

Preface

A community's relationship to place is central to understanding itself. Its character can be found in the landscape. Visual elements in the landscape offer insight into the history and culture of the community that give it definition. The landscapes created are cultural landscapes. It is through the examination of local and regional cultural landscapes that a community's character can be ascertained.

Harvey Flad, Ph.D., Poughkeepsie, NY (2005)

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) of the Town of Rochester is pleased to present this Farmstead Survey to our fellow residents. We believe it is the most in-depth document ever produced about Rochester's 330-year history of farming and will serve as a valuable reference for future preservation activities and will aid the Town Board and other commissions as they concern themselves with decisions regarding open space and the preservation of agricultural land in our town.

The Town of Rochester has kept its rural character ever since it was settled in the 1600s. While industry located in Ellenville and Napanoch to the southwest and Kingston to the northeast, Rochester maintained its open space, which was initially devoted to farming and then also supported a substantial summer resort industry. Over the past two generations, with the decline of farming and the summer resorts, which benefited from the produce from the farms in the town, agricultural land has been reduced by more than half. Still, farming persists and even thrives, with some farms continuing to serve local residents, including a substantial number of weekend homeowners.

It seemed an opportune time to learn more about our agricultural legacy and to offer a methodology that could be used for further research on our historic farmsteads, either by individual landowners, the HPC or other town agencies.

We hope our fellow residents will value and enjoy this farmstead survey as much as we do. We are grateful to Neil Larson for his excellent research and analysis. We thank Preserve New York and Erin Tobin their Grants Coordinator, Robert Anderberg and Elaine Laflamme, and an anonymous donor for their support. In his role as Vice President and General Counsel for the Open Space Institute, Bob Anderberg has been a strong supporter of preserving Rochester's farming heritage. And finally, we thank Carl Chipman, Supervisor, and the Town Board for their encouragement of our work.

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