

# Farm of Johannes and Christina Katharina Milhizer, Legenbauer Road, East Poestenkill, 1858-1899

Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

Emilie W. Gould with help from Nancy Jones

January 18, 2020

---

The center of Rensselaer County was originally called Middleburgh (later, Middletown) and was part of the Manor of Rensselaerswijck, granted to Kiliaen van Rensselaer in the 1630s by the Dutch States General. Van Rensselaer was a charter member of the Dutch West India Company, formed in 1621 with exclusive rights to settle New York State (then, New Netherland). Settlement was slow, so the Dutch government ratified a Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions in 1629, granting large blocks of land to patroons who were each required to purchase land from the local indigenous population and settle fifty adults within four years. Thereafter, these tenants would pay an annual rent on their farms and a transfer tax when leases changed hands in perpetuity.

Van Rensselaer's manor spanned both the east and west banks of the Hudson River in the vicinity of Albany (then Fort Orange) and consisted of almost 1000 square miles in what became Albany and Rensselaer counties. Both Dutch and German families were recruited to settle on his land. Rensselaerwyck became the most successful of the Dutch manors and lasted twelve generations, despite changes in the legal system after the British acquisition of New Netherland and the American Revolution. It was surveyed by John Gilbert in the 1790s and by Calvin Feathers in the early eighteenth century; the system of "great lots" referred to in subsequent deeds was established at that time.

The manor dissolved in the 1840s as the result of a tenant rebellion against the sons of Stephen Van Rensselaer, the "Good" and the "Last Patroon." Van Rensselaer had been lenient with his tenants; his sons were not and tried to collect arrears after their father's death in 1839. The subsequent Anti-Rent War led to changes in the New York State Constitution in 1846, ending the feudal rent system and forcing the Van Rensselaer sons to sell most of their lands.<sup>1</sup>

The patroonship system helps explain why parts of Rensselaer County remained unsettled into the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. A map of the manor from a century before shows farms along the Hudson River, Hoosic River, and tributary streams, but not on the Rensselaer Plateau. Over the next hundred years, additional farms, hamlets, and villages filled in many of the blank spaces. However, empty areas in the uplands remained. An 1854 map shows the situation of the Poestenkill Community Forest at that time.<sup>2</sup> The eastern ends of the towns of Poestenkill and Sand Lake and the western end of the town of Berlin remain unfragmented forest. East Poestenkill was a small hamlet known as Columbia. What is now Legenbauer Road runs south about a mile, ending with a farm owned by D. Hanshed. Further to the southeast lies Perigo Hill, the highest point on the Plateau at 1878 feet.

---

<sup>1</sup> Levine, David. "History of America's Other Revolution: The Anti-Rent Wars." Hudson Valley Magazine (July 8, 2019). Online at <http://www.hvmag.com/Hudson-Valley-Magazine/August-2015/History-of-Americas-Other-Revolution-The-Anti-Rent-Wars/>

<sup>2</sup> Rogerson, A. E., Balch, E. A. & Smith, R. P. (1854) *Map of Rensselaer County, New York: from actual surveys*. [Troy N.Y.: E.A. Balch, publisher] [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013593230/>.



Figure 1: East Poestenkill, 1854.

Seven years later, another map shows Legenbauer Road connecting with the town of Berlin.<sup>3</sup> (The dashed line suggests it is little more than a dirt track.) Two more farms have been developed, one of them by “J. Mithizer” on the north side of the road.



Figure 2: East Poestenkill, 1861.

Fifteen years later, Beer’s *Atlas of Rensselaer County* shows the situation little changed; no further farms have been carved out of the Plateau at the east end of Legenbauer road. The owners of several properties have changed, but some of the original settlers – Babcock, Hanchit (Hanshed) and Millhizer (Mithizer) – remain.<sup>4</sup> The Mithizer family farm lasted at least two generations and today makes up the center parcel of the Poestenkill Community Forest.

<sup>3</sup> Lake, D. J. & Beers, S. N. (1861). *Map of Rensselaer Co., New York*. Philadelphia: Smith, Gallup & Co. Publishers. [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/200958352/>.  
<sup>4</sup> Beers, F. W. (1876). “Poestenkill.” *County Atlas of Rensselaer, New York*. New York: F. W. Beers & Co.



