

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

Note: For full bibliographic information about sources cited in this chronology, refer to the Bibliography, found in Appendix C.

Beginnings and Oneida Indian Occupation: Before 1848

- 15,000 Years Ago. Land in central New York State that would become home to Native people and Euro-Americans was, for thousands of years, covered by the Laurentide Ice Sheet, a massive glacier extending from the Arctic. Fifteen thousand years ago, the glacier retreated and melted into Glacial Lake Iroquois, a large water body covering the Upper Mohawk Valley. (Koch, 15) Subsequent melting eventually resulted in the formation of Oneida Lake and its tributaries, including Oneida Creek. Originating in higher elevations south of Oneida Lake, the creek flows northward, emptying into the lake's southeast side. Flooding along the creek banks produced a buildup of alluvial sediment, creating fertile ground.
- 4,000 BCE. Nomadic people may have gravitated to the area around 4000 BCE, after warming temperatures resulted in food sources that could be hunted, fished, and gathered. By the fifteenth century, the Haudenosaunee or "Five Nations," including the Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, and Mohawks, occupied central New York State. The fifth group, the Oneidas, established main villages along Oneida Creek and in the hilly terrain of what became Madison County, and while known to relocate throughout the territory every five to twenty years, Oneidas did form semi-permanent settlements, surrounding them with high palisades. (Koch, 19)
- Late 1700s/Early 1800s. Between the 1780s and 1840s, the State of New York purchased millions of acres of Oneida lands through a loosely defined set of treaties, employing coercive measures, in violation of federal law. (Koch, 18-19) Facing pressure to sell, many Oneidas gravitated to and settled in an area west of Green Bay, Wisconsin, where a reservation was established by treaty in 1838. (Koch, 18-19). By the end of the 1840s, a population of Oneidas remained in two villages located to the southeast and southwest of what would become the Mansion House site.
- The Oneidas' land had been divided into large rectangular lots drawn by the Surveyor General of the State of New York in 1780 and 1840, and attracted land speculators, missionaries, settlers, and boosters of Erie Canal development. The State disposed of the land in return for partial remittance, and upon payment in full, the buyers would then receive articles securing the deeds. A small communal group of three families, the Hatches, Ackleys, and Nashes from East Hamilton, New York purchased land near Oneida Creek, occupied a log cabin, and operated a lumber-sawing mill. (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 48)

Documentation of the Oneidas remaining in the area was recorded by a Community member in 1852, *"The Indians have been our very good neighbors from the commencement of the Community here, and we are glad to show our appreciation of it, as well as to pay our respects to the remnant of a once powerful race. We inhabit the home of their fathers; the Community domain but a few years since was their common ancestral inheritance. We believe it was never deeded as the property of any individual white man, but passed from the community of nature to the community of civilization and grace."* (Worden, 35)

1811. John Humphrey Noyes was born in Putney, Vermont. He graduated from Dartmouth College and went on to read law. After undergoing a religious experience, he abandoned law and prepared himself for the ministry.
1825. The Erie Canal, connecting Albany to Buffalo, opened.
1831. Noyes entered the Andover Theological Seminary. He soon found the students too worldly.
- Also in this year, the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad opened. By 1851, the railroad connected several east-west routes to provide a single line between Albany and Buffalo.
1832. Noyes transferred from Andover to the Theological Department at Yale University, where he became associated with a group of revivalists and with them, formed a free church. He opposed Calvinist doctrine of human depravity, believing it was possible for man to attain perfection in life on earth. (*NHL Nomination*, Section 8, Page 1) He believed that the second coming of Jesus Christ had occurred during the first century after Christ's death, and that the millennium had already arrived. Thus, it was no longer possible to follow in the old paths of alternate sinning and repentance. *"Sin no more; repent no more; so regulate your lives as to eliminate that worst of all evils – selfishness."* (Noyes, quoted in Robertson, *The Oneida Community*)
1834. Noyes announced that he had attained a state of perfection, or sinlessness. As a result, he was deprived of his license to preach, asked to withdraw from Yale, and dismissed from the free church. (*NHL*, 8/1)
1836. Noyes returned to Putney after attempting (and failing), for two years, to draw other perfectionists together and interest reformers in his new theology. He gathered his family and friends together and expounded his views. (*NHL* 8/1) He further refined his ideas, influenced in part by several communistic experiments in America, including Brook Farm (West Roxbury, MA). (*NHL*, 8/2)
1839. By this year, Noyes's group was meeting regularly, and developed a society whose aim was to spread perfectionism by means of its publications. The

group adopted a communal way of life (based less on principles than on expedience).

1846. Noyes's Putney community began practicing complex marriage. This was spurred by Noyes's belief that monogamy was not compatible with perfectionism (dating back to 1834). The surrounding neighborhood (including Calvinistic elders) rejected this idea, prompting Noyes and about 45 followers (a total of 47 adults and children) to flee to central New York. (Wonderley, *CLR*, 10)

1847. A small communal group already existed on Oneida Creek (consisting of three families from nearby East Hamilton, New York, a log cabin, a lumber-sawing mill owned by Jonathan Burt) and several other small structures. (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 48). Upon hearing of the Putney community's plight, invited the Vermont group to join. "*We virtually took the land from the hands of the Indians themselves, for the white settlers had not paid their debt to the State when they passed their titles to us. And so this soil scarce knows the touch of private ownership, for the Oneidas held their lands in common.*" [Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 49 (from *American Socialist*, 10/2/1879)]

In 1847, when members of the Putney community arrived at Oneida to settle their land, they found two small farmhouses, two log cabins, and a shed. (Hayden, 199) (Note: Worden states that J. H. Noyes did not come until January of 1848).

Establishment and the Oneida Community: 1848-1861

1848. Noyes and his followers accepted the Oneida group's invitation and began migrating to central New York in March of 1848. The group migrated in states, the first of which arrived in March after crossing Lake Champlain via ferry, navigating the Erie Canal from Albany to Dunhamville, and making their way southward. (Noyes, *The Days of My Youth*, 5)

Noyes selected the location on a farm across the creek then owned by "Deacon Francis," and that 80-acre property was purchased early in the spring. (Wonderley, *CLR*, 15) The ground just below the knoll was selected for the site of the first Mansion House.

"And now it may be interesting to revert to the time when the site upon which the Oneida Community dwellings now stand, was so rough and uncultivated as to be passed by unnoticed. One lonely cottage stood on the hillside; a barn across the road; a butternut-tree, which has since been famous in the annals of the Community, the only suggestion of romance or beauty in the vicinity. Neighboring buildings were few and scattering. Nearly a quarter of a mile from the cottage alluded to, long known as the "White House," were three farm houses, together with a saw-mill. These buildings were owned by Mr. Jonathan Burt. He and his

family, jointed by Mr. Daniel P. Nash and Joseph C. Ackley, formed the nucleus which at length grew into the Oneida Community.” (Worden, 1)

The first settlement was a “motley assortment of already existing and hastily built structures,” and “[f]aced with the necessity of housing some ninety people before winter, [the Community] acquired the Francis property across the creek which boasted a small farmhouse, two barns, and the only topography relief in the neighborhood: a knoll offering an extensive view of the surroundings.” (Wonderley, CLR, 11)

The present-day Kenwood Avenue existed as a dirt road at this time. “Great quantities of black berries” covered the knoll where the present-day Mansion House stands. Other plants growing on the site included celandine (jewelweed), and a large butternut tree (on the east face of the knoll). The south lawn contained a cultivated field of potatoes and corn, and apple orchards covered the north lawn. (Wonderley, CLR, 41)

“North of the house was a plot of ground intended for a garden, which possessed three or four unfortunate cherry-trees, a bed of cabbages, onions, lettuce, spinach, a few tomatoes, and a small bed of asparagus, but not enough of anything to supply our table. For larger fruits, we had only apples, and for these we were mainly dependent upon buying...The idea of cultivating small fruits in quantities sufficient to supply our table freely, had not been thought of by any of us, until the arrival of Mr. Henry Thacker in the fall of 1849. With his scientific knowledge and practical experience we were destined to see a great form, not only in our fruit and vegetable-garden, but in our orchards and among our flowers. His standard was high, and in less than one year from the time of his arrival our gardens were wonderfully improved, and everything growing luxuriously. Two years more, and we were able to add an attractive variety to our table; the “mammoth strawberries,” beautiful to the sight and delicious to the taste, were among the chief dainties.” (Worden, 33)

Noyes and a new community member, Erastus Hamilton, staked out the foundation walls for a communal home, referred to as the Mansion House. (*Oneida Community, 1849*, 4). The building was “situated on an elevated plot of ground in the right angle formed by the intersection of two roads; one of which it fronts on the east, at a distance of six rods (approximately 99 feet), and the other on the south at a distance of twenty-five rods (approximately 413 feet). The space between the mansion and the southern road is naturally suitable for a garden and lawn, and is already planted with shrubbery and fruit-trees.” (*Annual Report of the Oneida Association, 1850*).

