

# COMMUNITY

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## SPOTLIGHT ON THE TOWN OF **KIRKLAND**



Photo by ELIZABETH A. MUNDSCHENK  
The melting snow provides a wet playground for two horses on Kirkland Avenue, Jan. 5, 1998.



### TOWNS AND VILLAGES

The Village of Clinton is located in the Town of Kirkland. The town of Kirkland was named after the Rev. Sam Kirkland, missionary to the Oneida Indian nation, who also started what is now Hamilton College. Incorporated in the town of Kirkland is the village of Clinton, named after George Clinton, the first governor of New York state.

In 1787, Moses Foote with seven or eight families started out from New England from the town of Plymouth and started the village now known as Clinton. It covers an area of 19,716 acres and includes Kirkland's Patent and parts of the Brothertown Tract and Coxeborough Patent. Through the center flows the Oriskany Creek.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Kirkland Town Library was erected in 1872 as the Sigma Phi house, the first Greek letter fraternity at Hamilton College.

### NOTABLE DATES

**1968:** Filmmakers from Hollywood traveled to the Upper Mohawk Valley to begin shooting "The Sterile Cuckoo," starring Liza Minnelli. The book was written by Hamilton College graduate John Nichols and the movie was shot at the college, Rome, Sylvan Beach and in the town of Kirkland.

### Residents work together to preserve quality of life

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### Clinton institution has noble roots

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The houses up and down Clinton's clean streets are in well-tended rows, populated by a majority of middle-aged residents who hold in great esteem their village's storied history. In its center sits the Village Green, famous for the Farmers' Market and summer concerts. Stores along West Park Row are surrounded by nests of flowers and trees, providing a breezy covering to residents and visitors as they stroll the popular block.

Kirkland is home to more than 10,000 residents, census data show. Close to 2,000 of them populate the village of Clinton. Statistics show a rising housing market in the village. In the year 2000, the average home sale price was \$109,080; this year looks to close with at least two homes selling for more than \$400,000.

Clinton is located almost in the middle of the town of Kirkland. The communities are predominantly white and residential with minimal evidence of problems that plague larger areas — such as crime and poverty.

The problems village and town officials do face, however, are seen as potential threats to the residents' quality of life, an attribute that draws many people to the small village and town. "We try to work for the benefit of our constituents. The town, village and the schools try very hard to work together," Kirkland Town Supervisor Annette Foley said.

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The Hamilton-Oneida Academy, chartered in 1793, remained in existence for nearly 20 years. It would be transformed into Hamilton College, named after the first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, who had been a trustee of the old academy. Chartered in 1812, Hamilton was the third college to be established in New York state and is today among the oldest in the nation.

During its first century, Hamilton offered a classical education in the liberal arts and sciences. With the World War I era, the college gradually broadened its curriculum to encompass the social sciences as well as modern languages and literature. After World War II, greater emphasis was placed on the arts, along with such disciplines as economics, government and psychology.

One of the most important changes in its history occurred when Hamilton established a sister institution, Kirkland College, in 1968. The two colleges were separated by College Hill Road. Hamilton remained a men's school, while Kirkland enrolled women only. Hamilton's class of 1978 called itself "The Last Bachelors." That's the year Kirkland College was dissolved for financial reasons and its campus and curricula absorbed as part of Hamilton's. For the first time, Hamilton became co-educational.

The relationship between the college and the surrounding community has been, for the most part, a positive one. Earlier this year, a new endowed fund was established at Hamilton by two anonymous donors to foster goodwill and better communication between the two entities. Known as the Town-Gown Fund, it will offer gifts and grants to Clinton and Kirkland educational, cultural and civic organizations starting this fall. Hamilton intends to grow the fund to \$1 million over the next five years. "The town is proud of Hamilton's excellent academic reputation and is pleased that so many professors and their families serve on local boards and committees," Foley said, adding that many Hamilton students volunteer their time and talents as well.

Not only is the return of Hamilton students to the area each fall good news for local merchants, but the college itself provides intellectual stimulation to the community. "We seldom describe our little village ... without adding the phrase 'the home of Hamilton College,'" he said.

The campus has attracted some of the most prominent leaders in the country as speakers. With former President Jimmy Carter's speech on The Hill last April, Hamilton had hosted two of the five most sought-after speakers in recent years, according to a Gallup Poll. The other was retired Gen. (now Secretary of State) Colin Powell — in 1996.

Today, the college offers its students a solid liberal arts education that increasingly reflects contemporary needs in such areas as comparative studies and computer science. With growing national recognition, Hamilton draws half its student body from beyond New York's borders and even from abroad. It has become a highly selective institution as the numbers of applicants for admission annually increase.

In addition, its graduates have mapped out careers across the country, and many of them have achieved major success in virtually every walk of public and private life. As for the future, Hamilton is heading into the 21st century with much more money than it had four years ago when it began its New Century Campaign. The \$109 million it has raised is \$35 million more than the original goal and far exceeds the \$69.5 million contributed in the last campaign from 1990-1994.

