

After lunch in Cohoes and an introduction to the town by the Spindle City Historic Society, who publish a very good newsletter, we visited the historic Van Schaick Mansion, recently acquired by the Daughters of the American Revolution. It is located on Cohoes Island in The Hudson River. It is probably from the same period as the Fonda House. It is also a timber frame building with a veneer of brick and a gambrel roof. The center hall retains its decoratively turned balustrade and paneling. The ceilings are plastered. Its large front door is two-part with pad-hinges and interesting latches and locks. The Van Schaick house was built by people of wealthy. The Douw Fonda house for a tenant farmer. The framing for the gambrel roof in the Van Schaick Mansion is very similar to the Fonda House.

The DBPS held its annual meeting in the Van Schaick Mansion. President, Keith Cramer announced that the Society had been granted \$25,000 by the W.K.Kellogg Foundation to fund their Dutch Cultural Resource Survey. Half of the grant will go for a Volunteer Coordinator, someone who will coordinate the volunteers. The Mabee Farm will serve as the Survey's office and archive.

Peter Sinclair of HVVA requested \$1,500 for the Barn Repair Workshop, planned for May at the Dutch barn on the Palatine Farmstead in Rhinebeck, Dutchess County. The workshop will continue the work begun last summer that was supported by the DBPS with a \$1,000 gift. Bob Andersen asked that HVVA submit a short article with pictures of last year's workshop and plans for the barn.



Van Schaick Mansion
Cohoes Island, Albany County, NY

Saturday, March 18 In the morning, John Stevens drove over from Connecticut to give a talk and signed books at the Ulster County Historical Society in Marbletown. It was well attended. By the time a few of the group left for the Columbia County Historical Society, in Kinderhook, to hear a talk on the restoration and archaeology being done on the Van Allen House, the crowd was so involved in conversations that it had no time to hold an HVVA meeting.

Sunday, March 19, I drove with Alvin Sheffer to hear Wally Wheeler's talk on the Dutch houses in the Town of Colonie, Albany County. it includes Cohoes. Colonie was part of the large and successful manor of the Van Rensselaer family, a vast estate of tenant farmers and prosperous grist mills, a territory that makes up a large part of present day Albany and Rensselaer Counties. Wally and the staff of Hartgen Associates have been studying the New World Dutch architecture of the town. They believe there are only ten to fifteen 18th century buildings still standing. Some of these have been tentatively identified by using 18th century road maps and overlaying them on Government Geodetic maps. Some of these overlooked houses are hiding behind modern siding and alterations.

We learned more interesting things about the two Cohose houses we had visited on Friday. Wally showed a floor plan drawing of the Fonda House making its present form much clearer. There are still questions about how the house was originally used and arranged.

Wally has discovered that the water table of the Van Schaick house was capped with pieces of clay pan-tiles, giving it a molded look. The water table is a 2-inch enlargement of the foundation that forms a ledge all around a stone or brick building at floor level. Often the top bricks are molded or rubbed round on the upper exposed edge. The water table seems to be for style rather than function. Loren McMillan pointed out that often foundations of stone houses measure 2-feet thick and walls above the water table, 22-inches. Little is known of the use of clay pan-tiles on early buildings but Wally recognized these from ones he has seen from archaeology.

CORRECTIONS & ADDITIONS
to previous March 2006 HVVA Newsletter
The author of the report on the
Brigg/Hatfield/Smith farm
incorrectly named it the Jones farm
This is being corrected on our web site

Tuesday, January 31 I went to see a farm in Hyde Park on the Fallkill (Valkill). It is owned by Jim Smith and is on North Quaker Lane. The complex of buildings maintains a little-altered historic farm setting. It received a NY State Barn Repair Grant last year. Bob Hedges, his son Nathaniel and John Copell, have begun the repairs. I registered it:

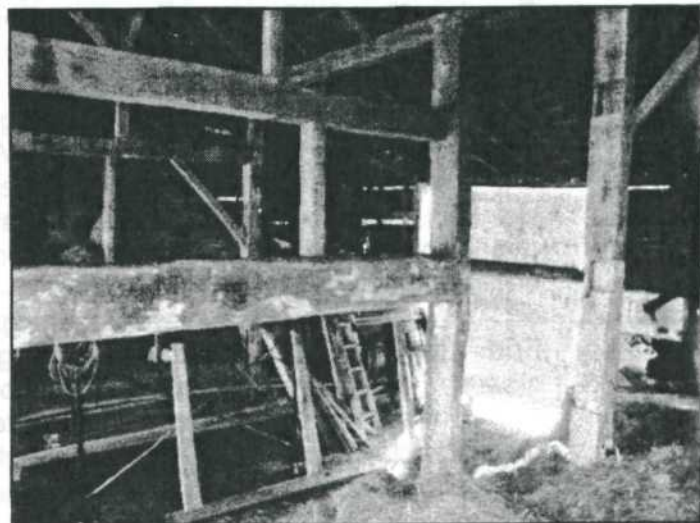
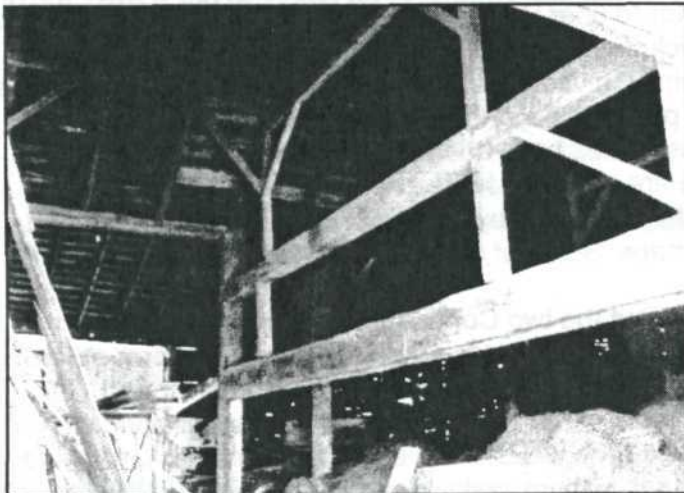
4-bay swing-beam, side-entrance, scribe-rule barn with double beams, added side-aisle and extension, also outbuildings and contemporary frame house, circa 1790
Briggs/Hatfield/Smith (NY/Dut/HP/07)
North Quaker Lane, Hyde Park, Dutchess County, NY
N 41°48.566 - W 073°52.097 - elevation 308'

Friday, March 3 I returned to the Smith farm. Randy Nash, who has been coordinating the barn repair grants for the state, had come by to see its progress. He said that the timber frame restoration work in the Smith barn was the best he had seen in this State wide program. He said the over 2 million dollars program proposed for next year has the support of Governor Pataki and is part of the present budget being debated.

One important result of the program is the data base that has been created by the thousands of barn repair applications from throughout New York State. Randy said that students at Cornell have now digitalized it.

Randy corrected and added to our observations. The lowered beam in bent 5. did not necessarily mean that the north bay was a mow that reached to the ground. He is familiar with mows that are angled and Bob and I also knew of examples. Randy thinks that the north bay functioned like south bay to keep animals. He pointed out that the English key-hinged doors did have a "middle man" (removable center pole) like the Dutch. The door header was replaced.

Tuesday, March 28 I returned to the Smith farm. They have removed the plank wall exposing the swing beam and evidence of the speculated human door. Framing repairs are done and Bob has mortised his style and is adzing the rail for his first key-hinged door. The hardware has not yet arrived.



**Front and Back View of the Swingbeam
Briggs/Smith 4-Bay English Threshing Barn,
North Quaker Lane, Hyde Park,
Dutchess County, NY**