Figure 3: East Poestenkill, 1876.

The lives of John and Catharine Milhizer are surprisingly well-documented. A biography in Ancestry.com and various census records provide information about their birthplace, children, and development of the farm. However, as happened with many immigrants to the United States in the 19th century, the family name is spelled inconsistently. Variants include Mulhauser (birth record and will), Millhyser (1860 deed), Melkiser (1860 US Census), Mithizer (1861 map), Millhiser (1863 Civil War Draft Registration, 1865 NY Census, and 1880 US Census), Millhysen (1870 US Census), Mithiser (1871 Business Directory), Millhizer (1876 Atlas), Milhizer (surnames of the children) and Muhlhisen (probate and deed, 1900). First names are also inconsistent. Johannes is also called Johann or John; Christina Katharina is referred to as Catharine, Catherine, Caroline, Katie, and Maggie. However, the couple are buried in Woodside Cemetery in Poestenkill as Johannes and Christina Katharina Milhizer, so that is how they will be identified in the rest of this document.

Johannes Milhizer was born Johannes Mühlhäuser on April 4, 1819 in Krapfenreut, Goppingen, Baden-Wurttemberg, just east of Stuttgart in Germany.<sup>5</sup> His father appears to have died when he was ten (although a brother with the Mühlhäuser name is listed in the Ancestry.com genealogy as born two years later.)

When Milhizer left Germany is unknown, but it was probably in the mid-1850s.<sup>6</sup> Large numbers of Germans had been coming to the United States since the 1820s. Many of the first immigrants left small villages (like Krapfenreut) seeking farmland; others were religious refugees – first, Anabaptists and, later, Catholics. After the failed democratic Revolutions of 1848, a large number of well-educated, politically-liberal Germans arrived and settled in the cities of the Northeast and Midwest. Unlike these, Milhizer appears to have been a young man looking for land. He may have been drawn to rural Rensselaer County by the existing German-speaking population, which dated back to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century settlement of Rensselaerwyck. There was an English-speaking Lutheran church in Poestenkill, founded in 1833, and a German-speaking one in Taborton, first active in the 1850s. Columbia (East Poestenkill) itself had a Baptist church, established in 1814.

<sup>5</sup> Ancestry.com. "Johannes Mulhauser/Milhizen [Family Tree]. <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/159462330/person/282085018044/facts>

<sup>6</sup> There is no record of the couple in the 1850 US or 1855 NY Census.



| German Immigration to United States (1820–1870) <sup>7</sup> |                      |                    |                      |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Immigration period   | Number of Immigrants | Immigration period | Number of Immigrants |
| 1820–1840  | 160,335              | 1851–1860          | 951,667              |
| 1841–1850  | 434,626              | 1861–1870          | 787,468              |

Johannes arrived with his wife Christina Katharina (nee Zwyger or Schweiger); she was also born in Krapenreut, but was ten years younger. (Presumably, they were married when they left Germany.) Their first two children were born in Rensselaer County in early and late 1856.

The earliest record of Johannes is a deed of sale dated April 20, 1858, between Charles N. and Elizabeth Quitterfield and John Millhuysen, for a small parcel of ten acres “in consideration of the sum of one dollars lawful money of the United States”:<sup>8</sup>

Beginning at on the west by Reuben Wheeler, on the south by William P. Van Rensselaer, on the east by Giles B. Conpece (Cropsey), and on the north by Dan Henchitt, it being a part of lot No. ninety (90) in the township formerly called Middletown, as surveyed by John Gilbert and lot No. five (5) in such survey made by Calvin Feathers containing about ten acres of land in the same more or less. [Book 105 of Deeds, Pages 82-83].

This small parcel was former Rensselaerwyck land, which had been sold without restriction by William and Sarah Van Rensselaer to Cyrus Amidon in 1842. William was Stephen Van Rensselaer’s son and had inherited his father’s manor lands in Rensselaer County in 1839. (The fact that the deed was signed by Sarah Van Rensselaer, releasing her right of dower, indicates that William owned the property outright and personally.) Amidon acquired all of lot 90 and sold this section to D. D. J. Hull on January 13, 1845.<sup>9</sup> Hull, in turn, assigned (leased) it to Charles N. Quitterfield six months later.<sup>10</sup> At some point, Quitterfield must have acquired full title because, in 1858, he sold the land to the Milhizers, and purchased another farm along the Poestenkill Creek the following year.<sup>11</sup> Then, a somewhat mysterious pair of rent assignments takes place in June 1860, when “John Millhuysen” assigns his interest in the parcel to Caroline Witkop for \$100 and she, the next day, transfers the assignment back to “Caroline Millhuysen” for the same \$100. (Caroline Witkop appears to be one of the Milhizer’s closest neighbors, living in Berlin adjacent to the Poestenkill town line.)