“The rectangular building measured 60’ by 35’ and was oriented north-south. The structure was sited at the base of a knoll with the northern end abutting the present south slope. The southern or front end faced the creek.” (Wonderley, CLR, 15)
“When they stood back to look at it, they saw a big rectangular box three stories high...Hamilton, at least, softened, the stark look of the building by adding such

decorative embellishments as a crenellated cupola above and, below, an arcaded walkway to what Perfectionists called a piazza.” (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 59). The members, both men and women, worked to build the wood-frame house, clearing swamps, digging foundations, and erecting chimneys. (Robertson) Construction began on March 1st, and the cornerstone was laid on August 8th. (Wonderley, *The Look of Utopia*, 33; Foster, ed., *Free Love in Utopia*, 2; Worden, *Old Mansion House Memories by One Brought Up In It*, 4; *Circular*, February 27, 1862 and September 8, 1859; Parker, *A Yankee Saint*, 172)

The White House and original Burt House were converted into nurseries (for children, their nurses, and housekeepers); the Mansion House was reserved for adults. (Worden, 9)

Most of the community members lacked experience with communal living, but most had practical knowledge, including expertise in farming, masonry, carpentry, machinery, blacksmithing, cabinetmaking, shoemaking, milling, teaching, printing, wagon-making, harness-making, gunsmithing and lead pipe-making, as well as architecture, engineering, teaching, and printing. “They were rural and small-town New Englanders and New Yorkers comfortable with physical toil.” (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 75)

1849.

By 1849, the Oneida Community’s “domain” consisted of 160 acres lying on both sides of Oneida Creek, paid for in full and held in deed from the State. An additional 68 acres were purchased during the year. The January 1849 Annual Report noted that the property contained mostly alluvial soil of good quality, an excellent water privilege occupied by a saw-mill and other lumber machinery. (*First Annual Report of the Oneida Association*, January 1849).

Beginning in the spring of 1849, members constructed a “Children’s House” where children of the community were to be housed together under one roof. Two, two story extensions were built on the west side to house wood, washing rooms, a bake room, sitting and sleeping rooms.

Noyes moved to Brooklyn, New York where he would reside for six years, and established an “Associated Community.” (Wonderley, *CLR*, 12)

The Community membership totaled 87. (*HSR*, 2)

Also in this year, the community planted over 600 grape vines and fruit trees, including apple, pear, plum, cherry, peach, quince, and dwarf pear. The community also introduced flowers to the landscape, despite Noyes’s disapproval, creating an extensive flower garden on the north lawn. (Wonderley, *CLR*, 43) The 1850 Annual Report stated that in 1849, “[c]onsiderable has been done during the year in the way of agricultural improvement. In addition to a large number of fruit-bearing tress which were

originally on the domain, the Association have planted an orchard last spring, with 621 young fruit-trees – the gift of George W. Robinson, of Baldwinsville, and Henry Thacker, formerly of Owasco, now the Horticulturist of the Community.” The trees included apple (80/35 varieties), pear (77/36 varieties), plum (80/24 varieties), cherry (53/17 varieties), peach (236/23 varieties), quince (25/2 varieties), dwarf pear (40/15 varieties), and grapes (30/3 varieties). A total of 621 trees and 155 varieties. Thacker, a nurseryman, also transferred 2300 trees of different kinds to the Community.

1850s.

By the early 1850s, the community was tending fruit trees, berry bushes, and vegetable gardens, an enterprise regarded as “horticulture.” Members believed that horticultural would take them to a “higher spiritual plane and bring about a more advanced state of civilization.” (Wonderley, CLR, 11) At the site of the present-day Quadrangle was “some of [the] choicest garden ground.” It was used for the cultivation of strawberries, grapes, and vegetables. The main strawberry bed was “an oblong square of an area about ¼ of an acre. It [was] divided into four or five strips running lengthwise of the bed, about four feet in width, and with spaces between of about a foot and a-half or two feet.” Two rows of trellises held the grapes, and an onion bed covered one acre of ground. (Wonderley, CLR, 12)

In the 1850s, visitors from the outside world were “pouring into Oneida,” perhaps 1,000 per year during the decade. Some came to taste the food produced in the community, especially strawberries and cream; others were curious about the way of life. (Wonderly, *Oneida Utopia*, 89)

As a way to sustain themselves financially, the members began to make things. They produce silk thread, canned fruits, and made cutlery and silver spoons. Their most lucrative product was the Newhouse trap, a forged item used for animal trapping invented by community member and blacksmith Sewell Newhouse. By 1850, the Oneida Community’s population totaled about 200. (Robertson) It would remain at this level for most of its existence. (Wonderley, CLR, 11)

1850.

The whole number of persons connected with the Association at the beginning of 1850 was 172.

During 1850, an additional 55 acres were purchased, bringing the domain total to 273 acres [note that purchases add up to 283 (160 + 68 + 55), however the Annual Report states 273]. Much work was done to reclaim the soil to a proper state of cultivation. “Motives of prolicy, as well as good taste and habits of community life, invite our efforts in the direction of making our domain a “garden,” rather than what is usually understood by the title term “farm.” “The garden proper, though hitherto limited to the extent of supplying the wants of the Association, and occupying only one acre, has been a very attractive place of recreation to the members, and had drawn considerable attention from visitors. Arrangements are made for its enlargement, the coming season, to five acres; and ultimately, as has been said, it will blend with farming interest, and be

extended so as to cover substantially the whole domain...”[O]n nine rods of ground were raised 350 cabbages, whose average weight was 14 lbs. each, on five rods, 19 bushels of onions; on nine rods, 75 bushels of tomatoes; on a single rod, 200 bunches of celery. Also from 95 hills, the Community yielded three bushels of sweet or southern potatoes. Over 100 young fruit trees were added and plans were made to extend the pear and apple orchards to 1,000 trees each. Other crops raised included broom corn (for broom manufacture), oats, barley, wheat, buckwheat, beans, and more. (Annual Report of the Oneida Association, 1851)

The Community also raised cattle and hogs and produced milk and meat, but this effort was not *“in line of our ambition or attractions, to make a main business of waiting on animals.”* (Ibid)

Other improvements made in 1850 included furnishing a play-ground for children, building fences, and constructing a large and very substantial building for mechanical purposes, on the ground formerly occupied by the saw-mill. A printing press was housed in the attic.

In 1850, members constructed a two-story print shop, for the purpose of printing religious tracts or, *“to publish the gospel and help one another in spiritual things.”* The shop burned in 1851 and its equipment, shipped to Noyes in Brooklyn. (Wonderley, CLR, 12)

1851.

By 1851, the population had reached 205.

A third extension was built off the west side – a wood-shed measuring sixty feet long (later moved).

The community began increasing the horticultural acreage beyond the knoll, mostly towards the west and north, hoping that garden lands would *“blend with the farming interest and be extended so as to cover substantially the whole domain.”* Noyes advocated for reliance on tree fruits as a staple of the diet, writing, *“The largest part of the labor of the world is now spent on the growth of annual plants and animals. Cattle occupy more of the soil at present than men. The cultivation of trees will be better sport than plowing, hoeing corn, digging potatoes, and waiting on cows and pigs.”* (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 92)

The community also began planting trees, for purely aesthetic reasons. *“Of all the thrift trees that grew in our old children’s-yard, there not remain but three, a tulip or whitewood, a linden, and an elm.”* (Remembrance of Henry Seymour, 1870)

As early as this year, the South Garden was developed, as evidenced by Charlotte Miller’s 1851 drawing. By 1853, the design was clearly geometric in shape, with a large circle in the center and four right angles projecting from the circumference, forming a star. Originally filled with roses, the garden was replanted with perennials after the roses attracted

slugs. Maintenance of the garden was assumed by individuals with a private interest in the feature. The May 29, 1871 issue of *Circular* noted:

“Besides our public flower-garden [on the north lawn], which receives the special attention of the floral department, we have another garden just below the terrace south of the house, which might be appropriately called the “home garden.” Its numerous beds are divided among certain members of the family who have a taste for flowers. Here they have ample opportunity to display their native genius for flower culture. At sunset on pleasant evenings this garden presents a busy animated appearance. Its walks are thronged by the owners of the different flower-beds, who are enthusiastically hurrying to and fro with watering-pots, rakes, hoes, cuttings, plants to be set out, etc., etc. Many prepare for the summer campaign during the long months of winter, day after day carefully nourishing a dozen or more choice plants or tender cuttings. When the blue skies and warm winds of summer come, their pets reward them with lovely flowers.” (“Community Journal,” *Oneida Circular*, May 29 1871, 172)

A tulip tree was planted in the original “Children’s Yard,” later the Quadrangle. (Worden, preface)

1852. A cemetery was established on the south side of Chapel Street (this was the year of the first adult death within the community).

1853. An entry in *Circular* noted that members placed seats in the landscape, “[t]hey are tastefully shaped into sofas, divans, and settees, by the skillful hands of the members of the Community.—These rustic seats are scattered about here and there...” (Anne E. P. Child, “Life at Oneida-No. 2,” *Circular*, September 24, 1853, 359) Wonderley noted that “This was Charles Ellis’s distinctive “rustic furniture” – outdoor benches and chairs made from the gnarled roots of white cedar harvested from the surrounding swamps.” (CLR, 43)

In 1853, Henry Thacker, a landscape gardener from Owasco, New York, joined the community. “He strove to improve the productivity of the community’s fields and orchards with scientific methods, although he also warned the members that the climate was far from Edenic and did not favor fruit.” Regardless, Community members believed that “horticulture was simply ‘applying our system of criticism and self-improvement to the land.’” (Hayden, 191)

In 1853, the phrase “Horticulture the leading business for subsistence” began running on the first page of almost every issue of the Community newspaper as a statement of a key belief,” and would continue to appear prominently over the next 11 years. (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 93).

Community members began selling nursery trees and produce.

The horse barn was built on land to the south and slightly east of the Mansion House. It was made from timbers and material taken from

several old buildings on lots lying west of the Mansion House. It later became known as the “Old Post Office Building.” In the same year, the Frances Barn was built (later used as a livery). It burned in 1881, but was immediately re-built.

