

Morgan Van Wagoner House & Barn
Hosmer Road
Somerset
Niagara County
New York

HABS No. NY-5529

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1-

~~PHOTOGRAPHS~~

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MORGAN VAN WAGONER HOUSE & BARN

HABS NO. NY-5529

Location: Hosmer Road
Town of Somerset
Niagara County, New York
Latitude: 43°21'
Longitude: 78°36'

Present Owner: New York State Electric & Gas Corporation
4500 Vestal Parkway, East
Binghamton, NY 13902

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: None, unoccupied

Statement of
Significance:

The Morgan Van Wagoner House embodies the characteristics of Cobblestone construction, a method of construction which was utilized in the area of Rochester, N.Y. during the period of the development of the Erie Canal. Built in 1848, the Van Wagoner House is an example of a mid-19th century vernacular rural dwelling; detailing is derived from the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. The foundation of a second building and two refuse deposits located in the immediate vicinity of the house also contribute to the significance of the property.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: Cobblestone house was built about 1848 Barn was built about 1922
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: Table 1 provides a chronology of titles to the land on which the Van Wagoner Farmstead stands.

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4. Alterations and Additions: It is presumed that between 1886 and 1930 changes were made to the house. The modifications likely included the replacement of the front door by the Italianate bay window, as well as the elimination of the center hall by the removal of the center hall stairs to the rear and the construction of an Italianate arch to separate the north and south parlors. Also, likely laid at this time was the hardwood floor with its elaborate Italianate parquet center panel (see Figure 1) which is located beneath the archway at the threshold between the north and south parlors. Since the chimney at the back of the house partially covers a cellar window, it, too, was likely an addition to the original house and may have been installed at this time to provide an open fireplace for both the north and south parlors.

A final major addition was the new construction of roughly the northern third of the house, that part which includes the porch and kitchen on the ground floor and the bedrooms on the second floor. As may be seen in the architectural drawings and photo graphs the upstairs windows and doors in this part of the house are not as elaborate as in the rest of the dwelling. This upstairs section may well have been the servants' quarters.

The construction of the northern addition to the house also called for the removal of the chimney which had originally been located at the center of the north exterior wall. Remnants of that chimney were discovered in the attic.

The attached one-story frame wing to the north, the garage, is modern and utilizes assorted left-overs from the earlier renovation of the house. While this structure is relatively new with modern garage doors and a beveled concrete block foundation wall, the rear wall shows vertical deals which suggests that there was an interior partition which was covered by a shed.

SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE TRANSFER OF THE VAN WAGONER PROPERTY

Table 1

<u>GRANTOR</u>	<u>GRANTEE</u>	<u>TYPE OF DOCUMENT</u>	<u>DATE OF DOCUMENT</u>	<u>DATE RECORDED</u>	<u>LIBER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
Wilhem Willink and Others (Holland Land Company)	Samuel Palmer	Deed	February 10, 1831	March 9, 1831	5	606	DEEDS
Samuel Palmer and Clarissa (wife)	Stephen Wilson	Deed	October 6, 1831	March 23, 1833	7	533	DEEDS
Stephen Wilson and Eleanor (wife)	Gardner T. Corliss and John Corliss, Jr.	Deed	March 23, 1833	May 30, 1833	8	135	DEEDS
Gardner T. Corliss and John Corliss, Jr.	Morgan Van Wagoner	Deed	April 21, 1835	April 27, 1835	12	57	DEEDS
Morgan Van Wagoner and Elizabeth (wife)	John B. Seeley	Deed	December 31, 1866	December 31, 1866	110	179	DEEDS
John B. Seeley and wife	Charles C. Davis and Edwin W. Davis	Deed	March 31, 1871	April 5, 1871	125	229	DEEDS
Edwin W. Davis and Laura (wife)	Sarah Davis	Deed	March 8, 1875	January 8, 1878	149	34	DEEDS
Charles C. Davis	S. Delos Davis	Will	May 15, 1886	Probated May 20, 1903	57	320	WILLS
S. Delos Davis and Kate W. (wife)	Frank M. Bradely	Mortgage	February 13, 1926	February 23, 1926	464	30	MORTGAGES

SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE TRANSFER OF THE VAN WAGONER PROPERTY

Table 1

(continued)

