

# Demolition of an old stone carriage house in Fairmount: Last link to the origins of a community



What was left of the old Geddes farm carriage and stable house, Fairmount, Tuesday. (Sean Kirst | [skirst@syracuse.com](mailto:skirst@syracuse.com))

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*Do you have memories of the old stone [carriage house](#) in Fairmount - either as apartments, as part of the Fairmount Animal Hospital, or even earlier - or of the layout of that area in the days before the commercial explosion of the*

*past few decades? If so, [email Sean Kirst](#) or leave those thoughts here, as a comment.*

Within the last couple of years, the **Onondaga Historical Association** erected a sign near an old stone carriage and stable house in Fairmount. The historical marker noted the stone building was a final remnant of the famous Geddes estate that gave "Fairmount" its name.

As of this week, it might be time for a new sign.

The old carriage house, located south of West Genesee Street in Fairmount, was demolished over the past few days. The history of the place intertwined with the roots of that community: **James Geddes**, the original owner of the farm, was one of the principle engineers involved in the Erie Canal - and Dr. Richard Grambow, a veterinarian who lived in the building into the 1980s, said the stone used for the walls was similar to the material used for the canal.

"I'm sorry to see it go," said Grambow, 80, founder of the **Fairmount Animal Hospital**. "It's part of history ... part of Fairmount history and part of our history."

In an email, Camillus Town Supervisor Mary Ann Coogan said the building was razed by the owner, Rocklyn Development. The company has yet to tell the town what it hopes to do with the space, Coogan said. A call to Rocklyn was not returned.

Coogan said "a couple of unhappy people," upset about the demolition, have already contacted her office. There was nothing the town could do to save the building, she said. It was not listed on the National Register of **Historic Places** and there were no barriers to demolition.

In an area now dominated by chain restaurants and other businesses, Connors - of the OHA - said the old carriage house represented a final physical connection to a heritage as deep as Fairmount itself. Established by James Geddes, a major figure in the early history of Onondaga County, the farm was passed down to his **son George**, who transformed it into one of the most well-known and innovative farms in **New York**.

The Geddes farm was so prestigious, Connors said, that it attracted the attention of **young Frederick Law Olmsted**, who would go on to international fame as **landscape architect** responsible for such treasures as Central Park in Manhattan and the civic parks system in Buffalo.



Demolition this week of the old Geddes farm

carriage house, near West Genesee Street, Fairmount. *Ellen Edgerton | Submitted photo*

Olmsted traveled to **Central New York** in 1846 and lived at the farm for six months, Connors said - and then corresponded for many years with George Geddes.

Ellen Edgerton, a Central New York writer with a passion for Fairmount history, said Geddes was notably progressive for that era, actively supporting women's rights and the abolition movement - as underlined, Edgerton said, by this **letter to Matilda Joslyn Gage**. His son James, Edgerton said, was among those responsible for bringing the New York State Fair to Geddes.

As for the heritage of the building, Richard Grambow had been working as a vet in Mattydale when he began leasing the old carriage house, in 1965, as part of what would be his new animal hospital in Fairmount. He eventually purchased the landmark from Nick Louise, who had converted it into a home in the late 1940s. Grambow believes, for a time, the Louise family ran a store that sold ornaments and gifts.

Grambow estimates that the carriage house was built around 1870, although Connors thinks the structure may have been even older. In the beginning, Grambow said, the animal hospital was in the lower level, while Grambow's family lived on the upper floors.

"It had 18-inch stone walls and four big beams, just like a barn," he said.

His family moved to Skaneateles in 1986, and the carriage house was converted into apartments. Grambow eventually sold his interest in the hospital. The present owners, Dr. Eileen Fatcheric and Dr. Suzanne Losito, considered converting the old building into a center for boarding and grooming pets.

The idea proved too costly, Fatcheric said. They sold the building to Rocklyn in 2013, when the animal hospital moved to a nearby location.

To Edgerton, the lesson of the demolition is the need for some kind of "early [warning system](#)" to increase civic awareness before it's too late to intercede. The idea, Edgerton said, would be creating [community surveys](#) that list buildings of historic or emotional value - not only landmarks restricted to the historic register - and then to begin discussions about ways of saving them, while there's still time.

Edgerton wonders if that kind of process could have led to a new use for the old carriage house before it went down this week - wiping out one last structural bridge to the origins of Fairmount.

"So much history," said Dennis Connors, "was linked to that one site."

**- Sean**