

Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey

# Village of West Winfield

**Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

*Prepared for  
the Village of West Winfield*

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## Table of Contents

Introduction and Methodology .....	1
Description of Existing Conditions .....	3
Physical and geopolitical setting.....	3
Spatial plan .....	3
Circulation patterns .....	4
Built environment.....	5
Green spaces .....	8
Historical and Architectural Overview .....	10
Summary.....	10
Early development, ca. 1792–1840 .....	11
Antebellum period, ca. 1840–1860 .....	17
Becoming a village, ca. 1860–1898.....	20
Early village years, 1898–ca. 1945 .....	26
Post-war years, 1945–ca. 1970.....	31
Recent history, 1970–ca. present.....	33
Assessment of Historic Integrity.....	35
Summary.....	35
National Register Criteria and Themes of Significance.....	37
Recommendations.....	37
Sources .....	39
Appendices	
1: List of properties surveyed and key map of properties reviewed with proposed National Register Historic District study boundary	
2: Streetscape photographs	
3: Historic maps (1839, 1859, 1868, 1900, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1943)	

# Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey

Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York

9 February 2024

*Introduction and Methodology*

1

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## Introduction and Methodology

Reconnaissance-level historic resources surveys are undertaken to identify historic resources and assess their degree of historic integrity. Such studies often discuss these resources in terms of themes of significance as outlined in the documentation for the National Register of Historic Places. This allows interested parties to grasp the historic integrity<sup>1</sup> and significance of particular resources or groups of resources within a given area. And, a good study should allow those parties to take a more comprehensive approach in planning for these resources. Such planning might include listing in the National Register of Historic Places, local historic district designations, considerations for planning ordinances in areas with cultural resources, planning for economic development, or specific preservation projects. Sometimes such studies have their origins in a potential threat to the resources under review.

This study was undertaken to assess the historic resources of the Village of West Winfield in the Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York, and identify potentially eligible resources, especially a district or multiple districts, for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Village of West Winfield in partnership with the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank applied for and received partial funding from the Preserve New York program administered by the Preservation League of New York State. Preservation consultant Jessie A. Ravage was retained as principal investigator to conduct the survey.

West Winfield is an incorporated village, and its officially designated boundary was adopted as the survey boundary. Intern Nikki Waters, a field technician with a master's in Historic Preservation at Goucher College, performed individual property field review and photography throughout the entire study area. Field review focused on checking the existing village landscape from public roads against mapping episodes dating to the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. The field survey was completed in the winter and early spring of 2023. All buildings in the survey were photographed regardless of age and recorded in CRIS (Cultural Resources Inventory System). Waters correlated existing buildings with earlier mapping episodes to confirm the ages of buildings within the survey area.

The photographs and map correlation are recorded in the property list compiled in alphanumeric order by street name in Appendix 1. A key map prepared by Rick Lederer-Barnes of Upstate GIS provides a cartographic record of the survey and a proposed boundary for further review as a National Register Historic District. The Town Historian Steven Davis prepared a list of properties where historic buildings are now gone that is also in Appendix 1.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Register of Historic Places identifies seven aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

# Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey

Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York

9 February 2024

*Introduction and Methodology*

2

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Ravage, the principal investigator, reviewed the survey area more generally and shot overview photographs of the hamlet in the Spring of 2023 to provide a contextual visual record. She also reviewed historic resources such as maps, census records, clippings files, historic photographs, and secondary sources in various repositories and also ones digitally available. This work formed the basis of the narrative section of the report.

The narrative section is composed of two main parts: a description of the study area and an overview of the study area's architectural and community development during the historic period. The description tells what can be seen if one visits the study area today. It avoids detailed interpretation to allow the reader to see the resources without prejudice. This begins with the topographical setting of West Winfield and then moves to the spatial organization of the village, its circulation patterns within or overlaid on the landscape, and its built environment. Reviewed in the aggregate such components found in a study area can tell us much about how a place developed and illuminate the historic significance of its built environment within the larger regional context.

The historical and architectural overview develops that context and is meant to help the reader grasp how the surviving resources presented in the description embody and illustrate the historic development of West Winfield. The report's penultimate section draws conclusions about the development of the village's built environment, assesses its integrity, identifies themes (National Register documentation provides many possibilities) of significance illustrated within the study area, and provides conclusions drawn from the study. The final section recommends further actions for planning for the study area's cultural resources.

In addition to the printed and digital versions of this report filed with the Village of West Winfield, this survey may be found online *via* CRIS in the Online Tools section of the New York State Historic Preservation Office (<https://cris.parks.ny.gov/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>). Visitors do not need an ID to browse the site. Click "I Agree" and sign in as a guest. All properties reviewed in the Village of West Winfield are individually recorded with street address and tax parcel ID (a.k.a. SBL number). Each record includes at least one photograph and descriptive information including approximate date of construction for the main building on the property. The narrative sections of the printed report, the key map, and historic maps are also uploaded to CRIS.

Jessie A. Ravage

9 February 2024

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## PHYSICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL SETTING

The Village of West Winfield is in the Town of Winfield in the southwest corner of Herkimer County. Herkimer County is a large county extending north to the drainage basin of West Canada Creek and south beyond the summits of the southern escarpment of the Mohawk Valley. The county's east and west boundaries are formed partially by streams and partly by straight courses aligned with eighteenth-century land divisions. It is bounded southerly by Otsego County, westerly by Oneida County, northerly by Hamilton County, and easterly by Montgomery and Fulton counties. Winfield is the smallest town in Herkimer County.

The Village of West Winfield lies approximately three miles south of the summit line of the south escarpment of the Mohawk Valley, which marks the division between the valley and Allegheny Plateau. The latter area spans an upland region extending east to the Schoharie Valley and south to the Susquehanna Valley.

The area immediately surrounding the village and town is characterized by ridges rising steadily to more than 1,600' and running generally southwest to northeast. These enclose valleys carved by retreating glaciers in the last glaciation of the region, approximately 10,000 years ago. Watercourses following the valleys southwards are fed by small streams that descend the slopes of the ridges. Much of the Village of West Winfield lies on the floodplain (approx. 1,180' elevation) of the East Branch of Unadilla River, which flows generally east to west through the village. A tributary stream of the river, North Winfield Creek, flows south through the village and empties into the East Branch in the southeast quadrant of West Winfield. Mill foundations and part of a concrete dam are located on the latter watercourse on the east side of South Street. While the floodplain extends south and west from the village, a steep hillside encloses it on the northwest. The land east of North Winfield Creek ascends to a broad plateau that rises gradually north and east to about 1,300'.

## SPATIAL PLAN

The Village of West Winfield forms an irregular pentagon laid out in straight courses following lots surveyed in the Bayard and Lispenard patents after their acquisition in the 1770s. The northern section of the village encompasses Lots 9, 10, and 11 of the Bayard Patent; its southern section incorporates parts of or all of Lots 3, 4, and 5 of the Lispenard Patent. These lines were not adopted because of their history but because of their continued use as ownership boundaries. Burrows Road in the southeast quadrant of the village appears to follow a range line, or line between rows of rectilinear lots. Highways were often laid out following range lines to allow each lot access to the larger transportation system. The internal spatial plan of West Winfield is closely tied to earlier settlement in the Mohawk Valley and the route of the Great Western Turnpike, chartered in 1803 and opened within the following decade rather than to the eighteenth-century plat.

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## CIRCULATION PATTERNS

The village boundary is drawn on straight courses that create an irregular five-sided figure within a rural, agricultural setting. It encompasses approximately 580 acres, or about 0.9 square miles. Village development centers on the intersection of North and South streets (adopted as CR 67 and NY 51 respectively) with East and West Main streets (formerly the route of the Third Great Western Turnpike). The turnpike route was adopted as part of US 20, a transcontinental route assembled mainly from existing highways in 1926, which runs from near Boston, Massachusetts, to Newport, Oregon. At the four-corners–intersection, South Street (NY 51) turns east onto East Main St (US 20) and continues past the village line. About two miles east of the main intersection, NY 51 turns north towards NY 5, an east–west route paralleling the Mohawk River in the Village of Herkimer.

Before county and state highway adoption in the twentieth century, North and South streets were improved by the Utica-Burlington Plank Road Company chartered in 1849. This toll road connected the upland region with the Erie Canal and the New York Central Railroad, paralleling the Mohawk River about fifteen miles to the north. The Mohawk Valley is part of a generally level east-west corridor connecting the Hudson River with the Great Lakes and forms one of the most significant transportation routes in the nation. Today, I-90 traverses the valley as a segment of its coast-to-coast route. Later in the 1800s, a spur line of railroad Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (DL&WRR) paralleling the East Branch of the Unadilla crossed South Street and connected the villages of Richfield Springs and West Winfield with the rail corridor traversing the Susquehanna Valley to the south. The railroad berm, now abandoned, cuts through the southern half of the village.

From the initial cruciform street plan in West Winfield, additional rectilinear streets increased street frontages for village development over time. In the southeast quadrant of the village, Church Street and Curtis Avenue form an elbow. Clapson Street runs east from Curtis over North Winfield Creek and bends north, paralleling the creek bank, and meets East Main Street.

South of Unadilla River, additional streets extend east and west of South Street (NY 51). Helmer Avenue runs west from South Street in a cul-de-sac. Nearly opposite Helmer Avenue, Burrows Road runs east and crosses the village boundary. South of Helmer Avenue, Mill Street extends west from South Street.

In the western section of West Winfield, Taylor Avenue runs south from West Main Street (US 20) and ends near the village boundary. A little farther west, a private land, Cramer Drive, runs a roughly parallels Taylor Avenue.

On the gradually rising land in the northeastern quadrant, Academy and Carrier streets form an elbow. Pleasant, Water, and Fenn streets extend this elbow north and east to form a small neighborhood in that corner that overlooks the west bank of North Winfield Creek. East

of the creek, Fairground Road forks northeast from East Main Street; it is called Fairgrounds Road when it crosses the village boundary. Fairview Drive and Circle form a cul-de-sac subdivision projecting west from Fairgrounds Road, just inside the village boundary.

Sidewalks parallel East and West Main streets for almost the entire length of the village. In the commercial area west of North and South streets, the sidewalk aligns with the curb marking off the road surface. Continuing west, a wide verge lawn separates the sidewalk from the highway. A sidewalk set off by a verge lawn parallels the west side of South Street south of the commercial area. A verge lawn separates both sides of North Street from the street surface. Side streets through most of the village lack sidewalks, or they parallel only one side of the street.

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

West Winfield retains domestic, religious, educational, commercial, transportation-related, and civic buildings dating to all periods of its development from ca. 1800 into the early twenty-first century. The village incorporates a small commercial district located mainly west and south of the main intersection and an industrial area mainly south of the confluence of the East Branch of Unadilla River and North Winfield Creek. Residential neighborhoods extend north and east of the four corners and both west and south of the commercial district. Additional residential development faces streets in the south section of the village, radiating from the industrial area located there. In general, older buildings, regardless of use, concentrate around the main intersection and represent a variety of functions and construction characteristics. The great majority of West Winfield's historic-period residential buildings are of wood-frame construction; many feature cobblestone foundations. Other building types – commercial, civic, and religious – are often masonry examples. The corner lots of the main intersection are occupied by a recently built convenience store, a mid-century service station, a park, and the brick Masonic Hall (dedicated 1922).

Beginning in the commercial district centered west of the main intersection on West Main Street and extending a short distance on South Street, the imposing two-story textured brick, Beaux-Arts Masonic Hall stands at the southwest corner of US 20 and NY 51. A row of four earlier, lower-profile, gable-front commercial buildings extend westward, including a one-story, three-bay, gable-front, cobblestone office with dressed stone quoins and a two-story wood-frame example retaining a Federal-era oval window in its peak. The brick-veneered International-style post office continues the row westward. Three commercial buildings complete the row on this side of the street. These include an early twentieth-century, gable-front example spanned by display windows and two small mid-century, "colonial"-influenced buildings. Each is separated from the next by a drive accessing open space to the rear of the row.

## Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey

### Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York

9 February 2024

#### Description of Existing Conditions

6

On the north side, a mid-century service station (now a restaurant) occupies the corner lot. Continuing west, a wood-frame commercial building with a stepped false front stands next to the diminutive buff-brick Georgian Revival bank and the two-story, three-bay, gable-front, dressed stone blacksmith's shop built in the early 1800s. A large, early twentieth-century, rock-faced concrete block service garage with a gabled brick-veneer front facade is next. The four-bay brick-veneer firehouse (built ca. 1970) completes this row. These three buildings are fronted by a wide paved area extending to the sidewalk and street.

