

Hunter & Gillespy
Homesteads
in
Shawangunk, Ulster, New York

by Mary Ann Schaefer

Boulder, CO

12 April 2020

Revision 1

14 April 2020

Please do not copy or redistribute without permission.

Introduction

This article is a precursor to other research I have started pertaining to the Hunter family. There I will better introduce the Hunter family and their apparent connections to the Gillespy family. However, during the course of that research, I came upon a Hunter deed where the land description was remarkably close to the land description appearing in the 1770 deed from James Gillespy (Jr) to Matthew Bevier Jr. This, of course, has caused a diversion, which you will read about here.

The Gerard Beekman Patent

First, according to the [History of OC](#), here is the description of the boundaries of the Walkill precinct as of 1743, taking note that part of the northern boundary of the precinct – the border between Walkill and Shawangunk precincts – was defined by the southern bounds of land granted to Gerardus Beekman:

these precincts covered remained until 1743, when, by act of Dec. 17, three full precincts, having all the officers of towns and exercising all their duties, were established by act of the Assembly. These precincts were to be known and called “by the name of the Walkill Precinct, Shawangunk Precinct, and Highland Precinct.” The first, the Precinct of Walkill, was bounded on the north “by the north bounds of ten thousand acres of land granted to Jeremiah Schuyler and others, by the south bounds of four thousand acres of land granted to Gerardus Beekman and others, by the north bounds of three thousand acres of land granted to Henry Wileman and others, by the east bounds of three thousand acres of land granted to John Johnson, and by the east bounds of two thousand acres of land granted to Cadwallader Colden;” on the south “by the north bounds of two thousand acres of land granted to Patrick Hume, by the north and west bounds of the land granted to Cornelius Low and others, and by the northwest and southwest bounds of two thousand acres of land granted to Phineas McIntosh, and by the line dividing the counties of Orange and Ulster to Shawan-

Here is a map showing Ulster County (1829-1839); this section shows one of the southern boundaries of Shawangunk precinct, the border with Walkill precinct. Notice the tract belonging to Gerrard Beekman. This is where the Gillespy land was located.



Deeds

The Hunters arrived early to Ulster County, settling in Shawangunk around 1729¹ and supposedly they had Gillespie's with them when they came. Here is the earliest Ulster County deed I could find pertaining to the Hunter family.

1754 Hunter to Rea

Ulster county deed ([II-372](#)) recites the sale of property in Shawangunk precinct from Robert Hunter of Shawangunk precinct and his wife Elizabeth to Matthew Rea. Several undocumented sources tell us that Robert Hunter's first wife was Elizabeth Gillespie, and technically we still can't prove that Robert's wife, Elizabeth, was a Gillespie. But I will proceed on the assumption that she was, mostly for the sake of exploring the connection of other nearby Gillespie's.

It should be noted that Matthew Rea was the son-in-law of Robert Hunter's brother, James (1707-1789).

Here is the property description from that deed, Hunter to Rea:

“all that lot of land being the moiety or half part of a certain lot being marked in the Draught thereof No. 5 within a certain tract of land granted by letters patent bearing date the 24th day of March 1709 onto Gerardus Beekman, Rip Van Dam, Servius xxxboom, and others beginning by the SE corner of the lot late Cornelius Tiebout No. 4 at the Paltz River² and runs along the line of the said Lot No. 4 west 24 degrees north 134 chains and 49 links, THENCE crossing the said Lot No. 5 south 24 degrees westerly 19 chains and 7 links to the line of the Lot No. 6, and THENCE along the said Lot No. 6 east 24 degrees southerly 138 chains and 49 links to the Paltz River aforesaid to a large white oak marked with 3 notches and the letter “F” on the south side thereof, and THENCE northerly along the Paltz River to where it began containing 259 ½ acres ”

This deed was witnessed by John Wilkin and David Crage.

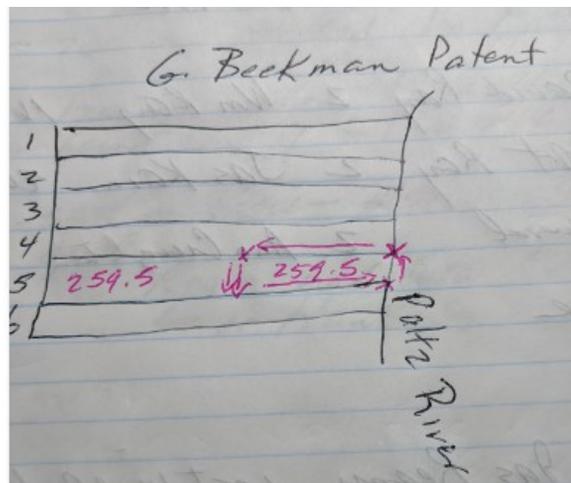
1 The [Goodwill Memorial](#), Or, The First One Hundred and Fifty Years of the Goodwill Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, Orange, NY; by James Milligan Dickson; pgs 66 and 69.

