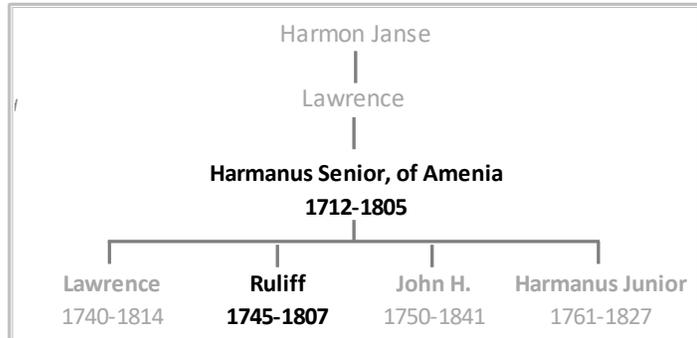


Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York

Bryan Knickerbocker
2 June 2019

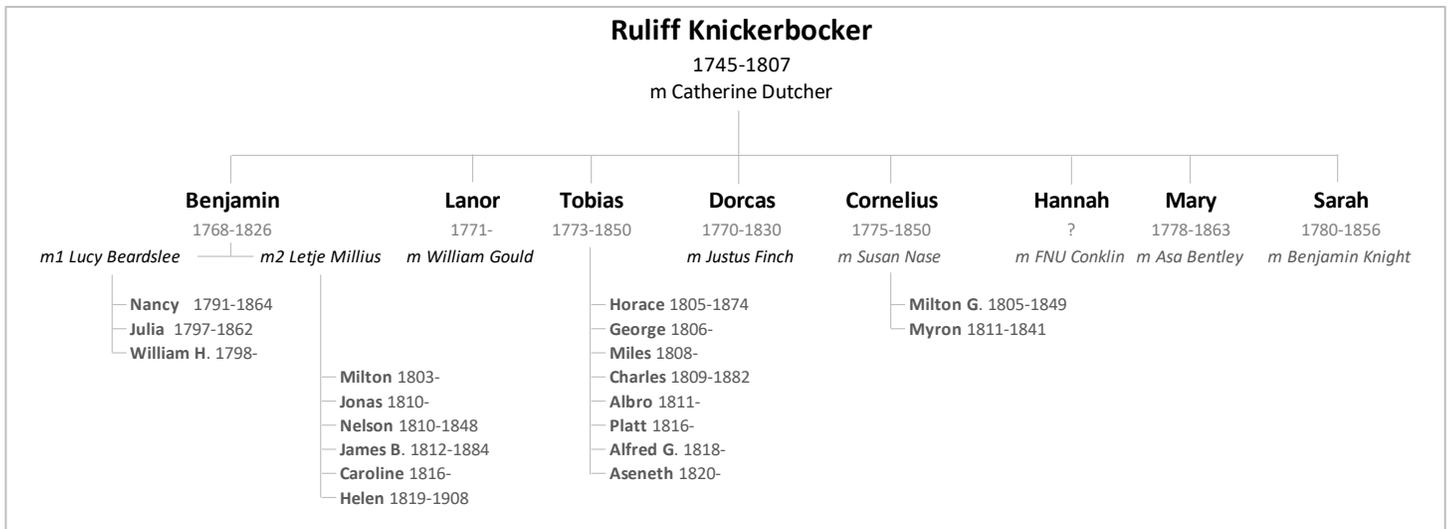
This report discusses Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York.

Ruliff was the second son of Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior.



This is part 2 of The Knickerbockers of Amenia. The first part discussed the overall history of the family. Here we will focus on Ruliff and his children. Ruliff needed his own report because his story is so complex.

Ruliff Knickerbocker had three sons: Benjamin, Tobias, and Cornelius. He also had five daughters: Lanor, Dorcas, Hannah, Mary, and Sarah.



Each of the children will be discussed here.

The stories of Benjamin and Cornelius Knickerbocker, as told here, are very different than is found on most popular genealogy sites.

**Background:
Amenia, New York**

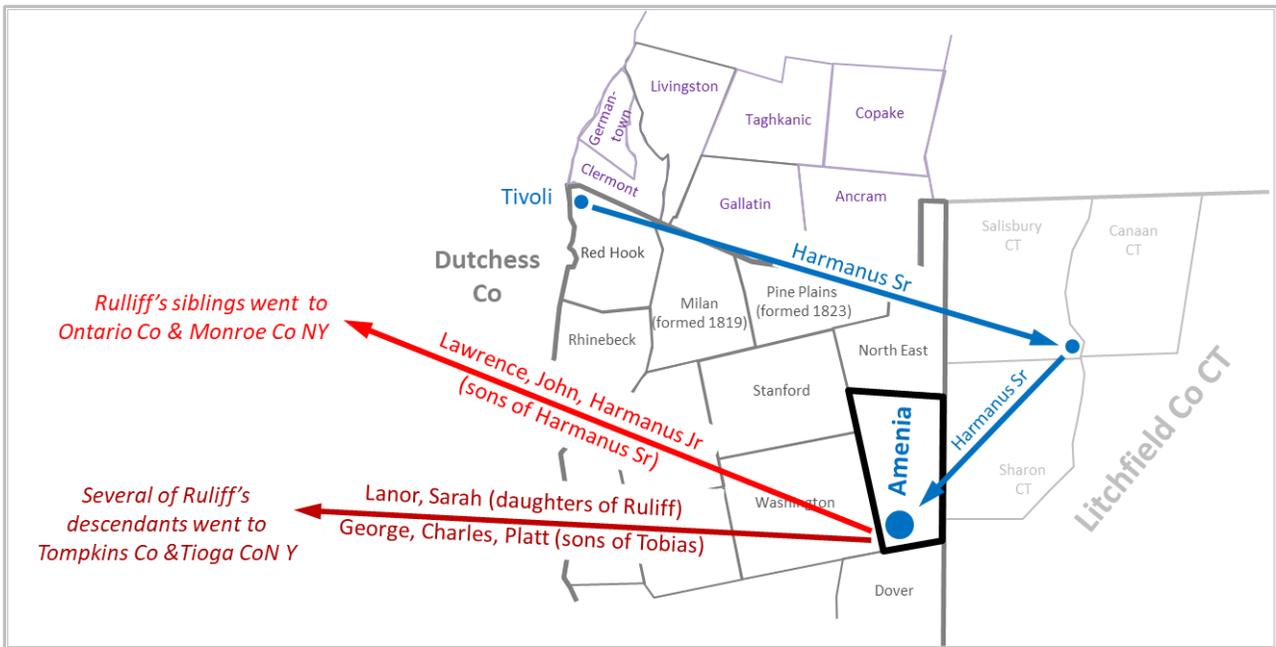
The report “Knickerbockers of Amenia New York” described the travels of Harmanus Knickerbocker, Senior. He was the founder of the Amenia line of Knickerbockers.

Harmanus eventually settled in the southwestern corner of Amenia, near today’s intersection of Butts Hollow Road and Route 22 (also known as Route 343).

Three of Harmanus’ sons (Lawrence, John, and Harmanus Junior) left Amenia by 1807, and moved to western New York.

Ruliff Knickerbocker remained in Amenia, and is the main focus of this report.

Ruliff’s descendants didn’t stay in Amenia for very long. They left the area before about 1862.



The largest cluster of Ruliff’s descendants wound up in the area near Ithaca New York. This included two of Ruliff’s daughters (Lanor and Sarah) and three of Ruliff’s grandsons (George, Charles, and Platt).

Harmanus Knickerbocker's Land along Butts Hollow Road

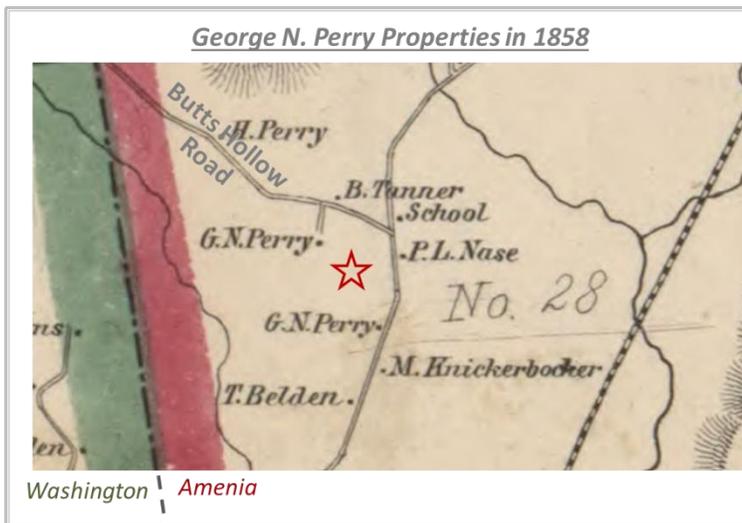
Land records play a large role in later sections of this report. We will introduce the topic by discussing the location where Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior lived.

