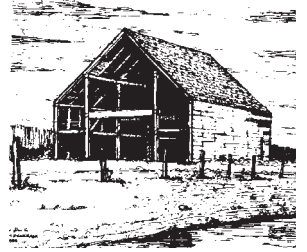


DUTCH BARN PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



FALL 2012

VOL. 25, ISSUE 2

Before the DBPS: A History of Research and Surveys

Walter Richard Wheeler

This issue of the DBPS *Newsletter* celebrates our 25th year as an organization. It seemed appropriate as part of this anniversary to recall some of the efforts that lead up to the establishment of the organization in 1986, and its chartering in the following year. This brief essay compiles a history of research and activities on the part of members of the DBPS before the organization started and offers a context for two formerly uncollected articles presenting results from early survey efforts, which are reprinted in this issue.

The earliest scholarly work that covered New World Dutch barns as a cultural resource in any critical way was published by Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker in his *The Founding of American Civilization*.¹ This book, which appeared in 1938, includes a substantial section on New World Dutch culture. The next major publication was the well-known work by John Fitchen, *The New World Dutch Barn*, containing the results of field work conducted in the 1960s.²

Charly Gering recalls meeting Fitchen after the publication of his book:

It must have been sometime in the 60s. I was unloading hay bales in the Dutch barn on my father-in-law's farm when Willis Barscheid pulled in with Fitchen. We had a nice talk and remember him saying that he regretted not having had a native informant such as Willis when he did his book because the farthest west he went in the Mohawk Valley was the Dutch barn in Nelliston along the Lack Kill. Both barns are now gone.³

Vince Schaefer appears to have been among the earliest scholars to attempt a systematic survey of a particular region. As noted in the article he wrote in 1971 and included here, Vince began collecting information on NWD barns in 1937. Vince Schaefer (1906-1993) is recalled by most people as the fellow who developed the notion of "cloud seeding," but will be remembered by many of our readers as one of the founders of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society, as a frequent contributor to the Newsletter and as editor of the *Dutch Barn Research Miscellany* from 1988 until 1992 (this series can be found on our website on the

Publications page). Vince also authored a book—*Dutch Barns of New York: An Introduction*—which details his long history of involvement with barns and their preservation.⁴ Vince's papers have been deposited at the M. E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives in the library at SUNY Albany, at his request. Among his papers are three cubic feet (as yet unprocessed) of research materials pertaining to New World Dutch barns.

Uncollected in his publications on New World Dutch barns is a lengthy article he published in a now-defunct Albany, New York newspaper, part of a series that he entitled "Five Rivers Rambles."⁵ It seems fitting as we complete our 25th anniversary year to republish this nearly-lost article, which comprises a history and survey of the barns known to Schaefer as of 1971. I have edited this piece only slightly—removing some passages which refer to photographs which were intended to have been included, but which were not printed with the article—I have inserted any other changes to the text within brackets. As published the article included two photographs of the Teller-Schermerhorn barn—with which Vince is closely connected—and a map showing the location of the 21 barns he had located (only 11 of which remained standing in 1971: even fewer remain today). We have redrafted this map, and I have provided new photographs to accompany his text.

Unfortunately, Vince's title for this article is still appropriate. Although New World Dutch barns are sturdy things, continuing changes in the field of agriculture and in patterns of land development contribute to the continuing precarious status of this vernacular icon. A threat which has grown during the past 20 years is the removal and re-appropriation of barns as playrooms and houses in areas which have no historical connection to the New World Dutch cultural hearth. Frequently the history of the barn is not conveyed to the new owner. The day may not be too far off when one might encounter the largest concentration of New World Dutch barns in Texas.

(continued on page 2)

Before the DBPS (continued from page 1)

Fitchen and Schaefer's efforts had much local impact, and appear to have inspired efforts by a number of other historians in Albany and Montgomery counties, in particular. Also providing an important and early support for the preservation of New World Dutch barns was the *Altamont Enterprise*: since the publication of Vince's paper it has continued to print articles supporting the preservation of these vernacular buildings in Albany County and in surrounding areas. Allison P. Bennett, now-retired historian for the Town of Bethlehem in Albany County, conducted a preliminary survey of New World Dutch barns surviving in her town, and published an article on the subject in the *Enterprise* in March 1972.⁶

Charly Gehring and Paul Flanders conducted a systematic survey of the towns of St. Johnsville and Palatine in Montgomery County in the early 1970s. Gehring was the site director at Fort Klock at the time, and a "small grant from a State funding source" was used to support the work. Charly recalls "Paul and I made a chart with measurements, features, etc., of ca. 38 barns. Most of them are now gone." Charly also wrote "a pamphlet describing the Dutch barn and its use in the agriculture of the Mohawk Valley around the time of the Revolution" and "curated a small exhibit of period agricultural tools, such as a *mathaak* and *zicht*."⁷

Another early survey effort was conducted by Clark Blair and the Montgomery County historian, working principally in Montgomery County, New York. Clark completed a survey which included approximately 30 New World Dutch barns.