The commercial district also extends a short distance south of the central intersection in the village. The southeast corner is now occupied by a recently constructed convenience store set back from East Main Street to accommodate gas pumps under a large canopy. Two wood-frame commercial buildings with Italianate-style false fronts face each other just south of the convenience store and Masonic Hall lots. A small, early twentieth-century building with a glazed front is inserted in the space between these and the Hall on the west side. The commercial section ends with a recently rebuilt Dollar General on the east side and the brick Bisby Hall built in 1909 facing South Street on the west side. The latter features a two-story, three-bay front façade replete with stone belt courses and keystones, a bracketed parapet with center pediment, and a grand-story arched center bay flanked by Tuscan columns. The building is now used as the village offices and library. A village park occupies the northeast corner of the intersection. Beyond that, East Main Street is mainly residential as far as Fair Street. The large two-story Georgian Revival brick school built in 1932 stands at the northeast corner of Fair and East Main Street. The 1943 USGS map showed four houses beyond the school.

Most of the earliest houses in West Winfield face East Main Street. These include both side-gabled and gable-front examples that retain varying degrees of their Federal-style decorative schemes, especially doorways, cornice treatments, and fenestration. A few more houses with Federal characteristics, mainly cornice details, face the north side of West Main Street beyond the large, early-period cemetery that once marked the western edge of the turnpike hamlet that grew into the Village of West Winfield. One more house with a Federal decorative scheme stands on the west side of South Street next to the Village Hall and Library (Bisby Hall). That house incorporates a blind arcade and full return on the gable-front façade and highly detailed side-hall entrance.

Later taste Greek Revival and Italianate houses are found continuing east from Academy Street and on both West Main and North streets. Modest Greek Revival examples also face Academy and Pleasant streets in the northeast quadrant of the village. These are generally one-and-a-half-story, three-bay, gable-front houses with lower-height wings and ells. Mid-nineteenth-century Italianate houses occupy prominent locations on both East and West Main streets including two large examples east of the small park at the center of the village. Another large Italianate house faces South Street. More picturesque examples with bracketed gable-front facades are located west of the large cemetery on West Main Street and on East Main on



## Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey

### Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York

9 February 2024

#### Description of Existing Conditions

7

the east bank of North Winfield Creek and on South Street south of the creek. Examples with low-hipped roofs face North Street including an especially large example at the northeast corner of Academy Street. A somewhat smaller – but with an equally intact decorative scheme – Italianate house occupies the lot west of the Federated Church. The Mid-Century Modern wood-frame church has a deep setback its large lot on the south side of East Main at the top of the rise between the four corners and North Winfield Creek.

Possibly the largest number of historic-period houses in West Winfield represent two additional styles popular from the 1880s into the 1930s. Houses of varying scale and decorative schemes represent the range of late Victorian eclectic styles, especially Queen Anne and Eastlake. Most are two-story examples with steeply pitched gabled or hipped roofs and illustrate the wide range of possibilities employed by house builders of the period such as large, open porches, roof embellishments, and surfaces articulated with shingles, battens, and beadboard. Among the largest and most stylish, a palatial example at the corner of Fenn and Pleasant streets, shares its lot with a capacious, matching carriage barn.

Small subdivisions of vernacular examples in the same stylistic trend were built in the late 1800s on recently opened Church, Curtis, and Clapson streets and Taylor Avenue as well as on established streets – Academy, Pleasant, and Water streets – to accommodate a steadily rising population. Additional individual examples face South Street south of the bridge over the East Branch of Unadilla River. These houses are almost invariably cross-gabled or gable-fronted, two-story houses with deep eaves, open porches, and regular fenestration. A few smaller, individual examples face East Main Street near Fair Street, and another large house faces the textured buff brick Roman Catholic Church of St. Joseph the Worker (built 1921) that forms a visual bookend to the developed area at the west end of the village.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, architectural design shifted to lower-profile buildings that often relied on symmetrical fenestration and restrained decorative schemes drawn from buildings constructed in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Some designers drew inspiration from Gustav Stickley's Craftsman ideas that incorporated both Early American and Arts and Crafts design into buildings. A few examples are located in the northeast quadrant of the village plan on Academy Street and on the west side of Fair Street opposite the school. Three houses, at least two of them "kit houses," line the north side of West Main Street from the firehouse west to the graveyard also represent these stylistic trends.

Evidence of post-World War II residential development on earlier streets is limited. A variety of Mid-Century houses with deep setbacks occupy large lots on the south side of East Main Street east of the brick school. Hipped roofs and gabled roofs combine with varied sidings and veneers. Some are one-story; others are two stories. More modest ranches infill between earlier houses on Mill Street in the south section of West Winfield. Much of the frontage on Burrows Road was subdivided for similar scaled houses in the 1960s. Willard Avenue, a house trailer development off Burrows Road, encompasses sixteen units on a loop south of the former

railroad berm. The former fairgrounds site on the west side of Fair Street was subdivided into a cul-de-sac development in the same era. Here, people built mainly one-story ranch houses, a popular type at the time. These vary in ways indicating that most were constructed for individual clients rather than on spec.

An industrial district forms a cluster of buildings alongside South Street both north and south of the East Branch of Unadilla River. The greatest concentration of these buildings adjoins the route of the former Richfield Springs Branch of the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad. Among these are a barrel-vaulted, metal-clad Quonset building; a large two-story, wood clapboard building with a prominent cupola ventilator; and concrete block buildings of various ages including the former creamery built ca. 1925 with a tile-capped Moderne parapet.

In the early 2000s, a senior living facility comprising two low-rise buildings on separate and adjacent lots was constructed on the east side of South Street between the former railroad and the village boundary. These buildings are similar to examples found in other central New York State villages.

## **GREEN SPACES**

West Winfield incorporates several green spaces, most notably two cemeteries and two parks. The large early graveyard with individual bedstead-type markers, later obelisks, and still later squared granitic markers dating to the early twentieth century is located on the south side of West Main Street adjacent to the historic commercial district. It occupies a six-acre parcel on level ground on the first bench of land above the drainage of the East Branch of Unadilla River. Its frontage on West Main Street is delineated by an iron fence, and the property has a small mortuary set well back of the rectilinear plan of paths and plots.

The smaller, later St. Joseph's Cemetery occupies a narrow 3.5-acre parcel on the steeply rising hillside north of the Roman Catholic church on West Main Street. A portion of the cemetery is located directly behind the church on the church parcel. Memorials here are characteristic of the early twentieth century. Markers carved in low, horizontally rectangular forms from hard materials such as granite and gneiss are organized in rectilinear plots. Mature trees and shrubs dot the hillside.

There are two village parks. Centennial Park occupies the site of three commercial buildings on the north side of East Main Street at the four-corners intersection. A large gazebo is located near the center of lawn that spans the site. Young trees edge the sidewalk and are planted in a line running north-south through the park.

Memorial Park incorporates land bordering both banks of North Winfield Creek south of East Main Street and the East Branch floodplain in the southeast quadrant of village. Two nineteenth-century gazebos, playing fields, walking paths, and storage buildings are placed over

## Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey

### Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York

9 February 2024

#### Description of Existing Conditions

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9

its 15-acre parcel. That parcel abuts a second parcel, also owned by the village that encompasses the convergence of North Winfield Creek and the East Branch of Unadilla River.

Finally, the Village of West Winfield owns a large open area comprised of four parcels that total approximately 14 acres aligned with the East Branch west of South Street. These encompass the site of the former Hiteman Leather Company that closed in 1968 and was gradually demolished. The last buildings were razed in 1998. The site has been tested for contamination, and as of this writing forms a broad swath of remediated and disused land that visually separates historic commercial and residential development focused on East and West Main and North streets from the historic industrial *cum* residential area adjoining the former rail line and river.

## SUMMARY

Two main forces – industry and commerce – defined the economy of West Winfield. By 1810, water-powered industry centered on the confluence of North Winfield Creek and the East Branch of Unadilla River. A highway, now called North and South streets, connected this industrial district with the Town of Litchfield farther north *en route* to the Mohawk Valley. The Litchfield Road was improved as part of the Utica and Burlington Plank Road in the mid-1800s, which encouraged further economic growth in West Winfield. By 1872, a spur of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (DL&WRR) connected Richfield Springs and Richfield Junction with the main line farther west via West Winfield, adjacent to this industrial area.<sup>1</sup>

The village's central commercial district aligned primarily with the Great Western Turnpike, opened by 1810 in this area and now a segment of US 20. In the village, this route is designated East and West Main streets and forms a four-corners intersection with the old Litchfield highway. The state adopted South Street and East Main as part of NY 51 in the 1930s.

Citizens of West Winfield responded to changes in transportation and industrial innovation throughout the historic period with new businesses and new institutions represented by new buildings. An academy, several churches, and hotels and services supporting travelers organized and opened during the first half of the nineteenth century. Its stores mainly served local people. After the railroad opened its spur line, creameries and new steam-powered businesses opened adjacent to its passenger and freight station immediately south of where South Street crossed the river. The tannery alongside the river continued operations manufacturing varied leather goods until 1968. A new brick Classical Revival school was built at the eastern edge of the village in the early 1930s. This school is the nucleus of a greatly expanded central school established at the end of the historic period. Similarly, three of the village's four churches federated in the 1940s and built a single church building in the early 1970s. St Joseph's Roman Catholic parish formed in the 1860s. Its wood-frame church was replaced by the present buff brick church in 1922. This is associated with the Catholic cemetery. In 1909, the brick Beaux-Arts Bisby Hall, now used as the village library and offices, was built. In 1920, a new brick Masonic Hall was erected at the southwest corner of the main intersection.

Houses form the largest portion of West Winfield's historic architectural inventory. A number of Federal-era examples face East and West Main streets; one more stands on South Street. Later examples illustrate mainly vernacular trends informed by the Greek Revival and

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<sup>1</sup> "Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad," Wikipedia entry. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delaware,\\_Lackawanna\\_and\\_Western\\_Railroad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delaware,_Lackawanna_and_Western_Railroad); retrieved 20 January 2024). The DL&WRR leased the Utica, Chenango, and Susquehanna Valley Railway in 1870, "continuing this branch north to Utica, with a branch from Richfield Junction to Richfield Springs. West Winfield is west of Richfield Junction on this spur line.

Italianate styles. Vernacular and high-style Queen Anne examples are found especially on residential streets opened to accommodate increased population during the late 1800s. While early streets opened northeast of the main crossroads within a few years after the academy opened in 1850, short streets lined by vernacular eclectic-style wood-frame houses projected south from Main Street before 1900. Similar houses filled in lots platted on South Street in the village's industrial section. More high-style late Victorian houses were built on "suburban" lots mainly east of North Winfield Creek. There is little infill postdating World War II. Instead ranch houses and a house trailer park line new streets in two sections of the village. A cul-de-sac opened in the northeast corner near the fairgrounds on Stone Road, and new house lots were platted on Burrows Road extending east from South Street.

### **EARLY DEVELOPMENT, CA. 1792–1840**

The area now encompassed by the village boundary of West Winfield lies within two patents acquired in the last years of British dominion in the Thirteen Colonies that soon formed the United States of America.<sup>2</sup> Burr's maps of individual New York State counties published by the state's Office of the Surveyor General in 1829 and 1839 show how lands in southern Herkimer County were first divided after being patented by the crown during the eighteenth century. Early on, European development adjoined the Mohawk River because it was the main travel corridor at the time, and patents adjoining the river were divided in long narrow strips, each with access to the waterway. This also provided "back lands" for lumber. European settlers freighted commodities especially wheat, on the river and adjoining rough highways, to Albany and Schenectady, the principal market towns of the time.

In western Herkimer County, the Mohawk was bordered on both banks by Cosby's Patent, or Manor. On the south side of the watercourse, the topography rises steadily towards the summit dividing the Mohawk-Hudson and Susquehanna watersheds. The upland section of the Manor probably supplied wood for building and heating rather than being cleared for extensive agriculture, a circumstance that prevailed throughout the region until after the War of Independence ended in 1783.

Most areas more than about 600 feet above the Mohawk River, on both the north and south escarpments, including Cosby's Manor, were patented by the crown in the 1770s. Peace negotiations at the end of the French and Indian War (1754–1763) drew boundaries beyond which neither the British nor the French could acquire land as they expanded their empires. This led to a rush of patent requests to the crown amongst the variety of merchants, military officers, and provincial servants who anticipated development of lands within the Line. Among

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<sup>2</sup> In the royal colony of New York, land was acquired by cartels of men who then subdivided their share for lease and cultivation in the pattern of English land tenure where owners' income was derived from long term leases.

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

12

these were brothers William and Robert Bayard and Leonard (probably) Lispenard, who acquired patents south of the Manor in present day Herkimer and Oneida counties.<sup>3</sup>

By the time these upland areas were patented, war threatened again, and the recently patented lands were deemed indefensible during the War of Independence (1776–1783). Within years of the ink drying on the Treaty of Paris that ended that conflict, New Englanders flooded over much of the Allegheny Plateau on the south escarpment and also filled in around earlier German-descended people living in the Mohawk Valley. Early settler surnames in West Winfield indicate that it was primarily New England outmigrants who acquired land in the sections of the Bayard and Lispenard patents now within the village boundary and surrounding area.

