

E. A. **Curtis**: Architect and Citizen
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2011

Enoch Arnold **Curtis** was born in Busti NY in 1831. He attended the village school while he worked on his father's farm and completed one term at the Jamestown NY Academy in 1848. After the family moved to another farm near Ashville NY, he taught school in the winter and farmed in the summer. Around 1852 he began work as a builder. On 3 October 1855, he married Jennie D. **Norton** of Ashville. At the same time, he studied whatever architectural textbooks were available to him. The first opportunity he had as an architect -- as far as is known -- was the design for a new Baptist Meeting House in Panama NY. "Mr. E. A. **Curtis**, of Ashville, is the architect, and Mr. Wm. H. **Daniels**, of Panama, the builder," reported *The Fredonia Censor* of 30 May 1860. In 1862 he enlisted in the Army, recruiting men to form Co. D of the 112th New York Volunteers, by whom he was elected Captain. Wounded at Cold Harbor in June 1864, he was honorably discharged in September. He and his family came to Fredonia, and in December 1864, he bought a hardware store. While he ran the business he seems to have continued working towards an architectural career. He exhibited "samples of his draughting" at the Fair Grounds in October 1866, although there is no record of any buildings he designed after the Panama Baptist church of 1860. But having samples of his work ready for the Fair and exhibited there argues that he was exploring the possibility of setting up as an architect.

In February 1867 he advertised that he had building plans available at the shop of "E. A. **Curtis**, Architect and Designer." By May he had completely retired from the hardware business and taken an office in "**Green's** building" "adjoining the Savings' Bank," that is, about at *29 East Main Street*. He prepared designs for W. H. **Green's** home at *57 Central Avenue*, which was being built in July 1867. There must have been buildings which we don't yet know about that gave him enough of a reputation to be able to secure contracts for the significant projects he had in hand at this time. *The Fredonia Censor* of 7 August 1867 reported that he was, at that point, architect for a new Episcopal church in Dunkirk, the Presbyterian church in Westfield, a brick school house in Cassadaga, and the Union School Building in Delanti (Stockton NY). At the same time he was designing some private dwellings, including the A. C. **Crosby** home in Westfield. In February 1868 he purchased two acres on East Main Street, and in March an additional four acres. He designed a home of his own to stand on the lot, the handsome brick building at *145 East Main Street*, for which Robert **Wolfers** did the interior woodwork. In addition, during 1868, he designed homes for S. L. **Bailey** (*42 Central Avenue*) and the Rev. Samuel **Sumner** (*139 Chestnut Street*), as well as the Union Block (*1 East Main Street*). In 1869 he designed the large, brick 3-story **Putnam** Block at *2 West Main Street* and the **Barmore** Building, that is, the American Block (*7-11 East Main Street*). For the **Putnam** building, the brickwork was by George **Wilson**, the woodwork by **White & Wells**. The American Block was built by C. M. and G. W. **Porter**. (The 18 August *Censor* commented that C. A. **Merrill** had done some fine painting on houses built by E. A. **Curtis** and others, but without specifying which houses were being referred to.)

In 1870 he did the O. **Monroe** residence on Bennett Rd at 7th Street in Dunkirk NY; in 1871 the E. F. **Warren** residence (*64 Central Avenue*), for himself, a new home at *50 Central Avenue*, just opposite today's **Curtis** Place, and in Titusville PA a home for J. H. **Winsor**. 1872 saw the H. H. **Clark** residence on West Hill and one for J. F. Irwin (*55 East Main Street*). In 1873 he redesigned the Masonic Hall and roof of the Center Block. However, the bulk of his time between 1872 and 1874 seems to have been spent in Pennsylvania. The *Titusville Morning Herald* of 23 June 1874 announced that "Mr. E. A. **Curtis**, the accomplished architect of Fredonia, who has been sojourning in this city for two years since, is about to return to the former place [Fredonia] for a summer vacation." **Curtis** had designed and seen the building of three business blocks, St. Mary's Convent Academy, the German Reformed Church, the Warren & Venango Railroad depot, residences including that of J. L. **McKinney**, Esq., the Brown Bank, and the Opera House at Pleasantville, among others not listed. (Obad **Edson's History of Chautauqua County** [1884] lists the "1st National Bank block" and the "Oil Exchange" in Titusville, but with no dates.) In

