



WHO'S BURIED HERE?

EYPE SCHOUTEN

Not surprisingly after 230 years, some of the stories from the revolutionary war era are vague and unverifiable. Yet some of them have the ring of truth; some legends are true, after all.

Down the road from the cemetery is a beautiful old house, one of several in the area that belonged to various members of the Storm family. In colonial times the Storms kept slaves.

During the revolution, the occupant of this house, Garret Storm, was a noted patriot and quite public about his political beliefs. Legend has it that during the revolution, Tory sympathizers actually hung Garret Storm from a rafter in the attic of his house. The legend also says that one of his slaves, a woman named Eype Schouten, discovered Mr. Storm as he was hanging there and cut him down, thus apparently saving his life.

While there is no proof of any of this sweet story, it is true that in his will many years later Mr. Storm made arrangements in his will to take care of his "good and faithful maid" Eype.

Eype Schouten is believed to lie under one of the unmarked stones in this cemetery.

The entire piquant Eype Schouten story is based on notes taken in the 1920's by noted local historian Helen Wilkinson Reynolds. Author of several books, (1924's "Old Gravestones of Dutchess County," 1929's "Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley before 1776," and "Dutchess County Doorways" in 1931 as well as several monographs), Ms Reynolds had apparently found Garret Storm's will, the original of which is now seemingly lost.

But her notes, which are kept at the Adriance Memorial Library in Poughkeepsie, have an ethical proof that many find convincing.

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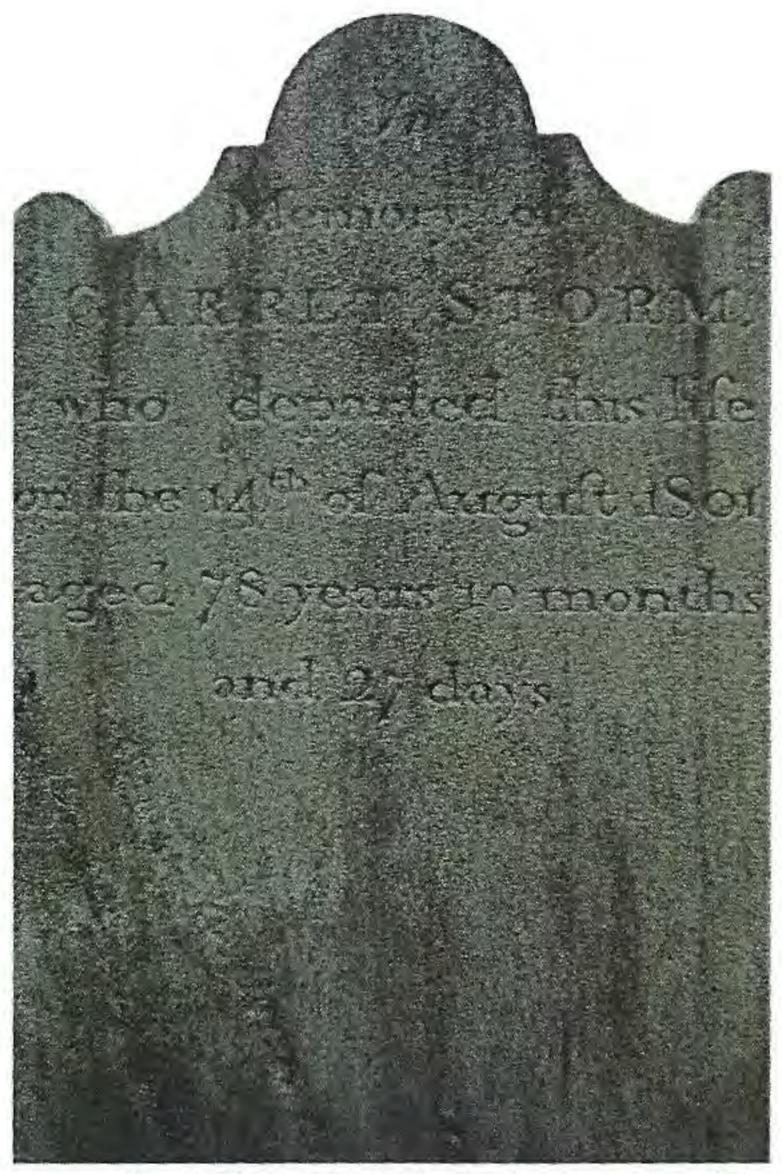
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By tradition, Garret Storm was hung by Jaries by the attic of small part of house, + was att down by old slave named Eigie.



Garret Storm's house, a short walk from the cemetery. The old part is the smaller section to the left, and it is in that attic that Mr. Storm was allegedly hung. The larger portion of the house is later.



