

IMAGES
of America

EAST FISHKILL



Malcolm J. Mills

Malcolm (1937-2019) was a good friend.
He was the Director of the East Fishkill Historical Society for many years.

INTRODUCTION

The Dutch settlements of New Amsterdam (Manhattan) and Fort Orange (Albany) were established early in the 17th century, but it took another several decades before anyone showed interest in settling on the eastern side of the Hudson Valley, which was low-lying and heavily forested. After England had reclaimed and renamed New York, King Charles II gave land on the east bank of the Hudson River to his brother James, Duke of York, in 1683. James named the county after his wife, the Dutchess of York. The archaic spelling of Duchess, with a t, has been retained.

Francis Rombout and his partner Gulian Verplanck realized the forests contained good lumber and beaver, whose skins were highly prized in Europe for hat making. They also believed the land could be drained, as had been done in Holland. So, in 1683, they purchased 85,000 acres from the Wappinger Indians. The sale was negotiated at Fishkill Landing on the Hudson, and the Wappinger received fair payment. The partners then requested official title, and on October 17, 1685, Gov. Thomas Dugan issued the Rombout Patent in the name of King James II, granting them land in "Dutchess County." The agreement allowed the Wappinger to continue to live on the land. However, in 1756, their sachem (leader) Daniel Nimham led his people to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, during the French and Indian War.

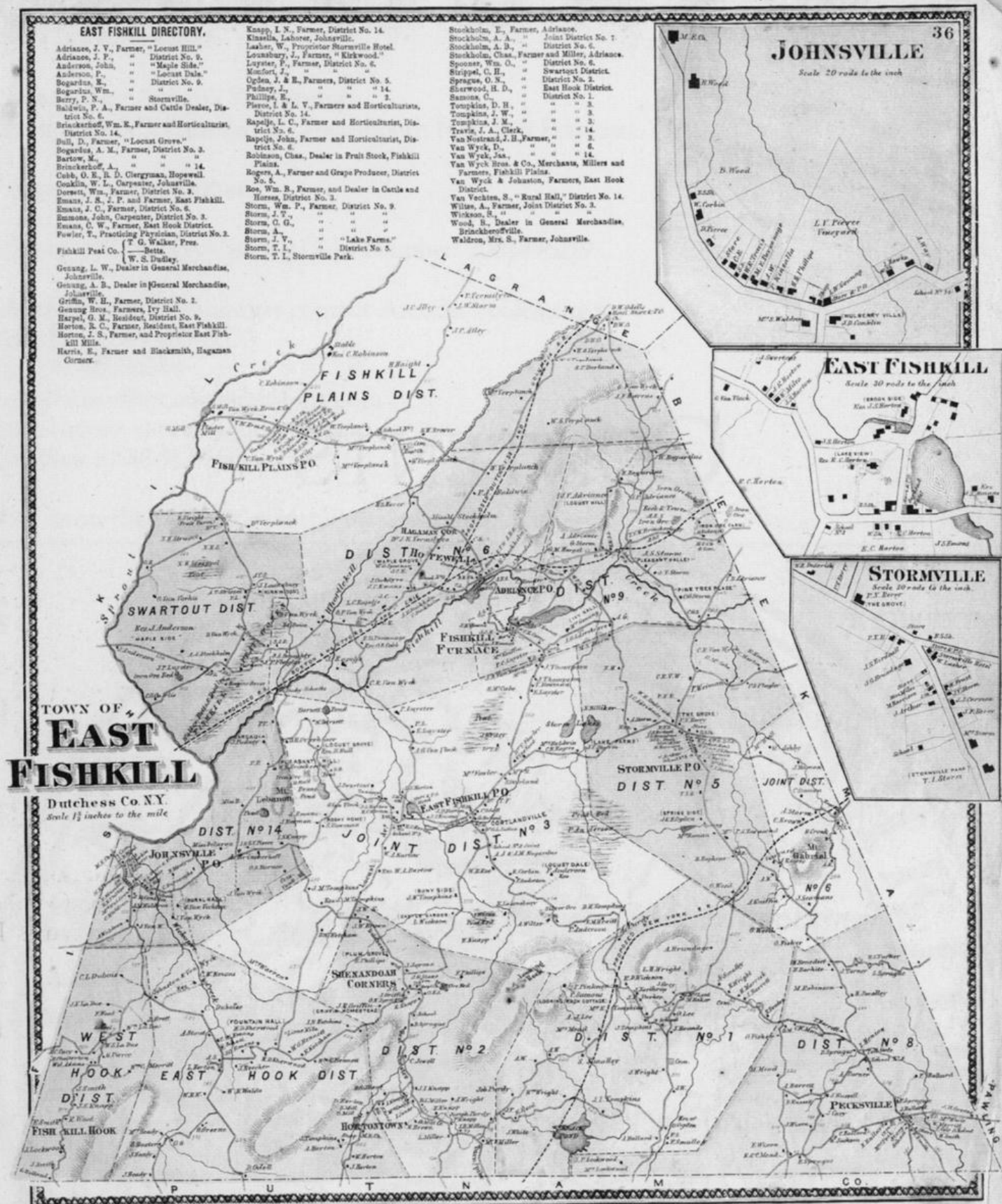
In 1683, Francis Rombout's third wife, Helena Teller, bore him a daughter, Catharyna, who became the future Madam Brett. When Rombout died, he left his "Land in Wappins" to his daughter. In 1707, the remaining three partners asked the Supreme Court to divide the land, and each received approximately 28,000 acres. This land included the modern towns of Beacon, Wappingers Falls, Fishkill, East Fishkill, and part of Beekman. Catharyna, now married to British naval officer Roger Brett, moved to her land in Dutchess County in 1709. The Bretts built the farmhouse that still stands in Beacon and a gristmill. Roger Brett was accidentally drowned in the Hudson a few years later, and of the three original partners, Madam Brett was the only one to then sell off parcels of her land, which were initially purchased by investors from Flushing and New Jersey.

