

THE CELLARS OF RIDGEBURY DISTRICT

Much of the history of any district may be found in the study of old cellars and foundations that remain long after the buildings have been demolished. Something of the size of a house can be determined from the mammoth chimneys and the great stones that served as doorsteps.

Approaching Ridgebury from Scotland District on the south the first cellar to be encountered is that of the DAVID HANFORD house which is still standing and is now owned by Kenneth Morgan, formerly by Ellis B. McLaury. This was formerly the Ira Keeler place.

Opposite across the road is the old GATES homestead. Around the bend stood the home of Clark Keeler, the son of Ira Keeler. This old house was moved to Scotland District and formed part of the Edgewood Store. It was moved by D. Crosby Baxter. A man named TURNER once lived in it.

Farther up the hill on the left at the next bend lived BARNABAS ALLEN and on the right further up is the cellar and lilac bushes where JOHN DAN lived. The house was built about 1830. Albert Brush, brother of Deacon Brush, lived in it after Allen did. Walter Moore married Allen's daughter and lived close to the top of this hill on the left or west side. There were other houses near the top of this hill, continuing past the schoolhouse which stood formerly in the triangle at this intersection.

Up the next grade on the left was the home of Major BOUGHTON, a shoemaker. After Boughton married he lived across the street in the ORD homestead.

After Ira Keeler died, his son Clark Keeler sold the house to David L. Hanford. Ira Keeler married one of the daughters of Gates who lived across the street. It is said that a member of the Turner family originally built the Clark Keeler house, and Clark Keeler bought it, with about eight acres.

Pork Hollow was located about one eighth mile from the present Westbrook Pegler residence in a southerly direction.

The Nehemiah Keeler Tavern was later owned by Jeremiah Desmond. Bradley Keeler lived here.

At the top of Ridgebury Hill was the FLOYD HUNT home, which was last occupied and owned by John Kehoe. The house was burned about 1927. The farm was formerly owned by John T. Rockwell. There were many Bockwells living along Ridgebury Street at one time or another — Obil, Runa, Abraham, John T., Zara.

Next along the street is the farm of Charles F. Palmer. The house is still standing. It was formerly the home of Runa Rockwell. To the north (south of the church) is a cellar and several old maples. Dr. David Burr lived here. The Burr house was built before the Revolution but its owner before Burr is not known. Later, in about 1929, a new house was erected on the old cellar of the Burr house, and some of the chimney brick was used in the fireplace in the living room. The house was built by Mannion and is now (1958) occupied by Thomas E. Belden.

AN OLD STORE was located south of the church. The store burned but the old well remains.

ABBOTT lived opposite the Lobdell house way up the street.

BENJAMIN AMBLER lived near the Abbotts in the present Wohlhutter place. He was a deacon in the Mill Plain Baptist Church. In 1930 Mrs. Wohlhutter sold her house to a Mr. Merry.

JOHN NORRIS (father of Stephen Norris) lived in the original Norris house above the fork on the road leading to Mill Plain, a distance of about twenty rods.

LAMBERT K. NORRIS lived in the house located in the fork itself. He was the son of Stephen Norris and died 6 Feb 1887. He had married Harriet Meyer. This old house was probably built long before Lambert was born. George Norris also lived in this house.

ENSIGN SAMUEL KEELER TAVERN stood in front of the present Kleber house. This was formerly owned by Washburn, Elmer Rundle, and Gamaliel N. Benedict.

The AMBLER residence was sold by Mr. Merry to Daniel M. McKeon in 1937. It had once been the home of Samuel A. Coe.

OBED TOWNSEND lived at the Gates house on Barlow Mountain Road. His wife died on the farm and his daughter (Mrs. Julia Bowerman, Timber Lake, Oregon) was born there.

SPRING VALLEY ROAD was the home of a number of old settlers.

THE BIRCHARD FAMILY lived on Spring Valley on the east side of the road. Elias and Ezra Birchard were born here.

JERE BIRDSALL'S parents lived opposite the farm of Norman E. John.

JERE REGAN lived in the former Timothy Smith house on the corner of Barlow Mountain Road. He was the father of conductor T. Ed Smith. The house burned down in 1929.

On the old road or lane leading up to Barlow Mountain is the remains of a cellar and a great chimney. On the left lived Daddy Gates and on the east about opposite lived [blank space] Gates.