In his *Knickerbocker Family* in NYGBR, William Van Alstyne said that Harmanus Senior's farm later became the home of George N. Perry. By the time of Van Alstyne's work (1908), the land was owned by William Rundall.

William Van Alstyne's Description (written in 1908)
"Herman Knickerbocker" lived opposite Mrs. Joseph Belden's and where George N. Perry lived for many years, the property now owned by William Rundall.

(We should point out that Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior owned several parcels of land in this vicinity. We believe the parcel owned George N. Perry, and later by William Rundall, was the main residence of Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior.)

The Library of Congress has a map showing major property owners in Dutchess County in 1858.



This map shows that George N. Perry had two farms near Butt's Hollow Road.

The red star is the approximate location of Harmanus Knickerbocker's main farm.

In 1858, "M Knickerbocker" owned property to the east of G N Perry. This was Miles Knickerbocker, son of Tobias.

Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York

We can use land records to confirm that William Rundall eventually owned the farm of Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior. The table below shows the seven transactions:

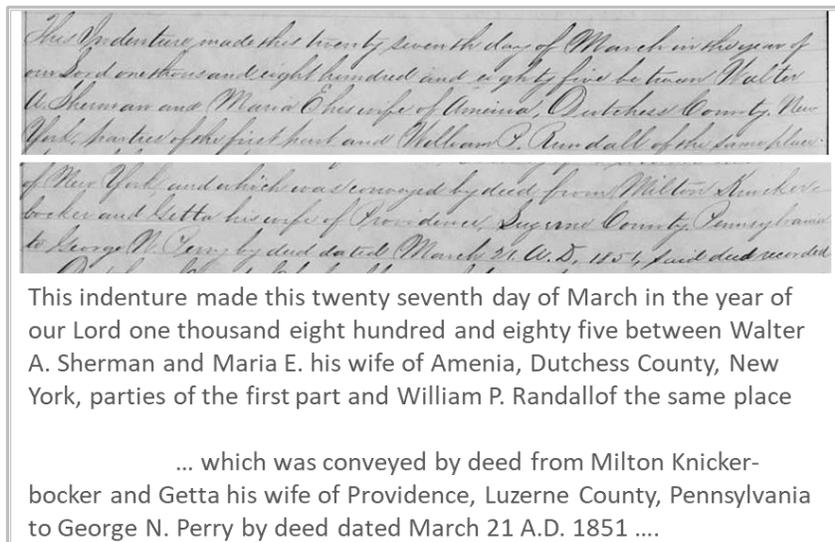
	<u>Prior Owner</u>	<u>New Owner</u>
1805	Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior	Cornelius Knickerbocker (via will)
1850	Cornelius Knickerbocker	Milton Knickerbocker (via will)
1851	Milton Knickerbocker	George N. Perry
1877	George N. Perry	Jerome Cronkhite
1883	Jerome Cronkhite	David Sherman
1884	David Sherman	Walter Sherman
1885	Walter Sherman	William Rundall

This land passed through many hands, but there is no doubt that we are talking about the right parcel.

William Rundell bought the land in 1885.

Here are two excerpts from the 1885 deed.

The 1885 deed refers back to the 1851 transaction between Milton Knickerbocker and George Perry.

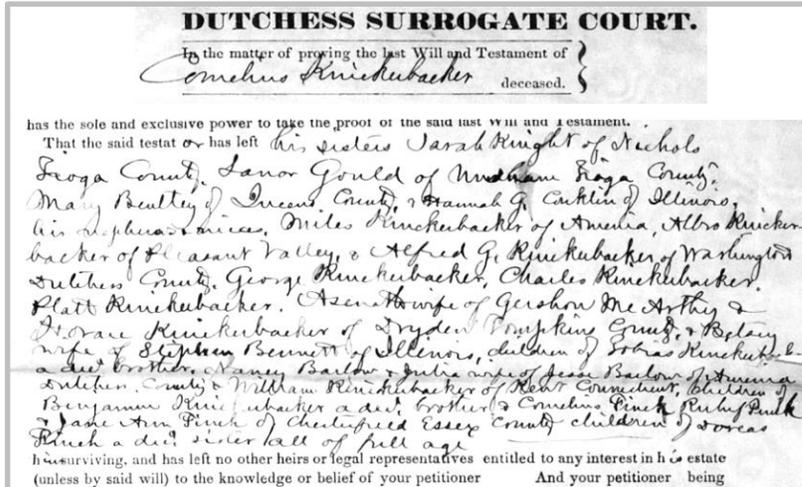


Milton was the last “Knickerbocker” to own the Knickerbocker homestead in Amenia.

Notice that Milton Knickerbocker was described as being from Providence, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. This detail is critical to the later part of our story.

Overview:
The Eight Children of Ruliff Knickerbocker

The single best source of information about the makeup of Ruliff's family comes from the probate file of Ruliff's son Cornelius.



This was entered into Surrogate Court records on September 23, 1850.

In the transcription below, we have highlighted the siblings of Cornelius Knickerbocker.

In the matter of the last will and testament of Cornelius Knickerbocker:

That the said testator has left his **sisters Sarah Knight of Nichols Tioga County, Lanor Gould of Windham Tioga County, Mary Bently of Warren County, Hannah G. Conklin of Illinois,** his nephews & nieces, Miles Knickerbocker of Amenia, Albro Knickerbocker of Pleasant Valley, & Alfred G. Knickerbocker of Washington Dutchess County, George Knickerbocker, Charles Knickerbocker, Platt Knickerbocker, Arseneth wife of Gershon McArther & Horace Knickerbocker of Dryden Tompkins County, & Betsey Wife of Stephen Bennet of Illinois, children of **Tobias Knickerbocker a dead brother,** Nancy Barlow & Julia wife of Jesse Barlow of Amenia, Dutchess County, & William Knickerbocker of Kent Connecticut, children of **Benjamin Knickerbocker a dead brother** & Cornelius Finch, Ruluf Finch, & Jane Ann Finch of Chesterfield Essex County children of **Dorcas a dead sister,** all of full age

heirs surviving, and has left no other heirs or legal representatives entitled to any interest in his estate (unless by said will) to the knowledge of your petitioner

Thus, we know that Ruliff had eight children: sons Benjamin, Tobias and Cornelius, and daughters Dorcas, Mary, Hannah, Sarah, and Lanor.

Each will be discussed later.

Summary of Key Events: Following the Money Trail

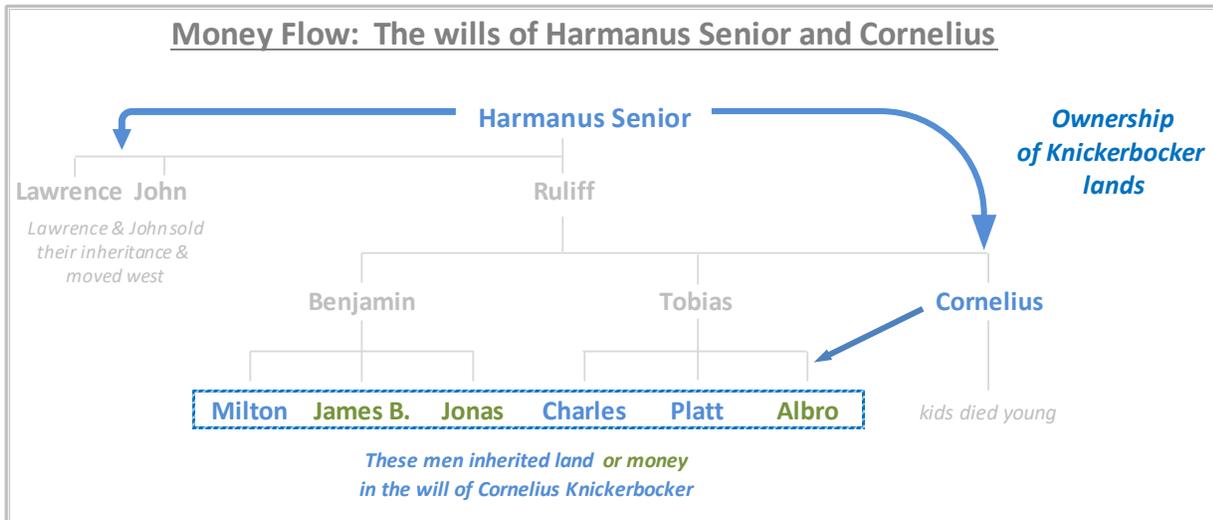
The events in Amenia have always been baffling.

