

FONDA.

The prospect of rapid increase of population and demand for real estate in the Mohawk valley, as a consequence of the construction of the Utica and Schenectady Railroad, led to much speculation in lands and building sites along the line. The village of Fonda dates its principal growth from this time. In 1835, a number of capitalists, including John B. Borst, John L. Graham, James Lorimer Graham, Judge S. W. Jones, Charles McVean (at his death surrogate of the county of New York) and James Porter organized the Fonda Land Association. They bought the ground on which the newer and larger part of the village stands, and had it surveyed, laid out and mapped. William C. Young, chief engineer of the new railroad in its construction, and its first superintendent, also interested himself largely in the project. John L. Graham, who was counsel for the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company of New York, obtained from that institution, in behalf of the association, a loan of \$25,000 with which to make purchases and improvements. Among the latter was the building of the Fonda Hotel in 1836. John B. Borst was the man most heavily interested in the whole enterprise, and the titles to the real estate acquired were taken by him for himself and associates. Most of the parties to the investment suffered in the financial distress of 1837, and their embarrassments enabled Mr. Borst to buy out their interests under a foreclosure of the mortgage held by the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company. Among other things he thus became sole proprietor of the hotel.

On the petition of Chester S. Brumley, John S. Haggart and Richard H. Cushney, the Court of Sessions which sat at the Montgomery county court-house, September 30, 1850, consisting of County Judge Belding and Justices F. P. Moulton and Obadiah Davis, granted an order for the incorporation of the village under the name of Fonda, subject to a vote of its citizens, for which provision was made. The vote resulted almost unanimously in favor of the measure. In the spring of 1851, the Legislature passed an act authorizing the village of Fonda to elect officers. Pursuant to this act an election was held May 13, and the following were chosen: Trustees—R. H. Cushney, R. Van Housen, P. H. Fonda, Charles Timmerman and Douw Van O'Linda; assessors—John Everson, William B. Housen and Gilbert S. Van Deusen; collector, Henry W. Staats; clerk, Henry Van O'Linda. The population of the territory incorporated was 875.

Thus the ancient name of Caughnawaga was formally superseded by that of the family which had been so prominent in the annals of the neighborhood for a hundred years, and the old village of the Indians and the Dutch was overshadowed by the flourishing new town growing up on its western border. The present village has been steadily progressing since its incorporation, its population having increased to about thirteen hundred, and all its interests correspondingly developed. Its position on a well equipped trunk railroad gives it ready communication with the world at large, of which it can the better avail itself, since it is the stopping-place for most of Fulton county, and thus a very important station, which hardly any trains pass without stopping. Its main street was paved in 1868. Communication with its neighbor across the river is facilitated by the Fonda and Fultonville street railroad, built in 1875, by Nicholas H. Decker, of New York and Johnstown, and of whose \$10,000 capital he is the principal owner. The growth and development of the village, in its various departments, are shown under the appropriate heads below.

THE CHURCHES.

ST. CECILIA'S ROMAN CATHOLIC.

The Roman Catholics, as represented by the Jesuit missionaries, whos

privations and sufferings have already been recounted, were, of course, the first christian denomination by whose servants religious exercises were held at this point. The last Jesuit missionary left Caughnawaga two hundred years ago, and from his departure no services of the church which he represented were held here until quite a recent date. Up to December, 1874, the Roman Catholics of Fonda had no house of worship, but assembled, to hear mass, at private houses. The present neat chapel was begun in 1875, and finished, free from debt, in December of the next year. It has a seating capacity of two hundred and fifty, and is built of brick, with cut-stone trimmings. Rev. John F. Lowery, the pastor of St. Patrick's Church, Johnstown, was the builder of this edifice. The altar is of marble, and surrounded by ten pieces of white statuary.

The Sunday-school is attended by forty-five children, and is superintended by Patrick Fitzimmons.

THE REFORMED CHURCH.

