

Significant Landowner Directory

As the grid plan approached, there were virtually unlimited opportunities, for Colonial- and Federal-era landowners. Throughout Manhattan, every up-and-coming residential hamlet and rural community as well as all the farmland along the riverside railroad track edges, eventually, would succumb to the grid.

It was simple to tap into the northward-moving commercial swath on and off Broadway, or the residential migration along Fifth Avenue and adjacent to Central Park. On-the-spot speculators were handy and ready to forward every transaction. Many gambled and lost their land once an economic boom was followed by a panic.

Also, with the major players, say, an Astor or Wendel, willing to step in and to capitalize with each recurring stock market crash. The long-term investors had the means to amass more farm tracts as the city expanded farther north, along Broadway from Union and Madison Squares to Greeley and Herald to Times Squares and then into the Upper West Side—always northward.

This continual trend of encroaching commercialization on high-end specialty shops and upper-crust brownstone homeowners caused store owners and residents alike to again move on. The “Gold Key of Hanover Square” opened the way for the Goelet family real-estate fortune. Their sizable holdings between Union and Madison Square, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue cross one another, provided continuously increasing property values and revenues from their leased holdings.

No doubt the “grid plan” was all-encompassing and without regard to established owner’s boundaries and borders. Farther along Fifth Avenue, third- and fourth-generation Goelets amassed tracts already cut-up into plots, which they further divided into lots, and were way ahead of the crowd there, too.

Although this dead-center alley of resident’s to retailers to commerce buildings, proved to be among the most lucrative lots and plots in Manhattan, the significant outlying areas—those nearby the New Amsterdam settlement, now considered Downtown Manhattan, were great consecutive farm and pasture tracts, which were owned by a few families, namely Stuyvesant, Bayard, De Lancey, Warren, and Moore. Their holdings, as rural estates, could be measured in square miles.

The two largest homesteaders, the Hopper homestead (now, Hell’s Kitchen to Clinton) and Benson Farms (present-day, Southcentral Harlem to northeastern Yorkville) were within the Colonial-era Bloomingdale district or Harlem Commons. Both considered far from civilization when their boundary and border markers were staked out and registered.

From the beginning, there was resistance to urbanization as well. First, the landowning families were politically connected powerhouses. The more adventurous among them had

improved their tracts prior to the War of Independence. Additionally, farming villages had established themselves between the harbor settlement and Love Lane. The westernmost was Hampstead Hamlet, approximately within the five Tribeca historic districts. It was incorporated into the Trinity Church King's Farms, in the early 1700s.

The enlarged 1600s Greenwich Hamlet, the "Village" as it is referred to today, began at West Houston Street and was contained between Seventh to Sixth Avenues, which remained intact by the "Grid Plan" designers.

The Bowery Village, beginning on East Houston Street abutting a tax-free farmer's market, spread to East 12th Street, at Union Square. It ran along the Bowery Road, between Broadway and Second Avenues, centered at Copper Square, the confluence of the Bowery, Astor Place, and Stuyvesant Street. Another community followed the Union-Place-to-Love-Lane triangular extension of Bloomingdale Road, as East 17th to 21st Street Fifth Avenue, today's Flatiron and NoMad.

The next semblance of country villages was in the West Nineties to 116th Street, in the northern Bloomingdale District, as Morningside Heights. Below, within the Harlem the Harlem Plains, spreading from West 126th to 130th Street, is Manhattanville. A Lenape trading post, at a shoreline flat region. And, the Harlem Common Village, near to the Harlem Bridge, from East 117th to 128th Streets. Finally, in Upper Manhattan, near to West 168th Street at the Knightsbridge Road, a stagecoach station evolved into a first Washington Heights enclave on improved streets.

As the surface grid brought change, mass transit accelerated the unrelenting grading progression from rough terrain into standard lots. Many additional significant and very asymmetrical outlying Manhattan tracts—whether left fallow or tilled, a country seat or future building site—were amassed shortly after the 1684 British takeover, and consolidated through to 1775.

The significant landowners' boundaries, by neighborhood—rather than ordered by purchase or deed registration—are based on the John Randel Jr. Manhattan Farm Maps identifications, surveyed in association with Charles Clinton, after 1813, and drawn between 1818 and 1820, north from East Houston Street or Greenwich Avenue at West 13th Street, to the city limit, as West 155th Street.