referring to the *Herald* item, *The Fredonia Censor* was delicate enough to omit one statement which said that **Curtis** "will return again [to Titusville], and hopes to take up his permanent residence among us at no distant day, when building improvements revive." If **Curtis** was serious about relocating, it never came to pass, luckily for Fredonia, although he did continue to design buildings in Pennsylvania as well as other states in the ensuing years. 1875 saw a new Presbyterian Church building at *3 Church Street* in Fredonia. He also designed a brick home for DeVillo **Sloan** that was built in the summer of 1875 at *3521 Route 20* in West Sheridan area. In 1878 he designed and oversaw the construction of the Oil Exchange building in Bradford PA, which was opened with much fanfare in February 1879.

In June 1878 it was the Aaron **Putnam** residence at *134 Temple Street*, now the W.C.A. home. The *Censor* of 30 April 1879 had such a detailed and admiring description of it, that the *Lyons Republican*, they reported on 11 June 1879, added its endorsement after their editor, inspired by the *Censor* piece, sent for a copy of **Curtis's** designs. In 1878 **Curtis** also designed an elaborate "double gothic arch" spanning the intersection of Main and Water streets in Fredonia as part of the 10th Annual Firemen's Parade held on June 20th. He also found time to design E. D. **Howard's** new home at today's *81 East Main Street*, which was described in detail in the same 30 April 1879 article in the *Censor* as A. O. **Putnam's**. **Howard's** house had the foundation and walls done by George **Wilson**, interior plasterwork by William **Roth**, woodwork by **Porter & Morgan** and the painting by L. S. **Huntley**. In 1879 he began designing the Nathan A. **Putnam** home, *30 Central Avenue*, which was built in the following year. We have nothing for 1880; the only 1881 work on record is for a house for H. D. M. **Miner** (*36 Center Street*) to replace "his present residence," announced in the 23 March 1881 *Censor* and *51 Curtis Place* designed for T. S. **Hubbard** as a rental property by November 1881. If the following year is any measure, there were probably many other commissions that **Curtis** received that we simply don't know about for those years. The *Censor* of 1 November 1882 mentioned a house of many colors on Green Street built by Mr. **Harrison** for L. D. **Williams**.

Curtis also had completed plans for two dwelling houses "for Mr. Clarence **Ellis** in the south part of the town" and one for James **Gerrans** on Central Avenue in Dunkirk. "He has furnished plans for 26 houses this summer, some in Pennsylvania and western New York." T. S. **Hubbard** also had **Curtis** design an office building (he was in the grape root propagation business) to stand on a line with the rear of his residence. The office exterior was in a "unique cottage style." In 1881, **Hubbard's** residence was at *29 Central Avenue* and the office eventually became *27 Central Avenue*. In its 8 November 1882 issue, the *Censor* reported that the **Gerrans** place on Central Avenue in Dunkirk already had the cellar dug. Designed by **Curtis** in the Queen Anne style, the carpentry was to be done by W. W. **Murray**. He was also the architect for the Reuben Gridley **Wright** house at *233 East Main Street* in Westfield, with construction of the house beginning in the summer of 1882; the contractor was John **Ard**, and Harry **Wratten** the head carpenter. In 1883 his plans for the Producer's Oil Exchange in Bradford PA were accepted. Again, for 1884 we have no record. The *Censor* commented proudly in April 1885 that, in competition with architects from Philadelphia and New York City, **Curtis** had won the commission to redo the residence of C. M. **Reed** of Erie PA. In September 1885 the paper quoted from the Dunkirk *Herald* that the handsome house "built in late years in Dunkirk" was that of S. J. **Gifford** at the corner of 4th and Dove streets, Capt. E. A. **Curtis**, architect. In December they reported that he had planned the Randolph water works building. He also drew plans for a new tower on the Fredonia Baptist church (*19 Church Street*).