This road leads up to the former Buckley glass. The Buckleys came from Norwalk. In 1910 and a little later, this lane was used as a carriage road.

On the road to Danbury from the church corner lived URIAH DEFOREST just west of the Norris place, which latter stands near the Danbury line. Stephen Norris Jr. lived on the corner and his son Benjamin DeForest Norris lived alongside. There were two houses and the town line ran between them. The present house is the newer of the two.

STEPHEN ALLEN, a Revolutionary soldier, lived across the road south of the Norris place. In 1931 a large elm stood near the former site. Stephen Allen's son, Barnabas, was born here and later kept a hotel in Mill Plain. He was president of the Pahquioque Bank of Danbury.

STEDWELL, a colored man, lived just beyond the H. H. Murdock home in an old house. Jonah Parker once lived in the Murdock house, which is extremely old.

MRS. MARY RAFFERTY once lived on the road to Ned's mountain; this was at one time the home of Barney Caroll.

[NEGRO] GEORGE a colored man caught his hand on a flax mill and died of lockjaw. His house was a short distance east of the McKeon garage.

A number of colored men who lived on or near Ned's Mountain had an orchestra and played for dances around the countryside. One of them was Grandison Riley who played the guitar.

CAPT HENRY WHITNEY homestead was situated just south of the Samuel Coe dwelling. The old cellar remains and the old well also, as of 1931.

Farther south On this road in the WILLIAR H. I. HOWE lot so-called was an old house occupied by a negro named "[Negro] George" who died of blood poisoning when he caught his hand in a flax mill.

Way back well in the lots some quarter of a mile from Samuel Coe house stood a house built on a flat rock in which BENJAMIN PALMER lived in 1835. His daughter Alvina married a Benedict.

On NED'S MOUNTAIN there was a settlement of four negro families; the house thereto is north of the schoolhouse some forty rods.

An old cellar on Ned's Mountain Road shows where Barney Carroll lived when he first came to Ridgefield before he moved to West Lane. Mary Rafferty, a washerwoman, lived here also in the same house.

Near the Murdock house on the road leading to Dingle Ridge was the home of Gilbert Birdsall, brother of Jere Birdsall.

To the left of the fork on the way Ridgebury Street was the home of Samuel Ryder on the way up the hill just before the hill begins, on the bend. .

The Murdock place was formerly owned by Samuel Ryder.

On the cross road from Lyman Keeler's "Pink House" (painted pink and built about 1720) is the cellar of the home of William Cook (the house was destroyed by fire in about 1915).

JOHN L. WALKER who was postmaster of Ridgefield, was born in the older Floyd K. Hunt house opposite the John Ord place (later A.A. Norton).

The house of Mr. and Mrs. William Ortman was formerly the home of Samuel Sidney St. John. The house was built before the Revolutionary War.

The house on the north corner on the road leading to Danbury was probably built by Captain Timothy Keeler -- that is, the original house, now the barn. The present house may have been built by Lewis Reynolds who married ----- St. John. In 1931 this is the Lippolt place.

On the opposite or south corner at the house occupied by Frank Benson in 1931 lived and died Mrs. St. John, the mother of Samuel Sidney St. John.

Adonirum Keeler built the Jessie Lobdell dwelling.

John Platt Keeler built the house where his son Lyman Keeler lives.

The "Pink House" north of Lyman Keeler's house was the home of Capt. Nehemiah Keeler. It was probably built about 1720-1730, and it was an old house when Capt Nehemiah Keeler was married.

The Desmond house is afbo very old, built about 1725, probably by a Keeler and it was once a tavern.

An old red house stood north of the present home of Dr. Robert O. DuBois. It was a very old house — probably the home of a Rockwell — and for years it was the tenant house to the old Gilbert Burr (now DuBois) house.

The home of Joseph Dlhhy was formerly occupied by a Rockwell family and also Ezekiel Wilson, a soldier of the Revolution.

Walter Hampden's house formerly belonged to Jeremiah Smith and Peter Finch — a Revolutionary soldier — also lived here.

William Barhite lived in the old house which stood just east of the present Gibson place, close to the road.

(From notes compiled by George L. Rockwell, 1930-1943 and never published.)