Appendix A

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ALFRED

The History of Alfred is present as part of our comprehensive plan to provide the background material for the Alfred Town and Village Planners to understand the importance of what has proceeded them historically. With this small sample of information, we hope to enable those leaders to appreciate our heritage from which we arrived and to preserve the artifacts that sill remain. It is our history that defines us.



The State legislature on April 7, 1806, passed an act creating the county of Allegany out of Genesee and Steuben counties and constituting the town of Alfred of the south west corner of Steuben County.

The naming of Alfred, NY has traditionally been attributed to Alfred the Great. That attribution may never be definitively verified because there appears to be no extant document from the period when the town was named that ties it to King Alfred - no town, county, or state record regarding the source of the name.

Despite the missing documentation, there is evidence in support of the legend, and there are no records that point to any other source for the name. Nineteenth-century accounts do cite Alfred the Great as the source. In addition, there was no early settler named Alfred (first or last name) for whom the town might have been named.

This whole area of the country (six million acres) was first purchased, in 1788, from Massachusetts by two land developers named Phelps and Gorham, and therefore called the Phelps and Gorham Purchase. They hired surveyors who traversed the forested area and laid out range and township lines. A 1790 map shows these range and township lines, including Alfred's block at that time. Legal townships only began to fill the surveyors' grid when there were sufficient settlers. The surveyors' rectilinear scheme still exists; just check the maps of Western New York.

In 1807, the first settlers moved to the Alfred area clearing forests and building log cabins in order to bring their families in. These settlers were three men, Seventh Day Baptists, from Berlin and Brookfield, New York: Clark Crandall, Nathan Green, and Edward Green. They bought 800 acres of land along the valley near the northeastern part of the town where Crandall's land lay below Alfred Station and Greene's above. The Greens were sons of Edward J. Greene, soldier of the Revolution, born in Charlestown, R. I., 1758.

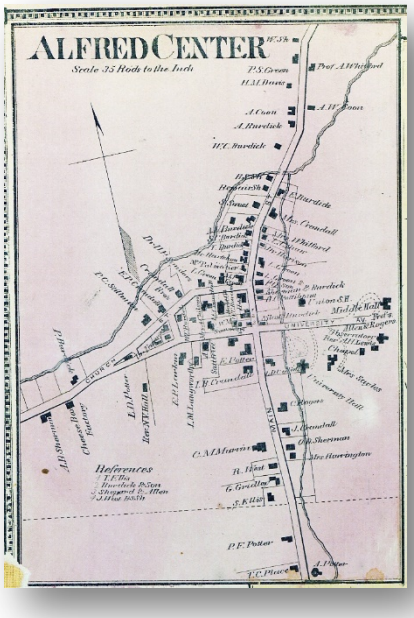
March 11, 1808 Allegany County was re-organized by adding the seventh (most western) range from Steuben County (this moved Alfred's range from Steuben to Allegany) and shedding Allegany's western three ranges to Cattaraugus County. At the same time, the town of Alfred was named and organized by the state legislature as one of five towns formed from the larger town of Angelica: Angelica, Alfred, Caneadea, Nunda, and Ossian.

Alfred (formerly known as Baker's Bridge) and Alfred Center were the two most prominent settlements both established in 1807. Baker's Bridge and Alfred Center held much in common for in this early period land owners in the one settlement also held property in the other, and thus their interests overlapped. As late as 1836 the village of Alfred Centre was not more than a hamlet of about a dozen houses which were small one-storied, unpainted and for the most part unfinished.



The home of Edward Greene was on the corner of Main Street and Church Street. He drowned a few years after his settlement while rafting lumber in the Canisteo river at Hornellsville. Edward, Nathan Greene and Amos Jones built the first frame house of the town on that location. The Green house was replaced by Stephen B. and Elisha B. Coon they built the Tremont House about 1850. About the year 1860 it was purchased by William C. Burdick, and about 1870 it was moved across the street on the site now occupied by the Carnegie Library. The building was remodeled and renamed the "Burdick House." It was destroyed by fire in 1887 and was not rebuilt.

The earliest extant written reference to the town's name was in a series of historical articles written by Jonathan Allen (whose grandfather was one of the early settlers) for The Sabbath Recorder in 1881. In describing "those early times when towns were born, in Western New York, faster than the Legislators could furnish names for them," Allen wrote: "Alfred, signifying 'Wise Counselor,' given by the Legislature to this town, March 11th, 1808, and for which a large Legislative Committee stood sponsors...."



The early records of the town have to do almost entirely with the matter of surveying and building roads. Three commissioners of the highway were appointed, and these men had their hands full in settling difficulties which frequently arose, and in laying out new roads to accommodate the ever-increasing population.

Judge Clark Crandall came from Petersburg, N. Y" in 1807, on foot and settled in Alfred. His first public office was that of commissioner for the opening of roads. He was supervisor of the town for two years and town clerk for three terms and was made brigadier general of the State militia in 1820. He was one of the presidential electors of the state in 1832. He established the first manufactory at the Station, wooden pails, built the first court house in the county in1819 and represented the county in the state legislature in 1820-1821.He opened a grocery store on Main Street almost opposite the Carnegie Hall. (The second building on the red brick block on Main Street.)

It was natural in a newly settled country for birds and small animals to be destructive to growing crops. This was quite evident from the following memorandum taken from the early records of the town:

> "Resolved, That a bounty of 12 and one half cents each be paid for each crow killed within the limits of this town between the first day of April and the first day of July of the present year, (1854). Any person claiming said bounty is required to exhibit the birds to some justice of the peace and testify under oath that they were killed within the limits of the town and within the time specified."

A bounty was paid by the several towns as well as by the State for all wolves and panthers killed. At the first town meeting it was voted to offer a bounty of four dollars for every wolf killed. During a period of twenty-seven years ending in 1845 one thousand two hundred and fifty-five wolves

and panthers were reported to have been killed, for which bounties aggregating $20,000 were paid by the county and State.