2 This river was known as the Paltz River or later, the Walkill River. Both references are to the same river.

Here is where the Hunter's and Rea's were located in 1798:



From this map, we can see that the Hunter's lived close to the Dwaars Kill, and not the Paltz (Walkill) River. Given the shape of the original Beekman patent, I am imagining that the 3000-acre tract was initially divided into long lots that might have looked like this:



The red ink is showing the acreage that Hunter sold to Rea in 1754. Note that we know there were six lots by virtue of a 1776 John Gillespy deed that described Lot No. 6 as being the southern boundary of a 3000-acre patent.³

³ [A Life on the Line, Capt. John Gillespy 1741-1810](#), Ulster/Orange, NY; MA Schaefer, 12 April 2020; p. 6.

It appears from the 1754 deed that Robert Hunter sold the acres closer to the Paltz River to Rea, while he kept the acres closer to the Dwars Kill. Robert Hunter wrote his will in 1775⁴ and died shortly thereafter. He left the farm he lived on to his son, James Hunter, and he left the farm on the west side of the Dwars Kill lying between the farms of David Crage and Jan Crispell to his son, John, providing that his widow Ann (Neely) could live there for the rest of her life.

Rea Deeds

Matthew Rea's will⁵ was written 2 Jan 1794, and it was proved 6 April 1802. His will describes two lots of property: “a south lot” that begins at the Walkill River where a brook runs into it, and “a north lot” beginning at the Dwars Kill joining the lands of James Hunter.

After Rea's death, we see several subsequent UC deeds pertaining to the Rea's that are chock full of property descriptions ([16-299](#), [20-554](#), [20-558](#) just for starters) where we find reference that Matthew Rea had owned property in both lots 4⁶ and 5 of the original Beekman patent, and where he had sold 50 acres to James G. Graham. If I'm not mistaken, there was also a reference to Robert Dill. There is even a later deed, 1834, from Margaret Rea to Francis Kain ([43-347](#)), the latter of whom is thought to have had Gillespy connections.⁷ I have a feeling that with a bit more concentration on these deeds, we might slowly be able to piece together more of the history of who owned the subdivided lots of the G. Beekman patent.

My Analysis

Taking into account the maps we have and the property descriptions from the Hunter and Rea deeds, my first thought was that the property sold to Matthew Rea in 1754 was the same property that James Gillespy Sr. bequeathed to his wife, Mary, in his 1749 will, which Mary in turn quit-claimed to her son, James Jr. in 1759. But if James Gillespy was apparently living on his land in 1749, and his widow subsequently lived there until 1759, it doesn't make sense that the land Robert Hunter sold to Matthew Rea in 1754 was the same land where Gillespy's were residing.

Maybe it's time to review the land description in the 1770 deed from James Gillespy to Matthew Bevier Jr.:

“all that easternmost half or moiety of all that lott and premises.... lying on the west side of the Walkill in the precinct of Shawangunk joyning to the south of a lot of law now x / belonging to George Grahams....beginning at the west bank of the Walkill at the division line between a lot of land now in the possession of George Grahams and the said James Gillespy from thence southerly on the stream of the Walkill as it runs to the north east corner of lot of land now in possession of Dirk Rosa, also on the said bank of said Walkill then containing the full breadth (breadth) of the whole lot called Lot No. 2 westward until it contains the full quantity of 129 and $\frac{3}{4}$ acre of land or one-fourth part of the whole lot called No. 2 in a certain division made of the whole patent under which the said premises lyeth together...”

4 NY County Wills, [36-199](#).

5 Ulster Wills, [C-305](#).

6 The 1754 Hunter-Rea deed referred to Lot No. 4 as belonging to the late Cornelius Tiebolt (I think). Need to do more research on that person. Perhaps Rea was able to acquire some of that land in Lot No. 4 after he became owner of half of Lot No. 5.

7 A [Study of Gillespy Neighbors in Shawangunk](#) Precinct, Ulster County, NY, Pre-1800; MA Schaefer; 24 February 2020; pp. 8-10.

