

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006**

**Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York**

Page 1

The Fly Creek Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C as a representative example of a mill hamlet in Otsego County, New York. The National Park Multiple Property Document (MPD) for "Mill Hamlets in the Oaks Creek Valley, 1785-1956" provides the historic context for the development of mill hamlets along the valleys of Oaks Creek and its tributary Fly Creek in the town of Otsego, Otsego County, located in central New York State. The Fly Creek Historic District encompasses three mill hamlet clusters now considered a single hamlet, which illustrate the pattern of hamlets centered on clusters of small, family-owned, water-powered mills at road crossings identified in the MPD. Different families, including the Marvins, Jarvises, and Badgers developed mill seats on Fly Creek and Oaks Creek around which settlements coalesced and merged into a single entity. These families also traded potential seats from the early settlement period into the 1830s. Hamlets like Fly Creek clustered around these service centers in frontier regions as settlement pushed westward through New York State in the late 1700s and early 1800s. These industries provided local people with a variety of services. The Fly Creek hamlet area demonstrated consistent growth from the 1790s through much of the antebellum period. Its position on a turnpike in a region not served by rail until 1870 meant that the shops and stores that grew up around the mills and the three important intersections by each of the three mill areas were generally prosperous. With many small, independently owned businesses, the residential area that grew up in Fly Creek was stable. It established social and religious gathering places that drew people from the outlying areas as well, reinforcing the hamlet's centrality. As local industry failed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the service businesses, mainly stores, survived and even prospered enough to construct new commercial buildings at the main crossroads. Nevertheless, the greatest proportion of its buildings, especially dwellings, reflects the antebellum era of growth and general prosperity. The hamlet as a whole retains the feel of a mid-nineteenth century village. The mill sites in each of the three clusters may retain significant archaeological evidence and so are eligible under Criterion D.

Summary History of Development

The Fly Creek Historic District encompasses three historic mill hamlet development clusters now considered a single hamlet called Fly Creek. It is named for the stream running roughly north to south through the hamlet and two of the clusters developed on that watercourse. The third and most southerly of the three clusters is located on Oaks Creek, into which Fly Creek flows.

The Oaks Creek valley, which includes Fly Creek valley, drains the central section of the town of Otsego, which lies in the northeast quadrant of the Otsego County. This in turn was part of Montgomery County, a colonial designation that persisted into the early republic period, until 1791. Settlers from the Mohawk Valley, southeastern Pennsylvania, and from eastern New England had established small communities beginning in the 1740s, but these were largely destroyed during the Revolution. George Croghan, who had received a royal patent for the land where Fly Creek lies, was among the many financial casualties of the period of upheaval following the war. In the settlement of his debts, his land in Otsego County was bought by Judge William Cooper of Burlington, New Jersey. For at least a century previously, the upper reaches of the Susquehanna basin, of which the Oaks Creek valley is a part, had been a buffer region between the Mohawk Valley and Indian settlements farther south on the banks of the Susquehanna. Cooper's surveyors working to divide the land into saleable parcels found relatively narrow, thickly wooded valleys drained by streams that ran in all seasons.

In the period following the Treaty of Paris of 1783, Yankees flooded into central New York State, including Otsego County. Arguing against the traditional system of land tenure exercised by New York's colonial aristocracy, who became the new state's powerbrokers, William Cooper sold his lands outright rather than leasing it long term. This may have made his lands more appealing to New Englanders than surrounding tracts held by descendants of families like the Schuylers, Livingstons, vanRensselaers, and others as New Englanders were accustomed to

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 2

freehold. By the early 1790s, Cooper had sold most of his holdings in the Ballstown Purchase of Croghan's former lands, encompassing all of the lower reaches of Fly Creek.

Fly Creek valley was most easily reached by following Oaks Creek northwest from its confluence with the Susquehanna, where a road was apparently constructed very early. Before 1800, a highway ran over the ridge west from Cooperstown to cross Fly Creek. Local tradition holds that this route followed the course of Goose Street and Hoke Road to cross Oaks Creek in the Cattown area of Oakville. One of the three hamlet clusters that became part of Fly Creek grew up around this crossing, which was very nearly the meeting point of Lots 10, 11, 16, and 17 in the Ballstown Purchase, and the associated intersection where the Cooperstown highway met the road paralleling the west bank of the creek.

The earliest mills here appear to have been built on the west side of the creek, north of the Cooperstown highway.¹ In 1805, John Badger of Burlington bought a potential mill seat on the west side of Fly Creek in Lot 16.² Two years later, he bought an additional ten acres from Levi Clark of Lanesborough, Massachusetts. He sold this to William C., James N. and Asahel H. Jarvis in 1815. In 1826, he bought three acres of land in Lot 17 on the east side of the creek and north of the old highway to Cooperstown.³ It encompassed an island in the creek, a naturally occurring narrows potentially useful situation in building a head race or a milldam. In 1828, he bought additional land running between the creek's west bank and the road running south to the turnpike. It lay south of the highway running to Cooperstown. The deed also included the house lot bounded west and south by the "Chapel Burying Ground."⁴ Together, they comprised an enviable position for a mill, and Badger operated a trip hammer here. Badger may also have opened the pail shop, giving the north hamlet of the three the name "Pail Corners,"⁵ which is still heard today, but its earliest name was "Fly Creek."

