

Dutchess County Historical Society

Year Book

Volume 73

1988

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The Dutchess County Historical Society YEARBOOK (ISSN 0739-8565) has been published annually since 1915 by the Dutchess County Historical Society, Box 88, Poughkeepsie, New York 12602.

Individual copies may be purchased through the Society. Selected earlier Yearbooks are also available.

Manuscripts, books for review and other correspondence relevant to this publication should be addressed to:

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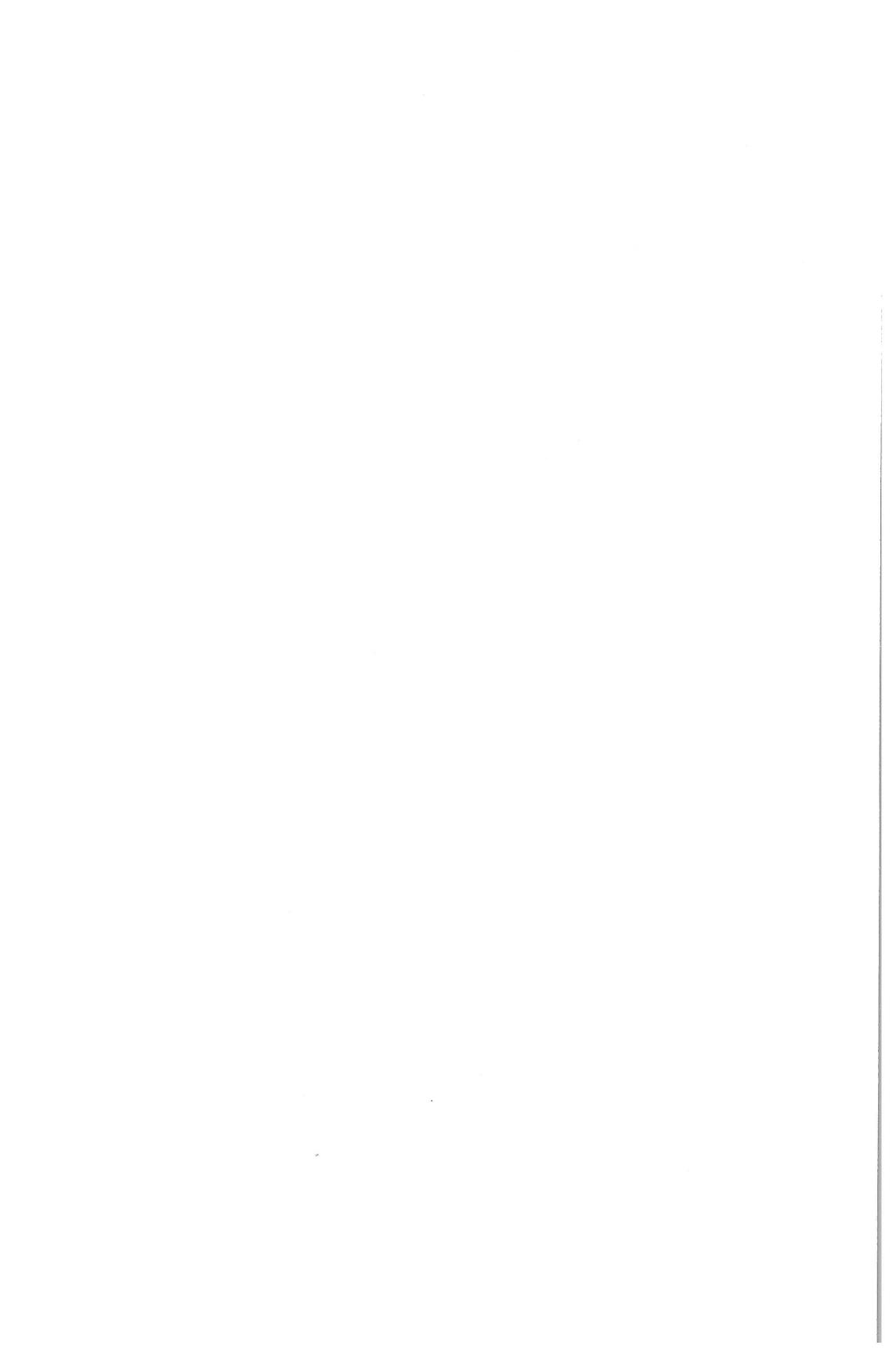
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The Dutchess County Historical Society was organized in 1914 to preserve and share the county's rich history and tradition. The only county-wide organization of its kind, the Society is the active leader and promoter of local history in Dutchess County. Principal endeavors include the publishing of historical works, and the collecting and safekeeping of manuscripts, artifacts and other priceless treasures from the past. The Society has also been instrumental in the preservation of two pre-Revolutionary landmarks, the Clinton House and the Glebe House, both in Poughkeepsie.

The Society offers its members a variety of activities and special events throughout the year. For further information or to join please contact the Society at P.O. Box 88, Poughkeepsie, New York 12602, 914 (471-1630).

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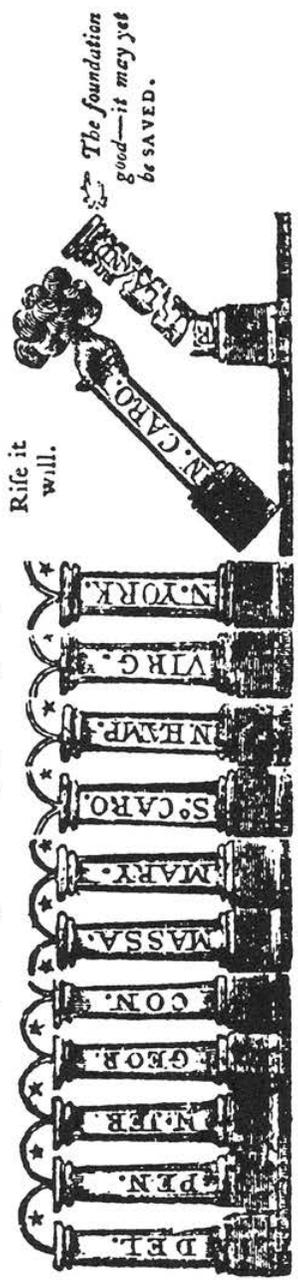
An Introduction to *The Constitution and New York*

Much has been written during the bicentennial year on those fascinating details of the New York State Ratification Convention of the United States Constitution which took place in the Poughkeepsie Court House. John P. Kaminski's essay which follows complements this enthusiastic outpouring. It is an overview and much of it will be familiar. What does make this article unique is its sense of perspective. In broad terms the author explains the powerful forces maneuvering at the Poughkeepsie Court House. Was this really a pivotal event in American history?

John Kaminski is a history professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. The article below is a condensation of a longer essay which appeared in *The Reluctant Pillar: New York and the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*, edited by Stephen Schechter. The Dutchess County Historical Society reprints the abridged version with thanks and acknowledgement to Professor Kaminski and to William Kasdorf of Madison House Publishers, Inc.

The Editors.

REDEUNT SATURNIA REGNA.
On the erection of the Eleventh PILLAR of the great Na-
tional DOME, we beg leave most sincerely to felicitate "OUR DEAR COUNTRY."



The FEDERAL EDIFICE.

The metaphor of the federal structure supported by the state pillars was used elsewhere, but the *Massachusetts Centinel* was the first newspaper to print an illustration bringing the metaphor to life. On 16 January 1788 a cartoon was printed under the heading "THE FEDERAL PILLARS," showing five pillars erected with a sixth pillar labelled "Mass." in the process of being raised. The cartoon was updated as each state ratified the Constitution. This version, showing New York raised, appeared on 2 August 1788.

The Constitution and New York *Adjusting to Circumstances: New York's Relationship with the Federal Government, 1776–1788*

John P. Kaminski

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On April 20, 1777, the newly declared state of New York adopted its first constitution. Unarguably, it was one of the most conservative forms of government established by any of the thirteen rebellious colonies. Aristocratic New Yorkers looked forward to electing their leader, Philip Schuyler, as the state's first governor in June 1777; but much to their dismay George Clinton, an upstart militia officer from Ulster County, was the people's choice. This election was a harbinger of politics in New York for the next quarter century. Clinton's primary source of support came from the yeoman farmers of the northern counties of Orange, Ulster, Albany, Washington, and Montgomery. His opposition was primarily centered in New York City, the city of Albany, the town of Hudson, and the lower counties of Kings, Queens, Richmond, and Westchester.



George Clinton (1739–1812), the son of an Irish immigrant, was an Ulster County lawyer. He fought in the French and Indian War and was a militia brigadier general in the Revolution. He served as a delegate to Congress in 1775 and was elected the state's first governor in 1777. After six consecutive three-year terms from 1777–1795, he chose not to run, partly because defeat seemed inevitable. He was elected president of the state ratifying convention, and as such he did not vote on the final question. In 1800 he was again elected governor and served until 1804, when he became Thomas Jefferson's vice president. He continued in that

office until his death, serving his last four years under President James Madison. Drawing by Charles Balthazar Julien Fevret de Saint-Memin, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

When George Clinton was first elected governor, the aristocracy thought him unqualified for the position. They looked forward to his defeat in 1780, but, with the military exigencies of the time, Clinton was reelected for a second term. In 1783, with peace restored, Clinton had solidified his position and was easily reelected to his third term. By 1786 the governor's popularity had reached such a level that he was unchallenged in his bid for his fourth consecutive term. Anti-Clintonians continued their opposition to the governor's policies within the state, but by the mid-1780s they had decided to combine their efforts with like-minded men in other states in an effort to strengthen the general government. A stronger central government might be able to limit the radical policies of the state legislatures, such as the New York paper-money issue of 1786. Thus the original intrastate conflict between the middle-class forces of George Clinton and his aristocratic opponents became part of a larger Continental struggle between the supporters of a confederation of sovereign states and the advocates of a strengthened central government with coercive powers over the states and the people.

The Revolution: A Bond of Necessity

New York suffered more from the Revolution than any other state. Military activity occurred incessantly within its borders, and New York City and the six lower counties were occupied by British troops for much of the war. New York continually sought assistance from Congress—assistance that seldom materialized because of Congress' weakness. Both Clintonians and Anti-Clintonians agreed that the national legislature had to be strengthened in order to deal effectively with the military problems. In early September 1780 Alexander Hamilton called for a national convention that would grant Congress additional powers. On September 7 Governor Clinton addressed the New York legislature and echoed Hamilton's appeal. Later in the month the legislature appointed delegates to attend a convention of states in Hartford that was "to propose and agree to . . . all such Measures as shall appear calculated to give a Vigor to the governing powers, equal to the present Crisis."

The Hartford Convention, composed of delegates from New England and New York, met November 8–22, 1780. It proposed that the army be authorized to collect revenue and that Congress be empowered to levy import duties. Within three months Congress itself asked the states to grant it the power to levy a 5 percent impost (tariff) to help pay the national war debt. With the British occupying New York City and no tariff revenue coming into its coffers, the New York legislature swiftly approved the Continental impost on March 19, 1781, less than three weeks after the new government under the Articles of Confederation had become effective. Eleven other states followed New York's example. Only Rhode Island refused. But because of the unanimity provision of the Articles, Rhode Island's refusal killed the impost.

Two years after the American victory at Yorktown, New York City was still occupied by the British. The American army and the state militias remained unpaid, and public creditors received no interest on their securities. In this atmosphere a special session of the New York legislature met in July 1782 and resolved that Congress be given the power to tax and that a general convention of the states be called to amend the Articles of Confederation accordingly. The resolutions were forwarded to Congress, which took no action on them.

The New Policies of Peace

With the cessation of hostilities and the British evacuation of New York City, the military justification for a strong Union came to an end, and the Clintonians reassessed their state's position within the Union. The governor and his supporters decided that all their efforts should now be directed at making New York as strong as possible within the loose federal alliance that existed under the Articles. Toward this end, the Clintonians devised a new system of revenue composed of three parts: (1) a state tariff, (2) the sale of loyalist estates and unsettled state lands, and (3) a moderate tax on real and personal property. This new system directly pitted the state-oriented Clintonians against their more nationally minded opponents, who wanted a strengthened Congress.

The new Clintonian policy was inaugurated on March 15, 1783, with the repeal of New York's earlier approval of the Impost of 1781. The state tariff was to be the cornerstone of the Clintonian financial system, and as such it could not be surrendered to Congress. Annual income from the state impost during the Confederation years represented one-third to one-half of New York's annual income.

The impost was especially important to the Clintonians because much of it was paid by non-New Yorkers. About half of all foreign goods imported by Connecticut and New Jersey came through the port of New York. The people of these two states, along with those of Vermont, Massachusetts, and (to a lesser degree) the southern states, indirectly contributed to New York's tariff revenue every time they bought European goods imported through New York. Thus out-of-staters reduced the tax burden of New Yorkers. This hidden tax on consumers was collected by merchants—a group not well represented in the ranks of Clintonians. By forcing merchants to pay the impost, albeit through increasing the prices of imported goods, the Clintonians reduced the taxes on real and personal property. In this way the Clintonians championed yeoman farmers, a group who supported the governor's efforts to keep their taxes low.

Besides the tariff, the Clintonians raised almost \$4,000,000 from the sale of confiscated loyalist estates. Aristocratic manor lords did not like to see these once glorious estates broken up and sold in small parcels; it was not a good omen for their own future. Nationalists also opposed the Clintonians' confiscation of loyalist property in those areas evacuated by British troops in 1783, because such actions violated the treaty of peace. How could Congress force Britain to obey the treaty if the states violated it with impunity?

New York's unsettled land was also important in the Clintonian financial picture. This vast territory promised huge future revenues, but New Yorkers had fears about this resource. The state's claim to the area known as Vermont was disputed by New Hampshire and Massachusetts and by the Vermonters themselves. New York's delegates to the Confederation Congress pursued its ownership claims with little success, reporting to Governor Clinton on April 9, 1784, that Congress was determined "not to do any thing about the matter, expecting that in Time we shall be obliged to consent that [Vermont should] . . . become a separate State." In the same letter the delegates warned Clinton about the possible attempts to seize New York's northwestern territory. "Upon the whole Sir it is our opinion that the utmost Vigilence ought to be exercised to prevent any encroachment on our Territory as we are to expect no protection otherwise than from our own arms." On June 4, 1784, another New York delegate warned the legislature to take "every precaution respecting the W. Territory" because "a Plan is formed and perhaps wrought into System to take that Country

from us.”

Thus the Clintonians clearly saw that any attempt to strengthen Congress would probably result in the loss both of the state impost and of future land sales from confiscated loyalist estates, from Vermont, and from northwestern New York. The Clintonians would not allow Congress to wrest away the state’s most productive sources of revenue.

The Hard Times of 1785–1786

The end of the Revolution in New York was accompanied by two years of prosperity followed by a serious economic depression. To relieve the hardships of the depression and to stimulate the economy, a demand arose for the state to create a land bank that would loan paper money on real estate collateral.

Governor Clinton at first opposed such a land bank, but by the spring of 1786 he came to support the proposal as an opportunity to aid distressed debtors while improving his own political standing. A provision added to the paper-money bill provided that \$125,000 of the paper money would be used to pay the interest and principal on the entire state debt and on two kinds of federal debt owned by New Yorkers. The federal securities funded by the bill amounted to \$1,400,000, owned by about 25 percent of New Yorkers. The remaining \$3,600,000 in federal securities, largely owned by several hundred wealthy Anti-Clintonians, was left unfunded. Clinton was therefore able to assist in getting the paper-money bill enacted, cement his strength among state public creditors, and gain new support from the majority of federal public creditors within the state, while not unduly benefiting his opponents.

It was now in the interest of most New York public creditors to support the state’s financial interests over those of the Union. Furthermore, the paper money loaned to farmers held its value well and allowed many debtor farmers to avoid bankruptcy and foreclosure proceedings. The paper money, along with revenue from land sales and the state impost, allowed New York to purchase large quantities of federal securities with its interest-bearing state securities. By 1790 the state of New York owned federal securities worth over \$2,880,000 in gold. The interest due New York on these federal securities more than equaled the annual requisitions on the state by Congress. Thus New York had been transformed from a debtor state into one of the wealthiest creditor states in the Union. The interest of most New Yorkers had become connected with the state and its governor rather than with the federal government.

Commerce

Although Governor Clinton made a concentrated effort to attach farmers to his policies, he also wholeheartedly encouraged foreign commerce. The more trade that came through the port of New York, the greater the tariff revenue. Therefore, when commerce deteriorated in 1785–86, the Clintonians joined their political adversaries in seeking ways to stimulate trade. This explains why New York in April 1785 gave Congress additional commercial powers to restrain trade with countries without commercial treaties with the United States. It also explains why New York appointed five delegates to attend the Annapolis Convention of September 1786, which was called to consider the country’s commercial problems. The legislature, however, provided that any proposals emanating from the Annapolis Convention had to be approved by all of the states. Thus New York was willing to consider a national commercial plan, but it reserved the right to reject any plan that might be detrimental to the state.

The Impost of 1783

By the beginning of 1783 the financial condition of Congress was desperate, so during the first four months of the year it debated measures to alleviate the situation. In April a unified program was adopted that included another request for a federal impost. Unlike the Impost of 1781, this new levy did not gain the state's support. Clintonians hoped that some other state would reject Congress' new attempt to seize New York's most lucrative revenue producer. But by spring 1786 all of the other states had adopted the impost in one form or another. New York could no longer avoid the issue.

In order to sway public opinion in their favor, the Clintonians launched a masterful newspaper campaign which emphasized the dangers inherent in giving Congress an independent source of revenue. With its own income guaranteed, Congress would soon swallow up the state legislatures; and with the disappearance of the states as viable political entities, freemen would lose many of their hard-won rights. Thus, at least in the public debate, the issue was not primarily economic. By rejecting the impost, New York could save the entire country from becoming a centralized despotism.

All attention focused on New York as the legislature debated the impost in May 1786. Clintonians were keenly aware that their motives would be questioned if they simply rejected the impost outright. Consequently the Clintonian-dominated legislature chose a middle ground. New York adopted the duty but refused to give up the right to supervise and remove the collectors of the impost. The state also reserved the right to use the recently issued state paper money to pay the impost revenue to Congress.

As expected, Congress rejected New York's qualified ratification of the impost and asked Governor Clinton to call a special session of the legislature to reconsider the matter. The governor rejected Congress' request because, in his judgment, no emergency existed. Congressional delegates condemned New York for endangering the country and sent a second appeal to Governor Clinton. The governor again refused. The New York legislature reconsidered the impost when it reconvened in regular session; and on February 15, 1787, the Assembly voted 38 to 19 to retain the provisions obnoxious to Congress, despite the eloquent appeal of Alexander Hamilton that it should accept the national formula. Thus revenue from duties collected on imported goods coming through the port of New York would still flow into the state treasury. The Assembly's action had killed the federal impost but preserved the impost of the state. It was evident that New York's interests were not the same as the interests of the United States.

Congress Calls the Constitutional Convention

Only five state delegations attended the commercial convention at Annapolis. Instead of transacting business with such a small representation, the delegates, with New York's Alexander Hamilton in the forefront, called a new general convention of the states to meet in Philadelphia in May 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation. By the third week in February, when Congress took up the convention issue, several states had already appointed delegates. New York's congressmen proposed that the Annapolis Convention report be ignored, and that Congress consider a resolution agreed to by the New York legislature on February 20, 1787, calling for a general convention to consider "alterations and amendments" to the Articles of Confederation that would "render them adequate to the preservation and support of the

Union." Some congressional delegates viewed New York's proposal with skepticism, especially in light of the Assembly's recent defeat of the impost. Since New York's proposal ignored the Annapolis Convention report and the actions of those states that had already appointed delegates to a general convention, it was believed that New York was attempting to sabotage the entire convention movement by dividing Congress between two different proposals. Other delegates, however, saw the value in the convention proposal originating from a state rather than from an extralegal body such as the Annapolis Convention.