Wherever there was a question. The matter was resolved, as best as possible, by cross-referencing comments or notations on the Drapp's Map of 1860 or the 1865 Viele Map of Manhattan boundaries and waterways.

The additional investigator's estimated boundaries included, for the most part, were unearthed while tracing a parcel's ownership lineage. They only need to be considered better than interesting accumulated impressions, and far short of flawless. They are, therefore, to be enjoyed, hopefully as asides, and never to serve as proof-positive and absolute identification for the past, present, or future inheritance matters. Or, any other

matter, as a matter of fact. Then, by neighborhood, the Significant Landowners of Downtown West, are:

Northwest Chinatown, Little Italy, SoHo, and (southeast) Greenwich Village.

Nicholas Bayard, the governor's nephew, who owned a working estate and easterly pastures, stretching from Canal to Houston Street, along the Bowery, which essentially comprised central Downtown.

The Bayard westerly lands spread to Minetta Brook, at West Fourth Street. He built Richmond Hill, a manor house, at Bayard Hill. Both Mountain and his home play a role in New York City's initial War of Independence War battle, changing occupants for eight years throughout, with the tides of war.

The couple produced several children, among them **Stephen N. Bayard**, a commodities trader, married Margaretta Van Cortlandt, in 1698. He improved the southeast portion, and **Francis Bayard Winthrop**, who resided in his East Forties country seat.

NOTE: Nicholas Bayard married a **Judith Varleth**. The new Mrs. Bayard's uncle, Nicholas Varleth ambassador to the colony of Virginia, was her bridegroom's stepfather.

Nicholas' mother, Anna, nee Stuyvesant, at one time, Mrs. Samuel Bayard, was the present Mrs. Nicholas Varleth. Her niece by marriage (Judith Varleth), became her daughter-in-law (Judith Bayard) as well.

What's more, a young Judith Bayard (her brother, Samuel Bayard, married Anna Stuyvesant, and fathered Nicholas), traveled to New Amsterdam with Anna. Acting as the matchmaker, Anna introduced her brother, Peter, to Judith Bayard.

Therefore, Mrs. Judith Bayard Stuyvesant was Nicholas Bayard's biologic aunt; therefore, as Mrs. Peter Stuyvesant, Nicholas Bayard was her nephew twice over.

Greenwich Village.

(1776-1830)

Captain Robert Randall's Mineto Farm Trust, for the benefit of Sailor's Snug Harbor, a home, covering Seventh to Tenth Streets along the Bowery and extending west to Fifth Avenue. In 1802, the Trustees' lease holdings included from the exclusive Washington Square North, Row, to the burgeoning NoHo residential enclave.

The additional significant landowners, from East Ninth to 21st Street (Love Lane), and running on a northeast-to-southwest diagonal, covering Broadway, University Place, Fifth to Sixth Avenues, were:

- Ninth to Tenth Streets, **Henry Brevoort**, (questionably, Mrs. Sarah Astor's nephew);
- Eleventh to 13th Streets, **Mary and John Mann Jr.**;
- Fifteenth to 16th Streets and then again to 18th Street, **Thomas Burling**; (as the narrow strip between), **Johan Cowman**;
- Eighteenth to 21st Streets, along Fifth Avenue, **Isaac Varian**;
- Eighteenth to 19th Streets, to the west, **James R. Smith**;
- Twenty-First Street, on Fifth Avenue, **Gilbert Coutant**;
- Twenty-Third Street, the near west, **John Oothoudt**.

Union Square, Flatiron District and Ladies Mile.

(1775-1850)

- West 12th to East 18th Streets, a farming tract roughly bounded by Fourth and Sixth Avenues, running on a diagonal throughout, (based on the meandering northeast to southwest branches of the Manetta Water, **heirs of Henry Spingler**;
- Eighteenth to 22nd Streets, west of Fifth Avenue to the Bowery, **Cornelius T. Williams**, sold to the **Goelet Family**, except East 19th to 21st Street, in the Third-to-Fourth Avenue-midblock lots;
- East 18th Street, between Broadway and Fifth Avenue, occupying the northwest corner, the **Peter Goelet** mansion, garden, and aviary;
- East 19th to 22nd Street midblock lots, as Grammercy Park, **Samuel B. Ruggles**.

