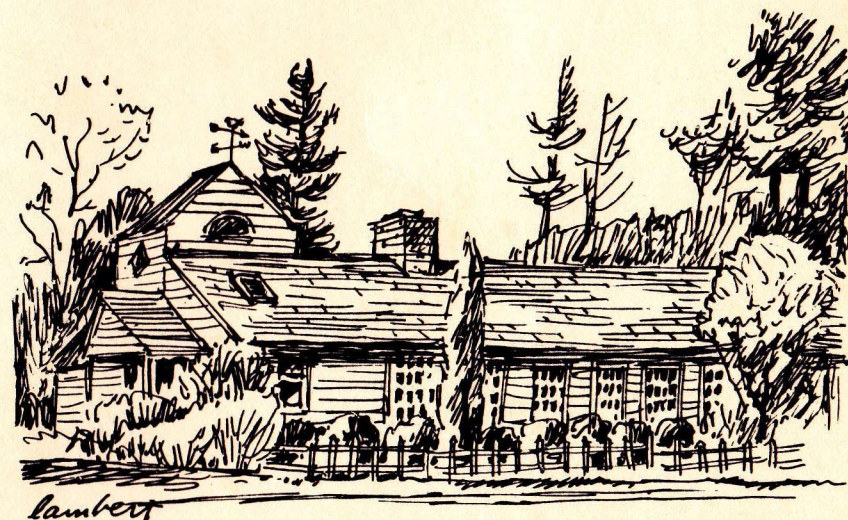


# TWICE "REMOVED" & THRICE SURVIVED

*A Brief History of the Little House,  
Most recently seen at  
303 East Upland Road,  
Ithaca, N.Y.*



July 1993

*By Elizabeth Mount*



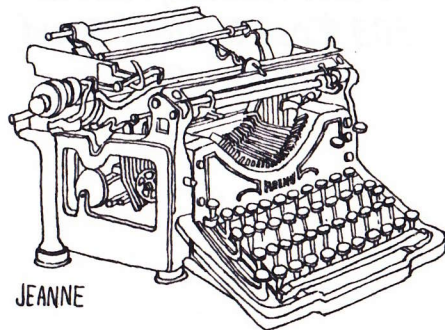
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By Elizabeth Mount  
Ithaca, New York

