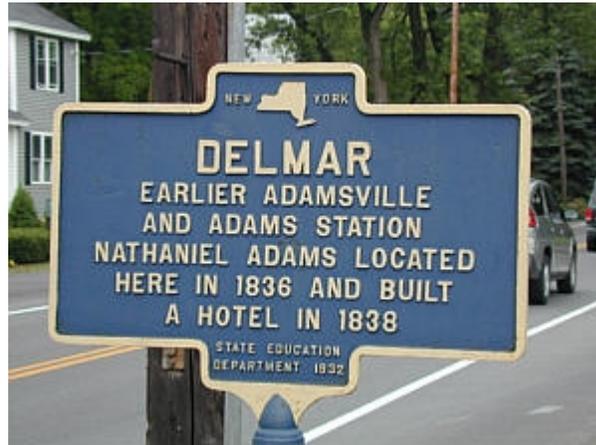# BETHLEHEM - A GREAT AMERICAN TOWN

In the August 2005 issue of Money Magazine, Delmar, a hamlet in Bethlehem, received national recognition when it was listed number 22 out of 100 "Great American Towns." In particular, Delmar was among one of the "Best Places to Live" because of its low crime rate and its access to arts and leisure including museums, restaurants, recreation areas and parks. Delmar also scored high on household income and the education level of its residents.
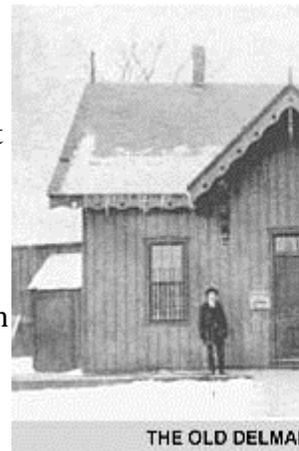
For those of us who live in the "Town of Bethlehem," the designation caused some confusion. Delmar is not a town; it is a hamlet in the Town of Bethlehem. To cause further confusion, Money Magazine's definition of town is "town = town + surrounding area." By this definition, they really did mean the Town of Bethlehem, not the "town" of Delmar. No doubt, Money Magazine's definition of a town is pretty loose for they also include the cities of Scottsdale, AZ, Santa Barbara, CA and Cedar Rapids, IA as "towns."

The recognition of Delmar as a "Great American Town" has many wondering how Delmar became "Delmar" in the first place. Unlike other nearby towns, such as Guilderland or New Scotland, there is no village or hamlet called Bethlehem within the Town of Bethlehem. There are hamlets called North Bethlehem and South Bethlehem and there used to be one called Bethlehem Center, but the location of Bethlehem Center is now where Glenmont is today and where Glenmont was located, at the intersection of Glenmont Road and Route 144, there is no hamlet today. There is a hamlet on many town maps called South Albany, but that's another story.

Furthermore, we are not on the border of Delaware and Maryland as Delmar, MD and Delmar, DE are and we don't live by the sea as the French words, "de la mare," imply. But it is likely that it was the influence of the Post Office that brought about the name of Delmar. Up until 1884, Delmar was called Adamsville after Nathaniel Adams, who came here in 1836 and became the first postmaster in 1840, but mail was being mis-sent. New York already had an Adams. The town of Adams, NY near Lake Ontario was founded in 1796 and within the town of Adams there was an Adams Village.

For a short time, the name was changed to Adams Station but a petition was presented to change the name to Delmar. The Delaware and Hudson Railroad, which had a run from Albany to Binghamton with several stops in Bethlehem, had already changed the name of the Adamsville station to the Delmar station. Apparently they didn't like the name, "Adamsville," because it was too long and confusing for conductors to call out. However, with that logic, one wonders how the Slingerlands station kept its name, but it was the influential Slingerland family that had something to do with that. The Delmar petition passed and the hamlet became known as Delmar in 1892.

THE OLD DELMAR

And again in 2005, it was likely the influence of the Post Office that made Delmar a "Great American Town." The demographics of an area are commonly organized by zip code and Delmar's 12054 which includes the hamlets of Elsmere and Normansville and is surrounded by Glenmont's 12077, Selkirk's 12158 and Slingerlands' 12159, together with the nearby resources of Albany, made Delmar standout. It met all of Money Magazine's requirements to be 22nd on their list, which included a population of 14,000-plus, higher than median income, positive population growth, real estate appreciation, a major airport within 60 miles, a major teaching hospital (Albany Med) within 30 miles, high scores in education, low unemployment, low crime, low commute times and access to arts and leisure facilities.

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