

## **Evolution and Preliminary Historic Significance Evaluation of the Former Mill Race Inn Property**

4 East State Street – Geneva, Illinois

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Historic photos provided by HPC Commissioner Alan Hiller and the Geneva History Museum

Preliminary Chain of Title provided by HPC Commissioner Carolyn Zinke

January 15, 2014 (Revised July 27, 2016 and August 12, 2016)

*NOTE: This report has been compiled at the direction of the Geneva Historic Preservation Commission for the purpose of evaluating the potential of granting landmark status to a portion of the former Alexander Blacksmith Shop / Mill Race Inn property. Additional research may provide supplementary information that may substantiate or refute assumptions contained herein. All stated dates are based on documented sources, local histories, and/or probable dates in the case of construction improvements. Evaluations and conclusions are subject to change based on further research and/or site investigation.*

### **Evolution of the Site**

First pioneer settlers arrive in vicinity of present-day Geneva in 1833, including Daniel Shaw Haight and James Brown. Following year, Frederick Bird, James Clayton Herrington and Christian Bowen Dodson arrive. In the winter of 1834-35, Haight “sells out his claim” to Herrington.

Between 1835 and 1837, the newly-settled area is known concurrently as “Herrington’s Ford,” “La Fox,” and “Campbell’s Ford.”

Between 1836 and 1840, the nucleus of a community forms on both the east and west banks of the Fox River.

May 1837, a plat for the City of Geneva is recorded for the settlement on the west bank of the Fox River.

### **June 1837 – Julius and Edward Alexander arrive from Plainfield, IL and settle along the Fox River.**

Julius and Edward Alexander were blacksmiths, by trade.

Julius Alexander laid claim to land on the east side of the Fox River (north and south of present-day State Street).

“When they arrived, (Julius and Edward) cleared the land just north and east of the present bridge, using the lumber to build and roof their first shop. Stone for the forge and chimney came from the nearby quarry. Their first job was for Daniels, Stride, Sterling and Company, the new proprietors of the dam and sawmill enterprise.... With the help of Robert Lester and James and Ralph Adsit, the Alexanders built a one-and-a-half story frame house.... The work done by Julius and Edward Alexander helped to complete the sawmill so essential for (Geneva’s)

growth.... The completion of the sawmill made Geneva a little more self-reliant than before.”  
(Geneva, Illinois: A History of Its Times and Places [“Geneva”], p. 34)

**1840 – U. S. Government completes survey of public lands in Kane County, making registration of claims possible.**

**1840 – U. S. Government allows public sale of lands in Kane County through the Chicago District Land Office; Julius Alexander purchases his original land claim: the fractional southwest quarter of Section 2 of Township 39 North, Range 8 East, consisting of 135.68 acres.**

**1842 – Julius Alexander establishes their second blacksmith shop, constructed of limestone.**

“The young Alexanders were instrumental in founding the Methodist congregation in Geneva. ...In the early 1840s, Julius’ second blacksmith shop was built on the south side of State (street), in what is now part of the Mill Race Inn.” (Geneva, p. 34)

The long-held tradition, cited above, is that a one story, utilitarian building was constructed with limestone, exterior bearing walls with a wood-framed, gable roof (ridge presumed to run north-south). Measuring approximately 24 feet wide along East State Street and approximately 36 feet deep, the structure was constructed on a shallow foundation and the floor was likely dirt. However, an investigation of Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps identifies the original blacksmith shop as a wood-framed building with a fixed canopy extending into State Street. (Based on investigation of those maps, the Alexander brothers’ blacksmith shop is not part of the present building but the site of that shop lies under a later, kitchen addition.)



**March 10, 1843 – U. S. Government issues a Land Patent Certificate to Julius Alexander for the fractional southwest quarter of Section 2 of the Township, consisting of 135.68 acres (see image to left).**

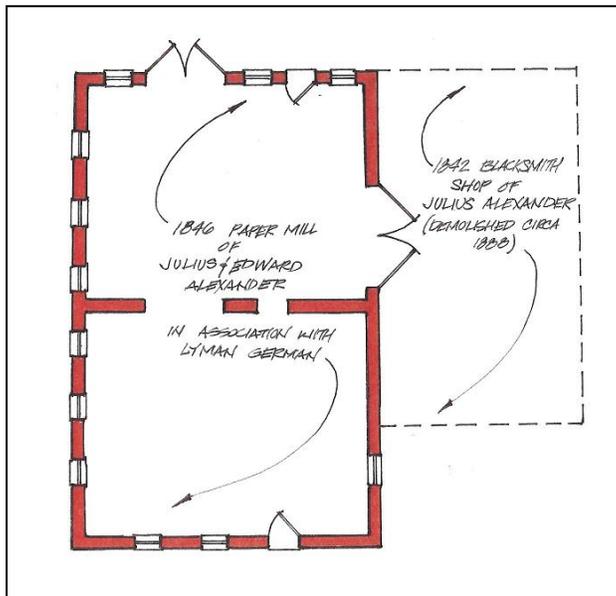
Due to the large volume of land that the Federal government offered for sale, it was not uncommon that property owners did not receive a land patent (a “title”) to their claimed property for several years. When new areas of land were offered for sale, long lines would form at district land offices. Consequently, the long lines, zealous rush for prime parcels, and the long wait for the receipt of patents resulted in the coining of the phrase “doing a land office business.”

**1846 – Julius and Edward Alexander along with Lyman German construct a second limestone building adjacent to the west wall of the original 1842 structure.**

It is unclear for what purpose the building was constructed, but possibly a wagon factory / livery stable or—more likely—some type of early industrial manufactory.

The limestone building was situated close to the mill (or “tail”) race to take advantage of either water-driven turbines for power or as a source for intensive water use in the production and/or fabrication of manufactured goods. **If a water-driven turbine was the power source, then the power drive may have entered the building through an opening in the west foundation wall.** It is very unlikely that the structure ever incorporated a vertical water wheel as a power source because the mill race was too shallow. Furthermore, no evidence of a horizontal water wheel (more common in the early water-powered industries of northeastern Illinois where rivers are relatively shallow) exists on site or in any historical record.

**The one story, utilitarian building was constructed with limestone, exterior bearing walls with a wood-framed, gable roof (ridge presumed to run north-south). The roof may have been an**



**extension of the gable of the earlier blacksmith shop. Measuring approximately 30 feet wide along East State Street and approximately 48 feet deep, the structure was constructed on a shallow cellar. The main floor was constructed of heavy timber framing and wood planking; the cellar floor was likely dirt or, possibly, limestone slabs.**

It is unclear whether or not the buildings shared a common wall. It is most probable that the buildings were separate and distinct structures; the connection between may not have been part of the original 1846 construction.

**1849 – John and Daniel Stevens (also Stephens) purchase the 1846 limestone structure and operate a paper mill in the building until 1851.** (Geneva, p. 38)

1849 – Mr. and Mrs. John Stevens along with Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Stevens among 12 original members who gathered the Geneva Congregational Church (Geneva, p. 263)

1850 – Federal Census:

Daniel Stevens, 51 (b. 1799 NJ), merchant

John Stevens, 46 (b. 1804 NJ), papermaker

Joseph C. Stevens, 37 (b. 1813 NJ), papermaker

Henry Shapatin, 35 (b. 1815 PA), papermaker

William Lawrence, 31 (b. 1819 NY), works in paper mill

Jacob K. Anthony, 25 (b. 1827 NJ), papermaker (later becomes Geneva’s first advertised druggist [Geneva, p 332])

Likely, the paper mill utilized cotton rag pulp rather than wood pulp since the process and machinery for producing a quality paper from wood pulp was not developed until 1850. It is likely the paper produced was for stationery and pamphlet printing rather than for wallpaper or other large-scale household use.

**1851 – Stevens Paper Mill at Geneva closes.**

**Circa 1860 – Johnson “John” Updike purchases the site.**

Johnson Updike was a wagon painter according to a letter from Eric Anderson (GHC Collections):  
*“Remember your building, vacancy of it. Never remember it as a blacksmith shop. Remember it as Carlson laundry and a paint shop. A fella by name of Updike from Batavia running it. Wagon painter.”*

Johnson “John” J. Updike (b. 1826) moved to Geneva with his parents, Levi and Theodosia, before 1850.

Johnson Updike’s probable siblings were:

- Randolph (Farmer, Elgin)
- Lewis (Carpenter, Geneva)
- Sarah (married Moses Huntley before 1850)

Johnson Updike’s first wife was Emeline \_\_\_\_\_, and they had a son, Abram (b. 1849)

Second wife was widow Maria Hinebaugh (married 4 Oct 1863)

Her children: daughter Alma (b. 1846) and son Francis (b. 1856)

By 1870, Updike had amassed real estate holdings valued at \$18,000.

John and Maria Updike farmed and lived in Geneva and St. Charles through at least the 1880s before relocating to Batavia in the 1890s.

**1868 – Johnson J. Updike sells the 1842 and 1846 buildings and property to John Rystrom.**

John Rystrom (b. 1821) arrived in Geneva from Sweden between 1851 and 1855

Wife: Annie/Austin (b. 1825)

Children: Mary (b. 1850), John A. (b. 1856), Charles (b. 1858), Albert (b. 1860), Edward “Eddie” (b. 1865) and Clara (b. 1867) – all born in Illinois except Mary (Sweden)

Arriving also from Sweden and residing with the Rystrom family:

John Riders (b. 1839), wagonmaker; John Peterson (b. 1821), blacksmith; and May Carey (b. 1817), presumed sister-in-law.

**Under John Rystrom, the 1846 limestone structure was altered dramatically. Although the limestone structure remained in its original form, a wood-framed second floor was constructed above the original limestone building. Consequently, the original roof structure**

**was removed and replaced with a new floor structure, most probably of heavy timber posts and beams with plank flooring.** The second floor was utilized—as was the common practice—for the paint shop of Rystrom’s carriage and wagon manufactory. **An inclined ramp led from the new second floor to State Street, the ramp allowed for the movement of lightweight carriages from one level to the other.**

**Before or during the Rystrom occupancy, a fixed wood canopy was extended north of the front wall of the 1842 Alexander Blacksmith Shop.** The extension allowed for repair of wagons and wagon components outside of the confines of the stone structure as well as a probable location of an exterior forge.

**During this period, it is probable that a large doorway was inserted into the north half of the east wall to allow for the movement of wagons and carriages between sections of the Rystrom complex.**

John Rystrom and his workers were highly regarded as carriage and wagon makers.

By 1877, John Rystrom moved his family to Oregon (Ogle County), Illinois and established a well-regarded carriage and wagon manufactory. There (in 1880), John A. worked as a skilled carriage painter and Charles worked as a skilled carriage maker alongside their father, John, (occupation in 1880 Federal Census: carriage and wagon maker).

In 1878, Andrew Rystrom (possibly John Andrew Rystrom) was continuing the family business at Geneva. History noted that Andrew Rystrom was an “exemplary Swedish carriage manufacturer.” (Past & Present of Kane County, Illinois)

**1868 – Construction begins on a new State Street bridge across the Fox River. The bridge consists of stone piers with an iron truss driving deck. The new bridge includes a raised approach at the east end; the raised approach extends across the west half of the north façade of the 1846 limestone manufactory building, constructed by Julius Alexander and Lyman German.**

**Circa 1880 – Site purchased by Lewis E. and Huldah Landon.**

Lewis Landon was the father of Sarah Landon, wife of Charles E. Mann; the latter married in 1868 (see below). Nothing has been discovered about Landon or the use of the property under their ownership; however, the building may have continued to be used as a carriage and wagon shop for a short period of time. It is possible that Lewis & Huldah Landon were little more than property owners and that the property continued to operate as Andrew Rystrom’s Carriage Shop until mid-summer 1884. No significant modifications or improvements were known to have been made during this period. Additional research may yield more information about the carriage shop and/or the Landon period of ownership.

