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EARLY CRAGSMOOR: THE GOLDSMITH AND CODDINGTON FAMILIES

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The Story of the Goldsmith Family: Jeremiah Goldsmith, Revolutionary War Soldier, and His Descendants

The Goldsmiths are one of the very earliest Euro-American families to settle on Mt. Meenahga. While the Terwilliger family, discussed in our previous article, settled on the western portion of Mt. Meenahga, the Goldsmith family settled the eastern portion, which on more recent maps is called “Mount Don Bosco.” According to family tradition, the first Goldsmith to own property on the mountain was Jeremiah Goldsmith, a Revolutionary War veteran who was given a large tract of land “in return” for his military service. Unfortunately, the historic record does not support this version of the Goldsmith family’s local beginnings. Another story has emerged, however, from primary documents. This version contains some fascinating details about Jeremiah’s experiences as a soldier during the Revolutionary War. One of his direct descendants, Mary Jane Fales, a Cragsmoor resident, shared Goldsmith family papers with us, including a handwritten copy of portions of an unidentified, circa 1820 document from the Ulster County Court of Common Pleas. Upon further study, the original of this document was revealed to be a Revolutionary War pension application. The latter, along with the Goldsmith family papers and other documents, sheds much light upon the lives of Jeremiah, his wife Elizabeth and the lives of some of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Documents tell us that Jeremiah Goldsmith (1742-1827) was most likely a native of Suffolk County, Long Island. He was living in New York City in 1771 when he married Sarah Cornell (b. 1748) at the city’s Presbyterian Church. In 1775, he enlisted in the First New York Regiment, a unit of the Continental Army

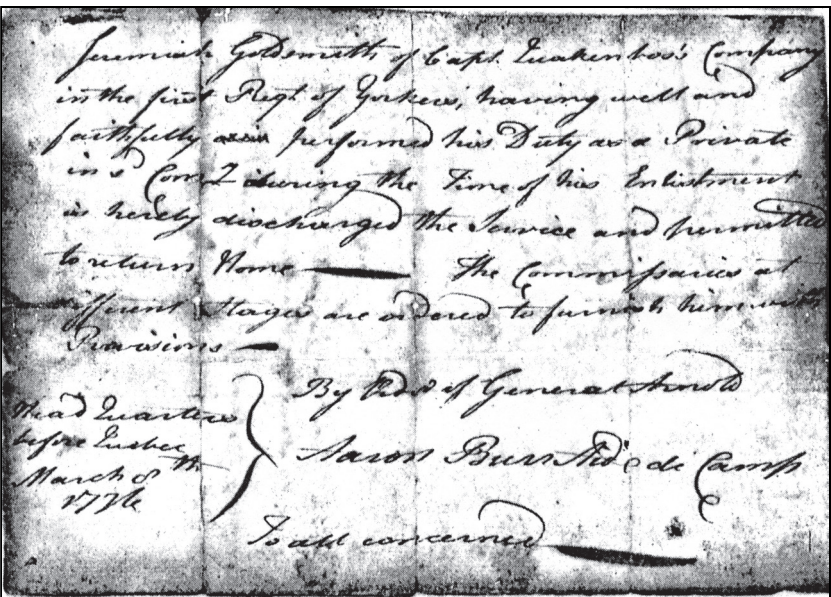


Portion of 1800 land partition map showing lots III and V.
Source of map: Bruyn, Cantine and Oliver 1800. Courtesy of Ulster County Clerk's Office, Archives Division

- 1 - “Pond” forms part of present-day Lake Maratanza
- 2 - Sam's Point
- 3 - House on Lot III: The “Jeremiah Goldsmith” house
- 4 - House on Lot V: The “Joseph Coddington” house

much favored by the city’s workingmen and artisans. It must have been a logical choice for Jeremiah, described in military documents as “a carpenter.” Thirty-three years old at his enlistment, married and the father of a three-year-old girl (Cassandra, b. 1772), Jeremiah was a demographic anomaly among the New York troops, where the median age was 23 years.

We assume that in August 1775, when the First Regiment departed New York for the so-called “Invasion of Canada,” Jeremiah was with them. Jeremiah fought in the siege of Fort Sainte-Jean and at the Battle of Montreal, both of which were won by



Jeremiah Goldsmith's March 1776 Revolutionary War discharge papers. These were authorized by General Benedict Arnold and signed by Aaron Burr, at that time his aide-de-camp. Source: Jeremiah Goldsmith, Revolutionary War Pension Application.