The potential waterpower offered by North Winfield Creek and the East Branch of the Unadilla River was an important draw for people who settled in the West Winfield area. Grinding grain and sawing lumber were essential to agricultural and commercial development. Older mills located on the slope of the south escarpment of the Mohawk Valley were at lower elevation, and carrying goods to them was arduous. Processing locally grown or harvested raw material nearby for local use reduced travel. By 1794, Joseph and Timothy Walker built a saw and grist mill in the West Winfield area.<sup>4</sup> In 1800, Benjamin Harrington opened a clothing works to process woolen goods into cloth suitable for garments.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the difficult journey, the Mohawk Valley was long established as the primary route of trade. Settlers on the Allegheny Plateau relied on that trade to sell their produce into the larger Atlantic markets and to buy imported goods. In the earliest years of settlement, people in the West Winfield area looked north to the settlement at Litchfield (named for Litchfield, Connecticut, and which occupies much of the Bayard Patent) and thence to the Mohawk Valley trading centers. The Congregational society in West Winfield was first known as the Second Congregational Church of Litchfield when it was organized in 1799. Its meeting house stood about four miles north of the main crossroads, indicating the southward spread of population. A Baptist society was established in 1798 and built its first meeting house in 1803.<sup>6</sup> This indicates a growing community of residents in the area, as does the removal of the Second Congregational Church meetinghouse to a site about a mile east of the crossroads on the recently opened Great Western Turnpike in 1816.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> All were descendants of Huguenot families welcomed by England as settlers in the royal colony of New York after their persecution in France. Many did extraordinarily well as merchants and financiers and by the early 1700s were well established in the lower Hudson Valley and in the growing port of New York City. As such, they traded in land, one of the colony's most stable investments.

<sup>4</sup> George Hardin, ed., *History of Herkimer County* (Syracuse, D. Mason & Co.: 1893): 369.

<sup>5</sup> Hardin, 373.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer of Herkimer County for 1869-70* (Syracuse, N.Y.: The Journal Office, 1869): 116.

<sup>7</sup> Hardin, 375.

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

13

The Great Western Turnpike was chartered in 1803 to connect Manlius in Onondaga County with the port at Albany, near the head of the Hudson River navigation. The route connected with the First Great Western Turnpike, chartered in 1799 to link Cherry Valley in Otsego County with Albany. (The Second Great Western Turnpike bore southwest from Cherry Valley to Cooperstown, and thence west to Sherburne in Chenango County.) These turnpikes offered an upland east–west route that paralleled the Mohawk Valley and formed the predominant freight routes over the Allegheny Plateau into the 1820s.

The Third Great Western Turnpike opened in sections over the first decade of the nineteenth century. At the time, livestock raised for meat was the region’s largest market commodity, and numerous taverns serving drovers and other travelers opened along the turnpike route. The turnpike engendered industrial development alongside agricultural endeavor.<sup>8</sup> At West Winfield, the confluence of North Winfield Creek and the East Branch of the Unadilla coincided with plentiful hemlock forests to provided good conditions for the tannery that opened ca. 1820. Tanneries required large amounts of water held in banks of vats where hides were tanned, or cured, using hemlock bark. Most early operations supplied leather to local shoe shops, but by the 1830s some were supplying shoe factories in larger towns and cities. Rufus Wheeler acquired the tannery in West Winfield in 1823, and his descendants expanded its production over time.<sup>9</sup>

By the time the tannery in West Winfield opened, the state was already digging the Erie Canal, which connected the Great Lakes and Hudson River navigations. The first section opened in 1819; the artificial waterway opened end-to-end in 1825. Water freight costs were as little as 10% of overland rates, and by the early 1830s, the predominant freight routes over the Allegheny Plateau had shifted from the older east–west orientation to north–south routes. The Third Great Western Turnpike Company abandoned its route by the early 1840s. Since many early turnpikes were the best and most used highways in rural regions, they were often adopted as town highways.

Highways were among the most important functions of town government. Towns and counties were erected as population rose in areas across the state. Herkimer County was among the earliest new counties formed by the state legislature when it was erected from Montgomery County in 1791. The formation of counties and towns gradually diversified the electorate and began loosening the power of the landed gentry during the first half of the nineteenth century in New York.

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<sup>8</sup> The story of water-powered manufacturing in rural regions in the early nineteenth century is hyperlocal. In many cases it is buried in early accounts, superseded in the latter part of the century as Americans recast the period as a halcyon time of independent small farmers. The story is more complex. In addition to tanning, entrepreneurs engaged in iron founding, tool making, fiber processing, and likely other industrial endeavors. New England Yankees predominated as owners of these businesses.

<sup>9</sup> Hardin, 373. (<https://archive.org/details/historyofherkime00hard/page/373/mode/2up>)

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

14

In 1816, the Town of Winfield was erected from the Otsego County (erected 1791) towns of Richfield and Plainfield and the Town of Litchfield in Herkimer County. The creation of towns straddling previously drawn county lines was unusual. Winfield, especially West Winfield, maintained its earlier community orientation to Litchfield and by extension, the Mohawk Valley. It seems likely the decision to be part of Herkimer rather than Otsego County anticipated the importance of the planned canal over the upland turnpike.<sup>10</sup>

The location of the tiny hamlet at the intersection of the turnpike and an established highway leading to the Mohawk Valley encouraged a growing commercial district. David R. Carrier (1795–1880), who moved to East Winfield as a child, opened a store at West Winfield in 1822 at the northeast corner of the main crossing.<sup>11</sup> The 1879 county history provides a description of how Carrier’s business operated:

At first, his business amounted to about \$15K p.a., which must be reckoned a large business when the time and condition of the country are considered. But little money was in the country then, and his trade consisted very largely in barter, or an exchange of goods for produce of various kinds, which was exchanged for goods again in New York and Albany. He purchased cheese and pork, which he packed in casks and sent by wagon over the turnpike to Albany, and thence by river to New York, and his goods were brought back the same methods of transportation. He also purchased corn and rye, which he exchanged with distillers for spirits, and were sent to market in the same way.<sup>12</sup>

This passage suggests that at least in the early period, Carrier’s trade traversed the turnpike rather than going north to the Mohawk Valley. Cheese and salted pork were value-added agricultural products that weighed less than their raw materials. Whiskey was also a value-added product, and distilleries were common throughout the region at the time.

Spafford’s 1824 gazetteer noted two post offices — Winfield Spring and Mineral Spring — in the recently formed Town of Winfield, which was named for General Winfield Scott. Neither post office name persisted for very long. Gordon’s 1836 gazetteer listed post villages at Winfield and West Winfield.<sup>13</sup> Mineral Spring was described as centrally located in the town, and a later reference notes that East Winfield had a sulfur spring.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Winfield Spring became East Winfield. Spafford noted in 1824 that the number of post offices was rapidly

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<sup>10</sup> Despite stories told of people ridiculing the proposed canal as “Clinton’s Ditch,” sources of the time show that it was eagerly anticipated as an economic boon.

<sup>11</sup> Hardin, 373; and “David Russell Carrier, 1795-1880.” (<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Carrier-377>). The latter offers a well-documented account of Carrier’s life,

<sup>12</sup> F.W. Beers, *History of Herkimer County (History of Herkimer County, N.Y.* (New York, N.Y.: F.W. Beers & Co., 1879): 128.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Francis Gordon, *Gazetteer of the State of New York, etc.* (New York: by author, 1836): 483.

<sup>14</sup> J.H. French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York, embracing a comprehensive view of the Geography, Geology, and General History of the State.* (Syracuse: R. Pearsall Smith, 1859): 349–50.



**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

15

growing, and that at least 20 had changed names as he was compiling his list for his gazetteer a dozen years before.<sup>15</sup> The Beers 1879 county history stated that the West Winfield post office was established in 1825 with David R. Carrier as postmaster.<sup>16</sup> This date may be slightly incorrect, but Carrier's appointment was typical. Storekeepers of a political persuasion agreeable to the current federal administration were often appointed, at least in part because stores were often central. Further, they were equipped to manage the exchange of funds for postage.

The opening of so many new post offices indicated growing population. Between 1810 and 1820, the number of residents censused in Litchfield increased 40%. The 1810 census for Litchfield, which still encompassed most of the Town of Winfield, counted 414 families, 2,533 people, and 319 senatorial electors.<sup>17</sup> The last figure shows that a sizable proportion of men owned property. In 1820, the combined population figures for Litchfield and Winfield neared 3,500. The combined number of senatorial electors nearly doubled; combined taxable property increased nearly threefold.<sup>18</sup>

New Englanders tended to establish church societies promptly as they came from a cultural tradition that formed communities around shared religious beliefs. In New England, their meetinghouses often functioned as community centers where town meetings and other functions were held. How soon they built meetinghouses in central New York varies widely. Congregational societies, which grew out of the Puritan tradition, relied on educated clergymen, as did Episcopalians. Such men were often reluctant to move to frontier regions, and some residents turned to the Baptist and Methodist sects, which relied heavily on lay preachers supported by circuit riders. The 1824 gazetteer recorded one Presbyterian and two Baptist churches in the town of Winfield. The Presbyterian church might have been the one built by the Second Congregational Church of Litchfield that was moved to the Great Western Turnpike about a mile east of the crossroads in 1816, nearer to East Winfield than West

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<sup>15</sup> Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York*. (Albany, N.Y.: B.D. Packard, 1824): 615–19. He offered a rant about how time consuming and frustrating compiling the list had been, and that each page cost him about \$25.

<sup>16</sup> F.W. Beers, 128.

<sup>17</sup> Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York*. Albany, N.Y.: H.C. Southwick, 1813): 225.

<sup>18</sup> Spafford (1824), 285 (entry for Litchfield) and 576 (entry for Winfield).

## Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey

### Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York

9 February 2024

#### *Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

16

Winfield.<sup>19</sup> West Winfield's Methodist Episcopal society built a meeting house in 1828 at a cost of \$1,200.<sup>20</sup>

Burr's 1839 *Map of Herkimer County* delineated the post villages of Winfield and West Winfield in the Town of Winfield, located about two miles apart on the old turnpike route. This was a characteristic interval for hamlets offering tavern accommodation that can still be identified along US 20. According to Gordon's 1836 gazetteer, Winfield featured a church, two taverns, three stores, and about 25 dwellings "upon a long street." This suggests a hamlet focused on turnpike travelers. West Winfield had by then exceeded East Winfield with about 35 dwellinghouses. It further encompassed diverse businesses, including two grist mills, a sawmill, a carding and cloth dressing mill, two stores, and a tavern. Gordon noted the Baptist and Presbyterian churches, but didn't mention the Methodist one. None of these church buildings survives in the village.

Of this early period, houses and the stone blacksmith shop appear to be the only surviving buildings. Nearly all face Main Street, which suggests a preference for the turnpike over the Mohawk Valley route. The turnpike was an improved highway; the northern route was likely maintained through the town highway system of property owners giving an allotted number of hours each year to maintain it. Pre-1840 houses include more vernacular examples – a side-gabled one at 317 and a gable-front one at 331 on the north side of West Main and three more stylish houses facing both sides of East Main Street (Nos. 423, 426, and 434) near the main intersection. The latter houses retain generally intact Federal-style door surrounds and varying amounts of their early decorative schemes. One of these appears to incorporate an early doctor's office (mapped in 1859) as an ell added during a later remodeling of the house. Near North Winfield Creek, two houses (455 and 459 East Main St) rest on steeply banked basements characteristic of the pre-1840 period. The house at 177 South Street (known locally as the Bisby House) retains nearly all of its elaborate Federal-style decorative scheme.

Additional modest one-and-a-half-story houses on the north side of East Main Street could date to the early period. A house (299 West Main) set above the highway at the western edge of the present boundary appears to date to this period; later additions and alterations hide its initial design.<sup>21</sup> The burying ground on the south side of West Main Street marked the

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<sup>19</sup> Through the Act of Union of 1802, the Congregational and Presbyterian sects were allied, and some Congregational churches became Presbyterian. If this is the case in West Winfield, the name change did not stick. Congregational churches in New York State nearly all trace their roots back to Massachusetts and Connecticut in the 1780s and 1790s. Myron McKee (1840–1910) detailed the two moves, saying that the second location was in East Winfield, where he grew up in "The Town of Winfield," Address by Hon. Myron A. McKee of Richfield Springs, formerly of Winfield, Delivered before the Herkimer County Historical Society, March 14, 1903. (<https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/winfield/winfieldprofile.html>; retrieved 26 December 2023)

<sup>20</sup> Child, 119.