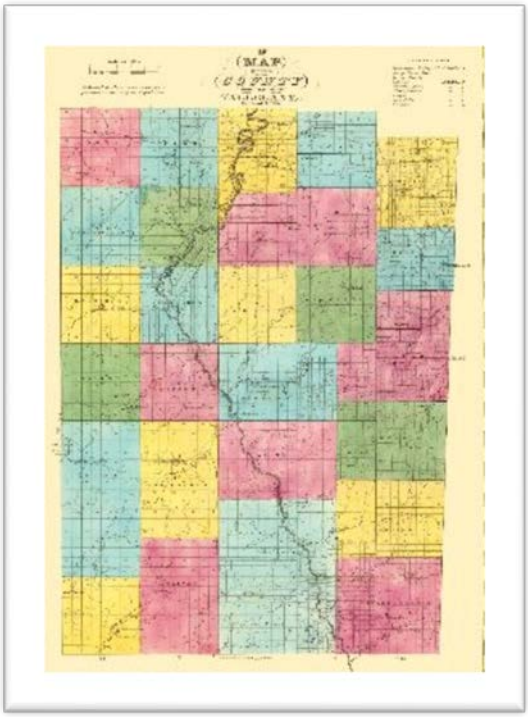
The David Stillman family started in a covered wagon of the Prairie Schooner style, drawn by two yoke of oxen, and leading a cow. On the way Mr. Stillman bought a horse to help the oxen with the load. They were four weeks on the way and it rained or snowed every day but one.

The family lived in a log house for several months until the new frame house was ready. This house, later converted to the dormitory for the New York State School of Agriculture, was the first public house or hotel in the town. Today, it is the site of Serv-U Credit Union located on the far North end of the village at the intersection of route 244.









An original Allegany County map was found recently by a man in Black Creek, a hamlet in the Town of New Hudson. The date stamp was from 1829 and statistics from the 1820 census were displayed in the top right corner. According to this table, the Town of Alfred contained two distilleries and 18 asheries.

Whiskey was a common drink and a curse to both whites and Indians. At every "bee" or "raising" a jug was in evidence. Not only were church members addicted to the practice of drinking, but ministers of the gospel as well, partook with the others on such occasions.

The first temperance worker in Alfred was Mrs. Esther Stillman, wife of Maxson Stillman, Sr. She proposed that their new home, which was to be one of the best frame houses in Alfred, should be raised without whiskey - a thing unheard of in those early days.

Her husband readily seconded the proposition and no rum was used on the occasion, but a bountiful supper was served instead. This was an innovation, but it took well with the people and started an influence that had a remarkable effect on the later life of' the community.

In later years through the efforts of such strong advocates who stood boldly for the truth and righteous living, and who combated the evils of intemperance wherever found, Alfred became free from the curse of strong drink.



Dr. John B. Collins of Rhode Island descent, and of Quaker parentage, settled at Alfred Station in 1820. He was the first physician to acquire a medical practice in the town and as long as he lived, was the leading practitioner. Aside from the duties of his profession, he was interested in other matters. He represented the county in the state legislature, was one of the organizers of Alfred Academy and a member of the first board of trustees. He assisted in organizing the first district school and started the first temperance society in the town.

EDUCATION IN ALFRED
The Common School

As the wages paid teachers in this early period were so meager it was generally understood that board would be furnished free of expense by "boarding around." The number of weeks the school should continue and how long each family in the district should board the teacher was based on the estimate of scholars each family would be sending to school. The teacher's life was not an easy one. Often' the sleeping quarters and food provided were inadequate. The distance from the schoolhouse oftentimes necessitated the taking of long walks in all sorts of weather over roads sometimes almost impassable.

In these early years there are 54 names recorded of men and women who taught in the district schools of the town, Nancy Teater being the first in 1815, although school records were insufficiently kept at that time.

As population increased the town was divided into 15 school districts, each district employing a teacher. In the year 1838 there were 518 scholars attending school in the town. Each teacher received for her wages about $25 per year. Of the early school commissioners who served the town the following names appear: Jared Stillman, Cornelius Rice, Isaac Millard, Phineas Shaw, Orra Stillman, Alfred Lewis and Oran Vincent. Paul M. Vincent in 1843 became the first town superintendent of schools. He was succeeded by Philip Place, Jonathan Allen, Joseph W. Smythe, Jared Kenyon, William C. Kenyon, and Clark Sherman, all of whom served at different times through the period from 1843 up to the Civil War.



Alfred Grammar School, later Alfred Union Free School

RELIGION IN ALFRED
The Seventh Day Baptists

The First Seventh Day Baptist Church of Alfred was organized October 20, 1816. On this occasion a sermon was preached by Elder William Satterlee, with George Stillman and Daniel Babcock ordained as deacons. The first meeting of the new organization took place at the old schoolhouse on the site once owned by the former residence of Leonard Claire Tinkertown. The charter members numbered twenty-five. Unofficial meetings were held four years earlier. The people in the vicinity of Alfred formed themselves into a "religious association for the maintenance of religious services and for mutual watch care and admonition."

The first meeting was held at the home of Edward Greene on July 4, 1812. This home was the first house erected in Alfred located on the corner of Main Street and Church Street.

The first church building was erected during the years 1824-1828 on the west side of Main Street not far from the State barn, near where the old Lucy Barber brick house formerly stood. Today this location is the Palmer Block Company. The building cost $2500. It was built entirely of wood and was 36 by 50 feet. It served the congregation until 1854, when the present structure was completed. The home of Mrs. Charles Stillman on Glenn Street contains many of the old timbers taken from the First Seventh Day Baptist Church structure.

The second church was organized with 52 constituent members in 1831. The first church edifice was erected in 1836 near the junction of East Valley and Railroad Valley, one mile south of Alfred Station. This building was occupied about 25 years, until they moved to their present location and structure in 1857. The first pastor was Reverend Ray Greene. As the churches were about one mile from the settlements, people used lumber wagons in summer and sleighs in winter for transportation. During the warm weather men appeared at church in homespun, and many times barefooted. The women wore bonnets and dressed in calico.

