

TOWN OF ITALY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



JUNE 2004

AMENDED JULY 2005

Prepared for the Town by
The Italy Zoning Commission

With the assistance of Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The fundamental nature of a Comprehensive Plan is to guide future decision making in a town. It provides the overall framework for future public and private investment and policy development. Many forces influence a town: the regional economy, state and federal agencies and regulations, local laws, developers, and the actions of individual property owners. By clearly stating the Town's goals and following them, the town can help guide these influences and determine its own future. The Comprehensive Plan provides a broad outline for the basis of land use and development. It encompasses the aspects of Italy that make it truly unique: its history, geographic location, scenic beauty, and rural town character.

According to New York State Law, a Town can prepare a comprehensive plan which then is reviewed by the public and adopted by the Town Board. This approval process does not prevent future review and amendment. The visions and goals set forth in this document should be viewed as flexible. As the Town and the needs of its residents change, so should the Comprehensive Plan. This plan is intended to serve the Town of Italy over the next ten years. It should be updated every ten years or less as directed by the Town Board.

The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Italy is intended to reflect a shared vision of the town's future. A clear sense of Italy's history and present state will help guide this vision for the future. One of the most significant inputs to the Town of Italy Comprehensive Plan is a survey that was developed, completed, and compiled in 2003 and 2004.

Again, the Town of Italy Comprehensive Plan is driven, first and foremost, by the voices of its residents and land owners. This document is meant to reflect those voices.

1.2 The Planning Process

In December of 2002, the Town of Italy Zoning Commission was formed because of pressing issues and concerns facing the community. From the onset, the Italy Town Board and members of the Zoning Commission emphasized the need for, and encouraged, public participation and input into the planning process. The goal of the Zoning Commission was to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan reflected the shared ideas, desires, and vision of the community. The Zoning Commission accomplished this by reaching out to the public and seeking input from the community and incorporating this information into the planning process. Input from town residents and landowners was solicited, welcomed, and received at every step in this process, from the initial Zoning Commission survey development (the "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats" or S.W.O.T. process), to regular open meetings, to the mailed Comprehensive Plan Survey itself.

A list of Zoning Commission members is included in the acknowledgement section in the appendices.

SECTION 2 - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In developing a Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Commission was responsible for determining the needs and desires of the citizens of the Town. The Comprehensive Plan was then developed to represent the expressed needs and desires as visions and goals for the future of the town.

2.1 S.W.O.T. Summary

The Zoning Commission's first action was to hold a public workshop on May 20, 2003. This workshop was a "brain-storming" exercise called a S.W.O.T. analysis. Participants were asked to express any thoughts, concerns, or interests for each of four categories, as they pertained to the town: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (S.W.O.T.). Each response was written on a poster, under a category. After all thoughts were exhausted, each participant was asked to choose the three most important issues for the town. The chart below and on the following page shows the results of this exercise. The issues that were considered most important are listed first under each category. This exercise provided the Zoning Commission with a solid list of issues, which were then used as the basis for the creation of the Public Survey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
rural character	high taxes for limited services
open space	lack of zoning
privacy	low tax base
people	nothing for children
state land (High Tor)	no community programs
good air quality	lack of businesses
wildlife	lack of employment opportunity
night skies (stars)	weak property values
lack of crime	unpaved roads
relaxed lifestyle	no medical or emergency services of our own
valley store	no place to shop
golf course	poor development
Finger Lakes Trail	lack of public communication
gullies	
Canandaigua Lake/other waterways	
Alcoholics Anonymous	
low population density	
Kamp Kiononia	
forest land	
good schools	
good roads and snow removal	
affordable property	
three churches	

OPPORTUNITIES
outdoor recreation
privacy
playground
wind energy
solar energy
land
hang-gliding
motorcycle and bicycle traffic
scenic vistas
family place
identity
crafts people and artists
officials easy to talk to
major trails throughout the area
golf course
at threshold of local gov't involvement/planning
maple syrup producers
small farms
historical value

THREATS
lack of zoning
lack of community involvement
zoning
lack of a master/Comprehensive Plan
windmills
loss of pipeline for tax purposes
funding cuts
increasing traffic
paved roads
losing valley store
unpaved roads
landfill
towers

2.2 *The Zoning Commission Survey*

A survey was developed in late 2003 and mailed to every property owner and registered voter in the town in early 2004. Recipients were encouraged to make additional copies of the survey for members of their household. Copies of the survey were also made available at the Italy Town Hall and at other locations throughout the Town to encourage input from all members of the Town, especially renters who are typically underrepresented in surveys such as this. The survey addressed a range of issues facing the Town of Italy. 1432 surveys were distributed and 467 surveys were returned. The response to the Zoning Commission's survey, at 32.6%, was well above what is considered a 'statistically significant' return rate for such mailings. Often, survey responses indicated a unified voice on many issues. The following is a written general summary of the survey results. More specific results can be obtained by contacting the Town of Italy Zoning Commission.

The Zoning Commission Survey included 23 questions that addressed issues that will have a direct impact on the Town's decision making over the next ten years (please see the appendix for a copy of the survey form). The goal of the survey was to assist the community in formulating a clear vision and direction for our town's future. Members of the town also had the opportunity to offer opinions on specific issues that face them personally.

2.3 *The Zoning Commission Survey Summary*

Property Ownership

Roots in Italy go deep. The average resident/landowner has been in Italy 17.5 years. The survey respondents indicated that they had owned land in Italy ranging from less than a year to 72 years. Those that were seasonal residents have owned property in Italy for up to 50 years.

The most striking result of the survey is an overwhelming agreement on the importance of Italy's natural and scenic attributes. According to the survey, the most popular reasons for people choosing Italy as their residence were: its rural character, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities. These were consistently listed as the finest attributes of the town. 66% cited rural character and privacy to be among their top reasons. 55% noted the unspoiled scenic vistas. The price of real estate was important to 45%, while 43% highly valued the recreational resources such as High Tor, state forestland, and the Finger Lakes Trail.

Development

Most of the respondents (92%) felt that it was in the town's best interests to preserve and protect the natural and scenic attributes, as well as the rural nature of the community. 87% valued agriculture. 59% of respondents felt that tourism should be encouraged in Italy, and 69% felt that the proximity and accessibility to natural public land resources should be promoted. A majority of 78% felt that the town should support and encourage home-based businesses, while an even greater majority felt that home-based businesses should be permitted in residential areas, as long as they met certain requirements. Only 35% agreed that they would support commercial or industrial growth.

Land Use Control

A significant majority of town residents felt that development which affects neighbors/the town should be subject to some form of municipal oversight (questions 7,8,10,11). 80% disagreed when asked if a landowner should be allowed to use their property in any way, regardless of how it affected the quality of life, or property value of their neighbors. 73% of respondents felt that structure heights should be addressed in the town, and over half (53%) felt that their property's value was vulnerable due to the lack of zoning in the town.

Historical and Recreational Resources

An overwhelming majority (78%) of respondents felt the need to preserve and protect historic sites within the town. Included with those historic sites, respondents listed many natural features and vistas they desired to be protected. These included the old town hall, one- room schoolhouses, churches, cemeteries, and sites of early settlers' residences. A little less than half (47%) felt that the town should purchase land as it becomes available for specific uses such as a town square, park, or garden.

Views

The survey asked respondents to list their favorite view and least favorite view in the town of Italy. 65% of respondents listed areas of natural or scenic beauty as their favorite view. 11% listed their own property as a favorite view. In response to the least favorite view, 19% wrote “trashed properties” within the town, 13% old vehicles in yards, 5% specified illegal landfills, with 5% each to cell towers, run-down buildings, and mobile homes.

