

Proposal for the Oran Schoolhouse  
Hamlet of Oran, Town of Pompey  
Onondaga County, New York  
August 2015

### **The Proposal**

The Town of Pompey Historical Society proposes renovation of the Oran Schoolhouse for the purpose of creating a new community center within the Hamlet of Oran, Town of Pompey. This renovation proposal includes moving the building from its current location to Elman Field, a 2-acre property approximately 300 feet west of the current site.

### **Background**

The building known as the Oran Schoolhouse dates back to the 1830s when it apparently served as a store and post office for the Hamlet of Oran. An early deed (Warranty Deed, 1837, Book of Deeds No. 67) records Anson H. Taylor as owner of the building in 1836. Mr. Taylor is listed as the Oran Postmaster from 1828-1833 (Pompey Our Town in Profile, Vol. 1, 1976, p. 156). The building lot sits at the southwest corner of the intersection of State Route 92 (formerly the Cherry Valley Turnpike) and the Oran Delphi Road. See Appendix Figure 1 for current site location.

It is not known when the building first became a schoolhouse. Records indicate that it served as Pompey Common School District #15, then District #22, from sometime in the mid 1800s through 1951 (Pompey Our Town in Profile, Vol. 1, 1976, p. 264). The building was later sold to the Oran Memorial Park Association (OMPA) for use as the Oran Community Center. From the 1950s through the late 1990s, the building housed many events and activities ranging from monthly OMPA meetings to community parties, club meetings, craft fairs, and yard sales. Additionally, it served as Election District #4 polling place for the Town of Pompey. In 1998, the Oran Schoolhouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1999, the Oran Memorial Park Association transferred ownership of the Schoolhouse to the Town of Pompey Historical Society with the agreement that the Historical Society would preserve the integrity of the building as an Historic Place and would maintain its functionality as a center for community activity in the Hamlet of Oran.

### **The Challenges**

The Historical Society faces two challenges with the functional use of the Schoolhouse/Community Center: (1) the poor physical condition of the building and (2) the dangerous site access.

The Schoolhouse is not usable in its present condition. The outside measurements of the building are 24 feet 7" wide by 40 feet 8" long by 16 feet tall. It is approximately 1000 sq. ft. with a full basement and large attic. A building inspection completed in 1997 found the following problems that need resolution in order to meet building-code standards and/or to make the building safely functional. Basement framing and other wood structural members are slowly deteriorating. The flue for the furnace is rusting and is not functional without replacement. The source of the well water is unknown; it is believed that it originates somewhere on the other side of the highway, State Route 92, that runs roughly east-west in front of the building on its north side. Given the mystery, it is more practical to dig and maintain a well of known location and quality. The location and functionality of the septic system are unknown, leaving the toilet facilities unusable. Cosmetic changes such as painting and window replacement would make the building more comfortable and inviting for use.

The greater challenge is the Schoolhouse's location. There is no safe pedestrian access to the building. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, the lot size has been reduced from 1 acre of land to 0.23 acre (lot size 70 feet front boundary by 95 feet west boundary by 115 feet east boundary by 135 feet back boundary). The 1934-1935 Tax Roll records the Oran School District #14 as 1 acre of land and schoolhouse. The 2014 Tax Roll indicates the present lot size of 0.23 acre. See Appendix Figure 1 which shows the current lot size.

Vehicle parking is non-existent. A small parking area could be created on the east side of the lot, but it would accommodate only 2 or 3 vehicles. Access would have to be from State Route 92 because of the New York State changes to Oran Delphi Road on the eastern boundary of the lot. The Schoolhouse property is bounded to the south and to the west by private residences, so there is no access potential in either of those directions. It is the combination of decreased lot size and highway changes that have created the unsafe conditions.

The Schoolhouse lot is located at the corner intersection of State Route 92 and Oran-Delphi Road. It is clear that the Schoolhouse has always been close to the road. The photograph below, from a postcard dated 1911, shows the close proximity of the building to the road. The building on the right, surrounded by trees, is the Schoolhouse. At the time of this photograph, the road was known as the Cherry Valley Turnpike that connected Manlius and Cazenovia.



Photograph (circa 1911) of Cherry Valley Turnpike, looking east. The Oran Schoolhouse is the building on the right.