New York's motion was rejected by Congress. Another resolution was proposed and accepted that implicitly acknowledged the Annapolis Convention report and sanctioned the elections of delegates that had already taken place. But this resolution limited the power of the proposed convention, which was called "for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation." Any proposals from the convention would have to be approved by Congress and by the states before taking effect.



Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804) was born in the British West Indies. He immigrated to New York in 1772 and entered King's College (Columbia University) the following year. By 1774 he was totally committed to the patriot cause, and he wrote extensively against British policy. He served in the Continental army from 1776 to 1781, much of the time as George Washington's aide-de-camp. In 1782 he resigned from the army, finished his legal studies, and entered Congress (1782–1783). In 1786 he represented New York at the Annapolis Convention, where he drafted its report calling for a constitutional convention to

meet in Philadelphia. He served in the state assembly in 1787 and was one of three New York delegates to the Constitutional Convention. He alone signed the Constitution for New York. He was back in Congress in 1788, and during the debate over the ratification of the Constitution, he, along with James Madison and John Jay, wrote The Federalist. He was one of the Federalist leaders in the state convention that ratified the Constitution. President Washington named him the first secretary of the treasury, an appointment which was the climax of his public career. He was killed in a duel with Vice President Aaron Burr in 1804. Portrait by John Trumbull, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

New York's Delegate to the Constitutional Convention

After a month's debate the New York legislature agreed that three delegates to the Constitutional Convention should be elected by separate balloting in both legisla-

tive houses—the same method used to elect the state’s delegates to Congress. On March 6 the Assembly voted for its candidates. State Supreme Court justice Robert Yates and Alexander Hamilton were overwhelmingly elected. The final candidate selected, Albany mayor John Lansing, Jr., narrowly defeated New York City mayor James Duane by a vote of 26 to 23. The state Senate nominated the same three candidates, who were thus declared elected. A month later, at Hamilton’s behest, the Assembly called for the appointment of two more delegates, but the Senate rejected the enlargement of the delegation.

The three New York delegates to the convention were prominent in state politics. Albany lawyer Robert Yates was forty-nine years old and had served on the state Supreme Court since its establishment in 1777. Thirty-three-year-old John Lansing, Jr., perhaps the wealthiest Clintonian, had studied law with Yates and had been a delegate to Congress in 1785 and a state assemblyman from 1780 to 1784 and again in 1786, when he served as speaker. Alexander Hamilton, a thirty-year-old New York City lawyer, had distinguished himself in the army during the Revolution, and afterwards as a member of Congress in 1782–83, a commissioner to the Annapolis Convention in 1786, and a state assemblyman in 1787. Hamilton’s reputation as a strong nationalist was well known. Yates and Lansing, on the other hand, were thought to be opponents of any serious attempt to strengthen the general government, especially if that entailed the loss of the state’s impost.

Yates and Hamilton first attended the convention on May 25. Lansing arrived a week later on June 2. During the convention Yates and Lansing aligned with a minority of delegates who favored a revision of the Articles of Confederation that would strengthen Congress without relinquishing the sovereignty of the individual states. They usually voted in tandem against Hamilton, and it was said that Lansing usually followed the lead of and was deferential to Yates. Since voting was by state delegation, New York’s vote usually supported state sovereignty.

On June 16 Lansing gave a speech in which he said that the mere consideration of a national government violated the resolution of Congress and the delegates’ commissions from their states. New York, he said, “would never have concurred in sending deputies to the convention, if she had supposed the deliberations were to turn on a consolidation of the States, and a National Government.” Furthermore, the states would never “adopt & ratify a scheme which they had never authorized us to propose and which so far exceeded what they regarded as sufficient.”

Hamilton’s stance was diametrically opposed to that of his fellow New Yorkers. On June 18 he delivered an impassioned five-hour oration. Hamilton preferred a bicameral Congress in which the lower house would be elected by the people for three-year terms. The upper house, or Senate, would be selected by electors chosen by the people and would serve for life. The single chief executive was also to be chosen by electors, and he too would have life tenure. This president of the United States would be commander in chief of the armed forces and would have an absolute veto over acts of Congress. The supreme judicial authority was to be lodged in a court of twelve justices with life tenure. Congress could also create inferior courts. All state laws contrary to the national constitution or federal laws would be considered null and void. All state governors would be appointed by the president and would have veto power over their state legislatures. No state was to have an army or navy, and the militias were to be under the exclusive direction of the United States.

Hamilton knew that his ideas were too extreme for the convention or for the public. But he believed that there were “evils operating in the States which must soon cure

the people of their fondness for democracies." Once the people tired of democracy, they would endorse his beliefs. Because of his sincerity and his eloquence, Hamilton was "praised by every body" in the convention, but he was "supported by none." Frustrated, he left the gathering at the end of June after being continually outvoted by his two companions.

As the conclave inexorably moved toward a more national government, Yates and Lansing became increasingly more disenchanted. They finally left the convention on July 10 and did not return. New York was thus unrepresented. Hamilton returned after August 6, but under the rules of the convention New York's vote was not counted because only one delegate was present. Hamilton was absent again from August 20 to September 2. On September 8 he was appointed to the Committee of Style that wrote the final version of the Constitution, and nine days later he signed the document as the only delegate for New York.

For some reason Yates and Lansing waited a while before publicly declaring their objections to the proposed Constitution. It was said that Governor Clinton had a hand in convincing them to write their report. Finally, on December 21, 1787, ten days before the scheduled legislative session, they wrote to Governor Clinton, giving the reasons for their opposition and for not returning to the convention. When a quorum assembled on January 11, 1788, Clinton gave the legislature the letter and the proposed Constitution.



John Jay (1745–1829) was born into a wealthy New York City family. He graduated from King's College in 1764 and was admitted to the bar four years later. He served in the First and Second Continental Congresses and in 1776 was a member of the Provincial Congress, where he was the primary author of the new state constitution. He returned to the Continental Congress in 1778 and was elected President in December of that year. He held that position until September 1779, when he was appointed U.S. minister to Spain. His unsuccessful diplomatic service in Madrid

(1780–1782) ended when he went as a peace commissioner to Paris, where he helped negotiate the peace treaty with Great Britain that ended the Revolution. Upon his return to America he was appointed Confederation secretary for foreign affairs. He assisted Hamilton and Madison in writing The Federalist and was a Federalist leader in the New York ratifying convention. President Washington appointed him the first chief justice of the U.S., but Jay resigned in 1794, when he went to Great Britain to negotiate the treaty that bears his name. Returning to New York, he was elected governor for the first of his two consecutive three-year terms. He retired from public life in 1800. Portrait by Cornelius Tiebout after Gilbert Stuart, courtesy of the New York Public Library.

In their letter, Yates and Lansing said that they rejected the Constitution because it created "a system of consolidated Government" which was not "in the remotest degree. . . in contemplation of the Legislature of this State. . . If it had been the intention of the Legislature to abrogate the existing Confederation, they would not, in such pointed terms, have directed the attention of the delegates to the revision and amendment of it, in total exclusion of every other idea." Furthermore, "a general Government," such as the one proposed by the convention, "must unavoidably, in a short time, be productive of the destruction of. . . civil liberty." Although they were not present when the convention signed the Constitution, they were convinced before they left that the Constitution's "principles were so well established. . . that no alteration was to be expected, to conform it to our ideas of expediency and safety. A persuasion that our further attendance would be fruitless and unavailing, rendered us less solicitous to return."

The Public Debate over the Constitution

The public debate over the Constitution in New York was an extension of the debate over strengthening the Articles of Confederation that had been going on since the Revolution. From 1783 to 1787 the debate had in large measure centered on the federal impost. Beginning in February 1787, however, the debate broadened and focused on the type of government best suited for America. During the four months that the Constitutional Convention sat, Federalists used the state's newspapers to prepare the public to receive whatever the convention produced.

The proposed Constitution was first printed in New York City in the *Daily Advertiser* on September 21. Three days later the *Advertiser* published the first New York commentary on the Constitution in the state. The new document, it said, would "render us safe and happy at home, and respected abroad." Adoption of the new form of government would "snatch us from impending ruin" and provide "the substantial basis of liberty, honor and virtue." It was "the duty of all honest, well-disposed men, friends to peace and good government. . . to cultivate and diffuse. . . a spirit of submission" to the Constitution; which, although not perfect, was "much more so than the most friendly and sanguine expected."

In the months of public debate that followed, Antifederalists condemned the Constitutional Convention for violating the Articles of Confederation, the instructions from state legislatures, and the resolution of Congress calling the convention. They predicted that the Constitution would create a national government that would end in either aristocracy or monarchy and would, in time, destroy the state governments. They decried the lack of a bill of rights, especially since the new Constitution and laws and treaties made in pursuance thereof were declared the supreme law of the land. The president and Senate were too powerful, and the Senate held legislative, executive, and judicial authority, thus violating the concept of separation of powers. The House of Representatives was too small to represent all segments of American society, and Congress had dangerous powers, some of which were undefined. Officeholders would surely multiply under the new government, and taxes would consequently rise. Jury trials in civil cases were not guaranteed, and the appellate jurisdiction as to law and fact favored the wealthy. Various provisions in the Constitution recognized, condoned, protected, and even encouraged slavery. Antifederalists believed that the state conventions should not ratify the Constitution but should recommend amendments to another general convention. In this way the people

would obtain the best form of government with the least danger to their liberties.

Federalists responded that the new Constitution would create a federal republic with delegated powers divided among legislative, executive, and judicial branches that would check each other. Since the new government would have only delegated powers, it was unnecessary to have a national bill of rights. Federalists stressed the unanimity of the convention in creating a constitution that was an accommodation among thirteen jarring interests. No new convention could hope to produce a more acceptable compromise. The illustrious Washington, the sage Franklin, and other prominent Americans were continually cited as strong supporters of the new government. Opponents were labeled selfish state officeholders, demagogues, debtors, Shaysites, and Tories. If the Constitution were rejected, anarchy would ensue, and in accordance with the commonly accepted circular theory of government, a tyrant would eventually seize power, restore order, and establish a despotism. If the Constitution were adopted, commerce would revive, the economy would flourish, public creditors would be paid, land values would rise, paper money would be abolished, government expenses would decline, taxes would be reduced, immigration would increase, and the prestige of America would rise. Once the new government was functioning, defects in the Constitution could be corrected through the system's own process of amendment.

The public debate over the Constitution in New York began in earnest on September 27 when the *New York Journal* printed the first of seven essays by Cato, said to have been written by Governor Clinton. Cato called on freemen to be prudent and cautious: "Do not, because you admit that something must be done, adopt anything." The Constitution should be adopted if it were found acceptable, but if it were judged to be dangerous, freemen should "reject it with indignation—better to be where you are, for the present, than insecure forever afterwards."

On October 1 Caesar, allegedly Alexander Hamilton, charged Cato with demagoguery. "Shall we now wrangle and find fault with that *excellent whole*," Caesar asked, "because, perhaps, some of its parts *might have been more perfect*?" He then warned Cato and other Antifederalists that it would be wiser to accept George Washington willingly as the first president under the Constitution than to have the former commander in chief lead another army to establish the Constitution by force.

Before October 18, New York newspapers relied heavily on items originally printed outside the state. After that date, however, the New York press became the national center for the public debate over the Constitution. Antifederalist and Federalist propagandists tirelessly produced material. For the most part New York newspapers were Federalist oriented, especially those upstate in Albany, Lansingburgh, Hudson, and Poughkeepsie. New York City had three staunchly Federalist newspapers—the *Daily Advertiser*, the *Independent Journal*, and the *New York Packet*. The *New York Morning Post* was fairly neutral, while the *New York Journal* was rabidly Antifederalist. To assist in disseminating Antifederalist material, a committee of gentlemen was formed in New York City. Led by Collector of Customs John Lamb and his son-in-law Charles Tillinghast, this committee vigorously solicited, edited, published, and distributed Antifederalist literature throughout New York, Connecticut, and, to a lesser extent, the entire country.

The single most important Antifederalist publication in New York, and probably in the entire country, was the forty-page pamphlet by Federal Farmer. Published during the first week in November 1787, it was reprinted in several editions in different states, and several thousand copies were sold.

By far the most admired New York essays were *The Federalist*, written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay under the pseudonym Publius. A total of eighty-five numbers were published between October 27, 1787, and May 28, 1788, in four New York City newspapers and in book form. The first essays had a fairly extensive nationwide circulation, but as the numbers kept pouring forth from the presses, their circulation diminished. Newspaper republication almost ceased after it was announced that the entire series would be published in a two-volume edition. The first volume, containing thirty-six essays, was published on March 22, 1788. The second volume, containing forty-nine essays, appeared on May 28, 1788. Despite the significant place *The Federalist* has assumed in American political thought, its impact on New York's reception of the Constitution was negligible.

Far more important in the political battle to get the Constitution ratified in New York was John Jay's *An Address to the People of the State of New York*, signed by A Citizen of New-York. In this nineteen-page pamphlet, published on April 15, 1788, Jay asked New Yorkers to unite with the other states "as a *Band of Brothers*; to have confidence in themselves and in one another, . . . to give the proposed Constitution a fair trial, and to mend it as time, occasion and experience may dictate." Jay's pamphlet, according to one contemporary, had a "most astonishing influence in converting Antifederalists, to a knowledge and belief that the New Constitution was their only political Salvation."

The arguments in Jay's pamphlet were ably answered in a twenty-six-page pamphlet entitled *An Address to the People of the State of New-York*, signed by A Plebeian. The pamphlet, perhaps written by Melancton Smith, was published on April 17, 1788. It maintained that "the indefinite powers granted to the general government" endan-



Melancton Smith (1744–1798) was born in Jamaica, Long Island. Early in life he successfully ran a retail store in Poughkeepsie. He bought land throughout Dutchess County, which he represented in the Provincial Congress in 1775. Early in the Revolution he served as a major in the militia. In 1777 and 1779 he was elected sheriff of Dutchess County. In 1785 he moved to New York City, where he practiced law and ran a prosperous mercantile firm. He served in Congress from 1785 to 1788. Smith probably wrote the influential newspaper series by "Brutus" and perhaps the pamphlet signed by "Plebeian." He master-

mind-ed the Antifederalist election campaign for the state convention where he served as manager of the Antifederalist forces, but he lost much of his political power when he abandoned his party in the convention and led a group of Antifederalists who voted to ratify the Constitution. He died of yellow fever in 1798. Drawing in John and Mary L. Jeanneney, Dutchess County: A Pictorial History (Norfolk, Va., 1983).

gered the state governments and the liberties of the people “not by express words, but by fair and legitimate construction and inference.” Plebeian objected to the idea that the Constitution should be adopted first and then amended. “Why not amend, and then adopt it?” he asked. “Most certainly” this was “more consistent with our ideas of prudence in the ordinary concerns of life.”

From mid-October 1787 through July 1788, a steady stream of essays, extracts of letters, poems, news items, filler pieces, and convention debates filled the state’s newspapers. Nowhere else were the people as well informed about the Constitution as in New York.

Warm Work in Poughkeepsie— The Legislature Calls a Convention

When the legislature met in Poughkeepsie in early January 1788, it was uncertain whether a state convention as prescribed by the framers would be called to consider the Constitution. On January 31 a resolution calling a convention was introduced in the Assembly. Antifederalists wanted to preface the resolution with a statement that the Philadelphia Convention had exceeded its powers by reporting a new Constitution rather than amending the Articles of Confederation. This Constitution would, if adopted, “materially alter” New York’s constitution and government “and greatly affect the rights and privileges” of all New Yorkers. After a long, bitter debate, the Antifederalists’ preface was defeated 27 to 25. Antifederalists then proposed that the Constitution be submitted to the convention “for their free investigation, discussion, and decision”—an obvious attempt “to introduce the Idea of *Amendment*.” This motion was defeated 29 to 23, and the original resolution calling the convention was accepted 27 to 25. On February 1 the state Senate, after a similar debate, approved the Assembly’s resolution 11 to 8.

The state convention was to meet at the courthouse in Poughkeepsie on June 17, 1788. The election of delegates was to begin on April 29 and continue until completed, but it was not to exceed five days. For the first time in state history, all free, adult male citizens were eligible to vote by secret ballot, despite the property qualification for voting in the state constitution. Polling places were to be located in every town and precinct—not just in county seats, as was usually the case. Apportionment of convention delegates coincided with Assembly apportionment.

Both parties seem to have favored delaying the meeting of the state convention until mid-June 1788. Federalists, thinking that a majority of the state opposed the Constitution, wanted time to convince the public that the Constitution had to be adopted. They hoped that ratification by nine states would occur before their convention met. This would have two benefits: no state would be adversely influenced by an early New York rejection of the Constitution, and New York might more likely ratify the Constitution if nine states had already adopted it.

Antifederalists had their own reasons for preferring a late convention. Clintonians adopted the same strategy they had used on the Impost of 1783—they hoped that another state, especially a large state such as Massachusetts or Virginia, would reject the Constitution and thus take the onus off New York. Furthermore, although opposition to the new government looked substantial, Antifederalists still were uncertain about their statewide strength. Clintonians also hoped to coordinate interstate activities in an effort to seek amendments to the Constitution through a second constitutional convention. Proposals for such a convention would be made at the New York

ratifying convention, but it would take time to communicate with Antifederalists in other states.

In addition, the regular procedure of state government dictated a late convention. The legislature met in January, and the convention election had to be properly announced so that the people were aware when it would take place. Then, according to the election law of 1787, four weeks had to elapse after the elections before the ballots were counted. Once the results were known, delegates had to be given a decent amount of time to ready themselves for the trip to Poughkeepsie, with perhaps a long stay there. Thus, even if an early convention was wanted, it would have been difficult to obtain.

Throughout the last four months of 1787, a great deal of uncertainty prevailed over New York's attitude toward the Constitution. The general (and intuitive) consensus was that New York City warmly supported the new government, Governor Clinton and his party opposed it, and the state as a whole was either hostile or evenly divided. The ambiguity stemmed from the lack of open political activity in all arenas except the newspapers. Elsewhere in the country, state legislatures, towns, counties, associations, and individuals took strong public stances on the Constitution. This, for the most part, was not the case in New York.

Once the legislature set the date for the election of convention delegates, campaigning began with a fury unmatched in any other state. County committees were established to supervise the nomination of candidates; town and county meetings of local political leaders abounded; county committees of correspondence were formed; nomination lists were formulated and published in unprecedented numbers; and writers in newspapers, broadsides, and pamphlets continued their daily appeals to the electorate. "The New Constitution," it was said, was "the Sole Object of all our attention."

By the time of the elections, however, and for a month after, uncertainty still persisted. Since the state election law of 1787 provided that ballots were to be sealed in county ballot boxes for four weeks after the election had begun, the ballots were not counted until May 27, when it was determined that nine of the state's thirteen counties had elected Antifederalists. Only nineteen Federalists had been elected to their opponents' forty-six. Antifederalists had swept to an amazingly one-sided victory much beyond anyone's expectations.

