



Town of New Paltz Hamlet Histories: Libertyville

The Hamlet of Libertyville, known as “Nescatock” or “Poughwoughtenonk” by early native peoples and settlers, was part of the Louis Dubois Patent of 1688. It currently encompasses the area west of the Wallkill River, south of Sky Top in the town of New Paltz to northeastern Gardiner Town*.

Permanent habitation of Libertyville began in 1698 when Louis Dubois’ sons, Solomon and Louis, settled on the present location on a flat plain to the west of the Wallkill River. Solomon’s home rested behind the property at 302 Libertyville Rd and Louis’ south of the home at 181 Libertyville. According to Kenneth E. Hasbrouck in his 1959 publication *Historic New Paltz*, “The descendants of the two brothers made up practically all of the population of Libertyville until 1820”**.

Libertyville was an agricultural hamlet, with four of the early farms extending on the east bank of the Wallkill River from the Joseph Hasbrouck farm at Guilford to the flats. These farms belonged

to Henry L., Louis Garret and Peter Dubois. A grist mill was constructed around 1790 by Nathaniel Dubois, and the area of Libertyville Rd was a center of milling activity that included a saw and carding mill. The wool factory (no longer present), store and hotel were in business in the same area during the mid to late 19th century. However the store was later moved to the foundation of the hotel after the latter burned down in 1916. A blacksmith also operated in the hamlet, but the shop has since been demolished.

Many public facilities provided the hamlet with a sense of community. The Conferentie (or "Owl") Church was first constructed around 1767 and children were educated on the school at 371 Libertyville Rd. between 1856 and 1935. The school was sold at auction in 1935 and was converted to a private residence and the church no longer exists. In 1827, over 110 acres of property was purchased from the Merritt family by the Ulster County Legislature at a total of \$3800. One year later the County Poor House was constructed on the grounds purchased from the Merrit's where it remained in operation for over 150 years. During the 1860s, a home for the mentally insane-along with many associated outbuildings, was built on the same site.

Libertyville also attracted attention from wealthy sugar/ coffee magnate and philanthropist John Arbuckle. In July of 1902 Mr. Arbuckle purchased 282 acres of land for \$12,000 in order to erect a sanitarium for "women and girls employed by the various companies of Arbuckle Brothers"***. This purchase included the 19th century farmhouse built by Jonathan Deyo and owned (at the time of purchase) by his daughter Helena Smedes. The home at 46 Libertyville Road and surrounding area (including the properties of 32, 60 and 48 Libertyville Rd) was used as a working farm for employees and open air camp for sick children****. On July 15, 1911, tragedy struck when the nearly completed four story, 287 foot long "Arbuckle Colony" burned to the ground. The building was intended as an addition to the above mentioned facilities, as a "fresh air" facility for the sick. The estimated loss at the time was \$80,000*****.

The construction of the New York City Aqueduct between 1908 and 1916 resulted in the transformation of Libertyville. Farms and families were displaced and homes became boarding houses as a result of this massive public works project. Libertyville also became a center for recreation in Ulster County during throughout the 20th and into the 21st centuries. Automobile races on the Wallkill River and ice skating were popular past times in the Libertyville area during most of the early 20th century. In 1967 the Ulster County Fair came to the grounds that housed the County Poor House and Mental Institution. These facilities closed in the late 1970s and were demolished in the mid 1980s. However the Merritt and Poorhouse cemeteries still exist on site. In 1999 the Town of New Paltz leased a total of 80 acres to Libertyville, which is being turned into a multi-purpose athletic park (known as "The Field of Dreams"). The Ulster County Pool and many other outdoor recreational activities continue to be hosted in Libertyville.

* LeFevre, Ralph. *A History of New Paltz, New York and its Old Families* . 2nd. Albany, NY: Fort Orange Press, 1909. 208-215. Print.

** Hasbrouck, Kenneth E. *Historic New Paltz*. New Paltz, NY: 1959. 66. Print.

*** "John Arbuckle's Project", *The New York Times*, Jan 17. 1903

**** Harp, Peter H. "Horse and Buggy Days: Memories at the Arbuckle Farm." *New Paltz Independent*
Dec 1967, Print.

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***** "Big Arbuckle Building at New Paltz Totally Destroyed by Fire", *New Paltz Times*, July 18th, 1911.