1854. Community member Jonathan Burt laid out paths. *“I have been engaged the last two days in marking out and working the wide paths for our new garden-ground. Its site you will understand is in part the spot where the barns formerly stood. We have two of these main paths crossing each-other at right angles. The one begins at the south end of the old barn-site, and runs north to the new one, about 700 feet long by 9 wide. The other crosses it directly in line with the walk leading from the mansion-house to the road. This is eight feet wide, and will lead across the pear orchard into the meadow flats below, its length being about 400 feet. I confess that in this approach toward a scientific and artistic arrangement of our gardens, I find a relish which I have not been wont to have in tilling the ground.”* (J. Burt, “Oneida Commune—The Out-door Domain,” *Circular*, May 23, 1853, 291)

Noyes announced that *“the community could not provide for itself economically though horticulture...the horticulturalists in the Community began to work out the methods of fruit preservation...another member, Charles Ellis, made rustic lawn furniture.”* (Hayden, 197)

The community developed the technology of vegetable preservation. (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 93)

1855. A reservoir was added to the property. The community placed a fountain in the middle of the south garden, fed by the reservoir.

1856. The Community test-marketed tomatoes preserved in cans and jars.

1857. The community invented and made the machines needed to mass produce the Newhouse traps, installing the equipment in their mill. They made 26,000 traps in 1857, and by the early 1860s were producing over 200,000 per year. (Wonderley, *CLR*, 12)

1858. By this year, the “Fruit Business” was begun, including retail sales of tomatoes, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, cherries, and grapes, hermetically sealed in glass jars. This enterprise would continue for the next ten years, and include the sales of preserved cherries, corn, grapes, peas, strawberries, tomatoes, and others in both glass and tin cans.

The September 9th issue of *Circular* announced that Mr. Bradley was building a small greenhouse and experimenting with the “concrete wall,” a new form of construction involving the underground portion of the wall. Located in what would become the Quadrangle, the greenhouse measured 14’ by 25’ and, apparently, was glass covered. (“An Oneida Journal: Ocean Telegraph Jubilee!!” *Circular*, September 9, 1858, 131) In 1866, it

was described as follows (note that the green house was demolished in 1868 and replaced with flower beds):

The green-house presents the finest display of flowers now that we have ever seen in it. The Azaleas, of which there are a number of varieties, have been in full bloom during the past week. Several varieties of roses are also in bloom, including the Lamark, a most delicate and highly perfumed white rose, and the splendid Augusta, which has been flowering for several months, and bids fair to continue for a good while to come. The Cactuses are putting forth their great flower buds. Orange blossoms fill the air around them with their rich perfume. Pelargoniums and numerous other flowers add their beauty to the scene. There are forty-three different kinds of plants in blossom, besides many varieties of some kinds. There are nineteen varieties of Azaleas in full bloom (Daily Journal, April 4, 1866).

1859. A wing, 15' by 26', was added to the greenhouse, doubling the size of the building." (An Oneida Journal.: Garden Items. To the Oneida Fruit Preservers," Circular, July 14, 1859, 99) It was "mostly devoted to the propagation of plants for future planting out, or sale." (Circular, February 20, 1862, 7)

Also in this year, A 12-foot addition was built on the front (south) end of the Mansion House, making the final dimensions 72' by 35'.

1860. The community decided to conduct water from two or three springs situated on the western edge of the domain, about 3/8 of a mile from the house, at an elevation sufficient to force water into the kitchen. Up until this point, water was pumped from a well (of the Francis farm) to a reservoir located to the north of the Mansion House.

Expansion: 1862-1880

1862. The current Mansion House was constructed, replacing the earlier building. Decoration on the "hall" of the building was added by Allweldt (of Syracuse). The building was located on the crest of the knoll (above the first Mansion House), a site seen by Noyes as superior:

The advantages of this spot are its conveniences of access, its nearness to the existing buildings of the community, its dry situation and good prospect. The most apparent objection that rises against the locality, is the fact that the building and its surroundings will occupy some of our choicest garden ground that is now used for the production of strawberries, grapes and vegetables. But on the whole we want just such land for our site, and all the associations connected with this spot are home-like and loving. It will be in the center of what has been the favorite promenade of old and young since the beginning of the Community. (Wonderley, Oneida Utopia, 112)

The design, created by Erastus Hamilton, “probably inspired by examples of villas in Italian style illustrated in the most popular architectural handbook of the day, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, but the day’s most eminent theorist of landscaping, A. J. Downing.” (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 112) Built of brick, the building was largely constructed with hired labor (non-Community members). (Ibid, 114)

Concurrent with this construction was a transformation of the grounds into a pleasure garden, modeling the advice of Andrew Jackson Downing. As noted in the HSR for the South Wing, “The Mansion House landscape was developed in the rural mode as made popular by A. J. Downing and his followers in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The romantic and picturesque notions are expressed in architectural style selected for the Mansion House, Italian Villa. The style was that Downing promoted as ideal for a country seat setting. As well, the characteristic asymmetrical layout, rambling and irregular plan and bold detailing lent themselves nicely to the purposed and use for the building as implemented by the Oneida Community. The meandering landscape with woodland, rustic and rural design features was a quintessential expression of the Downing tradition.” (HSR, *The South Wing*, 10)

*“The Oneidans also worked constantly, as a religious obligation, to improve comfort, efficiency, and beauty of their Community home. They believed its design should both reflect and facilitate the complex harmony for which they were striving in Community life, and they gave a lot of thought to architecture and landscaping. They read and discussed Andrew Jackson Downing, Capability Brown, and other leading landscape architects of the time, and studied Frederick Law Olmsted’s plans for New York’s Central Park. Under the direction of their resident horticulturist, Henry Thacker, they laid out the grounds around the Mansion House with shaded walks, hedges, a formal garden, and an avenue of elms. Their guiding aesthetic principle, in landscaping and architecture as well as the design of machines, was that beauty was inseparable from utility. ‘We are convinced,’ Circular noted, ‘that simplicity, absence of pretension, and the straightforward adoption of means to end, will ultimately provide, in architecture as well as in all things else, to be the truest standard of taste.’” [HSR, *The Tontine*, 4 (quoted from Spencer Klaw, *Without Sin*, 85)]*

On the North Lawn, Community members removed the cherry trees, grape arbor, and onion bed, and in their place graded the terrain, constructed paths, and planted shade trees to create an “emerald green lawn, perfect and velvety.” (A Non-Expert, “Researches in Landscape Gardening. No. 1” *Circular*, March 20, 1862, 24) The work was done by a team of volunteers led by Alfred Barron, and completed in one summer. Barron embraced Downing’s philosophy that the purest embellishment resulted from choosing the finest in nature and artistically enhancing it. In his lectures with Community members, he stated, “[t]he earth is a great repository of wealth and beauty, of that which is calculated to please the eye, and administer to the happiness of man; and a great part of man’s happiness lies in his

power to develop and reveal these hidden treasures.” (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 117). He quoted Downing, “to appear to advantage, requires some extent of surface; its lines should lose themselves indefinitely, and quite agreeable and naturally with those of the surrounding country.” He urged members to think beyond the geometric, “to the natural school of landscape derived from ‘the genius, enthusiasm, and fine writing’ of Downing.” (Ibid.)

“Barron’s landscape scheme centered on a graveled walkway winding around the periphery of the lawn north of the Mansion House.” (Ibid.)

“In the near future, flower beds would be created, and Henry Thacker and a workman would build a gazebo.” (Ibid.)

Lists of shrubs and trees appeared in *The Circular* in 1863 and 1870, and on September 11, 1862 the publication reported:

“Our new lawn, for the first time close shaven, begins to have the carpet feeling and finished reflection which is required; and notwithstanding the lack of shade, which only years can supply, with its paths and verdure pleasantly environs our Community dwelling. Whatever may be true of other objects of human art, a lawn may be watched for increasing beauty for many years. Our grounds are planted in clusters and with an eye to judicious arrangement, with a variety of trees, including elm, chestnut, basswood, maple, beech, tulip, black walnut, gingko, locust, oak, & etc. The evergreens consist of Scotch and American pine, Norway Spruce, Arbor vitae, hemlock, larch, & etc.”

