



History of the Duryea Farm of the Fellowship Community

Duryea Family Line

Pierre Durier	<i>Born in France around 1630</i>
Jean Durier	<i>Came to the United States around 1686</i>
Pierre (Peter) Durier/Durie	<i>Lived 1690 - 1766</i>
Jan (John) Durie	<i>Baptized March 20, 1715</i>
Jacobus (James) Durie	<i>Lived June 24, 1744 - 1775</i>
Jan (John) Duryea	<i>Lived May 12, 1771 - 1854</i>
James Duryea	<i>Lived December 13, 1813 - 1861</i>
Isaac Van Saun Duryea	<i>Lived March 16, 1859 - November 11, 1930</i>
Howard Sherwood Duryea	<i>Lived April 19, 1905 - October 10, 1980</i>
John Howard Duryea	<i>Born July 19, 1939, married and had 1 daughter. Sold farm in 1997 to Fellowship Community.</i>

Did you notice that this family's name changed in spelling several times? That happened with many families in America. Duryea (in all of its different spellings) means "dwelling by the river."

Durier/Durie Family 1630-1715

The earliest Duryea ancestor that we know of was named Pierre Durier. Born in France in 1630, Pierre moved to Holland with his wife and three children in 1654 to seek religious freedom. Pierre's oldest son, Jean Durier, came to the New World in 1686. In those days, immigrants from Europe crossed the Atlantic Ocean in small wooden ships, a dangerous journey that lasted six to eight weeks.

When he arrived here, Jean found a land already inhabited by Native Americans and being settled by Europeans, mostly English, French, and Dutch. He bought 261 acres of farmland in what is now New Jersey. He later passed this land on to his son, Pierre (Peter), who was the first Durier born in North America. Peter was the first of eight generations in his family to farm in America. In Europe, young farmers took over the land that their parents had farmed. In America, where land was plentiful and relatively cheap, each generation of a family like the Duriers would buy new land to farm.

Jan & Jacobus Durie, Jan & James Duryea 1715-1859

The next four generations of the family lived and farmed in and around New York and New Jersey. They married into many local French, English, and Dutch families that are historically linked with the area, such as the Van Sauns and the Demarests. They lived through the American Revolution, the founding of the United States, the Napoleonic Wars, and land conflicts with the local Native Americans, the Lenni Lenape tribe.

Jan Durie (notice the name change) was born in 1715. His son Jacobus, or James, died in 1775. Another Jan (who spelled his last name Duryea) was born in 1771; Jan's son, James Duryea, was the father of Isaac Duryea, who was born March 16, 1859. It was Isaac who founded the farm that we know today as The Duryea Farm of the Fellowship Community.

Isaac and Angela's Farm 1859-1930

In 1883, Isaac bought 33 acres of land on Ackertown Road from his brother-in-law's family, the Eckersons. A local carpenter built the six-room, two-story farmhouse that still stands at Duryea Farm. Instead of using nails for the main beams, he framed the house with beams joined with mortise and tenon joints, a stronger method that was widely used at the time. Isaac also built barns, a tool shed, a smoke house, and a root cellar — all the buildings a farm needs to house its people, animals and equipment. Isaac married Angela Sherwood, who lived with her family on Ackertown Road, in 1896, and they lived in the farmhouse.

The house has been heated in a variety of ways over the years. In the early years, wood stoves provided heat and were also used for cooking. In the 1930s, a coal-burning furnace warmed the house. Now, it is heated by hot water and baseboard radiators, with a boiler that burns natural gas. When the house was built, domestic electricity was unheard of. The Duryeas' farmhouse was wired for electricity in 1928.

When Isaac and Angela started the farm, few homes had indoor plumbing.



Water for cooking and washing was pumped by hand from the well, and hot water was only available when Angela heated it on the wood stove. The house was finally plumbed for running water in 1943.

The main crops Isaac raised were apples, peaches, cherries, raspberries, strawberries, and cucumbers. The strawberries were sold in New York City. Isaac and Angela also tended a small vegetable garden, just to feed the family. They sold their fruit, as well as eggs and butter, at market in Paterson, New Jersey. It took Isaac a full day, traveling by horse and wagon, to go to Paterson and back.

In the 1800s, just about every farm and homestead had animals: chickens, cows, horses, dogs, and hogs. Farmers used their horses to pull carriages for transportation and to pull plows to work the fields.

The Duryeas made their own ham and bacon by slaughtering their hogs and then curing the meat in their smokehouse, a process that took several weeks. Duryea Farm was one of the few farms in the area with its own smokehouse; the Duryeas made their smokehouse available to their neighbors so that they could cure hams too.

During Isaac and Angela's time, the barn that currently houses the Jessup Learning Center was home to horses and cows. It was also used to store hay and carriages, wagons and sleighs. Special sleds were used to move wood when the farmers cut down trees in the winter. The red sleigh dated 1857 that you can see in the Jessup Center was used for rides around the farm pulled by a pony. Other sleighs were used to deliver milk and haul heavy loads of wood or ice.

