



HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

The project area is situated entirely within the furthest western extremity of the City of Rome, Oneida County. This part of Rome is bordered by Vienna to the west and Verona to the southwest, across Wood Creek.

When the British began to secure military dominance over much of the Iroquois Confederacy in central New York State, present day Oneida County was apportioned in the west part to Oneida Indian territory and the eastern section part of Tryon County. Prior to 1777, Tryon County and the project area were parts of Albany County. A few years after the Revolution, in 1784, Tryon County was extended further west to include more Indian lands and its name was changed to Montgomery County (Sleeman 1990:viii). This very large county was subdivided in 1791 into Tioga, Herkimer and Otsego Counties. The project area was located within Herkimer County. On March 15, 1798 Oneida County was set off from Herkimer County (Tomaino 1998:17). Until 1802 Oneida County included what today are St. Lawrence, Lewis, Jefferson and Oswego counties. In this year, St. Lawrence County was established followed during 1803 by Lewis and Jefferson Counties. Oswego County was set off during 1816 (Sleeman 1990:viii).

Oneida County as it presently exists geographically was originally divided into thirteen townships, including the township of Rome in which the village, and eventually the city of Rome would be situated. The township of Verona was subsequently established in 1802 and Vienna in 1816. Vienna was initially established as the township of Orange in 1807 (Sleeman 1990:viii).

While it is not known exactly which Europeans were the first to see Oneida County, a likely candidate is Harman Meyndertsy van den Bogaert (c. 1612-1648), a young Dutch surgeon with the Dutch West India Company stationed at Fort Orange (Albany). Van den Bogaert came to the New World in 1630 and, after a tour of duty at Fort Albany, was taken through parts of what is today Oneida County, including Rome, by Oneida guides in 1634 (Sleeman 1990:ix). Due to its unsettled nature and two major wars, the area would not be settled permanently for over another century.

Although the history of the village of Rome itself can be traced back to its incorporation in 1819, the area's legacy as a place of highly significant historical value extends back almost a century further. The reason for this is Rome's unique geographic position. Situated roughly in the center of a mile wide stretch of land separating the westernmost part of the Mohawk River to the east from the eastern extremity of Wood Creek, flowing into Oneida Lake to the west, the area of present-day Rome was a major thoroughfare for colonial military, and later industrial and immigrant movements. From as early as 1727, the British used this portage to access Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario. At that time this was the sole route connecting the Hudson River Valley (and therefore the Atlantic) to the Great Lakes and greater interior North America. Because Rome presented a dry obstacle and route, they called it the "Great [or Oneida] Carrying Place" or simply the "Carry." Here bateaux and cargo had to be transported, commonly with wagons and mules, over varying distances depending on the season along the same natural corridor (Tomaino 1998:18).



During both the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War, the "Carry" and its adjacent sections of the Mohawk River and Wood Creek became the sites of numerous military strongholds, "a station upon one of the most noted military routes of the continent" (Scott 1950:7). The earliest of these was Fort Williams, established in 1755, followed later that year by Fort Bull. Over the next several years other forts of various sizes would be built and rebuilt, named and renamed, throughout the area (i.e. Fort Craven, Fort Newport, Fort Rickey and the largest, Fort Stanwix). While none of these were located within the project area, Fort Rickey, situated on the south bank of Wood Creek directly adjacent to the confluence with Canada Creek, would have been the nearest. This places the fort only a few feet outside the project area. A dam was built within the channel of Wood Creek adjacent to Fort Rickey by the British during 1758. This dam is also within a few feet of the project area. Fort Bull was also close, located on Wood Creek's north bank about 2.1 miles upstream to the east. Fort Stanwix, around which grew up the early settlement of Rome, was clearly the most significant stronghold. Established in 1758 by British General John Stanwix under the orders of Major General James Abercrombie, the fort saw little action during the French and Indian War due to the surrender of Montreal in 1760 (Scott 1950:9). Rendered essentially useless except as an Indian-colonial meeting/trading place, Fort Stanwix fell into disrepair until 1776 when the Continental Congress decided to rebuild and improve it for use in the Revolutionary War. The task was completed under the auspices of General Schuyler after whom the fort was renamed.

