

Brighton Landmarks

In 1995, the Brighton Town Board passed a law providing for the designation of landmarks, recognizing that Brighton possessed buildings of high architectural and historical merit. In June this year we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of that ordinance. Here are just a few of the sixty-three designated Brighton landmarks.

1795 Monroe Avenue has been the home of Malek's Bakery for many years but in 1928, it was Brighton's first town hall. From the town's founding in 1814, government business in Brighton was conducted at the home of the town clerk with large meetings held at school houses or taverns. In 1928 the Brighton supervisor, clerk, police, and court moved into the lower floor of the newly-constructed residential and commercial building on Monroe Avenue. In 1932 the town took over the second floor apartments for office space. The town government remained at this location until 1953 when the new town hall was constructed on Elmwood Avenue. 1795 Monroe Avenue merited designation as a town landmark because of its value as part of the cultural, political, architectural, and social history of the town.

In 1792 Orringh Stone built a small frame house on East Avenue in Brighton in which he and his wife raised their children and provided hospitality to travelers. In 1805 he added the distinctive Federal style two-story addition. With his death in 1839, the property was left to his children but because all but one of them had moved to the Midwest, the farm was eventually sold to John Peter Tolan, a nurseryman and Irish native, in 1860. John Tolan and his wife Ellen McKeon, had two daughters, Mary and Ellen. In 1956 the younger daughter, Ellen Tolan, sold the house and remaining five acres to the Landmark Society of Western New York who operate it as a historic site and education center. The Stone-Tolan house at 2370 East Avenue is on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places in addition to being a town of Brighton landmark.

The second oldest house in Brighton, circa 1797, is located on Landing Road North overlooking Ellison Park. It was constructed by Augustus Griswold, a partner of John Tryon who established the commercial village of Tryon near the Irondequoit Landing in what is now Ellison Park. The small community died out by 1820 and today the Old Tryon House remains as one of only two buildings from that early time in Brighton history.

Brickmaking and agriculture were the principal occupations in nineteenth century Brighton so the town has several examples of early brick farmhouses. One of the most interesting is the Buckland House on Westfall Road. The earliest part of the house dates to between 1820-1830 with additions to the building throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the needs of its owners changed. Amos B. Buckland of the Buckland family of brick makers owned the house from 1835 to 1865. In 1911, the Rochester Orphan Asylum, later known as the Hillside Children's Center, bought the house and added the full second story so five orphan boys could live there with a farm couple and learn farming as well as grow food for the children at the facility on Pinnacle Hill.

In 1997 the town of Brighton bought the house and thirty-two acres for parkland from the estate of Max Gonsenhauser.

Brighton's youngest landmark is the Alcoa Aluminum ranch style house on Clover Street, built in 1957 by contractor Fred DeBlase. With the cessation of airplane construction at the end of World War II, the Alcoa Company sought domestic uses for aluminum and hired residential architect Charles M. Goodman. Goodman's Care-free house used aluminum for the roof, exterior walls, and window frames. Only twenty-four such houses were built nationally with Brighton's Alcoa house the only one in New York State. Recent owners restored the distinctive purple color to the front facade.

Mary Jo Lanphear
Town of Brighton Historian
10 April 2015