

Town of New Paltz Landmark Nomination Form
Continuation Sheets

COLDEN – LEFEVER – WIRTZ HOUSE
37 Old Route 299, New Paltz, NY

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY CONDITIONS

The Colden – Lefever – Wirtz is first recorded in the 1790s and was built as a story-and-a-half stone house with a two-room plan characteristic of the period. These small stone houses were constructed without an internal lobby or passage by which to control access to interior rooms. Most of these dwellings had separate entrances into each room. The two-room plan house was of a more middling sort as it was planned to contain a living room and a kitchen without the luxury of a parlor. Often, the third room was added later as the family became more affluent and established. The early history of this house is associated with a tenant property, so a third room or parlor was considered unnecessary. It is possible that the house was enlarged with rear additions once the house became owner-occupied in the 1830s.

The current appearance of the house reflects the stage it reached in 1904 when a New York City family adapted the aging building to a summer country house by adding a new roof, porches and wood shingle siding in a modern cottage style. While additional space and conveniences continued to be added in years since, the house has retained its distinctive antique cottage quality.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The Colden – Lefever – Wirtz House is significant example of 18th-century stone domestic architecture in the Town of New Paltz. One of only eighteen early stone houses surviving in the town, the house represents an important artifact of New Paltz's formative era and cultural development. Stone houses are iconic in the history of the town and Ulster County, and they are important symbols of the Dutch heritage in the Hudson Valley. Unlike the more numerous and less permanent wood buildings built in the 18th century, stone houses have survived into the 21st century. Although generally revered as relics of a primitive past, they were the elite houses in their period and provide valuable evidence of architectural traditions, construction methods, material life.

The Colden – Lefever – Wirtz House represents a group of two-room stone houses that were precursors to houses with internal entries or passages. This particular example illustrates the evolution of stone houses into summer homes during the turn of the 20th century when farming was in decline and summer tourism and the phenomenon of city dwellers buying old houses as second homes was on the rise.

The New York State Historic Preservation Office has determined that 18th-century stone houses are individually eligible for the National Register and that the changes that have occurred in subsequent historical periods contribute to that significance. In the New Paltz context, all of the surviving stone houses in the town are worthy of local designation and protection.

CHAIN OF TITLE & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Edited excerpt from the National Register Nomination Form prepared for an Ohioville Historic District by Neil Larson for the Town of New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission in 2007.

Getty Colden is the earliest owner of record for the stone house at 37 Old Route 299. According to the 1798 town-wide assessment of real estate made for the U.S. Direct Tax, she owned 241 acres “on the road

Town of New Paltz Landmark Nomination Form
Continuation Sheets

COLDEN – LEFEVER – WIRTZ HOUSE
37 Old Route 299, New Paltz, NY

from Paltz to Bakers Landing on Stephen Goetchius & Jacob Halsted,” a stone house and a Dutch barn that she was renting to Lucas Belue [sic] & Thomas Burnet.¹

Gertrude Wynkoop (1769-1845) was the daughter of Dirck Wynkoop (1738-1827) and Sarah Elting (1748-1829) of New Paltz. Her father invested in large amounts of land, including a significant share of the Hardenbergh Patent in the Catskills, and a prominent figure in regional politics. (He was a delegate representing Ulster County at the U.S. Constitutional Convention in Poughkeepsie where he voted against ratification.) In 1790 Gertrude Wynkoop married David Colden (1762-1798) who was the son of Cadwallader Colden (1722-1797) and Elizabeth Ellison (1726-1815) of Coldenham in the Town of Montgomery in Orange County and the grandson of Cadwallader Colden (1688-1776), the last Colonial governor of New York. David Colden’s brother, also named Cadawwader (1769-1834) served in state and national elective offices, as well as mayor of New York City.

