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The Village of Cassadaga, NY has a long and interesting history. It is fortunate that many of the homes and other sites that were prominent in that history are still around today. This walk presents an opportunity to sample some of these historic places and learn about their stories.
Before starting your walk, a brief history of Cassadaga will be helpful. This area had served as summer hunting and fishing grounds for Native Americans for hundreds of years before the first settlers arrived in the early 1800s. In 1809, Orthello Church first settled at the Lake outlet (near the corner of Maple Avenue and Mill Street). Others followed, driven by abundant timber and the hope that Cassadaga Creek would serve as an effective way to move timber, and later potash, to settlements farther south. In 1827, the Cassadaga Navigation Company was formed, but hopes of using keel boats for shipping never panned out. By the 1850s, the settlement was growing and framed houses began to replace the early log cabins. The 1855 census showed 131 people living in Cassadaga. The completion of a railroad through Cassadaga from Dunkirk in 1871 helped the area grow as movement of goods became easier.

The 1870 population was 225 and the Village included a church, two hotels, three stores, three blacksmiths and factories making shoes, pumps, butter churns and baskets. Agriculture remained prominent, but the harvesting and shipping of ice by train to major eastern cities was an important industry.

The Village has evolved since the first settlers arrived from the north. Stores, churches and public buildings have come and gone, but today’s Village of 634 residents remains vibrant and proud to share some of its history with you.

This tour will cover the following route and is approximately 3 miles long. See the map in the center of this booklet for an overview of the walk.

Starting point is the Village four corners at the intersection of Maple Avenue and Route 60 (Main Street). It then proceeds north on North Main Street to Dale Drive. Turn left and follow Dale Drive to its end. Turn left onto Frisbee Road.

From Frisbee, turn left onto Alden/Burnham and continue to Maple Avenue.

Turn left on Maple Avenue to return to the Four Corners.

You are now ready to start your tour.

This pamphlet will describe 24 stops on your walk. Enjoy Cassadaga and its history.

Reminder: Always walk on the left facing traffic!
1 Four Corners
This area served as the commercial center of the Village. At one time four major buildings anchored the corners. A large hotel, built in 1850, was located at the northwest corner (now Ames Common). Sadly, it was lost in a fire in 1895. The hotel was known as the Phillips Temperance House and was built by Willeston Phillips, a member of a prominent Cassadaga family. The building on the southeast corner housed a grocery, laundry, drug store, and variety store. On the northeast corner, the building was occupied by a hardware, furniture and grocery store. The second floor was a bowling alley. On the southwest corner was the Dye Hotel. All of these buildings were lost to fire by the 1970s.

Proceed north on North Main St.
Stop 2 is the brick house on your left.

2 Brick House
This house, built in the 1860s, was the first in Cassadaga to use brick construction. The bricks were made using mud from the Cassadaga Lakes. The house was built by a dentist, also a member of the prominent Phillips family. His office was in a small building next to the house.

Continue north on North Main St.
Stop 3 is on your left.

3 55 North Main Street
This home, built in the 1850s, was originally the “Pig’s Ear Tavern.” Since the tavern served alcoholic beverages, the building was moved several times between the towns of Stockton and Pomfret depending on which town was dry at the time.

Turn left onto Dale Dr. Stop 4 is on your right.

4 18 Dale Drive - Fisher House
This land was settled by Ichabod Fisher, one of Cassadaga’s early settlers. He purchased land from the Holland Land Company in 1813. He operated a saw mill that was built next to the house. The present house was built in 1897 by a descendant, John Fisher. The house is still owned by the Fisher family.

Continue on Dale Dr. Stop 5 is the empty lot on your right, just beyond stop 4.

5 Dale Drive Snack Bar
Although now an empty field, this area was a Village hot spot during the summers of 1957-1960. The snack bar served all types of food, including the first pizza in the Village! Unfortunately, the lack of rest rooms caused it to run afoul of the Health Dept. and it was closed. The building was subsequently torn down.

Continue on Dale Dr. Just after Park Ave. intersection is stop 6.