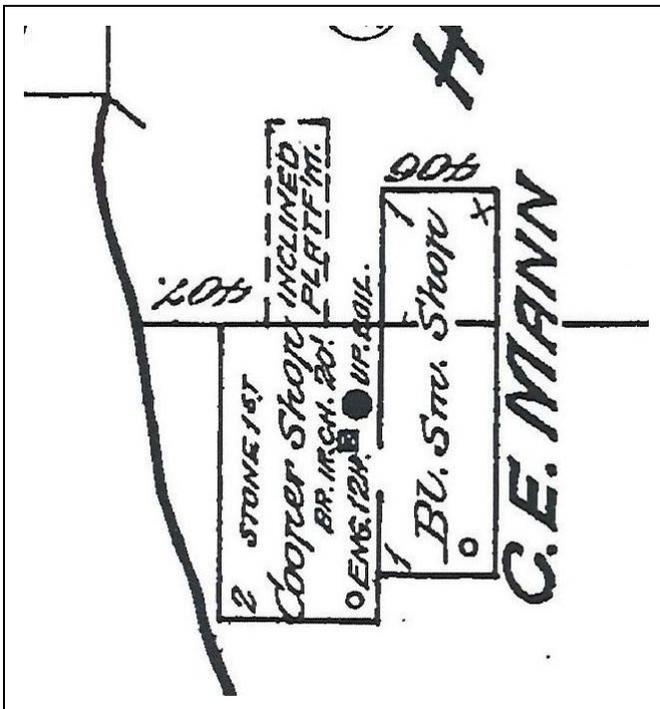
**October 1884 (recorded 1887) – Site sold to “Clyde E. Mann.”**

This entry is confusing (and, likely, a recording error) since Clyde Mann was only 10 years old at the time of the transaction; 13 years old at the time of recording. Also, Clyde’s middle name was “Alison.”

Clyde’s father was Charles E. Mann (1844-1907), who arrived in Geneva during the 1860s and, in the 1880s, practiced law at Geneva, but before and afterward served as Superintendent of Schools at Geneva, St. Charles and Batavia as well as serving as the Kane County Superintendent of Schools. Charles E. Mann was instrumental in establishing the high school at Geneva (1874) and served as its first Principal.

Charles E. Mann was first married to Sarah Landon (1847-1883); following her death, C. E. Mann married Emma Violet Curtis (1854-1932). Two children were born of the first marriage: Mary Estella (1876-1944) and Clyde Alison (1874-1966).

**1885 – Alexander Blacksmith Shop (1842) and Rystrom Carriage and Wagon Shop remains (1846 limestone building with circa 1868 frame second floor) and is operating as C. E. Mann’s Cooperage.** (1885 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map)



According to several histories, the State Street property was converted to a barrel making factory (cooperage) and a manufactory of wooden butter and cheese boxes as well as a patented potato planter. An advertisement of the era (in the collections of the Geneva History Center) suggests that C. E. Mann continued in the fabrication of wagons and carriages, specializing in “milk-wagons” and all the while continuing some blacksmithing at the site.

**The building was remodeled to accommodate manufacturing equipment and a steam-powered power-drive. The power source was a 12 horsepower engine. The vertical steam boiler was vented through a 20 foot tall brick and iron chimney.**

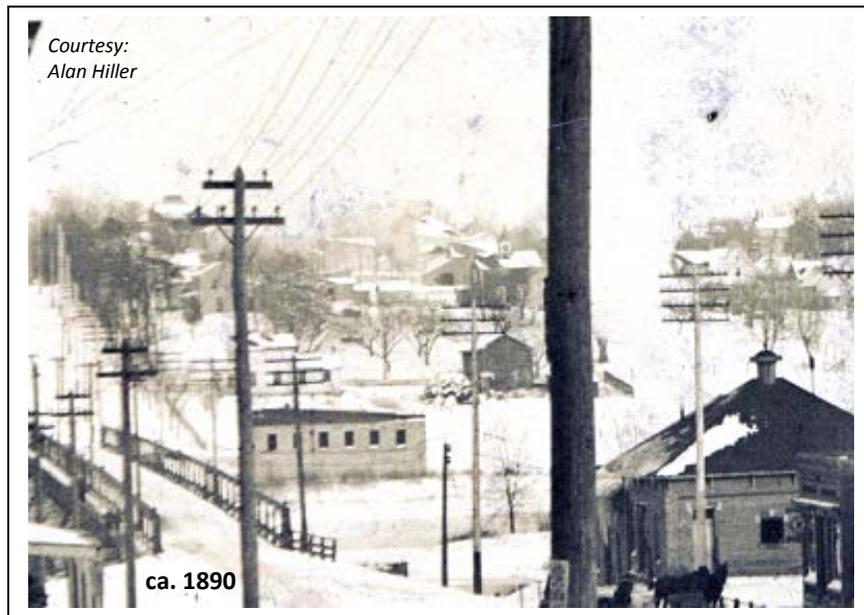
Mann, later, moved his manufacturing company to the former Danford Reaper Works site.

**The 1842 Alexander Blacksmith Shop disappeared during this time. It is unclear whether the blacksmith shop was lost to fire (which would also explain the loss of the wooden second floor that had existed at the ca. 1846 limestone, former paper manufactory) or whether the wood-**

framed building and second floor addition were simply demolished following the relocation of Mann's operations to the former Danford Reaper Works property.

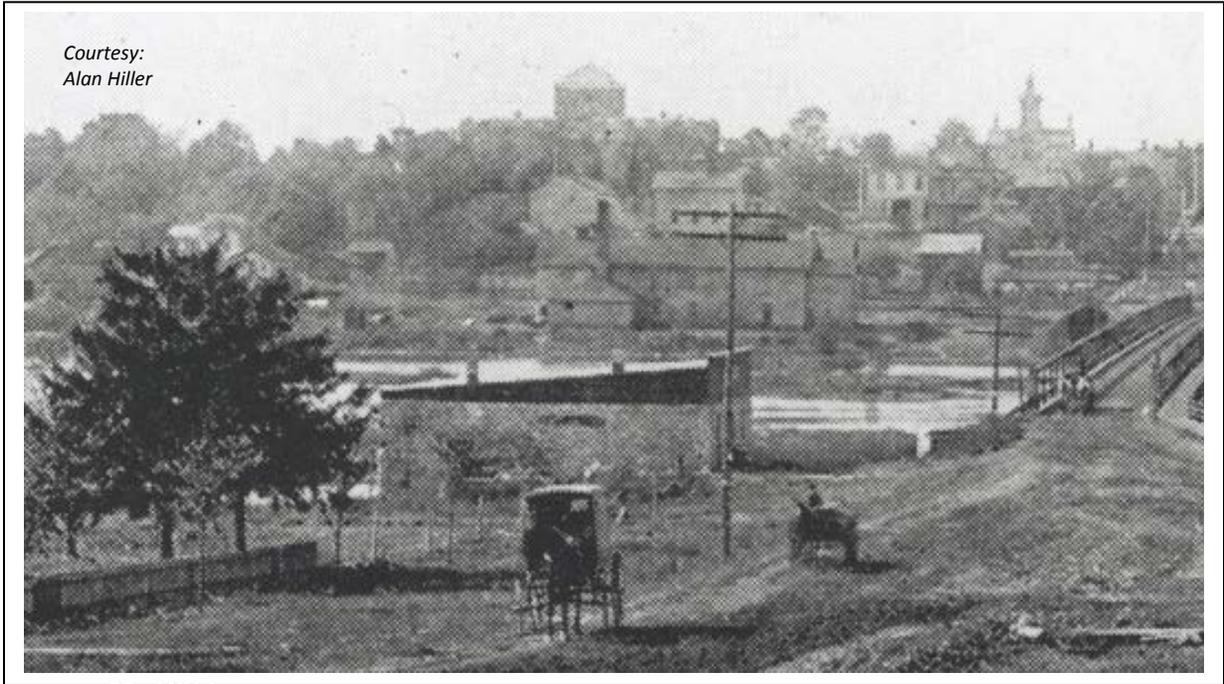
Between 1886 and 1889, fire may have resulted in the loss of the early building and damaged the 1846 limestone manufactory building. Some unsourced accounts identify the early settlement building was lost as a result of a fire between 1888 and 1891; however, images dated 1892 do not show fire damage to the east wall of the 1846 building which remained. Although the C. E. Mann factory is recorded as having succumbed to several fires at various locations around Geneva, none of those fires matches the chronology of his company at this site on State Street.

It is entirely possible that the building—after 50 years—was obsolete or in poor repair. During that same period, the circa 1868 second floor (including the inclined ramp), attributed to Rystrom, was removed. The roof was reconstructed as a shed roof, sloping from north to south.



**1891 – Site likely vacant, nothing was recorded on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map for this year.**

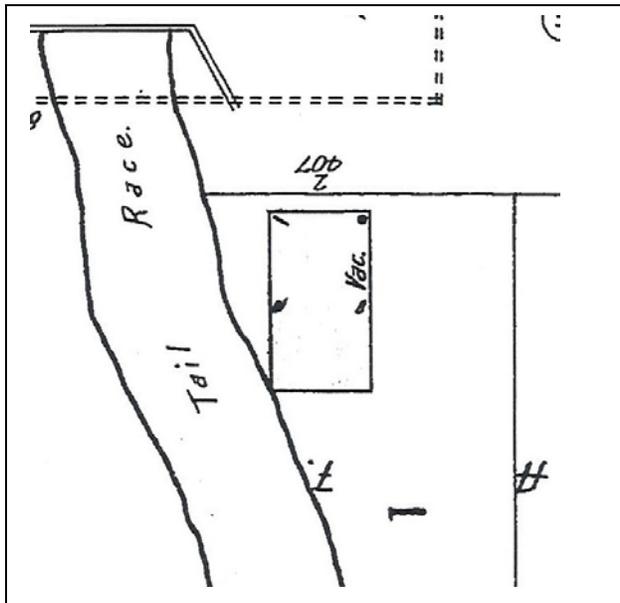
The fact that the Sanborn Fire Insurance map does not indicate anything about the structure at this site suggests that the building may not have been functional...again, suggesting that a fire may have rendered the building unusable for a time.



**Circa 1893-1895 – The 1846 building is used as laundry business of Oscar Carlson.** (Colin Campbell)

**No significant changes to the structure have been identified during this period.**

**1897 – Building is identified as “vacant” on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map for this year.**



The notation indicates that the building may have been sitting idle following fire. The building may or may not have yet been reconstructed. It is probable that C. E. Mann, who by this time had returned to the educational profession, was trying to determine what to do with the remnant structure.

**Jan 1900 – Clyde E. Mann sells property to Charles W. Carter.**

Charles Willard Carter (1868-1957) was the brother-in-law of Clyde A. Mann; married to Mary Estella (Mann) Carter (1871-1944). Presumably, the property provided rental income to the Carter family, who lived in Aledo (Mercer County), Illinois, where he was a physician.