Between 1800 and 1807, this was one of five communities to which William Cooper granted land for building churches throughout his holdings.⁶ Father Daniel Nash of Christ Church, Cooperstown, apparently started missionary work as early as 1797 that led to the organization of parishes in Westford, Cherry Valley, Springfield, Fly Creek, Milford, Hartwick Hill, and Morris. The Episcopal chapel's building date is unknown, but it was used until about 1820. From 1812, the First Methodist Episcopal Society of Fly Creek, organized by Seth Mattison, also used the building for services. While the chapel and its congregation are long gone, the Chapel Burying Ground with some of the area's earliest grave markers (the earliest documented in 1792) occupies an L-shaped lot on the southwest corner of the crossroads. The land was permanently granted for use as burial ground for 900 years in 1808 by David Marvin, who owned a farm on west side of Fly Creek, with the condition that he could graze his sheep there and that the owners would maintain a fence to keep his sheep in. This deed, rewritten and filed accordingly with the Otsego County Clerk, noted the location of Asahel Jarvis's house at the southwest corner and also a schoolhouse.⁷ Jarvis's house lot remained connected with the mill property until the 1860s. The last known burial at the Chapel Burying Ground was made in the early 1900s.

The second cluster, or mill area, now considered to be part of the hamlet of Fly Creek developed at roughly the same period as the first. Located on the Oaks Creek about a mile and a half southwest of the first, Aaron and Daniel Marvin established a grist mill and a saw mill on the east bank of the creek in the 1790s, or possibly a little earlier. The "highway" or "old state road" leading to Marvin's Mills was a notable landmark in the period, and it

¹ Early deeds. The 1856 *Gates Map of Otsego County* shows the grist mill at this site to be the only millsite in use at this crossing at that time.

² F/553.

³ LL/430.

⁴ OO/2.

⁵ Hurd, 248.

⁶ Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town*. ETC.

⁷ Information about the chapel and its burying ground is taken from: Peter Martin, "The Old Chapel Burying Ground." Typescript. July 1994. (Cooperstown, New York: New York Historical Association, Local History Room).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 3

was used to locate land in deeds.⁸ This route apparently followed the route of Day and Allison roads, passing houses belonging the Cheney family. Like all mills built in the pre-1800 period, Marvin's Mills, as it was called in deeds of the period⁹, served local needs. When the Marvins put the mills up for sale in 18xx, they stated there were two good houses as well as a barn and # acres of improved land.¹⁰ The latter phrase denoted land cleared for crops, so the property could support several kinds of endeavor. Like many businesspeople of the period, the Marvins earned their living as farmers in addition to another trade. How many more houses stood near Marvin's in the earliest period is unclear. The two "good houses" may be the two Federal period houses near the intersection of Cemetery and Allison roads on the rise overlooking the creek, but no other buildings there appear to be so early.

The stone mill across Oaks Creek from Marvin's Mills, which opened about 1812 to make wire and cards¹¹, brush-like tools for aligning fibers for spinning, may have been a larger and more expensive operation to set up. Its owners sought to meet a demand, most likely local, generated both by the small water-powered carding mills along Oaks Creek and possibly also at the recently opened cotton spinnery in Toddsville, about two miles downstream. When British goods flooded the market after 1815, the wire factory failed and was retooled as a paper mill.¹²

The third cluster composing the foundation of the hamlet of Fly Creek has its origins in a mill on the east bank of Fly Creek that appears to have been first sold in xxxx by xxxxx.¹³ No public highway reached it at the time, and the deed included a right-of-way for the new owner to reach it by crossing xxxx' land from the east. The siting of this mill relative to the one upstream at the crossing is characteristic. Water rights were bought and sold along with mills to ensure enough head to push the wheel. Mills spaced too closely together on a watercourse without enough drop could not be sustained without costly engineering of the landscape to generate an additional fall. Millwrights of this period, especially those building small mills for local services sought natural features to aid them in creating enough drop and force.

The new turnpike from Cooperstown to Sherburne passed near the third mill about 1810, placing this property on the most direct route running west of the Otsego county seat, which was developing as a commercial and legal center. From Cooperstown, the turnpike continued northeast to Cherry Valley, where it joined the First Great Western Turnpike connecting it to Albany and the Hudson River. In 1813, Chester and Kent Jarvis (CHECK) established a furnace on the east side of Fly Creek on the north side of the turnpike.¹⁴ This business was an early example of its type in Otsego County, and it is unclear whether it was seasonal and how many men it employed. Like operating a grist mill or a saw mill, foundry work required some level of skill as well as strength of its workers. Of the three mills areas in the north-south corridor running from the chapel and Badger's triphammer on Fly Creek to Marvin's Mills on Oaks Creek, the one straddling both Fly Creek and the turnpike offered the greatest economic potential.

