

# ***NORTH CASTLE HISTORY***



Photograph by Tom McConnell  
Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

**HISTORIC SMITH'S TAVERN**  
"The House of Living History"

**THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Volume 39 -- 2012**

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*Smith's Tavern  
Society Headquarters  
Listed in The New York State  
and National Register of Historic Places*

# *The North Castle Historical Society*

440 BEDFORD ROAD ARMONK, NEW YORK 10504

Dear Friends,

I would like to acknowledge the Board of Trustees of The North Castle Historical Society. They freely give their time and resources in the pursuit of keeping the history of our town alive for others. I would also like to recognize and thank our Docents who give up their afternoons to keep Smith's Tavern open. They are always there with a smile, willing to share their knowledge of Smith's Tavern and the area's history with us. Take a step into Armonk's past and visit with us from April through November to browse buildings and visit our exhibits.

Thanks to our volunteers, we continue to keep our educational programs exciting. Colonial Crafts days are highlights for area 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes. We look forward to the return of our Armonk Antiques Show in early 2014. We are lending our support in the fight to save the Elijah Miller House (Washington's Headquarters) in North White Plains. This is an important part of our nation's Revolutionary War history that we should not lose.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and myself, I would like to thank all of you for the support you have continued to give us over the years. If you have any suggestions for us on ways to improve our programs or publications in the future, please let us know. Without your help we would be unable to open our doors for a look into our rich, history filled past.

Sincerely,

Ree Schultz, President

CHARTERED BY THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK



# SMITH'S TAVERN

"The House of Living History"

by  
Doris Finch Watson<sup>1</sup>



Lucille Bruno, Artist – Collections of The Society

**SMITH'S TAVERN, TOWN OF NORTH CASTLE, NEW YORK**  
The drawing shows entrance steps through the rock wall at the street  
and the small porch on the right, both of which were removed.

The story of Smith's Tavern is the story of an ancient house and an old Westchester town and how their roles were entwined throughout the passing generations.

## Before the Revolution

North Castle, New York, with its beautiful rolling hills and winding streams, called "the fishing place among the hills" by the Indians, was a prosperous Westchester town whose inhabitants worked at their trades and farmed their peaceful, fertile lands. The first Town Meeting was held April 6, 1736 and leading citizens were elected to office. The crops were

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<sup>1</sup> Lucille Bruno prepared the drawing of Smith's Tavern. Richard Lander and the author collaborated on research.

harvested, millstones turned, and roads were cared for by local residents. One of those peaceful farms was the sixty-acre parcel of Benjamin Hopkins, who owned the house which would become known as Smith's Tavern.

### 1776 The War Years

In that year when our Declaration of Independence was signed, North Castle was a divided community; even some families were split in their loyalties. Some were Patriots striving for Independence. Others were Tories loyal to the English King. Benjamin Hopkins had moved from North Castle to Fishkill, and Ichabod Ogden<sup>2</sup> was in residence at the place to be known as Smith's Tavern. It was a Militia Headquarters for the Patriot cause. When the British returned from burning Bedford, they marched past the house and attempted to burn it, but it was saved by the local militia.<sup>3</sup>

### After the Revolution

Patriot leaders became town government leaders, and by 1791 the area of the Town of North Castle decreased when the northern section became the Town of New Castle. That same year of 1791 Harrison Palmer<sup>4</sup> became the Town Clerk, conducting town business in his house and tavern – for he was then the owner of the building which was to become known as Smith's Tavern.

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<sup>2</sup> Ichabod Ogden is listed in the 1763 Freeholders of North Castle census.

<sup>3</sup> The village of Bedford, New York was burned by the British and their sympathizers the first part of July 1779. On October 29, 1846, Silas Sutherland of Middle Patent testified that when Bedford was burned the King's men fired on their retreat the following houses along the way: Israel Lyon, John Ferris, Peter Lyon, Andrew Sniffin and a house occupied by Ichabod Ogden where the militia had quarters, and which was afterwards owned and occupied as a tavern by John Smith. The History of The Several Towns, Manors, and Patents of the County of Westchester by the Late Rev. Robert Bolton, New York: Chas. F. Roper, 1881, page 72, Volume 1.

<sup>4</sup> Harrison Palmer, son of Gilbert and Sarah (Harrison) Palmer of North Castle, married Phebe Lyon, a daughter of Peter Lyon. Harrison Palmer was a farmer and tavern keeper (Smith's Tavern) in North Castle. He held several Town offices – Town Clerk 1791 to 1798, and Justice of the Peace. Phebe joined the Quaker Church of her husband's family and became an eloquent speaker at their meetings. They moved to New York City where he was a well-known dry goods merchant and where he died in 1814. Phebe lived until 1849. North Castle History, 1986, volume 13, page 20.



## **1797 Captain John Smith Buys His Tavern**

Harrison Palmer and Phebe, his wife, sold the building and over sixty acres to Captain John Smith, who served as a Patriot soldier in the Revolution. He operated Smith's Tavern, which became the center of much of the town's activities. He was elected Town Clerk of North Castle in 1798, and the Annual Town Meetings and the Town Board meetings continued to be held in the Tavern for over fifty years. Captain Smith was commissioned Postmaster of "North Castle" in 1809 with the first post office housed in the Tavern. Located at the thirty-seven mile marker (from New York) Smith's Tavern was a stage coach stop for the New York-Danbury Stage that rumbled through North Castle on the Post Road which ran in front of the Tavern. (The route turned south near the Tavern, following present-day North Greenwich Road, over Old Bedford Road and on to King Street.)