A month later, on July 20, 1860, Johannes expanded the farm by purchasing the adjoining seventy-five acres to the south directly from the Van Rensselaers for \$225:

Beginning at the Northeast corner of Lot 106 of the Middletown; S 18 degrees West, 20 chains, S 87 degrees West, 40 chains, N 18 degrees E, 20 chains, N 87 degrees E 40 chains, being 75 acres. [Book 113 of Deeds, Page 361.]

In this transaction, Johannes was identified as John Millhysen of Sand Lake. (The Town of Poestenkill was a separate township but had been taken from the Town of Sand Lake on March 2, 1848.) There is no lease and no rents reserved which indicates that Milhizer received full title to the land.

A month later, on August 16, the enumerator of the 1860 US Census arrives and identifies Johannes and Christina as John and Catherine Melkiser with four children – John (aged 4, born January 23, 1856), Mary (4, born later in the

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia. “German-Americans.”

<sup>8</sup> Despite subsequent assignments in 1860, this deed appears to have given Johannes Milhizer clear title, as it is referenced in all subsequent deeds for the farm.

<sup>9</sup> According to Anderson (1897), Cyrus Amidon was one of the earliest storekeepers in the town of Poestenkill. (p. 557)

<sup>10</sup> Anderson (1897) also identifies Charles N. Quitterfield as Town Clerk in 1855. (pp. 560-561)

<sup>11</sup> Amidon sold a 20-acre piece of lot 90 to Darius Allen on May 8, 1845, and the rest of the lot (about 120 acres) to Joseph Baker on April 9, 1846. However, there is no map evidence that either owner lived on these properties.

In January 1865, the family suffers a tragedy. In the span of seven days, four children – Johann (John, aged 8), Christina Katherina (Katy, 5), Georg (George, 3), and Daniel (5) – die from spinal meningitis and are buried in the Woodside Cemetery in East Poestenkill. All of the grave inscriptions are in German. This may represent the linguistic preference of the parents or, possibly, the family’s membership in a German-speaking church. However, a third explanation is more likely. In the 1865 NY Census, Milhizer is described as illiterate (at least in English), and twenty-five and thirty-five years later the couple’s own gravestones are in German.

[illegible]

Johannes and Christina Katharina were living in a log home with their two surviving children. The property was only valued at \$50, one of the least valuable in the area. Johannes was now a naturalized citizen; Christina Katharina remained an alien. The agricultural statistics provide some information about what was – and was not – being produced on the farm.

[illegible][illegible]

| Apple orchards.        |                          |                         | Market gardens.   |       |                          |       | Pounds of maple sugar made in 1904. | Gallons of maple molasses made in 1905. | Gallons of grape wine made in 1904. | Pounds of honey collected in 1904. | Pounds of wax collected in 1904. | Pounds of cocoons raised for silk, 1904. | Unsummarized articles of farm produce, 1904. |        |                 | Neat cattle.    |   |                     |            |       |                 |                    | Butter.         |                    | Cheese.         |                     | Cows milked for market. |       |     |     |     |     |    |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|--------|-----------------|-----------------|---|---------------------|------------|-------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| No. of trees in fruit. | Bushels of apples, 1904. | Barrels of cider, 1904. | Acres cultivated. |       | Value of products, 1904. | Kind. |                                     |   |                                     |                                    |                                  |  | Quantity.                                    | Value. | Calves of 1904. | Calves of 1905. | Over-1 year old, exclusive of calves, 1904. | Working cows, 1905. | Milk cows. |       | Number of cows. | Pounds made, 1904. | Number of cows. | Pounds made, 1904. | Number of cows. | Gallons sold, 1904. |                         |       |     |     |     |     |    |
|                        |                          |                         | 1904.             | 1905. |                          |       |                                     |   |                                     |                                    |                                  |  |  |        |                 |                 |   |                     | 1904.      | 1905. |                 |                    |                 |                    |                 |                     | 1904.                   | 1905. |     |     |     |     |    |
| 202                    | 203                      | 204                     | 205               | 206   | 207                      | 208   | 209                                 | 210                                     | 211                                 | 212                                | 213                              |  | 214  |        | 215             | 216             | 217   | 218                 | 219        | 220   | 221             | 222                | 223             | 224                | 225             | 226                 | 227                     | 228   | 229 | 230 | 231 | 232 |    |
|                        |                          |                         |                   |       |                          |       |                                     |   |                                     | 50                                 |                                  |  |  |        |                 |                 |   |                     | 1          |       |                 |                    | 4               | 4                  | 2               | 4                   | 4                       |       | 300 |     |     |     | 24 |

<sup>12</sup> The rent assignments or as yet unidentified mortgages may have something to do with this status, although the deeds seem to transfer full ownership to Johannes.

| Horses.         |                 | Swine.                        |                    | Sheep.                        |                               | Poultry.                      |                               | Domestic manufactures, 1864.                     |  |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Cattle of 1864. | Cattle of 1865. | Two years old and over, 1864. | Miles owned, 1864. | Two years old and over, 1864. | Two years old and over, 1864. | Two years old and over, 1864. | Two years old and over, 1864. | Value of manufactures and articles made in 1864. | Value of manufactures and articles made in 1864. |
| 233             | 234             | 235                           | 236                | 237                           | 238                           | 239                           | 240                           | 241  | 242  |
| 233             | 234             | 235                           | 236                | 237                           | 238                           | 239                           | 240                           | 241  | 242  |
| 24              |                 |                               |                    |                               |                               |                               |                               |  |  |

Figure 5: 1865 NY Census Agricultural Statistics, Poestenkill, Rensselaer County.

Only six acres of land were cleared for crops, on which the family was growing buckwheat, Indian corn, and potatoes. Milhizer claimed \$230 worth of livestock, mainly cattle and pigs. Four milk cows had produced 300 pounds of butter; two cows or calves had been butchered. One pig was butchered in 1864, yielding 200 pounds of pork. There were no horses, oxen, or sheep. Fifty pounds of honey had also been collected, probably for sale.

Milhizer had only begun to develop his farm from the wilderness of the Rensselaer Plateau but his crop options were limited. The property is at a high elevation – approximately 1400 feet. Apart from the Taconic mountain range, there is no higher elevation for agriculture in the county. As State Geologist Ebenezer Emmons noted twenty years earlier, elevation constrained what could be grown in many parts of New York State. Oats and peas were the most reliable crops; potatoes were apparently also quite hardy; buckwheat, rye, and wheat grew only in established fields; corn was at its limit at 1500 feet.<sup>13</sup> The heavily-glaciated soils were poor. As George Baker Anderson noted in his 1897 *Landmarks of Rensselaer County, New York*:

The central and eastern portions [of the town of Poestenkill] are rocky and mountainous and not productive, except in a few localities where the husbandman, by years of toil, has succeeded in bringing the naturally sterile land up to a fairly productive state.<sup>14</sup>

Five years later, Johannes appeared in *Child's Gazetteer and Business Directory for Rensselaer County* (1870) simply as “John Mithiser, farmer.” But the 1870 US Census shows that he and Christina Katharina had been busy. They had two new children – Henry J. (aged 3) and William (only 11 months, born July). The farm was now valued at \$1000 with \$300 of personal property. Johannes was again listed as illiterate but Mary and Adam were attending school.

