



From the Editor...The two-day Barn Repair Workshop, June 13 & 14, at the Palatine Farmstead in Rhinebeck was a success. The wagon doors were 90% finished and we plan to hold another workshop, July 18 & 19, 9AM-5PM to finish the wagon doors and latches and to continue restoration of the front. Join us, no charge, free lunch. We hope to split and shape some saplings.

We had made an application and sent three review copies of John Steven's new book, Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830, to the Vernacular Architecture Forum (VAF) and had hoped that it might be awarded their annual Abbot Lowell Cummings Award, since Abbot had given the book such a favorable endorsement, but alas, of the two they found worthy from the forty newly published books on vernacular architecture they reviewed, John's was not one of them.

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FROM THE JOURNAL=====

Thursday, June 1 On a tip from George Turrell of Rockland County, and after an exchange of e-mails, I met with Hugh Goodman, Carla Cielo and John Stevens at 205 Mulberry Street, in downtown Newark, to examine a two-and-a-half story gambrel roofed frame house circa 1830 that, along with its neighbor, is about to be demolished for a large sports arena and development that is taking out a lot of old buildings in this area near the city's downtown.



Downtown Newark, New Jersey, 2006
The Last Survivors of the Old City

This house may be the oldest structure in the area. We took measurements of the framing and John took notes. The gambrel roof style appears to have been introduced into the Hudson Valley by carpenters from New England as early as 1714 in Albany. When carpenters that worked in the Dutch tradition began to construct gambrel roofs, especially in the 1760's but perhaps much earlier, they used a different framing system with a plank-purlin, a design that eliminated the purlin posts and allowed for a more open loft space. From examples of gambrel roof framing we have examined, there seems to have been a lot of innovation and different solutions in their design. The framing of the gambrel roof of the Mulberry Street House has a modified English framing system with two pairs of purlin posts in the end walls and three internal ties that help to create an open loft space by eliminating internal purlin posts.

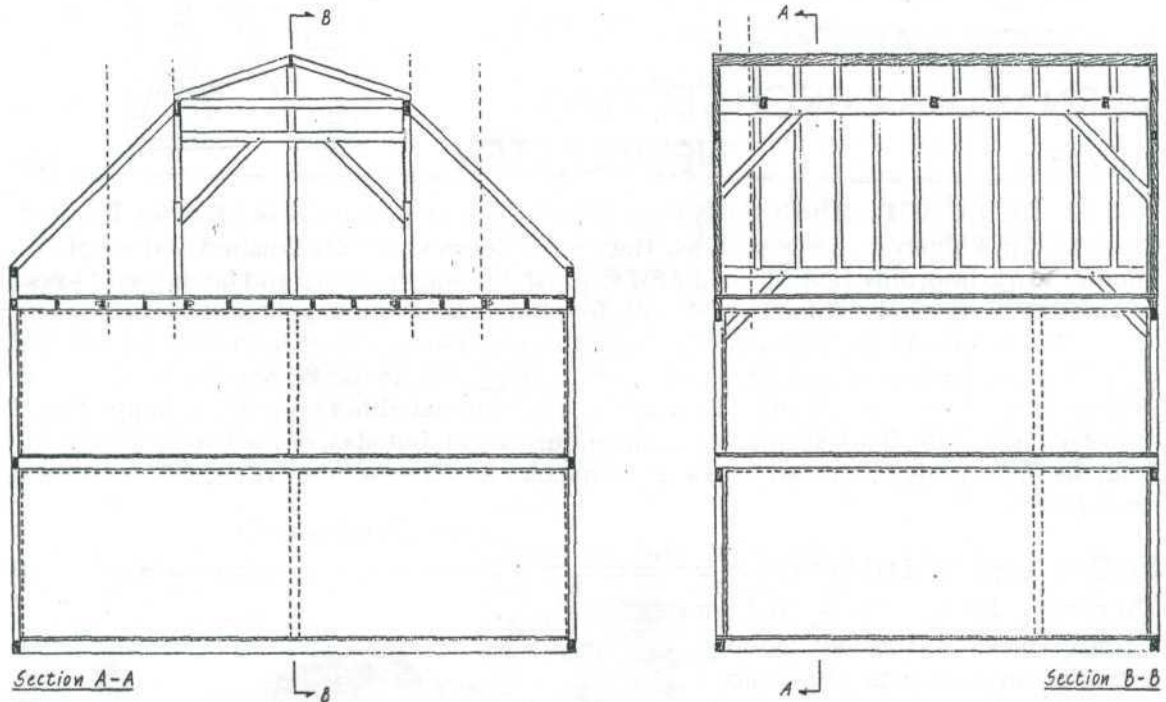
We debated whether the sawn rafters of the Mulberry Street House were original. Most of the frame is sawn, and the rafters are nailed to a ridge-board. There are Roman numeral marriage marks on the house frame. Its longitudinal system of floor joists in the loft was new to us. Much of the structure is covered so that it was hard to evaluate the framing. The house has a very interesting use of space, two chimneys on the side-wall of the house and at least four fireplaces, a truly urban design.

The design of the roof framing was new to us. Is it the work of a clever carpenter or related to a regional style?

Saturday, June 3 I drove with Rob Sweeney across the Hudson River to Dutchess County, to meet up with Bob Hedges and a bunch of people to visit the Feller House in Red Hook. I registered it:

Large center-hall Federal frame house with Kitchen addition
Feller/Dahlberg (NY/Dut/RH/ 24)
Feller Newmark Road, Red Hook, Dutchess Co., NY
N42°00.677 W073°50.686 elevation 100'

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205 Mulberry Street, Newark, New Jersey
drawing by John Stevens

(From the Journal, continued)

The Feller house has just been purchased by Laurie Dahlberg, whom we met at the May barn repair workshop in Rhinebeck. The house is surrounded with protected farm land and seems to have been a Feller farm forever. Laurie acquired the house and two acres from the family. She had been told it was late 18th century. The lath is riven, and the framing could be 18th century. It is an early and important Federal house which has preserved much of its interior details, including three high style Federal Fireplace mantels. It was thought that the kitchen was the earliest part, but roof evidence in the kitchen storage loft suggests it was an addition. Much will be learned as the building undergoes repairs and HVVA hopes to follow its progress.

Of special interest is a cast-iron side plate of a 1749 five-plate stove used as a fire back in the kitchen fireplace. Its two figures and a skeleton depict the "Dance of Death" #110-113 in Henry Mercer's, The Bible in Iron, 1961. This same situation, a large Federal house with early stove plates reused as fire backs, occurs in New Paltz, Ulster County, at Locust Lawn, a 1814 building with two 1716 stove plates cast in Germany. I feel that these re used plates are heirlooms from earlier family houses.

There are many timbers from an early house re-used as floor joists in the basement of the Feller house. Perhaps they are from a mid 18th century two-room Dutch house with a jambless fireplace and 5-plate stove. With a lot of study it might be possible to reconstruct an earlier house from the pieces remaining.



Feller/Dahlberg House
Red Hook, Dutchess County, NY
side view, center-hall Federal frame house
with kitchen wing