

**Boathouses on Cazenovia Lake:
Cedar Cove, Ormonde, and Owahgena**

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Thesis: The construction of boathouses on Cazenovia Lake started in the late 1800's.

Some of these buildings were well maintained and have survived the test of time.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1792, Theophilus de Cazenove, an agent for the Holland Land Company purchased 55,000 acres of land in the central New York area. A Dutch naval officer named John Lincklaen had previously explored this area and convinced de Cazenove to make the purchase. Continuing exploration, Lincklaen realized the value of the land throughout the area and de Cazenove purchased even more land. This area, now totaling 120,000 acres was named the "Cazenovia Establishment." The Holland Land Company sent Lincklaen back to the Cazenovia Establishment to begin the settlement and sale of the land. He had surveyed the area with the vision of turning Cazenovia into a commercial city, but in 1817 construction began on the Erie Canal. Since the canal went through Syracuse and Utica, and not through Cazenovia, most of the business flocked to Syracuse and Utica. Lincklaen's vision of Cazenovia becoming a commercial city had ended (Grills Cazenovia 9-22).

After the death of Lincklaen in 1822, his brother-in-law/adopted son, Jonathan Ledyard continued what Lincklaen had started. Ledyard took over all operations of Lincklaen's land office. His goal was to sell off the remaining amount of land owned by Lincklaen, and he eventually settled the quarter million dollar debt that was left behind by Lincklaen (Grills Upland 39).

Jonathan Ledyard's son, Lamburtus Wolters Ledyard, graduated from Harvard Law School in May of 1861. "Returning to Cazenovia, Wolters went to work in the family investment business which had evolved from John Lincklaen's land office." (Grills Upland 78). Wolters' goal was to turn Cazenovia into a summer retreat. His ideas were to construct summer rental properties, to reconstruct a public pier, and to rename

Cazenovia Lake as Lake Owahgena, which to him sounded more romantic. His ideas attracted people from Boston, New York City, and all over the East Coast who then built homes and summer cottages. Wolters promoted the lake:

Cazenovia Lake is a focal point for residents during summer months. Annual regattas attract sailors from wide areas, and local races, ... The Lake, formerly known as "Owahgena-home of the yellow perch," is popular for boating, fishing, and swimming as well for its scenic beauty (Grills Cazenovia 85).

Mansions and other lakeside homes were built on Cazenovia Lake. Wolters, who owned "The Oaks," began a series of parties at his lakeside home. Boat owners and summer residents were always invited. Fireworks, bands, and boating activities were always part of his parties. "The Owahgena," a lakeside clubhouse and boathouse hosted boat regattas on the lake. "The Cazenovia Club," also located in Cazenovia, held annual regattas; the winner received the Preston Cup, donated by George Preston. He was a president of a bank in Philadelphia and owner of the boathouse named the "Ormonde" located on Cazenovia Lake.

THE OWAHGENA

In 1885, "The Owahgena," owned and designed by L. Wolters Ledyard, was constructed. The Owahgena was originally used as a private club. The Owahgena boathouse/social club was built at the southern base of Cazenovia Lake, next to the outlet



Figure 1. Exterior of the Owahgena with tower (photo from Cazenovia 75).

that flows into Carpenters' Pond. The Owahgena is an Italianate Style building, some

features that are typical of Italianate Style are: box-shape building, tall square tower off to the side, its use of balconies, and its roofs which are mainly low hip and slope gently (Grow 34). Wolters promoted The Owahgena by publishing articles in the *Republican*. The *Republican*, currently named the *Cazenovia Republican*, was a newspaper published in Cazenovia. One of the articles Wolters wrote for The *Republican* noted:

It is in its adaptation a boathouse, where boats can be cared for and parties of ladies and children can embark, aided by skillful boatmen, and a reading and social room, where summer members can read, write, enjoy the scenery and have parties, entertainments and illuminations. Ladies also find it a pleasant place to meet with their handiwork to pass their mornings, here the air from the water is usually cool even in mid-summer days. No very wide or extended range of purpose is attempted. The Owahgena does not ambition as a club, or offer the excitement of a casino. It is only a simple place that may gratify the tastes and serve the convenience of those who like quiet ways, and do not weary of the refined surroundings that form an especial charm of country life (The *Republican*, Grills, Upland 107).