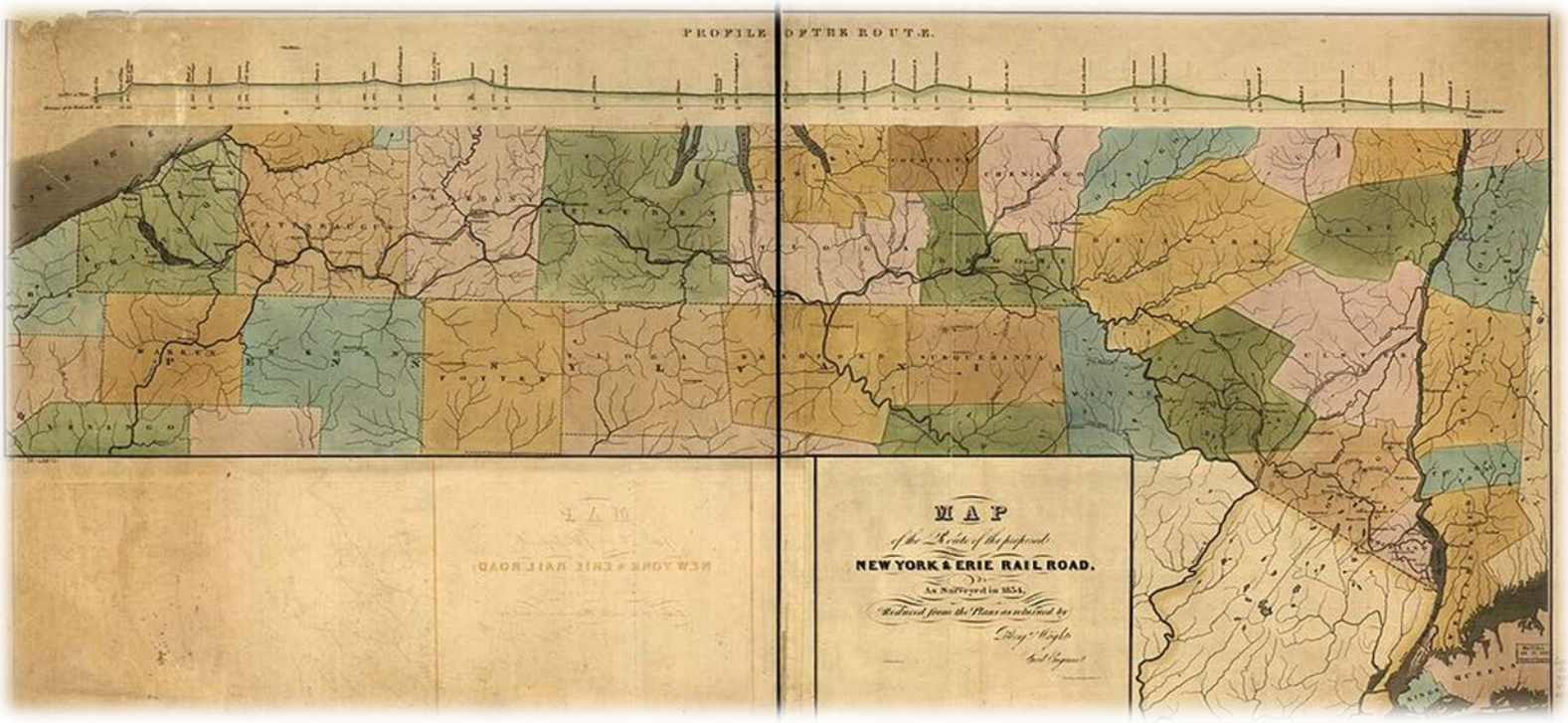
Ethan Lamphear in his reminiscences gives a graphic account of the preachers in these early days.

> He says: "Richard Hull preached the first sermon I can remember it in the school house at the 'Bridge. He could scarcely read or write his name at the time. He worked at farming and made spinning wheels. He wore no coat, only linen trousers, and a vest, without a shoe to his feet. David Stillman and my father talked the matter over that he ought to have some shoes. Father, after meeting, stepped out to the door, picked up a stick, and stepped back to the side of the preacher, stooped down, took hold of his foot and said, 'Take up" He measured the foot, and the next Sabbath the Elder came to church with shoes on his feet."



Alfred Station Seventh Day Baptist Church

The Erie Rail Road



The Erie Railroad was chartered in April of 1832 and was finished in 1851. It was roughly 446 miles long. Built as a broad-gauge line, it had six feet between the rails as opposed to the standard four feet eight and a half inches. This enabled them to carry larger items than anyone else, and only the Erie could use the line, thus keeping all other lines out of its territory. It enters Allegany County from the east in Almond, a corner of which it crosses; it then passes through Alfred, Andover, Wellsville, Scio, Amity, Friendship, and Cuba. There were stations at Almond, Alfred, Andover, Wellsville, Scio, Phillipsville, Belvidere, Friendship and Cuba, and switches at Tip Top, Elm Valley, Dyke and Summit. The Highest point between New York and Lake Erie (in Alfred Station) is appropriately named Tip Top.

Many rail stories have been passed down over the centuries during that occurred during build time. The first is the Irish Raid that took place when the railroad was being built through Alfred Station, then known as Baker's Bridge. One of the Irishmen living at the station was arrested for a misdemeanor and was taken to Alfred. The Irish were

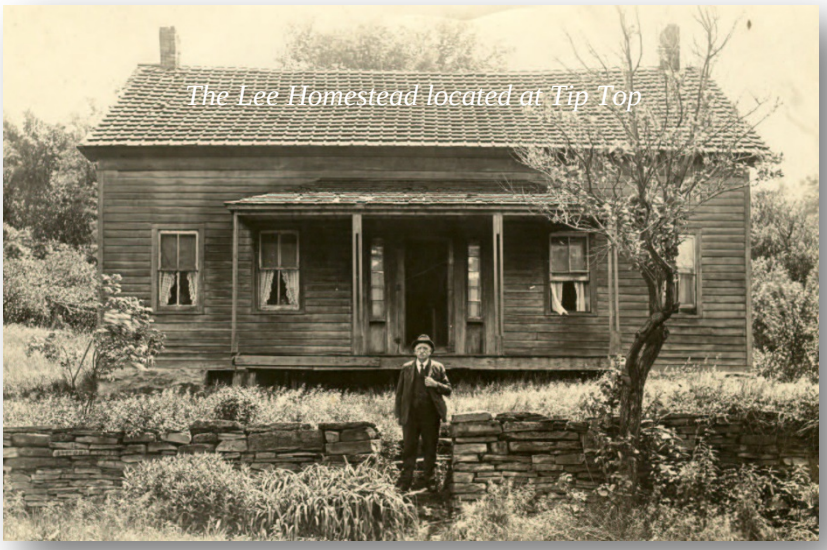


aroused, and a mob started on foot for Alfred to rescue their comrade. They were armed with picks, shovels or any implement that was handy. Women joined the mob with rocks carried in the toe of a sock or stocking. At the time there was a company of State Militia located in Alfred, composed of residents of the town and they had an old brass cannon among their paraphernalia.