<sup>21</sup> This building's form and location alongside a stream suggest a tavern site with a water supply for livestock. No information yet uncovered supports this supposition. Smith, 154-5, calls this building the "Long

9 February 2024

west boundary of dense hamlet development in the early period. It seems to have been laid out as a community cemetery instead of belonging to a specific church. The oldest stones are located in eastern and older section of the cemetery.

## **ANTEBELLUM PERIOD, CA. 1840–60**

Myron A. McKee (1840–1910), who grew up in East Winfield and later worked in the West Winfield Bank, related that, “Up to the forties, the east part of the town [of Winfield] seems to have had the larger part of the population.” After that, West Winfield began growing, and the commercial importance of the eastern hamlet declined. He attributed West Winfield’s expansion to the opening of mills by “Mr. Walker,” which led to further industrial development by others. McKee suggested that David Carrier’s removal from East Winfield, where he partnered with Benjamin Carver in a store and distillery, to West Winfield where he opened a second store and built a house represents this shift on an individual basis.<sup>22</sup>

Carrier appears to have been a driving force in the growth and prosperity of West Winfield throughout his residency. He may have influenced the construction of the unusually handsome – now gone – two-story, gable-front cobblestone district school built on East Main Street in 1847.<sup>23</sup> This building indicated a far greater interest in publicly supported education than many common schools erected in the mid-1800s.

Carrier appears to have been instrumental in raising the funds to open the West Winfield Academy in December 1850.<sup>24</sup> In 1854–55, he was listed as the treasurer of the board.<sup>25</sup> At the time, common schools educated children up through the eighth grade; those seeking additional instruction attended privately funded academies or seminaries. In central New York, academies varied greatly as the state imposed virtually no restrictions or guidelines until the 1860s. Some institutions only enrolled either males or females. Many emphasized a classical education that would prepare students, almost entirely male, for attending college. Ladies’ seminaries might emphasize a curriculum to prepare girls to manage households. Many schools had a sectarian emphasis.

The West Winfield Academy was built through subscription that raised \$4,000.<sup>26</sup> In 1854–55, the academy listed about 115 males and 100 females enrolled. The teaching and

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House” for its orientation to the highway. He records it was sold to man called English, who made “extensive repairs and changes” to the building and ran it as a roadhouse in the 1930s.

<sup>22</sup> McKee, unpaginated transcription. (<https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/winfield/winfieldprofile.html>)

<sup>23</sup> Thomas W. Smith, *An Intimate History of West Winfield*. 2<sup>nd</sup> printing. (Richfield Springs, N.Y.: Heritage Press, 1979): 46.

<sup>24</sup> Child, 115.

<sup>25</sup> “List of Officers, teachers, and students for West Winfield Academy, 1854–5.” (<https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/winfield/wwinstud1854.html>; retrieved 29 Oct 2023)

<sup>26</sup> Child, 115.

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

18

administrative staff comprised three men and three women. Most students listed residences within about a 15-mile radius. Many came from West Winfield; a significant number were from East Winfield and Cedarville, a hamlet at the top of the gorge descending to Ilion, where the Remington gun factory was located. Others came from Plainfield and Richfield. A handful came from distant places, possibly drawn through family relationships.<sup>27</sup> The 1855 state census listed several students boarding out. A boarding house was added sometime later at a cost of \$3,000.<sup>28</sup>

It seems likely that Academy Street, running north past the district school to the Academy opened about the same time as the academy itself. By 1859, Pleasant Street connected the Academy property with North Street to form an “elbow.” These were the first streets added to the village plan. The modestly scaled, mainly one-and-a-half-story houses with vernacular designs drawing on Greek Revival-style massing and details that face East Main Street were built by 1859. Those facing Academy and Pleasant streets date only slightly later based on design characteristics. Most were mapped by 1868 at a time when modest houses often still featured gabled roofs and few stylistic details.

In 1859, just under 50 houses were mapped in West Winfield. Not yet an incorporated village, the inset delineated the area of densest development. This ran east to North Winfield Creek, west to just beyond the burying ground, south to the millpond where the creek joined the East Branch of Unadilla River, and north beyond the sharp bend in North Street, where the recently opened Plank Road diverged from the “Old Road” to Litchfield. Beyond the bend, three houses stood near the Old Road intersection. The Burlington & Utica Plank Road was chartered on 7 May 1849.<sup>29</sup> A certificate for five shares of stock at \$50 each issued more than a year later in September 1850 may indicate that subscription was slow. The certificate was co-signed by David R. Carrier, treasurer, and Alonzo Wood, president. The company intended to raise \$60,000 for the approximately 35-mile route.<sup>30</sup>

Plank roads were very popular in the 1840s and 1850s in New York State, where more than 340 companies formed in those decades. Most routes improved existing highways with heavy planks laid crosswise to the direction of travel. In the immediate vicinity, the Ilion and Cedarville Plank Road Company was chartered 1 February 1848. Its eight-mile route through the gorge was adopted by the state as NY 51 in the period after the First World War, when both

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<sup>27</sup> “List of Officers, teachers, and students for West Winfield Academy, 1854–5.”

<sup>28</sup> Child, 115. This source was published in 1869; the 1859 Map of Herkimer County does not show a second building, but the surveyor mapped few ancillary structures. This makes it hard to date this building more closely.

<sup>29</sup> “List of Plank Roads in New York.” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_plank\\_roads\\_in\\_New\\_York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_plank_roads_in_New_York), retrieved 29 Oct 2023)

<sup>30</sup> Stock certificate No. 18 for the Burlington and Utica Plank Road. ([https://auction.archivesinternational.com/Burlington-and-Utica-Plank-Road-Co-1850-Issued-Stock-Certificate\\_i29297517](https://auction.archivesinternational.com/Burlington-and-Utica-Plank-Road-Co-1850-Issued-Stock-Certificate_i29297517); retrieved 29 Oct 2023)

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

19

counties and states undertook extensive adoption campaigns. A little farther west, the Bridgewater and Leonardsville Plank Road (now part of NY 8), was chartered on 3 March 1848. The Utica & Waterville Central Plank Road (now part of NY 12) was chartered 30 December 1848.<sup>31</sup>

The Burlington and Utica Plank Road was eventually adopted by Herkimer County, while the other three were adopted by the state. This suggests that the Mohawk Valley link never fully surpassed the east–west turnpike in this immediate area. The 1859 map displays an obvious preference by commercial and service businesses as both local and transient clientele face that route. At the southeast corner of the main intersection, S. Day’s large hotel spanned a broad frontage extending eastward. Large stores occupied the other three corners. Smaller stores stood on the west side of South Street and another next door to the one at the southwest corner. T. Adams’ Hotel was a little farther west on West Main. Four shops, including the two-story stone blacksmith’s shop (No. 379, now a law office), a cooper’s shop, a tailor’s shop, and a shoe shop, lined the north side of West Main beyond the Bisby Store at the corner. A tin store stood on the first lot facing North Street. East of Carrier’s store at the northeast corner, a watchmaker’s shop and the West Winfield Bank, established 1854, stood west of Dr. Rose’s large house (No. 411) with its separate office building.<sup>32</sup> David Carrier was also instrumental in establishing the bank.<sup>33</sup> A second shoe shop stood east of the doctor’s office. North Street was already becoming the leafy residential street with mainly large houses on sizable lots depicted in turn-of-the-twentieth-century postcards. Development on South Street was more mixed with a few widely spaced houses between the stores and blacksmith’s shop near the turnpike and a second blacksmith’s shop and the Wheeler tannery near the river.

The bank, the academy, and the plank road appear to have been immediate boons to the local economy. The bank was initially capitalized in 1854 with \$100,000; five years later that figure rose to \$125,000.<sup>34</sup> Less than a decade after its founding, the academy enrolled 357 students, 165 of them pursuing classical studies, and its revenue of \$3,142 matched its expenditures. The institution offered a 600-volume library, and its classrooms were equipped with \$925 worth of apparatus. The property was valued at \$10,000, which suggests that its large boarding house was built by that time.<sup>35</sup> Charles Weeks opened his sash and blind factory in 1857.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps supplying the fittings for that building was among its first large jobs. During the 1830s and 1840s, sash and blind factories mechanized this sector of the building trades,

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<sup>31</sup> “List of Plank Roads in New York.”

<sup>32</sup> This house appears to incorporate both the older house within an Italianate-style remodel and to reuse the Greek Revival doctor’s office as a rear ell.

<sup>33</sup> Hardin, 374.

<sup>34</sup> J.H. French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York, embracing a comprehensive view of the Geography, Geology, and General History of the State*. (Syracuse: R. Pearsall Smith, 1859): 95.

<sup>35</sup> French, 134.

<sup>36</sup> Hardin, 373.

making window sash and blinds, or shutters, consistent within localities and less costly on a per opening basis. They were essential to the emerging Italianate style, with its large, generally similar, rows of windows, which persisted into the early twentieth century throughout the region.

The 1855 state census, the 1860 federal census, and the 1859 *Map of Herkimer County* illustrate the expansion of West Winfield's economy during the 1850s. The industrial ("Industry Other than Agriculture") schedule of the 1855 census recorded numerous small businesses in the town of Winfield. A majority of the twenty-one entries were located in or near West Winfield. Among these were several small operations: two or three shoe shops and at least three blacksmith's shops. Several grist mills were listed, including two sizable operations, one owned by a man aptly named Miller, and Krill's mill on South Street. There were also the cabinet shop of A.P. Fairchild at the western edge of the village and two cheesebox makers. The circular wooden boxes were used to ship locally made cheese – at the time an important American export – into a trans-Atlantic market. This industrial list generally matches the 1859 map, which included a directory with the West Winfield inset. C.D. Cross listed himself as a Daguerrian artist, or photographer. J. Calder listed himself as a tailor; an unusually large number of women reported themselves as milliners or dressmakers in the population schedules of both censuses. Perhaps the large number of young women students at the academy offered a ready market. Four dry goods sellers were listed, although interestingly, David Carrier was not among them. R.[ufus] Wheeler listed himself as a tanner and currier in the directory. Subscribers to the map's survey and printing probably paid a surcharge to be included in the directory so this list is likely not comprehensive. French's 1859 gazetteer listed the bank, two gristmills, two sawmills, a clover mill, and the tannery. Clover mills processed seed sold for planting meadows for winter feed.

French presented census figures from the state's 1855 census and recorded that 381 people resided in West Winfield. The population schedules recorded in 1850, 1855, and 1860 show that most residents were born in New York, mainly in Herkimer and nearby counties. The overall town censuses for all three years show that people born before 1800 generally hailed from the New England states. There were a few people from England. In 1860, a few Irish maidservants and laborers "lived in" in their employers' households. Almost no Irish people owned land. No Black people were censused in Winfield.

### **BECOMING A VILLAGE, ca. 1860–1898**

West Winfield suffered casualties during the American Civil War (April 1861 to April 1865), but the community grew and emerged from the conflict in a generally prosperous state. The local weekly newspaper, the Republican-leaning *Standard Bearer*, inaugurated in August

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

21

1859, might provide detailed coverage of the local economy and people.<sup>37</sup> It seems likely that the Wheeler tannery held contracts with the Union Army to supply leather for footwear and harnesses. Remarks made in the concluding sections of the 1865 state census for the Town of Winfield noted that farm labor wages had doubled since 1860, from \$14 to \$28/month since the war began, indicating a laborers' market due to enlistment. The price of farmland had risen 30%, while individual debt had fallen along with calls for credit. Prompt payment was on the rise, and there was no increase in pauperism.

The census taker in 1865 wrote in his concluding Miscellaneous Statistics (Section X), "In this town we have the village of West Winfield containing a population of 487. Two Churches. Three stores. Two hotels. One wagon shop, two blacksmith shops, one bank, one academy, one grist mill, two sawmills, one lumber yard, sash blind and door factory." He detailed the Wheeler tannery and cheese box makers at the confluence of the Unadilla's East Branch and North Winfield Creek in the industrial schedule, but apparently did not regard them as within the as-yet unincorporated village. That indistinct boundary also makes the actual rise in population figure over the last decade difficult to determine definitively.

The 1859 inset map of West Winfield shows the burial ground on Main Street as the last property going west save one house labeled D.R. Carrier. A little later, the county history published in 1879 reported that the cemetery was "located near the village," indicating that it was still regarded as the visual boundary of village development. In 1866, the cemetery property was extended westward and incorporated with a governing board. This exemplified how, "The people of this vicinity are coming to adopt the practice, which prevails in many towns, of depositing their dead in large, incorporated, and well-kept cemeteries; and the other burial places are gradually falling into disuse."<sup>38</sup> Rather than abandonment, West Winfield chose a middle ground of expanding an existing burial ground at the periphery.

