

## Settler's House

The Petrie house is the oldest building in Erie Canal Village. It was moved here in 1978 from the old Wright Settlement area of Pennystreet Road. Another section of the farmhouse now serves as the Tavern's woodshed.

The layout of these early homes is usually the same. Two large fireplaces were built back to back in the central chimney. One was used for cooking and heating the kitchen, the other heated the parlor. Just inside the front door were three doors leading left, right and straight. There might have been a room or a small alcove for a bed off the kitchen or parlor. This area usually was against the back wall of the house, with an adjoining kitchen workroom. Sometimes called a buttery, sometimes a milkroom, this room often had a small fireplace of its own or a bakeoven. Earlier Cape Cods had their bake ovens to one side of the kitchen fireplace or at one side of its reflecting wall.

The Settler's house at Erie Canal Village represents an early farmhouse which has been absorbed by a village sprouted on the banks of the Erie Canal. The Canal, on its way west from Rome, met many such homes. When this happened and farm lands were divided, a bridge was built providing access to the farmer. In this instance, that bridge would have been just outside the parlor windows, for at the Canal Village there was a slight divergence of Clinton's Ditch, or the original canal, from the path followed by the 1844 Enlarged Erie. The little stream which flows through the center of the Canal Village is all that remains of the original Erie upon which a triumphant De Witt Clinton passed on the "Seneca Chief" in 1825. Our "settler" who built this house in 1815 would have witnessed this event. Later he would have seen his farm road extended all the way to South Rome; the plot around his house would become part of an island when the Enlarged Canal was dug through, bisecting Clinton's Ditch just east and west of here.

This type of house is called a Cape Cod and it was brought to New York by New Englanders who were long familiar with it. They were built in profusion

after the Revolution, usually as a replacement for a log cabin raised from the wilderness. The Cape Cod was easy to build and was a good home for a growing family.

While the parlor might be used for special occasions, the kitchen was the center of most early homes and the farmwife was the center of the kitchen. She cooked, baked, spun, wove, sewed, washed, ironed, prepared foods like cream and butter, processed herbs and dried fruit and preserved meats. The tools were basic and all powered by hand. Their use filled the days of these women. When supper was cleared away and the fire was arranged, the couple often slept here.

This house is essentially a box made by sheathing a rigid frame of 18 hand-hewn timbers carefully fitted together without nails. The sheathing is rough sawn planks nailed vertically all around covered with clapboards. A roof is pitched with small timbers and shingled. Inside walls are lathed and plastered. Space is left in the center for a large brick or stove chimney. A few board partitions, a stairway, plus doors and windows completed the house-- no plumbing, furnace ducts or electricity. Plumbing was an outhouse plus gravity fed water to a pipe in the house, or a well and bucket. Central heating was provided by cordwood in the fireplaces of the central chimney. Electricity, well, there was light from the windows and at night from the fire, or a candle if you stayed up late!

You might have looked out long enough to see the watery light of an approaching boat. And you'd be curious about what the westbound boats had on board. Eastbound vessels had bulk cargoes of lumber and grains. Westbound carries had merchandise from Albany and New York-- new fangled things like cast iron stoves and cookstoves, and a host of household gadgets, plus, the newest farm equipment.

The stoves would quickly supplant central chimneys and the first floor of such homes as had them would gain around 90 square feet. In this house

after later partitions were removed by carpenters, a perfect 8' x 9' hatch of floorboards was found in the center, which lifted out easily to reveal the position of the original chimney.

Our settler may have hailed the captain of a passing boat at dusk to inquire about the news. One night he may have heard, "England's got a new queen-- they say her name's Victoria!"