The Convention

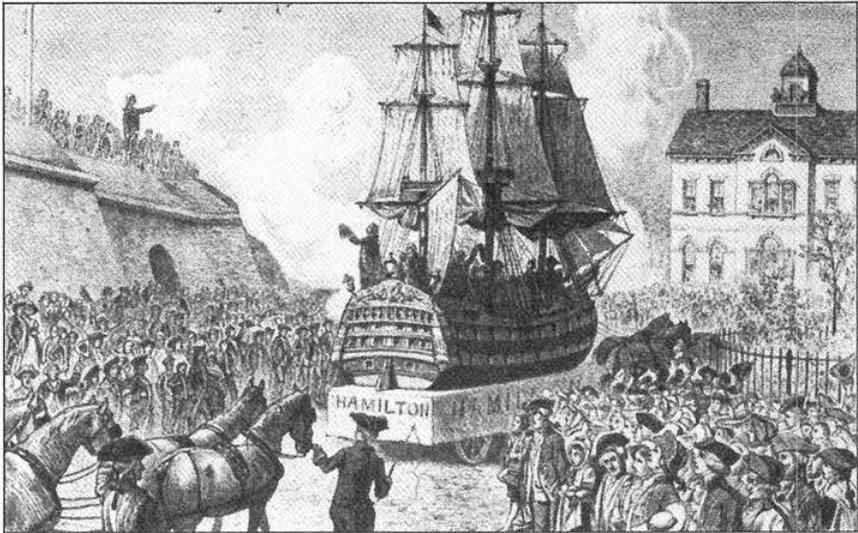
The convention opened at noon on June 17. Governor Clinton was unanimously elected president, and the doors of the convention were ordered open to the public. Other procedural matters were handled on that day and the next. The debate on the Constitution began on June 19, when Chancellor Robert R. Livingston delivered an hour-long oration that expounded upon the deficiencies of the Articles of Confederation and condemned New York's inflexible policy on the federal impost. He warned the delegates of the dangers facing New York outside the Union: Staten Island might be seized by New Jersey, and Long Island by Connecticut. Northern New York would be endangered by Canadians and land-grabbing Vermonters, while western New York would be vulnerable to the British and their Indian allies. Livingston urged the delegates to consider the Constitution objectively, not from the point of view of interested state officeholders (which many of the delegates were), but with the open minds of citizens with the best interests of the state and the country at heart. In closing, he moved that the Constitution be discussed by paragraphs and that no votes

be taken on the document or any parts of it until the whole had been discussed. Antifederalists agreed to the motion, with the proviso that amendments could be proposed and debated at any time.

Federalists had won the first battle of the convention: they had avoided an immediate adjournment or rejection and had gained a three- or four-week reprieve, during which time they hoped to hear that New Hampshire and Virginia had voted for ratification. Most Antifederalists, however, saw little danger from this delay. With more than a two-to-one majority, they did not wish to give the impression that they were unfair. They would listen to their opponents.

On June 20 Albany delegate John Lansing, Jr., responded to Chancellor Livingston's speech by saying that the problems of the Confederation could be solved if Congress were given the power to raise men and money. Fear of the dissolution of the Union, however, was not a sufficient reason to adopt the new Constitution. Lansing looked upon the abandonment of the Union "with pain," but it was better to break up the Union than to "submit to any measures, which may involve in its consequences the loss of civil liberty." Lansing also attacked Livingston's insinuation that state officeholders opposed the Constitution for selfish reasons.

Dutchess County delegate Melancton Smith "was disposed to make every reasonable concession, and indeed to sacrifice every thing for a Union, except the liberties



Many of the states celebrated their ratification of the Constitution with processions or parades. States also held processions on the 4th of July 1788, celebrating the adoption of the Constitution along with the anniversary of independence. These parades usually consisted of tradesmen, artisans and professional men who walked (by group) displaying banners, emblems, and the tools of their trade. Often floats represented different professions. The high point of New York's July 23, 1788, "federal procession" was this twenty-seven-foot frigate named *The Hamilton* pulled by ten horses on a wagon concealed by canvas waves. The ship was manned by over thirty sailors and marines and carried thirty-two guns that were fired along the way. Engraving by Martha J. Lamb, *History of the City of New York* (New York, 1877).

of his country." The Articles of Confederation, indeed, were defective, but that was no proof "that the proposed Constitution was a good one." Hamilton immediately responded, referring to "the imbecility of our Union" under the Confederation and predicting "that a rejection of the Constitution may involve most fatal consequences." He agreed that "we ought not to be actuated by unreasonable fear, yet we ought to be prudent."

On June 21 Governor Clinton addressed the convention. The United States, he said, was a vast territory and the states were dissimilar—"Their habits, their productions, their resources, and their political and commercial regulations are as different as those of any nation on earth." In response, Hamilton attacked the governor's inference "that no general free government can suit" the states. The governor, in turn, was aghast at the "unjust and unnatural colouring" given to his statements. He declared "that the dissolution of the Union is, of all events, the remotest from my wishes." Hamilton, the governor said, wished "for a consolidated—I wish for a federal republic. The object of both of us is a firm energetic government: and we may both have the good of our country in view; though we disagree as to the means of procuring it."

On June 24 news arrived in Poughkeepsie that New Hampshire had become the ninth state to ratify the Constitution. Although the news had been expected, no one really knew what the event would do to Antifederalist solidarity. Antifederalists were pleased with the reaction. "The Antis are Firm," Governor Clinton wrote, "& I hope and believe will remain so to the End."

A week later an express rider brought word that Virginia too had ratified. Although Antifederalists remained outwardly confident, claiming that Virginia's ratification had made "no impressions upon the republican members," signs of disunity began to appear.

On July 7 the convention finished discussing the Constitution, and a proposed bill of rights that was "to be prefixed to the constitution" was read by John Lansing. Three days later Lansing submitted a plan with three kinds of amendments: explanatory, conditional, and recommendatory. The first included a bill of rights and some explanation of unclear portions of the Constitution. The conditional amendments provided that until a general convention considered these matters, Congress should not (1) call the state militia to serve outside New York for longer than six weeks without the consent of the state legislature, (2) regulate federal elections within New York, or (3) collect direct taxes in New York without first requisitioning the tax from the state legislature, which would then lay state taxes to collect the federal requisition. The recommendatory amendments, which were "numerous and important," would be submitted to the first federal Congress under the Constitution.

Federalists attacked Lansing's plan as "a gilded Rejection" that Congress would never accept as a valid ratification. Smith, Clinton, and Lansing defended the plan as "our *Ultimatum*." In fact, many Antifederalists "thought they had conceded too much." Debate over the plan continued for almost a week despite Antifederalist attempts to bring it to a vote. Federalists saw hope because their opponents were "so evidently deranged and embarrassed" by their own plan.

Unable to win acceptance of the Antifederalist plan of ratification, Melancton Smith brought in a new proposal. The convention would declare that the Constitution was defective; but since ten states had already ratified, New York would also ratify, reserving the right, however, to withdraw from the Union if Congress did not call a convention to consider amendments within four years. In introducing this plan,

Smith said that he was convinced that Congress would not accept any conditional ratification, "and as he valued the Union, he was resolved that this State should not be excluded." Therefore, believing that his plan represented an unconditional ratification, Smith announced that he would not vote for any form of conditional ratification.

With Smith's proposal in mind, Alexander Hamilton wrote to James Madison asking whether Congress would accept New York's ratification with a reservation to secede. Before a response came, Antifederalists themselves, in a private caucus, rejected Smith's proposal.

On July 23 the convention considered a proposal by John Lansing for New York to ratify the Constitution "upon condition" that certain amendments be accepted. Queens County delegate Samuel Jones then moved that the words "upon condition" be expunged and replaced with the words "in full confidence." Melancton Smith supported the change. According to the New York *Independent Journal*, Smith said that "he was as thoroughly convinced then as he ever had been, that the Constitution was radically defective, amendments to it had always been the object of his pursuit, and until Virginia came in, he had reason to believe they might have been obtained previous to the operation of the Government. He was not satisfied they could not, and it was equally the dictate of reason and of duty to quit his first ground, and advance so far as that they might be received into the Union. He should hereafter pursue his important and favourite object of amendments with equal zeal as before, but in a practicable way which was only in the mode prescribed by the Constitution." Conditional ratification, said Smith, "must now be abandoned as fallacious, for if persisted in, it would certainly prove in the event, only a dreadful deception to those who were serious for joining the Union." Other Antifederalists agreed with Smith, but Governor Clinton remained unchanged, saying that he "would pursue what he believed to be the sense" of his Ulster County constituents, i.e., conditional ratification. The vote on Jones's motion passed 31 to 29. Antifederalists were stunned. If nothing changed, New York would ratify the Constitution unconditionally.

On July 24 Lansing proposed that the form of ratification include the right of New York to secede from the Union if amendments to the Constitution were not adopted within a certain number of years. Hamilton then read a letter he had received in which James Madison said that "a reservation of a right to withdraw" was "a *conditional* ratification" and, as such, was unacceptable to Congress. The following day Lansing's motion was rejected 31 to 28. The committee of the whole approved the final form of ratification 31 to 28, and it unanimously resolved that a circular letter be sent to the states "pressing in the most earnest manner, the necessity of a general convention to take into their consideration the amendments to the Constitution, proposed by the several State Conventions."

On July 26 the convention approved the committee of the whole's report to ratify the Constitution with recommendatory amendments by a vote of 30 to 27. John Jay then brought in the proposed circular letter, which was unanimously approved. Federalists, according to Philip Schuyler, had with "perseverence, patience and abilities. . . prevailed against numbers and prejudice."

Convinced by Circumstances

Why, then, did the New York convention, with a lopsided Antifederalist majority, ratify the Constitution? As the debate over ratification progressed, and as one state after another adopted the new form of government, a rising tide of public opinion

came to favor adoption. It was felt that all of the ratifying states could not be wrong, and that the Constitution should be given a chance.

Convention Antifederalists were far from being unanimous. From the very beginning only a few of them were willing to hazard such a drastic step as unqualified rejection. Federalist strategy also contributed to the adoption. The ability to keep the convention in session during the first critical weeks ultimately set the stage for ratification. For the most part, Federalist strategists played a waiting game of conciliation. They let John Lansing and Melancton Smith orchestrate the convention. Federalists' perseverance and stamina were much more important than their touted eloquence.

The single most important factor in obtaining ratification, however, was simply the course of events taking place throughout America. As Hamilton observed, "Our arguments confound, but do not convince—Some of the leaders however appear to me to be convinced *by circumstances*." The ratification by New Hampshire and, more important, by Virginia were determining factors. New York could not kill the Constitution by itself. The new government was going into effect with or without New York. Since New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware had already ratified the Constitution, New York was isolated, without a chance of establishing a middle confederacy. By staying out of the Union, New York would lose the federal capital and most of the benefit of its lucrative state impost. Furthermore, the threats of civil war within New York and the secession of the southern counties from the state were real and serious possibilities. Finally, the all-important task of amending the Constitution seemed most obtainable if New York was part of the Union. Antifederalists had not been converted to Federalism. For the most part they maintained their objections to the Constitution and viewed ratification as the lesser of two evils.

The most important Antifederalist delegate to moderate his views was Melancton Smith, the self-proclaimed convention manager. While attending the convention, Smith regularly corresponded with Antifederalist friends in New York City, then the nation's capital. On June 28 he wrote Massachusetts congressman Nathan Dane that he wanted "to support the party with whom I am connected as far as is consistent with propriety—But, I know, my great object is to procure . . . good amendments."

On July 3 Dane wrote Smith a lengthy, insightful letter in which he observed that if the Constitution were not ratified, violence would surely occur. The result of such violence would be "at least a system more despotic than the old one we lay aside, or the one we are adopting." Dane told Smith that "our object is to improve the plan proposed: to strengthen and secure its democratic features; to add checks and guards to it; to secure equal liberty by proper Stipulations to prevent any undue exercise of power, and to establish beyond the power of faction to alter, a genuine federal republic. To effect this great and desirable object the peace of the Country must be preserved, candor cherished, information extended and the doors of accommodation constantly kept open."

To accomplish these ends, amendments to the Constitution had to be proposed in the first federal Congress. "For any state now to stand out and oppose" the ratification of the Constitution would be a mistake, said Dane. If New York did not unconditionally ratify, those "men who wish to cement the union of the states on republican principles will be divided and have but a part of their strength in Congress where they ought to have the whole. . . . Men in all the states who wish to establish a free, equal, and efficient government to the exclusion of anarchy, corruption, faction, and oppression ought in my opinion to unite in their exertions in making the best of the Constitution now established."

"I entirely accord with you in Opinion," Melancton Smith responded to Dane. However, Smith knew that he faced a divided Antifederalist party. "Time and patience," he said, "is necessary to bring our party to accord, which I ardently wish." Dutchess County Antifederalist delegate Zephaniah Platt sided with Smith, voting for ratification "not from a conviction that the Constitution was a good one or that the Liberties of men were well Secured. No—I voted for it as a Choice of evils in our own present Situation." The Constitution "Must and would now go into operation," he wrote. "The only Chance remaining was to get a Convention as Soon as possible to take up our Amendments & those of other States while the Spirit of Liberty is yet alive." In sum, Platt said "that we have Endeavoured to consider all Sides of the question & their probable consequence—on the whole [we] decided on what we Supposed was for the Interest and peace of our State under present Circumstances."

The Clintonian goal of a second constitutional convention, of course, failed, but a bill of rights to protect individual liberties from the power of the new national government was promptly championed by James Madison in the first federal Congress. On March 27, 1790, New York gave its assent to eleven of the proposed amendments, becoming the eighth state to approve.

New York: Essay on Sources

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The Right To Choose: Suffrage During the Revolutionary Era

William P. Mc Dermott

"Aye" answered Abel Peters, when asked if he would post a bond for Enoch Lester, midway through the annual meeting held in the newly established Town of Clinton. On that day, April 1, 1788, he agreed to guarantee Lester's performance as a newly elected town constable, a post Lester had held for five years immediately before the American Revolution.¹ This was not the first time the paths of these two very different men had crossed. In 1776 both men had been arrested by the Committee for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, then a newly organized committee empowered by the New York Provincial Congress to incarcerate any individual who subverted the American cause.² Even then Lester and Peters had been neighbors. Peters, an affluent member of the community in 1788, had opened the first general store in Clinton Corners shortly before the Revolution. Lester, probably a patron in Peter's store, seems to have lived an undistinguished life, moving from one property owned by members of the Lester family to another.³ Both of these men came from affluent families. The Lester family, as partners in the Nine Partners Company, owned part of the approximately 140,000 acre Nine Partners Patent which included Clinton. Abel Peters had come to Dutchess County only a decade before the Revolution as the fifteen year old son of George, who soon became a successful storekeeper in Pleasant Valley.

Although released shortly after his arrest, Lester's provocative description of himself as "a true subject to George the third . . . [who] meant to live and die so" resulted in a second arrest. Paroled a few months later he returned home in October, 1777 and maintained a low profile for the duration of the war.⁴ Peters too, had been released. He reopened his store and conducted business in Clinton Corners during the Revolution. No doubt his pledge to support the Revolution and his service in the militia had redeemed his earlier transgression. Also his neighbors and patrons, almost exclusively Quakers who objected to armed conflict of any sort, had little quarrel with him for his support of the "old" order.

These arrests, not particularly significant against the larger tapestry of the American Revolution, and Lester's reelection to public office in 1788, raise a curious and interesting question. Was the Revolution and the events which followed, such as the Constitutional Convention held at Poughkeepsie in 1788, treated as a significant social movement by the average individual in the agricultural communities of Dutchess County? Obviously by 1788, if Lester's election to public office is any barometer, memories regarding his earlier behavior had faded. However, could it be that the inhabitants in Clinton did not regard the events of the previous dozen years as matters central to day to day living, regardless of their political, social, or economic significance? Perhaps, as Edward Countryman concluded about New Yorkers at the outset of the Revolution, "a great number . . . tried desperately just to keep out of it."⁵

Staughton Lynd in his analysis of the Revolutionary era in Dutchess County observed that, "Contemporaries had no doubt that the War for Independence was

accompanied by a struggle over who should rule at home." And this struggle, Lynd believed, was "a conflict between economic classes," which was a principle "factor in shaping the politics of the seventeen-eighties." He concluded that newly emerging popular leaders in the county in contrast to those of the privileged class "developed a democratic philosophy of politics which called for the election to office of men of the 'middling sort', frequent elections, rotation of office. . . ." But Robert Brown, in his often-cited study of Massachusetts, argued that colonial society even before the Revolution had already become "a relatively egalitarian middle-class society in which there was a great deal of economic opportunity." Therefore, Brown infers, the American Revolution primarily reflected a dissatisfaction with British policies regarded by all the colonists as oppressive, rather than a clash between classes within the colonies.⁸ And yet a third point of view argues that while there were wide economic differences between classes before and after the Revolution, the behavior of the people of New York regarding the American Revolution and the events which followed cannot be explained only in terms of class differences. Patriots and loyalists, Federalists and Anti-Federalists were found at the top of the economic ladder as well as on its lower rungs.⁹

Studying "the way government worked at the local level" to determine whether the earlier interpretations, social and economic, accurately portray the revolutionary period is an important, but often overlooked approach.¹⁰ Two questions deserve attention if one is to understand the reaction of ordinary people to the important events which transpired between the years 1775-1788. 1. How responsive was the ordinary citizen to these events? 2. Was there a struggle between the more affluent and those of lesser means at the local level? The purpose of this essay is to examine these questions as they are reflected in the voting behavior of citizens in the town of Clinton and its predecessor, Charlotte Precinct, during the Revolutionary era.

This area of Dutchess County is particularly well suited for study. Clinton, when established as a town in 1786 had been part of a larger geographical unit called Charlotte Precinct from 1762. This precinct encompassed the present towns of Clinton, Hyde Park, Pleasant Valley, Stanford, and Washington. In 1786 Charlotte was divided into Clinton (Hyde Park and Pleasant Valley included) and Washington (Stanford included). Combined they covered 22% of the land mass of Dutchess County at that time and represented about 17% of the county's population in 1775. Charlotte in many ways was representative of Dutchess County as a whole. Its location, its ethnic composition, and its agricultural economy reflected much of Dutchess County's makeup during the revolutionary era. Its location in the middle and northwest section of the county with two principle roads, the present Routes 9 & 44, and its shoreline along the Hudson River planted it firmly in the stream of Dutchess County's commercial activity. Most of its land was owned and farmed by its residents, although there appear to have been pockets of land rented to tenants. Additionally, its population, largely English by the time of the Revolution, included substantial groups of Germans and Dutch. This mix was representative of Dutchess County as a whole during this era. Using the 1775 tax lists as a measure of personal wealth, although comparability between precincts has yet to be studied, Charlotte Precinct was representative of the economic condition of Dutchess County citizens in 1775.¹¹

The attitudes of Charlotte's inhabitants to the politics of the Revolutionary era could be understood best if a record of their thoughts and actions had been left. But the inarticulate neither chronicle their lives nor leave memoirs of it, nevertheless they can be heard. A glimpse of their points of view regarding politics are reflected in the

surviving minutes of "town" meetings held in Charlotte and later Clinton. Skimpy though they are, these records at least noted who was elected to public office at the annual meetings held each April. In addition, tax lists and other records can be used to ferret out clues regarding elected officials, the "class" to which they belonged, and other pertinent information about them.¹²

II

In February 1775, after the New York Assembly failed to support the First Continental Congress, its supporters in New York City appealed to all New York counties to send delegates to a provincial convention, convening on April 20, to elect delegates to the Second Continental Congress. In a sense each county and town was being asked to choose between loyalty to the Crown and the more radical policy of revolution and independence.¹³ In Dutchess County only the vote on this issue taken in Charlotte and Poughkeepsie precincts has survived. At its annual meeting, April 7, 1775, this vote was supervised by Cornelius Humphrey, Esqr., who favored sending delegates, and Enos Northrup who was opposed. The resolution to send delegates was defeated soundly, 250 to 35.¹⁴ But the outcome in Charlotte was not unique; only four of eleven precincts in Dutchess County, Amenia, North East, Rhinebeck, and Rumbout, voted to send delegates. At a meeting of those four precincts Egbert Benson, Morris Graham, and Robert R. Livingston were chosen to represent Dutchess County. This questionable decision did not go unnoticed. One angry Dutchess County freeholder, noting Charlotte's rejection and referring to Poughkeepsie's vote of 110 to 77 against the resolution, questioned in his letter to a New York City newspaper, the right of this minority to represent all of Dutchess County. Nevertheless, Dutchess County was represented.¹⁵

The vote in Charlotte is particularly interesting. The tax list compiled in 1775 lists 658 taxpayers. Individuals who did not own taxable property were not recorded so the actual number of "freeholders and inhabitants" eligible to vote exceeds this number by as much as 30%.¹⁶ Based on this, fewer than 40% of eligible voters made their point of view known by voting. What is important here is that about 60% of Charlotte's residents remained uncommitted. While some may have been lackadaisical, a great many others were simply neutral as defined by Edward Countryman as those "who avoided being mentioned in any of the political sources."¹⁷ In Poughkeepsie, despite its higher percentage of voters, at least four of ten chose to remain uncommitted. These findings and the fact that only four of eleven precincts voted in favor of sending representatives indicate that, like Charlotte, a great majority of individuals in Dutchess County were opposed, neutral, or simply unwilling to commit themselves. This conclusion is consistent with the outcome of the same vote on the same proposal taken at the same time in Queens County. There, only 12% supported the American cause, while fully 60% chose to remain neutral.¹⁸ Incidentally, in 1788 the delegations sent by both of these counties to Poughkeepsie were opposed to a federal constitution.

