

Poughkeepsie Eagle

News

All the News
Worth Reading

Nov. 11, 1925

Single Copies Three Cents
Volume 65—Number 18,454.

CLINTON HOUSE INDEXED ON FALLACY

Miss Reynolds Declares That Governor Never Lived in Main St.

OWNERS ARE TRACED

Local Historian Proves Executive Occupied Other Dwelling

One of the most generally accepted local traditions concerning the American Revolution, namely that Governor George Clinton occupied during his residence here the house at the corner of Main and North White Streets now owned by the state and used as the headquarters of Mahwenawasih Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, has been disproved by careful historical research.

The data by which this tradition has been proved untenable are included in a monograph by Miss Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, of this city on Udry Hay, the second of a series on "Dutchess County Men of the Revolutionary Period," which is published in the 1925 Year Book of the Dutchess County Historical Society. The Year Book, was issued Tuesday.

From a variety of conclusive evidence, obtained after an exhaustive search of old records, Miss Reynolds has discovered the original part of what is known as the Governor George Clinton House was occupied in 1778 and 1779 by Hugh Van Kleeck, who built it probably about 1765, and who sold it in 1780 to Colonel Udry Hay who had just resigned his commission in the Quarter Master General's department of the Continental Army to become purchasing agent for the State of New York. The original house was burned about two years later at an unrecorded date prior to April 15, 1783, rebuilt on a more pretentious scale as it is at present, and sold at auction by the sheriff to Melancthon Smith on October 16, 1786 to satisfy a debt owed by Colonel Hay to Sylvester Gallop.

Clinton Lived in Crannell House

Clinton Lived in Crannell House

This, in outline, is the result of Miss Reynolds' inquiries into the ownership and occupancy of the building during the period in which Poughkeepsie was the capital of New York State and Governor Clinton, as head of the state government, resided here. But the fallacy of the old tradition as to the situation of the Governor's residence is disproved also by further evidence which she has discovered to show that Governor Clinton actually lived while in Poughkeepsie in the residence of Bartholomew Crannell, best known of the Tories in the village, on the site at 445 Main Street, just west of South Clinton, on which now stands the building occupied by McDonnell Brothers, commission merchants.

Miss Reynolds's conclusions on this point were suggested in her article on Bartholomew Crannell printed in the 1922 Year Book of the Historical Society. While only a few persons at that time appreciated the significance of her researches, the evidence then presented afforded ample proof that Governor Clinton resided in the Crannell House although Miss Reynolds was unable then to state positively that he had not lived at some time in the house which now bears his name. Now, however, incontrovertible evidence has been obtained concerning the ownership and occupancy of the so-called Clinton House which fixes the chain of title from the time it was built and eliminates the possibility that Governor Clinton occupied it.

Miss Reynolds's Evidence

The conclusion that the Governor lived in the Crannell House is based chiefly on three significant facts. The first of these is the Memorial of Bartholomew Crannell to the "Commissioners appointed by Act of Parliament for enquiring into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists," drawn up at St. John, Nova Scotia, on February 5, 1784, petitioning for compensation for losses when he was forced to flee from Poughkeepsie because of his Tory sentiments in December, 1776. In this Memorial are the paragraphs:

"One other dwelling house on a lot of about four acres with a barn and other valuable Improvements thereon, being the Claimant's Residence and which afterwards became the Residence of George Clinton, Esqr., the present Governor of the State of New York."

"Poughkeepsie was the Seat of Government during the War and No. 2

was made use of as the Government House."

"When the Government of New York left Poughkeepsie and quitted the Premises which had been the Claimant's he recommended it to two Gentlemen, Doctor Topper and Mr. Livingston, to get it if they could."

The second item in the chain of proof is an original map, on file in the Adriance Memorial Library, which shows "the House occupied by G. Clinton in the Revolution. Crannell House" situated at what is now 443 Main Street.

The third bit of contemporary evidence showing that Governor Clinton occupied the Crannell House is printed in Clinton Papers, Volume 6, page 50. It is set out in bill form and reads:

"Captain North's Receipt for boards, etc., for the repair of the house formerly belonging to Crannell. State of New York to Robt. North, Dr. 1780 Oct. 10 for the freight of 600 bricks from Albany to Poughkeepsie @ 2 per Hhd—0:12:0; for 100 l. ch bord @ 2 10:00:0; Novbr for 32 floor boards @ 3 6d. 4:00:0; for 5 plank @ 3, 0:15:0—15:7:0

"Received of George Clinton, Esqr., Govr of the State, sixty-four Pounds twelve shillings for the above articles in the new Emission computed at four to one in Specie being supposed the present passing Value, this 23rd July; 1781. Robert North."

