

# Saugerties In the Land of the Kingston Commons

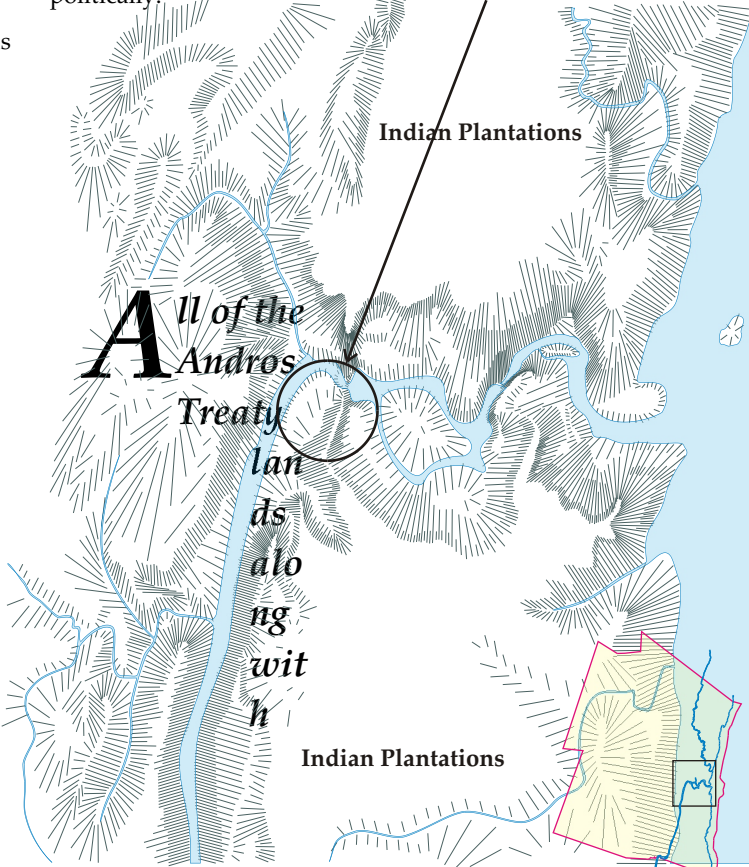
After 1680 and for the next half century grain would be key to the politics of colonial New York. The Duke of York through his colonial governor, Colonel Thomas Dongan, gave out patents for large tracts specifically to encourage an active planting of the land and expansion of New York's grain-based economy.

As in Old England, the farming was expected to be by tenants on homestead leaseholds with the crop yield paying the rent. The largest tracts, such as the 160,000 acres granted to Robert Livingston in 1686 on the side of the Hudson River opposite Saugerties, were elevated to Manors allowing the owners the stature and powers of a lord in England, supporting and profiting from their leaseholders. The underlying purpose and result was to establish a landed aristocracy as a home-grown governing class for the colony.

By 1683 there were enough landed "freeholders" for governor Dongan to assemble the first representative body in the colony's history. These large landlords met and approved of Dongan's division of the Duke's possessions into ten "shires" or counties in New York and two dependencies in New Jersey; the original twelve counties. The counties were subdivided into towns and manors. The purpose was to create a regionally based justice system and an organizational base for local militias. This assembly also drafted a document called the "Charter of Liberties" that was an early Constitution declaring their "Rights as Englishmen".

This budding representative form of government was sharply curtailed and its Constitution disallowed when New York

became a royal colony under James II in 1685. The power of the governor was also diminished as New York was made a part of the Dominion of New England. However, the concept of manors and counties and a provincial assembly of the wealthy power-base remained and the influence of the large landholders continued to grow politically.



Standing out in this political system dominated by family "lordships" is a great legacy to democracy; a representative body of landholders that was influential in the provincial assembly and continued in self government throughout the provincial period, the Revolution and into early New York State history. This was the Corporation of Kingston; the Kingston Commons; the oldest corporate charter in New York State; bearing a royal council seal

of 1688.

All deeds in the present town of Saugerties originate from the Meals and Hayes patent, the Kingston patent and from several patents that were in Albany County until this part of Saugerties was annexed to Ulster County through the claims of the Corporation of Kingston. These

location of the first non-patented water-powered mill in Saugerties, before 1687.

James II and Queen Anne granted after 1685 when New York was a royal colony.

Among the earliest of the licenses for patents granted in the tenure of Thomas Dongan as Governor were those for the northward expansion of the Esopus into the "Sagiers". These followed the creation and surveying of the counties in 1683, and were surveyed in 1686. Philip Wells surveyed the first for the Kingston patent. Robert Fullerton surveyed for the Meals and Hayes patent and the patent

## Overview: The Kingston Commons

The Trustees of the Corporation of Kingston, from the earliest deed transaction, used their stewardship over the land to expand and solidify their community. The vast majority of the Kingston Patent was maintained by them as a true commons; as a source of the everyday necessities of the "Freeholders and Commonality of the Town of Kingston".

The language used in creating the Corporation of Kingston had a special meaning in English law. Being a "freeholder" was distinct from being a freeman or Commoner. A commoner was any person who enrolled to vote as resident of the Corporation by paying a modest fee and swearing an oath of loyalty. The higher rank of freeholder was by provincial statute reserved for a person owning real property valued at 40 pounds in the location where they voted. The important distinction is that through simple residence either freeholders or commoners had the right to vote in the Corporation of Kingston and by this right the "Rights and Privileges of Englishmen" were being recognized. This was rare in English America.

All other persons living in or visiting the Corporation were termed "strangers". The Trustees protected the rights of the freeholders and commonality to their common property by regulating the "strangers" that could enter the commons. As early as 1689 the captains of vessels that brought strangers to the Kingston Patent lands could be fined if they did not register their passengers with the Trustees.

In a regulation of 1721 the Trustees stated that "no stranger shall set up trade or occupation in the Corporation" without a payment of 3 pounds for the "freedom". This, in essence, was setting the fee for becoming a member of the Corporation. There was a fee of 5 pounds placed by the trustees on the transporting of "wood, brush, stone, lime, tar or charcoal" from the Commons by those who did not have this "freedom" and this is partly how the Trustees maintained their treasury.

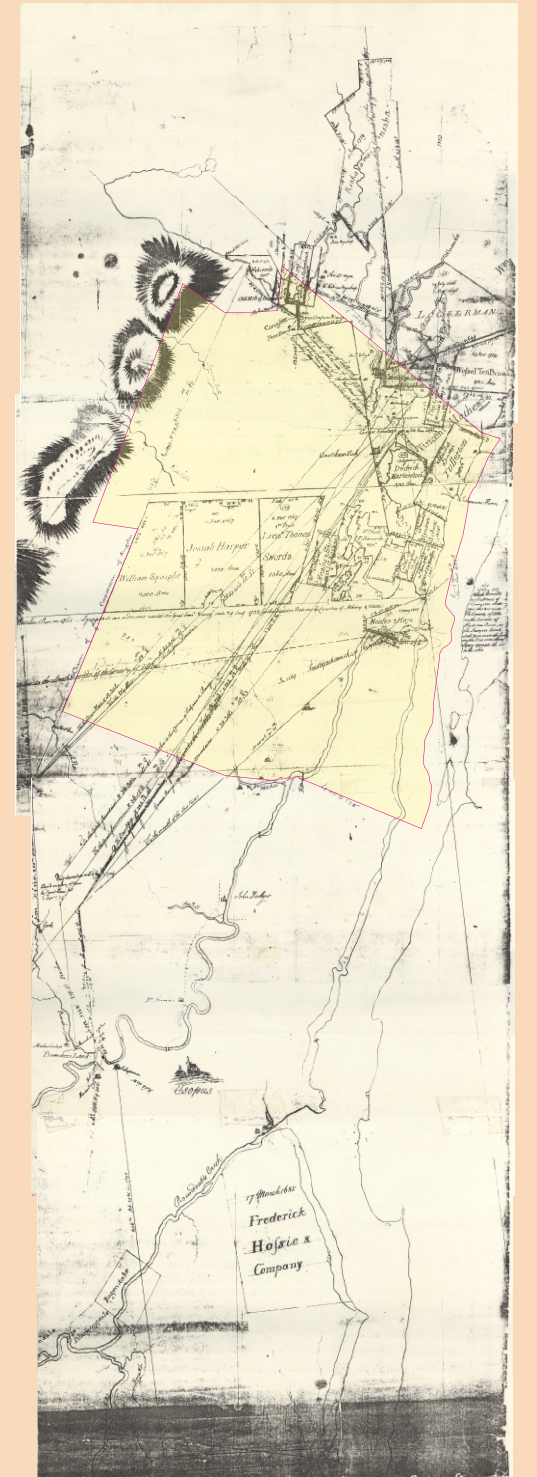
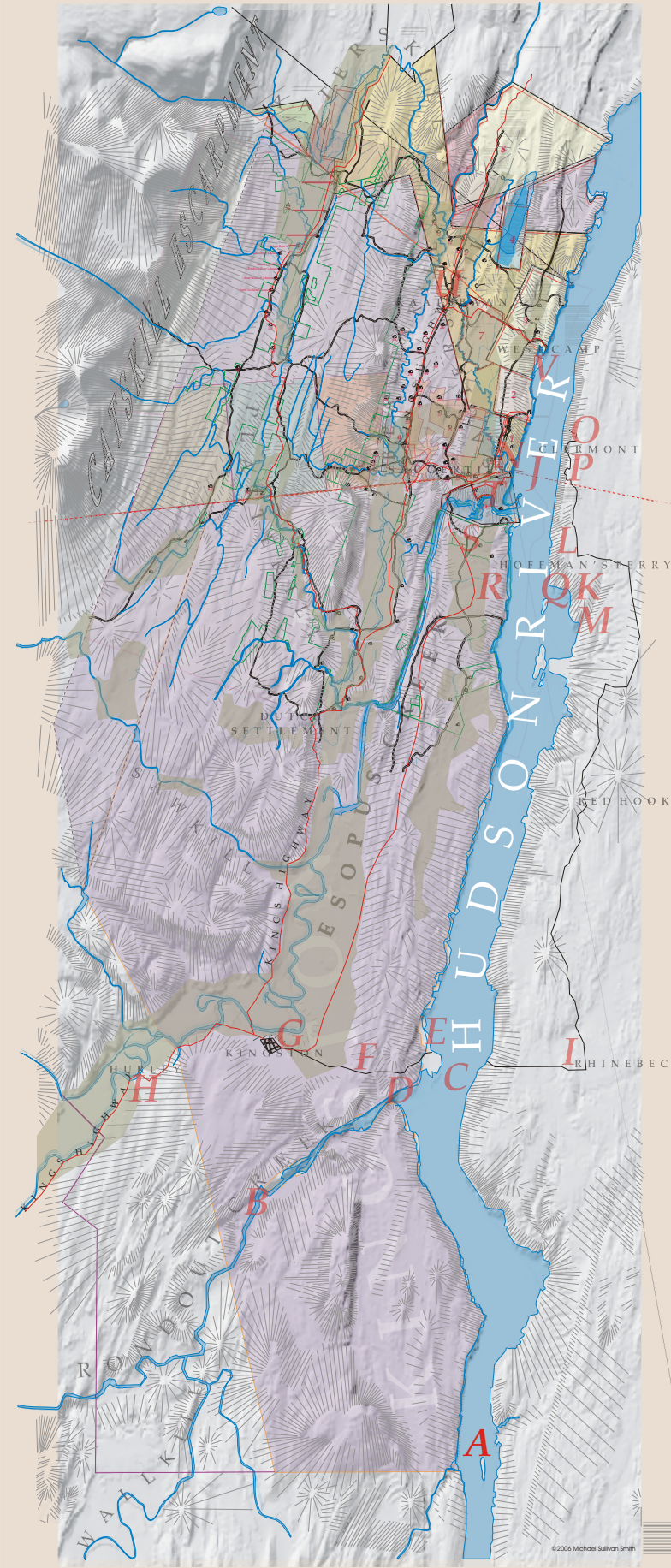
The Corporation of Kingston common lands were open, unrestricted, to all residents. The only land that was sold was specifically and obviously that which could be used to sustain a homestead or a plantation. The hillsides and other uncultivable areas adjacent to lands that were sold did not have to be owned. The owner of a farmstead already had the right to use them as a part of the Commons. Since everyone else that was a freeholder or commoner also had this right, the deeds from the Trustees that described private property reserved access to the common resources across the deeded lands: early forms of public easements.

