
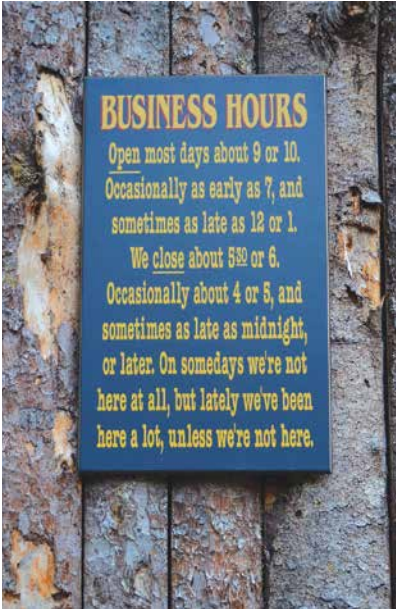







## HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

- The exterior of properties in this guide can be viewed from public roads, trails, or waterways, unless otherwise noted.
- Properties listed as water access  can be viewed from public waters, but unless the property is clearly public or commercial, assume the shoreline is private and do not dock or land. This symbol is used for buildings that can only be publicly viewed from the water. Other shoreline buildings that can be visited by the public or viewed from the road may also have good viewing from the water.
- Respect signs for private roads, and respect the bounds of private property when viewing from public roads. Adirondack residents are unfailingly friendly but value private property as private. This guide is not an invitation to trespass.
- Interiors of many buildings are open on a regular basis, including all businesses, civic buildings, museums, libraries, most churches, and some camps. Opening hours, however, are variable. Numerous Adirondack businesses and sites may close or have reduced hours between Columbus Day and Memorial Day. Contact the individual, business, or property for hours they are open and schedules of public tours or events. Times of church services listed in the guide are as of the time of this writing, and may change.



- Sites with limited access  can be viewed by appointment, or during tours or special events open to the public.
- Very limited access sites  require substantial effort to arrange a visit, or require staying on site as a paying guest.
- Private sites that cannot be viewed by the public  are occasionally included in the guide for their architectural value, or for architectural-historical context.
- Accommodations Available  indicates accommodations are available to the public. Terms of accommodation, however, vary widely, from nightly rooms to residential programs open to the public to weekly cottage or condo rentals to rental of an entire property. Accommodations are available as of writing.
- At-Risk properties  are considered endangered, in the opinion of the authors, by long abandonment, an advanced state of deterioration, and/or redevelopment pressure.


Each entry has a unique identifier consisting of its Tour letter and its numerical placement in that tour, for example **A.10** or **B-2.20**. Reference to sites in other volumes of the *Guide* also add the prefix for that region, **S** for Southern-Central, **E** for Eastern, or **N** for Northern. For example, **S:D.30** is entry 30 in Tour D in the Southern-Central Region.

As an on-the-ground (and water) guide, with hundreds of properties, individual entries are necessarily brief and intended primarily as an introduction to firsthand viewing. Introductions to each tour; essays on topics particular to Adirondack architecture; and brief biographical background on featured architects and designers all provide broader context for individual properties. Properties are numbered to facilitate driving, walking, or boating routes. Tours can be followed in any order and taken in pieces, but understanding will be cumulative with tours completed and the number of sites visited, since many sites are related to one another.















## HAMLET OF ESSEX

many buildings, further information is not available and the best course to understanding the architecture may be simply looking closely, and comparing related buildings and sites. Photos are provided primarily as an aid to identifying buildings. Credits for photos used by permission are listed at the end of each tour or essay. Otherwise, essay photos are by the author of each essay and all other photos not in the public domain are by, or the property of, Janet A. Null.











- Individual entries are identified by the building or site name, where known, with the historic name first.
- Following the street or route address, coordinates of North Latitude and West Longitude are given for each site.
- Dates listed are the dates, or approximate dates, of completion of construction.
- Architects or Engineers are listed only where documented, or where an attribution of design can be reasonably inferred—indicated by the abbreviation “attrib”.
- Nonprofessionals who designed projects for themselves or others are listed as Designers, and builders who also designed what they built are listed as Designer-Builders.

Points of Interest  are included on many tours. These stops may include scenic vistas, recreational opportunities, and places that represent—through their history, products, or standing in the community—some aspect of Adirondack culture where the interest is not primarily architectural. Points of Interest have been selected solely by the author, with no solicitation or compensation from any business or organization listed.

### KEY TO MAPS

	Interstate Route		Major Highway
	US Route		Minor Highway
	State Route		Local Road
	County Route		Seasonal/Dirt Road
	Building, Structure, or Site		Railroad
	Point of Interest		Hiking Trail
	Water Access or Viewing		
	Hiking Access		

### KEY TO TEXT SYMBOLS

	Water Access or Viewing		On National Register of Historic Places
	Hiking Access		National Historic Landmark
	Limited Access		At Risk
	Very Limited Access		Accommodations Available
	No Access/Private		Point of Interest

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

### Introduction

The story of the hamlet of Essex is a story of boom, bust, and eventual revival. In the neat and quiet hamlet of today it's not easy to visualize the powerhouse Lake Champlain port that the community was from 1800 until the Civil War. Blessed with two natural harbors, Essex had become both a commercial port and a shipbuilding center by the early 1800s. Ferry service between Essex and Charlotte, VT reportedly started in 1791, and continues today as the longest running ferry on Lake Champlain. The ferry now docks in the north harbor, where historically potash, lumber, iron ore, crops and other products of the surrounding area were shipped from Essex, primarily down the lake to Canada in the early decades, and other goods shipped in. The shipyards occupied "Shipyard Point" (now Beggs Point) and the south harbor. Today, Essex retains an active waterfront, albeit recreational, with rare surviving maritime structures (**D-1.25**, **D-1.45**, **D-1.46**)—as well as the rich architectural legacy funded by the maritime industries throughout the hamlet.



*Main Street in early 1900s, with porches and street trees, Conger House, Hascall House, and Harness Shop*

shipyards on Beggs Point built a majority of the canal boats designed for the Champlain Canal traffic, as well as the first of the unique horse-powered ferries (1807) that served the Essex-Charlotte crossing until 1827. The Hoskins-Ross shipyard also built the 92-foot (28 m) steamer *Washington* for ferry service in the late 1820s, and the 88-foot (26.8 m) canal schooner *General Butler*, the wreck of which off Burlington has become one of the most popular wreck dives on the lake (and the basis for the replica canal schooner *Lois McClure* at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum). The *Grand Isle* passenger steamer was probably the last large vessel built at Essex, in 1869.

The opening of the Champlain Canal in 1822 created Essex's greatest economic and physical growth, increasing commerce nearly fifteen times. The canal also shifted the direction of commerce from the north to the south, and boosted ship building with the demand for a new type of canal boat. Canal schooners such as the *General Butler* could sail up the lake, step their masts to navigate the canal, and be towed by a steam tug down the Hudson to New York City without ever having to unload and tranship their cargo, thereby producing a huge economic benefit.

The Ross and the Noble families dominated the economy and development of Essex for nearly 100 years and their names are associated with many buildings in the hamlet. William Gilliland had acquired extensive patents on the east shore of the lake and founded Willsboro before the Revolutionary War. After the war, his daughter Elizabeth (namesake of Elizabethtown) and her husband Daniel Ross settled just north of the hamlet of Essex, where their house (c.1793) still stands (**Tour D**). Ross built the first sawmill in the area around 1791 in Boquet, and the Boquet Iron Works. His sons William and Henry built adjacent stores on the Essex waterfront (**D-1.45**) and the first mansions in the hamlet (**D-1.39**, **D-1.50**). The Ross family were also part owners of the shipyards on Beggs Point, the subsequent Essex Manufacturing company, and the ferry line.

Along with Burlington and Whitehall, Essex dominated early shipbuilding on the lake. Eggleston's shipyard alone built 13 sailing vessels between 1800 and 1813, including four sloops for the War of 1812 plus an additional 250 row galleys and bateaux. Between 1814 and the 1870s more than 50 documented vessels were built in Essex shipyards including ferries, canal boats and passenger steamers. The Winslow/Hoskins, Ross and Co./Ross and McNeil

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

Brothers Ransom and Belden Noble arrived in Essex from Connecticut by way of Vermont in 1799 or 1800. Ransom started a small tannery (D-1-47) and Belden a hosiery business (but died in 1808). Ransom bought up large tracts of land from Ross to supply his tannery with hemlock, as well as substantial land in the hamlet. He built his fortune with control of most of the shipping business in Essex, including shipping potash, lumber, and iron from his mine in Lewis and forge in Willsboro. Of his four sons, Harmon and Belden joined and continued the family businesses in Essex, and Charles Henry expanded the family business in Elizabethtown (Tour E-2). In the absence of a bank in the area, Belden Noble and the Belden & Harmon Noble firm also became financiers (lenders), at first regionally and eventually beyond New York State. Harmon and Belden built adjoining homes on what later became known as “Merchants Row” (D-1.48, D-1.49).