## **The 1840's – A Time of Change**

Many of the town's residents began a new venture, working at home in the shoemaking industry, and in that period (1843) Captain John Smith was called to rest. He was buried in the Friends' Cemetery (Quaker) in Purchase. His son, Samuel, who was born the year after Captain Smith purchased his Tavern, carried on the business. He, too, served as Town Clerk, ran the Tavern and conducted a store. But the thriving days of Smith's Tavern slowed by 1855 as centers developed at Sands' Mills and Banksville. In 1884 Samuel Smith, in his eighty-seventh year, was laid to rest in Middle Patent Cemetery. Smith's Tavern had earned its lasting name and a special place in our town's history.

## **After 1855**

In the last part of the century many changes took place in North Castle's little Village of Kensico, which was known as Reuben Wright's Mills in the Revolution, and where General Washington's officers had headquarters. A portion of the fertile valley, including farms, a church, a school and homes were destroyed when an earth dam was built to create a lake for the water of the City of New York. (Later the entire valley was destroyed when a great dam created the present Kensico Reservoir.) In that same period in our history Smith's Tavern underwent changes, too.



Photograph by James B. Sutherland, Jr., Collections of The Society

**SMITH'S TAVERN, 1898**  
**Bedford Road was a gravel road.**

In 1885 Odle C. Knapp became the owner, and the place remained in the Knapp family until 1908. The Knapps altered the east wing of the building, raising the slanted roof on that portion to create more bed chambers. It was then that the flat Victorian roof was added to the right hand section, and larger upstairs windows were installed in that portion of the house.

**Into the Twentieth Century**

In the spring of 1908 North Castle residents were talking about the first, famous Briarcliff Auto Road Race that roared through the Main Street of Armonk.

That same spring Mr. and Mrs. George W. Smith purchased and moved into Smith's Tavern, and it was the childhood home of our present Postmaster, George J. Smith, their son.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mr. and Mrs. George W. Smith were not related to Capt. John Smith. Their son, George J. Smith, was Postmaster for Armonk from September 30, 1957 until January 16, 1978 according to U.S. Postal Service records.





Collections of The Society

**AGNES SMITH AND SON GEORGE<sup>6</sup>  
STANDING IN FRONT OF SMITH'S TAVERN**

In 1917 they sold to Fay P. Stanton, a man with a dream of once more opening a wayside tavern in the old building to be known as The Red Jacket Inn. But his dream was short-lived, and ended in foreclosure about a year later.

During that period more automobiles began to appear on the roads of North Castle and the town once again heard rumors of a proposed railroad through North Castle. (Plans about a first railroad had been rumored over fifty years earlier.) John W. Sterling began acquiring large parcels of land (later called Yale Farms), and he acquired much of the upper (east) acreage of Smith's Tavern.

In 1918 he bought the Tavern building and remaining acreage. When John Sterling died, the terms of his Will left Smith's Tavern and lands to Yale University.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



In 1939 the historic Tavern building was sold to Franklin B. Brown.



Collections of The Society

## **SMITH'S TAVERN, 1938**

### **The Later Years**

After World War II the Town of North Castle entered a period of new growth and development. Smith's Tavern, too, began a period of transition. It had continued to serve as a residence after its Tavern years, with a succession of occupants making some changes through the years.

Purchased in 1945 by Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Datlowe, the dwelling took on new life. Old plaster and wallpaper were removed, revealing magnificent age-old paneling. Plumbing and electrical improvements provided more of present-day comforts within the ancient building.

After a long residence, the Datlowes sold to the Hillside Church, and the building, over two centuries old, filled a new role in the community when Sunday school classes were held within its walls.

### **1976 A New Era – A New Challenge**

North Castle's year-long celebration of our Nation's Bicentennial and our Town's 240<sup>th</sup> Anniversary were memorable. Now we enter our third century as a nation. And Smith's Tavern enters a new phase in our annals: "The House of Living History" will be the home of The North Castle Historical Society. It will serve as a center for historical research with records and books, documents and maps, artifacts, photographs and rotating displays. Individuals, schools and various groups will find it a center of learning and appreciation for other times in our history.

In its challenging new role, this treasured old building will enable us to preserve our precious heritage in North Castle for the generations to follow. Smith's Tavern once again will be a vital center in our community.



Collections of The Society

### **A 1977 GRANT FROM IBM MADE THE PURCHASE POSSIBLE<sup>7</sup>**

**Accepting the \$85,000 check from IBM Vice President Richard Hubner [R] are Society Vice President Dorrie Watson and President Richard Lander.**

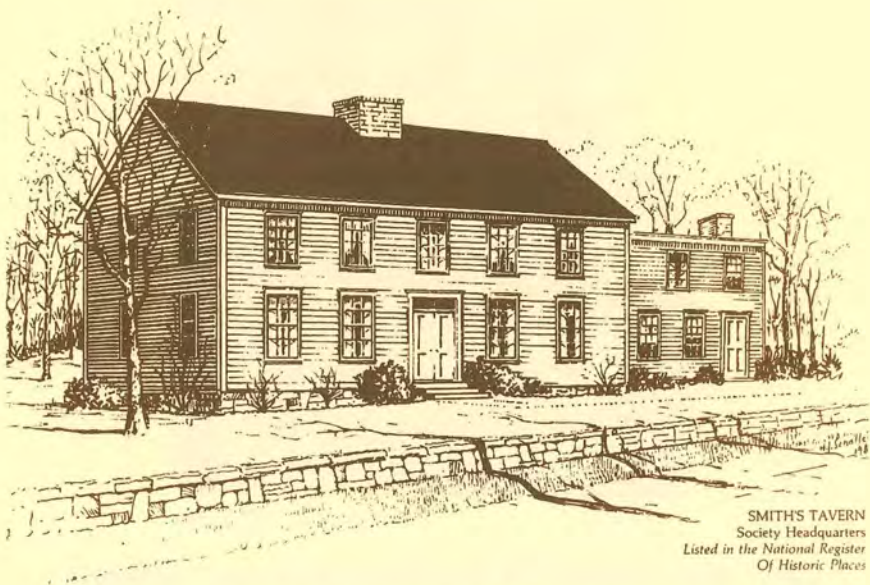
<sup>7</sup> Refer to North Castle History, Volume 27, 2000, pages 16-22.