The only problem with the articles was that members of the Owahgena Club did not understand what Wolters meant by “quiet ways” (Grills, Upland 107).

On September 10, 1891, some of the members of the Owahgena Club formed their own club, “The Cazenovia Club.” The Cazenovia Club, built by architect John Carpenter, was to rival the Owahgena Club. The Cazenovia Club was built in two different styles, Queen Anne and Colonial. It was located where Cazenovia College’s

South Campus exists today. After the first building burned down, a second one was built under the supervision of John Carpenter. This is also located at Cazenovia College's South Campus and is currently used as an art building by the college. What attracted people to the Cazenovia Club was that it had a casino, a ballroom, a double bowling alley, and a cottage on the lake for members who only spent summers in the area (Syracuse July 28, 1882).

Wolters Ledyard still kept The Owahgena running even though there was now competition. The Owahgena still held its boat races and other activities. On July 18, 1887, President Cleveland and his wife came to Cazenovia. The two started off at Lorenzo and by evening they were at The Owahgena. Events were held on and off the lake in honor of President Cleveland and the First Lady.

On November 23, 1916, Miss L. Murray Ledyard, who ran The Owahgena, sold the club to the Cazenovia Club. The members of the Cazenovia Club were outgrowing the building that John Carpenter rebuilt.

Today, the Cazenovia Club still operates in The Owahgena. A gentleman named Mr. Hobart Cook currently manages the building. Only during the months of May through October does the building get used, because the building has no heat other than that of a fireplace. During the open season members hold meetings, events, and dinners. Mr. Cook mentioned that there would be a wedding rehearsal dinner held there. The Owahgena has three tennis courts that are used in the summer, and also has a tennis program for the youth in the Cazenovia area. The boathouse section of The Owahgena is used to store members' boats during the winter months. The types of boats are generally canoes, rowboats, and Comets (a type of sailboat).

Mr. Cook said that the boathouse part of the building foundation was redone a couple of summers ago. This was because the building began to sink. There was a seventeen-inch slope from one side to another. The dock area ultimately had to be raised five inches. Builders took special care to keep the configuration and the dock the same.

One of the things that remained in the boathouse section was the original lift to remove boats. It is a large manual wooden crank with ropes and pulleys anchoring it. Once the boat is hoisted in the air to a certain height, it can be moved off the docks and through a tracking system. Then the boat can be



Figure 2. Hand operated boatlifts in the Owahgena (photo by author).

brought across the room. During the winter months the boat entrance is boarded off.

Since The Owahgena is a social club, rules are being debated over its handicapped accessibility. One of the battles that was lost to maintain the building's original look was replacing the rope railings with wood railings in the stairways. Wolters Ledyard originally put in the rope, but unfortunately the rope doesn't have the stability of a wooden railing. In the end the rope did stay, but since the wood is placed approximately a couple of inches above it, the beauty of the rope vanishes. Another battle that is still being debated is whether or not to install an electric lift in the building. This would be used for transporting handicap person from one floor to another. Mr. Cook expressed that at one time, many years ago, an elderly lady always wanted to be upstairs on the second level by the bar, so the bartender would kindly go down the stairs and carry her up.

One of the structural parts of the building, which is no longer in existence, is the tower. The tower was sixty-five feet in height. The rumor was that Wolters Ledyard designed a sixty five-foot tower for The Owahgena to intentionally block the view of the lake from "The Meadows," which was owned by Wolters' brother-in-law George Ledyard, since the two of them didn't get along. Currently the stairs that went to the tower still exist in the lower section. The upper part of the tower has been burned down. The lower section of the tower still remains and has been capped. Today people will be reminded of the tower, since the stairs that would have gone to the top still remain.

According to the Cazenovia Republican, The Owahgena was described this way: "The building is of the Queen Anne order of architecture, two stories in height, with a handsome tower reaching towards the blue sky sixty feet" (Grills, Upland 101). Surrounded by grass, The Owahgena on one side had tennis courts for the members; on the other side at the outlet to the lake, was the boathouse, which is attached to the building. Gardens, trees, and shrubberies were located all around the structure. The walls along the outlet were made of rocks. Decks on the second floor went around parts of the building. The lake front side on the second floor is mostly glass. The tower stood tall with windows on all four sides to observe the view.