This venerable society, originally the Reformed Dutch Church of Caughnawaga, is believed to have been organized from five to ten years before the building of its historic house of worship in 1763. For nine years after that event there was no pastor here, services being held, it is supposed, by the minister at Schenectady, which place was the out-post of the denomination in this direction, until the building of the Caughnawaga church. In 1772, Rev. Thomas Romeyn became pastor of this frontier congregation, whose members were scattered among all the settlements west of what is now Amsterdam. He was a college graduate, of nineteen years' ministerial experience. At his accession the roll of the consistory comprised the following well known names: Elders—Peter Coyne, Johannes Kiltz, Johannes Veeder, and Frederick Dockstader. Deacons—Adam Fonda, Louis Clement, Sampson Sammons, and Charles Van Epps. Mr. Romeyn held the pastorate of the church for twenty-two most eventful years, dying at his post in 1794, aged sixty-five. The territory over which he originally had charge was reduced very early in his administration by the organization of the church at Minaville, in the town of Florida, and further, toward the close of his term of service, by the formation of the Stone Arabia church.

Mr. Romeyn was succeeded, in 1795, by Rev. Abraham Van Horne. The consistory, at that date, was composed of Elders John Fonda, Garret Van Vrakelin, Joseph Prentup, and Frederick Starin, and Deacons James Lansing, Abram Vosburgh, Johannes Van Antwerp, and Peter Quackenbush. Domine Van Horne was, like his predecessor, a New Jersey man, and a college graduate, and is spoken of as "a man of great ability and extensive knowledge." During his pastorate occurred the transition from the Dutch to the English, as the language of the church services, Mr. Van Horne officiating in both tongues. He served this church in a pastoral relation thirty-eight years, during which many events, important to the denomination, occurred within his jurisdiction.

The growth of population in the valley is indicated by the formation of four new churches from parts of the district over which his congregation was at first scattered. The fact (which appears from the church records) that the pastor performed here fifteen hundred marriages, and over two thousand three hundred baptisms, has a similar bearing. During part of his ministry at Caughnawaga he owned and managed a farm, which is now owned by Robert Wemple. After retiring from the pastorate in 1833, he continued to live at Caughnawaga until his death, in 1840, at the ripe age of seventy-five. He was buried in the old grave-yard on the flats, which was disturbed by the laying out of the fair ground. During the last two

years of Domine Van Horne's pastorate, Rev. J. S. Ketchum, of the Stone Arabia Church, assisted him by conducting the Sunday afternoon services.

The third pastor was Rev. Robert Quinn, a man of thirty, who had just finished his theological studies, and who began his pastorate by his ordination in the church where he was called to minister. He remained but two years, and on his resignation, Rev. Jacob D. Fonda took pastoral charge of the society in 1835. He held the position seven years, during which two more churches were formed from the original parish. Several revivals occurred in his pastorate, in one of which thirty-one members were added to the church. No pastor was immediately called to succeed Mr. Fonda on his retirement in 1842, but services were held for about two years by Prof. Andrew Yates, D.D., of Union College.

During this time a new church was built, at an expense of about \$3,500, at the southwest corner of Railroad avenue and Centre street, which was dedicated in October, 1843. Rev. Douw Van O'Linda, the first pastor to officiate in the new church, began a fourteen-years pastorate in 1844, his ministry here being ended by his death. During his pastorate the bounds of this charge became about what they are now. "Few surpassed him in those qualities which go to make the acceptable preacher and pastor."

His successor, Rev. Philip Furbeck, settled here in 1859, this being his first charge and the place of his ordination. He resigned in 1862, and the church had no settled pastor for the next three years. During most of this interval, Rev. Washington Frothingham occupied the pulpit. In the spring of 1863, the organization of the church was so far modified as to place the management of its temporal affairs in the hands of nine trustees. The first board, elected March 3, of that year, consisted of John Campbell, jr., Barney J. Martin, Hamilton Schuyler, Geo. F. Mills, Douw A. Fonda, Samuel H. Conklin, John I. Davis, Henry Veeder and Charles Young. In 1865 the church once more had a pastor, in the person of Rev. John C. Boyd, who remained until 1870, when ill health compelled him to resign.

In 1868 the church was removed from its original to its present site, and to a considerable extent rebuilt, at an expense of about \$10,600, \$947 of which was raised by the Ladies' Aid Society. On the completion of the improvements, the building was re-dedicated in August, 1869. In 1872, the word "Caughnawaga" in the title of the church was changed to Fonda. The word "Dutch" had been dropped five years before from the name of the denomination by order of the General Synod.

The present pastor, Rev. Thos. Walker Jones, was installed in November, 1870. Within the first three years of his pastorate, the society secured a parsonage at an expense of \$4,000, and over \$6,500 was expended in the improvement of the church and the purchase of an organ. When these investments had been made, the value of the church property was estimated to be \$30,000. The membership was then about two hundred and fifty. It has now risen to four hundred; over three hundred members have been received into the church by the present pastor. The membership of the Sabbath-school is about the same as that of the church. Jacob Hees is the superintendent. Members of this church assist in carrying on half a dozen union schools in the town, including those at Berryville and Sammonsville.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL.