Duane Hurd's *History of Otsego County* states that Asahel Jarvis opened the first business there in 1813.¹⁵ An 1813 deed from Stephen North to Jarvis and Benjamin Todd, member of the family of millwrights that developed the water power on Oaks Creek at Toddsville, included "a ditch for conducting water from any factory or other machinery which is now or may hereafter be erected on said land."¹⁶ This suggests that Jarvis and Todd may have opened a little earlier. Given the weight of a furnace's raw materials and product, a good road was essential. In

⁸ Deed refs

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¹⁰ Deed, Dusenbery.

¹¹ Dusenbery, Hurd

¹² Dusenbery, Hurd.

¹³ Deed.

¹⁴ CHECK chrono for source.

¹⁵ Hurd, PAGE.

¹⁶ Q/513.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 4

1814, Asahel and Lydia Jarvis sold a moiety, or undivided half, of a “mechanics shop” on the north side of the turnpike, on the east bank of Fly Creek, to Chester Jarvis for \$1,500.¹⁷ John Waterman and Enoch Sill held the remaining interest for six months, and then sold that to Chester Jarvis in June 1815.¹⁸

By the time John Badger’s son, Orestes, bought the property in 1828, the little hamlet was generally known as the village of Fly Creek. This middle hamlet had successfully combined aspects of a mill hamlet, with the machine shop and furnace’s offer of steady employment at good wages, and a turnpike hamlet, with traveler’s services like a hotel, wagon shop, and blacksmith shop that were also used by local people. At the clusters north and south of the turnpike hamlet, older Federal-period houses signaled their earlier settlement and development, but services beyond those of their respective mills now gravitated toward the “village.” Perhaps this area’s ascendancy is best illustrated by the three new meeting houses built in a space of twenty years, beginning in 1821 with the Universalists. This congregation, organized in 1805 and said to be the first in New York State, built a church on the road (now called Cemetery Road) connecting the turnpike with Marvin’s Mills.¹⁹ In 1838, the Methodist Episcopal congregation abandoned the old chapel at the north hamlet and moved into a new meeting house (NR listed, DATE) just north of the turnpike crossroads. The Presbyterian congregation, organized in 1828, built its own meeting house in 1840. The Universalist graveyard was opposite its meeting house on the Presbyterians’ south line.

While the Universalist building was a plain, late Federal-period rendition, the Presbyterian and Methodist churches were both vernacular interpretations of the Greek Revival style popularized by publications like Asher Benjamin’s xxxxx published in 183x. This style drew its inspiration from Classical buildings. Benjamin simply called the new taste “Greek,” as opposed to “Roman,” one old name for the Federal style, because it used proportions found in the Roman buildings buried at Herculaneum and Pompeii and excavated in the mid-1700s. The broader, heavier proportions of the later Greek taste coupled with its typically flattened, elongated mouldings dominate the domestic architecture of the central turnpike hamlet, while earlier Federal-style houses still stand among the buildings grouped around the mill sites north and south of it. Many Otsego County builders quickly seized upon the new taste. Perhaps builders and owners adjusted easily to the subtle differences between Federal and Greek Revival. The latter style remained popular through the 1850s, when in other places, it was being supplanted by Italianate and Gothic Revival, which presented more dramatic differences in form. The large proportion of Greek Revival style dwellings in the middle hamlet indicates that its period of most rapid expansion occurred from about 1830 into the 1850s.

By the time Orestes Badger bought the Jarvises’ iron-working operation, three cotton factories were in operation on nearby Oaks Creek, at Oaksville, Toddsville, and Hope Factory. The technology and the agents of these factories originated in New England, and much of the machinery was ordered from that region. Badger offered a local alternative, a little like the wire and card factory at the stone mill on Oaks Creek during the War of 1812. In the *Freeman’s Journal*, he wrote:

To Manufacturers—The Undersigned takes this method to inform those concerned in Manufacturing that he has purchased the Establishment formerly owned by C.[hester] and K.[ent] Jarvis mill in Fly Creek, Otsego County, 3 miles west of Cooperstown, which he is now putting in complete repair for building cotton and wool carding and spinning machinery, and is now ready to contract for building any of the various kinds of Machinery in use for those purposes. He intends to turn his attention principally

¹⁷ S/324.

¹⁸ S/385.

¹⁹ Hurd, 251-2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 5

to the building of cotton machinery, and is at considerable expense, adding the necessary apparatus for this branch of business.²⁰

Badger probably also manufactured a diverse range of castings for local people, but he most especially wished to demonstrate his success in the cotton machinery business and expand into the power looms, to which the Oaks Creek mills had shifted entirely by 1830, in an 1831 notice.

