

The New York genealogical and biographical record, Volume 44

By New York Genealogical and Biographical Society

page 314.

<http://tiny.cc/ig6fbw>

EARLY SETTLERS OF WEST FARMS, WESTCHESTER
COUNTY, N. Y.

Copied from the manuscript record of the late REV. THEODORE A. LEGGETT,
by A. HATFIELD, JR.

(Continued from Vol. XLIV, p. 240, of the RECORD.)

The sites of old Richardson homestead and Gabriel Leggett's, as well as those of later generations, have all an absorbing interest to me; nor less so the old graveyard on Hunt's Point. Inside the gateway lies a flat stone engraved: "Private Cemetery of John Leggett and — Willett." I infer from this that my great-great-grandfather's wife (whose name I have not found as yet among the old records) was a Willett, but of this later. Since the yard contains many Hunt graves, that of the poet Roderic Drake, and others, I imagine that originally there were two yards, separated probably by a fence, for the Leggett graves are by themselves. The old stones are very rude. There was probably at that time not a headstone cut in the whole Province, all such stones, as in old Trinity, New York, were imported from England or Holland. These old gravestones, therefore, are rough slabs, and at first I thought they were without inscription of any kind, but after several visits I found that sunken beneath the surface of the ground were the initials rudely carved. I have heard my mother say that grandfather Leggett wished to

be buried in "an old yard at West Farms." Grandmother, however, had him placed in the Quackenbos vault.

Near the old graveyard is the burying place of the slaves of the Leggett family and other families containing a good many irregular shaped headstones. I have often heard, and the wills which I will later record, show it, that there were a good many slaves owned by the family.

In the latter part of March, 1891, I went with Mr. Francis H. Leggett to West Farms to be present at the opening of certain graves, which proved to be those of William Leggett, 3rd son of Gabriel 1st, and of his family and others. On the lawn of the big white house which for half a century has stood on this estate (on Hunt's Point), grew six cedar trees until comparatively recent times, and tradition had told the owners that within the mound where they grew was an Indian burying-ground. Mr. J. L. Spofford, who now has control of this property, had his men dig into this mound, and found underneath lying flat, a gravestone bearing this inscription: "1744, Sarah Leggett—died Aug. 30, 1744, aged 52 yrs." Nine bodies were removed from this mound, or what was found of them, and buried in St. Peter's yard at Westchester. They should not have been disturbed, for I have since learned that when the property was sold by the Leggetts it was with the understanding that, the stones being laid flat, they never should be. Some of these stones, I am told, can be seen as forming in part a rockery made by Mr. Spofford. In William Leggett's grave there was nothing found save his arm bone and a gold link sleeve button, and the bone was preserved in a very singular way, it lay, no doubt folded across the breast, underneath that part of the coffin lid which had the following: "W^m Leggett—Aged 71 Years," formed by large headed copper nails. The copper preserved not only the portion of the lid in which they were driven, but the arm bone which lay beneath it. In the graves of the women were gold pins, probably used in fastening the shroud, also gold link cuff buttons. All were surprised by the stature of the men, for although the bones had crumbled, the space they had occupied was well defined, they were verily Anakim—over six feet—some were pronounced nearer seven by the Columbia College professor who was superintending the work. I have often heard my mother say the Leggetts were very tall, my grandpa "as high as the door."

I do not know as yet whether the first Gabriel was of the nine bodies removed, have no way of knowing where he was buried; but as the churchyard of the church where he attended at Westchester was distant and, having no hearses, the dead were carried to the grave on a bier, no doubt he and his were buried near the old homestead, for it was long the custom for landed proprietors to have a cemetery on their estate. I may find the spot yet.

Gabriel was no doubt buried in the old yard on Hunt's Point; I think I can make out his initials on one of the oldest stones.

Returning again to speak of the original patent, after the death of John Richardson's widow in 1694 or 5, and who, as will

be stated at length beyond, had married Capt. Williams, a member of Leisler's Council for the Province of New York, the following covenant was, Nov. 20, 1695, entered into by the heirs:

"Whereas John Richardson late of Westchester Co., deceased, did give and bequeth unto Martha, his then wife, all the houses land and meadow during her life with other things thereto relating, as appears by the last will and test. of the sd John Richardson bearing date 16 Nov., 1679, and the said Martha being deceased, the wife of Thos. Williams of said place; and since her interment several controversies hath arisen by John Ketcham & Bethia his wife, eldest daughter of sd John Richardson and Gabriel Leggett and Elizabeth his wife the other daughter of the said J. R., and John Lawrence of New Town Guardian to the two orphants of Joseph & Mary Hadley, late of Yonkers Plantation deceased, the other dau. of sd J. R., concerning the dividing of the estate given unto the said mother during life: and for pacifying of all hearts and contentions which hath arisen between the sd John Ketcham and Bethia his wife, and Gabriel Leggett & Elizabeth, and on behalf of George and Mary Hadley the two orphants of Joseph and Mary his wife aforesaid, and for the preventing of law suits, hath mutually agreed and concluded to divide the sd lands and meadows, houses and orchards in manner and form following: Impri. That John Ketcham and Bethia his wife shall have the Long Neck with all or singular the woods, under-wood, and all the appertences with a highway thereto, together with three acres of meadow within the Planting Neck, to have &c. heirs, &c. forever.

Second—That Gabriel Leggett and Elizabeth his wife shall have the now dwelling house and orchard, with a piece of meadow alongst the side of said orchard with 22 acres of land to be laid to said house and orchard in side of that land which the said Gabriel Leggett bought of John Forgason, with the land between the two orchards, together with one third of the undivided lands after the 1200 acres is laid out, and one third of the meadow in the Planting Neck after the 3 acres is laid out to the said John Ketcham, with all and every of the appertences unto the sd Gabriel Leggett, his heirs &c.

Third, That George Hadly and Mary shall have ye land lying upon ye Planting Neck of sd estate: and $\frac{2}{3}$ of meadow upon sd Neck after John Ketcham hath his three acres, together with $\frac{2}{3}$ of the undivided lands after the 1200 acres is laid out. Also John Ketcham shall pay unto John Lawrence of the New Town for the use of the orchard £4. 10s. & 9d in money, and Gabriel Leggett shall pay to the sd John Lawrence for the use afores^d the sum of £3.6s.

In witness &c. Nov. 20, 1695.

Witnesses

Content Titus
Sam^l Haight
Edward Collier

John Ketcham
Botthia Ketcham
Gabriel Leggett
Elizabeth Leggett
John Lawrence"

THE NEW YORK Genealogical and Biographical Record.