| Dwelling-house, numbered in the order of valuation. |    | The name of every person whose place of abode on the first day of June, 1870, was in this family. |                | DESCRIPTION.          |  |                            | Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male or female. | VALUE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED. |                           | Place of Birth, naming State or Territory of U. S.; or the Country, if of foreign birth. | PARENTAGE.               |                          | If born within the year, state month (Jan., Feb., &c.) | If married within the year, state month (Jan., Feb., &c.) | Attended school within the year. | EMPLOYMENT.   |               | Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic. | CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS.                  |   |
|---|----|---|----------------|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---|--|---|
| 1   | 2  | 3   | 4              | 5                     | 6  | 7                          |  | 8                           | 9                         |  | 10                       | 11                       |  |   |                                  | 12            | 13            |   |  | 14  |
|   |    |   |                | Age at last birthday. | If under year, give month in fraction, thus— $\frac{1}{2}$ | Sex.—Male (M.) Female (F.) |  | Value of Real Estate.       | Value of Personal Estate. |  | Father of foreign birth. | Mother of foreign birth. |  |   |                                  | Current road. | Cannot write. |   | Male Citizens of U. S. of age and by wife. | Male Citizens of U. S. of all ages who have right to vote in Federal or State election, or who are naturalized citizens, or who are natives of foreign countries. |
| 19  | 64 | 65  | Milthysen John | 52                    | m  | w                          | Farmer   | 1000                        | 300                       | Wormsburg  | /                        | /                        |  |   |                                  | /             | /             |   | /  |   |
| 20  |    |   | — Caroline     | 51                    | f  | w                          | Keeping house  |                             |                           | Wormsburg  | /                        | /                        |  |   |                                  |               |               |   |  |   |
| 21  |    |   | — Mary         | 14                    | f  | w                          | at home  |                             |                           | N.Y.   | /                        | /                        |  |   |                                  | /             |               |   |  |   |
| 22  |    |   | — Adeline      | 7                     | m  | w                          |  |                             |                           | N.Y.   | /                        | /                        |  |   |                                  | /             |               |   |  |   |
| 23  |    |   | — Henry J.     | 3                     | m  | w                          |  |                             |                           | N.Y.   | /                        | /                        |  |   |                                  |               |               |   |  |   |
| 24  |    |   | — William      | $\frac{11}{12}$       | m  | w                          |  |                             |                           | N.Y.   | /                        | /                        | July   |   |                                  |               |               |   |  |   |

Figure 6: US Census, 1870.

The land was now producing slightly larger crops, and Milhizer owned more livestock, now worth \$470; their fertilizer undoubtedly helped increase his yields. On six acres, the family harvested Indian corn (50 bushels), oats (40 bushels), buckwheat (10 bushels), and potatoes (150 bushels). Seventeen tons of hay probably came from a meadow.<sup>15</sup> There

<sup>13</sup> Emmons, E. (1846). *Agriculture of New York* (Vol 1, 5; Vol 2, 254). Albany: Printed by C. Van Benthuysen & Co.

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, G. B. (1898). *Landmarks of Rensselaer County, New York*. Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Company, 1897. P. 555.

<sup>15</sup> In 1870, the eighty-five acres were listed as “improved,” but the 1875 NY Census still showed only six acres were plowed.

were two horses and three pigs, along with the previous four milk cows and a steer or heifer. Butter production was about 250 pounds. Mary was 14 – old enough to help with dairy production. Adam was 7 – old enough to help with the animals.

| Name of Agent, Owner,<br>or Manager. | ACRES OF LAND. |             |                        | PERMANENT CASH<br>VALUE. |  |         | Total amount of property<br>owned, including value of stock. | LIVE STOCK, JUNE 1, 1870. |             |               |               |        |        |                             |         | PRODUCTS DURING YEAR. |      |              |       |         |            |      |      |     |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|---------|--|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------|--------|-----------------------------|---------|-----------------------|------|--------------|-------|---------|------------|------|------|-----|
|                                      | Improved.      | UNIMPROVED. |                        | Of farm.                 | Of dwelling and<br>outbuildings and<br>mill<br>equilary. | Horses. |  | Mules and Asses.          | Milch Cows. | Working Cows. | Other Cattle. | Sheep. | Swine. | Value of all live<br>stock. | WHEAT.  |                       | Rye. | Indian Corn. | Oats. | Barley. | Buckwheat. | Lbs. | Lbs. |     |
|                                      |                | Wood-land.  | Other unim-<br>proved. |                          |  |         |  |                           |             |               |               |        |        |                             | Spring. | Winter.               |      |              |       |         |            |      |      |     |
|                                      |                | No.         | No.                    |                          |  |         |  |                           |             |               |               |        |        |                             | No.     | No.                   |      |              |       |         |            |      |      | No. |
| 1                                    | 2              | 3           | 4                      | 5                        | 6  | 7       | 8  | 9                         | 10          | 11            | 12            | 13     | 14     | 15                          | 16      | 17                    | 18   | 19           | 20    | 21      | 22         | 23   | 24   |     |
| Millhysen John                       | 85             |             |                        | 100                      | 50   |         | 2  |                           | 4           |               | 1             |        | 3      | 470                         |         |                       |      | 50           | 40    |         | 10         |      |      |     |

