

ELLINWOOD - LEE HOUSE (Site)
HISTORY SHEET
General Information

Name of Structure: Ensign Ellinwood- Joel Lee House

Address: Wolcott St - N side of rd, just E of Armstrong Rd ¹
43.166103, -76.855967 ²

Parcel ID: (543800) 74115-00-737399

Atlas: Lot 184; 1853,1858,1874: "J.Lee"; 1904: "I.B.Jones"

When Built / Mason: c.1842, Henry Robinson ³

When Razed: ~1990s

Why: Deteriorated

Original Owner: Joel Lee

Subsequently: Chet Haviland, George Hunt, Don MacDougall (MacDougall Irrev. Trust)

Sales Record: <https://wayne.sdgny.com/saleshist/property.aspx?id=5643>

Book 573, Page 491: 4/1/1991 49.8 acre transfer from George Hunt

Book 856, Page 837: 12/1/2015 49.8 acre owners Donald K/Joanne MacDougall

Coordinate locator: 747377-1154064

Original Use: House

Subsequently: House; abandoned by 1950s

¹ 1/9/2021 field trip: Confirmed site; no trace of cobblestone remains visible from road. The site as seen from Wolcott Rd is completely obscured by trees, bushes, and understory growth.

² Google view (8/2013) shows 11121 Wolcott Rd with a bushwhacked path leading back into the trees with a chain across and a POSTED sign. There is a utility pole on both sides of the street just west of this juncture. Heavy vegetation obscures any possible footprint location, but this is most probably the place. It is just west of the stream and east of the Armstrong Rd intersection that comes in from the opposite side of Wolcott Rd. Satellite view indicates there is something way back at the end of this path (pole barn per tax records). <https://www.google.com/maps/@43.1654505,-76.8559167,3a,75y,57.58h,96.19t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1syaOl2H2K4j6mMWLlvrr0Q!2e0!7i13312!8i6656>. Satellite: <https://www.google.com/maps/@43.165816,-76.8556808,208m/data=!3m1!1e3>.

³ Between 1841 and 1842, stone mason Henry Robinson built a 2-story cobblestone house for Ensign Ellinwood on the north side of Wolcott Rd., slightly east of Rolfe Rd. (Roe p.242). *Rose Neighborhood Sketches, Wayne County NY, Alfred Seeyle Roe, © 1893*

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Photographs: Robert Roudabush (RR-late 1970s, Martin Wolfish (MW-1985-99), Verlyn Klahn (VK-~1954, and assorted photos from local historical societies. RR photos clearly show address on house "1841" (address have all been renumbered since then and this parcel, without any structures, has no numerical address). VK's two photos indicate poor condition (exactly as described below) and overgrown—clearly abandoned.

Description: ⁴

Design details:

1½-story, gable faced road. Entrance door on right, two windows to left, two windows centered between the three lower openings. Long sides were mirror images of each other and had 2 windows, with a very small square window abutting the cornice positioned above the lower window closer to the back corner. All windows had 6-over-2 sashes.

Masonry details:

Front faced with small, uniform, carefully laid oval lake stones of reds, light grays, and white; sides with multi-colored and shaped field cobbles; quoins variable, gray limestone and red sandstone—those along front elevation were hammered and neat. On front the stones were set in a slight rightward slant; on the sides, when possible the field stones were set similarly. Stones on front and side set 4/Q. Strong horizontal Vd mortar joints, verticals were pyramids. Lintels and sills were wooden.

Condition (Wolfish photo): Cracks along quoin line on both sides of the front/side elevations, most of stones on lower front (between the door and windows) had fallen off and the space had been mortared. Roudabush photos also show on the upper story stones between the windows and all the stones right of the windows up to the roofline and over to the quoin line were gone and the space mortared over.

⁴ Condition in RR (late 1970s) and MW photos (1985-1999): RR photos show cracks particularly along quoin lines on front corners with attempt to patch with black tar on the left corner and with white mortar on the right corner. Both cracks from roof to ground. Also patched crack from roof to upper right corner of one window on the side. MW photos show further deterioration on the front façade. All the cobblestone veneer had fallen off between the two windows exposing the stone and mortar matrix of the supporting 12" wall. More patching had been done with black tar in various places.

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First Hand Information - Correspondences

1/20/2014, 4:22PM Geoffrey Hunt (to Frank Dennis and forwarded to me)

I recall seeing "1842" carved into one of the stone block quoins either above the front door or the east road-facing corner. My father, George, bought the farm (50 acres) from the Havilands circa 1965-6. The Havilands—a late middle-aged couple at the time—lived east of Rose. I believe the elderly Haviland father lived in the cobblestone house as recently as the late 1950s, perhaps as late as 1960.

My father had thoughts of restoring the cobblestone house. The crack that you mention was extensive and most likely the result of fatigue/settling of the corner quoins along with a frost heave from water damage over the years-- probably the failure mode of so many cobblestone structures. Dad attempted to get the floor joists re-leveled, without success as it seemed the crack would only get worse. He did the best he could to at least seal the crack from further water penetration.

Dad was also stymied by the legendary mysteries surrounding the original mortar used by cobblestone masons. Dad speculated that part of the "secret" was using a generous portion of clamshells—or even eggshells—to supply an extra portion of calcium carbonate beyond the usual burnt limestone for the mortar formula. There is also a story about Henry Robinson posting guards 100 yards or so on either side of the house construction site along Wolcott Rd to warn him of oncoming travelers. Upon a warning the masons would cover up the mortar troughs and piles of raw materials.

My father subsequently sold the house and the farm, perhaps in the late 1980s or around 1990, to Don MacDougall, who lived on Dix Street in Rose. (I probably don't have the right timeframe). But I believe the cobblestone house either collapsed or was demolished by Don.

1/20/2014, 7:36PM Geoffrey Hunt to Karen Crandall

The Ellinwood-Lee cobblestone house was a more rustic version, less elegant in style and construction than the "gentry" cobblestone houses. As you observed, the three sides of the Ellinwood-Lee house were fieldstones, only the front faced with lake cobblestones.

I don't recall the Ellinwood-Lee house having fireplaces. The house was heated via cast iron wood stoves, the largest of which was in the kitchen in the rear of the house.

The site of the Ellinwood-Lee house was very attractive, slightly elevated from the road surrounded by stately and very old oak and maple trees. The barn was not cobblestone, instead a well-preserved post and beam structure. The beams were hand-hewn oak, with the usual twists and checks common for barns well over 150 years old. My father thought the barn was constructed before the house, most likely info he obtained from the Havilands, built around 1840 perhaps earlier. The barn was fairly large, two stories with a big hay loft,

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stanchions for milking a half dozen cows—I would guess a more ambitious size than a cobblestone mason would want to tackle.

It's easy to discern why more recent owners of these houses were unable to keep these structures viable. In the case of my father, the cost of restoration was daunting , not to mention the dearth of reconstruction experts with enough knowledge on how to repair and upgrade cobblestone buildings, at least in North America.

1/20/2014 I sent email to Joanne and Don MacDougall (jonimac@rochester.rr.com) asking them when the cobblestone house was demolished (year) and if they had any pictures of it. No response.