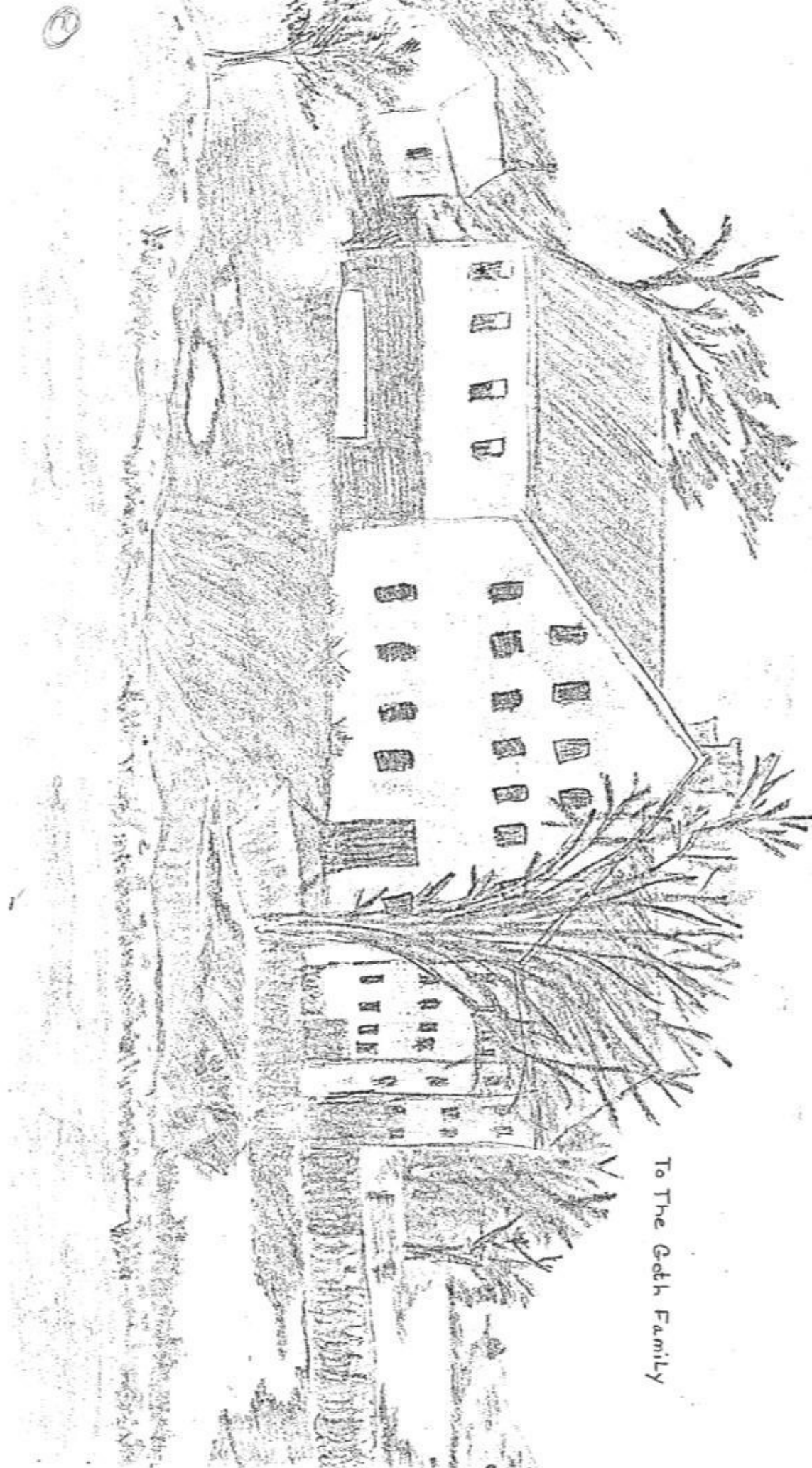


Rochdale Woollen Mill - 1867



To The Gath Family

(2)

The History of Rochdale

The history of Rochdale centered around its manufacturing enterprises. A milling business was conducted here for over 100 years. A small gristmill was built as early as 1790. The exact date is not known or the builder. The first owners that are recorded were Lytle and Amos Whipple who in 1798 purchased the mill and 40 acres of land. Their success in the business is not known, but they owned the mill for 33 years. The hamlet was known as Whippleville over those years. In 1831 Rochdale received its present name from James Taylor who purchased the mill and 1 acre of land for \$40.00. He was a native of Rochdale in England and named the hamlet after his birthplace.

The earliest history of this area that is known begins on May 7, 1697. A patent was issued to Henry Ten Eyck and 8 other men for a parcel of land which included our area. This was known as the "Poughkeepsie Patent." Poughkeepsie is an Indian name and probably meant "Pleasant Harbor", and was spelled APO-KEEP-SINK. The town was formed as a precinct on Dec. 16, 1737, and as a Town on March 7, 1798. The City was taken from the Town on March 29, 1854.

Rochdale is located on the west bank of the largest stream in Dutchess County "The Wappingers," it was named after the Wappingers Indians who lived near the mouth of the stream. The Indians called the creek "MAEVENAWASICH", meaning "a large good stream and cascades." This creek rises at Stissing Pond and runs for 36 miles where it empties into the Hudson River at New Hamburg.

When James Taylor bought the gristmill at Rochdale he converted the mill to cotton. He and his partner a Mr. Forbes ran the mill until 1850 when

the business) was dissolved through litigation. They did a fair business and the hamlet grew to about 15 houses, and everyone worked at the mill. Then it lay idle for 6 years, when it was rented by John Jeff who ran the business for 3 years. Rochdale mill closed again and the residents were without jobs. James Taylor died at Rochdale on April 14, 1877 at the age of 79. Little did the residents know that in 4 years prosperous times were coming to Rochdale.

In 1863, Elias Titus and his three sons Robert, Richard and Henry purchased the cotton mill. With their money and knowledge they turned the mill into a very successful business. For the next 37 years the hamlet was to grow and benefit greatly. Elias Titus came from the Town of Washington. He and his Brother started a mill on the east bank of the creek, 5 miles below Rochdale. He named the tiny hamlet that sprang up Titusville. Titus later had a partner named Cyrus Sweet of Poughkeepsie for 10 years. He then took his three sons into the business and expanded it by buying the Rochdale Mill.

The mill was in good repair but the dams had to be rebuilt. Here the stream is divided by an island making two dams necessary. One dam was made of stone and was 16 feet high with flood gates. The other was of wood anchored by boulders and was 5½ feet high. In 1867 Titus built a 40 by 50 foot addition to the mill facing Rochdale Road. He added an L shaped wing to the west side. The mill now was 70 feet long on the Rochdale Road side and 40 feet facing Titus Road. The mill was built of brick and was two stories high in the front. As the land sloped toward the creek the building was three stories high. Titus built two sheds between the creek and Titus Road, they were used for bleaching, drying and storage.

When Titus and sons took over the mill they changed it from cotton to wool. Sheep farming

was a big business to the East and wool was plentiful. The mill at Titusville did the rough work and employed 40 people, the finished product was made at Rochdale and employed 65 persons, half of which were female. One thousand yards of white flannel were made daily.

Rochdale was a thriving village with a population of 165 persons, everyone depended on the mill for their living. The business continued until 1900 when after many good years the mill closed. Many of the residents left, seeking employment elsewhere. Some remained hoping the mill wheel would start turning again. But their dreams were crushed, for on a Spring evening in 1904 the mill was totally destroyed by fire. All that remained of the mill was thousands of bricks, the old machines and the foundation. The big stone dam remained and was a big attraction for sightseers. In 1955 Hurricane Diana washed out the stone dam. Today all that remains is the end of the dam and part of the foundation, a rusty old fire hydrant, installed to protect the mill, still is standing on Rochdale Road in front of where the mill stood. Few people realize that such a large building stood on the corner and that a prosperous business was carried on there for over 100 years.