Essex leaders maintained seasonal residency and some of their businesses through the late 1800s—helping to preserve the hamlet—but had little interest in marketing the area to tourists and declined to buy into the railroad along the west shore of Lake Champlain that opened in 1875. As a result, the train passed by several miles to west, without a local stop. As the railroads, and commercial competition from the growing Midwest, siphoned both passenger



*Essex Horse Nail Co. on Beggs Point, early 1900s*

and freight traffic from Lake Champlain the shipping and ship-building economy of Essex declined precipitously, and the only sizeable industrial facility in the hamlet burned down in 1918. The peak population of Essex was 2,500 in 1850, and steadily declined thereafter (except for a small post-Civil War surge). In 2010 the resident population was only one quarter of the 1850 peak. In his final 1915 guide to the Adirondacks, Seneca Ray Stoddard accorded Essex no more than a mention as “a small village”, which remained in stasis for another 60 years.

The major catalyst for Essex’s revival over the past nearly five decades has been the Essex Community Heritage Organization (ECHO), a homegrown and supported preservation organization formed in 1973. ECHO produced a historic survey of the town and a National Register nomination that resulted in the entire hamlet of Essex, including 150 buildings, being listed in 1975 as the first National Register Historic District in the Adirondacks. In the years since, the organization has undertaken numerous projects for housing rehabilitation and executed or facilitated the rehabilitation of major buildings such as the Union School (D-1.2) and the Essex Inn (D-1.14). A growing number of newcomers over the same period have also boosted the hamlet, with tourism-related enterprises and seasonal residency.

Essex is justly known as one of the finest intact concentrations of Federal and Greek Revival style buildings in the country. Approximately 90% of the hamlet’s buildings constructed before the Civil War are still standing. The hamlet’s period of greatest growth coincides with the Greek Revival and the style is dominant in the hamlet. While Essex’s architecture occupies more the middle ground than the leading edge of the style, it presents a substantial and varied catalog of both residential and commercial buildings of the period, as well as several exemplary and sometimes nuanced examples (D-1.5, D-1.9, D-1.16, D-1.29, D-1.48). Equally important, is the presence of a full range of building types (excluding industrial) that exemplifies a historic Adirondack community, including the maritime structures, early retail buildings, historic inns, churches, homes spanning

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

the socio-economic strata from mansions to workers' houses, and, astonishingly, all its historic school buildings. Moreover, Gilliland's original street grid, only two blocks by two blocks, remains unchanged and neither the hamlet nor its edges—which still abut rural landscapes—have been compromised by strip commercial development or sprawl. Just south of the hamlet, the Gardiner quarry (**Tour D**) provided Chazy limestone, known locally as "graystone", for several buildings in the hamlet, as well as virtually all building foundations, retaining walls and front steps. The survival of original unaltered streets has also preserved such rare historic artifacts as hitching posts, carriage blocks, and sections of original sidewalk cut from the local stone throughout the hamlet. Beyond its enviable lakefront, it is the state of preservation—partly by default and partly hard-won—that makes Essex such an enticing place today, despite the loss of historically significant outbuildings and alterations that has sometimes resulted from zealous restoration. Though the relative purity of 19th century character in Essex is appealing, the hamlet is less of a palimpsest than most communities.



## HAMLET OF ESSEX

Constrained to a narrow strip of land between hills and the lake, Essex is compact and perfect for touring on foot or by bike. The hamlet tour turns south from Rte.22 and down Main St., looping through Beggs Point on its way, before heading back north via School St. and Elm St. and thence up the north segment of the main street (Essex Rd.) to exit the hamlet and continue **Tour D** to Willsboro. A rural loop south of the hamlet, down Lake Shore Rd. and through neighboring historic farms, is a separate loop off of **Tour D**.

**1** **2718 NY Rte. 22**  
44.30943°, -73.35428°  
Date: c.1790 or earlier

NR

**J. Ross House**  
2722 NY Rte. 22; 44.30947°, -73.35401°  
Date: 1848

NR

**2723 NY Rte. 22**  
44.30977°, -73.35379°  
Date: c.1836; late 1800s–early 1900s additions

NR

**The Garvey House**  
2726 NYS Rte. 22; 44.30952°, -73.35360°  
Date: c.1790

NR

**Henry Hawley House/H. Palmer House**  
2729 NY Rte. 22; 44.30985°, -73.35335°  
Date: Late 1700s–early 1800s

NR

**P.E. Haven House**  
2731 NY Rte. 22; 44.30987°, -73.35314°  
Date: c.1820

NR



2718 Rte. 22



J. Ross House

Houses in this first block introduce several forms and architectural characteristics that recur in the hamlet. Each of these six was built before 1850 and the first, **2718 NY Rte. 22**, is believed to be the oldest house in the hamlet—partly because it appears to be referenced in the first written description of the hamlet in the 1790s. The form is certainly old, a modest one-story block with the ridge line parallel to the road, the universal orientation of rural houses before the Greek Revival period. The foundation is local stone, typical throughout Essex, and it has no ridge rafter, an indication of pre-1850s construction. The street elevation displays modest Greek Revival updating, in the cornice returns and front door composition.



The Garvey House, c.1970s

The substantial brick **J. Ross House** is a classic gable front with side hall design. It has characteristic Greek Revival flat stone lintels and entrance door with side lights. At one-and-a-half stories, the upper floor windows interrupt what otherwise would be an entablature encircling the entire building. The stone front steps are a recurring feature in Essex.

**2723 NY Rte. 22** is a vernacular version of the Greek Revival side hall house, with recognizable later additions—a late 1800s or early 1900s wrapping porch (posts replaced) and an early 1900s shed dormer. It is one of at least four houses on the block owned by the Noble family that were workers houses, for employees of the nearby Noble tannery or other businesses.

Another Noble-owned house, the **Garvey House**, is the same type as 2718 NY Rte., one story with a center entrance, and from the same period. This was the modest, low-cost variant of the Federal center hall type house. The entry porch is not original or historically appropriate; it was added during a late 1900s restoration

The **Hawley House** appears to be a hall-and-parlor type house, based on medieval precedents from Europe that had two main rooms side by side—the hall and the parlor. It lacks the center hall typical of later Georgian-inspired architecture, therefore the façade is asymmetrical.



P.E. Haven House



## HAMLET OF ESSEX

**P.E. Haven** owned the house at 2731 NY Rte. 22 in 1858, though it was reportedly built by Charles Cheney. Haven owned the Sash & Blind factory and subsequently bought the Gould House (D-1.22). This is the standard five-bay, center hall Federal period house, of which several examples are found in the hamlet. The entry has the delicate detailing, with slender pilasters, characteristic of the Federal style; compare to Greystone (D-1.48) for an example of the same house form in the more robust Greek Revival.

### 2 Union Free School/Essex Heritage Center NR 2728 NY Rte. 22; 44.30955°, -73.35336°

Date: 1867; restoration 1970s and later

All five of the hamlet's known historic schools remain standing, three public schools as well as the private schoolhouses of the Noble and Ross families. The Union Free School, built right after the Civil War, is the most prominent, towering over Rte. 22 as it enters the hamlet. The clapboard building with regular fenestration is an exemplar of the conservatism of Essex builders, with a form that references Federal period houses, and Greek Revival detailing that was anachronistic by the 1860s. The design of the lantern with its Moorish roof was also a look back, referencing one on the school in Stowe, Vermont, the state from which many settlers came to Essex. There is a small mystery about the school's construction. Ransom Noble's old house was moved here to use as the school and then determined unsound, but it's possible some part of the house was incorporated into the west end of the new building. Closed c.1909 when the new Essex High School opened, the school building suffered years of neglect, until rescued and rejuvenated by ECHO as the local history museum.



### 3 Farnum House/J.T. Willett House NR 2732 NY Rte. 22; 44.30959°, -73.35295°

Date: c.1837; late 1800s porch

This fine, classic side hall house with rear wing displays a distinctly Greek Revival design subtlety in the gable front—the second-floor window is centered above the wide entrance to give the façade better order and balance, thus creating uneven spacing of the upper windows. Note also, the blind window in the wall of the entrance hall, and the triangular gable vent, a feature imported from New England.