The new water system, bringing potable water to the Mansion House, was completed this year. The water flowed underground, by gravity, over a distance of about 3,000 feet to the “Small Reservoir,” an octagonal tower of stone about eight feet high in the Quadrangle. (Wonderley, *CLR*, 51)

1863. The Tontine building, constructed to accommodate laundering operations with steam-driven machinery, was complete to the west and behind the Mansion House (today this house’s the dining room). Also in this year, a new livestock barn (also known as the “Arcade”) was completed across the road and northeast of the Mansion House (in 1873, this building was converted for use in the canning business).
1865. The community developed another pleasure garden for strolling, “Spring Grove,” in the ravines just north of the sand hill springs. It was bordered by a pear orchard, and later, a two-acre plantation of larch trees.
1866. *The Daily Journal* reported the method that was being used to construct pathways at the Mansion House site: “The patent walk from the front of the [Mansion House] was laid yesterday...the process of laying the walk was as follows: A lot of sand and gravel from the creek was sifted. The coarse gravel and stones were thrown into one pile and the fine gravel and sand into another, coal ashes being mixed with each. Then into each pile a sufficient quantity of coal-tar is

missed to thoroughly saturate the whole mass, so that each individual grain or pebble is completely coated with it. The foundation of the walk being prepared by excavating to a depth of three inches, the coarse part of the prepared material is laid down and carefully leveled with a rake. Then the fine material is laid on and leveled in a similar way. A sprinkling of the dry sand and ashes is then thrown on, and the whole surface leveled by being heavily stamped with a plank and pounder. Another sprinkling of dry sand is now thrown on, and evened with a broom, and the walk is then rolled with a stone roller about two feet long, fourteen inches in diameter and weight, six-hundred pounds. This rolling process is continued for some time until the material is graded. Another sprinkling of fine sand is added, and the walk is finished. The result is very satisfactory walk, smooth, impervious to water, and durable." (Daily Journal, 5/2/1866) (Note that these walks likely included a route that extended from the Mansion House's front door directly across the oval lawn. (Daily Journal, 7/9/1866)

1867. The Oneida Community had amassed \$180,000 in profits from their industries, and began to purchase more land.
1868. The canning business ceased operations.
1869. In the fall of this year, the Midland Railway (later the New York, Ontario, and Western) was finished and soon began running excursions of hundreds of summer visitors, putting the Community on display..." (Worden, preface to *Old Mansion House Memories*)
- 1869-1870. The South Wing was added to the Mansion House where the community practiced a form of eugenics ~ stirpiculture - an effort to produce a spiritually elevated group of people. (Wonderley, CLR, 13) The old Children's house was moved down across the highway, and the Old Mansion House was torn down. The southern portion of the grounds were converted into a children's play area, including a sand bed and sledding hill.
- In 1869, the Midland Railroad was constructed, leading to several changes in the landscape, including relocating the cemetery.
- Also in this year, a plan of the *Oneida Community's Buildings and Southern Grounds* was drawn by J. J. Skinner, with assistance from Alfred Barron. This beautifully detailed plan shows the layout of the Mansion Houses (both old and new), and the former children's house moved to the east side of Kenwood Avenue. Elements of the plan include:
- ~ Alignment of both Kenwood Avenue and Chapel Street as they appear today
 - ~ Grading of the south lawn into a bowl or amphitheater shape
 - ~ An elaborate system of gently curving walkways throughout, including the main drive to the Mansion House (new)
 - ~ An elliptical-shaped lawn extending eastward from the Mansion House (new) to Kenwood Avenue

- ~ Plantations of orchard trees (organized in regular grids) to the west of the Mansion House complex and to the west of the Children's lawn
- ~ Allees of shade trees (presumably elms) along both sides of Kenwood Avenue
- ~ The formal garden, set below the Mansion House at the northeast corner of the Children's lawn

1870. The 9/26/1870 issue of *Circular* provided a list of trees growing on the Oneida Community lawn. The list was divided into Evergreen Conifers (18 species), Deciduous Conifers (3 species), and Deciduous (42 species). Most of the "Deciduous" category included trees, but buckthorn, burning bush, and Aralia (shrubs) were also listed. ("Community Journal: Oneida, Trees on the O. C. Lawn, Evergreen Conifers. Deciduous Conifers. Deciduous. Willow-Place. Wallingford." *Circular*, September 26, 1870, 221)

The old Mansion House was torn down in November out of fear that fire might engulf the wood-frame building. (Worden, 105)

1871. The *Handbook* described the property as "a landscape of unspeakable beauty...spread before us...the lawn with its neatly trimmed paths, the flower gardens with their brilliant colors, and the rustic seats and arbors...beyond are the orchards and the vineyards...The Community home farm extends for half a mile in most directions...and towards the northeast...over a mile." (Hayden, 196 and *Handbook*, 1871)

1876. A new Cow Barn was built across Kenwood Avenue from and to the north of the Mansion House, allowing the Arcade to be used for the fruit processing operations.

1877-1878. The western extension of the Mansion House was built to accommodate Perfectionists leaving the Wallingford branch (with the addition of the Wallingford branch, the Oneida Community population totaled 306). This addition, known as the "New House," was designed by Lewis W. Leeds & Co., architects, from New York. (*Architectural Timeline*)

1879. Noyes left Oneida for Niagara Falls (Canada), where the Community was in the process of moving its tableware business from the Wallingford, Connecticut branch. After Noyes's departure, the Community set up a governing council (10 men and 9 women) to oversee the domestic and social affairs of the Community. (*HSR*, 12)

Modernization: 1881-1988

Note that Oneida Community, Ltd. changed its name to "Oneida Limited in the 1930s."

1880s-1890s. Life remained largely status quo for members who chose to remain in Oneida. They fabricated silk thread, canned fruits and vegetables, and

manufactured traps, including a new line of smaller traps (intended for mice) in 1886, "Victor."

1881. The community dissolved as a result of outside hostilities and dissention among the members. All property, real and personal, was distributed on an equal basis; the businesses were incorporated into a joint stock company, and the shares were apportioned. The Mansion House neighborhood became known as Kenwood.
- Several Community buildings burned, including the Horse Barn. The cause was found to be arson, committed by a former Community member.
1886. Noyes died in Niagara Falls, and his body was returned to Oneida for interment. A simple stone, indistinguishable from other members interred nearby, marks Noyes's grave. (Wonderley, *Oneida Utopia*, 165)
1899. The 1899 Sanborn Map showed the original layout of the Mansion House Drive, and on the grounds were the children's playhouse, a bicycle repair shed, and an ice house, tool house, and hen house, all located to the west (back) of the Mansion House. The silk shipping building stood across Kenwood Avenue, opposite the Mansion House.
- ca. 1900. By this year, the goods traditionally made and sold by the Community, including silk thread, canned fruits, and traps, were being mass produced by competitor companies (thread and fruit production ceased in the 1910s, and the trap manufacturing operations were sold to a Pennsylvania company in 1925). Leadership saw the need to specialize in a product "with an expandable market," - silverware. They invested in a high grade of "triple plate" silverware, known as "Community Plate."
1904. The Sanborn Map from 1904 reflected the same layout and grouping of buildings as shown on the 1899 map.
1906. Kenwood Park was laid out, a subdivision of land to the west of the Mansion House into residential lots for the company executives of Oneida Community Ltd. The men built 20 new homes at their own personal expense, some of which were designed by Theodore Skinner, and by Syracuse Arts-and-Crafts architect Ward Wellington Ward. They replaced the former fruit orchards and vegetable beds with a golf course.
1908. A plan for expansion, "*Future Development Mansion House Grounds*," of what appears to be housing units, located to the south of the Mansion House and near the trolley tracks, was drawn, likely by Theodore Skinner. The formal garden appears on the plan, altered (reduced in size) by a realignment of the elliptical drive leading to the Mansion House.
1909. The 1909 Sanborn map showed only the ice house and a small shed to the west of the Mansion House. An unpaved road had been built across and

perpendicular to Kenwood Avenue (beginning of subdivision of land for private, one-family homes).

1914. A lounge was added to the Mansion House to facilitate meeting space for Oneida Community, Ltd. administrators and salespersons. (OCMH website) The 1914 Sanborn map verified that the passenger depot, built to service visitors to the Community in the late 19th century, remained, as did both reservoir structures. Also by 1914, the rectangular green across Kenwood from the Mansion House, labeled “The Vineyard” had been established. Roads rimming the green space were labeled Seymour Lane, Vineyard Place, and New Street.
1920. A map of the Sherrill-Kenwood Water District was prepared, showing the addition of “Vineyard Park,” a square green space located across Kenwood Avenue from the Mansion House. Several houses stand along the roadway rimming the park.
- 1926-1936. In 1926, the Oneida Community, Ltd. constructed a new administration building to the north of the Mansion House on the opposite side of Kenwood Avenue. It was designed in the English Gothic style. The Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, were engaged by the Oneida Community, Ltd. to develop a plan for the grounds of the Administration Building.
- 1930s. Oneida Community, Ltd. changed its name to Oneida, Ltd.
1951. Shurcliff and Shurcliff, landscape architects, prepared a plan entitled “Suggested Changes to the Grounds, the Mansion House.” The drawing showed the layout of pathways around the north lawn, and identified many mature trees (likely planted during the Community days), including elm, black walnut, ginkgo, hemlock, maple, and oak. The plan showed abandoned tennis courts to the southwest of the Mansion House, a “drying yard” to the west of the Tontine, and a skating rink area on the west side of the north lawn. Skinner Road, rimming the north and west side of the site, had been built (1920-1951) and extended southward to Chapel Street. The design included 24 spaces for perpendicular parking in front of the Mansion House, widening the drive in this location to 42’.
1965. The OCMH was nominated as a National Historic Landmark. At the time, the landscape was described as follows: *“The grounds around the house are neatly groomed lawns, planted with trees. A small summerhouse is located north of the north tower and is the only associated outbuilding. The inner courtyard of the Mansion House is simply landscaped, with paths crossing the lawn, and several trees, including an ancient tulip poplar, planted during the active days of the Community.”* (NHL 7/2)

Rebirth: 1988-Present

- 1987-88. The Mansion House, along with 13.873 acres surrounding the building, separated from the Oneida Limited company and formed a non-profit organization dedicated to “maintaining, preserving and restoring the Mansion House for the benefit of present and future generations of scholars, students, and an interested public.” (Adapted from the organization’s mission statement) (Non-profit formed in 1987, 13.873 acres deeded in 1988)
1989. A map of the grounds was prepared, showing the addition of garages (in location of former tennis courts), and removal of the system of pathways from the north lawn (these may have existed at the time, but were omitted from the drawing. Skinner Road looped around the north and west sides of the property, but terminated at the rear of the Mansion House complex. Several shade trees were located in the ellipse to the east of the Mansion House and on the north lawn with fewer numbers on the South Lawn.
- 1997-2002. Crawford & Stearns prepared a four-volume Historic Structure Report, addressing the 1862 Building, South Wing, Tontine, and New House.