The early deeds in the Saugerties Region described the best lands for farming and planting. The entire logic of ownership of private property within the Commons was that a homesteader had the right to own the land that he could improve to make it productive. The improvement of land encouraged settlement in the countryside and this was promoted openly by the Trustees. The wild lands that could not be improved supplied such necessities as firewood, timber, building stone and grazing for sheep, pigs and cattle and this not only benefited the homesteaders but also the village dwellers who often owned animals and paid herders to take them to the commons.

The Trustees also encouraged settlement through social and economic policies. They negotiated prices for lands on a sliding scale based on ability to pay. They did the same for the interest on loans that they made from the considerable treasury that they accumulated from these sales. When they made a "loan" to a church it was more of a grant. A wealthy person seeking a loan paid 8 percent while a poor person paid six, and often five percent. There was a written policy that the wealthy were not to be given the advantage of borrowing at low interest just so they could profit from re-circulating the money at a higher interest.

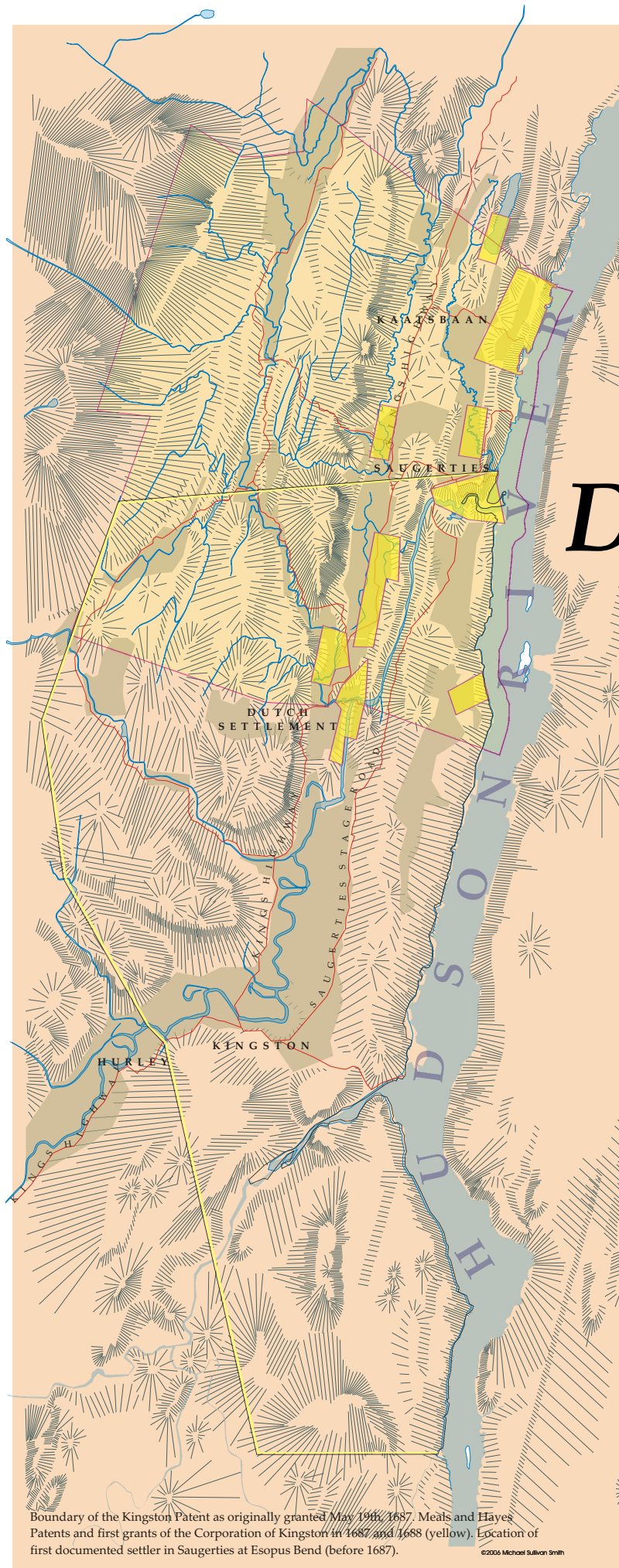
The Trustees were the bankers, constables and justices of the community. These positions represented the same structure that was found in the Manor Systems that surrounded them. The Livingston, Cortland, Rensselaer, Beekman and other families that held the patents on all sides of the Kingston Patent held the same authority over the settlers on their lands as the Trustees. However, the difference in the systems is that the granting of the Kingston Patent established the annual election, by the freeholders, of their "lords". These Trustees, all twelve of them, were up for re-election every year. The only electoral advantage any one had over another was in having multiple distinct Freeholds allowing more than one vote. Otherwise, the position was based on merit and community standing.

We can assume that the actions of the Trustees and the system that was established in the Kingston Commons represented the will of the majority of the people of New York at the time. Ulster County was to become rapidly the most populace and broadly settled county in the Hudson Valley with the Corporation of Kingston as its center of population. The advantage of living in the Commons and the sense of freedom and community that this system represented instilled in its settlers the expectations that would lead to demands for a fuller system of like liberty and rights throughout the rest of the Hudson Valley and beyond.



1687 bounds of the Kingston Patent with exclusions and "Claim of the Corporation of Kingston", 1803

# 1687 - Earliest Homestead in Saugerties



that bears his name.

The four tracts of the Meals and Hayes survey were granted by Dongan as a patent on May 31st, 1687. This is the earliest private ownership of land in the town of Saugerties.

The Kingston patent was to have a more complex form of grant. The planters and millers of the Dutch Settlement “precinct” of Kingston

for the election of twelve Trustees each year on the first Tuesday in March. These Trustees thus became responsible for all of the governmental functions of the now greatly expanded town of Kingston. This made Kingston the first of only a dozen-odd communities ever incorporated as self-governing entities in English America.

***Documents state that John and Hannah Wood were already settled on land and that a house, herd pens, gardens, orchards and conveyances to a sawmill site were there and this indicates the establishment of a well-settled family within the bounds of the present Village of Saugerties prior to 1687.***

petitioned Governor Dongan in 1686 to have these lands and all the land north to the Albany county line made into a single patent along the lines of the one granted by Governor Andros to the New Paltz “Duzine” (12 founding settlers) in 1677. Instead Dongan did a grant structure that was unprecedented for the time. All of the Andros Treaty lands along with those south of the Rondout to the New paltz patent and east of the town of Hurley were consolidated into one large patent putting it under the estate and governance of “one body corporate and politique to be called by the name of the Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonality of the Town of Kingston.” The patent was granted May 19, 1687 and the establishment of the Corporation of Kingston was ratified by council May 17, 1688.