### 4 Fletcher House/Fortune House NR 2733 NYS Rte. 22; 44.30990°, -73.35284°

Date: c.1824; mid to late 1900s porch

A rare form in the Adirondacks, this is a side hall house with the ridge parallel to the street—in effect a transitional Federal-Greek Revival building. That's not surprising given its construction date, but it is surprising that it's not the only one of its type in Essex. The form is sometimes also called a half-house since the additional two bays of the usual five-bay center hall are missing.

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

### 5 Cyrus Stafford House

2736 NY Rte. 22; 44.30961°, -73.35270°

Date: c.1847; c.1900 glazed porch; late 1800s–early 1900s carriage barn

One of the premier Greek Revival buildings in Essex, this merchant's house is the same form as the next door Farnum House (D-1.3), but with a higher level of materials and detail, and impeccable execution. The entablature encircles the entire building, sitting on brick Doric pilasters at the corners and creating a full tympanum, with a wide triangle in a sunburst design nearly filling it. A stone water table also encircles the building, meeting up with a beautiful set of original limestone entry steps whose monolithic sidewalls are carved with volutes. The entrance, with its in *antis* Ionic columnettes is from *The Modern Builder's Guide* (1833) by Minard Lefever, one of the most accomplished and copied architects of the era. It retains its original two-panel door, with egg and dart molding, which is astonishingly rare. The glazed porch on the rear wing is likely turn of the 20th century but also likely a replacement or alteration of an original service porch on the kitchen wing. The property retains its wide lot from the 1800s and a historic carriage barn still stands in the rear.



### 6 Presbyterian Church/Essex Community Church

2743 NY Rte. 22; 44.31003°, -73.35205°

Date: 1853–56; clock and bell 1911

Architect: attrib. T. S. Whitby

One of the oldest Federated churches in the state was formed in 1922 when the Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, and Presbyterian congregations consolidated, with common services in the former Presbyterian Church. The Methodists moved from their stone church (D-1.41) and the Baptists from their brick Greek Revival church, which subsequently burned down in 1943. The 1850s Presbyterian Church replaced the original 1818 wooden church on this site that had burned down. One of only two Essex buildings built of limestone from Lingonier Point in Willsboro, the other being Greystone (D-1.48), the church is believed to have been designed by Greystone's architect. Also like Greystone, the church was commissioned and funded by Belden Noble as a present to his bride Adeline. In an era when the Gothic Revival was *de rigueur* for churches, this building takes the conservative form of a traditional New England meeting house, a familiar form for parishioners with Vermont connections. The design variant with a projecting central tower had also been published in Asher Benjamin's 1797 *Country Builder's Assistant* and later in the Congregational publication *A Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages* (1853). Contemporary Italianate features and details, however, embellish the exterior, including stone corner quoins, round-arched windows, and, originally, iron cresting along the building and tower roofs. The tower clock, which has three faces and chimes, is considered by many to be the "community clock". The church interior is largely original, including the curved choir loft on cast iron columns, original pews and (modified) chandelier. Originally painted with walls imitating stone blocks and a trompe l'oeil dome on the ceiling, the interior was painted white in the 20th century, when colored and textured glass also was installed in the windows.





## HAMLET OF ESSEX



### 7 Ross's Tavern/Wright's Inn/Town Offices NR

2313 Main St.; 44.30960°, -73.35182°

Date: c.1790s southern half; c.1820s–1830s northern half; restoration 1970s and later

Built by Daniel Ross—a partner in the new cross-lake ferry service that increased potential patrons—as a five-bay center hall Federal tavern and inn, this is the oldest inn in Essex. It was bought in 1799 by General Daniel Wright, commander of the Essex Co. militia in the Revolutionary War, who expanded the building with another five-bay section to the north and a rear wing. A porch was added the length of the façade around 1880 but removed in 1990. The building operated as an inn into the 1940s, as the Baldwin House then the Adirondack House, and was donated to the Town in 1969.



### 8 2312 Main St. NR

44.30962°, -73.35144°

Date: c.1850; possibly moved c.1870

#### Harold Tart Grocery Store NR

2310 Main St.; 44.30953°, -73.35142°

Date: Mid-1800s; reportedly moved and enlarged c.1870

Surviving mid-1800s commercial buildings are rare in the Adirondacks, but Essex has six within just a two-block stretch of Main St. (See also **D-1.9**, **D-1.10**, **D-1.11**).

The typical form for such buildings was a retail or other mercantile use on the first floor and an apartment for the merchant on the second floor. Built within the Greek

*Harold Tart Grocery Store, early 1970s*

Revival period, the gable end faces the street and the storefront is as transparent as glass manufacturing at the time made possible. **2312 Main** has corner pilasters and a substantial roof cornice with returns. An original Greek Revival entablature also spans across the first floor, below which a later 1800s wooden storefront with four-light windows was inserted, with an Italianate style door to the upstairs. The former **Grocery Store** next door is a simpler example with attenuated corner pilasters and cornice, but notable shallow pediment hoods over historic 2/2 windows. The storefront with bay-shaped picture windows, supported at the corners by slender cast iron columns, was a turn-of-the-20th century innovation for retail establishments, typically with either a glass transom above, or a signboard as in this example. The storefront has been “restored” in recent years with mullioned windows and wood encasing the columns, though the original signboard and wood panels below the windows remain.



### 9 Old Brick Store NR

2309 Main St.; 44.30940°, -73.35176°

Date: c.1860

#### W.R. Derby Store NR

2307 Main St.; 44.30932°, -73.35173°

Date: Mid-1800s; and later

Even more rare than early commercial buildings, are surviving early storefronts—the part of the building often modernized every few decades. These two stores retain largely intact mid-1800s storefronts. The original use of the **Brick Store** is not known but it was owned by Palmer Havens in the 1870s, so might have been associated with his blind and sash factory. It is an exceptional example of a masonry Greek Revival commercial building, even accepting its Italianate corbeled cornice. The storefront configuration is original,

*Old Brick Store*

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

spanning the entire building width — supported on columns wrapped in the Doric Order that also appear mostly original. Wood panels below the windows are also part of the original configuration, but the windows would have had multiple lights, as large as possible within the size of glass available at the time and what the owner could afford. Of course, white was the historic color for this storefront. The **Derby Store** retains not only the original storefront configuration, also in the Doric Order, but also original panels below the windows with Greek echinus moldings. The current windows are a fair approximation of storefront windows from the period. A staircase salvaged from the 1870s wreck of the steamboat *The Champlain* at Essex is installed inside the store. Looking at the building as a whole, the rear wing appears to be the earlier Derby store (pre-1850) though much altered now. The front section has scaled-up corner pilasters that match the storefront and a loft door for goods above the store entrance (note the ridge extension for mounting the hoist). The second-floor windows may be a later alteration; the porch and balcony are a recent restoration of this feature that had been added c.1900, except with Tuscan columns originally.



W.R. Derby Store

### 10 Fortune House & Tailor Shop— “The Manse”

NR

2306 Main St.; 44.30930°, -73.35135°  
Date: 1846; c.1895 porch

Robert Fortune might have had his tailor shop in part of this house when it was built, but within a decade he had a separate store across the street. The standard upright and wing Greek Revival house has a characteristic recessed entrance yet a Federal style vent in the gable. The wood siding on the wing is surprising; it might possibly be an alteration of a former shop front in the wing. Often called “The Manse” the house was used as such only between c.1856 and c.1870, at which time the Presbyterian Church built its own vicarage (**Tour D**).



### 11 Harness Shop & Post Office

NR

2304 Main St.; 44.30915°, -73.35132°  
Date: c.1827; remodeled mid 1800s

Reportedly an earlier building remodeled during the Greek Revival period, this commercial building is the same type as the others in this block only a little wider, with a four-bay storefront supported on plain brick piers. The two center openings were both historic doors in the 1970s, suggesting this was always a double storefront, with the Post Office occupying one side from the 1850s to c.1900. Parts of the current storefront appear to be late 1800s to early 1900s, which might also be when the loft door on the second floor was expertly filled in with brick.



