

NEW SKETE

A BRIEF HISTORY

Beginning ...
Spring 1966—twelve former members of a Byzantine Rite community of Franciscans left and established a separate monastic community. After a six-month stay in north-western Pennsylvania, at a lodge provided by the Benedictines, the Monks moved to the beautiful hills of upstate New York. Helped by neighboring farmers, they learned quickly how, with hard work, to provide food for the table—and gained the respect of the local community. To find the seclusion necessary for the contemplative life, the Monks soon moved once again to a nearby small mountain. Here they built their monastery where they continue to live, work and worship today.

Creating a living ...
The Monks supported themselves through donations, and by the work of their own hands, producing their own liturgical books, icons, and art work, and by raising livestock. Using the culinary talents of Brother Elias they also developed their own smoked meats and cheeses, as well as gourmet sausages and cheese spreads, for their New Skete Farms catalogue.

New Skete Shepherds ...
Their love of their first German Shepherd dog, Kyr, led the Monks to look for additional well-bred German Shepherd dogs. They began doing their own reading and research and consulted with many well-known breeders, trainers, and veterinarians. Eventually, at the request of friends, the Monks began breeding these intelligent and beautiful animals, then raising and socializing the puppies.

The Nuns of New Skete ...
In 1969 a group of nuns left the order of Poor Clares and established the Nuns of New Skete several miles from the Monks. After building their monastery with help from the Monks, they worked to make slip covers vestments, and icons. New Skete Kitchens began in 1977, with the Nuns baking their own gourmet cheesecakes, fruitcakes, and other products.

The Companions of New Skete...
A chapel community was formed by people from the area who attend church services at New Skete. In 1983 several couples formed the Companions of New Skete and built their communal dwelling, Emmaus House, near the Monks and worked with them, principally on their special-recipe dog biscuits for sale.

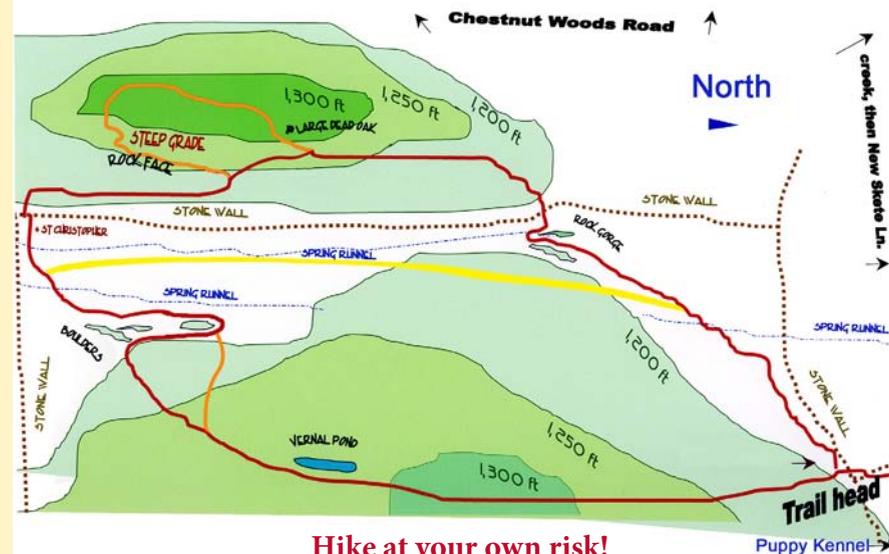
In February 1979 the New Skete communities were received into the Orthodox Church in America, which had first come to these shores through missionaries in Alaska in the late 1700's.

Today ...
For almost 50 years, New Skete has dedicated itself to providing the best possible companion dogs. New Skete Shepherds as well as dogs of all breeds, need and benefit enormously from formal obedience training. With New Skete Training, the Monks offer a course that includes standard AKC obedience and incorporates the values of the monastic environment. These provide a foundation for a healthy relationship and bond between human and dog.

Based on their experience and expertise the Monks have written extensively on the relationships of dogs and people. They have also published liturgical books and music, as well as books on meditation and their monastic life.

NEW SKETE HIKING TRAIL

Trails begin just below the Puppy Kennel on the outside curve of the paved road. The various trails are marked with three different colors. The main trail is a **red** blaze; alternative paths are marked with **orange** and a center trail is marked with **yellow**. The east route [lower line on map] has an orange loop back, which if taken makes about a 30 minute hike. The west route [top of map] has an orange loop extension, which is more difficult with a steep grade. Follow the red blazes for a less difficult trail. A north-south [center] yellow trail bisects the red loop. It cuts about 30 minutes off the full trail hike. **FULL LOOP:** 1.23 miles; allow about 1½ hours at a leisurely pace.



Hike at your own risk!

Wear appropriate shoes and clothing, use tick repellent spray and **carry** a hiking stick for safety.

If you go, please **inform** a staff member or one of the monks.

We hope you enjoy your time in the peace and beauty afforded by this monastery.

Please respect the sacredness of creation around you and value it, as we do, as part of the distinctive spiritual quality of the monastic environment.

If you would like to volunteer to help maintain the grounds or trail, please contact Karen Gladstone, Director of Advancement and Stewardship at 518-677-3928 ext. 214 or email karengladstone@newskete.org, or stop in at the gift shop and leave your contact information.



