

O'Brien Block -- 109-115 W. First St.
Oswego
Oswego County
New York

HABS No. NY-244 A

HABS
NY,
38-OSWE,
2A-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

O'BRIEN BLOCK 109 - 115 WEST FIRST STREET

(See Field Records for photographic views of O'Brien Block)

Location: 109 - 115 West First Street - East side of First Street between Seneca and Cayuga, Oswego, New York.

Present Owner: O'Brien Realty Company

Present Occupant: 109 - number no longer used; 111 - New Life Restorations; 113 - The Messenger, small newspaper; 115 - The Olive Branch, bookstore.

Present Use: Rental property currently rented as stated above.

Statement of Significance: This building, part of the block between Cayuga and Seneca, was in the heart of the pre-Civil War business district in Oswego. The remaining buildings in the block comprise the last of the pre-Civil War commercial buildings in Oswego (with the exception of the Stone and Willet store which is on the National Register of Historic Places).

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Possibly as early as 1837. The property known as Lot 7 of Block 17 was owned by Henry Eagle from 1816 until his death in 1858. The tax assessment roles of 1822 (the earliest available) show buildings on the property listed as "stores and houses" with a valuation of \$12,000. About 1830, Eagle sold a parcel of land in the southwest corner of the lot, 26 feet on West First Street by 50 feet deep to David Harmon and George DeLong who operated shops there. In the early thirties, the valuation of the Eagle property had dropped to \$6,000. During the period of wild inflation which occurred in Oswego in 1835-36, the valuation jumped to \$30,000, but during the equally wild depression which followed in 1836-37, the valuation was shown at \$11,500 and Eagle regained title to the southwest parcel of land. Tax assessment roles subsequent to 1836 list store rather than "stores and houses" on the Eagle property. Unfortunately, after 1843, no indication of what buildings might be on the property is given.

No other radical change in valuation occurs until

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1848-1853, another period of growth, but this change is gradual and might indicate the remodeling of the building into the smaller stores which are indicated at these addresses in the 1852 City Directory, the earliest available. In 1852, 109 - 111 housed the Smith and Strong Clothing Store, 113 Bonner, Kraft and Extein Dry Goods and 115 Thompson Brothers Millinery. The size of the stores in the 1862 directory would indicate that interior walls were moved to accommodate whatever business was currently renting space. Thus current numbering does not necessarily indicate the boundaries of the old establishments. 109 no longer exists.

2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners:

This building is located on Lot 7, Block 17 as laid out in the original survey of Oswego by Simeon DeWitt and filed with the Secretary of State on April 14, 1798. The following references to the title of this property are found in the Oswego County, N.Y. Deed Books:

109 (Parcel D) and 111 (Parcel C) West First Street

- 1858 Last will of Henry Eagle recorded in March, 1858 Book 79 of Deeds, Page 169. All property in Lot 7, Block 17 is left to Charlotte M. Eagle, wife, during her life and then in equal shares to four of the Eagle children, Frederick, Charlotte, Catherine and Cornelia.
- May 1858 parcels in lot divided among children.
- 1898 Deed recorded in 1898 shows Cornelia Eagle Carmichael the owner of parcel D, and Catherine Eagle Lonergan the owner of Parcel C.
- 1898 Warranty deed dated 1/26/98 conveys Parcel D to Max B. Richardson (once Mayor of Oswego) for \$500. Recorded in Book 226 of Deeds, page 362.
- 1900 Warranty deed dated 10/10/1900 conveys Parcel D from Philip Lonergan to Max B. Richardson for \$300. Recorded in Book 235 of Deeds, page 217.
- 1903 Last will of Max B. Richardson recorded 8/3/03 leaves all property to brother Lawrence J. Richardson. Book 245 of Deeds, page 97.

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O'BRIEN BLOCK 109 (Parcel D) and 111 (Parcel C)
WEST FIRST STREET.

- 1907 Warranty Deed dated November 1907, conveys property to Norman L. Bates, nephew. Book 260 of Deeds, page 294, consideration \$1.00 .
- 1923 Land contract recorded 5/15/23 in Book 330 of Deeds, page 220. Norman Bates sells property to Leask Mfg. Company, consideration \$4,500.00 .
- 1953 Mortgage dated 5/22/53 and recorded in Book 467 of Mortgages, page 581 - Parcel C only mortgaged to Oswego City Savings Bank for \$15,000.
- 1957 Covenant Deed subject to above mortgage conveys property (Parcels C and D) to O'Brien Realty Co., recorded May 1, 1957, Book of Deeds 594, page 313.