Deeds Traced Down to Present

With regard to Crannell's statement of his recommendation to "Dr. Topper and Mr. Livingston" that they acquire the property, the records of the Clerk of Dutchess County show (Deeds Liber 27,173) that on May 30, 1783 Gilbert Livingston and Peter Tappen, sons-in-law of Crannell, actually did obtain the property, along with "all the real estate in the town of Poughkeepsie, deemed forfeited by the attainer of Bartholomew Crannell" for £600. Miss Reynolds has traced the deeds of the property down to the present, and has found reasonable ground for believing from documentary evidence that the old Crannell house in which Governor Clinton lived was torn down by John P. Adriance between 1851 and 1865 and the building which now stands upon the site erected.

Several other facts point to the certainty that Governor Clinton occupied the Crannell residence. Crannell left Poughkeepsie in 1776, but his wife and unmarried daughters continued to occupy the house until about the middle of 1777 when they joined him in New York. Governor Clinton came here in December, 1777, having been preceded by Mrs. Clinton, who was a sister of Dr. Tappen, already mentioned, a son-in-law of Crannell. Mrs. Clinton stopped for a while with her brother at Pleasant Valley, where she remained for greater safety during Vaughn's raid up the Hudson. Her arrival in this vicinity took place shortly after the fall of the forts in the Highlands early in October.

Governor and Mrs. Clinton came to Poughkeepsie to make their residence when the excitement subsided, and it seems quite reasonable to suppose that Dr. Tappen, desiring to have his father-in-law's property in good hands after its seizure by the Committee on Sequestration in May, 1777, induced his brother-in-law and sister to occupy

the committee on Sequestration in May, 1777, induced his brother-in-law and sister to occupy it. It was perhaps the finest dwelling in the village and doubtless he had little difficulty in persuading them to do so. Dr. Tappen was one of the leading Whigs in the community, and his wife, Elizabeth Crannell, was one of the heirs of the property.

Hay a Scotchman By Birth

Miss Reynolds's account of the life of Edny Hay and the details of her discovery of the facts concerning the present Chapter House of the D. A. R. are extremely complete. Hay was the son of an old Scottish family, she discloses, a well educated man, who in the third quarter of the 18th century emigrated to Canada. He became a timber-merchant near Quebec, and by 1775 had built up a personal reputation and a considerable business. He sympathized with the Colonies, however, and the Crown authorities harassed him to such an extent that he lost property valued at £1988. In 1776 he reached Crown Point and Ticonderoga, and was made an assistant deputy quarter-master general in the Continental Army. When certain military departments were concentrated at Fishkill with the establishment of the state government at Poughkeepsie in 1778, Colonel Hay came to Dutchess County. He remained in the quarter-master department at Fishkill for two years, winning the esteem of General Washington and of other Revolutionary military leaders. In 1780 he resigned his commission to become purchasing agent for the state and removed to Poughkeepsie. He remained here until 1786, living in the present D. A. R. house, which he purchased on October 3, 1780 and in the Christ Church Glebe House in upper Main Street, now owned by Conrad Gindra, after his own home had been damaged by fire. After the sale of the property he removed to Vermont, buying property in the Town of Underhill. He had a notable career there, serving in the Legislature from 1798 to 1804. He was one of the executors of the will of Ethan Allen. His death occurred at Bennington on September 6, 1806, in his 67th year. An obituary notice asserted that "his influence in our public councils for a considerable number of years" has been predominant beyond a parallel.

Miss Reynolds's researches into the history of what is known as the Governor George Clinton House show that the land on which it stands was acquired by Hugh Van Kleeck from his father-in-law, Clear Everitt, between 1764 and 1767, and a map, dated 1770, on file in the office of the state engineer at Albany, shows a house on the lot. The Field Book from which the map was made refers to it as "Hugh Van Kleeck's Home Lot." Miss Reynolds concludes that the house was built soon after his marriage to Maria Everitt in 1763, perhaps in 1765 when the records show he first paid taxes. The tax lists show Van Kleeck as a taxpayer from 1765 to 1774 inclusive and in 1778 and 1779. He may have been out of Poughkeepsie in 1775, 1776, and 1777, as the tax records for 1775 and 1777 list his property as "Hugh Van Kleeck's Place," a form used when a property owner was temporarily non-resident. The list for 1776 is missing.

Property Sold to Hay

In October, 1780, Van Kleeck sold the property to Colonel Hay after an incident which cost him his captaincy in the Continental Army. The burning of the house, in whole or in part, is attested by a permit issued under the authorization of General Washington on April 14, 1783 allowing Army artificers to come to Poughkeepsie from Newburgh to assist Colonel Hay in rebuilding his home. This permit, which was discovered by Dr. J. Wilson Poucher of this city, is listed in abstract form in the Calendar of Correspondence of Washington with the Officers, Volume 3, Page 2371, and the original is in the Library of Congress. It reads:

"Head Quarters, Newburgh,
April 14th, 1783.

