

## *CAPTAIN ABRAM SPEER HOUSE* *(TUERS HOMESTEAD)*

WHEN Captain Abram Speer, eldest son of John Hendrick Speer of Second River, surveyed his land near the Third River, he also found time to visit the home of the owner of a blacksmith shop on Povershon Hill - now Centre Street. Here, about 1760, he married the daughter of a family named Wouterse or Wouters. A home was built for Captain Speer and his bride which today may be glimpsed while passing on Bloomfield Avenue near Centre Street.

Two houses now stand on what the old maps show as Spring Street and Valley Road. Here Captain Speer raised four daughters. Records show that one daughter married John Stager who had five sons; one other daughter married a Joralemon; and, the present property remained in the family of a daughter Dorcas who married Daniel Pake. Their child Sarah married Daniel Tuers. The Tuers grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Simon, are known and remembered by many in town today.

The property according to Captain Speer's last will and testament, probated March 19, 1834, consisted of "lot of land called Onion Field adjoined to the lands of John Pake and Isaac Cadmus, deceased, about 20 acres," - left to his grandson Gilbert Pake in trust for Dorcas Pake, mother of Gilbert and daughter of Abram Speer; "secondly, 10 acres of land adjoining Pake, extending to Stone Fence to John Berry's land on East and Town farm on West;" "third, 12 acres of woodlot near Horseneck, Caldwell;" "fourth, lot of Salt meadow purchased of John Condit near Maple Island Creek."

Since occupancy in 1942 as the home of Richard B. and Alice Romney Tench, many improvements have been made in both houses. Great efforts have been made to preserve the authentic reminders of one of Nutley's first settlers.

Following a lane, whose address is 149 Church Street, one is surprised to find the historic barn and out houses and to view the well preserved main house to which a second story has been added. Stars of Bethlehem still grow where original Dutch settlers planted them in the 1700's. Bricks in the foundation show plaster held together by hair; old glass remains in a few window panes; a huge solid piece of stone serves as a doorstep. An original well, 150 feet, is tested for purity and the water is used by Tench family. Markings on stones have not been traced but many town events of Belleville, Franklin, Nutley were recorded in 1907 by Mrs. Mary M. Booth and Mrs. Barbara A. Hough, great-granddaughters of Captain Speer.

While operating a grist mill and a blacksmith shop and tannery by Yantacaw River at Chestnut Street and Vreeland Avenue, Captain Abram Speer, according to his name on old deeds, found time to become Justice of the Peace.

Noted for caring for his large family, history notes also his kindness to the last

two slaves owned in this town. "Old Nancy," who was freed upon his death in 1834, was provided for according to the law, from the estate of Captain Speer. Again a greatgranddaughter in 1907 passed on the stories of "molasses cookies" whose recipe made "Old Nancy" beloved by all in the household.

Captain Speer, with his wife Emmetche, are buried beneath the Reformed Church in Belleville.

A descendant, Miss Elizabeth Tuers resided with her mother, Mrs. Bertha M. Tuers, at their residence, 125 Church Street, which originally was part of the Speer property.

Miss Tuers, once Secretary to the Mayor of the town, has left Nutley to teach in the University of Aleppo, Syria.



CAPT. ABRAM SPEER HOUSE (built 1760). 149 Church Street. Tuers Family till 1929.  
Home of Mr. and Mrs. Richard B. Tench.

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