What businesses—if any—occupied the property between 1896 and 1905 is unknown. **No known modifications to the building have been identified during this period.**

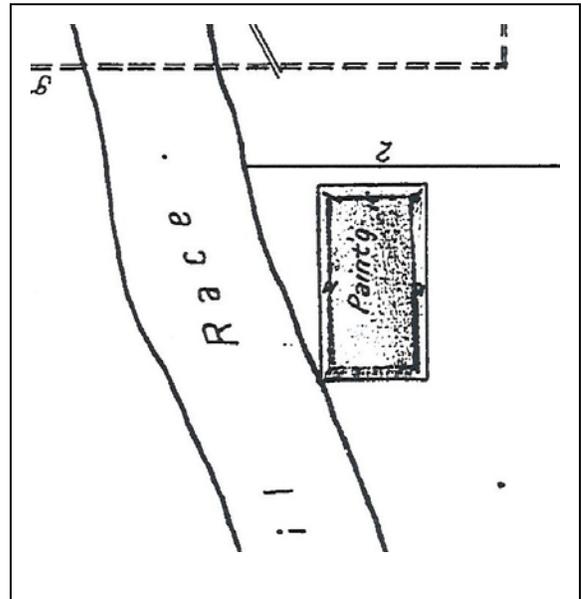
**1905 – One story “Painting Shop” is recorded on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map for this year.**

No additional information about the nature of the “painting shop” is known.

In November 1906, the property is transferred through several transactions to M. Estelle (Mary Estrella) Carter, wife of Charles Willard Carter and sister of Clyde A. Mann.

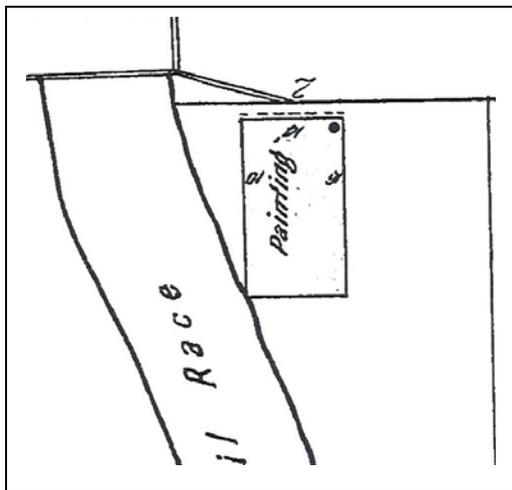
**1909 - 1910 – The 1868-69 bridge is removed and replaced with a concrete bridge.**

At this time, the raised grade of the east approach to the Fox River bridge was lengthened, terminating a substantial distance east of the 1846 manufactory building. The elevation of State Street had been raised approximately 6-8 feet above the historic grade and new retaining walls were added at each side of the roadbed approach. The new approach obscured a significant portion of the north façade of the 1846 manufactory building. After that time, the large doorway at the east elevation certainly became the primary access point to the limestone structure.



**1912 – One story “Painting Shop” is recorded on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map for this year.**

No additional information about the nature of the “painting shop” is known.



**It is possible that during this period, some of the original limestone walls may have been painted at either the interior or exterior or both. No significant changes to the structure have been identified during this period.**

**Circa 1918 – Building is believed to have been used as a machinist’s shop by Romanian immigrant brothers George M. and John Kirk.**

In December 1921, the property is sold by Charles W. Carter to George M. Kirk. No other family owned the property for a longer period of time (37 years in the extended Mann family).



**Sept 1922 – Building and property were sold at Sherriff's Sale to Emery T. Moore.**

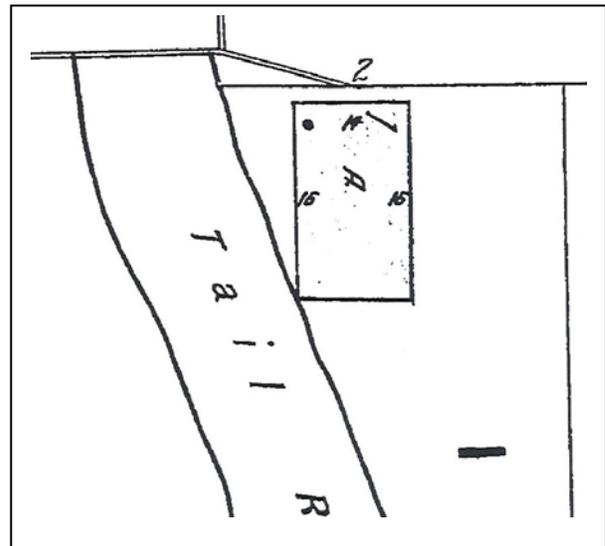
Emery Thomas Moore (b. 18 May 1870 at Lisbon, Illinois) was a resident of St. Charles, Illinois. He had been engaged as a retail merchant in 1910, but had become a real estate dealer, specializing in farmland by 1930. When he died on 27 Oct 1938, he was engaged in farming and had lived for 60 years at St. Charles.

**Presumably, Emery T. Moore replaced the wooden floor structure (likely plank over heavy timber frame) with the existing, cast-in-place concrete floor structure in order to adapt the building for automobile sales and/or repairs.**

**1923 – Building is used for auto business as recorded on Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map for this year – use could refer to either auto sales or auto repair.**

**The building consists only of the 1846 limestone structure; however, decorative parapet walls (likely wood-framed construction) were added at the roofline above the original limestone walls of 1846.**

Between 1923 and 1945, a one-story, masonry automobile garage was constructed on the lot east of the property that would become the Mill Race Inn. It is likely that this new building may have accommodated the business (circa 1918-1930) that had been housed in the future Mill Race Inn building.





Photograph (probably *ca.* 1920) of the wood foot bridge from State Street to Island Park before concrete bridge was built in 1931.



Detail of photograph above (pre-1931, probably *circa* 1920) showing the 1846 paper manufactory (later cooper shop and wagon painting shop) before 1933 remodeling by August Wilson & Son for Anne Forsyth's Mill Race Inn. Note: exposed lower level at south wall which does not appear to be accessible from the north basement in 2016 (possibly accessible from south basement of later additions to Mill Race Inn?). Also, a later addition (probably wood frame) has been removed from the left (west) side by evidence of an old roof line above the windows at the south end. Roof appears to be intact (based on June 2016 site visit) but encased within the numerous additions (*circa* 1946-1990) of the now-closed Mill Race

**March 1929 – Emery T. Moore sells the property to John R. Tallman, who opens a plumbing and heating business in the building.**

John R. Tallman (b. 19 Sep 1882) was a resident of Geneva, Illinois, where he worked as a plumber prior to and after 1920.

John R. Tallman was married to Elizabeth (b. 1880) in 1901, and they had at least three children: Wheeler (b. 1903), Bernice (b. 1906) and Grace (b. 1919).

**1930 – Occupied as the Plumbing and Heating Shop of John Tallman.** (per several historical accounts)

Federal Census identifies Tallman as “proprietor of plumbing shop,” but he likely closes his business near the onset of the Great Depression (1929-1938) and begins farming on South Batavia Road, where he remains through at least 1940. John R. Tallman died in August 1962.

**1933 – John R. Tallman leases the former industrial property to Anne Forsyth, who names her new restaurant “Mill Race Inn.”**

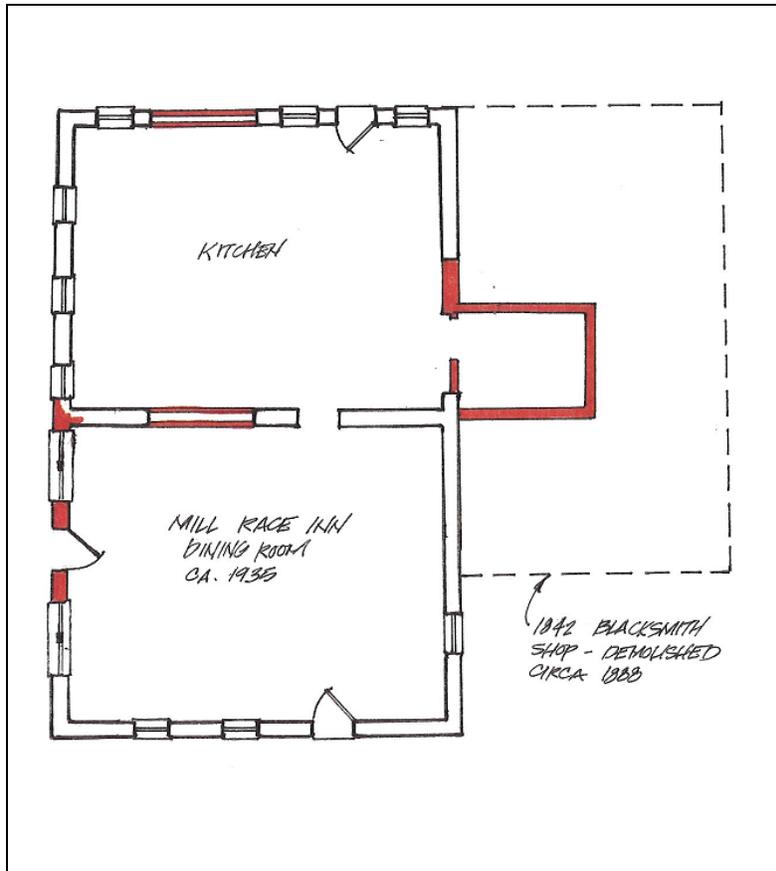
Anne Forsyth was single and a resident of Aurora, Illinois, where she had worked in a variety of clerical positions before becoming a police woman at Aurora (according to records of the Geneva Historical Society per Glorianne Campbell, presenter of “Remembering the Mill Race Inn” lecture on January 14, 2014).

Anne’s father, Alex, had been an official with the CB&Q Railroad, but had died prior to 1920. At that time, Anne (b. 20 Nov 1875) lived with her mother, Rose M.; a bachelor brother and artist, Harold; and a spinster sister, Margaret “Marjorie” (b. 25 Oct 1873), who was a teacher in the local schools. The family (said to be a missionary family according to records of the Geneva Historical Society) lived at 78 S. Root Street, Aurora.

Kate Raftery of The Little Traveler shops and lunch room which—as a gift shop and restaurant established in the late 1920s—had operated successfully and grown “topsy-turvy” on Third Street, encouraged Anne Forsyth to open the small restaurant on the east bank of the Fox River.

**1933 – Building is remodeled for Anne Forsyth by local contractor, August Wilson & Son (formerly partner in Wilson Brothers Contracting).**

**The remodeling consisted of providing larger windows to the west side of the building (to afford better views of the former mill race and Fox River); remodeling of the north section of the building for use as a Kitchen; and two, small, limestone additions to the east side (probably for a walk-in refrigerator and a storage or mechanical room). The entrance was located at the southeast corner of the building through an original (or early) doorway.**



The historic window to the east at the southeast corner may also have been enlarged, at this time, to match the west windows installed for Anne Forsyth. A parapet (likely of wooden construction) may have been added to the north façade at this time to increase the visibility of the new establishment. No other structural changes are known to have been made to the exterior of the building.

