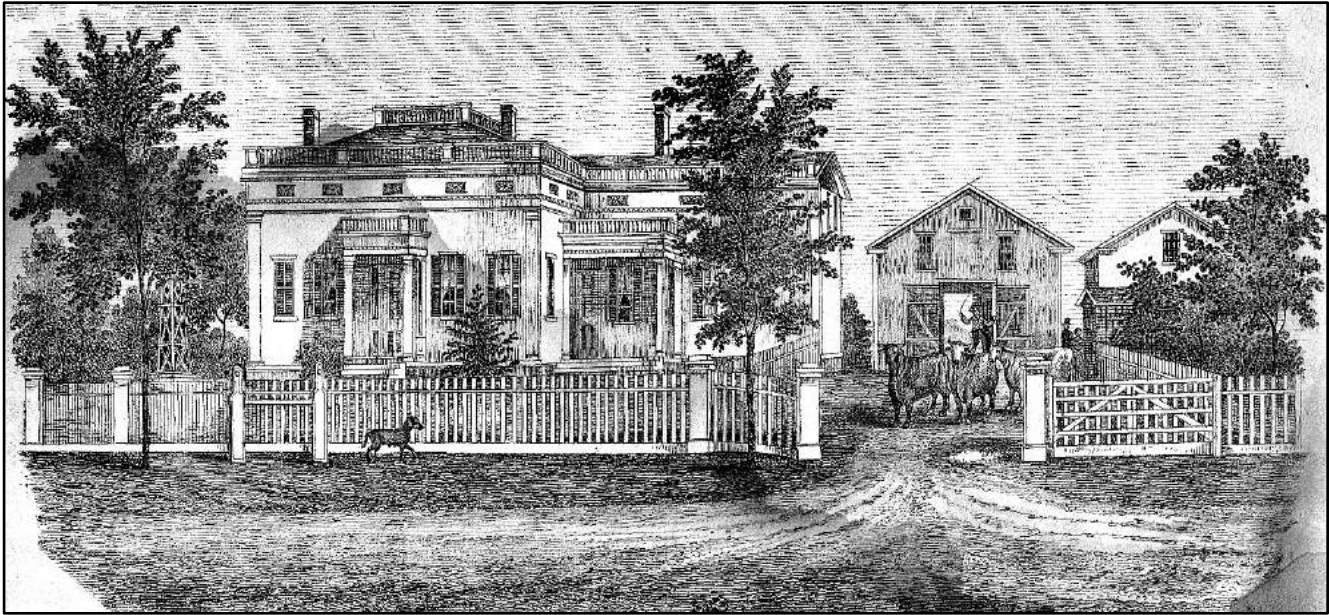


# Barber – Mulligan Farm

Aaron Barber, Jr. was born in Connecticut in 1806. By 1810 he was living in western New York with his mother and siblings, as his father had died. He was depended upon to support the family as a young boy and did so by “industry and enterprise.” This ambition helped him develop into a successful landowner. In 1840, Barber and his wife Lois Stevens and family of three children moved to what would become Barber Road in Avon. In 1852, Barber built a main farmhouse along with three outbuildings – a horse barn, carriage house and corncrib, all in the Greek Revival style. This was the beginning of a dairy farm that has continued to this day.



Lithograph of the Barber home. Source: Livingston County 1858 wall map



Barber's home in 2015

Barber continued to purchase nearby property, including two adjacent farms. His son, Aaron Barber III, became a partner in the farm, and upon his father's death in 1869 became the successor. The farm was a very prosperous operation under his care. In the 1865 Agricultural Census it was stated the combined land in his possession was valued at \$49,000, and there were three laborers and a servant among the household.

Barber grew many crops at this time, including hay, barley, wheat, oats, Indian corn, potatoes, and apples. He specialized successfully in shorthorn cattle and Merino sheep and also raised pigs and poultry. Tax records show major improvements to the land in 1874, and this likely reflects the building of a major barn complex.



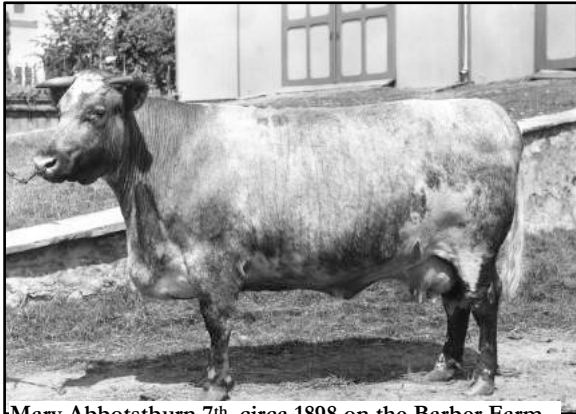
Barn complex, 1920. Source: Mulligan family collection.

Following this expansion, it was necessary to build a tenant house. Therefore a Victorian house was built in 1882 next door.

His cows were nationally ranked, claiming blue ribbons in many State fairs all over the US. In 1918, a sketch of his well bred cow was published in *Shortborn Cattle* by Alvin Howard Sanders, and Bryant Cowan stating:

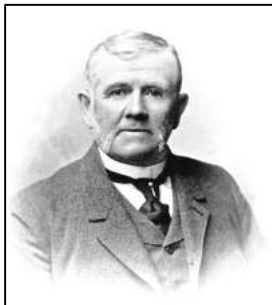


Victorian tenant house, Barber Road, 2017



Mary Abbotstburn 7<sup>th</sup>, circa 1898 on the Barber Farm.  
Source: Livingston County Historian

*“She fed kindly from the start, and, as a buxom heifer of rare promise, was bought by Aaron Barber, York State’s enthusiastic admirer of good Short-horns, at the round price, for those times, of \$1,000—after winning the yearling heifer championship over all breeds at the Illinois State Fair of 1894. She matured into one of the noblest cows of any breed known to the American cattle trade. She had a back like a billiard table and her wide, deep ribs and long, level quarters were wrapped in a wealth of flesh that constantly recalled the carcass of her illustrious sire. From 1894 to 1898, inclusive, Mary Abbotstburn 7<sup>th</sup>, in the hands of Mr. Barber, was the unrivaled queen of American Short-horn cows.”*



Aaron Barber III

Barber and his wife Caroline Hall had no children, so when he became elderly he put the property up for sale. In 1920, Edward Mulligan and his wife Frances (Nancy) Taylor purchased the amassed properties and started a family. They bought their first Guernsey cows in 1922, farmed the land and raised sheep and chickens. After Ed’s death in 1964, sons Livingston (Mike) and John operated the dairy farm.



Edward Mulligan

The Mulligan Farm was the first property in Avon to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1980, Nancy and her son Mike Mulligan were inspired to pursue the designation after the potential routes for Interstate 390 came close to going through the center of the farm. The National Register nomination was unusual as it included 640 acres and a total of 35 barns, houses and outbuildings. The acceptance was based on the “large collection of nineteenth-century rural buildings which continue to play an active part in the agricultural industry of the region.”

Unfortunately, the original barn complex burned due to a lightning strike in 2009, gutting the historic core of the farm. However, maintaining the historical integrity of the farm continues. Also in 2009, the original farm was placed under easement through the Genesee Valley Conservancy, protecting it from further non-agricultural development.

Mike’s son Jeffery now operates the expanded business, having added new barns and milking parlor, and farming enough acreage to support a milking a herd of 1200 cows.

Clara Mulligan, AP&HS Trustee  
June 2017