

# **The Streeter Centennial Hike**

Berlin, NY

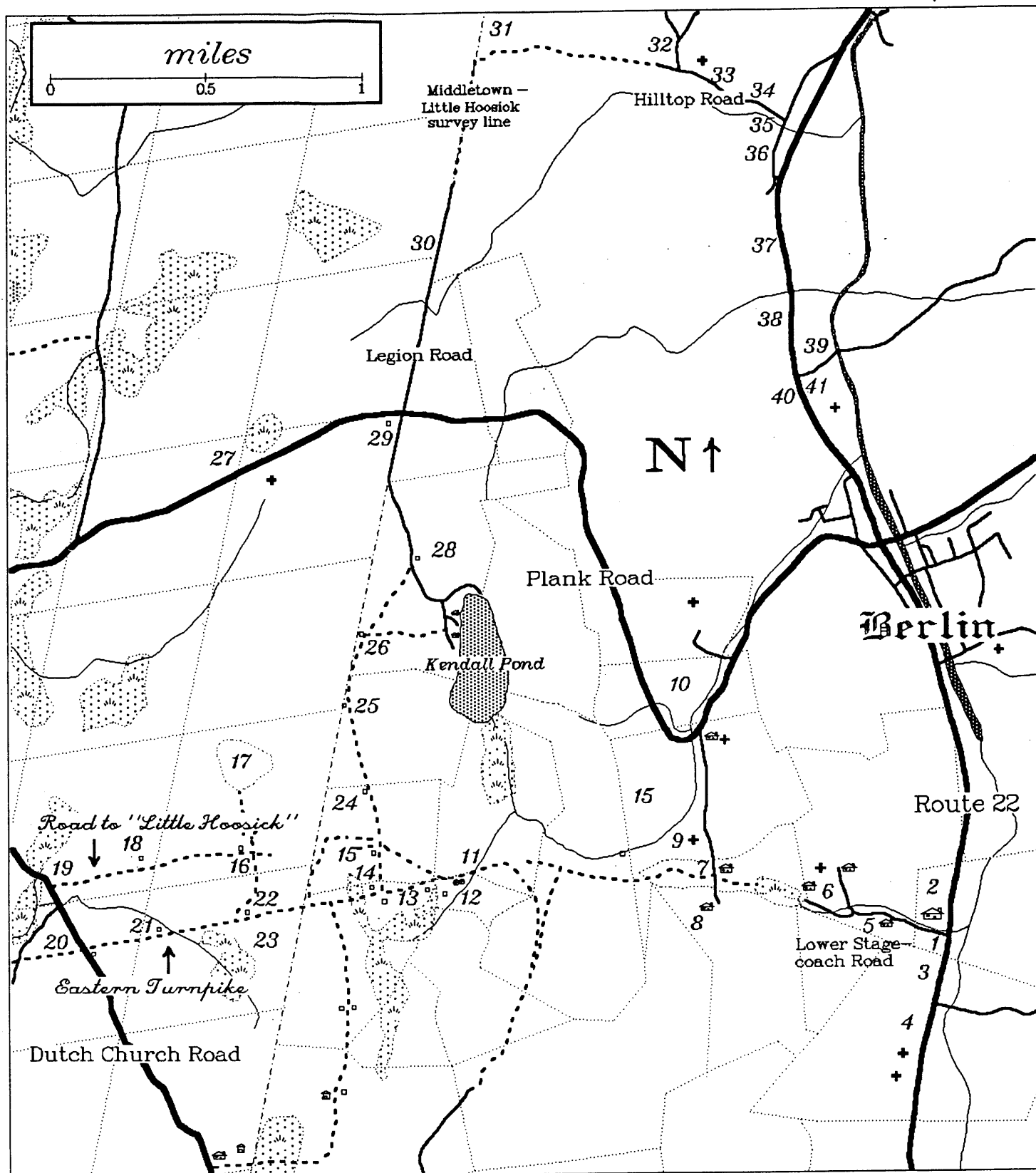
May 2—21, 1995

Taconic Valley Historical Society

Taconic Hiking Club

Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy

Much of this hike occurred on private land through landowner's permission, please respect private landowners and do not trespass without permission.



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# *The Streeter Centennial Hike*

## Commentary

1. We begin our "Wanderings in Rensselaer" by Samuel S. Streeter near the terminus of the Road to Little Hoosick shown on the 1767 "Bleecker" map running from the Patroons' Mills in Bath (Rensselaer) to the farm of Captain Peter Siemon (Simmons) who was the chief farm master of Rensselaerswyck. Siemon settled in Little Hoosick (Berlin) between 1754-1757 and Petersburg was named in his honor. As this is the oldest road known, it was probably the one to which Edward T. Heald referred in his 1926 book, *Taconic Trails*. He states that "before the days of the stage coach it is said that this was a military highway, and that General Washington followed this route on his way to Cambridge to take command of the Revolutionary Army."
2. By 1790 when John A. Van Alen surveyed Little Hoosick for the Patroon, Stephen Van Rensselaer, The Sedgwick Inn was thought to be the home of John Barber Babcock who came to Little Hoosick in 1775. Later the farm was sold to Peter Wyckoff and in 1920 to Maurice Whitney who opened it later as the Ranch Tavern. Local produce, maple syrup, eggs, and poultry were featured on the menu and coffee beans arrived from New York City in 50 pound sacks via the Rutland Railroad. Then in 1956-1959 Rose and George Sedgwick continued the tradition of fine dining and in the 1980s Edith and Robert Evans reopened the Tavern and renamed it the Sedgwick Inn.
3. Beers' 1876 county *Atlas* shows the Cheese Box Factory just south of the Lower Stage Road. It probably supplied boxes for the Cheese Factory which was north of the Southeast Hollow Road on the east bank of the Little Hoosick River and to one located in Cherry Plain. The house south of here is the current home of Cheryl and David Sicko. They are the first residents to actually own the house as it was built for and used for years by tenants of the Dennison family. The original north-south road (predecessor of Route 22) passed between the Sickos and the Stephens, the next place south.
4. Peter Siemon lived on this property in a log cabin and Jonas, his son and a Loyalist who moved to "Holland Purchase," deeded this farm to Jonathan Dennison in 1809. In 1815 Dennison built the original part of this house. His

twin sons, David and Jonathan, Jr. lived there until 1890 when it passed to Milford and Sara Maria (Wyckoff) Streeter. Milford was a son of Samuel S. and Rhoda (Dennison) Streeter. Eleanor (Whitney) and James Fosburg lived there from 1917-1936 when it was sold to Tom Green who named the place Green Pastures. In 1957 Jean and Donald Stephens rented, then purchased, and still occupy this historic home.

5. Although Streeter did not mention this red house in his letter, it was surely here as the main part dates back to the 1790s and is located on the John Barber Babcock Farm. It is currently owned by Cindy and Frank Raphael.

6. This house site belonged to Langford Weaver who is buried nearby. Neal Allen, retired History Professor at Union College, renovated the house and built the current one to the east which is now owned by William Waterman.

7. An 1860 county map shows an S.S. Streeter living on the site now occupied by Patrick Madden. The current house was built by Dori and Edgar Curtis, former conductor of the Albany Symphony Orchestra and Dean of the School of Fine Arts at Union College, who built his studio east of the house.

The three corners is where the Eastern Turnpike turned north then east across the crest of the Taconic Range via the Berlin Pass and proceeded down Bee Hill Road into Williamstown, Massachusetts. The Eastern Turnpike was incorporated in 1799 and was completed in 1804. It was a link in the Albany-Boston Post Road.

8. The house just west of here belonged to Daniel Rhodes and is now owned by the Eberharts. In a 1889 letter in the possession of Hilda Fryer from "Lib" (Goodermote) Miller, written to the folks at home, she wondered "Can you drive up with a wagon up Rhodes' Hill to the Mountain?" She also adds she would not live on that mountain even if they gave it to her.

9. Richard Boon is buried in a small family cemetery west of Old Post Road on his farm. None of his buildings remain.

10. Simon Wood lived near the big bend on Plank Road and is buried nearby.

11. Both the Road to Little Hoosick and the Eastern Turnpike pass over Cross Brook, named for the first land owner, William Cross, over the Stone Bridge. Eastward along the brook was Cross's grist mill. In the mid 1980s Jack Sweeney rebuilt the road for W.J. Cowee, Inc. and reinforced the bridge with a steel culvert to handle the weight of logging trucks. A hand dug ditch extended from this brook, now known as the Hammond Brook, to feed Kendall Pond. In 1908 another hand-dug trench was made for a pipe from Kendall Pond to supply water to a powerhouse on Plank Road to supply electricity to Berlin.

12. Samuel S. Streeter's father, Barzaleel Streeter, laid up this wall in 1814. At that time he could lay up 4 rods (66 feet) per day for \$1.00 pay including board. (see page 13 of the Streeter Reminiscences)

13. In 1820 Barzaleel Streeter moved his family of four children and his wife, Olive (Weaver) Streeter, to a house he built on the Hammond Property on the mountain. From here he moved into the gambrel-roofed house south of Berlin where his last two children were born. During 1830 Barzaleel Streeter again moved his family into the old Washington Hotel owned by Dr. Burton Hammond which he later purchased. (see page 14 of the Streeter reminiscences) In 1854 he was given a license to sell "strong and spirituous liquors and wines". He registered an earmark with the Town Clerk for use on his livestock, namely a fork in the right ear and crop and hole in the left.

14. In 1822 Sanford Wheeler bought property originally leased to Elisha Oviatt and tavern licenses were granted to him in 1818, 1819, 1822, 1825 and 1845 for \$5.00 per year. In 1830 a \$5.00 license allowed him to also keep a grocery and dry good store. It later passed to Coonradt Cushine (Kirkheim) and is known today as the Cushine Place. The barn foundation across the turnpike is larger than most barn foundations we have encountered.

15. Moses Hendrick, nicknamed "the old Dutchman", was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. He died on April 18, 1848 of the "flue" at the age of 92 and is buried in the old Rhodes Cemetery on Old Post Road.

16. Anthony Eymer leased Middletown lot 112 in 1794 for the rent of 9 ½

bushels of wheat per year. It was willed to his son, David, in 1827 who sold it to John Reeve in 1830 for \$600. John Reeve was the first supervisor of Berlin in 1806 and founder of the Washington Library in 1820. The Hoosick Road went through this lot. The Eymer earmark was a slit and diagonal crop on the right ear. Note the carefully laid up stones around the well behind the cellar hole.

17. Cornelius Wilsey was mentioned briefly on a deed but nothing further was found out about him except that he is buried in the old Rhodes Cemetery. The meadow north of the Eymer Farm was referred to as the Wilsey Lot. It may be the same as the open area known today as the Seiring (or "Siren") Meadow used by Ted and Tommy Cowee for hunting. His stone hunting blind is still visible in the center of the meadow. Polly Ann (Miller) and George Seiring came to the mountain circa 1849 and we presume lived at the north east edge of the meadow where a cellar hole was located. The Seirings raised a family consisting of four or five daughters.

