

Pillars Of The Community

by Lynne Belluscio

I knew that pillars from the Woodward House on East Main Street were supposedly taken to Stafford and installed on the large stone house, owned by Gary Churchill, but it was never clear to me which Woodward House they came from.

Any pictures that I saw of either Ernest's house, "Poplar Lane" or his father's house, "Hill-Bar" didn't show pillars of that size. That was until this last winter, when Jim Delooze was going through Woodward photographs and found a photo of massive Ionic pillars, but for the life of me, I couldn't figure out where the pillars were located. They certainly looked like the ones on the house in Stafford. We pulled out all the photos we could find of Hill-Bar and with a magnifying glass I thought I could see pillars on the east end of Hill-Bar, but they weren't the right size.

Today I thought, maybe I'd look in the postcard collection and sure enough, on the front of Hill-Bar, are massive Ionic pillars. They must have been a later addition because they don't show up in the earlier photographs.

The Woodward family posed on the front porch in front of the stone stair foundation. I think the photographs were taken when the youngest child, Helen was about three or four. She was born in 1899, so the large pillars

weren't in place in 1903, so must have been added after that. Orator Woodward died in 1906, so it's possible the pillars were added before he died, but I'm not certain.

Contrary to Bill Brown in his book "Genesee's Rich and Famous", I don't think Orator Woodward bought this house in 1882. That was the year that he married Cora, and they lived on South Street for a while and after several of the children were born, the family lived in the Tillou house, next to LeRoy House. Perhaps he bought the house in 1892. For certain, he owned the house and had remodeled it by 1898, when it was included in a photo portfolio of Genesee County.

The house was the former Murphy home, a Colonial yellow-brick house and Woodward added the dormer gables and the towers at the corners. He wanted the house to look more like a French chateau. It was said that folks in town thought that it looked as if he had put silos on his house.

So at some point, Hill-Bar became even more grand, when the four huge pillars were added to the front entry. After Orator died in 1906, Cora continued to live in the massive house until Helen became 18. Then they moved to Buffalo, where Cora lived in the fashionable part of the city. Her eldest son, Ernest, became the owner of Hill-Bar,

but the style of the old house did not suit his taste and he had the house torn down. At this time, the huge pillars were moved to Stafford. In 1920 to 1921, Ernest built his new home on the site of Hill-Bar. Ernest's home became known as Poplar Lane.

The new home for the pillars, was the Federal style limestone house built in 1808 by Peter Stage. The limestone for the house was quarried on the property as



Hill-Bar before the pillars.



Ionic pillars on Hill-Bar (looking west).



Hill-Bar.

was the stone for the Stafford Baptist Church which stood across the road. The church was abandoned in 1850 and partially dismantled. Finally when the last of the church was demolished in 1917, the remaining stone was

used for the rear addition to the house. According to the book, "The Architectural Heritage of Genesee County" it was at this time that the portico and the pillars were added to the front of the house.



Churchill house.