ORMONDE BOATHOUSE

In 1885, Wolters Ledyard sold the Glenwood farm and all of its property (which is property Wolters had owned) to Mr. and Mrs. George R Preston. George Preston was a president of a bank in New Orleans;



Figure 3. Exterior of the Ormonde Boathouse (photo by author).

eventually his family moved to Philadelphia, where he was again served as president of a bank. Mr. Preston began working on his property, to improve the site where his future summer retreat was going to be built. The property had a steep decline towards the lake and he had sent about 150 men to work on the site (Upland 139). One source says that Frank Furness, who designed Mr. Preston's home in Philadelphia, also designed the Ormonde (Upland 138). Another source says that New York City architect George B. Post designed the Ormonde mansion (Cazenovia 67). The Ormonde boathouse and main home were built in Shingle Style. The Ormonde mansion was built in 1885 and can be found on East Lake Road.

The boathouse was built in an oval shape. It was used during the summers as a place to have tea and entertain guests. The interior was mainly shingle with a large stone fireplace. Windows were placed all around the oval-shape structure. Beams with detailed moldings criss-crossed on the ceiling. Iron plates connecting them detailed the criss-crossing beams. The exterior kept the same shingle style and had a deck wrapping around it. A long patch of ground comes off from the side of

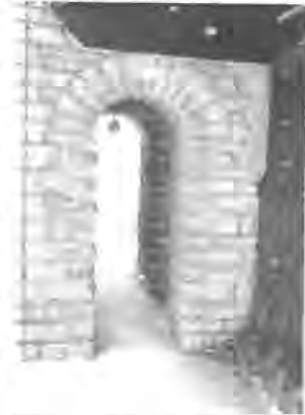


Figure 4. Back entry to the Ormonde Boathouse (photo by author).

the building creating a peninsula which comes out in front of the boathouse. The peninsula creates an inlet where additional boats can be parked. On the back of the boathouse (the side facing the land) is a beautiful stone entryway. The boathouse section of the Ormonde was used to store Mr. Preston's boats. Mr. Preston was avid boater; he sponsored the Preston Cup. This was a boat race in which sailors had to endure a ten-mile course on the lake (Upland 56).

“Ormonde saw four generations live there during fifty years...” (Kennard 79). During those generations, the boathouse was still used to entertain people. It is said that a grand piano was in the boathouse so Miss Alice Preston, a family member who could sing, would entertain guests on some moonlit nights (Kennard 79).

Business partners, Edward Tibbits and Richard Daidone, purchased the Ormonde boathouse in the winter/spring of 1994. The Ormonde came with additional property directly behind the boathouse. This additional property had a newer home, the exterior had of which shingle style appearance. Mr. Daidone and his family, who are from New Jersey, use the home in the summer time and on some weekends in the winter months. Mr. Tibbits owns a new home nearby.

Edward Tibbits and Richard Daidone use the Ormonde boathouse for hospitality purposes. Since Mr. Daidone lives in New Jersey he entertains his family and friends in the boathouse. Since the boathouse was remodeled by the previous owner, boats cannot be stored in the structure. Mr. Tibbits does have boats, including a canoe and a seventeen-foot motor boat. During the summer time, the motor boat is parked in the inlet, while the canoe is stored on land. The fireplace is still used today. The boathouse is now fully operational with a working bathroom and kitchen. It is fully heated by electric heating, which is turned off during the winter months when it is not in use.

Mr. Tibbits said that the previous owner had done lots of work on the Ormonde boathouse. The previous owner was Syracuse advertiser Eric Mower. Mr. Mower had closed off the boathouse section and built two bedrooms, a bathroom and several closets. On the second floor/main room, Mr. Mower installed a contemporary kitchen. It looks like he included part of the porch to add on to the kitchen, since the remainder of the

interior does not look disturbed. Mr. Mower also added in electrical outlets and brought the boathouse up on date to current living standards.

The Ormonde has still maintained most of its historic features like its shingles and large fireplace, but unfortunately due to past owners, the main aspects of using boathouse to store boats have been stripped away, creating the place that it is today.



Figure 5. *Left:* Interior of the Ormonde Boathouse of the past (photo from Cazenovia 76). *Right:* Current Interior of the Ormonde boathouse (photo by author).