Based on several photographs, the limestone walls at the exterior were unpainted; the interior finishes of the original restaurant are unknown although one account states that the interior walls were “whitewashed” during Anne Forsyth’s tenure. (GHC Documents)

**The 1933-1935 remodeling may have included the addition of some decorative elements to the State Street façade of the building as well.**

Anne and Marjorie Forsyth opened their new restaurant on Saturday, May 20, 1933. The Mill Race Inn operated as a seasonal eatery—serving lunch, tea, dinner and supper—from 1933 thru 1939.

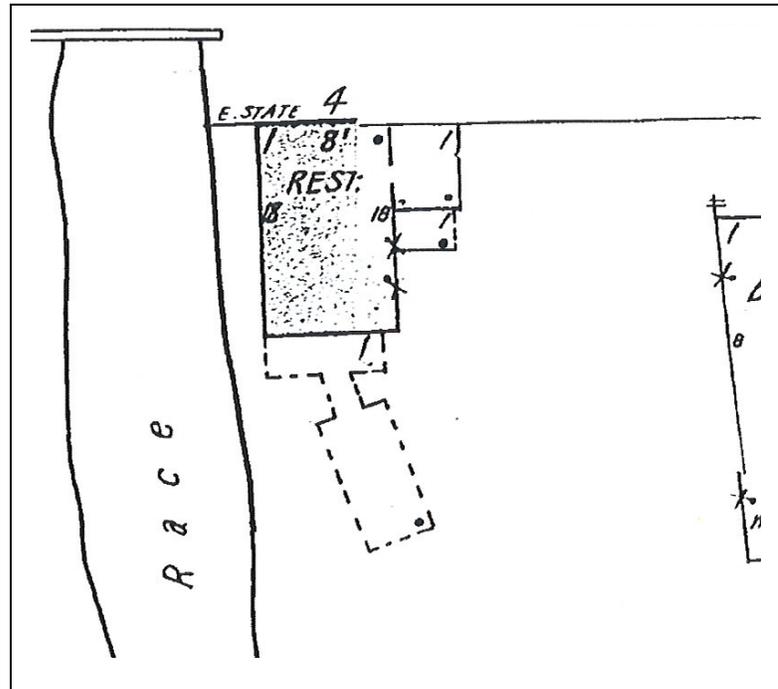
**The building was not heated or cooled;** therefore, the restaurant operated only between mid-April and early November.

**Nov. 1939 – Anne Forsyth purchases building from John R. Tallman.**

For a short period of time in the early 1940s, Margaret Sollinger, wife of Albert Sollinger, of Aurora provided some financial support for the operation of the Mill Race Inn; the extent of the business relationship is unclear. Presumably, this business relationship had allowed Anne Forsyth to purchase the property and expand her restaurant operations and offerings.

**Circa 1940-45 – Anne Forsyth undertakes second renovation of her restaurant.**

At this time, the Kitchen was expanded at the northeast corner of the 1846 former paper mill building of limestone, and—likely about 1940—an open-air porch and attached pavilion was constructed to the south of the original 1846 building. Within a short time, the 1940s-era pavilion was screened for outdoor dining and special events use. Possibly, the space was utilized for dancing, especially with the return of veterans from World War II.



It is likely that, during this period, the exposed limestone walls in the Kitchen and support areas were painted for a healthier food preparation environment.

During this time, heating was added to the restaurant...reportedly with the addition of a fireplace. However, the restaurant continued to close from late autumn until early spring each year (a custom of many restaurants of that era).

**March 1946 – Property is sold by Anne Forsyth to Mill Race Inn, Inc.**

The parties to the new corporation included Ray C. Johns of Wayne, IL; Anne Forsyth is 71 years old.

After 1946, the extent of Anne Forsyth's involvement in the daily operation of the restaurant is unclear; however, it is probable that her influence was minimal with her advancing age. Consequently, the years of Anne Forsyth's significant years of management and operation of the Mill Race Inn ceased sometime between 1946 and 1955, but most probably in 1946.

At this point in time, the cozy dining setting along the scenic Fox River—the hallmark of Anne Forsyth's original Mill Race Inn—began to disappear in favor of an ever-larger restaurant with an expanding customer base.

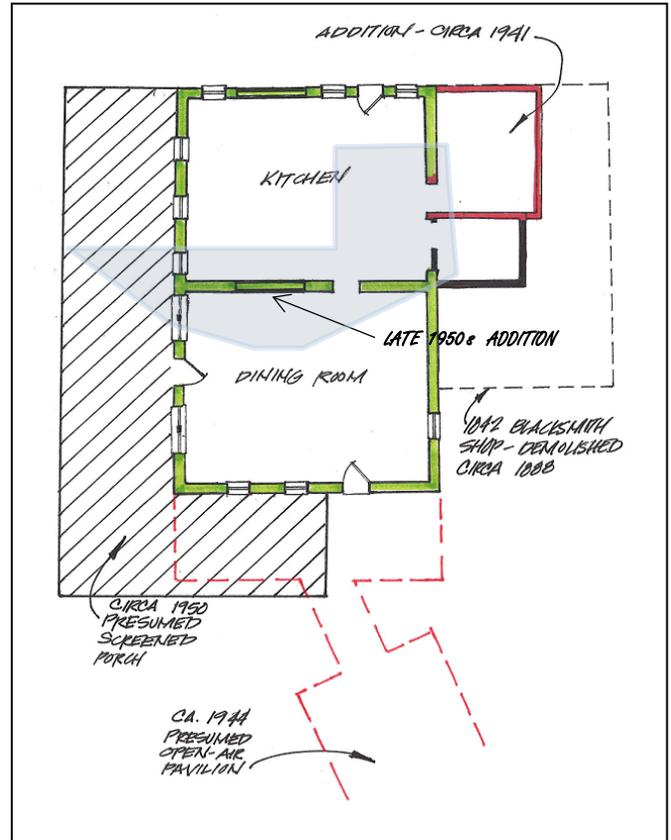
After 1945, an open-air, uncovered dining porch was added (likely by Ray C. Johns) to the west side of the restaurant; the west addition utilized salvaged streetcar rails for structural beams. Likely this work occurred shortly after the close of World War II, when scrap iron and steel was no longer in demand for the war effort (many communities had removed streetcar rails to provide scrap metal for the war effort).

By 1950, the west porch was enclosed with screening.

**Circa 1955 – The interior dining space is enlarged by the Mill Race Inn company.**

Under Ray C. Johns ownership, numerous changes were made between 1955 and 1960 to the Mill Race Inn building.

The Kitchen was expanded to the north, encroaching into an un-used right-of-way along State Street. The Kitchen, also, was expanded to the east, destroying the original stone additions constructed by August Wilson & Son between 1933 and 1935. Likely, additional painting of the original limestone walls was completed in the food service areas of the restaurant.



The circa 1946 west deck was enclosed with stacked awning and fixed windows within new exterior walls and a permanent roof about 1956. The new space was used as an additional dining room. Other building additions also provided a new entrance area at the east side of the complex as well as a private dining room at the northwest corner of the 1846 limestone building.

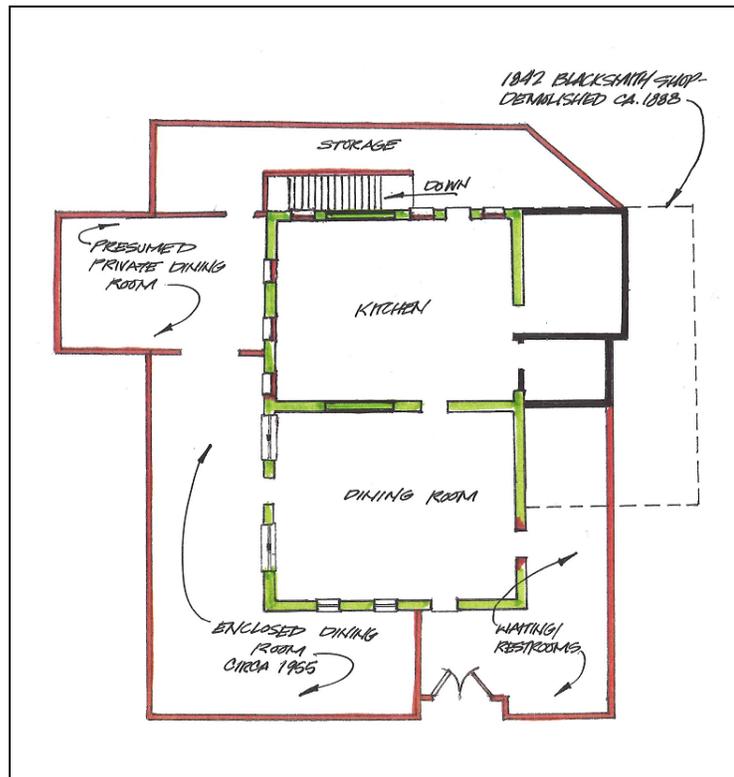
Only a small portion of the south and east walls at the southeast corner of the 1846 limestone structure remained exposed to the exterior. The exposed stone walls—nearly 120 years old—appear to have survived unpainted.

Under Ray C. Johns, the restaurant continued to operate seasonally between mid-March and late November.

Ray C. Johns died in 1964.

**1964 – The Mill Race Inn is operated by Stuart Johns.**

Following the death of his uncle, Stuart Johns managed the restaurant for a number of years.



**1965 – The Mill Race Inn’s original owner celebrates a milestone birthday.**

Anne Forsyth was 90 years old.

