

HISTORY OF THE ADOBE

at

BROWN BROTHERS NURSERIES Penfield, New York

The Adobe (rammed earth) house, built in 1835, stands in good condition today. It is one of the few houses of this type still standing in this part of the country and is now occupied by Brown Brothers Nursery Company who maintain it as their general office. It was built by William Gorse, who came to Penfield from Hartford, Connecticut in 1812. One year was required to build the house. The method of construction as handed down to Mrs. Anson Antes of Fairport, grand-daughter of William Gorse, was as follows:-

"A pen was built on the ground and clay drawn from a nearby creek bed spread over the ground to a depth of about a foot. On this, cut straw was spread to a depth of 3 or 4 inches. Oxen were driven around and around inside the pen to thoroughly mix the ingredients. Plank forms about a foot high were set up on the wall foundations and filled with the clay mixture. As soon as the clay and straw had dried sufficiently to be self-supporting, the forms were raised and another course poured. Floor joists were laid across the walls and another layer poured on top, thus embedding the joists in the wall. When completed a year later, the house was given a thin plaster coat of clay and the interior walls were plastered and kept white-washed. Three fireplaces were used for heating and cooking."

In renovating the building for use as a general office, the Brown Brothers Company attempted to make as little change as possible in this memory-rich old home. Plumbing, heating, and electrical fixtures were installed and new flooring laid on the first floor.

(OVER)

William W. Gorse, born in Hartford, Connecticut, September 10th, 1803, was only nine years old when he came to the Village of Penfield with his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Gorse in 1812.

Little is known of the boys childhood other than that he lived with his parents in a log cabin erected by them soon after their arrival from Hartford, on the site now occupied by BROWN BROTHERS NURSERIES Display Garden.

In May, 1825, when he was 21 years old, William Gorse married Rebecca Tripp, born July 15th, 1798. The records do not show where they spent the first ten years of their married life but in 1835, work was started on an Adobe or rammed earth house. The couple moved into the Adobe early in 1836 as soon as it was completed. Their daughter, Esther, born August 7th, 1833, and the only one of several children to live more than a few weeks, was three years old when the family moved into the Adobe.

Sometime between 1853 and 1859, Esther Gorse married Joseph Burns, the son of a neighbor, John Burns who bought a farm on Jackson Road in 1853. This farm was later known as the Salmon Farm and since about 1925, it has been used by Brown Brothers Company for growing Ornamental Trees, Shrubs and Evergreens, until sold to A. Bradford Squire during 1944.

Joseph and Esther Burns purchased a three acre plot at the corner of Jackson and Whalen Roads, from Esther's father, William Gorse. They built a house and lived there until after the death of Mrs. Gorse, February 21, 1877, when they moved into the Adobe. Of their five children, only one is living. May, born May 21, 1871, married Anson Antes in 1907, and lived on Penfield Road until recently when they moved to Fairport. It is from Mrs. Antes that the dates and other information relative to the Adobe House have been secured.