The Methodist Episcopal church was organized in 1842 with a very small membership, which has had an encouraging growth. Belonging to the Fonda rather than the Caughnawaga period, it has not the historic associations of the older churches in the village, but like them is in its present operation a power for good. The society, shortly after its organization—in 1844—provided itself with a house of worship at a cost of \$4,000.

ZION PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL.

This congregation was organized November 19, 1864, by Rev. Robert G. Howard. There were then but ten or twelve communicants; there are now about forty. The clergymen who have successively had charge of the station since Mr. Howard, have been Revs. James H. Brown, Hobart Cook, Chas. F. A. Bielby, — Poole, Wm. Lusk, Lewis Schuyler and Chas. H. Van Dyne.

Ground was broken for the construction of a church in 1866, but the building was not consecrated until May 29, 1869. It is a neat stone structure, costing some \$6,000 and seating two hundred.

THE NEWSPAPERS.

Caughnawaga was represented in journalism by *The Mohawk Farmer*, not a long-lived publication. Fonda's first newspaper was *The Fonda Herald*, which was issued by J. K. Reynolds, jr., in 1837.

Next came *The Fonda Sentinel*, which was started in 1845. During part of its existence under that name it was published by Clark & Thayer. In 1864, the *Sentinel* was purchased by Mr. C. B. Freeman, who united with it the *Mohawk Valley American*, which he had been publishing at Fultonville, and formed the *Mohawk Valley Democrat*, which was issued from the former office of the *Sentinel*. The *Democrat* continued under the control of Mr. Freeman until two years since, when it passed into the hands of the present proprietor, Mr. John E. Ashe.

The American Star, which had been published six weeks at Canajoharie, was removed to Fonda in May, 1855, and in the next year to Fultonville, where it took the name of the *Mohawk Valley American*, coming into the possession of Mr. C. B. Freeman, whose disposition of it has been noted above.

THE COURSE OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY.

The water-power afforded by Cayadutta creek led, at a very early day, to the establishment of grist-mills at this point. One or two have been already mentioned. Another is said to have stood, previous to the Revolution, half a mile above the site of the Cayadutta, or "Upper," mill.

A cotton-mill was carried on for about five years by a company organized in 1811, consisting of John and Simon Veeder, G. Van Deusen, Henry Fonda and Myndert Wemple. The capital was \$5,000. A woolen-mill and carding-machine for custom-work were attached. Simon I. Veeder rented the building, and started a satinette factory in 1825, which he continued till 1830, when he sold to John Booth. The latter operated the establishment until about 1843, when he died, and the property passed into the hands of J. V. A. and J. V. Wemple, by whom the building was used as a threshing-machine manufactory for a short time, the last-named gentleman becoming at length the sole proprietor. In 1860 the property passed into the hands of Geo. F. Mills & Bro.