the American troops under the leadership of General Richard Montgomery. He received his discharge at headquarters “behind Quebec” on March 8, 1776. It is unclear, however, whether he also participated in the disastrous Battle of Quebec (December 1775), which resulted in a British victory, the death of General Montgomery and the “decimation” of the First Regiment. Jeremiah’s original discharge papers bear the names of General Benedict Arnold (who would defect to the British in 1780) and Aaron Burr, who was then Montgomery’s aide-de-camp. Under Arnold’s orders, Jeremiah was “permitted to return home.” Family tradition tells us that “home” was New York City, where Jeremiah would have headed to join his wife and small daughter. If so, he would have arrived in the spring of 1776. The following September, New York City fell to the British. It is highly unlikely that Jeremiah lingered here during the British occupation. Jeremiah “re-upped” in August 1777. According to his pension file, he served for three years in the Continental Army’s Company of Artificers, based in New Windsor, near Newburgh. As defined by the National Archives website, artificers were “skilled artisans and mechanics who kept military equipment in good working order.” Artificers were often detailed to other military locations to perform specific tasks,

such as building barracks, fortifications and boats. Jeremiah received his discharge from the Artificers on September 1, 1780. Although the war would not be over for three more years, this marked the end of his military service. Family tradition suggests that by the war’s close, Jeremiah was living in the Orange County community of Little Britain, located near New Windsor, his original place of enlistment. Decades later, in 1855, Jeremiah’s eldest son Walter would tell the census taker that he was born in Orange County. If so, this indicates that by 1785, the year of Walter’s birth, the family had left New York City but was not yet living at Mt. Meenahga. In 1790, Elizabeth, her mother, Sarah Larzelere, and Jeremiah sold family property on lower Manhattan’s Dey Street, the future site of the World Trade Center. The deed for this transaction identifies the three as “of the County of Ulster,” thus revealing that by this date they had moved to the region where they would spend the remainder of their lives. The first solid piece of documentary evidence we have found linking the Goldsmith name to the Shawangunk Mountains is a 1799 entry in the field book of Jonas Smith, the surveyor for the partitioning of the Schoonmaker/Hornbeck tract, which contained the areas that would become Cragsmoor and Mt. Meenahga. His notes for Lot Number III (located on Mt. Meenahga) describe it as the lot “whereon W. Goldsmith lives....” We are hypothesizing that “W. Goldsmith” is Jeremiah and Elizabeth’s son, Walter Goldsmith (1785/6-1863), who would have been a very young teenager at the time, aged thirteen or fourteen. In 1799, Lot Number III was still in the possession of the Schoonmaker/Hornbeck heirs, suggesting that the Goldsmith family were then living as tenants or squatters upon the land that they would ultimately own for generations. Family tradition locates the original Goldsmith cabin almost exactly where the eighteenth-century surveyor drew it, northwest of Sam’s Point (see map). The year following the surveyor’s visit, however, the 1800 census lists the Goldsmiths as living in “Navesink,” the present-day Town of Neversink.

During these years the Goldsmiths may have traveled back and forth between their two separate homesteads. By 1810, as indicated by the census of that year, Jeremiah, Elizabeth, her mother, Sarah, and some of their children seem to have settled permanently at Mt. Meenahga. Church and census records indicate that their two oldest daughters, Lydia (1777?-1853) and Cassandra, were already married and residing in the mountain’s vicinity. Whereas Jeremiah and Elizabeth had shared quarters with two sons, two daughters and Elizabeth’s mother in 1810, their census listing for 1820 shows them living on their own. By then Jeremiah and Elizabeth were in their 70s. Elizabeth’s mother, Sarah, was in her 90s. Sadly, sworn testimony given that year by Jeremiah as part of his pension application depicts a grim and impoverished old age. He and his family lived, he said, “...in a small hut on the Shawangunk Mountain where I till and cultivate a small patch of land without owning it or paying any rent.” His personal property he described as consisting of five farm animals and “a few articles of common household furniture.” He described himself as “...lame in my right arm” and “... so infirm...as to be unable to earn a livelihood.” Elizabeth was 72 years old and suffering from rheumatism. She was “crippled” according to Jeremiah, and “wholly unable to labor.” Sarah was also “unable to work.” Jeremiah described his two grown daughters, Sally (b. 1790?) and Elizabeth (b. 1795?), as “cripples” as well. Aspects of Jeremiah’s testimony conflict with what we have learned from other sources. For example, three years after having told the court “Of real estate I have not,” Jeremiah began to convey portions of Lot III to his children, grandchildren and their spouses. Since it is unlikely that the apparently destitute Jeremiah purchased the land immediately after his court appearance, we must assume that he lied. Why would he do this? One explanation is that Jeremiah’s pension had been granted under the auspices of an 1818 Act of Congress. After 1820, however, applicants also had to prove that, in addition to being veterans, they had no other means of support. Facing the possible loss of his pension, Jeremiah may have exaggerated whatever hardships the family now faced. Whether or not his testimony was accurate, the court found Jeremiah’s application “admissible on the evidence of the applicant’s indigent circumstances.” He continued