The election of town officials in Charlotte in April 1775 reflected an attitude of "business as usual." Despite Humphrey's obvious support of the American cause, he was elected town supervisor, a position he had held in 1773. Northrup, apparently loyal to Britain, was elected one of two assessors. He was also elected highway commissioner. Before the year closed, Humphrey, becoming more deeply immersed in the revolutionary movement, prepared his mill for sale and was elected to represent

Dutchess County at the Provincial Congress in New York. At the town elections the following year Northrup was elected again as assessor.

In 1776 James Smith, Esqr., was elected town supervisor. His three years' experience in that position, 1768-1770, would serve him well during this period of tension. But a few months later he was tarred and feathered for sentencing to jail a member of the revolutionary Committee on Safety.¹⁹ This followed on the heels of an armed skirmish in Charlotte between 150 Tories and a number of Dutchess County patriots, strengthened by 500 Connecticut militia.²⁰ Smith and other public officials from Charlotte, some of whom had been involved in the armed skirmish, did not serve their full term in office. They had been arrested by the patriots and sent to jail.²¹ This incident stimulated the citizens of the precinct to take action at the next annual meeting held in April 1777. Incidentally, Enos Northrup, perhaps a loyalist but an inactive one, remained in town but never again held public office. His opponent, then Colonel Humphrey, served the town in several significant capacities after the war wound down in 1781, including town supervisor in 1786.²²

The 1777 election saw the most dramatic change in government since Charlotte Precinct was established in 1762 or for that matter until well into the nineteenth century. The voters swept out of office every public official who served in 1776. The completely new slate was led by the newly elected supervisor, Ezra Thompson, a prosperous farmer who had held only one other public office previously, but in subsequent years became prominent in precinct politics. A decade later in 1788, he would be elected an Anti-Federalist delegate to the Constitutional Convention. The magnitude of the change in those who served in public office in Charlotte in 1777 is startling. All but two or three of the newly elected individuals were political newcomers, never having held a precinct office before. Even more significant is the fact that, typically, individuals, once elected, were likely to be reelected in the following year. Obviously, this was not the case in 1777. Also, eight or 38% of the newly elected individuals or their sons were officers in one of the nine militia companies reported by Charlotte's Committee of Safety in September 1775, yet not one had been elected in 1776.²³ Not only had the voting inhabitants of Charlotte become politicized, but the events of 1776 seem to have swung their allegiance to one favorable to the Revolution. Unfortunately, how large was the group of inhabitants who continued to remain neutral is not known as the number of votes at annual meetings was never recorded. The following year, 1778, voters returned to office the highest percentage of public officials ever reelected; twenty of twenty-one incumbents were reelected.

In a span of just two years the inhabitants of Charlotte had twice used their right to vote to affect the policy-making body in the precinct—its public officials. While neutrality was an option chosen by about 60% of the inhabitants in 1775 and continued to be an option, presumably chosen by fewer people in 1777, voters had had it their way. They exercised their right to disagree. Even a particularly well respected leader like Cornelius Humphrey could not persuade them. Nor were these important decisions reserved only for those who had "a stake in society" i.e., those who owned property of a certain minimum value or leaseholders who met a similar property test.²⁴ Property qualifications required to vote in colony-wide elections were, as Williamson pointed out, "seldom if ever the same as those for voting in local elections in Town."²⁵ All of Charlotte's "freeholders and inhabitants" were permitted to vote in town elections.

Local conditions rather than colony-wide issues related to broad principles, such as universal suffrage or other related issues, determined how people voted at the local

level. What was important was maintaining a certain orderliness in the community. Incidents, such as the skirmish with the Tories in 1776, or issues, such as the vote in 1775 which might have led to a sudden decision to separate from Great Britain, threatened the sense of order and therefore were quickly defused when ordinary people raised their voices at the annual meetings. Following the dramatic results of the 1777 election and the equally dramatic reelection of 95% of the incumbents in 1778, Charlotte's inhabitants returned to their more usual voting behavior. Except for electing new assessors, reflecting the new law which required nine instead of the usual two or three, about 60% of the incumbents were reelected in 1779. In subsequent years this percentage was even higher. Apparently, an acceptable order had returned to the community in 1778 and continued thereafter. Perhaps as Tiedemann so aptly put it, "traditional agricultural people, . . . were more concerned with the soil, the weather, and the prospects for the next crop than debating the merits of Britain's imperial administration."²⁶

III

If the voters in Charlotte were able to impose their will as effectively as they did in 1775, 1776, and 1777, did this access to power affect who they elected in subsequent years? More specifically, did the democratic principles which were central to the revolutionary movement become manifest in town politics, i.e., did voters elect a greater number of individuals who were less affluent? To study this question the tax lists were divided into five categories representing different levels of wealth based on the assessed value recorded therein. The percentage of individuals in each of five wealth categories is listed in Table I. As one might expect there was an inverse relationship between assessed value and the number of individuals in each category. Next, the men who held public office and the assessed value of each during three periods, 1765-1768, 1775-1778, and 1786-1789, were examined. The assessed value in the first year of each of these periods was used to determine (a) the relationship between wealth and the probability of holding public office and (b) the relationship between wealth and the importance of the office held.

Additionally, public offices were divided in this study into two categories based on the degree of responsibility. In Category I were the supervisor, assessors (usually two or three but in 1778 there were nine), commissioners of highways (usually three), and the town clerk. All of these officeholders except the town clerk were policy makers whose decisions affected the town at large and most of the individuals in it. The town clerk, primarily an administrative position, was included because of his close working relationship with this group and the likelihood he influenced their decisions. In Category II were the following lesser officeholders, a tax collector, four or five constables, two appraisers of intestate estates, two fenceviewers, two poundkeepers, and two overseers of the poor.

As one might have expected, wealth in Charlotte and later in Clinton was not distributed evenly. Briefly stated, during the twenty-five year period studied only about a quarter of the town's wealth, as reflected in the assessment rolls, was controlled by those on the lower half of the economic ladder i.e., those assessed at £2 or under. In contrast, about 40% of the town's wealth was controlled by men in the upper 10-12% on the economic scale. The remaining one third of the town's wealth was held by the middle group i.e., those assessed at £3 to £5. If representation in public office had been "democratic," it should have been apportioned in a similar manner. This, in fact, was not the case.

Table I. Percent of taxpayers at each assessed value

assessed value (in pounds)	1765	1775	1786
1	32.9%	30.1%	31.0%
2	26.0	27.2	24.0
3-4	19.0	24.0	28.6
5-6	8.7	9.4	10.9
7+	<u>13.5</u>	<u>9.3</u>	<u>4.8</u>
	100.1%	100.0%	100.3%

Even before discussing the issue of representation, it is important to note that public office was typically held by a very small number of individuals. As Table II shows, 27 men were elected to the 72 town offices during the period 1765-1768. Many were reelected and a few held several offices. Twenty years later at the end of the revolutionary period the picture was essentially the same.

Table II. Officeholders partitioned by value of assessment and category of office held

assessed value (in pounds)	1765-1768		1775-1778		1786-1789	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
1	0	1	0	7	0	4
2	0	2	0	1	1	4
3-4	0	3	7	6	3	3
5-6	2	2	11	2	3	3
7+	3	14	3	7	2	3
unknown	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
	5	22	21	26	9	20
Number of offices in each category	16	56	35	55	33	56

Note: a) When two or more offices were held by the same man, only the principle office held was placed in the category.

b) The names of Commissioners of Highways were not recorded until 1774.

But during the 1775-1778 period this pattern was interrupted when 47 men were elected to 90 offices. Had public office become more accessible to a broader segment of the population during the early years of the Revolution? Actually not, it was the dramatic discharge from office in 1777 of every incumbent which accounted for almost all of the change during that period. In the following year and the subsequent years voters returned to their old habits. A few men were elected to all the public offices, many were reelected, and several were elected to two or more offices each year.

IV

Regarding the issue of distribution of public office among the economic classes, the findings are clear. Table III shows that wealthy men in the community held a large number of the public offices throughout the entire twenty-five year period studied. Although there was a marked decline in their numbers over the years, the wealthy continued to be elected in numbers which far exceeded their numbers in town. However, despite an apparent trend toward more equitable distribution of public offices, substantial underrepresentation of those from the lower socio-economic group continued. This underrepresentation was even more pronounced when the importance of the office is taken into consideration. In the 1765-1768 period 3 of the 5 men who held the 16 most important offices in town (reelections included) were from the wealthy group. Twenty years later this condition had not changed: 9 men held the 33 most important offices during the 1786-1789 period and 5 of them were from the wealthiest group. Even more striking is the fact that during the entire twenty-five year period only one man, Hugh Wildey, an ordinary farmer and veteran of the Revolution, served in an important office. Elected assessor in 1786, he was reelected each of the following three years.

Yet, one cannot overlook the gradual trend toward more egalitarian representation; a greater number of individuals from the middle and lower economic groups were able to attain public office after 1775. This trend, imperceptible in the most important offices, is apparent in the secondary offices. About 20% of these offices were held by men from the "lower order" after 1775 compared to 10% during the earlier period. However, half of these men were elected to the office of town constable, probably regarded as the least prestigious office. But can even this change be attributed to newly developed interest in democracy brought about during the Revolution and the years which followed? Probably not. The trend toward broader representation had already begun in the late 1760s and it crystallized in the early 1770s. For example, during the period 1772-1775 37 men were elected to 79 offices. Of these only half were men from the wealthier group compared to 63% during the 1765-1768 period.

Table III. Percent of public offices held by wealthy men

Period	number of offices	number of men elected	% held by the wealthiest 15%
1765-1768	72	27	63%
1772-1775	79	37	48%
1775-1778	90	47	34%
1786-1789	89	29	38%

As Table III shows, a greater number of men were elected to public office during the 1770s than had been elected during the 1760s or the 1780s. Clearly, during the 1770s there was dissatisfaction. In 1773, four years before the clean sweep in 1777, three of every four incumbents were not reelected. Although the extant records shed no qualitative light on this election, the matter, whatever it was, also colored elections in 1774 and 1775. In those elections only about 45% of the incumbents were reelected. While it would be some time before a consistent reelection rate of about 75% evident from 1765 to 1772 would return, the election in 1776 returned 62% of the

incumbents to office. Except for the debacle in 1777 and its reversal in 1778, reelection rates were closer to 65%-75% in the years which followed than to the 27% noted in 1773. While these years were marked by high inflation, call to duty of men in the militia, profiteering by a few, and other such wartime ills, elections in Charlotte were uneventful. Men who served in local office were not seen as responsible for these conditions, nor did the inhabitants choose to vent their frustrations about the war and its effects at their public officials.

Thirteen years after the issue of independence was initially considered in 1775, the people of Charlotte and Dutchess County were again presented with a broad issue to vote on, the ratification of the Constitution. And once again voters were neutral or indifferent, though those who did vote strongly opposed ratification. In Dutchess County fewer than 2700 votes were cast, about one third of the total electorate of 8000.²⁷ Nor was this unenthusiastic response unique to Dutchess County. Alfred Young compared the number of voters in 1775 and in 1788 demonstrated voting turnout in New York was lighter than one might have expected.²⁸

Again in 1788 and 1789 inhabitants in Clinton focused more on conditions immediately relevant to their lives. Because local controversy was absent, these elections, contrary to those in 1776 and 1777, were uneventful. The reelection rate was 75% and men were elected to town offices regardless of their obvious differences about the Constitution. Anti-Federalist Cornelius Humphrey was elected to the position of inspector (overseer of the town meeting) in 1788 at the same time that Federalist Richard D' Cantillon was elected town supervisor. At the state level Clinton resident John De Witt, an Anti-Federalist, served in the New York Assembly in that year and the next. And during this time Cornelius Humphrey served his Dutchess County constituency as state senator.

V

What conclusions can be drawn? There are several.

1. Many voters in Charlotte and Dutchess County chose to remain uncommitted regarding significant issues in 1775 and again in 1788.
2. Voters in Charlotte were not adverse to discharging incumbents from office when a significant issue of local importance stirred them.
3. Contrary to general belief, the change to broader or more democratic representation in public office had already begun to evolve prior to the Revolution.
4. Men of wealth were favored with elective office significantly more frequently than those of lesser means before, during, and after the Revolution.
5. Elected office did become more available to men from the lowest economic group during the 1770s, but it was primarily secondary offices which were attainable.
6. The number of different individuals elected to public office increased during the Revolutionary era during periods of dissatisfaction but when dissatisfaction was not evident, the electorate typically elected men from a small pool of individuals.
7. And finally, in Charlotte/Clinton it was local conditions which appear to have affected elections rather than issues of general political, social, or economic magnitude.

Was the struggle between classes a principle issue at the polls during the Revolutionary era? To be sure, antagonism did exist between the classes, and, between some tenants and landlords, it was intense. The tenant uprising on Livingston Manor in 1777 is a good example of dissatisfaction which festered well before the Revolution.²⁹ But this struggle was not necessarily representative of all of the mid-Hudson Valley.

Nor did it necessarily intrude in local politics. In fact, it may not have characterized the politics of freehold settlements at all. Charlotte Precinct is a case in point. Primarily a freehold, its political atmosphere, if its elections are a credible measure, was more often indifferent, focused on local conditions, and interested in maintaining the status quo locally.

That is not to say in Charlotte or in the rest of Dutchess County there was no interest in broader political issues during the Revolutionary era. Both sides of issues such as independence at the start of the Revolutionary period, and the ratification of the constitution at its end were represented when county wide votes were taken. But on home ground inhabitants were essentially satisfied to vote for men they had always elected regardless of their stand on the broader issues; men who had achieved status in the community. Many of the men elected to public office in Charlotte were successful merchants or large landowners who operated farms worked, one might assume, by "hired men." But these men, although wealthy relative to the rest of the inhabitants, were not, nor had they ever been, nor were they likely to join the ranks of the super-rich of the sort spoken of in discussions regarding the land rich aristocracy in the mid-Hudson Valley. In fact, in all of Dutchess County only twenty-eight men were assessed at £20 or higher and fewer than one hundred were assessed more than £12 in 1775. Of the 3950 individuals whose names appeared on the tax lists only Henry Beekman of Rhinebeck, assessed at £265, Beverly Robinson of Philipstown, assessed at £70, David Johnson of Charlotte, assessed at £50, and perhaps a dozen others assessed at £35 or higher could be considered super-rich. Typically, these men did not hold local office.

Struggle for control based on class conflict was not evident at the ballot box in local elections. Certainly, men of wealth were elected to local office considerably more frequently than those of lesser means, not only in Charlotte Precinct but in other precincts in Dutchess County. This was also the case in similar towns in Massachusetts. Towns like Amherst and Weston elected men of wealth more frequently, particularly to the principle town offices. It was "proper" to elect these kinds of men, and as Bonomi observed, the "better sort" continued to be chosen for political office forty years after the Revolutionary period. Ordinary people believed elective office had been earned by and was reserved for men of status and dignity. Seeing through our twentieth-century eyes and minds it is difficult to conceive this was the prevailing attitude. But the concept of equality at that time was still only a fresh breeze, yet to be appreciated. As J. R. Pole so aptly put it, "Deference: it does not seem, in retrospect, is a very secure cement to the union of social orders. Yet to those who live under its sway it can be almost irresistible." Even Melancton Smith, regarded at the Constitutional Convention as the spokesman for the common man, acknowledged the power of deference. "Will anyone say that there does not exist in this country the pride of family, of wealth, of talents, and that they do not command respect among the common people." But as Pole further points out, men were willing to accept their lot, even when it meant accepting less than universal suffrage, because they, too, expected to advance to loftier heights one day.³⁰

Endnotes

1. Franklin D. Roosevelt, ed., *Records of Crum Elbow Precinct, Dutchess County, New York. . . Town of Clinton, 1738-1799, Collections of the Dutchess County Historical Society* (Dutchess County Historical Society, Poughkeepsie, 1940), Vol. 7(1940), pp. 73, 74, 76, 77, 120.
2. *Minutes of the Committee and of the First Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York, 1776-1778, Collections of the New York Historical Society* (New York Historical Society, New York, 1924-25), Vol. 1(1924), pp. 3-4.
3. Robert Livingston, "To Gilbert Livingston," November 22, 1786, cited in Staughton Lynd, *Anti-Federalism in Dutchess County, New York: A Study of Democracy and Class Conflict in the Revolutionary Era* (Chicago: Loyola U. P., 1962), p. 106.
4. *Commission for Detecting Conspiracies*, Vol. 1(1924), pp. 228, 291; Vol. 2(1925), p. 392.
5. Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790*, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 103.
6. Staughton Lynd, "Who Should Rule at Home? Dutchess County, New York, in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Ser. 3, Vol. 18(1961), p. 331, 356; Lynd, Staughton, *Anti-Federalism in Dutchess County, New York* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962), p. 3.
7. Robert E. Brown, *Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691-1780* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1955), p. 19.
8. A review of these policies can be found in Edward S. Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763-1789* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1956), chapters 2, 3, and 4.
9. Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, chapter 4.
10. Edmund S. Morgan, "The American Revolution: Revisions in Need of Revising," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 14(1957), p. 14 & 5.
11. Dutchess County Tax Lists, 1757-1779, 1786. Adriance Memorial Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
12. Records of Crum Elbow, pp. 67-124.
13. Carl Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1766* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1909, reprint 1960), pp. 176-187.
14. The vote was actually 140-35 but another 110 inhabitants who intended to vote against the resolution arrived at the polls too late to vote. Peter Force, *American Archives: A Documentary History of the English Colonies in North America* (Washington, M. St. Clair and Peter Force, 1839), Fourth Series, Vol. II, p. 304.
15. "Protest of the Freeholders of Seven Precincts in Dutchess County, New York." Shortly thereafter on May 1, 1775, the validity of this protest was questioned by another Dutchess County freeholder who challenged the initial letter writer to obtain 600 signatures to support his protest. He indicated that of the 1800 freeholders in Dutchess County he could obtain 1200 signatures from those who would agree to send delegates. Force, *Fourth Series*, Vol. II, p. 304; *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts relating to the War of the Revolution*, 2 vols. (Albany, Weed, Parsons and Co., 1868), Vol. 1, p. 41.
16. William P. McDermott "Settlement and Settlers," in William P. McDermott, ed., *Clinton, Dutchess County, N.Y.: A History of a Town* (Clinton Corners, N.Y., Clinton Historical Society, 1987), p. 31-32.
17. Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, p. 118.
18. Joseph S. Tiedemann, "Communities in the Midst of the American Revolution: Queens County, New York, 1774-1775," *Journal of Social History*, 18(1984), p. 58.
19. Force, *American Archives, Fifth Series*, Vol. III, p. 457-458.
20. Philip Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee, 1986), p. 143; Force, *Fifth Series*, Vol. I, p. 1408n, 360.