John Wolcott was involved in efforts to document and preserve New World Dutch barns starting in the early 1970s, as well. He recalls his activities with the Committee for Dutch Barns, established in the mid-1970s.

Our committee didn't last long. There were only about five or six of us. I think it was Steve Ruthmann, Linda Champagne, the former Niskayuna Town Historian, Jackie Imai, and myself. Everett Rau may have been advising us—I don't quite remember—and Vince Schaefer too, anyway we were pretty much off and on in touch with them. The main thing that happened was the Guilderland Survey and its publication with a location map in the *Altamont Enterprise* in 1977....There was a good article in the *Gazette* around the same time.

One thing that was asked for in the *Enterprise* article was a Town Dutch Barn Protection District. Something that has never happened unfortunately and more barns have been removed from the Town or demolished since. In addition to the location map in the *Enterprise* article there were drawings of a typical interior frame for people to tell if they owned a Dutch barn or knew of one near them. During our survey I kept hearing things like: "Oh I know what a Dutch

barn is. It's those kind with the two turn roof, isn't it?" Or "Oh yes! I've seen lots of them in Pennsylvania." At a later time Russell Ziemba and some others formed the Historic Action Committee for the Capital District and this included concerns for local Dutch barns, and we even did some lobbying at the State Legislature for Dutch barn protection....

The article that John Wolcott wrote in 1977, detailing their survey and legislative efforts in Guilderland and Albany County, is the second of the two articles reprinted in this issue of the *Newsletter*. Other articles on the subject appeared in the *Schenectady Gazette* and *Albany Times-Union* newspapers. The results of the survey were later incorporated into a map depicting the location of historical resources, published by the Albany County Tricentennial Commission in 1983.

These activities, and those of other scholars such as Ruth Piwonka, Paul Huey, Rod Blackburn, and Shirley Dunn, were fueled by a resurgence of interest in all things Dutch in the New World which grew during the third quarter of the twentieth century. The Vernacular Architecture Forum held its annual national conference in the mid-Hudson Valley in 1986. While not concentrating specifically on barns, this event was important as a catalyst in the maturation of scholarship into New World Dutch cultural resources, particularly in the upper Hudson Valley. Two publications edited by Neil Larson resulted from the conference.⁸ Ruth Piwonka and Elise M. Barry conducted a survey of Columbia County resources at about this time as well.⁹ *Remembrance of Patria*, an exhibition held at the Albany Institute of History and Art in connection with the Tricentennial Celebration and curated by Roderic H. Blackburn and Ruth Piwonka, presented recent research on the material culture of the New World Dutch cultural hearth. The exhibition was mounted through much of 1986 and a catalog followed two years later.¹⁰

Ned Pratt has assembled recollections of some of the other activities which led up to the establishment of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society.

Shirley Dunn was teaching a class at the Albany Institute in the fall of 1986, about contracts for Dutch Barns in historic Court Records. It was one of a series funded by the New York Humanities program. In discussions in and after the class, the members often talked about how we were losing Dutch Barns. An informal meeting was set up by Shirley Dunn at the Schodack Town Hall, on October 10, 1986, which involved a number of these students/people attending the lectures, and this led to the formation of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society. Who was there? Shirley Dunn and Neil Larson were, and probably Randy Nash. Neil thinks that Paul Huey, Mark Peckham, and Ray Smith also attended. In December 1986, a savings account was opened by the Society. The first general membership meeting was held on January 25, 1987, at Crailo State Historic Site in Rensselaer, where Shirley Dunn was then working.

Forty-two members attended; officers were elected, and a constitution was adopted.¹¹

Shirley Dunn was elected first president of the DBPS. Among the first undertakings of the group was the documentation of the Guilderland barns identified by the earlier Committee for Dutch Barns survey. A report compiling the field notes of this survey was assembled by DBPS trustee and later president Mark T. Hesler in 1987.

From the beginning, a large contingent of our membership has been involved in “direct action,” promoting preservation through the renovation, repair and restoration of barns. Members of the Timber Framers’ Guild, begun in 1984 and chartered in the following year, were early contributors to the efforts of the DBPS; many of its members remain in our group.