The royal charter for the Corporation of Kingston called

Two of the first “freeholds” deeded out of the land of the Corporation of Kingston were to the 1686 Philip Wells surveys of 86 acres for Peter Winne and 87 acres for William deMeyer, both in the Plattekill/Mount Marion part of the present town of Saugerties. The deMeyer grant was later expanded further by an 800 acre grant in 1688.

Confirmation deeds to the many Dutch Settlement lands watered by the Plattekill in the area of Saugerties were also given. A 1686 Philip Wells survey of 186 ¾ acres north of the land of William Legg confirmed the long occupied Innship of Jan Burhans and Jan Oosterhout. Most of the Dutch Settlement lands were occupied by the founding and first-to-serve Trustees of the Corporation: Dirick Shepmous, William deMeyer, Jacob Ruttsen, Wessel TenBrooge, Barrett Aertze, Tunis Jacobsen, Benjamin Provoost, William Legg, Jacob

Aertsen, Mattyse Mattise, William Haines and John William Hooghteen.

The land north of these Dutch Settlement deeds is known as the “Churchland”. The Dutch Reformed Church had always been, since a strict directive by Peter Stuyvasant in 1664, responsible for orphans and the poor. This was also a function of the Corporation’s charter and so the solution was to use the crop yield of the Churchland to support the church. Thus the central valley or “great meadow” of Saugerties was early cleared and planted as a common activity of the “Commonality of Kingston” and became the first lands to be worked as a “common”.

Another responsibility of the Corporation was the maintenance of roads and bridges. The relationship of the earliest deeds to the roadbed of the “public road to Albany” (the Burhans/Oosterhout and the deMeyer grants as examples) essentially placed this maintenance responsibility on individuals as an exchange for ownership.

George Meals and Richard Hayes received patents for four tracts of land totaling 1194 ¾ acres. One of these was for

441 ¾ acres that encompassed the mouth of the Esopus Creek at the present village of Saugerties. The other three were from one to three miles north and west of this area.

On November 22, 1687 the first deeds dividing land in the future town of Saugerties were written. On that date George Meals and Richard Hayes split their joint ownership and a mortgage and deed was given to John Wood from Richard Hayes for all the land south of the Esopus Creek. From this mortgage and deed we have documentary evidence of who the first inhabitants in the present town of Saugerties were. Documents state that John and Hannah Wood were already settled on land and that a house, herd pens, gardens, orchards and conveyances to a sawmill site were there and this indicates the establishment of a well-settled family within the bounds of the present Village of Saugerties prior to 1687.

How much earlier they had settled and whether there were others homesteading in the same area cannot be known for sure. Further documentary evidence of a wagon road crossing the creek at this homestead would suggest that there may have been yet more settlers on undeeded land that formed a

community around the falls of the Esopus well before the end of the seventeenth century.

It is possible that George Meals and Richard Hayes laid out the claims for their patents intending to create a self sustaining Innship at the mouth of the Esopus like that at the Dutch Settlement. Their four grants supplied the four needs of an early settlement.

The large 441 ¾-acre Esopus basin grant was a port on tide water, a high plateau for the placement of a village and numerous mill sites on the creek. This tract included in it the most important landmark of the region, the mouth of the Sawyerkill that marked the bounds of Ulster and Albany Counties. Close to this is their 201-acre grant at the present location of the high school; ideal grazing land watered by the Sawyerkill which ran diagonally down its length.

Their 300-acre grant to the north that extends into the present Greene County was mostly a marsh meadow and likely selected because it was believed to include the important source of the Sawyerkill: the “Great Fountain”.

Finally, their 252 acre grant to the west of the village that is centered at the Beaverkill Creek was, next to their grant at the Sawyerkill, the second best-watered land in Saugerties. But more importantly, this “Beaverkill tract” also included a stretch of the path to Catskill where it intersected paths to the river and mountains making it an ideal location for trade.

George Meals was the father-in-law of Richard Hayes. It is possible that they intended to settle their families in Saugerties and create a landholding dynasty. They possibly planned to build their community around

John Wood’s already established and improved homestead and other homesteads already in the area using these to attract more homesteaders and businesses to their water and port resources. The policy of landowners of the day was to lease and not sell land, profiting from the success of settlement.

This plan, however, never had the chance to be developed. By 1694 both George Meals and Richard Hayes are deceased. In 1692 Goodwith White, widow to Richard Hayes, signs the satisfaction of the mortgage of John Wood. Sarah Meals is represented as the widow of George Meals in another deed to John Wood in 1694. By 1700 John Wood’s signature can be found on deeds as a Trustee of the Corporation of Kingston.

It is not until 1709 that any deeds are again made from the Meals and Hayes patent. At this time John Hayes, grandson of George Meals and son of Richard Hayes is representing himself as the sole heir to the land of Richard Hayes and to one quarter of the remainder of the patent tracts. In 1712 John Hayes transfers the entire north section of the 441 ¾-acre tract at the mouth of the Esopus Creek to John Perse (Persen) in exchange for “a house Barne & Lott of Ground... & also the sum of 30 Pounds”. In 1719 the sole remaining tract held by the original heirs, a one-half share of the Beaverkill tract, is sold to Evert Wynkoop.

In 1686 the surveyor of the Meals and Hayes patent, Robert Fullerton, also laid out a 797 ½ acre tract called the Wonton Island tract. This was not confirmed as a patent until 1692. The times between 1686 and 1692 were chaotic as king James II was deposed, William and Mary were placed on the throne and Jacob

## Overview: Locating the first Homestead

The land south of the Esopus Creek in the Meals and Hayes patent is a large parcel that extends all the way from the Hudson River west to where the Esopus Creek turns east and enters the present mill pond. It extended north to include all the land from the present Barclay Street down to the location of Saugerties’ early industrial revolution mill sites. This land and the land to its north and south, were separated from the central valley and the Kings Highway by the deep Esopus Gorge and the Kaleberg hills that it cut through. An early settler in this land was totally separated from the population center of Kingston.

It is possible to pinpoint, thanks to a later deed, the actual location of the homestead of John and Hanna Wood. In 1705 John Wood asked the Corporation of Kingston for a deed to some land adjacent to his 1687 purchase so that he could put fences on higher ground. There are three important landmarks used in this deed. One is a wagon road, the other is the house of

John Wood at the wagon road and the third is the second fall on the Esopus.

The second fall on the Esopus was at Stony Point. After 1825, Barclay’s dam on the first fall flooded it under the millpond. In John Wood’s day the creek was much narrower behind Stony Point and was bound by a stretch of fertile bottomland, on the inside bank of the creek. This was a sheltered location, ideal for a homestead. This place and the house site of John and Hannah Wood is now visible across the creek from the Esopus Drive neighborhood at the base of Main Street and is in the land of the present Esopus Bend Conservancy.

A part of the present Town/Village boundary line follows the course of the wagon road that went past the door of John and Hannah Wood and continued up the hill that forms the south ridge of Stony Point. Above the waterfall at Stony Point, still following the Town/Village line, this ancient wagon road crossed the Esopus Creek at a ford.

# 1710 - 1721 - Palatines Homestead in Saugerties

Leisler was executed.

Leisler became acting governor in the period of uncertainty as fear spread that the French were planning an invasion on behalf of James II supported by the colonial governor Andros. The wealthy land holders and traders accused Leisler of treason as an unappointed governor and had him executed. He was afterward exonerated by the Crown.

These events have a connection to Saugerties through the Fullerton patent and Jacob Leisler's father-in-law, Govert Lookermans. Lookermans was the wealthiest Dutchman in New York City at the time the British arrived in 1664. He was linked in politics and business to Peter Stuyvasant and later to every English governor. When he died his stepdaughter was his sole heir and she was married to Jacob Leisler. Through her mother she was related to the wealthy and influential Bayards and Van Cortlandts and they sued to have the Lookermans wealth come to them. It is the loss of this suit that is the real reason for Leisler's execution.

Leisler's conviction for treason caused the confiscation of all of his property. The Wonton Island patent and a larger tract above the Meals and Hayes Great Vly tract, both carrying initial claim dates of July 29th, 1686, are thought to have been surveyed originally to make patent claim for lands that Govert Lookermans had purchased many years before from the Catskill Indians.

When Leisler was exonerated in 1692 the large patent above the Great Vly was granted in 1695 but the granting of the Wonton Island patent under the surveyor's name at the same date effectively meant this remained property of the Crown.

In 1709 Queen Anne, with

royal ties to the German Palatinate, or Rhineland Princes, received thousands of refugees into England fleeing the invasion of their land and persecution by France. She then contracted the colonial governor Robert Hunter to settle all of the Palatinate on "Her Majesty's land" and to purchase additional land suitable for the 2000 immigrants to utilize in working off their passage manufacturing tar from pine trees for naval stores. The land she provided was the Fullerton patent (West Camp) and the land

purchased was 6,000 acres from Robert R. Livingston (East Camp) directly opposite on the Hudson River.

The Palatines were settled in the winter of 1710/11 but the trees were unsuitable for making naval stores and the Camps had disbanded by 1712.

Many of the immigrants moved to the Schoherie Valley that year. Those that remained on the east side of the river settled into Beekman lands around Rhinebeck or remained in the area of Germantown. Those on the Saugerties side of the river stayed at West Camp for a time but began to settle on lands to the west and into Catskill and Kingston.

The Palatines left West Camp because the title to the Wonton Island patent; the land that West Camp was on; was attached by

the Colonial Governor, Governor Hunter, after he lost his large investment in his tar manufacturing venture. It is likely the Palatines continued to live at West Camp as their church was there and they already had built houses there. Baptisms are recorded in West Camp up until 1719. But their sights were set across the Sawyerkill to establish their own farms. They could not purchase land at West Camp and were told that on Kingston land they could sign ten-year leases for as

little as two fat hens per year and purchase their farmsteads when they were more prosperous.

There was a political motive for the Corporation of Kingston to attract these Palatines and offer them deeds. They provided an instant population boom in the lands just outside of the recognized north bounds of the Corporation of Kingston into Albany County. In these early years of Colonial government a seat on the Provincial Assembly was based on population and this made the surrounding manors competitive for attracting settlers. The owners of the manors were all seeking to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the Palatines to offer leases on their lands and thus increase their influence on Provincial policy.

Kingston countered the potential loss of its dominant position in the Provincial Assembly by claiming the lands

that the Palatines had begun to settle to its north. The Trustees declared that the northern boundary of Kingston and of Ulster County was a line from the source of the Sawyerkill, not the mouth. This gave them a claim to all the land west of the Sawyerkill, doubling the amount they had in Saugerties with the originally recognized County border.

Prior to this expansion the official count for Assembly representation in 1728 put 232 Palatines residing in West Camp and 50 on Kingston land. The majority of these Palatines may have called West Camp home but they were farming and seasonably inhabiting the whole of the lands west of the Sawyerkill by this time. With the total population of Ulster County, from the Hudson all the way to Pennsylvania, as 1600, including infants and slaves, joining these West Camp

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## ***Overview: Dutch Culture in Saugerties***

A kind of character and personality of the early settlers in the Saugerties Region had begun to surface with the first generation of Palatines born in the Kingston Commons. This was based on the two dominant influences in their lives; the liberality of settlement rights in the Commons and the important position of the Church as the center of Kingston's Dutch culture.

The Dutch maintained their strong sense of individualism by centering their society around the Reformed Church. This influenced all of the traditions and culture of the Hudson Valley well after the change to English rule in 1664. Though few native Dutch, compared to the number of English that had settled New England, actually immigrated to America, the effect the Reformed Church had on the culture made Dutch influence in New York as strong as Puritan influence was in most of New England.

The majority of the earliest population of Saugerties was Palatine German. When this immigration arrived in 1710 it was under the influence of two churchmen. Joshua Kocherthal was Lutheran and built the church at West Camp. John Frederick Hager was Dutch Reformed but had taken orders in England to form an Anglican Church at the colony. He did so at East Camp but preached Reformed at West Camp. Until 1721, after Kocherthal had died and Hager had moved to Schoharie, all the Palatines worshiped at West Camp as Lutherans and refused to conform to the Anglican rights. During this early period there was little interest paid to the Palatines by the Dutch Reformed hierarchy of Kingston.

Prior to 1719 the Governor had for many years tried to bring the Dutch of Kingston under the Church of England by assigning Anglican

pastors. None found acceptance. In 1719 the Dutch Reformed Church of Kingston gained a charter from the Crown similar to that of the Reformed Church in New York. This sanctioned its authority within the colony permitting its Dominie to take their authority from Amsterdam. The Dominie that had successfully gained this charter was Petrus Vas. He was ordained by the Classis of Amsterdam, became pastor in Kingston in 1710 and remained there until he died at the age of 96 in 1752. All services were thenceforth by this charter preached in Dutch.

In 1727 there was a problem created when a Reformed church was organized in East Camp by a minister that had not been ordained in Holland and preached in German. After having two successive ministers at East Camp that insisted on preaching the Anglican religion in English, the Palatines on the east side of the Hudson had congregated around this new preacher who brought to them a recognizable service. They were attached to his ministry and refused to accept an Amsterdam-ordained minister when one was sent to them.

This Amsterdam-ordained minister, George Mancius, arrived from Holland in 1730. Even though he was German, he was not accepted at East Camp. He went to West Camp where he found the church there abandoned and the Palatines congregating, without a minister, on the Kaatsbaan, two miles to the west. They had already begun to break off their association with their earlier homes in the West Camp villages and were meeting at the Kaatsbaan with others settled on their farmsteads on Commons lands in Saugerties, Hardenbergh lands in the Woodstock valley and on the Beekman lands as

far away as Catskill.

Mancius began his preaching at Kaatsbaan in the autumn of 1730 but only after associating himself with the Dutch Reformed Church in Kingston. It is in this association that the first signs of the Church's method of social control surfaces. Mancius was given two years to develop fluid Dutch for preaching his sermon. Though he was German and he was to also be an assistant in the Kingston church, he was not to preach separate languages to the two congregations. The de facto official language of the Commons seems to have become Dutch by order of the charter of Petrus Vas.

In this period, except for some influential holdouts (Beekman deeds were in Dutch), official documents, including the minutes of the Trustees of the Corporation of Kingston, were all written in English. However, wills and church records of the period are found to be mostly in Dutch. Even though the Palatines were a highly literate group and wrote German well, the personal documents of those settling in the Commons are found to be in Dutch after the second generation. After the ruff of 1727 the Palatines on the east shore of the Hudson settled into Germantown and Rhinebeck and maintained their German identity and language.

The permitting of the building of the Kaatsbaan church in 1732, the duel role of Dominie Mancius at Kingston and Kaatsbaan and the acceptance of the Palatines to being preached to in Dutch all seem to be considered responses to the political reality of life in the Commons. Ownership of land was easy for those who adhered to the cultural norms. Good citizens spoke Dutch.

This fused the population and soon family

makeups matched the community. While the baptismal records of the West Camp church under Kocherthal prior to 1719 list mostly Palatine names, the baptismal records in Kaatsbaan record the inter-marriage of Dutch and Palatine names from the first entries in 1731.

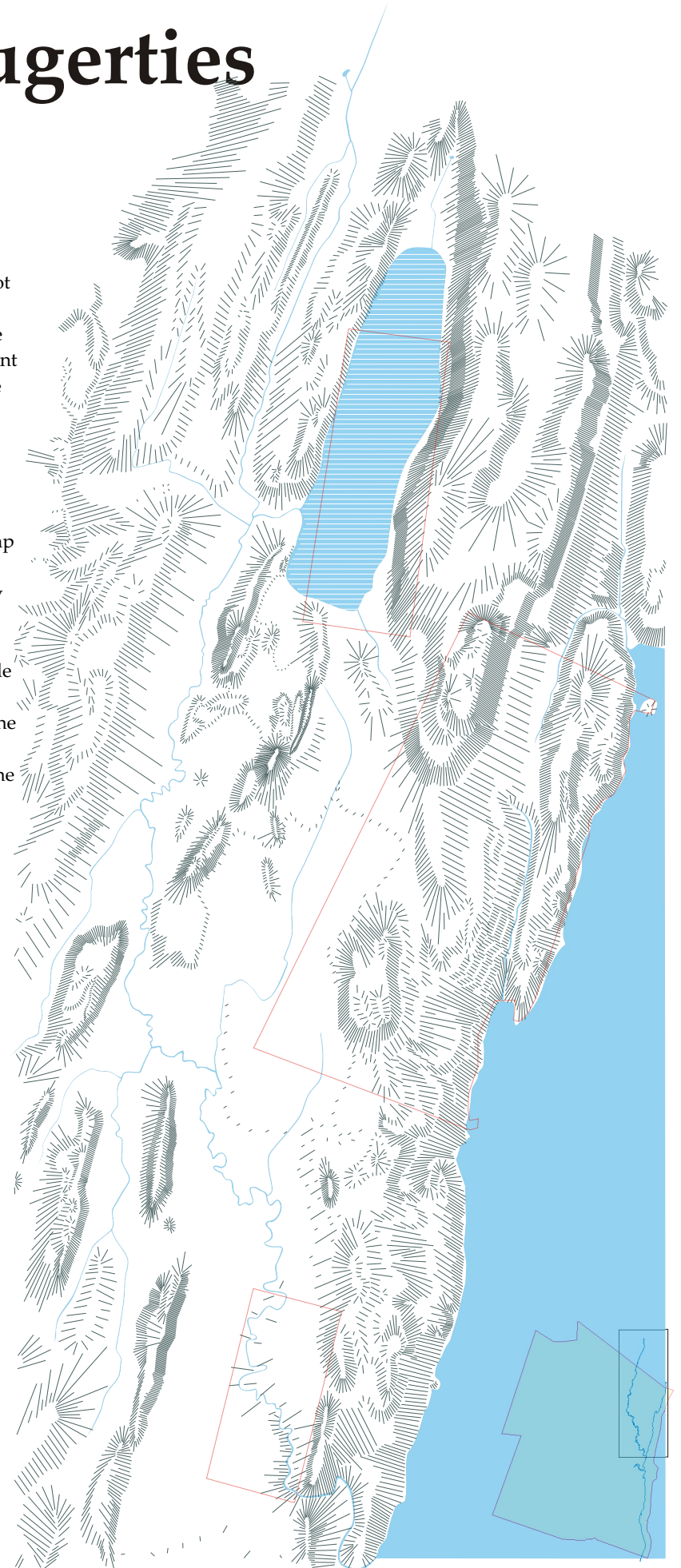
Mancius, after the death of Vas, succeeded him as Dominie of Kingston for ten years until his own death in 1763. Consequently, all of the influence of the larger culture of Kingston for a period of over 50 years came solely from these two individuals, both with strong ties to Amsterdam and the Dutch language. For nearly the entire period of early settlement in Saugerties the structure and authority over the community was firmly established in an association with Dutch "fatherland" control even though the Corporation of Kingston operated as an English charter under an English colonial governing authority.

