



# The Advocate

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
Greetings.....	1
The Story Behind Our Logo .....	2
Who Was Jabez Abel? .....	3
Events for National Preservation Month.....	3
Ask the Expert .....	4

**Greetings from Cazenovia Heritage!**

Welcome to the first issue of the Cazenovia Heritage newsletter, *The Advocate*. Each quarter, we will keep you up to date on programs, what is happening locally in preservation, as well as provide stories of interest. As many of you know, Cazenovia Heritage was created to elevate awareness and knowledge of Cazenovia’s historical architecture, neighborhoods, sites, and objects. We believe that increased knowledge of our historical resources leads not only to greater community pride, but to a greater appreciation of what our historical resources contribute to our economy, quality of life, and sense of place. Our newsletter name, *The Advocate*, reminds us of our role not just as owners or observers of these resources but as advocates for their protection. Preserving our future, not just our past.

After receiving positive community response from focus groups conducted this past fall, Cazenovia Heritage applied for and received approval as a tax-exempt, 501-3c non-for-profit. Our Board and volunteers are being assembled, and our website is being built. Over the next year, we will bring you programs on our historical buildings; the people who built them; and the places, spaces, and things of Cazenovia. For those with more of a hands-on or technical interest, there will be a series on restoration standards, tips, and techniques in the modern age. In May, we will kick off National Historical Preservation Month with both a walking tour and a public seminar. More details will be announced in April. Inside this issue you also can learn the story behind our logo, shown above, and the man behind the story.

We will always welcome your ideas, questions, and comments and hope to see you at an upcoming program!

## The Story Behind Our Logo

Over the past several years, many of us in Cazenovia traveling to and from the Transfer Station have watched the decline of the abandoned house at the corner of Ballina and Stone Quarry Roads. After a while, as it became overgrown with brush, it receded both in our view and in our attention. This house, the Jabez Abell farmhouse, was one of the area's best examples of Italianate architecture. Built in 1870, it was home to a prosperous farm of 95 acres and noted Cazenovia family.



The home's architectural and historical significance was recognized in 1987 when it was placed on the National Register for Historic Places. Described as a two-story, three-bay, cubic structure with a low-pitched hipped roof surmounted by a prominent cupola, it features an entrance with a particularly elaborate portico with ornamental woodwork. A central projecting pavilion and projecting bay windows housed an interior of fine craftsmanship, including a three-story spiral staircase, and walnut and cherry woodwork.

The house had been owned by an absentee owner for over 30 years (its magnificent barn having been sold to and currently in use by Johnson Lumber Co.) and subject to the ravages of CNY winters and summer storms. In late 2019, it came on the market and several of us banded together to explore saving it from a developer's bulldozer. In January 2020, the house was purchased by Brian Coughlin, a local contractor and builder. Brian's future intent for the building was unknown even to himself at that time, other than to save it from demolition. During the spring and summer of 2020, Brian's crew removed interior debris and cleared away brush. Assessments of the structure were undertaken that revealed the extensive damage that time and neglect had wrought.



While the farmhouse still may be sold for commercial development, Cazenovia Heritage is concerned that this is one the community could lose and one that should not have been lost. In the 1960's, the demolition of the extraordinary Pennsylvania Station in New York City became the rallying cry and impetus for the creation of historical preservation law at the Federal and State level. That a historical treasure such as the Jabez Abell farmhouse was allowed to decay to the brink of no return became the genesis of Cazenovia Heritage. It may yet be saved, or it may soon be lost. Regardless of outcome, its proud cupola was adopted as our logo to remind all of us in the years ahead that Cazenovia cannot and will not stand idly by while historical landmarks such as this are destroyed.

We display the logo to honor Jabez Abell and as a reminder of our obligation and commitment to protecting what Cazenovia holds dear.

## Who Was Jabez Abell?

The answer to the question is another question: Which Jabez Abell? The first Jabez Abell was among the first purchasers of land in Cazenovia at \$1 per acre from John Lincklaen on the first day of land sales, June 1, 1793. This Jabez was born in Norwich, Connecticut in 1759; was a veteran of the Revolutionary War; and whose original ancestor had arrived in Massachusetts from England in the 1600's. He was married to Elizabeth Sanford in 1795 in Connecticut and brought her to Cazenovia where they ultimately would have four surviving children. Jabez initially acquired 47 acres in Lot 10 at the corner of what is now Stone Quarry and Ballina Roads, called then and now, Abell Corners. He served as an overseer of the poor (1804) and school commissioner (1812).

