

HOUSE OF DAVID VAN NESS
Called MAIZEFIELD

Source: DUTCHESS COUNTY DOORWAYS - By Helen Wilkinson Reynolds (Pages 245-251)

"A map of the town of Rhinebeck made in 1797 shows on the described site a large house, marked "General Van Ness" and that structure, in existence in 1797, obviously forms the main part of the dwelling which the writer visited in the spring of 1931. In late years the house of 1797 was given additions at the south and west and was carried up in a third story but in 1931 it was possible to see clearly that General Van Ness had occupied a four-sided house, two stories high, with front and side walls of brick and rear wall of stone.

According to rough measurements made in 1931 the dimensions of the original house, as owned by General Van Ness, were: width, 54-55 feet; depth, 40 feet; ceilings, 10 feet, 9 inches high; central hall, 11 feet, 3 inches wide by 39 feet long; northeast room on the first floor, 19 feet by 21; northwest room, 19 feet by 18 feet, 10 inches; southeast room, 19 feet by 17 feet, 10 inches; southwest room, 19 feet by 22."

"The house of General Van Ness was built with four chimneys and the first and second floors each had four fireplaces, the kitchen having been apparently in the basement. In May, 1931, the original simple trim remained at the fireplaces of the rooms on the second floor. The mantel of 1797, still in the room at the right of the main entrance, is shown in plate 130. In plate 25 is shown the front door and its frame in designs of 1797 but obscured by a nineteenth century porch. On the second floor the interior doors and doorframes are of 1797 but on the main floor doors, doorframes and plaster decorations on the ceilings are in the style of 1840-1860."

"The staircase in the house of General Van Ness was originally at the west end of the main hall, the flooring of the hall in the second story showing where the space that once was head-room was filled in. Now the stairs are in the addition that was made to the original house at the west. Presumably the present broad flight, composed of two runs of steps and a landing is the flight of 1797 in a new location. The handrail ends in a swirl that rests on a post, each of the four sides of the post being graduated from a narrower top to a wider base.

In 1931 the windows of the house of 1797 were closed by folding shutters, made in sunk panels, harmonious with the panelled jambs of the front door. The depth of the window-spaces shows the thickness of the walls of the house. At some late date a veranda was built the whole length of the north wall of the house and French windows, that open on it, must have been cut at the same time.

David Van Ness (1745-1818), who lived in the brick house of 1797 was a native of (the present) Columbia County, New York, and settled in Dutchess before the Revolution. His first home was at the road-junction in the northern end of Dutchess, around which grew in time the village now called Upper Red Hook."

"In the War of the Revolution David Van Ness served as a captain in the Continental Line in 1776-1778 and in 1778 as a major in a regiment of Dutchess militia. He continued his connection with the militia after the war was over, rising in rank until, from 1793 to 1801, he held a commission as general of a brigade. He was sent to the Assembly in 1790; was a Presidential Elector in 1792 and in 1812; and in 1800 and 1802 was a member

of the Senate of New York.

A map of the post road, made in 1789, shows that at that date David Van Ness was still living at Upper Red Hook. But between 1789 and 1797 he moved some two or three miles to the southward and established himself anew. His second home was the brick house described above, with which went 364 acres of land. The deed by which General Van Ness took title to the property is not on record and it is not known whether he built the brick house after buying the land or whether he acquired house and land together. In 1815 he sold the house and the tract of 364 acres and removed to Troy, New York, where he died soon after.

David Van Ness was a son of William and Gertruuy (Hoogeboom) Van Ness, who lived near Claverack, New York, and a brother of Peter Van Ness (who created at Kinderhook the estate called LINDENWALD, that afterwards was the home of ex-President Martin Van Buren). He married about 1770 Cornelia Heermance (sister of General Martin Heermance of Rhinebeck) and they were the parents of seven daughters and three sons, born between 1771 and 1798. Two of the daughters, Catharine and Jannetjen, married brothers,--William Radcliffe, Jr., and John Radcliffe of Rhinebeck. A third daughter, Gertruuy, was the wife of Henry Lyle (long a resident of Upper Red Hook) and the mother of Ann Marie Lyle, who married Richard Varrick Roosevelt (a son of James Roosevelt of MOUNT HOPE in the town of Poughkeepsie). One of the sons, Jacob Van Ness (1772-1847), was admitted to the bar, practiced law in Dutchess and, in 1815-1819 and 1821-1826, filled the office of County Clerk."

