

# Meet the 'Overlord of Tompkins County'

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(Photo: Provided photo)

Camp Street was named for Hermon Camp (1787-1878) and for his impressive home, built between 1845 and 1847, which stands almost alone on one entire Trumansburg block.

Originally, the street was called Lawn Street, and on an 1853 map, Camp's residence is shown there with the name Lawnside.

Lawn Street persists as the location of Camp's house on an 1866 village map. Into the 1870s, it is listed in his newspaper ads for flax seed oil. These ads continued after his death, still listing Lawn Street.

By the 1880s, Camp Street had begun to appear as an identified location in local papers, but so did Lawn. However, as late as 1965, on a Trumansburg tax map, the street with Camp's house is printed as Lawn Street, although a copy of the same map shows the handwritten word "Camp" added in. Subsequent maps, including the 2017 tax map, firmly indicate Camp Street.

Born in Connecticut, Camp arrived in Trumansburg at age 18 and stayed for the rest of his life. Once a whiskey seller, Camp underwent a religious conversion in 1831 and took up many causes. According to the "History of Trumansburg" (1890) by newspaper editor A.P. Osborn,

Camp “became an austere, uncompromising Calvinist. He abandoned the sale of liquor and began the war against its sale and use.”

Not just a temperance man but an advocate of abolition and other reforms, Camp served as postmaster, shopkeeper, county sheriff, assemblyman, banker and cavalry colonel in the War of 1812. He also dominated the cultural life of Trumansburg.

Recognized as “the foremost merchant in all the country between the lakes,” he was likewise, Osborn notes, “no saint” and “... would brook no opposition, everything must yield to his imperious will.” This view lingered — 1930s Ithaca Journal columnist Romeyn Berry commented that Camp “came pretty close to being King of Trumansburg, Duke of Ulysses and Overlord of Tompkins County.”

In 1825, Osborn says, “occurred the most important event of Mr. Camp’s life, namely, his separation and subsequent divorce from his first wife,” Lucinda. This parting reverberated throughout the village, creating rifts that affected congregations, politics, juries, families and friendships.

The reasons are cloudy. It’s been suggested that Camp became displeased when no issue came from the union, but hints point to some other cause. Trumansburg historian Lydia Sears referred to a contemporaneous diary entry indicating that Camp “hoped that God would forgive (Lucinda),” but Sears alleged “the lady, for she was indeed a lady, had been framed.”

Lucinda remarried in 1828; Camp himself married three more times and fathered 13 children. He’s buried under a commanding obelisk in Trumansburg’s Grove Cemetery. The Camp house stayed in family hands until 2002 and remains a village landmark.

While no specific declaration of the block’s name change has surfaced, it seems that Camp’s outsized persona, along with the imposing stature of his house, in time led to the morphing of Lawn Street in the public mind and the eventual designation of his territory as Camp Street.

*S.K. List is the Trumansburg Village historian. This article is part of "Names on the Land — Tompkins County," a Legacy Project of the Tompkins County Bicentennial Commission ([tcnames.wordpress.com](http://tcnames.wordpress.com))*