1993

*Dedicated to  
Everyone who tries to  
Pour New Wine  
into Old Jars*



*April 1993  
A Limited Edition  
Printed in Ithaca, New York, 14850*



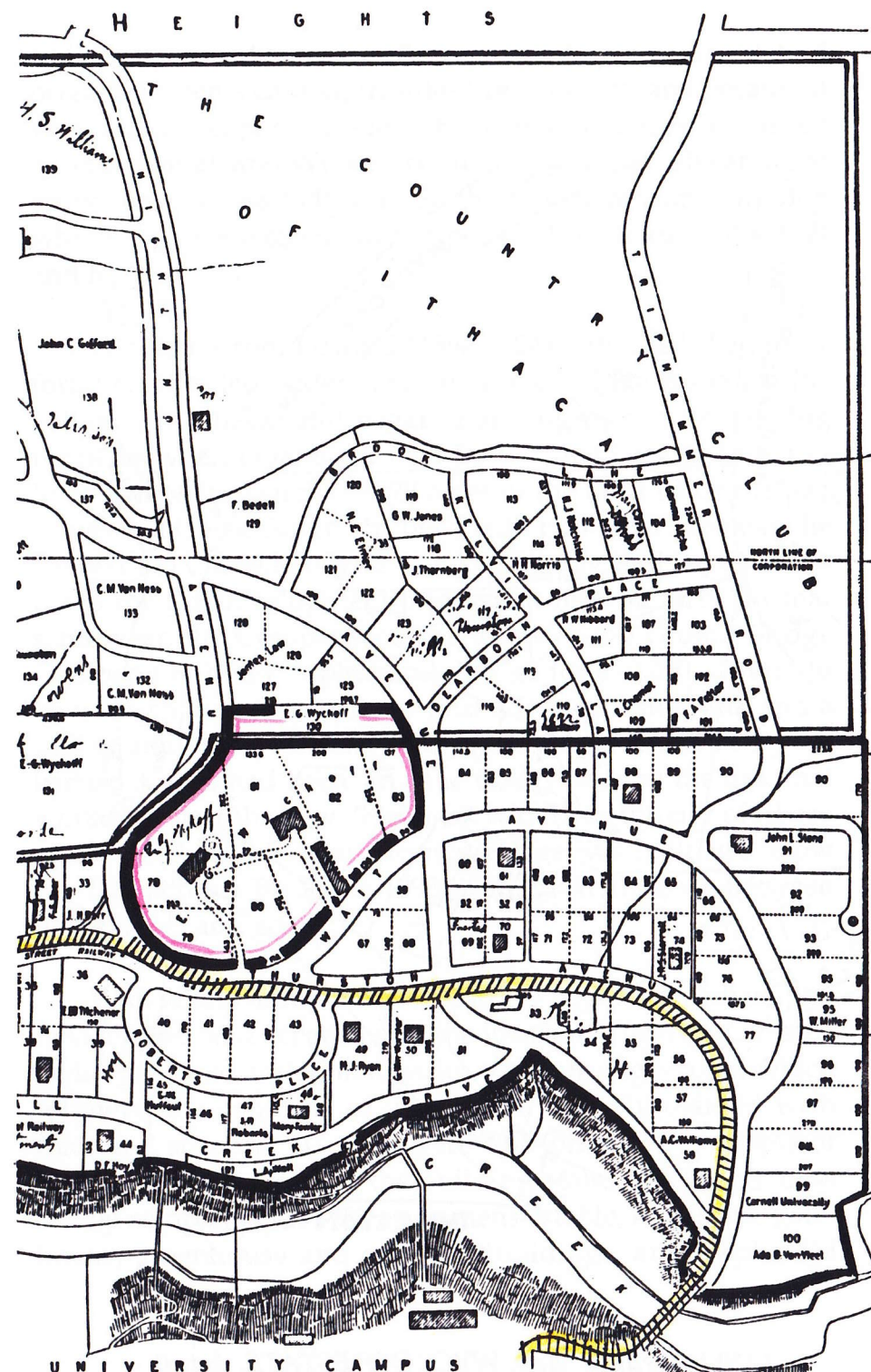
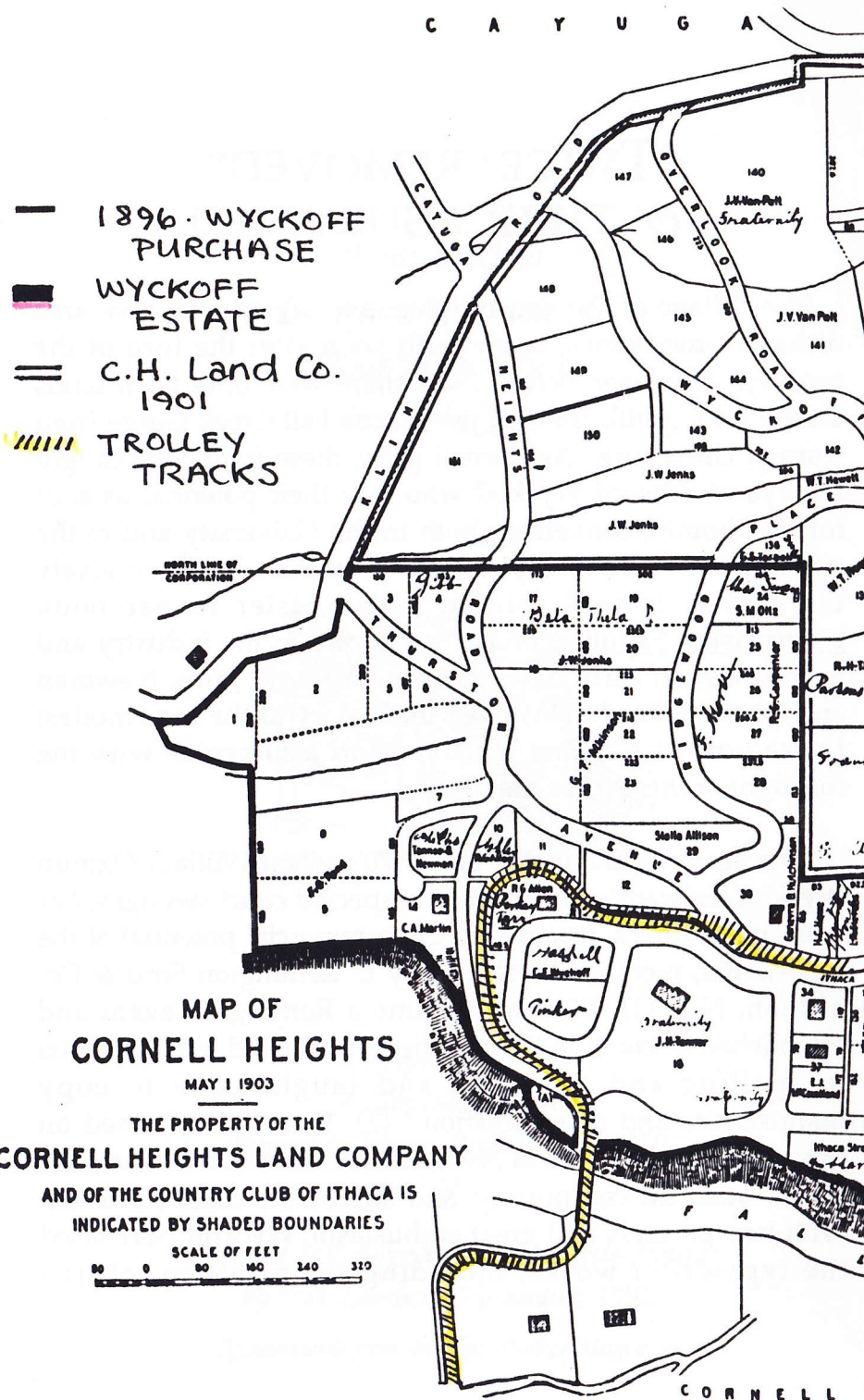
*Pen and Ink Drawing of the Little House  
by Jack Lambert, November, 1992  
Typewriter© from the New Yorker Magazine*

