

Dynasties on Land and Lake



For information: 1-800-468-5227, www.lcbp.org



Henry H. Ross

When Henry H. Ross was made a Director of the Champlain Transportation Company in 1846, it was because of his enormous influence upon lake commerce. Along with his ownership of a shipyard, the ferry, sawmills and large farms, and through his legal practice and loaning of capital, Ross's business interests approached a vertical monopoly. He built the fine Federal style mansion Hickory Hill in 1822, still standing at the top of Church Street. (Courtesy of the Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh.)



Ransom Noble

A tanner from New Milford, Connecticut, Ransom Noble came to Essex in 1800 and soon built a small empire upon the manufacture of leather goods, market farming, sawmills, iron manufacture and extensive private financing. One of his sons, Belden Noble, built the large cut stone house called Greystone still prominent on north Lake Shore Road. (Courtesy of the Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh.)

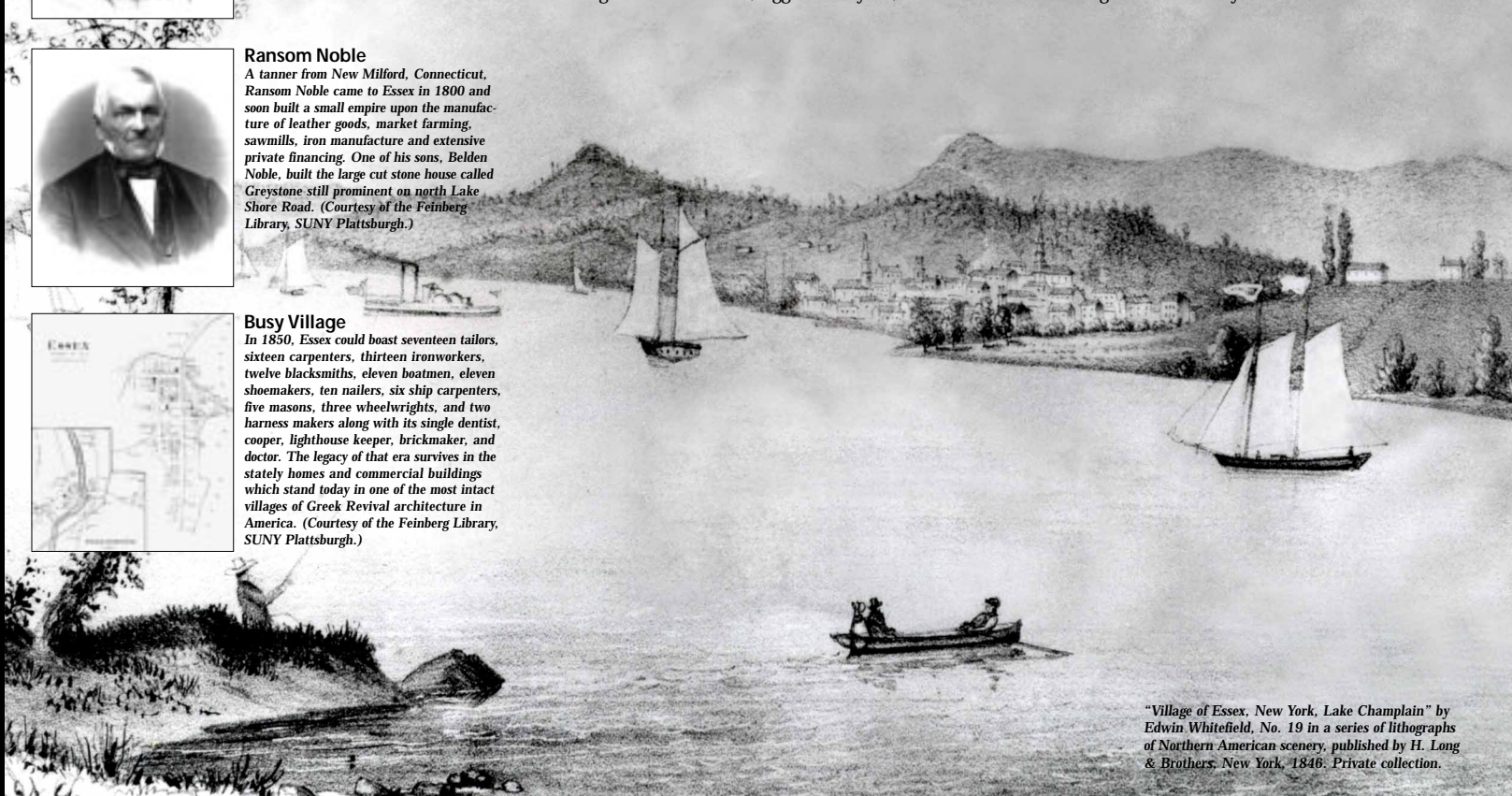


Busy Village

In 1850, Essex could boast seventeen tailors, sixteen carpenters, thirteen ironworkers, twelve blacksmiths, eleven boatmen, eleven shoemakers, ten nailers, six ship carpenters, five masons, three wheelwrights, and two harness makers along with its single dentist, cooper, lighthouse keeper, brickmaker, and doctor. The legacy of that era survives in the stately homes and commercial buildings which stand today in one of the most intact villages of Greek Revival architecture in America. (Courtesy of the Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh.)

Until the development of a comprehensive rail system, Lake Champlain was the main highway between two of the great mercantile centers of North America—New York and Montreal. The carrying trade for this commerce required a large fleet of ships. Beginning in 1800, with Richard Eggleston's building of the *Elizabeth*, Essex became Lake Champlain's principal shipbuilding center. During the War of 1812, Eggleston's yard, located

at South Bay, produced a wide variety of vessels, including sloops, row galleys and bateaux. Whether in service to the British or American navies, smugglers, or the region's commercial titans, these ships played an active role in the war. After the war, and particularly after the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1822, steamboats, ketches, schooners, sloops and, in the twentieth century, pleasure craft, were fledged from Essex yards.



"Village of Essex, New York, Lake Champlain" by Edwin Whitefield, No. 19 in a series of lithographs of Northern American scenery, published by H. Long & Brothers, New York, 1846. Private collection.