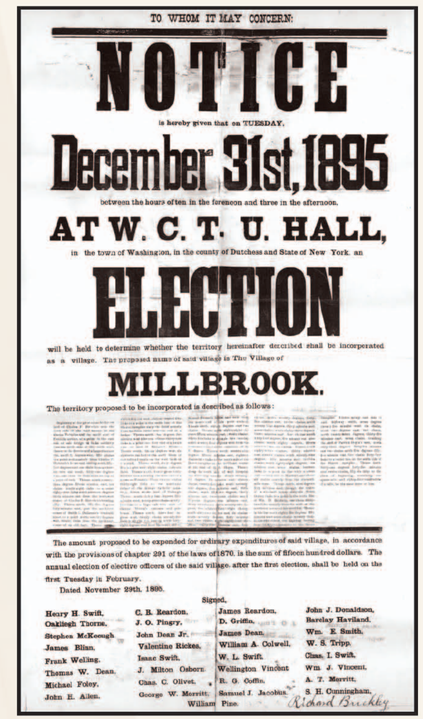
Serving a Growing County | The Supervisors in their Communities

As the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries progressed, the individual supervisors faced more demands within their own municipalities in addition to increased activity on the county level. New towns and villages required new roads, civic buildings, and municipal services, while existing communities required extensions of their infrastructure to accommodate growth. Rivalries between towns placed strain on their dual roles as local and county officials over time. Parochial concerns and the relatively even numbers of supervisors over the years produced many instances of stalemate within the collective board of supervisors. As the twentieth century wore on, the need for a county-level executive to provide overall leadership became increasingly clear.



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

NOTICE

is hereby given that on TUESDAY,

December 31st, 1895

between the hours of ten in the forenoon and three in the afternoon.

AT W. C. T. U. HALL,

in the town of Washington, in the county of Dutchess and State of New York, an

ELECTION

will be held to determine whether the territory hereinafter described shall be incorporated as a village. The proposed name of said village is The Village of

MILLBROOK.

The territory proposed to be incorporated is described as follows:

The amount proposed to be expended for ordinary expenditures of said village, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 291 of the laws of 1870, is the sum of fifteen hundred dollars. The annual election of elective officers of the said village, after the first election, shall be held on the first Tuesday in February.

Dated November 29th, 1895.

Signed,

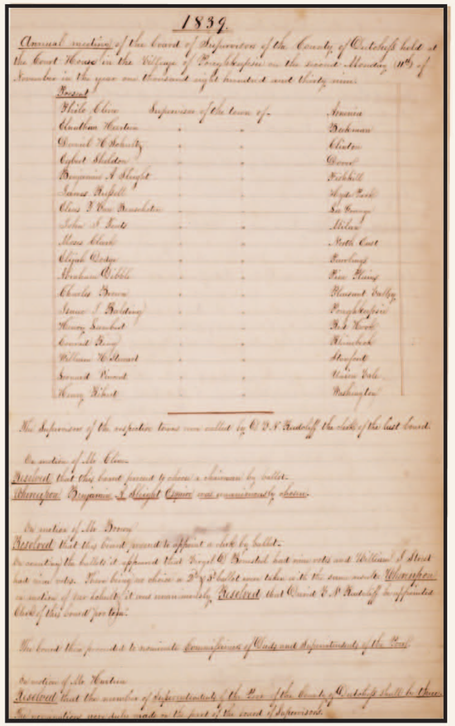
Henry H. Swift, Oakleigh Thorne, Stephen McKeough, James Bliss, Frank Welling, Thomas W. Dean, Michael Foley, John E. Allen, C. B. Reardon, J. O. Pingry, John Dean Jr., Valentine Ricks, Isaac Swift, J. Milton Osborn, Chas. C. Olivet, George W. Merritt, James Reardon, D. Griffin, James Dean, William A. Colwell, W. L. Swift, Wellington Vincent, R. O. Coffin, Samuel J. Jacobus, William Pine, John J. Donaldson, Barclay Haviland, Wm. E. Smith, W. S. Tripp, Chas. I. Swift, Wm. J. Vincent, A. T. Merritt, S. H. Cunningham.