Changes to State Route 92 have had significant impact on safe access to the building. With thanks to the New York State Department of Transportation (NY DOT), we now have access to engineering reports on changes to Route 92 and to the Oran Delphi Road. The 1935 Report is a record of the initial widening, reinforcing, and paving of the highway. The 1958 Report documents further widening changes to the highway and shoulder. The 1995 Report documents changes to both Route 92 and the Oran-Delphi Road that resulted in further limitations to Schoolhouse site access. Finally, we have documentation of a permanent easement by the NY DOT that resulted in a loss of 2,135 sq. ft. (.049 acre) of the Schoolhouse lot. The photograph (July 2015) below shows the

current state of the highway and the close proximity of the Schoolhouse building (on the right) to the road. It is 21 feet 7” from the building front door to the curb of the highway shoulder.



Photograph (July 2015) of State Route 92, looking east. The Oran Schoolhouse is the building on the right.

NY DOT traffic volume data, measured as Annual Average of Daily Traffic (AADT), shows a steady increase in the number of vehicles using State Route 92 and Oran Delphi Road. The posted speed on State Route 92, to the north side of the building lot, is 45 MPH, but vehicle speeds are generally much faster. Note the following data:

<u>Year and Location of Traffic Volume Count</u>	<u>Est. AADT</u>
a. 1965 Rt 92 from Pompey Center Rd to Madison County line	6,208
b. 1997 Rt 92 from Pompey Center Rd to Oran-Delphi Rd	9,985
c. 2005 Rt 92 at Oran Delphi Road	11,330
d. 2011 Rt 92 at Oran Delphi Road	11,250

Data taken from NY DOT Traffic Volume Statistics. 1965, 1997 data received from DOT. 2005, 2011 data online at [www.dot.ny.gov](http://www.dot.ny.gov).

### **Planning Considerations**

There are several considerations we will use to guide this restoration project:

- uses for the restored building need to remain focused on educational and/or historical functionality and/or community access;
- the building relocation and restoration must meet all conditions that maintain its listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), including the following:
  - the building must be relocated only within the limits of the Hamlet of Oran because its National Registry designation is tied to this Hamlet specifically;

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- the new location should provide for a reasonable line of sight of the building from the road – this is considered important to maintain the integrity of the NRHP status;
- the limestone (field stone) foundation is an important characteristic of the building and must be preserved;
- the new siting must preserve certain currently visible attributes of the Schoolhouse in relation to the grounds, e.g., the field-stone foundation is visible because the building is actually set into a slope – we would need to replicate that characteristic.

Our initial thinking is to move the Oran Schoolhouse building three properties to the west on State Route 92. The property, known as Elman Field and owned by the PHS, is 2 acres with 305 feet of frontage on the highway. It is located within the Hamlet of Oran (see Appendix Figure 2). The property slopes down from the highway into the field. We would be able to site the building into the slope with frontage of our choosing on the highway. We would be able to put an access driveway to the east of the building simulating the physical character of an intersection that is a physical attribute of the building's current location. There would be sufficient space for well, septic, parking and safe access to the building. The highway access would be sufficiently far from the Oran-Delphi intersection to be safe. The new location would put the Oran Schoolhouse next to the property of the Oran Community Church, which is also on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Action Plan**

The following steps will provide us with the necessary information to make the decision about proceeding with the project.

1. Develop a feasibility study that identifies: (a) proposed uses of the renovated, relocated building as a Community Center, (b) the process for obtaining funding to support the renovation, and (c) the anticipated income sources for maintaining the building;
2. Review the application process for requesting that we are allowed to move the building without losing the NRHP status. Begin the steps for seeking that approval.
3. Develop proposed project timeline that includes application deadlines for grants and other funding sources.

The Hamlet of Oran was founded in 1793. The Schoolhouse building has been an integral part of the Hamlet community since the mid-1800s. It is our goal to preserve this example of 1800's architecture and of rural education and to revitalize its use as a Center of community activity.

