



Built in 1810 as a simple graystone building, the Noble Warehouse underwent significant changes in the early 20th century when Colonial Revival features such as the Palladian window and extended entry were added. Following its use as a commercial building, the Noble Warehouse has been occupied by a small factory, apartments, a movie house, and a summer theater.

The Noble Warehouse is one of a handful of buildings in Essex constructed of local limestone, known as "graystone." In the first half of the 19th century large numbers of masons and quarrymen occupied the Lake Champlain region. The availability of material combined with skilled laborers in a prosperous community led to the construction of several masonry buildings.

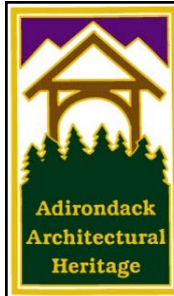
Greystone Manor and the Essex Community Church are the only stone buildings in Essex not built using Essex limestone. Instead, the quarry on Willsboro Point provided the stone for these buildings. The church is designed in the Italianate style using arched windows, a hipped roof, and a tower. Stone quoins help define the corners.



Architecture of the Champlain Valley



Essex



Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH) is the regional, nonprofit historic preservation organization for the Adirondack Park. This tour is one of over fifty events AARCH is offering in our 2009 program schedule. Further information is available by contacting AARCH at 518-834-9328 or by visiting our website at www.aarch.org.

AARCH would like to thank the Town of Essex and Shirley LaForest, Essex Town Historian, for helping to prepare and lead this tour.

*For more information about Essex history contact:
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Be sure to see Shirley's exhibit at the Town Hall about the history of Essex, and the families who have lived and worked here over the years.

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Essex was first settled in 1764 by William Gilliland who then brought his wife and family here in 1766. The settlement was destroyed during the Revolutionary War, but after the war Essex was rebuilt and became the site for numerous commercial enterprises as well as becoming the first location of the Essex County Seat.

Men like Daniel Ross, Gilliland's son-in-law, and Ransom Noble had controlling interest in nearly every endeavor such as stores, mills, a tannery, potash and iron works and a busy wharf. These men held mortgages, extended loans, and accumulated enough wealth to build the large stone and brick homes in Essex. In the case of the Noble family they were affluent enough to loan start-up money to the New York Times newspaper and also to build a second beautiful home in Washington DC, worthy of national recognition.

Because of the enterprises of men like Ross and Noble, many middle-class people such as lawyers, shipwrights, cabinet makers, hotel keepers, mill supervisors and lake captains as well as farmers also came to Essex during the early part of the nineteenth century. By 1820 Essex was considered a chief port on the lake and this promoted the establishment of shipyards and ferries in Essex. With the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1825, Essex experienced a period of economic growth. The growing town required more houses and thus you see here the wonderful homes that fulfilled the need for housing.

The location of Essex on Lake Champlain with its beautiful scenery of water and mountains on both sides of the lake not only provided the means for Essex to become established as a thriving community in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the very same water and mountains have brought tourists and visitors here since the second half of that century.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR...



The original part of this building, which today serves as the Town Hall, was constructed circa 1790 as an inn and tavern, by local businessman, Daniel Ross. In 1799 it was purchased by

Daniel Wright, who expanded the building to the north and lent his name to the establishment, then known as Wright's Tavern. This wood frame, clapboard sided structure presents the simple form, symmetry, and restrained detail typical of early colonial architecture. Though some alterations have been made, the general massing and fenestration have remained intact.

This Greek Revival commercial building was constructed around 1840. The lower level was occupied by a storefront while the second floor provided space for offices or living quarters. Though simple in design, the structure is both functional and elegant. The cornice line is highlighted by brick corbelling, similar to dentil molding. This type of building would have been common on the streets of towns like Essex during the mid-19th century when industry was booming and small towns were in a period of prosperity. Remoteness from large cities meant that towns of substantial population provided a variety of services for residents. Often, shopkeepers or businessmen lived on the same property or in the same building that their business was located. A handful of structures remain along Main Street where evidence of commercial enterprise is still visible.



ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS, MATERIALS, STYLES, FUNCTIONS, ALTERATIONS



St. John's Episcopal Church was constructed in 1835 as a private schoolhouse for the children of H.H. Ross. It came to function solely as a church in 1880, at which point it was remodeled incorporating Gothic elements, such as

pointed arch windows and buttresses.

Sitting high above town, Hickory Hill was the residence of H.H. Ross. Built in 1822, this five bay, brick home features a symmetrical façade, elliptical fanlight over the front door, and a Palladian window— all features associated with the Federal style. This high style residence represents the wealth and prosperity common in Essex in the early 19th century.



The southern half of the Old Brick Schoolhouse was most likely constructed in 1818, though it is possible that it is actually Essex's earliest schoolhouse dating to 1787, and was moved to this site. The bell was originally centered over this southern part and was moved when the school was expanded in 1836 to accommodate a growing population. The school operated until 1867 when the



Union School (the large yellow building at the corner to the north) was built. The schoolhouse was used for public gatherings but is now a private residence.



Palladian Window
A window of large size, characteristic of neoclassic styles, divided by columns or piers resembling pilasters, into three lights, the middle one of which is usually wider than the others, and is sometimes arched.

The popularity of Greek Revival style from about 1825-1860 greatly impacted Essex and the nation as a whole. Commonly a gable roofed building of 1 1/2 or 2 stories, this style utilized prominent columns and pilasters to emphasize the entryway, often with a porch, likening the buildings to Classical temples. A full or partial return often defined the roof line, which was underscored by a wide cornice line.

Many earlier buildings were modified to reflect the changing trends and 1 or 2 story porches reflecting the style were attached to existing houses.



These houses are good examples of a typical gable front design, offering details such as simple entablatures, sidelights, and corner pilasters. Each house is three bays



wide and the offset front door indicates a side hall plan. The porches are most likely additions.