

# The Colonie Historical Oracle

Quarterly Newsletter of the Historical Society of the Town of Colonie

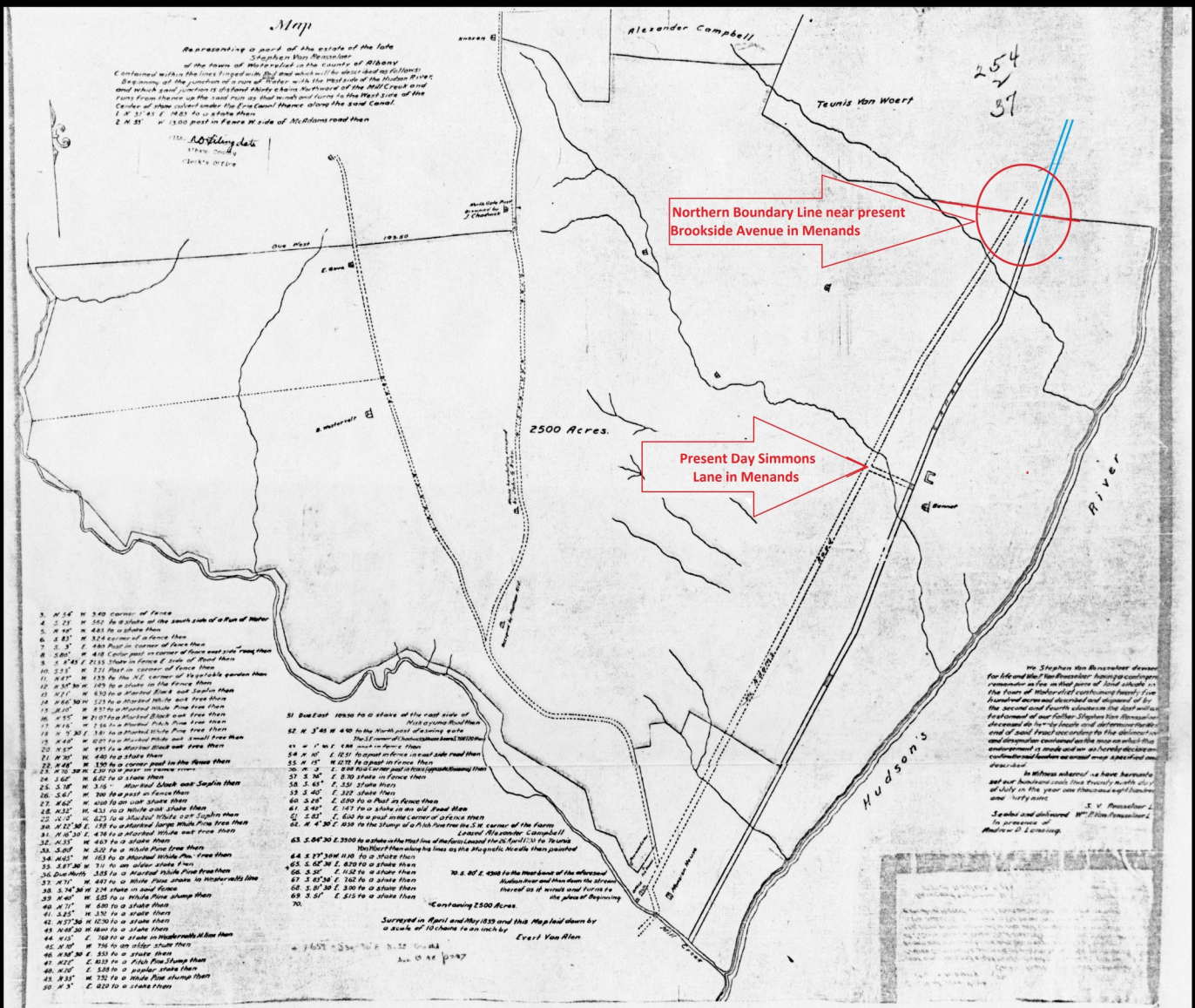
Volume 16, No. 3

July — September 2021

## “The Homestead Farm”

### The 2,500 Acre Farm of Stephen Van Rensselaer III

Submitted by Kevin Franklin, Colonie Town Historian



The Stephen Van Rensselaer III Estate:  
2,500 acres located today in North Albany, Menands and Loudonville

If you live in the southern end of Menands or in Loudonville, or the area along parts of the Albany Shaker Road, chances are the property where your home stands was all part of a 2,500-acre tract of VanRensselaer land called “The Farm” that was separate and apart from the rest of the land within the old West Manor of Rensselaerwyck.