Machine Shop and Furnace—The subscriber contracts machine making at the old stand in Fly Creek [where] he has made quantities of cotton machinery, which can be seen in the first establishments of the country. [He] continues making spreaders, drawing frames, dressers, throstles, mules, power looms, and [other tools used in] cotton or woolen factories. Also engine lathes, turning lathes, gear-cutting engines, iron turnings, screws for cider mills, paper mills, and presses. He has erected a furnace, connected with the above business, and makes castings to any pattern not exceeding 700 lbs. in one piece.²¹

This was a business with enough capital invested that it must employ men beyond Badger himself in order to produce enough to support its costs. One historian noted that Badger's interest lay in inventing and perfecting machines. Badger had also experimented in making oil presses to make linseed oil from the area's abundant flax crop of the period.²² In 1833, Badger sold the property to Russell Williams for \$4,000.²³ Williams owned the Otsego Print Works, the cotton factory at Oaksville, and may have wished to manufacture his own machinery as his company had considerable difficulty competing with cotton goods printed with the new copper cylinder technology coming from England. In February 1837, Williams and his wife Clara, residing in Homer, New York, sold the Fly Creek property to Charles H. Metcalf for just \$500. The circumstances suggest that Williams was in financial trouble, as many were that year as American banking toppled under the weight of overspeculation. Metcalf mortgaged part of the property to Laban Mathewson of Hartwick in 1839 for \$1,200, and the mortgage was never discharged.²⁴ Metcalf may have suffered the economic fallout brought by the Panic of 1837, but later censuses and deeds reveal that Metcalf held on through difficult times for a number of years.

As for Orestes Badger, he moved on to other industrial innovations. In 1836, he patented an endless chain horsepower, which he manufactured on the east side of the highway running from Fly Creek to Todd's paper factory. When he died in 1850, his son Ezra took over the business and enlarged it to include threshers. J.B. Hooker, for whom Hooker Avenue (now Schoolhouse Lane) was named, partnered with Ezra for some time.²⁵

The turnpike and the businesses it attracted played a role in this expansion. Not only did it carry more traffic than the highways to Badger's and Marvin's mills, but it provided a wider and straighter road that was probably also better laid than the earlier ones. The sheer weight of a furnace's raw materials and product would have been easier to move over the turnpike. Having the furnace and mechanics shop in this hamlet seems to have drawn a number of smaller shops manufacturing a variety of agricultural implements. While the churns, horse powers, and fanning mills made in these shops were largely built of wood, they required castings for gears and other mechanisms that could be easily gotten from the furnace. The federal census of 1850 recorded three industrial enterprises other than agriculture in the Town of Otsego located in the Fly Creek hamlets. While enumerators were erratic in terms of which businesses they included in these schedules over the years, they provide useful anecdotal information. Livingston & Metcalf owned the foundry (Hugh Livingston joined Charles H. Metcalf in the business in 18xx and continued as a partner until 18xx), which produced machinery that year valued at \$6,000. They

²⁰ *The Freeman's Journal*, 1 September 1828.

²¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, 27 June 1831.

²² [Leaning], 213. Flax was little grown by the mid-1800s.

²³ XX/210.

²⁴ *Book of Mortgages X/45*.

²⁵ [Leaning], in Shaw. 213. By the time he wrote the section of Fly Creek for Shaw's volume, Leaning owned Ezra's shop and furnace.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 6

employed 15 men at an average of \$26 a month, and used 150 tons of iron (\$3,375). In addition to water power, the forge consumed 50 tons of coal (\$500). Metcalf & Livingston had \$5,000 invested in real property and tools and equipment. These figures suggest that the business was in debt. John Post's fanning mill factory employed one man using hand labor at the same wages as Metcalf & Livingston and made 30 fanning mills that year valued at \$550. Post's investment in lumber matched that of his cost in gears, both at \$45. The latter were probably made to order at the furnace. John Nelson (or Wilson?) employed four men using hand power to make wood churns valued at \$1,000.²⁶

Five years later, the industrial schedule of the *New York State Census for 1855* provided details for Green & Clark's sawmill and shingle mill at the old Marvin's Mills site, Metcalf's iron foundry and machine shop, E.W. Badger's horse power and saw shop, and Lucian Hinds's pail manufactory. Green & Clark's ran on water power and employed only one man. Metcalf had sunk additional capital into the foundry by adding steam flasks, bringing his investment in tools and machinery to \$3,000. Wages had dropped to an average of \$21 a month, and the plant employed only 12 men. This combined with increased production moved the foundry into the black. The pail shop at the north hamlet made 10,000 wooden pails bound with hoop iron and painted or oiled valued at \$4,500. Six men worked at an average of \$15 month; three women earned an average of \$10 a month.²⁷ These figures suggest that working at the pail shop required less skill than the foundry.

The picture presented by combining data from the *New York State Census for 1855* and Cyrus Gates's *Map of Otsego County*, published in 1856, provides considerable details about the area's social history at the close of the antebellum. The census counted roughly 60 households within the three hamlet clusters. The ages of the heads of household range from the mid-20s to Clark Brown (household number (HH#) 132), the machinist who came from Rhode Island in 1814 to build cotton machinery.²⁸ In 1855, at age 65, he still listed himself as a machinist. While he probably still worked at the furnace at the turnpike crossing, the 1856 map shows him living on the east bank of Oaks Creek overlooking the mills started by the Marvins. His house, with the steeply pitched roof typical of Federal-period buildings, still stands, and is one of three early houses where Cemetery Road meets Allison Road. The census listed five machinists and four mechanics. The difference, if there was one at this period, between these two trades is unclear. Mechanics may have been less skilled, but Ezra Badger (HH # 182), who owned and ran a shop making agricultural implements, called himself a mechanic. Stephen B. Welch (HH #161), at 63, was a patternmaker. He would have run the pattern shop that made the forms for casting. Lyman Stevens, 46 (HH #166) and a Connecticut man was a moulder. Oscar D. Niles, 18, son of Daniel Niles, listed himself as a moulder. Six men, three of them Irish and all in their 30s and 40s, listed themselves as day laborers. They may have divided their time between work at the foundry and farmwork. Charles H. Metcalf (HH #165) who owned the foundry listed himself as a foundryman. Ceylon North, one of the partners of North & Denio's fork shop on Oaks Creek listed himself as manufacturer.

Other trades included Lewis Lamphier (HH #129), John Peaslee (HH #151), and Alonzo Coats (HH #158), shoemakers; John Shumway (HH #130), carpenter; Norman Roberts, car[penter] and joiner (HH #140); Alexander Lerow, goldsmith (HH #144); Martin Marvin, Methodist minister (HH #147); Simon Pearsall, storekeeper (HH #150); Silas W. Alger (HH #153) and Deloss Brooks (HH #154), waggonmakers; Abram C. Brooks (HH #156), blacksmith; John K. Leaning (HH # 183), doctor; and Russell Brownell (HH #184), surveyor. Eliza Olendorf (HH #179), the tavernkeep, was the only woman listing a trade other than keeping house. Within the hamlet area, hardly anyone was a farmer, the most common trade of the period. Some households included boarders or members of different generations of the same family, but no shared housing was noted. This is

²⁶ *United States Census for 1850, Industrial Schedule.*

²⁷ *United States Census for 1855, Industrial Schedule.*

²⁸ Hurd, PAGE.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 7

corroborated by the mapping, where heads of households correlate with residents noted for buildings drawn on the map. In most cases, residents also owned the property.²⁹ On the 1856 map, the cluster of houses around each of the mills stands out. Near the site of Marvin's Mills, there were about six houses and the Stone Mill was marked on the west bank of Oaks Creek north of the bridge. At the north hamlet, near Lucian Hinds's pail shop (not drawn) and the grist mill noted in 1856, houses owned by Marvins, Stevenses, and H. Taylor lined the north side of the old highway from Cooperstown.

Gates delineated the center hamlet, "Fly Creek," since at least the 1830s, separately because it was too densely settled to be clearly drawn on the main map. Located at the north boundary was the old Methodist parsonage; at the east, John Post's Fanning Mill Factory; at the south, on the road to Todd's paper mill, the houses of Russell Brownell and T.T. Higby; on the road to the stone mill and Marvin's Mills, the Wheeler house and Mrs. Ingalls's. A. North's estate owned several prominent buildings along the turnpike, including the Greek Revival-style store on the northeast corner of the main crossroads, a large house on the east side of the creek, and two dwellings on the south side of the turnpike west of the crossroads where many of the village's approximately 40 houses stood. Clustered at the corner and lining the road north as far as the Methodist Church, were blacksmith's and wagon shops. The Universalist and Presbyterian churches faced each other across the road to the stone mill, and the former's graveyard stood opposite it on the latter's south line. Metcalf's Furnace occupied the north side of the turnpike where it crossed the creek, and farther east on the rise, was John Post's Fanning Mill manufactory. Ezra Badger, grandson of John, was running Erastus's factory making horse powers.

The 1860 federal census, enumerated on the eve of the Civil War, suggests overall stability rather than change. Ellery Cory, a Cooperstown hardware merchant, had taken over Hinds's pail shop. With \$5,000 invested in the business, the water-powered mill increased production to 12,000 pails, but their per item value dropped, as the entire output was valued at \$3,360. The four men, now averaging only \$13 a month and the two women, stable at \$10 a month, also turned out 3,000 sap buckets. E.W. Badger & Co.'s steam-powered agricultural machine shop's figures reflected the emphasis on increasing farm production with new horse-powered machines in the late antebellum. The business was capitalized with \$12,000 and consumed 30,000 feet of lumber, seven tons of cast iron, and 5 tons of wrought iron to make 25 horse powers, or treadmills, valued at \$6,500. Badger paid his six male workers an average of \$30 a month, the best mill pay recorded in the town of Otsego that year.³⁰ Metcalf's foundry was omitted from the industrial schedule, but he is listed as a mechanic, and most of the men listed as mechanics and machinists in the 1855 census still lived in the area encompassed by the Fly Creek post office.

