



### New Paltz Hamlet Histories: Springtown

The community of Springtown is located two miles north of New Paltz on the west side of the Wallkill River. Its name is derived from the low water table of the area, resulting in abundant streams and easily attainable water for agriculture and sanitation. Springtown is known for its fertile soil, a result of the flooding of the Wallkill. Many of the children and grandchildren of the early settlers of New Paltz were attracted to the Springtown area because of its agricultural potential, making it one of the earliest hamlets to be settled.

The first settlers were from the Dubois and Deyo families, Christian Deyo and his two sons were some of the first to arrive in the area in 1728\*. One of the oldest surviving homes from Springtown's early history is the 1755 Benjamin Dubois House (468 Springtown Road), in the present Town of Rosendale. Dubois, like many of his fellow settlers, was a second generation descendant of the original New Paltz Patentees, himself the Grandson of Isaac Dubois. Another early home, the 1785 Christopher Deyo house (374 Springtown Rd.), still resides within the original Springtown boundary in the town of New Paltz. One of the most prominent inhabitants was Judge Jonathon DuBois, who was a county judge in 1821\*\*.

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the population of Springtown had rapidly grown from a few homes to about 20, the same number as the village of New Paltz\*\*\*. Springtown's proximity to the main

southern thoroughfare from Kingston and its recognition as a stop along the early stage coach (later rail road) lines, also led to an influx of commerce. Cattle ranchers from Lake Champlain drove their herds through Springtown on their way to New York and Philadelphia markets\*\*\*\*. These stock drives led to many businesses popping up in Springtown to accommodate out of town visitors. Over six houses of entertainment, taverns and hotels were established along Springtown Rd\*. The property of 251 Springtown Rd. was a center of entertainment from 1852 to the early 1900's, as a hotel, ice cream saloon, post-office and Inn under various owners\*\*\*\* | † | †† | ††† | ††††. Other non-agricultural businesses included a Tannery operated by Scotsman William McDonald near Old Kingston Rd and a wagon makers shop on the property of 250 Springtown Rd. (demolished)††††† | †\*. According to 19<sup>th</sup> century historian Ralph Lefevre, a store owned by an African American: "... [who] sold molasses by the pint and whatever other articles he had for sale in like proportion" also existed in the Hamlet of Springtown †\*\*.

Despite numerous hotels and entertainment facilities, Springtown was a rural hamlet, with the church and school, at the center of this small community. The Springtown Chapel at 391 Springtown Rd hosted monthly meetings of the "Springtown Temperance Society", picnics, trotting matches and Christmas celebrations since the late 1860s†\*\*\*. The church was sold by the Ladies Aid Society in 1951, shortly before the group disbanded. A small school was established at Springtown prior to 1888, however the construction of a new school was ordered in 1891 and the old one sold off. The 1891 school stands at 393 Springtown Rd and was itself sold in 1935. Both the school and church were converted into private residences. With them went many of the long standing traditions that kept this small community together.

In recent years, the Wallkill River has influenced opinions over development and zoning in Springtown. On August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1955 the Wallkill overflowed its banks and flooded many homes in the Town of New Paltz, eventually rising to seven feet above the road near the New Paltz Bridge and submerging surrounding farmland. One Springtown resident, Michael Krebs saw the flood waters rise to the first floor windows of his home, as well as "[drown] a large flock of 1400 laying Leghorns"†\*\*\*\*. Another flood in October of that year resulted in the evacuation of more than 30 inhabitants from the Springtown Area††\*. Historically the flooding of the Wallkill was nothing new; it brought settlers to Springtown in the first place. However the 1955 flood sparked a debate over prohibiting development in areas of Springtown that are prone to flooding††\*\*. Proponents of the flood law believe it is necessary for maintaining the safety of the community. However landowners who wish to sell their homes or purchased lots to be subdivided see the moratorium as a restriction of their property rights††\*\*\*. Even though Springtown no longer exists as a hamlet, the Wallkill River continues to affect the people of this community well into the present day.

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\* Castellana, Joseph A. "A Brief History of Springtown" 6, May 1994. Print.

\*\* Hasbrouck, Kenneth. *Historic New Paltz*. New Paltz, NY: 1959. 79-80. Print.

\*\*\* *New Paltz Independent* 13 Sep 1882, Print

\*\*\*\* Lefevre, Ralph. *History of New Paltz, New York and Its Old Families*. 2nd. Albany, NY: Fort Orange Press, 1909. 203. Print.

\*\*\*\*\* *New Paltz Times*, 12 Jan 1865, Print

† *New Paltz Times*, 23 Dec 1871, Print

†† *New Paltz Times*, 28 Oct 1875, Print

††† *New Paltz Independent*, 31 Aug 1894, Print

†††† *New Paltz Independent*, 16 May 1946, Print

††††† Hasbrouck, Kenneth p. 80

†\**New Paltz Times*, 19 Oct 1866, Print

†\*\* Lefevre, Ralph p. 129-130

†\*\*\**New Paltz Times*, 20 Feb 1868, Print

†\*\*\*\* "Walkill Goes on a Rampage." *New Paltz Independent* 25 Aug 1955, Print.

††\* "People Evacuated from Springtown." *New Paltz News* 20 Oct 1955, Print.

††\*\* "Springtown Wants Residential Zoning." *New Paltz Independent* 6 Mar 1969. Print

††\*\*\* Quinn, Erin. "Receding Tide: New Paltz passes new flood law." *New Paltz Times* 27 May 2010: 1, 16. Print.