



VILLAGE OF AURORA

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The Community Preservation Panel
James Burkett, Chair
Village of Aurora

To the members of the Community Preservation Panel:

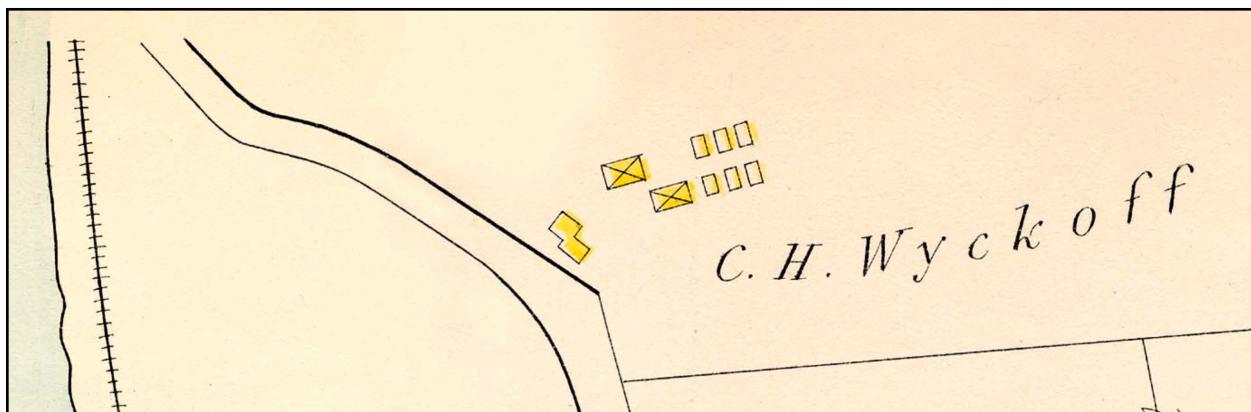
As Village Historian, I am delighted to support the nomination of 576 Main St. Aurora, by the owner, Claire Morehouse, for inclusion on the list of Village Landmarks. To follow established practice of designating properties by the builder and/or especially notable owner, I suggest that this Landmark be known as “the C. H. Wyckoff Grandview [or Lakeview] Farm.” (Wyckoff used both names at different times; I think Lakeview was the first. The present owner may choose the designation.)

To qualify for designation as a Village Landmark, a property must fulfill one or more of the qualities listed in Article VII of the Zoning Law. This property meets more than one of the criteria, as well as fulfilling the basic condition of age over fifty years. Built shortly after 1900 on a commanding rise once known as Franklin Hill (in reference to first settler Roswell Franklin), this farm complex of house and outbuildings certainly “represents an established and familiar visual feature of the community.” More than that, however, it played a significant role “as part of the … economic, or social history of the Village of Aurora.” Of special importance is the Historical Integrity of the property, retaining the “aspects of location, design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling or association for a property to convey its historic significance,” in this case, its role in agricultural history.

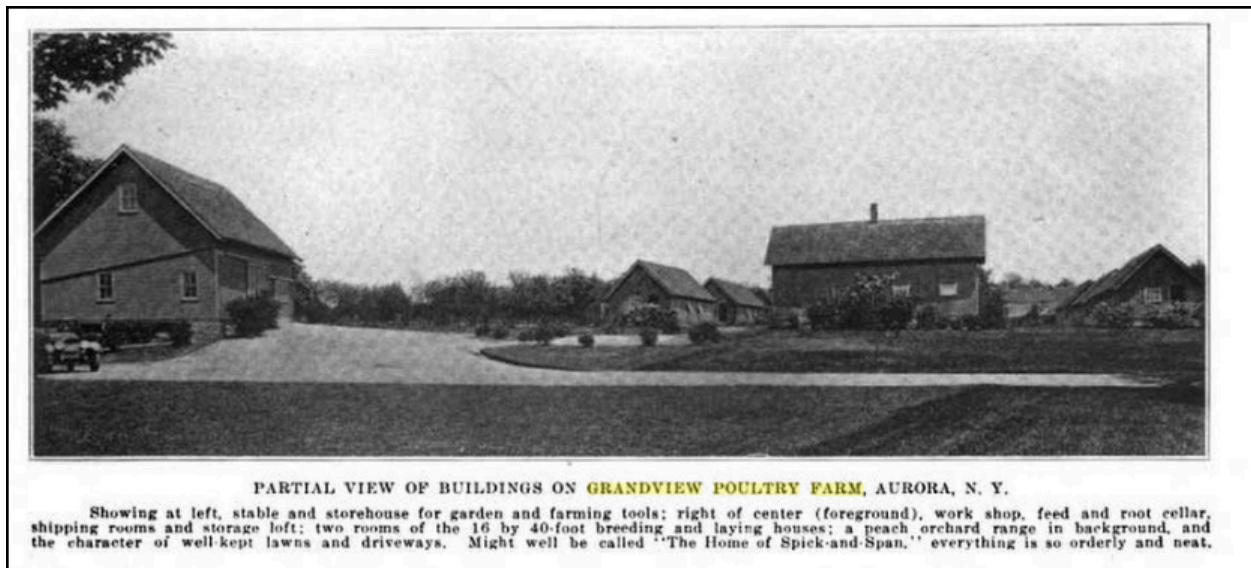
When Charles H. Wyckoff, already a successful poultry farmer in Groton, began construction of Lakeview Farm in Aurora, Dr. Albert Leffingwell described him, somewhat humorously, as “a speculator in hens.” Wyckoff was no gambler; he was already noted as a prominent poultryman,

specializing in the prolific, thrifty egg-laying White Leghorn, which he called "America's Business Hen."

The 1904 Atlas of Cayuga County shows the farm possibly during construction (the main chicken house is turned 90 degrees in the artist's rendition), and the house is depicted nearer the road.



A slightly later article shows the farm outbuildings, immediately recognizable in layout. Today, only the brooder houses and their associated fencing are missing. All the buildings are restored and well-maintained, affording a site integrity that is rare among farms of this age in our area.



Wyckoff's work followed the best practice of its time, and is of interest today for his use of integrated farming methods. Each brooder pen contained a peach (or other fruit) tree as an important part of young birds' nutrition. Leghorns are active foragers, and this method of orchard culture, already practiced and recommended, made the most of this natural breed-specific tendency.

Wyckoff's attention to breeding for eggs production made his breeding stock highly prized; they were sold not only nationally but internationally under his well-recognized name. Today, the White Leghorn is the dominant commercial white-egg breed, thanks to Wyckoff and his contemporaries. His was therefore a substantial role in agricultural and economic history, but also in Aurora's social history, a reminder of the keeping of both home flocks and show birds characteristic of a rural village. For example, Alonzo Zabriskie raised Black Minorcas to show, and the Morgan postcard of the newly constructed Aurora Free Library caught a White Leghorn, perhaps one of Wyckoff's, foraging around the corner of the foundation.

Finally, this property meets a third criterion of Landmark designation: "may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history." Agricultural land is usually classified as "undisturbed" because traditional tillage does not dig very deeply. Chonodote certainly extended over this area, along with an earlier house (prior to 1843).

For all these reasons, 576 Main Street is an excellent candidate for Local Landmark designation.

Sincerely,



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