Garret Storm's body lies in the cemetery of the Hopewell Reformed Church.

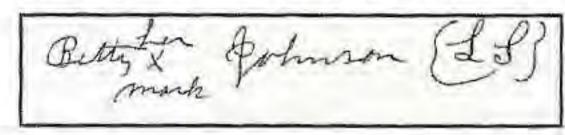
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BETTY JOHNSON

The last carved tombstone in the Storm family slave cemetery is that of Betty Johnson, who died February 1, 1848 at 65 years of age. Town of East Fishkill historian Henry Cassidy said that in 1985 Betty Johnson's stone was found at the bottom of the ravine nearby. It was later placed in concrete in its current location, presumably not the exact site of her interment.

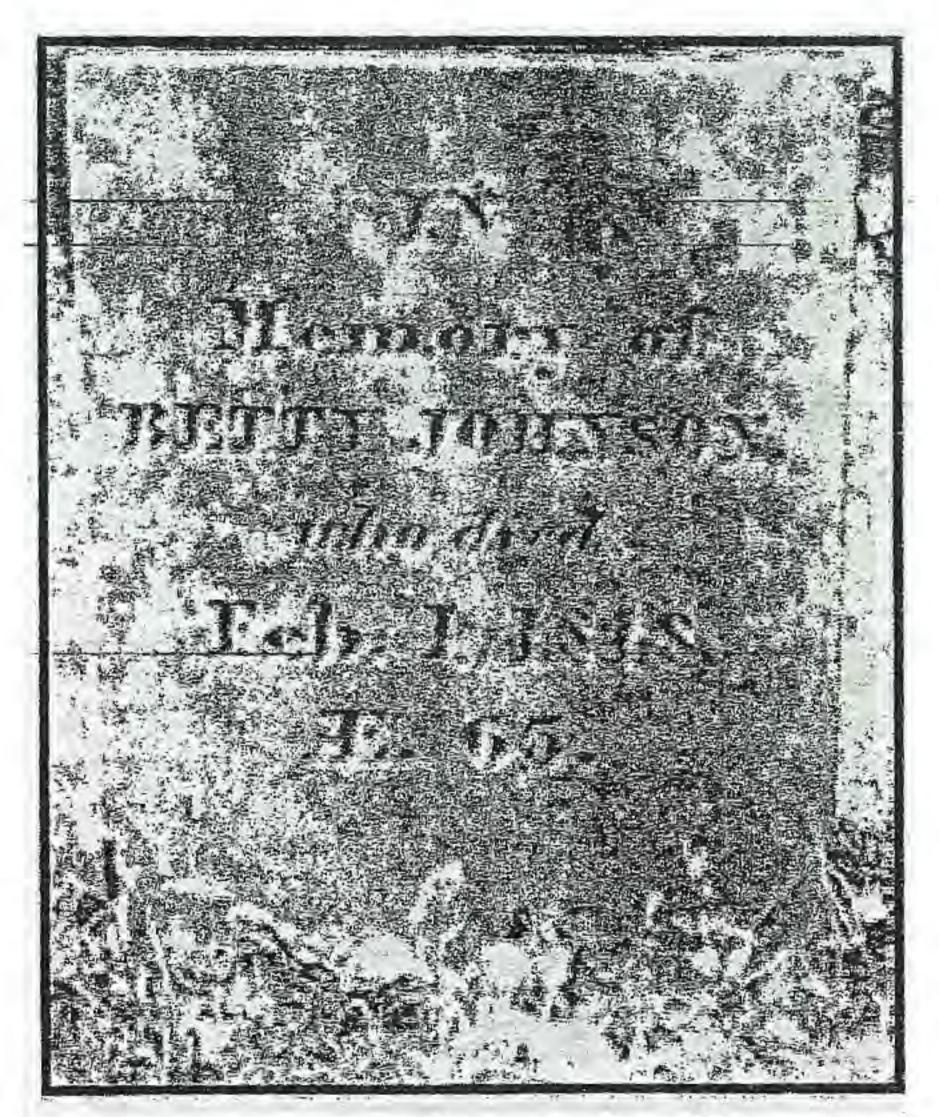
Betty Johnson had apparently died a free woman of some means, leaving an estate consisting of financial notes owed her of \$1,303.52, a savings account of \$356.29, and personal items appraised at \$61.75 for a total value \$1,721.56. Johnson, who was single, left her estate to her siblings and their heirs. Her burial in this cemetery suggests that these grounds not only held the remains of the many Storm families" slaves, but was also the burial site of other African-Americans who were not slaves at the time of their death.