The West Winfield plate of the *Atlas of Herkimer County* published in 1868 included the cemetery and the section running west to the later-drawn corporation boundary. This encompassed not only the cemetery, but also two houses and three outbuildings, one labeled "Barn," owned by J. Hardin and A.P. Fairchild's coal and lumber yard adjoining an unnamed tributary of the East Branch. The atlas and Child's *Gazetteer and Business Directory for Herkimer County* published in 1869 describe new economic development over the previous decade. The map depicted about 60 houses running west from North Winfield Creek to the Fairchild coal and lumber yard (adjoining 299 West Main St) and north from the river to just

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<sup>37</sup> Library of Congress, "US Newspaper Directory, 1690–present." (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85054438/>) This site provides the publication dates, which ran to 1871, when the name was changed to the *Standard*. The paper is available in volume at Herkimer County Historical Society. It is not available in either the New York Historical Newspapers or FultonHistory digital databases.

<sup>38</sup> Beers, 127–8.

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

22

beyond Pleasant Street. Pleasant and Academy streets remained the only new streets. The commercial district was of similar size, and scope.

By 1872, the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (DL&WRR), leased a 21-mile branch line running from Richfield Junction on the main Utica–Binghamton route to Richfield Springs from the Utica, Chenango, and Susquehanna Railway, which formed in 1866.<sup>39</sup> In Winfield, its route paralleled the north bank of the East Branch, eventually bearing northerly to cross the turnpike some distance east of the village. This, in turn, connected West Winfield with ports on the Great Lakes and New York City. This set the stage for enlarged industrial effort and increased commercial travel. By 1879, the Wheeler tannery was turning 30,000 calfskins and 4,000 slaughter hides into leather shipped to shoe factories in “manufacturing towns” annually. The day of the village shoemaker was largely passed, although there remained two small boot and shoe shops in West Winfield. The tanworks, West Winfield’s largest industry at the time, employed six men and used 300 cords of bark annually.<sup>40</sup> The 1868 atlas listed numerous smaller businesses typical of a turnpike village: two hotels, a harness maker, a wagon shop, a livery and stage line, and a blacksmith. There were just two masonry buildings in the village: the cobblestone school and the stone blacksmith’s shop on West Main Street.

A few years later, in 1875, the Congregational meetinghouse, which had been moved to East Winfield a half-century before, now became the fixture it remained on West Main Street in West Winfield for nearly a century, when it was moved to its third and final site. By then, West Winfield had mostly eclipsed the once larger hamlet of East Winfield. When moved, the building was enlarged to 84’ x 44’ at a cost of \$11,000.<sup>41</sup> It was used not only for services but also for meetings, lectures, and performances well into the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> The Congregational building also served the Baptists, from the time their church burned in May 1880 until their large, architect-designed, brick-and-stone edifice was dedicated in October 1890.<sup>43</sup> These two churches bookended the early commercial district and a few adjoining early houses facing the turnpike. The M.[ethodist] E.[piscopal] Church on North Street roughly marked the end of residential development in that direction.

The site of the Roman Catholic Church, apparently built on the present site in 1875, marked a western extension of residential development in West Winfield. The location of this

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<sup>39</sup> “Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad,”

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delaware,\\_Lackawanna\\_and\\_Western\\_Railroad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delaware,_Lackawanna_and_Western_Railroad); retrieved 20 January 2024)

Franklin Hough, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Albany: A. Boyd, 1873): 152, provides the mileages from Richfield Junction east to Richfield Springs on the 21-mile branch leased and operated by the DL&WRR and the date when the City of Utica and other places along the line assembled the route that was eventually laid.

<sup>40</sup> Beers, 127.

<sup>41</sup> Beers, 130.

<sup>42</sup> McKee. The church was demolished to make way for present post office ca. 1970.

<sup>43</sup> Hardin 377.



**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

23

building isn't obvious: a church wasn't mapped on the present site of St. Joseph the Worker on West Main Street until 1906.<sup>44</sup> Regardless, the establishment of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic church, a mission of the Waterville parish, in May 1867 signaled a changing, also growing, population in West Winfield. Before that, the rising number of Irish-born and Irish-American people in West Winfield traveled north to Clayville for Mass.<sup>45</sup> The new wood-frame church was completed in 1875 at a cost of \$8,000.<sup>46</sup> When dedicated, it served about 100 members.<sup>47</sup> In 1893, the church acquired its first cemetery plot, located behind the present brick church, whose site was mapped in 1906.<sup>48</sup> The cemetery was subsequently greatly expanded on a narrow lot ascending the slope behind the present church, where interments continue today.

The 1879 county history probably relied on the 1875 state census for its population figure of "about 600" living in West Winfield.<sup>49</sup> The figure nearly matches the 594 persons counted the following year in the 1880 census in a separate section devoted to the village.<sup>50</sup> The latter record shows that only about 10% of West Winfield's 166 households lived in shared accommodation (149 dwellinghouses). Comparison with historic surveys completed in 1868 and the early 1900s in combination with field review shows that about three-quarters of the houses presently on Main, North, Academy, and Pleasant streets were built by this time. Houses in these areas display a variety of vernacular interpretations of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles popular from the 1840s into the early 1880s.

The history further reported a lengthy list of businesses. There were the bank (by then incorporated as a national bank under recent federal legislation), seven stores, two drug stores, two hardware stores and tin shops, one shoe store (where shoes were sold), one clothing store, a hotel, two milliners, two jewelers, a bakery, a meat market, two restaurants and billiard saloons, two livery stables, three wagon shops, four blacksmith's shops, a furniture-undertaker-cabinetmaking establishment, two shoe shops (where shoes were made), a harness shop, a cooper's shop, a cheese-box manufactory, a sash and blind factory, three lumber yards, a coal yard, a tannery, a grist mill, a saw mill, a printing office, two attorneys, three physicians, and a dentist.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Century Map Co., *New Century Atlas of Herkimer County, New York with Farm Records*. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Century Map Co., 1906). The church was not surveyed by Sanborn in 1905; it was in 1910.

<sup>45</sup> West Winfield Centennial Committee. *Village of West Winfield Centennial Book*. n.p: [1998], 17.

<sup>46</sup> Hardin, 377.

<sup>47</sup> Hardin, 373.

<sup>48</sup> Centennial Committee, 17. The *New Century Atlas* mapped the earlier wood-frame church.

<sup>49</sup> The population schedule of the 1875 state census provides good individual person, household, and farm production data, but it offers little in the way of larger contextual information about the area of West Winfield. The industrial schedule is incompletely filled in, and the entire town of Winfield is listed under the Cedarville post office making it necessary to correlate households with mapping data from 1868.

<sup>50</sup> United States Census for 1880, Herkimer Co., Winfield, E.D. 42.

<sup>51</sup> Beers, 128.

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

24

Some stores and shops listed in 1879, such as the bakery, meat market, hardware stores, clothing stores and milliners were likely oriented to a mainly local clientele, but others like its hotels, restaurants, and liveries show that West Winfield also catered to a steady stream of traffic on the old turnpike. The sash-and-blind factory and lumber yards indicate a healthy building trade; the coal yard represents the shift away from wood-fired heat eased by the opening of the railroad spur.<sup>52</sup>

Of the commercial and service buildings represented in the list, there are few survivors in West Winfield. On the north side of West Main, the stone blacksmith's shop marks the eastern extent of a fire that cleared the area running west in 1906.<sup>53</sup> On the south side of West Main, two or three more buildings predate 1900. All of the commercial buildings on the north side of East Main are gone; Centennial Park now occupies those parcels. The former hotel at the southeast corner is replaced by a large convenience store. On South Street two additional late nineteenth-century buildings remain. Some buildings were lost to fire; others were replaced by new buildings beginning in the early 1900s to match new technologies and tastes. Some were simply demolished, and their lots were leveled.

By 1893, the tannery was the village's largest business. When C.J. Wheeler, the third generation to own it, took it over in 1884 it may still have only employed six men, as it did in 1879. He soon sold the business to E.D. Beckwith and John and Henry Hiteman. That partnership sold their tannery at Cedarville in favor of expanding the former Wheeler business, which had better transportation connections. The location allowed them to buy tanbark in Pennsylvania and ship it by rail. To accommodate increased production, they enlarged the plant in 1886, 1887, and 1888. The number of employees from the Wheelers' six men in 1879 rose to between 45 and 50 in 1893.<sup>54</sup> By 1893, the tannery had tripled production from 600 calfskins per week to 1,800. The rapid rise in production might also indicate the use of chromium salts instead of tan bark patented in 1884, which allowed skins to be processed in a fraction of the time required in vegetable tanning.<sup>55</sup> In a pattern common in rural factory villages of the time, it seems likely that many of these men headed the 85 families attending St. Joseph the Worker.<sup>56</sup>

A rise in employment at the tannery, on the railroad, and possibly other places by ca. 1880 increased demand for housing. In 1882, Noadiah Taylor, who acquired the J. Hardin

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<sup>52</sup> Among the primary reasons the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western formed was to carry coal from Pennsylvania to the Great Lakes navigation.

<sup>53</sup> Centennial Committee, 70.

<sup>54</sup> Hardin, 373.

<sup>55</sup> Unites States Patent Office to Augustus Schultz, of New York, N.Y., "Tawing Hides and Skins, Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. 291,, 784, dated January 8, 1884. Application filed May 31, 1883." (Google Patents, <https://patentimages.storage.googleapis.com/d3/51/63/90b80dd68023a8/US291784.pdf>; retrieved 22 January 2024 via <https://patents.google.com>)

<sup>56</sup> Hardin, 378.

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

25

property at the western edge of the village, opened Taylor Avenue. A little later, he opened a second shorter street a little farther west.<sup>57</sup> Houses on Taylor Avenue are all two-story examples of vernacular late Victorian house design with a variety of steeply pitched, cross-gabled roofs and dormers, open porches, and regular fenestration plans with large openings. Those at 172, 174, 175, 176, 177, and 179 may all use have used the same plan. Numbers 171 and 178 feature slightly lower pitched roofs and may date a little earlier. All rest on stone foundations. Each occupies a generously sized lot, and as a group, they form a coherent middle-class neighborhood at the periphery of the earlier village development. The exact alignment of the second street on the former Hardin property is the private lane called Cramer Drive.

A similar neighborhood of about a dozen houses extended south past the Baptist Church on East Main Street, turned west onto Curtis Avenue, and turned again onto Marble Avenue (later renamed as a continuation of Curtis Av).<sup>58</sup> The 1906 *New Century Atlas* showed a half-dozen more houses with similar designs mainly on the west side of South Street near the railroad and the village corporation line established in 1898. Finally, another short row of houses was built on the west side of Academy Street. Based on style, the latter two neighborhoods were probably also built by 1898.

By the 1880s, educational standards were changing. In 1884, West Winfield Academy merged with the district school to form a union free school that incorporated a publicly supported high school department.<sup>59</sup> Photographs of the large two-story brick building depict a Romanesque Revival design characteristic of academic architecture of the time that replaced the older building. The old cobblestone district school on West Main Street was abandoned; it was demolished in 1888.

In the same era, civic improvements, especially water supply, were identified as important to public health. In 1878, Reverend W.A. Fenn (1834–1927) established a private waterworks drawing from six artesian wells. Fifteen years later, in 1893, it was “liberally patronized.”<sup>60</sup> Water Street (now Fenn Street) shown in the 1906 atlas ran north from Main Street to Fenn’s large Queen Anne house associated with a capacious matching carriage barn on land near the west bank of North Winfield Creek. Reservoir Street (now Water Street) probably led to the storage facility, but the latter was not shown.

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<sup>57</sup> Smith, 169.

<sup>58</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, West Winfield (September 1900), Sheet 2. This was Sanborn’s first foray in West Winfield. The survey was limited to commercial, trackside, and industrial properties and nearby residential development.

<sup>59</sup> The “West Winfield High School Register of Alumni, 1915-6” provides the chronology. (<https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/winfield/winfieldalumni.html>, retrieved 29 October 2023) Smith, 46, provides the date of demolition.

<sup>60</sup> Centennial Committee, 130, and Hardin, 377.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. described the “water facilities” in West Winfield as a gravity system supplied by a 500,000-gallon reservoir elevated 67’ above the corner of Main and North Streets. This location indicates that the mile or so of mains composed of 3” and 4” pipe installed ca. 1885 was supplied by the reservoir built by W.A. Fenn. The 1900 Sanborn map marked eight hydrants, four on the old turnpike route and four more on the former plank road. The southernmost one was opposite the tannery; the easternmost was near the bottom of Academy Street, a little east of the Baptist Church. The westernmost one was near the Congregational Church and the Cottage Hotel. The adjacent residential districts west, north, and east were uncovered except for the distance that a few hundred feet of hose could reach. S.S. Morgan’s Italian villa on West Main Street was a casualty of this narrow range, but buildings within the range also succumbed.

