



Town of New Paltz Hamlet Histories: Butterville

Butterville, or *Oleynuit* (Dutch for butternut, after the numerous butternut trees that grew in the area) encompasses present day Canaan, Mountain Rest and Butterville Roads. The area was divided into twelve long narrow lots and distributed among the patentee families between 1738 and 1739, however it was not settled until the early 19th century [\[1\]](#). These lots started at the eastern edge of an elevated plateau that created the western edge of the Wallkill River. This forms the western portion of the Wallkill flood plain that extends to Mohonk Mountain.

One of the first settlers of Butterville was David Hasbrouck who built the home that resides at 102 Butterville Rd. According to the 1800 Census, he lived there with his wife, six children and one slave. The one surviving barn associated with this property has been converted to a private residence at 104 Butterville Rd. Early settler Abram Steen was one of the first inhabitants to take advantage of the rich soil of the area for agricultural use. Around 1830 his nursery became known for providing pear, plum, peach, apple and cherry trees for neighboring towns.

Other industries also blossomed in Butterville. The Humpho Creek, located near the center of Butterville, supported a gristmill in the vicinity of 47 Butterville Rd. A tannery was located at 106/108 Mountain Rest Road and a blacksmith shop was established as part of this growing community.

Beginning in 1843 a school house operated on land occupied by the home at 5 Butterville Road. The building was part of "Common School District #2" of the Town of New Paltz and classes were taught there until 1953. That same year it was put up for auction and later demolished. The present home that exists on the property was built three years later and reported to be constructed with portions of the original wood from the schoolhouse. The Quaker religion had a profound impact on the settlement of Butterville and became known as "The Quaker Neighborhood"*. A meeting house was constructed in the 1820s and Butterville saw an influx of Quakers over the next ten years. The Ruger family bought the land in the early 1900s after the Quakers discontinued meeting there. By 1940 they had also purchased the meeting house and had it torn down. It was later rebuilt as a private residence. The Quaker cemetery is associated with the meetinghouse but family plots (such as the Freer graveyard) remained associated with their respective families.

Improved transportation resulted in further expansion. A new road was constructed in the early 19th century through Butterville to elevate the post road above the Wallkill flood plain (present day Albany Post Road). The most dynamic change to the Butterville area occurred between 1890 and 1918, with the buying of farm property by Albert Smiley and the construction of the New York City Aqueduct. Both of these events resulted in the displacement of many old Huguenot and Quaker families and the conversion of their homes as boarding houses and facilities for the aqueduct workers. Further changes occurred with the establishment of Camp Fort Orange in World War One, when soldiers from the New York State Guard were stationed there to protect the water supply from a possible German poison attack. Although these troops were not involved in combat, many suffered from the Spanish Influenza outbreak. The current appearance of Butterville is the result of the large purchasing of land by Albert Smiley for the Mohonk Mountain House, which later became the Mohonk Preserve, and the construction of the aqueduct during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

* LeFevre, Ralph. *A History of New Paltz, New York and its Old Families* . 2nd. Albany, NY: Fort Orange Press, 1909. 213-215. Print.