When news reached the town that the mob was approaching, the cannon was loaded with stones, nails, and bits of chain. A chalk line was placed across the street on which they were approaching. Several men with guns stood behind this line, and when the Irishmen came up they were told that the first man who stepped over it was dead. They hesitated, and about that time the cannon was dragged around the corner. At the sight of the formidable weapon, the mob dropped their picks and shovels, and ran. Some of them slid off the bank down into the creek, and others went pattering down the dusty road. This ended the raid.

Tip Top between Alfred Station and Andover is the highest point on the Erie Railroad between New York and Chicago, having an elevation of 1,783 feet, and while the Erie was being built many handicaps had to be overcome in getting through the swamp. In 1851, a locomotive hauling a gravel train had sunk out of sight, when the rails with ends placed in chairs and not bolted pulled apart and a section of the track went down in the soft earth, until only the smokestack and part of the cab remained in sight. The locomotive was pulled out by fastening heavy ropes to it and their ends to a cherry tree that stood on solid ground. The men had a hard job rescuing the locomotive, and people came from all over the region to witness the wonderful sight. It took several days to accomplish it.



The Lee Homestead located at Tip Top

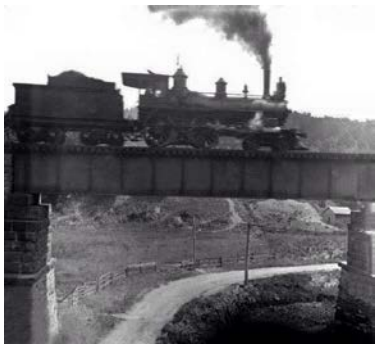
The "Lee Homestead" was also located at Tip Top. The homestead was built in 1840 and was used as a tavern for passersby. This old tavern sheltered many officials of the Erie Railroad between the years of 1848 and 1851 as well as workmen. The price of board was $2 per week, meals for wayfarers were one shilling, and lodging sixpence. This was before the time of nickels and dimes had come into existence. As referring to liquor, it is said the pure whisky sold for three cents per glass, or in larger quantities for two shillings per gallon. After 1852, the old tavern ceased to be a regular public house, although its doors were always open to Erie men, and many of them remember it as a "life-saving" station, when stranded at Tip Top without a "full dinner pail."

There was also a telegraph station and a water tower located at Tip Top, along with switching tracks allowing engines to unhook and return to Hornell or Andover. Brent Baker and Jesse Shaw were the telegraph operators who made sure that the trains ran on time so there were no accidents.



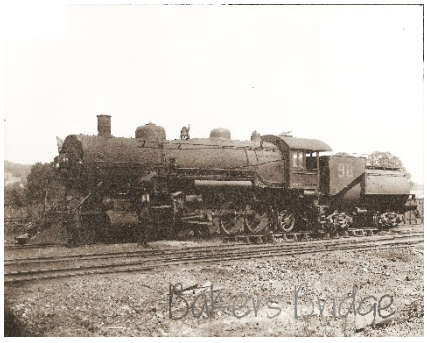
Charles Lusk lived a few hundred yards north of the telegraph station on the Lusk Road. Charlie was a foreman of a section gang and devised a railroad spike with a spur below the head which kept the spike from backing out of a tie. He won much acclaim because his idea reduced the maintenance of the bothersome loose spike.

Everything is gone at Tip Top except the bottom half of the water tower. Alfred's own Glenn Zweygardt's home and Studio is located at Tip Top. The water tower can be seen behind it.



Lee's Homestead stood across the street from the monument works on the bank. Water to fill the water tank came from behind the Lee Homestead, Frank Lee was paid $10.00 a month for the water.

It was a gigantic undertaking, through a wild, wooded and uninhabited country, from the Hudson to Lake Erie. There were many disappointments. Money was hard to raise, even though the communities had helped by giving land for station sites and right of way, and individuals had purchased the company's stock.



At the outset, it was estimated that the cost of building the railroad would be $6,000,000. When the railroad was finally completed to Dunkirk, the cost was over $20,000,000!

Early 1900's



In the town and village of Alfred at the turn of the century there were not many automobiles owned in the village. Many of the barns now used as garages housed the family horse, buggy, surrey or sleigh and often a cow. Most of the automobiles were not used in the winter months, the tires and batteries removed and stored until spring. Snow was a problem. The sidewalks were plowed by an iron shod wooden snow plow drawn by one or two horses and the streets were not plowed.

A large brick livery barn operated by William W. Sheldon was in the rear of the Greene Block where the Alfred University maintenance building now stands. Here you could rent a horse, buggy, surrey or sleigh or make arrangements for hay rides, special trips by stage or take regular trips to the depot. A horse drawn stage to Hornell carried a few passengers and the driver executed errands. The Red Bus line, the first public motorized transportation to Hornell, commenced operations January 1, 1916 and was soon followed by another line.



Frequent trips were made every day and the line was well patronized, especially in the late evening. The flat top of the Red Bus often served as an overflow for patrons unable to get seats inside. Typically the riders on the top of the bus were students.

Wooden church sheds located in the rear of the parsonage were used by rural residents for their shopping and other visits to the village. Shopping areas were located at frequent intervals in the various towns and villages to accommodate customers dependent on horse drawn transportation.