| YEAR ENDING JUNE 1, 1870. |       |                |           |        |        |                   |       |                 |        |      |      |       |          |       |       |       |            |             |        |       |           |        |      | TOTAL VALUE.     |                                |   |  |
|---------------------------|-------|----------------|-----------|--------|--------|-------------------|-------|-----------------|--------|------|------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-------------|--------|-------|-----------|--------|------|------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Cattle.                   | Wool. | Fur and Bones. | POTATOES. |        |        | Orchard products. | Wine. | DAIRY PRODUCTS. |        |      | Hay. | SEED. |          | Hops. | Rasp. | Flax. | Flax-seed. | Silk-worms. | SUGAR. |       | Molasses. | HONEY. |      | Forest products. | Value of Home<br>Manufactures. | Value of all animals<br>slaughtered or sold<br>for slaughter. | Estimated value of<br>all other products not<br>elsewhere specified, less<br>value of stock. |
|                           |       |                | Math.     | Seeds. | Dolls. |                   |       | Gallons.        | Dolls. | Lbs. |      | Lbs.  | Gallons. |       |       |       |            |             | Tons.  | Bush. |           | Bush.  | Lbs. |                  |                                |   |  |
| 25                        | 26    | 27             | 28        | 29     | 30     | 31                | 32    | 33              | 34     | 35   | 36   | 37    | 38       | 39    | 40    | 41    | 42         | 43          | 44     | 45    | 46        | 47     | 48   | 49               | 50                             | 51  | 52   |
|                           |       |                | 150       |        |        |                   |       | 250             |        |      | 17   |       |          |       |       |       |            |             |        |       |           |        |      |                  |                                |   | 300  |

Figure 7: Agricultural Statistics, US Census, 1870.

In 1873, John Milhizer purchased 50 acres to the south from John and Louise Huffman; this new parcel gave him a large piece of woodland attached to his current farm:

Beginning at a stake and stones in the Southwest (possibly Southeast) corner of said Lot no. 106 and running from thence south eighty seven degrees west twelve chains and sixty two links along the south side of said Lot no. 106 thence north eighteen degrees west thirty nine chains and seventy five links to the north line of said Lot no. 106 thence north eighty seven degrees east twelve chains and sixty two links to a pile of stones or a flat rock being the northeast corner of Lot no. 106 thence south eighteen degrees west thirty nine chains and sixty two links along the east line of said Lot no. 106 to the place of beginning containing fifty acres of land be the same more or less. [Book159, Page 462]

Interestingly, given the discovery of a charcoal burning pit at the Poestenkill Community Forest, Huffman was given one year to harvest wood and burn charcoal on Milhizer’s new lot:<sup>16</sup>

The party of the first part herein mentioned [Huffman] reserves all the standing timber on the north end of said lot and the privilege of cutting the same and burning the same into charcoal on any part of said lot and drawing the same away, the said cutting, burning and drawing to be done in one year from the date of this instrument.

This agreement benefited both parties by reducing the cost to Milhizer and partially clearing his new land.

Two years later, the 1875 NY Census shows the Milhizer family living better on a slightly more prosperous farm. At some point in the last ten years, they had replaced their log cabin with a frame house valued at \$500. A comparison of Figures 2 and 3 suggests that the position of the house moved to the south side of Legenbauer Road where the cellar hole can be found today.