General Patterson and the other commanding officers of lines have his Excellency's the Commander in Chief's permission to send such volunteer artificers from their respective lines to assist Lt. Col. Udny Hay in rebuilding his home as may from time to time be deemed necessary until further orders.

A subaltern is permitted to attend the party.

By order of the Commander-in-Chief,

David Humphrey, A. D. C."

The permit is in the handwriting of Richard Varick, Washington's recording secretary.

Obtained New Deed

On March 3, 1784 Colonel Hay obtained from Hugh Van Kleeck a new deed for the property, Van Kleeck's conveyance, now on file in the County Clerk's office, Liber 1 of Deeds, page 507, stating:

"Whereas: Hugh Van Kleeck, on or about the month of October, 1780, by conveyance in due form, in consideration of £900, conveyed in fee simple to Udny Hay certain lands and premises in Poughkeepsie;

"And whereas: the dwelling house of the said Udny Hay on the said premises was lately consumed by fire and the said conveyance was thereby destroyed,****said Hugh hath consented by executing another conveyance to said Udny Hay to put the said Udny Hay in as good condition as he would have been in if said conveyance, first above mentioned, had been preserved."

Miss Reynold's examination of the Mahenawasigh Chapter House has disclosed a number of additional bits of evidence identifying it as the dwelling of Van Kleeck and Colonel Hay. On the front wall of the building there is a stone bearing the letters "V K". The stone is broken immediately in front of the "V" and only part of the preceding letter remains. The portion which remains could conceivably be the right hand vertical line of an "H" with a bit of the cross line left. This stone, therefore must be a remnant of the house originally built by Hugh Van Kleeck, which suggests that the fire probably destroyed only the roof and the contents of the building and left at least part of the walls intact.

By investigating the cellar of the present building, Miss Reynolds discovered foundations, two feet thick, for a house 46 feet wide, east and west, and 20 feet deep, north and south, with large arches of stone supporting two chimneys at the east and west, and 20 feet deep, north and south, with large arches of stone supporting two chimneys at the east and west in the center of two gables. These indicate the size and shape of Van Kleeck's original house. Also in the cellar are to be found hand-wrought beams, charred in some places, bearing evidence to the fire and helping again to identify the property positively as that owned by Van Kleeck and Colonel Hay. In addition to what apparently were the original foundations, there is another foundation on the east, west, and north sides of the house, the same length east and west as Van Kleeck's building and nine feet north and south. Upon these foundations, built presumably with the aid of the artificers from Newburgh, Colonel Hay erected the present two story and attic building.

Claim of Title Obtained

The full chain of title to the house was printed in the Historical Society's Year Book for 1922, carrying it to July 5, 1900 when it was acquired by the State of New York.

While Miss Reynold's researches prove conclusively that Governor Governor Clinton did not occupy the house which now bears his name, she emphasizes in her monograph her opinion that the property ought to be held as a memorial to the part Poughkeepsie played in the Revolution. On this point she says:

"The property is very properly held as a memorial to the fact that Poughkeepsie was once the capital of the state. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the former rural village, out of which has grown a modern industrial city, was the seat of government of the State of New York at a critical period in history and that the presence of well known men and the conduct of important public business gave it a prominence which is part of the story of the Revolution."

Card Party Is Held.

A card party was given Tuesday evening at the Falkkill building for the benefit of Obed Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, by the following: Mrs. J. H. Spitz, Mrs. F. Rosen, Mrs. S. Rosin, Mrs. I. Fleishman and Mrs. E. Bernstein. Prizes were awarded to the following successful players: whist, Mrs. M. Gaynor, Miss Pauline Lutsky, Mrs. Betty Bloom, Mrs. J. Frank, Mrs. Francis Berlin and Mrs. Finkelstein; pinochle, Harry M. Schwartz and Mrs. Lena Melhado; bridge, Mrs. E. Wallenstein and Mrs. Gertrude Slote.

The non-players' prize was awarded to Mrs. Veiton and the door prize to Samuel H. Rudd.

DIED

O'CONNOR—In this city, November 10, Jane Brown, wife of Richard J. O'Connor, age 53 years. Funeral from her late home, Columbia Street, Friday morning at 9:30 o'clock and from St. Mary's Church at ten o'clock where a mass of requiem will be celebrated. Relatives and friends are invited.

DAVIS—At Bangall, N. Y., November 10, 1925, Jennie A. Parks, widow of John J. Davis. Funeral services will be held from the home of Mrs. Henry Mills, Thursday afternoon, November 12, at two o'clock. Interment at Pine Plains, N. Y. Waterbury papers please copy.