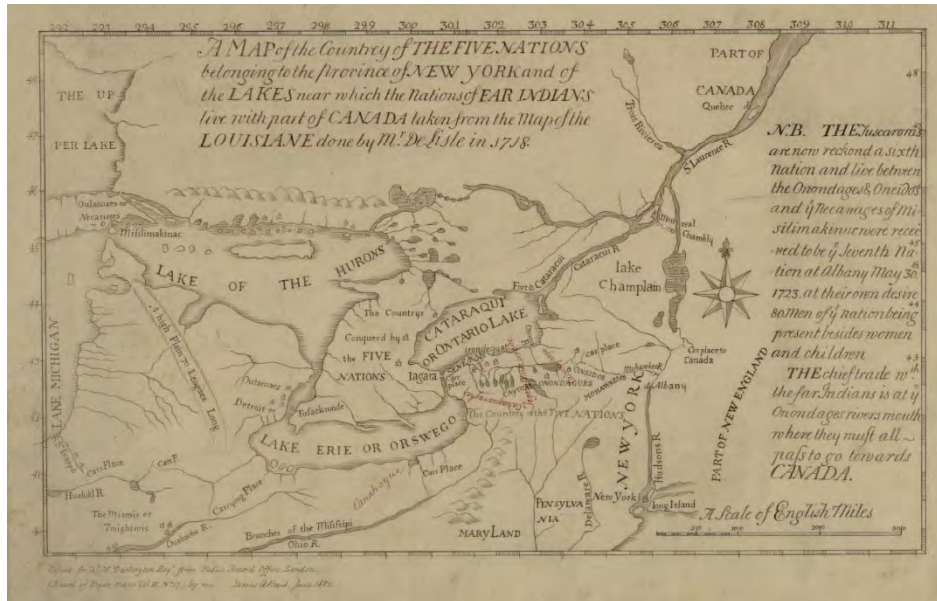
*Oneida Community Mansion House, Oneida, New York
Cultural Landscape Report*

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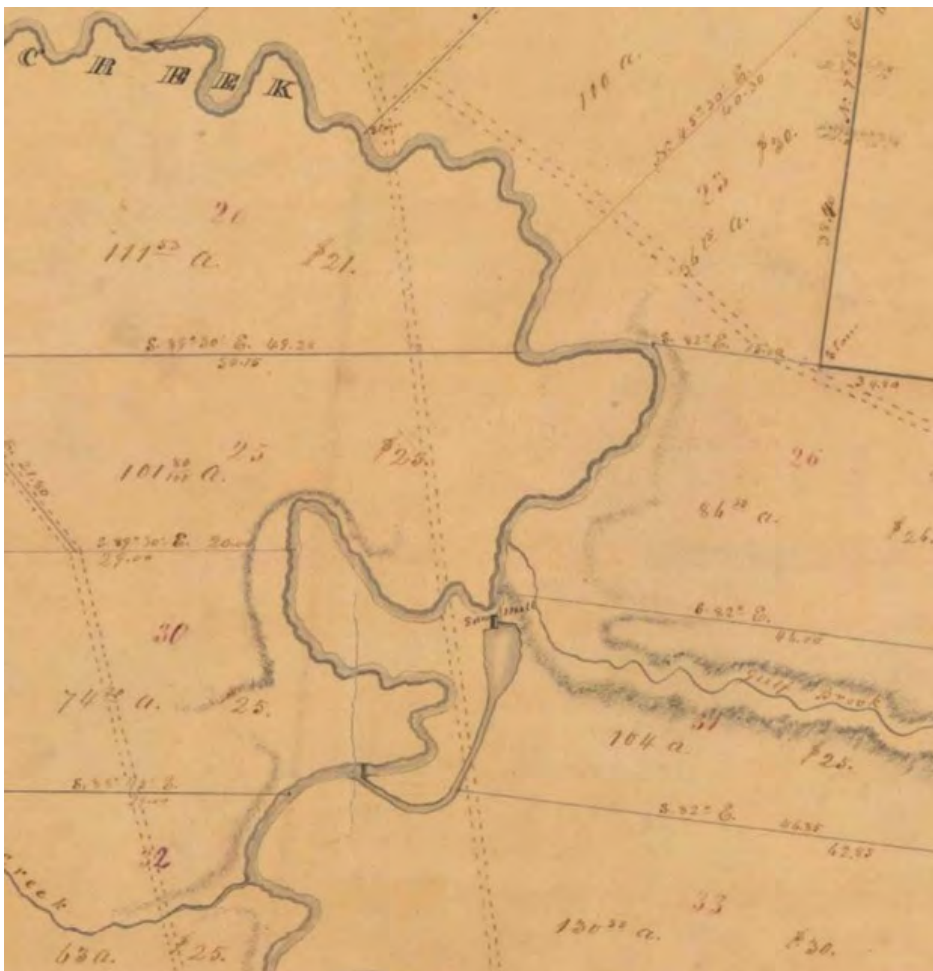
HISTORICAL IMAGES

Note: All images are from the collection of the Oneida Community Mansion House unless otherwise indicated.

Beginnings: Before 1848



1718. A Map of the County of the Five Nations belonging to the Province of New York and of the Lakes near which the Nations of Far Indians live with part of Canada taken from Map of the Louisiane done by Mr. DeLisle. (Darlington Digital Library, University of Pittsburgh)



1798. Oneida Purchase. Map 137, Surveyor General's Map Series AO273, New York State Archives, Albany, New York (map portion)

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Establishment: 1848-1861



Undated. The temporary shelter used by the Perfectionists upon their migration from Putney to Oneida



"1849." A painting made by Community member George Cragin in about 1915

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ca. 1851. A sketch of the original Mansion House and Children's House made by Community member Charlotte Miler

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Expansion: 1862-1880



1863.
Mansion
House,
Children's
House, and
original
Mansion
House
looking
southwest
from
Kenwood
Avenue



1865. A view of the North Lawn
looking south

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ca. 1865. The original Children's House
(with addition) with 1862 Mansion
House behind



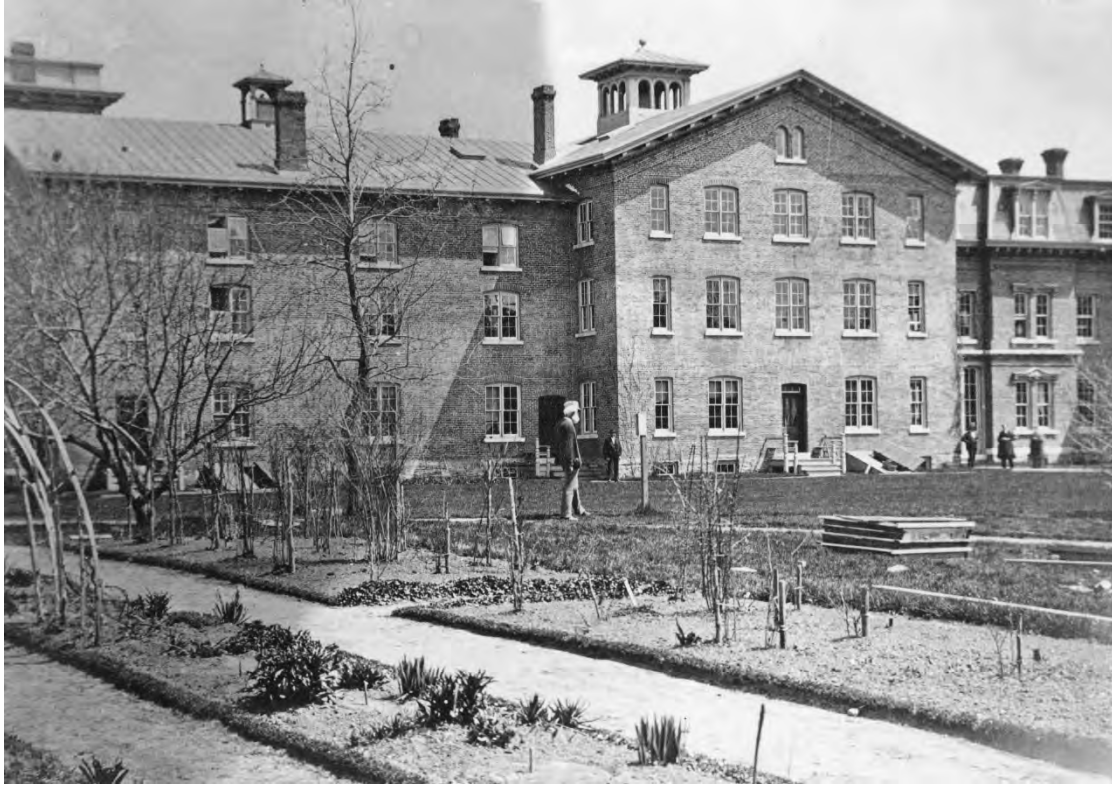
1865. Community members gathered
around the summer house

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1869. "Buildings, Southern Grounds, Oneida Community," by J. J. Skinner

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Early 1870s. Garden on the west side of the Mansion House



Early 1870s. Quadrangle, showing the Mansion House, South Wing, and reservoir

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1871. Community members gathered on the "oval" to the east of the Mansion House



1871. Gathering on the Quadrangle, with the tulip tree planted in 1851 (extant today)

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1874. View northward taken from north tower