Most and Least Liked Attributes of the Town

When asked what they liked most about the town of Italy, the top responses were the rural/small town character, the people, peace and quiet, unspoiled land, air, and water, and the scenic views. Responses to what they liked the least about the town included high taxes, trashed properties, lack of zoning, and poor road maintenance. The last question on the survey asked for respondents to list any areas of concern that were not mentioned in the survey. Wind Turbines was at the top of the list. Zoning was second, followed by the tax rate, road-work, and unkempt properties.

Conclusion

Both the number of responses and the often significant agreement of responses has given direction and clarity to the Town of Italy Zoning Commission in the formulation of this Comprehensive Plan.

SECTION 3 – BACKGROUND

3.1 History

In reviewing the history of the lands that would someday become the Town of Italy, one should perhaps begin with the last great ice age that ranged over the northern parts of the North American continent ten to twenty thousand years ago. For it was these thick ice sheets that formed the magnificent hills and valleys we know as Italy today. These geographic features would play a key role in the later exploration and habitation of the area by both the Native American and European-American settlers.

In the thousands of years that followed the receding ice sheets, until approximately 200 years ago, Italy's fertile valleys and lush hillside forests were inhabited by Native American tribes, the most recent of which was the Seneca nation. Seneca legends speak of the region as the birthplace of the Seneca people, which legend holds, took place at the foot of Clark's Gully, a magnificent scenic area located in the High Tor State Lands. During the Revolutionary War period, Seneca villages throughout the region were destroyed. After the war, veterans remembered the scenic and fertile Finger Lakes and many would return to settle the area.

Italy was a part of the Phelps Gorham purchase of 1788. In 1789, Ontario County was formed, taking in all of New York State west of the Pre-Emption Line (a north-south line approximately in line with Seneca Lake). A part of this huge area would later become Yates County, including the Town of Italy. Italy was originally part of the Town of Naples, which was organized as Middletown in 1789. Italy was incorporated as a separate town in 1815. When Yates County was formed from Ontario County in 1823, Italy became part of the new county.

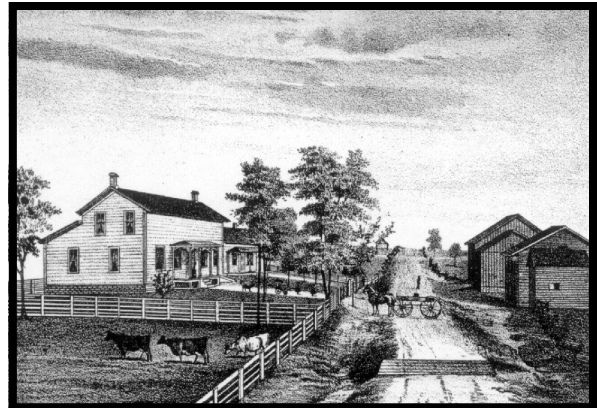
From the beginning, the "big hills" of Italy were recognized for their natural beauty as noted in this early settler's description appearing in S.C. Cleveland's *History of Yates County*: "The lustrous evergreen of the towering hills was a perpetual picture of the greatest beauty".



Those towering, thickly forested hills also influenced the settlers who would come to this area

to follow the creeks, rivers and valleys. In 1790 John Mower became the first to stake his claim in the West River Hollow at the age of 19. During the period from 1795 to 1810, settlement in the town was sparse, and was almost exclusively along the road which had been built from Canandaigua to Conhocton (later renamed Cohocton) which crossed the northwest corner of the township (generally following present-day Route 245).

The period from 1810 through 1855 was characterized by increasing settlement and development of several more populated areas within the town, the largest of which was Italy Hollow. By 1845 the town's population had reached 1700. The typical family worked a small farm to provide for its own needs. The valleys, and to a lesser extent, the hillsides, were fertile. These "side hill" farms and fields were difficult to clear and work, however, and early family farming was often limited to the subsistence variety.



Harris Farm, Italy Hill, mid 19th century

The majority of the town's non-agricultural commerce was directly related to, and dependent upon the forests. This activity centered in Italy Hollow, using Flint Creek and its available waterpower. Lumbermen, carpenters, joiners, coopers, wagon and carriage makers, chairmakers and even a dish turner all made their living from this natural resource. Due to the lack of easy transportation, grain products were often turned into distilled spirits (whiskey), and the burning of vast amounts of forest to clear land produced potash, the first cash crop.

Roadhouses sprang up along main routes through the township including the aforementioned Canandaigua to Cohocton road and the Italy Hollow (Valley) and Italy Hill roads. Elias Lee opened the first of these sometime after 1800. Settlement appeared on West Italy Hill and (East) Italy Hill became a stop on the stage coach route between Penn Yan and Prattsburgh.

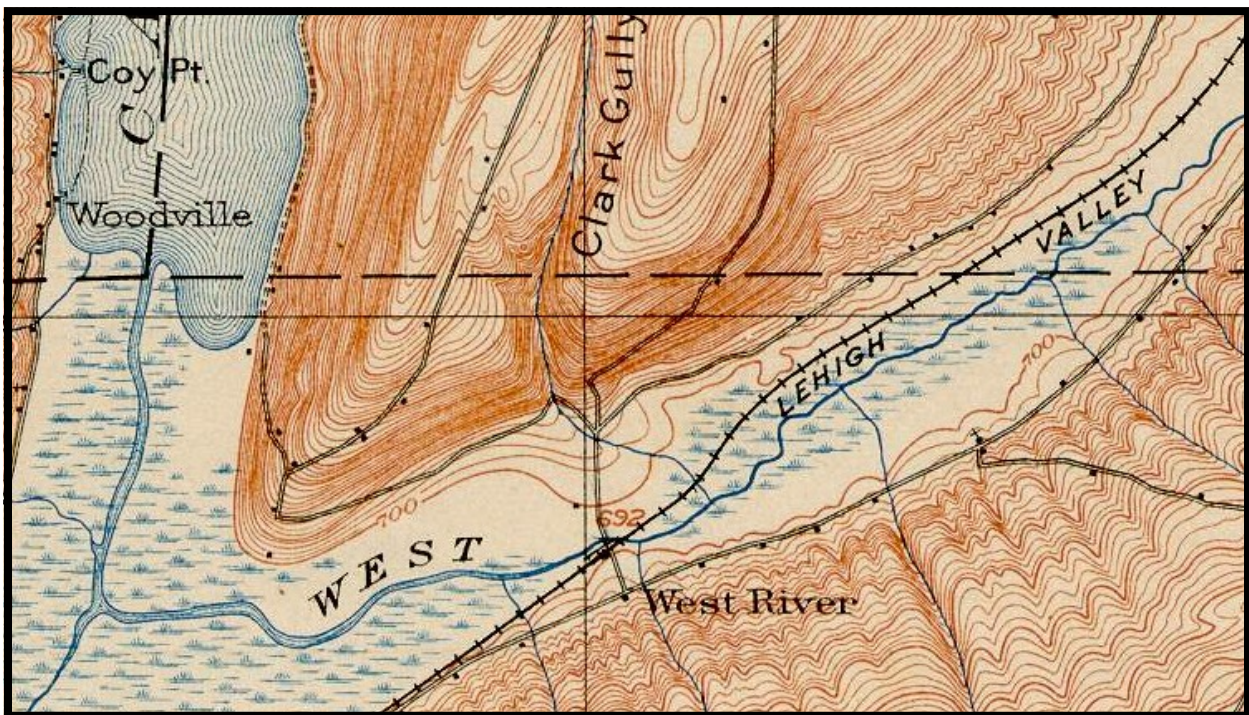
In 1817 a millpond and gristmills were built on Flint Creek and a Post Office was established at Italy Hollow in 1825. The first postmaster was Valentine Graham, who also served as justice of the peace and town clerk. The first physician in Italy was Dr. Elisha Doubleday. The Italy Hill Baptist Church was erected in 1844, and still stands today. The population of the town peaked in 1845 at about 1,700.