NOTE: **Ruggles** was responsible for inserting Madison and Lexington Avenues (equidistant from Fourth Avenue). He masterminded a gated garden, available to the surrounding standard-city-lot owners only, (thereby, turning a swamp-like meadow into a planned urban enclave); and, for resolving the complex traffic-flow issues, where The Bowery Road and Broadway cross Fourth Avenue, at East 14th Street, and then, at East 16th Street, they merge, by conceiving, organizing and established Union Square Park, a sorely needed common space).

The Village and West Village.

(1630-1814)

- **Dominie Everadus Bogardus**, the Dutch Reformed minister for 14 years, with his wife, **Mrs. (Anneke Jansen) Bogardus** worked the west central, Greenwich hamlet (Village) open fields, which had been granted by the West Indies Company. The property title was in litigation for 90 years.
- **Sir Peter Warren** and **Lady Susannah (de Lancey)** purchased the Bogardus farm, and its (west and northwest) adjoining 240 acres.

- Their Greenwich Farms then comprised Christopher to West 18th Street, running between Hudson and Washington Streets. North of Greenwich Avenue, the Village's northern-most point, the Warren's farmlands extended as far east as Sixth Avenue.
- **Abraham Mortimer**, the British paymaster general, leased the (Trinity Church owned) King's Farm north-northeast 25 acres—along Minetta Brook to Varick Street, at West Houston Street—and revamped Nicholas Bayard's mid-1650s Richmond Hill manor house. Nicholas Bayard III had mansion-built off the Bowery, at present-day NoHo.
- **Aaron Burr** obtained the paymaster general's remaining 55-year lease, (perhaps by dubious means, when representing the Federal Government's interest with the quasi-loyalist Trinity Church).
- **John Jacob Astor** bought out the lease—under duress, shortly. (Controlling that property was instrumental in advancing his subsequent long-term, real-estate-investment fortune.)
- **William Blackhouse Astor, Senior, and Junior**, as well as **John Jacob Astor II and III**, continued the dynasty.

Chelsea.

(1640-1850)

- **Yellis de Mandeville**, a Dutch colonial pioneer, established his 30-acre north Greenwich District homestead, encompassing West 21st to 23rd Streets and east at the Hudson River to Ninth Avenue. His heirs, the Somerindyke family, sold the farm in exchange for a notable riverside tract in the Bloomingdale District.
- **Major Thomas Clarke** purchased the de Mandeville farm in the late 1760s. Throughout the subsequent 30 years, Molly Clarke and her daughter, Chastity Clarke Moore, expanded their Chelsea Farm holdings to include West 18th to 25th Streets, spanning the Hudson River to Seventh Avenue.
- **Clement Clarke Moore**, Major Clarke's grandson, was an influential "Grid Plan" opponent and landowner rights advocate. Moore became a savvy builder and landlord—by necessity—but, with a continuous contempt for the oncoming grid plan implementation.

NOTE: Therefore, it could be said that from 1750-1850 essentially a handful of families controlled, what is northern Downtown, between Eighth and 23rd Streets, from the East to Hudson Rivers.

These important land mass owners were, as follows—

- **Peter G. and Nicholas W. Stuyvesant**, by land grants for commons, (Alphabet City and Stuyvesant Square).
- **Henry Springer**, a vegetable truck farmer turned millionaire, by chance (Union Square to Ladies Mile).
- **Peter Goelet**, through inheritance and by thrift (Union Square to Flatirons).
- **Samuel B. Ruggles**, if not as an owner per se, as the land speculator and builder extraordinaire who carved out Gramercy Park from **Cornelius T. Williams** heirs' northeasterly lots, and a small, confiscated, loyalist **De Lancey/Stuyvesant** Rose Hill Farm tract; as well as resolving a complex traffic flow issue at Broadway, Fourth Avenue, and West 14th Street.
- **Clement Clarke Moore's** Chelsea Farms stretched from West 19th to 28th Streets, from the Hudson River shoreline, unevenly, to Seventh Avenue, at places, as far east as Sixth Avenue. (A half-mile by three-quarter-mile tract.)