### **EARLY VILLAGE YEARS, 1898–CA. 1945**

When the Village of West Winfield was chartered in 1898, its population had stabilized in the mid-700s, where it persisted until after World War II. A village charter allowed a municipality to elect a mayor and board of trustees enabled to levy taxes to capitalize local improvements to highways, establish utilities, and form a municipal firefighting company. The charter established a corporation boundary forming a pentagon that follows lot lines surveyed during patent subdivision before 1790 and later codified as property boundaries by New Englanders settling there soon after.

The 1906 atlas shows that the boundary encompassed a generous amount of undeveloped land, especially in the south half of the village traversed by the railroad. (Villages on rail lines could draw revenue from the railroad companies.) Trackage businesses included a feed store, a warehouse belonging to the tannery, and a milk station. There were also a coal shed, a passenger and freight station, and a section house that oversaw the maintenance of the line and its buildings. The industrial enclave facing South Street adjacent to the river incorporated two millponds and a race system that powered a grist mill and two sawmills. The Sanborn fire insurance maps surveyed in 1900, 1905, and 1910 show that the Beckwith & Hiteman tannery just north of the East Branch of the Unadilla relied solely on steam power. There was also a store on the west side of the street, probably a general store serving the surrounding neighborhood of some fifteen houses.

The village extended more than a quarter-mile east of North Winfield Creek, where about a dozen houses, most recently built, faced East Main Street. Fairgrounds Road, an early town highway, bore northeast through that section and passed beyond the village line towards Cedarville. The boundary also took in considerable open land beyond the enclave of large, mainly Italianate and Queen Anne houses faced each other on generously sized village lots with deep setbacks built on lots north of the M.E. church and its parsonage. These buildings faced each across the street near the junction with Academy Street. Postcards show that deep

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

27

setbacks allowed space for sidewalks shaded by mature deciduous trees on both sides of North Street almost from the main intersection.

Despite the generous village boundary, the commercial district remained firmly centered on the intersection of the old turnpike and plank road routes and aligned mainly with the old turnpike route. The Brunswick Ho.[use], a two-story hotel with a saloon and a billiards room, stood on the west side of North Street, , stood at the corner and nearly abutted a warehouse on the west. A large, two-story commercial block housing a hardware store and a Lodge (society not identified) were next to the Hose Ho.[use] for fighting fires, the post office site at the time, and a small one-story blacksmith's shop. Cottage Hotel and its numerous outbuildings stood next to the stone blacksmith shop, which was the last business on that side of the street.

The south side of the street was similarly densely developed with a two-story insurance office and store at the corner. The next building west housed a dentist and a grocer. The diminutive one-story cobblestone bank (extant) with dressed stone quoins was next followed by the two-story meat market with an icehouse behind and an early-period, wood-frame house with a large Federal-style oval window in its gable-front peak. The Congregational Church marked the western end of the commercial area on this side of the street.

Buildings housing businesses were bracketed by residential development on East Main Street extending east to North Winfield Creek. In 1901, the large hotel at the southeast corner of the main intersection known for decades as the Haggerty House burned, and its site was cleared. The 1910 Sanborn map marked the livery stables two doors east of the site.

On South Street, commercial buildings faced each other beyond the Haggerty House at the corner. A three-unit, two-story block stood north of the print shop on the east side. On the west side, two storefronts at the rear of the corner building opened to South Street. A two-story, two-unit building (extant) housed a grocer and a hardware store. The dwellinghouse portion of yet another blacksmith's shop cum residence still stands.

By 1905, the Haggerty House at the southeast corner of the main crossing was gone. A year later, fire destroyed the Cottage Hotel on the north side of West Main and an adjacent house. Ironically, one of the village's eight hydrants was located directly in front of it. By 1910, a new two-story, concrete block firehouse was being built on West Main Street. A similar fiery fate awaited the store at the southwest corner of the intersection in 1912. It, too, had a hydrant directly in front of it. In 1919, the wood-frame Catholic Church at the western edge of the village succumbed to fire. It was replaced in 1921 with Neo-Gothic buff brick building still used by the parish today. The parish raised more than \$55,000 for its construction, a figure illustrating how greatly building costs had risen since the new Baptist Church was built for \$23,000 in the late 1880s.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Centennial Committee, 17.

During the 1910s, new heating and transportation technologies powered by gasoline overlapped with earlier water- and coal-powered ones. How much wood played a role by this period is unclear: woodland clearance peaked throughout the region in the early 1900s. The 1910 Sanborn map shows a few businesses using gasoline and gas engines for small operations; for large operations, others, especially the tannery and the milk station near the tracks, relied on coal brought by rail for steam power. The coal yards probably supplied domestic heat. For some, however, waterpower continued to provide motive force. In 1913, Thomas Smith and Arthur C. Hackley built a long concrete milldam just east of South Street on the East Branch of the Unadilla River to power saw and grist mills. Fragments of the dam survive, even though the mills ceased operations in the 1930s, about the time the grist mill burned in 1940.<sup>62</sup>

The village's first electrical company was established in 1915.<sup>63</sup> Lighting was usually the first priority for power plants as it replaced the open flames of kerosene and gas lamps. The same year, John Watkins built the large, two-story wood-frame feed mill alongside the railroad tracks and Burrows Road.<sup>64</sup>

The federal censuses enumerated in 1920 and 1930 record both continuity and change in West Winfield. The great majority of households lived under their own roofs rather than in shared accommodation. Well over half owned their residences. A plumber found work, indicating that houses now incorporated indoor plumbing. A resident of West Winfield could expect to purchase nearly all items – food, clothing, household goods and furniture, jewelry – and find banking, legal, and medical services on Main Street. The tannery – established as the primary employer by 1893 – remained so. Virtually all employed were men; in some households, not only the head of household but others also worked there. The cheese factory and the cheese box factory employed a few more. Married women were mainly recorded as working within the home: most were keeping house, but a few continued as dressmakers and milliners.

In 1920, the transportation trade was represented by blacksmiths, teamsters, and railroad workers. By 1930, evidence of horses in West Winfield had all but disappeared. Instead, several auto mechanics and service garage owners were recorded. West Winfield's location on the old Third Great Western Turnpike, encouraged this rapid shift. The route was adopted in 1926 by the federal government as part of its new US Highway network, a national effort to improve the highways for gasoline-powered transportation.<sup>65</sup> This first round of

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<sup>62</sup> Town historian Steven Davis says it burned in 1940. Smith, 14, states it burned two years earlier on page 22.

<sup>63</sup> Centennial Committee, 130.

<sup>64</sup> Centennial Committee, 68. The building was doubled in size by John's son Stanley ca. 1952.

<sup>65</sup> Richard F. Weingroff, "From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System," U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, 1997. Published in *AASHTO Quarterly*, Spring 1997. (<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/numbers.cfm#a17>; retrieved 20 January 2024)

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

29

establishing a federal highway system generally adopted existing routes, only building new roadways to connect them. US 20 was envisioned as one of several improved east–west coast-to-coast routes. (Not all of these were fully realized. All or most of US 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, and 80 were developed in the coming years. US 60, 70, and 90 joined other transcontinental routes mainly over the Great Plains.<sup>66</sup>) The Cherry Valley Turnpike Association formed immediately after US 20 as designated to market the route and its amenities. Until after World War II, US 20 was the fastest way to cover the 135-mile distance between Albany and Syracuse.<sup>67</sup>

In West Winfield, spaces opened by fire and demolition on Main Street were all filled during this period. Much of this new construction was masonry rather than wood frame. A bit earlier, in 1909, the neo-Classical theater, Bisby Hall, on South Street may have established the trend. Today this building, with its full-height sandstone columns flanking an arched center entrance, houses the village offices and library. The Bisby family presented it to the village as a charitable act acknowledging the importance of West Winfield to their family in a pattern expressed in other rural villages in the region.<sup>68</sup> The Masons dedicated their new two-story brick hall at the southwest corner of the main crossing in 1922.<sup>69</sup> On the lot west of the Congregational Church (later replaced by the present post office), Colwell’s Drug Store (374 West Main St) opened in 1920.<sup>70</sup> Its one-story, gable-front design with an at-grade entrance typified new commercial buildings oriented to automobile travelers. Over its years of operation, Colwell’s published numerous picture postcards of the village.<sup>71</sup>

On the north side of the street, a large brick service garage with a barrel-vaulted roof was built on the site of the Cottage Hotel, between the new firehouse and the old stone blacksmith’s shop. The West Winfield Bank moved from its cobblestone building on the south side of West Main to its new buff brick Georgian Revival building on the north side east of the

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<sup>66</sup> Map, “United States System of Highways, adopted for uniform marking the American Association of State Highway Officials, November 11, 1926.”

([https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/de/United\\_States\\_System\\_of\\_Highways\\_Adopted\\_for\\_Uniform\\_Marking\\_by\\_the\\_American\\_Association\\_of\\_State\\_Highway\\_Officials.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/de/United_States_System_of_Highways_Adopted_for_Uniform_Marking_by_the_American_Association_of_State_Highway_Officials.jpg); retrieved 10 November 2023)

<sup>67</sup> This booster association published placards for subscribers to place in their store windows and maps and guides listing accommodation and services along the route. For an example of an early tourist guide published in 1931, see <https://briandimambro.com/products/cherry-valley-turnpike-new-york-1931-u-s-route-20-souvenir-cartoon-map?variant=39740386738254>; retrieved 10 November 2023. This dealer displays select pages of the guide. “The U.S. Route 20 Byway Strategy” prepared in 2004 for basic details of this strategy. ([https://www.dot.ny.gov/content/engineering/Scenic-Byways/Byways-repository/U.S.%20Route%2020%20Byway%20Strategy\\_001-050.pdf](https://www.dot.ny.gov/content/engineering/Scenic-Byways/Byways-repository/U.S.%20Route%2020%20Byway%20Strategy_001-050.pdf); retrieved 10 November 2023)

<sup>68</sup> Other regional examples include the Clark family in Cooperstown, the Starins in Fultonville, and the Arkells in Canajoharie.

<sup>69</sup> Centennial Committee, 71.

<sup>70</sup> Centennial Committee, 72.

<sup>71</sup> Several are collected at “Jim Murphy’s Postcards of West Winfield, Town of Winfield.” (<https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/winfield/murphy/murphycards1.html>; retrieved 10 November 2023)

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

30

blacksmith's shop in the 1920s. The new bank resembles many village banks built throughout the region in the pre-Depression era. Such banks were built especially in communities where businesses like the tannery required safety for a sizable regular payroll. The masonry construction and "Early American" style spoke of durability and stability. A new building (#385) housing an electrical supply store was built next door on the east side.<sup>72</sup> At the northwest corner, a new service station didn't replace the remaining commercial buildings there until ca. 1960. The USGS field check performed in 1943 located buildings on all four corners of the main intersection, indicating that something had also replaced the second Cottage Hotel at the southeast corner. The commercial row that included Barstorn's IGA in the 1930s lasted into the final quarter of the century when fire consumed those buildings.<sup>73</sup> Their combined sites now form Centennial Park, opened in 1998 to celebrate the village's first 100 years.

On West Main Street, a new bungalow was built on the south side of the street and three new houses were built on lots subdivided from the former Morgan estate on the north side during the 1920s and 1930s. The one on the south side is a modest house; the three on the north are larger, and at least two were "kit houses." While many are familiar with Aladdin and Sears Roebuck pre-cut and kit houses, these two represent other companies that supplied plans, specs, and materials, sometimes precut, beginning in the early 1900s. The Morgan estate stipulated a 40' setback on the lots, which sets these three houses off from their neighbors. The first house (#357) going west – a large, two-story, side-gabled building, was provided by Harris Bros. – a ready-cut company based in Chicago.<sup>74</sup> Continuing west, the large stuccoed Spanish Colonial house (#353) was a Gordon-Van Tine house purchased in 1924 and put up by a local contractor.<sup>75</sup> The last house (#341) was built in 1925 with an office on the west side and a garage on the east side. It features three gabled dormers across the front roof face. Although not identified as a kit house, its proportions and details are suggestive.<sup>76</sup> Until these three houses were built in the 1920s, the open land hosted a Chautauqua encampment during summers.

As automobile ownership increased, especially after World War I, tent camping increased in popularity. In a 1930 guide to the Cherry Valley Turnpike told motor tourists they were welcome to camp in Memorial Park, which was opened by the town along North Winfield

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<sup>72</sup> Centennial Committee, 69.

<sup>73</sup> Centennial Committee, 74. A ca. 1935 photo shows the large two-story, gable-front wood-frame building and the edge of the one-story meat market east of it.  
(<https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/winfield/westwinsnapshots.html>; retrieved 10 November 2023)

<sup>74</sup> Smith, 127. "Antique Home Style. Harris Brothers Company."  
(<https://www.antiquehomestyle.com/plans/harris-bros/index.htm>; retrieved 10 November 2023)

<sup>75</sup> Smith, 129. The Gordon-Van Tine Company was based in Davenport, Iowa. Materials could be precut or not. Different sources provide various founding dates, but they began shipping plans and material ca. 1910. They were bought out in 1946 and liquidated moments before the postwar housing boom began.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, 130.