**1966 – The Mill Race Inn is expanded by Stuart Johns.**

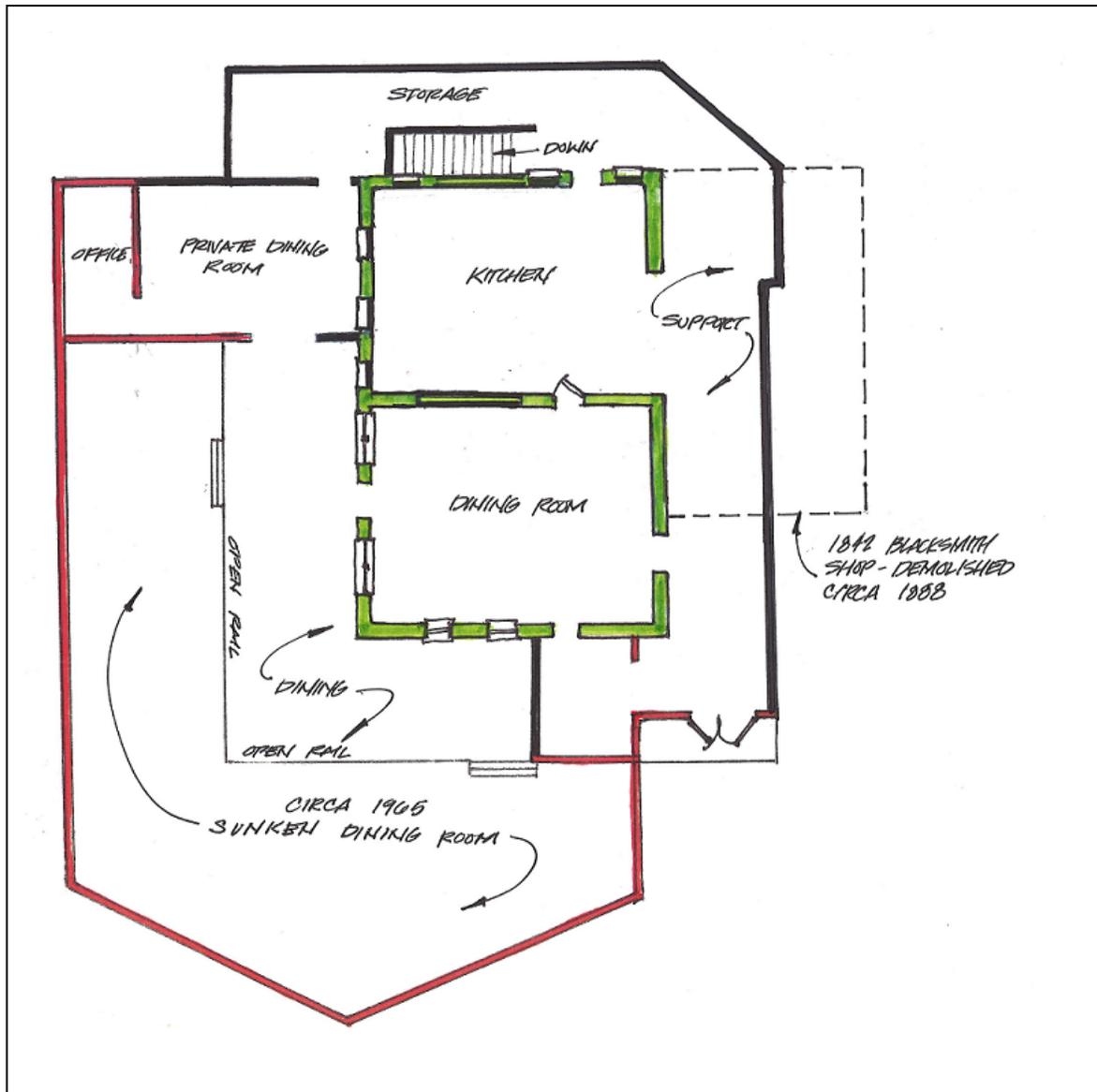
Apparently, the screened south porch and pavilion were removed around 1966 to make way for a new reception area and waiting room. The addition (see preceding sketch) completely enveloped the historic 1846 manufactory building.

Between 1967 and 1968, a new dining room along the river edge was built around the west and south sides of the original Mill Race Inn restaurant building.

The new addition was constructed within a portion of the former mill race channel and required a basement; the basement floor was set approximately 3 feet lower than the cellar floor of the 1846 structure. The mill race—which had long been stagnant and filled the Mill Race Inn with a noticeably pungent odor during the late summer months—had been filled in through a joint effort of the Geneva Park District and the Johns family. According to recollections of former owners and employees, the newly-constructed basement was prone to flooding from the time it was constructed. In fact, the restaurant operators “knew exactly what to do when the river rose” because it “flooded quite often” according to comments of Diane

Ellsworth (speaking at the “Remembering the Mill Race Inn” lecture— Geneva History Center, 01.14.2014).

**It is likely that the first air conditioning system was installed during this time.**



**1969 – The Mill Race Inn is remodeled for nearly year-round use.**

During Stuart Johns’ tenure the building was “winterized” with the addition of an expanded entry (Arthur Nelson of State Bank of Geneva notes, Geneva History Center Archives). However, the restaurant still continued the tradition of closing several months during the winter.

**Central air conditioning was installed about this time.**

**1973 – The Mill Race Inn management is assumed by Ray C. Johns’ daughter, Rae Johns Ellsworth.**

**1974 – An original Mill Race Inn partner dies.**

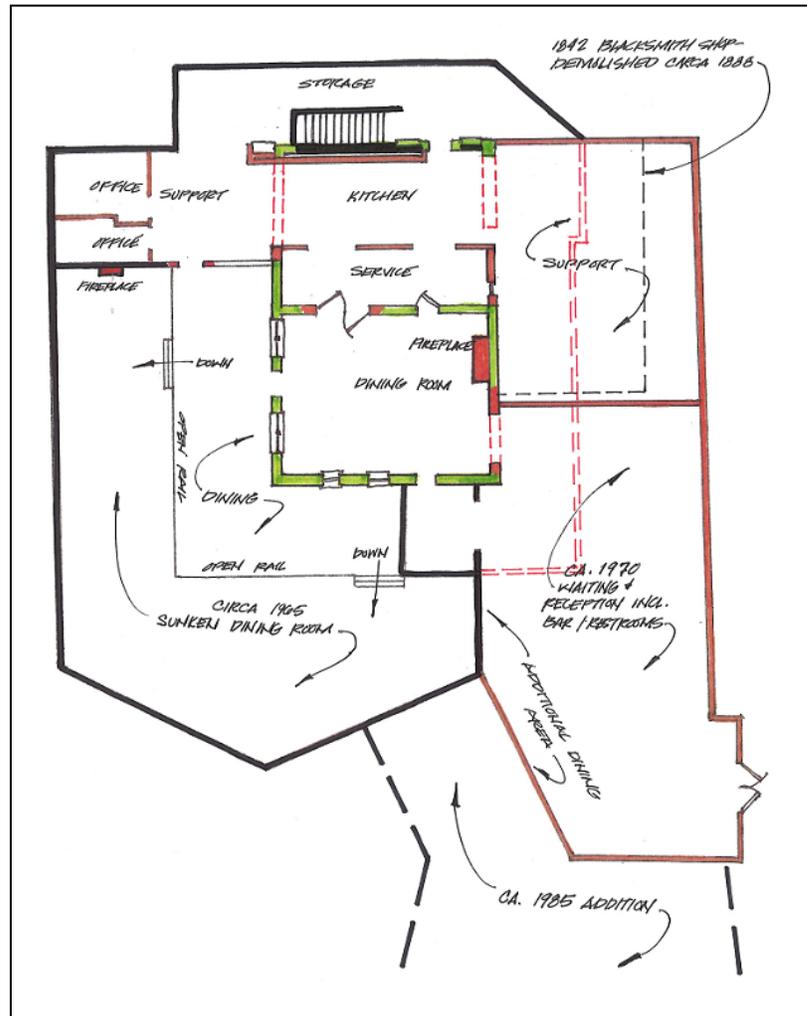
Marjorie Forsyth died in February 1974, nine months short of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Circa 1975 – The Mill Race Inn management responds to growing popularity of the Geneva dining destination.**

A major expansion along the east side of the Mill Race Inn complex is undertaken as early as 1975 but—more probably—beginning in 1976.

At this time, several fireplaces were installed throughout the restaurant, including a gas fireplace within the original Dining Room of Anne Forsyth’s Mill Race Inn.

During this remodeling, the Kitchen design required the removal of a section of the east and west walls of the 1846 building. The east wall was comprised of a large doorway; however, the west side required the removal of a portion of the historic limestone perimeter walls.



With this remodeling effort, the original 1846 limestone structure was completely enveloped within the Mill Race Inn complex.

Upon the completion of this expansion, the Mill Race Inn operated as a year-round restaurant.

**1976 –The Mill Race Inn’s original owner and creator dies.**

Anne Forsyth died in May 1976, 100 years and 5 months old.

Following the death of Anne Forsyth, the Mill Race Inn continued to be transformed from a cozy, intimate dining establishment to a larger, modern restaurant. Although historic limestone walls and many of the early small dining rooms remained, the restaurant was not able to meet the demands for larger parties nor was it able to accommodate an ever-increasing number of patrons drawn to the legendary restaurant along the scenic Fox River.

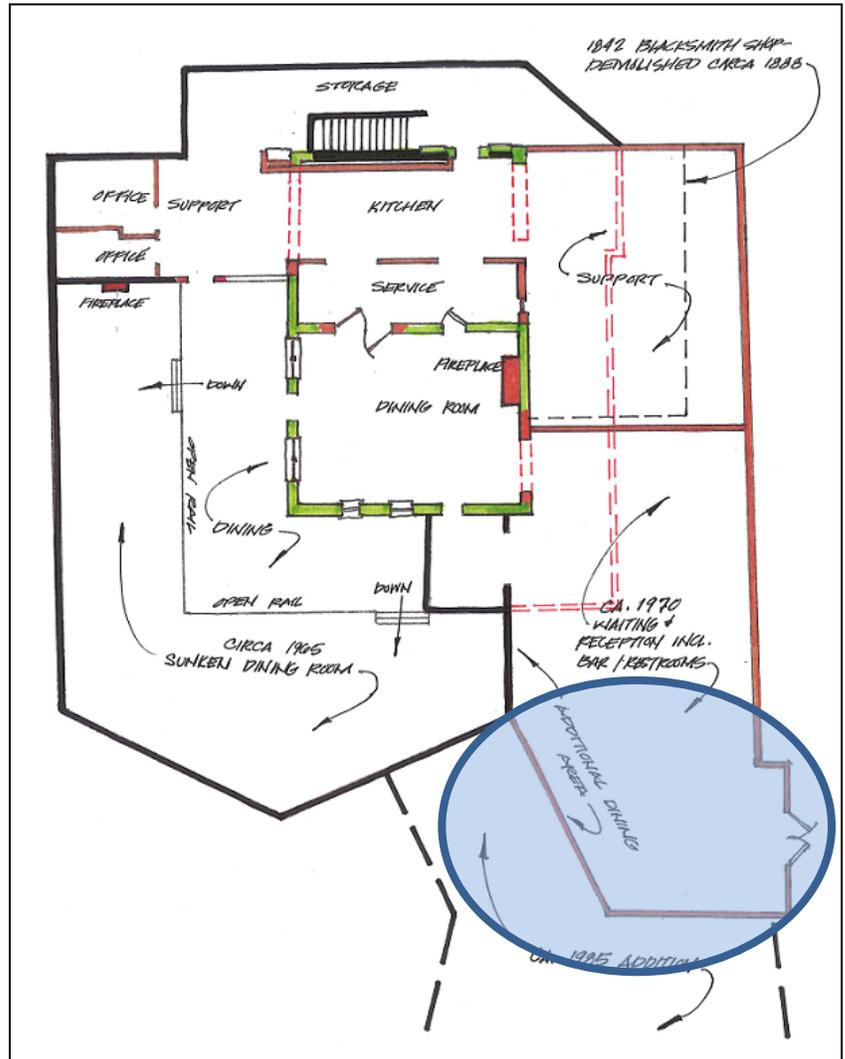
**February 6, 1978 – The Owners of the Mill Race Inn Request a Variance for use of basement level.**

**In an effort to serve its patrons more effectively, the Mill Race Inn management appeared before the Geneva City Council to make the following request:**

*Alderman Mayer advised the Council that the Mill Race Inn wished to change the plans under their present building permit which would provide for a basement storage room to be converted to a banquet room. (Based on the Council Meeting Minutes, it is presumed that the area of the proposed basement level Banquet Room is the space identified by a blue oval [see illustration to right]. However, the request may have been for the conversion of the circa 1965 storage room along the river bank.)*

*The Building Commissioner*

*was unable to extend the permit to cover the change because BOCA Code does not permit such use in a flood plain under the water level. The problem was reviewed by the Building Planning and Zoning Committee and determined that in the best interests of the Commercial district and the City as a whole, the Mill Race Inn should be permitted to expand its facilities. Thus the City Attorney was instructed to prepare an indemnification agreement to hold the City harmless in the event of a damage claim resulting from a flash flood. Such a document was prepared and*



