

Robert Corby on Pittsford

LET'S START WITH YOUR FAMILY. WHO WERE THEY AND HOW DID THEY GET HERE?

THE ONE BRANCH THAT WAS THE EARLIEST BRANCH WAS THE LUSKS. STEVEN LUSK CAME HERE IN 1786 AND FIRST CAME TO WHERE LANDING ROAD IS NOW IN BRIGHTON AND LIKED THE AREA, WENT BACK TO VERMONT TO GET HIS FAMILY LIKE MANY NEW ENGLAND SETTLERS THAT CAME HERE, THE REASON WAS BETTER LAND, MORE LAND AVAILABLE. HE CAME BACK SEVERAL YEARS LATER. BY THE TIME HE CAME BACK HERE, SIMON AND ISRAEL STONE HAD ALREADY ESTABLISHED HOMESTEADS IN PITTSFORD SO HE DOESN'T QUALIFY AS THE FIRST SETTLER, BUT HE ESTABLISHED WHERE THE FAMILIAR LUSK FARMHOUSE IS TODAY AT THE INTERSECTION OF S. MAIN STREET AND RTE 64.

LOTS OF OTHER ROOTS HERE, TOO, BESIDES THE LUSKS?

LIKE ANY FAMILY THAT'S BEEN HERE A WHILE YOU CAN FOLLOW ANY OF THE BRANCHES, THERE'S TOO MANY TO TELL ALL THE STORIES, BUT THEY ALL HAVE INTERESTING CONNECTIONS, INTERESTING AND UNEXPECTED THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO THEM ALONG THE WAY. ONE BRANCH OF MY FAMILY, SAMUEL HUTCHINSON LIVED IN MENDON, HE WAS A FARMER AND AT ONE POINT HE BOUGHT HIS NEIGHBOR'S CHAIR FACTORY AND THE NEIGHBOR JUST HAPPENED TO BE BRIGHAM YOUNG WHO LEFT THE AREA WITH THE REST OF THE MORMONS TO PURSUE A MORE HOSPITABLE ENVIRONMENT TO THE WEST AND HE HAD THAT FOR SEVERAL YEARS, DIDN'T MAKE A GO OF THE CHAIR FACTORY, MOVED TO THE VILLAGE AND STARTED A PRODUCE BUSINESS.

ANOTHER FAMILY CAME HERE BY THE CANAL?

THE SWEENEY'S. THE SWEENEY BRANCH CAME FROM IRELAND AND THE POTATO FAMINE. MOVED UP THE CANAL, THE ERIE CANAL FROM NEW YORK CITY, HOPPED OFF THE CANAL AND LEASED A FARM IN PITTSFORD.

WHY DID THEY STAY, WHY DO YOU STAY? WHAT'S THE ATTRACTION OF THIS AREA?

I THINK PITTSFORD HAS ALWAYS BEEN A NICE PLACE TO LIVE BECAUSE IT'S HAD, EVEN WHEN IT WAS A RURAL AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY IT HAD A NICE BALANCE OF A PLEASANT ENVIRONMENT, A NICE LOCATION AND NICE PEOPLE THAT LIVED HERE. AND I THINK DESPITE THE GROWTH THAT'S HAPPENED OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS THOSE QUALITIES HAVE BEEN MAINTAINED AND I THINK IT ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A COMMUNITY THAT PEOPLE CARE ABOUT AND I THINK THAT REFLECTS IN THE QUALITY OF THE VILLAGE TODAY.

IT'S THE OLDEST VILLAGE IN MONROE COUNTY. THE VILLAGE ITSELF WAS INCORPORATED IN 1827 AS A RESULT OF THE BOOM THAT HAPPENED HERE AFTER THE ERIE CANAL OPENED UP.

AFTER THAT TIME, ROCHESTER SUPERCEDED PITTSFORD AS THE PRIMARY URBAN CENTER IN MONROE COUNTY, LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE WATER POWER, WHICH PITTSFORD DIDN'T HAVE. AND PITTSFORD REMAINED KIND OF A RURAL BACKWATER UNTIL THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY WHEN SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT BEGAN.

WE OUGHT TO MAKE THE DISTINCTION, THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE VILLAGE

AND THE TOWN. TWO VERY DIFFERENT ENTITIES?

VERY DIFFERENT. THE VILLAGE HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 3/4 OF A SQUARE MILE AND A POPULATION OF ABOUT 1,500 PEOPLE. THE TOWN HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 25 SQUARE MILES AND A POPULATION OF ABOUT 26 OR 27,000. IN THE VILLAGE, THE BUILDING STOCK, 80% OF IT IS OVER 50 YEARS OLD. IT HAS THE OLDEST BUILDING STOCK OF ANY MUNICIPALITY IN MONROE COUNTY. IN THE TOWN, MUCH OF THE HOUSING HAS BEEN BUILT WITHIN THE LAST 40 YEARS. THE VILLAGE IS ACTUALLY A COLLECTION OF FAIRLY MODEST HOUSES, THE AVERAGE HOUSE HERE HAS A VALUE OF ABOUT 150 TO 17,000 DOLLARS. THE AVERAGE SIZE IS UNDER 2,000 SQUARE FEET SO IT'S REALLY A VILLAGE OF FAIRLY SMALL MODEST HOUSES.