In June 1886 he had designed "George S. **Josselyn's** dandy cottage at Van Buren;" in July 1886 the *Censor* reported on the construction then under way of the new school building, an academy, at Olean designed by **Curtis**, "who also designed a number of the finest residences in Olean," and in August a "substantial villa" for Sidney S. **Wilson** somewhere in the vicinity of today's *263/273 East Main Street*. The 19 January 1887 *Censor* referred to the 6 January *Olean Times* issue which had engravings of "the new Academy and the **Van Campen** block in that city," both designed by **Curtis**. That *Censor* article

also made the first reference to William H. **Archer**, who had apparently just joined **Curtis** as his draughtsman. 1887 also saw **Curtis** designing a new school building "at Cattaraugus station" and an "elegant residence to be erected by C. M. **Howard** in Peoria." Clarence M. **Howard** was one of the **Howard** Brothers who had had their watch company in Fredonia for 10 years, but were in the process of resettling in Illinois. The 23 February 1887 *Censor* mentioned **Curtis's** plans for a new Presbyterian church in Titusville, which were accepted over "those of New York [City] architects." In June it was the new school house in Ripley. "This is the sixth school building he has had to plan this season. In March 1888 **Archer** became a full partner in the firm of "**Curtis & Archer**." They designed a brick residence for Edwin F. **Warren** of Nebraska City NB. (**Warren**, a Fredonian, was the son of Judge Emory F. **Warren** and a former student at the Fredonia Academy [1856-1860].) The firm also beat out some Syracuse architects in the competition to design a school building in Fayetteville. "Capt. **Curtis** has been paying special attention to school architecture the past few years."

It was in December 1888 that *The Inland Architect and News Record*, in a summary of the year's work, listed the Fayetteville schoolhouse among the work of "Architects **Curtis & Archer**." "For Fayetteville, N.Y., school house, brick, slate and tin roof, iron stairs, cresting and shutters; cost \$20,000. For Belmont, N.Y., brick school house, slate roof, cost \$8,000. For Little Calley [sic], N.Y., brick school house, slate roof; cost \$6,000. For Greensburgh, Pa., Protestant Episcopal church building, 35 by 800 feet, brick and stone, slate roof, furnace, pipe organ, cost \$20,000. For E. M. **Danforth**, Olean, N.Y., frame residence, cost \$10,000. For G. W. **Galbraith**, Erie Pa., brick residence, cost \$6,000. For Bradford, Pa., Presbyterian church building, frame auditorium, cost \$8,000. For T. J. **Melville**, Bradford, Pa., frame residence, cost \$5,000." We can see by this, supposedly complete record for 1888, how much was not listed in *The Fredonia Censor*, indicating by how much we should increase our estimate of **Curtis's** work in other years. (*The Inland Architect and Builder*, published in Chicago, first appeared in February 1883. It began listing reports of building activity, primarily in the midwest, with its second volume in 1884. It seems clear that the motivating force behind **Curtis** reporting on his projects was **Archer**. The practice began only after **Archer** became a full partner, in 1888, and ceased as soon as he returned to Buffalo in June 1890, although he continued to advertise his own work in Buffalo and elsewhere for some years after, including a home for E. **Howard** in Buffalo, homes for F. G. **Gould** and Fred F. **Jewell**, and an office building in Buffalo for "Messrs. **Howard** Bros." on Washington Street, in 1891; Society building for St. Mary's Lyceum and redoing the bar in the Hotel Gratiot, Dunkirk, 1892; a brick home for Mrs. **Dotterweich**, Dunkirk, 1893; St. Hyacinth's Public School and Dunkirk Free Academy, Dunkirk, 1895; and a brick factory for the Mulholland Spring Co., Dunkirk, 1896. Whether it was a matter of pride or of indifference, **Curtis** never appears in those listings after 1890.)

In 1889 **Curtis** and **Archer** designed the National Transit Company building in Oil City PA, an addition to the Fredonia Normal School building, the Titusville PA Belmont Hotel, the Bradford PA Masonic Hall, "twelve school houses and numerous residences and other buildings." Obed **Edson** also lists the Grace M. E. Church, the City Hospital, and City Hall in Oil City PA, again without any dates. The *Inland Architect* (May 1889) adds "Fredonia, N.Y. -- Architects **Curtis & Archer** report: Office building, fireproof, brick and terra-cotta, four stories, iron beams and staircase, hollow tile floors, electric light, asphalt roof, 60 by 120; to cost \$75,000; for National Transit Company, Oil City, Pa. Schoolhouse, brick, two stories and basement, slate roof, galvanized iron cornice, eight-rooms, blackboard, etc., to cost \$12,000. Residence, frame, two stories, bathroom outfit, outside, wood cornice, pine finish, wood mantels; \$3,000; for William H. **Terrant**, Mayville, N.Y. Residence, frame, two stories, pine finish; \$2,500; for S. W. **Reynolds**, Forrestville, N.Y. Residence, remodeling of, O. T. **Schombloom**, Bradford, Pa."