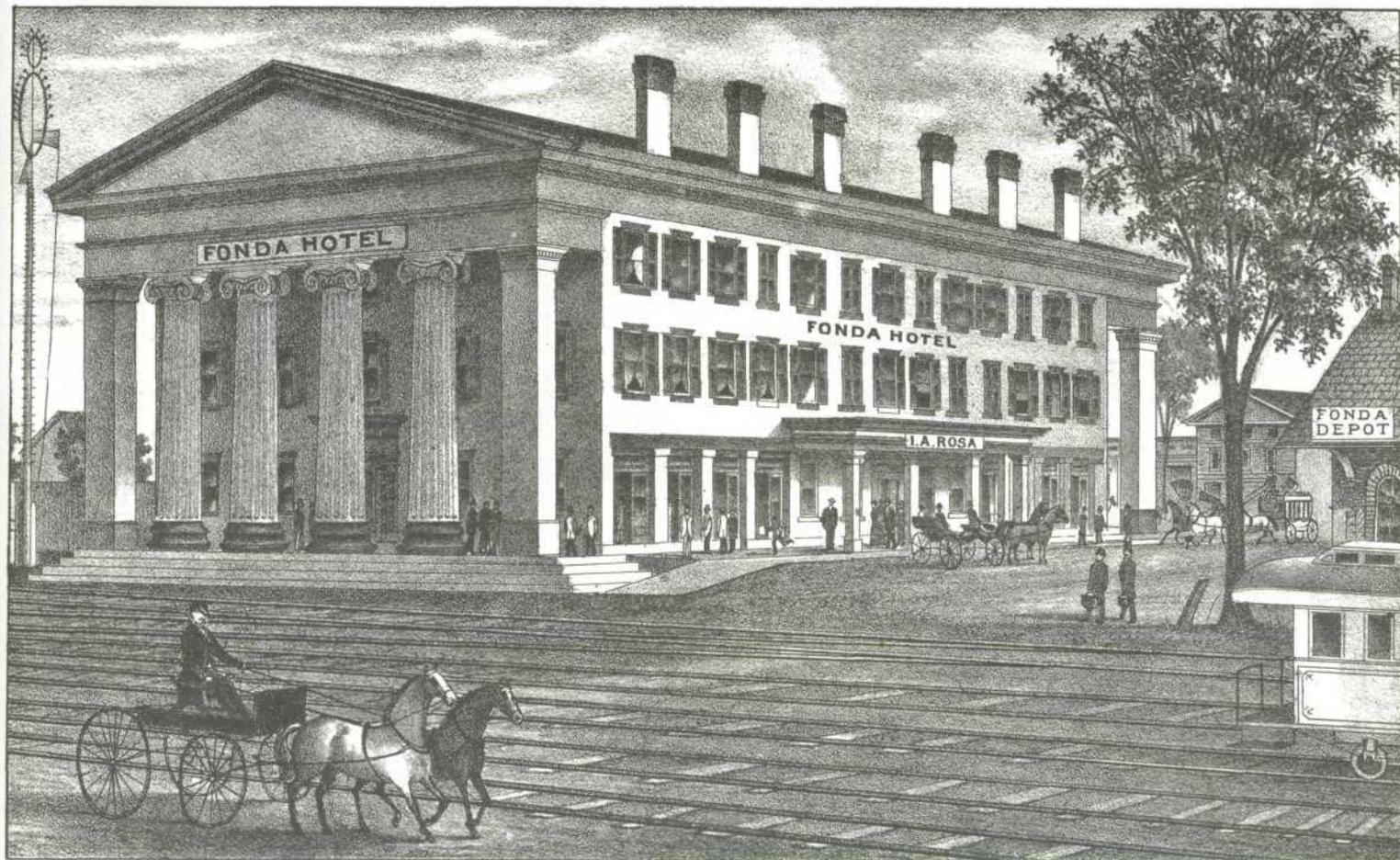
This firm began business at Fonda in 1849, purchasing what is now known as the Upper Mill, which now has four run of stone, with a capacity of one hundred and fifty barrels per day, and is devoted exclusively to supplying the wholesale trade of the firm. In 1860, being desirous of enlarging their business, the proprietors bought the lower mill, a building 40 by 60 feet, which is now furnished with three run of stone, has a capacity of six hundred bushels per day, and is used for custom-work. The firm also produces and deals largely in plaster and lumber.

The Mohawk River Bank commenced its business career October 13th, 1856, with a capital of \$100,000. Its officers were, Daniel Spraker, president; John Bowdish, vice-president; Earl S. Gillett, cashier; and Horace Van Evera, teller. It became the National Mohawk River Bank June 5th, 1865, with its capital and official management unchanged; and they still remain the same as when it commenced business in 1856. There have been very few changes in the board of directors. The banking house is a nice brick edifice, a few rods from the railroad depot, built in 1856 for the purposes of the bank. This bank has the reputation of being one of the most carefully managed institutions of the kind in this part of the State.