## **TWICE “REMOVED” & THRICE SURVIVED**

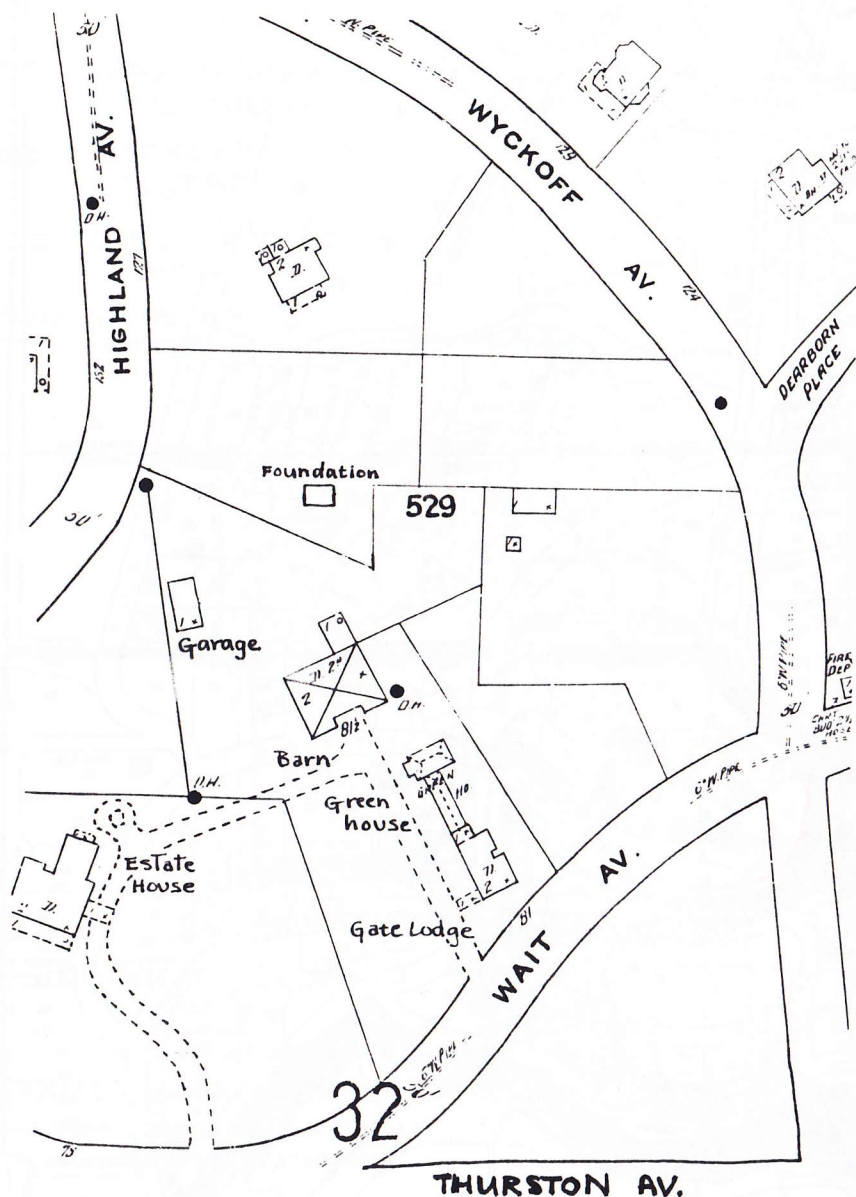
The Village of Cayuga Heights is today an attractive area of handsome homes, many built soon after the turn of the century. However, before 1900, there were only farm lands on the rolling hills that lay just across Fall Creek Gorge from Cornell University. As Cornell grew, these farmlands caught the eye of Edward Wyckoff who saw their potential as sites for fine homes, convenient both to the University and to the city of Ithaca. The story of these properties and their lovely old homes is well told by Carol Sisler in her book Enterprising Families, and is testimony to the industry and vision of such early developers as Wyckoff, Jared Newman and Charles Blood. However, the history of the very modest house now at 303 East Upland Road also begins with the foresight of these three men.

This story begins in the late 1870's when William Ozmun Wyckoff, Edward's father and a respected court stenographer working in Ithaca, recognized the commercial potential of the type-writer, recently developed by E. Remington Sons & Co. of Ilion, N.Y. (1) Wyckoff became a Remington agent and established a school in Ithaca where he "drilled local students in spelling and grammar, and taught them to copy manuscripts and take dictation." (2) Secretaries trained on this new machine were in great demand from Cornell and the Ithaca business community, and soon from cities far away. With two partners and great enthusiasm, Wyckoff purchased the typewriter works, including the rights to sell the









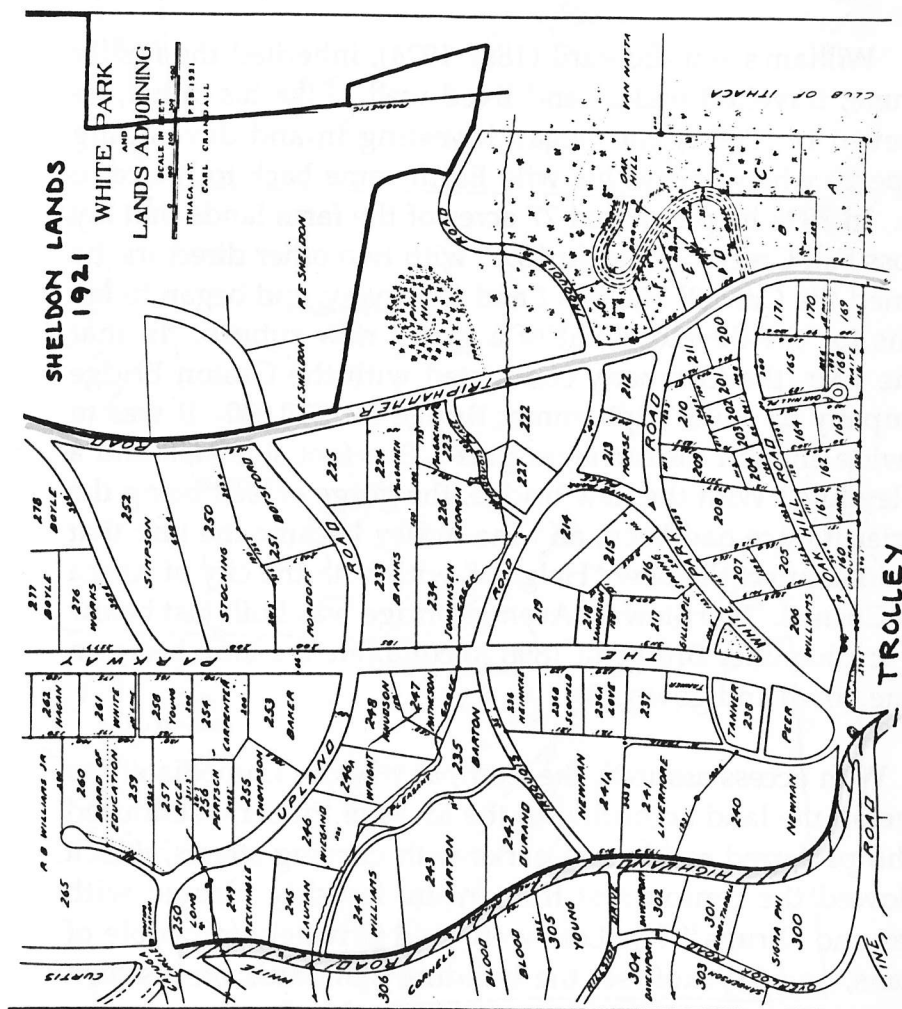
1910 Insurance Map, WYCKOFF ESTATE, detail.

typewriters worldwide. But – probably because it had originally been a clumsy, treadle-driven device, and because it was still very expensive – local bankers were not as convinced of its potential, and Wyckoff could not raise enough capital to move the business to Ithaca. So the factory remained in Ithaca where it prospered, as did the personal fortunes of Wyckoff and his partners.