The earliest settlement in what is today East Fishkill was near the Hopewell Reformed Church, on Beekman Road, which was then part of a throughway known as Madam Brett's Road. Settlers moved in and cleared the land for agriculture, and the community grew. Until 1849, the town had been part of Fishkill, and then in that year, the Town of East Fishkill received its own charter. The advent of the Newburgh, Dutchess and Connecticut Railroad, running north to Millerton in 1875, changed the character of the town. The commercial hub of Hopewell migrated to the area surrounding the railroad yards, and the new community of

houses and stores became known as Hopewell Junction when a second railroad line running east to west crossed the first tracks.

In 1900, the population of East Fishkill was a mere 1,970, and by 1960, this number had increased to 4,778. When IBM began operating a high-tech manufacturing facility between Route 52 and Interstate 84 in the early 1960s, a great number of jobs were created. Many of the new employees wanted to reside in the town, and the demand for housing resulted in new residential developments and the gradual loss of agricultural land. The influx of new residents continues today, and much of the rural charm of the past is being changed by commercial developments along roads that only 50 years ago were country lanes.

The area of the town is just over 53 square miles, and the population is rapidly approaching 26,000. Hopefully the new residents will come to appreciate and help preserve the few remaining historic houses that are scattered like gems in a sea of urban dwellings. There are still unspoiled parts of East Fishkill for everyone to enjoy that are still as they were almost a century ago, when most of the photographs in this book were taken.



The 1867 Beers map of East Fiskhill is seen here.

One

HOPEWELL AND ADRIANCE

The town's first settlement, known as Hopewell, centered on the Dutch Reformed Church. The person responsible or reason for selecting the name Hopewell is not recorded. However, there are many other towns with this name, and it sounds pleasant. Henry Hudson, who first explored the Hudson River in 1609, had on a previous voyage crossed the Atlantic in a ship named the *Hopewell*—probably just a coincidence.

People built their homes along the dirt roadway that ran from Connecticut to Fishkill Landing, today's Beacon. The road was known as Madam Brett's Highway, as most of the parcels of land upon which folks had established homes and farms had been purchased or leased from Madam Brett. To attend Sunday religious service, these residents had to travel to Fishkill—not an easy journey in those days. So, in 1757, the small congregation founded the Dutch Reformed Church in Hopewell and began holding services in Isaac Lent's barn. In 1764, the first church, built entirely of wood, was ready for use. It is interesting to note that the church records were written in Dutch until 1781.