The 1865 New York State census recorded the Village of Fly Creek separately, following the boundaries drawn in the 1868 *Atlas of Otsego County* surveyed by D.G. Beers. At the end of the section, the enumerator noted that Fly Creek had a population of 319, of whom 87 could vote. The franchise was still limited to men owning property at the close of the Civil War. This figure reveals a high proportion of owner-occupied residency in the village. The census recorded land owners, and by this period all but a few of Fly Creek's laborers and mechanics owned property. This was a shift from 1850, when many of these heads of household were young men just getting established.³¹ Given the established nature of the community by this period, this is not surprising. Fly Creek's population was aging as men recorded fifteen years earlier continue to reside in the hamlet area plying the same trades. Only a handful of new names appear as heads of household. Only three Fly Creek area mills were recorded in the industrial schedule. Metcalf & Livingston reappear, now with \$9,000 capital and making castings and agricultural implements valued at \$16,288.36. Badger's enterprise was sharply curtailed, with only \$3,000 invested and an annual product of \$2,000. He paid his men well, however. At an average of \$52 per month, they

²⁹ Census NOTE

³⁰ *United States Census for 1860, Industrial Schedule.*

³¹ Comparison of land holders from population schedules of the 1850 *United States Census* and 1865 *New York State Census.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 8

outstripped Metcalf & Livingston's average wages of \$30 a month paid to 14 men. John Post's churn and fanning mill shop, located on the north side of the turnpike east of the Metcalf foundry, made 105 churns (\$630) and three fanning mills (\$70) using hand power.³²

The population schedule coordinates well with the D.G. Beers's *Atlas of Otsego County* published in 1868. Beers provided an inset map of Fly Creek, in which he expanded the bounds of Fly Creek slightly over those of Gates's 1856 survey. On the west, he included Mrs. Olendorf's house four houses down from the tavern she once kept. On the south, he added lots on the way to Marvin's Mills. At all five points of the main crossroads, there were services, including a blacksmith's shop with waggonshops just north on the highway to the pail shop hamlet, two general stores, and a harness shop coupled with Colonel A. Potter's monumental marble works. Most manufacturing was located east of the crossroads along the turnpike road. The Metcalf foundry included a stone furnace building at the foot of a large millpond taken off the Fly Creek. His own house stood next door, and there were two small worker houses on a raised drive further east (these still stand). Across the way, east of the water ditch sold half a century earlier to Jarvis and Todd, he maintained an office on land apparently owned by Mrs. North. Houses lined the turnpike and the road north, opposite the Methodist Church. South of the crossroads, stood the Presbyterian and Universalist churches. Continuing south on the highway to the mill on Oaks Creek, additional Greek Revival style houses lined the upper part of the route. A. Fields, listed as a Carpenter and Builder in the Fly Creek Business Directory on the map, had subdivided seven houselots on the east side of the highway, probably in expectation of building on them. As in 1856, additional houses and barns were drawn as part of the village of Fly Creek on the highway leading to the Otsego Paper Works on the east bank of Oaks Creek in Toddsville.

The north hamlet, clustered around the industrial complex developed by John Badger and now owned by Ellery Cory, had a second industry, a cheese factory on Henry Taylor's land north of the Cooperstown road and east of the creek. Taylor, an aging Alexander Lerow, and members of the Marvin and Jarvis family owned the small group of dwellings at this four corners. Between this and the village, there were few buildings. The same was true of the road running south of Fly Creek village to the former Marvin's Mills. An open country lane led into the small group of early houses clustered near this three-way intersection and along the steep highway descending to the bridge over the creek and the stone mill on the far bank. While the village appears to have expanded services and the number of dwellings since 1856, these two communities were little altered as their residents aged and the small industries slowed to seasonal operation.

The post-Civil War period brought renewed optimism in many quarters. In the valleys of Oaks Creek and Fly Creek, most mills were running, including all three of the cotton mills under the ownership of Rufus Steere. The fork shop ownership was among the few to see the longterm consequences of isolation for heavy industry and had moved their operation to Onondaga County in 1865. For mills like those in Fly Creek Village and in the two related outlying hamlets that met local demands, isolation served them well as they had little competition. This didn't mean that they weren't keeping up with innovations in farm implements. David Olendorf was making horse rakes using a four-horse power water wheel with nine feet of head. He reported making 65 of them valued at \$525 in the 1870 census. George H. Gross had apparently taken over John Post's churn and fanning mill operation, which he ran for eight months that year and made \$900 in product. The Metcalf operation worked four months employing four men making threshing machines. The foundry and machine shop were running on both water and steam power. For the first time, the foundry recorded using old iron (80 tons) in addition to 25 tons of pig iron and 7 tons of bar, or wrought, iron. Production at Ellery Cory's pail shop at the next crossing north on Fly Creek was flagging, with only 1800 pails and 200 buckets (probably for sap) made.³³ The aging population trend observed in

³² *New York State Census for 1865, Industrial schedule.*

³³ *United States Census for 1870, Industrial schedule.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 9

the 1865 state census continued. The median age of heads of household was nearing 50. Men recorded in 1850 remained, but their sons seemed to have moved on. At the hamlet that formed around Marvin's Mills in the early period, Clark Brown, now 80, still listed himself as a machinist. His neighbor across the road, Daniel Green, continued farming at 71. John Clark, 79, lived with him. A.C. Brooks, 62, held down the blacksmith's stand at the main intersection in the village, while his waggonmaking neighbors, Delos Brooks, 44, and Silas Alger, 56, were now middle aged. The valley's first physician John K. Leaning, who arrived in the first flush of his career in the 1850s, was now 46. Ezra Badger, also 46, had given up making farm implements and was working as a superintendent on the railroad, which reached Cooperstown in 1870.