William's son, Edward (1867-1924), inherited the family fortune, travelled widely and lived well. Like his father, he believed in Ithaca, and began investing in and developing property when he and his wife Edith came back to Ithaca to live. In 1896 he purchased 77 acres of the farm lands that lay across Fall Creek Gorge. In 1897, with two other directors, he formed the Cornell Heights Land Company, and began to lay plans for the development of a grand new suburb. In that same year, the Company contracted with the Groton Bridge Company to build Triphammer Bridge for \$10,000. It was to be wide enough for carriages plus a five foot sidewalk and a trolley line. With the new bridge, the gorge ceased being the barrier it once had been, and the trolley became the link that would connect the new "Heights" with both the city of Ithaca and Cornell. The Stewart Avenue Bridge was built just below the Triphammer Bridge in 1898 to complete the loop between home, town and gown. (3)

With access assured, the Company began immediately to develop the land according to the ideas of Frederick Olmsted "who preferred residential parks with curving streets, which followed the contours of the terrain, lavishly planted with trees and shrubs." (4) Lots were sold privately to people of means, and Wyckoff set the building standards on his own site by completing in 1900 an immense stable, handsome gate-house, greenhouse and other outbuildings, and a splendid





white house designed by William Henry Miller in the Colonial Revival style. (5) As his house was built, other homes went up, streets were graded, trees planted and trolley tracks laid. Other lots were developed in similar if more modest ways, though many of them included their own complement of servants and outbuildings.



What is now a home on East Upland Road began life as one of the outbuildings on the Wyckoff Estate. It was called a "gymnasium" because of the dirt track which ran around the outside. Both inside and out, the one-room 20'x40' building was intended for fitness and sport for the leisured class. It was only a hastily thrown up structure, with no interior walls, ceiling, or floor. It had upright posts, an outside framework, wooden siding and a roof. Evan Sheldon – who was later to live in the "gym" – was told that people ran around the outdoor track, but was not sure what happened inside. (6) It could have been a changing room, an exercise area, or a volley-ball court. It is not identified on the 1910 insurance map of the estate, either because the structure wasn't substantial enough, or wasn't there long enough. However, before the gym could be transformed, new lands were to be bought and sold by local developers Newman and Blood.

Following Edward Wyckoff's lead, Jared T. Newman and Charles Blood continued opening up lands across Fall Creek Gorge. They purchased several hundred acres in 1901 between what is now The Parkway, Highland, and East Upland Roads. (7) These lots show ownership deeds by either of the two men and/or their wives, the Cayuga Heights Park Association (under the Bloods), or the Cayuga Heights Land Company (under the Newmans). Over the next 30 years, Newman continued to speculate in land which he

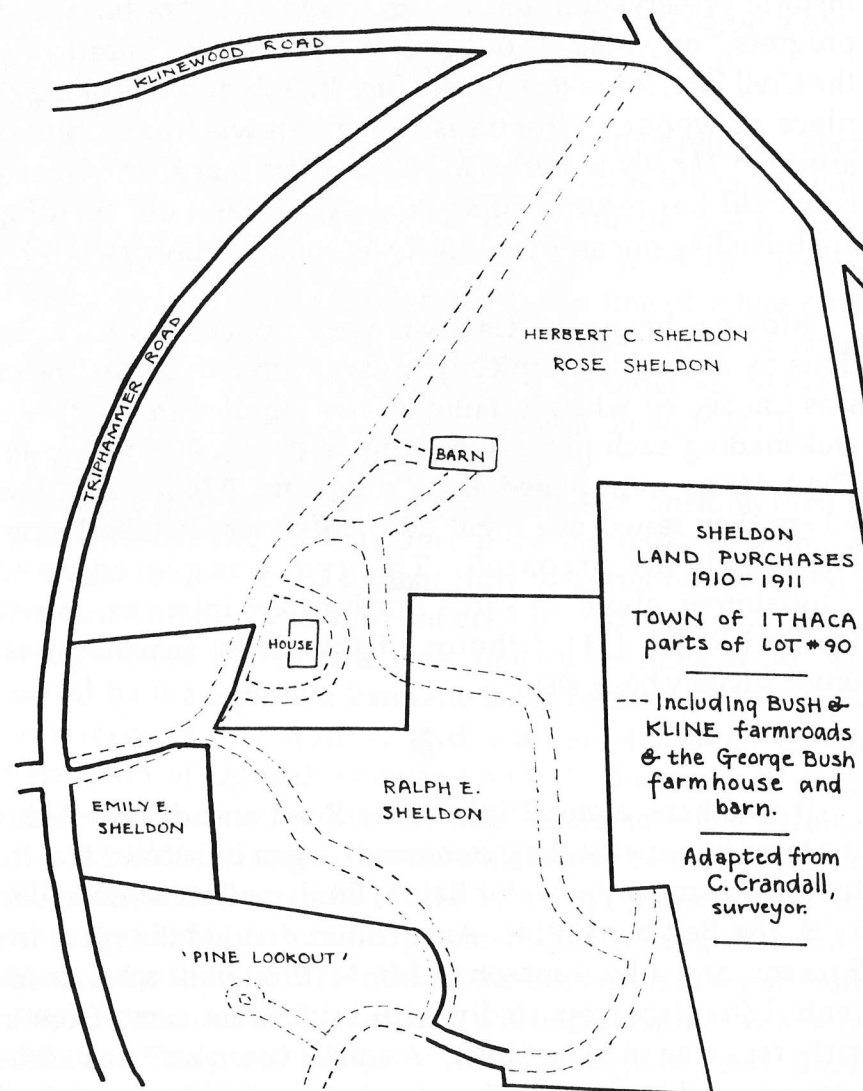


developed and sold privately. Land purchases extended to the White Park area, Sunset Park, the land north of Highgate Road, and the Klinewoods area. Cayuga Circle, at the intersection of Highland and Upland Roads, became a convenient trolley stop for the new lot owners.