It would have been around this time that the Coldens acquired the farm in New Paltz, perhaps through Gertrude Wynkoop’s father. The stone house on the property, evaluated as “some out of repair” in 1798, already may have existed for some time. The Coldens did not live there; rather, they leased the farm for income. The Coldens lived in Coldenham on the estate the original Cadwallader established in the early 18th century. When David Colden died in 1798, the property remained in Getty Colden’s possession. Soon after, she married her deceased husband’s brother, Alexander Colden (1757-1816), a Newburgh merchant. When Getty died in 1845, she was buried in Coldenham with her husbands.

John W. Church bought this farm from Gertrude Colden for \$3600 in 1833.² He also bought the 96-acre farm his father purchased from Jacob Halstead and .35 acres of land on the road leading south from Poughkeepsie merchant William Davies that year bringing his total holdings in the locality to nearly 400 acres. Church, who appeared in the neighborhood shortly before, was a native of Bristol Rhode Island. He relocated to New Paltz with his parents, Constant Church and Deborah Wheeler, and other family members from Westmoreland, New Hampshire around 1826 when their first land transaction was recorded. The 1830 census lists separate households for John W. Church and his father. John W. Church and his brother, Otis, have separate entries in the 1840 census, Constant Church having died in 1836, the same year John married Mary Landon. What attracted the Church family to New Paltz is unknown.

John W. Church moved his family to Hurley and began to divest himself of his Ohioville property. He made more than a dozen sales between 1833 and 1848, the latter being the year he died. One transaction conveyed Gertrude Colden’s farm to Nathaniel Lefever (1772-1853), son of Matthew and Elizabeth Lefever of the Town of Lloyd. He was a widow and 69 years of age in 1850 when he was enumerated with a household consisting of a housekeeper and two young black farm workers. When he died in 1853, the farm came into the possession of his nephew Andrew S. Lefever, who lived in New Paltz Landing on the Hudson where he and his brother, Philip, operated a shipping company sending freight barges to New York City.³ Andrew and his wife, Delia, must have operated the farm,

¹ Ibid. Lucas Ballou is also recorded as living in New Paltz in the 1800, 1810 and 1820 censuses. The farm represented Lot No. 4 in South division of Second Tier of Lots east of the Paltz River mapped in 1760. [Ulster County Clerk’s Office, Map Book 2, Page 87.]

² Ulster County Deeds, Book 40, Page 206.

³ Ann LeFevre Gilchrist, *The New Paltz LeFevre Family* (by the author, 2003), 6:26. Andrew fell overboard in the fall of 1861, and his body was not recovered until March 1862.

Town of New Paltz Landmark Nomination Form
Continuation Sheets

COLDEN – LEFEVER – WIRTZ HOUSE
37 Old Route 299, New Paltz, NY

as well, since maps of the town published in 1858 and 1863 indicate A.S. LeFever as the occupant. The couple deeded a small lot on the east side of the road leading north from the crossroads to New Paltz School District #4 in 1856.⁴

In 1860, shortly before Andrew Lefever drowned in the Hudson in a barge accident, he and Delia sold what remained of the Colden farm had been purchased by New Paltz physician Maurice Wurts. He proceeded to build a new house on the property, which the *New Paltz Times* reported was “the most stylish along the road between this village and the landing.”⁵ Two years later he erected a new barn, which a newspaper columnist found to be “quite an improvement.”⁶ The distinctive wood frame house was demolished in the 1920s for the construction of an electric supply substation; the barns were destroyed by fire. The 1860 census placed Wurts in the midst of other Ohioville residents. His household contained his wife, Maria Jenkins, children, Rachel L.F. and James J., an eight-year-old German girl named Mary Bhrent and Charles B. Auchmoody, a farm laborer. He was one of the first people of means to relocate from the village to Ohioville as if it were a suburb. Located on the turnpike, the farm was convenient to both the village and the landing. Maurice Wurts’s 1879 obituary described his life as follows.

