

# The Thurber Inn Lives On

The Village of Rouses Point, as well as the Town of Champlain, is steeped in history. There are a number of houses still standing in the area, that have housed early settlers of the area. One such house is known as the General Thurber Inn on Lake Street in Rouses Point. Presently it is the home of the Arthur Spiegel family.

Although the house is not the oldest in the village, most beautiful, its history contains some unusual facts. The house, itself, has sheltered some unusual people.

The house was completed in 1818 and was owned by Ezra Thurber. Thurber was an unusual man in his own right. He was a businessman, who had the house built to reflect his prominence. At the time, the house certainly must have given an impression desired by Thurber. This magnificent brick home, which had a total of 6 fireplaces, was built only fourteen years after the first frame house had been erected in Rouses Point by Ezra's father, Edward Thurber. Just imagine the stir, that this home, a veritable "mansion in the wilderness", must have made.

It is said, that the building was constructed of brick from both the Smith Brick Yard, located south of the village and Fort Montgomery, which had then been abandoned by the U.S. Government. It's told locally that the heavy timbers and some brick had been appropriated. Many of the large homes of the day, that are still standing, were constructed of materials from the fort.

As for a brief history of the first family to inhabit this home, Ezra Thurber was married to Achsah Smith, sister to the Smith's who owned the brickyard. Her brothers also contributed to the addition of fine houses to the village; The Broadweel home in Rouses Point on Lake St. was constructed in 1815 and the stone house at the end of Smith Street, where the Woodwards now live, was built in 1825. The Thurbers eventually had a family. There is little record of this fact, except it is known that there was Emily who married John Bailly, and Melvina who married Lemuel North, owner of the then famous Cold Spring Farm of the Rapids Road in Champlain. Ezra Thurber, was known as "Colonel Thurber", at one point, and later as "General Thurber". Though Thurber never served in battle, it is thought that the titles were given him locally, as an honor for his leadership in the militia General Thurber was one of the more prominent citizens of his day, having built the first wharf in Rouses Point in 1816. He also donated the land for the first burying ground the village in 1823. It was Thurber, who bought the first piano to come to Rouses Point in 1824, although Pliny Moore had brought a piano to his home in Champlain a few years earlier.

In 1819, Ezra Thurber was made vice-president of the first Clinton County Fair held in Champlain in 1819. He also held the clerkship of the Second Baptist Church of Chazy for many years, relinquishing the title only a week before his death in 1942.

The Thurbers inhabited the house for almost a century after its construction. In 1900, the home was sold to Dr. King, who made a number of changes within the old house: eliminating walls to enlarge rooms and changing the stairway. Dr. King was the father of Rufus King, who also lived in the home for many years. Rufus King was Rouses Point's renowned mystery author, who, it is said, received many of the inspirations for his mysteries as who looked down into the woods behind his house.

At the house passed through different owners after the Kings left, many changes were made. The basic structure of the building remains the same. LeBrock purchased the house, at one point, and had it converted into "General Thurber Inn", an elegant restaurant. At this time, many changes were made, altering the elegant aura of the old place: the fanlight and side lights around the entrance were painted red, the bricks painted white. Also, the back part of the house, for some unknown reason, removed.

The home was converted into the "General Thurber Inn" in the 1950's by the Atchues, who reverted the gracious building to a colonial decor. People visited the Inn to dine. An addition was made to the back, where cottages were available to rent. Mrs. Atchue still has a few items in home as mementos of that time. You can still see the library table, that was originally in the house. During the Atchue's stay in the building, Thurber Inn had many visitors, including a descendent of Samuel de Champlain who stopped to dine. A fashion show, representing the early years of the house, held during the Samuel de Champlain celebrated in the 1950's.

After the Atchue's sold the Inn, a number of changes were made by the new owner, Harold LeBrock. Unfortunately, a section the back was torn off and the old bricks were painted white. The LeBrock's served continental cuisine.

The building changed hands several times after that and the old building is now a home again. The Spiegals are attempting to restore the old place to its original beauty, having removed the white paint from the outside and doing extensive redecoration within. The Spiegals have recovered the bar that once was in the house and have added other antiques that compliment the beauty of the place.

The front door still has the original door knocker that reads: Ezra Thurber 1818. The King and Kessler names have also been added. With the help of the Spiegals, this gracious old home will remain as part of the history of the village. By naming their stables the "Thurber Stables", the family has also helped the Thurber name remain part of history also. It is to be hoped that his home and others like it will be saved as a tribute to those who began the settlement so many years ago.

Thanks go to the Spiegals, Ethel Atchue, and Andy Broadwell for their assistance.



## Inside Thurber Inn Today

Shown here is one of Thurber Inn's 6 fireplaces with a view of the staircase mirrored above.



Here is shown the Art Spiegel residence of Rouses point; formerly known as General Thurber Inn. The outside of the house has remained essentially the same since it was built in 1818. (Photo by B.E. Moore)

## Chamberlain Specializes in Cable Systems

Airman Jamie S. Chamberlain, son of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Chamberlain of Route 1, Cadyville, N.Y., has graduated from the U.S. Air Force course for cable splicing specialist at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. Graduates of the course learned how to test, seal, install

and maintain communications cable systems. They also earned credits toward an associate degree in applied science through the Community College of the Air Force. Airman Chamberlain will now serve at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D.