



The Old Dutch Settlement of Coxsackie

The Coxsackie Declaration of Independence

And a Brief Account
Of The Indians

Presented By

THE TICK TOCK INN

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THE OLD DUTCH SETTLEMENT OF COXSACKIE

Some Interesting Facts

Do you know that near here is the famous Bronk house built in 1663, or that Flint Mine Hill, within site of the Tick-Tock Inn, was once the great Algonquin Flint mine, or that in 1775 there was a Declaration of Independence drawn up in Coxsackie a full year ahead of the famous document of 1776? These are some of the interesting facts this little leaflet will tell you about the vicinity of the "Tick Tock Inn" situated at the intersection of Route 9-W and the old Coxsackie Turnpike, now Route 81.

Save for the canals, you are surrounded by land that is as truly Dutch as if it had been brought from the Netherlands. All around you are old Dutch homes of wood and stone, still inhabited in many instances by lineal descendants of the original owners and builders of nearly 300 years ago. It was here lived those valiant Dutchmen who placed their lives in jeopardy to draw and sign a stinging rebuke against the tyranny of King George III, declaring themselves free and independent citizens by the issuing of the first Declaration of Independence ever drawn up in the entire country. This document may be seen by visiting the Albany Institute and Historical Society in Albany, signed by settlers whose children's children walk the streets of Coxsackie today.

THE INDIANS — DELAWARES AND MOHICANS

When the first settlers came here the land was occupied by under-tribes of the Algonquin nation. Proof of this is found in the remains of their villages, burial places, arrow points, hammerstones and tools. The Lenni-Lenapes (or Delawares) and the Mohicans were here in 1609, and probably before that time. The Delawares owned the land on the west side of the Hudson River from its mouth as far as the Catskill, and west to the sources of the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers. The Mohicans occupied all the east side of the river from an unknown point in the north down to the Catskill and as far west as Schenectady. The wolf was the clan sign of both these nations in this locality; the bear and the turtle symbolized the clans located farther north. One of these Delaware sub-tribes was the Catskill Indians, and their land extended from the present site of Saugerties, north to the Catskills and perhaps beyond, for the definite boundaries have never been established. The lands beyond the Catskill Mountains were Mohawk property.

The area between the Catskill and Coxsackie Creeks was, by common consent, neutral ground, and both tribes were free to hunt and fish there. There is nothing to show how long ago the Delaware and Mohican tribes came into possession of this land. Indian legend says

that a few years before the coming of the white man the Mohawks, Mohicans, and the Delawares engaged in a great war, and that the final battle was fought on Rogers Island, opposite Catskill. The Delawares were a race of warriors, but after this skirmish they never again put on war paint or participated in the numerous Indian wars.

On a portion of the Coxsackie land grant (now South Athens), a large Indian village was at one time located, called by the tribe Mak-a-wo-muc, and the camp fires which burned there for many years have turned the soil black. In 1663 the tribal chief was "Long Jacob"; and in 1682, Mahak Niminaw. Above the Catskill and on Beeren, or Mohican Island, was another sub-tribe known as Mechkentowoons.

All of the relics discovered on this site in Athens have been of Mohawk manufacture, but there is still some conjecture as to whether the Indians whom Hendrick Hudson referred to as a "loving people" were Mohawks or Catskills.

Last of the Delawares

Andrew D. Peloubet of Athens wrote a history of his town many years ago, and to him and to J. B. Beer's History of Greene County must be given credit for much of the contents of this pamphlet, which the writer does. Peloubet says: "the last appearance of descendants of the Indian owners of this land was about the year 1852. For many years previous to this date, each spring there would come here a very old Indian and his squaw. His name was Nelse, hers was Till. They would camp on the bank of a small stream that ran parallel with and about 200 feet north of Union Street. In those days there were very old willow trees standing there, and they would make a shack in the shade of the trees and live there about six months of the year. My mother has often told me that when a little girl she and other children would go to see them make willow baskets, and the old Indian would boast of his Delaware ancestors, saying that his great-grandfathers owned the land upon which the village stood."

The Powerful Medicine Man

The manner and religion of the Indians of this region were generally the same as those of the other Indian nations of eastern North America with this exception: they believed that there was once a Chief named On-te-or-a, who was a powerful Medicine Man, and that he was continually interfering with the sun, moon and stars until he became such a nuisance that the Great Manitou spread him out on his back along the topmost ridge of the mountains, there to lie forever gazing on those orbs whose courses he had been trying to alter, and that his form could be seen from a distance.

The rulings of nature were then placed in the keeping of an old squaw, who would let out the moon and stars at night and gather them in at morning time. She would hoist the sun out of a pit behind the far eastern hills, letting him down at night into a cave in the west, from which he was supposed to travel underground back to the east. This old squaw also had command of the rain; thunder and lightning were the voice and arrows of the Great Manitou. Snow flakes were stray feathers that fell when she shook her bed. The mists and clouds hanging over the mountain tops were her breath.