IS THERE A PERSONALITY HERE?

I THINK THERE IS, THERE IS A MIX. IT'S INTERESTING, IT'S CHANGED, WHEN I WAS A KID, THE COMMUNITY WAS LARGELY A COMMUNITY OF OLD RETIRED PEOPLE THAT HAD BEEN HERE FOR YEARS. THAT'S CHANGED AND A LOT OF NEW PEOPLE HAVE MOVED IN HERE. AND THE NEW PEOPLE ARE A COMBINATION. IN GENERAL THEY'RE PEOPLE THAT VALUE A QUALITY ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING WHERE YOU CAN WALK AND WHERE YOU CAN MEET AND WHERE YOU CAN KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS. AND I THINK IT'S EVENLY SPLIT BETWEEN YOUNG FAMILIES WHO WANT TO RAISE THEIR KIDS IN THIS PLACE AND RETIRES WHOSE KIDS ARE GONE AND NOW WANT A PLACE WHERE THEY REALLY ENJOY LIVING AND THEY SNAP UP OLDER HOMES AND EVEN HAVE BIDDING WARS. BECAUSE OF THAT, I THINK ONE OF THE THINGS THAT HAS HAPPENED, REAL ESTATE HAS ESCALATED, WELL ACROSS MONROE COUNTY THE PRICING HAS REMAINED FLAT, EVEN IN THE MORE EXPENSIVE NEIGHBORHOODS. IN THE VILLAGE I THINK WE'VE HAD ONE OF THE HIGHEST INCREASES IN THE VALUE OF OUR RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE.

YOU'VE MENTIONED GROWING UP HERE, ONE ROLE, DID THE CANAL IF ANY, PLAY IN YOUR CHILDHOOD?

WELL, ACTUALLY, WHEN I WAS A KID THE CANAL WAS STILL LARGELY IGNORED AND THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES THAT GREW UP BETWEEN THE RAILROAD AND THE CANAL WERE STILL FUNCTIONING. AND SO IT WAS LARGELY JUST A WAREHOUSE DISTRICT AND MANY PEOPLE THOUGHT IT WAS UGLY. AND IT'S INTERESTING ... TODAY, IT'S KIND OF A FOCAL POINT OF THE VILLAGE. BACK THEN IN THE 60'S THERE WAS A STUDY DONE IN THE VILLAGE, AND THE CANAL WAS ALMOST ENTIRELY IGNORED, AND IT'S AMAZING BY TODAY'S STANDARDS AND I THINK A LOT OF THE CREDIT TO PROMOTING THE CANAL GOES TO 2 PRIOR FIGURES THAT WERE ACTIVE IN THE TOWN, WELL ACTUALLY 3 PEOPLE. ONE IS FORMER MAYOR HOLSWORTH WHO WORKED FOR YEARS ON SMALL PROJECTS THAT INCREMENTALLY BROUGHT ATTENTION AND USE TO THE CANAL WATERFRONT. THE OTHER WAS JOHN BURGERON, A TOWN COUNCILPERSON WHO ALSO WORKED ARDUOUSLY FOR DIFFERENT ISSUES FOR THE CANAL, AND THE THIRD IS MAY BOWDOM WHO IS THE CHAIR OF OUR PLANNING BOARD WHO HAS WORKED ON IT SEEMS LIKE 100'S OF PROJECTS OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS.

TODAY, THE CANAL PLAYS WHAT ROLE IN THE VILLAGE?

WELL I THINK THE CANAL IS AN ANCHOR FOR THE VILLAGE. OUR BUSINESS DISTRICT HAS CHANGED BECAUSE OF THE MALLS AND BIG BOX RETAILERS, IT NO LONGER PROVIDES ALL THE SERVICES THAT IT USED TO. FORTUNATELY SPECIALTY SHOPPING AND OTHER THINGS HAVE COME IN HERE. AND ANY BUSINESS DISTRICT HAS ANCHORS