"Stephen Brinckerhoff was in his twenty-fourth year when, on May 1, 1815, he bought the handsome house at Red Hood and he probably made the purchase in

anticipation of his coming marriage for, on the 25th of October, 1815, he married Margaret Platt Smith, a daughter of Judge Isaac Smith of LITHGOW, town of Washington, Dutchess County. The marriage ceremony was performed in the northwest parlor at LITHGOW and the bride, born on April 5, 1800, lacked several months of sixteen years when it took place. Child-wife that she was, she passed from LITHGOW to her new home at Red Hook to preside over the great brick house, where the large rooms and high ceilings, the long halls and the broad stairs emphasized her youth and the beauty and loveliness which (by tradition) she possessed. But the romance of this marriage was of all-too-brief duration. On March 18, 1818 (after only a little more than two years in the brick house), Mrs. Brinckerhoff died, leaving an infant daughter, Margaret Smith Brinckerhoff. The mother's body was carried from Red Hook to the home of her birth and tenderly laid in the burial-ground of her family at The Square in the town of Amenia. The stone at her grave says she was but seventeen years, eleven months and thirteen days when her death occurred."

"Following the death of his wife, Stephen Brinckerhoff sold the brick house to Arthur Smith of New York City, who held it a short time only. In 1825 Mr. Smith conveyed the property to Tobias Teller (1772-1854), of the town of Clinton, Dutchess County. Mr. Teller was a son of John and Margaret (Stoutenburgh) Teller, was prominent for some time in political circles in Dutches- but in later life removed first to Coxsackie, New York, and then to Washington County. He owned the house at Red Hook for sixteen years and the mahogany furniture in the house in his day,--sideboard, sofa, tables and tall clock,--as well as the red satin curtains with their gilt poles are now in the possession of his granddaughter, Miss Mary L. Teller of Auburn, N.Y.

In 1841 William Chamberlain (1800-1875) of New York City, a wholesale importer of tropical fruits (when fruit from California and Florida was not yet on the market), bought the brick house at Red Hook for a country-seat. Retaining a home in New York, Mr. Chamberlain identified himself with Red Hook as an interested resident and in 1865 established there the First National Bank, of which he was one of the first directors. A map of Dutchess County, dated 1858, shows the house of William Chamberlain at Red Hook marked MAIZEFIELD, a name presumably inspired by the fertile plain which surrounds the house and which, spreading in the foreground, with the mountains across the Hudson forming a background, has a beauty quite individual. It is not known whether the name was bestowed by Mr. Chamberlain or by one of the earlier owners of the property.

William Chamberlain had two children, a son and a daughter, and when he died he willed the brick house to his son, William L. Chamberlain (1831-1880). Surviving his father only five years, William L. Chamberlain died, leaving two sons and two daughters. His daughters, Alice and Julia Chamberlain, married respectively Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler and Robert Winthrop Chanler, brothers, whose family-home, ROKEBY (built in 1815 by General John Armstrong and listed here under his name), is not far from MAIZEFIELD.

The tract of land that was originally attached to the brick house was divided after the death of William L. Chamberlain and when his executors sold the house in 1882 they conveyed with it 130 acres of the original 364. The new owner of MAIZEFIELD in 1882 was Mrs. Theodore Timpson (Mary Hasbrouck). She was one of the four daughters of the Honorable Abraham Bruyn Hasbrouck of Kingston, New York (of high repute as a

lawyer and sometime President of Rutgers College), and the wife of Theodore Timpson of New York City, a wholesale importer of linens. One of Mrs. Timpson's sisters, Emily Hasbrouck, was the wife of the Honorable Joseph Folger Barnard of Poughkeepsie, brilliant Justice of the Supreme Court of New York, whose boyhood home at Poughkeepsie is described in this book. In 1900 Mrs. Timpson deeded the brick house to her son, Lawrence Timpson. The latter had married Katherine Livingston of CLERMONT, daughter of John Henry and Katherine (Hamersley) Livingston and a descendant, through her mother, of James Hooker and of Mr. and Mrs. John Reade of Poughkeepsie, whose homes are listed on other pages. Lawrence Timpson sold MAIZEFIELD in 1927 and he and his wife now live in England."