18. Middletown Lot #111, containing 149 acres, was first leased to Elijah Trumbull for 9 bushels of wheat per year. When Job Gilbert surveyed Middletown in 1788 Trumbull was already living on the property. It was to this place in 1805 that the Streeter Family came. (see pages 7-8 of the Streeter Reminiscences) By 1845 Barzaleel Streeter bought out his father's lease and his first four of their twelve children were born here.

19. The Letson (or Lutson) Road is now named Dutch Church Road for the Evangelical "Deutsch" Reform Church, established in 1862 for the German Community of West Berlin. From fragments translated from early letters, it appears that the Germans were recruited by the Glass Factory at Glass Lake to produce charcoal for their furnaces. Once the woods were cleared, they were able to purchase the land and settle the West Mountain. The first two German families were Kasper and Margareta (Gutermuth) Jordan (Yerton) and Eva (Miller) and Valentine Gutermuth (Goodermote) who arrived in 1834 from Dahlherda, Germany. They were soon followed by others until about 100 families lived on the West Mountain with their own church, school and post office. The school was first built southwest of the Eastern Turnpike but was moved in 1859 to the junction of Taborton Road and Dutch Church Road to be more convenient to more students. The church was built across the road next to the cemetery. The cemetery and a stone marker commemorating the first settlers are all that remain. We haven't yet identified the location of the post

office. In the 1920s and 1930s, when coal replaced charcoal, small farms could no longer sustain a family and roads were impassable in some seasons, the original settlers moved off the mountain and W. J. Cowee, Inc. and New York State purchased most of the farms which have since returned to forest.

20. The Eastern Turnpike was used by the local coalers to haul their charcoal west to the Glass Factory at Glass Lake.

21. David Bratton lived in a log house on the Eastern Turnpike which was gone by the time of Samuel Streeter's hike.

22. The Hakes family moved into this area around 1780 from Rhode Island. Rensselaer Hakes' first wife was Laney Eymer and his second was Lucinda Hendricks. He moved briefly to Illinois where his first child was born but returned to Berlin and fathered thirteen more children. The earmarks used for his livestock were as follows: in 1825, a quarter crop on the upper right ear and two half pennies on the upper and lower right ear and a slit on the left one; and in 1827, a hole in the right ear and a crop on the left. In 1851 Rensselaer Hakes was the Overseer of Road District #28 along with Sanford Wheeler and District #29 along with Cornelius Wilsey and Rufus Austin. That year he put in a total of 26 days work.

23. The Blivens lived south of the Eastern Turnpike. Round stone walls, such as those mentioned in the letter, have been sighted by loggers on this mountain but their use is a mystery. Were they charcoal kilns? Perhaps Charles Hakes found the answer when he told of the round stone wall north west of Berlin (or Macumber) Mountain where he found bits of charcoal when he was a child.

24. The school house was moved three times to its present location on Plank Road. This location is where Barzaleel Streeter went to school the second winter and completed his education in six months. It is interesting to note that he received a geography book and that a descendent, Daniel Dennison Streeter, was the first white man in Borneo and in 1912 received the Lynx Head Award from the Wilderness Club for his explorations. An account of this trip is in the files of the Berlin Free Town Library.



25. Abel Rhodes leased his 72 acre farm in 1794. He is a son of Walter Rhodes and is buried in the old Rhodes Cemetery. His farm was later known as the Bubie Lot. Louis Bubie told his daughter, Florence (Bubie) (Miller) Hill, that between this house and the Castle home there was a haunted house, where a woman lived who dressed in black and rode a white horse through the fields.

26. David Kendall leased his 160 acre farm in 1792 and today we remember him for lending his name to Kendall Pond. In the early 1900s it was Berlin's summer resort but now it is the private property of W. J. Cowee, Inc. and only two family camps remain.

27. Rufus Austin leased his 150 acre farm in 1803 for 15 bushels of wheat rent. In 1826 he rented James Green's mountain farm. An article in the *Chatham Courier* on February 13, 1895 tells of a Robert Austin and his sister Mandia (in other accounts she is named Drusilla) who settled near "Kendall's Lake." Drusilla married Roger Burchard (Birchard) and moved to Brattleboro, Vermont. Her daughter, Sophia, married a gentleman named Hayes, and became the mother of future President Rutherford B. Hayes.

28. Sterry Hewitt came to Little Hoosick from Stonington, Connecticut in 1780. A complete history of this family, whose descendants still live in the area), is in the Berlin Free Town Library. The Jones family is another early family to arrive in the Cherry Plain Hill area with the Dennisons. When William Randall Jones left the West Mountain he operated a farm on Green Hollow Road which is now owned by a Mrs. Roosevelt.

Plank Road was named for the three-inch-thick hemlock planks used in its construction circa 1830. It was called the Berlin-Poestenkill Turnpike and followed an existing road called the Old Petersburg Road. To pay for the planking, four or five toll gates were established and the money collected was used to keep the road in good repair. The small house on the junction of Old Post Road and Plank Road was reportedly an old toll house. N.B. Sylvester's 1881 County *History* lists John Rhodes, Silas Jones and Nelson Henderson as having operated taverns along this road.

29. The cellar hole of the Silas Jones Tavern is located on the south-west corner of Plank and Kendall Pond Roads. It is probably the shingle house

mentioned by Samuel S. Streeter. Silas Jones came to Little Hoosick from Rhode Island about 1780 and in 1806 registered the earmark of a half crop on the upper right and left ears.

In 1837 a road was laid out three rods wide from the north-east corner of the "Tavern House of Silas Jones" and running generally north to the Grafton Town Line. In 1843 there is a reference in the Berlin Town Road Book of its discontinuance. Legion Road followed this old road and took its name from a metal building erected around 1922 by the American Legion to be used for their clam steams. Only the stone fireplace of this building remains. The Legion did not meet here as it was too far from the village, but instead met in several other locations: above Niles Store, Odd Fellows Hall, Porter Lamphear's Undertaking Shop, Town Hall (by the Community House), the big Fire Hall and now in the old Rutland Railroad Station (the Watipi Building.)

30. W.T. Smith's place appears to refer to the current home of the Earls. It was here that Hilda Goodermote Fryer recalls visiting as a child and seeing a herd of wild boars.

31. We have not yet identified the location of the Pool farm house.

32. The Job Taylor farm is now owned by Margie and Ralph Jones, whose house is reputed to have been a stage-stop or a toll house. The Taylor cemetery is on the same side of the road and east of the farm. Members of the Niles, Saunders and Vars families are also buried here.

33. We are unable to locate the exact site of the old schoolhouse.

34. The Lodowick Saunders's house was across the road from its tenant house which is the current home of Katherine Wells.

One "freshet" occurred in August 1891 when two storms collided over the mountains and created a cloudburst and flood which caused death to James Smith, John McGann and the wife of James Taylor, and much damage to property. The cloudburst filled the brook behind Lodowick Saunders's house and destroyed the south end of the house and the north end of his grist mill or "vertical" saw mill. The dam held and caused the stream to move its course to

the north. The family who lived in the house at the time were at a camp meeting in Lebanon and when they returned home there were boulders in their living room and the back of the house was gone. Frank Dennison had better luck in the freshet when a ten-foot wall of water swept his cattle and sheep across the highway, over a stone fence and deposited them unharmed on a high hill.

35. The first Yankee settler in the howling wilderness of Little Hoosick Valley was Daniel Hull in 1770. He arrived from Connecticut by ox cart to East Stephentown where the passable road ended. They then followed an indian path on foot and twelve years later retrieved their ox cart. This was the first road connecting Berlin to Stephentown and the south. In 1765 Godfrey Brimmer settled in North Petersburg, coming in from the north.

We are not certain exactly when a road was opened through the valley that connected these two places, but by 1799 Aaron Oliver, Post Rider, advertised that his route included Petersburg, Stephentown, seemingly indicating that there was at least a path between the two, passable on horseback. He further states: "All commands in his line will be received with thanks and executed with punctuality. He returns his sincere thanks to his former customers and intends by unabated diligence to merit a continuance of their favors."

"O'er rugged hills and valleys wide,  
He never yet has failed to trudge it;  
As steady as the flowing tide,  
He hands about the *Northern Budget*."

The *Northern Budget* cost \$4.00 per year and was delivered to Petersburg and to Berlin on Friday evenings, and villagers would gather at the store of Dr. Burton Hammond to hear him read the news.

In 1801 an Act of the Legislature established a turnpike four rods wide which eventually became the current Route 22. It probably followed an existing path. As we approach the bridge over the creek on old Route 22, notice its arch. When the bridge was built in 1910, the needed gravel came from Moses's gravel bank and on every trip the workers stopped in at the Moses farm and had a "swig". Extra trips to the gravel bank resulted in a bridge constructed four feet above grade on both sides!

36. The Charles Saunders's farm is now the home of Herbert Moses and is south west of here. In 1790 Charles Saunders kept a hotel formerly owned by James Main called the "Nine Kitchens".

37. Farewell M. Cowee came to Berlin in 1844 from Westminster, Massachusetts. He was a farmer and horticulturist whose farm sustained \$1800 damage in the flood of 1891. Sometime after 1883 he became Supervisor of the town. Two of his sons, Willis Judson and Arthur Cowee, also were benefactors of the community. Arthur owned Meadowvale Farm and established a world famous gladioli business raising over 15,000 varieties. One hybrid was named "Berlinia" and was said to be "beautiful and was shell-pink in color, flecked with spots of darker shade." When in bloom, the fields attracted many visitors and one, Thomas Edison, included them in two of his movies, "The Apple Tree Girl" and "Gladioli Girl." The former was converted to a tape by Carl Fryer and is now in the Berlin Free Town Library. The second movie has never been located and is believed to have been lost in a fire at the Edison Studios.

W.J. Cowee developed, possibly with help from Pete Yerton and Willis Wyland, a machine that wound the wire around florist picks. Later they made wood turnings for Tinker Toys, Fisher Price Toys, Play School Toys and pre-fabricated doll houses that came disassembled in a green box. During World War I they produced wooden shell plugs and even Mr. Cowee's daughters, Sarah and Millicent, and his son, Clarence Harold, worked in the factory.

38. The David Crandall House is now owned by Henry Rubel and is just south of the Moses Farm. Some of the bushes of hydrangea that used to line Route 22 can be seen here.

39. The Sweets were one of the first families in Berlin. Amos Sweet built the first saw mill in the hollow east of the Christian Chapel and Thomas Sweet opened a blacksmith shop at Sweet's Corners (later known as South Berlin and Cherry Plain.) During World War I, Mrs. Emily (Blair) Henrotin thought South Berlin sounded too German and since her grandfather, Montgomery Blair, had been Postmaster General of the United States, she was able to have the name changed to Cherry Plain. On the 1767 Bleecker map the area is called "Sherry Plain."

