

Hudson REGISTER-STAR
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Weather

A few clouds and mild tonight with lows in the mid 40s. Sunny and mild tomorrow with highs in the mid 60s.

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RED HOOK ROLLS OUT RED CARPET FOR 175TH

Burr reportedly used Maizefield as hiding place

RED HOOK — Maizefield has passed through many hands since the early 18th century when it was the home of General David Van Ness, the town of Red Hook's first supervisor.

But it was Van Ness who was the first owner of record. Between 1789 and 1797, he and his wife Cornelia bought 364 acres, which extended from what is now Route 9 to Trow Blvd, and from Route 199 to the Sawkill, when they moved from upper Red Hook to what is now the village of Red Hook.

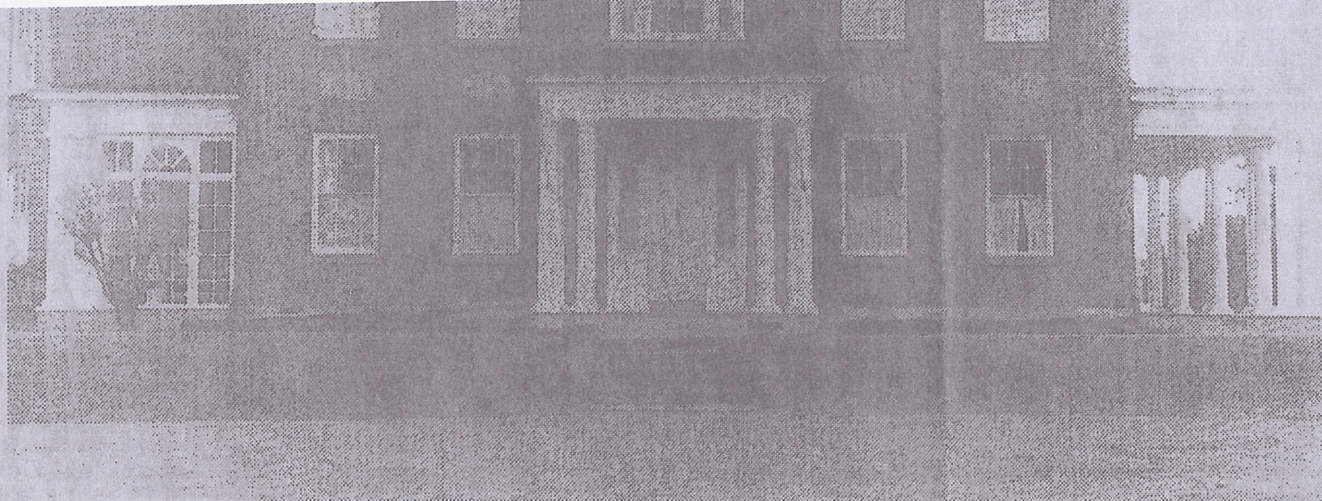
There seems to be some question about whether the house was already standing when Van Ness bought the land or whether he built it.

According to Helen Wilkinson Reynolds in "Dutchess County Doorways," the house is shown to be in existence and owned by Van Ness on a 1797 map of the town of Rhinebeck.

The house, she said, is similar to other rectangular-shaped, two-story brick
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Maizefield, home of David Van Ness, the first supervisor of Red Hook. (Staff photo by Donna Logsdon-Potts)

David Van Ness, first supervisor,



Maizefield, home of David Van Ness, the first supervisor of Red Hook. (Staff photo by Donna Logsdon-Potts)

David Van Ness, first supervisor, had strong influence on Red Hook

RED HOOK — As Red Hook prepares to celebrate its 175th birthday on Wednesday at Maizefield, thoughts turn to the town's first supervisor, David Van Ness.

Van Ness was supervisor for only one term, and he left Red Hook in 1815, only two years after the town was created. But according to town historian J. Winthrop Aldrich, his influence on Red Hook was very strong.

Prior to the separation of Red Hook from Rhinebeck, Van Ness was the post master, an appointed position that Aldrich said was "quite a plumb."

It is thought that the move of Van Ness and his wife, Cornelia, from Upper Red Hook to what now is the village of Red Hook had a strong impact on the center of the town moving from Upper Red Hook to the intersection of Broadway and Market Streets.

It is not known exactly when they moved, but according to maps, by 1797 they were living in Maizefield, on Market Street (now also Route 199). Sometime in the 1790's, Aldrich said, Van Ness and another prominent citizen, John Armstrong, designed the village of Red Hook.

Van Ness owned land north and Armstrong owned land south of Market Street. Aldrich said the two men decided to "make a community." Van Ness brought the post office, usually in the post master's home, with him and gradually the village grew.

By 1860, Aldrich said, the village was a thriving community with a bank, industry — most notably tobacco — and with access to the railroad.

"Clearly this was a community that was important," Aldrich said. "It was a flourishing rural village supporting an agricultural community."

After the Civil War, the village was officially incorporated.