### 12 Theater Block/Post Office

NR

2303 Main St.; 44.30905°, -73.35166°  
Date: c.1937

The original mid-1800s R. Fortune store on this site was replaced by Essex's largest commercial building in 1874, a three-story eight-bay wide masonry building known as the “Brick Block”, which burned down in 1924. The Post



## HAMLET OF ESSEX

Office moved into this replacement in 1937 and the Theater in 1940, but the building was not entirely completed until after World War II. It is characteristic in form of other Adirondack theaters of the period, with a recessed central entrance into the theater lobby flanked a retail storefront either side (**SC:A.43, SC:B-1.14**). With top-heavy proportions and faux Greek revival style detailing, the building compares poorly with all the genuine Greek Revival architecture in Essex. Although components of the façade have been replaced and the front stoop added in recent years, the building appears essentially as built, meaning its mediocrity is original.



*Ralph Hascal House*



*Asher L Conger House*



**13** **Ralph Hascal House** **NR**  
2302 Main St.; 44.30898°, -73.35123°

Date: c.1800; restored 1985


**Asher L Conger House** **NR**

2300 Main St.; 44.30885°, -73.35118°

Date: c.1849

One of the hamlet's earliest houses, the **Hascal House**, reportedly displays the framing in the attic of an original Georgian style hipped roof. Otherwise, it a perfect example of a restored Federal style center hall house, with its entry surround and fanlight, Palladian window above the entry, and a delicate cornice with dentils. A one-story porch was added across the front in the late 1800s and a second story cure porch above that in the early 1900s—both torn off when the house was restored (See Introduction photo).

The **Conger House** next door is a stripped down three-bay center hall Greek Revival—robust rather than delicate. It features a plain cornice, triangular vents in the gables and apparently had floor length windows on the first floor. It too had a Victorian-era porch across the front, so the current entry porch is not original.

**14** **Lake Shore House/Essex Inn** **NR**   
2297 Main St.; 44.30865°, -73.35153°

Date: c.1810; expanded c.1829; porch c.1835; renovation & northwest addition 2010–15

Like Wright's Inn (**D-1.7**), this hotel began as a five-bay center hall Federal building, and was expanded northward, in this case being joined up to a similar house next door—resulting in the odd connector bay in an otherwise symmetrical building. Adding the two-story full-length porch with Doric columns in c.1835 made the inn the most imposing Greek Revival building in the hamlet (first floor railings were added only recently for Code compliance). Except for 50 years during the 20th century when it was a private residence, the building has been operated as an inn under several names since c.1810, and has been a mainstay of village life. During the War of 1812 it reportedly housed troops and was also a hotbed of espionage. After being donated to, and saved by, ECHO in the 1980s, Trish and John Walker bought the building in 1995 and continued to rehabilitate the exterior (including replicating the original deteriorated

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

porch columns), repair the interior—which retains some original fabric—and bring it back as the Essex Inn, hosting community activities as well as visitors. Forced to close by the recession in 2009, the inn was acquired by Rick and Karen Dalton from Vermont to relocate their educational consultancy, and incidentally become innkeepers. They undertook additional renovations, built an addition and have since expanded their enterprise with other projects in the hamlet (**D-1.41**, **D-1.45**). This inn has endured as an economic engine, a social center, and an architectural landmark—and been lucky to be revived more than once.

**15 H.H. Ross House** NR  
2296 Main St.; 44.30865°, -73.35111°  
Date: c.1825

In the absence of redevelopment pressure, Essex's main street preserves the mix of commercial and residential uses common in past centuries, including early houses of the community's merchants and leading citizens. Though possibly built by H.H. Ross, this Federal style house was not his personal residence, which was grander (**D-1.39**). The center hall configuration, end chimneys and flat, delicate entryway with sidelights are classic Federal characteristics, but the second floor with three bays instead of five is unusual.



Turn left on Beggs Point Street

**16 3 Beggs Point St.** NR  
44.30865°, -73.35084°  
Date: c.1854; porch early 1900s

**A. J. Stafford House** NR  
7 Beggs Point St.; 44.30867°, -73.35044°  
Date: c.1849

**Robert Fortune House** NR  
10 Beggs Point St.; 44.30848°, -73.35019°  
Date: 1850

**John Winslow, Jr. House** NR  
13 Beggs Point St.; 44.30870°, -73.35004°  
Date: c.1842-47

**J. Hoskins House** NR  
14 Beggs Point St.; 44.30851°, -73.34991°  
Date: c.1842

This quiet middle class residential street leading to Shipyard Point has several mid-1800s houses of people with nearby businesses, including Robert Fortune whose tailor shop was on Main St. and J. Hoskins, an owner of the shipyard on the point. The character of the street, and most of the houses, has changed little over more than a century, (except for the lost overarching maple trees seen in historic photos). Number **3 Beggs Point** is a brick Greek Revival side hall house, with shingles added in the gable and a wrapping porch with Tuscan columns.

The **Stafford House** is larger than others and a conservative five-bay center hall configuration. But it carries well developed Greek Revival details, including corner pilasters with recessed panels and a full tympanum with sunburst decoration. The rear wing, an unusual two stories tall, might be an earlier building moved to the rear in the mid-1800s. Two historic workshops remain in back, though altered.

The wood wing of the **Fortune House** might originally have been a "tenant" (i.e. worker's) house, but the brick structure is a middle class dwelling. It preserves the classic side hall Greek Revival features—one-and-a-half gable front form, a boldly scaled recessed entry, flat stone lintels, and entablature on the sides with cornice returns on the gable



*A.J. Stafford House*



*Robert Fortune House*

## HAMLET OF ESSEX



*J. Hoskins House*

lot. His house is a modest upright and wing with also modest decoration, consisting of a simple entry framed by pilasters with entablature, and a simple roof cornice with returns. The most notable Greek Revival features of the house are subtle—an integral porch, flat board siding inside the porch, and floor length windows, an innovation for the period. The Gothic trefoil railing is attractive but later—first floor Greek Revival porches did not have railings

The **Winslow House** likely belonged to the son of John Winslow who started Essex's first shipyard nearby. It's the same side hall form as the Fortune House except in wood. The unusual side porch was present in the 1800s—providing a view of the lake—though the current porch design and the bay window are early 1900s modifications.

**J. Hoskins** of Hoskins, Ross & Co. owned the two houses closest to his shipyard at the end of the street, the house on the north side housing a tenant and his own on a larger



### Shipyards Point/Beggs Point Park

22 Beggs Point St.; 44.30876°, -73.34899°

This is a historically important site, not to mention incredibly scenic in its current use as a public park, named for Donald Beggs, who donated the land to the town in the 1970s. The Winslow shipyard, subsequently Hoskins, Ross and Co., was on this point from c.1807–c.1860, which built a majority of the canal boats built in Essex. In the 1870s the only large factory in Essex, the Lyon & Palmer Sash, Blind & Door factory, occupied the point along with the steamboat landing. The factory became the Essex Horse Nail Co. in 1880, which burned down in a spectacular fire in 1918 (See Introduction photo). Foundation stone from the buildings was used to stabilize the shoreline when the park was initially developed in the 1920s, and remains today.



### 17 Wardle House—"Nail Collector's House"

26 Beggs Point St.; 44.30910°, -73.34935°

Date: 2004

Architect: Steven Holl Architects, New York, NY

Builder: Mitch Rabinew

Faux Adirondack architecture (aka Adirondack Revival) has become so ubiquitous in recent decades that genuine contemporary buildings are scarce in the Park. This significant modern house, by an internationally known architect, is located on a sliver of the nail factory site—perhaps ironically within the otherwise historic and conservative Essex. The house is a tall cube, responding in part to the tiny site, that culminates in a "prow" form extended toward the lake. Copper sheet

cladding has now patinated and blends with the trees. The architect's signature punched, square windows provide what he calls "Fingers of Light" into the house (with a layout somehow related to Homer's *Odyssey*). He says the "largely open interior ascends counter-clockwise through a series of spaces pierced by the light of the windows", with the upward spiral of space finishing inside the "prow"—rational design meets the poetic. Holl's critically acclaimed and more recent Hunters Point Community Library in Queens uses a similar spatial concept. For interior photos and schematic design sketches of the house, see <http://www.stevenholl.com/projects/nail-collectors-house>

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

- 18** **29 Beggs Point St.** NR  
44.30928°, -73.35007°  
Date: c.1850 or earlier

A worker (or workers) at the shipyards likely occupied this small five-bay house, though mariners also reportedly lived in this area in the early 1800s. Note a second entrance on the end and the swayback ridgeline, which indicates the absence of a ridge rafter. (See **D-1.1** for similar houses).