40. We have not located Abraham Vantile's stone as yet.

41. Sweet's Carpenter Shop may have been the old building on the corner of Satterlee Hollow Road and Route 22, now the site of the Seagroats Greenhouses, one of the largest rose growers in the north east. Members of the Sweet family are buried in the small cemetery north of the Ricardi home.

42. According to legend, Captain Kidd left his ship at Castleton, New York, and walked to Boston, giving rise to the story that he passed through this area and buried his treasure along the way. Another Captain Kidd story comes to us from Petersburg. Mr. Livingston, who lived at the end of Pickleville Road, found a hand written account of the buried treasure and came to Ray Clark's garage in Petersburg to have the story typed by Mrs. Clark. Although Mr. Livingston supposedly had connections with Black Beard the Pirate and he dug many holes on his farm looking for the gold, he never found it. However, when Mr. Jones, a poor neighbor, died, the largest monument in the Meadowlawn Cemetery was erected in his honor. This led the townspeople to assume that the gold was found by Mr. Jones. In case it wasn't, we are still looking!

43. The Richer family was one of the earliest Dutch families that settled in North Petersburg. In 1773 Killian Richer, reportedly a Loyalist, built the house now occupied by Phyllis and William Craib and Killian's son, John, the first male born in Little Hoosick, built Sharon and Karl Klein's house. Both of these homes are in Southeast Hollow.

44. The Sheldon Family is remembered for its spring that supplied water to the travellers on Plank Road, and The Sheldon Band which bears their surname.

45. The Johannes George Brimmer Family was the first Dutch family to settle in "Dutch Hoosac", the present Petersburg, in 1754. The Brimmers became embroiled in the French Colonial Wars when Jeremiah, a son, was killed and two other sons, Godfrey and Jonathan were captured by Indians and taken to Quebec. A full account of the Brimmer Massacre is in Grace Niles's book, *The Hoosac Valley* (1912). Ernest Carlton Brimmer (alias Richard Dix, a movie star and descendant) came to Petersburg on June 15, 1934 when New York State erected two historical markers to commemorate this event. He

retold the Brimmer story on the radio BUT he pretended the location was Plymouth, Massachusetts.

46. The First Baptist Church was organized in 1783, was located next to the Center Berlin cemetery, and Elder Justus Hull became the first pastor. By 1831 a new structure was built at its present location, and this building was destroyed in the Berlin tanker explosion in 1962. A video of this disaster is available from the Berlin Fire Company. The Seventh Day Baptist Church just north of here was the first church in town, having been organized in 1780. The first pastor was Elder William Coon.

47. Benjamin Jones was a neighbor of James Main, who requested Jones to build him a beautiful cherry wood coffin because Mr. Main was preoccupied with death and wanted every thing to be ready when it occurred. The coffin was made and placed in the Baptist Church but it wasn't used for a long time as Mr. Main lived to a ripe old age.

48. The Jones family were early settlers in North Stephentown where they share a cemetery near Giles and East Roads with the Dennisons, who came from Connecticut. A 1790 letter in possession of Katherine Wells, written by John Chester to Mrs. Jerusha Dennison (second wife of James Dennison) of Groton, Connecticut, mentions a "Mr. Jones" and a "Mr. Jones Junior." We do not know the connection of Benjamin and Lemuel Jones to this early family but there are still many descendants of the Jones family living in the area.

49. William Himes may be a descendant of Simeon Himes who arrived in the Little Hoosick Valley after 1770 with the Bentley, Sweet, Dennison, Niles, Thomas, Whitford and Satterlee families from Rhode Island and Connecticut. Spink Himes, doubtless another relative, who is buried in the old Rhodes Cemetery, obtained a Van Rensselaer lease for land near Kendall Pond in 1794.

50. In 1739 Thomas Wells petitioned the General Assembly of Massachusetts to survey the towns of the upper Hoosac. "East Hoosick" and "West Hoosick" became the current Adams and Williamstown. Nearby White Creek, New York, was settled by Austin Wells, son of original proprietor Edmund Wells. Perhaps William Wells came to this area from this early family.

51. The Hammond Grist Mill appears on the Beer's 1876 *Atlas* as belonging to W.F. Rogers. It was powered by water diverted from the old mill dam behind the Baptist Church and the pipe is still visible over the bank east of old Route 22. Loyal Goodermote remembers his carpenter father, Art, and his great uncle, George Goodermote, using the saw mill formerly located at the dam in the winter to produce fancy porch braces and other wood turnings in the winter when outside work was impossible.

52. On the 1876 Beers *Atlas* William Sheldon's blacksmith shop is located just north of the Hammond Grist Mill.

53. A log school house was built circa 1773 at Center Berlin and John Krapsey was believed to be the teacher. This was followed in 1776 by a school erected on Cherry Plain Hill where, George Gardner, was the teacher. In 1779 a Greene Hollow school was taught by Rufus Colgrow, in 1784 at "North Berlin" taught by Clement Crandall, and 1801 in "Grays Hollow" (now Southeast hollow), taught by Daniel Carr. In 1806 six school districts were formed by the Town, which grew to eleven districts by 1900. Shortly after this, high school classes were added, and by the 1930's centralization was under way. Mildred (Hull) Craib became the first Superintendent. The District now has elementary schools in Berlin, Grafton and Stephentown, and a Junior-Senior High School in Cherry Plain.

54. After Roscio gave up ownership of his store, it became Stillman's Ice Cream Parlor. Lately, it was Anne's Pizza Parlor. An original recipe from the Ice Cream Parlor era was handed down to Shirley Dapson from Donald Lamphier for Stillman's vanilla and chocolate ice cream reads as follows:

*Beat 4 eggs, 2 cups sugar and 2 tablespoons of flour together in a double boiler, bring carefully to boil, do not let it lump. When cool, add 1 quart heavy cream, 1 quart milk and 1 tablespoon vanilla and freeze in a hand turned ice cream maker. For chocolate, shave 3 ounces Baker's chocolate and dissolve with 3 tablespoons sugar and add to the cooked base.*

55. Gifford's General Store later became a shirt Shop run by the Maxon Brothers who sold it to the Reis Manufacturing Company, who employed many women making underwear. Since then it has housed the Post Office, The Echo

and is now Carol Alderman's Beauty Parlor. The building is currently owned by Douglas Goodermote.

56. The former Wadsworth Hotel opened in 1844 and is the current home of the Miller and Anderson Families. A house nearby belonging to Ferdinand H. Hull was where Mary Ann Wyatt, an actress with a traveling troupe of Temperance Players performing *The Drunkard*, first stayed when she came to Berlin. Here she met Henry G. Green, a prosperous Berlin man who five days after their marriage, poisoned her. Many poems and ballads were written, and at this time a book about this famous murder case is in progress.

57. Locally this large building is known as the Rogers Block, named for the family of VanVechton ("Vac") Rogers, world renown harpist and composer, who turned down giving up his United States Citizenship to become Court Harpist to King Edward of England. In 1976 Corky Christman was honored to give a harp recital in Berlin to commemorate the erection of a head stone to Mr. Rogers by the Taconic Valley Historical Society. The introduction was written and read by Sharon Burdick Klein who was inspired by her teacher, Mary Kenyon, and her seamstress, May Adriance, to have Mr. Roger's grave marked. In thanks to Mr. Christman for his concert he was given two Berlin products, Cowee Cookies and Kent Goodermote's Maple Syrup.

58. Across Plank Road is the Colonial Inn built by Dr. Burton Hammond as a store, post office and hotel in 1806. Dr. Hammond came from New Lebanon where he belonged to the Shaker sect. Although trained as a physician, he preferred business and in addition to the hotel, he owned a grist mill. Upon his death in 1848 the hotel was left to his son, Alphonse, who in turn willed it to Sarah, A.M., A.G. and A.H. Hammond. They sold it to Barzaleel Streeter who renamed it the Berlin Hotel, and in 1856 he sold it to Daniel W. and Samuel S. Streeter. By 1858 Daniel Dennison bought it back and then sold it in 1862 to James Culver who sold it to A.B. Niles. In 1883 George Scripture bought the hotel but a Mr. McConiat took a mortgage on the premises. In 1891 this was the subject of a court case which Mr. McConiat won; he sold the property in 1893 to Sarah Dair who in turn sold it to Frank Dennison for \$1.00. He died one month later and after additional litigation with his heirs the hotel's clear title was returned to Dair.

Tracey Taylor purchased the hotel, changed the name to Taconic Inn, installed bowling alleys in the basement and showed the first movies in Berlin here.



During Taylor's ownership it was written up as "a stopping place for automobile parties and many autoists went there on pleasure to partake of the clean, wholesome and well prepared food."

In 1920 Wallace Hewett owned the Taconic Inn and less than a year later sold it to Fanny Fisk who bequeathed it to James Fisk. In 1927 it was sold to Molly and Bill Kinn. In 1944 Clarence Williams bought it and in 1948 it came in the possession of Helen (Palmer) and Elwin Burdick and Llewellyn Palmer who rebuilt the porches, revamped the bowling alleys and restored it to a fine country Inn. Helen Burdick is now the "lady of the house."

Just as the Colonial Inn has under gone many changes, so has our town of Berlin, New York and we now conclude our centennial hike of Samuel S. Streeter. At this point, may we say thank you to the many people we consulted who added their knowledge to this ongoing documentation project. We could not have accomplished this much without your assistance.

*Doree Cox*

Doree Cox  
May 1995

*"earmarks" registered with the Berlin Town Clerk in  
1825 by Barzaleel Streeter, for identifying his livestock*



# ***"Wanderings in Rensselaer"***

## ***Samuel S. Streeter's return to Berlin's "West Mountain"***

One hundred years ago Samuel S. Streeter took a hike up on West Mountain where he was born in a simple log home seventy-five years before. His grandfather, Samuel, brought his family to this rugged new country from Massachusetts in 1805. Here the family struggled for a living far below today's poverty level yet they survived and eventually prospered. His amazingly detailed letter, "Wanderings in Rensselaer," was published in the *Chatham Courier* in 1895. In his wanderings Samuel S. Streeter reminisces about early settlers who lived and worked on "West Mountain." We will follow the route of his hike and revisit the same places today.

Samuel S. Streeter, a son of Barzaleel Streeter, was born on the so-called "Wilsey Place" on "West Mountain" in 1818. Samuel married Rhoda Dennison, and in 1848 he was elected Town Supervisor of Berlin, campaigning on the issue of temperance. He was a successful merchant in the community and served as Postmaster in 1837 and 1841. He removed to Clyde, New York in 1850, Chicago in 1855 and by 1894 was residing in Brooklyn, New York. He died in Berlin in 1903 of influenza at the age of 84 years.

These handouts are not meant to comprise a definitive history of the area, but show the progress we have made in an ongoing study. No longer forgotten are the people who had the courage to settle this wilderness area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They left behind not only cellar holes, stone walls and old roads overgrown to forest, but written documentation of their struggles also survives.