The railroad's arrival brought freight from new industrial centers, which could manufacture many things less expensively than local shops using native labor and imported raw materials could. In 1875, only Benjamin Comstock's carding mill at Cattown was recorded in the industrial schedule for the town of Otsego.³⁴ The pail shop had apparently failed altogether. The population schedule suggests that some of Fly Creek's shops were still running. George Gross, 81, was listed as manufacturer of agricultural implements. William Shepard, 58, had taken over Metcalf's foundry, and his son William T., 35, listed himself as machinist. They retained Ephraim Rexford and Lyman Stevens as moulders, and young Julius Brooks, 24, (possibly the waggonmaker's son worked with them. William C. Russell, 24, worked as a machinist. But, these young men were among a dwindling group, both in terms of their trade and their age. Fly Creek's position on a good highway was increasingly the overriding reason for its continued viability. Residents involved in service businesses appear to have continued much as they had.

Dr. John K. Leaning, writing for Samuel Shaw's centennial history of Cooperstown published in 1886 listed Fly Creek's businesses. In addition to himself, Dr. A.A. Jones practiced medicine. Three merchants—Badger & Son, Robinson, and Sibley—ran stores at the crossroads. Robinson's occupied the large, Greek Revival-style building on the northeast corner that had been part of A. North's estate in 1856.³⁵ By this time, an Italianate-style addition of roughly equal size doubled the building's space. Sibley's used part of the Coats shoe shop on the southwest corner.³⁶ Longtime residents S.S. Alger and Alonzo Coats continued in their respective trades of blacksmithing and shoemaking. William Shepard had taken over Charles Metcalf's share of the machine shop after the latter's death.³⁷ O.D. Niles also ran a foundry and machine shop. H.E. Jones opened a hardware store on the south side of the turnpike in a new Italianate-style commercial building in 1882.³⁸ William Russell made and sold wagons and sleighs, probably using Alger's old wagon shop on the west side of the north road. This frontal gable, two-story shop (ca.1830) became Turner's garage after automobiles appeared.³⁹ Charles A. Waffle ran the Fly Creek hotel.⁴⁰ Fly Creek provided services to farmers up and down the Fly Creek and Oaks Creek valleys, for which they did not have climb the steep ridge separating it from Cooperstown. While the latter provided banking and legal services, Fly Creek provided for daily, weekly, even longer term needs and wants.

When the trolley reached Fly Creek in 1901, people could even travel great distances from near their own doorsteps as the line connected with steam railways at both termini. While the hamlet's commercial success had been insured by its location on the turnpike, the trolley allowed its residents considerable mobility at a time when this was of growing importance. The trolley carried freight in addition to passengers on its run from Oneonta to

³⁴ *New State Census for 1875, Industrial schedule.*

³⁵ Gates, *Map of Otsego County.*

³⁶ *Fly Creek Yesteryear.*

³⁷ [John K. Leaning], "Fly Creek," in S.M. Shaw, *A Centennial Offering being a brief history of Cooperstown*, etc. (Cooperstown, New York: The Freeman's Journal Office, 1886): 213.

³⁸ Fly Creek Area Historical Society, *Fly Creek Yesteryear* (Fly Creek, New York: INFO.) no page numbers.

³⁹ *Fly Creek Yesteryear.*

⁴⁰ [Leaning], 214.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register Of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York

Page 10

Mohawk, which it covered into the early 1930s. Its service was superseded by the gasoline engine: automobiles and trucks replaced the old electric line.

In 1903, the New Century Atlas Company of Philadelphia published the last series of maps of Otsego County that provided resident names and business locations. The outlying hamlet areas were mapped on the town of Otsego plate. Both retained densities almost unaltered from a half-century earlier. These areas had stabilized long ago, each apparently retaining an identity related, but different from the village of Fly Creek. H.W. Randall, whose father had bought the Marvin's Mills property in 1871 in partnership with Daniel B. and I.D. Hull, described the nine-acre property on the "Stone Mill road." The saw and shingle mills still ran entirely on water power generated by nine feet of head on a "never failing stream."⁴¹ The map also labeled a grist mill. Photographs taken in this period from the west bank of Oaks Creek show the ruins of the stone mill in the foreground, a wide milldam spanning the creek, a host of frame buildings on the hillside opposite, and large stacks of sawn lumber and logs.⁴² The density of houses lining the three-way intersection remained unchanged from the 1856 mapping nearly a half-century earlier. Similar conditions prevailed near the old pail shop, except that here, while the millpond was still shown, no mill appears to have used its stored power. The cheese factory also was gone.