1874. View northward over North Lawn taken from north tower

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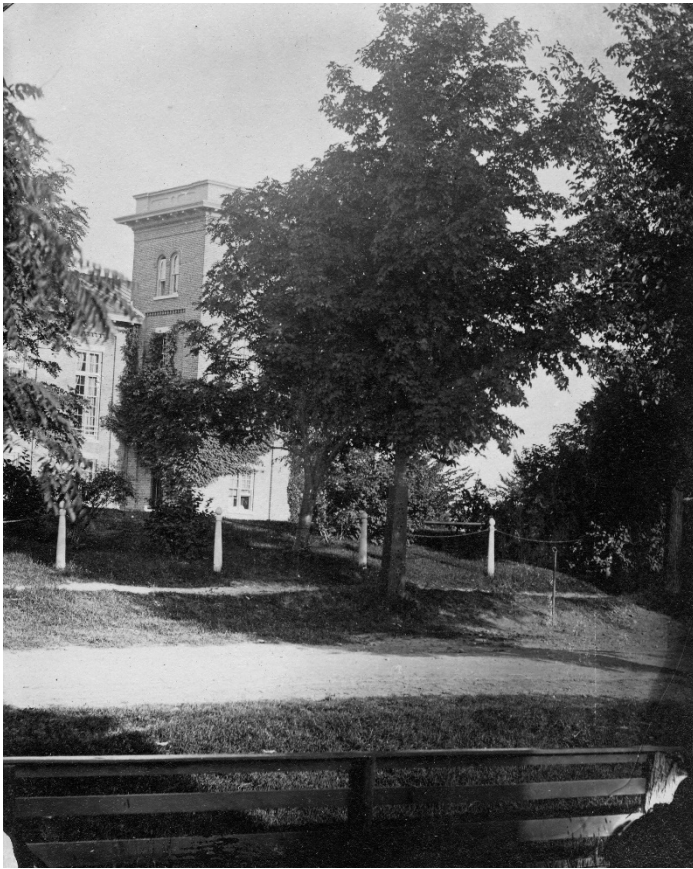


1874. View over North Lawn with perimeter pathway taken from north tower



1876. Mansion House (South Wing) looking north across the South Lawn

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1877. Mansion House from Kenwood Avenue, looking northwest



1878. Quadrangle, looking northeast

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1878. Mansion House (and New House) looking across the North Lawn, southward



1878. South side of the Mansion House (South Wing), looking north

Modernization: 1881-1987



1888. Community members seated in rustic furnishings on the “oval” lawn



ca. 1894. “Group under tree”

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ca. 1900. Mansion House “oval” with children’s playhouse in the background

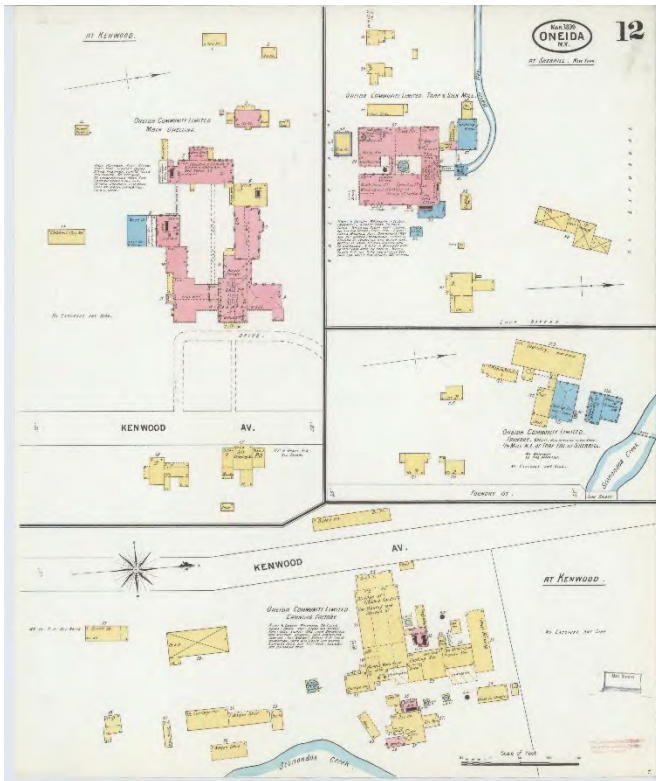


ca. 1900. Front of Mansion House

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Late 1800s. View along north side of New House, with remnants of former reservoir (right side of path)



1899. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map showing Mansion House with remaining outbuildings

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ca. 1900. View of South Lawn and South Garden (and butternut tree)



1900. View of South Garden from south side of the South Wing; butternut tree is visible

ca.

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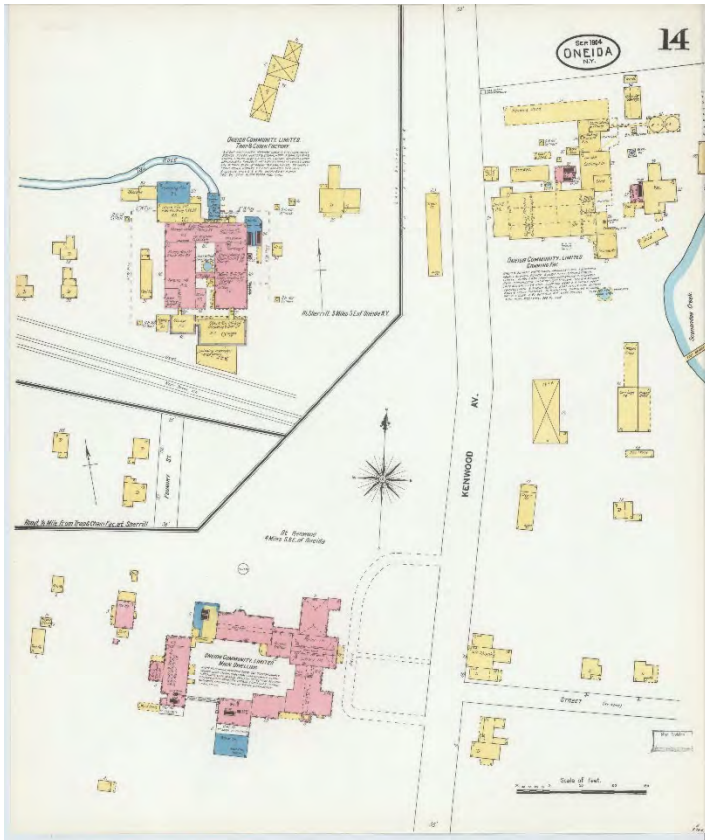


ca. 1900. View of Mansion House from northeast side

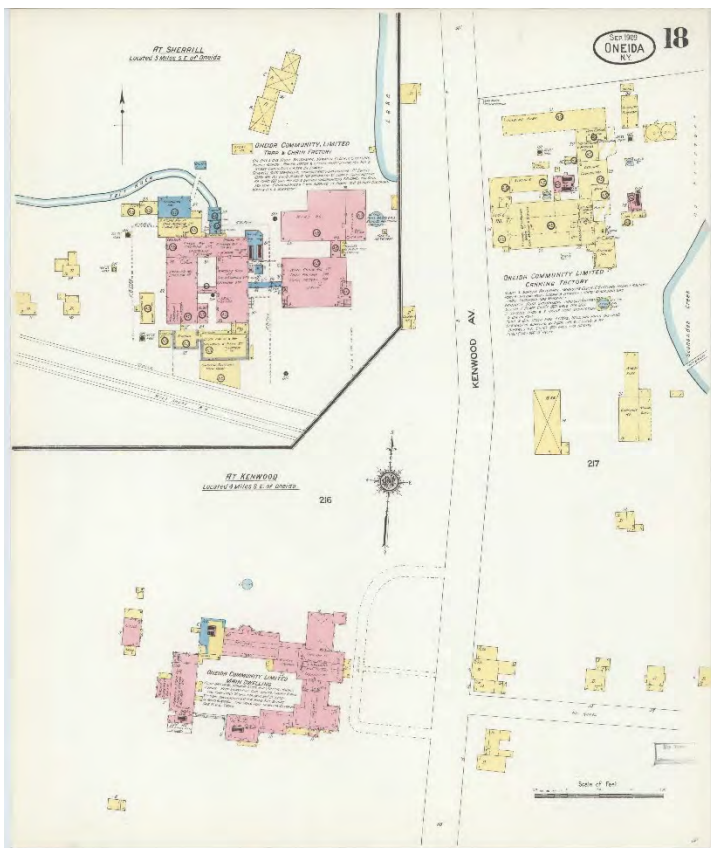


ca. 1900. View of Mansion House east façade across “oval”

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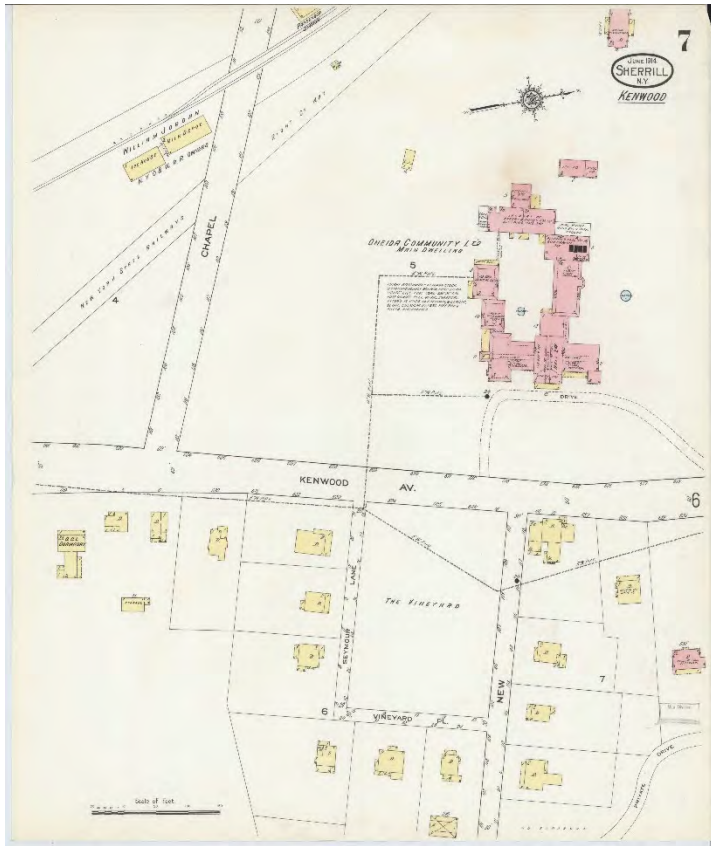