EARLY YEARS OF VAN NESS

Born in 1745 in Columbia County, Van Ness moved into Dutchess County before the revolution. During the war, he served as

a captain in the Continental Line and as a major in the Dutchess militia. He stayed on in the militia after the war, raising to the rank of brigadier general. He also was a member of both the state Senate and Assembly.

He married Cornelia Heermance about 1779. Her parents were freeholders of land in Red Hook. The house on the Heermance Homestead is still standing and is currently owned by Peter Bulkley, a member of the Red Hook planning board, Aldrich said.

Sometime before 1797, the Van Nesses moved to Maizeland. Since their 10 children were born between 1771 and 1789, most of them were probably raised there.

Van Ness is not the only famous member of his family. His brother, Peter, built Lindenwald, the estate at Kinderhook, later owned by President Martin Van Buren.

This same brother was the father of William Van Ness, an intimate friend of Aaron Burr. In Vice President Burr's famous duel with Alexander Hamilton in 1804, William Van Ness was his second. It is said, although not proven, that the son of David Van Ness, Jacob, delivered Burr's challenge to Hamilton and that after the duel, in which Hamilton was killed, Burr hid out at Maizeland.

THE LAST YEARS

When Van Ness left Red Hook, he moved to Troy. Just why is not known. Aldrich speculated that it might have been to be with some of his children. Troy was a booming town about that time, and it is not inconceivable that one or more of his children would have moved there, Aldrich said.

The first supervisor died in 1818. Aldrich said he thought Van Ness had been buried at St. John's Reformed Church in Upper Red Hook, but upon checking, found he was not. Because it was common in those days to be buried in the same town where one died, Van Ness probably is buried in Troy, Aldrich said.

(Information from J. Winthrop Aldrich and "Dutchess County Doorways" by Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, Published by William Jarquar Pavson of New York.)

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houses built in the area. This similarity seems to indicate a trend in local architecture, she said.

An interesting rumor surrounding the house is that it was the hiding place of Aaron Burr after his famous duel with Alexander Hamilton in 1804. Since the Van Ness family had ties with Burr, the rumor may be fact.

Since the 10 Van Ness children were born between 1771

...U.S. Embassy

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The U.S. Defense Department announced the additional troops would be deployed to improve security at U.S. military installations in Panama. About 10,000 troops are stationed at the U.S. Southern Command. Pentagon officials said more troops may be sent if they are deemed necessary.

Eric Arturo Delvalle, in hiding since he was ousted from the presidency after he tried to fire Noriega on Feb. 25, has called for the U.S. to intervene militarily and remove the general. Noriega is under indictment in the U.S. on federal drug trafficking charges.

and 1798, it can be assumed that most, if not all, of them were raised at Maizefield.

Van Ness, who became supervisor of Red Hook in 1813, only served one term. Born in 1741, by 1813 he was 72-years-old. In 1815, he sold Maizefield to Stephen I. Brinckerhoff of Fishkill and moved to Troy where he died two years later.

Brinckerhoff probably bought the house in anticipation of his marriage to Margaret Platt Smith of Washington, New York. He bought the house in May and was married in October. But she died two years later, and Brinckerhoff sold the house to Arthur Smith of New York City.

Smith only owned the property for a short time. In 1825, he sold it to Tobias Teller of Clinton. Teller was politically prominent in Dutchess County, but he left the county for Cox-sackie and then for Washington County.

It was when the next owner, William Chamberlain, lived at the property that historians first find it listed as Maizefield on a 1865 map of Red Hook, presumably, because of the fertile land surrounding the house. Although that is the first reference found, it is not known if earlier residents used the name.

Chamberlain lived in New York City and used the Red Hook property as a country house. A active resident, he established the First National Bank in Red Hook in 1865.

At some point during these years, wings were added to the south and west sides of the house and the roof was raised to added a third story, which was used for maids quarters.

It is after the death of Chamberlain that the 364 acres were divided. In 1882, his executors sold the house and 130 acres to Mrs. Theodore Timpson, the former Mary Hasbrouck. She left it to her son, Lawrence, who married Katherine Livingston of "Clermont."

The property then passed into the hands of Leon Shelley, John Dearing, a U.S. Ambassador, and Betty Blair Eggert. She bought the house in 1963. It was not in good condition at the time, and she is responsible for the restoration of the house.

The current owners, David and Sharon Hessney, bought the house from Eggert in 1986.

"She didn't want it to become a museum," Sharon Hessney said recently. "She wanted a family to live in it."

David and Sharon have two

children, Jonathan and Ethan.

The new owners have converted the third-floor maids quarters into three apartments. But the conversion has been such that the house could be reconverted into its original condition, Sharson said.

Maizefield will be the site of Wednesday's 175th anniversary celebrating the creation of Red Hook.

(Information from Helen Wilkerson Reynolds' book "Dutchess County Doorways"; Red Hook town historian J. W. Aldrich; and Sharon Hessney.)