## "Wanderings in Rensselaer"

In my wandering around my native town of Berlin on the West Mountain I went up the old turnpike, [1] starting at the Deacon Coon cheese box factory [3] (now owned by Mr. Saunders) up past the old Weaver [6] place, then up to the three corners [7] past the Daniel Rhodes [8] and Richard Boon [9] farms, found the Daniel Rhodes farm owned and occupied by the widow of Ambrose Rhodes, the old Boon house and out buildings all gone except the barn, then up where Simon Wood formerly lived [10] no signs of any buildings ever having been there, the lots grown up to brush and . . . ; then up past where the old . . . house stood many years ago no sign of any buildings there now; a man by the name of Alden Hunt once lived there, then Lucius Manning moved there and lived where my father, B. Streeter in 1821 moved in a house on the Hammond farm.

The next place up the turnpike (when I was three years old) before getting to the above house just above the stone bridge [11] are two large flat stones [12] set up in the wall, one has B.S. on it and the other 1814, shows when we built the wall. There is nothing left of the house now but the stone steps [13] which led up to the kitchen. The next house above on the top of the mountain at three corners is where Sanford Wheeler [14] lived and kept a tavern; at that time the travel west was all that way, on the turnpike which was new then; then north half mile was another three corners where Moses Hendrick [15] lived; part of the house is there yet; then down the west road the other side of the mountain to the old Eymer [16] farm where he lived and died; then his son-in-law, Rensselaer Hakes moved there and lived there till he went west with his family, in company with Charles Saunders and family, Riley Potter and family, Percy Stillman and family, John Willcox and others in the country back of La Salle, Illinois.

My grandfather, Samuel Streeter, moved in the house . . . land of Sand Lake. There is only part of the house standing and that looks very old; down in the pasture north there was an old log house that Cornelius Wilsey [17] lived in; nothing left there but the spring. Next below on the road is the Streeter [18] farm and part of the house where I was born. Things have changed very much there is the last 76 years. From there went down to the next three corners [19] then took the south road that went over through the Dutch settlement called the Letson road to the turnpike to the south west corner of the Streeter farm called the four corners [20] then followed the old turnpike east past where David Bratton once lived in a log house [21], direct south from the Streeter farm house; no sign of any house ever having been there, then east to the Hakes [22] place where he lived before moving to the Eymer farm.

South of the turnpike back in the lot is where the Blivens lived — John, Percy, Sam., Bashey and Lydia. [23] No buildings left there on the Hakes place, no signs of a good farmer ever living there, except fencing his stacks with stone walls, and some of the round walls still are to be seen; then east to the top of the mountain to the Wheeler place, [14] which has been kept in very good order by a German, then north by the Hendrick [15] place and past where the old school house [24] stood where I (first went to) school, Sarah B. Denison teacher, and afterward Richard Menter. It was quite a large building and well filled every winter. It stood on the Hendrick farm and was moved from there down under the hill in the woods near the Kendal House; [26] then went north to the old Rhodes farm, [25] one-half mile west of Kendall pond. Abel Rhodes first took the farm from the Van Rensselaers, where his son Jonathan H. was born and lived till he married. Afterwards moved to Berlin village.

The buildings are still there, looking very old, occupied by a German family; from there north expecting to see the old school house, but found it had been moved out on the old plank road west

of where Rufus Austin [27] lived, then to the Kendall [28] farm where David and Edwin Kendall lived many years, they sold to Sterry Hewitt and William R. Jones, they were good farmers kept quite a dairy, lived there a number of years, then moved to White Creek and Jones bought his present farm up the East hollow, then north to the plank road and four corners where stood the shingle house [29] which was kept for a tavern a long time, John Rhodes father of Washington and Doctor Rhodes was the last landlord that I remember. Nothing there now or any signs of a building ever having been there, then north from there by where William Smith [30] and his son Daniel lived; below the road lived Elder Kenyon and afterwards Peleg Saunders. The old house stands there yet, then down the mountain past where Perry Stillman lived.

North of the road was a small farm where the Pools [31] once lived, buildings all gone. Next below was where Job Taylor [32] lived, the house and barn are there yet. Below stands the old school house where all the Taylor family were educated [33]. Next is the Lodowick Saunders house [34] and grist mill almost gone to decay by age and freshet, then comes the north and south road [35] three corners again to the Charles Saunders [36] farm, house had been taken away, but after going south a short distance found the house located above the road where it had moved out of the way of freshets, then south to the Josiah Godfrey farm at that time the best farm in Berlin, now owned and occupied by F.M. Cowee [37] who married Sarah Godfrey. All below the road a big meadow, now mostly young trees and posies all in blossom around the house and above it looks as though the freshet gave them a loud call.

Then over the bridge upon the bank, in a little house once occupied by Whitman Place is now remodeled into a beautiful cottage owned and occupied by Arthur Cowee as a summer home; farther south is the old house where David Crandell lived [38], then south of the line between the Godfrey and Holden Sweet [39] farms above the road is where (I saw when about ten years old)

Abraham Vantile [40] buried who killed himself by cutting his head nearly off with a drawing knife in John Sweet's carpenter shop. [41] I examined the place and the stone that was put up to his head which is still plain to be seen; then passed the Holden Sweet place which looks old, then on to John Sweet's where from there to Deacon Eliphlet Niles [42] farm where Braddock Hull dug a large hole in the hill looking after Capt. Kidd's hidden gold, then past . . . nearly took his house across the road then along by where Jacob Richer [43] lived then by Augustus Sheldon [44]; Rebecca lived there till she married David Denison, then Widow Martin Brimmer [45]; across the road was the Baptist parsonage [46], next was Benjamin Jones [47] house and opposite Lemuel Jones [48] house where I lived in 1842, then comes Wm. Himes house [49] and shop opposite, then Wm. Wells [50] the tailor and the Hammond grist mill [51], then Wm. Sheldon's wagon shop [52] and house opposite the school house [53] then stood.

Near Sheldon's house on the north where I went to school, then the Braddock Hull house and opposite his blacksmith shop where Roscio's store [54] now stands, then comes the building that Doctor Emerson Hull and Sheffield Boon built for a store house for cheese, wood, etc., that they speculated in and failed, the building was sold to Lyman Bennett and moved where it now stands and occupied as a store by Horace Gifford and sons [55], then come to the Berlin House [58] where I lived from 1830 to 1840, it was called Washington Hotel, then an old building with a store in the south end, the old Doctor Hammond house attached to it with their parlor inside the hotel building. The chamber rooms were large and few of them, it is now very much improved for better. The lady of the house took me through it to show me the improvements she had made, the large rooms are cut up in good sized bed rooms and well furnished all through, and the house is a first-class country hotel. In my travel up and on the mountain and back, opened and closed 18 pair of bars, gates and fences.

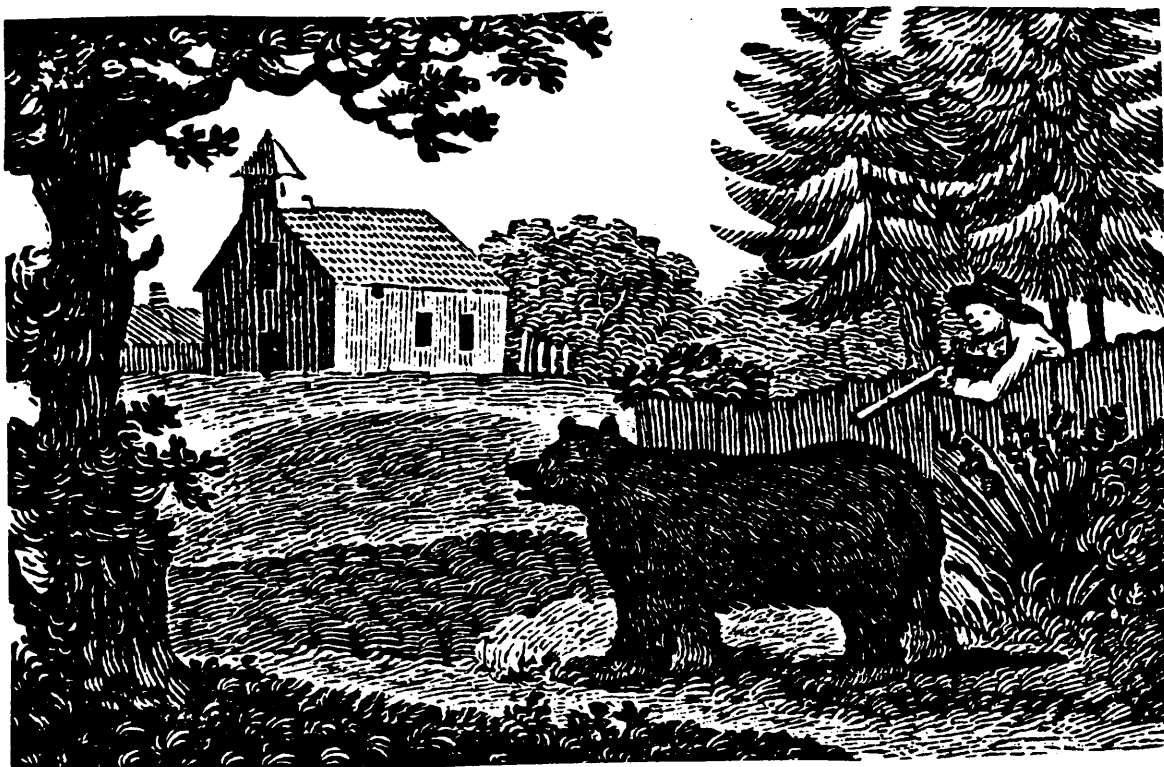
S. S. Streeter

# *Life on the "West Mountain"* *Berlin, New York (1805-1838)*

*reminiscences of Barzaleel Streeter,  
compiled by his grandson, Milford Streeter*

from the files of the Berlin Free Town Library

*Having for a long time felt an interest in preserving a records of the incidents and recollections of our now aged Grandfather's life, and fearing that if I do not myself take up the task of collecting the material and putting it together now, it may be neglected and lost. I here assume the task of him who is now the head of our family. We have reason to be proud of his virtues, and an interest in reading a sketch (however poor) of his honest and rugged life.*



In the fall of 1805, Samuel Streeter emigrated with his family to what was then termed the "new country"; a man from Petersburg, with his team, acting as transporter. They took up their abode in the West Mountain, near Berlin, N. Y., and for a time lived with their relative "Zeol" Wakefield, who had come to the country two years before to work on the turnpike. This house (log) was but 14 X 24 in measurement, yet it accomodated at that time twelve persons. The children slopt in the Garret and



the old folks below, the two families separated by the single partition and chimney. The latter was built of sticks and often caught fire, but a little water dashed against the burning pieces was generally sufficient to quench it. Barzaleel speaks of the methods of cooking which were practised at that time. His mother would bake bread by sweeping clean a place in the fire-place where the hot embers had been, upon which spot she carefully put the loaf of bread and when it had become glazed over, drew burning coals over to a sufficient depth to bake it through. Corn and rye were the materials of which it was usually made. Pork was the staple meat and was commonly boiled up with beans. An iron kettle that hung over the fire and a long handled frying pan were about all the cooking furniture they owned.