With the establishment of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society, promotion of the documentation, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about New World Dutch barns and the material culture of the New World Dutch by its members began to be promoted beyond the early survey areas in Albany, Columbia, Ulster and Montgomery counties. Connections to historians and ongoing research in other parts of New York State, New Jersey, and the Netherlands have resulted in a body of preservation successes, research and published works of which we can justifiably be proud.

¹ Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker. *The Founding of American Civilization: The Middle Colonies*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1938.

² *The New World Dutch Barn*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968.

³ Charly adds: “I couldn’t remember the name of the farmer [who owned the Nelliston barn]. It wasn’t recorded in [Fitchen’s] book but it suddenly came to me. His name was Cap Lasher. When I was in grade school in Nelliston (40s and early 50s) he used to pass by our fence during recess with a load of manure in a very old wagon pulled by a horse. Fitchen notes that his barn was destroyed in 1965. I think it was a fire if I remember correctly. The barn on my father-in-law’s farm had been moved to the site as it was built at the top of a long slope so that a foundation for a stable with 12 stanchions could be accommodated below.” Email correspondence with Charly Gehring, 27 November 2013.

⁴ Published posthumously by the Purple Mountain Press, Fleischmanns, New York, in 1994.

⁵ “Five Rivers Rambles: Noble Old Dutch Barns Are Dwindling,” fourth in a series, *The Knickerbocker News/Union-Star* (Albany, NY), 22 September 1971, 3A.

⁶ “Dutch Colonial Barns in Town of Bethlehem [sic],” *Altamont Enterprise*, 17 March 1972, 3.

⁷ Email correspondence with Charly Gehring, 25-27 November 2013.

⁸ Neil Larson. *Ethnic and Economic Diversity Reflected in Columbia County Vernacular Architecture*. Kingston, NY: Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1986 ; and *The Masonry Architecture of Ulster County, New York: An Evolution, 1665-1935*. Kinderhook, NY: The Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1986.

⁹ Ruth Piwonka and Elise M. Barry. *A Study of Ethnic Pre-Federal Architecture in Columbia County, New York*. Kinderhook: Columbia County Historical Society, n.d. [c. 1985]

¹⁰ *Remembrance of Patria: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America, 1609-1776*. Albany, NY: Albany Institute of History and Art, 1988.

¹¹ Ned Pratt, written in November 2013.

Noble Old Dutch Barns are Dwindling

By Vincent J. Schaefer



Photo 1: The Delmont-Wemple barn, Dunnsville. Photo by Nelson E. Baldwin, HABS.

As a youngster living in the Bellevue area of Schenectady, I spent a goodly portion of the summer-time working on farms in the vicinity. My first job was picking peas on the Roy Vincent farm on the Great Flats

along the Mohawk near Schonowe where I now live on Schermerhorn Road.

I’ll never forget how frustrating it was to fill the last two inches of the bushel basket. I guess the weight of the pea pods kept pushing down and filling all of the air spaces contained in the lower part of the basket. This is probably the time when I first began to understand the concept of “close packing” that we later utilized at the GE Research Laboratory in developing molecular concepts in surface chemistry! Following my short-lived job in the pea patch, I graduated to operating a hay rake along the Normans Kill, picking strawberries along the Aplaus Kill, and later stowing hay in the barn on that same place—the Snyder farm at the High Mills. It is the farm barns of our region that I encountered in my summer wanderings that I would like to discuss in this essay.

A youngster has missed a marvelous experience if he has not climbed through a hay mow half stuffed with

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Noble Old Dutch Barns *(continued from page 3)*

fragrant new-mown hay, or slept with the sweet aroma of cured hay surrounding his “bedstead,” or searched for a hen’s nest hidden below the eaves, or perhaps had the thrill of jumping from an upper level into the springy cushion of five feet of loose hay, or heard the road of a thunder shower or the soft whisper of a drizzle on the slanting roof and perhaps experienced the shock of a stream of cold water suddenly cascading down his neck from a hole in a wooden shingle!

Every farm in the Five Rivers area had a barn of some sort—some of them had several—and on the older homesteads they probably were built at successive periods as the need developed. The most spectacular of the barns of our region were the “Dutch” barns, some of which were constructed in the late 1600s and the 1700s until about the end of that period or into the early 1800s. These were succeeded or in some cases supplanted by what some people call the “German” barns, I presume because of the farmers from the Palatinate of Germany who moved up the Hudson and Mohawk valleys and then into the Schoharie, where they settled the early “dorfs” of that beautiful valley.