<sup>16</sup> However, the charcoal pit discovered during Tom Wessals walk in fall 2019 is not on the former Huffman property.

| Dwellings.               |                            |        | Female members<br>in case of widow. | Name of every person whose usual place of abode<br>was in the family on the 1st day of June, 1870.<br>See Instructions, Page 19 | Age.            | Sex. | Color.<br>White, Black,<br>Mulatto or Indo<br>Chinese. | Relation to the<br>head of the<br>family. | In what county of this State,<br>or in what other State, or<br>foreign country born. | New married. | New returned. | Single. | Profession, trade or occupation. | Last place of employment,<br>if out of the city or town,<br>where the family resided.<br><br>—<br>If in U. S. Service, or absent<br>as specified in Art. II, § 3<br>of Constitution, write<br>former home in this<br>column. | Veteran. |          |        | Over 21, and not able<br>to read and write. | Deaf and dumb, blind, insane,<br>or idiotic.<br><br>See Additional facts are to be<br>entered in every case, on the<br>special blank, for those<br>classes. |    |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------|------|--|---|--|--------------|---------------|---------|----------------------------------|--|----------|----------|--------|---|---|----|
| Number of the<br>family. | Of what material<br>built. | Value. |                                     |   |                 |      |  |   |  |              |               |         |                                  |  | Native.  | Married. | Alone. |   |   |    |
| 9                        | 83                         | Frame  | 500                                 | 96  | John Milliger   | 56 M |  |   | Germany  | /            |               |         | Farmer                           |  |          | /        | /      |   |   | 9  |
| 10                       |                            |        |                                     |   | Ratio Milliger  | 45 F |  | wife                                      | Germany  | /            |               |         |                                  |  |          |          |        |   |   | 10 |
| 11                       |                            |        |                                     |   | Mary Milliger   | 19 F |  | Son                                       | Kennelton  |              |               | /       |                                  |  |          |          |        |   |   | 11 |
| 12                       |                            |        |                                     |   | Adam Milliger   | 11 M |  | Son                                       | Kennelton  |              |               | /       |                                  |  |          |          |        |   |   | 12 |
| 13                       |                            |        |                                     |   | Henry Milligan  | 8 M  |  | Son                                       | Kennelton  |              |               | /       |                                  |  |          |          |        |   |   | 13 |
| 14                       |                            |        |                                     |   | Willie Milligan | 6 M  |  | Son                                       | Kennelton  |              |               | /       |                                  |  |          |          |        |   |   | 14 |

The farm now totaled 136 acres. Fifty acres were wood lot; seventy-two acres were pasture; eight acres were mowed for hay; and six acres were plowed for oats, Indian corn, and potatoes. Two horses contributed their animal power. The number of milk cows had increased to seven, along with one bull, and one or two heifers were being kept each year. Butter production had more than doubled to 700 pounds a year. One or two pigs provided additional meat; an unspecified number of chickens provided \$10 worth of eggs. Honey was no longer listed but the family may have been collecting some for its own use. Henry was 8 and able to help his parents and siblings.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Figure 9: NY Census, Agricultural Statistics, 1875.

<sup>17</sup> Sylvester, 563.





Thus, the year 1880 US yields a final (and somewhat unsatisfactory) record of production on the Milhizer farm. There was no New York census in 1885, no New York data from the 1890 US census that survived a Washington DC fire in 1921, and no Rensselaer County data in the 1892 New York census. Except for their obituaries, no references to Johannes or Christina Katharina show up in a newspaper search of 1880-1900. Christina died on January 25, 1890, aged 59, and was buried with her four children in the Woodside Cemetery on 56 Road. Johannes died on August 1, 1899, and was buried beside her. Both of their gravestones are inscribed in German.



Johannes's will (dated January 14, 1899) was probated five months after his death on August 1, 1899, under the name "John Mulhauser." He left explicit bequests of \$300 to each of his four children (daughter and three sons). His sons Adam and William were named executors and directed to sell the residue of his estate and split the proceeds. By this time, Adam and Henry were married; Mary and William were not.

Figure 12: Woodside Cemetery.

The history of the Milhizer farm in the twentieth century requires further research. It was sold within a few months to Adam Milhizer and later passed to his son Charles. However, it is unclear if Adam moved into his parents' house or lived in a neighboring home on Legenbauer Road (now an inholding within the Poestenkill Community Forest).

On June 1, 1897, the year before his marriage to Minnie Reinke, Adam purchased 67 ½ acres from the widow of Dan Hanchet; the Hanchets (Hanshed or Hanchit) settled before 1854 and owned the farm next to that of his parents. (See Figures 2 and 3.) Two years later, Adam bought his parents' farm from his siblings, and he and Minnie were farming this expanded property in the 1900 census. A son, Charles, was born later that year.

