

Clarkson, New York

A Brief History and Walking Tour



Clarkson Town Hall

Walking Tour Directions

Exit the Town Hall, go north (right) and turn east (right) on Ridge Road to observe buildings #2-5.

Cross Ridge Rd. to view the Palmer house. Travel west and cross Lake Rd. to see the Selden and Boss houses #7-8.

Return to the corner and cross Ridge at Lake going south for houses #9-14. Return and view the Randall House and cobblestone shop south of the Town Hall.

1. Clarkson Town Hall, 3710 Lake Rd.

The Town Hall was built in 1899 on the site of the present post office. In 1936 the building, in need of repair, was moved to the present corner and remodeled resulting in the current Greek Revival design.

2. Gustavus Clark House, 8359 Ridge Road

It is said that this house was built between 1816-1820. It was owned by Gustavus Clark, a merchant, and was often referred to by early residents as the “Manor House.” The scene of many parties and social events, it even had a guest house on a site next door.

3. The Creamery 8349 Ridge Rd.

This small building was built in 1890 as a creamery where local farmers brought their milk to be processed. Milk was heated to 180 degrees and sold as “sweet milk” and butter was made, packaged and sold to the populace.

4. Clarkson Academy (Schoolhouse), 8343 Ridge Road

This pre-Civil War two story schoolhouse, built in 1853, to replace the Academy which burnt the previous year. It is a fine example of Greek Revival architecture. Classes were held in the school for approximately 100 years, first as an Academy, then a high school, then elementary school. It is now under renovation by the Clarkson Historical Society.

5. Clarkson Church, 8339 Ridge Rd.

This building was built in 1825 by the Clarkson Congregational Society in the traditional New England style. It is believed to be one of the oldest frame churches built between the Genesee River and the Niagara Frontier and it holds the distinction of being the *oldest church in continuous use* between Canandaigua and Niagara Falls. In the early days, it was used as a landmark by the old “Ridge Trail Stage Line.”

6. Joel Palmer House, 8354 Ridge Rd

Joel Palmer settled on land in 1810 upon the site of a log cabin which was built in 1804. He operated a tannery and built the present brick home in the federal style between 1820 and 1825. Deacon Palmer was a member of the first Clarkson church and it is said that his wife gave birth to the first “white” child born west of the Genesee. Her name was Elmira Palmer.

7. Selden House, 8396 Ridge Rd.

This house was built by Abel Baldwin around 1820. His daughter Laura and son-in-law Henry Selden, a distinguished citizen and lawyer who would become Lieutenant Governor of New York and judge in the State Court of Appeals, lived in the house. It was said that Selden even ran a small law school on the premises. His son, George Baldwin Selden is given the credit for inventing and patenting the six-cylinder gasoline engine.

8. Philip Boss House, 8412 Ridge Rd.

Philip Boss, an artist and cabinet maker lived on this property and is credited for building this house sometime in the 1820s or 30s. He painted portraits of neighboring residents such as Deacon Palmer and his wife. It is said that one of his portraits was in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

9. George Bower House, 3731 Lake Rd.

It has been said that the rear part of this house, circa 1812 had been the Baldwin Tavern. It is believed to have been moved from the northwest corner of Ridge Road to the present site in 1825. During the war of 1812 it is believed that soldiers billeted in the area near the tavern. When Mrs. Peck lived here she had the first telephone in Clarkson.

10. The Bowman House, 3741 Lake Rd.

This outstanding example of the Greek revival style, previously known as the Portico Bed and Breakfast, was built by John Bowman circa 1850. He sold the house to a canal boat captain James Warren who would become Supervisor of Clarkson and Monroe County Sheriff.

were at Garland, at the intersection of Sweden Walker and Ireland Roads known as Otis and at Redman's Corners.

In 1825, the Clarkson Congregational Church was built and even though its name has changed over the years, it has been in constant operation as a place of worship since construction was completed. The present Town Hall was constructed in 1899 and in 1936, was moved to its present location as a WPA government project and renovated to its present colonial revival design.

At the time of this writing, the population of our community is approximately 6,072. Even though there is still some agriculture, the town has become a "bedroom community." Clarkson has a post office and is served by the Brockport Central School district. Lakeside Memorial Hospital, Legion Hall, several professional buildings and restaurants and the Seymour Library are located within the town. The Town Highway Department, park and playground are located north of the Ridge Road on Lake Road.

We hope you will take a walking tour around the four corners and especially note what was originally called a village green where the church and a pre-civil war academy stand.

There were also dense forests and swamp land north of the Ridge Road. Soon, saw mills and grist mills were built along Clarkson's streams. The arches and tunnel of the Blodgett grist mill just off Lake Road, was unearthed several years ago. A postal route was established from Canandaigua to Lewiston and the mail was carried by wagon twice a week.