21. Commission for Detecting Conspiracies, Vol. I, pp. 3-4.
22. Records of Crum Elbow, passim.
23. Force, *Fourth Series*, Vol. III, p. 653.
24. *The Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution*, 5 vols. (Albany, James B. Lyon, 1894-1896), Vol. I, Chap. 74 & 94, pp. 407, 453.
25. Chilton Williamson, *American Suffrage from Property to Democracy, 1760-1860* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 16; see also pp. 26-29.
26. Tiedemann, "Communities in the Midst," p. 69.
27. *Country Journal*, June 3, 1788.
In 1790 there were 10,968 males over 16 years of age in Dutchess County. Using the 75% to 80% rule regarding ratio of males over 21 years to total number of males produces an electorate of over 8,000. Also it should be noted that shortly before the election provisions had been made for universal male suffrage on this issue. Furthermore, a secret ballot, and voting places located in each precinct, provided the broadest opportunity to vote. *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States in the Year 1790* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1909); Lynd, *Anti-Federalism*, p. 18.
28. Alfred Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York: The Origins, 1763-1797* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 92.
29. Staughton Lynd, "The Tenant Rising at Livingston Manor, May, 1777," *New York Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 48(1964), pp. 163-177.
30. Dirk Hoerder, *Society and Government 1760-1780: The Power Structure in Massachusetts Townships*, (John F. Kennedy Institute, Free University, Berlin, Okt., 1972), pp. 23-31; J. R. Pole, "Historians and the Problem of Early American Democracy," *American Historical Review*, vol. 67(1962), p. 642, 646; Jonathan Elliot, ed. *The Debates in the Several State Conventions, on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution . . .*, 5 Vols. (Washington, 1854), II, pp. 245-246, as cited in Young, *The Democratic Republicans*, p. 96; Patricia U. Bonomi, "Revisiting The American Revolution as a Social Movement," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 10(1982), p. 339.

Life 200 Years Ago in the Original Nine Towns of Dutchess

Of the 20 present-day towns in Dutchess County, nine owe their status as towns to an act of the State Legislature passed on March 7, 1788 which created them out of the pre-existing precinct system. These towns were: Amenia, Beekman, Clinton, Fishkill, North East, Pawling, Poughkeepsie, Rhinebeck and Washington. To commemorate the bicentennial of these towns, the official town historians were invited to write "state of the town" articles describing life as it had existed there approximately two centuries earlier. Articles were forthcoming from all nine towns, written sometimes by the town historians and sometimes by their designates.

The date of March 7, 1788 did not have the same significance to all of the nine towns. Clinton actually chose to celebrate its bicentennial in 1986, two hundred years after the Clinton Precinct had been created out of the much larger Charlotte Precinct and named after George Clinton. Since the boundaries of the precinct and town were identical, it appeared to Clintonians that the Act of March 7, 1688 did little more than change the administrative nomenclature. However, the law of 1788 was a major step in drawing communities into a more uniform framework of local government within the state.

What is even more confusing is that the towns of 1788 did not have the same area and boundaries which they claim today. In most cases they were considerably larger. The historians of each town have made their own decision as to whether they would write about the town as defined by its original boundaries of 1788 or by its contemporary ones.

Amenia, as it was founded in 1788, had remained essentially as it was, although boundary adjustments with the town of Northeast were made in 1823.

Beekman, as it was created in 1788, contained parts of present-day Lagrange which were removed in 1821. When Unionvale was founded in 1827 most of its territory came from Beekman with a smaller portion coming from Lagrange.

The area of **Clinton** is much reduced from its original extent. In 1821 Hyde Park was carved out of its territory on the West, and Pleasant Valley was separated on the south.

The town of **Fishkill** has undergone many changes in its boundaries. In 1821 a portion was removed to help make up LaGrange. In 1849 there was a major reduction when the Town of East Fishkill broke away. In 1875 the Town of Wappinger was created out of Fishkill's northern territory in 1875. There was also an annexation; in 1806, before Putnam County separated from Dutchess, part of the Town of Philipstown was added to Fishkill.

North East at its founding in 1788 extended much farther west. The Town of Milan was subtracted in 1818 and Pine Plains in 1823. In 1823 there were also the boundary adjustments with Amenia mentioned above.

Pawling originally contained the territory of the Town of Dover which was separated from it in 1807.

The **Town of Poughkeepsie** in 1788 was identical in its boundaries to the Poughkeepsie Precinct of 1737. The enclave of the **City of Poughkeepsie** was subtracted in 1854.

Rhinebeck, as originally founded, also comprised the territory of Red Hook which established its own legal identity in 1812.

Conveniently, **Washington** was the only one of the nine townships of 1788 to retain its boundaries in their original form.

The Editors.

Early Amenia

Ann Linden

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As one comes over Delavergne Hill today and views the panoramic valley surrounding Amenia, it is easy to understand why Dr. Thomas Young, an 18th century settler named the town from the Latin *amoena* meaning "pleasant"¹ or "pleasing to the eye"². Even before the early settlers arrived from New England, the indigenous Pequot Indians were aware of the beauty of the area, calling Ten Mile River (Webtuck Creek) beautiful hunting ground.³

For nearly half a century after the issuance of the Great Nine Partners Patent (Amenia) remained only sparsely settled. It was not until the 1740-1750 decade when land was more available for purchase in units of from two hundred to three hundred acres at a dollar and a half an acre, that a large number of people were encouraged to settle there. In those years many families migrated from New England to take up land that appeared that it might lend itself to the successful pursuits of agriculture.⁴

Wheat was the first agricultural crop to be sold for cash. It was transported westward to Poughkeepsie or other Hudson River landings. Wheat farming was near its peak around 1788 but subsequently declined due to the ravages of the Hessian fly and black stem rust long before the Erie Canal opened up the competition of Western wheat.

The real boom of the iron industry in Amenia came in the 1800's, but even before the American Revolution the high grade ores of the Amenia open pit mine west of the present village were already being worked.

The mill site which later became known as Leedsville was an important manufacturing center by the standards of the times. During the Revolutionary period, when commercial ties with England were severed, steel was produced nearby at the "Steel Works" near Wassaic. Pig iron ingots, the primary material from which the steel was produced, were brought down from the Livingston Furnace in Ancram. However, steel manufacture there was no longer viable once hostilities ceased and English imported steel became available again.⁵

Eventually the Steel Works site was adapted to wool processing when John Hinchcliffe in 1803 set up the new mechanical carding equipment which replaced hand methods for combing and cleaning wool prior to spinning.⁶

The dangers of maritime commerce during the Napoleonic Wars, which embraced our War of 1812, led to a short-lived venture in full-scale woolen cloth production at the mill site now known as Leedsville. After the restoration of peace the mechanical weaving business failed, but the factory continued to be used for textile finishing. During this time the hamlet was dubbed Leedsville by an Englishman from Leeds who identified it with that textile center of his homeland.⁷

The present day village of Amenia at the junction of Routes 22 and 44 did not exist in 1788. It developed as a stop along the Dutchess Turnpike which was completed in 1805, but it did not gain its present name and any great importance until 1851 when the previously known hamlet of Ameniaville became the site for a station on the Harlem Division of the New York Central Railroad. Amenia had for some years been

the name of a small settlement about a mile north of the new station, but now this name was shifted down the road and Ameniaville became Amenia pure and simple.

Returning to the year 1788 when the *township* was originally established, we find that the population was concentrated in its most eastern portion and especially in the famous Oblong, that 1.8 mile strip of land ceded by Connecticut to New York in 1731 as compensation for lands on Long Island Sound which became part of Fairfield County. The Oblong or Webetuck valley had the best agricultural land and, in 1788, the most important mill sites of the town. This land was more attractive than the worn-out rocky soils that many Connecticut Yankees were farming in the 18th century.

Captain James Reed of Norwalk first saw the Oblong Valley in 1859 while marching toward Canada to fight Montcalm in the French and Indian War. The decisive victory at Quebec was won before he arrived, and he returned to marry and settle in Amenia, becoming a farmer, merchant and entrepreneur in the early iron and steel industry. He left ten sons and two daughters.⁸

Caleb Benton, founder of the farmer-philosopher family at "Troutbeck" near Leedsville, came to the area from Guilford, Connecticut where he had found his farm to be too divided into small separated parcels. We learn something of the communication problems of the day in noting that he paid for his land "15 or 16 dollars an acre" in coins which he carried to the seller on horseback, and that when he and his family moved they came to Poughkeepsie by sloop.⁹

Not all settlers were from Connecticut, of course. Peter Cline (Klein), for example, who settled from Rhinebeck in 1760, came into the colonies as an indentured servant although maintaining that he had actually paid for his passage from Germany. Cline worked and saved to buy a small farm in the Oblong for \$10.50 an acre.¹⁰ What he acquired he earned for himself. This was generally characteristic of the social history of Amenia. It was a place where families of poor to modest means set roots.

In searching for common threads in the fabric of Amenia 1988 and Amenia 1788, the existence of an agricultural society is the most obvious continuous theme. From wheat to dairy farming to large horse farms, the landscape of Amenia remains pastoral.

Some of the early sites of the iron works have been used continuously by local industry. If Wassaic is no longer centered around the Gridley Iron Works, no longer by the Borden Milk Factory, it is today centered around a feed mill and livestock business and a factory occupying the original Borden building.

But if only one theme could be chosen for Amenia's last 200 years it is "independence." The hard-working, church-going settlers were the ancestors of a population wanting no help or interference from the outside and proud of their work and the beauty of the area surrounding their town.

Endnotes

1. Newton Reed, *Early History of Amenia with Impressions of Amenia by Dewey Barry*, (Amenia, New York, Harlem Valley Times, Inc., 4th ed., 1985) p. 162.
2. State Historical Marker, Routes 22 and 44, North of Village of Amenia.
3. Reed, *Early History of Amenia*, p. 10.
4. Reed, p. 162.
5. Reed, p. 127.
6. Reed, p. 124.
7. Reed, p. 124.
8. Reed, pp. 106-107.
9. Reed, p. 80.
10. Reed, pp. 87-88.

The Town of Beekman—1788

Lee Eaton

Historian, Town of Beekman

On March 17, 1788, when Beekman became one of the original towns of New York State, Jonathan Dennis led the civil affairs by becoming the first Town Supervisor. The town he presided over was far larger than the Beekman of 1988. The town borders encompassed the present town of Unionvale and part of LaGrange which were not set off until the next century, along with what was know as Beekman today.

In spite of the vastness of the area, Beekman was rural in nature and was never a major hub of activity as were other sections of the county. However, five years after the end of the American Revolution, Beekmanites, along with residents of all the thirteen states, were struggling to find their national identity and to form a new nation.

The major settling of Beekman took place only 50 or so years earlier. Living in the newly formed town were approximately 3,500 people of whom about 3% were slaves. A number of substantial homes had been built by this time. Roads, crude though they were, made travel possible between the outlying towns and the county center in Poughkeepsie. By 1788, there were mills, churches, stores and large cultivated farmlands as well as smaller clustered settlements.

Along with the excitement engendered by becoming a town, the citizens of Beekman no doubt had great interest in the ratification of the Constitution. Certainly it was of more than mere interest to people like James Vanderburgh and Ebenezer Cary who played their roles during the recent war. Indeed, Cary tried to become a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, but his Federalist views prevented him from gaining this honor.

Dr. Cary went back to his peacetime pursuits as doctor of medicine and farmer. Col. Vanderburgh also had a large farm as well as a store. Dr. Cary remained interested in politics and was a Town Supervisor from 1797 to 1804. Col. Vanderburgh, a friend of George Washington, must have been influential in the affairs of the day. He also was a Federalist and, being a storekeeper, surely made his views known to fellow townsmen.

And who were these townsmen who lived here 200 years ago? We know that most of them were descendants of the early settlers whose roots were as varied as the trees they cleared for homesteading. They were not the aristocrats of the county who inhabited Beekman's Back Lots. They were for the most part common folk who took advantage of the easy rental terms offered by the Beekmans.

The descendants of Zachariah Flagler, John Brill, Jr., Arie DeLong, Nicholas Emigh, Martin Buck and John Hall were proud of their heritage. Their forefathers came from varied backgrounds and faiths and forged their place in the wilderness.

Flaglers and Brills among many others were part of the Palatine Germans who left East Camp and West Camp in the early 1700s to find religious freedom and to find land on which to raise their families. The DeLongs were of Huguenot heritage. John Hall was a descendant of English pioneers from Rhode Island, as were the Carys who were to come later.

In the area known as Gardner Hollow and in the place called Oswego, the Quakers were to erect meeting houses. Most of these members of the Society of Friends came

from New England. By 1788 their presence was noticeable in the town. They were also well known for their pacifism during the war. Some of the most common family names of the Quaker community were Irish; Yeomans and Moore from Oswego and Sweets, Haxtuns, Doughtys and Ricketsons from the Appoquague meeting in Poughquag.

Joining the Palatine families, who were both Lutheran and Dutch Reformed, were English families who were second or third generation from New England and Long Island. There were Carmans and VanWycks in Green Haven, Vanderburghs and Noxons in Poughquag, Humphreys and Dennisses in Beekmanville, and the list goes on. Many of the English descendants were members of the Episcopal Church. The Methodists and Baptists were to come later and the Catholics not until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Some mention of these early "People of Beekman" would be appropriate during this, our town's bicentennial year. Of necessity, we will only concentrate on settlers who lived within present day town lines. Zachariah Flagler, patriarch of the Flaglers in this country, came from Franconia, Germany and was a Palatine. The Palatines could be considered displaced persons in their time. They were shoved from pillar to post and ended up on the banks of the Hudson where their lives were about as improved as the Boat People from Vietnam living in labor camps today. Many of the Palatines moved into surrounding communities looking for a better existence. The Flaglers were part of this group. Zachariah's oldest son, Philip Solomon Flagler, shows up on the Beekman tax list for the first time in 1724. This was the same year he married Anna Margaret Winegar Dop, a widow nine years his senior. The area in which they settled was two miles southeast of Green Haven, down a lane now known as Frog Hollow. They probably built their dwelling in the valley and their burying ground is just north on the hillside. The Flagler farm consisted of about 600 acres of rolling hills and valleys. It is still one of the loveliest sections of Beekman and, although the railroad passes under the hills, it is still relatively unspoiled. Succeeding generations of Flaglers settled in different parts of the farm and in outlying sections of Green Haven. By 1850 there were eight fine Flagler houses, five of which are still standing.

One of the earliest neighbors of Philip Flagler was Joshua Carman of Hempstead, Long Island. His sons built the first mill in Green Haven and Joshua, Jr. built a fine house in a field east of the mill. In Helen Wilkinson Reynolds' *"Doorways of Dutchess County,"* she describes the house as follows: "It is a frame house and in its original state was clapboarded. With walls 1½ stories high, the house was longer than broad and had a kitchen wing at one end. Through the center ran a hall with a boxed in flight of stairs, and at either end were two rooms, those at front larger than those at rear." After many years the house has undergone many structural changes and the house looks far different today than in 1788. Joshua Carman, Jr. was married to Sara Hewlitt. Their eldest daughter, Sarah Carman, married Cornelius VanWyck in 1764. He was later killed during the Revolution at the Battle of White Plains. Sarah's son Theodorus, along with his brothers-in-law, subsequently bought the house from the Carman estate. The mill became known as Peter's mill but the house was called the VanWyck house for many years. Theodorus VanWyck married Clarissa Vanderburgh, daughter of Col. James. His sister Hannah and brother-in-law Samuel Peters eventually took over the house. Descendants of the VanWyck-Vanderburgh line still reside in Beekman.

For many years, during the formation of Dutchess County, Henry Vanderburgh

was the County Clerk. He was well acquainted with Beekman contemporaries such as John Carman and Frans DeLange who also served as public servants. Of his two sons, history tells us that the elder, Henry Vanderburgh, Jr., born in 1717, followed in his father's footsteps. He held important offices in the county and was well thought of until politics reared its ugly head. Henry, unlike his younger brother James, was a staunch Loyalist. He remained so, even though it meant banishment and confiscation of his property. Henry and his family were part of the group led by the Rev. Mr. Beardsley and Bartholomew Crannel who emigrated to New Brunswick, Canada and founded the city of St. John's.

Meanwhile, brother James, who was born in 1729, was making a different kind of life for himself. In 1753, he married Margaret Noxon, daughter of Bartholomew Noxon of Beekman. They settled on a tract of land on the road leading from Poughquag to Gardner Hollow and built what was known as a substantial house, large enough to accommodate a growing family and a large staff of slaves who were domiciled in basement quarters.

James Vanderburgh fathered seven children by his first wife. Upon her death, he married eighteen year old Helena Clark who was to mother eleven more Vanderburgh children.

As time went on, it became apparent that James Vanderburgh's political leanings were far different from his brother's. He became active militarily and espoused the cause of the Colonists. He was commissioned Lieut. Colonel of the 5th Regiment, Dutchess County Militia and became Colonel in 1778. He was active during the entire course of the Revolution in both civil and military affairs. With his regiment, he took an active part in the building of fortifications in the Highlands.

In Gen. George Washington's diary for May 1781, he mentions being a guest at Vanderburgh's while on a trip to New England and again on his return on May 25th. One can almost visualize the scene as the family prepared for their famous visitor. Mrs. Vanderburgh, 32 years old and in her ninth month of pregnancy, must have been hard put to oversee this important task. By then, the children of James' first marriage were grown, but she still had a lively bunch of youngsters in the house, ages 13 to 2 years old. What excitement must have prevailed as food was readied for the Washington retinue! The excitement increased when Helena Vanderburgh gave birth to a son the day before the General's return visit. Her seventh child was appropriately named George Washington Vanderburgh. It is said that the general was so pleased with his namesake that he gave his silver buckles to the baby.

After the war ended and his militia was disbanded, Col. James continued to be active in the formation of the new nation. His politics were reflected in the naming of his last son "Federal."

If we tend to think of the Flaglers and Vanderburghs as dynastic families, we must also speak of another dynasty which was forming in Beekman at the same time. The Brills were not known as much for their political activities as the fact that their numerous progeny dispersed throughout Beekman formed an agricultural dynasty.

The Brills were also of Palatine descent. John Brill, Jr. had over ten children and 25 grandchildren, many of them settling on farms from Poughquag to Green Haven. John appears in Beekman on the 1778 tax list. It is said that his farm consisted of 294 acres in Frog Hollow, making him a close neighbor of the Flaglers. There were close ties between the two families since John named one of his sons Philip Flagler Brill.

John Brill's children married well and most of them were financially solvent enough to build large well-constructed houses on Brill land. By the time John's grandchild-

dren came of age, there were marriages into the families of Doughty, VanWyck, Peters, Rogers, Adriance, Emigh and many others. There was hardly a Poughquag or Green Haven family without Brill connections.

The Brills scattered all over our country and there are no living descendants with that name still in Beekman. The town has recently named a new road in honor of this early farming family.

The DeLongs of Beekmanville were of the family of Frans DeLange. Arie DeLong was married to Margaretha Flagler, daughter of Zachariah, the patriarch of the Flaglers. Arie had a mill and may have also been the proprietor of an inn. He died in 1798 and he was buried behind the Beekmanville Hotel. A few years ago there were only three stones remaining in what was probably a family burial plot. These stones and remains were removed to the Flagler burying ground in Frog Hollow.

