

Wing-Northup House

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The Wing-Northup House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. Portions of the content on this web page were adapted from a copy of the original nomination document.

Description

The Wing-Northup House is located on the west side of Broadway—U.S. Route 4—in the Village of Fort Edward, Washington County, New York. The Wing-Northup House is set back from the street, and likewise from the properties that closely flank it to the north and south, with the primary elevation of the brick main block facing eastwards towards Broadway. Beyond the house, to the west, is a small public park that was developed adjacent to the Hudson River, and to the immediate south, within the river corridor, is Rogers Island. The Champlain Canal is located to the east, as is the right-of-way of the Delaware & Hudson Railroad, both tending on a northeasterly alignment away from Fort Edward. In front of the house is an open flat yard planted with grass, which is bisected by a sidewalk that approaches the main entrance from the sidewalk fronting on Broadway. Ornamental coniferous shrubbery is located to the immediate south of this approach walk, as well as along the north side of the parcel next to the south flank elevation of the adjacent property, and the area in front of the foundation is likewise embellished with ornamental plants. A flagpole and a cast-iron urn are situated in front of the house on the lawn, both being deemed non-contributing objects. The north and south sides of the Wing-Northup House are located in extreme close proximity to the adjacent elevations of the adjoining properties, while the area to the west of the house, moving towards the park, is largely open.

Overview

The Wing-Northup House consists of a two-story front block of the traditional five-bay, center entrance type with end-gabled roof, from which extends a two-story brick ell, built contemporaneously c.1815 and forming, along with a shed-roofed projection, the original L-shaped footprint; a one-story brick side wing added to the north side of the main block and ell, c.1879; and a short two-story frame extension on the west gable end of the ell, its precise date unknown but in place by 1880. The c.1815 partially open, single-story shed-roofed projection that spanned the south side of the brick ell—terminated at the rear wall of the main block—was later fully enclosed and a portion of it adjacent to the rear wall of the main block raised in association with the movement of the staircase and installation of an office and bathroom in the early 20th century. Map and physical evidence also suggests the location of a small frame wing against the west wall of the frame extension, this feature now removed. The Wing-Northup House served a domestic function throughout the 19th century and into the early 20th century, before being modified to serve as the home of the Knight's of Columbus chapter, at which time modifications—such as the moving of the stair outside of the original main block envelope and the opening up of the former chamber story of the main

block—were made to accommodate this new, non-domestic use. Late Victorian modifications had likewise been rendered, particularly to the facade of the main block, in the later decades of the 19th century, however most of these treatments were lost prior to the acquisition of the property by the Washington County Historical Society.

The Wing-Northup House property was acquired by the Washington County Historical Society in 1982, to serve as the organization's first headquarters building. Shortly thereafter efforts were initiated to restore the historic dwelling in a manner more consistent with the pre-Knights of Columbus period, and in particular to the Federal-period treatments of the Wing ownership period. A partition removed from the entrance hall was rebuilt, thereby restoring the original center hall scheme; Late Victorian two-over-two window sash was removed and replaced with custom built six-over-six windows, the window apertures themselves restored to their original size on the first story, and a Federal-style porch, supplanted by a Late Victorian version that included an oriel window at second-story level, was restored based upon the earliest known photograph of the facade. Notable features dating to the original construction campaign include mutule blocks on the exterior cornice and a Federal-style mantel with well-rendered Neoclassical-inspired composition ornament, the latter being an extremely high-style piece that speaks to the original level of finish desired by the Wings. Physical integrity, due to alterations made to the plan and finishes during the early 20th century, is moderate, though sensitivity was taken to restore earlier features lost prior to the acquisition of the property in 1982 by the Washington County Historical Society.