Between 1865 and 1900, the period between the Civil War and the turn of the century, Italy lost almost a third of its population with just 1000 remaining in 1900. This was not atypical of rural Upstate towns of the period. By this time, most of the forests were gone. Italy Hollow remained the population center with its two churches, stores, inns, blacksmiths, a nursery, a gristmill, post office and sawmill. Two hundred of the town's families owned and worked farms in 1875, raising small grains and apples, potatoes, and assorted vegetable crops. This was also the period when the enormous Parish sheep farm was at its zenith, encompassing more than 1000 acres. Edward R. Parish raised Merinos that were nationally recognized. The barns still stand

today at the base of Parish Hill Road, at its intersection with route 245. By the end of the 1800s, ten vineyards had been planted in the town and a basket factory was established to support them on West Italy Hill.

West Italy had a post office and a store, but never truly reached “hamlet status”. By 1875, all seven of the town’s churches were established; two in Italy Hollow, two at Italy Hill, the Town Line Church and the Pine Tree and Free Methodist Churches on West Italy Hill.

In 1871, the Geneva and Southwestern Railway was incorporated to connect Geneva with Naples, running through Italy along the West River. The villages of Naples and Middlesex were bonded for the money needed for construction, which started in 1872. The line was surveyed, grading of the right-of-way started, cross ties purchased and some bridges built. A financial panic in 1873 caused abandonment of the project.



Topographic map (circa 1925) showing the Lehigh Valley Railroad in the West River Valley and the station hamlet of 'West River'

In 1892, the Middlesex Valley Railroad was incorporated. Construction utilized the graded right-of-way of the never-built Geneva and Southwestern Railway. When completed in 1894, it connected Naples with the Lehigh Valley Railroad at Geneva. A station known as ‘West River’ was built in Italy near the intersection of Sunnyside Road and what is today Route 245. The Lehigh Valley acquired the Middlesex Valley Railroad the following year.

The period from 1900 to 1940 was one of re-adjustment for the previously thriving hamlets. These businesses were dependent on the farm families and lumber trade. This had flourished in

earlier times, but declined with the forest bounty gone. Mirroring a pattern in Upstate New York and New England, hill farming became less and less practical as mechanized equipment was introduced. The construction of “hard” roads provided easier transportation to places like Naples, Rushville, and even Canandaigua, which the hamlet businesses found hard to compete with.

The Great Depression of the 1930s hit rural areas like Italy hard. By 1940, the population of the township had dropped below 500 for the first time since it was founded in 1815. As family farms failed during the 1930s, the Town of Italy was the focus of government efforts to purchase marginal farmlands and return these to their original woodland character. The results of this reforestation effort can be seen today along much of the east side of Italy Valley and in the High Tor Wildlife Management Area.

Following the hardships of the Second World War, Italy remained somewhat agricultural. Adequate paved roads and increasing private car ownership allowed for the beginning of a commuter era that would last until the present time. Most of the remaining hamlet businesses closed as their customers went to “town” to do their trading and find jobs. Also during this period, the forests were rejuvenated thanks to the reforestation efforts of the depression years, providing for new recreational activity within the town.

A 1976 listing of homes and businesses within the former Italy Hollow area shows a little less than 200 entries, so the town has slowly “come back” from the depression days. Even until this day, however, it remains the least populated of the towns in Yates County.

The big hills of Italy remain, forested again and looking toward the next chapter in their history.

The Town of Italy has 3 structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- **The James Fox House** is a circa 1815 structure constructed in the Federal Style and is currently a private residence (*750 Italy Valley Road*)
- **The Italy Valley Methodist Church** is a circa 1856 example of Greek Revival architecture (*Italy Valley Road*)
- **The McLoud-Smith House** is a late 1820’s stone house also in the Greek Revival style (*Italy Turnpike just west of Dunn Rd*)

Other historic and scenic sights include:

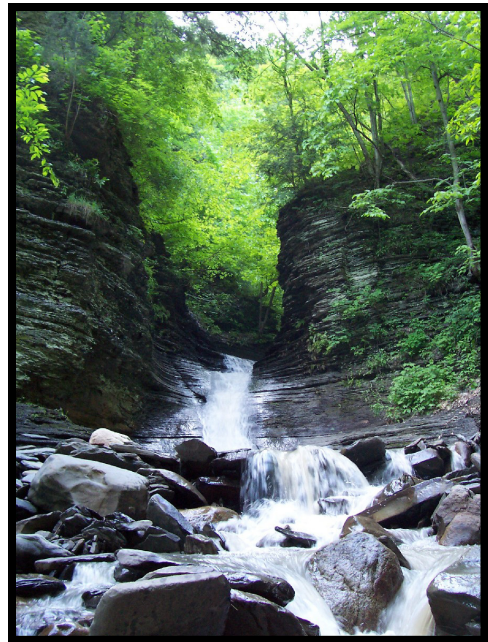
- **Parish farm buildings.** These date to the mid-1800’s, and are located on Route 245 and Parish Hill Road
- **Big Rock.** This is a landmark for hikers on the Finger Lakes Trail as it climbs the east side of Italy Valley. The rock is the size of a one to two car garage, and is an excellent example of a geological “erratic”. Erratics occur when the ice age glaciers melt and deposit the rocks

they have carried within the ice flow. It is likely that this huge rock was positioned in this spot thousands of years ago, and has remained there ever since.

- **High Tor State Wildlife Management Area.** This resource consists of over 6,000 acres straddling the towns of Italy and Naples. High Tor offers excellent hunting, fishing and hiking. A product of the Great Depression, the land that is High Tor was reclaimed from failed farms and reforested in Federal WPA programs by unemployed men in the area during the 1930s. It is accessible from various points, including a parking lot and trail off Brink Road and off of Basset Road near the town's western border. Individual camping is not permitted, but groups may use several designated campsites by permit.
- **Clark's Gully.** Located within the High Tor Wildlife Management Area near Sunnyside Road and West Avenue. According to Seneca legends, this is the birthplace of the Seneca people.
- **Big Elm Tree** (photo on following page). Located by what was called the Italy Valley highway, this tree stood long before the first settlers arrived in Italy. The tree was said to have been the largest tree in New York State, and was reportedly 150 feet high and 35 feet in circumference at its base. Its branches were said to have overshadowed more than an acre of ground. The Big Elm was a place of council for the Native Americans. The Big Elm burned and was subsequently cut down in 1933.