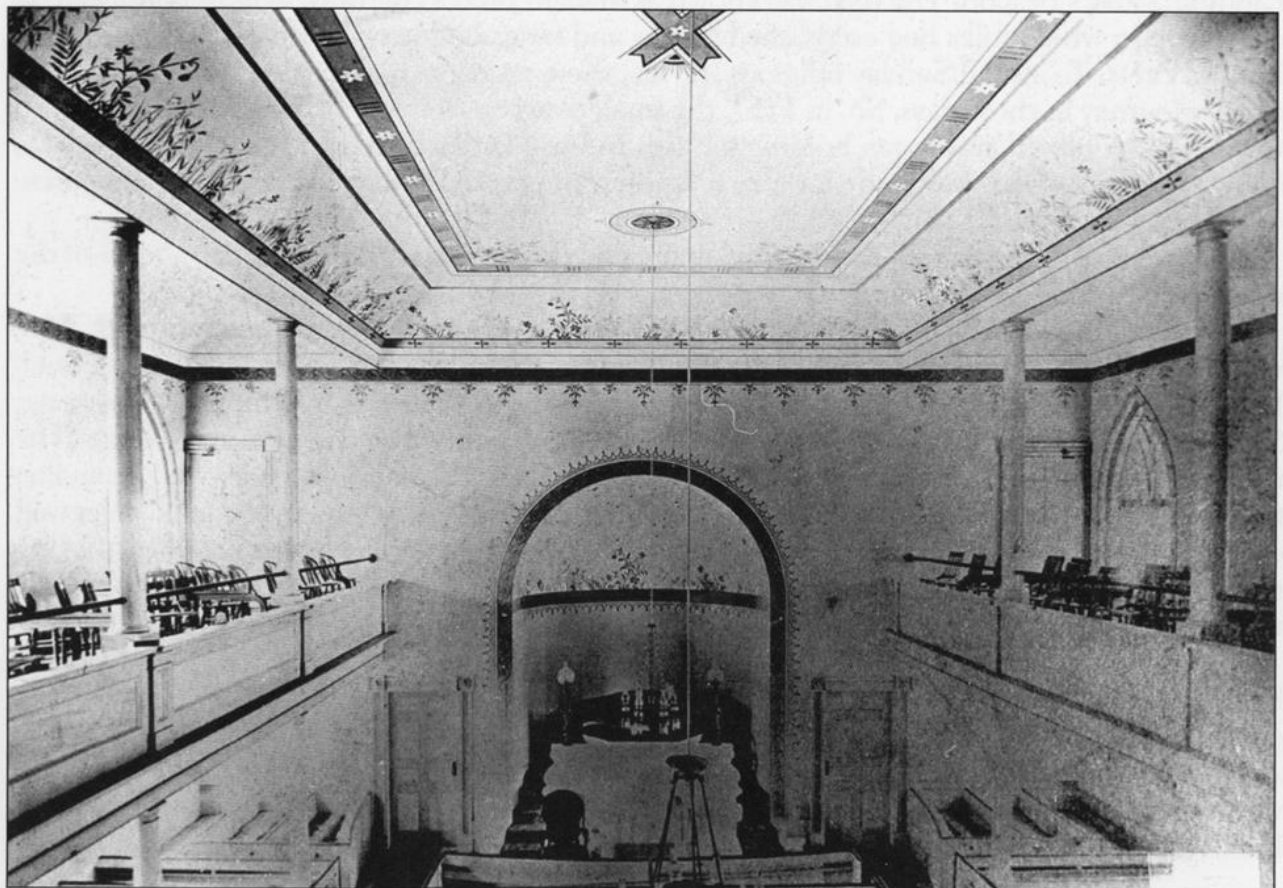
Mills were built to saw timber and grind grain, and the hamlet thrived until the advent of the railroads toward the end of the 19th century.

The road through Hopewell achieved new significance during the Revolutionary War, when it became a strategic route for moving troops, supplies, and other military matériel. It was renamed the Upper Road or Continental Highway. Generals Washington, Lafayette, Stuben, and others regularly passed along this road and stopped at the inns and homes. The road gained prominence when General Burgoyne's English, Hessian mercenary, and Canadian forces—defeated at the Battle of Saratoga—were marched as prisoners through Hopewell en route from Boston to Virginia in December 1778. As word spread of the marchers coming through the area, every able-bodied man, woman, and child turned out to line the road to see the defeated army trudge through Hopewell.

A post office was established in Hopewell in 1828. When the railroad came into town, however, a new post office was opened in Hopewell Junction, and in 1871, a new identity was given to the old Hopewell Post Office. The first postmaster of this new office was Abraham Adriance, who operated from his home, and so the area around the Dutch Reformed Church was known as Adriance. A historic marker at the junction of Beekman and Clove Branch Roads records the fact.