<u>GRANTOR</u>	<u>GRANTEE</u>	<u>TYPE OF DOCUMENT</u>	<u>DATE OF DOCUMENT</u>	<u>DATE RECORDED</u>	<u>LIBER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>
Frank M. Bradley	The Farmers and Mechanics' Savings Bank of the City of Lockport	Assignment of Mortgage	February 9, 1927	February 11, 1927	31	441	ASSIGNMENTS, ETC. OF MORTGAGES
S. Delos Davis and Kate W. (wife)	The Farmers and Mechanics' Savings Bank of the City of Lockport	Mortgage	February 9, 1927	February 11, 1927	344	432	MORTGAGES
S. Delos Davis and Kate W. (wife)	The Farmers and Mechanics' Savings Bank of the City of Lockport	Mortgage	December 4, 1928	December 4, 1928	344	596	MORTGAGES
The Farmers and Mechanics' Saving Bank of the City of Lockport	S. Delos Davis and Kate W. and the Somerset National Bank	Foreclosure		June 6, 1930	24	538	LIS PENDING
William S. Caton, Referee	J. Carl Fogel Trustee	Referee Deed	August 26, 1930	August 28, 1930	545	468	DEEDS
J. Carl Fogel, Trustee	Albert A. Harrington and Ruth R. (wife)	Deed	June 12, 1931	August 17, 1931	570	340	DEEDS
Hazel M. Fogel (wife of J. Carl Fogel)	Albert A. Harrington and Ruth R. (wife)	Deed	June 12, 1931	August 17, 1931	574	493	DEEDS

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S. Delos Davis and Kate W. (wife)	Albert A. Harrington and Ruth R. (wife)	Deed	August 13, 1931	August 17, 1931	574	487	DEEDS
Albert A. Harrington and Ruth R. (wife)	The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States	Mortgage	April 4, 1955	April 4, 1955	942	551	MORTGAGES
The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States	Albert A. Harrington and Ruth R. (wife)	Release of Lien	September 27, 1955	October 26, 1955	966	341	MORTGAGES
Albert A. Harrington and Ruth R. (wife)	New York State Electric and Gas Corporation	Deed	July 31, 1957	August 8, 1957	1265	430	DEEDS