The deed to your home may or may not include a very detailed and lengthy title search like one that was done on a home along the Albany Shaker Road in the Loudonville area just beyond the site of the City of Albany’s water reservoir, where developer Charles Buchman was building homes in the Albany area immediately after WWII. Buchman also developed the Park Lane and Park Hill Apartments in Menands along with the area called Park Hill Drive.

We all know the story behind how Henry Hudson “discovered” this area in mid-September of 1609 when Hudson pushed his small ship the Half Moon up the “North River” to the latitude near present day Albany where the ship continued to ground on shoals as the river became more shallow at and beyond Albany. Hudson was under contract with the Dutch East India Company of Holland to find what was hoped by many in Europe at the time to be a North-Eastern route from Europe to sail to the East Indies for trade without having to sail all the way around the Continent of Africa. Were it not for the shoals near Albany and Henry Hudson pushing his ship and crew as far as conditions would allow, the bustling little community of Beverwyck and Fort Orange might have been established farther south along the river, or not at all.

Hudson’s exploration of the North River proved it not to be that elusive route, but his journals revealed he had found a virtual utopia filled with virgin forests as far as the eye could see, plenty of game and fresh water in a river filled with fish, and fertile flatlands along its banks that were under cultivation (enough harvests to fill the holds of several ships) by friendly Native Americans who were willing trade food and more importantly; furs for trinkets that Hudson’s crew offered. News of Hudson’s voyage triggered more ships to sail upriver to the Albany area, bringing European made implements of value to the Indians who were more than willing to trade valuable beaver and other animal pelts in exchange for them.

In 1621 the States General of the Netherlands granted a charter to the Dutch West India Company, giving it not only a monopoly to conduct trade, but to acquire land and establish colonies in what became “New Netherland” along the North-

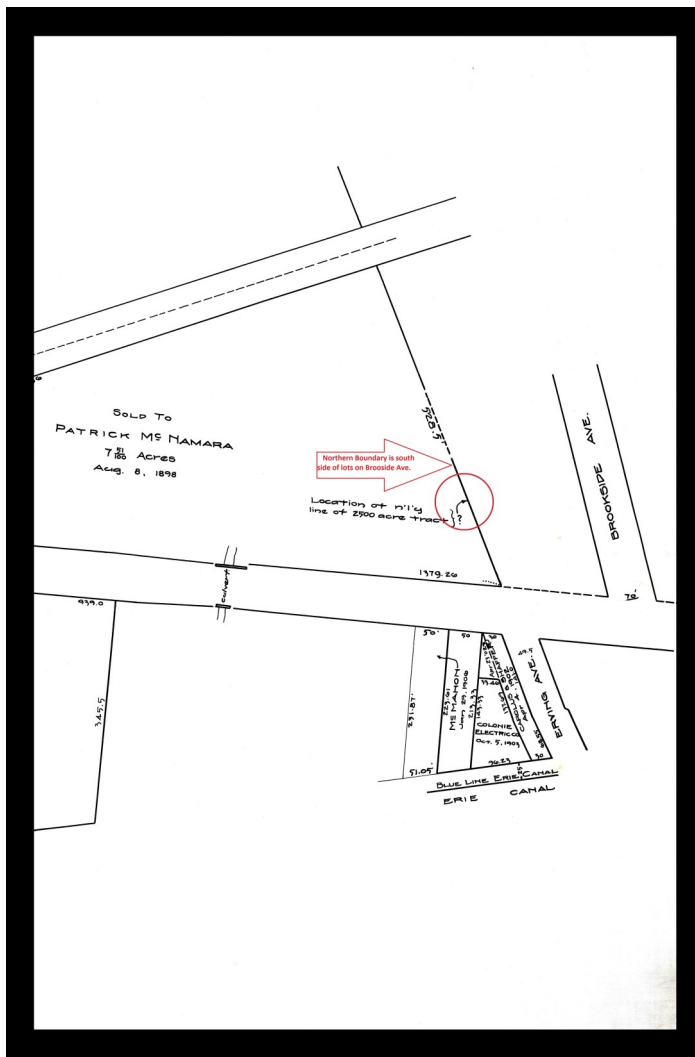
East area of America. In 1624 The West India Company sent a party of 30 families to settle at what eventually became Albany.