Abraham B. Rapalje of Ulster County and John Rapalje of Fishkill were appointed by Betty Johnson to be executors of her will, instructing them "to see that I am decently interred and that a neat and suitable tomb Stone be erected on my grave..." She also had a strong association with Ann and Richard Rapelje of Fishkill, who owed her the bulk of her assets; it was they who witnessed that Betty Johnson, "being of sound mind and memory," affixed her mark on her will on April 27, 1843.



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The "neat and suitable tomb Stone"

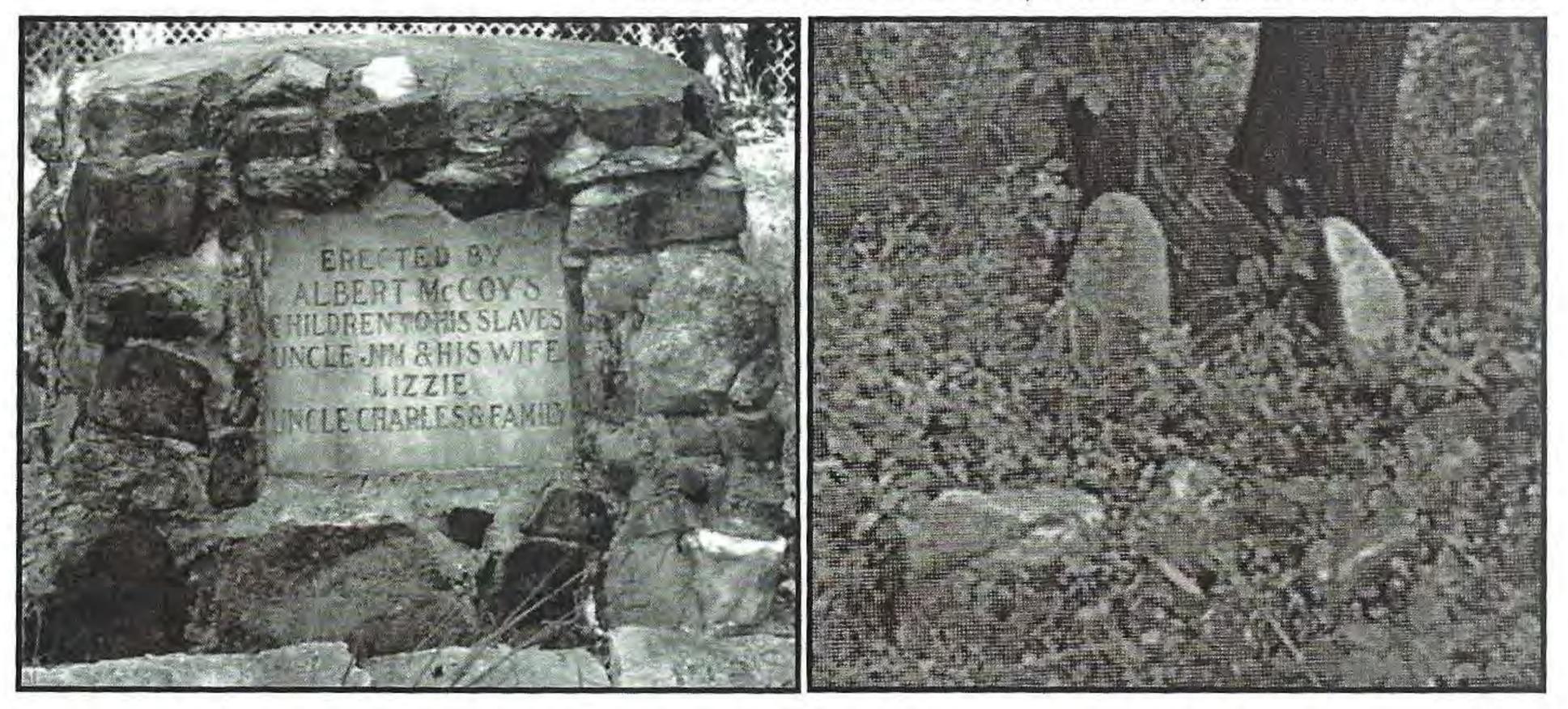
WHO'S BURIED HERE?

OTHERS

Other than Betty Johnson, the names and dates of almost all the other people buried here are now lost. But in addition to some wooden crosses which are of course now gone, at various points there were at least two more marked stones: a 1924 survey included a stone for "Elizabeth Moon, wife of Robert, died July 1, 1825, age 41 years" and in 1972 a third carved stone was found: "Cornel Doughty, died December 1, 1816, age 70"; both of these stones are now lost. The marble stone lying flat on the ground today (which has no markings) was only recently discovered in the ravine below.

