



The Society for the Preservation of  
**Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture**

February-March 2007

**Newsletter**

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The Society for the Preservation of  
**Hudson Valley  
Vernacular Architecture**  
is a not-for-profit corporation formed  
to study and preserve vernacular  
architecture and material culture.

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Pictured is the Benjamin Ten Broeck house (built circa 1751) as documented by the federal government in 1936. The house exemplifies Hudson Valley Dutch building practices. The goal of the Dutch Farmstead Survey is to compile a complete data base of all Dutch influenced structures throughout the New Netherlandic region.

## From the Editor

As expected, the HVVA annual meeting was very busy indeed. About thirty members attended with many old members who have not been seen for some time and a good deal of new faces, both offering their services. Although we were crowded together in a tiny room at the Bevier House in Ulster County, we made the best of it and perhaps the intimacy of the room helped to bring our diverse personalities together as we shared our hopes and dreams for the common goal of the preservation of HVVA's mission. I am pleased to report that without any exception everyone present felt the future of HVVA looked strong and healthy. Perhaps the common thought was "unlimited potential."

There are a few changes regarding the trustees and officers and you can view the newly elected in the updated list printed on this page. We wish to thank the newcomers, Walter Wheeler, Karen Markisenis, and William McMillen for agreeing to serve on our board; Welcome.

Jon Dogar-Marinesco, HVVA member, has kindly offered his professional services to produce our newsletter as you can see by this issue. We greatly appreciate his effort. It is our wish to continue to produce a monthly newsletter; whenever possible, a larger bimonthly issue may occur, such as the case with this issue. We hope you continue to enjoy the information we send

you, and please, we urge you to contribute articles and snippets from time to time.

The membership list is filled with the highest caliber professionals in the field of vernacular studies, so please, enlighten us.

A big thank you goes to those who contributed to this issue. Especially to Greg Huber for his excellent article on Ulster U-barns.

One noteworthy issue to inform the membership about is the newly proposed HVVA office. The new office will be movable, and be about 12x16 feet, built in a rustic vernacular style. It will not only house the current working office but also the Society's archive and library as well. Currently our archives and supplies are stored at Peter Sinclair's home, and although we are grateful for the many years Peter has offered his space, we have now grown enough to require lodging of our own. We hope to make this space accessible to our membership and scholars for their research as well. Bob Hedges, Russell Ley, Tom Collucci, and myself, make up the building committee.

And remember, "Preservation begins at home."

**Rob Sweeney** - HVVA's *sheeodoo*

Gable wall of four-bay Bogart true U-barn in Marbletown, Ulster County, New York. Most of gable wall weather boarding is original with three intact martin holes. Pentice that is partially original protects original threshing floor doors. Building to right of Bogart Dutch barn is a one aisle two bay barn of probable post 1800 vintage.

1



## The Work and World of an Early 19th Century Albany Potter

January 20 – May 27, 2007

The show will present the life and works of **Paul Cushman**, an Albany potter, and place his business and products from his pottery within a broad historical and aesthetic framework. The exhibition will feature more than 40 examples of Cushman's works, along with works by his competitors and successors. Period maps, prints, drawings and paintings will complement the exhibit by presenting a visual record of Albany in the early 19th Century. Additional artifacts such as imported ceramics, furniture, cast iron, printed and written documents will place Cushman's stoneware and his factory within perspective of a burgeoning economy and regional market. A fully illustrated catalogue will be published with six scholarly essays.

## Four Centuries of Ceramics and their Stories from the Albany Institute's Collections

January 20 - May 27, 2007

**CLAY CONNECTIONS** will showcase rich collections of Dutch Majolica and English faience, Chinese export porcelains, and English transfer-printed tablewares. These material objects speak to us about the past, distant civilizations and foreign cultures. The exhibition also offers a look at the trade and commerce of Albany from the seventeenth century to the present and the ceramic materials that have flowed into and out of the city, often quite literally on the Hudson River, which connected Albany to the New York City and the rest of the world.

## True U-Barns of Ulster County

by *Greg Huber*

Throughout most of its range in the Eastern River Valleys of New York State and the northern half of New Jersey one form of Dutch-American barn among several of those identified appears as a three-aisle variable bay frame structure. They are also called true form or classic barns and they most often have main wagon entries at both gable walls and a planked floor occupies the center aisle or nave. The two side aisles for the stabling of farm animals were very frequently of dirt and appeared several inches to as much as two or more feet below the level of the nave. An average drop is about a foot or so. In Ulster County and perhaps elsewhere a unique modification occurred in two barns such that the threshing floor was eliminated in the last bay which is entirely of dirt. Thus dirt or bare ground surrounds three sides of the floor forming the letter "U." The term U-barn denoting a certain distinct variant or sub-type of the three-aisle barn was first coined by Peter Sinclair in the early 1990s. In this first installment in a two-part series of articles on the U-barns of Ulster County, New York the U-barn in its true form as a fully developed type that has not yet been recognized will be discussed.