- 19** **Alexander Blacksmith Shop** NR  
39 Beggs Point St; 44.30946°, -73.35076°  
Date: c.1860; expanded late 1800s–early 1900s

The original blacksmith shop, likely one story, has three non-combustible stone walls and possibly had large openings facing the street. It was converted to a residence and expanded with a wrapping porch and upper stories with a gambrel roof and center dormer, becoming a visually distinctive building on the harbor.



Turn left onto Main St.

- 20** **Ezra Parkhill, Jr. House** NR  
2 Beggs Point St.; 44.30839°, -73.35106°  
Date: c.1842

This brick Greek Revival house responded to its location on a corner lot by having entrances on both streets. The gable front on Main St. formerly had three bays, one for the entrance and two tall windows. It also had a one-story porch across the front—possibly an original feature.



- 21** **P.E. Havens Office** NR  
2291 Main St.; 44.30827°, -73.35158°  
Date: c.1830s–1850; house 1901–1909

Havens owned this entire block by the 1870s (except for the Episcopal Church, **D-1.40**), and his gable-roofed stone office—originally a store—occupied this location. At least the building foundation, and possibly more, became part of a total transformation into a bungalow, with a characteristic integral porch. The style is a hybrid of Craftsman—cobblestone walls and porch piers—and Dutch Colonial Revival, with a gambrel roof and oval gable vent. The atypical gable front orientation for a bungalow results from building on the original gable front store.



- 22** **John Gould House/P.E. Havens** NR  
2285 Main St.; 44.30785°, -73.35137°  
Date: c.1833; gazebo c.1860s

Gould's impressive limestone Federal style house was in effect the only mansion on Main Street. When Havens bought it, he created an extensive formal garden between the house and the office building, which reportedly became a publicized "showplace". The gardens (now lawn) contained an octagonal gazebo (still standing, but relocated) and



*Etching of John Gould House, c.1870s*

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

the entire property was fronted by an ashlar limestone retaining wall along the street (partly surviving), topped by an iron fence (gone). The house has transitional Greek Revival features, including the cornice with returns and triangular gable vents (compare with “Greystone” **D-1.48**). A mid- to late-1800s outbuilding stands in the rear.



*Henry Gould House Entry, nd*

### 23 Henry Gould House/W.G. Lyons House **NR**

2286 Main St.; 44.30798°, -73.35091°

Date: c.1848; entry canopy c.1860s–70s

John Gould’s brother’s house across the street is nearly identical in form and construction to the contemporary Conger House (**D-1.13**), except for the entryway and shorter first floor windows. The entry recess appears to retain original Doric corner pilasters, to which the fanciful entry canopy was attached, probably by Lyons around the time Havens was updating his block across the street. The Italianate canopy is supported on manufactured brackets (that are massive for residential use), and also originally had Gothic Revival trefoil cresting on top—elaborate finery for a straightforward building.

Turn onto Orchard Lane

### 24 Orchard Lane (north side then south side)

#### **Baptist Parsonage**

5 Orchard Ln.; 44.30798°, -73.35051°

Date: c.1847

#### **Methodist Episcopal Parsonage**

7 Orchard Ln.; 44.30799°, -73.35032°

Date: c.1849

#### **Palmer House**

9 Orchard Ln.; 44.30801°, -73.35012°

Date: c.1849

#### **11 Orchard Ln.**

44.30803°, -73.34993°

Date: c.1849

#### **W. J. Hoskins House**

10 Orchard Ln.; 44.30784°, -73.35010°

Date: c.1840s–50s

#### **Livery Stable**

8 Orchard Ln.; 44.30782°, -73.35023°

Date: c.1880s–90s

Orchard Lane is a short street of modest mid-1800s houses. The north side of the street has two that were used as parsonages and, at 11 Orchard, a tenant house owned in the 1870s by the Essex Mfg. Co. The **Baptist Parsonage** sat behind the Baptist Church on Beggs Point St. (originally Church St.), which burned down. The former parsonage is a diminutive brick Greek Revival—only two bays wide—that, nevertheless, presents characteristic features with panache, including a full-scale cornice and a floor length parlor window. The former **Methodist Parsonage** is a normal



*Baptist and Methodist Parsonages*



*Palmer House, late 1880s*

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

side hall house form in wood, fronted by an early 1900s porch with turned posts atop a solid railing. Both the **Palmer House** and **11 Orchard** are narrow Greek Revival houses with additions, including similar wrapping porches from c.1900, but 11 Orchard appears to be a side hall type and the Palmer House was different. An early photo shows a hall and parlor house with the gable turned to face the street, and Greek Revival styling. The first floor was three bays, having a center entrance topped with a tall entablature, but the east elevation also had its own entrance into the rear room (hall).



*Livery Stable*

The south side of the street continues in a similar vein, starting with a brick Greek Revival at **10 Orchard** with many additions—including the front bay window from the early 1900s. It was owned by Hoskins (of the shipyard) and was probably a tenant house. The exceptional building for the street is the late 1800s **Livery** behind 8 Orchard. Every Adirondack community had at least one livery up until the automobile era, but very few survive. This L-shaped version has a gable front with carriage opening facing Orchard and the rear stable wing can also be viewed from the Marina's driveway (**D-1.25**)

### 25 Eggleston's Shipyard/Essex Marine Base/Essex Marina NR

2270–72 Main St.; 44.30759°, -73.35080°

Date: c.1800–1810 Eggleston's Shipyard; c.1936 Service Station; restored 1990s

Shipyard Point and the south bay were the sites of Essex's formidable ship building industry. Richard Eggleston built the first sloop on Lake Champlain about 1810 and during the War of 1812 the yard built four more sloops and 250 bateaux. Eggleston's eventually constructed about ten 150-ton vessels and more than 100 freight vessels. For most of the 1900s the site was the Essex Marine Base owned by the Morse family, which built most of the present structures as well as pleasure boats, invigorating the leisure boat industry for the hamlet. In the 1980s the site was divided into the Essex Marina, the northern part, and the Essex Shipyard, the southern part, the latter mostly destroyed in a storm around 2015. Three connected boathouses stand at the marina, but it's unclear if any parts date back as far as the 1800s shipyard. The south shed, which contains a marine railroad, is the oldest, the north one c.1940, and the middle has a stone west wall reportedly part of the pump house built c.1909 (demolished). Working boathouses of this type are now very rare (see also **Tour B**). Also notable is Morse's former service station on Main St., one of a number of the architecturally individual, pre-World War II gas stations in the Adirondacks—with an iconic former Texaco sign pylon, a few others of which still stand at Adirondack roadside businesses (such as The Donut Shop sign in Inlet)



*Service Station*



*Middle & South Boathouses*

### 26 2279 Main St. NR

44.30751°, -73.35122°

Date: c.1910

#### 2277 Main St NR

44.30736°, -73.35114°

Date: c.1910

These two "newer" houses built on an undeveloped part of the Havens estate represent a small and brief building boom in the hamlet around 1900. Both are the American Foursquare form—simply a square with four rooms up over four down—that could be rendered in various styles, or mixed as these



*2277 Main St.*



## HAMLET OF ESSEX

are. The steep roofs, bay windows and patterned shingle gables are characteristic of Queen Anne, while the front porches with Tuscan columns are pure Colonial Revival. In addition to form, strong similarities in features—including the same clapboard, the same wide bay window with a stained glass transom, and the 45° cut at the northeast corner—indicate the houses were designed and built by the same builder. Many similar houses were published in catalogs, which often became the design source for local builders (See the essay “From Pattern Books to Catalog Houses” in *The Adirondack Architecture Guide: Southern-Central Region*).



### 27 Willett House/Dr. J. N. Oliver House— “The Cupola House”

2278 Main St.; 44.30748°, –73.35073°

Date: before 1850; expanded c.1860s; restored 1990s

Originally a five-bay Federal or Greek Revival center hall form, the house was expanded and updated into the more imposing villa form (perhaps influenced by the Noble Clemons House, **D-1.37**, essentially a cube with hipped roof and a central lantern. Following the dictates of leading proponents Andrew Jackson Downing and architect Alexander Jackson Davis, a villa was usually in the Italianate style, but Greek Revival versions are found in New York also—of which this is a very simple example. The form of the original front porch is unknown, but might have been similar to the extant 1990s version.