Beside the barn was a granary, which held the food for the animals. The granary was built on stilts about six feet off the ground and had slats to keep air moving inside. The tops of the stilts were bound with tin to stop rodents from getting into the grain.

Duryea Farm Tools

Isaac and his family did all of their farm work with hand tools. Many examples of these tools can be seen today in the Jessup Learning Center. Descendants of the first Duryeas donated these tools so that we can learn about farming in the history of Rockland County.



Because a farmer like Isaac built his own house, barn, granary and other buildings, he knew how to use many different woodworking tools. The saws that Isaac used to cut down trees required two people, one on each end of the saw. He used a whetstone to sharpen his wood knives and many field tools.

Many of the nineteenth-century farm implements on display in the Jessup Center resemble tools we use today, such as shovels and hoes. The scythes were used to mow hay and harvest grain, a once-common skill that is nearly forgotten today. Many of the Duryea Farm tools are worn down from use over the years. For example, you can see hoes that once had sharp points that are now rounded down. Farmers rarely bought new tools; they knew how to maintain and repair the equipment on which their livelihood and their families depended.

Some tools were used in the fields and the forest, while other tools were used indoors. The “indoors” tools include the many implements used for processing crops and food. To transform grain into flour required a sequence of many tools, including threshers, mills, and grinders. The finished flour could then be sold or used on the farm to bake the family’s bread. Apples were made into juice and cider using a press dated 1868 that is now in the Jessup Center and still used to this day. Students who visit the Jessup Center can operate an 1876 corn sheller, which removes dried kernels of corn from the cob. Churns were used to make butter, and molds to make it into squares.



Some tools were used by women, including the spinning wheels on display in the Jessup Center. These include a flax, or linen, spinning wheel from around the 1720s, a cotton wheel from the 1750s, and a great wheel from the 1800s.

A Farm Wife’s Work in the 1800s

Women on the farm worked just as hard as men. Besides caring for the children and taking care of the house, a farm wife like Angela had many of her own farm chores to do. Very early every morning, she built a fire in her wood stove so she could cook the day’s meals. The wood stove provided the heat for all the baking and cooking, and the hot water for laundry and washing up.

Churning Butter

Angela and her children also made all the butter used in the house and sold at market. To make butter, Angela put milk from her cows in pans in the cool cellar. Once the milk separated and the cream came to the top, Angela skimmed off the cream and then churned it by hand. You can see a churn like Angela’s in the Jessup Center.

When the churning was done, the fresh butter would float to the top to be pressed into blocks. The leftover milk was buttermilk, which was used in baking and tasted very sweet. The buttermilk could also be fermented and thickened into clabbered milk, fed to the pigs.

Howard and Irene's Farm 1930-1970

In 1930, at age 25, Angela and Isaac's son Howard took charge of the family farm. Howard Duryea saw many changes in his lifetime, especially the introduction of gasoline-powered equipment. Howard purchased his first motorized tractor in the early 1930s. It had iron wheels. In 1940, he purchased his first rubber-tired tractor. By 1946, tractors had replaced all of the work horses. Unlike his parents, Howard didn't keep milk cows. He focused instead on raising fruits and vegetables.

Even after running water was installed in the farmhouse, doing chores was hard work because there was no hot water and all the washing was done by hand, as described by Howard's wife, Irene:

We didn't have washers and dryers. You had to heat the water in a boiler on the stove and then put it in the tub and then use a scrubbing board and wash your clothes and hang them on the line and take them off. I remember doing diapers that way—on a scrub board in a sink, hanging them up. The water was so hard when the diapers dried on the line they would be so stiff—I would have to iron the diapers [to soften them].

Howard's vegetable farming took up much of the land. He developed a large tomato business, raising about 50,000 tomato plants each season. He marketed his tomatoes under the "Sherwood Brand" label. Some years, Howard also leased or rented additional land for orchards. He built greenhouses that he used to start seedlings for his own crops and to sell to other farmers.

Farming in Hard Times

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Howard Duryea didn't get much money for his produce. Customers paid \$1 for about 30 pounds of tomatoes; a whole truckload of tomatoes only earned him \$6. But he somehow kept the farm going, and even managed to buy seven additional acres of land in 1942. During World War II (1939-45), Howard grew white cabbage for sale to the U.S. government, which sent it to the troops overseas. Between 1945 and 1955, much of Duryea Farm's produce was sold at the Bronx Terminal market in New York City.

Howard found creative ways to keep his farm in business during changing times, while many of the hundreds of farms in Rockland County began to falter and the land was sold to build houses. In 1958, he started a pick-your-own strawberries business. This made growing strawberries much easier, since he didn't need to hire help to pick, pack and sell the strawberries. In 1964, the United Nations called Duryea Farm to ask if they could bring a delegation from the Philippines to pick apples at the farm. This was the beginning of a pick-your-own apples business that was successful for many years.

Irene worked hard, too. She helped with the farm chores, cooked, raised five children and served as cashier for the pick-your-own businesses. She also found time to can vegetables and fruit for the family to eat during the winter.