THIS HISTORY OF SMITH'S TAVERN APPEARS IN A SMALL, BROWN, FOLDED BROCHURE PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY. IT WAS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE PATRIOTS AND EARLY SETTLERS WHO GAVE US OUR NORTH CASTLE HISTORY. SMITH'S TAVERN CONTINUES TO BE "THE HOUSE OF LIVING HISTORY".

FOUR ADDITIONAL BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE EDUCATIONAL COMPLEX. THE BRUNDAGE BLACKSMITH SHOP WAS ACQUIRED IN 1981; THE ONE-ROOM EAST MIDDLE PATENT SCHOOLHOUSE IN 1984; DR. JERRY LIGHT'S PRIVY IN 1981; AND THE 1798 QUAKER MEETING HOUSE IN 1995.

THIS REPRINT OF THE BROCHURE, UPDATED WITH FOOTNOTES, PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS, IS DEDICATED TO THOSE WITH THE FORESIGHT AND STRENGTH OF PURPOSE TO FOUND THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND TO ESTABLISH HISTORIC SMITH'S TAVERN EDUCATIONAL COMPLEX.



Pen and Ink Drawing by Hal Schaller, Collections of The Society

**SMITH'S TAVERN, 1985**

## **HERITAGE TRAIL**

by

**Battle of White Plains Monument Committee, Inc.  
(Republished for the 1976 Bicentennial Celebrations)**

During March, 1958<sup>1</sup> the Battle of White Plains Monument Committee was organized for the purpose of locating and marking as many sites as possible relating to the fighting between British and American forces from October 28 until November 5, 1776 – the Battle of White Plains.

Westchester played an important role in the first seven years of our nation's struggle for independence.

Unfortunately many landmarks have been obliterated over the years, dimming the memory of this vitally historic era.

### **Restoration of Landmarks**

In 1962 the Committee cleaned away the brush and debris on Merritt Hill, which is used as the battleground during the October reenactment of the Battle of White Plains.

In 1963 the Committee purchased the old Jacob Purdy house which was military headquarters at one time during the Revolution. Merritt Hill and Mount Misery were also cleared and marked.

The Committee, with the cooperation of the County of Westchester Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation; the City of White Plains; and the Towns of Harrison and North Castle marked as many of the historic sites as could be located.

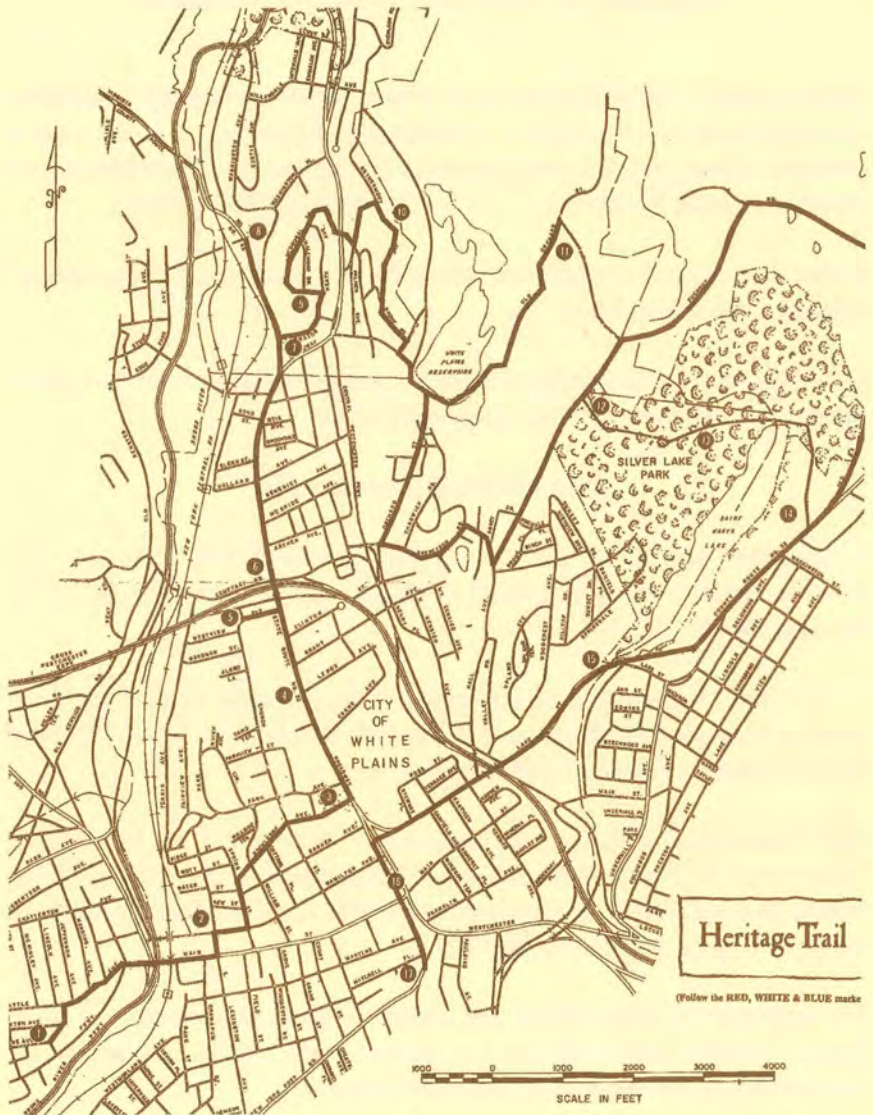
The trail starts in White Plains and continues through Harrison and North Castle. Many of these sites have been razed, built over, and presently bear no resemblance to those early and proud days.

