

Stone Arabia, Kilts Farm, and the Timeline

This old farmstead is so inextricably intertwined with my life and my family history that I hesitated to develop it for fear that readers would think it a vain and self-serving effort. I beg your indulgence if it does appear unseemly or immodest. I could find no other way to express the results of my research. My only goal was to set a time reference around the development of this area and construction of these buildings and their relationship to my family. Respectfully, Willis Barschied, Jr.

During the period 1580 – 1614, Native Americans were interred on this property. A memorial to them was erected in 2005.

On October 19, 1723, the Stone Arabia Patent comprising 12,700 acres was granted to Listmaster John Christian Garlock and 26 other Palatine families. This date serves as the settlement date. These Palatines were a displaced people from the Palatinate along the Rhine River in Germany. I am a direct descendant of John Christian Garlock through my mother, Margaret Garlock Barschied (1906 – 1986).

On August 24, 1750, Peter Kilts purchased 50 acres lot number 43 of the first division of the Stone Arabia Patent from the heirs of Philip Livingston, a member of a wealthy Hudson Valley family.

On September 7, 1756, Conrad Kilts was born here and at the end of his life was buried here.

Between 1750 and 1780 buildings were erected here.

On October 19, 1780, A few miles south of this place the Battle of Stone Arabia was fought. The American battalion was defeated and their commander Col. John Brown was killed. The Stone Arabia settlement was destroyed by British Crown forces, loyalists, and Native Americans. It is believed that all buildings on this property were destroyed. Conrad Kilts engaged in the American cause, including the battle of Stone Arabia.

Circa 1780 – 1800, the destroyed buildings were replaced. The Dutch Barn, a type of structure existing from Stone Arabia's first settlement, was built. The Lutheran and Reformed Churches, which had been destroyed, were replaced and remain standing today.

Circa 1835 – 1845, the white Greek Revival house was constructed along with the summer kitchen.

Conrad Kilts died on May 12, 1846 here where he had been born ninety years before. His monument, along with those of numerous descendants, are here in the Kilts Cemetery.

On April 23, 1853, Susan Livingston, listed in the Church records and in the census of 1850 as a Woman of Color, was interred near the Kilts Cemetery. Her grave stone gives her age as 44. Local legend has it that she was once a slave having been born in 1809. By 1853 she would have been free.

In the mid 1800s the Dutch Barn was greatly altered and added so as to accommodate more dairy cows. The trend in agriculture was moving from an era of grain growing to one of dairying for the production of cheese and butter. Numerous local cheese factories were erected.

In the mid 1870s the Kilts family moved to a farm a short distance south, on a more travelled road. Subsequently the buildings began to fall into disrepair.

In August 1948 Willis Barshied Jr. and Ethel Nellis, who was born in Stone Arabia, were married. Ethel was a direct descendent of pioneer William Nellis, a Palatine who settled on lot #42, just to the west of the Kilts lot, in 1723. Thus I had a second major link to Stone Arabia.

On June 29, 1965, a much deteriorated Kilts house and summer kitchen were sold to Willis Barshied Jr. by Albert F Kilts. It was the first time in 215 years that the property was not owned by the Kilts family. An effort to repair and restore the house and summer kitchen began at this time.

On December 5, 1972, the Dutch Barn and another small piece of property was purchased from Curtis and Helen Nellis who had since bought the remainder of the Kilts farm. Curt's ancestor William Nellis and his descendents had owned lot #42, just to the west of the Kilts land since 1723. Work to secure the barn began immediately.

During this time I removed the west wing section of the cow shed which had been added and used the lumber to build the garage/shop located across from the white house.

On October 24, 1983, the 18th Century house frame that was located on the upper end of lot #11 of the Harrison Patent was purchased and disassembled for transport to the Kilts Road property. The frame was repaired and by 1985 the exterior was completed... the inside shortly thereafter.

In 1986 Amish families began to settle in Stone Arabia. Part of the area saw transformation to a way of life that had disappeared a hundred or more years ago. Small farm dairying was reintroduced. We now had wagonmakers, wheelwrights and harnessmakers. Perhaps the greatest change was the amount of field work with teams of horses and horse drawn vehicles on our roads. Barn and house raisings became common.

On August 24, 1987, I purchased the building frame which was to become my shoe shop. The much neglected structure originally stood a few miles south of its present location. During the following months a foundation was completed with the help of two Amish boys. The frame was repaired and the building was erected with the help of friends. The shop was furnished with examples of early shoes, shoemaker's tools and other implements used in the leather trade. The shop became a memorial to my Great Grandfather, Nicholas Barshied (1835-1919), who emigrated from Germany and pursued the shoemaker's trade. This project completed the construction in my little settlement up to this date, July 21, 2007.

Kilts Farmstead was placed on the state and national registers of historic places in 2009.