**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

31

Creek in 1920. It furnished “fine drinking water” and was equipped with swings, slides, and a swimming pool.<sup>77</sup> The park has been updated with playing fields and walking paths, but it still incorporates two large, handsomely crafted gazebos that stood on the S.S. Morgan Estate.<sup>78</sup> The guide further noted that West Winfield offered “good hotels, restaurants, filling stations, and several stores.”

A few additional houses were built east of North Winfield Creek in this period. These include a large bungalow at 475 East Main Street and three somewhat later “colonial” examples on generous lots on the west side of Fairground Road. (Nos. 501, 503, and 509 Fairground Rd were surveyed in the 1943 USGS field check). In 1932, the Greek Revival-style Weeks house at the northeast corner of Fairgrounds Road was moved about a quarter-mile west to its present site at 479 East Main Street to make way for a new school to replace the one on Academy Street. The brick Georgian Revival building, designed by the Utica firm of Kinne and Frank cost \$244,000 and occupied a five-acre parcel at the visual eastern edge of the village.<sup>79</sup> Georgian Revival school designs were especially popular during the Depression. Many schools built in this period including several facing the former Third Great Western Turnpike share design characteristics of symmetry and Classical details executed in brick with sandstone trim. Collectively, they were meant to reinforce patriotic values of early America.

### **POST-WAR YEARS, 1945–CA. 1970**

The sweeping victories of the Allied forces that ended World War II segued to bounding optimism and an eagerness to develop new ideas across much of the nation. New opportunities for returning GIs encouraged young men to marry and raise families. Until 1968, the tannery provided steady employment to many West Winfield residents. West Winfield’s population rose from 754 in 1940 to 832 in 1950. It rose again in 1960 to 960 and peaked in 1970 at 1,018.<sup>80</sup> Numerous communities recorded such figures in the Baby Boom years. In West Winfield, new houses were built on recently platted subdivisions at the periphery of the developed areas within the village boundary, and the school built a new wing to accommodate the increased number of students.

When wartime rationing ended, many Americans hit the road. The Cherry Valley Turnpike Association had paved the way for West Winfield and other villages along US 20 to open businesses catering to renewed auto tourism. In the late 1940s, traffic could be bumper-to-bumper. For a short time right after the Thruway (I-90) opened in the Mohawk Valley in the

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<sup>77</sup> Excerpts from Will C. Waldron, *The Cherry Valley Turnpike* (Waterville, N.Y.: Osborn Mayer, 1930). (<https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/winfield/winstuff.html>; retrieved 10 November 2023)

<sup>78</sup> The gazebos are pictured in Beers, *History of Herkimer County* (1879): opposite 284.

<sup>79</sup> Smith, 46.

<sup>80</sup> Population figures from Wikipedia, which draws from US Census records. (“West Winfield, New York,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West\\_Winfield,\\_New\\_York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Winfield,_New_York))

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

32

late 1950s, motorists might have favored that route for its novelty.<sup>81</sup> That purpose-built route, part of the 1956 Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, rapidly became the pre-eminent freight route. For holidaymakers seeking scenery and amusement, however, US 20 was often the choice for family vacations.

In 1953, a new service station and garage opened at the western edge of the village. Van Atta's Restaurant (372 W Main) opened a few years earlier in 1947.<sup>82</sup> This one-story, side-gabled concrete block building features three gabled dormers spanning its front roof face and bears a resemblance to "colonial" at 341 West Main across the street. On the land east of the little tributary of the East Branch, one family built an eight-cabin tourist resort called Kay's Cabins on Cramer Drive.<sup>83</sup> Two or three house trailers now occupy this site. The large chains that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s superseded the cabin resorts popularized between the wars on main trunk routes, but along highways such as US 20, cabin resorts and motels – essentially tourist cabins strung together under a single roof – continued viable long after that. On US 20, these businesses developed at interval similar to the frequency of taverns opened in the early 1800s.<sup>84</sup>

By the 1950s, new house lots were being platted in West Winfield. Within the area developed by the early 1900s, potential new house sites were few. Based on tax data, Fairview Drive was the first new street to be opened. By the 1960s, Fairview Circle was added. These form a single-access loop on level land overlooking the east bank of North Winfield Creek. The back lines of lots on north side of Fairview Drive meet the village line. Houses here are mainly late Capes and gable-roofed ranch houses. The degree of variation indicates that people bought lots and built rather than buying lots with houses built on spec. New lots were also platted on Burrows Road. Houses here are mainly ranch houses. The Crumb Trailer Park (174 Burrows Rd) opened on the site of the former town dump with 16 units of varying age.<sup>85</sup> This runs north from Burrows Road to the railroad berm. A few more houses of similar age fill in between earlier ones on Mill Street, which extends west from South Street.

Within the earlier parts of the village, houses were built on the sites of the old West Winfield school on Academy Street and the Baptist and Methodist Churches in 1960s and 1970s. A purpose-built post office replaced the Congregational Church, which occupied prime commercial real estate, in the 1960s. Several new houses, mainly single-story designs with a variety of Mid-Century details, were built on large lots on East Main Street opposite the school

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<sup>81</sup> Smith, 158.

<sup>82</sup> Smith, 203. The building now houses Gates-Cole Insurance.

<sup>83</sup> Centennial Committee, 73.

<sup>84</sup> Tania Werbizky, M.A., Cornell University, completed a master's thesis about these businesses on US 20 in central New York ca. 1990. So far, I have not located a reference to her thesis, but she is frequently quoted in sources on this topic as a google search reveals.

<sup>85</sup> CDM, "Final Feasibility Study Report; Hiteman Leather Company, West Winfield," 2006, page 1-2. (West Winfield, N.Y.: Village Library)

and continuing east nearly to the boundary. A few more filled the remaining frontage on Fairground Road, and a handful of new houses were built on North Street beyond Pleasant Street and the former Methodist Church site.

During the 1940s, apparently first to decrease fuel use for heating the three Protestant churches – Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational – began rotating services collectively around their three buildings. They found this increased a sense of community in addition to the intended economizing, and this practice continued informally for some time before beginning the legal and financial process of federating the three congregations into a single entity.<sup>86</sup> This adopted a much older idea used in several Erie Canal villages, where federated churches formed in the early 1800s whereby different sects pooled their resources to construct a single building for services held at different times.<sup>87</sup> In 1965, the congregations signed a consolidation agreement and began formulating plans to build on the large previously acquired property on the south side of East Main Street overlooking the west bank of North Winfield Creek. The new wood-frame Mid-Century Modern church was dedicated in May 1970. The building incorporates the large rose window once located in the front façade of the Baptist Church.<sup>88</sup> The West Winfield Federated Church is set back from the highway, and its lot is landscaped with mature trees and shrubs.

A decade before village population neared its peak, the West Winfield school district added the elementary wing off the back of the school on East Main Street in 1960.<sup>89</sup> In 1969, the year after the tannery shut its doors, West Winfield centralized with the Leonardsville and Bridgewater school districts to form the Mount Markham Central School District.<sup>90</sup> In a similar spirit of expanding services to residents, the Greater West Winfield Medical Center opened to provide community health services in a purpose-built Mid-Century Modern building at 544 East Main Street in 1963. It is now part of the Bassett Healthcare system.

### **RECENT HISTORY, 1970–CA. PRESENT**

Closure of Hiteman Leather Company in 1968 greatly altered West Winfield's economy. Except for the feed mill, most of the smaller industries located near the railroad on South Street had already shut down. In 1970, however, two Hungarian immigrants, Laslo Pustay and Sandor Pusztai, opened Precisionmatics to manufacture custom metal fittings in partnership with Bob Taylor. For about a year and a half, they worked in part of the tannery building. They moved to the former Dairymen's League creamery building, subsequently the Helmer Tool and Machine plant, after they bought that building. Precisionmatics partnered with Simmonds Precision in

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<sup>86</sup> Centennial Committee, 21.

<sup>87</sup> This occurred at both Canajoharie and St. Johnsville; there may be additional examples.

<sup>88</sup> Centennial Committee, 21.

<sup>89</sup> Smith, 46.

<sup>90</sup> Centennial Committee, 27.

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

34

Norwich, N.Y., in 1976 on their first aerospace contract and bought its first computer numerical control (CNC) machine that year. This established Precisionmatics in this sector of the industry. By 2015, they'd outgrown the former creamery and began planning a new building just outside the village boundary at 675 US 20.<sup>91</sup> They moved there in 2017, where in combination with the Mount Markham Central School District, they are the largest local employers.

When the tannery buildings were demolished in 1996 and 1998, they left behind a Brownfield site that is now grassed over. Visually, this leaves a gap in a streetscape once more densely developed. The east side of South Street from East Main to Curtis Avenue has experienced the greatest degree of loss and redevelopment. One nineteenth-century commercial building and two houses remain from of the buildings mapped by the USGS in 1943 on the east side of the street. Much of the space these buildings occupied is paved, and a large parking lot with a deep setback fronts the Dollar General. The gable-end of a multi-unit residential building is similarly flanked on both sides. Pre-1940 buildings on the west side of South Street have fared better and mainly fill the frontage extending south nearly to the former tannery site.

Village population was counted as 1,018 in 1970; it began a precipitous decline soon after, falling to 871 in 1990. In 2020 it fell to 733. A declining population following a housing boom in the postwar period has led to almost no post-1970 residential construction. The salient exceptions are the two multi-unit buildings on South Street near the village line. In the late 1970s, Mayor Harold Talbot urged establishing the West Winfield Housing Authority. The authority opened the 24-unit General Winfield Scott House for seniors and low-income people in 1985. The property was expanded with a 16-unit building named posthumously for Mayor Talbot when it opened in 1992.<sup>92</sup> The two buildings, which stand near each other, are now privately managed.

When the village celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1998, Centennial Park, which occupies four lots where commercial buildings stood until the 1990s, opened. This green space faces a large, recently built convenience store with high canopies over its gas tanks and a broad building that occupies much of the breadth of the former turnpike hotel site. New or greatly remodeled buildings face the east side of South Street nearly to Curtis Avenue. Farther south, a sizable garage housing a spray foam insulation company is set back from the highway near the former feed mill; storage units are located on the next lot north. A remodeled gable-front commercial building stands opposite. On West Main Street, in the 1970s, a firehouse able to house larger trucks replaced the older concrete block one built soon after the village was chartered. East and north of the main intersection, few changes occurred on these

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<sup>91</sup> "Precisionmatics Company, Inc." (<http://www.precisionmatics.com/>; retrieved 24 November 2023)

<sup>92</sup> Centennial Committee, 125.

**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

*Historical Narrative and Architectural Overview*

---

35

predominantly residential streets in the village and they present generally intact streetscapes established mainly before 1900.

# Reconnaissance Level Cultural Resources Survey

Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County

9 February 2024

35

*Assessment of Historic Integrity and Recommendations for Further Work*

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## Assessment of Historic Integrity

This assessment of cultural resources in the Village of West Winfield in the Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, summarizes the survey findings and applies the criteria laid out in National Register Bulletin 15 and the themes laid out in Bulletin 16 published by the National Park Service about assessing and inventorying cultural resources.

### SUMMARY

The Village of West Winfield in the Town of Winfield in Herkimer County, New York, comprises about 580 acres (or 0.9 square miles). The village retains an inventory of cultural resources representing its history of development from its post-Revolutionary settlement by mainly New England people to ca. 1975. That date approximates the 50-year construction anniversary for eligibility to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places established by the National Preservation Act of 1966 and reiterated in the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980.

Early water-powered industry – milling and tanning – were established near the confluence of the East Branch of Unadilla River and North Winfield Creek beginning in the 1790s. A northbound route linked that development to the earlier-settled Town of Litchfield and thence to the Mohawk Valley beyond. This travel orientation began to shift in the early 1810s with the opening of the Third Great Western Turnpike.<sup>1</sup> This east–west route is still the predominant route of travel in the region, although traffic volumes and types of travelers have varied greatly over the past two centuries. By 1872, the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad opened a branch line connecting the Village of Richfield Springs and points west, among them West Winfield, to its Utica-Binghamton line. The railroad ran through the industrial section of the village along the river. People in West Winfield responded to the economic advantages of the confluence of transportation routes throughout the historic period (ca. 1800–1975).