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<sup>1</sup> Battle of White Plains Monument Committee, Inc., Post Office Box 1776, White Plains, New York



# Heritage Trail Map



Battle of White Plains Monument Committee, Inc.

## KEY TO THE HERITAGE TRAIL MAP

1. The cannon on the lawn of the private home on Whitney Street and Wayne Avenue (Chatterton Hill) is modern but it marks the site where Alexander Hamilton's guns fired against the British when they attacked on October 28, 1776 in the first assault of the Battle of White Plains.
2. The Jacob Purdy House located at Spring Street and Rockledge Avenue was built in 1721. The farm originally consisted of 132 acres which included Purdy Hill (Church Street Hill). General Washington used the house as headquarters for a few days before the Battle of White Plains and again for almost two months during the summer of 1778.
3. The First Presbyterian Church on North Broadway in White Plains, constructed of wood, was built about 1727, and stood on the same site on which now stands the present stone church, built in 1854. The first church was destroyed by fire in 1776 when the village was burned by some Continental soldiers in disobedience to General Washington's orders.

Many old tombstones remain in the churchyard, including those of Elijah Miller and two sons - the three of whom died during the Revolutionary War. (Elijah Miller's widow occupied the Miller House used by Washington as Headquarters during the Revolution.)

4. British mortar on North Broadway marks the spot where Washington's defenses crossed Broadway from Purdy Hill, to continue across the hills to the east.
5. The Anthony Miller homestead, built about 1724, now located at 379 Church Street, was moved to its present location a few years ago. Originally it occupied the Reichhold Chemicals, Inc. site on North Broadway. Anthony Miller operated a fulling mill on the Bronx River.
6. The White Plains Rural Cemetery Office on North Broadway was originally a Methodist church. It was built in 1795 and used as a church for 93 years.



7. A monument at the corner of Virginia Road and North Broadway marks the site of the giant White Oak which marked the boundary line of North Castle and White Plains. The Indian deed which sold White Plains to a group of Rye residents is dated November 22, 1683. The original tree was long known as the Treaty Oak.
8. The Miller House on Virginia Road served as headquarters for George Washington during the battle of White Plains. The table used by the General while in the house is on view here. Headquarters is open to the public free from February 22 to December 15 of each year, and it is operated by Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation.
9. The trenches on Miller Hill near General Heath Avenue have been restored by the Battle of White Plains Monument Committee in cooperation with the County of Westchester. Here the last shots in the campaign at White Plains were fired against the British by Americans serving under Colonel John Glover.
10. The earthworks on Mount Misery, near Nethermont Avenue, though part of Washington's defenses at White Plains, saw no action. However, because of the bitter cold endured by the troops stationed in these trenches, the hill received its name which is retained to the present day.
11. Old Hill Avenue was originally an Indian trail, later used by settlers. It is presently a footpath which leads to Hall Avenue, a distance of about 1/3 mile.
12. The Gilbert Hatfield house, on Hall Avenue, being the only house on the hill during the Revolution, is believed to have been the headquarters of General William Heath, in command at Hatfield Hill.
13. The cemetery on Buckhout Road dates back to Revolutionary times. Buried here are many former slaves, freed by the Quakers of Purchase, who settled them on land near the cemetery during the 18th century. Many Civil War veterans are buried here. Foundations of the church are still visible.

14. The footpath continued from Buckhout Road to Merritt Hill and Lake Street, a distance of about one mile. Along this trail through Silver Lake Park are the foundations of old houses, an old root cellar, and the remains of a mill dam (all overgrown with trees and shrubs at this time). This area was also a camp site occupied by Washington's Continentals during the White Plains Campaign.
15. Merritt Hill, on Lake Street, was the scene of one of the skirmishes during the White Plains campaign. Restored by the Battle of White Plains Monument Committee in 1962, it is now used to re-enact the Battle of White Plains each October.
16. Washington stored some of his supplies in the old Horton grist mill on Lake Street during the campaign at White Plains.
17. The original Village of White Plains was located on Broadway. Houses surrounded the Green, the remnant of which is now Tibbett's Park. The Purchase of White Plains from the Indians took place here at Armory Place and Westchester Avenue on November 22, 1683.
18. The first Court House in White Plains stood where the armory now stands. It was here that the Provincial Congress of the Colony of New York met and unanimously adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 9, 1776. The Declaration was read in public for the first time in New York on July 11, 1776 by Judge John Thomas of Purchase. At that moment the Colony of New York became a State and this spot is marked by a monument honoring White Plains as the birthplace of the State of New York. The Court House and most of the village were burned in 1776.

The "30 Miles to New York" milestone on the grounds of the armory is the only milestone remaining in the City of White Plains.



## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM YOUR EDITORS**

Several sites described in the research by the White Plains Monument Committee, Inc. are in North Castle, or very near the Town line.