Much information about the structure and history of these early barns has been assembled by Professor John Fitchen of Colgate University in his book, *The New World Dutch Barn*, published by the Syracuse University Press in 1968.¹ Persons interested in the structural details of these fascinating barns should read this well-written book. Unfortunately, although I told the author how to find the Wemple barn on the upper Normans Kill (Photo 1), which is one of the finest of these ancient structures still in active use, he never returned to learn about others that I have photographed and studied for many years. His book records only three of these barns in the vicinity of Albany and Schenectady, which were the main settlements of the Dutch, who were primarily



Photo 2. The Schermerhorn barn, Photo by G. W. Allen and A. I. Delahanty, 1937, HABS.

responsible for the construction. To supplement his records, I have prepared a map of our local region that adds a number of barns that he missed or was not informed about along with the three that he has recorded (Figure 1).

Unfortunately, of the 21 on my map, only 11 remain standing [as of 1971], the others have burned or were torn down during the last half-century [i.e., since 1921], which spans my personal interest in the subject. Two of the finest examples of Dutch barns were located along Schermerhorn Road in the small settlement called Schonowe just north of the GE plant in Schenectady. One was located on the old Burdeck farm, subsequently owned by the Bigwoods and currently by the Raz family. According to local tradition, this barn was sought by Henry Ford to be transported to Dearborn Village near Detroit at about the time he purchased the Mohawk River camp of Dr. Steinmetz and moved it to that location. Shortly after his purposed offer was refused, the barn burned, leaving nothing but the tradition.

The other was the Teller-Schermerhorn barn, which was owned by Clarence Schermerhorn and used for many years by Charlie Myers as a horse barn (Photo 2). This barn was a magnificent structure. As a young man I had fond hopes of acquiring it and converting it into a museum of early barn architecture. Unfortunately, the roof covering was neglected for a number of years and eventually the large roof rafters became rotted as rainwater seeped onto the timbers so that fungus growth finally destroyed them. Since they were nearly 50 feet long and there were 22 of them, it was quite impossible to replace them. Since the anchor timbers, columns, siding and some of the lesser timbers and flooring were

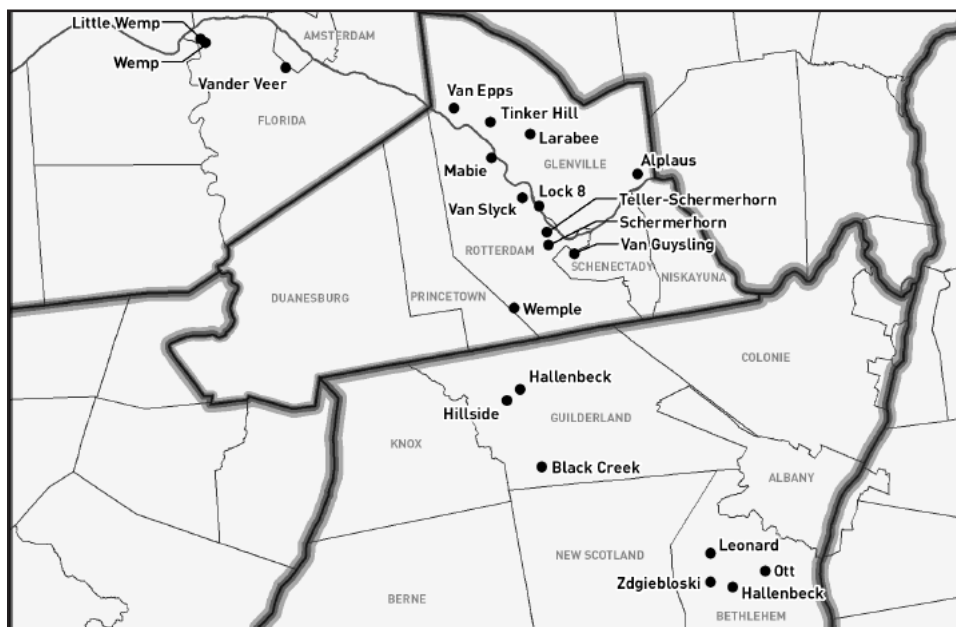


Figure 1. Vince Schaefer’s survey (map redrafted by Tracy Shaffer Miller, 2013).



Photo 3. A recent photograph of the Paul Schaefer house.

still sound, I purchased the barn and dismantled it [in 1948].

After removal of the deteriorated roof boards and rafters, the white pine siding, the studs and the basic skeleton of the barn were salvaged, much of it was used in the construction of my own home on Schermerhorn Road, which is patterned after the Dutch farm house of the Great Flats, very much like the Bradt House down the road a few hundred yards from my location. The big timbers became the frame of a large library room that my brother, Paul, added to his home on St. David's Lane (Photo 3).²

In taking down the Schermerhorn barn, I was greatly impressed as to the simplicity of design and construction of these great barns and their inherent stability. Knowing something about pulleys and levers, I can't help but agree with Professor Fitchen that two or three persons could have erected the massive structure without the need for a barn-raising bee, as would be the case with the design of the latter "German" barn, whose roof had a lower pitch and thus the basic frame was higher and much more complicated in design.