We believe that we have finally figured out what happened.

Harmanus Senior designated Cornelius as his favorite grandson, and skipped over Ruliff, Benjamin, and Tobias. Cornelius was a lucky man. He inherited a third of Harmanus' large estate, and became the patriarch of the Amenia families at the age of 32.

Unfortunately, though, Cornelius' family all died relatively young. Cornelius was alone by the time he died in 1850.

When he wrote his last will and testament, Cornelius decided to share the wealth. The bulk of Cornelius' estate went to sons of Benjamin and Tobias.



Cornelius left his most valuable piece of property to Milton Knickerbocker. Milton inherited the house where Cornelius lived, his farm, and also one of the family burial grounds.

The heirs of Cornelius Knickerbocker were long gone from Amenia before they inherited anything. For example, Milton and Jonas Knickerbocker lived in Luzerne County, PA (near Scranton). James B. Knickerbocker lived in La Salle County, IL (90 miles from Chicago).

None of these men ever moved back to Amenia.

By the mid-1860's, the Knickerbockers were gone from Amenia.

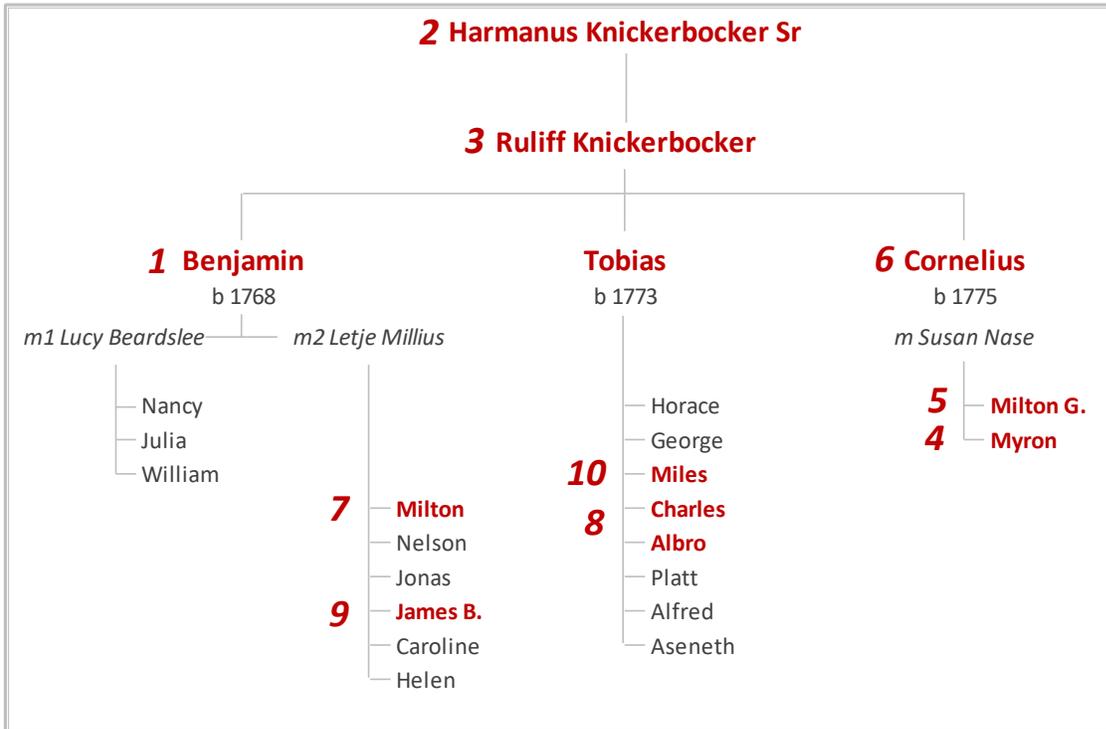
We don't know why Cornelius picked specific nephews to receive the bulk of his estate. Milton was not the oldest son of Benjamin, and Charles was not the oldest son of Tobias. Thus it appears that Cornelius was playing favorites, just as Harmanus Senior had done.

Timeline of Key Events

At first, it was difficult to understand what happened within Ruliff Knickerbocker's family. The story finally became clear when the events were put in chronological order.

Below is a partial family tree with ten red labels. The labels are based on the sequence of the key events.

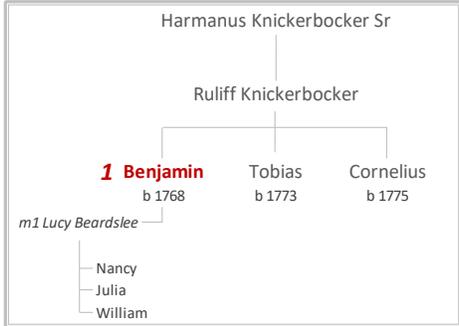
For example, the first key event in our story involved Benjamin Knickerbocker. The second key event involved Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior, and so on.



We will describe the key events one at a time.

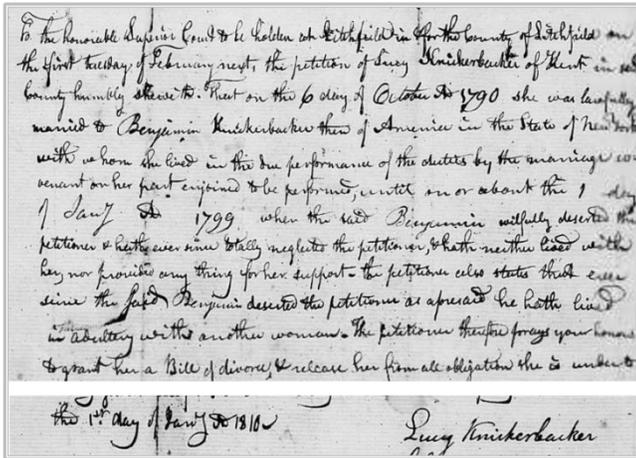
1. Benjamin Knickerbocker left his wife in 1799

Benjamin holds the dubious distinction of being the earliest known divorce for anyone named Knickerbocker.



Benjamin married Lucy Beardslee on October 6, 1790, in Amenia. According to Lucy's court filing, Benjamin abandoned her in 1799. Lucy claimed that Benjamin was living in wedlock with another woman. This must have been a scandal in a small town like Amenia.

We don't know exactly what happened between Benjamin and Lucy. The only thing that we have is the statement that Lucy made in court in 1810.



To the honorable Superior Court to be holden for Litchfield in for the County of Litchfield on the first Tuesday of February next, the petition of Lucy Knickerbocker of Kent in said county humbly showed that on the 6 day of October 1790 she was lawfully married to Benjamin Knickerbocker then of Amenia in the State of New York with whom she lived in the due performance of the duties by the marriage covenant on her part enjoined to be performed, until on or about the 1 day of Janry 1799 when the said Benjamin willfully deserted the petitioner & herby ever since totally neglected the petitioner, & hath neither lived with her, nor provided anything for her support, the petitioner also states that ever since the said Benjamin deserted the petitioner as aforesaid he hath lived in adultery with another woman. The petitioner therefore prays your honors to grant her a Bill of divorce & release her from all obligation she is under to

The 1st day of Janry 1810
Lucy Knickerbocker

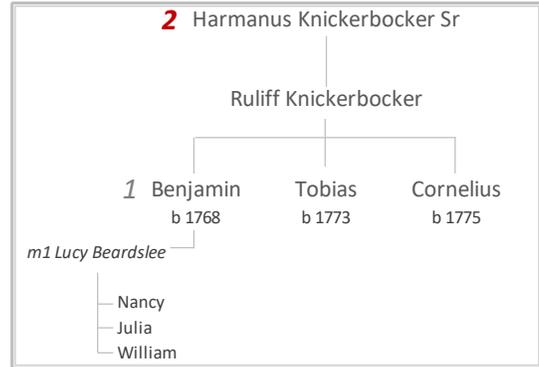
There is something odd that we will point out. The will of Cornelius Knickerbocker, which is discussed later, did not mention Benjamin or his children. However, the executors of Cornelius' will sought out Nancy, Julia, and William. Why did the executors go out of their way to find people who were not named in Cornelius' will?