1904. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map showing Mansion House and few remaining outbuildings (children's playhouse has been removed)



1909. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map (vault has been removed)

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1914. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map



1928. South Garden, taken from inside, looking northwest to the Mansion House

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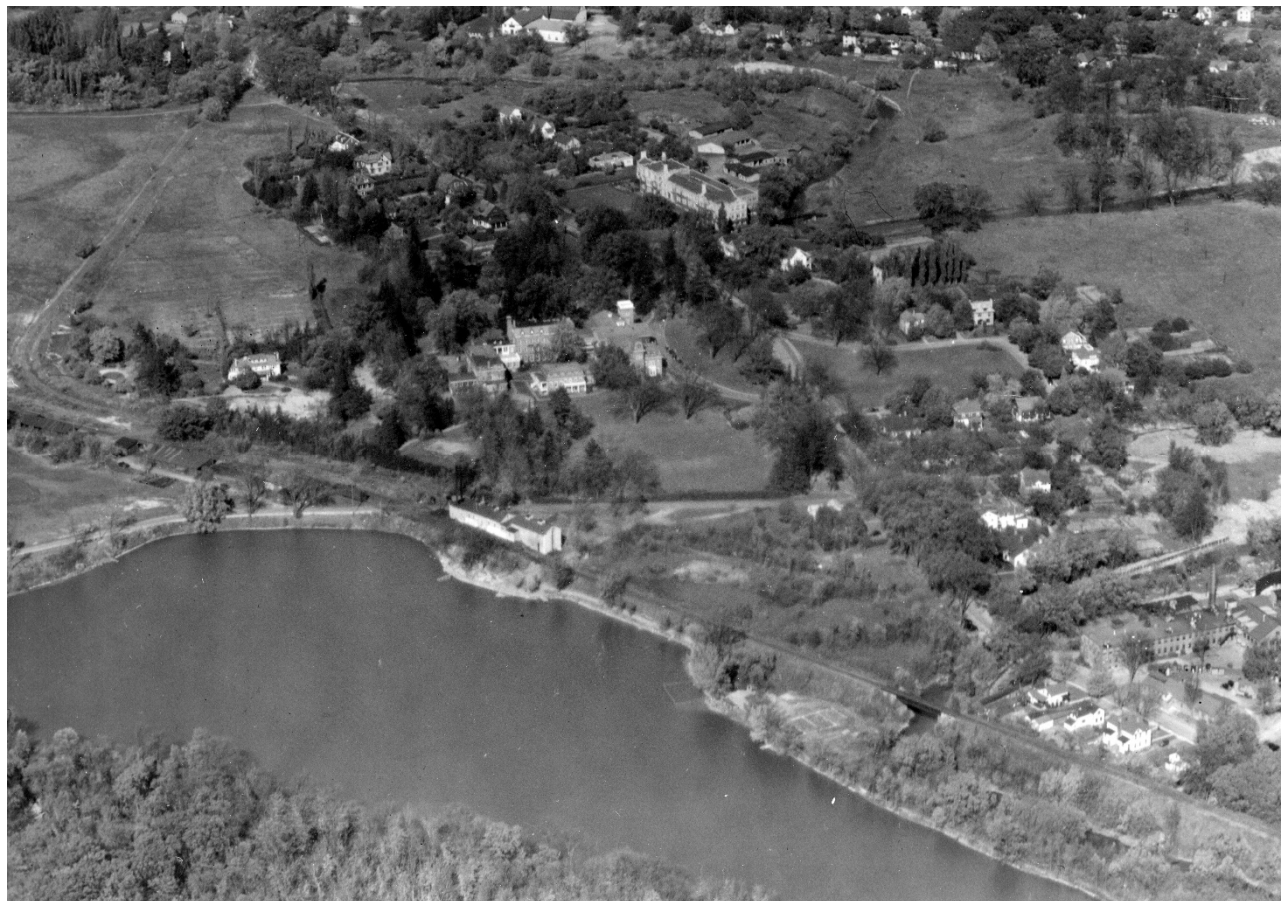


ca. 1940. Aerial view taken from south of Mansion House



ca. 1940. Aerial view taken from north side of Mansion House

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ca. 1940. Aerial view across Sunset Lake

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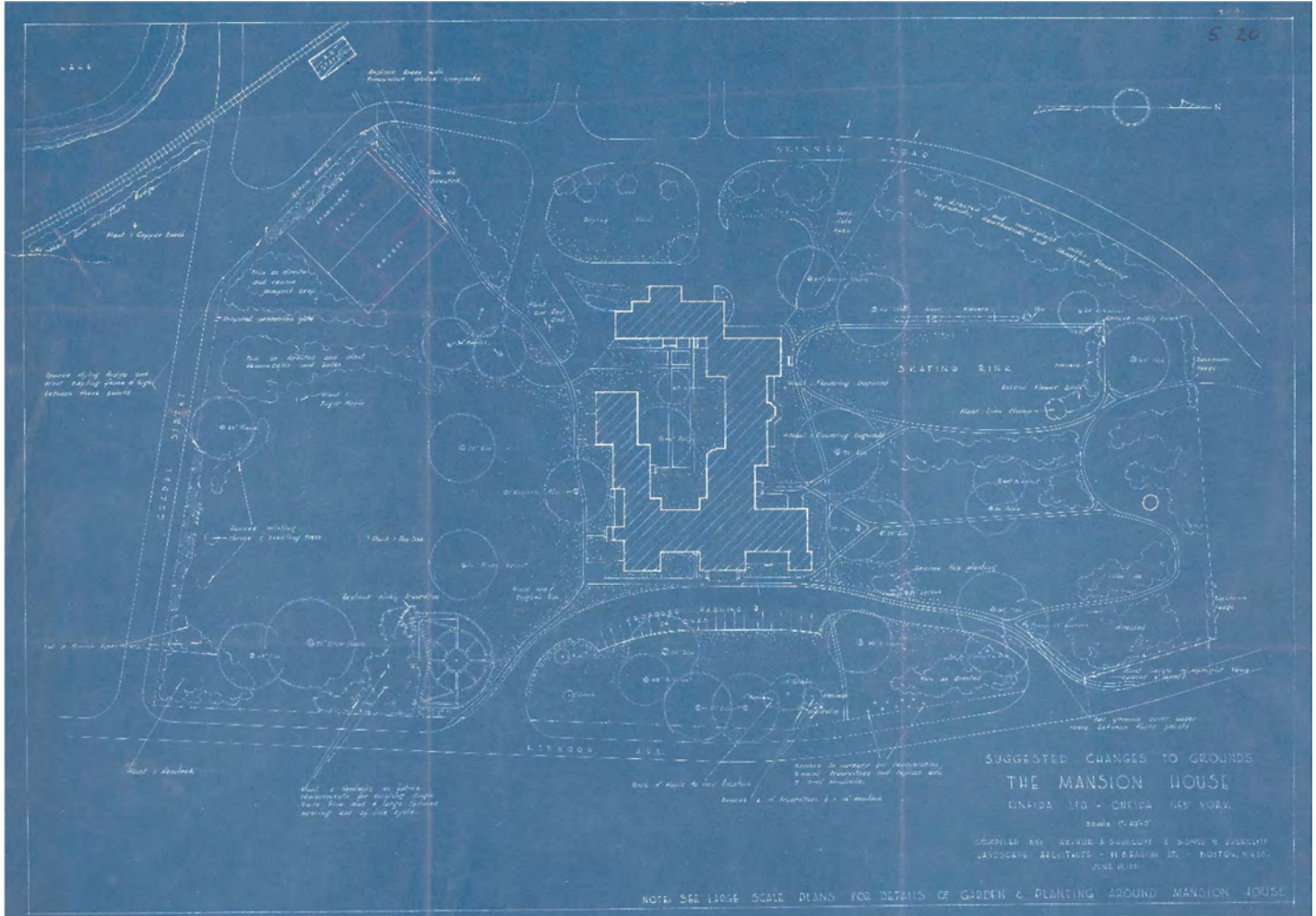


ca. 1940. Aerial view taken from southwest of Mansion House



ca. 1940. Northwest corner on the exterior of the Quadrangle; intersection between the New House and the 1862 Mansion House

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1951. Suggested Changes to Grounds, The Mansion House. Shurcliff and Shurcliff

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1965. The Mansion House, taken from Kenwood Avenue looking northwest