The Cary family of Appoquague, later called Gardner Hollow, descended from John Cary, an early settler of Bridgewater, Massachusetts in 1644. The Beekman branch of the family started with Dr. Ebenezer Cary who was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1745. He was educated as a physician at Brown University, moved to Beekman around 1766 with his first wife, Mary Bentley and they had five children. With his second wife, Delight Champlin, he fathered another nine children. In between siring children Dr. Cary served as adjutant to Col. Vanderburgh's militia. He also represented the county in 1781 and 1784. From 1797 to 1804 he was Supervisor of Beekman.

The family homestead, built in Gardner Hollow, was in the Cary family until around 1850. The farm looks today much as it did then.

How then can we imagine these Beekmanites of 1778? We can see farmers Jansen and Rogers enjoying a day's fishing on Poughquaick Pond, later to be called Sylvan Lake. The land around the lake, except for a cleared area near the road, was probably heavily wooded. Undoubtedly it was a refuge for waterfowl such as geese, herons and ducks. These farmers had no idea that in another 60 years an iron mine would be dug next to the lake and a railroad's engine would be changing the scene forever.

We can also imagine the bustling little community of Appoquague. The Quakers in their simple garb held their meetings, farmed their holdings and buried their dead in the graveyard in Gardner Hollow.

In contrast, the Vanderburghs and Noxons, being more affluent and visiting the County center more frequently, probably dressed well in the fashions of the day. The gentlemen wore ruffles and high boots. The ladies had lovely full-flowing lacy gowns and fancy moccasins on their heads. These people surely had much by way of socializing in the form of family get-togethers.

The farmers as a matter of routine brought their grain and lumber to the mills which were located in each hamlet. This was a great opportunity for catching up with the news of local and national events. They had little access to newspapers in the rural areas, and events of national importance took sometimes weeks to sift down to these farm folk.

How could these people possibly foresee Beekman of 1988? Could farmer Jansen even envision condominiums housing over 2000 people right on the shores of his fishing haunts? Could the Noxons and DeLongs ever in their wildest dreams envision their landscapes enveloped by over 500 homes? Supervisor Jonathan Dennis, no matter how farsighted he may have been, could never have been able to fathom the problems of his 20th century counterpart Jim Dankelman.

There has been slow and steady growth in Beekman since 1788. The town has had

its spurts during the iron age of the latter 1800's and again after World War II with the opening of Green Haven Prison. We are now, in the year 1988, experiencing the biggest growth surge in our history. The land is being subdivided and homes built faster than can be realized. Untold burdens have been placed upon our fire company and rescue squad as well as our highway department. Beekman School is so overcrowded that many of our children are being sent elsewhere. Our town library is still housed in the one-room schoolhouse it was in 24 years ago and is finding new patron demands difficult to cope with in cramped quarters. Citizen groups have voiced concern about water levels and other ecological effects of development which may change the quality of life in our lovely rural community.

The rapid growth of Beekman will necessitate difficult decisions by our town leaders. They, as their predecessors, can only imagine what the future will bring and they can only do their best to prepare for these changes.

From Flaglers to Delaneys, from Vails to Slocums, from Skanes to Headys—the people of this town have lived and loved their precious piece of Dutchess County known as Beekman. Long may its beauty survive. When our time capsule is opened in the year 2013, it is hoped that the people of 1988 will be remembered fondly.

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Late Eighteenth Century Clinton (including Hyde Park and Pleasant Valley)

William H. Benson, Jr.

Historian, Town of Clinton

The post-Revolutionary War period, or the last twenty-five years of the eighteenth century, was a time of transition for Clinton, both in government and in the way of life.

Clinton Precinct, which included Hyde Park and Pleasant Valley at the time, was a grand mixture of estates along the Hudson, farmers in-land, and tradesmen everywhere to satisfy the needs of the early settlers. Merchants provided general merchandise, while the millers provided cloth, grain and lumber. The "smiths" provided everything from harnesses to hinges to high-top shoes, and Clinton's 696 families had what they needed.

Most of the "publick high-roads" were built and open by 1790, with only a few cross-roads left to be opened as the density of the population increased. A major connector was opened in 1793, when the "old bridge" which had spanned the Wappingers Creek for many years on Clinton Corners Road near Hibernia had to take the back seat to the "new bridge" which opened across the Wappingers Creek on Hibernia Road, to provide a direct link to Salt Point from the east. Jacob Smith's map of 1797, although missing many of the secondary roads which were public at that time, shows that the main thoroughfares were in place by that time to serve the early settlers.

There were still a few landowners with extensive holdings of real estate. The Crooke family, with the Charles Crooke mansion in Hyde Park, had extensive undivided lands in Hyde Park and the present town of Clinton. The death of Charles Crooke, followed by the premature deaths of his son Charles Crooke and heir William Barber, caused the land to be divided among heirs in 1767 and again in 1783. This division and subsequent sales by the disinterested heirs provided more land for settlement in many places, but much of the Crooke land remained in the family until well after 1800.

David Johnston also had large land holdings in Hyde Park and the present town of Clinton. He surveyed and divided his Great Lott 2 in northern Clinton in 1775 and then gave portions of it to his children, but sales of this land were slim until after 1800. David Johnston's estate was located in Lithgow, and he seemed content to retain his land in Clinton. His son John Johnston, a prominent lawyer of the time, settled on Johnston land in Hyde Park. Other Johnston land in Hyde Park was later divided and sold by the family.

At the same time in our local history, several of the early farm families had settled in and were starting to expand their influence through second, and in some cases third, generation farm family acquisition of land. Notable among these families are the Travers, Sleights, Storms, Frosts, Lawrences, Powells, Marshalls, Wards and, of course, many others. Some of these farm families expanded in their neighborhoods

while others spread throughout the town. The Travers stayed quite close together in northwest Clinton, as did the Frosts in western Clinton. The Powells and Marshalls, however, seemed to be scattered around, apparently more interested in the quality of the land and its availability than staying very close to home.

Major milling operations were throughout the area. The largest operations seem to have been in Hyde Park and Pleasant Valley, but major mills were also located in Pleasant Plains, Hibernia, Salt Point, Clinton Hollow, Bulls Head and Schultsville, among others. Most were grist mills, sometimes combining saw mill or fulling mill operations in their complex. Some were exclusively saw mills or fulling mills. John Rowland ran a shingle-making operation in Clinton east of Pleasant Plains.

The most influential men of the time were the merchants and traders who often extended their business prowess into the "money market" and held many mortgages, sometimes foreclosed, and always seemed to be there when property was for sale. They often turned over these properties at handsome profits, and always seemed to be in the "right place at the right time."

Most notable among the early merchants and traders was the Stoutenburgh family. They had many businesses in Hyde Park, and at one point had four dams on the Crum Elbow in Hyde Park to power their mills and other operations. The Doctors John and Samuel Bard also were very influential men of the time.

Perhaps the craftiest of all was Pleasant Valley's Daniel Dean. After obtaining a patent for a fulling mill cleaning operation, he sold the rights to the patent to an upstate New York man. The "fine print" of the sale gave only the rights to sell the cleaning machine in Kentucky! He followed this with the purchase of a small parcel of land next to the New York Slate Company in northern Clinton, and, on paper, started the Dutchess County Slate Company. The New York Slate operation wanted no competition and bought him out for \$25,000 for 35 acres, nearly 100 times the going rate for land at the time.

Many of the families of early settlers seemed to spread their talents over many endeavors, involved in many trades or businesses. Notable among these are the Ostroms. Denne Ostrom had a fulling mill north of Pleasant Valley and Roeliff Ostrom had a mill near Browns Pond while many of the Ostroms settled on farming. Some of the early settlers combined the mill and farm operations, including the Ostroms. The Schultz family of Bulls Head and Schultsville combined farming, milling, and also had general stores in both hamlets.

The diversity of family origin was evident in the churches which were attended at the time. The Wurtemburgh Church served the Palatines of north Clinton as it did the people of Rhinebeck. The Netherwood Baptist Church had a large following in northern Pleasant Valley and southern Clinton. Presbyterian Churches served a following in Pleasant Valley hamlet, and another in Washington Hollow served the people of southeast Clinton and Pleasant Valley. The Quaker Meeting Houses were in several places by that time, with the largest meetings occurring in Clinton Corners and Crum Elbow.

Schools were very important to the early settlers, and schools were provided throughout the area. Records of the early schools are very sparse, with little information available until the later forming of the school districts. In the eighteenth century, it appears that schools were formed in population centers, such as Pleasant Valley, Salt Point, Pleasant Plains, etc., but most of these early schools show only in deeds which set aside a parcel of land for them.

The hamlets of Clinton, Hyde Park and Pleasant Valley had no significant develop-

ment until just after this time period. Hyde Park was perhaps the earliest, when Dr. Samuel Bard started settling small parcels of six acres north of the Crum Elbow Creek in 1799. Until that time, most of the stores, mills, and even the tradesmen, were housed on large parcels of land with very little residential development. Even as late as 1799, the mill property at the bridge in Pleasant Valley was 162 acres on the northwest side of the Wappingers Creek! This was typical (John DeWitt's Mill at Frost Mills was 200 acres), and the mill workers were often housed on premises. The earliest property division for hamlet settlement, other than Hyde Park, occurred in Clinton Hollow and Salt Point where both mill properties were divided about 1800 and small parcels were sold to tradesmen.

By the very late eighteenth century, many of the slaves had been freed after a decision by the local "authority" that they were capable of sustaining themselves. There were, however, according to the 1790 census, 176 slaves in the then Town of Clinton. Most belonged to the affluent of the time. In Pleasant Valley hamlet, Jacob Everson had 14 slaves. John Teller in Bulls Head had seven, John DeWitt in Frost Mills had nine, William Barber in Hyde Park had eight, and Margaret Uhl in Staatsburgh had seven slaves. The other slaves were widely scattered, although members of the Stoutenburgh family had 21 slaves in total at the time.

In summary, the scene in Clinton at the time of the formation of the town was one of transition. The influence of the large landholders had significantly waned over the past 25 years, and they were now in a minority. The typical family of the time was probably farming, had a mortgage with a successful merchant, also had an account at the merchant's store, went to their church without fail, and worked from dawn to dusk on the land they had so tediously and patiently cleared. Father determined what was to be done, and, except for time out to go to school or prepare meals, mother and the children worked side-by-side with father. It was expected. But more importantly, it was just simply the thing to do.

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Much of the information included comes from the extensive deed research and mapping by the author of the area addressed by the article.

Fishkill—1788

Willa Skinner

Historian, Town of Fishkill

Fishkill in 1788 was not the busy military town it had been five years earlier at the close of the Revolutionary War. Barracks and other military buildings on the Van Wyck property along the Post Road had been dismantled and given to the people of the town who used the beams and other material in construction of new barns and dwellings.

Cornelius Van Wyck was about to start construction of his new house on his portion of the family land, using some of the wood from the dismantled barracks.¹ His older brother, Isaac, remained at the family homestead which had been built by their grandfather, Cornelius. Isaac was elected to the state legislature and liked to ride in style in a yellow coach with a black footman in the rear and the family crest painted on the door.

Near the banks of Sprout Creek, Gen. Jacobus Swartwout would soon build his new house, similar in style to the house of Cornelius Van Wyck. 1788 was a busy year for Gen. Swartwout; he was a delegate to the New York State ratifying convention of the Constitution at Poughkeepsie, siding with the Antifederalists.

When the Swartwout family moved into the new house, the old dwelling was turned over to the Rev. Isaac Rysdyck and became the parsonage for the three Dutch Reformed congregations in the town, all under Rysdyck's charge—the church in Fishkill-village, the New Hacksensack Reformed Church and the Hopewell Reformed Church. The Rev. Rysdyck conducted a classical school at the Dutchess Academy which stood on a hill a short distance west of the Rombout Presbyterian Church. After Rysdyck's death in 1790, the academy moved to Poughkeepsie.²

The post office kept by printer Samuel Loudon during the Revolution had been discontinued after Loudon packed up his press, closed shop and returned to New York City to continue publication of his weekly newspaper, the *New York Packet*, which he had printed in Fishkill all during the war. But now the Fishkill post office, once the most important in New York State and for a time the only one, had shut down and was not to re-open until 1793 when Cornelius Van Wyck was appointed post-master.

The boundaries of the newly incorporated town took in all of which had been the Rombout Precinct, encompassing the present towns of Wappinger, East Fishkill, half of LaGrange and the City of Beacon. The census of 1790 lists 885 households in the town, with a total population of 5,491 persons including 601 slaves. During the next ten years, the population grew to 6,159, and the number of slaves dropped slightly to 524. The census of 1800 does not list the number of households but states the number of males 26 years of age and up as 943, assuming these persons would be heads of households.³

The Post Road was an important thoroughfare where it met the road from New England to form crossroads in the village. From these roads farmers hauled their produce to the river landing five miles to the west of the village.

A traveler passing through Fishkill along the Post Road enroute to Poughkeepsie would find his way past the Dutch Church, now torn apart in a state of disrepair and

slowly being rebuilt, past Connor's Tavern where the Committee for Detecting Conspiracies had met in the early years of the Revolution, and past Jacobus Cooper's blacksmith shop. He would turn north at Evert Swart's store and tavern (now Mid-Hudson Medical Group) and continue up over Osborn Hill past the house of Dr. Cornelius Osborn⁴ who had been a doctor for the troops at the Fishkill encampment.

The route of the Post Road then skirted the edge of the Green Vlie (Green Fly Swamp) and took a course past the "Falls of the Wappins" where the road crossed a bridge over the falls, passing Peter Mesier's house and mill, then meandered toward New Hackensack, taking a winding course northward until it reached Poughkeepsie.

Use of the Dutch language was declining, but it was a gradual fade-out. Records of the town's three Dutch Reformed churches at this time reflect a curious mixture of Dutch and English. Preaching from the pulpit was not in English but many families continued to converse in Dutch at home.

In an effort to raise funds for the rebuilding and enlargement of the Dutch Church in the village, the old pews were put up at auction, and, following the custom of the time, the new seats were rented on a yearly basis to members of the congregation, each pledging a certain amount of money to occupy their pews. English currency rather than American dollars was still being used.

John Brinckerhoff and Dirck Brinckerhoff were the largest contributors, each pledging forty pounds English money. Those who gave twenty pounds were Elias Dubois, Evert W. Swart, Jacobus Swartwout, Gysbert Schenck, Abram Brinckerhoff, Henry Schenck, Martin Wiltse and Oliver Teller. Robert Brett gave eight pounds; Cornelius Van Wyck, four; and Isaac Van Wyck, eight. Hugh Connor, who ran the tavern across from the church, promised two pounds. Abraham Rapalje, who contracted to build the new pews, pledged two pounds. His brother, Richard Rapalje, a prominent merchant, pledged one pound.⁵

Repairs were also under way at Trinity Episcopal Church which had seen much use during the war as a military hospital for troops suffering from smallpox. Appraisers were appointed to "assess damages" to the church and for use of the graveyard. The bill came to a total of 349 pounds English currency, four shilling and eleven pence, "to be liquidated by the publick."⁶

A grist mill built by Catheryna and Roger Brett some time between 1708 and 1713 and saw mill built at a slightly later date were in operation in 1788 at the mouth of the Fish Kill. The DeWitt family operated a mill on the Fish Kill a half mile southeast of the Hopewell Reformed Church; and nearly opposite the church at Hopewell was Aaron Stockholm's mill. In the Matteawan section along the creek, a mill was owned by the Pine family and another by Hendrick Schenck. Peter Mesier was operating mills where the falls over Wappinger Creek provided excellent water power.

In the Northern portion of the town, the Verplancks operated a mill on Sprout Creek, and it was from here that the Farmers Landing Road led to the Verplanck-owned dock and warehouse at the mouth of the Wappinger, serving the residence of New Hackensack, Sprout Creek, Swartwoutville and Hopewell. The stone house where the dock had been still stands today as the Farmers Landing house.

An English visitor named William Strickland, who came to this country in 1795, passed through Fishkill in October when the autumn scenery was in its full glory. Fortunately for posterity, Strickland kept a diary of his travels and in it he took note of the beauty of the countryside as he passed through Dutchess County. In Fishkill he was impressed by the fine soil, neat-appearing farms "whose houses are in good condition," but he did not care for the stone walls that dotted the countryside.

"Between this place (Fishkill) and Poughkeepsie," he said, "are many fences of stone, gathered off the fields or dug for the purpose in the neighborhood, an unsightly improvement, which we have not before met with."

When Strickland entered the valley of the Fish Kills, he noted in his diary that "the country about Fishkill suddenly subsides and becomes nearly level; it is apparently of great fertility and better cultivated than any we have yet seen in America. "This part of the State," his diary continues, "which is called Dutchess County, was on account of its climate, beauty, and fertility and easy access by means of the Hudson River early occupied by the Dutch settlers, and is still chiefly held by their posterity; to commemorate the former, most of the gravestones in the Church yard are in the Dutch language, and some in that language have been lately erected; but the use of it is rapidly declining, and the people are assimilating themselves to the English or American manners and with them their religion also.

Most of the inhabitants here are of the old Dutch, who fixed in this favourite region at an early period, which may be one cause of its present fertility and favourable aspect which carry with them the general appearance of long establishment and the neat improvements of an industrious people."

He then states that "the New England youths coming here to marry the Dutch heiresses should be noticed here if not noticed afterwards; most of the Dutch families are now wearing out by such means; the industry of the New Eng: working out the indolence of the Dutch."

And when our English visitor saw the condition of the Dutch Church in the village, he had this to say: "Here is a large Dutch church rapidly going to decay probably never to be repaired."

No one ever told him how wrong he was on that score. The church *was* rebuilt and has been used continuously for services ever since.

Endnotes

1. Cornelius Van Wyck's house stood until 1965 when it was taken down for construction of the Holiday Inn. Isaac's house is today the Van Wyck Homestead Museum, owned and operated by the Fishkill Historical Society.
2. State Education Department, roadside marker, Old State Road, off Route 52, Fishkill.
3. *18th Century Records of the Portion of Dutchess County Included in the Rombout Precinct*, collected by Reese & Reynolds (Poughkeepsie: Dutchess County Historical Society, 1938), p. 7.
4. The Osborn house was located at the fork of Osborn Hill and Baxtertown Rds. It burned to the ground in 1921.
5. A document bearing the signatures of the congregation's members and amounts each member pledged hangs on a wall inside the church.
6. Minutes of Vestry, Trinity Episcopal Church, Fishkill, 1788.
7. William Strickland, *Journal of a Tour in the United States of America 1794-1795*. (New York: New York Historical Society, 1971).

North East

Helen Netter

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With the passage by the New York State Legislature of the General Organization Act on March 7, 1788, providing for the division of the State into counties and townships, the Town of North East was established. It embraced that part of Dutchess which eventually, in the early 19th century, became the present-day towns of Milan, Pine Plains and North East, an area which over the years had been known variously as the Little or Upper Nine Partners Patent, the North Division and the North East Precinct. The boundaries of this precinct were defined December 16, 1746 as on the south by the northern line of the Great, or Lower, Nine Partners tract, on the east by the Connecticut line, on the west by the easterly line of the Beekman patent and on the north by the lands of Livingston.

By 1788 settlement of the region was well under way although it had been slow in coming. The land had been granted in 1706 by the British crown to nine proprietors or patentees but it lay vacant except for squatters until it was surveyed by Charles Clinton in 1742 and divided into sixty-three lots thus making occupancy or sale by the proprietors lawful. In actuality, the share purchased by George Clarke from the other patentees, about 50,000 acres, was in litigation for over 150 years and was not entirely disposed of until 1894.