*Lucy Knickerbocker, Benjamin's ex-wife, died in 1829.
 She was buried in South Amenia.*

2. Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior finalized his will in 1802

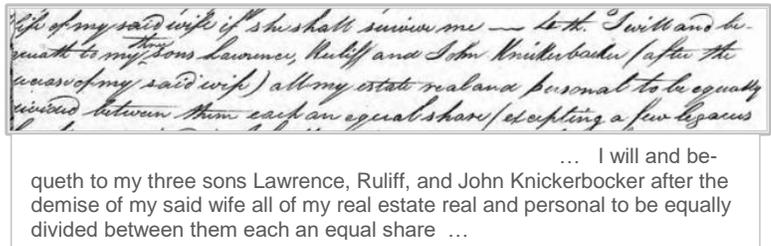
Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior (1712-1805) was the founder of the Amenia families. His story can be found in the report "The Knickerbockers of Amenia."

Harmanus Senior signed his last will and testament in 1802, in the middle of Benjamin's issues with his first wife.

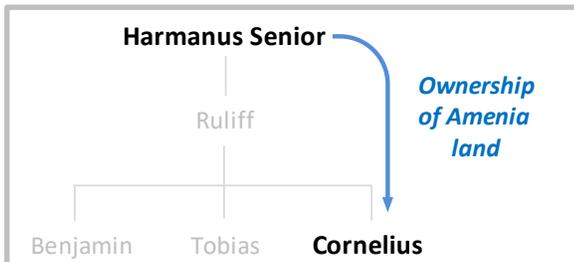
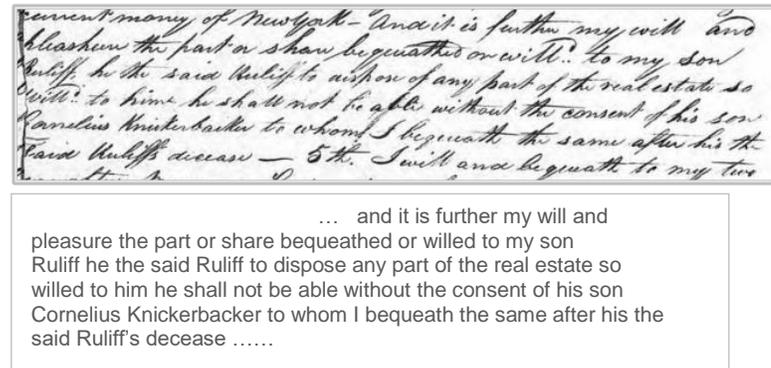


The will contains some odd language.

At first, it appeared that Ruliff Knickerbocker would inherit a third of his father's real estate.



Later in the will, though, Harmanus gives ownership of the land to Ruliff's son Cornelius.



We will never know exactly why Harmanus structured his will this way. He bypassed Ruliff, and also Ruliff's two oldest sons, Benjamin and Tobias.

Harmanus Senior and his wife Elizabeth died in 1805. They were buried on his farm, which was later sold to the Belden family.

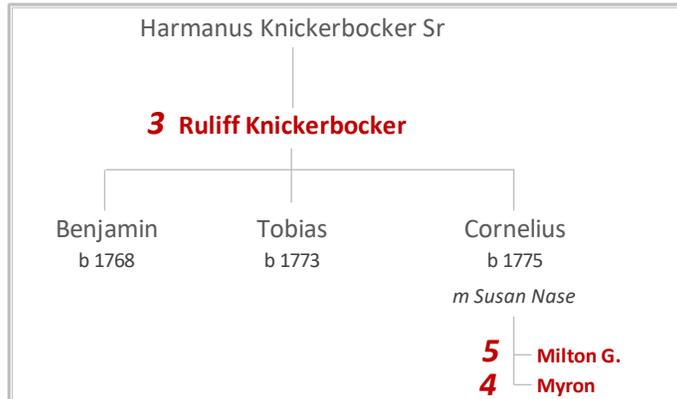
Three sons of Harmanus Senior (Lawrence, John, and Harmanus Junior) moved to western NY State. All three were gone from Amenia by about 1807.

3. Ruliff Knickerbocker died in 1807

Ruliff died in June, 1807.

Ruliff's son Cornelius became the patriarch of the Amenia family.

During the 1810's and 1820's, Cornelius was probably a happy man. However, his joy wouldn't last.



4. Myron Knickerbocker died in 1841

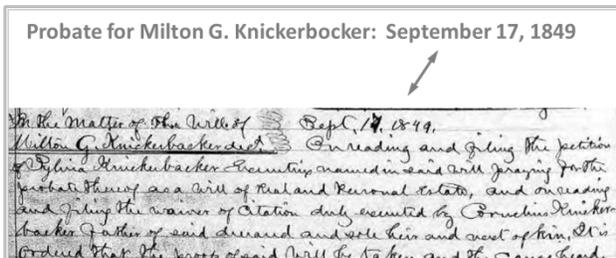
Myron Knickerbocker was the younger son of Cornelius.

Myron died in 1841, at the age of about 30. His will mentioned his wife Caroline, his brother Milton G. Knickerbocker, his brother in law George Hoofcut Junior, and his deceased mother Susan.

Myron did not leave any surviving children.

5. Milton G. Knickerbocker died in August of 1849

Milton G. Knickerbocker was the older son of Cornelius. He died in 1849.



Here is an excerpt from the probate for Milton G. Knickerbocker. The date is September 17, 1849. The text includes a very clear statement that Cornelius Knickerbocker was father of said deceased and sole heir and next of kin.

Cornelius Knickerbocker participated in the probate process. This proves that Cornelius outlived his son Milton G. Knickerbocker.

Milton G. Knickerbocker did not leave any surviving children.

*Ruliff was buried near his father.
Cornelius' two sons, Myron and Milton were buried on the west side of the road,
on Cornelius' farm. They were buried near Susan, their mother, who died in 1832.*

6. Cornelius Knickerbocker finalized his will in October of 1849

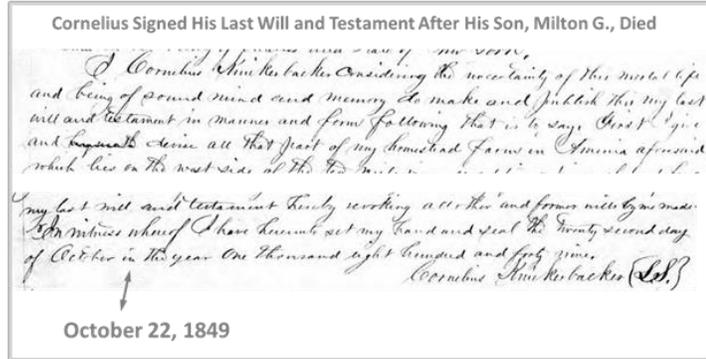
At first glance, it might seem like Cornelius Knickerbocker was a lucky man. His grandfather liked him, and left Cornelius control of the Knickerbocker lands in Amenia.

However, Cornelius did not lead a charmed life. His wife died at age 43, and his sons died at ages 30 and 44.

Cornelius was alone.

Cornelius signed his last will and testament in October, 1849.

The date is important. This was after the death of his son Milton G. Knickerbocker.



Cornelius Knickerbocker died in September 1850. (The transcription from 1903 claims that the tombstone said "September 12, 1850". The actual date might have been a few days earlier.)

The will of Cornelius Knickerbocker was short (about 520 words), but it was a mess.

Also I give and bequeath all the residue and remainder of my personal property after payment of my funeral expenses and all my just debts, and for a monument or gravestone similar to the one erected to the memory of my deceased wife to be procured and erected by my executors hereinafter named to my three sisters Dorcas, Mary, and Sarah if living share and share alike and if any one or more of my said sisters is now dead or shall die before me then the share of anyone so dead or dying before me I give and bequeath to the male heirs of such one so dead or dying.

Shown here is an example of an oddity in Cornelius' will.

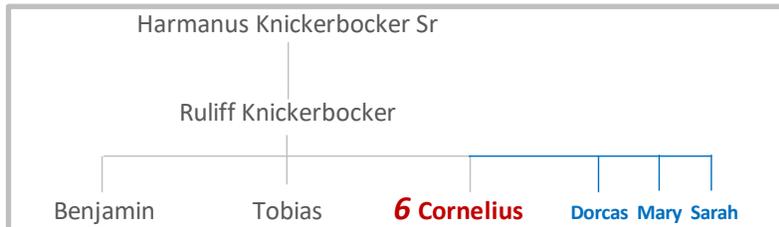
This rambling paragraph specified that Cornelius wanted a tombstone like his wife's. It also mentioned three of Cornelius' sisters.

Dorcas, Mary, and Sarah were to receive part of his estate "if living."

This was a nasty trick to play on the executors of the will.

Dorcas Knickerbocker Finch, the sister of Cornelius Knickerbocker, had been dead for about 20 years. It appears that nobody in Amenia knew how to find Dorcas' family.