### 28 W. Edwards House

2276 Main St.; 44.30730°, –73.35067°

Date: c.1860

Since historic documentation is limited for buildings in rural areas, it is often necessary to infer the history of a building, including its date of construction, from various clues or sources. Oral history calls this building the “1813 house” and a knowledgeable local source dates it around the 1840s, but what clues there are contradict both dates. The 1858 map shows no building on this site, and the historic survey indicates the house has light wood framing—so the map indicates it was either moved here or built after 1858, and the framing suggests it was simply built later, hence the inferred c.1860 date. It’s a good example of an older form one-story center hall (see also **D-1.1**), with Greek Revival detailing, notably a simple but well-proportioned entry surround.



Edwards House

### 29 H. Edwards House/Mrs. P. E. Havens House

2273 Main St.; 44.30706°, –73.35106°

Date: c.1841; gambrel roofs early 1900s

#### Henry Edwards Store

2269 Main St.; 44.30687°, –73.35093°

Date: c.1836; bay windows c.1860s–1880s

Edwards’ house and his tailor shop next door are exemplars of Greek Revival design that have been modified without losing their essential form and character. The original brick

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

house is well preserved and its form remains quite clear. The narrow upright—just one room wide—with symmetrical one-story wings is a small Greek Revival house type with great presence that appears to have developed in New York State. In some examples the first floor of the upright might be recessed forming an integral porch. Here that space is filled in with the center door and flanking windows framed by pilasters with Greek key capitals and decorated entablature—a design for a pulpit from Asher Benjamin's 1830 *Builder's Guide* creatively adapted for a building entrance. The wings were raised in height with gambrel roofs in the early 1900s, when the front porch was also added.



*Edwards Store*

Edwards' tailor shop displays the typical characteristics of the Greek Revival commercial buildings on Main St.; gable front orientation, full width storefront, signboard above, central loft door, and 6/6 double hung original windows on the upper floor with flat lintels. Particularly notable (and vulnerable) is the ghost of Edwards' original sign above the storefront. The building was later updated with bay windows in the storefront and apparently a new roof with exposed rafter tails and Carpenter Gothic jigsawn trim—the features that make the building look so different from its cohort up the street.

### 30 W.H. Beanman House

312 School St.; 44.30669°, -73.35089°

Date: c.1840; porches after 1973

NR

The front of this modest hall and parlor type Greek Revival house is on School St. An original, or early, one-story wing is attached to its uphill end, creating a long facade. Building into the hill also created a usable ground floor, so the building appears two and a half stories tall on Main St. A two-story Victorian porch added to the east end, much shallower than the current porch, has been lost since the 1970s and recent porches also added on the School St. elevation. Though windows and doors have all been replaced, the house retains its original corner pilasters and entablature.



### 31 Richard Parkhill House

2268 Lake Shore Rd.; 44.30670°, -73.35057°

Date: 1905

NR

One of the early 1900s houses—built at the tail end of the Victorian era—this is a modest cross-gable vernacular cottage. The steep roof, front porch (posts and brackets replaced) and a bay on the north elevation with the second floor overhanging the first are the most recognizable Victorian features.



### 32 Cm. Charles Martin House

2263 Lake Shore Rd.; 44.30643°, -73.35083°

Date: c.1844; barn, porch and dormer late 1800s–early 1900s

NR

#### Captain Edmund R. Eaton House

2261 Lake Shore Rd.; 44.30632°, -73.35082°

Date: c.1840–52

NR

#### James M. Havens House/W.D. Palmer House

2259 Lake Shore Rd.; 44.3061°, -73.35086°

Date: c.1840; porch and barn late 1800s–early 1900s

NR



*Captain Edmund R. Eaton House*

## HAMLET OF ESSEX



James M. Haven House

A number of ship or boat captains lived along this section of the street that was fully built up before the 1850s, including Cm. (presumably commander) Martin and Captain Eaton. Their aligned Greek Revival upright-and-wing houses mirror each other in form and are fronted by a stone wall along the street. Corner pilasters support an entablature, interrupted on the gable front by the second floor windows. The entablature on the wing of the **Martin house** was lost when the dormer was added, but remains on the **Eaton house** wing, along with the porch that was restored when an attached mid-1900s garage was removed. This house has the richer details also, reflecting greater cost (i.e. status) for the owner. Corner pilasters are fluted. The entry has *in antis* columns (also fluted), an architrave with ears, and molding finishing the edges—a design repeated for window surrounds. Behind the house stands a tall historic barn and a similar barn is behind the Havens house—unusually large outbuildings to find within a hamlet, where outbuildings in general have a low rate of survival. The **Havens house** is the same one-story three-bay house form, with end chimneys, seen elsewhere in the hamlet, expanded with a north addition and amplified by a wrapping porch. Greek Revival detail is limited to sidelights and pilasters flanking the entry, with the entablature either buried or removed for the porch addition. The porch has chamfered posts with delicate jigsaw brackets, the same brackets as the Martin house.



33

### Melancthon S. Baker House

NR

2264 Lake Shore Rd.; 44.3062°, -73.35042°

Date: c.1908

The site of this house, and (continuing) up the street to the Willett house (**D-1.27**), was industrial-mercantile until late in the 1800s, with shipbuilding operations, a pottery and a wharf along the south harbor. This example of one of the infill houses is similar in type to the Parkhill house (**D-1.31**), but bulkier. It's most interesting feature, the porch that angles around the corner, is more Colonial Revival style than Victorian. Roof brackets, now lost, formerly made the upper façade less plain.



306 School St.

34

### Fletcher House

NR

306 School St.; 44.30655°, -73.35150°

Date: c.1829

### Jehial Fletcher House

NR

3 Ross Way; 44.30649°, -73.35201°

Date: c.1850s

The plain Federal period Fletcher house is a straightforward center hall form (with a two-story rear wing), except for a slightly asymmetrical front likely due to larger rooms on the east end. The door on the second floor is a leftover alteration from the mid-1900s when the house had a rudimentary porch on the roof of a front addition. The later Jehial Fletcher house is a side hall form (see also **D-1.4**), but deferential to its neighbor in massing and restraint. Detail is limited to shallow pediment hoods over the windows and door. The entry porch is a recent addition.

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

### 35 F. P. Billings (Stone) Cottage NR

290 School St.; 44.30621°, -73.35292°

Date: c.1828; restored 2000s

Architect: John Mesick, Essex, NY (restoration)

Builder: F. B. Billings

The smallest house in the hamlet that was built of limestone from the nearby quarry, this was a tenant house owned by Ransom Noble. The fine ashlar masonry on the three sides visible from the street (the rear wall is uncoursed masonry) is comparable to more prominent houses, such as the Gould House (D-1.22). The three-bay Federal form is comparable to other modest houses in wood, for example D-1.1. Built partly into the slope, the building has an unusually short lower story, which reportedly housed the kitchen and it has no rear wing (the typical kitchen location).



### 36 Essex High School NR

269 School St.; 44.30594°, -73.35469°

Date: 1909

Regardless of its name, the last of Essex's schools served K-12 students until 1952, when the centralization movement transferred all Essex students to the Willsboro Central School. The symmetrical, rational, two-story brick building is characteristic of other schools from the early 1900s to 1930s in the region, but with its awkward proportions, squat lantern and unusual absence of detail it would not win in an architectural comparison with most of those schools—nor with the majority of buildings in Essex hamlet.



Turn left onto Elm St.

### 37 Noble Clemons House NR

7 Elm St.; 44.30698°, -73.35276°

Date: c.1850s

The best example of the Italianate in the hamlet, the house still holds onto Greek Revival features—note the corner pilasters, plain flat lintels and entrance door configuration with flat architrave. Simple yet elegant cornice brackets are the most distinctive Italianate feature on the building. The entry porch is a replacement, but likely similar to the original. The beautiful iron fence in front, with tall Gothic styled posts, is contemporary with the Nobles' fences (D-1.48, D-1.49), but a different design. Clemons owned the Essex Inn and his house claimed a large corner lot with a commanding view of the lake.



### 38 Charles G. Fancher House/ T. Edwards House NR

9 Elm St.; 44.30726°, -73.35276°

Date: c.1824

This is the finest example of the Federal side hall houses in Essex, and likely the earliest. Especially notable is the entrance with its slender pilasters, delicate architrave and half-height sidelights—similar to the entrances on



## HAMLET OF ESSEX

the Essex Inn (D-1.14). The narrow corner trim on the building is also true to the Federal period, but the cornice is transitional, or replacement, Greek Revival. The house zigs and zags into a rear wing and a long ell extending south, which appear to be early or original. This unusual configuration for the region might have been based on the farmhouse form with a connected back house and barn popular in New England, from where many Essex settlers migrated.



