

**Across the Way
Gillespys in
Mamakating Precinct
Ulster County, NY**

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Introduction

I've been doing a lot of map work lately, and so I'm becoming much more educated about the locale where early Gillespys lived in the Ulster/Orange area. I first became aware of the Mamakating Precinct last fall,¹ but until now, I haven't found my way back there to see if I can find more meaningful clues about the Gillespy clan.

To remind ourselves, some of the earliest records we have about Gillespys come from Mamakating Precinct:²

- 1775 Pledge, Mamakating Precinct.^{3 4 5} The four Gillespy men who signed the pledge were John, George, David, and either Thomas or James.⁶

I've gone back to look for other names of interest from this time/place, and these caught my attention: Capt. John Crage, John McKinstry, Matthew Neely, Abraham Smedes, Matthew Terwilliger, and Rosas including Aldret, Abraham, Jacob, and Issac. We know that Crage, Smedes, and especially Roosa's were found in Shawangunk Precinct.

- 1779 Petition for a militia force to protect the frontier, Mamakating Precinct, signed by James, John, and David Gillespy.⁷

Again, I've gone back to review the other names on this petition, and they include: John Crage, Isaac Roosa, John McCreery, Robert Milliken, William Cross, Jacob Roosa, Philip Vankuren, Solomon Terwilliger. We see some of the same names from the 1775 pledge, several associated with Shawangunk.

It's interesting to note which surnames are *not* seen in these particular Mamakating records – specifically Hunter and Wilkins. Presumably these families signed the pledge in Shawangunk or Walkill, and I am still trying to locate those records. But who were these Gillespys in Mamakating, where in Mamakating were they, and why were they there? This article will explore some of those questions.

1 [Gillespies in Early Sullivan County, NY](#); MA Schaefer; 11 October 2019.

2 The Precinct of Mamakating later became the [Town of Mamakating](#). This area was part of Ulster County until Sullivan County was formed in 1809.

3 History of Sullivan county: embracing an account of its geology, climate, aborigines, early settlement, organization ; the formation of its towns with biographical sketches of prominent residents, James Eldridge Quinlan, Liberty, NY 1873, pp. [410-413](#).