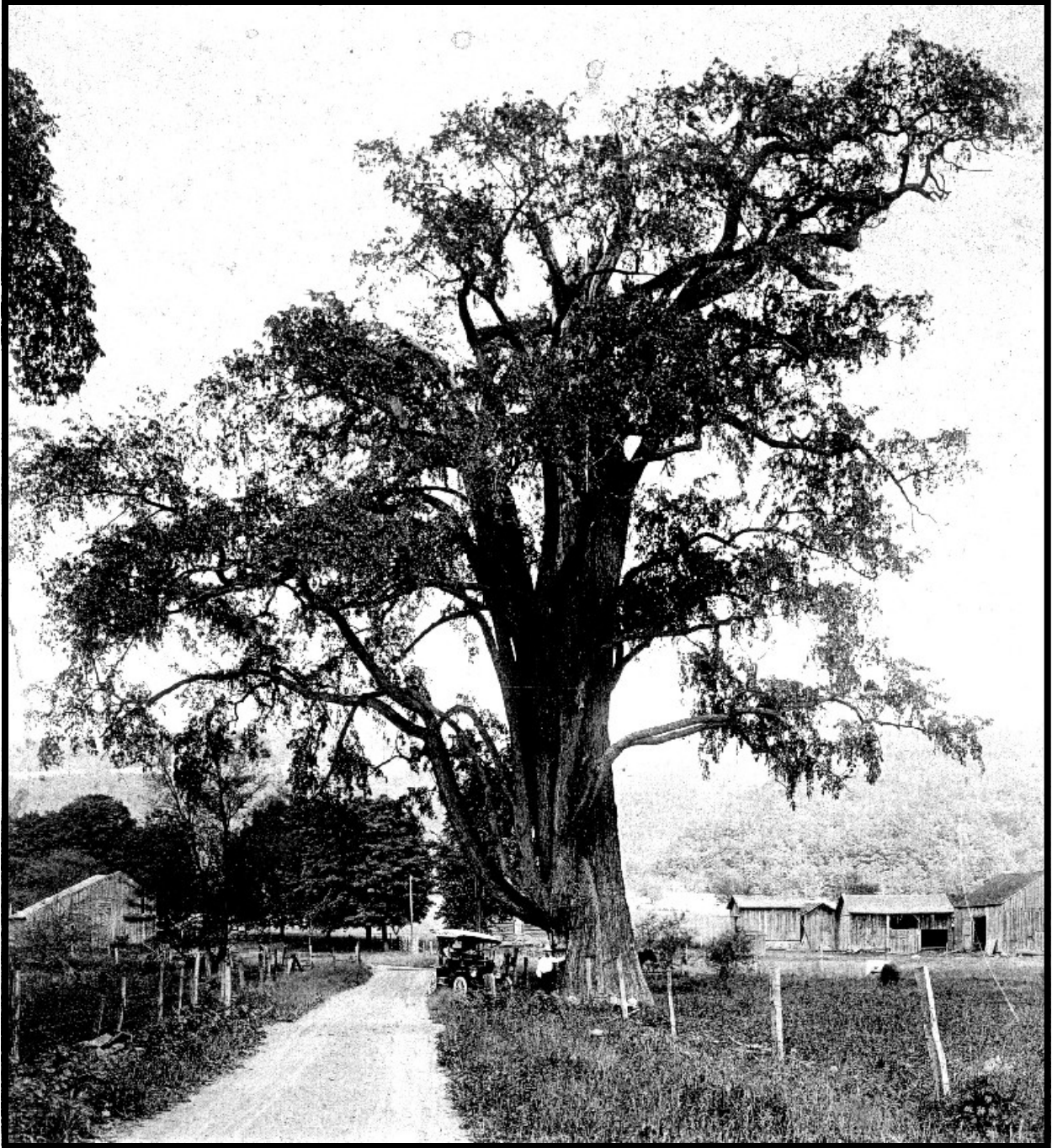
High Tor Access Point



Clark's Gully

Sources for the Town History:

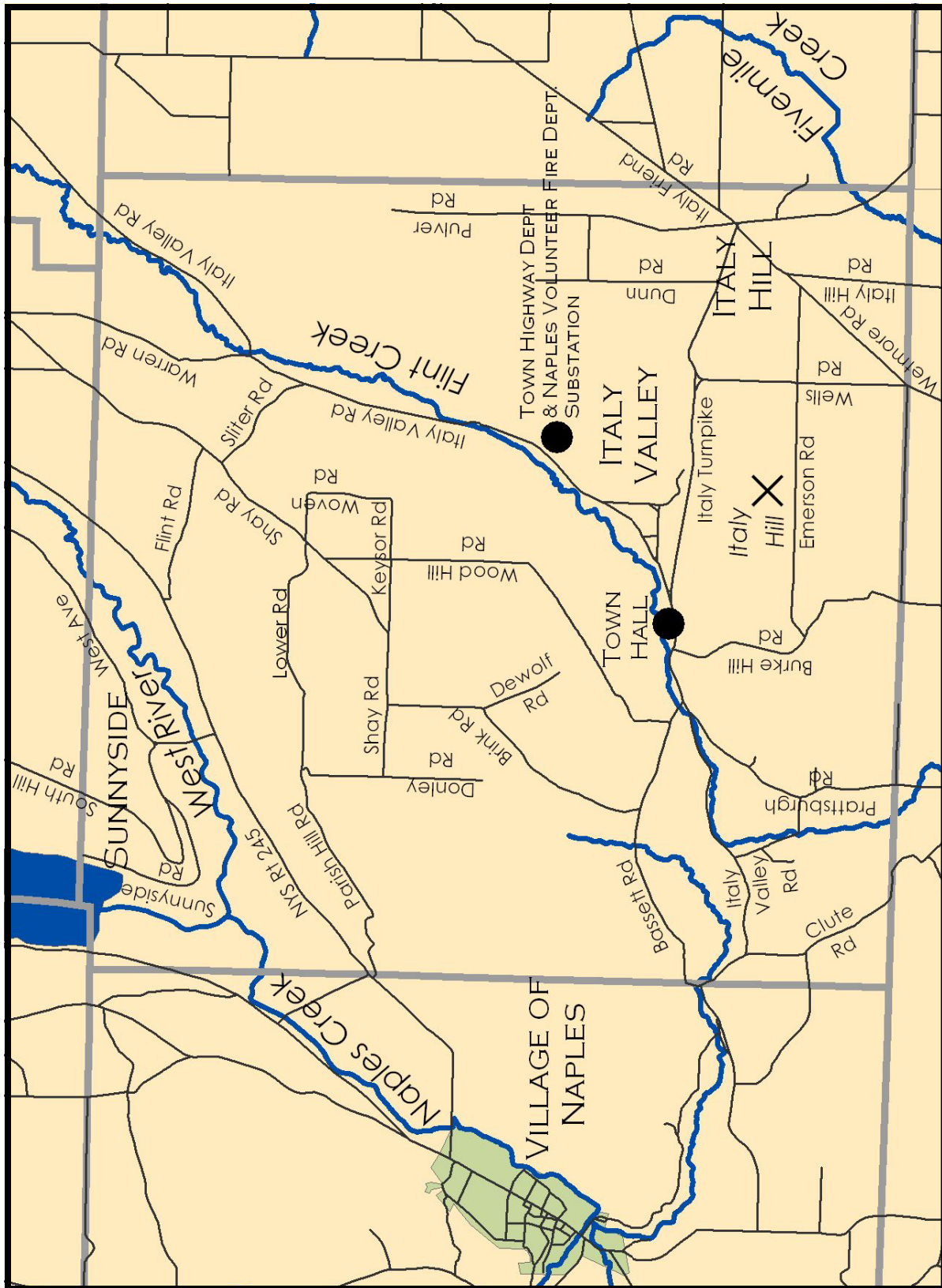
Input from Molly Kuhn during her work with (and on) the Italy Zoning Commission; assistance from Sandy Dunn, Italy Town Historian, and information from the following books: *History of Yates County* by S.C. Cleveland; *A Good Country, A Pleasant Habitation, An Outline History of Yates County*, by Frances Dumas.



Big Elm Tree, early 20th century



Map 1 - Italy: Regional Geography



Map 2 - Italy, Local Geography

3.2 *Geography and Climate*

Geography

The Town of Italy lies in the Finger Lakes Region, in the west-central part of New York State. The Finger Lakes Region is a subdivision of the larger geographic area known as the Appalachian Upland, which covers about half of New York State. This area was deeply scoured by glaciers which receded 8,000-10,000 years ago (recent in geological time). The movement of huge masses of glacial ice deepened existing stream valleys. When the glaciers receded, these deep valleys filled with water forming the eleven Finger Lakes.

Italy is at the southern end of Canandaigua Lake and is located in the southwestern corner of Yates County. The town is approximately a 6-mile by 6-mile square covering approximately 39 square miles. Italy is characterized by the hills and steep valleys common to the southern Finger Lakes Region. The two main valleys in the town are the West River Valley, stretching along the northwest section of the town and the Italy Valley, stretching across the central portion of the town. Italy Hill, located in the southeastern part of the town, is the highest point in Yates County at 2,145 feet. This high point offers dramatic views to many hills and valleys. Canandaigua Lake, the low point in the Town of Italy, is 686 feet above sea level.

