

# The Wonderful Brick Farmhouse of Savage Farm

by Carol Sisler\*

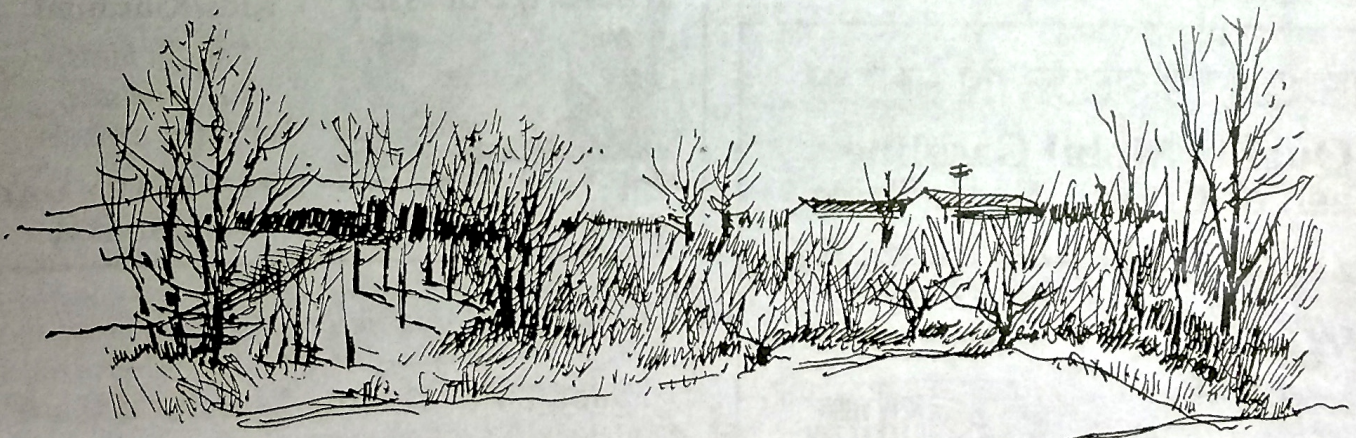
The brick house was built on part of a 600 acre tract awarded to Lancaster Lighfall after the Revolution. While he elected not to settle on the tract, he sold it to Solomon Levy, and by 1825 the land was owned by a Richard Manning. Manning's daughter married Elijah LaBar, who owned the brick house until his death in 1884. The house was built at some time between 1810 and 1829, the clay for the bricks being dug from land near the house. It is believed that the LaBar family welcomed travelers into their six-room house for a meal or a bed. A diary written in 1869 by 14-year old Carrie Manning, a neighbor of the LaBars, describes the interaction among the neighbors in fascinating detail.

After Elijah LaBar's death, the property passed through a number of owners until it was acquired by Elmer Savage and his wife Genevieve in 1922. They subdivided the land and sold 6 acres and the house to Mabel Griswold in 1924. In 1941 Kenneth and Eleanor Beeson bought the house, selling it to Cornell in 1968. Mr. Beeson was the Director of the United States Plant, Soil and Nutrition Laboratory at Cornell. He retired to Phoenix, and recently had his 92nd birthday. His daughter Priscilla remembers that "when my parents purchased the house, it had wide plank softwood floors that were painted black, and the wallpaper needed to be redone. The paint on the floors was taken off with a blowtorch with which we all helped. When the time came to redo the wallpaper, it was discovered that the plaster underneath was held together with horsehair.

"The barn was torn down in the late forties and was replaced with the present garage. The barn had a loft, stalls, room for carriages on the first floor, and two or three additional stalls underneath with access to the pasture. The beams, which went the width of the barn, were at least a foot wide and when the barn was torn down, the Rays... bought them. There was a dairy farm directly across from our place which I believe is now called Texas Lane.

"The water for the house came from a spring with the pump located in the basement. The horses were also watered from the same spring, with a constant supply dripping into a water bin. If we ever had a watermelon in the summer, it was kept in the same bin to keep it cold. In the wintertime I would take out the horse and sleigh. My sister and I would also walk across the fields... to go ice skating on the Savage pond. It was quite a popular spot. I can still feel how cold my feet were by the time we arrived back home."

Cornell rented the house to several staff members before selling it to David Yeh and Rachel Weitzman in 1983. Kendal at Ithaca purchased it from them, and now the residence will continue to enjoy a long life as the guest house for the Kendal community.



*Sawbert  
Savage Farm March 1989  
from Triphammer Road*

\* Local author Carol Sisler writes extensively about Ithaca and the Finger Lakes region. Used by the author's permission, this excerpt from her research was first published in the Kendal newsletter.