The executors of Cornelius' will got lucky. The surviving sisters knew how to find Rufus Finch, the husband of the late Dorcas Knickerbocker, and knew the story of her children.



 The entire will of Cornelius Knickerbocker is shown in the appendix of this report

Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York

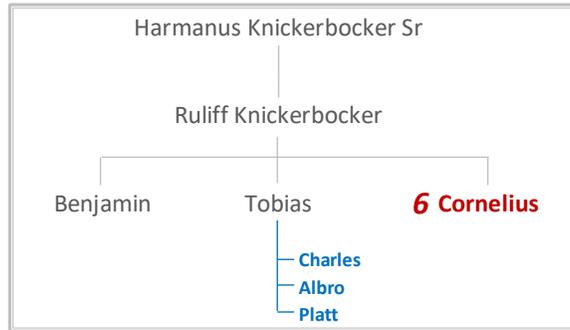
Parts of the probate process were very simple.

I give and devise to **Charles Knickerbocker and Platt Knickerbocker sons of my brother Tobias Knickerbocker** all the residue all the residue of said homestead farm lying on the east side of said ten mile river and also a four acre lot on tower hill adjoining John Binhem land on which four acre lot Cornelius Dutcher now lives to them their heirs and assign forever share and share alike upon condition that they pay to **their brother Albro Knickerbocker** three hundred dollars within eighteen months after my decease and comfortably support and maintain their father during his natural life.

Cornelius split his land holdings into two parcels. The smaller of the two parcels of land went to Charles and Platt Knickerbocker.

The portion of the will dealing with Charles, Platt, and Albro Knickerbocker is very clear.

There is no doubt that Cornelius was referring to his nephews.



The wording in the other key part of Cornelius' will is very confusing. Cornelius was not a lawyer. He wasn't very good at creating legal documents.

Shown below is the most important part of Cornelius' will. This was the very first item, and dealt with the larger parcel of land, including the house where Cornelius lived, and also one of the family burial grounds.

First I give and devise all that part of my homestead farm in Amenia aforesaid which lies
[...lengthy description of the location...]
to have and to hold the above parts of said homestead farm **to the said Milton Knickerbocker** his heirs and assigns forever except as above excepted and reserved upon condition that he pay within eighteen months after my decease to each of **his brothers Jonas Knickerbocker and James Knickerbocker** three hundred dollars.

The first time that Cornelius mentioned Milton Knickerbocker, he was called "the said Milton Knickerbocker." If Cornelius was in law school, he would have flunked. He forgot to tell us who he was referring to.

He also forgot to tell us anything about the identity of Jonas and James.

Notice that the will does not say "my son Milton" and also doesn't use a middle initial for "Milton." (Cornelius' son, Milton G. Knickerbocker, was already dead.)

Also notice that the will refers to Jonas and James as his brothers, not "my sons."

Who were Milton, Jonas, and James?

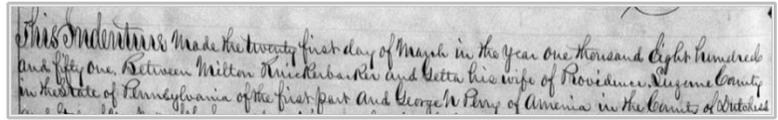
Fortunately, Dutchess County records give us the answer to this puzzle.

7. Milton Knickerbocker sold his inheritance in 1851

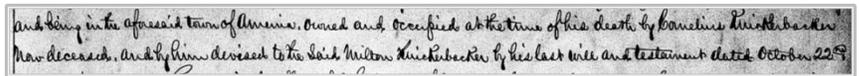
The executors of Cornelius' will had no problem finding Milton Knickerbocker.

In March of 1851, Milton Knickerbocker sold the land that he had inherited from Cornelius.

The key phrase in the deed is "Milton Knickerbocker and Getta his wife of Providence, Luzerne County in the state of Pennsylvania.



The lands that Milton sold were left to him by Cornelius Knickerbocker.



1850 Census, Providence, Luzerne, PA

	Jessie Kilmer	65	m
Helen	Milton	31	f
	John	19	m
	Samuel	15	f
	Hannah	8	f
Letty	Letty Knickerbocker	75	f
	Wm. M. Mott	39	m
	Abigail	40	f
	Mary	16	f
	Francis G.	13	m
	Henry	11	m
	Eugene	9	m
	Smith	7	m
Milton	Wm. G. Kilmer	39	f
	Milton Knickerbocker	48	m
	Esther	48	f
	Wm. H.	23	m
	Catharine	17	f
	Adeline	7	f

Milton Knickerbocker and his wife Gertrude were in the 1850 census in Providence, Luzerne, PA.

Just above Milton was an elderly lady named Letty Knickerbocker

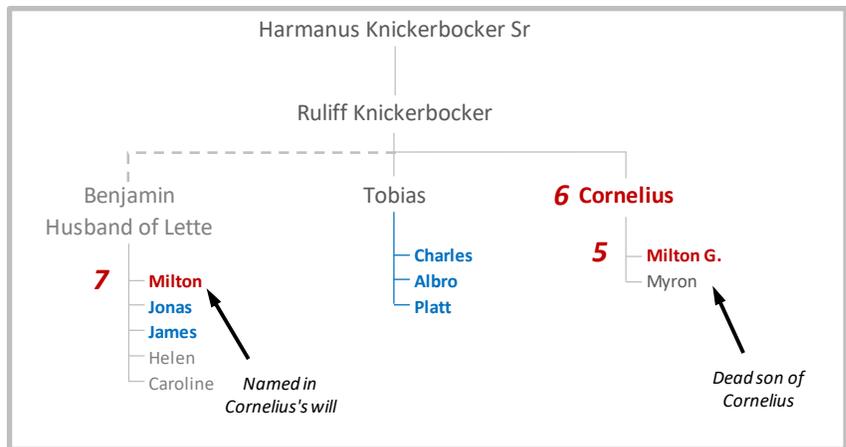
In this census record, Lette was 75 years old, and living with the family of Helen Kilmer.

Helen Kilmer's death certificate shows that she was the daughter of Lette Knickerbocker and Benj Knickerbocker.

So far, we have proven that Milton (the heir of Cornelius) was a different person that Milton G. (the son of Cornelius).

We have also provided a hint, based on the 1850 census, that Milton (the heir of Cornelius) might have been was the son of Benjamin and Lette.

Our story isn't finished yet.



Milton Knickerbocker died in 1866, and was buried in Galloway Cemetery in La Salle County, IL.

8. Charles & Platt Knickerbocker sold their inheritance in 1851

In 1851, Charles and Platt sold the land that they inherited from their uncle Cornelius.

9. James Knickerbocker received his \$300 by 1857

According to the will of Cornelius Knickerbocker, Milton Knickerbocker was supposed to pay \$300 to his brother, James Knickerbocker.

We don't know exactly when James received his money. However, we know that the \$300 payment was recorded in Dutchess County records in April, 1857.

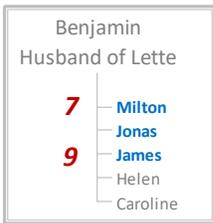
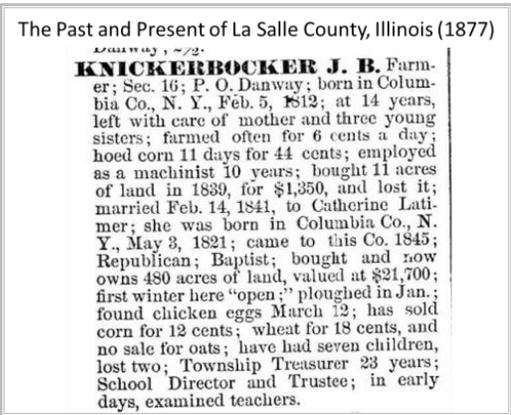
The documentation shows that this was James **B.** Knickerbocker. The witness for the transaction was a judge in La Salle County, Illinois.



James B. Knickerbocker of La Salle County is easy to trace. For example, shown here is his biography from a local history:

According to James biography, he was born in 1812, but lost his father at age 14 (i.e. in about 1826).

James had a sister named Caroline who also lived in La Salle County. Caroline's biography specifically said that she was the daughter of Lette Knickerbocker.



This proves the connection. Cornelius Knickerbocker left the largest portion of his estate to Milton, James B, and Jonas Knickerbocker. These were children of Benjamin Knickerbocker and his wife Lette.

This is a major surprise. Benjamin Knickerbocker and Lette Millius have been a long-standing mystery. Benjamin's origins have been hard to trace. Now, finally, we have proof that Benjamin and his children were tied to a specific line of Knickerbockers.