The Town of Italy has the lowest population and is the least developed of any of the nine towns. It has the largest acreage of forestland, floodplain and public recreation lands in the county with the least amount of agriculture. Italy also includes the largest concentration of wetlands in the county. The Town of Italy is situated at the drainage divide of two major watersheds. The western half of the town drains into the West River, which flows southwest from Middlesex to Naples Creek and Canandaigua Lake, eventually leading to Lake Ontario. Flint Creek drains the eastern half of the town, flows north, also eventually draining to Lake Ontario. A very small portion of the southeastern section of the town drains to Fivemile Creek, eventually flowing south to the Cohocton, Chemung, and Susquehanna Rivers to Chesapeake Bay.

Climate

The Finger Lakes experience a fairly humid, continental type climate, which is modified by the proximity of the Great Lakes. Precipitation is rather evenly distributed throughout the year in quantity, but frequency is much higher in the cloudy winter months. Snowfall is significant, approximately 60 inches annually in Yates County, but far less than either Rochester or Syracuse, and is highly variable over short distances.

Overall, the local climate is variable, especially in the hill and valley topography of the southern Finger Lakes. South facing slopes warm more quickly in the spring, while sheltered valleys can receive killing frosts earlier in the fall. Hilltops can receive snow that does not reach valley floors.

Winters are generally cold, cloudy and snowy across the region, but are changeable and include frequent thaws. A portion of the annual snowfall comes from the "lake effect" process and is

very localized. This feature develops when cold air crosses the warmer lake waters and becomes saturated, creating clouds and precipitation downwind. The Italy area receives much less lake effect snow than Rochester or Syracuse. The Finger Lakes are also subject to occasional general or "synoptic" snowfalls but the worst effects usually pass to the east. Italy does see somewhat lower temperatures than those places closer to the modifying effects of the Great Lakes, although anything below -10F is uncommon.

Spring comes slowly to the region. The last frosts can occur as late as mid-May. The spring months are actually the driest months statistically, due in part to the stabilizing effect of the Lakes, although soils are wet. Sunshine increases markedly in May.

Summers are warm and sunny across the region. The average temperature is in the 70 to 72 degree (Fahrenheit) range. Rain can be expected every third or fourth day, almost always in the form of showers and thunderstorms. Completely overcast days in summer are rare. Severe weather is not common, but a few cases of damaging winds and small tornadoes occur each year in the region. There usually are several periods of uncomfortably warm and muggy weather in an average summer, with several days reaching the 90F degree mark. Still, the area usually experiences some of the most delightful summer weather in the East.

Autumn is pleasant, but rather brief. Mild and dry conditions predominate through September and much of October, but colder air masses cross the Great Lakes with increasing frequency starting in late October, and result in a drastic increase in cloud cover across the region in late October and early November. Although the first frosts may not occur until mid October, the first lake effect snows of the season usually follow by mid November. These early snows melt off quickly, with a general snow cover seldom established before mid-December. The growing season is relatively long for the latitude, averaging about 180 days.



Vineyards, West River valley, Town of Italy

SECTION 4 – CURRENT CONDITIONS

4.1 *Recreation and Natural Resources*

The Town of Italy is rich in natural resources. The responses to the survey indicate that the protection of these resources is important. Concern for natural resources is not a new phenomenon; indeed the reforestation of marginal farmland in the town was started over 70 years ago. However, population growth in rural areas and other development issues create new challenges for environmental protection.

When taken together, High Tor State Wildlife Management Area, Italy Hill State Forest, and Yates County property, Italy has approximately 5,500 acres of designated open space. The Town of Italy lies within two principle watersheds, Flint Creek and West River. Approximately seven miles of the Bristol Hills Branch of the Finger Lakes Trail is in Italy, connecting the town to 450 miles of trail across New York State. Italy is the most forested and least developed town in Yates County. It is precisely this lack of development that may be Italy's greatest natural resource.

Recreation

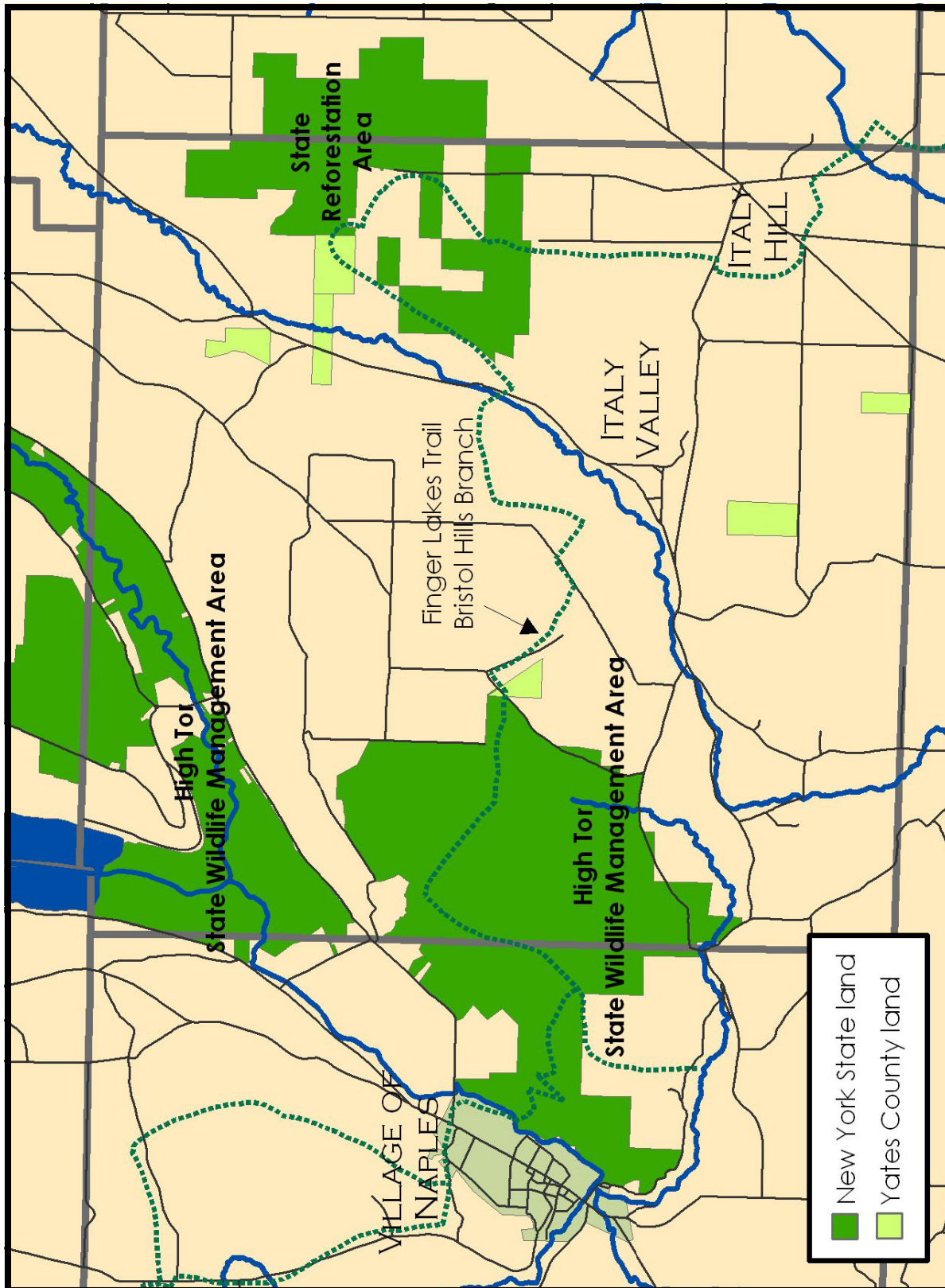
According to the National Forrester Service, backcountry use and outdoor recreation have increased tenfold since 1985, making it one of the largest growth industries in the United States. The Town of Italy is uniquely positioned to take advantage of this opportunity. Italy has always been a favored destination of deer, turkey, and grouse hunters. Increasingly, backpackers, day hikers, mountain bikers, parasailers, ice climbers, kayakers, canoeists, telemarkers (a form of skiing), and Nordic skiers are coming to Italy for its miles of trails, gullies, wooded hills, and vistas. Brook Trout, once abundant in Flint Creek, can still be found in small tributaries. The West River and Italy's many ponds offer excellent sport fishing opportunities.

