

History of the old

SMITH HOUSE

at 350 Brookside Avenue, Allendale, N.J.

Compiled by

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The house at no. 350 Brookside Avenue, Allendale, N.J. stands on land originally part of the Romopock (Ramapo) Patent, also called "the Ramapo Tract," which was purchased from the Indians on 18 November 1709 by John Auboyneau, Elias Boudinot, Peter Fauconnier, and Lucas Kiersted, empowered by Peter Sonmans, Esq. of the Proprietors of the Eastern Division of New Jersey.¹

The entire tract contained 42,500 acres of land, or about 66 square miles of area from the Great Rock (now Glen Rock) east to the Saddle River and then northerly along the Saddle River into what is now New York State, and extended westerly to a point beyond the Ramapo River.

On 15 September 1768 a survey of the Ramapo Tract was presented to the Board of Proprietors of Eastern New Jersey (the Alexander-

¹Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, Volume 50, No. 4, October, 1932, pg. 375, "The Ramapo Tract," by Edward S. Rankin, Newark.

Morris Survey, in the Map Room of the Bergen County Court House).²

At this time 28,627 acres of the tract were unsold; 3468 acres were sold. The tract in 1768 had 50 woodlots and 156 tenants and was valued at 53,000 pounds proclamation money.³

The house at 350 Brookside Avenue stands on part of lot #196 of the Ramapo Tract (Alexander-Morris Survey of 1767-68) comprising 60.5 acres. In 1768 the lot was vacant; it had not been sold and no tenant was living on it. Adjoining lots were later sold to Weart Valentine (155 acres), William Folly (106 acres), Peter Tebow and John Rap (192 acres), and Henry, Cornelius, Frederick, and Peter Van Horne (two lots: 108 acres and 191 acres). By 1783, as indicated on the Hampton-Morgan Survey made that year, a house existed on an adjoining lot of the Ramapo Patent. This house was the Smith House on Hillside Avenue, which was razed in the mid-1960's and on which site today's Hillside School stands.

Between 1768 and 1794, lot #196 of the Ramapo Tract was sold, but the deed was not recorded at Bergen County.⁴

The earliest deed recorded in Bergen County for this property is dated 6 June 1794 (Book P; pg. 422) in which James Parker and

²In 1963, Claire K. Tholl, delineator, drew for the Bergen County Historical Society a composite survey of the Ramapo Tract, based on Alexander-Morris's Survey of 1767-68, on which are superimposed old roads and houses from Jonathan Hampton-Morgan's Survey of 1783 (Library of the New Jersey Historical Society), and modern roads and railroad lines.

³Document #8399, Stevens Family Papers.

⁴It is probably recorded in Perth Amboy, at the Office of the Proprietors of Eastern New Jersey.

Abraham Ogden, trustees appointed to execute the wills of Henry Cuyler the elder and Henry Cuyler the younger, conveyed to Albert Smith 60.19 acres "being lot 196 of the Ramapo Patent."

This may have represented an inheritance, for in a later deed Albert Smith was declared "owner by indefeasible estate of inheritance."

Albert Smith and his wife Susanna had at least five children, three of them baptised at Paramus Church: John A. Smith, born about 1783; Gerrit A. Smith, born 11 March 1786; Albert A. Smith, born 15 March 1788; Jacob A. Smith, born 13 November 1792; and Jacobus (James) A. Smith, born 24 July 1795.

On 3 November 1823, Albert Smith and Susanna, his wife, conveyed 30.38 acres of the original 60.19 acres (lot #196 of the Ramapo Tract) to his son, Jacob A. Smith. The deed is recorded in Bergen County (Book U2; pg. 478) and the property is described:

Beginning in the northwest corner of said lot and at a heap of stones running from thence south 7 degrees west 17 chains and 87 links, thence south 86 degrees west 2 chains and 78 links, south 58 degrees west 2 chains and 18 links, south 66 degrees west 2 chains and 62 links, south 8 degrees east 1 chain and 80 links and thence easterly along the mill dam at high water mark to the southerly corner of the stone dam thence southeasterly along said brook to the line of Abraham Quackenbush thence across the brook along the line of Quackenbush north 6 chains and 20 links to a white oak tree marked thence north 39½ degrees east 3 chains and 57 links to a stake in a stone heap, thence north 26 degrees west 11 chains and 40 links to a stake in a stone fence, thence north 52 degrees west 11 chains and 33 links to the place of beginning, containing 30.38 acres bounded westerly by lands of Garret A. Smith and Daniel Blauvelt, southerly by lands of Abraham Quackenbush, easterly by lands of said Abraham Quackenbush and John A. Smith, northerly by lands of said Albert Smith.