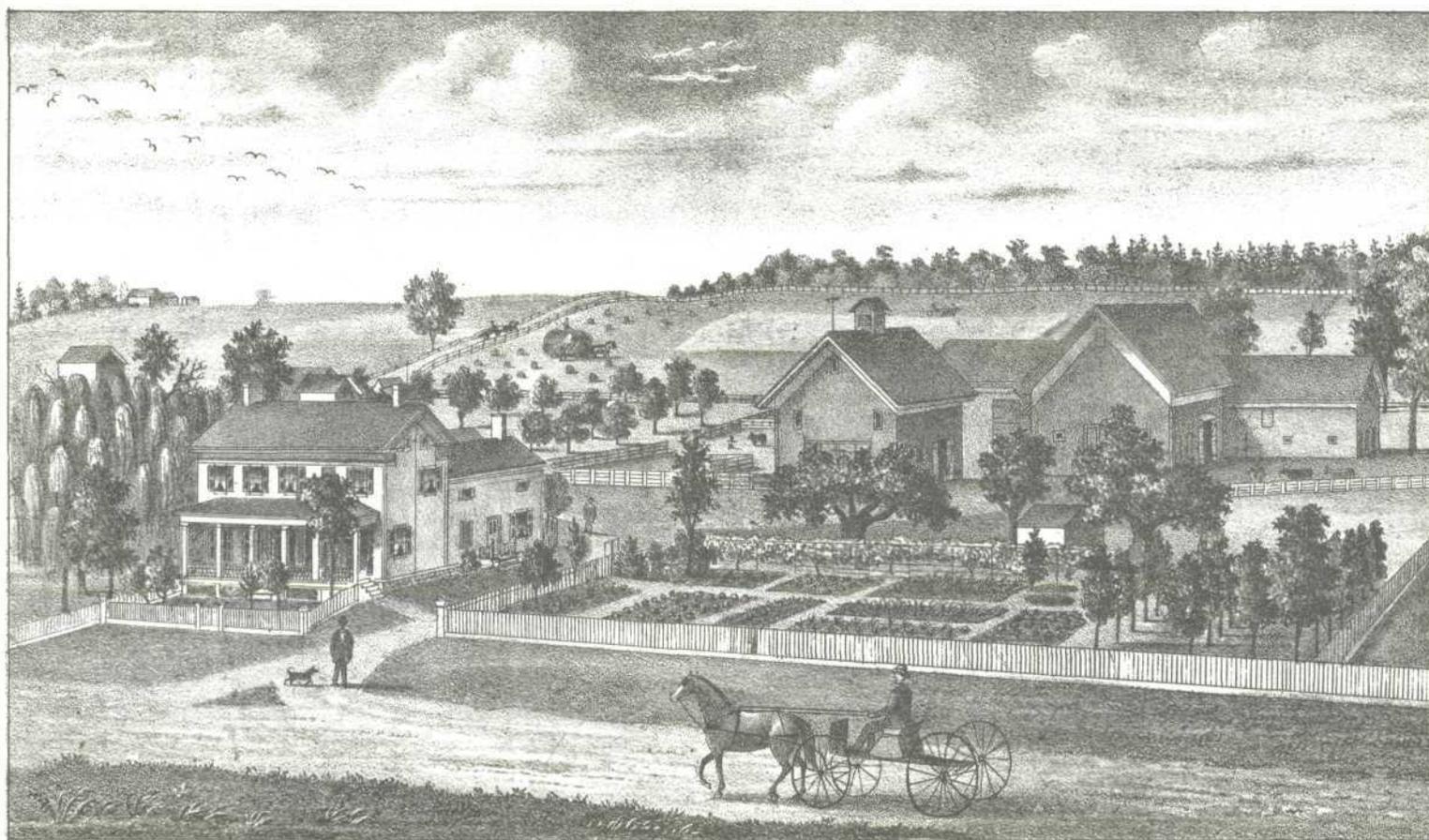
One of the first merchants was Gen. Dodge, who was in business here about 1790. The first drug store was kept by N. Webster about 1842. McIntyre & Briggs now carry on the business on Main street.

The mercantile business of I. M. Davis is one of long standing. He began in 1844 as a clerk. In the next year he formed a partnership with his father, under the firm name of M. O. Davis & Son. The father retiring in 1849, the son carried on the business alone for a year, when he took a Mr. Teller as junior partner, who remained with him until 1855. Mr. Davis then went into the hardware business, and continued it alone until 1861, from which time he had a partner until 1867. Since then he has carried on a general mercantile business, and is one of the most successful business men of the county. H. L. & J. G. Sizer, Main street, and two or three other establishments are also in the dry goods trade, and there are two clothing stores.