The Finger Lakes Trail in the Town of Italy is made possible by the generosity of private landowners who allow the trail to connect public lands. There is a single lean-to, known as the "Outback Inn," where backcountry enthusiasts can stay in Italy.

Italy is home to over 4,300 acres of the High Tor State Wildlife Management Area, a preserve of over 6,100 total acres in three towns. High Tor includes approximately 3,400 acres of steep, wooded terrain with several man-made impoundments; 1,700 acres of marsh bordering the southern end of Canandaigua Lake; and 1,000 acres of overgrown fields with steep, wooded hillsides. Among the critical diverse habitats found within the High Tor Wildlife Management Area are grasslands, shrublands, conifer stands, emergent marshes, and large blocks of forest.



In March of 2002, Governor George E. Pataki announced the designation of High Tor Wildlife Management Area in Ontario and Yates Counties as a new State Bird Conservation Area



Map 3 - Public Recreational Lands, Town of Italy

(BCA), providing additional protection for critical bird habitats and expanding opportunities for bird watching. High Tor Wildlife Management Area is one of only 18 bird conservation Areas designated across New York State. New York's Bird Conservation Area Program, which was modeled on the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Areas Program, was signed into law by the Governor in 1997.

Forestry and Agriculture

Italy's abundant hardwood forests were at first an impediment to settlement, then later drew loggers and sawmills to the town. Today, the Town's forests contribute greatly to its scenic beauty and represent an economic benefit to many forest land owners.

In addition to nurturing forests, the land in Italy has also supported agriculture. Although developed later than many, more easily accessible areas, agriculture grew in Italy throughout the 19th century, especially along the fertile valleys. Farms later spread into more marginal hillside and hilltop lands. As the regional and national agricultural economy shifted in the 20th century, these marginal farms were the first to be abandoned, some of which became part of High Tor. Today, many hillsides that even twenty or thirty years ago were active pastures or hayfields are reverting to scrubland and forest. The lands are crisscrossed with the remnants of farming, including old hedgerows, stone walls, and old foundations.

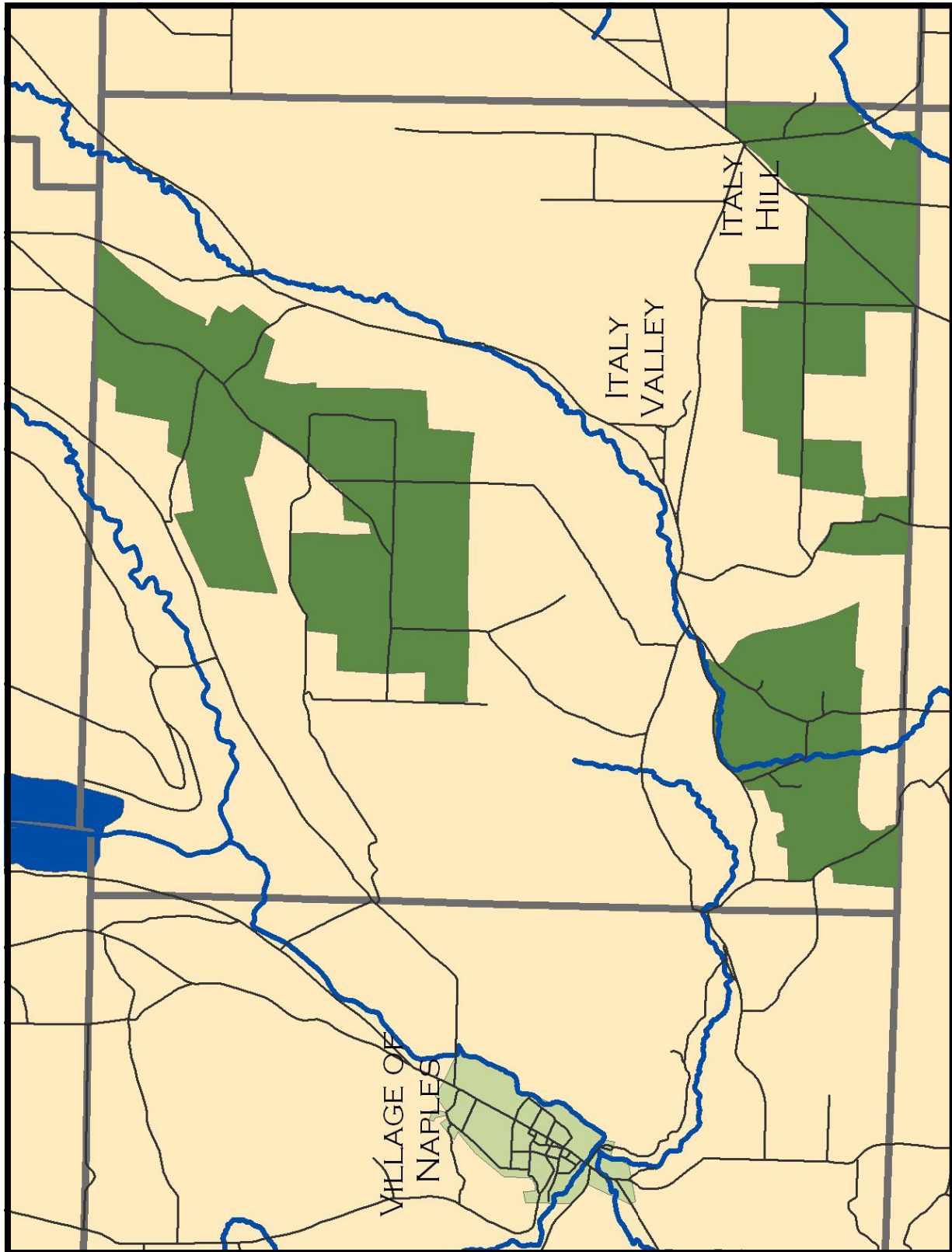


Organically raised dairy cows, Town of Italy

Still, agriculture remains active in Italy today and the residents' survey indicates a strong desire to see these maintained and encouraged. Current agricultural activity in Italy includes viniculture, maple sugaring, beef cattle, hay cutting, and some dairy farming.

Article 25-AA of the Agriculture and Markets Law authorizes the creation of local agricultural districts pursuant to landowner initiative, preliminary county review, state certification, and county adoption. Of the Town's more than 24,000 total acres, 6,200 acres are in Yates County Agricultural District 1. The map on the following page shows the locations of these lands.

The purpose of agricultural districting is to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The program is based on a combination of landowner incentives and protections, all of which are designed to forestall the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Included in these benefits are preferential real property tax treatment (agricultural assessment



Map 4 - Agricultural Districts, Town of Italy

and special benefit assessment), and protections against overly restrictive local laws, government funded acquisition or construction projects, and private nuisance suits involving agricultural practices.

Water Resources

The water resources of Italy are also very important. Although Italy has only a very short stretch of shoreline on Canandaigua Lake, the Lake is an asset for Yates County and the entire Finger Lakes Region. The enjoyment of this resource, and the increasing importance of tourism to the Finger Lakes, depends on the high quality of the water. The western portion of Italy (approximately 42% of the town) drains into Canandaigua Lake via the West River and Naples Creek.