### **ITEM 5 ON THE HERITAGE TRAIL MAP ANTHONY MILLER HOUSE**

“On the north side of the road crossing Bronx River, near Mr. Champanois’ residence, was the house of Christopher Yeomans; Anthony Miller where the Misses Tompkins house stands; north of the cemetery; his (Anthony Miller’s) fulling-mill was on the brook, south of the house.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1721 the surveyor general, Cadwallader Colden, presented a survey for Joseph Budd, John Hoit and others for a parcel commonly known by the name of White Plains. The description included, “...Thence up the stream of Brunxes [Bronx] River to an oak-tree about seventeen chains, above Anthony Miller’s fulling mill ....”<sup>3</sup>



John Rosch, 1939<sup>4</sup>

### **ANTHONY MILLER HOUSE, RESTORED**

**The house was moved to 379 Church Street, White Plains, New York**

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<sup>2</sup> History of Westchester County, New York including Morrisania, Kings Bridge and West Farms by J. Thomas Scharf, 1886, L. E. Preston & Co. Volume 1, Part 2, p. 722

<sup>3</sup> Historic White Plains by John Rosch, White Plains: Balletto-Sweetman, 1939, reprinted by Harbor Hill Books, 1976, page 16

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, page 122

A fulling mill processed the loosely woven cloth; either wool, cotton or linen with pounding mallets and urine. A fulling mill required field space where fabric could be dried in the sun and air. During Colonial years fuller's thistles were used to raise a nap so that the fabric felt softer.

The original homestead was on today's North Broadway just over the North White Plains-White Plains border, where Reichhold Chemicals, Inc. offices were built (next to present-day 499 North Broadway).

## **ITEM 6 ON THE MAP - WHITE PLAINS RURAL CEMETERY**



Courtesy Gray Williams, Westchester County Historical Society<sup>5</sup>

## **WHITE PLAINS RURAL CEMETERY OFFICE**

The Cemetery is located at the present-day intersection of Interstate Route 287 and New York State Route 22 (North Broadway) in White Plains. The Cemetery offices are housed in the first Methodist Church building in White Plains.

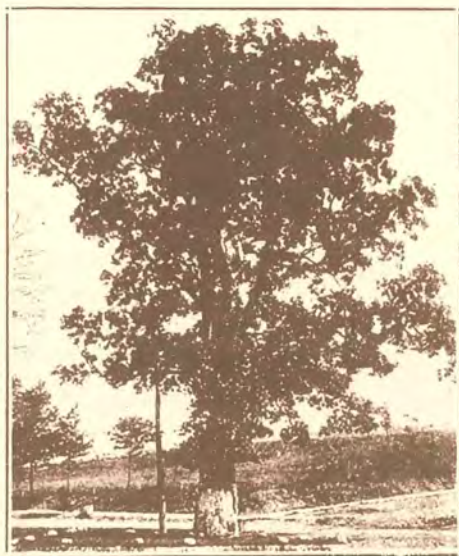
White Plains historian Renoda Hoffman wrote in her book, Yesterday in White Plains, that the first Methodist church in White Plains was completed on the NW corner of Broadway and Cemetery Road in 1795, but that it burned on the day it was dedicated, and rebuilt in 1797.

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<sup>5</sup> Picturing our Past: National Register Sites in Westchester County by Gray Williams; Westchester County Historical Society, 2003.



## ITEM 7 ON THE MAP – OAK TREE MONUMENT



John Rosch, 1939

### WHITE OAK TREE – THE TREATY OAK

**Today a metal sign marks the spot where the tree once stood.**

John Rosch reported in his 1939 book, Historic White Plains, that this tree stood at the intersection of North Broadway (New York State Route 22) and Virginia Road in North White Plains. He wrote that the tree was destroyed by lightning in 1903, three weeks after the photograph appearing above was taken.

In earlier years the oak tree was used as a boundary defining marker, as described above under the Anthony Miller House section, and as a site where treaties were negotiated with the Indians.

This corner was the site of the original Fisher Farm, and later the Oak Tree Inn for many years, and today Save-Way Cleaners. Next door is the North White Plains Firehouse. Legend says that the historic old oak tree was used by Continental soldiers to hang deserters and spies during the Revolution, and was also called The Old Washington Oak.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to North Castle History, volume 2, 1975.

## ITEM 8 ON THE MAP – MILLER HOUSE ON VIRGINIA ROAD



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

### **WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS ELIJAH AND ANN MILLER HOUSE**

This house sits on Virginia Road in North White Plains at the base of Miller Hill, from where the last shots were fired during the Battle of White Plains.

The ancient structure and property have been owned by Westchester County since 1917. Currently Westchester County government officials are allowing the building to deteriorate without maintenance and have covered the building with a blue tarpaulin as the roof needs replacing.

Elijah Miller and two sons, James and Elijah, Jr., lost their lives fighting for American independence. Ann Miller was hostess to General George Washington and several of his generals. Her house and grounds served as camp grounds and hospital for the troops.



## ITEM 9 ON THE MAP – MILLER HILL



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

## MILLER HILL

**Only undeveloped Revolutionary War battle site remaining in Westchester County. Trenches and earthworks are visible.**

## ITEM 10 ON THE MAP – MOUNT MISERY



Collections of The North Castle Historical Society

**MOUNT MISERY,  
NEAR PRESENT-DAY NETHERMONT AVENUE**

## ITEM 16 ON THE MAP – OLD HORTON GRIST MILL



John Rosch, 1939

### THE JOHN HORTON GRIST MILL – LATER DEUTERMANN'S MILL

“Spurred on by an extremity of circumstances, Washington’s army arrived in strategically located White Plains on October 21<sup>st</sup>, [1776] and rested on the hilly ground, north of the village; the lines extending from the Bronx over Dusenbury’s Hill, across Broadway and eastward to the rocky territory at Horton’s Pond, later known as St. Mary’s Lake, now Silver Lake.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1925 the Westchester County Park Commission bought about twelve acres of land formerly owned by Charles Deutermann, deceased. The larger of the two parcels was along both sides of the Mamaroneck River east of Deutermann’s Mill.<sup>8</sup> The millstones from this mill were used in the monument commemorating the Reuben Wright Mills located just south of Rye Lake Bridge on New York State Route 22 in North White Plains on the eastern shore of Kensico Dam Lake.

