



Gambrel roof three story basement barn



**Experience the 19th Century
All Historic Buildings Open**

SOMERSET OLD FASHION FARM FESTIVAL

Sunday of ~~Memorial Day~~ Weekend

Antique Vehicles and Equipment

Period Demonstrations

Plowing With Horses

Horse Drawn Wagon Rides

Refreshments / Baked Foods

“VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS”

House and Grounds Decorated

Second Sunday of December

TOWN OF SOMERSET

WELCOME CENTER

Open ~~Saturday~~ & Sunday 1:00 - 4:00 PM
Last Saturday in June thru 2nd Sunday of October

**BABCOCK
HOUSE
MUSEUM**

7449 Lake Rd. Barker, New York 14012

BABCOCK HOUSE MUSEUM

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The sturdy cobblestone house built upon a large farm three miles west of Somerset Corners was built about 1848 by Jeptha W. Babcock. The Babcock family is of English descent and the American Branch was founded by James Babcock who emigrated from Essex, England.

Jeptha W. Babcock was a farmer, the first postmaster in the western section of the town, Supervisor of the Town of Somerset, and a New York State Assemblyman. He was a respected citizen, a Friend (or Quaker) in religious belief, and in politics, a Whig and Republican. A man of firmness and decision, Mr. Babcock never left a stone unturned to accomplish his purpose after having resolved upon a course of action.

Jeptha was born in 1806 in Rensselaerville, Albany County, New York. In November 1829 he married Mary Hoag, a Dutchess County native. Jeptha and Mary moved to Niagara County in 1833. They had four children: Isaac H., Henry H., Mary Jane, and Sarah Elizabeth.

In 1865 Jeptha and Mary moved to Lockport, N.Y. Mary died in 1869 and Jeptha on October 21, 1883. The obituary in the Lockport Daily Journal, dated October 22, 1883, states, "Mr. Babcock was prominently identified with the development of Niagara County."

The Babcock Homestead was later owned by other families. Each one preserved the architecturally unique house. It is now owned by AES Somerset.

This beautiful Greek Revival style home is a two story house of the middle-late period. The cobblestone era divides itself into three periods, early - from 1825-35, middle - through 1845, and the late period which includes all structures erected through the 1860's. The Civil War seemed to have ended the cobblestone construction as only a few were built after 1866.

For travelers beyond Upstate New York, cobblestone houses have the appeal of the unusual. Few people realize here was developed a type of masonry of unique beauty and interest. With but a few exceptions, this type of masonry wall is not found elsewhere in our country.

Building these houses was a slow process. A good mason could lay up about three courses of stone, on one side, in one day. This represents about nine inches of wall. They would have two or three houses under construction at once, allowing time for the mortar to set and harden as they worked on

the next. We can well understand why it took more than two years to build a cobblestone house.

New York State Electric & Gas Corp. acquired the Babcock house August 23, 1982 as part of the property for the new 625 megawatt electric generating plant that was under construction near the shore of Lake Ontario. That year they replaced the roof to make the house weather tight. In 1983 extensive restoration work actually began. NYSEG worked very closely with several leading authorities on historically significant buildings and their restoration. They did as suggested and in many ways, more than was requested.

The bread oven is an interesting feature of the restored home. As workmen were engaged in doing necessary repairs, they came upon a partially constructed brick oven. Pictures were taken, and bricks and mortar were sent to Genesee Country Museum, Mumford, N.Y. With these photographs and fragments, historians were able to create a drawing of what the bread oven was probably like in its original condition. From this research the oven was reconstructed in the restored kitchen.

Wrought iron fixtures acquired from an artisan in Massachusetts are handcrafted replicas of authentic 19th century pieces. Light fixtures that resemble candles adorn the dining room and other areas of the home. Craftsmen covered their wires in such a manner that no wiring is exposed. Wax was dripped to give the resemblance of candles that had run.

The woodwork is a specially prepared "wash" that produces the appearance of aged paint. Woodwork and cabinets are painted a pale gray.

On the back of the house, a dirt floor storage shed was replaced with a family room, lavatory, and utility room.

The house is functional for our times, but most of the house was left as it was when Jeptha Babcock worked the soil and was one of the largest wheat growers in this section of the county. His son, Isaac, very well could have helped gather stones for the house.

Since May 1987, according to an agreement between NYSEG and the Town of Somerset Historical Society, the society has maintained and furnished the house. In 1999, AES Somerset purchased the Babcock house and has continued this agreement. It is the Welcome Center for the Town of Somerset, open during the summer and early fall.

*Lorraine G. Wayner
Somerset Town Historian
May 1988*



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All Historic Buildings Open

“SOMERSET DAY”

Second Sunday of August

Antique Vehicles and Equipment

Period Demonstrations

Crafts

Giant Flea Market

Horse Drawn Wagon Rides

Refreshments

Baked Foods

“VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS”

House and Grounds Decorated

Second and Third Sunday of December

Town of Somerset

“WELCOME CENTER”

Open Weekends

June thru October

Printed in Niagara County



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