

Historic Homestead Yielded to Industry At Constable Hook

Story of Peter Van Boskerck's Settlement Goes Back to Earliest Years of America—House Stood for Generations, Demolished 2 Decades Ago

The first house ever built in Bayonne no longer stands. It lives only in history and in the memory of those workmen who in 1911 demolished it stone by stone to make way for the tanks of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey.

But for long years before the sweep of industry converted Constable Hook into a tremendous testimony to the strength and ambition of man, that section formed as picturesque and romantic a countryside as the region had to offer. And it is only natural that when Peter Van Boskerck, pioneer, looked about him for a place to settle he chose this spot upon which to build his home.

The result is pictured and the length of time and his descendants remain on the site is attested to by a row of headstones to be seen in the family cemetery to the left of the homestead. Through the years the Van Boskercks tilled the soil and lived in peace and quiet on their waterfront that has since risen many thousand-fold in value.

Slaves Adopt Master's Name

How far back the history of the homestead goes may be determined from the fact that slaves helped the Van Boskercks in the development of their holdings. So attached did these slaves become to the family that after they were freed many of them adopted his name of Van Boskerck, to which the original spelling had been changed in the course of time.

A History of Bayonne, published by the Bayonne Trust Company of Bayonne, N. J. in 1911 to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary, describes the location of the Homestead and gives some interesting information concerning it. It says:

"Constable Hook, by reason of its nearness to the Narrows, and also because it is at the mouth of the Kill von Kull, appears to have secured prominence in its early days out of proportion to its later importance. This point, a distinctive name given to a portion of Bayonne which lies opposite New Brighton, Staten Island

and is now the center of a hive of oil and other industries.

This point, containing about three hundred acres, was granted to Jacobson Roy, a runner of Fort Amsterdam, hence the name Constable, the title for runner, and Hook, Point, Constable Hook, or Runner's Point.

Those days it was a piece of low land of sandy character with salt marshes intervening. Van Boskerck's Point, which is really part of the same formation of land jutting out into the bay, was to the north of the point, distinctly named Constable Hook.

On Van Boskerck's Point stood probably the first house ever built in Bayonne. It was the homestead of one branch of the Van Boskerck family who, generation after generation, tilled the soil as farmers, assisted by slave labor, and marketed their surplus products at the growing city of New York. Transportation of produce in those days was by pier and a type of sail boat much like a schooner in rig with mizzen or topsails.

Burial Ground on Homestead

On the left of the accompanying picture are shown grave-stones. A plot on the Old Homestead was used as a family burial ground and it was in that cemetery that most of the Bayonne pioneers were buried. Peter Van Boskerck and his descendants were laid to rest there and also ancestors of the Cadmus, Vreeland, Cabberry, Van Horn, Carabrandt and many other old Bayonne families.

In 1911 the Old Homestead finally yielded to the March of Progress. The property that had been successfully defended from unfriendly Indians gave up to the giant industrial wheels of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey and was sold to the local refinery. The building was demolished and the bodies of many were removed to other cemeteries.