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Now home to the president of RIT, the expansive property on Lehigh Station Road known as Liberty Hill once belonged to one of Henrietta's early pioneers.

In 1817, Ansel Hanks and his wife Isabella left their home state of Vermont and arrived in the village of Henrietta when it was still a somewhat of a wilderness. Hanks constructed a log cabin on the farmland where his family would reside for the next century.

In 1839, Hanks built the original cobblestone portion of the Liberty Hill homestead on his property. The residence remained in the Hanks family for three generations.

Ansel and Isabella's youngest son, John, and daughter-in-law, Naomi, began minding the manor following their marriage in 1865. Naomi passed away at the home twenty years later a few days shy of the couple's wedding anniversary.

Following John Hanks' death in 1906, the estate passed on to his children, Ansel and Martha. It stayed in the family until they sold the property in 1919 to Kodak executive, Frank W. Lovejoy.



The residence served as the “country home” of the Lovejoys, who hosted countless social gatherings at the pastoral estate. Both Frank and his

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namesake physician son had additions built on to the original cobblestone house, which became a popular destination on historic home tours.

Grandpa's hunch now a third-generation success

Visitors to the abode in the 1960s took delight in the period pieces and Audubon prints adorning the original building's living room, the sunlit colonial kitchen in the home's new wing and the large, glass-enclosed porch overlooking the lawn, pool and greenhouses.



Guests also took in the 260 acres of Liberty Hill farmland directly across the street from the residence. The property had been home to crops and cattle before Frank Lovejoy Jr. converted it into a game farm replete with 500 pheasants.

In 1978, Dr. Lovejoy and his wife decided to donate the farm to Hillside and the Liberty Hill homestead and its outbuildings to the Rochester Institute of Technology.

The following decade, RIT offered up the home to university president, Richard Rose. RIT presidents have occupied the house ever since and each has left their mark on Liberty Hill.

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Rose, who, along with his wife earned an award for helping preserve the landmark house, instigated the residence's use as a venue for large-scale student and university events.



His successor, Albert Simone, saw the addition of two guest bedrooms, an office and an enclosed back porch to serve as a reception area during Liberty Hill happenings.

“We have 10,000 people a year come through our home. It’s a place where we build a sense of spirit and teamwork within the university, where we develop our town and gown relationships,” Simone said in 1993.

Current president Bill Destler has been instrumental in making Liberty Hill a more green space.

In addition to placing beehives on the property, Destler also had a solar array installed in the backyard and has been working with groundskeepers to replace the garden’s exotic plants with flora native to the area.

Though the 177-year-old homestead is ever-changing, Liberty Hill remains a fixture of the RIT community.

Emily Morry is a Rochester-based freelance writer.