113 (Parcel B) West First Street

- 1816 Deed dated 6/3/1816 recorded in Book A, page 20 conveys all of Lot 7, Block 17 from Nathan and Polly Sage to Henry Eagle for \$2,400.
- 1858 Will dated 3/18/55 and recorded 3/17/58, Book 79, page 169 of Deeds leaves all property to Charlotte M. Eagle during her life, then to four children in equal shares.
- 1858 Quit-Claim Deed dated 5/27/1858, Book 80 of Deeds, page 2 . Charlotte M. Eagle, widow, Cornelia, Catherine and Frederick, children, pass title to Charlotte M. Eagle, daughter.
- 1858- Trustees appointed
1863 Moses P. Hatch and William Morgan
- 1863 Deed dated 12/3/1863 recorded in Book 97 of Deeds page 266. Charlotte M. Eagle Gallie puts property in trust for son, Charles R. Gallie. William Morgan named trustee. Charlotte Gallie succeeds him as trustee May 19, 1870 - recorded Book 129 of Deeds, page 126.
- 1870- Property changes hands several times. Deed
1877 dated 9/29/1870 Book of Deeds 130, page 178 conveys property to James M. Wilson, consideration \$5,000; 7/16/1872 Quit-Claim Deed to

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O'BRIEN BLOCK 109 (Parcel D) and 111 (Parcel C)
WEST FIRST STREET.

- George M. Alcott, Book 137 of Deeds, page 280;
6/20/1877 Covenant vs. Grantor Deed to James M.
Hart, Trustee for Charles Gallie, Book 154 of
Deeds, page 154.
- 1883 Deed dated 1/4/1883, Book 177 of Deeds, page 339
Title conferred to Charles R. Gallie.
- 1887 Last will recorded 7/10/1894, probated 6/16/1887
property bequeathed to Executrix, Cornelia E.
Carmichael, Aunt.
- 1891 Warranty Deed dated 5/18/1891 and recorded in
Book 208 of Deeds, page 40 conveys property to
Emma M. O'Harra, consideration \$500.
- 1891- Property mortgaged twice to Cornelia Carmichael
1894 5/18/1891 as security for \$475.00 and 6/30/1894
to James B. Farewell as security for \$600.
- 1895 Warranty Deed dated 5/26/1895 and recorded in
Book 219 of Deeds, page 256 conveys property to
Charles D . Burch, consideration \$1.00 .
- 1902 Tax Deed dated 11/29/1902 and recorded in Book 250
of Deeds, page 437 conveys property to City
Chamberlain.
- 1905 Last will of Charles D. Burch probated 3/04/1905
and recorded in Book 251 of Deeds, page 385 con-
veys property to Frederick R. Burch and Josephine
Burch McFarland.
- 1906 Deed dated 1/16/1906 recorded in Book 231 of
Deeds, page 409 conveys title from the City of
Oswego to Louis C. Rowe, postmaster 1894-5, con-
sideration \$174.35 . Deed dated 1/23/1906 con-
veys property to Eternal Company, recorded in
Book 254 of Deeds, page 249.
- 1914 Mortgage dated 6/5/1914 recorded in Book 266 of
Mortgages, page 361 mortgages with other land
property as security for \$4,547.63 .

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O'BRIEN BLOCK 109 - 115 WEST FIRST STREET

- 1918 Mortgage foreclosed. Deed dated 12/28/1918 recorded in book of deeds conveys property to Katherine Hinman, consideration \$3,000.
- 1919- Three deeds dated 1/9/19, 2/14/20 and 4/19/22
1922 convey property to John and William Leask, to William Leask to Leask Manufacturing Co. respectively. Leask Mfg. incorporated 3/29/22 .
- 1953 Mortgage dated May 22, 1953 recorded in Book 467 of Mortgages, page 581 conveys this property and Parcel A to Oswego City Savings, consideration \$15,000. Book 467 of Mortgages, pages 577, 8, 9.
- 1957 Deed dated 4/26/1957 conveys property to O'Brien Realty Company, consideration \$100 subject to above mortgage on which \$10,987.50 was still due. Book of Deeds 594, page 313.