SELF-GUIDED TOUR

CHURCHES, GARDENS, BELL TOWER, HIKING TRAIL

NEW SKETE MONASTERY CAMBRIDGE, NY



CHURCH OF HOLY WISDOM

TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST TEMPLE

BELL TOWER

MEDITATION GARDEN



CHURCH OF HOLY WISDOM

This larger church is dedicated to Christ, the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24, 30). It was designed and built by the Monks working with a local builder and was consecrated in 1983 by Metropolitan Theodosius, Archbishop of the Orthodox Church in America. Its light-filled openness and its U-shaped altar screen are inspired by the early churches of Constantinople. Inlaid in the Italian marble floor tiles, at the entrance to the nave, are pieces of mosaic from the basilica in Constantinople consecrated to Holy Wisdom and built in 576 A.D. by the Emperor Justinian.

On the right [east] wall of the wide narthex as you enter is the Golgotha shrine with a large icon of the crucifixion surrounded by Byzantine floral carvings, an oil lamp, and a table for candles. The central focus of the main church body is the large deisis depicted on the east apse wall. Here Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God, is shown enthroned on the cherubim (Ezekiel 1), flanked by the Theotokos and John the Baptizer. Below it is the altar area with its square table and surrounded by its icon screen. High up on the nave dome ceiling is the large round icon of Our Lady of the Sign (Isaiah 7:14), the patronal icon of the Nuns of New Skete. The altar dome has ancient symbols, inspired by Ezekiel and recorded by Irenaeus, Augustine & Jerome, of the four Gospels: Matthew as human/angel; Mark as lion; Luke as ox/calf; John as eagle. The cross is central to the Gospels.

Icons are mounted on the walls and ceilings; they are also placed on stands throughout the church flanked by carved walnut candle stands. The eternal lamp in the sanctuary signifies the divine presence. In the north [left] alcove is the Good Friday burial shroud picturing the body of Christ. On the ambo in the center of the nave are the celebrant's seat and the lectern for the Holy Scriptures. These as well as the forty-eight choir chairs are carved from Ash and Zebrano. The altar screen, the Golgotha, and the extensive wall paneling use English brown oak. All the wood carving except on the holy table, choir seating, and west pillars was by Serbian master-craftsman Paul Moses.



TEMPLE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

This is named after the August 6 feast of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8), the patronal feast of the community, depicted outside above the entrance door and inside on the upper west wall. The monks designed and built this smaller first church in 1969. The rough-hewn exterior has unique gold cupolas or "onion" domes. The floor inside is laid with green slate from nearby quarries, and the walls and pillars are covered with cedar and ash.

The upper interior is adorned with mural icons painted by Constantine Yousis. Above the rounded east apse is the Communion of the Apostles from the Last Supper. Below it is the life-size icon of Christ seated and the ash wood carved iconostasis or altar screen.

To the right of the holy doors leading to the altar area stand the icons of John the Baptist, Mary Magdalene, and Nil of Sora. On the left are icons of Christ's mother Mary the Theotokos, Sergius of Radonezh, and Herman of Alaska. Together with the Christ in the apse, these form a traditional deisis arrangement. The main feast day icons hang on the lower walls. Both churches are open to visitors.

Church services at the Holy Wisdom Temple are open to the public
Sunday Matins ~ 9 am
Sunday Divine Liturgy ~ 10 am (followed by coffee hour ~ all are welcome)
Tuesday through Friday Matins ~ 7:15 am (except on Feast days)
Saturday Matins ~ 8 am
Tuesday through Saturday Vespers ~ 5 pm

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The Monks' Gift Shop Hours except holidays:  
Tues. through Sat. 12:30 to 4:00 pm.  
Open Sunday afternoon by chance or appointment.  
Please ring doorbell to alert monk or staff member on duty of your arrival.

## BELL TOWER



The Bell Tower was built in 1980 and holds seventeen bells. In designing the tower, the Monks were inspired by the wooden bell towers of the Carpathian Mountains in Eastern Europe. The peals announcing major services are composed of rapid rhythmic patterns played by hand. The art of tolling bells has been handed down within Orthodox monasteries and churches by unwritten traditions. The bells are rung three times each day as a call to prayer.

A description of the bells and their origins is given on the plaque at the base of the tower.

An information plaque for the cemetery is posted along the paved driveway. Across the road from this is the New Skete Shepherds puppy kennel. Visiting the puppy kennel is by appointment only. The lower paved parking lot is for New Skete Training, which is off-limits to visitors. Thank you for your interest.

## MEDITATION GARDENS



In 2006, in celebration of New Skete's 40th anniversary and through the generosity of many donors, the Monks embarked on a special project that enhanced one of their core monastic values--hospitality.

Creating a sense of sacred space between the two churches, the Meditation Gardens feature a gently sloping pathway for improved access and rustic stone steps along cascading pools of water teeming with fish and frogs.

Constructed of stone from the monastery grounds and slate from nearby Granville, NY, this peaceful landscape contains three levels of terraces surrounded by lush flowering annual and perennial plantings, with outdoor benches for reading and quiet reflection or conversation. These provide an inviting, and gracious welcome for all visitors.

The Meditation Gardens also serve as a lovely setting for the beginning of the Sunday Divine Liturgy and for the Blessing of the Animals at the Feast of St Francis.