There is a detailed record of an impressive structure designed by the two in 1889 and completed early in 1890. That was the Women's Educational and Industrial Union Building at 406 *Central Avenue*. Its progress was followed stage by stage in the Dunkirk *Observer*, which gave a very full description in its issue of 24 October 1890. Equally impressive was their design for a new Village Hall in Fredonia to

replace the old, refurbished Academy building. Designed, as were others of the time, to be a multi-function and revenue-generating structure, it had rooms for the Fire Companies and their equipment, a Lockup, a Janitor/Jailer's apartment, and Village offices. For rent were a beautiful (now restored) Opera House, a Post Office and newspaper/magazine room, a large club room, a meeting room and small offices. The construction was by **Dean & Spring** Mfg. Co. of Franklinville. The Village Hall had its formal opening on 28 April 1891 with a performance in the Opera House of "Josephine, Empress of the French." *The Inland Architect* of May 1890 said, "Architect E. A. **Curtis** reports: Plenty of work in prospect if labor market gets firmly established. For Fredonia, New York, a town hall and opera house, three-stories, size 64 by 174 feet; brick and stone, slate roof; steam heated; cost \$40,000. For Village of Friendship, New York, a two-story brick schoolhouse, size 67 by 73 feet; cost \$20,000. For Mr. Theodore **Reuting**, Titusville, Pennsylvania, a two-story store, size 54 by 80 feet; brick and stone; cost \$12,000. For the Titusville Iron Works, a one-story machine shop, size 44 by 100 feet; brick and iron; cost \$18,000. For R. G. **Lamberton**, of Franklin, Pennsylvania, alterations and additions to residence; cost \$10,000. Also for John O. **McCalmot**, a two-story frame residence, size 56 by 60 feet; cost \$6,000."

Construction began in Titusville on the **Reuting** Block in 1890, designed by **Curtis**, and in December 1891, he was reported to be "drafting some interiors for Dunkirk and Titusville residences." **Edson** lists the residences of George V. **Forman**, Benjamin **Brunded**, and Joseph **Seep** in Titusville. In 1892 he, along with Frank W. **Tarbox** and Dr. M. M. **Fenner**, bought the old **Johnson** House (at Park Place and West Main Street). **Curtis** drew up the plans for the rebuilding which included enlarging it and redoing the older portion facing Main Street into four store fronts. Once again there is a gap in the record. In 1894 he prepared designs for the Forest Hill Cemetery entrance gates and for the chapel and the Cemetery Superintendent's home and office which flanked the entrance. The designs appeared in an October 1894 issue of the *Grape Belt* although the construction was not completed until 1896. The stone work was done by Arthur **Peters** of Dunkirk. Also in 1894 **Curtis** drew plans for a new verandah for Ralph H. **Hall's** home at *43 Central Avenue*. In 1895 it was a redesign of the interior of Ferdinand **Sievert's** drug store at *18 West Main Street* and he designed the parsonage for the Dunkirk Presbyterian society in that year. He also designed another home for Aaron O. **Putnam** at *24 East Main Street*. It was built in 1895, not long before **Putnam's** death in 1896.

In 1896 he designed *30 Forest Place* for Theron M. **Clark**, in 1897 A. F. **French's** home at *56 Central Avenue* and then, next to it, a new home for F. E. **Cooke** at *50 Central Avenue*, a wing for the W.C.A. Home at *134 Temple Street*, the Aaron **Putnam** place **Curtis** had designed in 1878. He was chosen as the architect for the City Hall building in Bradford PA in 1897, which was built in 1898. The contractor was William **Hanley** of Lewis Run PA. 1898 also saw a new gymnasium building, facing Terrace Street, for the Normal School. It opened in May 1899. In 1899 **Curtis** designed an Inn to be erected at Light House Point on Lake Chautauqua. In 1900 **Curtis** took time out to redo his own house at *50 Central Avenue*. It was a drastic renovation described by a *Censor* writer as similar to how some animals shed their skin and get a new one "without exposing their inwards.... There may be some of the old house left in the new structure but it is not apparent. For all practical purposes he has an elegant new home." He also had a design accepted for a Nursery building for the Western New York Home for Dependant Children in Randolph. Closer to home, he drafted a redesign of Dr. **Waterhouse's** home at *57 Central Avenue*, a building **Curtis** had done in the first place. However, the changes did not actually take place until two years later for a new owner.