Two of the properties acquired by Newman were parts of the Town of Ithaca Military Tract #90 near what are now Triphammer and East Upland Roads. These were the Phillip Kline farm and the Emma L. and Isaac Bush farms. (8) In 1910 and 1911, Newman sold some of this farmland to Herbert C. Sheldon and his wife Rose, their son Dr. Ralph E. Sheldon, and Ralph's wife Emily. Herbert, Rose, and their daughter Pearl moved into the George Bush farmhouse (now 309 East Upland Road). It was a handsome house, built in 1825 in the shape of a thick T, and Sheldon set about enlarging it to suit his family. Above the house, on the rolling wooded lands, he also built a fine barn of 14 x 14 beams, put together with pegs and tenion joins. (9)

Before coming to Ithaca, Herbert had farmed near Lyle, N.Y. Grandson Evan recalls that his grandfather had a garden, a threshing machine, a wood cutting operation and pigs, and that the family did their own weaving. Herbert also had the foresight to know that his three children needed a good education, and sent them all to Cornell. It was this that prompted the family's move to Ithaca where they lived in several locations before buying the Kline/Bush farms. At the time of the purchase, son Ralph was practicing medicine in Pittsburgh, Pa., and neither he nor his father could finance the sale. Emily Sheldon could.

But there was no house on the property for Emily and Ralph, and so Ralph made a thrifty purchase, one that was



*Surveyor's Map, 1910-1911*  
**SHELDON LAND PURCHASES, detail.**



not uncommon for the times. He bought an existing structure – namely the Wyckoff gymnasium – and had it moved to the new land. Calling it “removal,” moving houses had been a fairly common practice during the 19th century, not for historic preservation, but because they were “in the way of progress,” or would be of better use elsewhere. Shortly after the Civil War, four-story brick office buildings were taking the place of wooden structures in downtown Ithaca, and an article in *The Ithaca Journal* in 1870 reports that a “Mr. Dean of Newfield has resumed operations again, and old buildings are travelling our streets as lively as young elephants.” (10)

Moving the gymnasium was not an onerous job. It was done by cutting it completely in half with handsaws (the cut was uncovered when installing a bay window in the 1980's), and loading each piece onto a horse drawn lumber wagon. The wagons were pulled about a mile up Triphammer Road where they rested one night on the dirt road while the new site was being prepared. The gym was placed at 901 Triphammer, about 75 yards north of the intersection with Upland Road. (11) (Photos of this early removal have unfortunately been lost.)



It was here, along Triphammer Road and directly below the farm house, that the gymnasium began its second life, this time as a summer home for Ralph, Emily and sons (Evan born 1909, and Bert born 1914). An architect divided the space into 5 rooms, and a local mason (a Mr. Marion) built a handsome central fireplace, reportedly with bricks that came from an early repaving of State Street. A small “sunroom” was added onto one end in about 1920 to cover a small cellar space, built to house the pipes that brought water down the hill from Ralph's spring. (12)

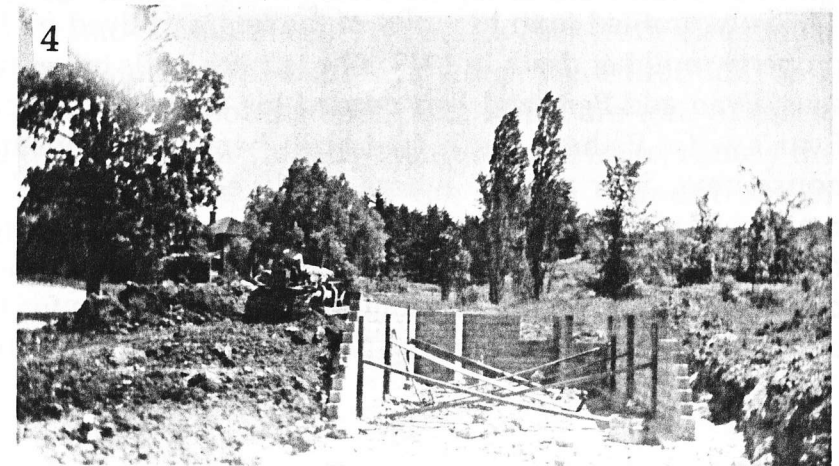
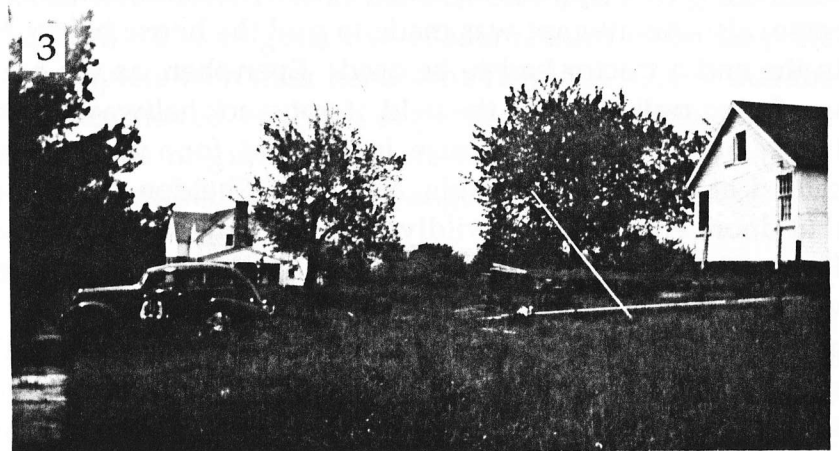
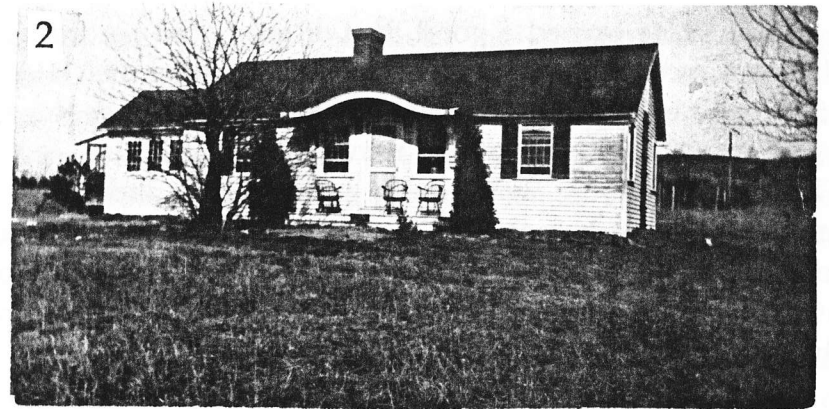
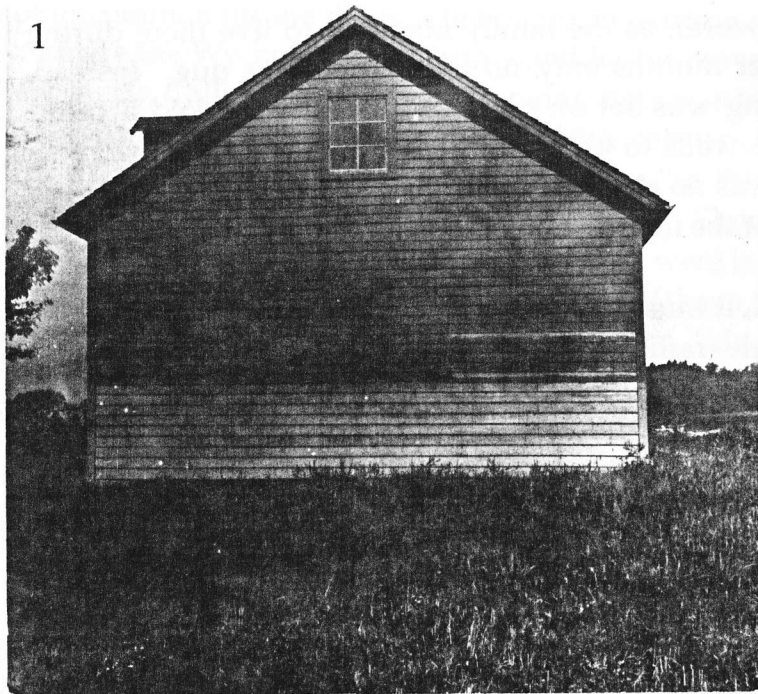
However, as the family intended to live there during the summer months only, no foundation was dug. Instead, the building was set on piers, with straw banked around the outside walls to keep out the wind. The floors were single, there was no electricity, and mail had to be picked up a block away at the intersection of Upland and The Parkway.