to receive his pension until his death in 1827. As the records state that the final payment occurred on the year of his death, and as pensions were paid to veterans’ widows, Elizabeth most likely died before him. In passing along portions of his Mt. Meenahga holdings to the next generation of Goldsmiths, Jeremiah reinforced the community ties already formed through the marriages of his two older daughters. Not only had Cassandra married a cousin of the family’s Terwilliger neighbors, but also both she and Lydia had baptized their children at local Dutch Reformed Churches. Jeremiah and Elizabeth’s daughter, Elizabeth, and granddaughter, Phoebe (b. 1811), married sons of their Cragsmoor neighbor John Mentz. Christine Evans (1786-1872), who became the wife of Jeremiah’s son Walter, was probably related to neighboring branches of the Evans family. Family tradition places Walter and Christine in the Woodside Dell section of Mt. Meenahga. Most of the Goldsmith descendants still living in Cragsmoor and elsewhere in the Town of Wawarsing trace their ancestry to one of Walter and Christine’s eleven children, Joseph E. Goldsmith, (1845-1921) and his wife, Apollonia Fischer (1862-1934), who lived in Woodside Dell and raised their own children there. Today, the graves of an unknown number of Goldsmiths, probably dating to the first two generations, can be found in a small family cemetery, located in one of Mt. Meenahga’s upper meadows, near the site of the original, circa 1790s Goldsmith homestead. Judith Remet, a Woodside Dell resident, led us to the cemetery and explored it with us. She had first learned of it, she told us, from her neighbor Bob Goldsmith (1908-1979), Jeremiah and Elizabeth Goldsmith’s great-great grandson. **The Story of the Coddington Family: Joseph Coddington, Farmer and Hatter, and his Sons** In the early nineteenth century, members of the Coddington family occupied a 270-acre tract of land designated as Lot V in the first allotment of the Schoonmaker/Hornbeck tract (see map). This lot was located in what is now the eastern portion of Cragsmoor. On today’s map it would extend from a short distance east of Vista Maria Road eastward

to the boundary between the Towns of Wawarsing and Shawangunk, and southward from the vicinity of Sam's Point Road to the approximate location of Hansburg Road.

The 1799 Schoonmaker/Hornbeck tract survey indicates that prior to the Coddingtons, Jeremiah Brown resided on Lot V. The 1800 census lists Brown among the mountain residents. However, between 1800 and 1810 (see also below), Lot V became the home of Joseph Coddington, who is listed among the mountain residents in the 1810 census. He continued to reside on Lot V until his death in 1847 at the age of 84. Records of the Wawarsing Dutch Reformed Church indicate that Joseph Coddington died of "consumption" [i.e. tuberculosis].

Joseph and other members of the Coddington family are descended from John Coddington [there are various spellings in the records], who settled in Woodbridge, New Jersey, in the 1680s. There are a number of his descendants named Joseph who were later associated with Ulster County. Although the available information is sometimes inconsistent, it is most likely that Joseph was a son of Christopher Coddington (b. 1731, Woodbridge, N.J.). In 1753 Christopher married Maria Oosterhout (b. 1734, Kripplebush, Ulster County). Between 1754 and 1760 the couple had five children who were baptized in the Rochester Reformed Church. Shortly after the latter year, the family relocated to the Town of Machackemeck (now Deer Park) in Orange County. The records of the Reformed Church at Machackemeck indicate that Joseph was born in 1762 and his brother John in 1765.

By the 1780s, Joseph Coddington had moved from his birthplace to the vicinity of Goshen, New York, another Orange County town. The records of the Presbyterian Church of Goshen indicate that Joseph married Elizabeth Jones (b. 1757/8) in 1781. Elizabeth probably died within a few years of the marriage, since the church records also show Joseph marrying Unis (Eunice) Mott, in 1786. Eunice continued to be indicated as his wife in deeds dating to 1813 and 1830. Census records indicate that in 1790 Joseph resided in Middletown, Orange County (near Goshen). Sometime during the 1790s, however, he relocated his family to the Town of Colchester in Delaware County, where they are listed in the 1800 census. The census records also indicate that by 1800, Joseph's brother John was already residing in the Town of Rochester, although

not on the mountain. Census records show that Joseph and Eunice Coddington and their family moved to the mountain circa 1804/5. These records also indicate that the family was large. In 1810 the household included eight persons, and 10 persons in 1820. Of particular interest in the history of Cragsmoor are three of their sons: Henry (1891-1870), Benjamin (1795-1877) and Judson, born 1804. The 1850 [Federal] and 1855 [New York State] census records indicate that the two older sons had been born in Orange County, where Joseph lived before moving to the mountain, and that Benjamin had lived in Wawarsing since 1805, while Judson was born in Ulster County.