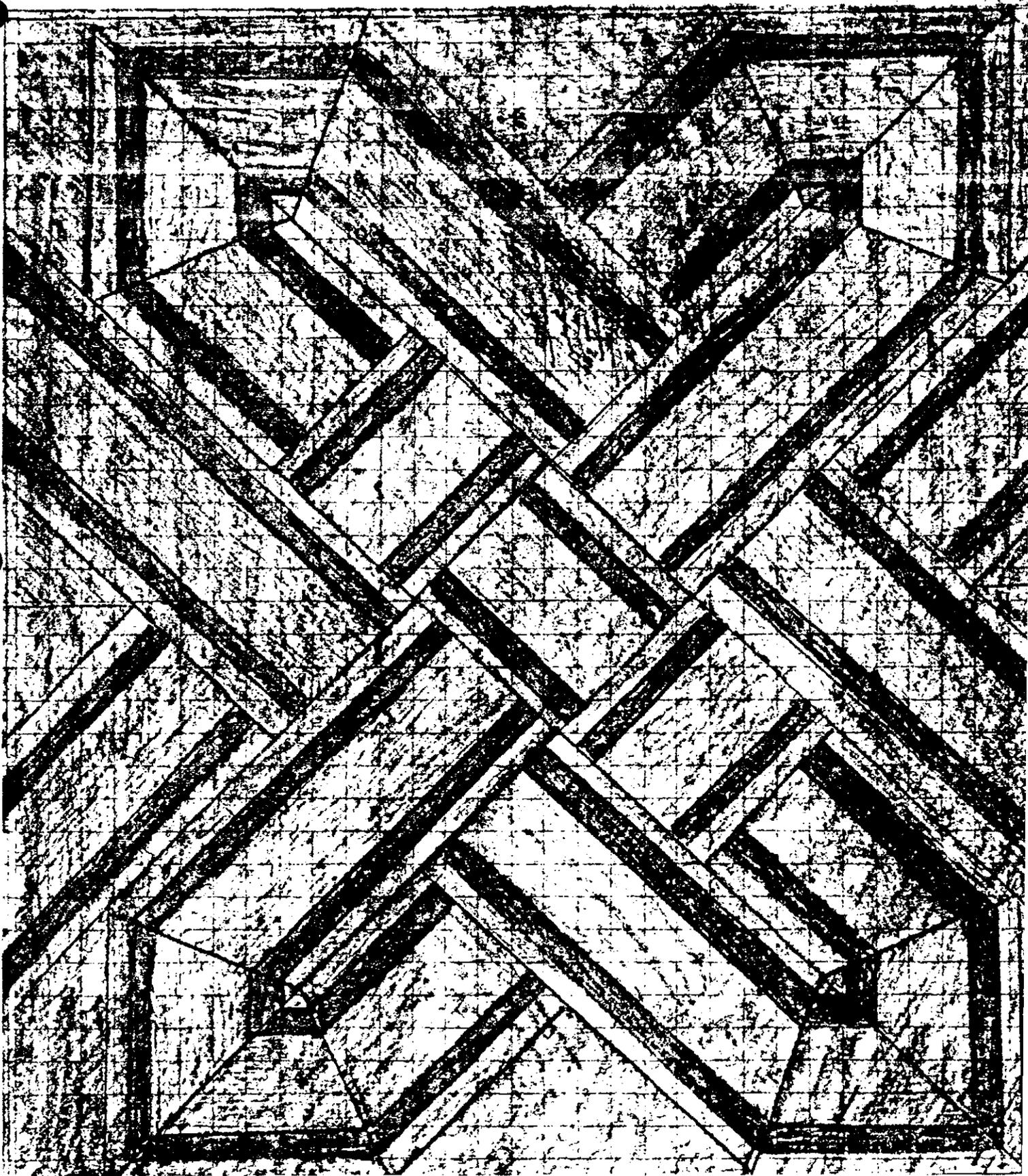


Figure 1 - Italianate Parquet Flooring

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The House is one of the forty-six cobblestone houses identified in Niagara County. The house is of cobblestone construction showing Greek Revival and Italianate stylistic forms and details. The gambrel roof barn is of more modern construction.
2. Condition of the House: The house interior and exterior is in extremely poor condition due to weathering and vandalism. The barn is in good condition.

- B. Description of Exterior: The oldest portion of the house, its southern wing, is of Middle Period style having cobblestones 2-3" long in front. The stones are multi-colored and field cobbles, being therefore datable in style to the first half of the Middle Period (1835-1845). The number of courses to a quoin on the front of the house were four which also denotes the earlier half of the Middle Period as do the "V" horizontal mortar joints. Very rarely is there anything in the Van Wagoner house construction which suggests a vertical mortar joint. When these do occur they are of amorphous character. A schematic drawing of the stone placement in the front of the Van Wagoner house is shown in Figure 2.

Descriptive characteristics of the house (as provided in the "Request for Determination of Eligibility...") are as follows:

- Main portion: one-and-one-half story with cobblestone exterior walls, cut stone lintels, sills, water table and corner quoins; cobblestone selected for uniform size (2-3") in front, larger (3-4") at rear; fieldstone foundation walls; southern part of main portion shows pairs of one-over-one sash flanking a bay window which probably replaced a center entrance to the original house; two pairs of small frieze windows, similarly arranged; in a large and richly molded wooden entablature; northern part of main portion appears to be an addition, evidenced by joint in entablature which continues above wood clapboards, over an open porch, and contains two more frieze windows; first story exterior walls within porch are cobblestone; masonry is of fine quality, with horizontal joints raked to a continuous ridge.

