

# THE TOWN OF BEEKMAN: A BRIEF HISTORY

By: Thom Usher, Town Historian



In 1737, Beekman became a precinct and the first local government was formed. In 1788 the new State of New York was divided into counties and towns and we then became the Town of Beekman. By 1827, all the other original sections of the Beekman Patent were set off and what remained was what we know as the town limits today.

The original residents were said to be Wappingers Indians. Europeans started settling here in about 1710. Some of the earliest families were the Brills, Flaglers, DeLongs, Doughtys, Rogers, Dennisses, Dorlands, Sweets and others.

Probably the first house of worship was a Lutheran Church on Beach Road which is on the records from 1749 and served the German settlers who came from the Palatine immigration. The Quakers erected a meeting house in 1771 in Gardner Hollow. It was named the Apoquague Preparative Meeting. The remains of their burying



ground are on the corner of Gardner Hollow and Pleasant Ridge Roads. The Beekman

Baptist Church (pictured right) and The United Methodist Church (pictured left) of Poughquag were both erected around 1840 and are our town's longest standing churches. The Catholic community has worshiped primarily at The Church of St. Denis, just over the East Fishkill line.



During the American Revolution, Beekman's own hero was Col. James Vanderburgh of the Beekman Militia. Vanderburgh was a friend and confidant of General George Washington who visited the Vanderburgh homestead in Poughquag on a few occasions. One of the Vanderburgh children was named after the general. The homestead sat on the road between the Methodist Church and the turnoff to Route 55.



Beekman has always been a rural area. The town experienced its first 'boom' influx from the mid-1800's to about 1900 when Sylvan Lake, Beekmanville and Clove Valley were all in the throes of an active mining enterprise. The industry brought both the railroad and huge numbers of people to Beekman. The new folks were mostly Irish men eager to escape the potato famine and who subsequently sent for their families to join them,

thereby introducing an entire new culture into Beekman.

Also during the Revolution, one of the most important of the colonial highways which transported men and supplies from New England to the Hudson passed through Beekman. The road from Pleasant Ridge to Gardner Hollow to Poughquag turned right onto Beekman-Poughquag Road and left onto Beekman Road where it led on to the road to Fishkill where the troops were massed. The route made for long and arduous travel, so frequent stops were made at inns and taverns along the way.

The iron industry died out at the end of the nineteenth century and few remnants remain today. The remnants of the old Beekman Furnace can be seen on Furnace Road and a keen observer may still discern the hump of land on which the railroad ran from Hopewell out to the Clove.

At the end of the 20th century, Beekman is once again experiencing a boom, this time in development of the land. As one of the fastest growing towns in the entire country, we are seeing the demise of our farms and the filling in of open land with new houses and families. The issues are many and our town is facing changes which will alter the demographics and culture forever.

As our town continues to grow, the history is being preserved by the Beekman Historical Society. Residents are urged to join us in this venture as we chronicle the tales and legends of our forefathers in this, our beautiful Town of Beekman.