

A Place Called Cook Corners

As I write these lines I am aware that I am witness to another of Stone Arabia's changing scenes. It is a cold January morning. What do I see from the front window of this old house where I have lived for 64 years? Not far in front of the house looms the almost square corner in State Route 10 a mile or so north of Palatine Bridge, NY. That stretch of highway had included that sharp corner called Cook Corners from long before the memory of any living person. To further complicate the passage around the corner by vehicles a long existing building stood so near the north shoulder of the road as to be near or on the modern right of way. It is that building that is being torn down to hopefully be re-erected somewhere else. The building's removal is truly a significant part of Stone Arabia's changing scene. Hopefully the better visibility around the corner from the north where the road intersects with Dillenbeck Road will reduce the accidents that have occurred here. To understand the layout of this present road as it wends its way to and through Stone Arabia we must step far back in time. The first settlers of this unusually named place, as it was granted to the Palatines on October 19, 1723, needed little more than footpaths. The patent was for 12,700 acres north of the Mohawk River. Although 1723 was an early date to procure land in our area there was an earlier adjacent patent just to the south. The Van Slyck patent along the north bank of the Mohawk River had been granted in 1716. The original roads as they became needed did not follow present Route 10. Just when the now familiar route with its Cook Corners course was laid out is not known.

When the course was chosen in the area coming from Palatine Bridge toward Cook Corner it followed the line between the Van Slyck patent and the south boundary of the Stone Arabia patent and followed the lot lines as surveyed in the 1700s. Why the name Cook Corners? From far back in the 1700s the Cook family owned the farm where Cook Corners is located. The "history of Montgomery and Fulton Counties" was published in 1878 by FW Beers and Co. It includes a drawing of this farm as the residence of Jacob C Cook. Cook had paid to include the drawing, some family history, and their name as patrons. This drawing from 134 years ago shows the building now being removed. The structure is of post and beam construction. The framing members are hewn. The plates and sills are forty feet in length with no splices.

Luckily the old building is being carefully taken apart and will be given a new lease on life somewhere far from its original location. By the early 1900s the old Cook farm had changed hands. The Shults family, Martin Shults and his son Earl, 1885 – 1990, became the owners. Earl was my father in law's uncle. It was he who told me many of the facts about the farm. My father-in-law Benjamin S Nellis, 1900 – 1972, and his wife purchased the property in 1927 from Earl Shults. Earl was a frequent visitor to his old farm. I met him soon after I arrived here in 1948. We became good friends. He was an excellent carpenter and being as free with a long life of experiences as he was I learned much from him.

Several weeks have gone by since I started this story about Cook Corner and the buildings which stood near it. I started as the building nearest to the corner was being carefully taken down. Doubtless being so close to the road was once a benefit when it served as a horse barn and wagon house. However as motor vehicles became more prevalent the building became a garage. That is what it was in 1948 when I came here. To exit the garage where you could not see cars approaching from the north became a

hazardous undertaking. No one came out of the garage onto the main road unless someone on the house side signaled that all was clear. Earl Shults told me that when present Route 10 was improved and paved, I believe it was 1921, he offered for \$800 to move the building back so a less severe curve could be made. The state declined the offer. Possibly now that the offending building is no longer there the corner can be improved.

I failed to mention that a second building located only a few yards toward Palatine Bridge and on the same lot was also to be removed. That building was a residence for the farm's hired man. Again, I must refer to memories of Earl Shults to explain its location there. Extensive changes were made to the farm buildings while owned by the Shults family. When Earl would come into one of the rooms of the main house he would say "I put the lath on this room with my own hands". He told me that the large main farmhouse once faced towards the east. It was moved to face north as it does now. The 1878 drawing confirms this. In a day and age before the machinery we now have that would have been quite a project. Earl also said that originally there had been a long building extending toward the south from the main farmhouse. Part of that had been moved across the road for the hired man's house.

Both buildings are now history. Visibility on the corner is greatly improved for vehicles coming from the north. A few days ago the framing materials from the old horse barn began its long trailer ride to far-off Texas and hopefully a new lease on life. The tenant house was not usable in the same way. It was crushed to pieces and found its way into dumpsters for removal to the landfill.

All through the removal process it became evident what great effort had once been expended in constructing these once useful buildings. Some of the work done in the 19th century and others in the early 20th. No one visualized at that time that the beginning of the 21st century would see their demise as part of Stone Arabia's changing scene.

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Stone Arabia

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