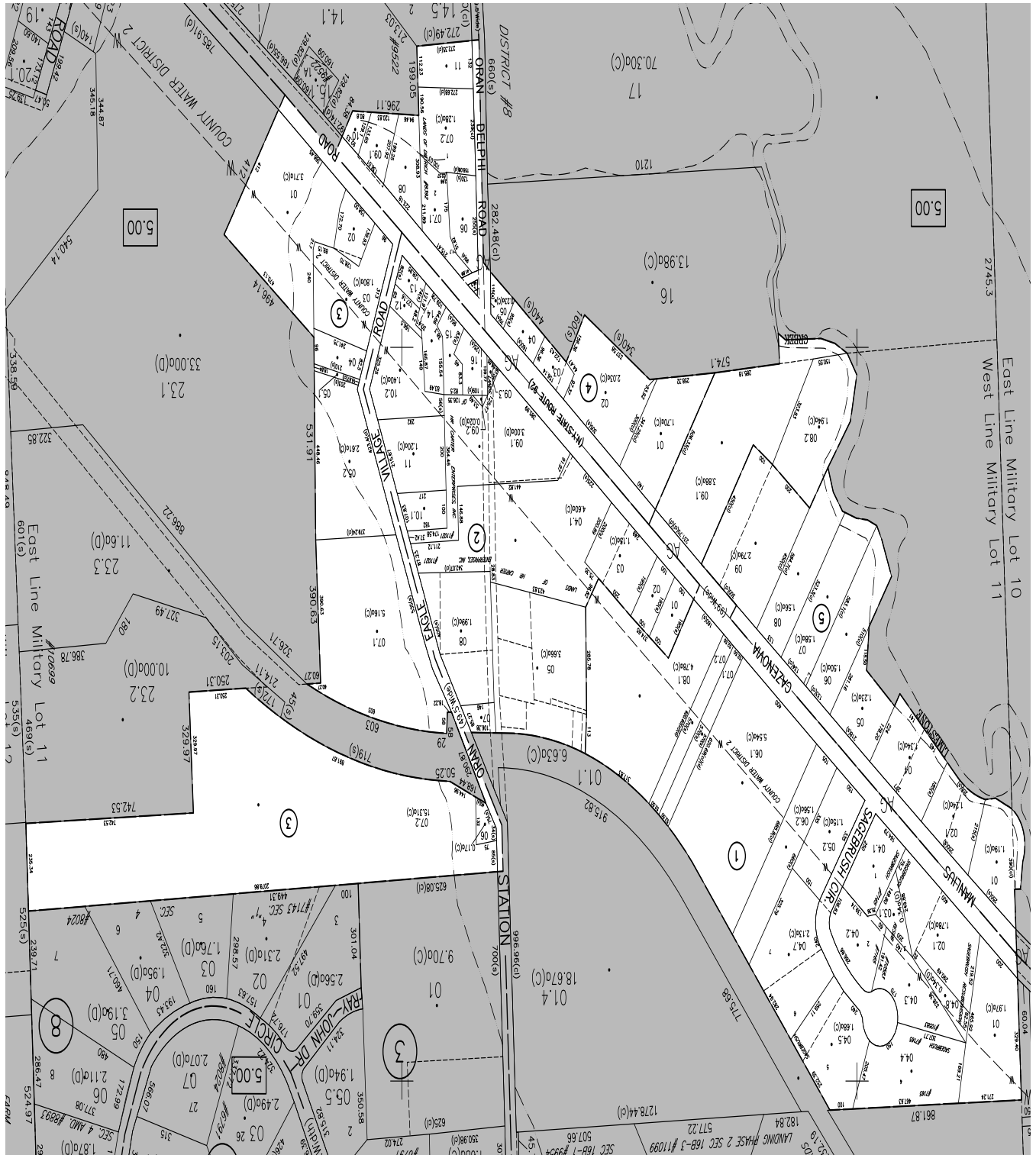
Comments and questions welcome.

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Appendix – Figures (cont.)

Figure 2. Real Property 2015 Tax Map, Hamlet of Oran  
Hamlet of Oran Boundaries. Properties in white are within the Hamlet of Oran.



## References

New York State Department of Public Works, Division of Highways. (1935). Plans for Reconstructing a Portion of the Cazenovia-Manlius, Part 3 State Highway No. 9025 (NRSRC-3557).

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County of Onondaga, Tax Roll for the Town of Pompey, 1934-1935.

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Warranty Deed, 1837, Book of Deeds No. 67.