In 1629-1630, the States General and the Dutch West India Company conveyed a tract of land to Killian VanRensselaer on the west side of the Hudson River extending “from the mouth of the Mohawk River, 24 miles southward, and two days’ journey westward [into the country].” (The survey point for the northern boundary of that parcel was taken from the landmark of the Cohoes falls in a westerly direction.) A 1969 issue of the *Colonie Townsman* newspaper showed a photograph of the original 1630 Surveyors stone still standing in a heavily wooded area known to locals as “Skadaddle Ridge” on land owned by the Guptil family. Present day Manor Avenue in Cohoes is identified as the northern boundary of that tract of land named the “West Manor” or today’s Albany County.

The entire West Manor tract was initially known as “Watervliet”. Seven years later, on the east side of the Hudson, a similar tract 24 miles north and south and 24 miles inland was obtained, making Killian VanRensselaer the Patroon or Lord, presiding over 700,000 acres of land combined, called Rensselaerwyck (name as spelled on the 1767 Map of the Manor.) The original “Watervliet” was broken up into other towns after the American Revolution beginning with Rensselaerville and eventually all of the other townships that make up today’s Albany County leaving that familiar triangular shaped parcel of land still called “Watervliet” which became Colonie in 1895.

The above paragraph helps to understand some of the language in the aforementioned title search describing the 2,500-acre parcel called “The Farm”, when the title search document mentions the old Town of Watervliet. In looking at the 2,500-acre survey map, “The Farm” begins near the Patroon’s Mansion in the North Albany area and spreads northward along the Hudson River and north-westward into what is now parts of North Albany and Colonie. Two points on this old map stand out: One is a small road leading east from the “Macadam Road” on the map, (Today’s Broadway in Menands) and ending after crossing the adjacent Erie Canal. This road is today’s Simmons Lane in Menands. From the north-east area of the map runs a straight line in a westerly direction. This line is also the boundary of the backyards on the south side of Brookside Ave. in Menands.

(See map, next page.)



Northern boundary of 2,500 acre tract is south side of lots on Brookside Ave. in Menands.

This same line is clearly defined on an early 20th Century map of the old Watervliet Turnpike (Broadway) outlining the lands along the Watervliet Turnpike still in the Estate of the late William P. VanRensselaer. That map shows the survey lines of the names of several of the early commercial companies that were built in the southern end of Menands at the time including the Albany Felt Company and Simmons Machine and others including the old Chadwick Baseball Park, later Hawkins Stadium, home of the Albany Senators Baseball team.

The title search document researched by Charles L. Drake, describes when the last Patroon, Stephen VanRensselaer III died January 26, 1839. According to Stephen III's will, "The lands in his manor on the west side of the Hudson River was devised to his son Stephen excepting, among other pieces of land

To his son William P. VanRensselaer, he devised his manor on the east side of the Hudson River in Rensselaer County. The death of Stephen VanRensselaer III not only divided his vast estate among his two sons, it also sparked what were referred to as the "Anti Rent Wars" when the sons tried to collect past due rents from tenant farmers on VanRensselaer land, but that is another extremely interesting story.

The language in the fourth clause in Stephen III's will is a bit hard to understand or follow, but it kept the 2,500-acre tract solely in control of VanRensselaer's offspring. It reads:

"I give, devise and bequeath my farm in the Town of Watervliet above devised for live [sic] to my son Stephen, from and after his death to my grandson, his son, Stephen, during his natural life, and I will and direct that upon the death of my said grandson Stephen the remainder in fee in the said farm shall belong to and vest in such of the issue of the said Stephen my grandson, as shall then be living; and in case my said grandson, shall die without leaving issue, the said remainder in fee in the said farm shall belong to and vest in my said son William; and in case the same shall fail to vest in my said son William, by reason of his death, then the said remainder in fee shall belong to such persons as by the laws of this State would be entitled to inherit the same as heirs to my son William, in case he had died seized of the same after the death of my grandson Stephen; and in case of the death of my grandson Stephen during the life of his said father so that the life estate in the said farm created for my said grandson as aforesaid shall fail, then I will and direct that the remainder in fee therein after the termination of the life estate of my said son Stephen shall belong to and vest in such of the issue of the said Stephen, my grandson, as shall be living at the death of my said son Stephen; and in case there shall be no such issue then living, then the remainder in fee shall belong to and vest in my said son William; and in case the same shall fail to vest in my son William, as aforesaid, then the remainder in fee shall belong to and vest in such persons as would be entitled by the laws of this State to inherit the same as heirs to my said son William, in case he had died seized of the same after the death of the said Stephen my grandson, and the said Stephen, my son."