The first winter in the new state was passed by "Zeel" (nick name for Barzaleel) with Joshua Godfrey, working for his living. Mr. Godfrey kept a hotel on the turnpike and the work was light choring. Here again the boy was subject to the "custom" of the country. The first regular duty for each member of the family, in the morning, was to dispose of their allowance of bitters, and every member of the family took it, even to the two little boys.

The boy was at home again during the following summer and helped plant corn and potatoes upon what is now called the Ambrose Rhodes farm, a four-acre field, part of which was cultivated upon shares.

One of the chief inducements for entering the new country was the activity, or plentifulness of work in the winter, which was the result of the completion of a new turnpike to Sand Lake, where the glass house was then in full blast. Large quantities of wood were burned and much of it passed over this road. Zeel and his father employed themselves at this work one winter.

The father cut the wood, and the boy, with a pair of horses and bob-sleds, drew the wood to the furnace. The wood was cut near Parogo Hills, about three miles from the glass house and seven from their home. They carried three loads a day which required 32 miles of travel altogether, as they passed their night at home. The pay was light but was the only support of the family. The work, although light and remunerative only to the extent of \$2.00 a day for the team and two hands, was the best to be had at that time.

Of schooling, the boy never had enough to hurt him. His first experience in that line was during the winter of 1807-8, when he was thirteen years of age. He worked for his board at old Squire Gray's (father of Scuyler) and attended school three months steady. January, February and March were the only months in the year when school was kept. One other winter he went to school and then graduated, at least he went no more from that day to this, as a pupil. He was six months a pupil and that was all. After that he taught. He taught school the winter he was eighteen years old, again after he was married; still again after he moved down into the village. He claims to have been a good boy and diligent scholar. No doubt he improved fast if his head was as clear during youth as during old age. His teacher made him a present of a geography that first winter for good behavior and scholarships. The present indicated his favorite study. He was naturally a self educator and taught himself while teaching others. Hardly an instance can be found, after the boy reached the age of ten years, where he was not self supporting. He worked for Wm. Bentley at the old grist mill (it stood opposite the present one) for board during the second winter he went to school. The school-house then stood upon the spot now occupied by Joab Wilcox's harness shop. This was in 1809-10. He continued to work for Mr. Bentley during the follow-

ing summer and received therefor \$6.00 per month and board. The money part his father took. When winter came again, he went home to help his father split rails and shingles, which parties from the hollow bought of them on the ground, paying for same corn, potatoes and other provisions. It can be plainly seen that from this time forward, and even before, Zeel was a decided helper in the support of his father's family. In the spring of 1811 ten acres of ground was hired, between Comee's orchard and the old Chas. Saunders line, and planted to corn. The young man, with a pair of horses, plowed it all, and it being on a hill side, he necessarily "brought" all the furrows. No hill side plows were then known.

About this time Zeel Wakefield moved to Sand Lake, and the family for the first time since they entered the state, lived with the house to themselves, and no doubt they duly appreciated the extra room thus obtained, as their children were quite numerous.

Zeel was named after his uncle. He says that he first spelled it "Barzeleel" but afterwards, upon being told that it was wrong, changed it to "Barzaleel", as he now writes it. The name is said to have been taken from the Bible, but I have never been able to find anything nearer than "Bezaleel" which I find in the thirty-first chapter of Exodus; also in Josephus, third book, eighth chapter. No doubt the name was this before corrupted.

Zeel was an adept at wall building, as well as the parent from whom he took the art. Together they did a good deal of jobbing out at this trade. They obtained the same wages at it as paid to skilled mechanics of any kind, i.e., \$1.00 per day each. The ordinary pay of a common laborer was at the time but 50¢ a day. Board was included with the rates of pay mentioned above. The laying of cellar walls was a part of their trade.

This was done as they would build a stone fence, excepting that the top was covered with mortar where the sill of the house was to lay, and the inside "pointed" up with the same material. Four rods of wall fence was considered a good day's work for one man.

Those times were necessarily economical. To go barefooted in all seasons but winter was considered no hardship and quite a saving of expense. Barzaeel was no exception in this or any other of the methods of economy of his day. Two tow shirts and pants would do him for a whole season, while in winter he was clothed with strong, coarse woolen goods and kip shoes, with leggins. Itinerent shoemakers (cat whippers) were a feature then.

In the fall of the year they found employment in nearly all households, especially in those away from villages. They worked by the piece, and were found with everything, and were supposed to leave their patrons well shod and prepared for the anticipated severities of winter.

During the summer of 1913, while engaged in serving a term of six months with Mr. Wm. Dently, in accordance with a bargain made by his father, Barzaeel was drafted into the Militia. Strong objections being raised by both the above named persons, upon the question of age, he left the neighborhood to avoid the expected call and went to Shaftsbury, Vt. There he found employment at wall building, which he followed until the weather had become too cold, when he returned home with \$46.00 cash in his pocket, the net proceeds of about two months of labor. The money was paid over to his father, as customary, but the earning of so much money in so short a time was considered quite a marvel at that time. The trip was an unnecessary one in the main aspect as the young man found upon his return that no call for men had been made. The following

spring he enlisted in the cavalry (troopers). After his return from Vermont, in spite of earnest protest upon the ground of being unqualified, he was persistently urged to accept the position of village school teacher and at last did, teaching three months, and succeeded to his and his friends' satisfaction.

May 20th, 1814, at the age of 19, Barzaleel married Olive Weaver, a lady one or two years younger than himself. Neither possessed worldly goods, but both did possess a wealth of pluck and moral virtues. Their marriage ceremony was as plain as their lives had ever been. Upon the morning of the eventful day, the young couple proceeded upon horseback from her parents' house to the parson's, and after staying a sufficient time to obtain the proper credentials, they departed as man and wife to partake of the wedding dinner at his father's cabin; the same consisted of pork and beans.

Barzaleel's father was not pleased with the idea of his marrying just at this time, for his services to himself were quite valuable, but the question was finally settled by the young man's agreeing to pay his parent the sum of \$100.00 per year for his time until he was twenty-one years old, at which period he was to be considered his own master. On the agreement of his contract the young wife was brought home, and the fledgeling husband began his handicapped career. But he was no fledgling if we consider alone his capacity for work. With such energy did he commence life that before the end of the first season he had earned enough money from wall building to pay his father \$150.00, receiving therefor a complete discharge from obligations in that direction and with \$25.00 left he bought a few necessary articles and commenced keeping house in one of the two rooms into which the building was divided. In this house, afterwards called the Wilsey place, were born Amanda, Daniel, Samuel and Elvira. During this year, the militia was called on to

repel the British from Plattsburg, but not the cavalry to which Barzaleel belonged. While he was at work on a wall near the Hammond House, the Berlin detachment passed him on their way to Troy and among them he recognized Daniel and Benjamin Denison. This was that body of soldiers of whom such wonderful stories were told by the early settlers. 'Tis said that after a march of nine days towards the lines, they received intelligence of a battle and the defeat of the enemy, whereupon they turned about and actually accomplished the return journey in one day. Others say that during the whole of that famous march, these warriors retired each night to their several homes to pass the night. This last tradition seems so unreasonable that we refuse to believe it.

In a wall yet standing near the spot where the Hammond House stood, are the stones upon which is to be seen in plain characters nearly a foot in length, the inscription "E.S. 1814". This was hammered there by Barzaleel during that year. He mentions the fact with evident pride. The marks suggest to his mind recollections of early accomplishments of which he is proud. With him, hard unflagging industry has ever been the only passport to worthy manhood.

Five years were passed by the young married couple in the Wilsey House, a livelihood being obtained in the usual way, but with nothing to spare. Neither family while living in that house ever had more than a bare subsistence. They were exceedingly poor, but struggled on and eventually through it.

In 1817 Barzaleel was elected one of the constables for the town of Berlin and continued to be re-elected to this position for many years in succession. From this time there seems to have been an improvement in his affairs. He did the usual amount of work for the support of his growing family and the constable work, which paid something, was looked after at night.

In 1820 he moved his family to the Hammond House, so called from its ownership. The ground belonged to Dr. Burton Hammond, who furnished the material for building the house and Barzaleel, with one carpenter, did all the work. Sarah and Aurora were born here.

In 1821 Barzaleel was elected to the position of town collector as well as to that of constable and to both of these offices he continued to be re-elected until he moved into the hollow in 1826.

About the same time, his father moved from the mountain to the Holden Sweet farm about three-quarters of a mile north of the village, and from this time he began to live a little easier. Five other of his children were married before leaving the mountain; Willard to Sally Ann Rhodes, sister of Ebben; Elsie to Fenner Spink; Luria to Luke Kenyon; Prudence to Ebben Rhodes and Roswell to Ellen Kenyon, sister to Luke.

Barzaleel took his family into the "Gambrell roofed house" near the south village, attached to which were eighty acres of good land, part of which was cultivated by its owner, Kyer Hull, and the balance by the tenant, with the aid of his two sons, Daniel and Samuel. The latter were then old enough to do a good deal of work, and together were required to keep up with their father in hoeing a row of corn or potatoes.

Before leaving the mountain, Barzaleel had been appointed deputy sheriff, and the duties of this office, added to those of the other two positions, to which he continued to be returned, now occupied the greater part of his time but with the help of his boys, he managed to raise grain for a couple of cows, a horse, sheep and pigs, as well as food for the family. Harvey and William Henry were born in this house. Barzaleel was deputy under four different sheriffs; Moses Warren, of Hoosac, W.P. Haskins,

of Troy, Henry Vandenburg, of Schodac and another of Lansingburg. At one time it looked as though he would be nominated for the higher position. He was the oldest deputy in the country, and custom would have given him the office. Intrigue defeated his claims, and the result was a compromise which would have made him city deputy and jailor, provided the Democratic candidate had been elected, but such was not the result, and in one view this must have been to him a consoling fact.