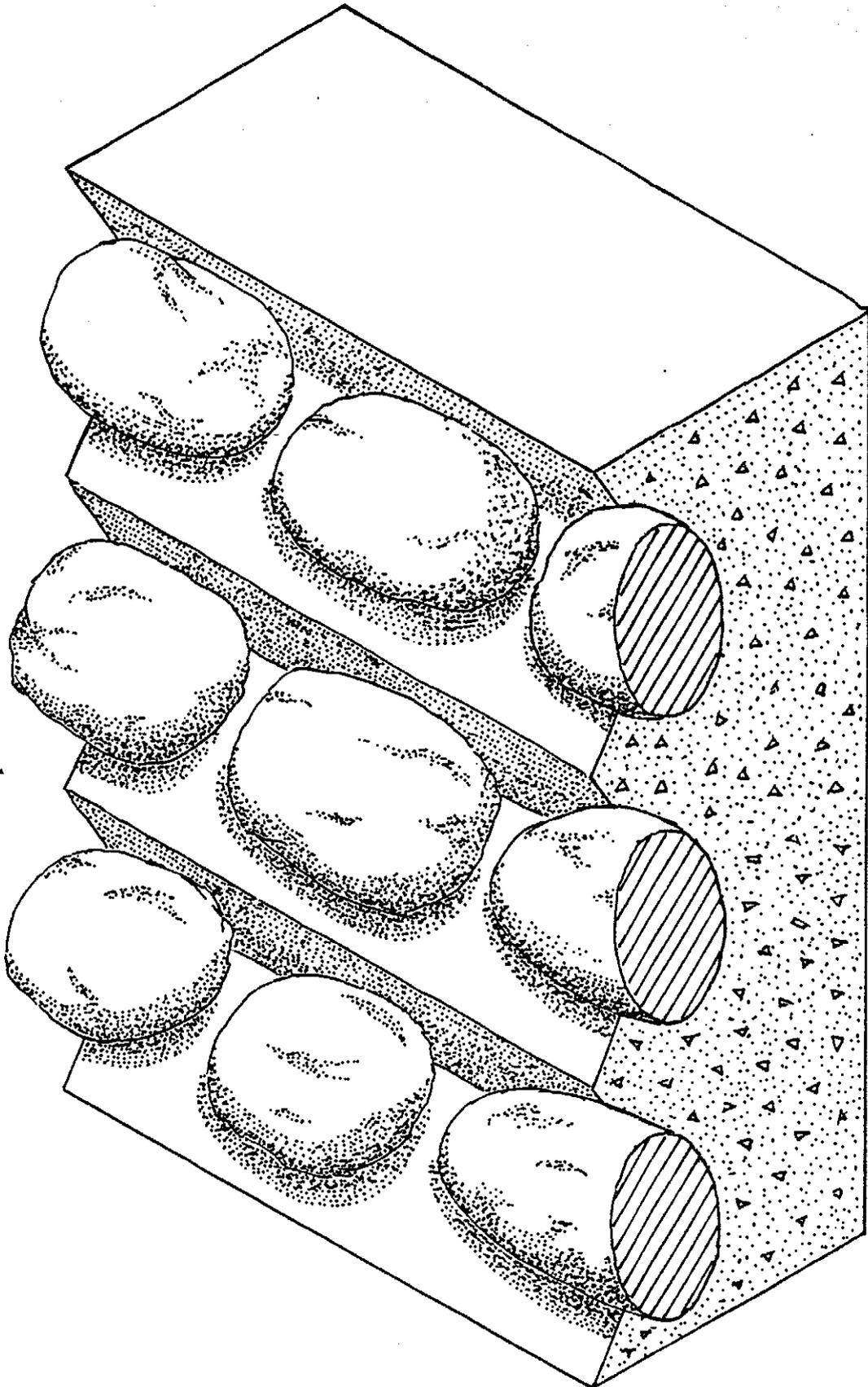


FIGURE 2 - A Schematic Draing of the Cobble Placement
in "V" Horizontal Mortar Joints on the Front
of the Van Wagoner House.

- One story cobblestone wing in rear (west): simpler boxed eaves, small dormer in hipped roof, simple frame porch, otherwise similar to cobblestone portion in front.
- One story frame wing to north: Greek Revival door casing, 1/2 inch wood clapboards exposed 4" to weather, distinctive wood eaves cornice, wood shingle roof, modern garage doors and beveled concrete block foundation wall, rear wall of wing exposes vertical deals, suggesting once an interior partition, protected by a former shed.