Still, it must have been a delightful summer retreat. There was little traffic on the dirt roads (Upland was not tarred until the mid-1940's). Early cars venturing up the steep hills after a heavy storm were sure to get stuck. (13) A nearby orchard flourished. Emily planted the handsome line of white pines which ran from the barn down to her house, most of which stand today. Evan Sheldon quotes his mother as saying “It was a wonderful place for three months of the year.” (14)

But this arrangement was not to last. Dr. Sheldon died in Pittsburgh treating patients during the influenza epidemic of 1918, and Emily moved permanently with her boys into their vacation home. Evan remembers the discomfort of living through Ithaca winters in a house fit only for summer use. He studied by the light of a kerosene lamp because there was no electricity in the house, and walked 4 blocks to the intersection of Upland, Highland and The Parkway (Cayuga Circle – at the corner of the Newman Estate) to ride the trolley to the DeWitt School in downtown Ithaca. Sometime in the early 1920's, Herbert paid for the lines and poles that would bring electricity to the properties, later selling them to a power company. In 1924, he sold the big farmhouse and built a small house in the pine stand at 1001 Triphammer where he lived near Emily and the boys with his daughter Pearl. Pearl lived there until her death in 1966. (15)







- (Clockwise) 1. Gym placed at 901 Triphammer Rd.  
 2. Gym redesigned as house. 3. Car ready to pull house.  
 4. Foundations prepared on Upland Rd. (note tractor on left).  
 5. Back of house, looking towards Upland Rd. and Felton house.

*Photos courtesy of Evan Sheldon.*



Emily now owned a good deal of land, and according to the insurance maps of the time, she began selling lots. (16) In 1939, one family wanted the lot where Emily's house sat, and so she simply sold the lot and moved the little house – again! This time the house would have a foundation and the other amenities of a home. The second move was to its present location at 303 East Upland Road, and while only a block away, it seems to have been a much more hazardous move than the first.

This second move was engineered by an itinerant contractor who apparently didn't know much about house removals. An attempt was made to pull the house by car, but in the end a tractor had to be used. Even then, as the house was being pulled across the field, it got stuck halfway, and the family had to live in the house, in the field, for a week. It had settled at an awkward angle, and Evan Sheldon remembers that doors either swung wildly open, or hardly opened at all. Rescued eventually, the house was pulled to its new site where a proper cinder block foundation had been prepared, giving the house a real, though unfinished basement. The sunroom was turned into an indoor bathroom. Lawns were seeded, and shrubs, trees, and gardens put in. This was to be a third life for the house - a year 'round home at last.

Emily profited from her sales of the lots, and lived on her property until her death in 1949. She left her lands to her two sons, Evan and Bert, and Bert deeded his lands to Evan and Evan's wife, Esther. Emily had built herself a very small house next door at #305 where she lived during WW II, renting out her home to a naval lieutenant. When Evan returned from the war, he made it into an office for a new business venture, selling ammunition, parts and tools for the building of hunting firearms. (17) He enlarged the office

once, but the wholesale business, called General Sporting Goods Corp., soon outgrew the space and Evan and Esther moved with it to East Shore Drive in Lansing, N.Y. where the business prospered. Emily's house at #303 left the Sheldon family in 1955, after which it changed hands at least six more times until 1973 when it was purchased by Tim and Elizabeth Mount. (18)

Even now, life is not dull for the little house. In 1977 the Mounts added three rooms and an enclosed porch on to the west end, and in 1988, a family room, bath and a 2nd story bedroom were added on to the east end (removing the sunroom/bath). The original five rooms remain essentially the same, complete with their handsome fireplace. Given that the house was moved twice, it is perhaps inevitable that the corners of the original rooms are no longer at right angles, and that the striped wallpaper hangs in unexpected ways.

