

SAX HOUSE
NYS ROUTE 9 AT SOUTH JUNCTION ROAD
TOWN OF PLATTSBURGH
CLINTON COUNTY, NEW YORK

By: David C. Glenn

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William Gilliland (1768-1847) transferred the twenty acres the Sax house now sits on to Alfred Keith on August 18, 1809. The sale price was five hundred dollars. There is no indication by price, description or tradition that at the time this parcel was anything but vacant land.

The 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803 assessments of the Town of Plattsburgh showed William Gilliland as owner of 1,750 acres of the Friswell Patent. None of these show a house on any of Gilliland's land. The Alfred Keith property was at the south edge of the Patent and was a part of Gilliland's land until 1809. An earlier assessment of 1798 does not mention the Friswell Patent or Gilliland. These are the only assessments available.

Keith erected a blast furnace on the property in 1809 and operated it over the next several years with various partners while retaining title to the land. The Town of Plattsburgh assessment roll of 1811 shows "Keth and Wood" as owners of an 18½-acre lot and furnace in the Friswell Patent, no house is listed. Keth is probably a phonetic misspelling of Keith.

In 1812 Jacob Sax married Rowena Keith, believed to be a sister of Alfred Keith. At the beginning of the War of 1812, Sax was in Chazy Landing. On the approach of the British he removed all his goods to Orwell, Vt. The war over, they returned to Chazy, and then later moved to the Salmon River. Sax first appeared connected with the Keith Blast Furnace in 1818 or early 1819. The *Plattsburgh Republican* carried a notice of May 31, 1819 that the Salmon River furnace would be in blast by the 15th day of June operated by "Keith and Sax".

According to a Sheriff's sale Sax was occupying the 20-acre lot in May of 1821 but Alfred Keith redeemed the property, indicating Keith was still the owner. It is believed to be about this time that Jacob Sax built the present stone house on his brother-in-law's property. It is concluded based upon the preponderance of evidence that the SAX HOUSE was built by Jacob Sax circa 1820.

Alfred Keith, and his wife Hannah, then living in Sheldon, Vermont transferred the property to Jacob Sax in 1822. The Sax's most likely occupied the house from circa 1820 until 1830 when disaster struck in the form of a flood on July 24th of that year. This freshet, as floods were then called, took out the blast furnace, water wheel, dam, forge and all of his other buildings near the

river. All that was left were the house and shop up on the hill. The Sax's soon moved on with their lives not by rebuilding at Salmon River but by moving to the Town of Willsboro.

Jacob and Rowena Sax sold the Salmon River property to Saquezs of New York City in 1832. The property was sold to Robert Platt in 1834 then transferred to Charlotte Platt in 1837. In 1843 it went to Knox and Whitlock of Troy, New York who sold the property in 1845 to a Trustee for Mary Elizabeth (Elmore) Gilliland, wife of William Gilliland (1812-1886), the third of that name. The Gilliland's lived in the house from 1845 until 1880. It was purchased by Mutual Life Insurance of New York in 1881 and sold to Cyrus P. Day later that year. Cyrus did not live long after this and the trustee of his estate sold the property to his son Frederick in 1884. Fred married Mary Gilliland, the daughter of Henry P. Gilliland in 1885 and she moved into his home.

Fred died in 1926 and Mary continued to live in the house until she died in 1947. The house had a Gilliland connection from 1845 to 1880 and again through Mary Gilliland Day from 1885 until 1947. The property then reverted to their children Thurber Day, his wife Ruth, and Frederika Day Mason. Frederika married Edward S. Mason of Peru in 1946 and she became sole owner of the property. They lived in the house for a time until she sold the property to Carl and Natalie Davis in 1958. It is still in the Davis family as of 2009.

In 2002 the Town of Plattsburgh erected a blue and yellow New York State historic marker to commemorate the site which reads as follows:

