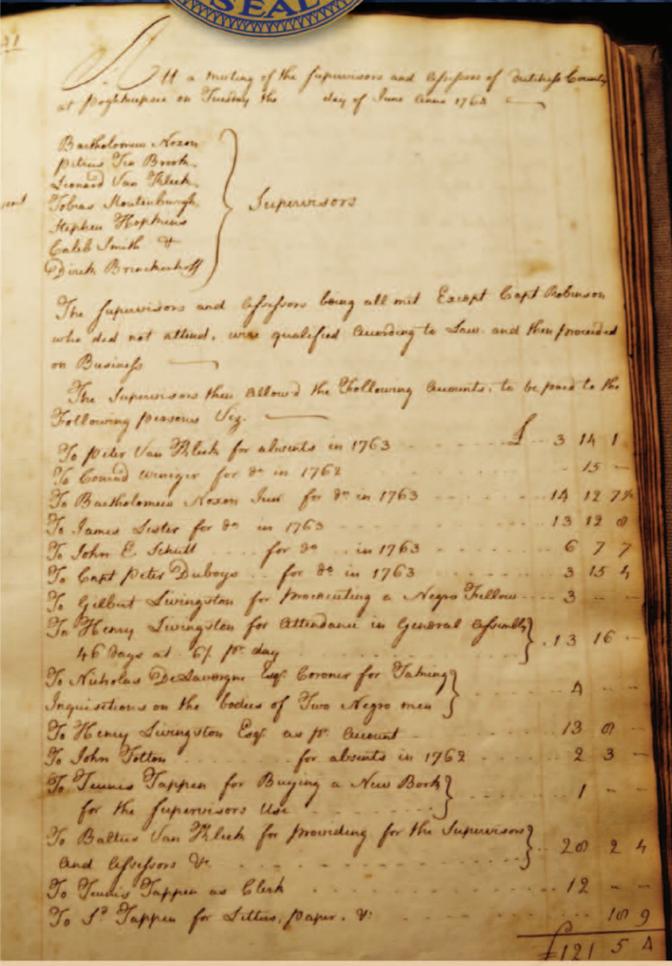




Colonial Government | Leadership in Dutchess



1764 SUPERVISORS' MEETING PROCEEDINGS

Courtesy of the Dutchess County Clerk

This page from the 1764 meeting of the Dutchess County Board of Supervisors shows the charges made against the county, including prosecuting criminals, representing the county in the colonial assembly, and to Baltus Van Kleeck for hosting the supervisors and assessors. Victims of crimes were expected to bring cases to trial, rather than report them to the sheriff and have the county proceed against the offender.

Although established in 1683 as one of New York's original twelve counties, the history of Dutchess County's independent government began in 1713. For its first 30 years, the county's population was so small that the entire area (which included modern Putnam and portions of modern Columbia counties) was administered from Kingston. On October 23, 1713, the colonial assembly granted permission for Dutchess residents to elect their own supervisor, treasurer, two tax assessors, and two tax collectors. During these first years, the single supervisor, whose tenure in office marked the roots of executive government in the county, focused his attention on reviewing the county accounts and building a "County-House and Prison" as required by a July 1715 act of the colonial assembly. This building, the first of five which have rested on the site still occupied today by the county courthouse, would serve as a meeting place for the government and law courts while providing jail cells for prisoners.

The four subsequent county courthouses have stood on the same site. Services billed to the county included killing wolves, representing the county at the colonial assembly, caring for travelers who fell ill within the county, laying out roads, confining prisoners, and bringing criminals to trial.



THE VAN KLECK HOMESTEAD

Courtesy of the Adriance Memorial Library

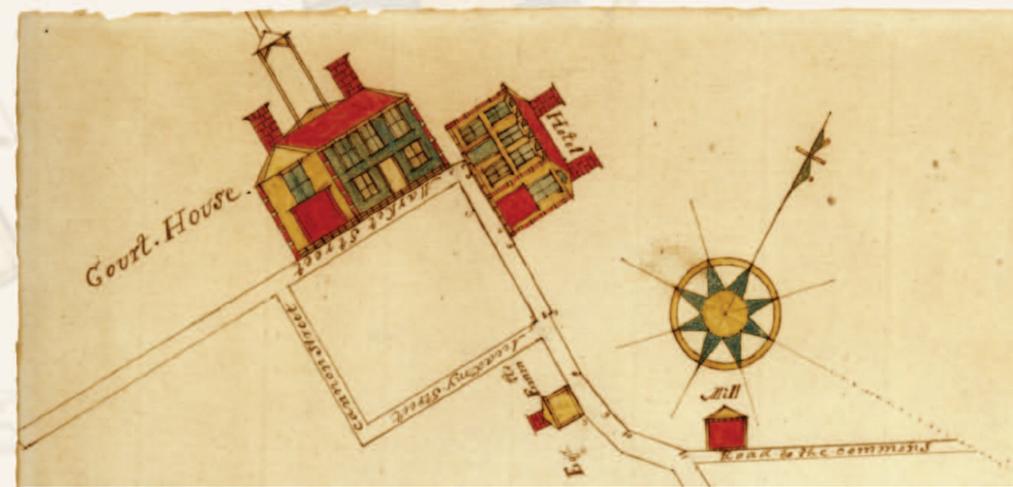
Built by Baltus Van Kleeck in Poughkeepsie in 1708, Dutchess County supervisors frequently lodged here during their annual meetings at the county courthouse. The county seat lacked a regular hotel for lodging government officials until much later in the century.



DUNGEON IN THE DUTCHESS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Courtesy of the Dutchess County Historical Society

This jail cell, photographed around 1901, was part of the fourth county courthouse, completed in 1809. Both the act of the colonial assembly and the deed for the land upon which the courthouse sits specified that a cell for prisoners be permanently maintained in the building. The current courthouse, completed in 1902, still features jail cells to comply with these agreements.



THE DUTCHESS "COUNTY-HOUSE"

Courtesy of the Dutchess County Clerk

By the time this map was drafted in 1804, Dutchess County was on its third courthouse. Built on the site of the current county courthouse, this structure was completed in 1788 just in time to host the New York Ratifying Convention on the United States Constitution. The courthouse burned in 1806.