Adam and Minnie lived in East Postenskill for the rest of their lives. She died in January 1940; he died three months later in April 1940. The 1905 census lists them with Charles (then 5) and a new daughter, Esther, aged 2. By 1910, they have another daughter, Ada, aged 4. In 1915, all three children are in school; in 1920, all three are still living at home, but Charles is now listed as a farmer in his own right and Esther is doing beadwork.

However, where "home" was is unclear. In 1918, Adam and Minnie deeded their farmland to their son, "in consideration of the sum of One Dollar, lawful money [sic] of the United States, natural love and affection and other good and valuable consideration." The deed lists five parcels, three from Johannes, one from Catharine Hanchet, and one from Henry Folderman to Joseph Hinkel.

The foregoing premises are conveyed by the parties of the first part [Adam and Minnie] and accepted by the party of the second part [Charles] upon the express understanding, stipulation, covenants, and agreements that the said party of the second part will support, care for, and maintain Adam Milhizer, one of the parties of the first part for and during the term of his natural life in the same manner and as comfortably as he now lives, and will provide him with a home during said period in the farm dwelling house situated on said premises. It is further agreed that the said Adam Milhizer, party of the first part, shall have all of the rights and privilege in and about the foregoing premises and buildings situated thereon that he now has. It is

further covenanted and agreed that if the part of the second part shall at any time fail to perform the stipulation, covenants, and agreements herein agreed to be performed by him that the foregoing premises and all of his right, title, and interest therein shall revert to the said Adam Milhizer, part of the first part, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, the same as though this instrument had not been made... [Book 378 , Page 259]

This agreement seems to have given Charles ownership of the land after his parents' death, but no control during his father's lifetime. Adam remains listed as head of household and owner of the farm in the 1920 census, with his sister Mary and her husband living next door – possibly in Johannes and Christina Katharina's old house.<sup>18</sup> Mary's husband Casper Goodermote dies the following year. In 1922, Adam sells the Hanchet property to brothers Abednego (possibly known as Benjamin) and Noah Hughes. In the 1925 Census, they and their mother Anna Hughes are listed as living on "Milhizer Road."

With this sale, it becomes difficult to determine where Adam and his descendants live for the next fifty years. They may have moved to the Folderman-Hinkel property or somewhere else. Around this time Minnie acquires some land under her own name, which may have given them another house. Wherever they are, they are probably no longer living on Legenbauer Road.

The 1925 Census places Adam and his five family members on the Troy-Berlin Road along with Mary nearby as head of her own one-person household.<sup>19</sup> The 1930 Census places Adam in a home valued at \$2240 next to Mary in a home valued at \$1000. By 1933, Esther has married Jessie Goodermote and Ada has moved to Lansingburgh; there is a delightful story in the local newspaper about the three children participating in a mock wedding celebrating their parents' 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>20</sup> By the 1940 census, both Adam and Minnie have died, and Ada returns from Troy (where she was working) to live with Charles. This arrangement does not last long; in the April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942 *Troy Times*, Charles advertises for a "Lady, middle-aged, wanted on farm for housekeeping." In March 1973, Charles dies "at his residence" in East Poestenkill.

The Milhizer farm was always extremely isolated. Only six (or twelve) acres of the original farm were ever intensively cultivated; the rest was hayfield, pasture, or woodlot. The farm house may have been abandoned in 1899, 1921, or later. The fields and pasture may have reverted to forest at any time up to 1973, though the growth of the Poestenkill Community Forest suggests an earlier date.

---

<sup>18</sup> Around 1908, at age 51, Mary marries Casper Goodermote and moves to his farm, where the two are listed in the 1915 NY Census. In 1920, the two are listed as retired and may have moved as their census entry now adjoins that of her brother Adam.

<sup>19</sup> However, a review of the census shows that few secondary streets are listed. Legenbauer Road runs off the Troy-Berlin Road and is not listed but "Milhizer," Hill, and Fifty-six roads are.

<sup>20</sup> "Mr. and Mrs. Milhizer Celebrate Anniversary." *Troy Times* (October 21, 1933). 6. The bride is played by a man, the groom by a woman, Esther is plays the bride's mother, and Ada is the clergyman.