

## Jacob I. Shull House

The Jacob I. Shull House, in the Italianate style dating from the 1860's, was moved here in 1981 from its original site at Indian Castle (Little Falls) in the Town of Danube, Herkimer County. It had been vandalized and was in need of much repair when acquired for one dollar from its last owner, Ralph Wagner of Spring, Texas.

This mid-Victorian house is of braced post and beam construction with a limestone ashlar (hewn or square stone) foundation. It was dismantled and the parts were numbered for reassembling at the Village. The conclusion that the house, including the wing, was built in the 1860's rests on analysis of the house itself and of a few facts uncovered by research. The usual sources-- deeds, wills, obituaries, county histories, directories, maps and talks with many neighbors--yielded little information.

It is known that in 1856 Jacob I. Shull received a loan of \$8,000, then a large sum, from his father, whose name was also Jacob. In the same year Jacob I. was deeded the land on which the house was to be built for \$4,000. Jacob I. Shull was 30 years of age at the time, a cattle broker, according to the 1869 Herkimer County Directory. The 1868 county atlas showed him as owner of a 100-acre tract, on which the Shull House was located. The place was designated as Indian Castle, the name given to a small fork in the South Mohawk Turnpike, just below the Shull House, in memory of a principle Mohawk village.

Jacob I. Shull was the son of Jacob and Anna Klock Sholl. His grandfather Johan Jost Schol (note the variations of the surname) emigrated from the German Palatinate in 1768 and nine years later fought in the Battle of Oriskany against the British as a member of the Second Battalion commanded by Col. Jacob G. Klock. Jacob I.'s mother was Col. Klock's granddaughter.

Jacob I. married twice. His first wife, Lany Wagner, died in 1875. His

second wife, Maria, last name unrecorded, may have been a sister of Lany. When he died in 1890 at 63, his obituary in the Little Falls weekly newspaper stated that he was "well and favorably known".

Jacob I's will resulted in many changes in his house. A codicil added in the year of his death directed his sons, William and Grant, to provide his wife Maria with food, fuel, clothing and medical attention, and gave her two choices for lodging. One choice was exclusive use of the bedroom and clothes press adjoining the dining room and the free right to use in common all other parts of the building. The other arrangement, which she preferred, was, in the words of the codicil, "... the free right to use and the free use of, for her exclusive enjoyment, the easterly half of the main building including cellar, and the right to use and free use of the main hall of said dwelling house in common with other inmates of the same."

"And I also ordain," the will continues, "that my sons shall at their own expense make such proper and necessary changes in the said house, in making rear approachways, cellarways, doors, partitions, and proper and necessary repairs in the said easterly half of the main building, in case my wife shall at any time elect to occupy the same." The responsibility for remodeling apparently fell to Grant Shull, as William quitclaimed the house to his brother the same year for \$275.

Alterations noted while the house was being dismantled for transportation to the Village included: a partition running across the parlor, which Shull had referred to as "the easterly half of the main building", dividing it into a large and a small room; retrofitting the larger of these rooms with wainscoting; new floorboards; dropped ceiling; sink and stove locations (units not found by the dismantlers); rear door to the outside, and a door (walled off) to the room behind the central stairway which formerly had been reached through the living room. A cellar stair opening into this room may have been added for Maria's convenience.

In evident compliance with her husband's wishes, Maria was provided with a kitchen-utility room, a sitting room off the front hall, a rear approachway and a cellar access from her bedroom. Two additions off the rear approachway, not moved to the Village, were a lean-to room and an outhouse.

It appears that the main building and wing were constructed at the same time. Construction of the wing, outside and in, is very similar to that of the main house. Cut nails are used throughout, with the exception of remodeled areas of the porch roof, where a mixture of cut and round nails was found.

The door locks in the wing, with one exception, were patented in 1884 or 1885, while main house locks were of 1866 patent, as was one lock in the wing. However, the later dated locks could have been added at the time of joint occupancy.

Gas pipes led from the cellar under the living room to the second floor joist, where they were distributed throughout the house except the parlor. It is possible that home-generated gas lighting was installed when the house was built. Such equipment was available as early as the 1850's.

Evidence of the house's former residents was found scrawled on the wall of the upstairs southeast corner room, under peeling wallpaper: "Mrs. Grant Shull", "Ella", "Willie", "Danube Indian Castle" and "May 26, 1889".