He had his plans for a new club house accepted by the Willow Brook Country Club in 1901, plans similar to those for the Bradford County Country Clubhouse. He also was the architect for the Annex to the Chautauqua County Jail and Sheriff's residence in Mayville. In her biographical sketch of **Curtis** (*Yesterdays III*), Elizabeth **Crocker** gives him credit for the Fire Hall at *33-37 Church Street*. However, in *The Fredonia Censor* of 4 September 1901, a story on the need to rebid because the earlier bids were too high, states that "Architect **Beebe** was immediately consulted, and the new plan hurried as much as

possible." That refers to Harry P. **Beebe**, a local architect. In 1902 **Curtis** was appointed to the Commission on a monument to the assassinated President McKinley. **Curtis** was the only non-Buffalonian so named. This was also the year when George L. **Knight**, who had purchased 57 *Central Avenue* from Dr. **Waterhouse**, had a verandah built on the front. In 1903 work began on the Ahira Hall Library in Brocton according to **Curtis'** plans. In 1904 he designed a new ceiling and floor which were installed in Trinity Episcopal Church in Fredonia, and in 1905 he designed a new State Bank block for Brocton's business section to be built by **Lindquist, Shelburg & Bailey**. In that same year he was the principal advisor in the decision to demolish the front wall of the Dunkirk Odd Fellows Temple at 214 *Central Avenue* and rebuild it to be stronger.

In 1906 **Curtis** designed some drastic renovations to 194 *Central Avenue* now the residence of the President of the State University College in Fredonia, and a house at 123 *Central Avenue*, perhaps his last architectural design. Of course, **Curtis** was not just an architect. He had a long, full life, as a recapitulation will show. Enoch Arnold **Curtis** was born on 19 July 1831 to Isaac **Candee** and Susan (**Hunter**) **Curtis**. He seems to have been named for his two grandfathers, the Rev. Enoch **Curtis** and Arnold **Hunter**. Enoch (the younger) was born in a log cabin his father had built on the land he had purchased in Busti. There is some slight confusion in the family record. Susan **Curtis** (his mother's) obituary (*The Fredonia Censor* 22 March 1893) describes her as the "widow of the late Arnold **Hunter Curtis**," confusing Arnold **Hunter**, her father, with Isaac **Curtis**, her husband. "Mrs. **Curtis** was born in Potter county, Pa., in June, 1810, her father being the first settler in Smethport." According to her official death record, she was actually born in Tioga County NY (the various census entries also give New York as her place of birth). On the other hand, her son's death record gives his mother's maiden name as "**Hunter**" followed by "Smethport Pa." Her father (and mother) did come from Connecticut, however. The record of her death on 15 March 1893 gives her age as 82 years, 9 months, 27 days, which would put her birth in May 1810. She married Isaac C. **Curtis** around 1830 and "came with her husband to Jamestown, this county, in 1830, and soon after Mr. C. bought a farm of the Holland Land Co. in Busti, and had to cut a road through a dense forest to reach his possession. There they built a log cabin in which their children were born....Mr. [Isaac] **Curtis** afterward bought a farm in Harmony where he resided until he was no longer able to work, when he moved to Angola where he died in 1875." On the other hand, *The Genealogical and Family History of Western New York* [1912] states that Isaac farmed in the town of Harmony and that "this was his home until death."