The large doors that opened to admit a team and loaded hay rick swing on wooden hinges. These also were distinctive but often were supplanted by "modernization" through the use of long strap hinges or sliding doors, as with the C. Schermerhorn barn that I salvaged. Invariably, however, careful examination would show the slots in which the wooden hinges were located before being abandoned in favor of a new and perhaps more convenient design.

The strength and centuries-long durability of the Dutch barns were due to the three, four or five [or even more] anchor beams around which the structure was fashioned. These were truly of massive dimensions, having horizontal cross-sectional width ranging from nine to 12 inches, with vertical thickness of 14 to 22 inches, and lengths of 20 to 32 feet. Huge trees, of a size no longer to be found in our region, were needed to supply such beams. As might be expected, most of these big timbers were of white pine, although hemlock, pitch pine, oak and even basswood were used. In most instances the timbers were adzed to shape. In a few cases they were further smoothed by plane or draw

shave. Some were finally finished by chamfering the edges in the same manner. It was the way in which the anchor beam was fitted into the vertical column that makes these structures "things of beauty." The anchor beam ended on either end with a vertical tenon (tongue) about two feet long and having the full depth of the beam. This was inserted into a mortise cut into the column, which itself was of massive dimensions—generally having a cross-section about a foot square, though sometimes smaller.

Not only was the tenon carefully fitted to the mortise, but it projected a foot or more beyond the outer surface of the column, and was then snugged "home" with two large, slightly tapered hickory wedges of rectangular cross-section. Before these were driven in, however, it was necessary to insert the tenons of the anchorbeam braces into the shallower mortises cut into the underside of the anchor beam and the inside of the column. Once assembled and with the rectangular wedges driven snug, holes were bored to accommodate hickory pegs—three through the column and the anchor beam tenon and one to three more at either end of the anchor beam braces, depending on their size.³ So well were these timbers fitted that those that have survived fire and other destructive forces are mostly as solid and true as when first assembled.

The iron hinges used on the smaller doors of the Dutch barn were a work of art—simple, functional, but an example of black-smithing par excellence....A very much fancier pair of hinges that I purchased years ago from Pete Morford of Fultonville was said to have come from a Dutch barn near Palatine Bridge.⁴ The pattern is more like the hinges seen on early German structures, and I am inclined to doubt it was of Holland Dutch origin. I have never seen any others like it in the Dutch barns of the Mohawk Valley area. Some years ago, in the vicinity of Vischers Ferry on the north side of the Mohawk River [in Saratoga County], I found some iron hinges having the rounded features of the Dutch hinge but presumably made by a local smithy who didn't know how to "spread" the hot iron to form the circular plate-like pattern that is so characteristic of the true Dutch hinge.

About 15 years ago [c.1955] I had an interesting experience related to this type of hinge on my first (and only) visit to the ancient fortified town of Visby on Gotland [part of Sweden] out in the Baltic Sea. My guide was Professor Carl-Gustaf Rossby, one of the great meteorologists of the world, who was born on Gotland. En route to the island I learned that Visby still possessed many homes and other structures that were built in the 1600s. Although Visby was one of the great outposts of the Hanseatic League, I had a hunch that there might be some "Dutch" hinges on some of the buildings. Thus I made a sketch of a Dutch hinge and told my friend that I expected we might find some of them in Visby. Imagine my satisfaction and my friend's amazement, when, as we passed through the great wall surrounding