4 History of Ulster County, New York, ed. Alphonso T. Clearwater, Kingston, NY, 1907, pp. [140-141](#)

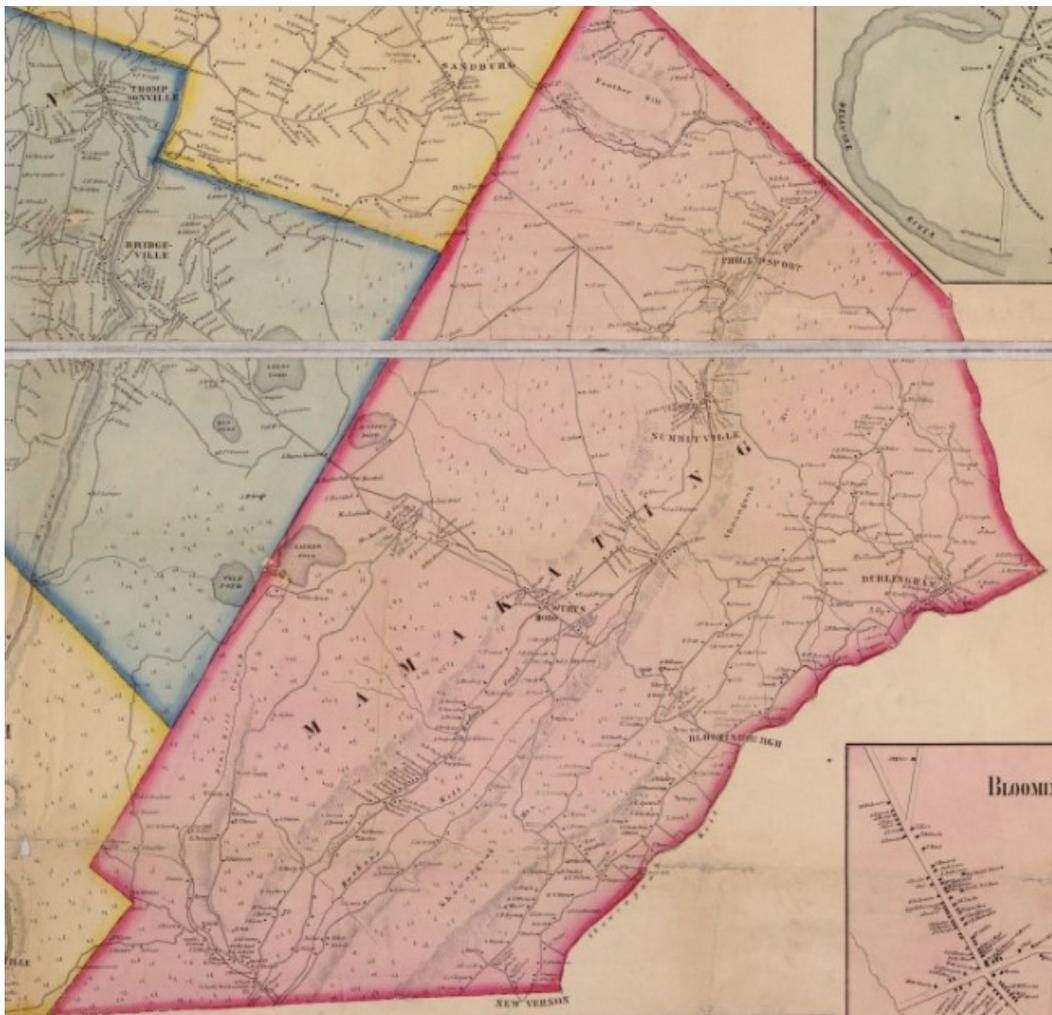
5 History of Ulster County, New York with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches, Volume I, Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, 1880, p. [75](#).

6 I would have to see the actual document, but I tend to think it's at least possible that the name of Thomas could have been mistranscribed, especially knowing the old handwriting. Because the name of James shows up so many times in the Revolutionary rolls, and not that of Thomas, I tend to think that James was the one who signed the Pledge.

7 Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, Vol IV, pp. [562-563](#)

Location

First, to give some perspective, here is a view⁸ of Mamakating Precinct, also later the town of Mamakating:



Remember that Mamakating Precinct was entirely within Ulster county until 1809. The southeast border seen here is the Shawangunk River, and Walkill Precinct (later Hanover, then Montgomery) was on the other side of the river.

In reading more about Mamakating, we learn that a number of forts were built along the Old Mine Road (today Route 209) to protect the settlers from Indian attacks. The closest one to the Walkill Precinct was built in 1731 and called Ft. Roosa. In looking at a modern map, many features seemed to be named Roosa, a name known to be the next door neighbor of James and William Gillespy in Shawangunk Precinct.⁹