The 1893 obituary seems to be the basic source for later accounts of Enoch **Curtis's** early years. A slightly embellished version in the *Centennial History of Chautauqua County* (1904) describes Enoch as the "oldest of six children." (This is repeated in the *Genealogical and Family History of Western New York*). Although his mother's obituary says only four children survived her -- Enoch, Corydon, Watson, and Eliza (Mrs. J. N.) **Wooley** -- there is a notice of the death of his brother, Samuel G. **Curtis**, in Wisconsin in June 1899, age 63. That may be an error, since **Edson** lists the children as "Enoch A., Emeline (Mrs. Edwin **Lewis**, dec.), Lydia S. (dec.), Eliza (Mrs. John **Wooley**), Corydon J. and Watson." Enoch **Curtis** as a youngster is said to have gone to the local school, which happened to be on one corner of his father's 100-acre farm in Busti. As was typical at the time, he attended school in the winter and worked on the family farm in the summer. He completed his schooling with one term at the Jamestown Academy when he was 17. That was in 1848, in which year the family moved to another farm in Harmony, near Ashville. There, Enoch taught in a common school winters and farmed with his father until he came of age (1852), at which point he is said to have left the farm "to engage in building." He seems to have pretty much taught himself architecture by working at the building trade and reading any architectural texts he could find. In fact, he may soon after have begun a lengthy courtship, since on 25 June 1853, he bought a house lot in Ashville from Morris **Norton**, his future father-in-law. On 3 October 1855, he married Jennie E. **Norton** of Ashville. The brief summary in **Curtis's** obituary suggests that he washed his hands of farming as soon as he could, devoting himself to becoming an architect/builder instead. That may be true, but on 1 June 1858 he bought (or was given) a 36-acre parcel from his father's

land in Harmony, outside of Ashville, that would have to have been for farming of some kind. The transcribed assessment rolls of the Town of Harmony for 1857-1863, compiled and edited by Donna J. **Johnson**, show him with his 3/4 acre house lot and the 36-acre farm. (The rolls for 1861 and 1862 appear to be missing.) All that suggests less than a total break with farming in order to pursue his dreams of building. In any case, he had additional responsibilities by this time. Their first child, Isabel K. **Curtis**, was born on 8 August 1856. Four years later, as far as we know, **Curtis** had his first contract as an architect, for the new Baptist church building in Panama.

In the spring of 1862, he enlisted in the Union Army for a three year term (he was 31 years old). With two other volunteers -- who canvassed French Creek and Mina -- **Curtis** recruited over 100 men in Harmony, Clymer, Busti and Kiantone from 13 July through 9 August. On 16 August the group was mustered into the 112th Regiment New York Volunteers as Company D (the fourth to be mustered in) and elected **Curtis** as their Captain. On 12 September 1862 the regiment marched to the railroad depot and embarked for Washington DC, on the 16th sailing to Fort Monroe, then marching to Suffolk VA. When he was ill at Suffolk VA, his wife came to the front to care for him. After engaging in a number of battles, on 27 June his unit was sent by rail to Norfolk, then by steamer up the York River, then marched to Hanover Court House, and finally from Williamsburg to Yorktown. By 3 August they had sailed for Charleston Harbor and Folly Island for the attack on Fort Sumter, and by November the troops had settled in relative comfort. It was decided that, during the winter of 1863-1864, additional recruiting would be pursued. Among the officers chosen for this task was Capt. E. A. **Curtis**. He left for Hilton Head on 21 December. However, by the time he reached Chautauqua, most eligible men had been taken by other units. However, the trip home must have been a wonderful time for him as well as his family, including 7-year old Isabel. The recruiting continued through April, offering an extended 4-month opportunity for the **Curtis** family to get reacquainted. The recruiting itself ended up gathering a grand total of 88 men, including a 16-member Brigade Band. On 4 May 1864, **Curtis** and the others arrived at Gloucester Point VA to join the rest of their regiment. After a series of marches and minor engagements, on 1 June 1864 they began their march toward Cold Harbor, meeting some fellow Chautauquans in the 49th New York along the way.

The terrible battle that took place at Cold Harbor is epitomized by an account of one episode given by the Chaplain, William L. **Hyde** in his *History of the One Hundred and Twelfth Regiment N.Y. Volunteers*. "The enemy holding the rifle pits on their flank, were able to pour in a severe enfilading fire, while they were also exposed to the front fire of the advanced line of works. At this point the carnage was terrible, the 112th from its position suffering most severely, its casualties nearly equaling the sum of those in the rest of the Brigade. Here Col. **Drake**...was shot" and "Capt. E. A. **Curtis** was wounded severely in the shoulder and leg." He was hospitalized for a time and, on 13 September 1864, discharged from the service and able to return home.