In all his political life, no event seems to have been so important to him as his trip to New York with prisoners. This was under Haskins, in 1827. He was yet a very poor man, but the prospect of such a remunerative job undoubtedly caused him to feel that for once he could afford to be indulgent. At any rate, he took his wife. He had nine prisoners in all, seven men and two women. They were shackled heavily at the feet and hand-cuffed in pairs. The steam boat would not take them, so they engaged passage on a north river sloop. At Sing Sing the male convicts were disposed of, but as the authorities would not receive females, they passed on down the river to New York. After reaching the city, the two women were placed in a boat in which were himself and wife, and they were taken to Blackwell Island, but here they were disappointed again in his attempt to dispose of the prisoners. Their next move was successful. At Bellevue Hospital relief was obtained, and that night, to cap the climax of this great trip, with all of its attending novelties, Barzalcel and wife went to the Park Theatre with the Captain of the sloop. Barzalcel speaks of that evening's entertainment as a "big thing", and no doubt both himself and wife were much amazed at what they saw during their short stay at the "Big City". Few who read this can realize the triumphs of that trip to the pair of back country people who were its principals. They were poor, and except for such an oppor-



tunity, had little reason to suppose that they would ever be in circumstances easy enough to enable them to visit the great mysterious city. They returned to Albany on the Steamer NORTH AMERICA, and found themselves, as the result of the journey, the possessors of more money than they had ever before owned at once. The allowance for conducting each prisoner was quite a sum, and after dividing evenly with the sheriff, as was then the custom, Barzaleel yet had over \$200.00. With this he paid up what little he owed and obtained quite a send-off in the estimation of his townsmen.

During all the years he lived in the Gambrell roofed house his time was mostly occupied with official duties, yet he managed, with the aid of the boys, to cultivate about ten acres of ground, and each summer cut hay on the west mountain. The Wilsey place was a part of the Stephen Van Rensselaer property, under a sixty year lease. At the time of which we speak, the back rent, eight bushels of wheat per year, was all due, and the lease had fifteen years yet to run. Barzaleel's father being poor, with no prospects of satisfying the debt, proposed to him and Willard to pay the rent and take the place. They accepted the proposition, and together raised \$250.00 for the purpose. This they took to Troy and offered "Old Stephen", but on his refusal to accept less than \$300.00, they went to Albany, where they managed to borrow \$50.00 of a friend, and then succeeded in getting the place discharged from back rent. A man named Wilsey, (from whom the place got its name) lived there afterwards, keeping the fences in order. The brothers cut and divided the hay. There was about 160 acres of the farm, all rough and stony. Barzaleel afterwards bought Willard's interest for \$190.00 and eventually bought the soil for \$350.00 cash.

During the year 1830 Barzaleel moved his family into the old Washington Hotel, owned by Dr. Hammond, more familiarly known as the "tavern". The place was badly run down at

the time, window panes out, door panels gone and general decay prevalent, but rent seems to have been a minor consideration with the owner of the property, provided he had a good tenant. There was no consideration fixed between them, Barzaleel agreeing only to do the best he could. The first year he paid \$100.00, but afterwards, in the course of two or three years, the rent was fixed at \$50.00 per quarter.

Business picked up under careful management, and substantial prosperity upon a moderate scale was the eventual result. Politics were dropped, but by their means he had become a prominent man of the township, so much so that in 1838 he was the Democratic candidate for Assembly, though suffering defeat at the hands of the Whig party.

Here most of the children grew up, and how? A bar was always kept, over which were dispensed liquors by the hands of his boys, and one would think that the latter would imbibe habits of bad tendency. What has been the result? Of four living sons (before Harvey died) not one was in the habit of drinking any kind of liquor; but one used tobacco in any form; from none of them does anyone ever hear profane language. There seems to have been some good sense and management, to bring boys through an ordeal of that kind, clean handed. No doubt they had clear heads as well, but I cannot doubt their being moulded in character mainly through the influence or authority of their father; and when I say authority, I speak of it in a potent sense. He was exacting of himself as well as with others. Duty he looked upon as a religion and all under his authority were required to conform to what he considered rules of reason. Idleness he despised; frivolity he frowned down, folly he would not tolerate. In mien austere, in decision immovable; is it a wonder that his authority over his children was of an absolute character? His severity was almost Spartan. But is it to be

regretted when we consider the result? The stern disposition seems to have been given him by nature, for he has never ceased to wear it. To the present time he is epigrammatic, severe in criticism, unyielding in opinion. Whether consistently or not, he has always claimed to favor temperance. At one time strong influence prevailed upon him to close his bar for a year, the hope prevailing that where no liquor was sold, none would be drunk, but the result, as measured by Barzaleel, was that more liquor was introduced into the town than ever, that year, and drunk.

In 1833 he leased the old Uncle Main farm. The owner, James Main, was great grandfather to the present James Taylor Main, of Troy. The farm was cultivated for several years, taking care of it in addition to the hotel.



## *Van Rensselaer East Manor land records*

The Manuscripts & Special Collections, New York State Library, holds an extensive collection of land records covering the "Manor of Rensselaerswyck," an area including a large portion of Albany and Rensselaer counties. In Rensselaer County, the entire county south of Lansingburgh, Schaghticoke, Pittstown and Hoosick was included in the "Manor." The Van Rensselaer family held rights, dating back to the 17th Century, to most all land in this area. These rights included the collection of "ground rent" on lands within the Manor. This rent was paid annually, usually in commodities such as bushels of wheat, to the agents of the "Patroon," the head of the family.

In 1785 young Stephen Van Rensselaer inherited the family rights to the Manor, and it became necessary to determine the extent of these land holdings. In order to complete this task, surveyors John E. Van Alen and Job Gilbert were hired to survey and map the entire Manor. The Manor was divided into the "East Manor" and "West Manor" by the Hudson River, and the East Manor into divisions known as Elizabethtown (Brunswick), Phillipstown (Nassau), Roxborough (Grafton), Greenbush, Schodack, Stepentown, Middletown and Little Hoosick. "Middletown" included chiefly the eastern portions of the present towns of Poestenkill and Sand Lake and the western portion of Berlin. "Little Hoosick" encompassed the present Town of Petersburg and the eastern portion of Berlin. You will notice that the east line of Middletown (west line of Little Hoosick) bisects the area of our study.

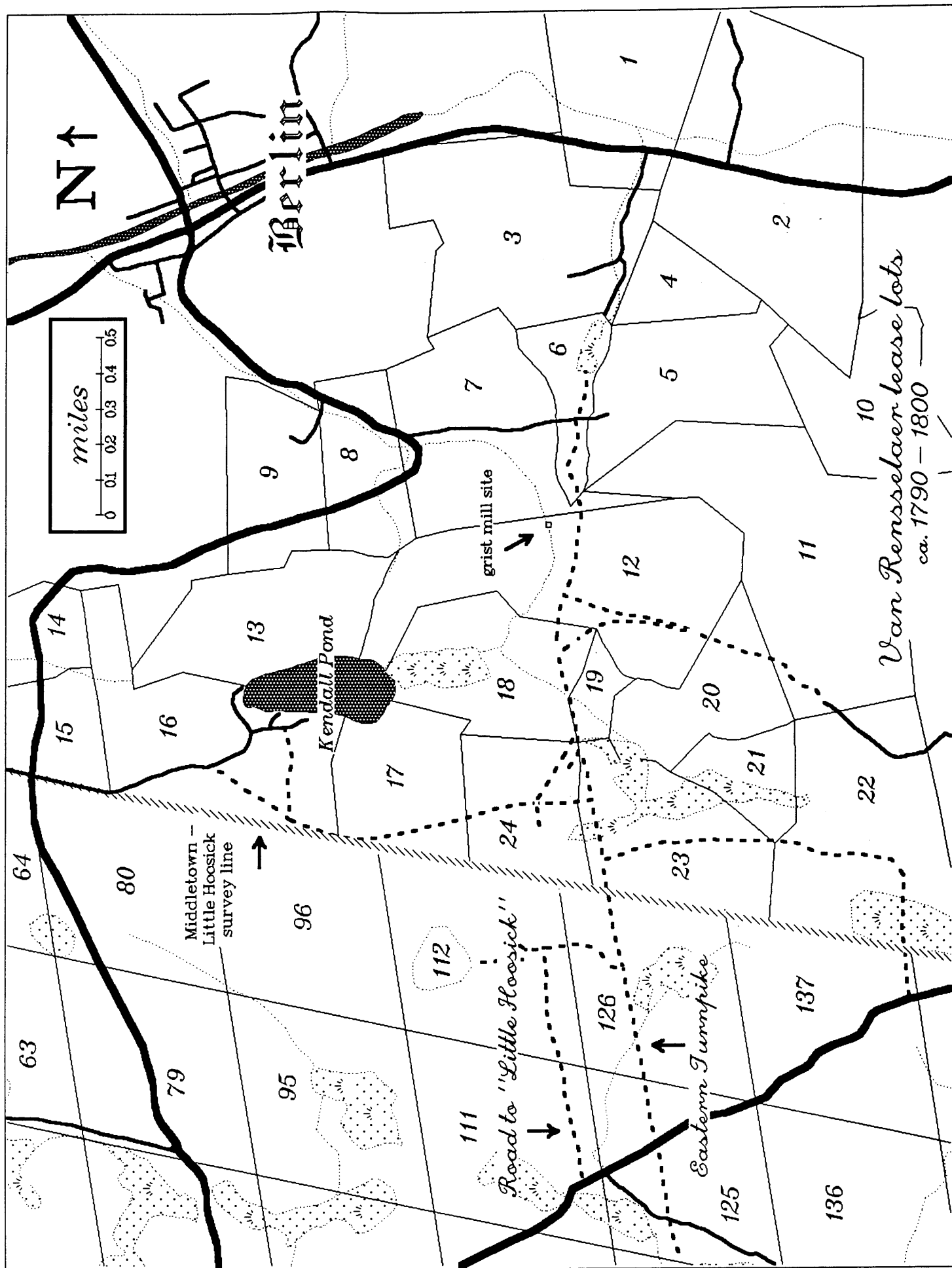
The Van Rensselaer Manor Papers consist primarily of maps, surveys, account ledgers and leases. While some of the West Manor papers (including most of the surveys) were burned in the Capitol Fire of 1911, most of the maps and surveys, many of the leases, and all of the account ledgers survive for the East Manor. One map covers the east half of the East Manor, while individual maps exist covering each of the survey areas except "Little Hoosick." Additional versions of these maps survive in the Historic Cherry Hill Papers (a separate collection of manuscripts kept by a branch of the Van Rensselaer family), also held by the New York State Library. Survey volumes, including both the actual surveys and maps of some of the individual lots, cover the majority of lots in the East Manor. In addition, some miscellaneous surveys survive as well. An index of the surveys should be completed later this year.

The accuracy of the maps and surveys is surprising, considering the rugged wilderness of much of the East Manor in the late 18th Century, as well

as the seemingly primitive instruments in use at this time. These records are frequently consulted by present-day land surveyors and title abstract firms for the valuable detailed and accurate information they contain. These records have gained the status of virtually an adjunct to land records maintained by the County itself. Current deeds to many parcels of land in Rensselaer County contain references to original Van Rensselaer leases. The Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy is studying methods by which these maps can be computerized. The attached map shows the results of the computer "digitizing" of some of these lot boundaries from circa 1790 maps, and plotting them over modern map data. This has greatly enhanced our study of the "West Mountain" in Berlin, and more specifically, the course of the early roads which traversed the area.