CEDAR COVE BOATHOUSE

“Cedar Cove” is located on East Lake Road, in Cazenovia, New York. It was an estate originally named “Clovelly,” owned by Joseph Peet. The estate originally consisted of five buildings. There was a main house, a carriage house, a gardener’s house, a green house, and a



Figure 6. Exterior of Cedar Cove Boathouse (photo from Cazenovia 75).

boathouse. An additional building was built by the Burdens, but it no longer exists. George B. Post, an architect out of New York City, designed the Cedar Cove estate in 1884. It was said to be one of the first Shingle Style homes in the area. In the late 19th century, Henry Burden from Troy, New York came to the area and purchased the estate (Grills, Cazenovia 67). Throughout the years, buildings from the Cedar Cove estate were either given away or sold off as the estate was divided. The different owners later built

additional guesthouses and homes. The current owners of the Cedar Cove boathouse are Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Wilson, who like previous owners own a home that was built on the estate behind the boathouse.

The current owner has maintained the boathouse for the 30 years he has owned it. Due to laws passed by the town of Cazenovia, he and his wife cannot live in it or use it as an overnight guesthouse. Mr. Wilson, who loves to fish, uses the boathouse to store his canoe, sailboat, and rowboat. In the summer months, it is used to entertain guests. Nothing special needs to be done to prepare for the winter months other than shutting the boat entrance and removing the boats from the water. Since heating was never put into the boathouse, it is not used during the winter months, but is used instead to store summer items.

On the lower level, where the boats are kept, is an electric lift, which removes the boats from the water. Mr. Wilson said that the electric lift was there when he first purchased the boathouse 30 years ago. It still is used today and is currently holding his rowboat. In the boat's slip, there is a small arch across from the entrance. It looks like a smaller version of the boat entrance and may have been an exit for a boat. The thought that it may have been used as an exit for a boat is that the arch and the lower half of the structure are Romanesque in style and it looks like it was filled in with concrete blocks. Unfortunately the person who did this is unknown.

Throughout the years, changes have been made on the Cedar Cove Boathouse. Recently, Mr. Wilson replaced the roof's shingles due to the boathouse's age. Mr. Wilson believes that the deck on the back/north side of the boathouse may have been added or extended, because the deck was built around a large tree. Mr. Wilson also said

that the deck on the side facing the water/west side partially came around to the north side. This is now a small bathroom, which was put in at the same time as the small bar.

The interior of the boathouse has been maintained to keep its original charm. When entering the boathouse on the upper level, it opens up into a large room. This room is where events or gatherings are held. The floors and ceiling are wood strip. The ceiling vaults up at a steep pitch and two wooden beams go across the room from east to west. The beams on each end have carvings of a gargoyle. Also, starting on the ends of each beam is a thick wooden arch about the same thickness of the beam that follows along the vaulted ceiling. Mr. Wilson said that the three arched windows on both sides of the boathouse might be the originals from when it was first built. These windows are located in the vaulted section. On the eastside of the



Figure 7. Arched windows in Cedar Cove Boathouse (photo by author).

room, there is a large fire mantel made of stone. Wood paneling, about chair-rail height, goes around the room. The entire paneling is bead board. On the north east corner of the boathouse is a built-in bar and across from that is a bathroom. Next to the built-in bar is a staircase, which leads downward to the boats. The slip is long enough for one boat. Along the sides is a narrow walkway for people to get in and out of the boats. Along the West Side wall is a switch to turn on the electric lift that lifts the boats out of the water.

The exterior of the building is mostly original. The lower half of the structure is all done in Romanesque style stonework (Grills Cazenovia 75). Romanesque style features include heavy rough-cut stone work and round arches (Carley 166). The stone work still remains magnificent in its strength and beauty. The upper level exterior

features half-timber siding, which is: “A type of house construction in which heavy wooden posts and beams form the skeleton of the structure. The area between them is filled in with brick, stone, or plaster” (Whiten 677).

A cantilevered porch wraps around the west side/lake front of the boathouse. A cantilever is part of a structure that projects out without apparent support Used structurally for support of projecting balconies, eaves, etc (Whiten 672).

CONSTRUCTION

“Boathouse” is defined in the Dictionary of Architecture and Construction as “a structure for storing boats when not in use; generally built at the water’s edge, often partly over the water; sometime has provisions for social activities”(Harris 59). The Dictionary of Architecture and Buildings offers another definition of “Boathouse” as “a structure built at the water’s edge to receive boats when not in use. This may be a light structure covering a water slip, or small wet dock, and so enclosing and protecting the boats; or it may be larger and contain machinery for raising boats from the water and storing them above”(Sturgis 315).