Within two months he had moved his family to Fredonia. There are a number of possible reasons for the move. If he was not familiar with Fredonia, his wife must have been, since her brother, Samuel H. **Norton**, was Rector of Fredonia's Trinity Episcopal Church from April 1859 until his early death in May 1864. Secondly, a good many of **Curtis'** comrades-in-arms were from Fredonia, including Lt. Colonel Frederick A. **Redington**, who had been commissioned and mustered in on 30 October 1862. While on duty at the Suffolk VA siege where **Curtis** had become ill, **Redington's** health also failed, but to such an extent that he was forced to resign his commission and was honorably discharged on 10 January 1863. It was from **Redington** that **Curtis**, in December 1864, bought the hardware store and set up in business at 47 West Main Street. On 1 December 1864 the two made a complicated exchange of properties. **Redington** deeded the store (#4 Woleben Block, 47 West Main Street) and his house lot (57 Forest Place) to **Curtis** for \$4500, while **Curtis** deeded to **Redington** his farm and house lot in Harmony for \$3800, which means **Curtis** paid out \$700. At first he seems to have focused just on the hardware business through 1865, perhaps taking time to further recover his health. The family established their residence nearby, around the corner on Mechanic Street (today's 59 Forest Place). However, **Curtis**

certainly was looking forward to getting back into the building design and construction trade. As we have seen, he had prepared a number of designs, "samples of his draughting" to be exhibited at the Fair Grounds in October 1866, and by 1867 he was advertising the building plans available at the shop of "E. A. **Curtis**, Architect and designer."

Nevertheless, he seems to have proceeded somewhat cautiously. The census entries tell the story. In 1865 he identified himself as a "merchant" and in 1870 merely as a "retired hardware dealer." It was not until the 1875 Census that he declared himself an "Architect." It is clear, however, that he was not depending on architecture alone for an income. Late in 1869 he bought the hardware business of G. N. **Frazine** at 18 *West Main Street* and took Darwin L. **Shepard** into partnership. No doubt the idea was to have the junior partner run the store while **Curtis** continued his architectural work. D. L. **Shepard**, who was born in 1841 in Exeter NY, came to Fredonia in 1866 when he was 25. In October of that year he married Miss Sarah E. **Winsor** (or **Winsor**) of Fredonia. There may have been an earlier friendship and/or family connection, since both the **Shepard** and the **Winsor** families were from Otsego County. When **Curtis** established the hardware store company, he got more than just a junior partner. Two of Sarah **Shepard's** brothers -- one was Jarius H. **Winsor** -- had a hardware store in Titusville PA. It was Jarius who had E. A. **Curtis** design a home there, construction for which began in 1871, and it must have been this connection that initially led **Curtis** to focus on Titusville in 1872-1874. Before leaving Fredonia for that period, he relinquished his role in the hardware store, turning it over to D. L. **Shepard** with an announcement to that effect in *The Fredonia Censor* of 31 January 1872. It is not clear whether the entire family moved to Titusville, or only **Curtis** himself. Their second child, Edith **Norton Curtis**, had only been born on 30 September 1871 (her sister Isabel was then 16). At any rate, by June 1874 he was back in Fredonia for good. A drop in oil prices following overproduction and the panic of 1873 not only caused his move back, but it also interrupted the building of the J. H. **Winsor** home. It was sold to James C. **McKinney** in 1876, the brother of J. L. **McKinney**, whose home **Curtis** had designed by 1874.

Once **Curtis** was settled back in their Fredonia home, there seems to be a lull in his activities, although it could just be another gap in the local records. One exciting event that did get recorded was the marriage of their older daughter, Isabel (known as Belle), to Frank C. **Chatsey** on 3 September 1875. **Curtis** and his wife were both active in Trinity Church, with Enoch acting as choir director, and in 1877, as the paid musical director. By the end of 1878 he must have decided -- or been persuaded -- to get involved in local politics. Early the following year he ran for and was elected a Trustee of the Village, serving just the one term. However, it was during his tenure on the Board that the question of an improved water supply for the Village was raised. **Curtis**, as Chairman of the Committee on Water Supply, had requested James O. **McCluer** of Warsaw NY, a hydraulic engineer, to analyze our local situation and give his recommendations. It was not until 1882 that the matter was again seriously considered. In the interim, **Curtis** was soundly defeated "when running for supervisor mainly on account of his persistent efforts in favor of water works" according to a retrospective piece in *The Fredonia Censor* of 24 December 1884.