Significance

The Wing-Northup House is a historically significant dwelling located in Fort Edward, Washington County, the earliest portions of which were built for Daniel Wood Wing in the prevailing Federal style of the early 19th century. Subsequently aggrandized and modified in later generations, the building was restored in the 1980s to serve as the headquarters of the Washington County Historical Society, following decades of ownership by the Knights of Columbus. The earliest section was built c.1815 for Wing, among the more prominent early citizens of Fort Edward, described in one 19th century account as "The leading man of the place with which fortunes were identified."^[1] Wood's lumber and mercantile businesses, which prospered in the antebellum era, relied upon the transportation and hydraulic power opportunities afforded by the Hudson River, Champlain Canal, and the Glens Falls Feeder Canal. Wing helped to facilitate the settlement of Fort Edward and played a leading role in its development until his death in 1856. Following the death of Wood's second wife, Almira Wood, the property was purchased by James M. Northup of Harford, New York, known in his day as the "Potato King" due to his efforts in promoting this crop regionally. Northup and his son H. Davis Northup established themselves as leading figures in this region's agriculture, as well as local banking, industry, and politics. H. Davis Northup resided in the Wing-Northup House until his death in 1913; the house came under the ownership of the Knights of Columbus in 1927. The Wing-Northup House remains an important historic resource in the Village of Fort Edward, sharing as it does salient links to one of the area's most prominent citizens in the antebellum period, Daniel Wood Wing, during his tenancy c.1815-1856.

Historical Context

Daniel Wood Wing—grandson of Abraham Wing, founder of present-day Glens Falls—was born in 1780, the year of the so-called "Burning of the Valleys," a series of Revolutionary War raids against the region led by British Major Christopher Carleton. Seeking refuge from these attacks, Wing's mother brought him to a small block house built in Cedar Swamp, located east of Glens Falls. Wood spent his formative years in the Glens Falls area, and following his marriage to Rhoda Stewart in 1803 worked in businesses associated with area hotels. Around 1815 Daniel W. Wood moved to Fort Edward, located in the Lake Champlain-Hudson River corridor. The land between Lake Champlain and the Hudson River was universally known as "The Great Carrying-Place" and was of considerable strategic value during the wars of the 18th century, culminating in the American Revolution. By the time Wood located in the Fort Edward area, opportunities in land speculation and industry were spurring local development. Plans were underway for the construction of the Champlain Canal, which would pass through Fort Edward and provide for a period of sustained growth. In 1820 the Wing family's property holdings in this area consisted of upwards of 2,600 acres.[2] The house Daniel Wing had built for him was in close proximity to Roger's Island—named for Roger's Rangers, provincial irregulars who served the British Crown during the French & Indian War, and who camped at this location following the surrender of Fort William Henry in 1757 — and the fort used by both the British and American forces during the Revolution. Rhoda Wood died in 1823, and two years later Wood married Almira Higby.

Of note is a visit to the Wing residence by suffragist Susan B. Anthony, who had tea on her way home from her first political meeting, a Whig convention in Sandy Hill. At that time Anthony was employed to teach the children of Lansing B. Taylor, Daniel Wing's son-in-law.

Historian A.W. Holden referred to Daniel Wood Wing as a man of excellent sense and judgment preserving, energetic and tenacious of purpose. He served as Commissioner of Education from 1821 to 1823. After the opening of the Champlain Canal and the related Feeder Canal, Wing and some of his associates built Fort Edward's first grist mill, 1824, using water from the Feeder Canal. In 1845 Wing and others purchased from the state the defunct Feeder Canal and Feeder dam for the purpose of establishing other mill sites. Later these men and other interested investors incorporated as the Fort Edward Manufacturing Company, established for the promotion of manufacturing in Fort Edward. The 1850 census listed Wing's occupation as being in the lumber business.

As an active member of St. James Episcopal Church, Wing contributed approximately one-third of the cost of constructing a new building by canceling building bills accrued with his business. The church held him in high regard and dedicated a memorial plaque to Wing and his wife Almira Wing. Wing likewise was instrumental in the organization of the Sandy Hill & Fort Edward Union Cemetery in 1847. By the time of his death in 1856, Wing had played a measurable role in the settlement and development of Fort Edward, incorporated in 1849 with a population of 2,000. His business utilized the Hudson River and the State canal system and became an integral part of the development of industry and commerce in this community.

