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A Brief History of the Farm at 71 Starbarrack Road

In 1986 Doug and Terry Schaff became the 6th owners of 18+ acres of one of the oldest working apple farms in Red Hook, NY. For a few years after the Schaffs purchase of the farm they found local farmers to care for the farm's historic apple orchards and to store apples in the coolers of its Dutch barn. But interest in tending the farms apple orchards diminished and by 1990, more than 250 years of continual farming came to an end on one of Red Hook's oldest farms.

The Red Hook Historical Society has more information on this particular farm than perhaps on any other one in the Town of Red Hook. Original leases on parchment dating back to 1754 and 1756 tell much of the early history of the property. Photographs taken by amateur photographer, naturalist and farmer, William Seward Teator, whose family owned the farm for close to 200 years, document the farm and its inhabitants in the early 1900s.

With the help of Red Hook's Historical Society, the Schaffs dated the history of their farm back to 1688 when Dutchman, Pieter Schuyler received a patent from King James II for land that included this parcel. Shortly thereafter he sold this parcel to a fellow Dutchman, Captain Barent Van Benthuisen.

In 1722, this parcel was leased to Palantine, Andries Drom. It doesn't appear that either Van Benthuisen or Schuyler ever occupied or used the land, making the Drom family the first non-indigenous people to occupy and cultivate it.

In 1754, the land passed into the hands of Peter Kool, who held onto the farm for two years.

In 1756, the Teeter family, who were also Palantines, took possession of the land, successfully raising apples and potatoes there for close to 200 years. William Seward Teator (The spelling of the family name changed) called the farm Meadow Brook Farm and the apple orchards were known as Blue Ribbon Orchards in recognition of the prize-winning apples that were grown there and sent around the world. Until the mid 1960s Starbarrack Road was called Teator Road.

In 1941, the property was sold to Albert B. Cole who continued to raise apples.

In 1966, brothers, Bruce and Frank Geiger purchased it, continuing a tradition of apple farming. Frank Geiger and his wife lived in the large Victorian farmhouse on the property.

And in 1986, Doug and Terry Schaff, became the sixth owners to reside at 71 Starbarrack Road.

In 2004, internationally-renowned timberman, Jim Kricker and Peter Sinclair, Editor of the Hudson Vernacular Architecture Newsletter visited the farm, identifying and dating

the historic structures on the property. The oldest barn on the farm was originally of Dutch design, (constructed in the early 1700s), one of ten Dutch barns registered in Red Hook. Roman numeral markings, used in pre-revolutionary times, show where structural beams were married. This barn had bays for housing horses and cows, and a center section for storing a carriage. At some point the barn was added on to, the roof was raised and it was moved over a full basement to handle the later orchard.

An English side-entrance barn with a two-story carriage house also graces the property along with a stone summer kitchen with a bees-hive oven, (dating back to the 1700s), and an ice house that was later converted into a stable and a workshop.