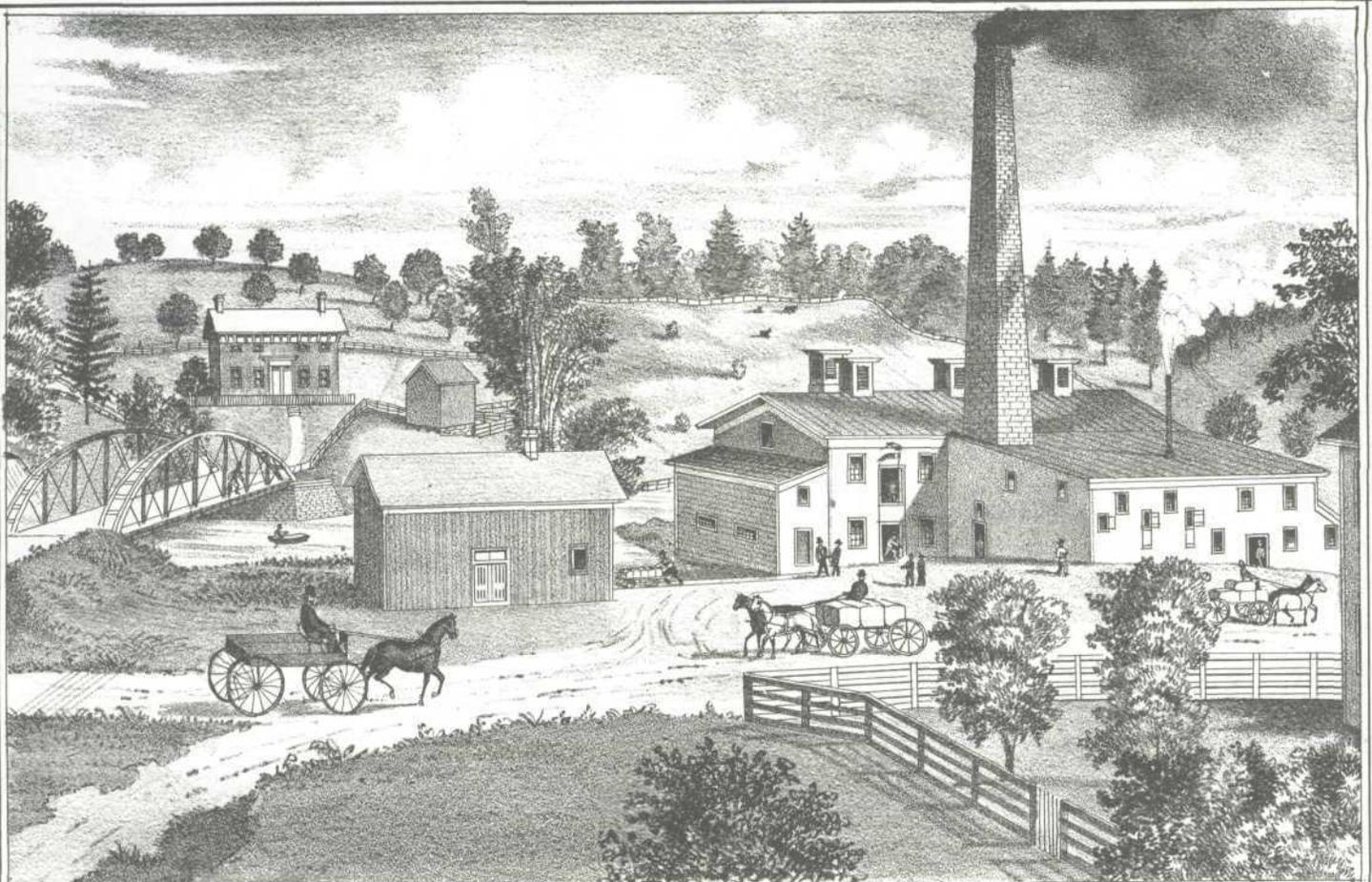
G. F. Putman, of Putman & Son, carriage makers, Main street, was born at Tribes Hill in 1823. He came to Fonda in 1840, and has been success-