The Smith family originally owned a large tract of land in the area of Brookside Avenue, Hillside Avenue, and Forest Road;

at least 4 Smith homesteads were built on this land, the earliest (the Hillside School site) having been built before 1783. Two Smith houses are still standing: the small house at 350 Brookside Avenue and the house at 53 Forest Road (probably built during the 19th century).

Albert Smith, his sons, and their heirs operated a sawmill on the Brookside Avenue site from before 1823 (mentioned in above deed) and as late as 1895 at the death of Jacob J. Smith, grandson of Albert Smith.

Jacob A. Smith, son of Albert and Susanna Smith, married Margaret Van Blarcom, the daughter of John and Elizabeth Mickler Van Blarcom. They had nine children: Susan Smith, born 2 January 1819, married Cornelius G. Van Dien; Eliza Smith, born 23 October 1820, married John Van Blarcom; Mary Smith, born 28 February 1822, married --?-- Bamper; John Smith, born 10 May 1824; Rachel Anna Smith, born 11 March 1829, married Daniel Yeomans; Jacob J. Smith, born 15 January 1831, married Jemima --?--; a child who died young; Albert James Smith, born 28 December 1836; and Cornelius J. Smith, born 26 February 1839, married Margaret Ann Young.⁵

Jacob A. Smith, in his will dated 2 July 1866 and probated 19 June 1871, mentions his wife Margaret; his daughters Susan, Eliza, and Rachel; sons Cornelius J. and Jacob J.; granddaughter Margaret E., daughter of son John; Theodor Bamper, Garret Bamper, and Rachel Bamper, heirs of daughter Mary. He left houses and lots to three of his surviving children (Eliza, Cornelius, and Jacob J.)⁶

⁵New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, Vol. 101, No. 2 (April 1970), pg. 81, "The Van Blarcom Family of New Jersey," by George Olin Zabriskie.

⁶Bergen County Wills, Book K, pg. 278.

Jacob J. Smith and his wife Jemima lived in the house at 350 Brookside Avenue, where he continued to operate the sawmill as well as farming the surrounding acreage. One of his crops was strawberries, for which the Allendale area was well known. A newspaper article of May 1889 reported that "Jacob J. Smith was first in with strawberries. He shipped 62 baskets on Tuesday, which is the earliest shipment of strawberries ever made from Allendale station."⁷

Jacob J. and Jemima Smith had four children: John J. Smith, born about 1864; Mary Smith, born about 1866; Rachel Smith, born about 1868, married --?-- Snyder; and Margaret Smith, born about 1870-71, married George Terwilliger.⁸

Jacob J. Smith committed suicide at the age of 65 by hanging himself in his barn in January 1895. His wife, Jemima, had died in 1893, and his despondency over her death, coupled with his fear that his mill dam would give away "all together...unbalanced his mind."⁹

His will, dated 17 October 1894, probated after his death in 1895, mentions his daughters Mary Smith, Rachel Snyder, and Margaret Terwilliger and his son John Jacob Smith (with whom he was apparently dissatisfied, expressing hope that son John Jacob Smith might "change his ways.")¹⁰ Jacob's eldest daughter, Mary Smith, was named execu-

⁷Hackensack Republican, May 30, 1889. (On microfilm at Johnson Public Library, Hackensack.)

⁸1870 and 1880 Federal Census Reports for Hohokus Township (of which Allendale was then a part).

⁹Ramsey Journal, February 1, 1895. (On microfilm at the Ramsey Public Library.)