During the winter of the following year, a plan was devised by British General John Burgoyne for a triple-pronged attack on Albany spearheaded by Burgoyne coming south from Montreal, Lord Howe traveling north from New York City via the Hudson and Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger approaching from the west through the Mohawk River via Wood Creek and the Carry. The new commanding officer at Fort Schuyler was a young and energetic colonel from Albany named Peter Gansevoort. In August 1777 St. Leger arrived at the Carry with a force of perhaps 1800 British, Iroquois and Hessians and proceeded to lay siege. The battle at Fort Schuyler lasted nineteen days and included the bloody six-hour battle at Oriskany during which General Herkimer was wounded (Scott 1950:13). The American forces ultimately prevailed despite St. Leger's attempts to rally his men one last time at Fort Bull before retreating back down Wood Creek.

After the Revolution the signing of two Indian treaties at Fort Schuyler opened lands to the west, allowing for the first sizable influx of European settlers into central New York. The first recorded white settler in the area of present-day Oneida County is a German from Durlach named Joannis Reuff or *John Roof*. Roof established himself in 1760 near the newly established Fort Stanwix (Scott 1950:15). The first of what can be considered a continuous settlement in Oneida County dates to June 5, 1785 with the arrival of Hugh White and his family from Middleton, Connecticut and the founding of Whitestown (Tomaino 1998:180). Jedediah Phelps is documented as the first permanent settler in what would become the village of Rome after the Revolution. He was followed shortly thereafter by Colonel William Colbrath, Numa Leonard, Charles E. Saulpaugh, G.N. Bisseu, the Ranny family, Ebenezer Wright and John Barnard (tavern keeper) among others (Wagner 1997:19-20). These homes were apparently all built around the then out-of-use fort. To the southwest at the confluence of Wood and Canada Creeks another very small community sprang up, later called Seifert Corners. The earliest person here



was evidently a man by the name of Armstrong and his family. This is the first settlement on or adjacent to the project area, lying just northwest of the confluence of Canada and across Wood Creeks. Later Armstrong established a tavern in the same house (Lord 2002:pers. comm.).

The earliest patent granted in Oneida County was the Oriskany Patent issued in 1705 to Peter Schuyler, George Clark, Peter Fauconnier, Thomas Wenham and Robert Mompeson. The tract included a portion of present-day Rome, as did the Scriba, Fonda and Cox patents (Scott 1950:14). One lot of 697 acres was set aside and auctioned to pay for the cost of the Oriskany Patent survey. This so-called *Expense Lot* was bid upon in 1786 by a wealthy Irish businessman named Dominick Lynch for 2,250 pounds. This property, divided into 400 x 600 foot lots, was the first of a series of localized land purchases that enabled Lynch to accumulate roughly 2000 contiguous acres in the area of present-day Rome before 1800. His profit-oriented habit of only leasing and not granting absolute titles for his land secured him a very unpopular reputation among the local inhabitants. Consequently, the newly founded village was named in 1819 after its township, Rome, despite Lynch's wish to call it *Lynchville* (Scott 1950:15-16). The Fonda Patent was then issued in 1786 to Jelles (Giles) Fonda. This action initiated the establishment of the Wright Settlement, by Ebenezer Wright, Canterbury Hill and Ridge Mills. For a time in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries, it seemed as if these settlements, to the north and south, would outgrow the central Fort Stanwix settlement, likely because they were unobstructed by Lynch's controversial realty estate policies (Scott 1950:17-18).