Mohican Indians were scattered through the area with one village being called Shacameco, near the present-day hamlet of Bethel. It was to this Indian village that missionaries of the Moravian church came in 1740 and established what has been called the first successful mission to Indians in North America. The village has been described as being comprised of several dwellings, a mission house, a church, bake ovens, cellars, a barrack and stable. Suspicion, fear and greed on the part of white settlers in the area resulted in the disbanding of the mission and the village. Some of the Indians and missionaries moved east and formed a colony on the border of Indian Pond, but they were later driven from there as well.

Geographical features of the precinct affected the pattern of settlement, particularly the hill known as Winchell's in the eastern part and the Stissing Mountain range farther west. Consequently we find New Englanders from Connecticut and Massachusetts moving into the area east of Winchell Mountain and more people of German or Dutch stock, especially Palatines, spreading over the west and north. With the break-up of "the Camp" on Robert Livingston's manor in Columbia County, a goodly number of these immigrants settled in North East, as is attested to by the large proportion of German names associated with farms in the countryside.

It would appear that not many of the original patentees or their descendants established homes in the North East Precinct. One colorful exception is the Graham family. Augustine Graham who was a descendant of James Graham, the Marquis of Montrose in Scotland, was a patentee in both the Little and Great Nine Partners patents. His son James became the proprietor of his father's interests. Both Augustine and James Graham resided in Westchester County and had only a landlord's relationship with North East. James had eight children, some of whom had homes in this area and who are considered the founders of what became the middle town of the precinct.

Morris Graham came to North East in 1767 and built a stone house which is still standing although in deplorable condition. He was a farmer raising cattle, hogs and horses. His brother Lewis received as his share of the patent an area which included almost all of what is now the hamlet of Pine Plains. His log house built in 1773 or '74 is still occupied although now covered with siding. Arabella Graham and Isabella Graham Landon were also large landowners in North East.

In the western part of the precinct, although the country was "all woods in which wild beasts and wild Indians roamed", Johannes Rowe settled on nine hundred acres in 1760 and built a stone house. Maltiah and Macey Bowman later opened a store. Other families followed, many being Germans.

Richard Sackett was apparently the only patentee of the Little Nine grant who was thoroughly familiar with this part of Dutchess County. He was also one of the Great Nine partners and resided in Amenia. Being involved in settling the Palatines on the manor of Livingston, he had occasion to travel the area under what must have been very primitive conditions.

Judging by the records left us by our country and town historians, the impact of the Revolutionary War on North East was minimal in comparison with its significance in such towns as Poughkeepsie, Rhinebeck and Fishkill. When in 1775 the precinct was canvassed for signatures to a pledge "to sustain the action of the Continental Congress" known as a "General Association", almost as many names appeared in the "refusing to sign" column as were listed as supporters of independence. Isaac Hunting, historian of the Little Nine partners patent, attributes this in part to the fact that many of its first immigrants or settlers were Palatines who were educated to believe that "powers that be are ordained of God." Others, he says, held back from motives of policy. It was a fearful experiment to take arms against the King.

Nevertheless a considerable number of North East Precinct men are listed as members of the Continental regiments or the militia. The aforementioned Morris Graham was made a colonel of one of the early regiments and other members of that family all had important roles in the fight for independence as members of the Provincial Congresses or of the armed forces. In the east end of the precinct support for independence was greater with such names as Eggleston, Hartwell, Hawley, Daken and Merritt, all prominent in the later history of that section, appearing on the petitions. These lists as well as those of the various regiments and companies provide useful information as to the male population of the precinct.

An interesting sidelight to North East's part in the war is found in accounts of the discovery of iron and the prospecting for lead for bullets and other purposes. Although the results were not of great significance for that purpose, subsequent development led to the opening of several iron mines in the area toward the Connecticut border.

Another physical feature of the Little Nine Partners region which has had influence on its development is the presence of the creeks which drain the area: the Wappinger, the Roeliff Jansen and the Shacameco. Apart from the salubrious effect of these streams on farming in the area, the water power they provided made possible the establishment of mills, an essential feature of any community in early days. They included sawmills, grist mills, plaster mills, carding mills and mills for the fulling of cloth. In North East Precinct the Shacameco Creek which flowed northwest from its source in Amenia until it joined the Roeliff Jansen on the Dutchess-Columbia line was the site of several mills, the earliest of which we have any indication being a saw mill on property owned by Arabella Graham. While several mills began operation

a few years later than 1788 it seems likely that property owners were settled on those sites by that year or earlier. The Phineas Carman mill on the southern border of the town continued in operation for many years, eventually used to produce cider, as was the mill at Willowvale, but the Hoffman mill, later owned by the Patchin family, was a fully operating grist mill well into the twentieth century. Early mills were also built in the western part of the precinct, one of the oldest having been built by Robert Thorne.

Also located on the Shacameco Creek was the Harris Scythe Works. After the Revolutionary War John Harris returned to North East and bought property and a sawmill along the creek and continued making scythes, an operation he had started before emigrating to Fort Ann in 1770. A few years later he moved his scythe works north on the creek where it prospered for a number of years under succeeding generations of the Harris family. For obvious reasons the little hamlet which grew up around the scythe works became known as Hammertown.

It would seem that any consideration of the history of small communities in rural areas often begins with the establishment of churches, and this is indeed true of North East. Even in the western section where settlement seems to have occurred more slowly than in the rest of the precinct, perhaps due to the forbidding terrain, a Methodist Society was organized before 1790 and a church building erected. The families attracted to the eastern part of the precinct, chiefly New Englanders, were largely Baptist. A Baptist Society was formed in 1751 and a chapel was later erected in the vicinity of Spencer's Corners. However the first to hold religious services in that region after the departure of the Moravian missionaries were the Methodists in 1751.

Bethel, in the central part of the precinct and the site of the first Moravian Mission, continued to be the religious center of the area for several years. Since those settlers of German descent were for the most part Lutheran or German Reformed, their church attendance required travel on horseback to the Hudson River communities, a journey arduous and dangerous. In 1746 a church, known as Round Top from the shape of its roof, was erected near the Moravian church built of bark in 1743. The Round Top church was built on property promised by James Alexander, owner of several lots. The land was not actually deeded until after Alexander's death when his son-in-law Peter van Brugh transferred the land to John Tise Smith and Michael Raugh "for the worship of Almighty God as practiced by Lutheran Evangelical churches." The Round Top church cemetery was for many years the only public burying ground in what became the town of Pine Plains.

In 1772 the German Reformed people built the "Red Church" on property belonging to the Pulver family on the Salisbury-Rhinebeck Turnpike. A Pulver family burying ground also occupied the site. Methodism did not find expression in this part of the precinct until 1788 when the Dutchess circuit was recognized and Freeborn Garretson was appointed elder. The other denominations were introduced during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

According to James Smith, Dutchess County historian, an area known as Spencer's Corners (toward the Connecticut line) was the first settled locality in North East. Philip Spencer came there in 1769 and even then it was known as an old settlement. Among the early settlers there were Samuel Eggleston who came from Connecticut, the Dakin family from Putnam County, Elisha Colver (or Culver) from Massachusetts said to be a justice of the peace under King George the Third, and James Winchell also from Connecticut. Winchell chose to live in the wilds of the mountain area which

now bears his name where he built a dwelling on the highway from Salisbury to Rhinebeck. He was known as one of the principal supporters of the cause of liberty.

The importance of roads as an economic necessity was recognized as early as 1703 in the province of New York with an act passed by the General Assembly for laying out of highways throughout the province. In 1761 Caleb Smith was appointed a commissioner charged with laying out highways in the North East Precinct, and in 1776 the first division of the precinct into highway districts was made. Ancient records list twenty-six such divisions designating the highways in such manner as "Begins at the house of Peter Knickerbocker and continuing south to Rhinebeck road" or "Beginning at the house of Charles Dolph, south to the Precinct Line, the cross road by Simon Dakin to the Oblong line." There is no doubt that some of these so-called highways were no more than paths or trails through the woods but the records, with their mention of property owners or renters and an occasional reference to taverns, mills and a meeting house, help to flesh out our impressions of those early days.

In 1784 the legislature passed an act providing "for the better laying out, regulating and keeping in repair, all common and public highways and private roads" in seven counties of which Dutchess was one. The war was over, peace had been declared and good roads were vital to commercial prosperity.

1788 is celebrated as a year of momentous accomplishment for our nation and indeed for the whole world, but for the old North East Precinct it was a year of looking forward to great events to come, though in a smaller sphere. The coming decade would find seventeen district schools established, encouraged by an act of the State Legislature and the provision of a school fund, of which North East's share was 154 pounds, one shilling, to be augmented by a local tax. Those same ten years would find a public library, a law office, a dozen dwellings, a tavern and at least two stores in the central hamlet "on the plains." Other indications of progress were scattered throughout the area and the separation into three distinct towns had by then become inevitable.

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State of the Town in 1788— Pawling

Myrna Feron

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The law passed on March 7, 1788 by the New York State Legislature changing Pawling from a precinct to a town was basically a change in political distinction. However, other changes were taking place within the town, some of them more slowly than in other areas of the county.

The boundaries of the town included the present day towns of Pawling and Dover. The separation between the towns occurred in 1807.

Geographical features of Pawling, with Quaker Hill to the east, West Mountain to the west and part of the Great Swamp between them, determined where the early settlers established their homes. Many small self-sufficient hamlets arose, centered around inns, stores, houses of worship and mills. These hamlets included Campbellville (Hurd's Corners), Quaker Hill, Gossetown, Woodinville, and Reynoldsville (Holmes). In Dover they were Webatuck, South Dover, Dover Plains, Dover Furnace, Chestnut Ridge, Dog Tail Corners, East Mountain and Wingdale. Other areas were known by the names of the inhabitants at intersections in the roads, such as Hoag's Corners, Toffey Corners and Akin Corners.

The first road laid out in the area roughly followed the course of Route 22 today. This major route extended from Vermont to New York City. Other roads leading north and south were Mizzentop Road through the center of the Oblong (Quaker Hill), West Dover Road and a road along the west side of Whaley Pond, following a course similar to Route 292 today. The main east-west road, reportedly established first as an Indian trail, ran from Quaker Hill along what is known as Old Route 55. A portion of this road was first proposed as a turnpike in 1818 and finally established in 1824 as the Beekman-Pawling Turnpike. This road led not to Poughkeepsie, as one might suppose, but rather to Fishkill. The hamlet of Reynoldsville was situated on the road from Patterson (Putnam County) to Fishkill. Another road led from Quaker Hill to Sherman in Connecticut. These roads, which began as horse trails, were not suitable for wagon traffic due to the number of rocks and ruts. As the 19th century began, many of the roads were improved as turnpikes. Several small connector roads have been abandoned with the passage of time.

When Pawling became a town, most families were engaged in mixed farming. They grew wheat, rye, oats, corn, flax, potatoes and apples. Herds of sheep and cattle were kept in grassy areas to be used for meat, leather and wool. Some farmers fattened cattle to be sold by the drovers. Hogs were raised for food, and what was extra was salted and taken to the river by wagon for shipment to the city. Geese were kept by every family and the down was plucked regularly to be used for beds. Butter and cheese, made by the women, were shipped either to the river or to Bridgeport or New Haven, a two day journey. Sugar and syrup were made from maple sap.

Often, farmers had a special skill in which they engaged in addition to farming, such as a cooper or butcher. Other occupations were blacksmith, tailor, shoemaker, carpenter, merchant, miller, potter, wagonmaker, saddler and harness maker, and

laborer. Wagonmakers and carpenters also made coffins when the need arose.

Many families had their own looms; the count in 1813 was 102. Wool and flax were woven either by a member of the family or by an itinerant weaver who was known to visit the area, remaining several weeks with each family.

Drovers herded cattle, mules and sheep, down what is now Route 22 to the city. Some drovers started from as far away as Vermont and brought cattle and other stock along the way. Fattening of cattle was one of the chief businesses in the area. The cattle started from Pawling on Thursday in order to reach New York by late Saturday. The trip took the better part of three days. Market Day was Monday. It is said that the farmers judged the quality of the market by the look of the stock passing through Pawling on Thursday.

Livestock was the only produce not taken to the river to reach the market. This was basically due to the terrain between Pawling and the river. From an elevation of 1,100 to 1,300 feet on Quaker Hill, drovers would have to pass through the valley and then travel over West Mountain, a trip which was too taxing for the stock.

Inns flourished along the drovers' route every few miles, giving respite to drover and livestock alike. In the town of Pawling at the turn of the century some of the inns along Route 22 were Preston's Inn, Wing's Tavern (Old Drovers Inn) in Dover and Hurd's Corners, Gideon Slocum's and Akin's Corners in Pawling. Inns in other areas of town include Brownell's Tavern, Tom Howard's Hotel and Nichol's Tavern.

The general store carried merchandise which the farmer could not produce himself. Items listed in Daniel Merritt's store included cloth, indigo, thread, cambric, pen knives, knitting needles, plaster, salt, rum, molasses, tea, apple trees, nutmeg, shad, flour, books and tobacco. Often no money changed hands at the store but rather the farmer offered goods for barter.

The population in Pawling according to the 1790 census was approximately 4,330 which was probably fairly evenly distributed between Dover and Pawling. The 1810 census shows 1,756 in Pawling and 2,146 in Dover. Forty-two slaves were included in the 1790 census. Undoubtedly, none of these lived on Quaker Hill, as the Quakers from the Oblong took action to abolish slaves in 1767 and disowned any member who retained a slave after 1778.

The population in the area decreased from 1790 to 1810. Some settlers, usually the younger families, moved north and west along the Mohawk Trail, while others traveled to Pennsylvania and further westward to make a life of their own. Among those who left was John Kane, a former precinct supervisor who took sides with the British during the Revolution and whose lands were confiscated by the newly formed government. The Commissioner of Forfeitures also confiscated the lands formerly owned by Beverly Robinson and Susannah, his wife; Roger Morris and Mary, his wife; the Philipse heirs and former British officers. A list published in the Country Journal offered the land in possession of the following for public vendue on August 20, 1788.

Nathaniel Worden, 300 acres
Abraham Sobot, 100 acres
Philip Griffith, 184 acres
Isaac Whaley, 100 acres
Solomon Denton, 150 acres
Daniel Mead, 50 acres
Widow Campbell, 50 acres

James Gordon, 200 acres
John Bruster, 100 acres
Theophilus Spencer, 70 acres
Henry Mulkins, 50 acres
John Davis, 70 acres
— Ketchum, 200 acres
Thomas Taylor, 100 acres
Elijah Morris, 40 acres
Timothy Whaley, 100 acres
Elisha Ludington, 30 acres
John White, 40 acres
Joshua Procer, 100 acres
Widow Procer, 100 acres

A number of these people must have purchased their lands as many of the names still exist in Pawling today.

This land was situated in the southern part of Pawling, including Reynoldsville, in an area known as the Gore, a territory disputed by the Beekman and Philipse heirs. An agreement had been reached in 1758 ceding this territory to Philipse.

The Anti-Rent Rebellion of 1766 was a result of the lack of clear title and the farmers' lack of ability to purchase the farms in their possession in the area of the Gore owned by the Philipse heirs.

This probably had an effect on Jonathan Akin, an Antifederalist, who was elected to the Convention of the State to consider the proposed Federal Government for the United States. The boundaries between the Beekman Patent and the Philipse Gore and the Oblong all lay within the Akin Farm. A monument not far from the site of Akin's house marks the point of these three territories. Akin, a Quaker, had a taste of what it was like to be controlled by the rich and powerful. An indication that others in the town felt the same as Akin was that he received 1732 votes as an Antifederalist, while the Federalist Candidate from Pawling, Isaac Tallman, only received 889 votes. Jonathan Akin remained true to his beliefs. At the final vote for ratification he was on of the two votes from Dutchess County against the Constitution. Akin also served in the Assembly 1788-1789 and 1791-1793.

Religion played an important role in the community. The Oblong Meeting House on Quaker Hill, built in 1764, was enlarged in 1800 adding galleries for the children. Meetings were held on First Day, Sunday and Wednesday. The meeting governed the community with a code of morals much stricter than those found in other areas of town. They frowned on the frolics held in the countryside, where there was plenty to eat and drink and a fiddler provided music for dancing. They also found the activities of the worldly people, such as wrestling and horse racing, distasteful.

The Methodists and Baptists settled on West Mountain and in Reynoldsville. The Methodist Church incorporated in 1809 and built their first church on property purchased from Ruth and Job Crawford now the southeast corner of the Dutcher Golf Course. Prior to that time, circuit riders or itinerant preachers visited, holding services in homes, barns, and school houses. The Reverend Peter Moriarity first came to the area in 1789. He was a plain, hard working man with a quick Irish wit.

The Baptists were located in the West Mountain and Whaley Lake area. Elder Henry Cary first preached in a log structure followed by Elder John Lawrence, Elder Phineas Clark, Reverend Robert Millard and Elder Nehemiah Johnson. The Johnson Meeting House was used from 1788 until 1841. In good weather, it is said, it was not

unusual to see as many as 200 people coming to the meeting house from Pawling, Patterson, Dover and Beekman. The path up the mountainside became known as the "Christian's Walk."

There is evidence that schools were distributed throughout the area, although the exact location of each is unknown. The Quakers often had classes in one room of a large home with lessons conducted for younger children by an older unmarried daughter or by a hired tutor. In 1804, an association for the establishment of a library was established on Quaker Hill.

In 1806, the first post office, Pawling, was established at Campbellville (Hurd's Corners) with Charles Hurd as its postmaster.

Such was the state of the Town of Pawling as it was established and in the years that followed.

Endnotes

1. Frederic W. Taber, *The History of the Pawling West Mountain Toll Gate*, (Historical Society of Quaker Hill and Pawling Collection, 1910).
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3. *Country Journal*, 8 July 1788. p. 2.
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The Town of Poughkeepsie: 1788

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Historian, City of Poughkeepsie

Halfway up the Hudson River with a view of the Catskill Mountains a small settlement developed into a hamlet and through the years into the community we know as Poughkeepsie. Initially settlers of the 1600's made their homes along the edges of the streams and the banks of the Hudson River.

In 1686 Robert Sanders and Mydert Harmense bought a patent of land from the Wapani Indians. The next year, Baltus Barents Van Kleeck and Jens Handrick Ostrom each leased 48 acres for ten years. This area on the Fallkill became the hamlet of Poughkeepsie. By 1720 a church had been built and a courthouse completed. In 1788 a statute of the New York Legislature designated the boundaries of the counties and towns of the State. Poughkeepsie was one of nine designated towns in Dutchess County. The designation included the hamlet.

Poughkeepsie was the smallest of the nine. It was bounded on the south and east by the Wappinger Creek, on the west by the Hudson River and the north by an east-west line approximately 2.5 miles north of the present Mid-Hudson Bridge.¹ The area was crossed by two transportation routes: the Post Road (the present Route 9) and the Filkintown Road (the present Route 44). The Post Road was the main thoroughfare between Albany and New York; Filkintown Road was the first road to eastern Dutchess County and Connecticut. (The Filkintown Road became Main Street about 1800 when it was extended to the river).

By 1788 the tiny hamlet of Poughkeepsie with its 1714 population of 445 persons including 29 slaves² had grown to more than 2000 people. (According to the Census for 1790 the town population was 2,529 people including 199 slaves). It had become an active business and recreational center for both the Town and the County.³ A County courthouse had been built to replace an earlier one. There were shops, a tavern, a hotel and a local newspaper which was the ancestor of *The Poughkeepsie Journal*.

During the Revolutionary War Poughkeepsie became the seat of the government of New York State. Although the legislature was moved to New York when the war ended, the presence of the State offices had made Poughkeepsie the site for the debate on New York State's ratification of the Constitution. It was finally ratified in the County Court House in Poughkeepsie on July 26, 1788.

