

YORK - ELTINGE HOUSE
224 Plutarch Road, New Paltz, NY

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY CONDITIONS

The house is an unusual example of an 18th-century stone dwelling becoming a rear service wing for a large and elegant 19th-century house. In many cases, kitchen wings are mistakenly construed as earlier dwellings rather than as utilitarian sections of more highly finished parts of a stone house, but the sequence of events in the construction of this house is dramatically evident. The stone house was erected soon after the assessment list for the 1798 Direct Tax was compiled, because it is not recorded. Its presumed owner, Johanniss (or John) York was living in a log dwelling at the time. York's presence in the neighborhood into the 1820s indicates that he was the owner at the time the stone building was constructed and likely for the wood frame house attached to it as well.

The actual construction date is unrecorded and short of dendrochronology, no particular documentary or physical evidence is extant to determine it. The only conclusion to be drawn is that it was built after the 1798 inventory was made and before the two-story wood frame "addition" was erected in the first quarter of the 19th century. The stone house faced the road with a façade containing two entrances and two windows, one each for the two rooms within. The second doorway was positioned to the north of the existing one and was later converted to a window. Vertical seams below the window are clues to the alteration.

There are a number of two-room stone houses with two entrances in the town, as well as elsewhere in the county. They were a fairly common design option for two-room houses built without interior halls to control access to interior spaces, although many surviving examples have been altered to remove one of the doors in later modernization efforts. The Elias Ein House at 294 Old Kingston Road is the only example in the town to retain its two front doors; it also has a date stone inscribed 1789. The Petrus Hasbrouck House, located across the street at 315 Old Kingston Road, was built ca. 1765 with two front doors. One of them was converted to a window later when a stone kitchen section was added. Christoffel & Deborah Deyo built a two-room stone house with two front doors at 374 Springtown Road. This house also was altered at a later time replacing both doors with windows when the front façade was moved to the opposite side of the house. The Freer-Louw House on Historic Huguenot Street, also had two rooms with separate front entrances until an effort was made in the 1870s to create a symmetrical front with a center entrance and create an interior passage.

The second doorway was removed when the two-story wood frame house was added to the south end of the stone dwelling and it was repurposed as a kitchen wing. The new house was oriented to the south, in a manner popular at the turn of the 19th century to provide optimum solar exposure. The shallow plan contained two rooms on each floor divided by a passage. While possibly expressing the continuity of the linear plans that were part of the traditional domestic architecture, the narrowness and tallness of the new building was also in line with the attenuated Neo-classicism introduced during the Federal Period. The restrained decoration absence of eaves also are characteristic of the period, and the absence of Greek Revival-style features suggests it was built before 1830. The only other example of this type of addition to a stone house occurred a bit later at the Abraham Elting House at 215 Huguenot Street.

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SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

With a stone wing built ca. 1800, the York – Eltinge House is a 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 York – Eltinge House is associated with a significant architectural two-room-plan house type with two front entrances and it also represents a small group of early stone houses that became the service wings for more commodious and stylish houses built in the 19th century, after stone houses had lost their social prestige. In this case, a story-and-a-half wood frame house with a symmetrical center-hall plan and center-entrance front façade in the Federal style was built later by the original builder.

CHAIN OF TITLE & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It has been surmised that the stone house at 244 Plutarch Road had been built by Johannis York, also known as John York, whose name is associated with a house at this location on the 1798 map of the town. Johannis York (1759-1841) was a Kingston native and son of Moses York and Maria Freer. He had married Jannetje Bevier (1761-1821), daughter of Jacobus Bevier and Antje Freer in 1780. They had seven children.

The assessment lists for the 1798 Direct Tax includes Johannis York as the owner of a log dwelling and a barn, along with 86 acres of land in Lot No. 6 of the Second Tier to the South in the 1760 subdivision of Lands East of the Paltz River, which covered the location of the property. In 1803 Johannis York was taxed on real estate valued at \$2280, a significant amount suggesting that was more established and living in a stone house. He was enumerated as a head of household in this neighborhood of New Paltz until 1830 when evidently conveyed the property to Roelif Eltinge. This fact indicates that York built the wood frame section of the house, as well. The form and design of the new house, which relegated the older stone house to the status of a kitchen wing, correlates with similar houses built before 1830. After this date the Greek Revival style would have been in vogue; the tall, attenuated proportions of the form, the narrow gable ends and the unembellished roof lines tight against the walls are features characteristic of the earlier Federal Period.

Roelif Eltinge (1808-1885) was born in the home of his parents, Josiah R. Elting (1764-1834) and Sarah Lefever (1768-1823) at the intersection of the Paltz Road and the road to Pleasant Valley, which now is the intersection of Old Rt. 299 and South Avenue (that house no longer exists). Eltinge married Blandina Lefever (1812-1875) in 1831 and it appears that they took occupancy of the York house around that time. York's wife had died in 1821 and his name is absent from the New Paltz census in 1830. On the other

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hand, Roelif Eltinge was not recorded as a head of household in the 1830 census. Both men's names are included in the 1840 census for New Paltz, but John York was in his eighties and living with two females, one of which probably was a daughter.

Roelif and Blandina Eltinge lived out their lives in the house. In 1850 their household contained four children aged 3 to 15 years, a teenage African American house servant named Elisa Hoornbeck, and two farm laborers, two of which had been born in Ireland. Roelif Eltinge was employed as a farmer; his farm was valued at \$10,000, placing the farm among the best farms in the town. Eltinge was appointed president of the Huguenot National Bank in 1857 and would hold the position for 18 years. (The Elting family had long been engaged in commercial enterprises and had played a role in the formation of the bank.) The 1860 census enumerated Roelif and Blandina with two of their children, four Lefever relatives and Dina Freer, an African American servant.

After his wife's death in 1875, Roelif Eltinge moved from the Plutarch Road house and went to live with the family of his daughter Elizabeth, and her husband Solomon Deyo. Initially, the house and farm were rented, at times to summer tourists and other times to tenant farmers.¹ After Roelif Elting's death, the property came into the possession of his daughter Rachel and her husband Solomon DuBois, and it remained in their possession until 1925 when it was sold to John and Mary Messmer of Newark, New Jersey.² Messmer began harvesting humus from the bogs along the Swartekill, which ran through the property on the east side of Plutarch Road, and he subdivided house lots on the higher ground on the west side. Messmer referred to himself as the Ulster County Humus King in a 1938 advertisement.³

According to a record kept on the address in the "House Books" compiled by the librarians at the Haviland-Heidgerd Collection in the Elting Memorial Library in New Paltz, the following list of owners succeeded the Messmers at 244 Plutarch Road.

- Samuel Hall
- Eva Bloom
- David & Wendy Ruger
- Wendy Ruger
- Palcic
- Paul & Dana O'Neill

¹ *New Paltz Times*, 6 June 1878, 22 March 1896.

² *New Paltz Independent*, 9 July 1925.

³ *Ibid.*, 5 May 1938.

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SOURCES:

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PHOTOGRAPHS



View of stone house from east. Vertical mortar joints below the window to the right of the door indicate the prior existence of a second doorway in the façade, as well as express the two-room interior plan. (The two rooms have been more recently combined into one open space. Larson, 2014



View from SE. Photo from Zillow.com, 2014