Richard Brickley

Incorporation of Millbrook Announcement

Courtesy of the Town of Washington/Village of Millbrook Historical Society

Uneven growth patterns throughout the county led some sections of older municipalities to expand faster than others. The resulting demands for greater services and autonomy in these areas led to the creation of new municipalities, which in turn increased the number of supervisors. In 1895, residents of the town of Washington voted to incorporate the village of Millbrook, an area within the town limits. Residents of Red Hook had followed a similar trajectory a year earlier, forming the village within the town's limits.



1839

Annual meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Dutchess held at the Court House in the Village of Poughkeepsie on the second Monday (11th) of December in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty nine

Present

Philo Olin, Supervisor of the town of Amenia
Cornelius Hoxsie " " Beekman
Samuel C. Schultz " " Clinton
Cyprus Sheldon " " Corn
Benjamin A. Slaight " " Fishkill
James Ferguson " " Hyde Park
Chas. I. Van Benschoten " " La Grange
John A. Lent " " Milan
Moses Shook " " North East
Lloyd Conkey " " Pawling
Abraham Noble " " Pine Plains
Charles Brown " " Rhinebeck Valley
Simeon J. Bentley " " Poughkeepsie
Henry Sandhart " " Red Hook
Everard Berry " " Stanfordville
William Wellmont " " Stanford
Gerrard Pennell " " Union Vale
Henry Wheat " " Washington

The Supervisors of the respective towns were called by C. B. Rockwell the clerk of the last board.

On motion of Mr. Olin

Resolved that this board proceed to choose a chairman by ballot.

Whereupon Benjamin A. Slaight Esquire was unanimously chosen.

On motion of Mr. Brown

Resolved that this board proceed to appoint a clerk by ballot.

On counting the ballots it appeared that Joseph C. Benedict had nine votes and William J. Hoxsie had nine votes. Votes being so divided a 2d ballot was taken and the same result. Whereupon on motion of Mr. Lent it was unanimously Resolved that Charles B. Rockwell be appointed Clerk of this board for 1839.

The board then proceeded to nominate Commissioners of Roads and Superintendents of the Poor.

On motion of Mr. Hoxsie

Resolved that the number of Superintendents of the Poor of the County of Dutchess shall be three.

The nominations were duly made on the part of the several Supervisors.

Stalemate at the 1839 Supervisors' Meeting

Courtesy of the Dutchess County Clerk

As this page from the 1839 board of supervisors meeting demonstrates, deadlocked votes were a common issue and a major weakness in the board of supervisors system. In this case, the supervisors went through eight tied ballots before selecting a successful candidate for clerk of the board by drawing lots.

John Armstrong, Jr., Rhinebeck Supervisor

Courtesy of Winthrop Aldridge, Town of Red Hook Historian

Supervisor John Armstrong, Jr. of Red Hook exemplifies the colorful lives that the county's leaders lived. A native of Pennsylvania, Armstrong served in the Continental Army and the Continental Congress before moving to Rhinebeck in 1789. His subsequent career included stints as a US Senator, Minister to France and Spain, Secretary of War under President James Madison, and a Brigadier General during the War of 1812. In 1840, Armstrong served as the Supervisor of Rhinebeck.

Charles Slocum, Beekman Supervisor

Courtesy of Thom Usher, Town of Beekman Historian

Seen here running for county treasurer in 1907, Charles Slocum had served as the Supervisor of Beekman in 1885. Between his terms in office, he worked as a traveling salesman for Edward M. Depew & Co., wholesale grocers, New York City. He stands in front of a toll booth, a reminder of the strain created by growing transportation demands in the county.

J. H. Ketcham, Dover Supervisor

Courtesy of the Town of Dover Historical Society

Born in Dover Plains in 1832, J. H. Ketcham served as the Supervisor of the Town of Dover from 1854-1855. He rose to the New York State Assembly from 1856-1857, then became a New York State Senator from 1860-1861. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he joined the US Army, becoming Colonel of the 150th New York (The Dutchess County Regiment). Ketcham ended the war as a Major General of Volunteers and went on to serve many years in the US Congress.