

Livingston County Bicentennial

MURRAY HILL

Historical Marker Dedication



Livingston County Campus at Mt. Morris, New York



On the grounds of Building One Thursday, September 2nd 4:30 PM

PROGRAM

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & MURRAY HILL HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Amie Alden, Livingston County Historian



MURRAY HILL - "A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY PLACE"

Read by William Mann, Livingston County Deputy Administrator, Central Services



UNVEILING OF HISTORICAL MARKER

Amie Alden & Deborah Bump, Executive Director, Genesee Valley Council on the Arts



TIMELINE OF MURRAY HILL HISTORY

Murray Hill is the ancestral home of the Seneca Nation, including Seneca chief William Tallchief (c. 1750 - c. 1833), who resided here and is buried at Mt. Morris Cemetery.

1794 - First European Americans settle in Mt. Morris.

1797 - The Treaty of Big Tree opened up millions of acres west of the Genesee River for development and set aside several reservations for Native Americans.

1807 - The Bank of America conveyed the area known as the Mt. Morris Tract to Harriet and John R. Murray, Sr., his sister Susan and her husband William Ogden, and the famous American artist John Trumbull, all of New York City, along with James and Naomi Wadsworth of Geneseo.

1837 to 1861 - The land was subdivided, and in 1839, John R. Murray, Jr. constructed for himself and his bride, Anna Vernon Olyphant, a simple but elegant mansion here. It has since been known as Murray Hill. The Murrays improved the grounds with formal gardens and fishponds. They entertained distinguished guests, including close friend John Kensett, the well-known Hudson River School artist. The Murrays were philanthropists and donated funds to build the former Episcopal Church in Mt. Morris, where they both are buried.

1861 to 1881 - Murray Hill was sold to Anson D. Smith and his wife, Laura Page. Smith was owner of Smith's Bank of Perry, and upon his death in 1862, Laura Page Smith became owner and president of the bank, one of the earliest woman bank presidents in the United States.

1881 to 1893 - The Murray Hill mansion was completely destroyed by fire in 1882 while under the ownership of Charles O. Shepard and his wife, Clara Louise McAlpine. Shepard, a former U.S. consul to Japan, built a much less extravagant home but greatly expanded the barns and stables. Murray Hill became known for prize cattle, sheep, thoroughbred horses, polo matches, and Charles O. Shepard's antics, which often made headlines.

1893 to 1899 - The property was sold to George Austen and his wife, Isabel Valle. George Austen was a retired businessman who worked for several years in the shipping business out of the Philippines. The couple dropped plans for improvements on Murray Hill, opting to build the Sweet Briar mansion in Geneseo and moving there in 1899. The Austens divorced a few years later and Isabel Valle Austen, a debutant from St. Louis, went on to become a well-known American poet.

1899 to 1907 - Murray Hill was purchased by Buffalo banker George L. Williams and his wife, Annie Addicks, as a summer retreat. In 1901, George L. Williams was treasurer for the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo where President McKinley was mortally wounded. He was present at the swearing-in of vice president Theodore Roosevelt as McKinley's successor and the Roosevelts were guests of the Williamses at Murray Hill as well. After the exposition, Williams brought hundreds of trees and flowering bushes to plant at Murray Hill.

1907 to 1931 - George L. and Annie Williams sold Murray Hill to Lydia Uelbelhoer Pattison of Buffalo. She and her husband, Edward P. Pattison, and children resided here. The family enjoyed the outdoors and utilized the property for recreation, including polo and ice skating on the ponds. It is likely that the Pattisons constructed the log cabin in what is now Al Lorenz Park for their children. In 1927, the Pattisons' daughter Ruth was married on this site in an elaborate ceremony. Lydia U. Pattison died in 1929, and the estate went to her husband and children. In the late 1920s, New York State became interested in the Murray Hill site for a tuberculosis hospital and offered Edward Pattison \$25,000 for the property, but he held out for more.

1931 - In the depths of the Great Depression, a massive local movement was organized to advocate for the tuberculosis hospital to be constructed in Mt. Morris. Governor Franklin Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor, made a brief visit to Murray Hill and found the site suitable as a possibility for the TB hospital. Eleanor Roosevelt commented that Murray Hill was "beautiful," leading to local myth that she influenced the final decision to locate the TB hospital here. In fact, the decision was based on the findings of state inspectors who narrowed down the search to either Mt. Morris and Warsaw. On the day the group was to inspect the site in Warsaw, there was a blizzard and the road to Warsaw was impassible, eliminating the site as a contender. The Mt. Morris site was determined to be the most advantageous because of its proximity to the railroads and improved water infrastructure. The restorative nature of the surroundings and the strong community support were also pivotal factors.

1932 to 1971- After a drawn-out court battle, Edward P. Pattison won about \$150,000 from the state for Murray Hill but refused to vacate the property when the state took it over. He and his family eventually were forced to leave. Ground was broken for the TB hospital in 1932 and construction for the children's hospital commenced in 1933. The hospital opened in 1936 and the campus included several residential buildings for doctors and their families, a nurse's dormitory, a greenhouse, and power plant. Improvements were made to the adjacent parklands for the staff and employees to enjoy. Preventative efforts and advances in the use of antibiotics impacted the spread of tuberculosis and resulted in the closing of the hospital by the state in 1971.

1971 to present day - Over the last 50 years, Livingston County has continually expanded and modernized the facilities and parklands at Murray Hill. By 1974, several county offices were rehoused on the campus, including a health-related facility in the former TB hospital. That year, the county also dedicated Livingston County's first park, encompassing 80 acres and later named in honor of Al Lorenz, the longtime park superintendent. In 2004, the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation was built to accommodate the growing needs of the area. In 2008, Livingston County dedicated the New Deal Gallery, operated by the Genesee Valley Council on the Arts, to house hundreds of easel paintings that decorated the rooms of the former TB hospital. The paintings were commissioned by the Works Projects Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression and comprise one of the largest collections of WPA art in the country. Several animal sculptures from the same time period remain on display on the campus grounds.

Over time, the Murray Hill campus has continually undergone change to keep up with modern times. Throughout this process, Livingston County has attempted to maintain the integrity and historical significance of Murray Hill as a workplace and as a place for the public to enjoy the greenspace.



The Livingston County Historian's Office is honored to be a recipient of grant funds from The William G. Pomeroy Foundation for this historical roadside marker. The Foundation strongly believes that historical markers play an important role in local historic preservation by serving a dual purpose. They educate the public and foster historical tourism, which in turn can provide much-needed economic benefits to the towns and villages where the markers are placed. Pomeroy's New York State Historic Marker Grant Program commemorates historic people, places, things, or events within the time frame of 1740-1921. Since 2006, the Foundation has funded more than 1,500 roadside markers and plaques nationwide.

Special thanks and appreciation to ~

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