Architect Robert Eggleston, who has designed many boathouses on Skaneateles Lake in Skaneateles, New York, served as a source of information regarding current methods of boathouse construction.

The construction of boathouses today differs from the construction of years ago. Today the process of building a boathouse is made difficult due to stringent building codes. Before building begins, various building permits must be obtained from different agencies (See Appendix A and B for permit applications). The Department of

Environmental Conservation (DEC), the Department of the Army, and local agencies are some of the places a homeowner must contact. The DEC's main concern is what is being done to the environment and water, and the Department of the Army is mainly concerned with the water and how structures in the water are constructed. Once all of the permits are approved, then the next stage of the project can begin. This process may take from months up to a year.

When designing a boathouse, a major consideration is what type of boats the homeowner plans on using. This is critical because boats can vary in size. One homeowner may want a boathouse for a canoe, another for an antique boat, and another may want it for a yacht. This will cause the boathouse to vary in size. Inside the boathouse is the slip. In The Sailing Dictionary by Joachim Schult, a slip is defined as a mooring space for one boat in a marina. The designer must figure out how many boats the owner plans on using to determine the number of slips required.

Next the designer must decide how the boat is going to be removed from the water. There are several different ways to do this. One way is to use a boat hoist. A boat hoist is a hoist built from above, with pulleys and cables that lifts the boat straight out of the water; it just floats in the air. Another type of hoist is a hoist built from above but set on a track. It is similar to a regular hoist but when the boat is in the air, the boat can be moved along the tracks either on or off the water. Some tracks extend from the slip, and out into the water, or they may go from the slip onto the docks or storage. The next type is a marine railway. This is set up with "train tracks" running from the boathouse (which is not built in the water) down into the water. The boat is set up on a cart, which is specially designed to hold it. Cables, pulleys, and a motor can transport the boat up and

down the track. A good feature about a marine railway is that additional tracks can be added to lengthen the track. This is helpful when dealing with shallow water.

An important reason to keep a boat out of the water, especially on Cazenovia Lake, is because of the zebra mussel dilemma. The zebra mussel is a form of sea life that was accidentally brought from a different part of the world into local lakes and rivers. Zebra mussels can cause an unbalancing of the eco-system in lakes and large rivers. One of their means of breeding is to attach themselves to boats in boathouses. If too many zebra mussels attach to a boat, it may ruin the dynamics of the boat's flow in the water. One way to prevent breeding of zebra mussels is to lift the boat out of the water when it is not in use.

When the time comes to start the construction of a boathouse, the first step is to put up a cofferdam. A cofferdam is a large rubber tube that has supports in the middle and is filled with water. The water in the cofferdam acts like a set of shock absorbers. The cofferdam is stretched out along the water to prevent any extra water from coming in, and calms the remaining water around the boathouse side of the dam. Another way of damming out the water is to put up a silt fence, a fence with posts set at ten feet on center. The posts are pressure-treated wood, which are held together by wire mesh with a filter cloth covering the mesh (USDA 5A.20).

Once the water lowers and then settles to its new level on the boathouse side of the cofferdam, the next step is to add stone to a section in the water. This allows larger vehicles, like cranes and backhoes to be brought into the water without the fear of sinking. In most cases, the ground must be excavated so the depth of the water in the slip becomes deeper. This is to prevent boats from scraping the lake's surface.

Once the stone is in place, the piers are built. The piers serve as major supports for the docks and rooms or homes to be built over the boat slips. Piers should be built in a cylindrical shape, not square. In the wintertime, a frozen lake can produce lots of pressure from moving ice, and “square piers will snap like a toothpick from the pressure applied from the ice,” according to Robert Eggleston. Round piers will push aside the pressure of the moving ice. Piers can range from three different types of material: concrete, pressure-treated woods, and steel. In order to use concrete, the DEC must approve. The DEC feels that if the concrete isn’t poured properly into the sono tube, the chemical makeup of concrete will contaminate the water. The type of pressure treated wood used is the same type as that used for telephone poles. Steel is usually used in larger boathouses. The sidewalls built from pier to pier or built as dividers to the slips are called cribs. The DEC prefers to use open cribs. Open cribs are functional because the center is hollow and is filled with rocks, which lets the water flow smoothly into the boathouse. It also gives fish a place to hide. The final step to take place is to finish adding in the lifts and the rest of the boathouse structure.