Stephen VanRensselaer III's grandson Stephen died without issue on April 9th, 1861. His father, Stephen IV died in 1868, leaving William P. VanRensselaer, the younger son of Stephen VanRensselaer III, to become owner of the 2,500-acre tract. William P. VanRensselaer left four children: Cornelia VanRensselaer Erving, Kiliaen VanRensselaer, Katharine VanRensselaer Atterbury and Eleanor VanRensselaer Fairfax.

The title search continues for many pages recording deaths and trustees, of various VanRensselaer family, etc., over time. Eventually; Anson P. Atterbury became the trustee of the several trusts created by the last will of William P. VanRensselaer, and all of the trusts, etc., were folded into a company called the WILLIAM P. VANRENSELAER ESTATE CORP., which eventually sold lands contained in the 2,500-acre tract of "The Farm". It should be noted that Cornelia VanRensselaer Erving was married to John Erving. The land of the Mohawk and Hudson River Humane Society in Menands came from the estate of John Erving. Today's Irving Place in Menands is corrupted from the correct spelling of the last name Erving.

**NOTE:** The map of the 2,500-acre tract was surveyed in April and May, 1839, just a couple months after Stephen VanRensselaer III passed away in January that year. An image of the map contains all of the surveyor's points and measurements which are hard to see if the map image appears in a newsletter. However; if requested, I can email a good resolution image of that map to anyone in the G.L.A. If any member of the G.L.A. who is a surveyor, knows a surveyor or has surveyor skills could reproduce (even approximately) the outline of the 2,500-acre tract on a modern map of the Town of Colonie, it would give people a better idea of where the footprint of this 2,500-acre tract was and I would very much like to keep the outline of that tract on file here with others in the map collection in the Historian's office.

**Credit:** The copy of the title search document used to help write this newsletter is courtesy of Mr. Peter Mason whose grandfather owned a small farm on the Albany Shaker Road west of Osborne Road and later a home on the Albany Shaker Road near the Albany City Reservoir.

## Interesting Items from the HSTC Collection



The label reads, "A carved coconut shell decorated by sailors while on a voyage around Cape Horn with Captain Tinklepaugh". It was donated by G. A. Ripley.

Andrew Geller, New Scotland Antiques, said it looks like a cocoa bean and it is a very good example of floral carving.

Captain Edward L. Tinklepaugh 1810-1876 is buried in Clermont Cemetery in Columbia County NY. From the internet, we find that Captain Tinklepaugh was one of the first ships captains working for the Vanderbilt Line, but later working for a Vanderbilt competitor.

He had a confrontation with Vanderbilt agents in Panama described by Stephen Dando-Collin in his book "Tycoon's War." He characterizes Tinklepaugh as "hard-as-nails" and "one of the most conscientious skipers on the Central America run."

During the American Civil War, Tinklepaugh captained a ship when in 1864 sailors mutinied aboard his vessel. A few were shot, others arrested and the 1865 inquiry into the mutiny was widely reported in the newspapers.



"Het Nieuwe Testament" Amsterdam, 1759. An Onderdonk Family Bible. Donated Dorothy Onderdonk. 1973.56



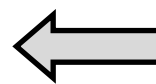
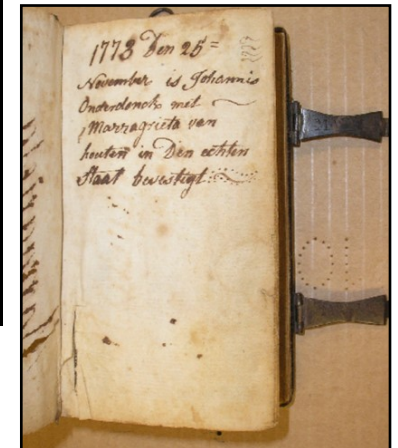
A small black leather covered Bible with ornate hinges (inner surface of the hinge has letters "MVH"). There are two eyelets at the tops of the front and back covers that would have allowed a strap of sorts allowing it to be suspended at waist or neck. Printed in Dutch in the fracture typeface used by Gutenberg, with some heading in various later typefaces.