Currently, there is a “cottage community” clustered along Sunnyside Road and some private roads in the vicinity in the northwest corner of the town. The slopes in the area are quite steep, leaving little room at the water’s edge for the cottages. This creates both a scenic community and challenging environment for infrastructure such as roads, access, and utilities (especially sewer and water). All of the lakeshore itself is in private ownership and there is no official public access to the lake.



View of Canandaigua Lake from Sunnyside



Naples Creek and wetlands, Town of Italy

Aside from the lake itself, Naples Creek and West River and their adjacent marshes are significant amenities in the town. Canoeists, kayakers, bicyclists, bird-watchers, hikers, and fisherman all enjoy these areas. There is public access to the West River in two places, from which boaters can easily reach Canandaigua Lake. In addition, the marshes help retain and purify the water from large storms before it flows into the lake, improving the water quality of the lake.

Other Natural Resources

The Town of Italy's potential for other natural resource extraction, such as mining, oil, or natural gas, is yet to be determined.

4.2 Land Use

The land uses of the various parcels in the Town of Italy are compiled by the Yates County Office of Real Property Services and represents the town tax assessor's estimation of land use.

According to this data, there are 23,883 acres of real property in the Town of Italy. Please see Table 1 below for a detailed break down of land uses.

Table 1 - Land Use

Land Classification	Total Area (acres)	Percentage of Total
Residential	10,163	42.6%
Vacant	5,902	24.7%
No Data	3,061	12.8%
Ag	2,865	12.0%
Public Open Space	1,539	6.4%
Community Service	297	1.2%
Commercial	42	0.2%
Utilities	15	0.1%
Total*	23,883	100.0%
* Note: This is not the same figure as the total area of the Town, since large areas of surface water and the public road right-of-ways are not included in the county real property data		

4.3 Population and Housing

According to the 2000 United States Census, the Town of Italy has 1,087 people. 50.9% are male and 49.1% are female. 98.3% identified themselves as white and 0.4% as African American, American Indian, or Asian. 0.4% identified themselves as some other race and 0.9% identified themselves as more than one race. 0.6% identified themselves as Latino (Note: the Census considers Latino an ethnicity, not a race).

The median age of town residents is 38.5 years, compared with 37.9 for Yates County as a whole.

The Town's building stock is relatively new, reflecting the sparsely settled, rural nature of the town for much of its history and the increasing growth in recent decades. Nearly 40% (39.6%) of the housing in Italy has been built since 1980, while only 20.9% of the structures were built before 1939. The total number of housing units in the Town is 578. Of those housing units 418 are considered occupied housing and 127 are seasonal housing, with the remaining 36 units vacant.

4.4 Services

Water

There is no public water utility within the Town. Individual residents utilize private well water for their water supply.

Sewer

There are no public sewers in the Town. Each property has private on-site waste water systems of various ages.

Gas/Propane

Residences in the Town of Italy use a variety of fuel sources. 42.8% depend on home heating oil or kerosene. 29.4% use propane, while 19.4% use wood. 3.8% use electricity and 2.4% use coal or coke. The remaining 2.2% use other fuels.

Electric

Electric service in the Town of Italy is provided by New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG).

Communication

Italy's telephone infrastructure (poles, wires, etc.) is owned and maintained by Verizon Corporation, Frontier, and Empire Access. Individuals are able to choose from many local and long distance service providers. Digital subscriber line (DSL) high-speed internet service is available.

Cable television is available in certain sections of Italy and is provided by Adelphia Cable. High speed internet via cable is not available at the time of this report and Adelphia has no plans to offer it in the Italy area in the foreseeable future.

4.5 Community Organizations, Institutions, and Government

Town Government

The Town was incorporated in 1815 and is run by a supervisor and town board of four. There are five full time employees: an elected Highway Superintendent, and four highway department staff. There are six part



time employees: Clerk and Tax Collector, Assessor, Code Enforcement Officer, Attorney, Town Justice, and Historian.

The Town Hall was built in 2000 and is located at 6060 Italy Valley Road, a short distance west of the hamlet. It was built with State and Town funds and utilized volunteer efforts in its construction.

The Town maintains the roads owned by the Town and cuts the grass at several cemeteries in the Town.

Churches

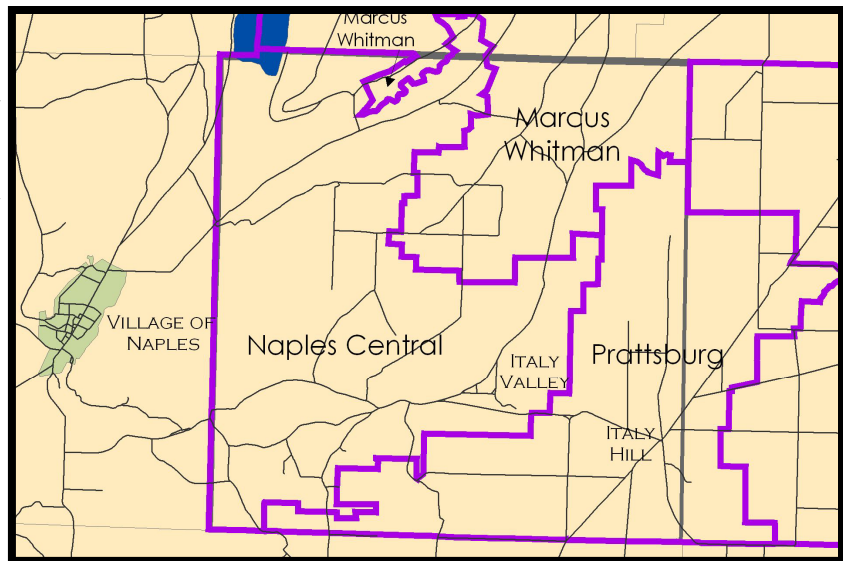
Methodist Church - Italy Valley (*in the hamlet*)

Baptist Church - Italy Hill

Italy-Naples Baptist Church - Italy Valley (*near the town line*)

Schools

Italy is served by three Public School Districts, Naples Central, Marcus Whitman, and Prattsburg Central, as illustrated on the Map. A private school is located at the County line Church.



Map 5
School District Boundary Lines,
Town of Italy

Fire Department

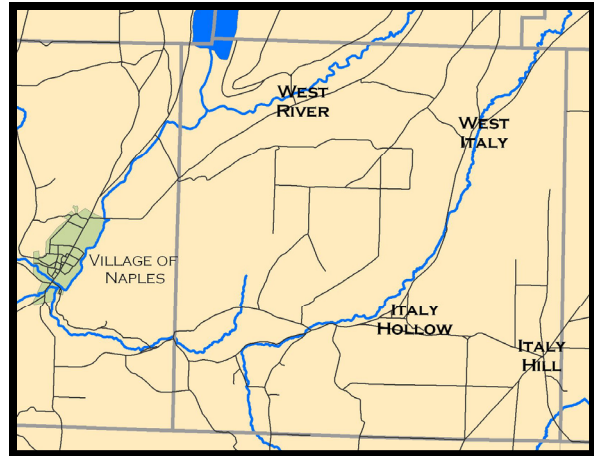
The western two-thirds of the town is served by Naples Volunteer Fire Department, which maintains a substation in the Town on Italy Valley Road just northeast of Italy Valley (the hamlet). The southeastern portion of the town, is served by the Prattsburg Volunteer Fire Department, while a small portion along Shay Road in the northern part of the town is served by Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department.

Law Enforcement

Italy has no formal or contractual arrangements for law enforcement. The Town is patrolled and serviced by the regular activities of the Yates County Sheriff and New York State Police.