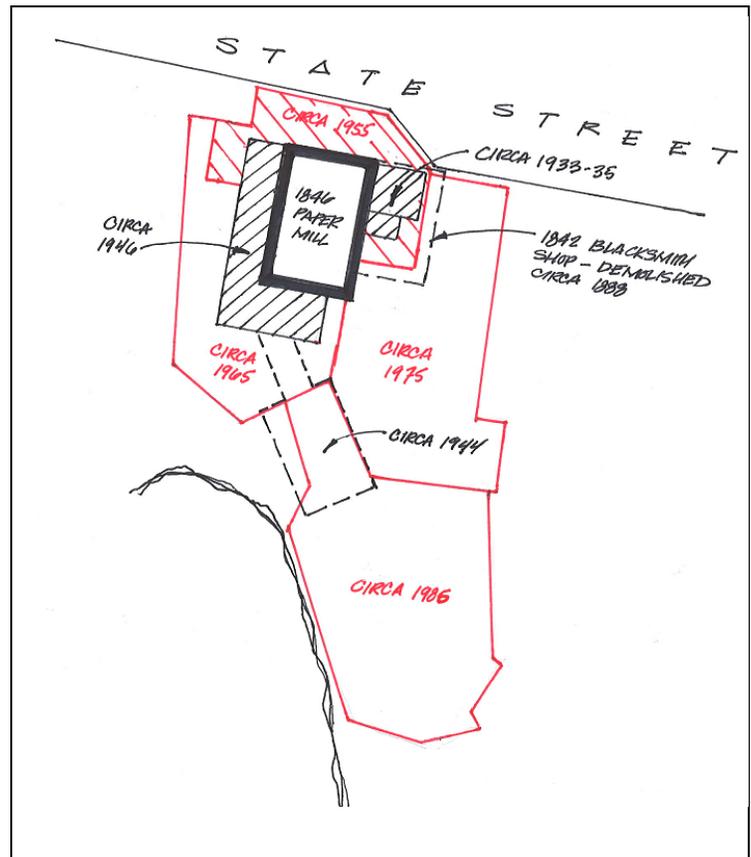
presented for consideration. Because the City Attorney felt uncomfortable concerning a possible liability even with passage of the agreement, considerable discussion followed. Alderman King felt that the BOCA Code prohibits such a structure, then why are we trying to break the code (sic) Alderman Mountsier inquired if the document could really hold the City harmless. Mr. Radovich advised of a possible exposure here. The integrity of the Mill Race comes into play and we would have to rely upon them to provide legal counsel in the event of a suit against us. Motion by Mayer that the City Attorney be instructed to study a variation amendment to the Building Code. The motion died for lack of a second. Motion by Montsier, seconded by Langeness, that the question be sent back to committee for further study and a recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

No evidence has been discovered suggesting the banquet room expansion was permitted.

**Circa 1983 – The Mill Race Inn is managed by John Mitchell and Bonnie Rae Off, the grand-daughter of Ray C. Johns.**

At some time between 1981 and 1986 (apparently opened in 1985), an expansive, timber-framed Dining Room and Bar (“The Mallard Room”) as well as a Lower Level casual dining room (“The Mill Grill”) and bar (“The Duck Inn”) were added to south end of the building, in the location of the former 1940s-era pavilion.

The interior and exterior limestone walls of the 1846 structure that were exposed to public view were *faux* painted to mimic the original limestone and to mask modern enhancements (soffits, HVAC ductwork / louvers, and lighting) to the original limestone building.



Mill Race Inn Complex - - Circa 2000

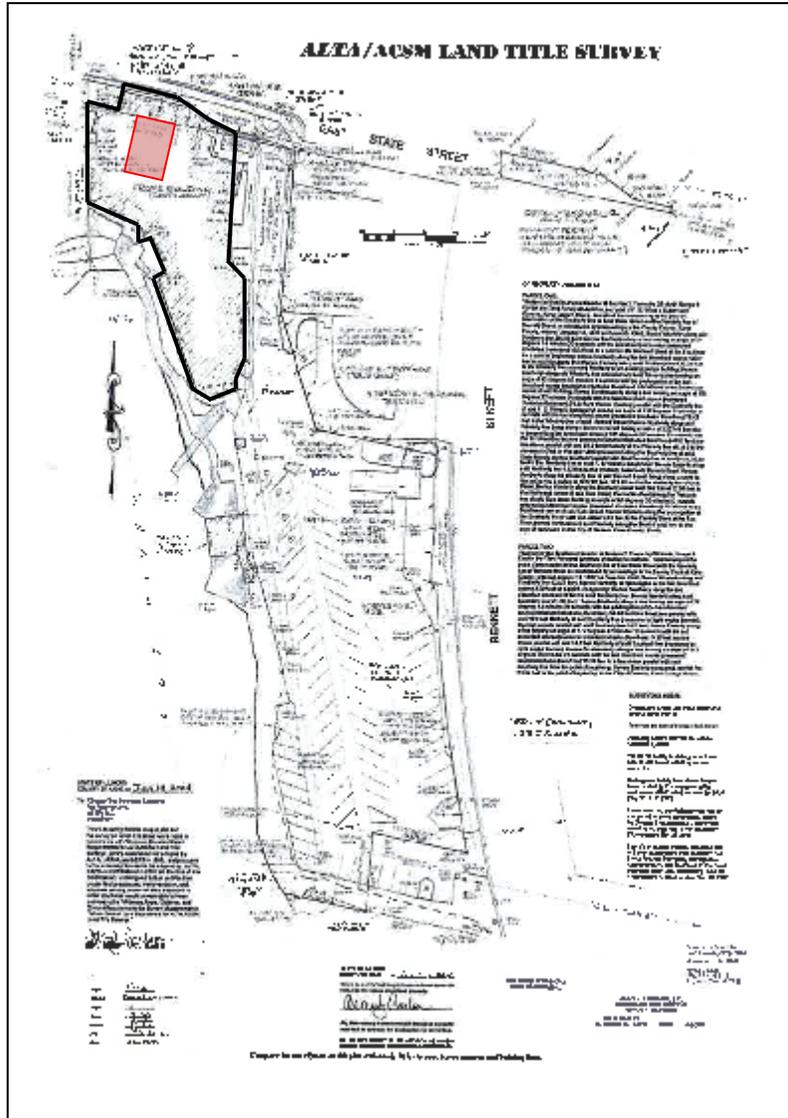
**2005 – The Mill Race Inn is sold to new owner, Charlie Roumeliotis.**

During the tenure of Charlie Roumeliotis, few—if any—significant changes were made to the Mill Race Inn complex.

Thursday, January 20, 2011 – The closing of the Mill Race Inn is announced for the approaching weekend.

The building is vacated and begins to deteriorate over a two year period. The basement of the building is flooded several times, and the property is vandalized periodically.

Mid-Summer 2013 – A prospective purchaser of the abandoned Mill Race Inn complex approaches the City of Geneva with plans for redevelopment of the site.



November 19, 2013 – The Mill Race Inn property is discussed as a possible local landmark at the regular meeting of the Geneva Historic Preservation Commission.

HPC Staff is directed to investigate the historic significance and identify the extent of any remnant portions of the 1842 and 1846 structures or the 1933 restaurant.

**November 20, 2013 – Investigation of what remains of the 1840s structure(s) begins.**

**November 26, 2013 –** Geneva Preservation Planner, Michael Lambert, and Geneva Code Enforcement Officer, Jim Forni, tour the abandoned structure with the prospective purchaser.

**December 10, 2013 –** A draft report of the Mill Race Inn property is prepared for review by the City of Geneva Administrative and Community Development Staff.

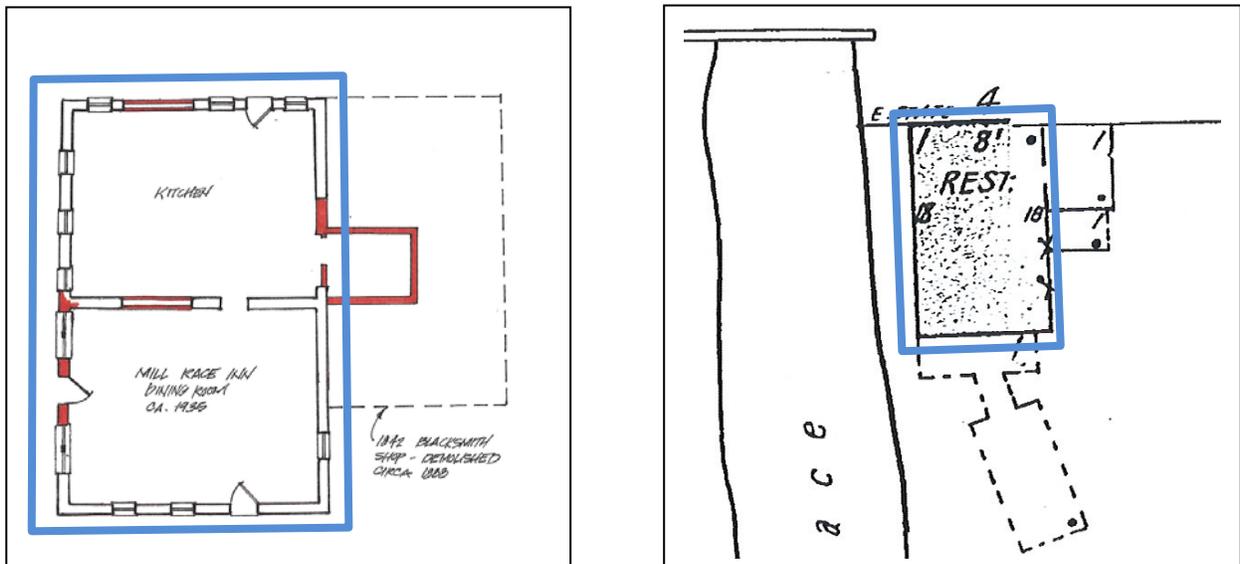
**December 20, 2013 –** Revisions are made to the draft report based on questions and comments raised by internal staff review and based on additional historical research provided by HPC members Carolyn Zinke and Alan Hiller, including review access to photographic and archival files of the Geneva History Center.

**January 14, 2014 –** “Remembering the Mill Race Inn” is the “Brown Bag Luncheon” topic at the Geneva History Center – Geneva, Illinois.

**January 17, 2014 –** Report of significance and preliminary findings is completed.

**July 27, 2016 –** Report is updated to provide minor additions of new information and documentation of the historical development of the Mill Race Inn.

**August 10, 2016 –** The City of Geneva announces that the Shodeen Construction Co. has submitted an application for the selective demolition of the Mill Race Inn that would raze the majority of the existing building and expose the historic structure (circa 1846 – circa 1944) for further evaluation of historic and structural integrity as well as potential adaptive use within future development of the site.



Areas outlined in blue (above diagrams) represent the historic paper manufactory which is scheduled to be exposed during the selective demolition undertaken by Shodeen Construction Co.

## **Preliminary Historic Significance Evaluation of the Site and Buildings**

Early Settlement-era structures (those properties constructed within the first 15-20 years of the establishment of a populated place) are rare historic resources, particularly in suburbanized communities where growth pressure has been constant for significant periods of time.

Typically small and humble, Early Settlement-era properties are often utilitarian, vernacular structures of little to no architectural style. However, the character of these early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings provides a glimpse of the buildings that the first pioneers erected when establishing a new community.