The cemetery itself has been restored before: in 1985, Henry Cassidy, late historian of East Fishkill, worked with Dutchess County Legislator Sherwood Thompson, the Smith Metropolitan AME Zion Church, Omega Psi Phi fraternity, Catherine Street Community Center (African-American Heritage Committee) and the Dutchess County Youth Preparatory Committee to bring the cemetery back from being essentially a garbage dump. The first dedication was on Memorial Day 1985, with a ceremony and the placement of a stone: "Slave Cemetery of Storm Family, 18th and 19th Centuries."

Not all slave's gravestones are as modest as those at Stormville; on the left is a marker from the McCoy slave cemetery in Charlotte, North Carolina.



On the right is what often happens to such cemeteries: at the Green Level slave cemetery in Alta Vista, Virginia, at some point the stones were just moved into a single pile; apparently the farmer's cows were tripping over them.



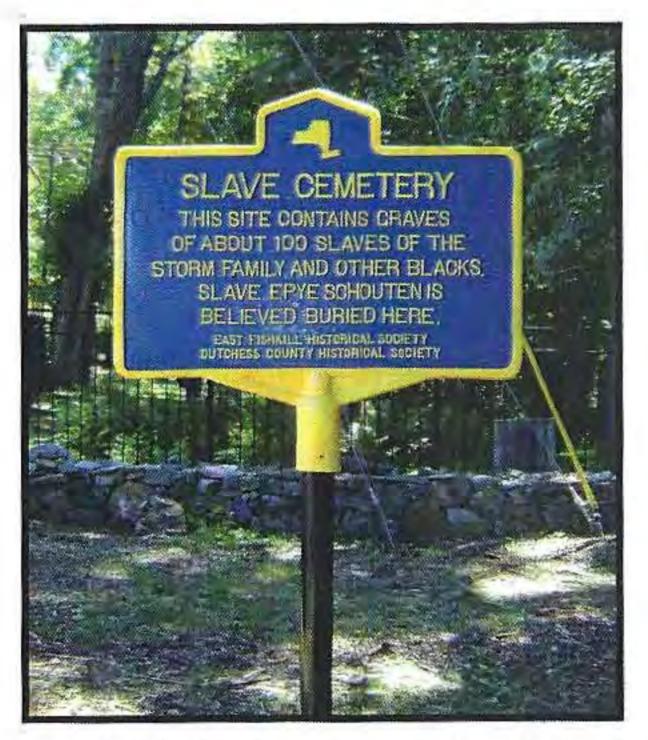
Only the weather remembers the slaves at Montpelier, the home of James Madison in Orange, Virginia





The August 22nd rededication ceremony ended in the pouring rain with a trumpeter playing and the audience singing Amazing Grace as each participant was handed a flower and invited to decorate a grave of their choice.







As the finale of the cemetery's rededication this sign was unveiled, also in the pouring rain.

The cemetery was restored in 1985 but over the years gradually faded from view.

Let us hope that in another 25 years another generation will again show the respect that is due to the cemetery and those who lie here; let us hope that more than the weather remembers the slaves and the slave cemetery of the Storm family.

In 2002 a developer, Spectrum/Skanska, began residential development of the area and contacted the Dutchess County and East Fishkill Historical Societies for their input and support to integrate the cemetery into their new community. In 2007, WCI Communities, the second owner of the housing development, now named "Four Corners," made arrangements for both documentary and field studies to be completed by Historical Perspectives, Inc. of Westport, CT. An arrangement between the Town of East Fishkill and Four Corners was made to protect the cemetery, Four Corners installing a low stone wall and fencing around the area. The Homeowners Association agreed to include the cemetery as part of their communal areas to be maintained, and some local citizens also took an interest in the site.

In 2010, the Dutchess County Historical Society and the East Fishkill Historical Society, working with Toll Brothers, the third developer of the area, arranged for a roadside historic marker to be cast and its placement seemed an appropriate time to publicly celebrate the renewal of the landmark cemetery.

Thus, on Sunday afternoon August 22, 2010, an event was held that included speeches and music, the official unveiling of the historic marker, and the placement of flowers on the remaining stones.

The weather for the event, however, was distinctly uncooperative, with extremely heavy rain and wind. This, coupled with a substantially larger turnout than expected, (estimated at 150), ultimately made for 150 very, very wet people.

An exhibit, "Who's Buried Here?" had been put together that described a little of the history that is known of the cemetery and of the people who lay within it. Sadly, the weather destroyed the exhibit before the event began.

As the material it included may still hold some interest for some people, it follows in a hopefully more waterproof format.

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