AND THE CANAL IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT DRAWS PEOPLE INTO THE VILLAGE TO WALK AND TO PLAY. AND IT ALSO PROVIDES A RESOURCE. IT'S A PLACE TO WALK YOUR DOG, SEE OTHER PEOPLE, GET AN ICE CREAM CONE, OR JUST SPEND A PLEASANT EVENING, AND THERE AREN'T MANY PLACES LIKE THAT. THE WAY WE GROW AND DEVELOP AREAS TODAY DON'T PROVIDE THAT. TODAY IN PLANNING, THE PRIMARY THING THAT HAPPENS WITH ZONING, AND REAL ESTATE AND GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ARE DEVELOPMENTS THAT BUILD HOUSES, FACILITATE EITHER RETAIL SHOPPING OR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ALLOW THE RAPID MOVEMENT OF THE CAR. NONE OF THOSE THINGS HAPPEN IN THE VILLAGE AND IT'S ALMOST THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO HERE AND I THINK AS THAT ATTITUDE HAS BECOME MORE AND MORE INVASIVE, PLACES LIKE PITTSFORD BECOME MORE AND MORE VALUABLE TO EVERYBODY.

WHAT'S IT'S POTENTIAL? IF WE LOOK AT THIS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS, AND WE LOOK AT THE EFFORTS THAT THE STATE IS UNDERTAKING IN A LOT OF PLACES ALONG THE CANAL, WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL, PARTICULARLY FOR PITTSFORD?

WELL I THINK THE POTENTIAL FOR US, IS TO CONTINUE TO FINE-TUNE THE THINGS WE ALREADY HAVE DONE. I DON'T THINK WE FORESEE ANY DRAMATIC COMPLETE CHANGES IN THE CHARACTER OF WHAT WE HAVE, I THINK WE CAN JUST DO BETTER SOME OF THE THINGS THAT WE HAVE ALREADY DONE. THERE ARE STILL A FEW OF UNFINISHED PIECES, ONE OF THE HUGE STRENGTHS OF OUR WATERFRONT IF WE STILL HAVE OUR ENSEMBLE OF HISTORIC WATERFRONT BUILDINGS INTACT, SO IT STILL LOOKS LIKE AN ERIE CANAL VILLAGE. AND THE FLOUR AND THE BEAN MILLS WERE OPERATING UP UNTIL 2 YEARS AGO SO THEY HAVE COMPLETE HISTORIC INTEGRITY AND I THINK THE REDEVELOPMENT AND REUSE OF THOSE FACILITIES IS PROBABLY, WILL BE THE FINAL KEY IN FINISHING OFF OUR WATERFRONT. AND THERE'S OTHER MINOR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS. RIGHT NOW WE HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE THAT IS PRIORITIZING THEM AND DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE TO MAKE SURE THAT THINGS GO IN POSITIVE WAY ON THE CANAL.

ANY CHARACTERS OUT OF YOUR PAST, OR YOUR FAMILY'S HISTORY OR THE VILLAGE'S HISTORY THAT POP OUT, THAT OUGHT TO BE REMEMBERED?

WELL I THINK ONE OF THEM OUGHT TO BE MY GRANDFATHER, TED ZORNOW. HE SPENT HIS WHOLE LIFE IN BUSINESS THAT WAS BASED ON THE CANAL. AND ALSO SORT OF TAUGHT ME AN ETHIC OF STEWARDSHIP, ABOUT PROPERTY, ABOUT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND ABOUT THE TOWN, AND I THINK THAT FOR ME WAS PROBABLY THE BIGGEST INSPIRATION IN DOING WHAT I DO TODAY WAS KNOWING THE HISTORY AND ALSO HIS ATTITUDES ABOUT WHAT HE HAD DONE OVER THE YEARS. AND MY FAMILY'S FARM IF IT WAS NOT FOR MY GRANDFATHER, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED 50, 60 YEARS AGO AND FOR HIM, IT MEANT MORE TO SEE IT AS OPEN LAND THAN THE MONEY THAT IT WOULD PROVIDE AS A HOUSING DEVELOPMENT. AND I THINK FOR THE VILLAGE IT'S A HUGE RESOURCE TODAY THAT WE STILL HAVE THAT KEY PIECE SO THAT YOU CAN SEE PROBABLY MORE SO THAN EVEN SOME RURAL VILLAGES TODAY THAT HAVE SUFFERED FROM ECONOMIC DECLINE ABOUT HOW THINGS WERE 85, 100 YEARS AGO.

LAST QUESTION. ON THE LIST OF MOST MISPRONOUNCED MONROE COUNTY NAMES, THERE IS NO "G" IN PERINTON. BUT HOW DO YOU PRONOUNCE PROPERLY "SCHOEN PLACE?"

"SHANE" PLACE.

NOT "SHO-EN"?

NOT "SHO-EN". IT'S NAMED AFTER THE SCHOEN FAMILY THAT RAN A LUMBERYARD AND COAL AND PRODUCE BUSINESS THERE IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY AND THERE'S STILL SCHOEN'S IN TOWN AND IF YOU TALK TO ANY OLD TIMER, THEY'LL SAY "SHANE" PLACE.