The Dutch Reformed Church was founded in Hopewell in 1757. The indenture (contract of sale) hanging in the lobby of the church is the original 1761 document conveying the land upon which the church is built. Three years after acquiring the land, the first church was built entirely of wood. It is interesting to note that the church records were written in Dutch until 1781. The church was used for worshipping until 1833, when it was dismantled. It was replaced by the present church, which is constructed of brick and masonry.



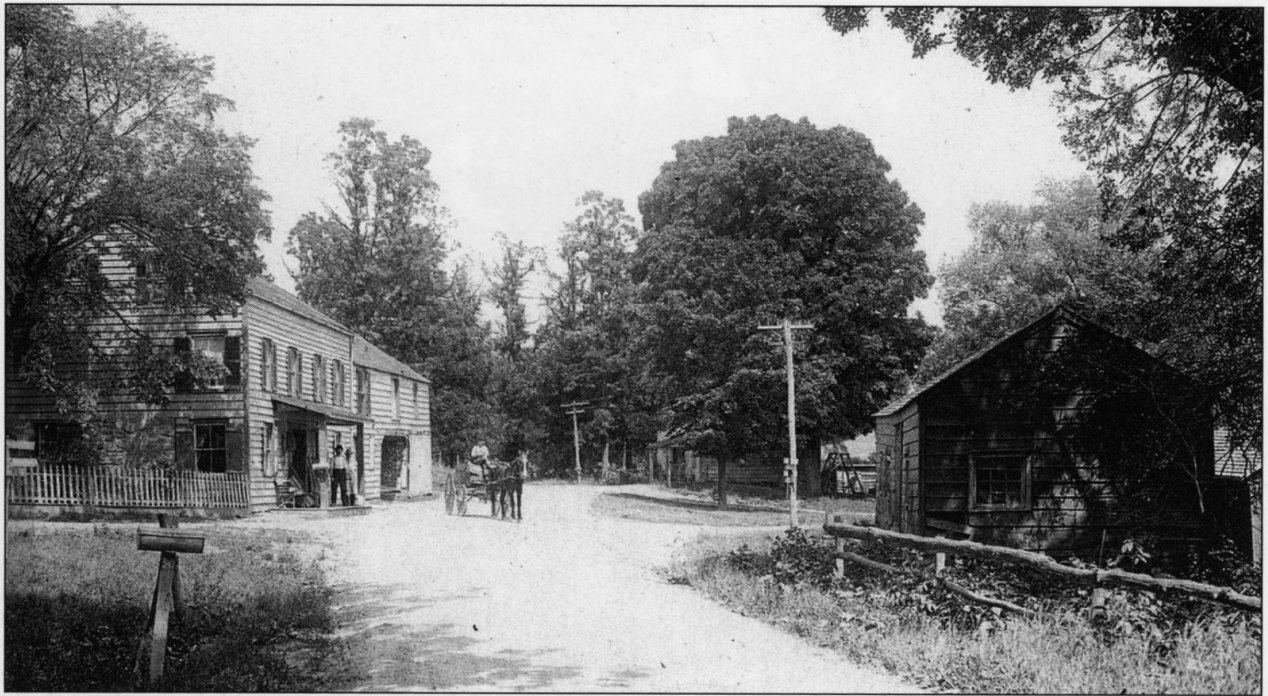
The interior of the Dutch Reformed Church is seen here as it was in 1900. A major restoration was completed in 2001, and the interior is now in pristine condition.



This photograph of the Hopewell Reformed Church parsonage, which stands in the parking lot of the church, was taken in 1875. The Rev. Graham Taylor, seen wearing a straw hat, is with his wife and daughter. He was pastor from 1873 until he retired in 1880.



The Isaac Lent house, on Beekman Road, was built around 1754 or 1755 on land purchased by Isaac Lent from Madam Brett. From 1757 to 1764, when the first church at Hopewell was complete, the members of the Church Society of Hopewell (Dutch Reformed) met in Lent's barn, now gone.



The junction of Carpenter, Beekman, and Clove Branch Roads is seen around 1900. The buildings on the left were torn down when the junction was widened.



This is Frank Conesa's store as it was known during the early 1900s at the Clove Branch and Beekman Roads junction. The last owners, before the store was demolished, were the Kennasses. There was a blacksmith's shop nearby.