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*Flagon & Trencher: Taverner and Innkeeper
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MILES OAKLEY

Innkeeper, White Plains, New York

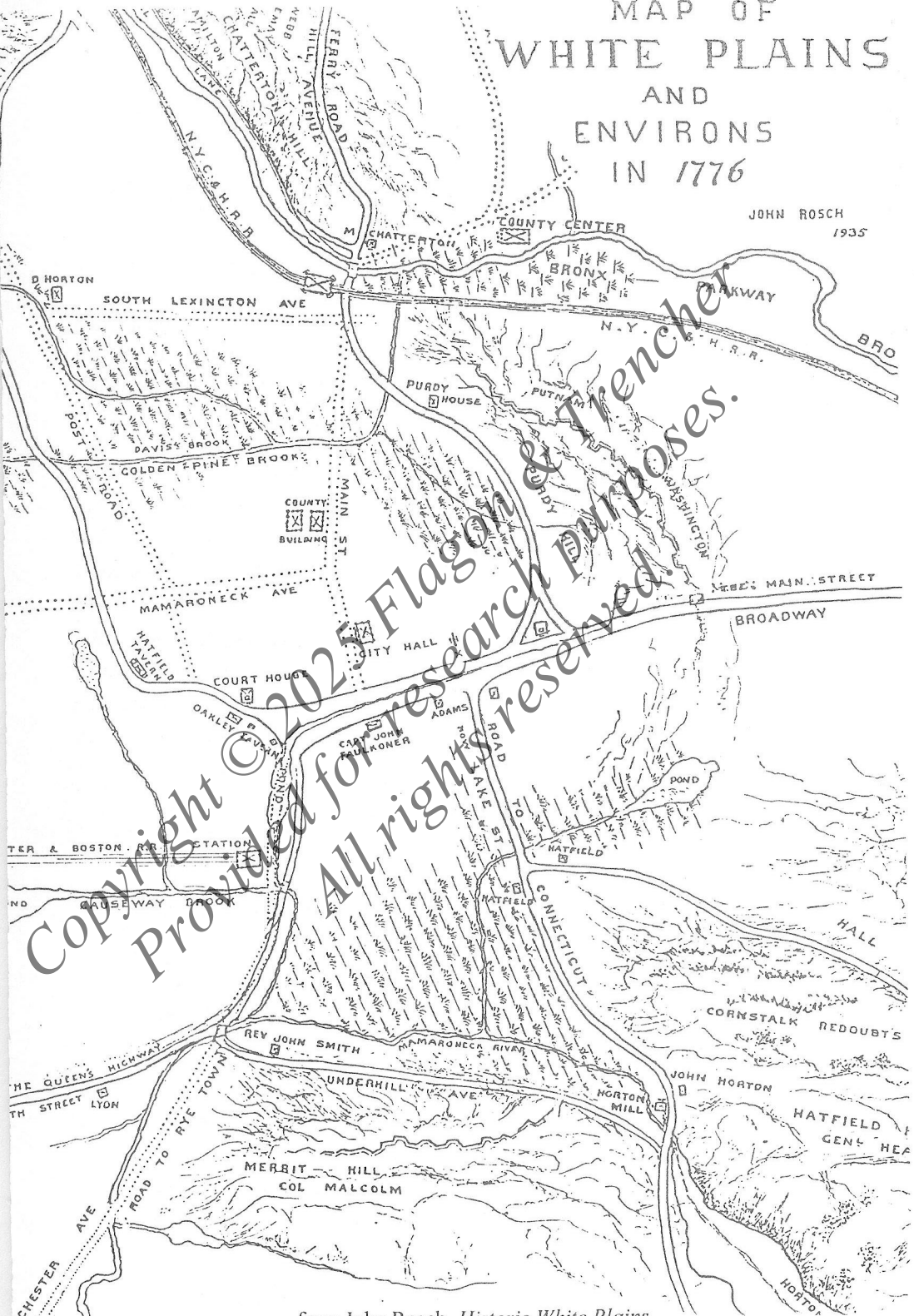
Miles Oakley was born at White Plains, Westchester County, New York about 1740, eldest child of Isaac and Miriam (Hunt) Oakley, and died before 1790 in Nova Scotia. He married Ann, daughter of Gilbert and Tamar (Brundage) Hatfield of White Plains. His wife survived him and lived at White Plains in 1700 when the US Census was taken.