6 Holtz Marina
The small log cabin on your left, to the right of the grey house, was the summer home of Vern Holtz, a Cassadaga resident for 56 years. Vern had an ambition to build wooden boats. Although self-taught, he designed and built 5 wooden boats. Since money was tight in the early 1920s, he decided to rent rather than sell the boats. In 1928 he bought this lot, which was swamp land, for $300. He filled in the swamp and built a boardwalk to the lake. He then built the cabin that is still here today. He ran the marina and a popular snack bar during summers until his death in 1987. The marina continued with other owners until the 1990s.

Continue on Dale Dr. Stop 7 is the small red island cabin on your left.

7 The Road to Lily Dale
The area along Dale Drive including Lily Dale, is in fact, a large island created by the 3 Cassadaga lakes and their marshland. Due to the large number of ferns growing nearby, the area was called Fern Island. Dale Drive was not a passable road for much of the year and access to Lily Dale and most of Dale Drive was from the other end of the road. In order to improve access, Dale Drive was rebuilt in the late 1920s. To shore up the road, logs were driven into the mud and large amounts of fill were added. The pressure from the fill caused the small island on your left to emerge from the lake. A cottage was built on the island in the early 1940s and was subsequently replaced by the current building.

Continue on Dale Dr. Stop 8 is on your right after the intersection of North Shore Park.

Camp Joshua
The area on your right, between North Shore Park and Pennington Road, was owned by the Cassadaga United Brethren Church. The Church operated a summer camp here from 1900 to 1921. The land was divided into small tent lots, as seen in the photo, and there was a large open air auditorium at the rear of the property.

Continue on Dale Dr. Stop 9 is the grey house on your right at the corner of Dale and Leroy.
10  209 Dale Drive - Fern Island House
The land on your left from the large white house to Lily Dale was owned by Daniel T. Harris and operated as a farm. In the 1850s, he created a picnic grounds here, accessible by steamboat from Cassadaga Village. In the 1860s he built the present structure as a summer guest house. Harris also operated a horse drawn livery service. The fare for a trip to Lily Dale or Cassadaga was 10 cents.

Continue on Dale Dr. until you reach Fellowships of the Spirit Learning Center. Look to your left across the lake to stop 11.

11  Madam Vignet's Home and Dance Hall
If you looked across the Lake from this point in the late 1890s, you would have seen the view in this picture. The home on the right, known as Shadyside, belonged to Madam Vignet. The building on the left was her dance hall. Twice a week a concert band played for dances. The train, which ran by the rear of her house, would stop to let off passengers to attend the dances. Neither building remains today.

Continue on Dale Dr. until you reach the entrance to Lily Dale at stop 12.

12  The Leolyn Inn/Lily Dale gate
On your left, the large white building is the Leolyn Hotel, one of two owned by the Lily Dale Assembly. This site was originally a farm and stage coach stop owned by Willard Alden. In 1873 he was approached by Jeremiah Carter, who insisted that spirit voices urged him to start a camp meeting on Alden's land. Mr. Alden agreed, and summer picnics and camp meetings started. Across the street is the entrance to Lily Dale Assembly. In 1879, this land was purchased by the Spiritualists and the camp meetings were moved. From a summer camp, the Assembly evolved when permanent buildings were built in the 1880s. After several name changes, in 1906 the Lily Dale Assembly name was chosen due to the abundance of water lilies on the Lake. Today, the Assembly owns over 160 acres and is the largest Spiritualist community in the world. It has a fascinating history and would be another interesting place to explore.

Continue on Dale Dr. until you reach the DEC boat launch, stop 13.

13  Iroquois Hotel
The picture shows the Iroquois Hotel, which was built on this site in 1895, replacing the first Lily Dale Railroad station. It served as a hotel, restaurant and saloon for visitors to Lily Dale. Its location next to the railroad tracks made it a convenient stop for the hundred plus Lily Dale passengers per day. The Hotel had numerous name changes before burning in 1967.

Continue on Dale Dr. until it ends at Frisbee Rd. Stop 14 is across the intersection.