The monthly review, Ice and Refrigeration, published by Nickerson and Collins Company, Chicago, reported that at the 1910 annual meeting of the Eastern Ice Association Charles Deutermann, of Charles Deutermann & Son, White Plains, New York was elected to the Executive Committee.

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<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., Rosch, page 65

<sup>8</sup> *Scarsdale Inquirer* newspaper, January 24, 1925, page 1



## ITEM 18 ON THE MAP – COURTHOUSE



Courtesy of the White Plains Historical Society

### THE FIRST WHITE PLAINS COURTHOUSE, ERECTED IN 1758

**The inscription reads: “Old Court House, at White Plains. The First Capitol of New York State. Where the Charter was Signed, July 9<sup>th</sup> 1776.”**

Currently the site of the White Plains Armory on North Broadway, it is where New York’s 4<sup>th</sup> Provincial Congress received the Declaration of Independence and where the charter creating New York State was signed on July 9, 1776.

The building and others in the village were burned on November 4, 1776 by American troops<sup>9</sup> after the Battle of Chatterton’s Hill. This plate was struck in honor of the monument standing in front of the Armory and dedicated by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution on June 14, 1910, in commemoration of the old courthouse as The Birthplace of New York State. The plate is a gift from Bruce Handler to the White Plains Historical Society.

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<sup>9</sup> Burning the buildings in White Plains when American troops retreated prevented the British from using them.

**SARAH E. HOBBY'S AUTOGRAPH BOOK**  
**1886-1893**



Collections of The Society

Sarah's small autograph book measures 6 inches long and 4 inches high. It is covered with red velvet fabric. The edges of the pages are gold. There are 52 pages, some of which are unsigned. The left inside cover is signed "Sarah E. Hobby".

Many of the autographs are those of staff and students at Fort Edward Collegiate Institute. The Fort Edward Collegiate Institute was a boarding school affiliated with the Methodist Church. It accepted both male and female students, but taught different courses to the males, including mathematics and science classes. For a period of time it became a female-only school. The school was destroyed by fire in March, 1910.<sup>1</sup> Fort Edward is north of Albany, New York and immediately south of Glens Falls, New York.

William W. McGilton signed on May 27, 1886. Teacher Alice K. McGilton signed the same day and wrote:

*Respond to the best within you,  
and love the good everywhere.*

Mary R. Close, Stanwich, Connecticut; Mary E. Reynolds, Moreau, New York; D. V. Hewlett, Geneva, New York; Vernon, Sarah A. and James M. Burgar, 153 Perry Street, New York, New York all signed during 1886.

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<sup>1</sup> The Cornell Daily Sun, Volume XXX, Number 122, 16 March 1910.



On June 17, 1886 A. Blanche Morse, Stanford, New York, wrote:

*My gracious, what a plague she is. She bothers the life out of me.  
Your Minervian Cousin*

Another friend at Fort Edward, Lizzie Blair from New York City wrote,

*I prefer a back seat, don't you? How do you like Mr. S?  
Graceful positions.  
Do you ever laugh when you shouldn't?*



**FORT EDWARD COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE<sup>2</sup>**

Some of the signatures give clues to Sarah's home – Banksville and the Middle Patent Methodist Church. Note that some of the writers identified their hometown as Banksville, Connecticut, as Banksville is cut in half between New York and Connecticut.

During February 1891, the Rev. William Willcocks, who was the pastor at Middle Patent Methodist Church, wrote in Sarah's Book:

*Banksville, Conn. – February 1891  
'Tis our service here to love and serve our God  
and prepare for His coming.  
Your friend & Pastor, Wm. Willcocks<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://ottawa.ca/sites/ottawa.ca/files/migrated/images>

<sup>3</sup> According to records of the New York Methodist Episcopal Conference, Rev. William Willcocks died at his home, "The Pines", Lakeville, Connecticut on February 1, 1923. He was the son of Edward and Julia Cornwall Willcocks. He and Jennie Cleveland of Lakeville, Connecticut married on July 1, 1890. He was survived by one daughter, Mrs. Lucille Willcocks Murray of Syracuse, New York and two sisters, Mrs. Andrew Mitchell and Miss Marie Petie, both of New York City.

Jennie L. C. Willcocks wrote on February 17, 1891:

*Every hour that flits so slowly  
has its tasks to do or bear;  
Luminous the crown with glory,  
if thou place each gem with care*

William J. Brundage and Clara Brundage<sup>4</sup> simply signed their names on October 8, 1887 and wrote Banksville, Connecticut. Annie P. Brundage, Banksville, Connecticut signed on October 14, 1887.

Charles E. Brundage, Banksville, Connecticut, October 22, 1889 wrote:

*May time pass lightly oer the coming years.  
No care or sorrow dim thine eyes with tears.  
May each succeeding day bring pleasure –  
joy – happiness – health and treasure.*

Others who lived in the Banksville area also wrote verses of advice and encouragement.

*For every grief a joy will come; For every toil a rest.  
So hope, so love, so patience bear. God doith all things best.  
Yours Sincerely, Jennie R. Downs – May 9, 1891*

*Be joyful as the days go by, counting God's mercies oer & oer.  
He who bore life's heaviest cross may be yours forever more.  
H. W. Ackerly – Banksville, Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1893*

Harriet M. Mead, Banksville, Connecticut signed on May 9, 1888 and Allen Mead, Banksville, Connecticut signed on May 20, 1888. On May 5, 1888 Jennie R. Mead, Banksville, Connecticut wrote the following advice to Sarah:

*We shape ourselves the joy or fear of which our coming life is made  
and fill our future atmosphere with sunshine or with shade.  
The tissue of the life to be, we weave with colors of our own  
and in the field of destiny, we reap as we have sown.*

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to North Castle History, volume 26, 1999.