C. Description of Interior: A description of the interior (as provided by Malo, 1979 in the "Request for Determination of Eligibility...") follows:

- Bay window on front (east) side: Italianate, coved metal roof, one-over-one sash with elliptical arch heads, good wood detail in cornice, keystone blocks, corner mullions and exterior panels beneath windows.
- Parlors: south parlor especially rich, large Greek Key blocks in door and window casings, high molded baseboard, hardwood center panel of floor surrounded with intricate marquetry border of three varieties of wood; broad elliptical arch connects this room to larger, north parlor (probably formed from a center hall and matching parlor, at the time the bay window was added to replace a front door, and center hall stairs were moved to the rear); moldings of arch Italianate, remainder of woodwork in north parlor Greek Revival, simpler than south parlor; hardwood flooring probably added with other Italianate alterations.
- Other rooms: Dining room, kitchen, pantry and two bedrooms on lower floor; five bedrooms and bath on second floor; two interior stairways and exterior cellar entry.
- Overall condition is poor due to deferred maintenance and vandalism.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house is located near the southern shore of Lake Ontario approximately 1600' due north of the intersection of Hosmer Road and NYS Route 18 (Lake Road) in the Town of Somerset, Niagara County, New York.

2. Outbuildings: The only presently existing outbuilding is a barn built about 1922. HABS drawings, floor plans and photographs of both the interior and exterior of the barn are provided with this report.

The first floor was utilized for livestock with an open free stall area, a milking parlor and milk house, and a large open area which would accommodate large and heavy farm machinery.

The second story is covered by a gambrel roof consisting of four planes. Auxillary storage areas were reserved at the south end of the barn.

There are two tall, cylinder-form silos located outside the south end of the barn. The silos are made of curved concrete blocks joined by heavy steel pins.

3. Archaeological Testing Program: The goal of the archaeological testing program was to locate and investigate buried structural remains and concentrations of artifactual remains within the study area. The study area was designed to be the house and surrounding living area up to the edges of the cultivated fields.

The study area was divided into three sectors for testing. Sector A, consisting of the house and immediate yard area, was divided into transects 10 feet apart. Transects 6 through 29 crossed this area. A total of 523 test pits were located in Sector A, however, 35 of these test pits fell within the house area and could not be dug.

Sector B consists of the standing barn and an area surrounding the barn up to the edge of the cultivated fields. This area was divided into 10 transects which were located 20 feet apart. The transects were designated A through J. Test pits were dug at 20 foot intervals. In some locations test pits could not be dug because of the barn or gravel fill between the barn and Hosmer Road. A total of 40 test pits were dug (See Figure 3).

Sector C consists of an area outside of Sector A to the edge of the cultivated fields. Transects were located 10 feet apart and test pits were dug at 20-foot intervals. Transects 1 through 40 crossed parts of Sector C. A total of 356 test pits were dug in this sector (See Figure 3).

Of the 919 test pits in Sectors A, B, and C, 310 or 34% produced artifacts. An additional 38 test pits produced cinders, coal or mortar, but no other artifacts.



The frequency of artifacts occurring in each test pit was divided into three categories: 1) 0-2, 2) 3-5 and, 3) over 5. The presence of coal and/or cinders as well as mortar and/or plaster was noted. Table 2 summarizes this information.

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY OF ARTIFACTS IN TEST PITS

SECTOR	Artifacts			coal and/or cinders	mortar/ plaster
	0-2	3-5	over 5		
A	102	48	40	103	10
B					
C	51	27	40	42	84

Twenty-one percent of the test pits which produced artifacts in Sector A contained a high frequency of artifacts. Further investigation indicated that many of these test pits were in the area of foundations. Foundations 1, 2, 5 and 9 were areas where test pits indicated a high density of materials. Other areas in Sector A which showed a clustering of test pits which produced a high density of artifacts were the backporch - yard area, the front porch - yard area, a refuse dump located just northwest of Foundation 2, and an area north and west of the house.

Sector B contained only 2 test pits which produced artifacts.

Sector C 43% of the test pits contained a low frequency and were not further considered.

Table 3 summarizes the dates assigned to test pits within the study area. It was not possible to assign a date to each test pit because some test pits did not contain material suitable for dating. In Sector A of the test pits in which artifacts were found, 62.6% were datable. In Sector B, both test pits which contained artifacts were datable. In Sector C, 60.1% of the test pits which produced artifacts were datable.