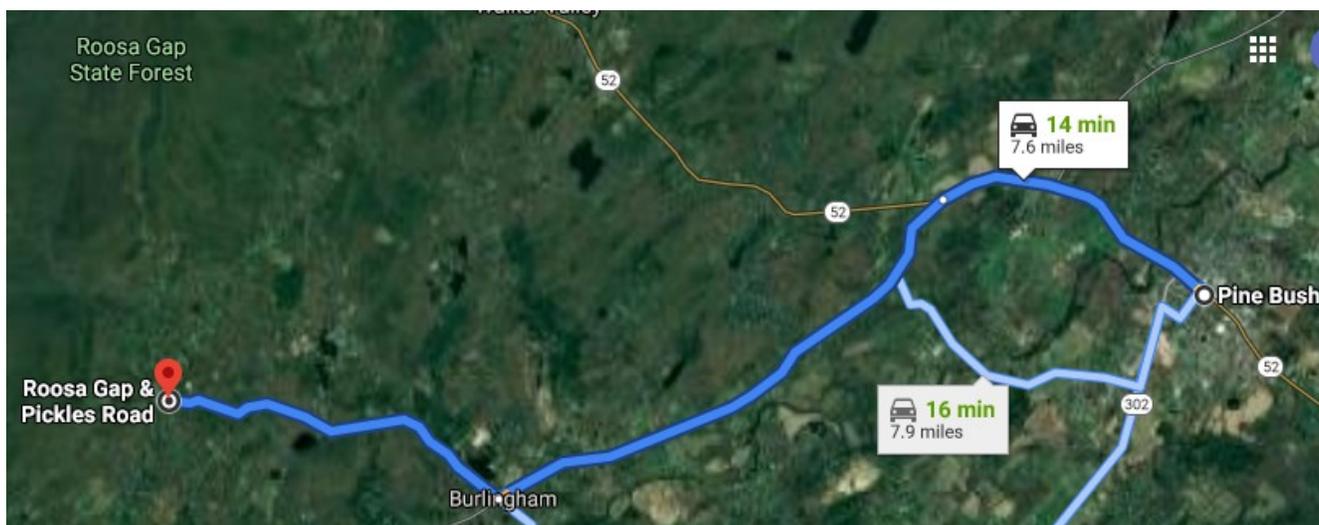
8 [Map of Sullivan County, New York](#) from actual surveys; C. Gates & Son, Philadelphia, 1856; Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA dcu

9 [A Study of Gillespy Neighbors in Shawangunk](#) Precinct, Ulster County, NY Pre-1800; MA Schaefer; 24 February 2020; Revision 4, 18 April 2020; p. 7.

Here's what I could find about Ft. Roosa:

On the east side of the Bloomingburgh Mountain in the town of Mamakating (Sullivan County) New York USA resides the old Roosa Fort, dating back to 1731. This fort is considered the oldest in the county. It still stands today, and is now a private residence. A settlers' fort or blockhouse, originally built in 1731 by Abraham Roosa or son Jacob. Still extant, located on Roosa Gap Road and Pickles Road, on the east side of Shawangunk (Bloomingburgh) Mountain. It is the oldest building in the county.¹⁰

Now to give us more context on a modern map:



Now I began to wonder what this stretch of road looks like on an older map.¹¹



Are we surprised to see the Gillespie name along the route on the west side of the Shawangunk River?

¹⁰ Written by a historian and artist whose online ID is [PineSinger](#). She has produced a beautiful poster of Ft. Roosa.

¹¹ [1856 map of Mamakating](#)

People

Who was S. Gillespie? I believe he was probably Stansbury Gillespie, 1818-1894, son of Abraham Gillespie, 1788-1864, and grandson of Samuel Gillespie. Stansbury was apparently born in Sullivan County, his parents probably living in Bloomingburgh at the time.¹² According to other Sullivan County deeds, Abraham's brother, Joseph S. Gillespie, was also living in Bloomingburgh before later removing to Ohio.

Note: We know of other Gillespie names in Sullivan County, such as William in Bethel, and Matthew who apparently had land near Barber Kill in 1813. However, this article will now focus on Gillespys found in Mamakating closest to the Shawangunk River, and to Pine Bush.

Boundaries

I went looking for a deed that accounts for Stansbury around the location where we find him on the 1856 map.

Deed SC [24-733](#)

30 Jun 1848, Abraham Gillespie of Crawford, Orange, NY & wf Christina, & Stansbury Gillespie of same place, \$3000, land situated and being partly in the town of Shawangunk and county of Ulster and partly in the town of Mamakating and county of Sullivan being part of a tract of land granted to Ellison & Colden & when said tract was divided by the commissioners it was allotted to the heirs of John B. Miller¹³ and by them conveyed to said Stansbury Gillespie & by him in part to said A. Gillespie
Said lot is bounded as follows:

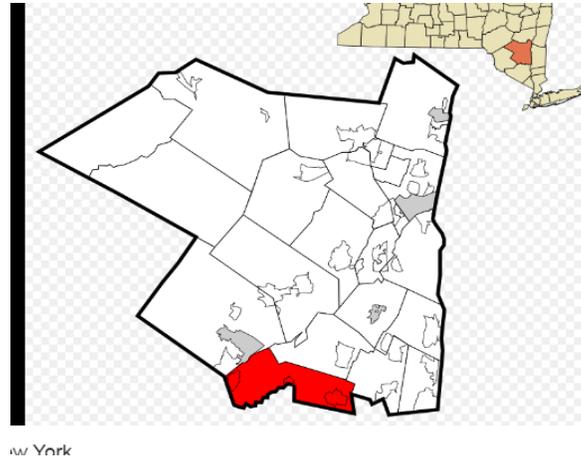
1. Beg at a stone set being the southeast corner of the farm of said Stansbury Gillespie of 200 acres
2. thence running along a public road south 74 deg & 15 min west, 25 chains and 25 links to a stone set on the line of the land of Mr. Hawkins
3. thence along his line north 45 deg and 45 min west, 25 chains to a chestnut stump
4. thence north 12 deg west, 63 chains and 80 links
5. thence running parallel with the east line of said tract 38 chains and 16 links (or to the line of the lands of Hiram Niven)
6. thence along his line south 35 deg and 15 min east, 24 chains and 80 links (or thereabouts) to a stake in a swamp on the west side of a brook the corner of the lands of the aforesaid Stansbury
7. thence running along his line south 74 deg and 15 min west, 32 chains and 38 links to a stake set at the foot of a steep hill the corner of the aforesaid 200 acre lot
8. thence running along the south line of the same parallel with the north line 65 chains and 50 links to the place of beg
9. contains 250 acres of land
wit by A. Dimmick

12 SC Deed 6-194, 1820, Abraham of Mamakating and wife Mary to Cornelius Wood, land in the village of Bloomingburg, on the north edge of Newburgh and Cocheton Turnpike, linked to lands of Alpheus Dimmick. Dimmick was a lawyer whose name shows up in several Gillespie records.

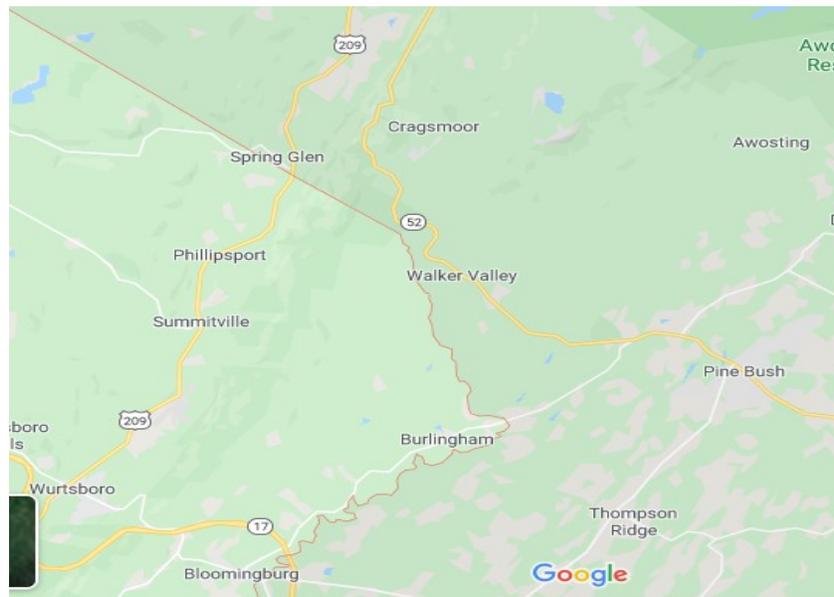
13 SD Deed [18-355](#), 1 April 1842 from *Christopher* Blackburn Miller and wife Sarah and William Ellison Miller to Stansbury Gillespie, 450 acres located in both Mamakating and Shawangunk.