Seldom has New Paltz lost a citizen who has been more generally esteemed and beloved. Possessed of a kind heart and genial manner, his presence was like sunshine on a cloudy day. In his earlier years Dr. Wurts took considerable interest in politics, and in the days when the Know Nothing [i.e. anti-immigrant] movement was at its height in 1855—was elected Sheriff by an overwhelming majority. About a dozen years ago he removed to New York city, where he carried on a drug store and also was engaged in the carting business. About two years ago he returned to his residence, near Ohioville, where he resided until his death... The funeral was held on Monday at the Reformed church, of which Dr. Wurts was a deacon. Seldom has there been a larger funeral, and his death will be widely and deeply felt.⁷

Wurts leased the farm to a number of tenants. In 1870, the Hartshorn family from New York City leased the “pleasant cottage at Ohioville” for the summer months.⁸ James Ketcham “moved his goods and chattels from the County House” and took up residence in the Wurts house in 1872.⁹ The property, consisting of a house, barn, wagon house and garden, was advertised for rent in 1876 for the monthly rent of 100 dollars.¹⁰ The following month, it was reported that Nelson Terwilliger was had leased the house, which lately had been occupied by Lyman H. Halsted.¹¹ After Wurts’s death, his widow, Maria, who lived until 1886, and his daughter, Rachel, who married William J. Tallman and resided in Asbury Park, New Jersey, held on to the farm and the stone house until the end of the century.

⁴ Ulster County Deeds, Book 98, Page 710.

⁵ 5 October 1860.

⁶ *New Paltz Independent*, 5 December 1862.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 January 1879.

⁸ *New Paltz Times*, 21 July 1870.

⁹ *New Paltz Independent*, 5 January 1872.

¹⁰ *New Paltz Times*, 23 March 1876.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6 April 1876.

Town of New Paltz Landmark Nomination Form
Continuation Sheets

COLDEN – LEFEVER – WIRTZ HOUSE
37 Old Route 299, New Paltz, NY

James and Maria Jenkins and real estate agent Charles Coutant purchased the farm in 1901 with the intent to subdivide it and sell residential lots.¹² In 1904 Charles T. Coutant conveyed the old stone house and 20.3 acres of land to August Boller, a retired New York City policeman.¹³ The wood frame second story and portions of the existing wood frame ell were added by Boller. His daughter, Harriet Faas, inherited the property, including the stone house, upon his death in 1938, which is where she lived for many years afterwards.¹⁴

By 1980 Dr. Alan Schwartz had acquired the stone house and Katherine DeMaio owned it from 2004 to 2007 when it was sold to Dorthea Marcus. The current owners are Scott Struble and Gina Durante.

SOURCES:

- Ancestry.com. on-line digital editions of U.S. Census and genealogical source material.
Hasbrouck, Kenneth. "Old Stone Houses," *New Paltz Independent*, 24 August 1950.
LeFevre, Ralph. History of New Paltz, New York and its Old Families, from 1678 to 1820. 1903; rpt. Bowie MD: Heritage Books, 1992.
New Paltz NY. Elting Memorial Library. Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection. "House Books," obituary and marriage records, vertical and photograph files.
_____. Huguenot Historical Society Archives, Town Records Collection. Manuscript assessment lists for 1798 U.S. Direct Tax, town tax lists.
Sylvester, Nathaniel B. History of Ulster County, New York. Philadelphia, Everts & Peck, 1880.

¹² Ibid., 17 May 1901 & 17 July 1903.

¹³ Ulster County Deeds, 382:209. Obituaries, Haviland-Heidgerd Collection, XIV:11.

¹⁴ Ulster County Deeds, 558:156. Obituaries, Haviland-Heidgerd Collection, XIV:11. Kenneth E. Hasbrouck, "Wurts 'Wirtz' House," *New Paltz Times*, 9 March 1950.

Town of New Paltz Landmark Nomination Form
Continuation Sheets

COLDEN – LEFEVER – WIRTZ HOUSE
37 Old Route 299, New Paltz, NY

PHOTOGRAPHS (Neil Larson, 2014)



View from SE (2007)



View from SE