One of the motivating factors for Joseph Coddington, and other heads of the Cragsmoor families, to have moved to the mountain was probably the acquisition of land on which their sons could settle. In 1813, Joseph deeded a 103-acre portion of Lot V to Judson Coddington. The deed also states that on the same day he had deeded another portion of the lot to Benjamin, although we have been unable to locate that latter conveyance. In 1830, Joseph conveyed another 70 acres to Benjamin and 29 acres to Henry.

Like other Cragsmoor residents, Joseph Coddington and his family were primarily involved in working the land. The 1840 census indicates that two members of the Joseph Coddington household were engaged in agriculture, and his sons were listed as farmers in the 1850 and 1855 census records. Joseph was apparently also engaged in craft production in order to earn cash to supplement his income from agriculture. L.W. Botsford, in his manuscript version of *In Days of Yore*, written at the beginning of the twentieth century, noted that:

Joseph Coddington was a hatter, of home spun cloth, he made linen hats for summer ware, and wool hats for winter, supplied the neighbors round about. This was in the 20's and teens.

Linen is made from flax, and Botsford notes that flax was grown by nearly all mountain families, but does not mention any other families as producing products from this raw material.

The only one of Joseph's sons to actually live on the mountain prior to Joseph's death in 1847 was Benjamin. Judson only appears among the mountain residents in the census records for Wawarsing in 1850 and 1855, suggesting that he had moved there after



*Log Cabin on Eastern Portion of Lot V (the "Coddington" Lot) - Frame Wing is a Later Addition.
Source: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form,
Chetolah (George Inness, Jr. Estate) 1980.*

his father's death. By 1860 Judson and his family had moved to Mamakating, in Sullivan County. Census records indicate that Joseph's eldest son, Henry, resided in the Town of Shawangunk. Although he apparently never lived on the mountain, he did marry a mountain resident, Elizabeth Evans (1799-1879), a daughter of Stephen Evans, who will be discussed further in the final article in this series.

Interestingly, the 1855 census indicates that both Benjamin Coddington and his son John W. Coddington lived in log houses. Botsford noted that this was the type of construction used by the early settlers, and one of these may be the same structure shown on the 1800 map in the northwestern portion of Lot V. The second Lot V log house was most likely built in the first portion of the nineteenth century on the eastern portion of the lot, and still stands at this location on what later became the George Inness, Jr. estate.

Benjamin Coddington and his brother Henry both served in the War of 1812. Pension records indicate that Benjamin served for three months in 1814. In an 1871 pension application Benjamin stated that he enlisted in Scotchtown (near Middletown, Orange County) in 1814 and served in Capt. Stephen Harlow's New York State militia regiment at Staten Island, New York. (Other records note his militia commander as Captain Richard Penny.) Henry Coddington served in the Army for a longer time — five years, from 1812 to 1817. He was an Artificer in Captain John R. Bell's Company.

After his service in the War, Benjamin returned to

the mountain and married Perthena Whelply (1798-1871). According to the 1855 census Perthena was born in Dutchess County and had been living in Wawarsing for 39 years (i.e. since 1816, which is presumably when she married Benjamin). The 1820 census indicates that Benjamin and Perthena had a son below the age of 10. This was apparently John W. Coddington, who was born in 1818 and whose household is listed adjacent

to that of Benjamin in the 1850 and 1855 census records. Also adjacent to the latter is the household of William Whelply (born circa 1812), also shown on an 1858 map. He was apparently a relative of Perthena (probably her brother). Listed as part of the Whelply household in 1850 are Samuel Coddington, age 54 (born 1796), another son of Joseph Coddington, and therefore Perthena Whelply's brother-in-law. Other members of the Whelply family were resident north of the South Gully as early as 1830, as indicated by census records as well as the 1858 map.

Benjamin Coddington died in 1877 and his wife Perthena in 1871. The inventory of grave markers in the Cragsmoor Cemetery undertaken by the Town of Wawarsing indicates the grave of Benjamin Coddington adjacent to that of Perthena. On the other side of Benjamin's marker is that of his brother Henry, who died in 1870. Also present in the Cragsmoor Cemetery are the grave markers of J.W. Coddington (1818-1870), Benjamin's son, and his wife Phebe (1823-1881). Perthena's headstone, although severely eroded like most of the headstones in the cemetery, is clearly discernable today.

In our next article, we will be discussing Cragsmoor's Evans family, many of whom are buried in one of the community's two known family cemeteries. Additionally we will explore a previously unknown aspect of Cragsmoor's history, the presence here of at least one slave-owning family. A source list for our third and fourth articles will also be included.