

One of the stations on the DAV&P was Moon Station. Still standing nearby is the house built by Ebenezer Moon, an early director of the DAV&P and the first station agent at Moon Station. In recent times, the house was opened for visitors and handouts provided them on the history of the Moon House. This is a facsimile of the handout in the possession of the Historical Society of Dunkirk, New York. It appears to have been produced around 1990 and is offered as a little bit of DAV&P history.

#### THE MOON HOUSE ON MOON ROAD AT MOON STATION

The house was built in 1870 at the time that they were finishing the building of the Dunkirk, Allegheny Valley Railroad. Ebenezer Moon was very much involved in both. He was born in 1811, came to Chautauqua County in 1836, married Rhoba Tower of Towerville, taught a few terms at Sinclairville and became mayor of that village. He bought land a few rods southeast of the present brick house, the foundation of his home can still be seen on the east side of present route sixty. In 1855 he bought 250 acres of land across the road in the town of Stockton. By 1860 there was much interest in building a railroad from Dunkirk to Jamestown and beyond. Ebenezer was very interested in this project and when the company was organized he became a director. He and Ashel Burnham were both influential in getting the road through Cassadaga instead of Stockton. It passed through land owned by each and each had a station named for him.

Ebenezer was the first station agent at Moon Station. Of his three sons, Adelbert moved to Brocton, A.P. moved to Beloit, Kansas and DeWitt Clinton, (D.C.), lived in Dunkirk after learning about railroading in his father's baggage room. He was to become the president of the D.A.V. and later when it was taken over by the New York Central he became a vice-president and general manager of the N Y C railroad between Buffalo and Cleveland. Local people remember seeing his private car parked at the siding at Moon Station while he visited his mother. It is said that the train used to wait at the station while Mrs. Moon walked from the house down to the tracks to board the train. This practice stopped when it was called to D.C.'s attention. Apparently he told her, "Mom, this ain't no way to run a railroad."

The house was built with brick made on the farm. The pit where the clay was dug is still there in the form of a pond which is always full of water. The Denny House on the Frisbee road is also built with these bricks as were other houses in the area. It was built after the Civil War when the country felt secure and the economy was developing. It was Ebenezer's dream to build a thriving community at Moon Station and in fact he made a start in that direction. Though he died July 1886 of Bright's Disease, by the turn of the century there was a bakery, a butcher shop and blacksmith shop on Farmers' Street - Route Sixty - and a sawmill and a Burnham's Cheese Factory at the intersection of the railroad and the Moon Road. In fact water rights to the cheese factory were guaranteed on each deed transferal - eight times - until, in 1961 when Warren (Rex) Smith signed an affidavit that in his lifetime he had never seen a cheese factory on the property. Moon Station handled more freight than either Cassadaga or Sinclairville. Ebenezer's dream might have materialized had it not been for an unforeseen gadget. The automobile came on the scene at this time and this was the start of the decline of this small rural community.

A number of people have mentioned the possibility that the house was built as an inn. (Esther Olmstead feels certain of this point.) From the general layout of the house, however, it seems to have been built as the dwelling of a man who has made his fortune and is ready for the good life of a country gentleman. The Moons designed and built in the Italianate style with arched windows and doors, balconies, curved roofs on the verandas, a double doorway in the front, sliding panel separating the living room from the dining room which could be raised to allow free circulation of guests during a dance. The two large doorways could be opened for social events. The Moons must have been a sociable family and used the house for lavish entertainment, with special trains bringing special guests. When Mr. Moon sold land for the cheese factory he agreed to give the Burnhams water rights, but reserved the right to use water from their line. I believe then was the time he built the fountain beside the house.

Augustin Wright managed the farm for the Moons for several years before buying it in 1912; Mrs. Moon had died in 1905. They too lived the good life and were noted for their fine horses, some of which died in a tragic barn fire. Mrs. Wright deeded the farm to her grandson, Oliver Brunson who lived there two years before passing it on to Frank and Jessie Tarbox. Walter Brunson, son of Oliver, told of a wind storm that took some of the roof off and some of the walls on the west side of the house. In the attic are signs of the repair work and part of a circular window that must have been in the peak of the northwest gable. There is not room for it there now because the roof has been lowered in that section.

The next three owners were Alice Bentley, H. Walter Wollemon and Dybwad Danielson. Someone during this period removed the sliding panel between the living room and the dining room and replaced it with a solid wall and added sink and cabinets on the west side.

It was in 1947 that Freida Torgesen and Dybwad Danielsen formed a partnership and operated the house as a business venture, calling it Moon's Inn. It must have been at this time that the beautiful little nook in the upstairs hallway was turned into a bathroom. Part of the mechanism for moving the downstairs walls is behind a small door over the toilet. After two years Danielsen died and Freida operated it as a rooming house until 1955. It was shortly after that I first saw the house. I well remember Frieda proudly showing me the entire house. By this time the house was used mostly as a dwelling for her, her daughter Ann and Rex Smith and two children. During this time several changes were made. The front porch and balconies were removed and replaced by cement slabs. Hardwood floors were laid in the northeast rooms. Also most of the farmland was sold. By this time the lighting systems had changed from candle and kerosene lamps to acetelyne gas and then to electricity. Rex often attracted the attention of passersby when he left the water running in the fountain all winter which formed an ice pillar some eight feet tall.

Melvin and Ella Belcher bought the place in 1967. Mel was a landscaper and Ella a dog raiser, so it was to be expected that the yard was landscaped and dog kennels placed in the shed in the back. Mel also did some farming and remodeled the barn.

Jack and Cindy Jacchino came in 1980. They were professional renovators. They carpeted a large section of the floors, started a complete renovation in the kitchen, living room and downstairs bathroom. Also they removed a section of the barn.

When we first began working on the house neighbors told of the spirits that were said to inhabit it. I was entirely unimpressed at the time but after working on it for several months I am very aware of them. Everybody who has lived in the house seems to have left his mark in some way.

We bought the place July 17, 1984. Frankly I don't know what we are doing. We consider ourselves restorers and we want to restore it to the best of our ability and finances, but we find it requires more than good intentions to restore a building. You need some knowledge of what the building was like in the first place.

One of my first experiences was rebuilding the chimneys which were in bad shape. There were three of them, all different. My friend Al was doing the work. I suggested that we do them like the one on the south side which was tall, slender and with indentations on the side. Al objected; he said it would require splitting the brick lengthwise and would be time consuming and costly. That I didn't want, so we built them like the west one -short and stubby but not bad looking. After a little study, I found that the old Italianate houses did have tall slender chimneys and chubby ones just don't fit. Now the house looks like a cowboy wearing a derby hat.

Come again

/s/ John and Ruth Smith