Forgotten Places – Quilty Hill Rd Properties (Keyes family)

By: Karen Ferguson, Town of Kirkwood Historian

Continuing with my series of Forgotten places along I-86, east of Five-Mile Point (a/k/a/ Windsor Road or Hwy 17), this month's article features the Keyes family property.

David Keyes, the son of Cyprian Keys Jr. and Martha Bush Keyes, was born in Princeton, Massachusetts, on January 27, 1781. He married Ruby Adams Keyes in 1799. Together they had 8 children: Israel, Ezra, Evaline, Ashley, Levi, Gilson, Harriet and Hannah. Their family relocated to Conklin (now Kirkwood) from Otsego County somewhere between 1825-1830. It was the 1830 Census records that first show members of the Keyes family listed.

David Keyes acquired property near the intersection of Windsor Road and Quilty Hill Rd in 1832 described as Lot 25 of Lawrence Tract in Conklin. He then deeded it to his son Israel on July 27, 1835. Israel was their oldest child, born in 1800. His wife was Celesta Shay Keyes who he met in Kirkwood.

Even though the property was deeded, David and Ruby continued to live in a log cabin on 2 acres of the property near Israel for the rest of their lives. Ruby passed away in 1851 and David passed away in 1857 at the age of 76. They are both buried in West Windsor Cemetery.

Israel and Celeste had 8 children – 3 sons and 5 daughters: George, Stalham, Eleanor, Ruby, Charlotte, Almira, Verona and Leonora. Sadly, Charlotte died in 1850 at the age of 10 and their youngest son, Leonora died a few months later at the age of 10 months. In fact, on the 1850 Census, Charlotte wasn't listed because she had already passed away and Leonora was listed as being 9 months old.

According to the 1855 census, assessment records and map, the Keyes family property was valued at $750. Israel owned 113 acres and his occupation was listed as a farmer. His house was described as a plank house. In addition to his dad's property, Israel's oldest son George is listed on this census and described him as 24 years old and married to a girl named Hannah. They also lived on 2 acres of Israel's property and his house described as being plank built.

Ten years later, the 1865 Census now showed Israel's son, Stalham, age 32, married to Lucy, age 27. They had two sons, Myron, age 10, and Edwin, age 8. Stalham was a farmer and lived on ¾ of an acre, a triangular piece of property on Quilty Hill north of Israel's property in the same house that would be occupied by the Hastings family.

Around this same timeframe, George and Hannah moved to Windsor. Their house was then occupied by George's sister, Verona, who was newlywed. She married Eben Divine at the Binghamton Baptist Church on March 29, 1865. (*The 1876 map shows their names on the property*).

Also in 1865, Israel Keyes consented to allow the Town of Kirkwood to build a new bridge over Fitch's creek connecting Quilty Hill Road to Windsor Road. He was paid $15. *That bridge was removed with the development of I-86 overpasses in 1999.*

Israel passed away on December 1, 1869. Stalham & Lucy Keyes, along with their sons Edwin & Myron, and Verona & Eben Divine continued to live on the estate with their mother Celeste. In addition to farming, their families contributed to the Kirkwood community. Stalham served as a Road Commissioner. Eben Divine served as a Justice of the Peace, Attendance Officer, Truant Officer and School Director, which were logical appointments for him living adjacent to School #9.

Stalham passed away in 1896. Lucy and the boys then moved to Cayuga County, which is also where they are buried.

Israel's wife, Celeste, died on February 28, 1904, at the age of 94, having lived her entire life in Kirkwood. She and Israel are buried in West Windsor with their 2 small children who had died in 1850. Their place of rest is next to Israel's parents and his brother Levi.

The remaining children and grandchildren sold the Keyes estate to William Murphy and Thomas Murphy and eventually all left the area. Thomas Murphy signed over his ownership to William on January 6, 1906. William Murphy then transferred the properties to his daughter, Mary Murphy Ryan (Trasker), on July 16, 1914.

Throughout the years, Mary subdivided a few small pieces of the property and deeded them to the County of Broome and the State of NY for the purpose of expanding the highway. She deeded property to Friend E. Swartz in 1939 which is the house where George resided, as well as Verona and Eben Divine when they were first married. *This property is now commonly known as 1 Quilty Hill Road*. Mary also deeded property to John A. Carver in 1948, Lloyd Alton Wood in 1950 and 1953, and Charles Sullivan in 1953. *The Sullivan property is now the location of the Quilty Hill Trailer Park*. Lastly, Mary subdivided the remaining property to Bruce Kibbler on June 1, 1960.

Bruce continued subdividing the property into single family lots; however, the major portion of the land where Israel resided and also the property where Stalham resided is still intact and is now owned by Chris & Margo Kibbler. While the original house where Israel Keyes lived no longer exists, the foundation is visible. Also throughout the property are the original stone walls that border the farm.



I find it amazing that in almost 200 years, this land has primarily been owned by 3 families: the Keyes family, the Murphy family and now the Kibbler family.

(Picture on left shows a portion of the original stone wall bordering the property. Additional pictures of the property, the original deed record, the bridge agreement, and a modern version of the site are posted on the Historian's Bulletin Board at Town Hall.)