With no employment in the hamlet, the population dropped and many houses lay empty. Homes could be bought for a few hundred dollars. Rochdale remained like this until the automobile became a dependable form of transportation. Population grew as many people were attracted to the old houses and others built new ones. Although many improvements have been made on the old buildings, the original hamlet has changed very little in the past 100 years. When I speak of the original hamlet, I am referring to the area between the mill and west to the foot of the small hill on Rochdale Road. This is all that Rochdale consisted of.

Many of the old houses date back to

the Whippleville days and some may have been standing since before 1800. The houses on the north side of the road are probably the oldest, they were the carriage house and the school house. The carriage house stands across the road from the mill property. Wagons were kept on the ground floor and the second floor was a hayloft, horses were kept where the cellar now is. Mrs. Wolf of Harmony Circle has pictures of her father and Uncle converting the old carriage house into a home. This is now the home of Charles Miller and Family.

A school house was built west of the carriage house. The school house was also used as a Church, every other Sunday Episcopal services were held by a Minister who traveled from Lithgow. Other services were held on the other Sundays. The school was also used for meetings and social events. This is now the home of Fred Swartout and Family.

The next house is the home of ^{Joe} ~~John~~ Both and Family. This was a very popular place for many years. The old well in the front yard provided the hamlet with its water supply. The roof covered well still stands but is no longer in use.

The next house was the old general store, that was so necessary for every village. Here you could purchase almost anything, for a trip into the city of Poughkeepsie was an all day chore. This house is now the home of James Long and Family.

The home of the Louis David and Family that sits back at the end of a lane next to the Longs, dates back to an early day.

The next two houses were boarding-houses and are larger than the others. The first house is believed to date back to 1806. This was the end of the hamlet to the west.

The seven houses on the south side of the road were also built at an early day. They are shown on a map made during the Civil War, as

were the houses already mentioned. These 7 houses are the present homes of Joseph De Michele and Family, Fred Herth and Family, Robert Rawls and Family, Ralph Krimm and Family, Mr. Rossa, the Hault Family and the home of William Lawless and Family. The only building off Rochdale Road was a barn on which is now Titus Road. Many years ago this was converted into a house. It is now the home of John Ludwig and Family. In 1862 these 15 buildings and the mill made up Rochdale. There were no houses east of the mill. There was one house on the west end of the road and at that time it was the home of P. De Harmer, now it is the home of Henry Kern and Family.

In early times before Dutchess Turnpike was built, Rochdale Road was the main route to Pleasant Valley from Poughkeepsie. Railroad service for passengers and freight was provided at Pleasant Valley by the Poughkeepsie, Hartford and Boston Railroad.

Rochdale through the years has been a victim of floods. In 1935 the water flooded homes on the low part of the road. Mrs. Wolf recalls the flood of 1935 when the water was nearly 5 feet deep in the road. Mrs. Wolf is in her 87th year and has probably lived here longer than anyone.

If you are along the creek on a misty night and you see or hear an Indian calling to her child, don't be surprised, but keep it to yourself. The story says an Indian maiden and her baby were in a canoe and it capsized. The Mother swam to shore but the baby was lost. On foggy nights you can see and hear the maiden in a canoe calling to her lost baby. This is an old story that belongs to Rochdale and you can take it for what it's worth.

I hope you enjoy reading my findings about our hamlet. Many of you are old residents and know a great deal about the area and many are fairly new and know very little about its history. I have always been interested in local history as my family was one of the first settlers of East Fishkill. I obtained most of the information from books handed down in my family and the library, I hope it proves to be interesting to the Rochdale residents.

(Charles D. Miller)
147 Rochdale Road