It was said that soldiers marching toward the Niagara frontier during the War of 1812, came to Clarkson and were billeted here en route. It has also been said that while building the first schoolhouse, the workers could hear the cannon fire during the battle of Lundy's Lane.

By 1820, before the Erie Canal, there were daily coaches on the route between Canandaigua and Clarkson and carriages were seen almost continuously, stopping at the many taverns along the route for food and lodging.

Salt springs, also known as salt licks sprang up on land north of the Ridge. The price of salt at that time was one dollar per bushel. Early settlers had very little money and usually bartered and traded for what they needed. It took six bushels of wheat to make a gallon of whiskey which was one of the first manufactured products from small distilleries established here. Around the 1820's, the log cabins gave way to frame,) and brick homes built from bricks made in local brick yards.. Subsequently many cobblestone houses were built from the plentiful cobbles on the land. Many of the homes are now protected from architectural change.

As Clarkson grew, there were stores, schools, churches, carriage and harness shops, cooper shops and other

businesses. At one time there was cigar manufacturing and a creamery near the four corners. Other early settlements

11. Daniel Lee House, 3749 Lake Road

This house built about 1840 by Daniel Lee has been pictured in several publications over the years. The Gilbert Stanton family owned the home for over 70 years and is believed that many in the New York State Legislature were entertained here. Note the simple fan and side windows around the front door.

12. Lemuel Haskell House, 3759 Lake Road

This home was built in 1841 by Lemuel Haskell. In later years the home belonged to the Drake family who could trace their ancestors to Sir Frances Drake. The main entrance door is Greek Revival in style while the porch is Italianate.

13. Fowler/Henry Martyn Home, 3773 Lake Road

This home was built by Gustavus Clark and Henry Martyn in 1829. Both men were also in the mercantile business at the time. One of the owners in the late 1800's was Ernest Fowler who had a cooper shop on the property. This beautiful brick Federal style home has delicate detailing on the original sidelights and fan light over the front door.

14. Simeon B. Jewett Home, 3779 Lake Road

This home, completely renovated has been pictured in many books and publications. Note the graceful fan window and side windows framing the door. This home, was built in the Federal style in 1828 by Lemuel Haskell for Simeon B. Jewett. Colonel Jewett was a noted political leader, jurist and US Marshall under President Buchanan. The house stayed in his family until 1911.

15. Randall House, 3734 Lake Rd.

This Victorian home was built in 1870 by H.S. Randall (south wing built in 1840). Randall operated a blacksmith and carriage shop in the cobblestone shop next door. The cobblestone building now fronted in stucco was originally built as a two story building in the 1850s.

For a longer walk:

Travel further east to 8251 Ridge Road and look at the beautiful Bush/Palmer/Gallup Home built in 1821. Note especially the front entrance of this home.

The house at 8265 Ridge Road is known as the Lewis Swift home. This house was built in 1817 and it is said that Lewis Swift lived there. He was a world known astronomer of the 19th century who discovered at least six comets and other celestial phenomena.

8294 Ridge Road was built in the 1820s by Dr. Nathaniel Rowell in the style of New England homes. The area connecting the home to the garage originally connected the home to a barn.

**Provided by Leanna Hale, Clarkson Historian
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A Brief Clarkson History

The Town of Clarkson is presently bordered by Orlean's County on the west, towns of Hamlin on the north, Sweden on the south and Parma on the east. Clarkson was originally part of the area in western New York known as the Triangle Tract and was named after one of the original land owners, General Matthew Clarkson. When Clarkson was formed in 1819, it included the area which is now the Town of Hamlin. Hamlin became a separate town in 1852.

Although Clarkson is one of the smallest towns in Monroe County, many of Western New York's prominent citizens dwelled here and went of to fame and fortune. In the early 1800's, Clarkson was noted for inhabitants who were judges, lawyers, doctors, and teachers and for the Clarkson Academy where many were educated. Among the Academy alumni was an automobile engine inventor and an astronomer.

The first permanent settlers began arriving in 1803. Moody Freeman settled on Lake Road approximately two miles north of what is now known as the Ridge Road. Lake Road (Rt. 19) was originally an Indian trail and in 1802 it became the first north-south road through the Triangle Tract extending from the line of the Tract, just south of Leroy north to Lake Ontario. Ridge Road (Rt. 104), was another Indian trail which is believed to have brought Seneca hunters to the area for centuries. It was constructed as a state road in 1809, but was little traveled until after 1816 when it was improved and bridges were built. A small hamlet was formed and the intersection of the two Indian trails and was known as Murray Corners. When the pioneers came to the area, deer and bear were plentiful which provided them with meat and skins for clothing.