¹⁰Bergen County Wills, Book X; pg. 459.

trix, and as such, on 4 August 1902, conveyed to James Hyland of Jersey City the property on which the house at 350 Brookside Avenue stands (the previously mentioned 30.38 acre tract) plus additional acreage, totaling in all 84.47 acres. On the same day, James Hyland, widower, conveyed the same 84.47 acres to Christopher P. Smith of Jersey City.¹¹

Christopher P. Smith was the county superintendent of Hudson County in 1896, and for several years before acquiring the property on Brookside Avenue, he and his family spent summers at Allendale in leased and rented homes. The Ramsey Journal, on August 8, 1902 reported that "Christie Smith of Jersey City, has bought the Jacob Smith place and will erect a new residence and fit the place up generally." He built, in 1903-04, the large home at 350 Brookside Avenue. The Bergen County Democrat of November 6, 1903 reported that "The ground has been broken for a residence for Mr. Christy Smith of Jersey City."

His son, Christopher J. Smith, in 1917 built a home for himself on a lot subdivided from the larger tract. Christopher J. Smith was an Allendale Councilman in 1919 and later, with Stephen T. Van Houten, developed the former Mallinson's Pond into Crestwood Swim Club.

On 12 July 1943, Sarah Katherine Smith (single), probably the daughter of Christopher P. Smith, conveyed the property at 350 Brookside Avenue to John Aro Mielty and Imbi Mielty, his wife. (Bergen County Deeds, Book 2386; pg. 564.)

¹¹Bergen County Deeds, Book 548; pg. 213 and Book 548; pg. 217.

On 26 December 1944, John Aro Mielty and Impi Mielty, his wife, conveyed the property to Earl Theron Engle and Mirth R. Engle, his wife. (Bergen County Deeds, Book 2499; pg. 158.)

On 29 July 1948, Earl Theron Engle and Mirth R. Engle, his wife, conveyed the property to Stuart Archibald and Josephine Archibald, his wife. (Bergen County Deeds, Book 2882; pg. 181.) The Archibalds called the estate "Brook Ledge Farm."

On 29 June 1973, Stuart Archibald and Josephine Archibald, his wife, conveyed the property to the Hattons (Bergen County Deeds, Book 5792; pg. 378), who later sold the estate to Chestnut Ridge Associates, the present developers of the subdivided tract of land.

The Allendale Historical Society feels that every attempt should be made to preserve the old Smith House at 350 Brookside Avenue because:

- (1) It is one of Allendale's oldest existing structures. Although a documented building date has proven elusive despite painstaking research and inspection of deeds, wills, road returns, and other records at the Bergen County Court House, it appears that the house was built as early as 1784 (the house is not shown on the Hampton-Morgan Survey of 1783) and no later than 1823 (at which time the mill dam is mentioned in a deed description).¹²
- (2) The architectural style represents an example of the sort of homestead built by early settlers of this area. An

¹²It is always difficult to document exact building dates of old homesteads; deeds often neglect to mention houses and other improvements on acreage conveyed, and wills, road returns, tax lists, and other public records can at best provide clues to existence of houses, mills, and other real estate improvements.

expert in the field of historical architecture could undoubtedly point out many additional features indicative of its age and genre, but these few are obvious to even an untrained eye: (a) hand-hewn beams--although most have been replaced over the years, (b) stone work in the foundation--thickness of the foundation walls; arched "beehive" oven in chimney wall in basement; "dug-out" foundation--often lived in by early settlers and completed with upper frame section as circumstances of time and affluence allowed, (c) placement of house on site--facing south, near waterway, (d) small size of windows, and (e) small size of house itself (it is remarkable that the house exists today with few major alterations and additions.)

- (3) The house is typical of the homestead of an ordinary early hard-working farmer and miller who laboriously carved his home and farm out of the untamed wilderness. Although, as far as we know, no famous person "slept" or stayed in the house, it has witnessed the generations of one of the many "ordinary" settling families of this area.
- (4) Allendale has lost, due to razing for rebuilding or modern development, so many of its historic landmarks (to cite a few: the pre-Revolutionary Smith house on the Hillside School site; the old Toll Gate House; the old Garrison-Berdan House on the A & P shopping center site; and the old Archer Methodist Chapel). By saving this old homestead, the Borough and the developers could publicly demonstrate their interest in and respect for, Allendale's history and heritage.