Miles Oakley, son of an inn keeper, lived next to the Court House and ran an inn across the street from it. Feelings about revolutionary action were running high on both sides when the Continental Congress met on 11 April 1775. About five hundred went to White Plains to attend the Court house meeting. Loyalists (Tories) gathered at nearby Abraham Hatfield's Tavern, while the Revolutionists (Patriots) met at Miles Oakley's Tavern. Excitement was great at court when the Loyalists entered, objected to the legality of the meeting, then left in a body, lustily singing "God save the King." Miles served as Lieutenant in the expedition against Montreal in 1775. Then, on 5 November 1775, the Patriots, suspecting his loyalty, burned his home and inn. He petitioned as follows:

"To his Excellency, General Washington, Commander-in-Chief of all the forces of the United States of America, the petition of Miles Oakley humbly sheweth that by his labour and industry he hath procured himself a small piece of land at White Plains, contiguous to the Court house: that on it, within the last four or five years he built him a comfortable house and barn, that he kept an inn for the entertainment of travelers, which enabled him to maintain his family, which consists of a wife and four small children; that on the approach of the enemy he moved his wife (who lay in bed but six days before) with his children to the north of the lines formed by troops under your Excellency's command; that on his return to bring off some of his furniture and most valuable effects, he found his home robbed and pillaged, his desk split to pieces, his money, books and papers taken away by our own troops by which means he is left without a second bed and scarce a change of clothing for himself, his wife, or his children; this your petitioner bore with resignation, not doubting but if he should again get into his house he should by his industry in time retrieve his losses, But so it is, may it please your Excellency, that on Tuesday night last, your petitioner's house and barn was by some of the American troops burnt to the

MAP OF WHITE PLAINS AND ENVIRONS IN 1776

JOHN ROSCH
1935



from John Rosch, *Historic White Plains*

ground, and your petitioner left without any means whatever of obtaining a subsistence. That your petitioner's losses do not amount to less than seven hundred pounds currency.

"Your petitioner begs leave to observe to your Excellency that he was ever a friend to his country, that he served as Lieutenant in the late northern expedition under Generals Schuller and Montgomery. Your petitioner, therefore, begs your Excellency will be favorably pleased to take his melancholy case into consideration, and give him such relief in the premises as to you in your great wisdom shall seem just and reasonable.

"Your petitioner further begs if your Excellency should be of the opinion that the granting of your petitioner relief is not properly in your department, that your Excellency will be pleased to inquire into the truth of the facts within set forth, and give your petitioner such certificates and recommendations, either to the honorable Continental or Provincial Congress as you think your petitioner's hard case truly deserved, and your petitioner will ever pray,

November 9, 1776

Miles Oakley"

Evidently the petition was to no avail, as the family is known to have moved to Nova Scotia where Miles died, and when the first U.S. Census was taken in 1790, his widow was living in White Plains. Their son Joshua and daughter Sarah returned to New Brunswick where some descendants remain to this date.

Burning of the Oakley Tavern was part of the burning of the Village of White Plains. The property was later owned by John and Isaac Valentine whose heirs conveyed it to James Crawford in 1828. He ran a hotel on the same premises that burned in 1855. It had an overhanging porch that sheltered the coaches carrying the mail from New York to Boston on the Boston Post Road.

Joyce Bingham Roy
88-06

REFERENCES

1. Philip Field Horne, *The Oakley Genealogy-The Westchester Branch*, [1962] 25, 445.
2. John Rosch, *Historic White Plains*, [White Plains, 1939] 48-9, 96-7, 242, map.
3. *The Hatfields of Westchester*, [NYG&B, 1935] 55-56.
4. *New York in the Revolution* [Albany, NY 1904] 1:47.