John and Nancy's Farm 1970s-1997

Howard and Irene's son John Duryea grew up farming with his father, and he wanted to do nothing else. He helped on the farm after school and during summer vacations. Throughout his childhood, John learned many things working alongside his father that he could not find in books, such as how to foresee changes in the weather. By the time he graduated from school, he was ready to be a full-time farmer.

John did not marry until he was 50 years old. His wife, Nancy, helped write this history. They had one daughter.

John continued the pick-your-own strawberries and apples businesses. In 1975 he added pick-your-own string beans and in 1987, he added pick-your-own

pumpkins. John also grew sweet corn, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, cucumbers, summer and winter squashes, ornamental gourds, string beans, pumpkins, turnips, broccoli, red and white cabbage, flowers, and herbs. Most of the vegetables were grown for sale, rather than for the family's consumption. Since he grew so many vegetables, John built three more greenhouses for starting seedlings.



Seasons on the Farm

There is always work to do on a farm, even in winter. As soon as all the apples—Macintosh, Cortland, Rome and Rome Beauties—were picked at the end of October, John pruned his apple trees. From mid-November through December, the strawberries were covered with mulch to protect them over the winter. During October and November, the fields were prepared and cover crops planted. Cover crops prevent soil erosion and also help put moisture and nutrients back into the soil.

Preparations for the next season were a big part of the winter activities. In December and January, tractors and equipment were repaired and manure was spread on the resting fields. John ordered supplies like seeds and tools that he would need for the coming spring season. He also planned where he would plant each of his many crops. He practiced crop rotation, which helps prevent plant disease and puts nutrients back into the soil.

John started seedlings in his greenhouses at the end of February. Then at the end of April, plants were big enough to be transplanted into the fields. John started

plowing fields with his tractors in mid-April. Because it takes two years to grow a good crop of strawberries, the next year's crop was planted each April. At the end of April, John started selling plants that had been growing in the greenhouse.

In early May, tomatoes, summer squash and crops for early-season harvest were planted. Planting continued through July and harvesting continued all summer and fall. In June, the pick-your-own strawberries would start. The farm stand would also open in June, and stayed open until the end of October. Pick-your-own apples usually ran from early September through mid-October.

Daily Work

No two days were ever alike for John. The work changed constantly according to the weather and the season. John often had to quickly change his workday plans according to the weather and be able to provide a day's work for his crew. The workday often began around 8 AM, but during the hot summer months, it started at 7 AM so that the picking could be done in the cooler morning hours. The sorting and packing would be done in the cool barn during the hotter part of the day. Most of the work involved fieldwork: plowing, planting, weeding by hand and with tools, or harvesting. John would try to end the workday around 6 or 7 PM, but often had to continue his work after supper until dark.

The Fellowship Community 1997-today

When John Duryea started to think about retiring, he was naturally concerned about finding a way for farming to continue on his family's property. Since his parents' time, Rockland County had been transformed from an agricultural to a suburban area. When John started farming, he had dozens of neighbors who were also farmers, but by the late 1990s there were just a handful of farms in all of Rockland County.

Fortunately, John and Nancy Duryea had a neighbor, the Fellowship Community, that shared their love of land and farming. The Fellowship Community, founded in 1966, is a community of all ages, centered around the care of the elderly; its work is based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education and biodynamic agriculture. From its beginnings, the Fellowship Community had gardens; its members were committed to growing as much of their own food as possible, and to being good stewards of their land. So naturally they

were delighted when John Duryea offered them the opportunity to buy Duryea Farm and keep the original 33 acres intact and under cultivation.

Today, Duryea Farm and the Fellowship Community have a dairy and a small herd of about eight Jersey cows, as well as sheep, chick-



ens and honeybees. There are ten acres of vegetables, 250 apple trees, and thirty acres of pasture and hay fields. They also raise herbs, flowers, berries, and grapes.

All of the Fellowship's co-workers (about 75) share the work of farming, gardening, childcare, eldercare, cooking, cleaning, maintenance, and running their weekly farm store, the Hand 'n' Hoe. As one co-worker said, "Much of our sustenance comes from our own land and labor." From their cows' milk, they make yogurt and cheese. In the fall, they dry herbs, blanch and freeze vegetables, and make apple-sauce, jams and relishes.

In 2001 a new barn was built to house dairy cows, horses, and sheep. The Fellowship Community laid the foundation, and then an Amish barn-building company came to do the construction. They brought the lumber with them and completed the barn in just two weeks, using no power tools. The milk processing rooms were constructed by local builders a year or two later.

Located in the old barn, the Jessup Learning Center (named in honor of Robert and Lois Jessup) is an active agricultural museum registered with Rockland County. Robert Jessup was a school principal and Lois was a local teacher. They were close friends with the Duryeas and helped with the sale of the farm to the Fellowship. As the sale was being finalized, Mac Mead, then the head farmer at the Fellowship Community, proposed naming the Learning Center the Jessup Center and Lois said that would be lovely. She died the next day.

The Jessup Center houses many of the Duryea family's tools, and hosts a variety of programs including the Pfeiffer Center's Outdoor Lesson program and Farm and Garden Days day camp. Many people come each year to the Duryea Farm of the Fellowship Community to learn about farming in the past and present.

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