But the house did survive, and it remains a cozy home, full of history and charm. It fronts quite closely onto East Upland Road, and so there is no privacy there. But it is the generous backyard – now with extensive perennial beds and shrubs, mature yews, willows, maples, pines, and an apple tree – that extends the space and beckons visitors to this “twice removed” house. It is a good example of the value of putting new life into old buildings. Two others exist from the original Wyckoff Estate in the buildings which were first built as a gatehouse and a potting shed, and which are today homes. And on the Sheldon property there are three more, namely the home which today rests on the strong foundations of Herbert's barn; a home which was once no more than an office space; and the home that truly began life as a gymnasium.





## FOOTNOTES

1. All area history from Sisler, pp. 86-122.
  2. Sisler, p. 87.
  3. Map of Cornell Heights, 1903.
  4. Sisler, p. 90.
  5. Wyckoff Estate, Insurance Map, 1910. The white house was torn down in 1964 to make way for apartments, but, ironically, the gatehouse and a potting shed (much improved) are now homes at either end of Lodge Way.
  6. Evan Sheldon, interview, March 1987.
  7. White Park & Lands Adjoining, map, 1921.
  8. Sheldon Land Purchases, map, 1910-1911.
  9. This barn was one of the last to stand in Cayuga Heights (see photo, *The Ithaca Journal*, October 17, 1957). After it was demolished, a home was built (#319) over the old foundation, where the Rusten family lives today. The old working pump still stands by the front door.
- Residents would be interested to know that before Upland Road existed, Kline Road came down from the Kline farm near what is now "The Corners," ran behind what is now 303 East Upland Road, intersected with Triphammer near Iroquois, and passed down to the intersection of Highland and The Parkway, where the present Kline Road today continues on down to flat ground at Percy Field (now Ithaca High School). The top half of Kline Road was abandoned in about 1900.
10. Information about house removals is from a Cornell

MA thesis by Julee Johnson, excerpts printed by Historic Ithaca-Tompkins County in 1990. It is another twist of fate that Julee lived at #319 E. Upland Road while she worked on the thesis!

11. The maps and neighbors' recollections are unclear about this address. On the Insurance Map of 1929 (which has been updated with pasteovers), you can see where there had been a small house between #901 and #903, and another at #905. They were both later pasted over.
12. Memorandum on an Agreement, July 1910. The spring belonged to Relph, though it was located on his father's land, and served both homes. The pipe leading to the farm house was buried, but the pipe to Ralph's house was originally above ground (except where it went under Upland Road) since it was only in use in the summer time. Emily later had a ditch dug to bury the pipe and bring the water into her house through this cellar space.
13. Carol Schmitt, interview, March 1987.
14. Even Sheldon, interview, April 1987.
15. Salvatore Indelicato currently owns both 309 E. Upland where he lives with his family, and 1001 Triphammer, home of his son Charles. Mr. Indelicato purchased the farmhouse in 1963, and found many original documents in a shed.
16. Insurance Maps, 1921, 1941, 1951.
17. The business at #305 has seen many astonishing changes, and is now home to Leonard and Sally Elkins.
18. Abstract of Title, 303 East Upland Road: see excerpts.



## ABSTRACT OF TITLE: EXCERPTS

The first mention of the property at 303 East Upland Road is recorded in an Executor's Deed selling part of Lot #90, Town of Ithaca, to Phillip Kline in 1823. It becomes part of the Newman-Blood properties in 1907. Contiguous portions of Lot #90 (first entered in 1874) pass from Emma L. Bush to Newman from 1903 to 1908. Robert Bush also purchases a farm in Lot # 90 in 1834, and this too passes in various parcels to Newman and Blood from 1904 to 1909.

Of related interest is another purchase from Lot #90 by Newman and Blood which leads to an agreement between Newman-Blood and the Ithaca Street Railway Company in 1904. This "Provides for the construction and operation of the Ithaca Suburban Railway running from Renwick to Thurston Avenue across Lot 88 and across Highland Road on Lot 90. It requires a five cent fare, and adequate service. The name of this railway was afterwards changed to the "Ithaca & Cayuga Heights Railway."

Finally in September of 1910, parts of the Kline and Bush farms are purchased by Herbert C. Sheldon and his wife Rose. Other parts are set aside to be "conveyed" to Ralph E. Sheldon, and that deed is recorded in April of 1911. A parcel of 2.05 acres at the southwest corner of this land is deeded to Emily E. Sheldon, wife of Ralph, and eventually can be identified as the property at 303 East Upland Road.

Some terms of the deeds are that each party shall have the privilege "to connect with the water pipes, telephone poles, and electric light poles (and gas mains if installed) upon the roads running through the lands of (Newman-Blood), by the

nearest accessible roadway." Each party also agrees not to affront the other with any "barn, stable, piggery, hennery, or other objectional outbuilding, or high or unsightly fence, or collection of refuse or rubbish" without written consent of the owner on either side. A subsequent transaction notes that "This does not apply to a well kept garage or stable. It is further agreed in case any garage or a stable is placed within said limits, that it shall be of artistic design, and so placed, or so much concealed by shrubbery as to be as little objectionable as possible."

Sheldon Road is first a dirt track on Emily's southern boundary line with Jared Newman. In 1927, Emily and Newman grant "to each other a right of way for either a public or private road" which becomes Water Tank Road, leading to what is now the Village of Cayuga Heights water holding tank. (In between insurance maps 1941 and 1951 it becomes Sheldon Road). Emily grants the right of way on the road to the Village in 1932, to get frontage for her south facing lots. In April of 1947, the Town of Ithaca accepts the grant of the road and "agrees to use, maintain, and permit the use of the said right of way as a public highway."

Another right that is granted with each transaction of deeds concerns water. As Emily sells parcels of land to new buyers, she gives each the right of way for a water pipe line to cross her property from Triphammer Road. Later on the rights included gas line easements.

Emily died in September of 1949, and the land passed to Evan and Bert, Emily's two sons. Bert deeded his holdings to Evan and Esther, wife of Evan. The property was then sold to the following families: Klaus, 1955; Van Vleck, 1959; Elkins, 1962; Russell, 1964; (and back to Elkins?); Morusty, 1968; Ridenour, 1970; and Mount, 1973.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*With Especial Gratitude to  
All Those who Loaned  
Their Materials and their Memories*



**Abstract of Title** of part of "Cayuga Heights," situated on Military Lot #90, including deeds, mortgages, and assignments. Held by the Tompkins County Trust Co., July 2, 1973.

