

HUDSON VALLEY VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

Washington County Tour

21 August 2010

WASHINGTON COUNTY, NEW YORK

The area of Washington County we will be touring today was settled in the 18th century by a number of distinctive cultural groups. Argyle's first settlers were Scots who came here and populated this land patent in the period preceding the American Revolution; they constituted a segment of a larger group which immigrated to America c.1738-40 from Argyllshire, Scotland. The Salem area, meanwhile, was populated before the Revolution by a large contingent of Scots-Irish colonists from Ballibay, Ireland, in addition to a substantial group of New Englanders from Pelham, Massachusetts. These two groups interspersed on a 25,000-acre patent. The towns of Cambridge, Jackson and Greenwich were settled predominately by New Englanders, with a number of Dutch and German families from earlier settled regions to the south moving into the area during the latter part of the 18th century. Hebron was first settled in the 1770s by members of the Highland Scotch 77th Regiment, veterans of the French & Indian War, and New Englanders from Rhode Island, among other areas.

Washington County remained somewhat of a remote frontier area at the time of the Revolution and bore witness to the conflict first hand, figuring prominently in Burgoyne's Saratoga campaign of 1777 and later lesser actions. The conclusion of the war brought stability to the region, at which time its agricultural potential and water-powered industrial interests could be developed unhindered. As for the immediate environs, this section of the Battenkill Valley between Greenwich and Salem was home to the noted Washington County historian and first New York State entomologist Asa Fitch, and likewise the family of Susan B. Anthony, residents of Battenville from 1826 to 1838.

Southern Washington County's architecture near the turn of the 19th century reflected its mixed ethnic composition and proximity to Dutch cultural areas to the south. This is expressed in the story-and-a-half houses and other bent-framed structures, illustrating the influence of Dutch construction methods and of builders familiar with them, and in the three-bay threshing barns and the center chimney houses—of both two-story form and the single-story Cape type—built by New Englanders. Log houses were a common dwelling type here in the settlement period; the village of Hartford was known as "Log Village" as late as the 1860s.

BATTENVILLE

Established as a mill site on the Battenkill in the early 19th century, Battenville is one of a number of hamlets which sprang up in connection with the harnessing of this river's water power. Mill villages such as Battenville, Center Falls and East Greenwich were developed as tightly clustered linear hamlets on the road adjacent to the river—the present day Route 29. This east-west route linked the county's primary north-south overland transportation arteries: the Lansingburgh-Whitehall Road (Route 40) and the Northern Turnpike (Route 22). The hamlets along this road undertook saw and grist milling and were sites of small-scale textile manufacturing and mercantile operations, and served as social and economic centers for outlying farms

Folsom-McLean House, c.1795 with subsequent modifications. Originally a hip-roofed dwelling of a type common in the region at the time; the original roof frame is embedded within the later gable form. The Folsom house was purchased c.1807 by Thomas McLean, one of five brothers who migrated to this area from New Jersey in the 1790s.

Battenville Tavern, c.1815; probably established by Thomas McLean at the time the hamlet's mill enterprises were first being realized; the north end is bent framed. The first recorded license for a tavern here was issued to McLean in 1817.

McLean Threshing barn, c. 1800; square-rule 3-bay threshing barn, later expanded with a fourth bay in characteristic fashion for this region. Badly deteriorated but still boasting an impressive swing-beam bent.

Anthony House, c. 1833. Built for the Anthony family and sold by creditors in the later 1830s following the failure of Daniel Anthony's mill interests in the economic decline precipitated by the Panic of 1837. The interior finishes and plan largely portray a 1860s reworking undertaken for the Haskin family. The northeast parlor does, however, retain its Anthony-period finishes.

LIVINGSTON FARMHOUSE, EAST GREENWICH c. 1800

The one and one-half story house was an established housing typology by the turn of the 19th century in this region, derived from Dutch construction precedents. The Livingston farmhouse was built on a rectangular, single-pile plan, with center hall flanked by a parlor and kitchen-keeping room, and one heated upstairs chamber.

WILSON HOUSE, HEBRON c. 1786

A characteristic example of a Connecticut Valley center-chimney house built c. 1786 for James Wilson and his family. Among the best remaining examples of its type in Washington County.

LUNCH BREAK IN SALEM

BLANCHARD HOUSE, SALEM c. 1797

Among the prominent houses of its era in this locale, this square-plan house with hipped-gambrel roof features a high-style façade with center pavilion and finishes indicative of the emergence of the Federal style, notably the southeast parlor, with its profuse use of composition ornament. General John Williams, the region's preeminent figure and landowner, contracted for the construction of the house as a wedding gift for his daughter Maria and son-in-law Anthony Blanchard following their marriage. General Williams' own house was situated a short distance to the east, where the school is now located.