Elsewhere, other churches, without such protective charters or longevity of their leaders, had all been actively continuing their fights for religious liberties. By the time that Mancius died times had changed. The congregation of Kingston, totally dedicated to its chartered association to the Church in Amsterdam, could find no ministers, even from Amsterdam, that were willing to pledge subordination to the "fatherland" Church once they arrived in America or to even preach in Dutch. All advocated, along with their fellow preachers who, though Dutch, were also preaching in English, the benefits of a local body to oversee their needs.

In the Kingston Church, the Corporation of Kingston and the County of Ulster many of the

same names served joint roles as trustees, elders and officials among these three bodies. This strong relationship was apparent when the new pastor sent from Amsterdam in 1764, Rev. Meyer, was removed by them when he swore allegiance to the Crown and would only state that he was neutral in his allegiance to the Church's charter and Amsterdam. Following this, no preacher was found acceptable to satisfy the needs of the Kingston Church until 1775. By this time the temperament of the old Dutch hierarchy had softened under the growing popular distaste for royally sanctioned privileges. Dutch, however, continued to be preached in Kingston until 1808 even though many of the younger people had no understanding of what they heard.

The personality of the inhabitants of the Saugerties Region is thus formed in the intermingling of the stubborn insistence of the Dutch on the priority of their culture and heritage and the stern attitude of the Palatine's insistent on the priority of their basic rights. As these merged in the liberal atmosphere of the Commons this formed a general personality of the population recognizable by an air of self assured, obstinate resolve. Protected by their associations with the land and the Church, an aloof strain of character, wary of the outsiders and outside authority, began to exemplify the third generation inhabitants of the Saugerties Region. This attitude took these early settlers honorably through the French and Indian War and the Revolution but made it painful for them to enter the next century; the first century of independence for all.



# 1732 - A Saugerties Community Separate from Kingston

numbers into Ulster County and the Corporation of Kingston was politically significant.

The only patents to Palatines in Saugerties were the 1722 Godfried DeWoolfen patent on the present Stroomzeit lands, described as lying in Albany County and the Dedrick Marterstock patent that uses the Sawyerkill as its west boundary which made it also in Albany County.

The center of a Palatine community had begun to form around a large flat rock surface called the Kaatsbaan that made a clearing on a rise over which the Kings Highway passed. This site gave a comforting view of the land around and became the place where the farmers met to discuss business, to meet new neighbors and to worship.

"Kaatsbaan" is literally translated "tennis court" but more correctly means "hand ball court". There were other locations with a similar name in other Dutch settlements and could have been flat, hard spots chosen specifically because the amusement potential that they offered made a good excuse for a meeting place. These may have existed for centuries before as the Indians are represented as playing ball on them when the first Dutch arrive.

The lands surrounding the Kaatsbaan and further west had never been planted by the Indians and had never been cleared. The Palatine German farmers had a different preference in farmland to the Dutch. Both the Dutch and the Indians farmed low, almost marshy meadowland at the banks of small rivers, or kills.

The Germans, whether from generations of being invaded or because their planting techniques required a different

soil type, found the high knolls more to their liking. These lands were not lands of low bushes and in most cases required considerable clearing. When the Palatines moved west to clear farmsteads it was into a dense oak and pine forest.

The large-scale agriculture focus in the more settled areas of Kingston, Hurley and Marbletown was only evident in Saugerties around Dutch Settlement and into the Great Meadow and the Churchland. Only after the disbanding of the Palatine population of West Camp did farming activity in the northern frontier of Saugerties begin to be considered by the Dutch of Kingston.

The Palatine homesteaders were hard workers and soon their cleared lands around Kaatsbaan and the potential of using their excess energy as labor attracted the Dutch into areas that had been Indian plantations. In 1719 Evert Wynkoop, the son of Cornelius Wynkoop, one of the original Nieuw Dorp settlers of 1662, purchased the majority of the Meals and Hayes patent at the Beaver Kill and built a stone house, the Wynkoop House, on the Kings Highway. In the next five years he added a considerable number of adjacent tracts purchased from the Corporation of Kingston to this.

Closer to the river the early stone houses still found in the village of Saugerties today were on lands originally Indian plantations. On Main Street Hisakia Du Bois built the Kiersted House and Egbert Schoonmaker built the

Schoonmaker House (1727). John Persen built the earlier Mynderse House on the River.

These first non-Palatine settlers in Saugerties also show a distinct interest in waterpower; power for sawmills in particular. The obvious reason for this is the availability of timber from the lands that the new settlers were clearing and the general demand for a lumber product that could be easily shipped out by river.

John Wood, Saugerties' first settler, is shown to be ambitiously expanding his mill locations up to the Sawyerkill in 1717 and it is presumed that John Persen, who owned the other half of the Esopus outlet Meals and Hayes patent after 1712, installed a sawmill below the first fall on the Esopus sometime shortly after his purchase. There are indications that

many more leased mill sites lined the banks of the Esopus at its first and second falls at this time.

At about this same time deeds from John Wood's sons to John Legg and Abraham Du Bois mention the "Negro Mill" as a landmark indicating that workers other than the Palatines were being used by the Dutch and Huguenot mill owners.

Later, before 1740, the old Bolting Act forbidding the milling of flour outside of New

York City became unenforceable and Saugerties became a center for flour mills. Not only the Esopus, but its Sawkill and Plattekill tributaries and also the Kaaterskill high up on the northwest plateau, attracted investors and a new breed of non-farming settlers. Over the next decade this attracted the attention of both the landed Dutch of Kingston and the owners of the Hardenbergh patent.

**The church that they built on their meeting site in 1732 was to become a landmark on every map of Colonial America. Saugerties, itself, and the Esopus harbor would not warrant mention on a map for many more years to come. The only way to know where Saugerties was on any map made before 1800 was to look for "Kaatsbaan Kirk", the only significant place name between Groote Esopus (Kingston) and Catskill.**

In a short 20 years following the Palatines' arrival a richly diverse community begins to be evident. By 1732 the Dutch are sufficiently settled to make a petition to the Corporation of Kingston for a deeding of the Kaatsbaan to the Dutch Reformed Church for a stone church to be built on this site.

Dutch and Palatine farmers from as far away as Kiskatom, Catskill and the Woodstock Valley had been making the journey every Sunday to Kaatsbaan to meet there. The church that they built on their meeting site in 1732 was to become a landmark on every map of Colonial America. Saugerties, itself, and the Esopus harbor would not warrant mention on a map for many more years to come. The only way to know where Saugerties was on any map made before 1800 was to look for "Kaatsbaan Kirk", the only significant place name between Groote Esopus

(Kingston) and Catskill.

The church at Kaatsbaan was a symbol of the solidarity of the Saugerties community. This early community could feel politically secure in its devout adherence to the Dutch Reformed Church and its relationship to the local control of the Trustees of the Kingston Commons. With this assurance,

by the mid-18th century it had settled into a pattern of settlement highlighted by cultivated farmland and sturdy stone homes connected by well traveled herding paths, wagon roads and highways.

Between the time of the founding of the Kaatsbaan Church in 1732 and the beginning of the French and

## Overview: Early Families in Saugerties

An early interest in Saugerties is expressed in a document of 1739/40 wherein the Kingston Trustees give a quite claim to the heirs of Barent Burhans that stated he had prior possession to lands given subsequently by patent under King James II to Meales and Hays in 1687. This document shows the Trustees placing their authority over the non Kingston patent lands in the way of their expansion north at the Hudson River assets of the present village of Saugerties. This document is a recognition of the growing importance of the community in what is referred to in it as "at Saugerties in the bounds of the Town of Kingston".

The founding Jan Burhans of the Burhans family was in Wiltwyck in the early 1660's. Along with the Wynkoops, Dubois' and Schoonmakers these were all early Dutch era settlers that had grown large families over time. They all had outgrown the practical division of their initial plantation lands nearer Kingston and Hurley and by the third generation were looking for new land.

These families are among the earliest permanent settlers of Saugerties. The early stone DuBois (Kiersted) and Schoonmaker houses' placement on the north side of Main Street made them outside of the Meales and Hays patent and built before the Corporation of Kingston literally annexed that land. Earlier, in 1719, Cornelius Wynkoop had bought the Meales and Hays Beaverkill patent and built the stone Wynkoop house on the Kings Highway just north of the original Ulster County line. Schoonmakers

and Wynkoops may have been the first of the early Dutch families to spread this far north.

Comparatively new arrivals such as the Martin Snyder family, that had been working off their passage from Germany in New Paltz, also found the availability of land in Saugerties attractive. Before 1740 he had settled near Christian Myers, a Palatine, who had purchased land from the Kingston Trustees and built a stone house east of the Churchland in 1724. The 1750 Malius Snyder stone house on Churchland Lane is just south of the line that ran between the original Ulster and Albany Counties and the early north bounds of the Kingston patent.

Just west of the Marius Snyder house is the earlier stone Schoonmaker house on Ricks Lane in Veteran situated under Cockburn Hill. Cockburn Hill is a landmark whose northernmost prominence marked the line that separated the counties. This was named after the surveyor, William Cockburn, who in 1765 mapped the border. He later built the stone house on Powdermill Road and farmed under the south slopes of Mount Marion.

Following Cockburn's surveyed border west the DeWitt stone house on the present Fishcreek Road and two stone Wolven house south of the Woodstock wagon road (Rt. 212) also mark early farmsteads within the Kingston patent that hug its early north boundary.

Palatine families such as the Wolvens, Mynderse and Trumbours were already spreading out to settle their second generation by the 1740's. The DeWolven stone house just

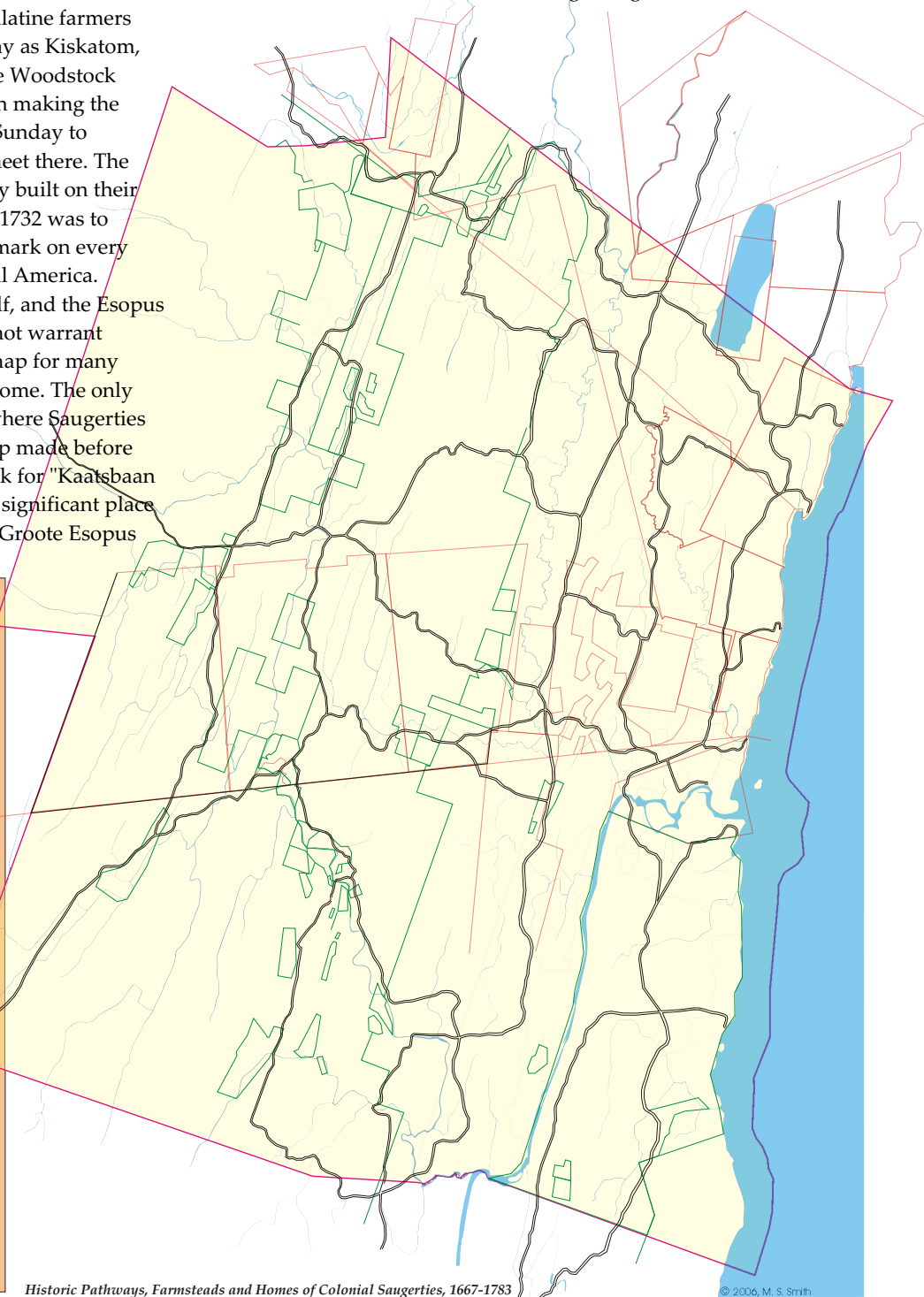
north of the village on the river, dating from around 1728, is the first homestead of the Wolvens. The Mynderse stone house on the river in the village was built by John Persen, a Dutchman, after 1719. His daughter married Myndert Mynderse, a Palatine. Further north across the Sawyerkill from West Camp the 1732 Trumbour stone house was built with a prominent placement on the Kings Highway. Other markers of the course of the Kings Highway, going south of the Trumbour homestead, are the stone Kaatsbaan Church and its stone parsonage, the stone Wynkoop house, the stone Christian Myer house, the stone DeMyer, Peter Winne, and finally the second and first stone Brink houses before crossing the southern border of Saugerties.

The last four farmsteads, beginning with the 1701 stone house of the first Brink homestead, still maintained a relationship to Kingston as its early Dutch Settlement district. From their positioning on the Kings Highway many more stone houses begin to spread up along the Plattekill Creek and the Vlykill. Flanking the high banks and cascades of these streams are the ancient stone houses of the early mill operators who first made their claims in 1667. Just north of these on the level fields of the inside curve of the Plattekill is the 1750 stone house of Hendricus Wynkoop and an equally ancient stone house north of the Plattekill curve on the continuation of this level ground.

This cluster of ten or perhaps originally many more homestead houses around the streams

and falls in Mount Marion were positioned to utilize the grazing fields they accessed from herding paths that paralleled the break in the hills made by the Plattekill. The upper reaches where the Plattekill and its tributaries wind through stone ridges that step their way up to the base of the Catskill escarpment was all common pasturage and this break in the Hooegebergs was the most direct access from below. Up this break where the Plattekill finds level ground are the early farmsteads already mentioned of the Wolven and Dewitt stone houses.

The relationship of these to the Kings Highway makes them equally distanced from Kingston village and the developing commercial center further north that was centered on the Wynkoop house. Mount Marion and the Hooegebergs make a wedge that made a community relationship to Kingston more likely for homesteads up the Plattekill Creek and into the interior. Along the Kings Highway, beginning at the original DeMeyer grant stone house, are three Myer stone houses found stretching north three miles in the 17th Century DeMeyer "Great Meadow" grant. These likely began the homesteads that saw themselves as part of a new Saugerties separate from the old Kingston community. The homesteads of the interior would join this new community with the improvement of the wagon road access to the Kings Highway through present day Veteran.



Historic Pathways, Farmsteads and Homes of Colonial Saugerties, 1667-1783

# 1732-1767 - Colonial Saugerties Finds its Center

Indian War there was economic upheaval in New York. Pennsylvania became the main grain-producing center of the colonies and Philadelphia outgrew New York City as a population and shipping center. A corresponding decrease in the demand for the grain of New York brought about a failure of many of the Dutch planters of Kingston and millers of New York City. Both the planters and millers relied heavily on slave workers for production and the drop in demand made support of this idle workforce a considerable drain on the wealth of both communities. At the same time support of the local militias that were the frontier defense against the French, a unique responsibility of New York, stressed the treasuries of the counties and the manors. The owners of the manors and large patent lands settled by leaseholds needed to support their share of the militia out of their rents. The rent was paid in wheat.

The settlement of the Palatines on subsistence farmsteads in the Saugerties region and their willingness to provide frontier defenses at their homes and man the militias out of a sense of self interest provided a great advantage to the Corporation of Kingston at this time. This, and their basic ingenuity, skill and irascible independence provided the cushion that was disparately needed to keep Kingston a thriving community.

The Palatine immigrants had an angry and defensive character mainly directed against their archenemy, the French. Earlier; in 1710, before ever reaching America, they had organized to march on Canada and planned their settlement as close to that border as possible. It was only the catastrophic destruction of

the British fleet in a storm in the St. Lawrence that year that spoiled this chance for vengeance. Later, at West Camp, their latent hostility teemed as they voiced their dissatisfaction with conditions under what they considered unjust bondage and servitude; so much so that the complete venture that they were central to was dissolved. Once settled in the Saugerties Region they ever looked to the looming wall of the Catskills as a potential threat to their homes and families. Just over the peaks they anticipated raids from the French and their Indian allies

and could never lower their guard for fear of the attack.

The Saugerties region is divided down the middle with the eastern farmland deeded out early and more settled. The western half was recognized as wilder and kept as common lands by Kingston. The needs of the colonial militia for protection against French Canada

encouraged the Corporation of Kingston to deed homesteads to the Palatines in the northwest frontier of Saugerties.

The Palatines of Saugerties were a perfect guardian for this northern frontier of the Kingston Commons with its dark passageways into the wild mountainous interior. They were in constant contact with their

sister settlements across these mountains in the Schoharie Valley and into Pennsylvania and knew all the Indian paths in between.

As these settlers cleared their land, planted their fields and built their fortress homes along the highways, pathways and trails their sturdy stone walls, as ready for defense as the character of their builders, protected these vital thoroughfares. Though no battle took place at Saugerties, if one had, this region, made critical to the defense against any advancing army because of its constricted landscape between the mountains and the river, would have been well prepared to protect the valuable, low heartland of Kingston and the heartland of the Colony, the Hudson River. If one were to describe the Saugerties region before and during the French

and Indian War, the only word that would fit would be "defensible".

Kingston's Palatine homesteads attracted a competitiveness for land from the second generation of Livingstons who owned the Hardenbergh patent to the west. In 1728 Robert (of Clarmont), the second son of Robert R. Livingston (the Founder), inherited a comparatively small portion of the original manor that was the land on the east side of the Hudson River directly opposite Saugerties. Nearly 6,000 acres had been separated from it for the Palatine settlement at East Camp (Germantown). The remainder he called Clermont. In an effort to expand his land holdings he took possession by

claims of the Corporation of Kingston and along the rough roads that passed through the high mountain valleys of his Hardenbergh patent. Conflicting claims between the settlers on Kingston land and Livingston leases in the present Manorville and West Saugerties section of Saugerties led to an arbitrated settlement of the western bounds of the Corporation of Kingston extending to the northeast corner of the Hardenbergh patent on the Kaaterskill Creek - well into Albany County.

Documentation of this fight for jurisdiction over the land sheds light on the level of habitation that was in Saugerties at the time. The records of lease agreements between landed families and farm workers, the

water powered mills, vast herds of beef and swine and easy access to major transportation arteries prospered as it fed its hungry neighbor to the south. This attracted the attention of the Colonial authorities and the Crown in a way that would shape the destiny of all of New York.

Two of the earliest maps of Saugerties that exist are from the immediate post French and Indian War period. The 1763 map of Charles Clinton was to show the extent of occupation in Saugerties at the end of the French and Indian War. A map made by William Cockburn in 1765 of the "Division Line between the Countys of Albany and Ulster from the Mouth of the Sawyers Creek (west as the needle points) to the River Delaware being 75 3/4 miles" under the authority of Lt. Governor Cadwallander Colden reemphasizes the position of the Crown on the limits of the claim of the Corporation of Kingston. They are both made in response to policies that would lead Saugerties into the Revolution.

England was an empire with all of Canada and India and the French Carribean possessions after the Treaty of Paris. But maintaining an empire is expensive and the treasury was empty. The troops also had not been paid. To keep political havoc from happening back home King George III and the Tory Parliament distributed land as bounty grants to pay the officers and soldiers who fought in the war. In addition to resolving the payroll debt this was to encourage its soldiers to stay in the colonies and its responsibilities of local government there.

At one point the British Army was 25,000 strong just in the American Colonies during the

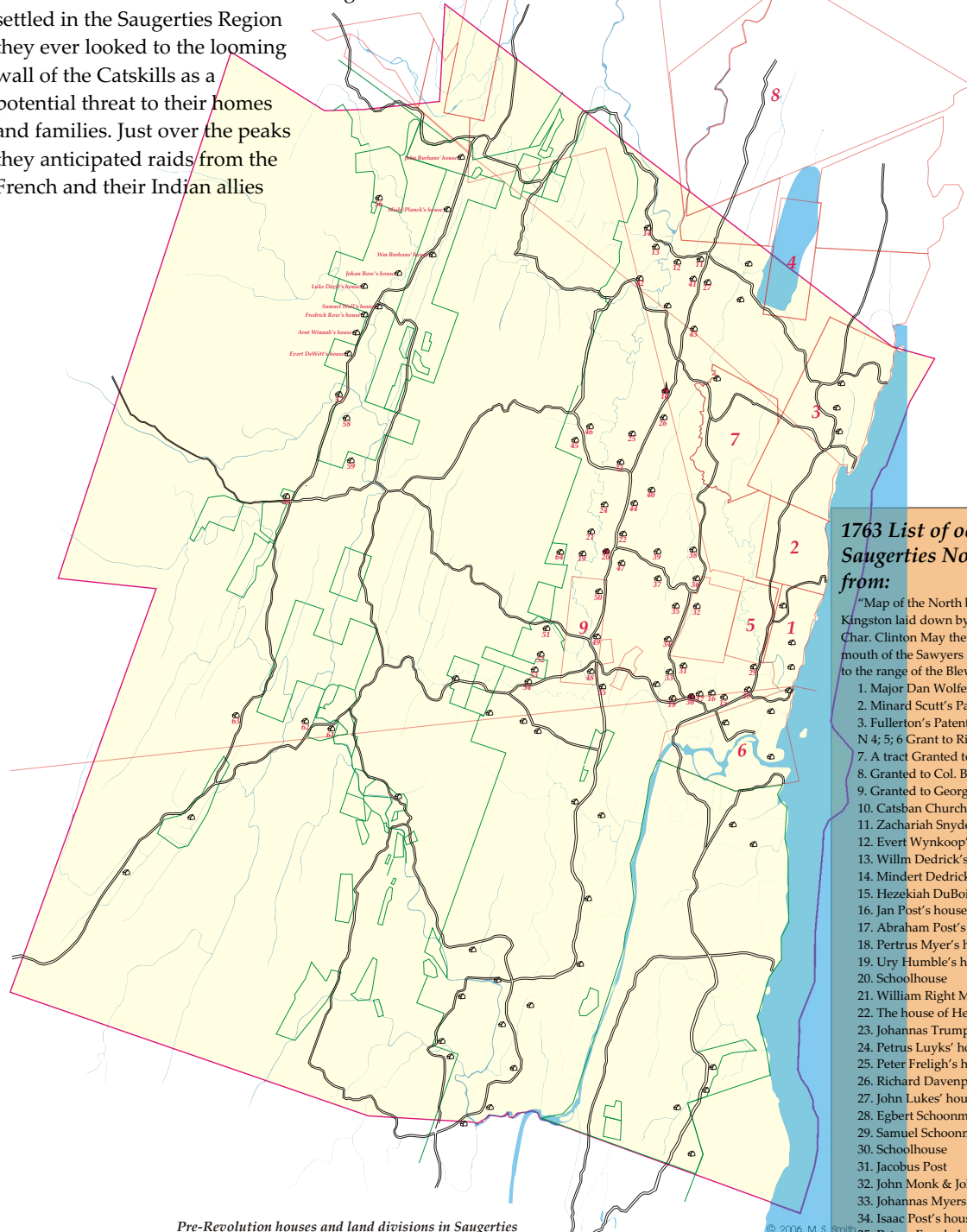
**The records of lease agreements between landed families and farm workers, the housing of slaves close to the pastureland, added to the large number of Palatine and more recent immigrant homesteads, show a Saugerties that is highly settled with a good stock of sturdy housing and cleared land by the close of the 1750's.**

various means of the Hardenbergh patent which comprised close to 2.5 million acres over nearly the whole of the Catskill mountain range. The closest settlement on this land was Woodstock, accessed by the ancient Indian path that ran right through the middle of Saugerties.

In the early 1750's Robert Livingston of Clermont began to attract a new immigration of German homesteaders onto land overlapping the west

housing of slaves close to the pastureland, added to the large number of Palatine and more recent immigrant homesteads, show a Saugerties that is highly settled with a good stock of sturdy housing and cleared land by the close of the 1750's. As a part of the growing population of the whole region this made Kingston a major force in the politics and economy of the time.

New York City had grown as a center of the slave market in the 1740's and in the 1750's as a major garrison for troops during the French and Indian War. Kingston, with its grain fields,



### 1763 List of occupants of Saugerties North of Kingston from:

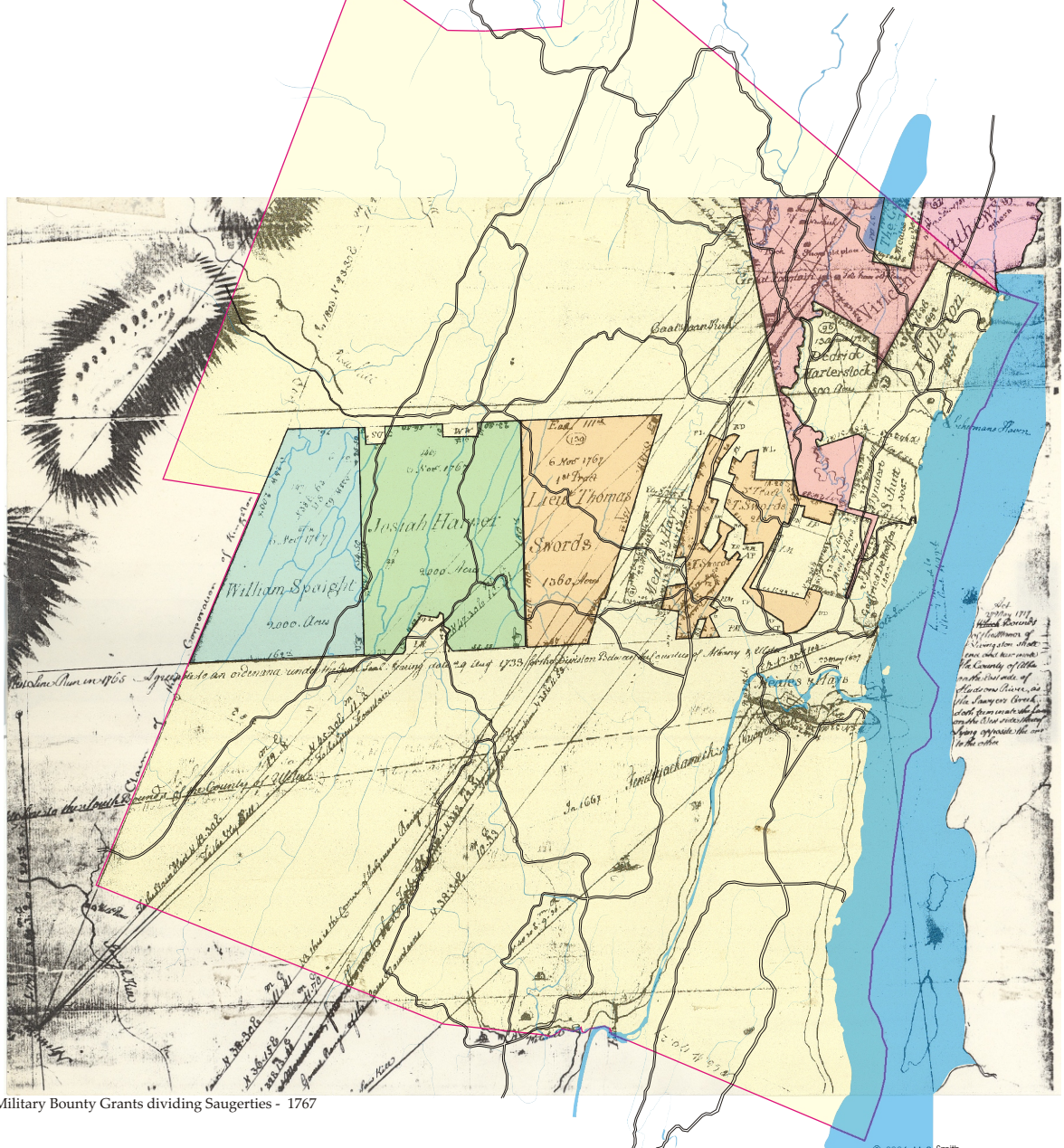
"Map of the North bounds of the Corporation of Kingston laid down by a scale of 40 chains to an inch by Char. Clinton May the 20, 1763" to a "line from the mouth of the Sawyers Kill with 4° variation 543 ch. 44 1 to the range of the Blew Mountains N27°E"