Jabez and Elizabeth's youngest son was Horatio, born in 1802. Horatio married Aurilla Whitney around 1835, and they had a son Jabez Abell born in 1841. Horatio remained on the farm and was one of several in school district #9 who established a local library, and it was kept at his house where it flourished up to the time when the school district library system was established by the state.

Son Jabez, born 1841, married Mary Ann Jones. After his father Horatio's death in 1852, Jabez inherited and worked the farm, which had grown to 95 acres. Around 1870, he built his home, the Italianate structure at the four corners. Mary Ann and Jabez had a son Jabez, born in 1870.

This son Jabez, often called Jabez Jr., lived on the farm until 1929 when he sold it to the Johnson family and moved to the village of Cazenovia, where he built a bungalow-style house at #50 Nelson Street. He lived here with his wife, Sarah Wheeler, until his death in 1954. He had an avid interest in history and photographed many places in Cazenovia of historical and personal interest between 1890 and 1910, though few have survived. He succeeded Dwight Williams as the Town Historian at the end of 1926 and continued in this role through the 1940s. His historical papers were published in the *Cazenovia Republican*, comprising over 3500 inches of text, resulting in the *Republican* being awarded the NYS Historical Association award for "Best Publication of Local History among Weekly Newspapers" for 1939 and 1940. His extensive clippings were put into a scrapbook which was acquired on his death by Harry Brown and donated to the library in 1959. Jabez and Sarah had no children.<sup>1</sup>

So, Jabez Abell, the owner of the historic Abell Farmhouse and Barn, was the grandson of an original Cazenovia settler, Jabez Abell, and the father of the Cazenovia's premier historian, Jabez Abell. Got it?

### Cazenovia Heritage Events for National Historic Preservation Month

Since 1973, preservation groups, state historical societies, and business and civic organizations across the country celebrate Preservation Month through events that promote historic places and heritage tourism. Cazenovia Heritage will join the celebration this year, with two free public events:

- A walking tour focusing on architecture of the downtown and adjacent neighborhood on Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM; and,
- A presentation on a preservation topic on Sunday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 2:00 PM, with the location to be announced and dependent on Covid-19 restrictions.

Additional details will be announced in April.

<sup>1</sup> Material extracted from website <http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~nc99usgw/history/index.html> published by Daniel Weiskotten; as well as U.S. Census Records 1800 – 1930, accessed via ancestry.com 10 Dec 2020

## Ask the Expert

**Q:** *My house was built around 1830 – 1850, and the previous owners replaced many of the interior doors with 20<sup>th</sup> century, hollow core doors. We'd like to replace them with something more appropriate. Is there a specific style or design of doors for this period?*

**A:** Let's start with some givens: Doors should be wooden and solid wood. That said, the good news is that doors built between 1750 and 1940 are almost universally made with frame-and-panel construction producing the common and easily recognizable panel door. It gets its name from the vertical panels that seem to float between flat cross and side pieces (known as stiles and rails), that hold the panels in place. There are usually four to six panels per door. The panels can be flat, however, they more often are beveled on all sides to create what's called raised paneling. This creates an illusion that the door is thicker than it actually is. Different styles treat the bevels (or molding profiles) slightly differently, and with different degrees of decoration.

In our area, a house (and its doors) could likely have belonged to any of four styles: late Federal; Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, or simple vernacular, employing different arrangements and proportions of the panels. Door panel and molding profiles would typically match those of a room's woodwork; look first for a clue there, i.e., less elaborate woodwork would call for less elaborate molding treatment. The late Federal period has a smaller, more intricate molding around the panels. Greek Revival marked a gradual shift in style, often using one or two large vertical panels, and with more angular moldings. The two large panels could have smaller panels above and below, or none. In brief, not knowing your house's specific style, a panel door having anywhere from two to six panels would feel right at home. Regardless of era or style, utility doors (basement, attic, storage closets) were often board and batten, with clinched nailing.

If building/buying a new door, choose eastern white pine or poplar. You also can also try salvage at "Significant Elements" in Ithaca or other online source.



Emergence during a Pandemic: One of the 2020 Focus Group meetings that explored the creation of Cazenovia Heritage.