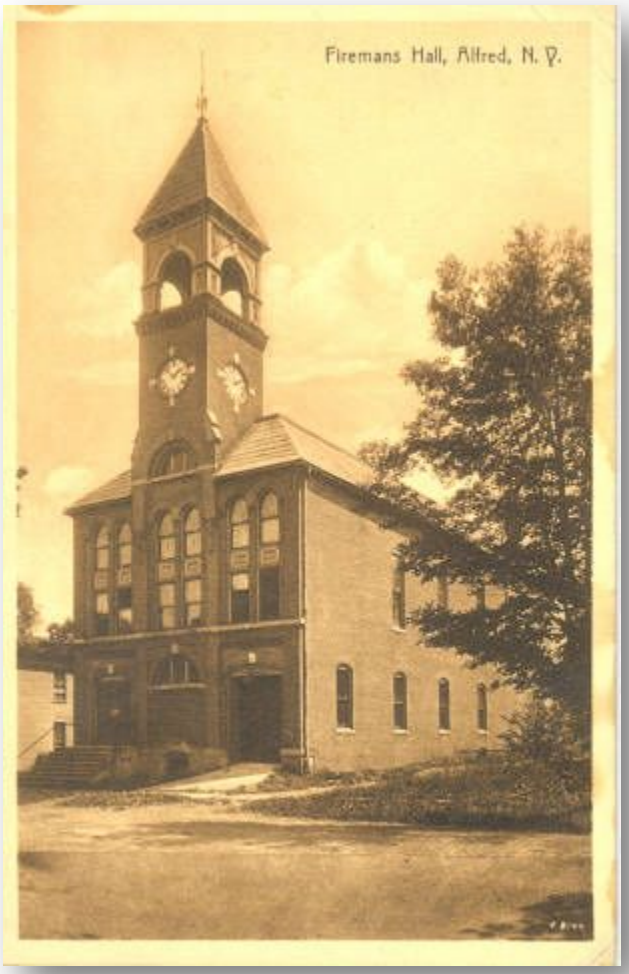
FIREMEN'S HALL/Village Hall



The A. E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Company was organized in the fall of 1887, the year that the east side of Main Street burned to the ground signifying the need for a formal fire department. This company was eventually named the A.E. Crandall Hook and Ladder Company in honor of Almond E. Crandall. Crandall was a local businessman who gave strong financial support to the company in those early years. He himself was not a firefighter. Milo Greene acted as the first chief of the company. Its first annual fair commenced on January 21, 1890, and continued for three evenings at Bliss Hall in Alfred Centre.

This company purchased a lot on West University Street and as soon as sufficient funds were secured to pay for the lot a building was to be erected. After several fairs and other entertainments to which the people of the town contributed liberally, the corner stone of the hall was laid on Thursday, June 5, 1890. The building was opened for use in the following spring. The brick structure still stands containing a public hall, dining rooms, kitchen, parlor and rooms with fire apparatus.

At the dedicatory exercises prayer was offered by Rev. L. A. Platts, followed by the reading of the history of the organization by the Secretary, A. B. Greene; The University band furnished music for the occasion. The corner stone weighing about one ton was placed in position by the "fire ladies" in command of John P. Mosher, assistant foreman. Appropriate remarks were made by L. C. Rogers, J. Clarke, and D. E. Maxson.



The clock in the tower was the gift of Alonzo, Madelia and Clotilda Stillman, while the bell which has rung out the hours through all these years was the gift of William H. Crandall. Being centrally located and having a seating capacity of several hundred people the hall is in great demand for entertainments of various sorts. At that time, it was used by the college for the weekly assembly. Various dramatic performances were staged here and withal the building is one of the most useful of any of the village buildings.

A portion of renovations to the hall were completed in the late 1990's. A liaison of the village board is researching opportunities to help fund the second half of the renovations to the building. Components still needed are insulation of ceiling and floor, replacement storm windows that are historically appropriate, electrical upgrades, second floor restrooms, and a forced air unit with air conditioning.

Water System

The village had a water system with wells and springs located on the Water Wells Road on the corner of the road leading to Foster Lake. Many homes still used their own wells. There was a flowing well and horse trough between Omicron and the Frechette home. The Village wells were connected by power rods to a central gas engine with a hook up similar to that used in pumping oil wells. The property on Lake Road is still owned by the village and could be used as a back up source for water.

The water aquafer use today is in Alfred Station and made up of two wells. One is located at the end of the Shaw Road and the second is located on Route 21 next to the Town of Alfred buildings. The water system is pumped to four reservoirs in the Village. Two are on Pine Hill, another located behind the Village Shop on Reynolds Street and the fourth is located on Alfred State Campus.

The Alfred Celadon Terra Cotta Title Company

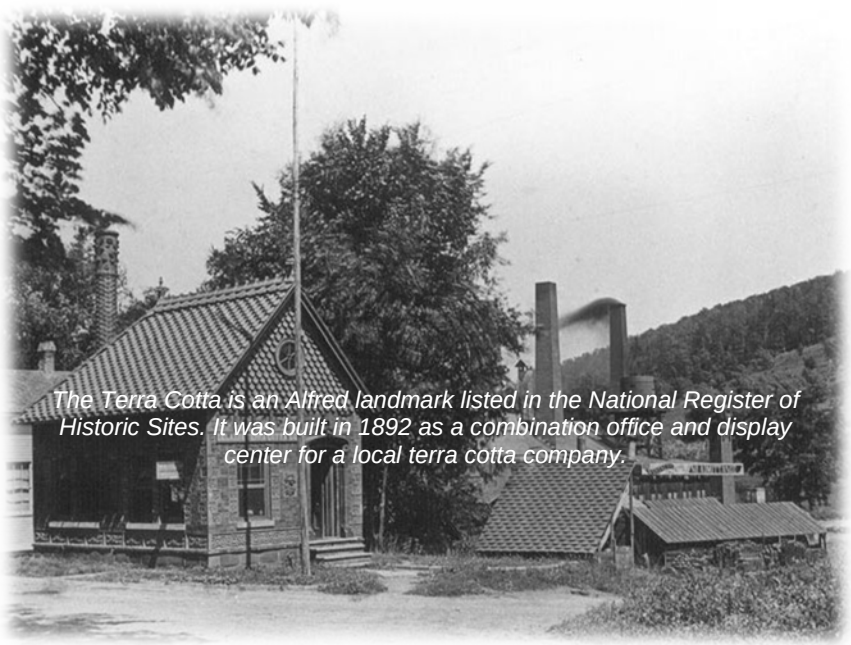


The Terra Cotta Company was organized on October 3, 1888 and was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York with a capital, of $10,000. D. S. Burdick was the first President. He was succeeded by J. J. Merrill, and W. R. Clarke was the first Secretary and Treasurer.

In 1888 George H. Babcock was elected Director of the company. He saw the possibilities for developing roofing tile and took an enthusiastic part in their development. The capital stock was increased to $40,000, Mr. Babcock taking most of the increase and thus secured control of the company. Mr. Babcock invented 20 different shapes of tile. Perhaps the most successful shape was the "Conosera" which was extensively used throughout the country. The prettiest tile manufactured is said to have been made from the Celadon clay, a beautiful green which was found in the bed of the stream at the rear of the plant. Babcock died in 1893.