115 (Parcel A) West First Street

- 1816 Deed dated 6/3/1816 recorded in Book A of Deeds, page 20, conveys all of Lot 7, Block 17 from Nathan and Polly Sage to Henry Eagle, consideration \$2,400 .
- 1858 Last will and testament of Henry Eagle, recorded Book 79 of Deeds, page 169, 3/17/58. All property bequeathed to Charlotte M. Eagle, wife, during her life and then in equal shares to four of the Eagle children. Quit Claim Deed recorded in Book 80 of Deeds, page 3 makes Frederick P. Eagle sole owner of Parcel A.
- Property conveyed to Leonard Ames and George French. No deed found.
- 1884 Deed dated 4/29/1884 Book 183 of Deeds, page 151 conveys property to Abram Buckhout, consideration \$450.00 (tax sale). Last will and testament of Abram Buckhout October 17, 1884 recorded in Book 186 of Deeds, page 187, leaves all property to wife, Margaret Ann Buckhout.
- 1888 Margaret Ann Buckhout dies intestate leaving William A. Buckhout and Anna C. Greeley as her only heirs at law. Probate of heirship recorded 4/27/1896 in Book 223 of Deeds.

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O'BRIEN BLOCK 109 - 115 WEST FIRST STREET

- 1895 Quit Claim Deed recorded 4/4/1895 in Book 219 of Deeds, page 251 conveys property to Minnie F. Cusick, consideration \$450.00 .
- 1898 Deed dated March 30, 1898, recorded in Book 226 of Deeds, page 491, property conveyed Clarence E. Sprout, consideration \$764.17 .
- 1906 Quit Claim Deed dated 2/5/1906 conveys property to Louis C. Rowe recorded in Book 254 of Deeds, page 264. Tax Sale involved. Rowe, then deeds property to Enternol Corp. by Warranty Deed dated 6/14/1906, recorded 8/20/1918, Book 308 of Deeds, page 584.
- 1914 Mortgage dated 6/5/14, recorded 9/14/1918 conveys land and more to Katherine Hinman, consideration \$4,547.63, mortgage foreclosed 12/3/1918. Deed dated 12/28/1918 conveys this land and more back to Katherine Hinman, consideration \$3,000.00 .
- 1919- Covenant vs. Grantor Deed dated 1/9/1919
1922 conveys this land and more to John Leask and William A. Leask. (No book and page # given). Deed dated 2/14/20 and 4/19/1922 conveys this and land at 113 to William A. Leask and then to Leask Mfg. Company. Book of Deeds 325, page 353 and 354.
- 1953 This and property at 113 mortgaged to Oswego City Savings Bank for \$15,000 . Recorded 5/28/1953 in Book 467 of Mortgages, page 581.
- 1957 Deed dated 4/26/1957 and recorded 5/1/1957 in Book of Deeds 594, page 313 conveys property to William G. O'Brien, Louise F. O'Brien, Ellen L. O'Brien, Jean P. O'Brien, Lawrence W.G. O'Brien and Ruth A. O'Brien copartners doing business as O'Brien Realty Company subject to the above mortgage on which the sum of \$10,987.50 was still due.

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B. Historical events and persons connected with the structure

The property known as Block 17, Lot 7 was owned by Henry Eagle a prominent Oswegonian who emigrated from Germany in 1808. He owned the lot from 1816 until his death in 1858. Early in his career, Eagle was a foreman and supervised the building of several vessels in the harbor during the War of 1812. Later on he became a successful merchant and also served several terms as fire warden for the young village.

During the years of his ownership, Henry Eagle's store was an important part of the downtown business district. As he grew older he apparently converted the store (or built new ones) into smaller shops and rented them to other merchants (circa 1847).

As the prime commercial district moved further south on First Street after the Civil War, less savory business moved in. In 1875 a wine and liquor store and a saloon were housed on this property with rooms to rent above. In the 1920's the property was owned by Leask Mfg. Company which made ladies dresses and aprons. In 1957 the property was acquired by the O'Brien family, prominent Oswegonians, who still hold title to the property today.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

Churchill, John C., LL.D Landmarks of Oswego County D. Mason & Company Publishers 1895

Finn, Leo Old Shipping Days in Oswego
Oswego County Board of Supervisors 1972

City Directories

Tax Assessment Records

County Deed and Mortgage Records

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