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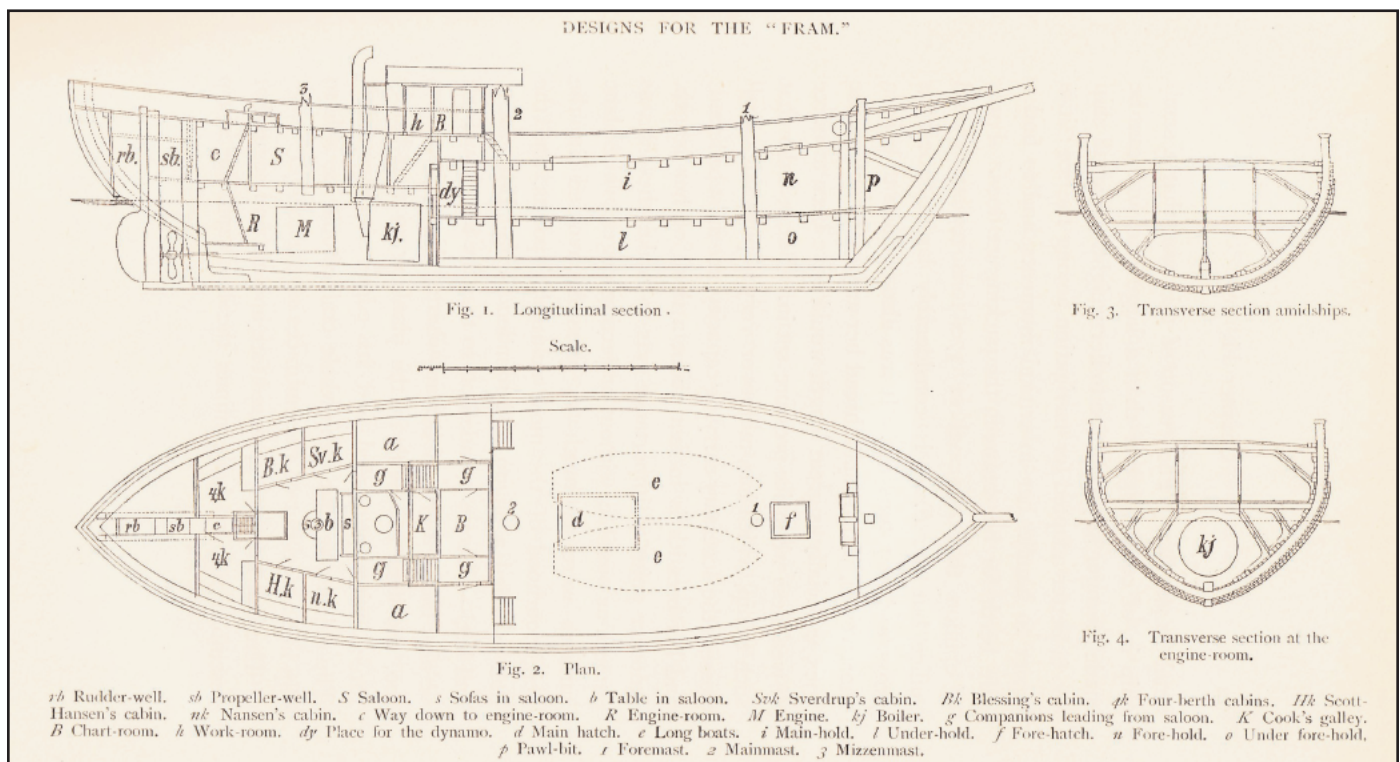


Figure 2. Plan and sections of the Fram (from Fridtjof Nansen. *Farthest North* [London: Constable & Co.], Vol. 1, 61.)

the town, the first door we saw swung on Dutch-type hinges!

Another distinctive feature of the Dutch barn is the angle and length of its roof and the tendency for the lower edge of the roof to be much closer to the ground than the barns that were built at a later date. The combination of their width, which ranges between 45 and 55 feet (averaging about 47 1/2 feet), and low eaves gives the barn a profile that is quite distinctive and suggests its origin when the knowledgeable observer is still a long distance away. The included angle of the roof on more recent barns is more than 110 degrees (an increase of 12 to 15 degrees from earlier barns) to accommodate the higher ground-to-eaves dimension.

I have often wondered about the builders of our Dutch barns. Without question they were master craftsmen. Some years ago I had a chance to see the understructure of the "Fram" in Oslo, Norway. This famous ship used by Nansen in his attempt to sail across the North Pole by permitting the Fram to be frozen into the drifting Artic pack ice, had many structural features that reminded me of the jointing of the Schermerhorn barn (Figure 2).

It would be a fascinating study for a graduate student in architecture, sociology or some similar discipline to make comparative studies of this subject. I have little doubt in my mind that the building of barns and sailing ships had many features in common. It would be fun to find out if my hunch is a valid one.

A number of minor items such as small door wooden hinges, wood latches with latch springs, hasps and fas-

teners have survived the years, either in current use as collector's items or in photographs.

Starting in 1937, I took photographs of the barns and their interiors in the vicinity of my home and those entered on my exploratory trips throughout the Five Rivers area. Thus I have considerably more than 100 photographs of these unique barns, many of which have since disappeared. Much credit is due to previous owners who have kept their barns in good repair and functional. Unfortunately, the fate of the Dutch barns remaining in our region is precarious.

With the decline of agriculture in the Mohawk-Hudson area, the need for these large structures for the storage of hay and grain is no longer of importance. Once a barn is no longer used for the storage of crops and the protection of animals, there is a tendency for the owner to neglect repairs, roof leaks and similar problems, until finally from carelessness, neglect or economic pressure, the barn burns, decays or becomes the prey of the bulldozer. This latter device can reduce even the sturdy Dutch barn to a heap of splinters within a few hours. A few of these noble structures should be declared national landmarks and be suitably protected before it is too late.