TABLE 3

TIME PERIOD	Number of Test Pits		
	SECTOR		
	A	B	C
19th Century	27		3
19-Early 20th Century	40		18
Early 20th Century	1		1
Early-Late 20th Century	3		2
Late 20th Century	27	2	30
19th-Early 20th-Late 20th Century	19		14
19th and Late 20th Century	2		3

The largest number of test pits in Sector A were assigned to the 19th or 19th and early 20th century. Of the test pits which could be dated, 22.7% produced only 19th century material and 33.6% produced 19th and early 20th century material. An additional 16.0% of the test pits included material from the 19th, early 20th and late 20th century. This is in contrast to Sector C where only 4.2% of the test pits, which could be dated, produced 19th century material. An additional 25.4% produced 19th and early 20th century material, and an additional 19.7% produced material dated to the 19th, early 20th and late 20th century. In Sector C the greatest number of test pits, 42.2%, were dated to the late 20th century. This corresponds to only 22.7% dated to the late 20th century in Sector A. In Sector B both test pits which produced artifacts were dated to the late 20th century.

In addition to analyzing the artifacts recovered from the test pits, attention was directed at detecting structural remains and refuse areas. The test pit notes were reviewed for indications of such features.

The testing program did provide good evidence of Foundations 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10 and 11. Some evidence suggested the presence of Foundations 4, 5, 6 and 12. Foundation 8 was not detected during the testing program because it was outside the area of investigation. Possible foundation remains were suggested in the field notes at several other locations, but subsequent investigations did not confirm these preliminary observations.

An excavation program was instituted to further explore the anomalies located during the testing program.

Archaeological testing around the barn and silos produced nothing of cultural interest. The building of the barn itself must have covered all or parts of several buildings. However, two foundations were discovered north of the barn.

The results of the excavations in those foundations are addressed below as the foundations are dealt with in numerical order:

Foundation 1. This consisted of a rectangular (17' x 14' x 10' outside dimensions) foundation which had a one-foot thick wall of mortared together fieldstones and a dirt floor.

Recovered artifacts included glass items, ceramics, and animal bones, all of which pertain to domestic refuse.

The archaeological evidence would support an appropriate life span for the building from the turn of the century into modern times.

Foundation 2. This foundation was rectangular with an outside length of 26' 9-1/2" and width of 18' 10-1/2". It consisted of a wall 17-1/2" wide made up of three layers of irregular flat fieldstones from a few inches to as much as 2 feet in length, cobbles and a few bricks. The interior of the foundation is covered with a scattering of stones of the same general character as those which form the wall. (These stones did not extend outside the structure and therefore were not part of the wall but an interior flooring).

Very few ceramics of any description were recovered except from the surface and these may have been largely intrusive. There was, however, a considerable amount of broken glass both from vessels and from windows. Most notable was the tremendous amount of iron in the form of hardware, scrap and parts of implements. Mortar and brick as well as asphalt roofing material were also recovered.

Foundation 3. This long, narrow building measured 37'9" by 12'6" in outside dimensions. It had a roughly 1 foot wide wall which had been constructed by first excavating a trench to a depth of about 1 foot, and then laying down a 4-6" layer of small cobbles on top of which was set a layer of large flat rocks.

A considerable amount of glass and fragments of chimney brick were recovered on the south side of the foundation.

Foundation 4. This foundation has an overall length of 28 feet and a width of 18-1/2 feet. There was no evidence of a north wall. The remainder of the foundation had an outer wall that had been constructed by digging a ditch to a depth of about 1-1/2 feet and then filling it with large fieldstones. The flooring of the structure is a scatter of small stone. No meaningful interpretation could be made from the assortment of recovered materials.

Foundation 5. Definition of this foundation was impossible due to it being scattered.

Foundation 6. This foundation had been destroyed and could not be plotted as to its original outline.

Foundation 7. This foundation related to an earlier house which had been demolished. The building has a poured concrete footing over the original laid stone foundation. These walls vary in thickness being 2, 3, 1-1/2 and 1 feet thick for the N, E, W, and S walls respectively. The main part of the structure is roughly square (25' E-W and 22' N-S dimensions). South of this following the west wall was an extension 19' long and 16-1/2' wide which contained a cistern 8' in N-S and 6' in E-W dimensions as well as a narrow room 5' in N-S and 8' in E-W dimensions. This latter was probably a porch, since it did not have an extension of the cellar beneath it. Three foot wide concrete steps led to a cellarway midway up the west side of the building. A flued concrete block chimney is located at the east side of the building in the elbow of the southern building extension.

