

THE THOMAS DODGE HOUSE (Documents Cont.)

MAY 1, 1866

STATES HAMMOND & WIFE (JOANNA) TO JESSE UNDERHILL. Liber 605, Page 384. Same property of 55 acres as above three deeds, except that the property on the west is now owned by John Holbrook and E. Lambert - and the property on the south, formerly estate of Henry Dodge, is now the property of his son Charles. The Friends' "Old Burying Ground" still bounds on the south near the road. Also, mention is now made of a plot rather near the road and north of the house belonging to the Fair Ridge Cemetery which is described as "enclosed and excepted" from the deed.

(Note: Jesse Underhill is shown in the position of this house and land on the 1867 map of New Castle, County Atlas of Westchester by Beers.)

MAY 1, 1876

JESSE UNDERHILL (& ELIZA SUTTON UNDERHILL) & EDW. J. CARPENTER TO ABRAHAM S. UNDERHILL. Liber 914, Page 355. Same 55-acre property as above. All parties were of New Castle except Carpenter, of Mt. Pleasant. In October 1873 the Underhills had deeded Carpenter a half-interest in the property.

OCT. 25, 1881

ABRAHAM S. UNDERHILL (& ANNA) TO ISAAC YERKES. Liber 1001, Page 201. A large 34-acre parcel of the above property, bounded on the south by the Friends' Burying Ground, (obviously containing the house). Abraham Underhill was "of Sing Sing."

(Note: On the same day, Isaac Yerkes bought the 8 acre "enclosed property of the Fair Ridge Cemetery" mentioned above, thus rounding out his property. Liber 1001, page 187.)

NOTE: TIME OF APPORTIONMENT. Isaac Yerkes decided in 1906 to divide the property into one small plot with the old house, and a larger parcel of 34 acres with no house - and to sell them separately as follows:

MAY 4, 1906

ISAAC H. YERKES & WIFE TO DAVID W. CORNELL. Liber 1754 Page 109. "Being a portion of the same property conveyed to Isaac Yerkes by Abraham S. Underhill, Liber 1001, P 201... and the Trustees of Fair Ridge Cemetery, Liber 1001, Page 187." Land, less than 1 acre, bounded on the south by the Friends' Burial Ground, plus the old house.

THE THOMAS DODGE HOUSE (Documents Cont.)

MAY 4, 1906

ISAAC H. YERKES & WIFE TO ALBERT TURNER. Liber 1754, Page 183. 34 acres, bounded on the south by the Cornell property in above deed (formerly Yerkes) and on the west and north by lands Oscar Brian and Fair Ridge Cemetery.

(Note: The above deed of Yerkes to Cornell and the following deed of Cornell to Washburn were for the same small plot of land and house, and were filed on the same day. This property exchanged hands twice in one day - probably for some technical legal reason.)

MAY 4, 1906

DAVID W. CORNELL (& FANNY M.) TO HOWARD WASHBURN. Liber 1777, Page 401. Less than 1 acre ... "situated in New Castle on the west side of Quaker Road, beginning at the point formed by the intersection of the west side of Quaker Road and the lands formerly of Isaac Yerkes, and the lands of the Society of Friends ... then running along lands of the Friends' Cemetery ... etc." Note that the mortgage on this property refers to buildings, rights to rents, etc. (Liber 1407, page 178.)

Howard Washburn, a prominent Quaker, later Town Supervisor and a large dealer in real estate, obviously bought the property as a business venture. He never lived in it, permitting Yerkes to rent for 6 months, at which point Washburn sold it.

Note: The following 5 deeds all concern the same piece of property as in the previous deed. Therefore, the property description will not be repeated.

JAN. 15, 1907

HOWARD R. WASHBURN TO CORNELIA MACY. Liber 1787, Page 346.

MAY 17, 1920

CORNELIA MACY TO JESSIE BAILEY. Liber 2253, Page 475

Note: According to records in Assessor's Office in New Castle, in 1931 this property was listed as "estate of Louis S. Bailey", and 3 years later changed hands again, as follows:

SEPT. 28, 1934

EST. LOUIS S. BAILEY TO GILBERT & FELIX MENNA. Liber 3537, Page 27.

THE DODGE HOUSES



REAR VIEW - THOMAS DODGE HOUSE
This view shows small leaded glass windows in upper storey. Thomas Dodge was the son of early settler, Robert Dodge.

THE THOMAS DODGE HOUSE
Front view of this 18th century house, the first house north of the Meeting House and Quaker Burial Ground on Quaker Road.



EARLY VICTORIAN SECTION
This was built by new owner Henry Dodge in 1852. The early house was moved up from its roadside position and added as a rear wing.

THE THORN-DODGE HOUSE
This part of the house is pre-Revolutionary. It is shown on a map made for General George Washington. Original owner: Elnathan Thorn.



THE THOMAS DODGE HOUSE

428 Quaker

18th century

One of the historic houses in the early

Quaker hamlet of Old Chappaqua

This house, probably one of the oldest in Chappaqua, stands on the west side of Quaker Road - just north of the historic Friends' Meeting House and old Burial Ground. Built close to the road, as most old houses were, it nestles into the side of a hill, with two stories in back, and three in front.