ALEXANDER McNISH HOUSE, SALEM c. 1794

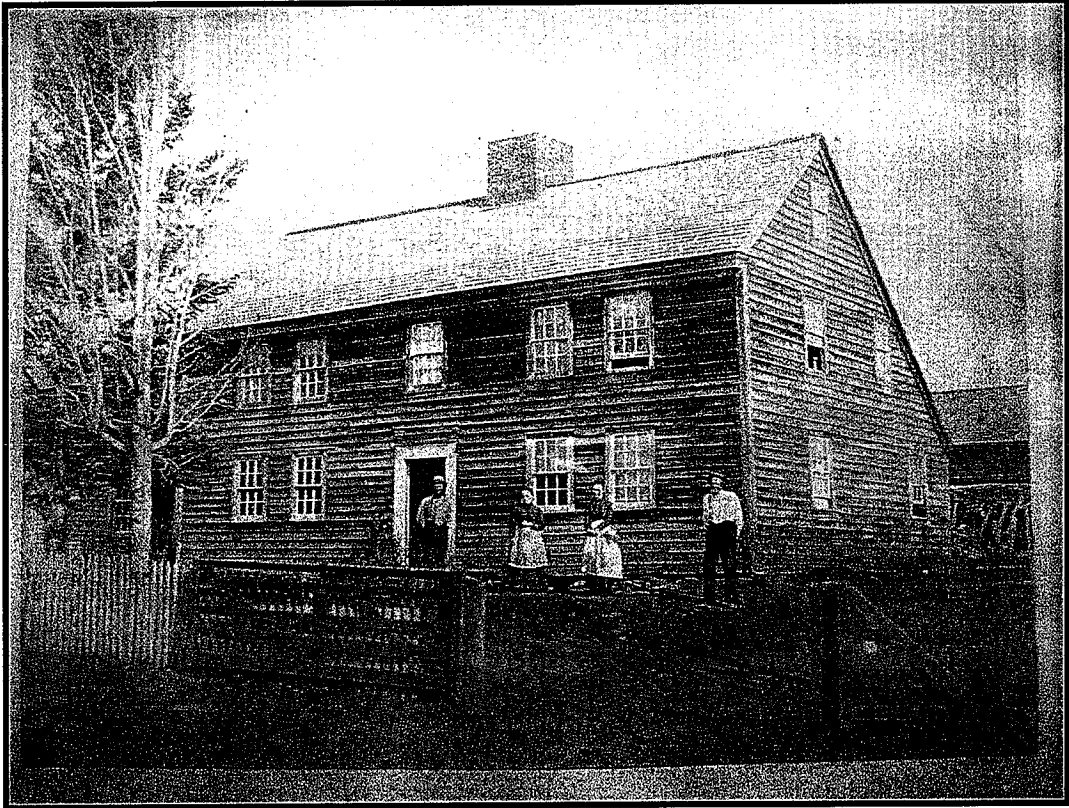
One of two brick houses of this type—built for the locally prominent McNish and Savage families—this house is representative of the better class of houses erected in Salem at the end of the 18th century. Finishes and plan reflect late Georgian precedents. The McNish family was part of the Scots-Irish migration to this area in the 1760s; the Savage family, meanwhile, was of French Huguenot extraction.

HILL FARMHOUSE, COILA c. 1800

An example of hybrid construction, this house was erected with a two-story bent frame, and features a variant on the three-way joint at the top plate and upper anchorbeam junction. A number of "compass roses" can be seen at the top of the stairs to the attic. The house was constructed in three phases, and retains an early indoor privy.

3-BAY SCRIBE RULE THRESHING BARN, O'DONNELL HILL FARM, JACKSON c. 1800

A three-bay threshing barn with one-bay addition, this is among the earlier barn frames thus far identified in the area, the older section featuring scribe-rule joinery and English tying joints. The house, meanwhile, another representation of the story-and-a-half dwelling in Washington County at the turn of the 19th century, was built with an English style braced frame and not a bent type frame, and was updated in Greek Revival fashion c.1840.



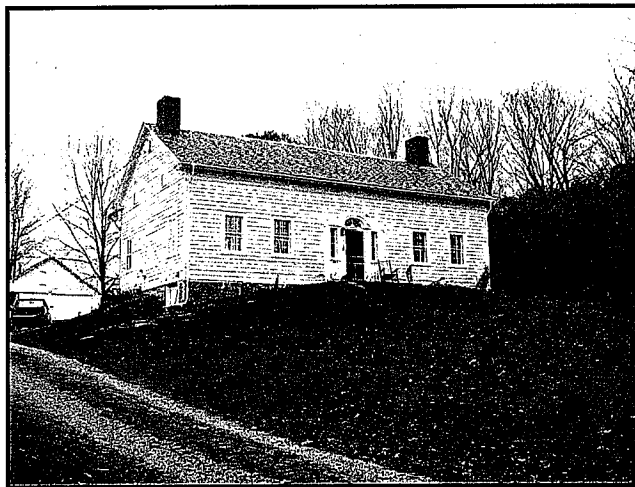
Wilson House, Hebron vicinity



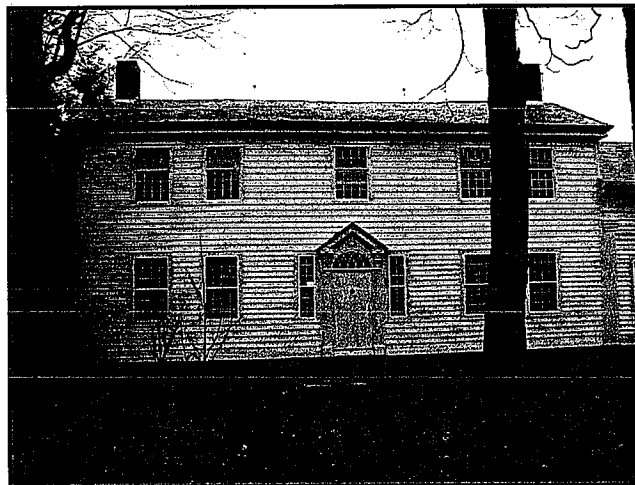
McNish House, Salem vicinity



Blanchard House, Salem



Livingston Farmhouse, East Greenwich



Folsom-McLean House, Battenville