A substantial number of the Van Rensselaer family's copies of the large, impressive original leases survive as well. But the most interesting records of all are the account ledgers (sometimes called the "rent ledgers"), massive leather-bound volumes documenting the annual collection of "ground rent" by agents of the Patroon. These ledgers include valuable information on such as dates of property transfers (often not found in recorded deeds) and on sub-leases, partial interests and tenants of properties, and names of the parties involved. In addition, the manner of rent collection is also stated. While rent was usually due in bushels of wheat, the actual payment may have been in the form of cash or promissory notes, or other commodities such as oats, rye, cider, shingles, firewood, domestic animals or even days of service laboring for the Manor. Occasionally they contain interesting personal information as well. The ledgers have all been microfilmed.

The Van Rensselaer Manor land records hold a wealth of information on rural Rensselaer County and its early residents. They largely date from the late 1700's until the 1850's, following the so-called "Anti-Rent Wars," by which time the family had relinquished its feudal rights to most of these land holdings. These records are available for research (Monday through Friday, except state holidays, from 9 AM to 5 PM) at the Manuscripts & Special Collections of the New York State Library, located on the 11th floor of the Cultural Education Center on Madison Avenue in Albany. Some original records can be studied, while in other cases, because of the fragile nature of some maps and surveys, and the size and weight of the massive account ledgers, patrons are provided microfilm or photostatic copies for their use. For additional information on use of these records, contact the State Library at (518) 474-4461.



*List of Van Rensselaer lease holders west of Berlin*  
*"Little Hoosick survey" (ca. 1790)*  
*surveyed by John E. Van Alen*

1. *leased to John Barber Babcock Feb. 14, 1791 for annual rent of 16.5 bushels of wheat, containing 138 acres; refers to the Little Hoosic River as the "Hoosick Brook"*
2. *leased to Capt. Peter Siemon (Simmons) Oct. 27, 1792, containing 241 acres; Mr. Siemon had an "old deed" to the property*
3. *leased to Joshua Wilcox Oct. 3, 1794 for annual rent of 9 bushels of wheat, containing 129 acres; Joshua Green held an interest in part of the lot 1804; David Hewitt & Stephen Wilcox also had interests in part of this lot; James Godfrey owned part of the lot, and his part was sold to Langford Weaver who sold it to Lodewick Saunders in 1819*
4. *leased to Major Wilcox Oct. 13, 1794 for annual rent of 4 bushels of wheat, containing 46 acres; transferred to James Godfrey, then to Langford Weaver in 1810, then to Lodewick Saunders and eventually to Daniel Rhodes*
5. *leased to Samuel Phelps Sept. 30, 1794 for annual rent of 8.5 bushels of wheat, containing 106.5 acres; rent released to Daniel Rhodes Nov. 2, 1846*
6. *leased to Caleb Wilcox Feb. 4, 1791 for annual rent of 4.5 bushels of wheat, containing 61 acres; released to Richard Boone Oct. 20, 1800 for annual rent of 6 bushels of wheat; J.B. Rhodes owned part of the lot as well*
7. *leased to Walter Rhodes April 3, 1793 for annual rent of 11 bushels of wheat, containing 134 acres; in 1816 this was owned by Ebenezer Rhodes*
8. *leased to Robert Perrigo June 29, 1791, released to Jesse Hakes Jan. 2, 1799; Hakes returned the lease in 1804*
9. *leased to Spink Hyams (Himes) June 13, 1794; Daniel Gray apparently held an interest; Abel Rhodes apparently owned the land in 1816, and in 1821 it was purchased by Richard Boone and eventually by Joseph D. Rogers*
10. *leased to Henry Bonesteel April 4, 1793, containing 114.5 acres*
11. *leased to Burton Hammond*
12. *leased to William Cross, mentions grist mill and is crossed by the "Albany Road," containing 182 acres. It was subdivided, with Robert Godfrey taking*

*44.1 acres on July 2, 1801; Charles W. Green taking 55 acres on July 2, 1801 [this part was first listed in the name of Medad Herrington] and James Main taking 82 acres on Jan. 7, 1803 [this part was first listed in the name of Jacob Harding] Green's portion was in the hands of Augustus Sheldon in 1807 and owned by Hezekiah Hull in 1816; at some time James Newcomb leased part from John Green.*

- 13. leased to Samuel Stillman June 30, 1791; owned by John Reeve in 1815; rent on this lot was sometimes paid in shingles or timber; eventually the lot was in the hands of Robert H. Smith*
- 14. leased to Paul Hyams (Himes)*
- 15. leased to William Kendall*
- 16. leased to David Kendall June 30, 1791, containing 159.5 acres; after his death was owned by David Kendall Jr. & Edwards Kendall; in 1841 in the possession of Sterry Hewitt & William R. Jones; rent on this lot was often paid in shingles or "boards," suggesting it contained a sawmill*
- 17. leased to Abel Rhodes Oct. 14, 1794, containing 72.5 acres; part sold to Robert Godfrey; the lot was sold in 1835 to James Kidd*
- 18. leased to Thomas Oviatt Feb. 14, 1791 for annual rent of 6 bushels of wheat, containing 82 acres; in 1799 in the possession of Caleb Bentley; in 1806 part of the lot had apparently been subleased to J. Babcock; in 1828 Melancton Bentley owned one-third of the lot; the other thirds were apparently sold to J. Hull, Jr. and George Harrington*
- 19. leased to Michael Buck Feb. 14, 1791 for annual rent of 2.75 bushels of wheat, described as being on the south side of the "Albany Road," containing 23.3 acres; in 1799 in the possession of Caleb Bentley; in 1822 1/3 was owned by Melancton Bentley*
- 20. surveyed for William Wheaton, but leased to Elisha Oviatt Oct. 2, 1797 for 8 bushels of wheat annual rent, containing 80.6 acres*
- 21. leased to Joseph Harris Feb. 14, 1791 for annual rent of 3.1 bushels of wheat, containing 45 acres*
- 22. leased to Ebenezer Andrus and sold to Thomas Crandall by quit claim, June 3, 1796, containing 122.2 acres; Ebenezer Rhodes applied for a lease Nov. 1835*
- 23. leased to Elisha Oviatt April 30, 1795; located primarily on the south side of the "new road from Little Hoosick to Albany" (the Eastern Turnpike), and containing 62.7 acres; in 1807 owned by Joshua Godfrey, in 1814 by Robert*



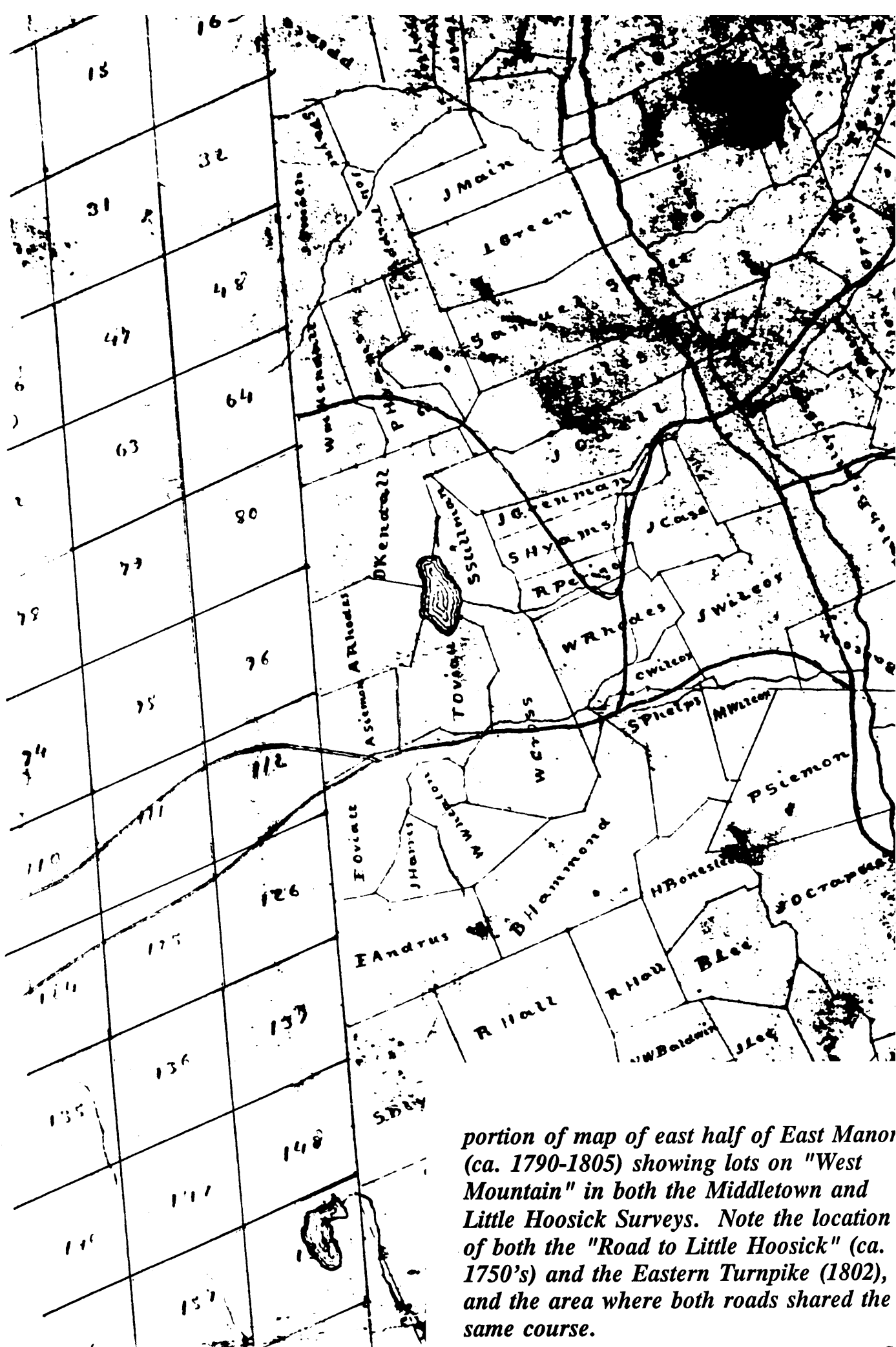
*Wheeler and in 1822 purchased by Sanford Wheeler; a note dated 1842 indicates that A. Brown and Burton Hammond own part of the lot*

24. *leased to Abraham Siemon (Simmons) April 21, 1795 for annual rent of 3.9 bushels of wheat, located on the north side of the "new road to Albany," containing 56 acres; owned by Robert Godfrey and transferred ca. 1802 to Moses Hendricks; Caleb Bentley owned part of lot*