The thing that leaps out at me is that the Gillespie property was partly in two towns and counties, Mamakating in Sullivan County, and Shawangunk in Ulster County. That means the county line ran through Stansbury's property.

Here is the town of Shawangunk in Ulster County:



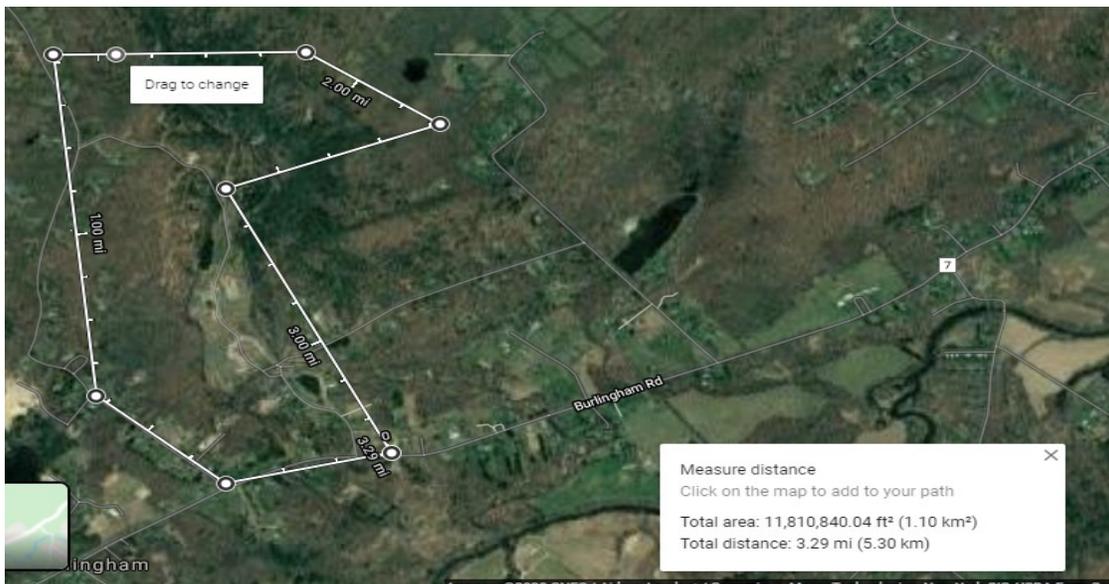
On the following map, the red line shows the county line between Sullivan and Ulster counties on the northwest, and between Sullivan and Orange counties following the Shawangunk River on the southeast, noting the location of Burlingham:



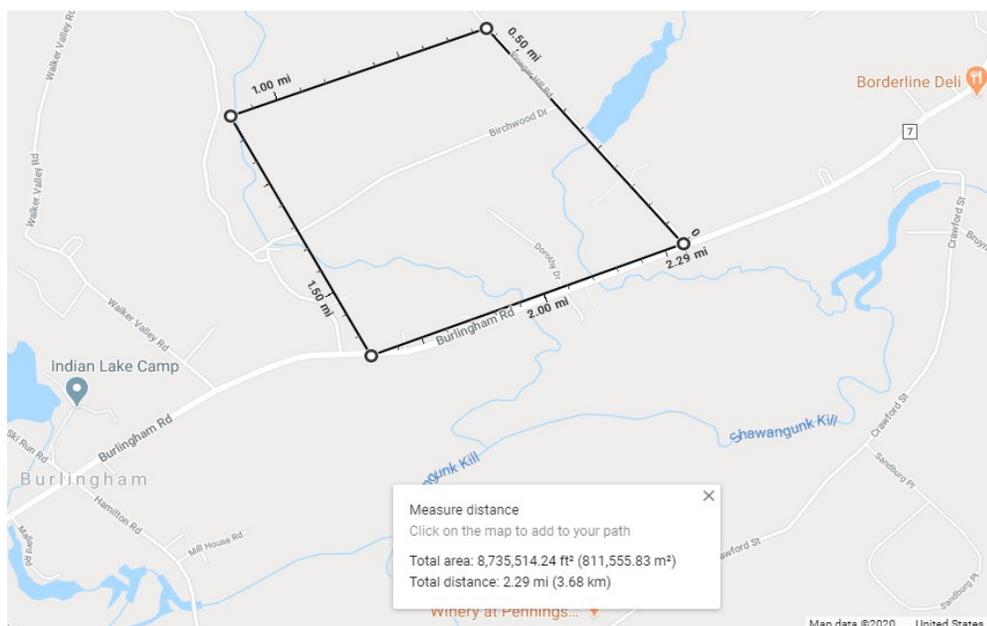
Zooming in, we see the boundary of Sullivan County starts at the Shawangunk River on the southeast and then follows the Platte Kill River northwest.