By the time James M. Northup purchased the former Wing property in 1884, sale of land had reduced the lot to approximately one-half of an acre. Northup gained note regionally as the

"Potato King," as it was he who introduced the Carter variety of potatoes to the area and encouraged farmers in Washington County to grow hundreds of acres of potatoes during the mid-19th century. Hartford and its vicinity became famous as the greatest potato-growing locality in New York State in this era. Northup continued to cultivate potatoes for the rest of the century and shipped as many as one half million bushels of potatoes to New York City. He was a leading local politician and served in a number of capacities; as Supervisor of Hartford, 1856-57; a member of NYS Assembly, 1858; Excise Commissioner, 1859-1865; and Washington County Treasurer, 1871-78. When he died in his Hartford home in 1899, Northup was the President of the Fort Edward National Bank, located adjacent to the Wing-Northup property.

Northup's son H. Davis Northup moved into the former Wing dwelling in 1886, and did so as a notable citizen of the area. After his first wife Pamela Wait died he married Kate I. Hopping of New York City, in 1885. H. Davis Northup attended the Fort Edward Collegiate Institute and graduated from Eastman's Business College in Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County, prior to joining his father and uncle in their renowned produce business. During the 1870s he was a member of the Davis Company, a shirt and collar company located south on the Hudson River in Troy. In 1880 the headquarters of the company moved to Fort Edward, and H. Davis Northup remained with the company until 1890. He also was involved with Republican Parry politics, serving as Washington County Deputy Treasurer and as County Treasurer, 1879-1883. In 1890 his industrial pursuits lead to the position of secretary for the Automatic Tap & Faucet Company, which produced ale taps and faucets in Fort Edward for the distribution in New York City. He also was a partner of the Fort Edward Manufacturing Company, a manufacturer of tin ware.

H. Davis Northup participated actively in a number of local organizations: as a charter member of the Satterlee Hose Company; Director of the Washington County Agricultural Society; Treasurer of the Washington County Royal Arcanum; Master of the Herschel Lodge No. 508, Free & Accepted Masons; Washington County Commandery, Knights Templar; Jane McCrea Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows; and as a member of the local Baptist Church. He died at the Wing-Northup House in 1913.

James M. Northup and H. Davis Northup, like Daniel W. Wing before them, left a perceptible imprint on life in Washington County and Fort Edward during the latter half of the 19th century. Members of the Northup family owned the property until 1927, the year the Knights of Columbus took ownership. Though prominent locally and regionally, it is difficult to make the case for significance in association with their tenancy, c.1884 to 1913, given that the house was renovated by the Washington County Historical Society to loosely reflect the Wing period and the Federal style treatments of its early years, and likewise since many of the Late Victorian era treatments they were familiar with have been removed.

The Wing-Northup House: Restoration, Existing Conditions & the Case of Significance

Built in the early 19th century and subsequently expanded and modified during the course of that century and in the early 20th century, the Wing-Northup House received significant restoration work in the 1980s to restore it in a manner more compatible with its early 19th

century appearance, following alterations made during the course of the 20th century by the Knights of Columbus. Exterior alterations made during the tenancy of the Knights of Columbus, c.1927 to c.1980, included the removal of the Italianate-style front porch that included a second-story oriel window—a Late Victorian era feature added during the Northup ownership period—and with it the alteration of the central second story Palladian window. Interior alterations during this period included the removal of one of the two walls of the first floor center hall, the moving of the main staircase to a new position outside of the original envelope of the brick main block, and the opening up of the second floor plan to create a single large meeting space. Given these changes and the related loss of historic period fabric—notwithstanding the sensitive efforts to restore lost or altered features by the Washington County Historical Society—the building is not being nominated under Criterion C for its design and as an example of 19th century domestic architecture, though some details, such as the mantel in the south parlor with its decorative Adam-inspired composition ornament, speak to a high level of original finish dating to the Wing ownership period.