Post Office

At the turn of the last century (1900), Italy had four post offices: Italy Hollow (located in the current hamlet area), Italy Hill, West Italy (located on Italy Valley Road between Sliter and Warren Road), and West River (located at the present Route 245 and Sunnyside Road). Since then, these have all closed, in large part due to improved transportation and technology, and Italy currently has no post office. Postal services are provided by post offices in Naples (14512), Branchport (14418), and Middlesex (14507). While Branchport does have a zip code and approximately 10% of Italy uses Branchport as a mailing address, there is no actual Branchport Post Office and postal functions for this zip code are handled by the Keuka Park Post Office.



Map 6 - Approximate location of Italy's Post Offices, circa 1900

An analysis of zip codes taken from the Real Property records reflect Italy's role as a recreational and vacation community. Table 2 below illustrates this. For example, nearly 20% of property in Italy is owned by persons with an address in the Greater Rochester area.

Table 2 - Italy Mailing Address Analysis

City/Area	Number of Addresses	Percent
Naples	412	39%
Rochester Metro Area	197	19%
Branchport	111	10%
Ontario County (except for Naples)	85	8%
Yates County (except for Branchport and Middlesex)	69	7%
Wayne County	46	4%
Middlesex	43	4%
Out of State	39	4%
Buffalo Metro Area	13	1%
Prattsburg	13	1%
Other New York State	13	1%
Southern Tier (except for Prattsburg)	10	1%
Syracuse Metro Area	9	1%
Total	1060	100%

4.6 Economy

According to the 2000 Census, the Town of Italy has an unemployment rate of 5.2%. There were 544 town residents over the age of 16 who were employed. Table 3 below shows the areas of employment.

Table 3 - Employment

Industry	Percent of Employed Population
Education, Health, Social Services	22.2%
Manufacturing	20.6%
Construction	11.9%
Retail Trade	10.3%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	6.3%
Professional, Management, Administrative	5.5%
Other	5.4%
Wholesale Trade	4.8%
Public Administration	3.5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	2.9%
Transportation and Utilities	2.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	2.4%
Information	1.3%
Total	100.0%

As the table indicates, the top five areas (Education, Health, Social Services, Manufacturing, Construction, Retail Trade, and Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services) of employment for Italy residents account for over two-thirds of all employment. Since there are very limited operations for these industries within the Town, it can be inferred that most residents commute to work outside the Town.

There are viable farm and forestry operations within the town, as well as a limited number of commercial and home based business.

The median household income in 1999 was \$33,750 and 7.6% of families in Italy were below poverty level.

SECTION 5 - COMMUNITY VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The vision for the Town of Italy is to preserve and protect its present rural character, natural resources, and quality of life. To that end, the following recommendations, based on extensive citizen input through the public meetings and survey, are suggested.

5.1 *Recreation and Natural Resources*

Recreation

Recreation and Natural Resources Recommendation 1: The town support actions to attract sportsmen and women and support the protection of greenspaces for sustainable future outdoor recreational pursuits. Related small business opportunities could include bed and breakfasts, hostels, horseback riding, gunsmithing, guiding, shuttle service, campgrounds, and retail stores catering to an outdoor sports market.

Recreation and Natural Resources Recommendation 2: The town sponsor, to the ability it is able, full enjoyment of the town's resources by its residents. Examples of this might include summer youth programming with an outdoor focus, guided hikes, or municipal sports leagues. It is further recommended that the Town of Italy disseminate information about available public land and its recreational opportunities through an information kiosk.

Agriculture and Forestry

Recreation and Natural Resources Recommendation 3: The town foster sustainable forestry practices in keeping with local and state forestry codes.

Recreation and Natural Resources Recommendation 4: In keeping with the high value residents of the Town of Italy place on agriculture, the residents strong desire to preserve agricultural areas, and in the greater interest of securing safe, local food production, the town support the following agricultural activities in whatever manner is appropriate:

- *Pasture based* livestock businesses, such as cattle, sheep, horses, goats, etc.
- Sustainable farm practices, including organic methods.
- Small scale poultry production.
- Maple sugar production

Water

Recreation and Natural Resources Recommendation 5: The water resources in the Town are very important for its continued vitality. All residents depend on wells for their drinking water, and the amenities of West River, Naples Creek, and Canandaigua Lake are valuable amenities for residents and are crucial components of the increasing tourism economy of the entire region. Therefore, the Town should actively work with relevant organizations to protect water quality, including the consideration of appropriate new ordinances to help achieve this objective.

Other Natural Resources

Recreation and Natural Resources Recommendation 6: These resources should be explored and used in such a way as to not adversely affect or endanger the soils, water, air, forests, or views. It is further recommended that other natural resources, such as wind energy, be explored with the same considerations.

July 2005 Amendment: *From the time of the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan in 2004 to July 2005, the Zoning Commission explored the issue of wind energy as a possibility for the Town of Italy. A great amount of information was collected and studied, including reviews of:*

- *existing and proposed wind farms*
- *turbine manufacturers' specifications*
- *governmental agency and non-governmental organization research on wind farms*

This was conducted in order to assess the advantages and disadvantages that might occur with an industrial project of this type. At the completion of this extensive research, it was determined that an industrial wind farm would not be compatible with the goals or visions of the residents as documented in this Comprehensive Plan.

5.2 Land Use

Land Use Recommendation 1: Establish Zoning. The Town will work, through the Italy Zoning Commission and with assistance from Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council, on developing and adopting a zoning ordinance that takes into consideration the need to allow for appropriate development, identify inappropriate land uses, reinforce the existing character of the town, and protect natural land and water resources.

July 2005 Amendment: Land Use Recommendation 2: *Adopt a Scenic Protection Overlay District. The Zoning Commission will incorporate unique scenic viewsheds and scenic areas as listed in the Yates County Looking Ahead document, prepared in 1990 under the auspices of the Yates County Land Use Review Board. Protecting the viewsheds and scenic areas as identified will help protect sensitive environmental areas within the Town. See the Scenic Viewshed and Scenic District Map in the Appendix to this Comprehensive Plan, Page A12.*

5.3 Population and Housing

Population and Housing Recommendation 1: Future housing proposals should be considered and reviewed with an eye toward preserving the natural landscape and rural character of the Town of Italy.

Population and Housing Recommendation 2: Codes should be fairly and effectively enforced to address unkempt properties, identified as a need in the survey.

5.4 Services

Services Recommendation 1: The Town should continue to work with relevant organizations and agencies to monitor existing on-site waste water treatment (septic) systems and enforce the proper regulations for new systems. This is especially critical in sensitive or higher-density residential areas such as the Canandaigua Lake shoreline area (Sunnyside) and Italy Valley (the hamlet).

Services Recommendation 2: The Town should inventory and identify all first responder/emergency service providers with a goal of developing coordinated, comprehensive fire, emergency medical, and law enforcement services.

Services Recommendation 3: The Town, through its Highway Department should inventory all roads and parcels (Town Hall grounds, cemeteries, etc.) that it is responsible for. The current state of this infrastructure should be noted and an operation and management plan developed. Particular attention should be paid to issues of un-paved roads, private roads, and emergency access issues, so that the Town can address these issues in a knowledgeable and orderly fashion.

5.5 Community Organizations, Institutions, and Government

Community Organizations, Institutions, and Government Recommendation 1: The 2004 Survey results indicate a strong desire on the part of residents to preserve historic structures and sites. Consequently, the town should support the preservation of these structures and sites.

5.6 Economy

Economy Recommendation 1: Economic development efforts should be in the concert with the rural character of the Town of Italy. The town should to the extent that it is able, support the small-scale, home-based, businesses as reflected in the 2004 Town Survey.

Recommendations for Implementation

It is recommended that the Italy Town Board appoint, at its discretion, regular or special purpose (ad hoc) committees to review and develop specific actions to be undertaken by the Town to encourage the implementation of the Town's vision as laid out in this Comprehensive Plan document.