We should be very clear: The surviving portions of the probate files of Cornelius Knickerbocker completely ignore the marriage(s) of Benjamin Knickerbocker. The probate files also never describe Milton Knickerbocker as a nephew of Cornelius.

Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York

However, it is absolute fact that that Milton Knickerbocker was the single largest heir of Cornelius Knickerbocker. This only makes sense if Milton and Cornelius were closely related.

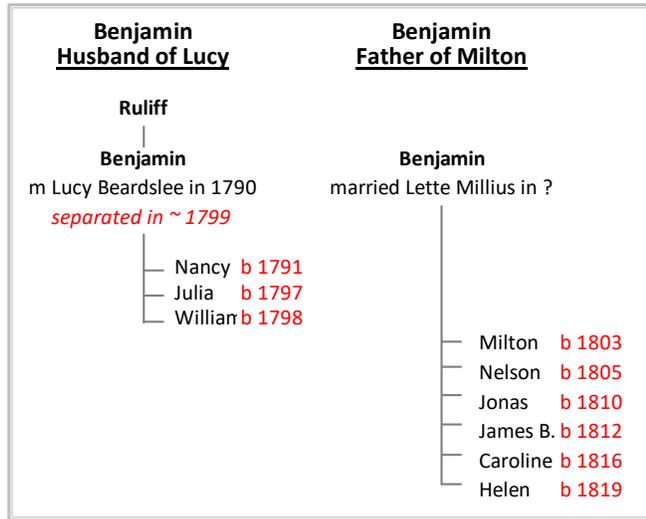
Shown here are the two families of Benjamin Knickerbocker. We have highlighted the key dates.

Notice that the birth dates of the children do not overlap.

According to Lucy, Benjamin left her in 1799. Lucy filed for divorce in 1810.

Milton was born in about 1803.

Milton and Jonas (of Luzerne Co PA) and James B. (of La Salle Co, IL) were beneficiaries in the will of Cornelius Knickerbocker.



The story seems clear. This man, Benjamin Knickerbocker, had two families. Benjamin separated from his first wife in about 1799. Benjamin started his second family in about 1803, which was long before his divorce was finalized.

Under the laws at that time, Milton might have been considered a bastard, with no right to any of Benjamin's property. Cornelius didn't care. Milton inherited the family farm.

Cornelius Knickerbocker might actually have been very clever. It seems strange that Cornelius never mentioned Benjamin in his will. However, this might have been intentional. Cornelius sidestepped any issues related to Benjamin's marriage(s), or Benjamin's oldest children, by giving his farm directly to Milton. Cornelius might have been smart to never mention Benjamin.

Of course, we don't know the full story. For example, what was Lucy Beardslee's role? (Was she unfaithful? Was William actually the biological son of Benjamin? And so on.)

We also don't know what Cornelius and Benjamin's siblings thought about these events.

Despite the uncertainties, the most important facts are very clear. Milton Knickerbocker of Luzerne, PA was the largest single heir of Cornelius Knickerbocker. Milton shared his good fortune with his brother James B. Knickerbocker of La Salle County, Illinois.

Jonas Knickerbocker was living in PA when he got his \$300 from Milton. Jonas and his descendants remained in the Scranton / Binghamton area Benjamin Knickerbocker died in about 1826. (Lette Knickerbocker was a head of household in 1830 in Gallatin, Columbia Co.)

10. Miles Knickerbocker left Amenia in about 1862

Miles was the only one of Tobias's sons who stayed close to home.

Unfortunately, though, Miles and his wife Julie apparently didn't have any sons who lived to adulthood.

Miles left Amenia in about 1862 and moved a few miles west to Pleasant Valley.

The departure of Miles Knickerbocker marked the end of the Knickerbocker presence in Amenia.

Harmanus Knickerbocker Senior arrived in Amenia in about 1758. His great grandson Miles Knickerbocker left Amenia in about 1862. Thus, the Knickerbockers were in the area for about 104 years.

The relatively short stay of the Knickerbockers was driven, in part, by the fact that Harmanus Senior left the family farm to Cornelius.

Cornelius probably planned to leave the farm to his sons. His plan didn't work out. Both of Cornelius' sons died. Cornelius left no descendants.

Tobias's story was very different. Tobias had seven sons who reached adulthood. However, they had no hope of inheriting the family farm, because Tobias had been bypassed. Tobias apparently never owned any land in Amenia. Thus, six of Tobias' boys moved away, in search of greener pastures.

(By the late 1800's, there were far more descendants of Tobias in the area near Ithaca, Tompkins County, than there were in the area near Amenia, Dutchess County.)

By 1860, the only remaining Knickerbocker in Amenia was Tobias' son Miles. Miles was apparently a successful farmer, and had enough money to buy land in Amenia. However, it didn't matter. Miles apparently never had children.

And so, the Knickerbockers were soon gone from Amenia.

Comparison with earlier studies

Some readers might be familiar with earlier studies of the Knickerbockers, such as William Van Alstyne's *The Knickerbocker Family* in NYGB&R.

Our description of Ruliff's family is very different from earlier studies.

For example, here is what Van Alstyne said about Cornelius:

Cornelius Knickerbocker (Rulef, Harmen, Laurens, Harmen Jansen), b. 1775; d. 12 Sept., 1850, aged 75 y.; m. Susanna Nase who d. 2 Feb., 1832, aged 43 y. and 6 m. They are buried on the Belden farm.

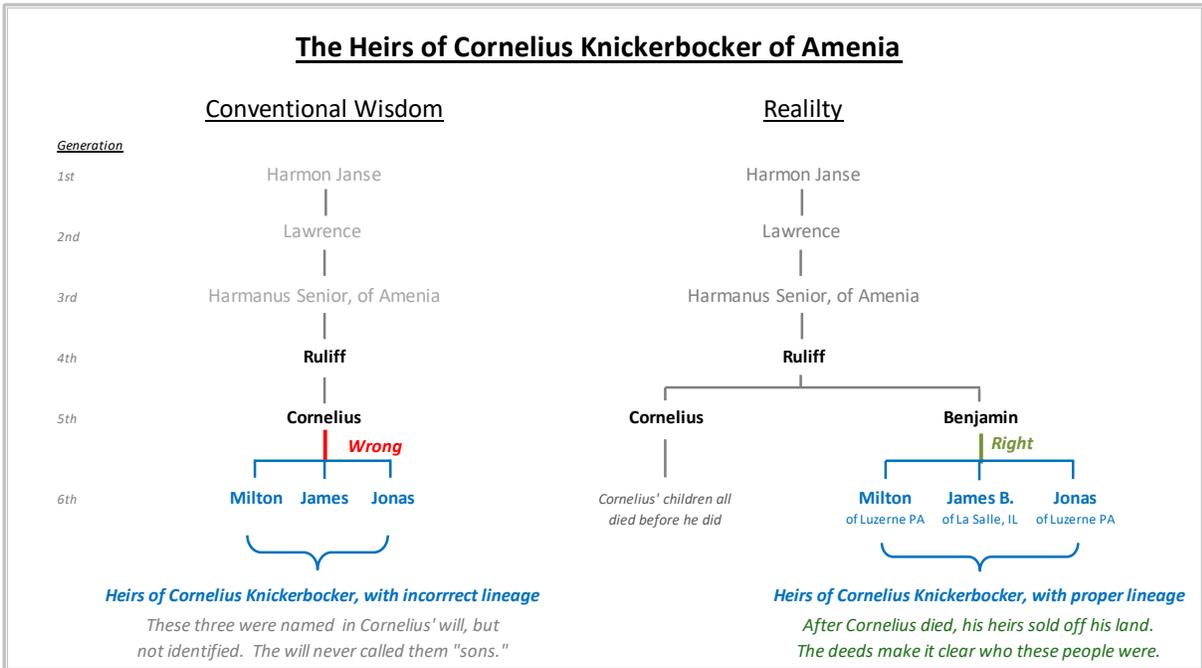
The will of Cornelius Knickerbocker of Amenia, N.Y., is dated 22 Oct., 1849, proved 28 Dec, 1850. In it he mentions Milton Knickerbocker and his brothers Jonas and James; Charles, Platt and Albro, sons of brother Tobias Knickerbocker, and sisters Dorcas, Mary and Sarah.

They had at least the following children:

- i. Milton G., d. 4 Aug., 1849, aged 44 y., 5 m.; m. Sylvia Dutcher. Residence, Amenia, N.Y.
- ii. Myron N., d. 20 May, 1841, aged 30 y., 5 m.; m. Caroline ----- . Residence, Amenia
- iii. Jonas.
- iv. James
- v. A daughter, m. George Hoofcut, Jr.