### 39 Gen. Henry Harmon Ross House— “Hickory Hill”

NR

23 Elm St.; 44.30810°, -73.35323°

Date: 1822; north wing c.1845; south porch c.late 1800s

The home of the son of Daniel Ross and grandson of William Gilliland, this was the first “mansion” in Essex, followed a few years later (1828) by his brother William’s house (D-1.50).

Sited above the hamlet, the house had expansive lake views but was away from the workaday waterfront that was the source of the Ross family wealth. H.H. Ross was also a Columbia-trained lawyer, a Major General in the New York Militia and briefly a congressman. Rightly regarded as the finest Federal residence in Essex, the design of the house was reputedly based on a former Ross family home in Salem, NY. The five-bay center hall form was the standard for Federal houses; what sets this one apart from the others of its type in Essex are scale, quality of construction, and level of detail. There are four end chimneys to serve the large rooms, a three-part cornice with dentils, tall windows with elegantly splayed marble lintels, and a raised first floor, reached by broad stone steps that are only the first element of an elaborate entrance. The wide doorway, with full height sidelights is spanned by an equally wide fanlight, and fronted by a porch with a shallow roof surrounded by a railing and supported on excessively tall Roman Doric columns. The composition finishes with a Palladian window above the porch. Originally a larger version of the porch railing also formed a balustrade along the entire front edge of the roof. (Compare with D-1.13 for a middle class wood house of the same type). The north wing was added for Ross’ law office, originally located on Main St. (D-1.45). Behind the Doric porch, it has tall windows framed by pilasters and an entablature with a guilloche pattern in the frieze. The interior proportions and details of the house are also reported as “very fine”.



### 40 Ross Schoolhouse/St. John’s Episcopal Church

NR

4 Church St.; 44.30820°, -73.35238°

Date: c.1835; moved & remodeled in 1880; stained glass c.1910; west addition 1984

Designer: Rev. John Henry Hopkins (church conversion)

#### St. John’s Episcopal Rectory

NR

10 Church St.; 44.30824°, -73.35208°

Date: c.1880

Built by Henry Ross as a schoolhouse, similar in form to the Brick Schoolhouse (D-1.43) and with a belfry, the Episcopal Church occupied the building in 1853. After purchasing the property in 1877 they moved it up towards the corner of Elm St. and transformed it into a distinctive, if somewhat ungainly, religious edifice. False buttresses were added, windows heightened to form Gothic arches, and a slender bell tower grafted onto the Church St. elevation. The open tower design, with a bell reclaimed from the 1870s wreck of lake steamer *Champlain* and a massive roof for a slender structure, is based on a design by Richard Upjohn in *Upjohn’s Rural Architecture*, 1852, also used for a Bolton Landing church (Tour B). The whole architectural composition

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

is simultaneously odd and engaging. Inside is an inlaid stone altar designed by Rev. Hopkins and stained glass windows by Taber Sears (1870–1950), a noted New York City muralist and stained glass artist. The adjacent rectory, contemporary with the church remodeling, is a nice example of a rural Gothic Revival cottage in form and proportions, with the characteristic front gables.

### 41 Methodist-Episcopal Church/ Old Stone Church

NR

11 Church St.; 44.30854°, -73.35200°

Date: 1835–1838; improvements 1876 and 1884; restoration c.2017

Smaller and simpler than the Presbyterian Church (D-1.6), this building is also twenty years older yet it's more contemporary in design. A very early example of the Gothic Revival in the Adirondacks, it does not have the articulated form of later such churches (for example Holy Cross in Warrensburg, SC: A-1.5), but it does have fine masonry work in the local stone, especially the arches. The large, well-proportioned lancet (pointed-arch) windows and entrance, effectively contrast with the solid masonry and animate the entire building. The opalescent glass windows, installed around 1884, are notably intact and a fine example of this type of art glass popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A three-tiered wooden bell tower on the ridge also had pointed-arch louvers, but was lost in the mid-1900s. The Methodists moved out in 1922, the building had a few subsequent owners, including the Town, but was mostly empty for many years. It was purchased recently by the owners of the Essex Inn and revived for use as event space, with a hotel suite on the ground floor.



### 42 Dr. Samuel Shumway House

NR

3 Church St.; 44.30853°, -73.35266°

Date: c.1832; dormers early 1900s

Dormers were added on the roof, but the elevations of this house have never been altered. It is an unusual but excellent example of a late Federal house, just at the transition to the Greek Revival, and also of a specific design response to a corner location on a hill. The ridge of the house parallels Elm St., but that façade is not regular, has few windows and only a secondary entrance. The main entrance, set into a beautiful stone arch, is in the gable end on Church St. A stone molding once framed around the arch; the ghost is still visible. Since visitors on foot would approach the house coming up the hill, this side was logically the principal elevation. The quarter round gable vents, again under nice stone half arches, were a frequent feature of Federal houses in this region. The three-stories tall east side of the house had the kitchen in the lower level and has more windows than the south and west elevations combined; of course that is the side of the house overlooking the lake.



## HAMLET OF ESSEX



### 43 Old Brick Schoolhouse NR

32 Elm St.; 44.30883°, -73.35275°

Date: c.1818; 1836 north room addition; 1970s renovation

As a plain one-room, one-story block with a gable roof and belfry, the hamlet's oldest standing schoolhouse was typical for 19th century schools throughout the Adirondacks. Two entrances on the south end, also a common feature, served boys and girls separately. Atypically, the school was built in brick, reflecting the relative and early wealth of the community. Essex's first school (1787) was reportedly on this site and some portion of it might be incorporated into the 1818 building. When the schoolhouse was extended by the north addition the belfry was relocated to the center of the now elongated building above the new entrance, the center always being the preferred location for a school belfry. Replaced by the Union Free School in 1867, the building eventually became a residence.



### 44 W. Higbee House NR

36 Elm St.; 44.30908°, -73.35281°

Date: c.1842

Elm St. as a whole displays an interesting mix of big and small houses across a continuum of time from 1822 (Hickory Hill) to around 1850. Ordinarily a smaller house also means simpler, but the small Higbee house is bold rather than modest. It's a classic Greek Revival upright and wing form and the gable front is nearly filled with the entrance, windows, and quarter round vents, all topped by a deep cornice with returns. The one-story wing also has a full entablature, a second entrance, and full width porch (now with replacement columns). The interior also contains full Greek Revival window and door surrounds with fluted pilasters in the main rooms. For comparison with one of the most modest houses on the street, glance across at 39 Elm, a c.1830 hall and parlor.



H.H. Ross Store

### 45 H.H. Ross Store/W.R. Derby Store/ J.B. Ross Tucker & Field Store NR

2748 Essex Rd.; 44.30986°, -73.35154°

Date: c.1800-1810; expanded 1812; porch added mid-1800s; north addition c.1900

### W.D. Ross Store/ W.R. & S.D. Derby Store NR

2750 Essex Rd.; 44.31003°, -73.35162°

Date: c.1810; storefront late 1800s-early 1900s; north addition n.d.

### Ross Wharf and Dock House NR

2752 Essex Rd.; 44.31028°, -73.35059°

Date: Wharf early 1800s; Dock House c.1815-30, relocated c.1860; east wing c.1890; west wing 1970s; raised and additions 1986

The adjacent stores (historic name for warehouses) built by brothers H.H. and W.D. Ross are two of the four intact early-1800s mercantile buildings on the north harbor. All are stone buildings, which has contributed to their longevity.

## HAMLET OF ESSEX

The ensemble of these buildings, along with the Ross Wharf and the Ferry Dock, presents as good an approximation of a working waterfront of the 1800s as can be experienced anywhere in the Adirondacks.

Mentally strip away some of the later attention-grabbing changes to **H.H. Ross's** store in order to see that originally it was virtually identical to his brother's next door—limestone masonry, three bays wide, two-and-a-half stories on the street, three-and-a-half stories on the waterfront, with loft doors for goods in and out on both the street and the waterfront. Reportedly built as a dry goods store and expanded in 1812 for Ross's law office also, the expansion is visible in the masonry on the south elevation. The two-story porch appears to have been added in the mid-1800s, perhaps following the Essex Inn example (D-1.14), and the solid railing is contemporary with the later north addition.

In the same form and same stone as the H. H. Ross and Ransom Noble stores (D-1.47), **W.D. Ross Store** has been less altered than its contemporaries. The only significant exterior change—inserting an open storefront into the first floor—would have been beneficial for continued commercial viability by the early 1900s. Involving considerable effort in a heavy masonry building, it was done without compromising the overall architectural integrity of the building, but the masonry above has deformed as a result.