Inside the cover: "Marragrieta Van Houten, Haar Boek" (Her book)  
On fly leaf: "1773 Den. 25 November is Johannis Onderdonck met Marragrieta Van Houten in Den echten Staat bevestigt"

Translation by Paul Huey: "1773, the 25 November, Johannes Onderdonck is confirmed in the state of marriage with Margarita van Houten"

The first half of the book is the New Testament, followed by "Sendbrief" (commentary), then a second book appears: "Psalmen de Propheten Davids, En eemige in Nederlauthen Dichte overgefet door" 1767 which are the Psalms of David with musical notation.

The final section is a Catechismus.



Seed advertising cards with a bit of humor, all 5 1/4" x 3"



Five are for Price & Knickerbocker, seeds and agricultural implements, 516 & 518 Broadway, Albany, N.Y. Printed by Clay & Richmond, Buffalo. "How do I A'Pear" is for Spencer & Perkins, 207, 209, 211 Broadway, Troy, N.Y. 1985.24

1. A peony or rose 1885
2. Petunia 1885
3. "A Corned Indian" 1886.
4. "How do I A'Pear" 1867.
5. Carrots 1886
6. Peas 1886

**Welcome New Members!**

The Historical Society of the Town of Colonie would like to welcome our newest members:

Kim Swidler, Susan Harris, Lauren Clemente and Elizabeth Weichsel.

*Welcome Aboard!*



Please visit our Facebook Page:  
**Historical Society Town of Colonie**

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Historical Society of the Town of Colonie, New York, Inc. in the classification I have checked or renew my membership as noted.

My annual dues payment in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

Classification	Annual Dues	Classification	Annual Dues	Classification	Annual Dues
<input type="checkbox"/> Student and Senior . . . . .	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Family . . . . .	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting . . . . .	\$100—\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual . . . . .	\$12.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Business . . . . .	\$50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor . . . . .	\$250.00 & Up

Please accept my additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ as a gift to the Historical Society. *The Historical Society is a not-for-profit corporation.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

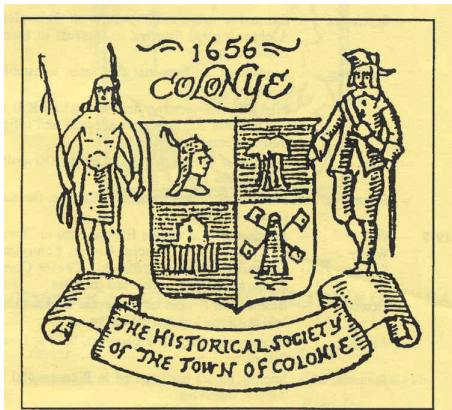
City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to Membership Chairperson c/o Historical Society, Memorial Town Hall, 534 New Loudon Rd, Latham, N. Y. 12110-0508

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

**THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE TOWN OF COLONIE**



Historical Society                      Founded 1971

MEMORIAL TOWN HALL  
534 New Loudon Rd., Latham NY 12110-0508  
518-782-2601

**Kevin Franklin: Town Historian**

Current Officers of the Society

- President:** Dr. Michael Radlick
- Vice President:** Mark Bodnar
- Treasurer:** Marcia Codling
- Recording Secretary:** Laraine Gillette
- Corresponding Sec:** Kristie Schimpf
- Past President:** Francina McCashion
- Trustees:** Peter Cooke, Ed Engel, Joseph Erkes, Al Lansing, David (Yizhen) Lin, Ursula MacAffer, Susan Ivie Mahar, Bebe Morehead, Diane Morgan, Dr. Donald Morton, Bill Remia

**Membership Chair:** Karen Senecal

**Newsletter Editor:** Mark Bodnar

**Support the Society’s efforts to stimulate an appreciation of the historical heritage of your community. Join Now!**

**PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

Sorry to say, but the constraints of COVID-19 have continued to curtail most of our Historical Society’s activities over the past months. Many of our trustees, including me, are at a point in life where just our age itself, not even considering other factors, puts us at increased risk for serious illness. As a result, I have continued to eschew in-person meetings for our organization.

We have held three virtual presentations, with a great deal of positive feedback, although our last session about Albany Rural Cemetery was Zoom-bombed by some immature person who ruined an outstanding presentation with his childish antics.

Not being able to meet or to conduct committee work is very disappointing for all of us. However, we really don’t have many options available to us, given the continuing contagion risk factors associated with the Delta variant. Although we all hoped to be back to normal this Fall with the benefit of a vaccine, we are likely to have to continue working virtually on a limited basis for some time yet this coming year. Let’s hope that we can get through this soon, and be able to pick back up on our work together for the Historical Society of the Town of Colonie.

*Michael S. Radlick, PhD, President*