How They Lived

The dwelling places of the Indians were the flat lands, bordering the river and streams which abounded in fish, and the woods, which were full of game. They raised maize (corn), beans and squash and some wild vegetables. They fared well, living generally as single families in circular wigwams 10 or 12 feet wide, constructed of poles set in a circle with the top drawn together and the entire frame covered with bark and skins.

The diseases and "firewater" of the white man made swift and sure work of erasing these tribes, and the only evidence now of this once numerous people is an occasional plowed up bone, utensil, or stone implement.

Long before Henrick Hudson sailed his ship "Half Moon" up the Hudson and came to anchor on September 16, 1609, nearly opposite Coxsackie, this land was inhabited. The ancestors of all the Indians who lived in eastern North America came here, traveling through the dense forests that covered the country, bringing with them skins and wampum and pipe stone to offer in barter. In return for their wares they received a highly valued, finished material: arrow heads.

Flint Mine Hill

In 1925, through the efforts of Mr. Jefferson D. Ray of West Coxsackie, the State of New York became interested in the amount of flint chippings and arrowheads discovered in this section. A two month expedition and survey by State Archeologists disclosed the largest flint mines in the State, located on what is known as Flint Mine Hill (originally called Myneberg). Looking south as far as the Vocational Institution, from the door of the Tick Tock Inn, Flint Mine Hill may be seen to the east at the rear of the Inn. The Hill site of the great Algonquin flint mines, was at one time considered in a state appropriation for national parks, but the proposal was never carried through. Nevertheless it marked one of the most important Indian discoveries in the east, doubly so since it was definitely proved that the site was not only a mine but a factory, from which arrowheads were manufactured and distributed throughout the entire eastern Indian country.

THE BRONK HOUSE—1663

Looking south along Route 9-W from the Tick Tock Inn, on the west of the highway and almost directly opposite the Vocational School, the little cluster of buildings known as the Bronk House may be observed. The building, which is the ancestral home of the Bronk family, is actually two houses, one stone, and one brick, joined by a covered passage.

Pieter Bronk was the first settler in this area, and his home is believed to be the oldest in the section. The land ran originally from the river to the foot of the high hills to the west, and about three miles or more along the river. This land was obtained by deed from two Indians named Sisketas and Siachemoes, sons of Keesie Wey, in Fort Orange (Albany) on January 13, 1662. The deed was recorded in Albany. The house was built about 1663, but the first mention of it in a legal form was on October 8, 1736. Additions have been made to the house from time to time. One portion bears the inscription "JB. JB. LB. CB. 1792". On a still older portion is the date 1738. The house was always occupied by the Bronk family or by farm tenants, and today it is preserved and maintained in its original form by the Greene County Historical Society. It is still a cherished possession of the last descendant of the family, and is completely furnished with valuable furniture of the era.

All the land embraced in the village of Coxsackie and West Coxsackie belonged to Pieter Bronk.

The Dutch "Kocks-Hacky"

A great deal of speculation and dispute has arisen over the true meaning of the word "Coxsackie" and its origin. Among various other spellings, it has been written Koixhacking, Cuxakee, and Kocks Hacky. The former spelling is attributed to the Indian pronunciation, and the latter, of course, to the Dutch. (The Coxsackie flats were called Caniseek by the Indians). The most widely accepted theory concerning the meaning of the word is "place of the owl" or "place where the owl hoots", although it has also been interpreted "place of the cut river banks". The most logical explanation is that which stems from the Algonquin language, "Shooks Aki", meaning the congealed blood of the primal serpent. This is an even more persuasive interpretation since the Algonquin believed that flint actually was congealed serpent blood.

A Tour of Coxsackie

Leaving the Tick Tock Inn and our friendly hosts, we may travel the road that leads toward the east and the Hudson River, and on toward the original village or settlement of Coxsackie. We cross Coxsackie Creek, which begins from a spring in the Kalkberg, the high ledge of rock to the west, just near the south end of the township.

At the foot of these rocks is the Indian footpath, portions of which are still in use. Over this trail the Mohawk Indians came to visit the Catskills and the Algonquins.

The old home of the Philip Conyn (Conine) family is located in this sector, and dates back to about 1831. The site was a tavern before the Revolutionary War. Adjacent to the Conyn home is the site of the first Church in Coxsackie, and just behind it are the family burying grounds of the Adams and Van Bergen families, containing some very old stones. Next is the large two-story stone house occupied by Carl Cary. This was the home of Petrus Van Bergen, ancestor of the Coxsackie Van Bergens. The walls are three feet thick, and set in the masonry in the front are the iron letters "P. V. B. I." There is no date recorded, but as Petrus lived here prior to 1775, the house is at least that old. About 300 feet west of this house stood another stone house, but not even the foundations are left of it. Tradition says that this house was attacked by the Indians, and that in defending it, the owner, Marte Gerritse Van Bergen, was killed by an arrow and buried with the death shaft still embedded in him.