Mrs. George H. Babcock rather than see the works deteriorate advanced money to continue the business through 1894 under the management of J. A. Hubbard, who succeeded Mr. Babcock as President of the company. The capital stock was increased to $150,000. The property was leased to C. T. Harris of Chicago, with W. R. Clarke as a partner. Later Mr. Harris secured enough stock to control the interests of the company.

There were main offices in New York and Chicago, as well as branches in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Columbus, St. Louis, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Paul and Minneapolis. The plant employed 25 to 50 men and boys. More than one fourth of the families of the village were represented among the employees. In the year 1897-1898, the works paid more than $20,000 cash into Alfred.



The Terra Cotta is an Alfred landmark listed in the National Register of Historic Sites. It was built in 1892 as a combination office and display center for a local terra cotta company.

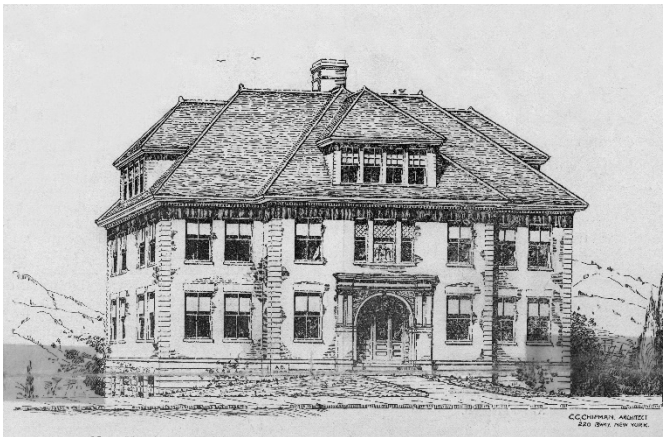
The company commenced business in a $75 building with a horse for motive power and did the first molding on February 7, 1889. From this small beginning the business increased until the plant covered an acre of ground with a capacity of one car of roofing tile per day. The first efforts of the company were in the manufacture of architectural terra cotta and chimney tops. The shale and rock beds found in the vicinity furnished abundant material for brick and tile. The extensive deposits of aluminous shale are, except the oil rock, probably the most valuable source of mineral wealth in the country on account of the superior quality of brick and tile made

from them. The roofing tile produced by this company has been pronounced superior in appearance and equal in quality to any American or imported make.

This company also catered to the decorative tastes of the era by manufacturing ornamental tiles for the exterior of homes and business buildings. These tiles include bas-relief heads, fruit, and geometric designs. Several examples of these distinctive and arresting tiles were set into the exterior walls of the Terra Cotta so that prospective customers could view them on display. Other examples can be seen in the area, especially along the top front wall of the Greene Block on Main Street in Alfred. The Terra Cotta was such an unusual building that a replica was produced and exhibited at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago.

The Celadon Terra Cotta Company prospered and was partially responsible for locating the New York School of Clay working (now the New York State College of Ceramics and Material Science) in Alfred. In 1906, the company was sold to the Ludowici Company of Ohio, which became the Ludowici-Celadon Company. By that time the original tile works had expanded until it covered more than an acre of ground, occupying the space where McLane Physical Education Center and the football field of Alfred University are currently located.

The plant was completely destroyed by fire on the morning of August 26, 1909, except for the Terra Cotta building which stood separately along North Main Street. The tile works was not rebuilt.


NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL OF CLAY WORKING AND CERAMICS, ALFRED, N. Y.

For the past several years, with the assistance of a federal matching fund grant, the local historical society has been engaged in restoring the Terra Cotta. Financial aid was provided by scores of the Friends of the Terra Cotta, several private corporations, Alfred University, Keramos (student ceramic engineering society), and the New York State College of Ceramics. Special mention is made of Ludowici-Celadon Company of New Lexington, Ohio, which contributed the reproductions of the large ornamental foundation tiles.

The value of the Terra Cotta lies not only in its relationship to local ceramics, it also serves as a reflection of Victorian thought and tastes, a truly unique artifact of our past.
By Dr. Warren L. Bouck

TOWN AND VILLAGE GOVERNMENT
Town Officers

The word town originally meant an enclosure-a collection of houses in closed by a wall or palisade for safety. The earliest towns of New York State were patterned after the Dutch towns of Holland. Today the town is a political corporation, with certain legislative, executive and judicial powers. The officers of a town are supervisor, town clerk, highway commissioners, overseers of the poor, constables, assessors, collector and inspectors of election. The judicial power within the town is exercised by the justices of the peace, four in number. In 1926, the officers for the Town of Alfred were:

Supervisor-E. E. Fenner.
Town Clerk-F. A. Crumb.
Justices of the_Peace-F. E. Stillman, Milo Palmer, F. S.
Champlin and Byron Baker.
Assessors-F. L. Greene, Melville Niles, and S. B. Bond.
Collector-Lyle Bennehoff.
Superintendent of the Highways-J. L. Sisson.
Overseer of the Poor-Elno Burdick.
School Directors-G. S. Robinson and Mrs. Eva Champlin.
Constables-W. H. Bassett, A. A. BurdiCk, E. V. Greene and I. L. Pierce.
Inspectors of Election-Mrs. Charles Sisson, W. H. Bassett, I. H. Babcock, and Mrs. Hazel Atwell.

Village Officers

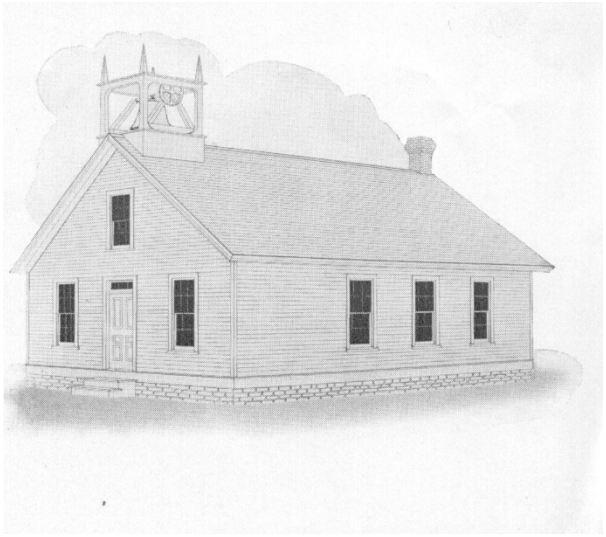
Village government is of later origin than that of the town. The growth of village government in the State of New York furnishes some interesting facts. The main consideration that boomed to influence villages to incorporate in the earlier period was the necessity of having some systemized regulations for the extinguishing of fires. The first law for the incorporation of a village was passed in 1798. This act gave certain powers to the freeholders and inhabitants of the villages of Troy and Lansingburg. This act declared each village to be a "body politic and corporate," with power to elect 5 trustees who could make by-laws and rules relating to the lighting of streets, putting out fires, and "anything whatsoever that may concern the police and good government" of said village. This was the birth of village government in the State of New York. The chief executive officer of the village is the president who is head of the police force and who is authorized to see that the ordinances are carried into execution. In 1926, the officers for the Village of Alfred were:

President-D. D. Randolph.
Treasurer-A. B. Kenyon.
Trustees-A. F. Randolph, W. J. Taylor, F. A, Crumb and J. N. Norwood.
Water and Street Commissioner-Lynn Vars.
Chief of Police-J. L. Sisson.
Registrar of Vital Statistics-W. H. Thomas.
Assessor-D. D. Randolph, A. J. Randolph. F. A. Crumb.
Custodian of the village clock-C. B. Stillman.

According to the report of the state tax commission for the year 1924 the assessed valuation of real estate including village property, real estate of corporations and special franchises amounted to $528,005. Taxes levied for village purposes amounted to $7,284.81.

Alfred Village and Town 1909 to the Present

Alfred State Agricultural and Technical Institute was established on October 18th, 1909 with 68 students enrolled. The Ag-Tech was at that time part of Alfred University. It consisted of a school of agriculture for the young men and a course in domestic science for young women. Today, looking at the deserted farms in this vicinity, one may wonder why an agricultural school was started in this area. Before years of erosion, a depression, two World Wars and a tornado impoverished many farms around Alfred, it was a thriving agricultural center. Large dairy herds were pastured on the surrounding hills. One of the first industries in the Alfred area of sugar hill was just that, maple sugar. Along with maple sugar the sale of cheese and cheese factories were abundant in Allegany County.



The turn of the century brought about a renaissance to the University and Village. The pace of which the two changed with in the village and the country at that time was incredible. From growth to depression, social change, the birth of the New York State education system with the college of ceramics and the agricultural schools. Both were established in the first decade of the 1900's and under the leadership of Booth Davis, President of Alfred University. When President Davis first took over it seemed as if he was directly responsible for everything from the formulation of general policy to the care of campus shrubbery. True, before his day the President had ceased to be the Registrar. In 1908 the deanship, which in effect had been his duty, was set off as a district office, Professor A. B. Kenyon becoming Alfred's first College Dean.

Back in the Village of Alfred, the Alfred Academy was separated from the University in 1897. Alfred Academy issued no separate catalogue until 1900. In that pamphlet the teachers' training class was featured and students were assured of the value to them of access to certain University facilities including the well-known literary societies – lyceums. Principal E. P. Saunders allowed the Academy to function as a free local high school but the days of the Alfred Academy were numbered. The University was blacking the Academy's red ink at the rate of $1500 to $2000 annually. Between 1903-04 and 1913-14 the student enrollment sagged from 161 to 89. Finally, an agreement was reached between the University and the Union Free School District by which the latter would maintain a full four-year high school in its Park Street building (South Hall). In June 1915 the Academy closed its doors for good. Thus, 78 years after its birth, Alfred Academy passed into history.

1915-1920



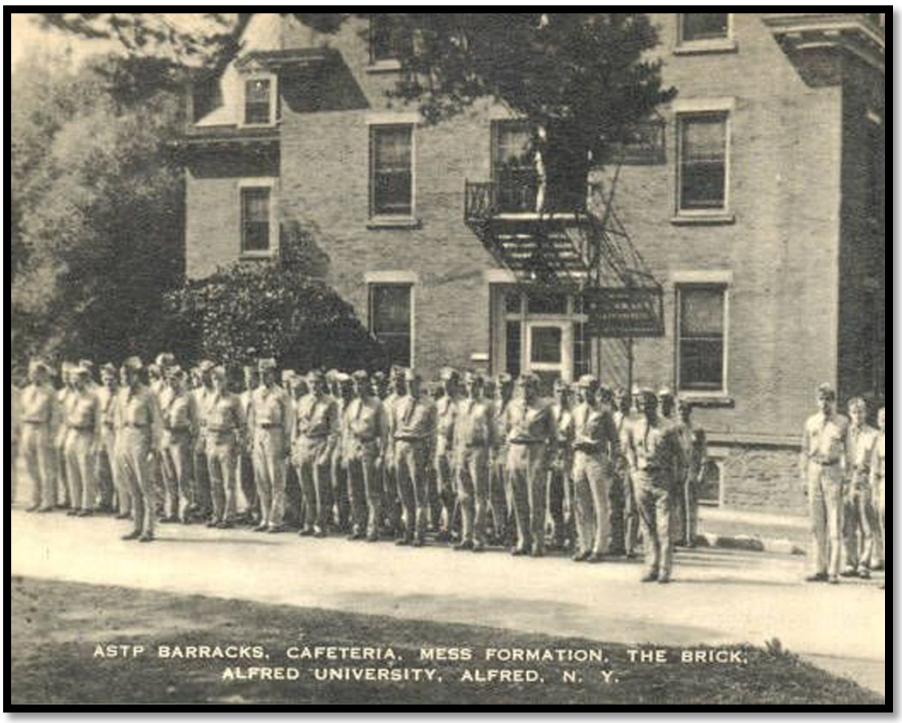
This was a difficult time for the University as the eyes of America were on Europe and the advent of World War One. To Alfred that seemed a tragic but remote event. By April 1917 Alfred Campus was alive with preparation of a military presence. From Easter, military drills were incorporated and Ivan Fisk was made drill-master, later was named by the University trustees captain of the "Alfred University New York State Military Cadet Corps." Men were enlisting and State-approved agreement were made to allow students who enlisted to receive semester credit if they had finished half a semester and had a grade of at least C. When the University opened in 1917 enrollment was off seventeen percent. In January of 1918, conservation had struck town and gown from every

quarter. Wheatless Day, Meatless day, Porkless Day, worried every home in Alfred and dormitory. Another fuel economizer was "daylight saving", instituted in the spring of 1918.