The house as built for Daniel W. Wing, a two-story brick building with a contemporaneous two-story brick ell, featured a characteristic early 19th century single-pile center hall floor plan and finishes representative of the Adam-inspired Federal style. The basement of both original brick sections was left unfinished—the kitchen was located on the first floor of the ell, the massive double-arch brick support in the basement indicating the location of the cooking area and possibly installed to support a slightly later cast-iron cooking range — and was accessible from grade, while the second story of the main block and ell had bed chambers. Fireplaces were located against the end walls of the main block, with Rumford-style brick fireboxes centered on projecting chimney breasts. Interior wood structural elements appear to have been largely milled. The load-bearing brick walls were laid in Flemish bond on the primary elevation, with dressed stone foundation work above grade. The exterior featured cornices with Neoclassical mutule block embellishment, still extant, at the soffit and likewise cornice gutters. First floor window apertures on the main block were restored to their original size during the 1980s restoration, having been increased in size during the Late Victorian era to accommodate taller two-over-two light windows on the main floor. The main block currently has windows in a six-over-six light configuration, both original and restored, as well as two twelve-over-eight light windows.

Perhaps the two most significant character-defining features of the c.1815 dwelling's facade, a front porch of Neoclassic inspiration and the tripartite window, required reconstruction in the 1980s. The front porch, which shields the six-panel front door and half-round transom, was rebuilt; it had been removed to accommodate the Victorian-era porch and oriel window, itself removed during the Knights of Columbus ownership period. The overall treatment of the entrance and porch is reminiscent of plates offered in Owen Biddle's *Young Carpenter's Assistant* of 1805. The tripartite window was likewise restored, it having been turned into a single glazed unit. Though the flat-arched head is found in this region and era—the Clary-Davenport House in South Hartford, c.1805, has such a window—it appears this window was originally of the traditional Palladian type and was subsequently altered to be spanned by an elliptical arch and then the current flat-arched treatment.

Other modifications made to the Wing-Northup House included the addition of a two-story frame extension to the west gable end of the ell, in place by the time of the 1890 Sanborn map, and the addition of the brick wing to the west side of the building in 1879. These

additions, which provide valuable space for the historical society's programming and archives, nevertheless post-date the Wing ownership period. A change to the first floor plan of the main block that should be noted, though a specific date is not known, was the removal of a wall separating the west wall of the north parlor from the adjacent room in the ell. Likewise significant to understanding the early disposition of space on the interior was the removal of the second floor chambers in the main block, providing for a single open meeting space formerly given over to partitioned spaces.

While the Wing-Northup House features elements that post-date the occupancy of Daniel W. Wing, among them the c.1879 wing, the overall massing of the c.1815 L-shaped dwelling, as well as important character-defining features such as the restored front porch and cornice treatments, reflect its pre-Victorian era characteristics. The first floor plan of the interior survives with some degree of integrity, though the moving of the stair to the outside of the original brick envelope has altered this layout, as has the removal of the partition between the north parlor and east room of the ell. The south parlor, likely the best room given the quality of the Adam-inspired mantel, remains largely intact in terms of finish to the Wing period. Given the exceptional prominence of Daniel W. Wing to the development of the Fort Edward area, and his great prominence in the 19th century history of this local—and likewise given that this is the best extant architectural resource chronicling his presence here—the Wing-Northup House would appear, even given its moderate level of physical integrity, to warrant inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Endnotes

1. A.W. Holden, *A History of the Town of Queensbury in the State of New York* (Albany, New York: 1874), 83.
2. Robert O. Bascom, *The Fort Edward Book* (Fort Edward, New York: 1903), 136.

References

Bascom, Robert O. *The Fort Edward Book*. Fort Edward, New York: 1903.

Holden, A.W. *A History of the Town of Queensbury in the State of New York*. Albany, New York: 1874.

† Brillon, Sally and Krattinger, William B., New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, *Wing-Northup House, Fort Edward, NY*, nomination document, 2008. National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, Washington, D.C.

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