

Nottingham's Burnt Orchard and the Henry Brodhead House

550 North Marbletown Road

Ferris Cook and Ken Krabbenhoft owners

1702-1716: HOMESTEAD AND FRAME HOUSE

1702. William Nottingham Jr. (1670-1731) of Kingston marries Margaret Rutsen (1680-after 1731) and begins acquiring land along the Esopus Creek in Marbletown. By 1716 he has built a house which survives in beams reused in the existing stone house on the property, known as the Burnt Orchard.

1731. Nottingham dies, willing the Burnt Orchard to his eldest son, Stephen Nottingham (1708-1778), with his wife Margaret as executor of the estate. She probably remains on the homestead until her death (year unknown).

1734. Stephen, now a resident of Marbletown, marries his half cousin Neltje (Nellie) Brodhead (1710-1790).

1742-1776. Stephen farms the Burnt Orchard, becomes a miller, buys slaves, and serves as Captain of the Marbletown militia. He makes out his will in 1776.

1778. Stephen dies. Neltje is sole heir to the estate, as they are childless. Henry Brodhead (1752-1820), a blacksmith who is a blood nephew of both Stephen and Neltje, is named administrator.

1783. The Revolutionary War ends, and building in Marbletown quickly picks up.

1784-present: STONE HOUSE

1784. Neltje Nottingham conveys the Burnt Orchard to her nephew Henry. Dendrochronology, structural evidence, and archeology all point to this year as the latest plausible date for construction of the existing house, presumably built by Henry for his family and Neltje.

1784-1786. Henry moves across the Esopus Creek to Lamontville, where he builds a mill and a house. Neltje probably goes with him or moves in with other relatives. She dies in 1790, the last person named Nottingham to live on the Burnt Orchard.

Ca. 1786. Johannes Andries Dewitt (1758-1836), son of Andries Dewitt of Lomontville, acquires the house and moves in with his wife Rachel Wemple (1761-1807) and the first two of their eleven children. He begins building a new house several hundred years north of the Burnt Orchard and moves there in 1791.

1790-1810. The house is given a Federal makeover, including addition of a fireplace and chimney to the north parlor. The 1798 Federal Tax Survey describes the house as "very old and bad", a reference perhaps to the state of the outbuildings and the original slant-roof kitchen shack (replaced in 1853). Their condition could be proof of temporary abandonment or renting the house to lodgers.

1833. Johannes writes his will, leaving the property to his eldest son Andries Dewitt (1782-1858), who married Maria Roosa (1787-1871) in 1816. Johannes dies in 1836, and Andries becomes the owner of the Burnt Orchard.

1853-present: FRAME KITCHEN

In 1852 Andries deeds the property to his son John Dewitt (1823-1907), who married Jennet Roosa (1826-1872) in 1845. A year later John builds the new kitchen wing with fireplace and beehive oven. Greek revival soffits, the brick smokehouse, and a post-and-beam carriage house probably date from this time as well. Andries dies in 1858.

1901. On June 18, John sells the Burnt Orchard to Sarah M. Lefevre De Witt (1854-1937), wife of his son Andris, for \$1.00. Andris is presumably ill; he dies on February 22, 1902. John also outlives Jennet (mother of Andris and a daughter named Andria) and Kate C. Hendricks (mother of his two other children, both girls). He dies in 1907.

1910. Sarah, the last Dewitt to own the Burnt Orchard, sells the property to Jesse Dubois of Marbletown. Within three minutes Dubois sells it to Herman and Jennie Bush (both born in 1879?) of Marbletown. Plumbing and central heating are installed.

1929. Herman and Jennie Bush sell the property to Nellie K. Rowland (1899-1999) of Kingston. Nellie knocks down most of the central hallway, replaces the hallway stairs, covers original plaster with sheetrock, lays strip flooring on the ground floor, enlarges the porch, and replaces the plank floor in the cellar with poured concrete.

1978. Nellie sells the property to Norma Roth (1922- 2008) of New York City, who replaces the roof but lacks the means to deal with ground floor boards and beams destroyed by termites, and a failing section of the south stone wall.

2010. The estate of Norma Roth sells the property to Ken Krabbenhoft and Ferris Cook of High Falls. They undertake an intensive three-year project of structural repair and restoration of the house to its ca. 1784 appearance while retaining such nineteenth-century features as the Greek revival roof elements.

2012. The carriage house is consumed in a fire of unknown origin. It is the last remaining wooden outbuilding on the property, the other barns, cribs, sheds, and sties having disappeared by 1978.