In retrospect it is surprising to realize that Poughkeepsie, at the time of the Ratification Convention in 1788, had not yet even become a *village* in political terms. It did not attain that status in which it had a village board of trustees and special village ordinances until March 27, 1799. The City of Poughkeepsie, with a government entirely distinct from the Town of Poughkeepsie, was not incorporated until March 27, 1854.

Meanwhile from July 31, 1792 to April 1, 1802, Nicholas Power, Editor of the *Pough-*

keepsie Journal, was the first Postmaster. The Post Office, where the *Poughkeepsie Journal* was edited at the time, was on the North side of Main Street "not far above Van Kleeck's hat store."⁴

The Filkintown Road became Main Street about 1800 when it was extended to the River, and many early Main Street residences became business places. Market Street also had shops, small hotels and taverns. The Poughkeepsie Hotel, on the north side of Main Street, where Main Street ended, was called Baldwin's Hotel in 1803. About 1777 Stephen Hendrickson's Tavern was on the site which is now 28-34 Market Street. The Forbus House was built at this place after 1815⁵ and in 1875-76 was replaced by the Nelson House⁶ which itself closed in 1963.

In 1688 Governor Dongan, the provincial governor of New York, had given Francis Rombout and Gulian Verplanck a license to purchase 85,000 acres from the Wappinger Indians. Nine thousand acres were within the southern boundary of the Town of Poughkeepsie. Most of the remaining acreage in the Town was acquired by freeholders and squatters.

Industries and settlements grew up along the creeks and streams where water powered mills could turn out food and lumber products for export and local use. By 1788 many farms had become commercial enterprises, selling their products locally and exporting large numbers of cattle and horses and quantities of grain. The Hudson River provided access for transportation of these products.

While today the population of Poughkeepsie is composed of many different ethnic and cultural groups, in 1788 the people were of Dutch and English extraction. There were a few Indians, testified by the genealogy of some Poughkeepsie families, and, of course, African slaves and a few freed slaves. It should be noted that while the Constitution did not give the vote to freed slaves, it was in Poughkeepsie on February 22, 1788 that the first law for the manumission of slaves in New York was passed.

We look back 200 years to a flourishing community and are glad that Poughkeepsie is still flourishing, prosperous and a good place to live.

Endnotes

1. In 1788 the Town and the hamlet were one geographical area.
2. Edmund Platt, *The Eagle's History of Poughkeepsie from the Earliest Settlements, 1683 to 1905* (Platt and Platt, Poughkeepsie, 1905), p. 19.
3. The Town of Poughkeepsie Census of 1790.
4. Platt, p. 56.
5. Platt. p. 88.
6. James H. Smith, *A History of Dutchess County, New York, 1683-1882* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1882), p. 437.

Rhinebeck—A Look Backward and Forward

Elma Williamson

Member, Board of Trustees, Rhinebeck Historical Society

Development! This was as much a concern in Rhinebeck in 1788 as in 1988, but for diametrically opposed reasons. Then it was a goal to be worked for; now it seems a threat.

The census of 1790 showed a population of 3,662 in Rhinebeck which at that time included Red Hook and Staatsburg. Five hundred fourteen households spread over a large territory, which was described by an innkeeper to the Marquis de Chastelux in 1780 as “uncommonly fruitful,” left great expanses of desirable open space.

“Ribbon Development” was not then a blight but a necessity. The inhabitants lived scattered along a lifeline of roads, some of them mere tracks impassable for long periods. Paramount was the Albany Post Road running parallel to the Hudson a mile or so inland. Intersecting this were the roads running inland from the landings on the Hudson through which passed most of the commercial and passenger traffic, one from Kip’s Ferry (present Rhinecliff) along the Sepasco Trail through the Flatts to Sharon, Connecticut and one from Schultz’s Landing (now vanished) via the Hook Road to Old Rhinebeck and by Pilgrim’s Progress to Schuyler’s Mill and beyond. Other connecting roads or tracks led to the Palatine settlement at Wurtemburgh and to Dover through Clinton, the route over which tenants on the Beekman Patent in lower Dutchess brought their rents in grain to the home office, and another to the mills on the lower Landsman’s Kill. The River Road ran north from Kip’s Ferry to the Livingston house at Clermont between the Post Road and the Hudson and there were a few other shorter connecting roads.

By 1788 the Flatts was ready for expansion. The country was recovering from the upheaval of the Revolutionary War. The struggle in Poughkeepsie between Federalists and Clintonians at the Constitutional Convention did not impinge greatly on the daily lives of the majority of the inhabitants, although in the Dutch Reformed church Dominie Romeyn baptised the infant Thomas Jefferson Smith as John Adams Smith to the consternation of his parents. Most people were thinking of getting on with making a living.

In 1785 an act of legislature had granted an exclusive right to operate a stage on the east side of the Hudson River to two men from New York and Albany and Isaac Van Wyck of Fishkill, to run at least once a week. By 1802 the *New York Post* was advertising daily departures with lodging at Peekskill and Rhinebeck and arrival at Albany on the third day. By 1792 a map had been drawn with a plan laid out for village lots in the orderly grid patterns that still distinguishes Rhinebeck village from other river communities.

Where the Sepasco Trail had met the Post Road it “made the corner,” a jog right along the Post Road before continuing east on what is now South Street. In 1801 this was eliminated by the cutting through of East Market Street to the church lands at Mulberry Street, then beyond through those lands to rejoin the Trail. This route became the Ulster-Salisbury Turnpike in 1802.

Throughout the nineteenth century the town, around its village nucleus, made steady growth. Spafford's *Gazetteer of the State of New York* of 1824 listed a population of 2,729 with 106 engaged in manufactures and 26 in commerce. The Reverend Timothy Dwight of Yale travelled through the County at this time and reported that Rhinebeck "was everywhere filled up with plantations" and that "the inhabitants appear to be in easy circumstances." 1834 saw the incorporation of the village, which later pridefully described itself as "the parlor village of Dutchess County." The proprietors of these small manufactures and commercial ventures built comfortable and handsome houses in the vernacular styles—Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Hudson River Bracketed, Italianate, Queen Anne, as also did the prosperous farmers.

In the twentieth century, after the hiatus of the Depression and the Second World War, another era of expansion arrived but at a much accelerated pace. Large scale industry moved into the County, led by International Business Machines. The people of Rhinebeck were shocked at the effects of uncontrolled development in southern Dutchess and tried to ensure that the tide of development would be directed into acceptable channels. They resolved to try to keep a vital village center, preserve their architectural heritage and open country from commercial sprawl without stifling development.

This is a continuing process, with no end in sight, but Rhinebeck has had many successes, from the efforts of private individuals as well as organizations and public bodies. The town was surveyed and established as a Multi-Resource Area under the aegis of the Rhinebeck Historical Society and the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation. Houses and sites in both village and town were listed on the State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. The town has taken over the former ferry landing in Rhinecliff to provide public access to the Hudson River. Mrs. Vincent Astor donated part of the Astor estate for the establishment of Ferncliff Forest. Local efforts are preserving and restoring the Quitman House, parsonage of the German Lutheran (Stone) Church, and birthplace of General Quitman, a hero of the Mexican War. Wilderstein, a Queen Anne house overlooking the Hudson with interior and furnishings by J. B. Tiffany and set in a landscape designed by the noted landscape architect Calvert Vaux, was given by Margaret Suckley, granddaughter of the builder, to the non-profit Wilderstein Preservation whose members are maintaining the fabric of the house and restoring the grounds. Still under negotiation is the plan for the former Astor estate, the largest single block of property in the town, to balance intensive development and open space. New and unforeseen problems will continue to arise, but the people of Rhinebeck are prepared to meet them. They intend to see that when the Tercentennial of the Constitutional Convention is celebrated Rhinebeck will still maintain much of its special quality and flavor.

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Town of Washington

Carmine di Arpino

Historian, Town of Washington

In 1788 the Town of Washington was a collection of hamlets seemingly scattered at random over the landscape, interspersed with farms quite recently wrested from the wilderness. However, the locations of these settlements were not as haphazard as it seemed but had been determined by the nature of the terrain and the available approaches to it. The future town was originally a wilderness on the heights. Its eastern end was a wall of very steep hills rising out of the Harlem Valley. The wall was broken by an occasional cut or cleft almost as steep as the hills themselves. In each of them a stream flowed, or tumbled, down toward the valley. Later some of these gaps would be called by such names as Deep Hollow and Butts Hollow. Of course there were no roads, only animal trails shared by Indians who hunted the area.

The ascent to the top was far more formidable than we can possibly imagine looking back from the 20th century. Can we, for example, appreciate the problem of getting ox carts or horse drawn wagons to the top? The approach from the west would certainly be easier. But here the prospective settlers tended to choose the lands closest to the river first. The arrival of the first settlers was facilitated by two events: the subdivision of the lands of the Nine Partners Patent (1734-1741) and the laying out of a road from Dover to Poughkeepsie, which occurred at about the same time.

The first arrivals were nearly all children of the Protestant Reformation. They came from other parts of the English colonies rather than directly from Europe. The largest number were Friends, more familiarly known as Quakers. They came from inland New England, from Nantucket, Long Island and coastal areas between the two, and from Westchester. Most of them came overland passing through the Oblong settlements, or up the Harlem Valley from the south. They made their way up the steep hills. All wagons used the crude road; some undoubtedly made the trip on foot along the same road or by the trail in the "Butts Hollow" cleft. They settled at the eastern end of the first open valley. I would venture a guess that they were the ones who named the place "Little Rest." Others moved on over the crest of the hill and started a settlement on its western slope. This became the locus of the Nine Partners Meeting.

Another wave came from the Hudson River and settled on the western edge of the first level valley they came to. They called the little settlement "Pittsberry." These were a mixed lot, religiously speaking, of Presbyterians, Dutch and German Reformed, and a sprinkling of Friends. Those with a preference for farm moved on eastward—north and south. Some of those who spread out into the Canoe Hills soon discovered the gorge through which flowed the east branch of the Wappingers Creek. They were quick to see the potential water power and settled there. This was the beginning of the future Hartsville or Harts Village.

The migration continued in a northeasterly direction and another hamlet came into being about two miles beyond Harts Village—the Mabbetsville of our own day.

The northeastern area of the future town was settled by people who came through, and from, the Amenia and Wassaic area. They were mostly Anglican and Separatists. Some came up the "Deep Hollow" cleft and settled on the open and rolling land at the top of it. Their settlement straddled the rough road which wound its way up the

hill from Amenia and reached out a few miles to the southeast from the top of it. This was the road by which the carts and wagons of the settlers reached the area. Some of the Separatists scattered into the hills to the north and west.

By 1788 most of the wilderness had been tamed. Nearly all of the countryside had been transformed into farms. It was also criss-crossed by roads, although some of them were little more than widened trails, parts of which became impassable muddy messes in the spring. The population had grown dramatically and this was especially true in the Quaker areas. Here many had arrived just before and during the War of the Revolution in order to avoid being involved in the fighting. They had come from the coastal areas, especially from Nantucket where their lives had been disrupted by the conflict.

The hamlets had also undergone considerable change. Pittsberry was now Washington Hollow. Much had happened in its first half century of existence. The first generation settlers had built the Pittsberry Presbyterian Church. The members of the congregation had come from all parts of the surrounding country. There were no town lines then. Some interesting names can be gleaned from the list of "pew owners" of 1769: Isaac Platt, Wilmot Oakley, Frederick Ham, Samuel and Melancthon Smith, and Zacharias Fleglear, among others. Within a few years after that date they had lost many of their number to the newer church in the more centrally located emerging village of Pleasant Valley. In 1777 the church sustained some damage in the course of a clash between insurgent Loyalists and Patriot troops. Repairs were undertaken by the Pleasant Valley church which now retained the Washington Hollow one as an adjunct.

The community was strategically located to serve as a service center for the surrounding area and continued to thrive as such. It was located at the point where the road from Dover forked into the one that wound its way in a northwesterly direction to join the one from Rhinecliff to Thompson's Pond and the one that meandered southwestward to Poughkeepsie.

A short distance to the east along the Dover Road another road branched off and, following a northeasterly course, passed through the growing hamlet now definitely known as Harts Village. The most prominent member of the community was now Philip Hart who had arrived on the scene in 1767. Some members of his family had been among the original settlers and had built the first grist mill on the stream. In 1774 Philip, at the age of 25, had married the 15-year-old Susan Akin, daughter of austere Quakers. He had taken over the old family mill and was now in the process of enlarging it. In 1788 he was well on the way to become a large property owner and industrialist. Harts Village itself was on the verge of becoming an important industrial area. It already had two grist mills, saw mill, blacksmith and wagonmaker shops, all of which were intimations of what was to be.

A short road connected Harts Village to a tiny community to its south astride the Dover Road. It was then called "Crossroads," but in the not too distant future it would become known as "Four Corners."

Farther east along that same Dover Road was the old Quaker community. It had grown in size and importance. To the Friends it would always be the Nine Partners Meeting. But it was also becoming known as "Mechanic." A persistent but undocumented account maintains that it was so named because of the many establishments of a mechanical nature that were located there. Many travelers and wagon drivers referred to the place as "Mabbett's", by which they meant their favorite stopping place, a combination tavern and inn operated by Samuel Mabbett.

Sam Mabbett was easily the most colorful and notorious character of the area. He was said to dispose of enormous quantities of rum in his establishment; undoubtedly the amount reported by rumor was far in excess of what he actually sold. He was also said to be a staunch Loyalist. Tales are still told about how clever he was at avoiding the Patriot search parties. All of these stories are difficult to believe considering how visible he must have been behind his bar. Here again his reputation may have been larger than is warranted by facts. In 1778 he and his son Joseph were included in a list of 14 individuals under sentence of banishment. But apparently the sentence was never carried out for after the Revolution they were still there. He eventually left the area, probably upon retirement, and Joseph continued to operate the family business.

A more important and enduring role in the history of the area was played by the Friends. In 1780 a brick edifice was built on their log meeting house and is now an historical landmark. The log meeting house had been destroyed by fire in 1778 and now, in 1788, they were already planning a far more important and ambitious project. There were no schools in the area at that time. Children had been taught, more or less, by the religious bodies that were in the area and by parents. Those who could afford it provided tutors for their children and then sent them away to school. Now the Friends were discussing the possibility of founding a boarding school. The men involved were Isaac Thorne, Tripp Mosher, Joseph Talcott, and a frequent visitor to the area, Elias Hicks. The last named was destined to split the Society of Friends into Hicksites and Orthodox within the next generation. Their plans did not bear fruit until 1796 when they opened the first co-educational boarding school in America, the Nine Partners Boarding School. In 1788 the Nine Partners Meeting House and the Pittsberry Church were the only houses of worship in the area.

At this time William and Isaac Thorne, sons of Isaac and Hannah Thorne who had been among the first settlers of the area, were operating a store at Mechanic. Isaac was a large land owner as well. In 1787 William, taking advantage of the revised land tenure laws, acquired 400 acres of land. This property would eventually become the nucleus of the Thorndale estate.

Less than a mile to the east of Mechanic the slightly older hamlet of Little Rest was still alive and well although it was being increasingly overshadowed by its neighbor to the west. It had grown in size since its founding. It continued to function as a service center for its area. It had a mill, store, blacksmith shop, and tavern.

A mile and a half north of Little Rest, reached by a crossroad, was the farthest settlement that had been planted by the settlers from the Hudson area. In 1788 it was not yet known by its present name of Mabbetsville. It was still known as "Filkinstown." The name actually included a larger area than the hamlet itself. This was the lot that had originally fallen to Henry Filkin, one of the original Nine Partners. As late as the end of the 19th century properties in the area were still said to be north or south of the Filkin town line.

In the 1740's this community had found its way into the history of the area in connection with events involving the Moravian mission to Indians at Shekomeko. This Indian village was located about two and a half miles south of Pine Plains and is not to be confused with the present village of that name. Missionaries and Indians had been accused of having a cache of weapons in preparation to side with the French in the French and Indian wars. Frances Hageman, justice of the peace at Filkinstown, was ordered to investigate. He found the accusation to be groundless. Later the missionaries were ordered to appear in his court at Filkinstown and again were found

to be innocent. All accounts of the affair refer to the place as Filkinstown. A recent author of an extensive history of the mission even confuses it with Little Rest.

Some old writers using the present name as a point of departure, and uniting it with the old travelers' reference to "Mabbett's", merge this community and Mechanic into one. James Mabbett, whose name the place would eventually bear, did not become a prominent resident of the area until the 19th century.

Filkin Town Road, which began at Main Street in the Village of Poughkeepsie, ended here. A continuation of the road, which now connected it with the one from Amenia, was not yet officially named. Undoubtedly the people of the time referred to it as the "Amenia Road."

The oldest estate in the area was located on this road in the northeastern corner of the future town. The house was built in 1760 as a "county seat" (country residence) by David Johnstone, a grandson of David Jamison, one of the original Nine Partners. Johnstone had inherited the property through his mother, Jamison's daughter. The size of the original tract has been exaggerated beyond belief by writers whose imagination is greater than their historical discipline. The present size of the estate is about 750 acres. The house, which is now an historical landmark, was unique in style and construction for the time and place. It boasts twelve foot high ceilings on the main floor and a triple pitched gambrel roof, among other things. Of course there were barns and other outbuildings as well as a tenant house. According to the first United States census (1790) Johnstone owned 14 slaves. Johnstone named his estate Lithgow, an abbreviated form of a place in Scotland, home of his ancestors, called Linlithgow. By 1788 the name had been extended to the hamlet a short distance west of the estate. Lithgow had also grown in size since its founding. Like all others it served as a service center for the surrounding area, perhaps more so due to its distance from the others.

As we have already indicated, not all of the people of the area lived in the hamlets. Indeed at least as many, if not more, lived on farms in intervening country. In the Colonial period many of them had been leaseholders. Now the legislature of the State of New York had changed the land tenure laws. All medieval remnants had been eliminated and provision had been made for tenants to buy the land. In addition, confiscated Loyalist lands had been placed on sale. It is true that many of these fell into the hands of speculators but many who had been tenant farmers were now independent owners. Lists of names of these people are not easy to come by. Even the census of 1790 is no help since it included Stanford.

Such was the status of the area on March 6, 1788. On March 7, the State legislature enacted the Township Act and the towns were born. The town lines were arbitrarily drawn on a map by state surveyors. A glance at the county map will reveal that the boundaries are all straight lines, ignoring all natural features. Indeed the lines cut across individual properties and hamlets alike.

Thus it came to pass that most of Washington Hollow found itself in what was then Clinton and later became Pleasant Valley. The northeastern corner of Washington dips into Clinton Corners and its southeastern one into Dover Plains.

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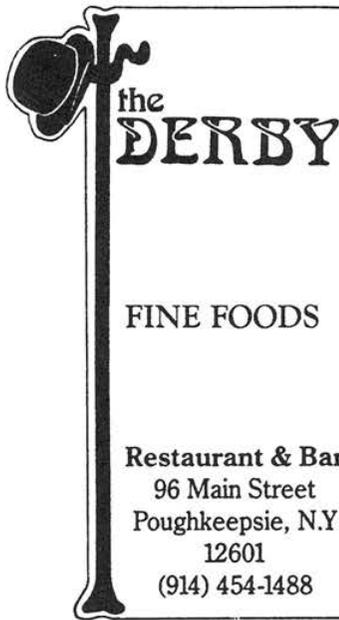
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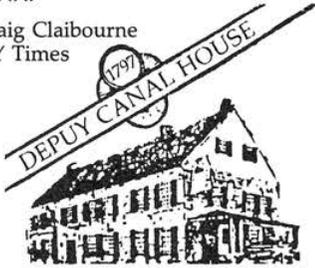
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