Now compare the 1770 land description to the land description found in the UC deed [OO-325](#), 1797, William Gillespy Jr to Matthew Gillespy:

“being the western most half or moiety of a certain lot formerly devised to James Gillespy on the west side of the Walkill being also part of Lot No. 2 within the tract granted by patent to Rip Van Dam and others the lot hereby granted Beginning at the division line between a lot formerly belonging to Gorge Gillespy and so extending with the full breadth of the whole lot Number Two eastward until it contains the full quantity of 129 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres or the one fourth part of the said whole lot No. 2 of the division of the said patent or tract.”

OK! I am now completely updating my first understanding of the James Gillespy property in Shawangunk. I initially thought that the 1797 land sold by William Gillespy Jr was the same land sold by James Gillespy in 1770, but it was not! Here are my new understandings and related thoughts:

- James Gillespy Jr. sold the easternmost half of Lot No. 2 (129.75 acres), and William Gillespy Jr. sold the westernmost half (another 129.75 acres, equaling a total of 259.5 acres, the same amount of land sold to Matthew Rea in 1754!). Note that the land description of James' eastern half includes the river as a boundary, but the description of William's western half does not.
- Both the Gillespy deeds refer to a one-fourth part of the whole of Lot No 2., so I am presuming there was another 259.5 acres to the west which was part of the original Lot No. 2. It's hard to say if that land had also belonged to Gillespy's or not, but at some point William Jr.'s land was next to Gorge Gillespy's land. So we know about three Gillespys associated with Beekman Lot No. 2: James Jr., William (Jr. in 1797), and George. It seems likely these were all direct descendants of James Gillespy Sr. (d. 1749) and his wife, Mary. Who was the fourth heir implied in the land descriptions?
- The 1797 deed refers to the patent of Rip Van Dam “and others.” Note that the 1754 deed from Hunter to Rea did mention that the original patent included both Beekman and Van Dam. See also my [Research Notes](#) at the end for more research needed. Nevertheless, in all these discussions, we are clearly talking about land located on the west side of the Walkill River.

Conclusion & Afterthoughts

- I was initially excited reading the 1754 Hunter to Rea deed recognizing that, like the 1770 Gillespy property, Hunter also had property that bordered the west side of the Walkill River. Maybe it was Robert Hunter who came to Shawangunk and bought (probably) several lots of the Beekman Patent (at least Lots 4 and 5), and he then leased or sold some of that land to Gillespy relatives. But this research tells us that much of Robert Hunter's land subsequently went to his sons and the Rea's. I have to spend more time going through the Rea deeds, but so far, I've not seen even a passing reference to Gillespy. I think the Gillespy's were probably indirectly related (James Gillespy was possibly a brother of Elizabeth Gillespy Hunter?), and thus the Hunter/Rea lands remained separate from the Gillespy lands.
- It seems likely that James Gillespy Sr. probably arrived in Shawangunk at the same time as the Hunters, around 1727-29. We might further imagine that James bought Lot No. 2 of the Beekman Patent around the same time that Robert Hunter bought Lots 5 and 6.
- As I was recently updating my Gillespie Case Studies,⁸ I started to entertain the idea that William Gillespy Jr. who sold the land in Shawangunk in 1797 was *not* the same person as the William Gillespy, son of Samuel Gillespy and Esther Rainey. In fact, I typed up a whole new case study for the theoretical William who lived in Shawangunk, and then at the last minute removed it from the case studies because there were a few points I couldn't reconcile. This research, however, brings that idea back to the forefront. Stay tuned.

⁸ [Updated Case Studies of Gillespy/Gillespie Families](#) in Early Ulster/Orange/Dutchess, NY; MA Schaefer; 3 April 2020; pp. 26-27.

Research Notes

- Might be able to find [this source](#) at NYSA?

29, 1719–20. [*Montgomery, Orange* county.]
MAP of Lands in **Ulster** county on the west side of the Paltz river, including Beekman's, Gallatin's and Gatehouse's. 1719.
[*Shawangunk, Ulster* county, and *Montgomery, Orange* county.]
MAP of 2,000 acres of Land in the county of **Ulster**, being part

- The [1779 will of Jacobus Bruyn](#) contains an enormous amount of detailed information about patents in the Shawangunk Precinct and surrounding areas. A great source! It seems that Bruyn owned some of the lots from the Beekman Patent, but those on the east side of the Shawangunk River.
- [The History of Ulster County](#) tells us that the petition for the Beekman patent happened in 1710, and that land was originally part of the Evans patent.