



The Hamlets of New Paltz: Ohioville

Ohioville is located two miles east of the Village of New Paltz along the New Paltz Turnpike (Old Route 299). It encompasses the area of Ohioville Rd, Paradise Ln and the present location of the New York State Thruway. The hamlet was created from the division of land east of Put Corners Rd in 1762 and remained uninhabited until 1765 when the first settlers arrived.

The hamlet was originally called “Helltown” for reasons yet unknown. According to some, the area was known for its high crime rate and lawlessness in the late 18th, early 19th century. The earliest home from this period that still survives is the Jacob Halstead House (9 Paradise Ln.), built between 1785 and 1790. Change came to Ohioville with the arrival of New Paltz blacksmith and entrepreneur Moses Freer in the 1836

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. His wealth and status gave him the authority to change the name of the hamlet to “Ohioville”, after being inspired by a recent trip to the Ohio territory

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. Freer also introduced some of the many industries that would encompass the region. He established a wagon makers and blacksmith shop in Ohioville (the latter at 11 Old Route 299)

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.The proximity to the New Paltz Turnpike made Ohioville a prime location for businesses to thrive and people to live.

Other industries sprung up around these early businesses. A harness making shop at 23 Old Route 299 was established by Thomas Silkworth near Moses Freer's blacksmith shop in 1866. Another blacksmith shop was built at 6 South Ohioville Rd (now demolished); a store owned by Isaac Dubois (15 Old Rte 299), florist and hotel also contributed to the economic growth of the community.

Public institutions were also established in mid-century. The Ohioville School was built in 1856 at 8 North Ohioville Rd. (north of the Freer blacksmith shop). It was later sold at auction in September of 1946 to Alex Gronman, who converted the school into a private residence [4]. Church services were held at the Ohioville School until 1898 when the Ohioville Chapter of the Dutch Reformed Church of New Paltz was constructed at 3 South Ohioville Rd. Despite its affiliation with the Dutch Reformed Church, multiple Christian groups held service there

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. Like the school, the Ohioville Church was sold at auction in 1949 and was converted into a private residence by Salvatore Tantillo

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. The Freer Blacksmith shop was sold around 1882 and converted into a hotel by 1909 was owned by Webster Sherman, who turned it into a store. Both the Sherman and Dubois stores also operated as post offices. However which store would be designated as the post office depended on the political affiliation of the post-master (who usually was the store owner). This made some confusion for new arrivals and out of town visitors

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The influx of Italian immigrants into Ohioville in the late 19th and early 20th centuries profoundly changed the hamlet. One influential immigrant family was the Lo Cascio's, who established a winery and summer resort at 125 South Ohioville Rd in 1920. The resort included two three story stone guest houses, a tennis court, movie theatre and dance hall. After the winery burned down in 1940, three Brooklyn businessmen bought the property and continued operating the facility as a resort. By the mid 1960s, "Lucky Q Ranch" horse riding academy was established behind the property (known as Villa Cusa). In 1978 the property was subdivided into 6 lots. The area encompassing 125 South Ohioville Rd. was known for its Italianate architecture and a *New Paltz Independent* article written in 1920 referred to this area the "Italian colony"

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Although the New Paltz Turnpike and New Paltz-Highland trolley made the area a prime location for commuters, the construction of the New York State thruway in the 1950's led to the destruction of the Ohioville Hamlet. Over 200 properties were moved or destroyed in order to accommodate the new road system and resulted in the loss of some of the oldest and most venerable homes and businesses in the area. Ohioville became isolated and the selling off of the school and church in the late 1940s destroyed the hamlet. However, several properties of historic note in the area (including the Halstead House and Villa Cusa) still survive as examples to the rich history of this now defunct hamlet.

[1] *New Paltz Times* 07 Jan 1869, Print.

[2] Hasbrouck, Kenneth. *Historic New Paltz*. New Paltz, NY: 1959. 26-30. Print.

[3] Lefevre, Ralph. *History of New Paltz, New York & Its Old Families, from 1678 to 1820*. 208 Print.

[4] *New Paltz Independent* 10 Oct 1946, Print.

[5] *New Paltz Independent* 22 Sep 1949, Print.

[6] *New Paltz Independent* 12 Aug 1920, Print.