Like so many old houses in Chappaqua, this one changed hands many times. In fact fourteen land transfer deeds have been traced (and a descriptive listing of the documents is attached at the end of this article.) Curiously, in 1906 it actually changed hands twice in one day when Isaac Yerkes (who bought the house in 1881) sold it to David Cornell, who immediately sold it to Howard Washburn.

(This unexpected maneuver confused the documentary tracing trail for some time, since it had been the local impression that the house went directly from Yerkes to Washburn.)

The house has been traced back to one of Chappaqua's oldest families - the Dodes; specifically Thomas and Hannah Reynolds Dodge, daughter of the elder Sutton Reynolds. To avoid confusion, perhaps it had better be stated here that there were actually two Dodge houses: This one, the earlier, north of the Meeting House, and the one we think of today as the Dodge Farms House, south of the Meeting House.

While, as often happened in the early days, there was no document on file to Thomas Dodge, there are references in deeds of neighbors referring to his ownership of the property, and such references are accepted as evidence by Title Guarantee Companies. The earliest is in a deed by Joseph C. Underhill (son of Caleb) dated 1825. Another is in a deed by Samuel Allen, in 1831, and still a third by Robert Purdy in 1848. An then, of course, there is the deed of sale by Thomas Dodge's widow after his death.

Thomas Dodge was born in 1778, and died in 1856 - and since a later deed by Isaac Vredenburgh refers to this property as the "same premises occupied by Thomas Dodge, deceased during his lifetime", it seems reasonable to infer that he lived in this house well before the above neighbors' references, and possibly other members of the large Dodge family before him. It is even possible that his father,

THE THOMAS DODGE HOUSE (cont.)

Robert Dodge, died here in 1818, for a newspaper article in which his descendant James Dodge was being interviewed reports that Robert Dodge "died in Quaker Road in 1818, in the little house that still stands near the home of his great-great-grandson, James H. Dodge." However, this is conjecture. Certain structural details such as an old fireplace aperture, and some antique window glass still exist to testify to its age. In addition, Mr. Livingstone Elder, consulting architect, after examining the exterior structure, places the original part in the 18th century.

Like his father before him, and his son Henry after him, Thomas Dodge was both a farmer, and a craftsman. A skilled carpenter, he produced fine furniture, and also made coffins. In addition he was caretaker of the neighboring old Quaker Burial Ground, and the original author of the well-known and highly valued historic manuscript, the "Book of Deaths", which listed birth and death dates of over 2300 Westchester people, most of them Quakers. Many are buried in the nearby burying ground. This book was begun about 1807, and faithfully kept up year after year by Thomas, later by his son, finally by his daughter Anne Dodge Washburn. Aside from its statistical and historical interest, this book is not without touches of rather violent drama, for among the listed causes of deaths are such items as "cut his throat", "killed by a cart", "frozen to death on the highway", "hung involuntarily", "putrid fever", "being shot", "drowned in the river", and many others equally sensational. And of course, there were many deaths resulting from the household fires so frequent in those days of candles, lamps, and open fires.

Thomas Dodge's family consisted of Hannah, his wife, five daughters: Anne, Amy, Sara, Abbe, and Phebe - plus just one son, Henry. This may well have been a rather unfortunate disproportion of the sexes for a farmer with 55 acres to work in those unmechanized days.

After the death of Thomas Dodge, his widow, who had recently also lost her son Henry, and whose daughters had all married, sold the house together with its 55 acre farmland to Edward Reynolds on March 15th, 1856.

Reynolds promptly (May 1, 1856) sold it to Isaac Vredenburgh. As you will see there was considerable trading in real estate in those days, possibly stimulated by the coming of the railroad.

After that the property changed hands many times. In 1881 it went to Isaac Yerkes - and at this stage the property was reduced to 34 plus acres.

THE THOMAS DODGE HOUSE (cont.)

The Yerkes family lived in the house for a number of years, and he continued to farm the land. They had one son, who, Miss Alice Sutton recalls, was unfortunately drowned in a pond behind the graveyard. In 1906 Yerkes decided to partition the property and sell. It was divided into one small plot of less than an acre with the old house on it, and a larger parcel of 3/4 acres north of the house.

Another owner, Howard Washburn, was a prominent Quaker, later Town Supervisor, and a big dealer in real estate. He obviously bought the house for re-sale purposes. He never lived in it.

After several intervening owners it was sold in 1934 to Gilbert and Fella Menza.

Perhaps we should pause here briefly to mention that Mr. Menza was murdered in the house, which naturally caused something of a stir, and also seems to prove that it was not always all quiet on Quaker Road. Cause of death, fourteen stab wounds - and in spite of a big investigation the murderer and the motive were never found. Skimming lightly over most of the many owners, and then pausing to give this lurid information, seems to corroborate the old newspaper saying that to get headline billing you have to be involved in either scandal or crime. As you can see, this charming old house has had a long and interestingly varied life.

The Thomas Dodge House is currently owned by Mr. and Mrs. James Bernson, well-known Westchester lawyers. The current address is 418 Quaker Road.

THE THOMAS DODGE HOUSE (cont.)

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THE EARLY QUAKER HAMLET
OF OLD CHAPPAQUA

its houses . . . its people . . . its way of life



Special
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Edition

Chappaqua Historical Society, Town of New Castle