Sure enough, mapping Stansbury's property, both the 250 acres he was selling to Abraham and the 200 acre farm that he had adjoining, the Platte Kill River runs through. Parts of the Gillespie properties were in different precincts and counties.



This was probably Stansbury's 200 acres adjoining the 250 acres he sold to Abraham:



Discussion

Mamakating has not been on my radar all that long, and I have kept it separate from my other research in Ulster/Orange because, in my mind, Mamakating was some place *far* to the west. Indeed, Sullivan county included more distant western points that were Gillespie destinations, but the precinct/town of Mamakating was right next door to where Gillespys were living in Ulster/Orange. Of course, my research colleagues living in NY already know this, and I thank them for their patience in waiting for me to catch up.

Based on this new understanding, here are some new points to consider:

- This is now the second time we have found a Gillespy whose property lies across two precincts and counties.¹⁴ This teaches me heightened awareness to location references. It previously would never occur to me that property described as being “in the town of Shawangunk” would be less than one mile from Burlingham in the town of Mamakating.
- There is still a time glitch in finding Gillespys in this locale – along the Shawangunk-Mamakating Precinct line which essentially became the county line between Ulster and Sullivan, AND a stone's throw from Pine Bush in Montgomery Precinct in Orange County to the east – 60+ years after the start of the Revolution when Gillespys signed pledges in Mamakating. I've spent some fair amount of time digging for any other evidence of Gillespys in Mamakating before 1800, but so far, no luck. And I am not the only Gillespie researcher to make this attempt.¹⁵ This situation seems to present us with two options:
 - Keep looking. The evidence is there, but we haven't yet found it. Evidence can't be found if someone is not looking for it.

¹⁴ [A Life on the Line, Capt. John Gillespy](#) 1741-1810 Ulster/Orange, NY; MA Schaefer; 12 April 2020.

¹⁵ Thanks to email discussions with D. Hart, a long-time Gillespie researcher.

- Adjust our perspective about the existing evidence. I have, of course, been taking the evidence of Gillespys in Mamakating literally. The verbiage of the Mamakating pledge reads:

we, the freemen, free-holders and inhabitants of the Precinct of Mamacoting,

The Mamakating pledge doesn't say where it was signed, but I'm guessing probably Bloomingburgh. Still in all, there is growing evidence of the presence of several Gillespys in the area of Pine Bush before the Revolution. What if the Gillespys, living in the Pine Bush area, or some of them, went to Bloomingburgh to sign their pledge even though they were not residents of Mamakating Precinct? From Pine Bush to Bloomingburgh was 9.5 miles, and from Pine Bush to Montgomery was less far by a mile or two, depending on the route. Maybe it had to do with the timing when the pledges in the precincts were signed, one precinct before the other? This is, I think, an interesting theory, and one to keep in mind.

Research To Do

- Need to locate Revolutionary Pledges for Hanover Precinct – I think I found recently that they still exist; need to follow up.
- Tax assessments for Mamakating Precinct – believe these are at NYSA
- More deed and/or patent research to see if Gillespys were landowners in Mamakating prior to 1800