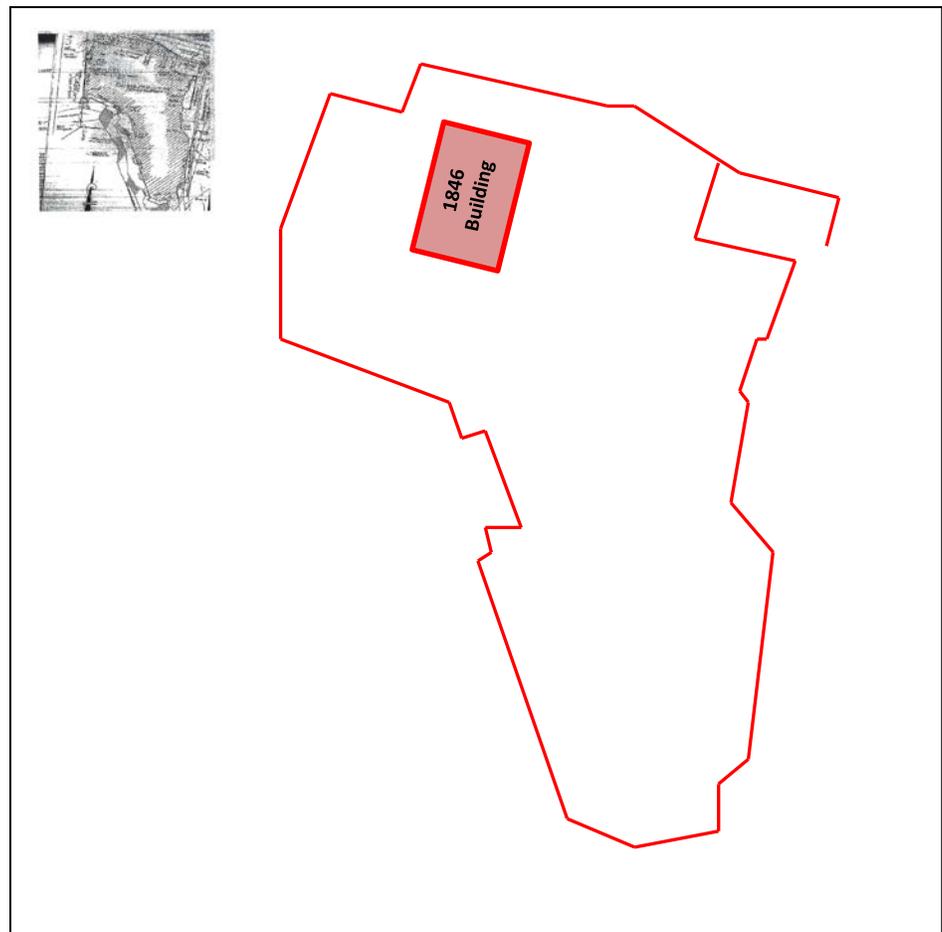
The Mill Race Inn complex contains a remnant Settlement-era structure from Geneva's earliest days as a populated place.

### **General Condition of the Mill Race Inn Complex**

The Mill Race Inn complex is a complicated assemblage of additions to an Early Settlement-era limestone structure that dates to the earliest years of the Geneva community.

The complexity of the floor plan makes it difficult—for the average person—to understand the historic and non-historic portions of the existing building. However, the 1846 manufactory building that became, in 1933, Anne Forsyth's original Mill Race Inn is clearly evident within the sprawling complex (see illustration to right).

As it stands today, the Mill Race Inn, overall, is in a poor state of repair. The building and grounds were abandoned with little effort to stabilize the structure or prevent damage and deterioration during a long period of no



occupancy. However, the building appears to be structurally sound and showed no readily-discernible signs of imminent structural failure.

Several windows have been broken; exterior decking is in poor condition and the pavement and sidewalks are beginning to deteriorate. Furnishings and miscellaneous restaurant appointments, along with upholstered furniture and worn carpeting, are scattered throughout the complex. Kitchen fixtures—with few exceptions—have been removed in their entirety.

Building systems (electrical, HVAC and plumbing) are antiquated and installed in piecemeal fashion throughout the rambling complex. It is doubtful that any building systems retain any functional utility.

Water has flooded the lowest basements areas of the structure; however, no standing water was evident in the 1846 cellar. In fact, there was little evidence of water ever present within the 1846 cellar, which has a floor substantially higher above the newer basements. The presence of standing water and the long-vacant condition have combined to create a poor interior environment.

### **What Remains of the Alexander Brothers' Early Settlement Buildings?**

The earliest structures attributed to the Julius and Edward Alexander have disappeared from the Geneva landscape: the original Alexander Brothers' Blacksmith Shop (1837-38) north of State Street; their wood-frame home (1837-38); and their 1842 limestone blacksmith shop on the south side of State Street, where the Mill Race Inn now stands vacant. In fact, records that indicate the 1842 building exists are incorrect.

However, the *circa* 1846 limestone manufactory structure—which measures approximately 30' X 48' and comprises little more than 1400 square feet of the entire property—remains clearly visible within the rambling Mill Race Inn complex.

Identifiable, today, by the original limestone bearing walls, the Alexander Brothers' 1846 manufactory no longer retains its original floor or roof. However, that is not so much an issue of building deterioration but a case of building evolution over time.

Three of the four original exterior walls of the 1846 limestone structure are visible within the present-day building; the exterior and interior faces of those walls are readily visible. However, the historic exterior face of the east wall is largely obscured from examination or observation; the interior face is largely exposed.

Unfortunately, approximately 15% of the historic west wall and approximately 40% of the historic east wall have been altered over time. The west wall loss encompasses a portion of the bearing wall and at least one original window opening. The east wall loss incorporates a large area that was once a sizable doorway (see *circa* 1892 image). However, an initial assessment suggests that at least 82% of the original walls, as exposed in 1846, remain intact with minor modifications made for Anne Forsyth's restaurant in 1933.

The cellar level of the 1846 manufactory building remains in exceptional condition. However, the floor is poured concrete, and the original ceiling / floor structure has been replaced over time.

Although some historic window and door openings of the 1846 structure remain unaltered (particularly at the north façade), few—if any—retain original jambs. Where historic jambs exist, no historic window sash or doors were evident during the site visit. Many window openings appear to retain original lintels and sills.

### **What Remains of Anne Forsyth’s Mill Race Inn of 1933?**

With the exception of the early service additions constructed along the east side of the 1846 structure, Anne Forsyth’s original restaurant was contained within the walls of the 1846 limestone structure.

Eighty years after Anne Forsyth’s little restaurant first opened, the dining room space of the original Mill Race Inn remains intact although finishes and some walls have been modified over time. Several windows installed in the early 1930s by August Wilson remain.

Alterations made after 1946 are largely not associated with Anne Forsyth’s original eatery; those areas of the complex are an odd arrangement of spaces and differing floor levels. Unfortunately, many of the original limestone walls were painted after Anne Forsyth was no longer involved in the day-to-day operations of the Mill Race Inn. Subsequent owners continued to modify and alter the original Mill Race Inn with the addition of later dining rooms.

However, the boundaries of Anne Forsyth’s 1933 restaurant are clearly identifiable as the perimeter of the 1846 structure; the 1933 Mill Race Inn restaurant is clearly evident within the abandoned complex.

### **What Architectural Integrity Remains?**

As an early vernacular structure, constructed of indigenous materials and adapted for many uses over time, the building retains a sufficient amount of integrity to be identifiable as the early manufactory building. Although the John Rystrom Carriage & Wagon Shop was, likely, the second most significant business at the site, little of the architecture constructed for that venture remains today.

A thorough investigation of the architecture of the remaining 1846 structure, as modified by Anne Forsyth in 1933, could better quantify the extent of original, extant materials from the two most significant periods of the structure’s history that have survived: the 1846 manufactory and Anne Forsyth’s 1933 Mill Race Inn.

### **Does the Building Satisfy Any Criteria for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places or as a Local Landmark?**

The National Register of Historic Places has established criteria that evaluates properties based on the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and

**(a) that are associated with events** that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

**(c) that embody distinctive characteristics** of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

**(d) that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information** important in prehistory or history.

Admittedly, vernacular, utilitarian buildings are often challenging structures to nominate for landmark recognition. However, the Alexander Brothers' 1846 manufactory building may qualify for National Register listing under Criterion A because the building is one of the few remaining Geneva buildings that is closely associated with the initial settlement of the pioneer community. Furthermore, it may be argued that the structure qualifies under Criterion C as an example of an early manufactory building associated with the early industrial development along the Fox River at Geneva. Few examples of these very early industrial buildings remain throughout the Kane County section of the Fox River Valley.

Following a similar evaluation (although the evaluation is not as restrictive at the local level), the City of Geneva—which is a designated Certified Local Government—could identify the property as a local landmark.

Important to any case that would lead to landmark status for the Mill Race Inn site would be the appropriate identification of a Period of Significance for the remaining structure. Based upon this preliminary investigation, an appropriate Period of Significance may be 1846-1945 (the date the building was first constructed thru the final year Anne Forsyth operated the Mill Race Inn, individually. Without further investigation, it is difficult to suggest that later (post 1946) sections of the Mill Race Inn complex meet the National Register criteria or merit consideration for landmark status due to continued modifications of spaces in recent times.

In either case, the building may qualify for Investment Tax Credits and other grant funds that could assist in the preservation of those portions of the complex determined to have historic significance. Identification of the appropriate parts of the structure that may be preserved as well as an appropriate Period of Significance would allow the redevelopment of large portions of the abandoned Mill Race Inn complex and site.

### **How Does Landmark Status and Rehabilitation of the 1846 Limestone Manufactory Fit with the City of Geneva Planning Efforts?**

The Geneva community has a long history of embracing its historic places and utilizing its history to promote economic development. To that end, several community planning documents have been developed within the last ten (10) years, each including goals and objectives for the preservation of architecturally and/or historically-significant buildings, sites and structures. Although the former Mill Race Inn building lies outside of the boundaries of the Geneva Historic District, the building has been identified by the City of Geneva as a historically-significant site.

## Historic Preservation Plan (2008)

The Historic Preservation Plan (2008) identifies numerous early settlement buildings and sites on the east side of the Fox River, including the former Mill Race Inn site.

Goals of the Historic Preservation Plan that may be applicable to the former Mill Race Inn site include:

Goal 1: Identify historic resources – architecturally and/or historically-significant buildings, sites and/or structures.

Goal 2: Protect historic resources through landmark designation.

