

EGYPT HISTORIC DISTRICT – The Later Years & the Future

Last in a series

The latter part of the 20th century into the beginning of the 21st brought further change to the hamlet of Egypt, not all of it positive. Although Comstock Foods (the former Egypt Canning Company), a division of the Borden Company in the 1960's, and a division of Curtice-Burns in the 1970's, was processing up to 200 tons of beans per day and employing about 255 seasonal workers during that period, its future was uncertain. Eventually, as a result of consolidation and reorganization, the Egypt plant was closed for good in 1982. Today, portions of the plant have been demolished and the remainder has had little care. The water tower, however, a recognizable visual sight, remains. Towers of that type were common fixtures in most towns and villages and Egypt's tower is the only one that remains in Perinton.

The old Staples tavern, in the vicinity of today's Quailbush subdivision, was torn down, and Oliver Loud's tavern was moved from the current site of the Town Centre Plaza to Bushnell's Basin. Traffic increased on Route 31, but there were few reasons to stop in the old hamlet that was increasingly surrounded by suburban subdivisions. On the other hand, several new buildings were constructed to house a variety of businesses. Perinton's hike/bike trail, using the old Rochester-Syracuse and Eastern trolley bed, became part of the hamlet. In the late 1980's, with a growing interest in historic preservation, and after Perinton had enacted an Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Ranney house and barns at 7516 Pittsford-Palmyra Road were designated historic landmarks, as was the old schoolhouse/grange further east at 7700 Pittsford-Palmyra Road. A number of other houses in the hamlet were surveyed for possible future historic designation. Egypt was certainly not about to give up its identity.

During the 1990's, an effort began to designate the entire hamlet as an historic district. The criteria for designation require that the area contains properties that would qualify for individual designation and that the area constitutes a distinct section of the town. Egypt clearly qualified on both points. There are four individual landmarks in the district: the former schoolhouse/grange hall; the Ranney homestead, probably the oldest frame house in Perinton; and farmhouses at 7725 and 7752 Pittsford-Palmyra Road. Egypt has been a distinct area of the town since 1813 when Perinton held its first town meeting in Packard's Tavern, one of the local stagecoach inns. It continued to be a center of agriculture and the canning business well into the 20th century, and it still maintains a vibrant identity today. Designation as an historic district came in March 2000.

Since then, the hamlet has seen some new building and there are more plans for the future. The historic architecture commission has worked and will continue to work with businesses to insure that new structures are appropriate to the historic nature of the area. In addition, the town's Egypt Subarea Plan, formulated in 2003, provides development guidelines. While there are some plans for commercial and residential development in the area, to date there are only two residential projects under construction (the Trolley Brook Estates and Carmel Estates subdivisions). The old Nelson's Store, unfortunately beyond repair, was razed in order to align Loud and Mason Roads in conjunction with the Route 31 expansion project. The Ramsdell-Ranney property has become part of adjacent Northern Nurseries, thereby saving Perinton's oldest frame house and preserving a segment of the area's agricultural heritage. Egypt Park, Lollypop Farm, the hike/bike trail and sections of the Crescent Trail offer recreational opportunities in the area. The challenge for the future will be to allow development while insuring that the small scale rural ambiance of the hamlet is preserved. In any case, the hamlet of

Egypt, Perinton's first area of settlement, is very much alive and well in the 21st century and will likely continue to reinvent itself as it has so many times in the past.



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