

HOMES OF HISTORIC DISTINCTION

Surgeon's farmhouse is a Revolutionary-era jewel

Current owner Bill Primavera fondly recalls the four decades he has lived in the Ebenezer White Homestead.

“Living in a centuries-old dwelling has provided me with a different perspective on what home life is all about—like living in another dimension,” Primavera said. “I can feel and appreciate the presence of the many other lives lived here.”

Over the years, some interesting and often impressive lives spent time in this building, which saw its beginnings as a one-room tenant farmhouse in the 1730s and was later expanded in the 1770s and again in the 1860s.

The original owner, Jeremiah Travis, was a loyalist, so, after the Revolution, his property and buildings were seized by the Commission on Forfeiture. In 1795, Dr. Ebenezer White, a “Soldier of the Revolution” as his tombstone reads, purchased the home from the Commission.



The Ebenezer White homestead

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NANCY MILANESE

White had served as a surgeon in the 3rd Regiment, Westchester County Militia, during the War and also served two terms as Yorktown supervisor (1792-1795 and 1802-

1803). He died in this home in 1827 at the age of 80; his heirs continued to live here until 1945.

Eminent visitors to the White homestead during the American Revolution are said to include George Washington and fellow Founding Father Thomas Paine, author of the “Common Sense” pamphlets.

Primavera likes to joke that “As I got older, the house got newer...” meaning that over the years, he repaired or replaced everything that required fixing. Today, however, although it offers every modern convenience, even the oldest part of the home is still a

typical tenant farmer’s house—one room downstairs and one upstairs with low ceilings, a large fireplace and hearth with a beehive oven. (An upstairs closet door still features its original finish—oxblood and milk combined to create a mud-colored paint.) The 1770s addition consists of wide plank flooring, front and back parlors, a side hall, and three bedrooms upstairs. Expansion in the 1860s added a dining room, kitchen and two additional bedrooms on the

second floor.

Almost 300 years have changed the home, but, Primavera remains attached to this Revolutionary-era jewel, which keeps him thinking about its past and his predecessors who lived there.

The Yorktown Landmarks Preservation Commission is always seeking applicants for the Homes of Historic Distinction Program. To qualify, homes must have historical significance based on age, architectural style, past ownership or association with a person or event important to Yorktown’s history. Through the program, plaques designating the basic facts about each house’s history are fabricated and installed on or around the home. The commission will work with each homeowner on appropriate wording for the plaque and will assist in research. The cost for the application and the plaque is \$100. Applications are available online at yorktownny.org/planning or by emailing nmilanese@yorktownny.org.

This article was submitted by the Yorktown Landmarks Preservation Commission as part of a series highlighting Yorktown Homes of Historic Distinction.



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