The small stone house situated on a knoll east of the creek is the oldest house in the settlement. It was the homestead of Peter Bronk, son of Jan Bronk, the first owner of the land, and was erected prior to 1700. In 1784 John T. Bronk, a son or grandson of Peter lived there. It is a typical Dutch house. The next and last stone house on the left is the old J. H. Whitbeck home, and is very old, but it is not known by whom it was built or in what year although it is believed that it was erected by either the Bronks, Van Bergens or Van Den Bergs.

Space forbids giving the history of all the old Dutch houses in this locality and of the many interesting legends connected with many of them, but there is a large brick Colonial mansion, at one time a hotel, at the east end of the street that deserves mention. The doors and woodwork, including the stair rail and mantles are all hand carved, and the ceilings are 14 feet high. The windows have hand made inside blinds, and there are 14 fire places, five of which are located in the cellar. The walls are very thick.

History shows that as early as 1650 religious services of some character were held by the Dutch settlers of Kocks Hacky and Katskill, but it was not until February of 1731 that a joint organization was formed between the two settlements under the direction of Jan Bronk and Francis Salisbury. The first Church building was on the north side of the road, fronting the Adams and Van Bergen Cemetery, and the deed and ancient registry are still in possession of the Church. The purchase price was 5 shillings. Judging by the inscription in the church register, "Het Doop Rock Van de Gemeinte Van Koksakse, Anno 1738, Jan. 21," the building must have been erected about that time.

The church stood on this site until May of 1798, when it was taken down and a lot for a new church given in exchange by Henry Van Bergen. This lot was situated on the south side of the road and nearly opposite the old site. The second church was built that same year, and stood until 1861, when the present building was erected on a new site 1/4 mile east. The old church records are still preserved here.

COXSACKIE'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Coxsackie Declaration of Independence was discovered in Albany by Mr. John M. Clark, President of the Albany Institute and Historical and Art Society, among castaway articles in an attic in that city. It was presented by him to the Society. The authenticity of the document was verified by Dr. Sullivan, State Historian; Dr. Wyer, Librarian; and the State Archivist. Two hundred and twenty-five Dutch signatures are appended to the Declaration. On the reverse side is written "George III, Last King of America".

The document reads as follows: "Persuaded that the Salvation of the Rights and Liberties of America, depends, under God, on the firm Union of its Inhabitants, in a vigorous prosecution of the Measures necessary for its Safety, and convinced of the necessity of preventing the Anarchy and Confusion which attends a dissolution of the Powers of Government:

THAT the Freeholders and Inhabitants of Coxsackie District, in the County of Albany, being greatly alarmed at the avowed Design of the Ministry to raise a Revenue in America, and shocked by the bloody scene in the Massachusetts Bay:

DO in the most solemn Manner resolve never to become Slaves; and do also associate under all the Ties of Religion, Honour, and Love to our Country, to adopt and endeavor to carry into Execution whatever Measures may be rendered by the Continental Congress, or resolved upon by our provisional Convention for the purpose of preserving our Constitution and opposing the Execution of several arbitrary and oppressive Acts of the British Parliament, until a reconciliation between Great Britain and America on constitutional principles (which we most ardently desire) can be obtained; and that we will, in all Things, follow the advice of our General Committee, respecting the purpose aforesaid, the preservation of peace and good Order, and the safety of Individuals and private property.

Dated at Coxsackie, the Seventeenth Day of May in the year of Our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and seventy five."

Coxsackie Today

Coxsackie is a leading industrial center in Greene County, with several manufacturing establishments contributing constantly to the growth and development of the town. A new housing program is currently under construction on the Old King's Road, and has been named the New Wayne Park section. The village has the modern and commercial improvements that are so necessary in maintaining an influential position in the County and State: a Central High School, pub-

lic library, churches, fraternal organizations, clubs and recreational facilities, a National Bank, and a weekly newspaper.

The area is noted for its health resorts and boarding houses, and Coxsackie is the natural gateway to the Catskill Mountain region. Some of the largest hotels and boarding houses in the area are easily accessible from Coxsackie, and thousands of tourists visit here annually. The West Shore Railroad passes through the village, and Route 9-W, one of the finest highways in the State leads directly from New York City and the Palisades through Coxsackie to Albany, Saratoga, and the Adirondacks to Montreal.

Before deciding upon a new location for your residence or business, inspect this fine old Dutch town. Coxsackie extends a cordial welcome to all who wish to visit or locate here.

Reis and Matter, the hosts of the Tick Tock Inn hope that you have found this little booklet interesting, and that you will soon come this way again. In the words of Rip Van Winkle, "may you live long and prosper".

John A. Reis
Proprietor of the Tick Tock Inn