The Students Training Corps (SATC) was established in the fall of 1918. Its purpose was to supply the service with officers, engineers, doctors, and other specialists. Enlistees were uniformed and equipped. The brick became the barracks, the co-eds being shunted off to the Castle and the formerly exclusive masculine haunt Burdick Hall.

Scarcely after the boys settled in their barracks a terrible epidemic of the Spanish Flu hit fifty of the student soldiers. Two young men, two young women, and two faculty members died as a result.

Relatively normal health conditions returned to the campus shortly after, so life went on but not so usual. The Village took on a military mind. Corps members took many specialty courses in things like military law, meteorology, and war issues. The Brick barracks held an army fitted out with canteen, mess hall, and hospital. The YMCA fitted up a "Hut" in Fireman's Hall where they held regular "Y" meetings, housed a reading room, offered free movies, and provided lectures with the SATC in mind.



Robert D. Garwood class of 1914 and co-founder of the Fiat Lux became Alfred's first graduate war casualty. Garwood served in the merchant marines and later joined the Canadian Flying Corps. He was shot down during combat in 1918.

The Great War ended. On November 11, 1918 with the clamor of ringing bells the Village of Alfred rejoiced. The local commandant declared a holiday at the Post. After helping in the celebration in Hornell, and joining in the cities peace parade SATC, other students, faculty, and members of the community returned home and lighted the previously prepared inflammable as the Kaiser's funeral pyre in a second celebration of peace and victory.

After WWI Alfred University experienced a growth in enrollment that brought on the idea to develop the campus and the curriculum. The school of ceramics developed into a full school of art. The boom had rocketed the enrollment in the School from the 52 in 1918 to 220 in 1933. New faculty members were hired: one well known Clara K. Nelson, art; Clarence W. Merritt engineering; Murry J. Rice, Chemistry; Charles M. Harder, Art; and Samuel R. Scholes who brought the Alfred Glass Department to the School of Ceramics. Some argue that Alfred University was the first Glass Department in the country.

President Davis had sent a letter to Governor Franklin Roosevelt with a proposal to enlarge the school of Ceramics which was rejected. Shortly after, Davis submitted a special bill introduced by Senator John Knight providing an appropriation of $175,000, for the new building. It glided through both houses in April 1930. President Davis, Jake Merrill, and Charles Binns rushed to Albany and were in the executive chambers when Roosevelt's signature was affixed. Thus was the edifice long known as the New Ceramic Building and later it took on the identity of Binns-Merrill.



The School of Agriculture: The school of Agriculture started out running but came up short by the 1930's. In 1909 Director Ladd brought the school to its feet building the Agriculture building on States Street and the Dairy next to the building. The Stillman Farm at the entrance to the Village on the North Side became a part of the school and a greenhouse was built off of Pine Street. Its objective was to prepare men and women for successful life on their farms, but with an eye for those who wish positions as inspectors or farm managers. Director Ladd resigned in 1920 and was succeeded by locally born Archie Champlin who held the position for many years.

Post war depression in agriculture hurt all institutions serving this key industry. Enrollment turned sharply down. Governor Smith suggested closing some of the specialty schools. By 1926 things were becoming quite gloomy for NYSA. In 1927 the schools were placed under the Department of Education. This removed the management of the school from the authority of Alfred University. President Davis, Director Champlin and the legislature tried to bring local farmers to their feet in an attempt to support the Agricultural School in Alfred. This was changed in 1927 State Fair when the topic was directed to the State of New York to support the Agricultural Schools in New York. This lasted through the duration of the depression. In 1936 Mr. Orvis was appointed as director. This situation was brought about by: 1) lack of interest in the six agricultural institutes, 2) a depression during which the State Education Department was not spending any funds on expansion (a depression which left parents unable to afford advanced education for their children), and 3) the decline in agriculture as an industry and other factors.

When Mr. Orvis arrived upon the scene, he found a school with but 30 or 40 students many of them not even high school graduates. With uncanny foresight Director Orvis started replacing some of the abandoned curricula, which eventually turned out to be the important ones in future education. The girls returned to campus for work in the field of secretarial science. With the mechanization of agriculture, a course in Rural Engineering consisting of farm machinery, sales and maintenance was inaugurated. At this point Mr. Hinkle came as assistant director. The industrial department was established. These courses proved to be a boon during World War II when the shops ran in three shifts (24 hours a day) training workers for war industry.



A Naval Pilot Training unit was added temporarily as the school's contribution to the war effort. The cadets took their ground training at Alfred, living in Bartlett, and their flight training in Dansville, occupying the Bernard McFadden's Health Spa there. In three years, Mr. Orvis had increased the registration to 354 young men and women. The Institute grew under his guidance proving his genius for administration to the school. It is now seen with an average 1400 student enrollment and many more turned away each year for lack of space and instructional staff.

The numbers grew during the years of 1941, 1948 and 1949 until Alfred State had some 500 or 600 students annually. In 1948 when the State University of New York was established, the Agricultural and Technical Institute as it was then called became one of its component units. It reached the status of a full-fledged junior college and could grant the degree of Associate in Applied Science. The school was originally planned for 250 students, and up until 1952 no additional buildings had been erected although registration had more than tripled. With the addition of the Industrial Building in 1953, Radio, Conical Laboratory Technology and other courses were all brought under one roof from rented or outlying buildings.

Mr. Orvis has had three extended absences since he became our director. During World War II he was in Europe with the rank of major. When the Marshall Plan was inaugurated in 48-49, he and Mrs. Orvis were stationed in Paris, France for two years where Mr. Orvis was Agricultural Chief in all the 17 countries outside the Iron Curtain. Again in 1954 he was called to serve the government and went to Israel for two years as Project Chief of the economic aid to Israel including agriculture, and education. During these absences, Mr. Hinkle, Assistant Director, was the Acting Director and to him also must be accorded a large share of credit for the success of the Institute. With that same spirit and enthusiasm Alfred State College was brought out of the dust of time to the level it was during the 1960's and 70's by its current President and leader Skip Sullivan.

The history of Alfred was graciously provided by Mr. James Ninos, history buff, artist, teacher, longtime resident, and board member for the Village of Alfred.