**Interviews** with Ithacans Carol Sisler, Robert Kennerson, Jack Burns and Donald Sheldon; Villagers Louise Boyle, Leonard Elkins, Salvatore Indelicato, and Carol Felton Schmitt; and Evan H. Sheldon, grandson of Herbert E. and Rose Sheldon, 32 Riata Road, Alamogordo, N.M.; March and April 1987, and December 1992.

**Insurance Maps.** Ithaca, N.Y., Sanborne Map Company, Publishers. 1910, 1919, 1929, 1941, 1951. In the collection of the DeWitt Historical Society, Ithaca, N.Y.

**Map of Cornell Heights,** May 1, 1903. In the collection of the DeWitt Historical Society, Ithaca, N.Y.

**Sheldon, Evan H.** Private correspondence, incl. photographs. August 23, 1982.

**Sisler, Carol U.** Enterprising Families, Ithaca, New York; Their Houses and Businesses. Enterprise Publishing, Ithaca, N.Y., 1986.

## ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

**Loaned by Salvatore Indelicato**

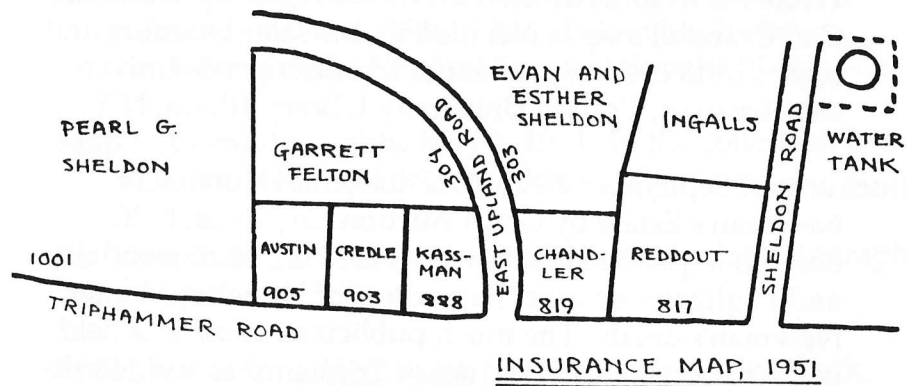
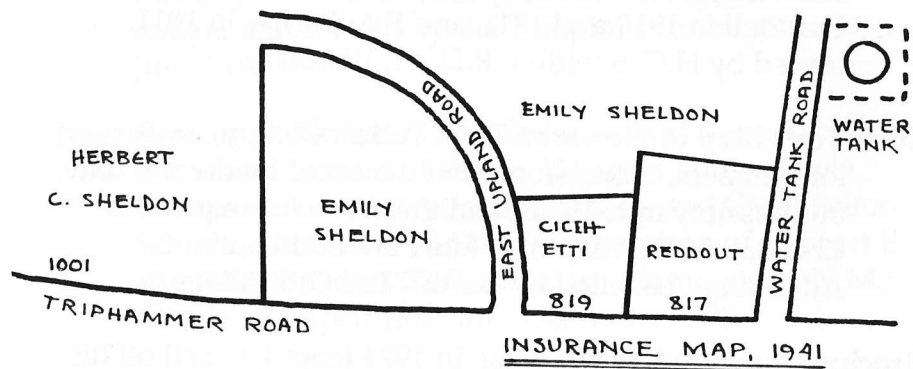
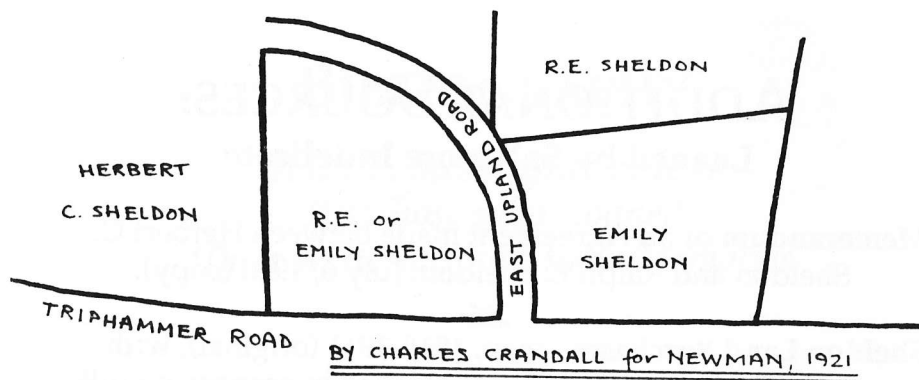
**Memorandum of an Agreement** made between Herbert C. Sheldon and Ralph E. Sheldon, July 6, 1910 (copy).

**Sheldon Land Purchases,** map, 1910-1911 (original), with barn, house and farm roads marked in orange; on full sized map of Newman Tract as surveyed by C.L. Crandall in 1910 and 1911, and F.A. Barnes in 1911; signed by H.C. Sheldon, R.D. #1, Ithaca.

**Surveyor's Map of Newman Tract,** full size (copy), with lot numbers, dimensions, and names of roads. No date, but possibly mid-1920s, and therefore subsequent to Crandall's 1921 map of White Park and Lands Adjoining. Labelled by hand: "The Old Village."

**Brochure** prepared by Newman in 1921 (copy), to sell off his White Park Lands at "two-thirds the regular price." The Carl Crandall map is included in this sales brochure and comes from the Department of Manuscripts & University Archives, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, N.Y.

**Brochures** of September 23-25, 1937 (original) Auction of Newman's Estate by Gerth Auction Co., Utica, N.Y. Sold off at public auction were Pine Hill, Klinewoods, and Highgate sections "Regardless of Value" soon after Newman's death. The much publicized affair was held in a striped tent at the corner of Triphammer and Northway Roads (see Sisler for additional information).



1921, 1941, & 1951 Insurance Maps,  
SHELDON PROPERTIES, detail.