1. Major Dan Wolfen's Tract
2. Minard Scutt's Patent
3. Fullerton's Patent
4. N 4; 5; 6 Grant to Richard Hays and George Meales
5. A tract Granted to Dedrick Marterstock
6. Granted to Col. Beekman and Gilbert Livingston
7. Granted to George Meales
8. Catsban Church
9. Zachariah Snyder's house
10. Evert Wynkoop's house
11. Willm Dedrick's house
12. Mindert Dedrick's house
13. Hezekiah DuBois' house & lott
14. Jan Post's house
15. Abraham Post's house
16. Pertrus Myer's house
17. Ury Humble's house
18. Schoolhouse
19. William Right Myer's house
20. The house of Hezekiah DuBois
21. Johannas Trumpo's house
22. Petrus Luyk's house
23. Peter Freligh's house
24. Richard Davenport's house
25. John Lukes' house
26. Egbert Schoonmaker
27. Samuel Schoonmaker
28. Schoolhouse
29. Jacobus Post
30. John Monk & John Tronnal
31. Johannas Myers
32. Isaac Post's house and Lot to Brouser Dickers
33. Petrus Evenhal
34. Adam Short's house
35. Fredrick Isenar's house
36. Hendrick Osterhout's house
37. Johannas Young house
38. Wilhelmus Folk house
39. Hans Ury Eligh house
40. Wilhelmus Row house
41. Peter McGee's house
42. Cornelius Osterhout's house
43. Tunis Aspel's house
44. Johannis Freulings house
45. Johannis Mouries' house
46. William Myer's house
47. Capt. Tobias Wynkoop's house
48. Johannis Folk's house
49. Evert Wynkoop Jr.'s house
50. Johannis Honnel's house
51. Ironimus Folkenbergh's house
52. Marla Snyder
53. Ephraim VanKeura's house
54. Johannis Plankr
55. Laurance Wynna
56. Jeremiah Snyder
57. Mathias Markell
58. Tunas Shad
59. Hendrick Wolfen
60. John Wolfen
61. Christian Snyder
62. Jacob Brink

Pre-Revolution houses and land divisions in Saugerties

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# 1767-1777 Saugerties in Rebellion



Military Bounty Grants dividing Saugerties - 1767

Livingstons and the Beekmans and to the landholding Trustees of Kingston. Their wealth had compounded in these years and wealth had made them feel independent enough to demand that the Colonial Assembly have representation in the Parliament of England. Curbing this independent spirit by placing royal grants on the wealthy doorsteps of the most outspoken Colonial landlords was Parliament's response.

Half of the Saugerties Region and all of the Catskill and

William Beekman and Edward and Philip Livingston of Livingston Manor and Robert Livingston of Clermont for the Hardenbergh patent and also for Cadwallander Colden, Lt. Governor of the Colony. They all wanted to define their personal claims to settled lands in the Catskill region of Albany County to either counter or take advantage of the Crown's search for available lands to grant.

William Cockburn's marriage into the Trumbour family, Palatines who had been farming

patent and other adjacent lands on the Kings Highway in Saugerties. When Charles Clinton made his 1763 map of all the inhabitants of the "North Bounds of the Corporation of Kingston" many of them were friends and soon to become in-laws. In 1771 James Clinton made the first official map of the bounds of the Kingston lands with the Sawyerkill source as the north bound.

The purpose of the 1763 survey was to relate all the inhabitants in the disputed land to the

Corporation of Kingston even though the boundary line between the counties places them outside of the originating Kingston patent. The point was to show the names as those who had loyally served in the Militia of

Kingston during the French and Indian War. This clearly made them entitled to their homesteads. Since their agreements and deeds originated from Kingston's Trustees this map anticipated a question of the extent of the "Claim of the Corporation of Kingston" which the later map of James Clinton defined.

However, against this convincing argument, six thousand acres resting on a county line from the mouth of the Sawyerkill was still granted in 1767 as military bounty lands. This made a mile-wide swath stretching from the Hardenbergh patent's east boundary to include most of the land at the Hudson River, right through the middle of the claim of Kingston in Saugerties. It essentially

depriving Kingston of any connection to a farther north boundary.

The granting of these lands ignored the Wynkoop deeds from the Trustees of Kingston and the Trustees' negotiated settlements with Robert Livingston. When George Clinton married into the Wynkoop family in 1770 he was becoming part not only of the grievance of his wife's uncle, Evert Wynkoop, a captain in the Kingston militia, but also of the powerful Robert Livingston whose land route to the river these bounty lands overlaid and potentially blocked.

This single provocative act granting military bounties in Saugerties served to unify the full population of Kingston in distrust of the Crown and Parliament. In June of 1775, after the battle of Concord and Lexington, the Articles of Association pledging to support a separate New York State was signed by all but 33 of its 597 voting freeholders. The next election of Trustees of the Corporation in March, 1776 dropped from its minutes the customary recognition of the authority of the Legislature of the Colony of New York over its proceedings.

The following year, on Wednesday, the 12th of March, one week after the election of the Trustees of the Corporation of Kingston, the draft of the New York State Constitution written by John Jay was introduced at the same meeting place in Kingston. This Constitution was approved on the 20th of April, 1777 and published and read in front of the court house in Kingston the following Tuesday marking the birth of New York State.

The Constitution called for a Governor elected by male

residents of the state owning freeholds worth at least a hundred pounds. It also eliminated special representation from corporations, towns and manors but opened voting for an enlarged Assembly to all owning at least 20 pound freeholds or paying a least 2 pounds per year in rent. Though this eliminated the Corporation of Kingston's special voice in the Assembly it made a large number of its freeholders eligible to vote for Governor. An even larger number could vote for representatives and even be representatives themselves.

The power of Kingston's landholding population mustered its political unity just months later when through its vote George Clinton narrowly edged out General Philip Schuyler, John Jay and John Morris Scott to win the state's first gubernatorial election. Kingston would see him elected to this office for eight terms and later to the vice-presidency of the United States for two.

***This single provocative act granting military bounties in Saugerties served to unify the full population of Kingston in distrust of the Crown and Parliament. In June of 1775, after the battle of Concord and Lexington, the Articles of Association pledging to support a separate New York State was signed by all but 33 of its 597 voting freeholders.***

Schoharie regions, were available for military bounty grants and these were all lands settled by the Palatines.

The Palatines thought they owned their land in Saugerties. They had deeds conveyed by the Trustees of the Corporation of Kingston. If the Crown did not recognize this ownership all their homes could be converted to leased farmsteads. Their ownership rights in Kingston were an anomaly in the Hudson Valley. In the manors and patents all around Kingston the farmsteads were leaseholds. All of their brethren's homesteads in the Schoharie were also on disputed land now open to grant. There was nowhere for any of them to turn.

The period between 1763 and 1767 saw a frenzy of surveying activity to the north and west of the Kingston Patent mostly by William Cockburn working for

the acreage from Kaatsbaan, north for nearly three generations, may have provided a great benefit to the Corporation of Kingston and its claim to the lands of other Palatine settlers. By respecting the boundaries of these previously settled farmsteads in his surveys as "Grants by Queen Anne" he effectively defined the northern boundary of the Kingston Commons.

Two other surveyors that had a stake in Saugerties were Charles Clinton, father of the first governor of New York State, George Clinton, and the future Governor's brother, General James Clinton. George Clinton's mother-in-law was the granddaughter of Evert Wynkoop, purchaser of the Meales and Hays Beaverkill

war. An additional 15,000 mariners were in the fleet. With 40 acres to privates and 2000 acres to commanding officers being given, a lot of land had to be available to support the royal largess.

Most of the available lands were west of the Appalachians, in central New York and into Canada. Speculation companies in England were feverishly paying cash for the bounty rights of soldiers and making specific claims for the best lands. George

Washington, as a Colonial officer, had already petitioned the Crown for 2.5 million acres at the junction of the Mississippi and the Ohio using the bounties his Mississippi Company speculators bought from Virginia Militia soldiers.

Included among these remote frontier lands were 2000 acre grants from the Crown's unappropriated lands in a portion of the Hudson Valley spanning all of southern and western Albany County

bordering Rensselaer manor and the Kingston and Hardenbergh patents. These were the prizes of all the bounty grants because they were already settled and improved. They came with "instant tenants" and would make the grantees instant "lords" over large productive estates.

There was an overt political motive behind making these lands available. The period of the war had been very good to the Colonial "lords" like the