Mrs. H. W. Ackerly advised in September 1893:

*May all the blessings Heaven bestows  
on you like evening dew descend and  
when the storms of sorrow flow,  
to calm your grief and still your woe,  
O may you ever look to Jesus as your friend.*

Jas. Wm. Macomber and M. E. Macomber, Bedford, New York signed on March 4, 1890. Mary J. Reynolds, North Castle, New York signed on April 20, 1889 and Florence A. Marshall, Bedford, New York signed on November 8, 1886. J. Alice Griswold, Banksville, Fairfield County, Connecticut, Mary J. Griswold and Albert Hobby signed but did not indicate a place or date.

On October 14, 1886 Della A. Palmer cautioned Sarah:

*True friendship is very scarce in human life,  
but when it exists, like the shades of evening,  
it exists even until the setting of the sun of life.*

Harvey C. Waterbury offered Sarah the following guidance:

*Banksville, New York, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1892  
Think not of the past or future.  
The present is all thou hast.  
For the future will soon be present,  
the present will soon be past.  
Very truly, Harvey C. Waterbury*

~

THE NORTH CASTLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS GRATEFUL TO OUR FRIEND VIVIEN CORD WHO DONATED THIS VICTORIAN AUTOGRAPH BOOK THAT ONCE BELONGED TO SARAH E. HOBBY OF THE BANKSVILLE AREA OF NORTH CASTLE, NEW YORK.

by  
**Sharon Tomback**

## Where was John Griffen's Store?

<sup>1</sup> Spelling of the name is also reported as Griffin and Griffith. Contemporary genealogical searchers report he married Esther Cromwell and that their children were Hanna, Anna, John II, David, Daniel, Job, Solomon, Esther, Phebe, Edmond and Sarah.

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A general store was an important part of any colonial community. Various items were sold at the general store. Many times farmers would barter their eggs and vegetables and meat for things they could not grow or make on their own farms. A general store would supply coffee, sugar, salt, imported items such as table and kitchen wares, furs, fabrics and clothing items, barrels and crocks. Sometimes the general stores would supply items made by the local tinsmith and blacksmith. The store would be a place to meet neighbors and talk about the crops and the weather.

### **Who was John Griffen?**

John Griffen was a storekeeper and successful farmer who lived and held widespread property at the head of King Street in North Castle. He had various outbuildings on his property, including a cider mill, carriage house, and oil mill.<sup>3</sup>

His parents were members of the Quaker community. According to the Purchase Monthly Meeting, Westchester County, New York Quaker Births, John was born the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month (NS) 1755.<sup>4</sup>

Purchase Monthly Meeting records relate that his parents were John Griffen, Jr. and Hannah Haviland Griffen. His mother, Hannah, died when he was three years of age, and his father married a second time to a woman named Judith.<sup>5</sup>

There were ten children born to John and Judith Griffen: Elihu, Hannah, James, Jesse, Dorcas, Phebe, Josiah, twins Aaron and Moses, and Judith. Some members of this family are buried at the Purchase Friends Meeting Cemetery, Purchase, New York.

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to "North Castle's First Subdivision", by Richard N. Lander, North Castle History, The North Castle Historical Society, 1985, pages 18-21.

<sup>4</sup> The Julian calendar (Old Style or OS) was superseded in 1752 by the Gregorian calendar (New Style or NS). The OS calendar ran from March through February, with March being month 1 and February being month 12. The new style did not come into common usage for some years afterwards. Also, Quakers did not use the 'pagan' names of the months and days and stated dates only using numbers, i.e., the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month. Therefore, it is often impossible to definitely give a date of birth for these earlier years unless OS or NS is given with the date.

<sup>5</sup> Nee Marshall per Havilands.org.

The 1779 North Castle Tax List shows John Griffin (sic) holding real estate valued at 800 pounds incurring a tax of 40 pounds,<sup>6</sup> and John Griffin holding personal property valued at 868 pounds incurring a tax of 21 pounds 14 shillings<sup>7</sup>. Four Griffin families, headed by John Sr., John Jr., Elihu, and Gershom, are listed on the 1790 Federal census for North Castle:

*John Griffin, Senior – 4 free white males 16 years of age or older; 2 free white males under 16 years of age; 3 free white females; no other free persons; no slaves.*

*John Griffin, Junior – 3 free white males 16 years of age or older; 6 free white males under 16 years of age; 5 free white females; no other free persons; no slaves.*

*Elihu Griffin – 3 free white males 16 years of age or older; 2 free white males under 16 years of age; 2 free white females; no other free persons; no slaves.*

*Gershom Griffin (sic) - 2 free white males 16 years of age or older; 4 free white males under 16 years of age; 4 free white females; no other free persons; no slaves.*

John Griffin's Will is dated January 21, 1826, although his date of death has been reported as September 30 of that year and probate of the Will reportedly occurred in 1827. In his Will he named wife Esther; sons Emmanuel, John I., Job, and Solomon; children of his predeceased son Daniel; children of his predeceased son David; and, daughters Phebe Underhill, Hannah Griffin, Anna Haviland, and Esther Field.<sup>8</sup>

### **Active Community Members**

The family members were citizens who actively participated in their community. Town records indicate the family members lived near the present-day intersection of New York State Routes 120 (King Street) and

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<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., Historical Records North Castle/New Castle 1736-1791, Volume 1, page C5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, page C6.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to "North Castle's First Subdivision", by Richard N. Lander, North Castle History, The North Castle Historical Society, 1985, page 21. Also refer to Westchester County Archives, Surrogate Records, Will A-0365(30)L, folder 11.



