

The Village of Elbridge, population of about 1200, located on NYS Route 5, approximately 15 miles west of the City of Syracuse was once a wooded wilderness crossed by Indian trails. Following the Revolution (1775-83), Central New York was divided into military tracts that were to be given to veterans of that war, in lieu of payment for their services. The first settler was Josiah Buck, a government surveyor sent here in 1791 to map the area. He was so impressed that he returned with his family in 1793.

Captain William Stevens, his wife and their six children arrived shortly thereafter near present day 210 West Main Street. The village and town were likely named by Captain Stevens after Elbridge Gerry, a governor of Massachusetts who along with Captain Stevens participated in the Boston Tea Party. Besides it's location on the established thoroughfare (the Indian Trail that became NYS Route 5), Elbridge had many attractive resources: Skaneateles Creek, provided water for power and fishing; there was fertile farm land and Carpenter's Brook, which flowed at the eastern edge of the village.

As more people began arriving, water powered mills, churches, schools and taverns were established. Homes and businesses soon sprang up. Elbridge separated from the Town of Camillus in 1829 because of the growth in the Town of Elbridge. The Village was incorporated in 1848 when the need for raising money through taxation became needed to fund sidewalks. Many of the buildings along Main Street date from the early 1800's to the 1890's. Thus during this period Elbridge grew into a prosperous industrial and farming community. This growth peaked between 1850 and 1875, began to level off and even shrank a bit until after World War II.

The industries and businesses that had been located along Skaneateles Creek: National and Stacey Chair shops, the Grist and Saw Mills, Amphion Piano Player Company, the Elbridge Electrical Manufacturing Company (maker of electric motors, generators and producer of the first electric starter for automobiles), all had either gone out of business or moved to Syracuse by 1913. They could not continue business when the growing City of Syracuse demanded more water from Skaneateles Lake. Roads were paved, the motorized truck was invented and electricity came to pass. The first home on Onondaga County to be lit electrically was 613 Route 5 West. Employees moved out of the Village, Syracuse was the place to be and Elbridge was forgotten.

By Syracuse getting the bulldozers of "Urban Renewal" the Villages of Elbridge and Jordan were spared. Of the approximately 100 buildings on Main Street, over 80% are historically and/or are architecturally important. The Village boast many other historically significant buildings. Almost all of the modern day development, with the exception of the two plazas, the library and bank are outside these borders of Elbridge's past.

The materials used in the construction of the primarily nineteenth century buildings along Main Street are also interesting. Due to the abundance of trees and plaster most structures are wood framed, have plaster ceilings and walls. Locally manufactured brick was used for building construction along with field stone, cobblestone quarried limestone and dolomite.

Also deserving attention are the barns and carriage houses that still exist behind some of the homes throughout Elbridge. Decorative woodwork adorns many interiors and exteriors of many houses. Hitching posts and carriage steps can still be found along Main Street along with well houses and iron hand pumps next to some kitchen doors.

Today the Village would likely be called a "bedroom" community even though it is quite self-sufficient. It supports many small businesses, professions and services. It has a village government, post office, public water system, a volunteer fire department, community church, doctors, dentist, law offices, grocery

stores, restaurants, a bakery, gift shops, barbers/hairdressers, a chiropractic office, public parks, furniture stores and a public library. There are also civic, social and fraternal organizations within the Village (s) and the Town.

There are two State and National Register of Historic Places within the Village. The Elbridge Hydraulic Industry Archeological District was placed on both registers 1982. The Elbridge Village Historic District encompassing sixty acres of land which hold more than sixty building and structures of various character along East and West Main Street, was placed on both the State of New York and National Registers of Historic Places in 2002.

Sources; A Stroll on Main Street, An Architectural and Historical Guide: Village of Elbridge Historian - Jeanne M.Schwartz

Town of Elbridge Historian - John G. Horner, 1999

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation: Ruth L. Pierpont - Director 2002