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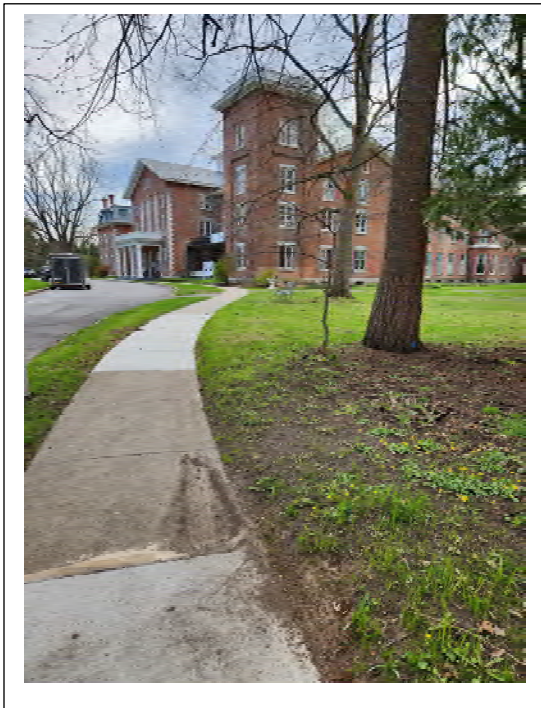
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EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTOGRAPHS

East Lawn/Oval

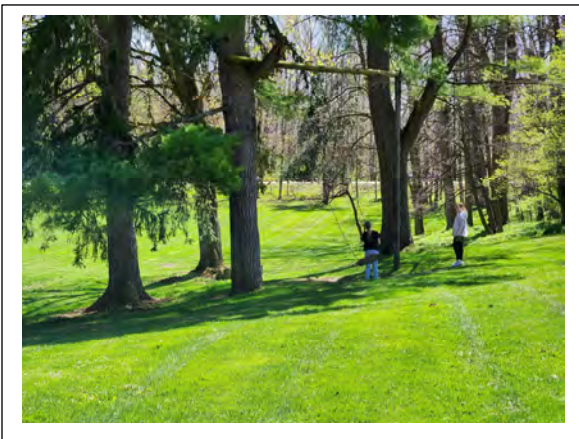
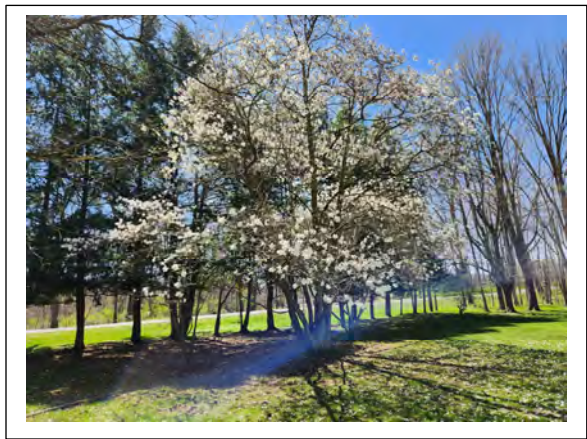


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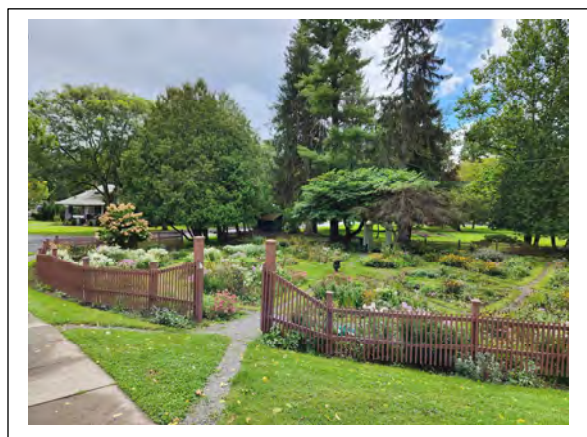
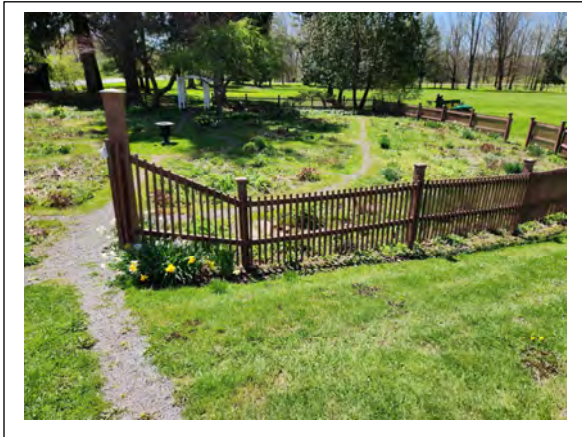
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South Lawn



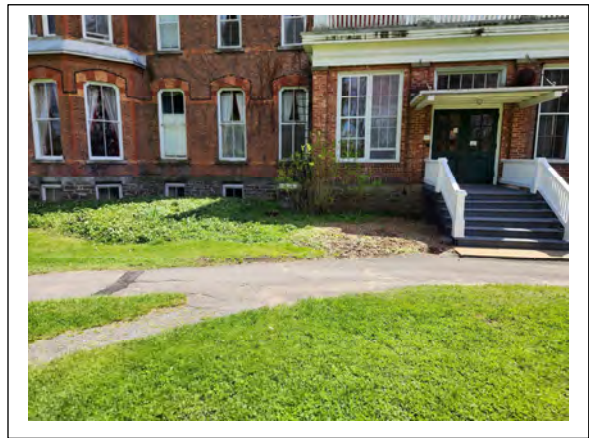
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South Garden



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North Lawn



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Cultural Landscape Report

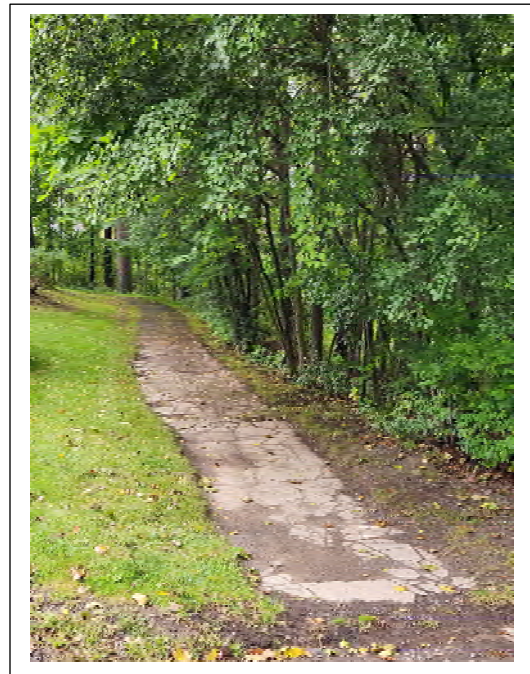
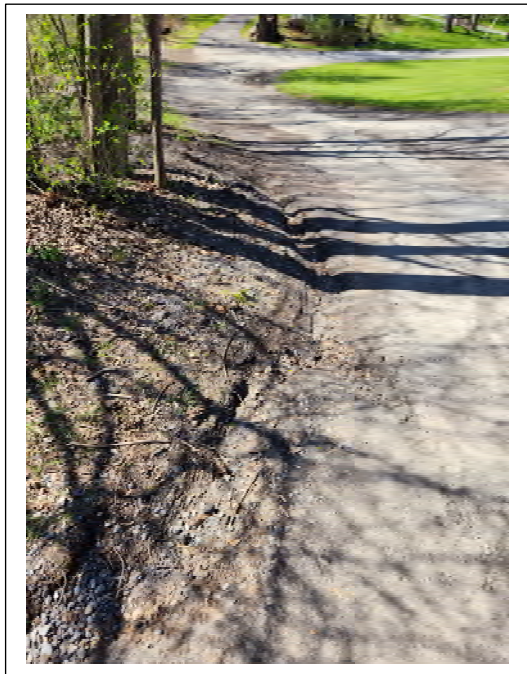
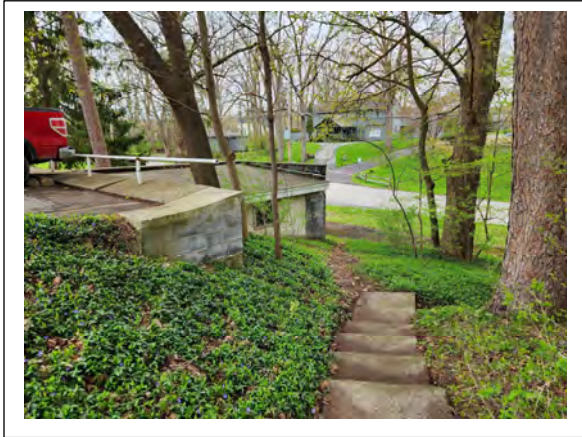


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West End



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Quadrangle



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Site Details



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1840. *Oneida Purchase*. Map 346, Surveyor General's Map Series AO273, New York State Archives, Albany, New York
1868. *Map of Proposed Branch of Midland RR between OC and WP*, Joseph J. Skinner. (OCMH Collection, Special Collections, Syracuse University Library)
1869. *Buildings and Southern Grounds of the Oneida Community*, Joseph J. Skinner. (OCMH Collection)
1872. *Map of a Section of the Oneida Community Domain Showing the Location of a Possible Water Privilege*, Joseph J. Skinner. (OCMH Collection, Special Collections, Syracuse University Library)
1892. *Map of the Water Supply and Sewerage, Oneida Community, Ltd., J. W. Jenkins*. (OCMH Collection)
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- ca.1908. *Future Development, Mansion House Grounds, Oneida Community Ltd., Theodore Skinner*. (OCMH Collection)
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