1 This book was published in a second edition, with additional material by Greg Huber as *The New World Dutch Barn: the Evolution, Forms, and Structure of a Disappearing Icon* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

2 This house is now owned by Union College.

3 Some of the descriptions of construction practices presented here do not accord with recent research.

4 Unfortunately no image of this hinge type was included in the article.

Guilderland Is A Treasure Trove of Dutch Barns

John R. Wolcott¹

"A good valuable farm for sale, with a Dutch built barn." So read occasional ads in an Albany newspaper in the 1790's and in the early years of the nineteenth century. Of course this was one farmer selling to another, and everyone knew what a Dutch barn was. That this was mentioned in the ads indicates both that the Dutch barns were highly regarded and were good selling points for farms, and that other barn styles were appearing in the Capital District. Today, ads appear in papers that read something like this: "Barn wood for sale," or "Wanted to buy: scrap beams and boards from old barns."

The fact that most people today don't know what a Dutch barn is, the general abandonment of farms, and the idea that if you've seen one old barn you've seen them all, can

be disastrous for historic barns. Almost as disastrous has been that the knowledge of Dutch barns is limited to certain wealthy, educated New Englanders, a very few local people, and...barn mover[s] and rebuilders...

It is true—in varying degrees—these barns are in need of repair. This is because, generally, the barns sought after are no longer owned by farmers and have fallen into disuse. In the case of the recent owners of the barns just removed [in 1976], the land around the barns is let out for cultivation to neighboring farmers and the barns could have been rented out. In the case of one of them, the farmer using the land said that he would like to have rented the barn for extra hay storage, but the roof was too leaky. Furthermore, although the owner of

the latter barn is a member of the Guilderland Historical Society, the Society was not informed beforehand of the disposal of the barn.

It has recently been discovered, through the joint efforts of the Guilderland Historical Society and the Committee for Dutch Barns, that Guilderland has a larger number of Dutch barns than any other community in the Albany area. Some may hold Guilderland's Dutch barns cheap because of their number, but I hope not.

The Town of Guilderland was established in 1803 and its name reflects the Dutch origin of the area. It is named after the Province Gelderland in the Netherlands. Its name was chosen in honor of the Old World home of the Van Rensselaer family, who founded the colony of Rensselaerwyck, from which the present Albany and Rensselaer counties were formed. Guilderland means "land of worth or value." If we think of value in terms other than money, then Guilderland's Dutch barns must be considered its richest historic treasure.

It had been thought that colonial Dutch architecture had practically disappeared in Albany County. The City of Albany is bemoaning the fact that it has only one or two vestiges of urban Dutch architecture as tokens of its origins. Guilderland has a rare opportunity to preserve and profitably use a group of Dutch buildings that can be said to be characteristic of the community. The town could become famous for its barns, and proud of them.

Already famous locally is one barn associated with an event at a crucial point in the American Revolution. In August of 1777 a large group of Tories planning to intensify and enlarge their raids behind rebel lines in this hey area were captured in the barn of Nicholas Van Patten on the Normanskill. This would have

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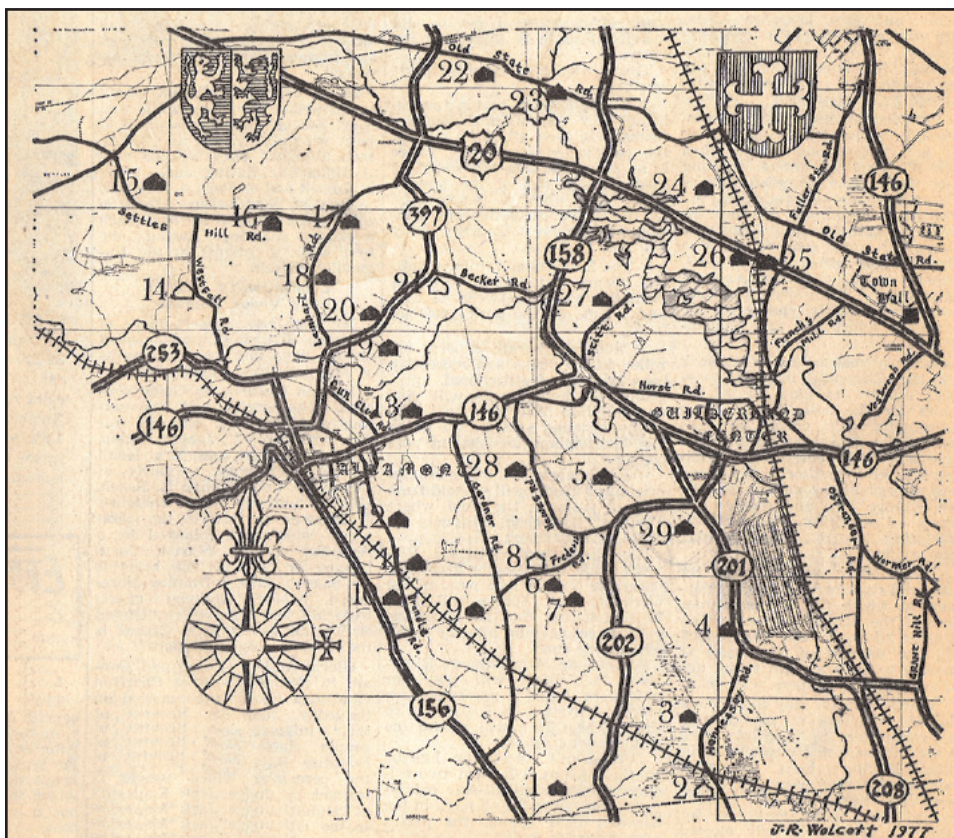