The Supervisor's race took place in February 1880. The Republican caucus was held on 7 February with H. A. **Pierce** and E. A. **Curtis** both vying for the nomination. The *Censor* of 4 February summarized **Curtis's** qualifications: He has been a [Village] Trustee the past years, "is Chairman of the committee on improvements, was the author of the able report on the subject of water works, and stands well as a prominent and efficient member of the Board." **Curtis** won the nomination but lost the election for Town Supervisor (the *Censor* was aghast) to a virtual Democratic sweep. However, 1880 also saw the arrival of the **Curtis's** first granddaughter, Ruth **Chatsey**. **Curtis** did not give up on the question of a water supply for the Village, however. One outcome of the debate over the water works system was a mock-solemn "Challenge" published in the 6 July 1884 issue of the *Censor*. It was an agreement "by and between Geo. H. **White**, of the first part, and E. A. **Curtis**, of the second part." In this document, **White** asserted and maintained "that two streams of water through 1¼ inch nozzles, cannot be thrown over the spire of the

Normal School Building at the same time by the Fredonia Water Works system and hose attached thereto."

"The said E. A. **Curtis**" asserted and maintained to the contrary. The parties each deposited \$100 in the National Bank of Fredonia, winner take all. Unfortunately, it is not clear that test was ever held. However, once the work was completed, *The Fredonia Censor* of 24 December 1884 did report that its success was due more to **Curtis** "than to any other one person," and went on to make the rather pointed comment that for the firemen "eight streams can be thrown simultaneously upon the highest structure in the village," no doubt the newspaper's Christmas present to E. A. **Curtis** that year. In May 1885 "six streams were sent up at once, and all went above our highest building." Also in 1885 **Curtis** joined the E. D. **Holt** Post, No.403 of the Grand Army of the Republic and was elected its commander several times. He was also an active member and at one time president of the Northern Chautauqua Veteran Association. In June of 1885 the **Curtis's** second granddaughter, Alice, was born to the **Chatseys**.

There is no doubt that the success of the water works project helped **Curtis** win when he ran for Village President (Mayor) in March 1887. He served through 1888 but lost to A. N. **Colburn** in 1889. Coincidentally or not, in the following May, the Board of Water Commissioners was abolished and the Village took over its functions. The junior partner of the architectural firm, William H. **Archer**, left the partnership in 1890 and resettled in Buffalo. Later that year, Edith **Curtis** graduated in the Classical curriculum of the Normal School, where she would go on to teach both German and painting. Late in 1891 **Curtis**, primarily as the architect, with Frank W. **Tarbox** and Dr. Milton M. **Fenner**, bought the Park House (earlier the **Taylor** House, before that the **Johnson** House, originally the **Abell** Hotel) on Park Place fronting Barker Common. That must have represented something of a financial risk. Indeed, there was a severe depression in 1893, but **Curtis** seems to have weathered it well enough. In 1896 he was a delegate to the Republican national convention that met in St. Louis, where William **McKinley** was nominated for the presidency. That may have been one of the main reasons why, after President **McKinley's** assassination in 1901, **Curtis** -- the only non-Buffalonian to be so honored -- was made a member of the New York state board to design a monument to the President's memory.

In 1905, the **Chatseys** bought a lot on Central Avenue, although the *Censor* of 31 May said, they "will not build this year." The house at 103 *Central Avenue* was built in 1906 to the design of E. A. **Curtis**, apparently the last of his long career. He was aging and suffering from the war wounds received some forty years earlier. On 10 July 1907 the *Censor* cheerfully announced that "Capt. E. A. **Curtis** sits on his front veranda, looks well and enjoys visiting with his friends. He is still weak from the effect of his illness. The wound is healing slowly." However, **Curtis** died on 4 October 1907 from the illness caused by the bullet wound in his shoulder received at Cold Harbor, a wound which, his physician, Dr. A. Wilson **Dods**, stated had reopened the previous May. **Curtis** was laid to rest in Forest Hill Cemetery not far up the broad avenue from the gate and gate houses he had designed and seen erected just over ten years earlier.