14  8021 Glasgow Road
The house directly in front of you was built in 1852 and was one of the original stops on the Underground Railroad. The property operated as a farm, supplying milk and vegetables to the TB hospital on the hill to your right. The hospital later became a seminary and now serves as the campus for Job Corps.

Turn left onto Frisbee Rd. Stop 15 is the red brick house on your right.

15  Denny House/Red House
This house was built by A.D. Denny. It was completed in the late 1860s. Although, intended to serve as an Underground Railroad stop, the Civil War ended before construction was completed. Mr. Denny was a wealthy landowner, with a reputation for importing and raising excellent livestock. The house served as a hospital in the 1920s.

Continue on Frisbee Rd. Stop 16 is the large stand of evergreens on your right.
16 The Todd Farm
The house and land pictured here in the 1890s was owned by the Todd family. In the early 1900s, in addition to running the farm, the Todds bottled the waters from a spring located on the hill behind the house. It was bottled in large glass containers and shipped to Buffalo. The farmhouse and other buildings were torn down in the late 1950s, but the land continues to be owned by the Todd family.

Continue on Frisbee Rd. Stop 17 is on your right.

17 Cassadaga Country Club
This property was originally the Frisbee House dairy farm. The current golf course was developed in the early 1940s. In addition to golf, a ski run was formerly in operation in the winter.

Continue on Frisbee Rd., take the next left on to Alden Rd., which runs into Burnham Pl.

18 Alden/Burnham Roads
The area where you are now walking was originally the separate Village of Burnhams with its own Post Office. It was incorporated into the Village of Cassadaga in 1942. Asa Burnham arrived in this area in the late 1860s. Although he had little formal education, he was a shrewd businessman and established several cheese factories in the area. He purchased the land here and worked successfully to insure the railroad from Dunkirk ran through Cassadaga. He developed an interest in race horses and, at one time, owned the largest stable of race horses in western New York. He built a race track in the area for his horses.

Turn left onto Maple Ave. Stop 19 is on your right.

19 Cassadaga Cemetery
The cemetery was established in 1817. The oldest remaining gravestone is dated 1831. Burials were held here soon after the cemetery was established, but early wooden grave markers are long gone and early burial records were lost in a fire.

Continue on Maple Ave. Stop 20 is on your left.

20 Lake’s End Marina
These buildings were built in the late 1940s for use as a marina. On this site in 1900, Ed Pierpont built a cider mill. Apples were plentiful and most farmers made small batches of cider using hand tools. Cider mills sprang up as machinery for large scale production became available. Pierpont’s mill produced cider and high quality apple vinegar. The original mill burned in 1930, but was quickly rebuilt. A second fire in 1937 destroyed the mill and all of its machinery.

Continue on Maple Ave. Stops 21 & 22 are on your right.

21 99 Maple Avenue
This home used to serve as the United Brethren Church which sponsored Camp Joshua (Stop #8).

22 93 Maple Avenue
This building served as the Bulger blacksmith shop. Mr. Bulger lived across the street at 94 Maple Avenue. When the shop was purchased by Ed Johnston, he paid two men with a team of horses $6 to dig a basement and then completely turn the house around.

Continue on Maple Ave. Stop 23 is on your right on the corner of Mill St.

23 First Fire Hall
The building pictured here was built on this site in the 1920s to serve as the Village’s first fire hall. It also served as the jail, with several cells accessed from the door at the back of the building. The structure was torn down when a larger fire station was needed. The building now on this site was a later addition, serving as a storage facility.

Continue on Maple Ave. Stop 24 is on your right.

24 Cassadaga Post Office
This building served at one time as a funeral home. Caskets for sale were displayed in the building’s large front windows. Later it became a grocery. The small attached building to its left was Ames Lunch, which served as the social center of the Village, beginning in 1921 and continuing for 50 years. Beside a soda fountain and small diner, Clarence Ames sold fishing and marriage licenses, animal hides and even collected tax payments.

You have completed the tour. We hope that you enjoyed your taste of Cassadaga history, and will visit our Village again. The stores, restaurants and organizations of Cassadaga are ready to welcome you.