Figure 1. "Locations of Dutch Barns in Guilderlandt" (J. R. Wolcott 1977). A key provided with this image gives the names of most of the owners in 1977. 1. Keith Fryer, 2. James Truax, 3. Hideshige Imai, 4. Ken Rivers, 5. Mrs James Zaremski, 6 and 7. Brock Farnsworth, 8. John Fyffe, 9. Malcom Bell, 10. Marshall Crouse, 11. Farnk Hildreth, 12. Art Crouse, 13. Richard Ferraioli, 14. Robert Whitbeck, 15. Ernest Rau, 16. John Stewart, 17. Everett Rau, 18. Reid Lainhart, 19. ---, 20., John Abbruzzese, 21. Anna Anthony, 22. ----, 23. Leo Beliveau, 24. Arthur Knaggs, 25 and 26. ---, 27. Mrs. John Schneider, 28. J. J. Rappant, 29 and 30 -----.

been a Dutch barn, and Bill Emblar, Jr., of Guilderland has some particular knowledge of it. Mr. Emblar has reason to believe that the original barn was move some years ago to a location on or near Route 146, near Altamont. This information should be pursued.

It is one thing to eulogize American civilization and local history during the Bicentennial; but we need to do something about preserving the monuments of the area's agricultural origin, and to promote public spiritedness, and community pride and cooperation. Some initial measures have already been taken to preserve Dutch barns in the area. In addition to the Guilderland Dutch Barn Survey, the Albany County Environmental Management Council made a commitment in 1976 to inventory all the Dutch barns in the county, and to seek means for their preservation. This was in keeping with Local Law 8, passed by the Albany County Legislature in August of that year.

This law reads in part: "It is further declared that certain open

spaces and historic sites and buildings should be preserved for the benefit of the residents of Albany County and that expenditures made for support and implementation of this policy are a proper County charge....The interest of the County can be that of ownership, or rights of lesser degree such as open space easements, or easements calling for the maintenance and preservation of historic sites and buildings." Section 7 of Local Law 8 concerns farmers: "Whereas farming is considered a right and proper use of such lands heretofore mentioned, and that such use is in keeping with the historical and ecological preservation of such lands, therefore, be it resolved, that all land buildings used for agricultural production, as defined in Section 301 of the New York State Agricultural and Markets Law shall be exempt from any condemnation proceedings initiated pursuant to any applicable law of the State of New York." The Council has also promised to seek information concerning financial aid for those needing it to repair Dutch barns....²

Everett Rau, a Guilderland farmer and owner of a Dutch barn, has been encouraging and willing to share his knowledge and insights on the origins, uses, and repairing of Dutch barns. The Committee for Dutch Barns is willing to find preservation-minded buyers or tenants for Dutch barns, and to help plan viable alternate uses for them. It is hoped that those disposed to part with these, or other irreplaceable cultural resources of the community, will in some way give the public area first choice and first chance....

Prototypes of these barns are all considered national landmarks in the Netherlands, and in the Province of Gelderland. Can Guilderland, New York, do less?

1 Originally published in the *Altamont Enterprise and Albany County Post* on 24 June 1977 (pp. 1 and 4), and reprinted here with their permission. The article is reproduced here with minor edits.

2 Editor's note: attempts to find information regarding this council's subsequent activities have met with little success.

DUTCH BARN PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



This newsletter is printed by the Dutch Barn Preservation Society, a non-profit organization incorporated by the Regents of the State of New York.

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