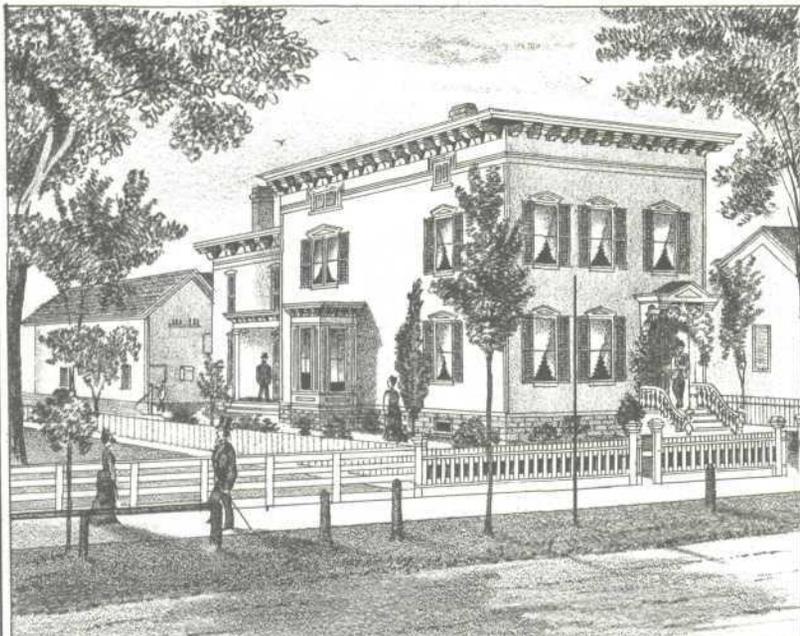
FONDA HOTEL, FONDA, N. Y.
— I. A. ROSA PROP. —



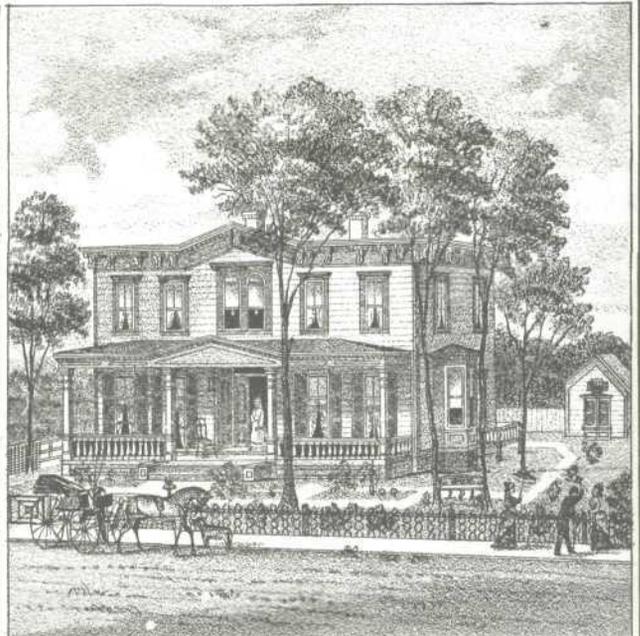
RES. OF JOHN I. DAVIS, TOWN OF MOHAWK MONTGOMERY CO. N. Y.



THOMPSONS & RICHARDS PAPER MILL, FONDA, Montgomery Co. N.Y.



Res. of **L.R. P. THOMPSON**, Prospect St. Fonda, N. Y.



Residence of **MR. DAVID CADY**, Amsterdam, N.Y.

fully engaged in his present business ever since. There are two or three other carriage factories and blacksmith shops in the village.

George Jones is a dealer in groceries, oysters and clams. E. B. Cushney is in the same business; both on Main street. There are two other firms in the same line.

Fonda is well provided with hotels. The Fonda Hotel is the most conspicuous building in the village. It is about 125 by 55 feet and three stories high, with an imposing colonnade at either end. It and the court-house are represented by a wood-cut in Barber & Howe's Historical Collections as they appeared in 1841, with a single railroad track running between them. The Johnson House, three stories high, with thirty-five guests' rooms and with a livery stable attached, was bought and fitted up as a hotel by its present proprietor, D. W. C. Johnson, in 1870. The Cayadutta Hotel, S. Vrooman proprietor, should also be mentioned. These houses are also on Main street. Two or three more might be mentioned. James Fisher and two others keep restaurants. J. S. Feltis is a wholesale dealer in Taylor & Sons' Albany ales; business established in 1852.

Cider and vinegar are manufactured by B. H. Vrooman, who is also an ice dealer, and by Benjamin S. Martin; the business of the latter, wholesale and retail, was established in 1866.

The first insurance office in Fonda was opened in 1862 by A. H. Burtch, who still continues it.

There are two justices of the peace; Peter A. Graff has his office in the court-house.

P. Colgrove, Main street, is a manufacturer of and dealer in harness, whips, etc.

Henry Siver is the proprietor of the Fonda Marble Works, Main street.

The legal and medical professions have the usual representations in the village.

Among business establishments not above enumerated, are a bakery, a lumber-yard, a flour and feed, two hardware, a furniture, a boot and shoe, and two fruit stores, four paint shops, an express office (American), and a photograph gallery.