

{ Our Towns }



Thendara

It's unusual in the Adirondacks for two hamlets to bump up against each other. Most are separated by miles of trees and road. But Thendara and Old Forge blur together on a mile-long sidewalk lined with motels, stores and houses.

Of the two, Thendara was once the boomtown. As lumbering gave way to tourism, though, it became the suburb. But not a sleepy one. This is the hub of the Adirondack Scenic Railroad, which has been running sightseeing trains out of the 1892 depot for 16 years. A cluster of historic buildings near the tracks maintain some Victorian elegance: Van Auken's still offers 12 guest rooms, lunch and dinner after 117 years as an inn. The Moose River House, built in 1882 as a hotel for Julia Lyon by her husband, William Scott de Camp, is a bed-and-breakfast run by their great-grandson H. Stuart de Camp.

The story of Thendara parallels that of the de Camps. Because it was an early train/steamboat junction for travelers visiting the necklace of lakes upstream, the community was first called Fulton Chain. Julia had inherited all those lakes from her father, tannery baron Lyman Lyon. She and William built a Fulton Chain town hall here in the 1890s. Their son Lyon renamed the whole place Thendara (supposedly an Iroquois word for "rim of the forest") in 1919 to lend some resort-town panache. In the 1950s or '60s, well after Old Forge had become the center of local government, Stuart's grandmother Mary de Camp stood defiantly on the porch of the former town hall to keep the Town of Webb from torching it. In 2004 the two-story, high-tin-ceilinged structure was falling apart, so Stuart invoked a clause in the deed that returned it to the family. He and his partner, Jimmy Ortiz, are now rehabbing it into a banquet facility.

You can find Thendara on Route 28 in Herkimer County. —*Mary Thill*

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