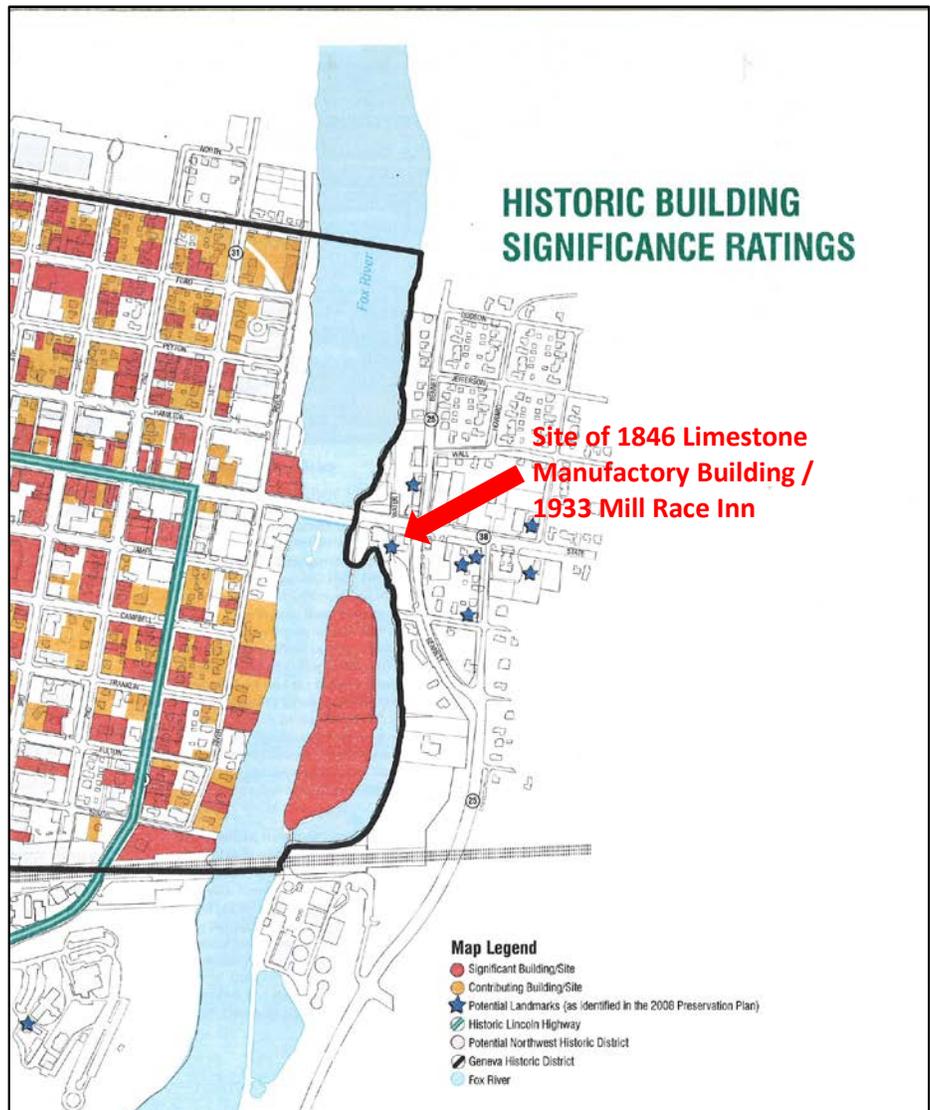
## Downtown / Station Area Master Plan (2012)

The Downtown / Station Area Master Plan (2012), which incorporates the east side of the Fox River, embraced historic preservation.

The Downtown / Station Area Master Plan (2012) identified seven (7) architecturally and/or historically significant structures on the east side of the Fox River in Downtown Geneva. These sites were identified as “Potential Landmarks” in the 2008 Historic Preservation Plan.

These extremely rare buildings—dating to the mid-1840s and 1850s—are representative of Geneva’s initial period of settlement.

Although many significant “settlement era” properties on the west side of the Fox



River are incorporated within the boundaries of the Geneva Historic District, none of the identified “settlement era” buildings on the east side of the Fox River, to date, have been individually landmarked. One of those buildings is the former Mill Race Inn property. (Page 15)

In fact, “many participants (in The Downtown / Station Area Master Plan (2012) focus groups) were in support of new redevelopment and reuse of existing buildings Downtown, however, the majority stressed that they had concerns regarding the type, style and architecture of future developments. Preserving the City’s historic architecture and character, while also promoting new infill development, will be an important (consideration to) balance moving forward.” (Page 20)

The Downtown / Station Area Master Plan (2012), identifies the Mill Race Inn as a site (contained within Opportunity Site 6 – East Shoreline Opportunity Concept) with significant historical value but that is, also, prime for redevelopment for commercial and/or residential use. (Page 30) The nearby intersection has been identified as a prime development “gateway” to Downtown Geneva in the plan as well.

## Opportunity Site 6 East Shoreline Opportunity Concept

**Development Concept Overview**  
The development concept for this opportunity site is intended to improve the area east of the Fox River as more of an extension of Downtown by providing opportunities for new retail, lodging, and residential uses in an attractive setting along the Fox River, along with public space, trails, and riverfront access. Sites along East State Street are shown as new residential development, utilizing the change of grade as a development asset. Each of the individual developments and uses illustrated in this concept can be evaluated independently of one another or in whole, while still achieving an overall improvement to the area.

**East State Residential**  
The area along the south side of State Street between Bennett and Crissey is shown as a combination of row houses and multi-family residential. Working with the site’s topography, a rear alley provides access to the rear-loading parking for the row houses with the multi-family building being located on the western portion of the site.

**Mill Race Inn & Southwest Corner of State and Bennett**  
The Mill Race Inn has a long history in Geneva and this concept illustrates a newly redeveloped Mill Race Inn and new retail development on the corner. This redevelopment concept keeps the banquet and restaurant use and provides a layout that makes better use of the river frontage with parking that could support the addition of a lodge or boutique hotel with outdoor dining along the river. New retail development is also shown at the corner. This concept would allow for the development at the corner to serve as an attractive “gateway” into Downtown Geneva.

**Open Space, Trails, and Trailhead**  
With a trailhead public parking lot, trails and riverfront open space can be easily accessed. Open space and trail connectivity are a primary component of this concept as is the notion of maximizing the riverfront as an accessible community asset.

**Site of Former Mill Race Inn**

- 1 A reconstructed Mill Race Inn or boutique hotel with river-view terrace/patio and expanded parking  
2-3 stories  
~ 70 parking spaces
- 2 A multi-family building at the corner with staggered row houses move east up the hill  
2-3 stories  
~ 20-30 units
- 3 Single family detached residential
- 4 Public open space with a parking lot and trailhead
- 5 Potential pedestrian bridge to Island Park

**Example Character Images**

Historic Architecture is addressed in the Downtown / Station Area Master Plan (2012): “Architectural details play a tremendous role in the creation of the area’s image, identity and sense of place. Building materials, ornamentation, style, articulation, doors and windows, rooflines, architectural features and

*massing are all elements of the built form that contribute to urban design. In Downtown Geneva, several traditional styles are represented and reflect the rich history of the area. It is this architectural and historic character that many residents recognize as one of the most valuable and important Downtown assets. Many of the existing buildings in Downtown are historically significant and have been identified as structures that should be preserved. (Page 50)*

The Downtown / Station Area Master Plan (2012) identifies several implementation Goals and Objectives that may be applicable to redevelopment of the former Mill Race Inn site including (pages 68-71):

**Goal 1: Preserve Downtown’s Authentic Character While Accommodating New Infill Development**

Objective 1: Encourage preservation and adaptive re-use of historic and architecturally significant buildings

Objective 2: Ensure that new infill buildings respect the existing historic context and character of downtown.

Objective 4: Establish programs that provide financial support to property owners and business owners for building improvements and rehabilitation projects.

**Goal 2: Strengthen Downtown’s Role as the Central Business District (CBD)**

Objective 3: Initiate programs to encourage the improvement and rehabilitation of older commercial buildings and spaces that are already, or are becoming, functionally obsolete.

**Examples of Historic Buildings Integrated into Contemporary Adaptive Use Spaces.**

The Geneva community has a long history of embracing its historic places and utilizing its history to promote economic development and creative, continued adaptive use of its iconic buildings. Examples of adaptive use—whether local or elsewhere—provide an immediate sense of timelessness and connection to a local community which supports the goals of the City of Geneva’s planning and economic development efforts.

The Geneva business and development community has re-purposed numerous remnant historic structures and entire buildings into vibrant, commercial assets for the community. In fact, iconic Third Street is rooted in a very early example of adaptive use that integrated a former, historic residence within a much larger retail complex: Kate Raftery’s The Little Traveler (established in 1924 with significant enlargement in 1946). A few, more recent, local examples include Dodson Place, The Herrington Inn, and Geneva Bank & Trust.

Beyond the Geneva streetscape, numerous examples of small historic structures have been integrated into larger, contemporary complexes that serve as highly-successful restaurants, inns, pubs, spas and other commercial and hospitality-related uses across the United States.

**Images of the Former Mill Race Inn – November 2013**



**Original 1846 West Foundation Wall to right**



**Original 1846 Foundation Wall and Window at left**



**Original Southwest Corner of 1846 Building**



**Streetcar Rail "Beam" at Post-1945 Addition**



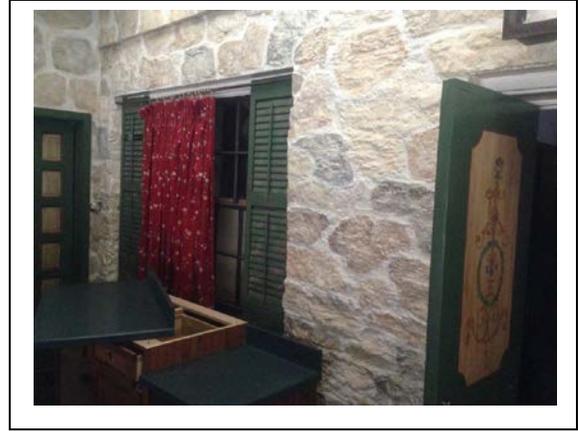
**Original Window Opening at 1846 Cellar**



**Circa 1955 Stairway to Basement along Original North Foundation Wall with Original North Façade Window Opening at Left**



**Original 1846 Exterior West Wall Looking Southeasterly – Original 1933 Windows**



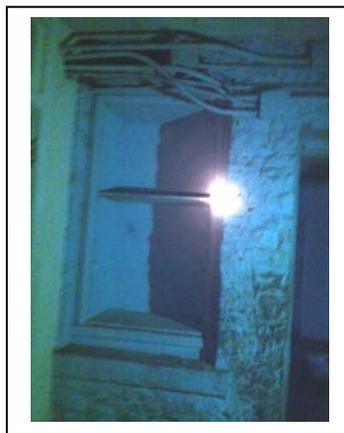
**Original 1846 Exterior West Wall Looking Northeasterly – Original 1933 Windows**



**Original 1846 Exterior South Wall Looking Northwesterly – Original Window Opening with 1933 Windows**



**Original 1846 Exterior South Wall Looking Northwesterly – Original Window Opening and Doorway**



**1846 North Façade Original Window Opening**



**1846 North Façade Original Doorway Opening**



**1846 North Façade Original Window Opening**



**Original South Wall as Modified for Anne Forsyth's Original Mill Race Inn Dining Room (1933 compare to 1918 photo)**



**Original West Wall as Modified for Anne Forsyth's Original Mill Race Inn Dining Room (1933 compare to 1890 photo)**



**Interior of Southwest Corner of 1846 Limestone Building as Modified for Anne Forsyth's Original Mill Race Inn Dining Room (1933 as updated)**



**Interior of Southeast Corner of 1846 Limestone Building as Modified for Anne Forsyth's Original Mill Race Inn Dining Room – Original Doorway (right) and Altered 1846 Window (left)**

All graphics, illustrations and other information provided herein is representational, in nature, and does not attempt to depict actual dimensions of building walls, areas or configurations. The information provided in respect to building evolution is based on the best available data accessible on the date when the report is identified as completed. The report is informational only and provided to assist in the evaluation of the property for adaptive use potential and possible local landmark status.

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