The Ross and Noble families built two early wharfs in the north harbor, serving the ferry and their shipping operations. In 1858 the **Ross Wharf** was short, labeled as the Steamboat Landing and had no building on it. Both wharfs have been damaged, rebuilt or altered over time but remain in their historic locations. The ferry now docks at the north one and the south wharf has transient dockage and The Old Dock restaurant, a use begun in the 1920s as a coffee house. The history of the building is not entirely clear. If the story about the Ross brothers signatures being visible along the loft staircase of the original warehouse—the two-story building—is correct the building could be early 1800s, though relocated onto the wharf around 1860. It's similar in form to the stone stores and retains a loft door and hoist on its east end. A utilitarian east wing was added in the late 1800s, when the steamboats were still docking here, and the exterior of both sections since altered. The history of changes to this site is illustrative of the challenges to survival for obsolete commercial-industrial structures, although this particular result is mostly positive.



W.D. Ross Store



Ross Wharf and Dock House

### 46 Noble Store/Shirt Factory/Masonic Temple

2756 Essex Rd.; 44.31051°, -73.35173°

Date: c.1810; facade alterations and additions early 1900s

The largest of the stone warehouses, built by Ransom Noble and Sons, sits at the head of what was their working wharf in the 1800s—now a narrower dock for the ferry. The lake side of the building (view from the dock) had several loading doors facing the wharf (some now filled in), and the sheer size of the building would have impressed maritime traders in the early in the 1800s. Subsequently used as a factory, the building underwent a Colonial Revival updating in the early 1900s, and later became the Iroquois Masonic Lodge 602. Palladian windows were added on the east and west elevations, a wood addition with tall arched windows on the south end, and a wood entry hall with *in antis* Tuscan columns and a decorated entablature facing the street. It presents a clear architectural synthesis of two different periods and styles. The Essex Theater Company now leases the building.



Street side



Lake side





**Ferry Dock**

2758 Essex Rd.; 44.31071°, -73.35142°

Dock for the Lake Champlain Transportation Co. year round ferry to Charlotte, VT. This is a good spot to view the waterfront of the north bay, especially the lake elevations of the historic warehouses, as well as the Ross Mansion boathouse (D-1.50).



**Ransom Noble Store/Belden Noble Memorial Library**



2759 Essex Rd.; 44.31076°, -73.35206°

Date: c.1810–1818; balconies and alterations early 1900s; stabilized 1994

Architect: Klepper Hahn & Hyatt, Syracuse, NY (stabilization)

Built as the store for Ransom Noble's Tannery located along the north side of the creek (See also *Adirondack Tanneries* in the Southern-Central Region). Associated tannery buildings, including a shoe factory on the south bank of the creek are long gone, except for one building at Greystone next door. Similar in design to the Ross Stores from the same period (D-1.45), the two-and-a-half story limestone building has loft doors for goods access at both the second floor and attic. Also displaying a rare survival of an early-1800s commercial façade—before the advent of the glazed storefront—it has the same size windows flanking the store entrance as everywhere else in the building. Belden Noble's widow, Adeline, began a book loan in the building and donated it to the hamlet for a town library in 1899, prompting the renovation of the interior and dressing up the utilitarian exterior with balconies and a projecting gable on carved brackets. The c.1900 interior is largely intact.



**Belden Noble House—"Greystone"**



2765 Essex Rd.; 44.31124°, -73.35210°

Date: 1853; tower and north porch additions late 1800s; south wing addition 1950s

Architect: T. S. Whitby, domicile unknown

The most prominent Greek Revival house in Essex was built for Ransom Noble's youngest son Belden, who ran the Ransom Noble & Sons businesses with his father and brother. It is the final and most elaborate of the leading citizens' houses that overlook the north harbor, collectively known as "Merchant's Row". Designed by an architect about whom virtually nothing else is known (except possibly a house addition 50 years later in Peoria, IL), Greystone was built of the same Willsboro limestone as the Presbyterian Church (D-1.6) and by the same masons. It is a textbook design, not innovative but fully realized, and meticulously executed in correct proportions, smooth-finished stone walls, and highly developed Greek detailing outside and inside. The conservative center hall defers to its earlier neighbors (D-1.49, D-1.50) but conceals a modern double parlor spanning the full width of the house, and across the center hall, visually opened up through wide sliding doors framed by elaborate Corinthian order pilasters and entablatures. On the exterior, Doric Order



## HAMLET OF ESSEX

pilasters support a full entablature with regular frieze windows covered by iron grilles, behind which is an actual third floor. (A piece of the iron cresting that formerly adorned the roof can be seen in the museum (D-1.2). The entrance and the entry porch have *in antis* and freestanding fluted Ionic columns and entablature, with cresting restored from historic photos, but slightly simplified. The house is rare, possibly unique in the region, for its use of all three Greek Orders, and the appropriate use of each—the robust Doric for the masonry building, the Ionic for the human-scaled porch, and the lighter and more decorative Corinthian on the interior. An ornate iron fence fronting the house (c.1860) is likely from the J. Jackson foundry in New York City, which produced all the interior ironwork at Greystone, though the Badger Co. or Moss and Fisk are also possibilities since their catalogs illustrate the same stanchions and many ironwork companies produced the same designs. A surprising shingled tower (on a stone base with small lancet windows) is attached to west side of the house. Built as a water tower but reportedly found inadequate to support a water tank, it was converted into an art studio. Behind the house is one of the original Noble tannery buildings, converted into a Gothic Revival style carriage barn around the 1850s, and behind that are ruins of the main tanning building with visible traces in the ground of the tanning vats.



**49** **Harmon Noble House** NR  
2775 Essex Rd.; 44.31181°, -73.35170°  
Date: c.1835, fence c.1860

**Noble Schoolhouse** NR  
2775 Essex Rd.; 44.31205°, -73.35151°  
Date: c.1860  
Designer: Attrib. Laura Noble

Harmon's house predated his brother Belden's house next door and is much plainer, though both share the same center-hall form. The house has minimal Greek Revival detail; most notable is the Greek key decoration on the entry porch entablature (which might be a reconstruction). The south bay window is an addition. Harmon followed his brother's lead in installing the beautiful iron fence in front, which is the same design as Greystone's fence.

The tiny, perfectly preserved family **Schoolhouse** might easily be mistaken for a garden folly. The tent-form roof rests on posts whose slenderness suggests they are cast iron and is trimmed with jigsawn decoration. The enclosed schoolroom within the pavilion—also octagonal—has a door and windows with Italianate enframements. There are very few octagonal buildings in the Adirondacks. Astonishingly, two are schoolhouses in the Town of Essex—the Boquet Schoolhouse (Tour D) and this whimsical gem.



Harmon Noble House



Noble Schoolhouse

**50** **William D. Ross House & Boathouse—** NR  
**“Rosslyn”**

2783 Essex Rd.; 44.31233°, -73.35132°  
Date: c.1828; historic front porch and steps replicated 1972; Boathouse c.1880s

Hickory Hill (D-1.39) and Rosslyn, the houses of Daniel Ross' two sons, were the first mansions in Essex. William owned the local stone quarry and the largest commercial wharf (D-1.45), as well as mills in Boquet. His classic five-bay center hall Federal house, has a characteristic and elegant arched



## HAMLET OF ESSEX



Boathouse

entry with sidelights and fanlight. The more contemporary cornice with modillion blocks (under the eaves) may be based on a design in Asher Benjamin's *The American Builder's Companion* (1826). There have been a number of extensions and then contractions of the building over the years. After World War II, when it was the Sherwood Inn, a wide verandah wrapped the east and south sides of the house. The historic front porch with Ionic columns was subsequently restored, though whether based on historic evidence or another source (possibly Greystone's porch) is not known. The Stick Style boathouse across the street is one of few private boathouses on this shore of the lake; best viewed from the Ferry dock. **Tour D** resumes just north of Rosilyn, with another associated property, the Ross "Dower House".

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*Courtesy of Essex Community Heritage Organization: Main Street in early 1900s, with porches and street trees, Conger House, Hascall House, and Harness Shop; Essex Horse Nail Co. on Beggs Point, early 1900s; The Garvey House, c.1970s; Harold Tart Grocery Store, early 1970s; Etching of John Gould House, c.1870s; Henry Gould House Entry, nd; Palmer House, late 1880s*

### Tour Maps:

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