Deeds of the early twentieth century and the atlas's detail map of Fly Creek identify the hamlet by the same boundaries as Beers's 1868 Atlas. The 1903 map of Fly Creek labeled no industrial sites. The Shepard foundry was gone and the old millpond incorporated into Bliss Park, owned by Mrs. E.W. Bliss. The little row of mill worker housing running east from her house, formerly owned by the foundrymen, is among the few remnants of the hamlet's earlier businesses. All three churches remained, and a new Grange Hall stood north of the Universalist Church. Cheney's store and the post office stood on the northwest corner of the crossroads. This later would become Aufmuth's store, and the building would be moved back to accommodate gas pumps. Alger's shop building stood behind it. Opposite was Dewitt C. Badger's store. Dewitt was great-grandson of John Badger, who built the triphammer at the pail shop, grandson of Orestes, who took over the Jarvis's furnace; and son of Ezra, who built numerous agricultural implements on the west bank of Fly Creek. Several new houses filled earlier spaces along the north road to the old pail shop and the south road to the stone mill. Hooker Avenue, now called Schoolhouse Lane, had been opened and several new houses faced it. Three houses and the Cemetery Association's building occupied the house lots owned by A. Field on the stone mill road (Cemetery Road) in 1868.

The new cemetery, opened about 1870, ran from the road to the creek.⁴³ Cemeteries like this one were part of the rural cemetery movement, which began in England and spread across the Atlantic in the late 1830s. Except for Lakewood Cemetery on the east shore of Otsego Lake, rural people did not seize the notion until the 1860s and later. Fly Creek's new cemetery, with its curving drives, terraced landscape, and carefully planted evergreen trees exemplifies the type as it developed in rural hamlets and villages in central New York State. These sites superseded the small family plots and churchyards used earlier on, and people even moved their buried family members into new quarters. These cemeteries provided new burial sites in a planned and consciously pleasing landscapes designed for sedate recreation and appropriate contemplation of nature's cycles.

As Otsego County slipped into agricultural depression in the early twentieth century, new enterprises ranging from businesses to building slowed. The village, really an unincorporated hamlet, of Fly Creek stabilized as it had in the post-Civil War period. While a number of people built new houses in the late 1800s, few built houses after the turn of the century. By 1903, the turnpike hamlet achieved the density it retains today with few exceptions.

⁴¹ *New Century Atlas*.

⁴² This image is very common. It is reproduced in *Fly Creek Yesteryear*. Several copies are in the Fly Creek Area Historical Society's collection.

⁴³ Peter Martin states in "The Old Chapel Burying Ground" that this cemetery opened in 1865, but it is not shown on Beers Atlas of Otsego County published in 1868.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register Of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number 8 - DRAFT
6 March 2006**

**Fly Creek Historic District
Otsego County, New York**

Page 11

The brick firehouse at the southeast corner of the crossroads and the concrete block creamery dating to the 1930s built on Cemetery Road are among them. The old school, located at the corner of the road to the Todd's paper mill (CR 26) and Feed Store Road (still called School Street in 1903), was replaced with a new two-room school on Hooker Avenue in 1907.⁴⁴ This frame building with its raised English basement of neatly cut stone and hipped roof was built to the latest plans available for rural schools. Similar school buildings survive in many central New York State communities, although few are as well preserved, despite the change to a center entrance from the earlier matching entrances in each wing.

While the new schoolhouse was up-to-date in design, its details were plain, as was characteristic of almost all of Fly Creek's buildings. From the Federal period through the Greek Revival and Italianate styles of the mid-1800s, vernacular interpretations of these tastes prevailed. This persisted into the late 1800s with large, gable-roofed buildings with plain porches adopting the forms of simplified Queen Anne designs. Period photographs show that these builders did go in for decorative millwork, some of which survives. A lack of new building signaled a sagging population as well as economy. Of Fly Creek's three churches the Universalist closed in 1925, and was later demolished. The Presbyterian Church held on until 1933, and its building was demolished in 1937. In the depths of the Depression, the building lot's new owner salvaged the lumber and built a new house on the old stone foundation.

The general simplicity, largely preserved, and the relatively large size of the houses, built not by mill owners, but by independent business owners and reasonably paid mill workers, were important features that drew new residents to the area in the mid-twentieth century. By the late 1930s, the obvious gap between the pail shop hamlet area and the old Fly Creek village was blurring as people built new houses on small lots along the road. Architecturally, the breaks between each of the old clusters remain clear, but the twentieth century emphasis on services like stores; community centers like the Grange, schoolhouse, and churches; and public transportation on the trolley has drawn these locales together into a single entity called Fly Creek. By the World War II period, people living in all three clusters considered themselves Fly Creekers regardless of earlier nomenclature.

⁴⁴ *Fly Creek Yesteryear*.