Before the DEC and other codes existed, building a boathouse on the lake didn’t require months of waiting for approvals. Homeowners/designers started constructing their boathouses by using rocks to dam a section of the water out. Homeowners/designers then went ahead and built their boathouses the way they wanted to. Early day boathouse buildings have concrete block walls (for example Cedar Cove), which was allowed in those times.



Figure 8. Oaks Boathouse during construction. Note stone dam on the right (photo from Upland 96).

CONCLUSION

Throughout the years, many structures from large estates to small camps have been built on Cazenovia Lake. Times have changed, and times will continue to change. People will always fish on Cazenovia Lake and young and old alike will be out there on large and small boats. People will always come from miles away just to witness the beautiful splendor of Cazenovia Lake and its boathouses. Even though there are many stipulations for building a boathouse on Cazenovia Lake, it is worth it to keep the lake looking as spectacular as it is.

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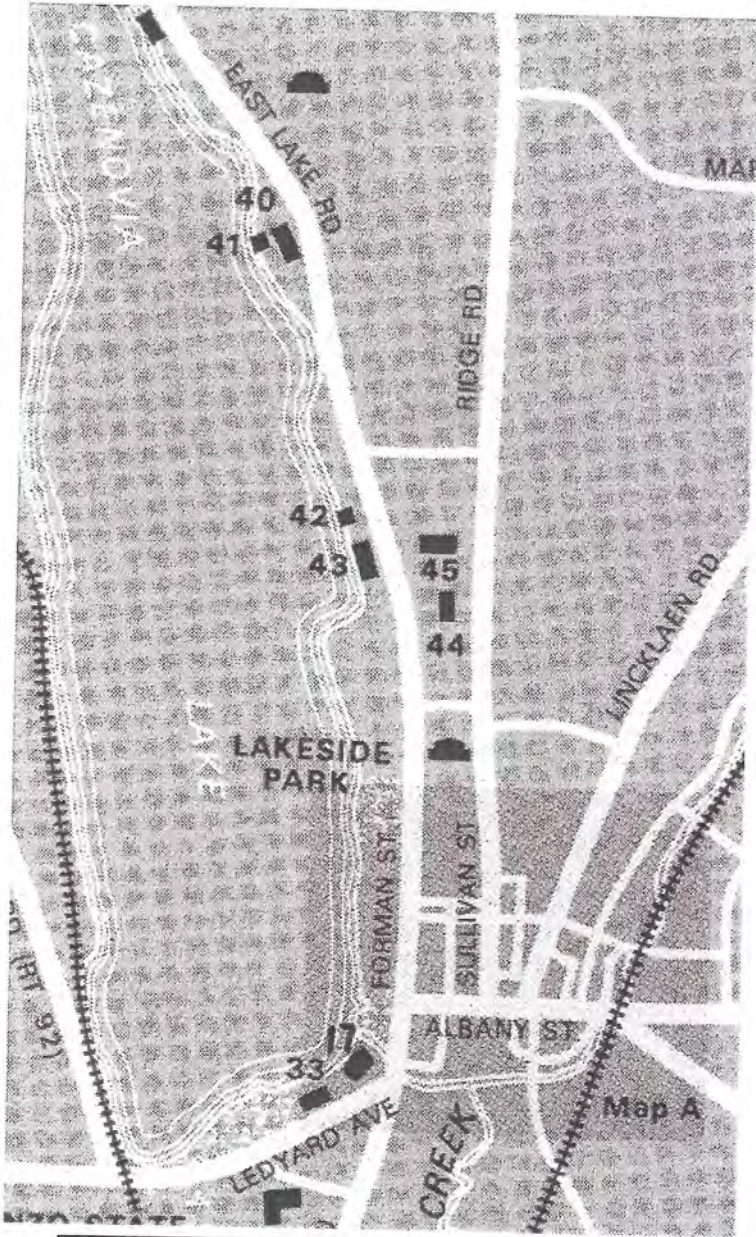
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Map of Cazenovia (photo from Cazenovia 114).



41. Ormonde Boathouse (photo by Author).



42. Cedar Cove (photo from Cazenovia 75).



17. Owahgena(photo from Cazevonvia 75).