Van Alstyne was wrong, but we can't blame him. The situation was complex, and the records were scattered and confusing.

Shown below are two trees. The one on the left is the conventional wisdom, consistent with Van Alstyne and many family trees on Ancestry, etc. However, the conventional wisdom is wrong. The tree on the right is correct.



The Children of Ruliff Knickerbocker

We will discuss each of the eight children of Ruliff Knickerbocker. Each of them was mentioned in the will or probate for Ruliff's son Cornelius.

We will start with the five daughters of Ruliff Knickerbocker.

Lanor Knickerbocker, daughter of Ruliff ***wife of William Gould of Amenia and Bradford Co PA***

Lanor Knickerbocker is hard to figure out. Her husband, William Gould, had a common name. Her son, Asa Gould, is also often confused with other men having the same name and about the same age.

In the early 1850's, probate files for Cornelius Knickerbocker said that his sister Lanor was in Windham, Tioga County. In reality, Lanor once lived in Windham, Bradford County, PA, which is just south of the state line. By 1850 she had moved just north, to Nichols, Tioga County, New York.

Her husband William Gould was in the 1790 and 1800 census in Washington, Dutchess County, New York. He was in Windham, Bradford County PA, in 1840. He probably died in either Bradford County PA or Tioga County NY in the mid 1840's.

In 1850, Lanor Gould was living in Nichols, Tioga County, NY. She was 79. She was living with her son Asa Gould, her grandson Warren Gould, and her great grandchildren including Myron Gould.

Family trees on Ancestry contain an incredible amount of misinformation about Lanor and her family.

Sarah Knickerbocker ***wife of Benjamin Knight***

Sarah [Knickerbocker] Knight is mentioned many times in the probate files of Cornelius Knickerbocker. This was mostly because she nominated her son William G. Knight to represent her and collect her inheritance.

Sara was called "Sally" in most records.

Sally Knight was in the 1850 census in Owego, Tioga County, New York, living with her son William. Sally was still in Owego in 1855, living with her son William G. Knight and her grandson Myron Knight.

Sally died in 1856, and was buried in South Owego. The name on her tombstone is "Sarah."

Hannah Knickerbocker, daughter of Ruliff
wife of FNU Conklin

Hannah is impossible to trace, so far.

The executors of Cornelius Knickerbocker's will were searching for Hannah Conklin of Illinois. It doesn't appear that they ever found her.

Hannah was not mentioned in the will, so it's not clear why the executors wanted to find her. It doesn't look like the executors tried very hard, other than posting a legal notice listing her name.

We suspect the name "Conklin" was correct, but that the location (Illinois) was wrong. The executors were wrong about the locations of several people.

Mary Knickerbocker, daughter of Ruliff
wife of Asa Bentley

Mary was mentioned in Cornelius' will. The executors had no trouble finding her. She exchanged letters with the executors as part of the search for the family of her deceased sister, Dorcas [Knickerbocker] Finch.

Mary Bentley gave her son Richard power of attorney. Richard travelled to Amenia to pick up Mary's inheritance.

Mary Bentley, age 72, was in Queensbury, Warren County, in the 1850 census.

There is a Mary Bentley, widow of Asa Bentley, buried in Jenkins Cemetery in Queensbury, Warren County. She died in 1863.

Dorcas Knickerbocker, daughter of Ruliff
wife of Justus Finch

Dorcas [Knickerbocker] Finch was a challenge for the executors of Cornelius' will.

Dorcas is also challenge for us, and genealogists. There is an incredible amount of misinformation on sites such as Ancestry.

Sometime around 1852, Mary Bentley attempted to help in the search. In a letter to the executors, Mary said that Dorcas had been dead for more than 30 years. Mary said that Dorcas Finch's children were "Allen or Cornelius" plus Jane Ann, Justus, Ruloff, and Betsey, "5 in all."

Mary's last contact with the Finch family had been in the 1830's.

The executors then found Justus Finch, who had been married to Dorcas. He provided a sworn statement, and also showed a bible record that was examined by the Surrogate Court.

Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York

Unfortunately, the handwriting in the sworn statement is extremely faint, and the bible record is not shown in full.

We will summarize Justus Finch's statement here. It appears that this information has been overlooked.

Justus Finch stated that he and his family "removed from Dutchess County to Saratoga County about 49 years ago," i.e. in about 1803.

Justus Finch confirmed that he and Dorcas had five children.

1. Cornelius Finch was born April 11, 1799. "Cornelius" was his given name, but, according to his father, he preferred to be called John Allen Finch.

John Allen (Cornelius) Finch died on May 11, 1834 at Canton, St. Lawrence County.

On September 7, 1853, Spencer Finch, and his sister Jane Elizabeth Macentyre, wife of Danford Macentyre, of Stockholm, St Lawrence County, were paid \$182 by the executors of Cornelius Knickerbocker. Spencer and Jane were described as children of Cornelius (later called John Allen) Finch, and grandchildren of Dorcas Finch.

2. Jane Ann. The handwriting is hard to read. She was born Feb (?) 11, 1801, married Willard Smith (?) and was "now living." This is almost certainly Jane A. Smith whose husband was Willard Smith, in Lawrence, Saint Lawrence County in 1850. (Justus Finch, age 76, was living with them in 1850.)

3. Ruliff Finch was born Dec 29, 1805. According to his father, Ruliff died "some seven years ago" (i.e. around 1845). He left a wife and three children, Harriet, Helen, and John, in Bath, Steuben County. It appears that "Ruliff" was known as "Ralph" in his adult years. He is buried in Bath, Steuben County. His wife Mary Doty Metcalf and two of his children (John and Helen) were in census records in Bath starting in 1855. (According to Cornelius Knickerbocker's will, the male heirs of Dorcas should have received something. In this case, though, it's not clear if Ruliff Finch's children ever received anything. We can't tell.)

4. Betsey Finch. Justus Finch didn't give her birth date, but said " (Eri Horner) near Cambridge VT ." Eli and Elizabeth Horner were in the 1850 census in Cambridge, Lamoille County, VT. She was born about 1814. She died in 1865 and was buried in the South Cambridge cemetery.

5. Justus Finch, Junior, who apparently hadn't communicated with Justus Finch Senior in about 7 years, when he was supposedly near Cincinnati, Ohio. He is hard to trace.

Despite the claims of many Ancestry trees, these were the only children of Justus and Dorcas.

Benjamin Knickerbocker, son of Ruliff

We believe that Benjamin was the oldest son of Ruliff.

Benjamin is discussed in great detail in other parts of this report.

Cornelius Knickerbocker, son of Ruliff

Cornelius was the youngest son of Ruliff.

Cornelius is discussed in great detail in other parts of this report.

Tobias Knickerbocker, son of Ruliff

Tobias Knickerbocker had eight children.

1. Horace 1805-1874

The executors of Cornelius' will thought that Horace was in Tompkins County. We believe that he was actually the "Horace" who was in Sullivan County from the 1840 census through his death in 1874. His wife was Nancy Dickerson (1805-1893). They might have had two daughters, Caroline (m Charles Misner) and Adeline (m Charles Barton).

2. George 1806-

George was living with his younger brother Platt in 1850 in Tioga County. He was 46, but didn't appear to have a wife or family.

We believe he is the same man who was 75 miles farther north, in Mentz, Cayuga County in 1855. He was the second husband of Ann (mnu) Duncan. In both 1855 and 1860 George and Ann were was living with her "Duncan" children by her first marriage.

The last sighting of George and Ann is in the 1870 census, in Calhoun County Michigan.

3. Miles 1808-

Miles is the only son of Tobias who stayed close to home.

Miles was in Washington, Dutchess County in 1840, when he was about 32 years old. The household included a young male age 15-19, a young female under 5, and a young female age 15-19. None of these three young people has ever been identified. (Since Miles was only about 32, it is unlikely that the teenagers were his children.)

In 1850, Miles and his wife Julia were by themselves in Amenia. In 1860, Miles and Julia had Horace Phelps, age 35, and Julia Phelps, age 24. We don't think that Horace or Julia were descended from the Knickerbockers.

Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York

In 1870 and 1880, Miles and Julia were in Pleasant Valley and then Clinton, living by themselves.

Charles 1809-1882

Charles Knickerbocker is easy to trace. This is partly because he had money, bought land, and left a detailed will. His family can be found on almost any genealogy site. He moved to Tompkins County in about 1840. His children were Louise, William, Jane, James, Tobias, John, Alonzo, Francis, Josephine, and Helen.