22 (Bedford Road). The store along with a carriage house, cider mill, oil mill and other buildings were on the large land holdings.<sup>9</sup>

During the early years of the Town of North Castle roads were maintained by the residents. Each year there was an annual Town meeting held in early April when those men in charge of maintaining each of the road districts were appointed. By 1786 there were 20 road districts. During the April 4, 1786 Town meeting John Griffen was appointed overseer of Road District 12: "From King Street westward to the Road near Cocks Mills, to have Rees Cocks, Elihu Griffen and James Griffen."

Town records indicate that John Griffen Jr., Nicholas Waldron, William Martin and Benjamin Lane were road overseers for 1784, although no district description is given. In 1789 John Griffen was appointed for district 7 south from his house to the Colony Line and John Griffen Sr. was appointed overseer for road district 14.

After the creation of the Town of New Castle out of North Castle in 1791, there were 14 North Castle road districts. John Griffin Sr. (sic) was appointed overseer for North Castle district 13 for the year 1791. For that same year Elihu Griffen was appointed highway master for New Castle road district 13, from Richard Tomkins to the manor line.

The Purchase, New York Quarterly minutes of the Quakers describe the authorization to build the North Castle Meeting House<sup>10</sup> and John Griffen was appointed a member of that authorization committee:

*1<sup>st</sup>, the 11<sup>th</sup> month, 1797 – Shapagua Monthly Meeting proposed building a meeting house at North Castle 30 by 40 feet with twenty foot posts – estimated cost 500 pounds – deficient sum 236 pounds 12 shillings. A committee of Jonathan Nickerson, John Griffen Jr., Joseph Quinby of Westchester, John Cornell, Thomas Vail and Isaac Haviland was appointed with power to allow the Friends of North Castle to proceed if the committee thought it right.*

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<sup>9</sup> *Farmstead Archaeology and the Impact of Agrarian Change at Three Sites in Eastern New York State*, Joseph Sopko, 2000; Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Domestic Site Archaeology in New York State J.P. Hart and C.L. Fisher, Editors, New York State Museum Bulletin 495, pp. 153-159.

<sup>10</sup> The North Castle 1798 Quaker Meeting House has been moved and preserved by The North Castle Historical Society. It is now part of the Historic Smith's Tavern Educational Complex at 440 Bedford Road, Armonk, New York.

## Archaeology of the Land

In 2000 Joseph Sopko studied the land use of a portion of the Griffen farm from about 1780 until 1915. Archaeological tests were performed along with historical documentation research. The succession of owners for the site studied was John Griffen, Jr., Daniel Griffen<sup>11</sup>, Jacob Chapman, Daniel White, and Stephen White<sup>12</sup>. The Griffen families lived on the study site from about 1780 until 1827 and the White families from 1830 until 1915.

These archaeological tests reported by Mr. Sopko recovered 7,433 artifacts from the stratigraphic deposits and plow zone soil levels and 17% were associated with the Griffen family occupation of the site. The ceramics, used for food preparation, storage and serving, were both locally produced and imported from England or Germany and included brown-combed or dot-decorated yellow lead-glazed buff earthenware, redware, stoneware, creamware, pearlware, white ware, porcelain, Delft and white salt-glazed stoneware.

Other items found included clam and oyster shells, kaolin pipes, bottle glass and lamp chimney glass indicating a participation in the local, regional and global economies. The absences of coal deposits on the site suggested that the Griffen families used firewood for heating and cooking. The artifacts recovered indicated participation in a regional economy by a family of middle-class social status.<sup>13</sup>

## Subdivision of the Land

In 1985 Richard Lander, then the North Castle Town Historian, researched additional Griffen family land holdings of approximately 175 acres near the Sopko study site. "John Griffin (sic), a prosperous farmer and storekeeper resided on an extended estate stretching partially along the upper Mile Square Road (Old Post Road) to and across King Street, south to Cooney Hill Road. On the east his holdings extended to lands of James Field and

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<sup>11</sup> Sopko reported that Daniel Griffen sold a 68-acre farm to Jacob Chapman in 1827; Westchester County Clerk's Office Deeds, Volume 30, 1827.

<sup>12</sup> A biography of Rev. Stephen F. White, Methodist Episcopal Church minister, published in 1895 reported that he married (2) Laura J. White in 1875 and that the family spent summer months at their beautiful home near White Plains, about 25 miles from New York City where they owned 70 acres comprising the old homestead.

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., Sopko, 1996.





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## **HISTORIC SMITH'S TAVERN**

### **"The House of Living History"**

The photograph appearing on the front cover shows a view of Captain John Smith's Tavern flanked by the American flag. Benjamin Hopkins owned the house and a farm of sixty acres prior to the Declaration of Independence. Thereafter, Hopkins moved to Fishkill, and Ichabod Ogden lived in the house.

During the war years the property was Militia Headquarters for the Patriot cause. Harrison Palmer was the owner by 1791. He served as Town Clerk and Town business was conducted here. Captain John Smith purchased the house and property in 1797, and was elected Town Clerk in 1798. Later, his son, Samuel Purdy Smith, also served as Town Clerk. The house and property were sold to Odle Close Knapp in 1884, and remained in the Knapp family until George W. Smith purchased it in 1908. Fay P. Stanton was the owner 1917-1918; John W. Sterling 1918-1937; Yale University 1937-1939; Franklin B. Brown, 1939-1945; Marghretta Datlowe 1945-1974; and The Hillside Church 1974-1977.

With the \$85,000 donation from IBM, and additional gifts from other community corporations, organizations, and neighbors, in 1977 The North Castle Historical Society purchased Historic Smith's Tavern, "The House of Living History".

Please forward any corrections or additions to the information presented herein and/or your constructive suggestions for improving this publication to the editorial board at The North Castle Historical Society, Historic Smith's Tavern, 440 Bedford Road, Armonk, New York 10504. If you would be willing to research and/or author an article, please let us know. Different writers and diverse perspectives are vital. We would appreciate hearing from you.

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