The village’s strongest asset in the terms set out in the regulations set out in compliance with state and federal legislation is its large assemblage of historic-period, mainly single-unit, housing stock in varied styles popular during the historic period (ca. 1800–1975) that remain in mainly intact streetscapes. Throughout the residential areas developed before World War II, there is virtually no infill postdating 1950. Early Federal-style houses occupy prime lots on Main Street; later Greek Revival and Italianate houses fill in around them between North Winfield Creek and the western boundary. Development on North Street began slightly later and includes mainly Italianate and Queen Anne houses. Streets in the northeast quadrant of the

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<sup>1</sup> Different sections of the turnpike opened at various times during the first decade of the century. Steven Davis, Town Historian, states that the road was opened in West Winfield in 1808. The commissioners’ records of the Third Great Western Turnpike are in Special Collections of the Research Library at the Fenimore Art Museum, formerly the New York Historical Association, in Cooperstown, New York.

# Reconnaissance Level Cultural Resources Survey

Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County

9 February 2024

36

## *Assessment of Historic Integrity and Recommendations for Further Work*

---

village retain examples built subsequent to the opening of the West Winfield Academy in 1850. Development continued here into the early 1900s. Newer streets are lined by rows of vernacular Queen Anne houses. Similar conditions prevail on South Street near the former railroad crossing and on Mill Street.

Postwar residential development occurred almost entirely in two main locations. Fairview Drive and Circle, a cul-de-sac subdivision, opened at the northeast edge of the village off Fairground Road. Approximately 30 houses, mainly ranch-style examples as well as a few late Capes, occupy lots with fairly narrow frontages. Similar development subdivided the frontage of Burrows Road into about a dozen lots surrounding an earlier farmhouse. While almost entirely constructed more than 50 years ago, these houses exhibit considerable remodeling using later materials and do not appear eligible for listing. The house trailer park off the north side of Burrows Road appears similarly ineligible at present. The row of houses built in the late 1940s and early 1950s opposite the 1932 brick school facing East Main Street exhibit a degree of historic integrity of design, setting, materials, and feeling, and they seem potentially contributing to a National Register Historic District.

Evidence of West Winfield industry along the watercourse and railroad in the southern section of the village is fragmentary. A large feed mill built in two phases and a Quonset building constructed soon after World War II are located on the east side of South Street. An early twentieth-century steam-powered creamery later used as a small factory stands on Helmer Avenue. Eroded concrete infrastructure east of the bridge over the East Branch marks the location of the last milldam, constructed in 1913.

Evidence of the commercial development facing the former Third Great Western Turnpike and South Street varies in integrity from the early stone blacksmith's shop to a recently built Mirabito convenience store on the site of an early turnpike hotel. Some resources, including the large brick, barrel-vaulted garage and the former Colwell's Drugstore, date to the era of early auto tourism that was enhanced by the designation of the route as US 20 in 1926. A few more buildings designed to serve that trade after the war are located west of the main intersection. There are several salient losses in addition to the hotel at the southeast corner. These include commercial buildings straddling the main crossing on the north side of Main Street and additional examples on South Street near the intersection.<sup>2</sup>

The brick Masonic Hall at the southwest corner and the bank opposite, both built in the 1920s, exemplify classically influenced designs popular in the first third of the twentieth century. West Winfield retains the highly characteristic and intact brick Georgian Revival school constructed in the mid-1930s to supersede earlier educational buildings with one that met standards set between the wars. Its ample lot at the village edge offers space that has allowed the school to expand with athletic fields and other outdoor activities increasingly deemed

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<sup>2</sup> For postcards and photographs showing how these streetscapes looked historically, see items under "Images of Winfield at Town of Winfield section of this website: <https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/winfield.html>. Historic maps listed in the bibliography illustrate building locations with the larger village.

# Reconnaissance Level Cultural Resources Survey

Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County

9 February 2024

37

## *Assessment of Historic Integrity and Recommendations for Further Work*

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essential. Of West Winfield's earliest educational buildings – the cobblestone district school, the academy and subsequent union free school located in the northeast quadrant of the village – little evidence survives.

West Winfield has lost three of its four historic-period church buildings, but it has gained the handsome Mid-Century Modern Federated Church of West Winfield dedicated in 1970 by an unusually forward-thinking combined Protestant congregation. The Roman Catholic neo-Gothic church, St. Joseph the Worker, provides a visual marker at the western edge of the village on Main Street. This building, constructed in the same era as the Masonic Hall and bank, illustrates how different styles used textured brick to create buildings with permanence.

The town historian, Steven Davis, has compiled a list of village properties that encompasses lots that once had historic buildings that are now either vacant or have replacement buildings on them. He counts about sixty-five such parcels; of these, only about eight buildings are replaced with newer ones. The greatest degree of loss is, unsurprisingly, on South Street (NY 51) and on land adjacent to the former railroad. East and West Main streets have relatively few losses in the residential areas abutting the commercial district, but within the commercial district, the list is longer. Similarly, on North Street, the small extension of the commercial district north from Main Street has experienced more loss than the residential area mainly beyond Carrier Street. Excluding the loss of the former Union School building in the northeast quadrant, that section of the village has sustained virtually no loss of historic buildings and retains the highest degree of historic integrity in the village.

Roughly half of the land within the village boundary is undeveloped. This incorporates low-lying areas alongside the two main watercourses – the East Branch of the Unadilla River and North Winfield Creek – and an unnamed drainage at the western edge of the village. At slightly higher elevation, some land remains under cultivation. Two cemeteries are located within the developed area. The early West Winfield Cemetery on West Main Street, begun as a community burying ground, expanded westward in the mid-1800s and extends to edge of the bench delineating the wetlands on the East Branch. The Roman Catholic cemetery ascends the hillside behind the church.

While some of West Winfield's buildings appear individually eligible, much of the historic development area delineated in this survey (shown on the key map in Appendix #) appears eligible for listing as a more inclusive and broad-based National Register Historic District (NRHD) in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). A National Register Historic District nomination for West Winfield would be based on the criteria and themes outlined below.

### NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA AND THEMES OF SIGNIFICANCE

The area of the Village of West Winfield incorporating East and West Main streets (formerly part of the Third Great Western Turnpike and now a segment of US 20), the streets north of that route, and also short streets (Church, Clapson, and Taylor Av) extending a short distance south at either end of the village appears eligible under Criterion A in the area of



# Reconnaissance Level Cultural Resources Survey

Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County

9 February 2024

38

## *Assessment of Historic Integrity and Recommendations for Further Work*

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community development as a hamlet oriented to commerce and transportation services. It is located at the intersection of the early east–west turnpike connecting Albany and Manlius (Onondaga County) with a northbound route reaching the Mohawk Valley. That valley, about fifteen miles to the north, is the eastern part of an artery running from Albany on the Hudson River to Buffalo on Lake Erie. The east–west turnpike route through West Winfield during the early turnpike era (ca. 1808–1840) established a local orientation for commercial and transportation services of blacksmiths, wagon shops, and taverns to face that route. These were flanked east and west by closely set houses extending east to North Winfield Creek and west to a community cemetery. This orientation persisted even after a plank road that improved North and South streets was opened in the mid-1800s.

As the hamlet grew, the turnpike was called Main Street. Soon after 1850, when the West Winfield Academy opened, new streets were staked in the northeast quadrant between North Street — the route to the Mohawk Valley — and the creek. The turnpike route was incorporated as a segment of US 20 by 1926, and this section was marketed as the fastest route from Albany to Syracuse. Automobile-related businesses — gas stations and service garages — replaced blacksmiths and wagon works on Main Street and joined earlier restaurants and hotels that served both local people and travelers. Memorial Park opened in 1922 and was for a time advertised as a campsite for auto tourists on the Cherry Valley Turnpike, as the route was dubbed by boosters of the old turnpike route. Businesses serving this clientele persisted at least into the 1960s.

About a half-mile south of Main Street and connected by South Street, small industries requiring water for power and for tanning opened in the early 1800s alongside the west-flowing East Branch of Unadilla River. By the early 1870s, a branch of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad paralleled Main Street in West Winfield and connected the Village of Richfield Springs farther east with the main line (from Utica to Binghamton) to the west. This probably contributed to rapid growth of the tanning industry in West Winfield in the late 1880s as did the use of chromium rather than tanbark in the actual industrial process.

When the village incorporated in 1898, the pentagonal boundary encompassed a sizable proportion of open land. It took in the area developed around the turnpike and the northern route to the Mohawk Valley and extended eastward to include a mainly post-Civil War neighborhood of Italianate and Queen Anne-style houses on large lots beyond North Winfield Creek on East Main Street. The boundary also took in a considerable section of the railroad and adjacent industrial district south of Main Street that straddled the East Branch. While the industry and railroad in that area played leading roles in maintaining the village economy until the late 1960s when the tannery closed, the historic integrity of the physical evidence illustrating this phase of village history eroded rapidly through disuse and demolition. Visually, this creates a gap between historic-period development with a generally good degree of historic integrity on Main Street and farther north and most of South Street, where the tannery buildings and a row of houses were cleared during the 1960s and later. The NRHD study boundary proposed in the key map associated with this report excludes the southern section of

# Reconnaissance Level Cultural Resources Survey

Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County

9 February 2024

39

## *Assessment of Historic Integrity and Recommendations for Further Work*

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the present village for this reason. Areas along Main Street and running north to the edge of the village east, west, and north retain a generally high degree of historic integrity representative of West Winfield's relationship with the larger regional, and after 1926, national highway network.

Much of the Village of West Winfield in the same area outlined above appears eligible under Criterion C in the area of architecture for its inventory of building styles popular from the early 1800s, when the turnpike hamlet began growing, to 1970, that are expressed in a variety of building types. The largest proportion of these are wood-frame houses representing mainly vernacular interpretations of the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, and twentieth-century classical revival styles. The period of significance closes with the dedication of the new Mid-Century Modern Federated Church on East Main Street, which combined three local historic church congregations under one roof. There are also commercial buildings, the buff brick Roman Catholic church dedicated in 1921, two cemeteries (an early community burying ground and a later Roman Catholic cemetery), and a brick Georgian Revival school (built 1932). It is said locally that the extant stone blacksmith's shop on West Main Street was built before 1790, although this seems early relative to Winfield's development history. Collectively, these buildings illustrate how West Winfield, essentially a service community on a regionally important thoroughfare, evolved during the period of significance.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

At present, one house in the Village of West Winfield is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Rather than seeking individual property nominations, which require a degree of interior integrity, West Winfield residents would benefit more from a district nomination than individual property ones. The historic documentation collected in surveys and NRHD nominations can enhance planning efforts because it allows a genuine understanding of existing resources that is often more effective than generalized schemes for development.

The economic benefits of listing extend equally to properties listed in districts and individually. This survey lays the groundwork for a district nomination by identifying a study area for potential listing and themes of significance. An inclusive National Register Historic District encompassing some or all of the historic section of the village would provide broad-based opportunity to local property owners to take advantage of legislated incentives at both the state and federal levels for rehabilitation of listed properties. The state's Homeowner Rehabilitation Tax Credit is commonly used in residential areas; there are also programs for income-bearing properties.

There are also energy efficiency incentives. Until recently, many planners and builders regarded older buildings as being energy inefficient, but this attitude has changed greatly in recent years as builders and architects demonstrate that LEED standards can be applied successfully to existing buildings. This saves energy costs in the long term because it reduces landfilling volumes of old building materials and extracting, processing, and transporting new building materials. Those who have used some new building materials have also discovered

# Reconnaissance Level Cultural Resources Survey

Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County

9 February 2024

40

## *Assessment of Historic Integrity and Recommendations for Further Work*

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that they are impervious to repair and will simply require replacement, sometimes even before they have repaid their owners' initial investment. Most historic buildings still on the landscape were designed for durability sustained through repair rather than replacement as extraction and labor costs for initial construction were comparatively high. Traditional building materials generally do not have a scheduled obsolescence, and well-executed repair often repays owners in durability. A shift to an ethic of repair can also generate local employment; most new building materials and components are not regionally made. Based on historic documentation, it appears that until the early 1900s, probably most buildings constructed in West Winfield were made using local labor and often also using local materials.

Independent of the National Register, some communities designate locally significant historic properties to foster pride and an interest in maintaining and enhancing historic infrastructure. Some municipalities pass local preservation ordinances designating local historic districts and guiding work done on properties within those districts. Such municipalities may become Certified Local Governments (CLG), a status allowing them to tap into funds for planning and preservation. This is a complicated step and often difficult to implement in smaller communities. Districts overseen by CLGs do best in communities where a sizable pool of people who demonstrate expertise in preservation, legal questions, and construction management can volunteer as members of the historical commission formed in compliance with the CLG program. Community awareness and pride is best generated by inclusiveness, and it is often challenging to maintain the objectivity required that allows all residents to feel part of a community interested in using its historic resources wisely.

Jessie A. Ravage

9 February 2024

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**Reconnaissance Level Historic Resources Survey**  
**Village of West Winfield, Town of Winfield, Herkimer County, New York**

9 February 2024

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