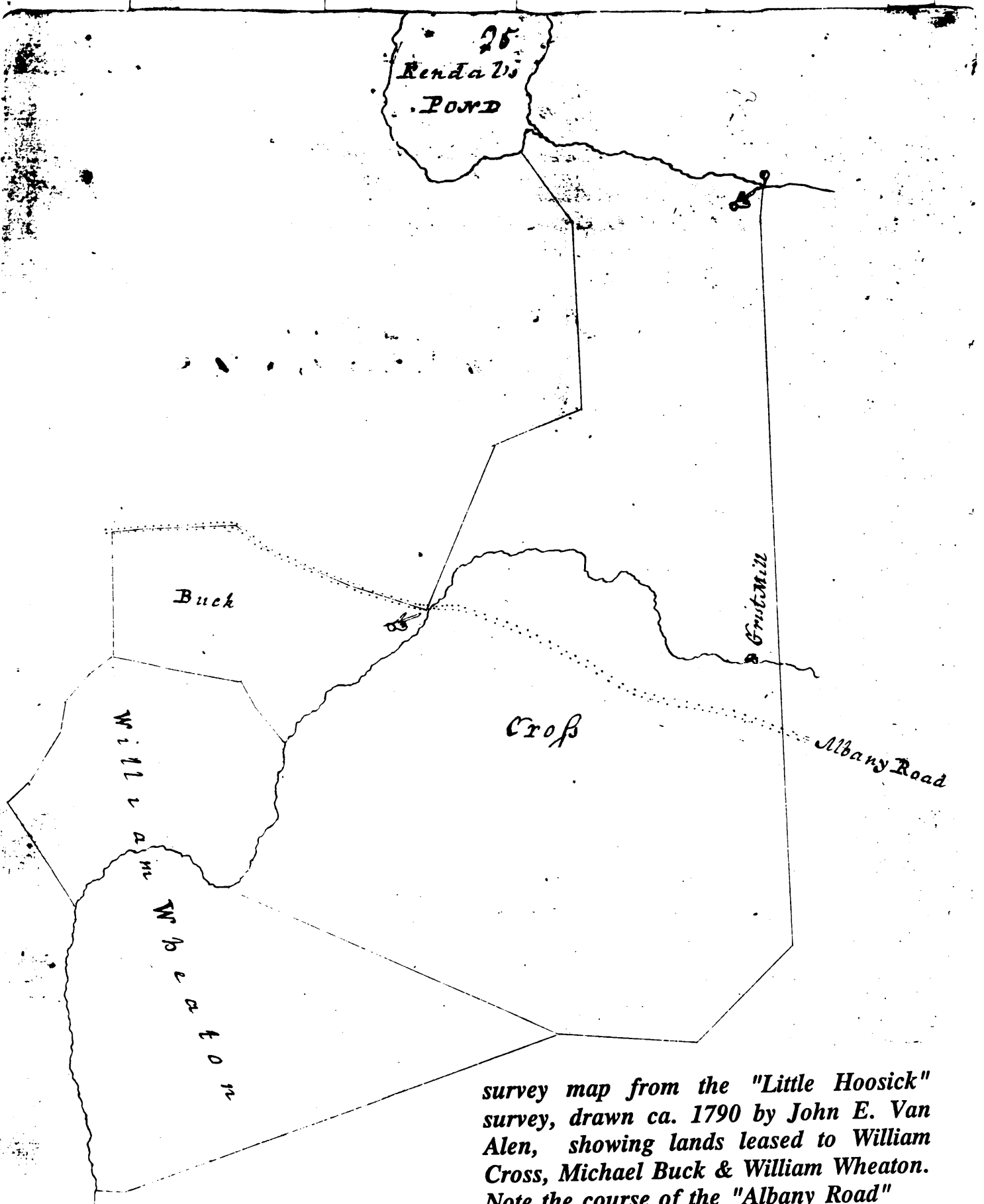
***List of Van Rensselaer lease holders west of Berlin***  
***"Middletown Survey" (ca. 1790)***  
***surveyed by Job Gilbert***

63. *leased to Matthias Scriven in 1798, and was on the lot in 1802; widow Ann Grover held a one-half interest as of 1806; no one on the lot in 1814 and Peter Crandall pretends to claim it; no one on the lot in 1831, and Rufus Austin offered 15 bushels of wheat rent for it use, but the Patroon requested 21 bushels; conveyed by deed to Rufus Austin in 1844 for \$1000*
64. *leased to Stephen Chapman at annual rent of 8 bushels of wheat*
79. *leased to Benjamin Austin on Nov. 21, 1803 for annual rent of 15 bushels of wheat*
80. *Jonathan Greenman was promised this lot in 1792; leased to Randall Spencer on Dec. 30, 1803 for 15¼ bushels of wheat annual rent*
95. *George Reynolds, "a very industrious man" from Petersburg, wished to lease the lot in 1804; leased to Edwin C. Wood on Jan. 19, 1836 and conveyed to him on Dec. 13, 1842*
96. *leased to Abel Rhodes for annual rent of 8 bushels of wheat on June 29, 1796*
111. *this lot was crossed by the "Hoosick Road;" leased first for ten years to Elijah Trumbull June 29, 1791, who made "some improvements" and constructed a "dwelling house; then owned by William Davis & David Maycumber, then by Barzelel Wakefield and obtained in 1811 by Samuel Streeter; Daniel Gray also held some interest in the lot; full title conveyed to Barzelel Streeter on Oct. 8, 1845 for \$360; a note indicates that payment of rent in 1815 was in "sugar" (possibly maple sugar?)*

112. *this lot also was crossed by the "Hoosick Road;" leased to Anthony Eymer on Sept. 13, 1794 for annual rent of 9½ bushels of wheat; Eymer "made improvements" on the lot; willed to his son, David Eymer, in 1827; in 1836 owned by Rensselaer Hakes*
125. *"Turnpike goes thorough this lot," leased June 29, 1791 to Samuel Rhodes for annual ground rent of 8 bushels of wheat; the lease was returned Jan. 27, 1800 and Jesse Hakes was said to be on the lot*
126. *also crossed by the Eastern Turnpike, this lot was leased to William Rhodes on June 28, 1791 for annual rent of 8 bushels of wheat; "some improvements" were made on the lot; then owned by James Rogers & Comfort Record; John Bliven, David Eymer, Joshua Hendricks & John Rhodes all owned or had interest in parts of lots; an undated pencil notes remarks that John Bliven was a "poor old cripple, not yet dead;" after 1839 Rensselaer Hakes apparently held an interest as well*
136. *leased to Isaiah Lamphear on April 6, 1801 for 14½ bushels of wheat annual rent; conveyed to "Glass Factory" on Nov. 1, 1811*
137. *leased to Isaiah Lamphear on March 22, 1803; lease "surrendered and returned to the Office" by Alden Hunt on April 30, 1822; Edward Kendall offered \$200 for a deed on Oct. 30, 1839; conveyed to George Horton on April 11, 1844 for \$750*



portion of map of east half of East Manor (ca. 1790-1805) showing lots on "West Mountain" in both the Middletown and Little Hoosick Surveys. Note the location of both the "Road to Little Hoosick" (ca. 1750's) and the Eastern Turnpike (1802), and the area where both roads shared the same course.



survey map from the "Little Hoosick" survey, drawn ca. 1790 by John E. Van Alen, showing lands leased to William Cross, Michael Buck & William Wheaton. Note the course of the "Albany Road" [the "Road to Little Hoosick"] and the location of an early grist mill.

# Manus Griswold

2 North 13.20  
 3 North 16.34  
 At 29.51 - 3, 464.37  
 At 10.93 - 1, 960.40  
 Total 0.93 = 0, 490.51  
 Diff. 12.9 = 0, 490.51

# Elisba Oratt

1A North 16.91  
 15 North 22.08  
 At 9.7A - 2, 900.56  
 At 10.04 - 1, 603.45  
 Total 0.94 = 1, 603.45  
 Diff. 2.35 = 0, 654.07

# Endrick Bonesteel

7 North 22.05  
 At 17.02 3.00  
 At 11.50 1, 060.70  
 At 10.02 10  
 Total 23.53 = 1, 371.62  
 Diff. 11.57 = 10, 310.92  
 At 11.50 1, 703.43  
 At 10.02 10  
 Total 13.603 = 13,609  
 Diff. 13.603 = 13,609  
 At 12.50 1, 096.91  
 At 10.02 10  
 Total 12.50 = 1, 096.91  
 Diff. 12.50 = 1, 096.91

The original circa 1790 field book of John E. Van Alen in the Historic Cherry Hill Papers, New York State Library, shows the surveyor's compass bearings used in manning lots in "Little Hoosick"

*Van Rensselaer East Manor lots surveys and account (rent) ledger pages covering Lots 111 and 112 in the Middletown Survey, originally leased to Elijah Trumbull and Anthony Eymer respectively. The surveys by Job Gilbert mention the old "Hoosack Road" crossing the lots. These account ledgers provide valuable information on persons who owned or had other interests in the lots and often provide dates of land conveyance. In addition, they contain interesting information on the manner of rent payment. Rent may have initially been charged in bushels of wheat, but it was often paid either in cash, by promissory note, or with other commodities such as bushels of oats or rye, in shingles or "cyder," or even "days labour on Road" [construction of the Eastern Turnpike.]*

Nov 11 (56)

beginning at Spruce Stake No 94 95 110 & 111. Bearing  
125° N 010 from the south. Spruce No 94 bearing N 8° E corner 1110

1877 40.0' in line of 95 to Beech Stake No 95 96 111 & 112  
1878 2000 00 90 112 to Spruce No 111 112 125 & 126

at 2952 cross Hornsuck Road  
S 87° N 4018 in line of 125 to Spruce Stake No 110 111 124 & 125

at 1470 small block ending at 111 } *Pat. No. 1845 cornered by*  
N 18° E 4000 in line of 110 to place, beginning } *and to 1000 ft. of the*  
at 1600 cross Hornsuck Road } *subject to surveying firm*  
} *of same - Camp 300 - 3*

containing 149. 300 25

Remarks. Section to Elijah Trumbull Kent. 9 Bus Wheat  
Soil tolerable good strong but stony beneath surface  
Hemlock, Birch and maple. Thoroughly watered

Some improvement, and increasing





Dr

Cr

Summary

Dr

for 1899-1900

1899-1900

1899-1900

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Account Ledger "B," page ("folio") 171, showing lot # 111 in Middletown

1160

Beginning at meet of l. & r. No 95, 96-111-112 bearing  
N 87 E 99, 110 in line of No 112 being N 8 E ... of No 111

N 87 E 99, 110 in line of 96 to meet Stake-11096 & 1112  
at 35.116 Corp Hoofnack Road

N 87 W 39, 111 in line of 126 to meet Stake 111-112 1298 1298

N 18 E 40, 00 Do 111 to place of bearing  
at 10.418 Corp Hoofnack Road

Leased to Anthony Cymor Rent 9/2 Bush Wheat  
A H P

Containing 146.2.20

Remarks

Soil Probable good Birch maple Spruce  
and Hemlock poor by water

Anthony Cymor, Improver in it  
on 11/1



***Account Ledger "B," page ("folio") 446, showing lot # 112 in Middletown***