Six squares (#'s 50-55) were excavated within, or immediately adjacent to this foundation. The amount recovered from the surface alone was prodigious and ranged from the early 19th century to the present.

Of special note was the presence of a brick chimney next to the south side of the cellarway. The burned debris around it indicates that the original building burned down. The flued block chimney at the front of the house indicates that a rebuilding took place. The presence of modern appliances among ashes at the bottom of the debris in the cellarway suggests that the second building may also have burned down.

Foundation 7 appears to have been in existence at least since the mid 19th century and to have experienced fire at least once and possibly twice during its life span.

Foundation 8. A large displaced concrete slab is all that exists of what may have been part of a garage floor back of the tenant house (Foundation 7).

Foundation 9. This foundation consisted of a 3 foot wide wall coursed of fieldstone and topped by a 3-4 inch layer of rubble and concrete. The structure is 7 feet wide in its N-S dimension and 8'-4" long and has a dirt floor. An exploratory 12 inch wide surficial slit trench was placed across it. A great variety of artifacts were recovered from this area. The entire area is an accumulation of various 19th and 20th century trash.

Foundation 10. This appears to also be one of the structures shown on the 1908 map (Figure 4). The foundation seems to relate to a barn 46 feet long and 32 feet wide. The foundation consists of a wall 29 inches wide and 16 inches deep.

Excavation in the northeast corner of the foundation produced materials dating from the early to mid 19th century to the present.

Foundation 11. This was a very simple rectangular structure 10 feet long and 6-1/2 feet wide which consisted of a light scatter of flat fieldstones, bits of brick, and small stones to form a flooring. No artifacts were found within it and there were no foundation walls.

Foundation 12. Foundation 12 was 19 feet E-W and 23 feet N-S. The building had a shallow foundation wall, one slab deep, of irregular or oval fieldstone and about 2 feet wide. No artifacts were recovered from the foundation.

Squares 1 and 9. These squares were designed to investigate a refuse deposit discovered 100 feet to the SE of the SW corner of the house. The dump was determined at the time to be 48 feet wide by 60 feet long up to 12 inches deep, and containing materials of cultural interest.



FIGURE 4 - A section from the New Century Atlas
1908 map showing the Somerset
Site.



The presence of modern items indicates that dump had been in use for a long period of time. The range of material was basically domestic along with some farming equipment. The ceramics were essentially utilitarian and included stoneware, ironstone, procelain, and hard plain white earthenware.

Square 2. The testing program had detected evidence suggesting another foundation between Foundation 1 and the SW corner of the house. The square produced additional evidence (considerable amount of mortar) suggesting a foundation.

Square 3. This square was excavated in order to investigate the presence of a possible foundation encountered in the course of the testing program. The square was located in the front lawn some 70 feet from the SE corner of the house.

This square produced a limited amount of domestic materials dating from the mid 19th century and ranging to the present.

Square 5. In response to the testing program which suggested an historic deposit on the west side of the garage, square 5 was excavated. The 11 inch topsoil was a dark brown loam overlying an orange yellow sod subsoil. The 265 grams of mortar and 358 grams of cinders recovered likely relate to the building of the foundation to the garage less than 4 feet away. The range of items as a whole, ceramics, glass, bone, shell... appear to be assorted refuse related to the house complex, having an overall date range the same as that for the farmstead as a whole.

Squares 6, 7, and 14. The presence of rocks and historic materials encountered in the testing program indicates that there might be a foundation in this area. Foundation 4 was to the east of Squares 6 and 7. Materials recovered are miscellaneous articles ranging from mid 19th century to the present.

Square 8. Square 8 lies midway between Foundation 4 and Foundation 9. Testing revealed assorted rocks and brick fragments which suggested another foundation which did not appear.

Square 15. This square was dug in response to the finding of c. 27 diameter circular dump during the 1977 testing program. As with the materials recovered in 1977, the artifacts (domestic refuse) were mixed in date ranging from mid 19th to mid 20th century.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by New York State Electric & Gas Corporation pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement executed by the Buffalo District of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the New York State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation in accordance with Executive Order 11593 prior to the moving or demolition of the Van Wagoner house on the site of the Somerset Generating Station.

Under the direction of New York State Electric & Gas Corporation, the data was obtained by Pratt and Pratt Archaeologists, Inc. in conjunction with JCM Architectural.