Albro 1811-

Albro was in Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County, in 1850 with his wife Almira and children Mary, Platt, and Milton. Milton was shown as a newborn in the 1850 census, and apparently died young. By 1860 Albro was in Poughkeepsie with Almira, Platt, Mary, and a new daughter, Caroline. Albro and Almira then disappear.

Albro's son Platt eventually moved to Tompkins County and then to Homer, in Cortland County.

Platt 1816-

Tobias' son Platt was in Owego, Tioga County, before 1850. In the 1850 census George Knickerbocker was living with him.

By 1860, Platt was in Dryden, Tompkins County, where he spent the rest of his life.

Platt's children were Clay, Emma, Jennie, and Ella.

Platt's wife was Maria Upton. (Her maiden name was given in son Clay's obituary.)

Alfred G. 1818-

Tobias' son Alfred G. Knickerbocker was probably the wagon maker who was in Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County in 1850. His wife's name was Mary.

There is no indication that Alfred ever had children.

There was an Alfred Knickerbocker, wagon or carriage maker, in Putnam County in 1860 and Poughkeepsie in 1870. Mary, widow of Alfred, was in the Poughkeepsie city directory in 1895.

Aseneth 1820-

Aseneth Knickerbocker married Gershon McArthur. They lived their adult lives in Danby, Tompkins County. Their children were Alice, Anna, and Charles.

Appendix

The Will and Probate of Cornelius Knickerbocker

The will of Cornelius Knickerbocker played a huge role in helping us understand the family of Cornelius' father Ruliff.

Here is the entire will:

I Cornelius Knickerbocker considering the uncertainty of this mortal life and being of sound mind and memory do make and publish this my last will and testament in manner and form following that is to say First I give and devise all that part of my homestead farm in Amenia aforesaid which lies on the west side of the ten mile river excepting a piece of land for a public burying ground or yard north of a lane adjoining Taber Beldens land. Beginning at the south east corner of the burying ground as now fenced thence running westerly as the fence runs ten rods thence northerly eight rods thence easterly parallel with the first line ten rods. Thence southerly eight rods to the place of beginning and reserving the right of way in said lane from to and from said burying ground for all purposes of burying the dead and erecting monuments and also excepting and reserving a right which I hereby give and devise to Tabor Belden to lay and repair his water pipes crossing said farm he paying what damage he may do to any grain growing when said pipes are laid or repaired and going square across said grave yard to have and to hold the above parts of said homestead farm to the said **Milton Knickerbocker** his heirs and assigns forever except as above excepted and reserved upon condition that he pay within eighteen months after my decease to each of his brothers **Jonas Knickerbocker** and **James Knickerbocker** three hundred dollars. Also I give and bequeath to said **Milton Knickerbocker** all my household furniture and farm utensils

Also I give and devise to **Charles Knickerbocker** and **Platt Knickerbocker** sons of my brother **Tobias Knickerbocker** all the residue all the residue of said homestead farm lying on the east side of said ten mile river and also a four acre lot on tower hill adjoining John Binhem land on which four acre lot Cornelius Dutcher now lives to them their heirs and assign forever share and share alike upon condition that they pay to their brother **Albro Knickerbocker** three hundred dollars within eighteen months after my decease and comfortably support and maintain **their father** during his natural life.

Also I give and bequeath all the residue and remainder of my personal property after payment of my funeral expenses and all my just debts, and for a monument or gravestone similar to the one erected to the memory of **my deceased wife** to be procured and erected by my executors hereinafter named to my **three sisters Dorcas, Mary, and Sarah if living** share and share alike and if any one or more of my said sisters is now dead or shall die before me then the share of anyone so dead or dying before me I give and bequeath to the male heirs of such one so dead or dying.

And I hereby appoint Elegen M. Swift of Dover James G DeForest of Washington and George N. Perry of Amenia executors of this my last will and testament hereby revoking all other and former wills made by me.

Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York

There are several things about the will that seem inconsiderate.

Cornelius ignored his sisters Lanor and Hannah. Cornelius also ignored all of his nieces. For example, only Dorcas' sons were eligible to split her inheritance.

Cornelius also ignored many of nephews.

However, none of these seem like they would invalidate a will.

For a variety of reasons, though, the probate process was complicated. The executors decided that they needed to identify every one of Cornelius' siblings. The process they followed resembles the probate for somebody who didn't leave a will, or somebody whose will was challenged.

The executors sought out Cornelius' sisters, Lanor and Hannah, who were still living. It's not clear why the executors did this. In the end, there's no record of Lanor or Hannah actually receiving any of Cornelius' estate.

The executors also named the heirs of Benjamin Knickerbocker and Lucy Beardslee, even though none of them were mentioned in the will. The early portions of the probate files mention William, Nancy, and Julia. Again, it's not clear why the executors did this. In the end, none of these three received any of the estate.

Earlier we showed a Surrogate Court record from September 23, 1850. This form is the single best overview of Ruliff's descendants.



The overview presented in court names 21 people, compared to only 10 people who were named in the will:

	<u>Named in the Will</u>	<u>Named in Surrogate Court Overview</u>
Brothers	Tobias	Tobias plus Benjamin
Sisters	Mary, Sarah, Dorcas	Mary, Sarah, Dorcas, plus Lanor & Hanna
Nieces & Nephews	Charles, Platt, Albro	Charles, Platt, Albro plus Miles, Alfred, George Horace, Aseneth (from Tobias) Cornelius, Ruluf, & Jane Ann Finch (from Dorcas) William H. Knickerbocker, Nancy & Julia Barlow (from Benjamin and Jane)
	Milton and his brothers James & Jonas	<i>Milton, James, and Jonas were not mentioned in the Surrogate Court listing</i>
	10 people	21 people

The form listed all 8 of Tobias' children as potential heirs-at-law. This seems reasonable, if the executors thought that any of them might want to challenge the will. Consider, though, that assembling the list of Tobias' children was very easy. The children were born and raised in Amenia, and one of them (Miles) was still there. It didn't take much effort for the executors to slap together a list.

Benjamin was dead, so the form listed William H. Knickerbocker and Nancy & Julia Barlow as potential heirs-at-law. Again, this seems reasonable, in case one of them

wanted to challenge the will. Again, though, this was very easy for the executors: Nancy and Julia were still living in Amenia.

We need to point out that the executors were not perfect. The probate listing was filed on September 23, 1850, within a few weeks of Cornelius' death. The executors hadn't had time to learn about any events outside of Amenia.

For example, the form contains the names of two dead men: Cornelius Finch and Ruluf Finch. Both had been dead for many years, but the executors didn't yet know this, because both men died in far-off places.

The list also omitted Justus Finch, Junior. We suspect this was because Justus Junior never lived in Amenia. The executors didn't find out about the existence of Justus Junior until later in the probate process.

We don't mean this as criticism of the executors. Instead, we are setting the scene for the more interesting question:

Why aren't Milton, James, and Jonas mentioned on the September 23rd overview form?

There are three possibilities. We have ranked them from most likely to least likely.

1. The list was preliminary, and it was wrong. This is the most likely case.
 - The list was filed on September 23, 1850, as a kickoff for the probate process. This was only a few weeks after Cornelius died. The list was obviously written in haste. It included only the information that the executors had at their fingertips.
2. The executors weren't sure if Benjamin and Lette were ever legally married (i.e. they thought all of their children were bastards)
 - This is possible. Benjamin's divorce and subsequent shenanigans were probably well known in such a small town. However, this might be reading too much into the situation. The executors were busy with more immediate issues. There were crops in storage, and the executors needed court permission to sell the crops before they spoiled.
3. The executors thought that Milton, James, Jonas, etc, were the sons of a different Benjamin Knickerbocker.
 - This seems least likely, for the reasons discussed below.

Ruliff Knickerbocker of Amenia, New York

Option 3 – that there was a different Benjamin Knickerbocker involved – seems unreasonable.

The key to this puzzle is Milton Knickerbocker.

In the 104 year history of the Knickerbockers in Amenia, the three largest landholders were (1) Harmanus Senior, (2) Cornelius, and (3) Milton. It is hard to imagine how this could have happened unless Milton was a member of the family.

Thus, we believe that Milton Knickerbocker was the nephew of Cornelius Knickerbocker.

If Milton was the nephew of Cornelius, then Benjamin Knickerbocker must have had two families. We know that Cornelius' brother married and divorced Lucy Beardslee. He must have married – or at least lived with – Lette Mellius after he separated from Lucy.

This is strongly supported by the story that we have told here. But, as always, additional research would be helpful.

----- *End* -----