During 1792 the first private canal company in New York State was formed. This was the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company, and their intention was to improve the Mohawk River/Wood Creek passage. Their first work along Wood Creek took place during the summer of 1793. A series of thirteen short canals were cut across the necks of meanders in Wood Creek. Fallen timber and debris were also removed from the creek. These canals eliminated the loops and shortened the distance between Rome and Oneida Lake by six miles (Lord 1998:3; Lord 1992). Three of these canal cuts lie within or adjacent to the project area, and are discussed below in the section on Historic Sites.

By this time, the need for a more efficient transportation system along the Mohawk River-Wood Creek corridor was recognized. During 1797 the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company completed a 1.7 mile canal through the Carry between the Mohawk River and Wood Creek. This canal had two locks, a feeder canal and two dams. Construction allowed the Durham boats, which were approximately 60 feet long by 8 feet wide and carried up to 12 tons of cargo. Prior to this time, the smaller bateaux were in use. Bateaux measured approximately 30 feet long by 5 feet wide and carried about 1.5 tons of cargo. These boats were light enough to be unloaded and dragged over the Carry (Lord 1997).

General Phillip Schuyler, the president and director of the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company, decided that improvements to Wood Creek would ease some of the difficulties of this passage. He proposed a series of six wooden locks to be built along Wood Creek. Four of these were constructed during 1802-1803. The two downstream locks, one at Oak Orchard immediately adjacent to the project area and another further downstream, were never built (Lord 1992:2). One of the four locks

completed was at the confluence of Wood and Canada Creeks adjacent to the project area.

The difficult passage along Wood Creek continued in use until the opening of the Erie Canal during 1825 (Scott 1950:19). The Erie Canal lies to the south and southeast of the project area, passing through New London and East Verona. See Figure 2.

The Erie Canal was used until the early twentieth century when it was replaced by the larger Barge Canal. This was part of an enlarged canal system which enabled barges to be taken through by tugboats, and even the use of self-propelled vessels (Scott 1950:20).

Cartographic Evidence

The earliest map collected is the 1772 depiction of the Mohawk River-Wood Creek corridor by Thomas Kitchin. This British map also shows roads and military installations. A portion of this map focusing on the Great Carrying Place and surrounding area is presented here as Figure 3. No structures are depicted within the project area. A trail does pass through the project area's eastern half entering from the east after running along Wood Creek then turning north to meet Fish Creek which it follows back to and across, Wood Creek. Fort Stanwix is the nearest structure to the project area depicted. The map also shows the abovementioned path passes a royal blockhouse situated along the east bank of what is presumably Oneida Creek about one mile south of Wood Creek to the southwest of the project area.

Figure 4 presents a British map of Fort Rickey made about 1780. The fort is shown on the south bank of Wood Creek adjacent to the confluence with Canada Creek. The dam at Fort Rickey is also shown, labeled *Old Dam*.

The 1794 Wright map is presented in part as Figure 5. This map also depicts the confluence of Wood and Canada Creeks, but at a smaller scale, so all of the project area is included. The only part of the project area shown to be occupied is the confluence. A road leads from Rome roughly following the north side of Wood Creek. It crosses Canada Creek on a bridge. The label *Mr. Gilbert* appears just east of Canada Creek.

Figure 6 is taken from the 1795 map of Rome. This map shows the Wood and Canada Creek confluence. The road and bridge over Canada Creek are shown. Two structures are shown, both on the north side of the road. The structure west of Canada Creek is labeled *Armstrong's* and the one to the east of the creek is labeled *Ranny's*.

The 1829 DeWitt map is presented as Figure 7. This map does not include roads or structures, but does show the patents within Oneida County. The project area is shown within Fonda's Patent.

The next map presented is Figure 8 is from the Rogerson and Murphy map of 1852. Much development has clearly taken place both within and outside of the project area since 1772. The Watertown and Rome Railroad has been constructed passing northwest/southeast through the northeastern corner of the project area. Nearly every major road appears to have been built by this time. Tannery, Oswego and Lauther Roads all appear as do New York State Routes 49 and 69. New York State Route 46/49 does not yet appear. Smaller roads that do not yet exist include Hogsback Road and