The Andries DeWitt House (1753 with later additions),

2323 Hurley Mountain Road.

Peter del Rio and Elaine Young owners

The Andries DeWitt Farm was established in 1698, when Andries (b. 1657) was deeded the property by his father Tjerck Claessen DeWitt. Andries is thought to have lived on the farm for a short time before returning to Kingston in 1708. According to court records, it was there that, on July 22, 1710, he “departed this life in a sorrowful way; through the breaking of two sleepers [beams] he was pressed down and very much bruised; he spoke a few words and died.”

The farm Andries lived on in the closing decades of the 17th century would have had a wood frame house that, like all similar structures in Marbletown, has not survived, although materials from that house may have been incorporated into the existing stone house, including a beam in the hallway of the center room. This, the oldest part of the house, dates to 1753, the year Andries’s grandson, also named Andries (b. 1728), married Blandina Ten Eyck and settled on the property.

The house expanded first to the south with the addition of the present-day dining room. According to Helen Wilkinson Reynolds in *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776*, the building then consisted of “two rooms, two chimneys, a door to the west and a half-story attic.” The south room had “a chimney, and like the first part [...] an entrance door to the west side.” In 1800 the third and final section was built on the north end, as attested by a stone that disappeared from view during subsequent renovation.

Changes to the interior and the porch on the east side of the house probably date to 1800 as well. In 1935 several dormers were added during extensive remodeling. The sunroom dates to the 1960s; two original windows were enlarged to provide it with doorways. Note that the three stones with ‘1698’ carved in them and set into the east and west exterior walls refer not to the date of the stone house but of the farm.

The most famous event in the early history of the house was the role it played in July 1779, when its then remote location made it an ideal place to store gunpowder and a month’s rations for six hundred men of the Continental Army.

Following Andries’s death in 1813, the farm was inherited by his son Johannes (John) A. DeWitt (1758-1836), who lived in the first house on today’s tour (the John Broadhead House) while a larger Federal structure was raised for him and his family a little ways up the road. Finished in 1791, it recently survived a fire that destroyed much of the roof.

The Hurley Mountain Road farm remained in the possession of Andries DeWitt’s descendants until the early twentieth century. The first non-DeWitt owner was John G. Van Elten of Kingston, in 1925. In the 1950s a Wall Street financier bought the property and sold off the arable land to John Gill.

Davis Tavern (1726)

2904 Route 209

Host Vince Guido

Although various sources have claimed that the ‘Widow Davis Tavern’ was built in the 1680s, the 1798 Federal Tax Assessment of Marbletown describes the Tavern as seventy two years old, i.e. built in 1726.

According to local researcher Darryl Brittain, the 1680s date reflects a long-standing belief in Marbletown that the building belonged to Jannetje Maurits Davis, the widow of Isaac Davis (1661-1712), a son of the infamous Kit Davis (1615-1680) and his second wife Maria Martensen, and that town meetings were held here until the 1740s (according to some) or 1813 (according to others). Local researchers have pointed out, however, that town records say the meetings were held at Widow Davis’s house, which may or may not have been a tavern as well.

Brittain determined that the building stands on a parcel of the land granted to George Hall, sheriff of Kingston, in 1676. The parcel passed through Hall’s daughter Mary to her husband John Cock, who sold it to Daniel Brodhead (possibly ‘Captain’ D. Brodhead 1693-1755) at some time prior to 1730—an indication that Brodhead himself may have built the existing house.

Brittain suggests that the building passed from Brodhead to Isaac Davis’s son Christopher (1707-1778), who married Elizabeth Broadhead in 1739. Elizabeth outlived her husband by fourteen years, dying in 1792 (another widow in a tavern?). In his 1778 will Christopher left all of his land “on both sides of the Esopus Kill or River with buildings thereon” to his son John Broadhead Davis (b. 1754), a tapster. At some time between 1792 and 1797, John B. Davis apparently deeded the Tavern to one Isaac Davis, possibly or presumably his brother (b. 1741).

I haven’t been able to research the history of the house beyond this, though locals remember when part of the front wall was torn down to turn the place into a garage. The wall was restored by previous owners, and still others removed the stairs and other original elements. From 2006 until a few months ago it stood unoccupied and untended while ownership and liability were being decided in court.

Those interested in the issues and personalities involved are referred to Hugh Reynold’s article “Seizure of Stone Ridge home for taxes sets off million-dollar mystery” (Hudson Valley Times, August 6, 2009).

Current owner Vince Guido has put the house on the market and hopes to find an owner who will preserve this early example of Hudson Valley vernacular architecture.

Ken Krabbenhoft