### **Notable graduates:**

A few Hamilton graduates became governors, U.S. senators, state Supreme Court justices and university presidents. E One, **James Schoolcraft Sherman**, class of 1878, became vice president under President William Howard Taft.

- The most distinguished statesman among Hamilton's alumni was **Elihu Root**, class of 1864. Secretary of war, secretary of state, and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace, he was for decades a leading figure in American public life.
- Perhaps the most controversial figure ever to graduate from Hamilton was **Ezra Pound**, a poet of genius and a pioneering contributor to the modernist movement in literature.
- Nobel Prize winners: **Elihu Root**, class of 1864 (Peace, 1912); **Paul Greengard**, class of 1948 (Physiology or Medicine, 2000).
- Pulitzer Prize winners: **Melinda Wagner**, class of 1979 (Music Composition, 1999); **Henry Allen** of the Washington Post, class of 1963 (Criticism, 2000).
- Other graduates of note: **Gerrit Smith**, class of 1818, philanthropist and leading abolitionist; **William M. Bristol**, class of 1882, co-founder of Bristol-Myers Company; **Alexander Woollcott**, class of 1909, drama critic for the New York Times; **B.F. Skinner**, class of 1926, behavioral psychologist; **Sol M. Linowitz**, class of 1935, former ambassador to Organization of American States; past board chairman of Xerox; co-negotiator of Panama Canal treaties; recipient of Presidential Medal of Freedom.

### **Water among Town of Kirkland hurdles**

Over the years, flooding has presented itself as the major hurdle facing the town. Specifically, the issue involves Oriskany Creek, which overflows during and after wet weather. "We are doing everything in our power to curtail flooding (but) the Oriskany Creek has flooded forever," Foley said. Many residents and business owners along the Route 5 section of town have sued the town to recover money they've either lost or had to pay out of pocket as the result of the flooding. "The flooding issue is so sad. It's devastation every time we have a rainstorm or prolonged rain," she said. "Everyone has tried to help us (including) the DEC (state Department of Environmental Conservation). Although not prone to flooding, the village of Clinton does share its municipal water flow with the town. It is, however, a sometimes troubled flow.

### **Who's who in town**

The town of Kirkland with its Clinton village and the surrounding hamlets are places where, generally, residents live while commuting to work in other areas such as Utica and Syracuse. Census data show Kirkland residents ages 45 to 54 are the single largest age group — at 13.6 percent — of the town's population. That's followed closely by 35- to 44-year-olds, who make up 13.5 percent. In the village of Clinton, 45- to 54-year-olds make up 17.4 percent of the population, the single largest group, followed by 35- to 44-year-olds at 13.9 percent.

In an ever-commercial society and one that's getting younger and more urban, Clinton's charm revolves around its historic district. Within the historic district owners aren't allowed to do certain construction without permission.

"We don't want Clinton to look much different 100 years from now. That's the attempt," Historical Society President — and former mayor — Dick Williams said. "People want (the village) to stay looking like it is now." One local merchant begs to differ. "They're going to go from historic to history," said Donna Czupryna, owner of Something Else on Williams Street. "There's not a lot of offerings. Local people don't support local businesses."

Overall, there isn't much major commercialism in the area. A few residents have spoken out against construction within the small community, including the recent expansion of Nice-N-Easy on Utica Street and Taylor Avenue and the planned Tops Market in the Clinton Shopping Center on Route 12B.

Still, Williams said a medium can be reached. "We've walked a pretty good line between commercial (development) and the residents," Williams said. "I'm concerned about more of that operation in the village. The traffic just changes the nature of (the community). I hope there's not much more of that activity (here)."

### **Schools make the grade**

An active, successful school system in Clinton's three-school district, with about 1,800 total students, has chalked up high test scores and a district budget praised for spending among the lowest dollar amounts per pupil. "We operate very economically and there's good staff with lots of enthusiasm," Board of Education President William Thickstun said.

Overall, 82.4 percent of Clinton fourth-graders scored at the two highest levels on standardized tests last school year. The district's economic health has been linked to fund raising through the Clinton Foundation, which helped offset costs the district otherwise would have to endure.

The foundation was created during the tenure of James Torrance, the former Clinton school superintendent, who was recently replaced by Interim Superintendent Patrick Curtin.

"The foundation has been very successful and has helped us with computer purchases and other things students need (daily)," board member Jerome Dawes said. "On the dollars and cents side, when you look at our district compared to (others) we come out very favorable."

Compliments abound for the school district and the village and town that make up the close-knit area. "People here like the location. It's close to everything, Utica, Syracuse," Foley said. "We don't have much commercial because there's a lot of farmland ... (but) you can have both worlds (here)."

### **Read more about Oneida County.**

<http://www.uticaod.com/community/livinghere/oneidacounty/oneida.htm>