### Emerging New Barn Expressions

Apparently near the turn of the 19th Century the very common three-aisle Dutch-American barn was constructed with deviations in certain structural expressions such that certain numbers of the barns functioned in particular manners that were not experienced in most 18th Century classic barns. Briefly, prevailing agricultural economies from about 1790 or 1800 and afterward were such that in many cases in many areas of Dutch settlement the pure classic barn was outmoded and certain innovations in both its macro-structure and micro-structure were needed. Certain farmers demanded departures from commonly accepted building traditions seen in the three-aisle barn. Fundamentally, it was either the stabling of farm animals or the storage of crops in contrasting ways from standards established for 150 years since the mid-17th Century that necessitated refinements resulting in a multitude of new manifestations of barn building techniques.

Consequently, many sub-types of barns were seen in the 1790 to 1840 era and beyond and the U-barn of Ulster County is a notable example of one of those barn types.

### True U-Barn Characteristics

It should be emphasized that the U-barn as a general class of barns has several variations of structural expression and elements of fabric. Only two true or fully developed U-barns have been identified, namely the Bogart and Palen barns each in Ulster County. They have the following characteristics: each barn is a classic type of three-aisle construction and each is of four-bay construction. Only one main gable wall wagon entrance was included in each barn. The last or far side inner bent has substantial opposing doors but only of single height very much like original gable wall threshing floor wagon doors (half height). In one barn original full door width oak hinges are retained while in the other barn there are substantial metal hinges. The doors along with an attendant low tie beam (Palen barn) or header (Bogart barn) as part of the bents precludes a full barn length wagon drive through status. Joined to both the header or tie and the H-frame posts are longitudinally oriented beams that stretch to the end wall that function as support for floors for the placement of farm crops in the last bay. The last bay has a dirt floor whose surface is considerably below the threshing floor level in each barn: 2.5 feet below in the Bogart barn and 4 feet below in the Palen barn. These characteristics

in sum basically define the fully developed U-barn. There is a third barn – the Henry Snyder barn – of classic type of three-bay construction whose last inner bent has opposing doors of double height but whose last bay has a floor that is about even with the threshing floor level. This last barn should be considered as a variant U-barn whose last bay actually appears to be an open bay (no solid exterior wall and without siding) somewhat similar to the circa 1820 Snyder three-bay barn west of Saugerties near Veteran along Route 212. There are a number of other variant U-barns in Ulster County.

### Locations of True U-Barns

Many fully developed U-barns may have appeared at one time in Ulster County since thousands of farmsteads existed up to the time of the Civil War. Ruth Piwonka, historian based in Columbia County, New York did a study of stone houses in Marletown and found that at least 200 appeared in that town alone. As seen above only two U-barns of true type remain in the county. The locations of the two barns are both in Marletown: Bogart barn is 1.25 miles west of Route 209 and the Palen barn appears just off the west side of Route 209. (Photos 1 and 2) In addition, the three-bay Henry Snyder barn, the last described barn



### Save this house!

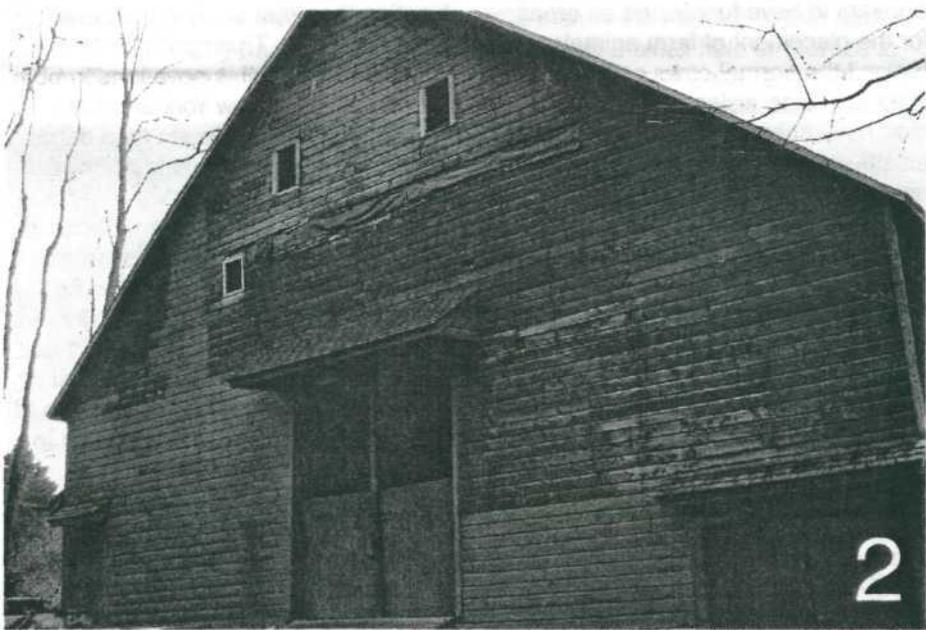
From: Farmhouseruins@cs.com  
To: gallusguy@msn.com

This is an 18th Century 2-story stone house with a two-room plan and a side flanking larder. All timber components are hewn including the framing of the stair bulkhead to the basement. There are two stone cook hearths, formerly with beehive ovens. Some original raised panel doors and 9-over-6 windows remain, but some are lost – and the first floor has been substantially altered but the floorboards remain. Winder stairs from first floor to attic are supported without stringers – each tread is supported separately and shimmed.

It needs to be down but about March 1. The land will be part of a green acres park and the demolition of the house is the outcome of a three-year legal suit. There is no way to save it at its existing location. The current owner is a lawyer and quite difficult to work with. The contract reads that the house must be demolished or salvaged. I will be documenting the house for the township.

There still might be time to save it. Since it's a stone, perhaps its floor plan can be recreated with a new perimeter wall system.

Carla Cielo



Palen true U-barn on Route 209 in Marletown, Ulster County, New York. All exterior siding of northwest gable wall is not original, including pentice.

Henry Snyder variant U-barn  
in Mount Marion, south of Saugerties,  
in Ulster County, New York.

Floor of side aisle at left  
is considerably lower than  
side aisle at the right.

## What a difference a meeting can make...

We became HVVA members in 2003 after Peter Sinclair revisited the Dutch barn on our property (the Storry/Gazlay Brick House on Route 209 in Kerhonkson, Ulster County, NY). He made his visit part of his "journal" and wrote about the barn in the July 2004 issue of HVVA newsletter. Peter's valuable opinion became an important part of our 2005 application for a barn grant. In December 2006, when we got the great news of getting a \$50,000 matching grant, we could not share our happiness with Peter except by sending a holiday card...

That made us decide to come to the annual meeting of the Society for the preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture on January 20, 2007. It is hard to describe the admiration, respect, and joy we took home from this meeting.

Never before we met so many passionate people and experts in such a small room, all determined to continue a noble tradition. A wonderful mix of ages, with Jim and Rob surprisingly young and so enthusiastic, so open to new ideas and new volunteers.

We are confident that Peter's work is going to be continued...

Before, HVVA meant just Peter for us; from now on, HVVA means love and respect for Peter plus determination to continue in his footsteps. We were honored to meet Rob and Jim and Doris, John, Roberta, Alvin, Dennis, Wally and all others wonderful people.

Thanks for making us feel welcome, part of the HVVA family.

And, of course, thanks to Peter, who started it all...

Manuela Mihalescu  
Jon Dogar-Marinesco



in the preceding paragraph (*Photo 3*), is seen in Mount Marion south of Saugerties.

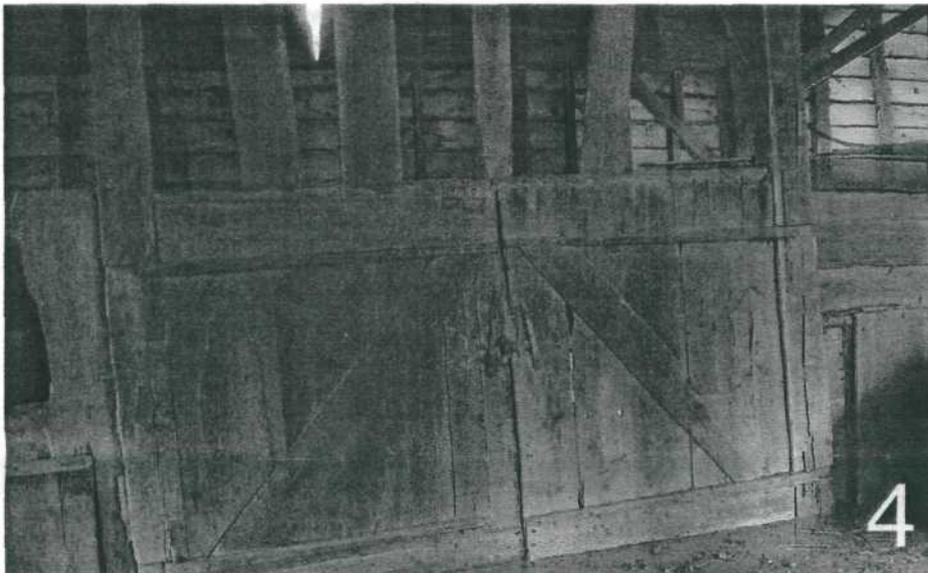
The Bogart and Palen barns likely functioned quite similarly although their age of construction varies by at least one quarter of a century – the Bogart barn is circa 1790 and the Palen barn is circa 1815. For comparison, the Henry Snyder barn is circa 1825 to 1835.

### Function of Last Bay

The distinct modification of the last bay in each of the two true U-barns appears to have functioned as areas for the placement of farm animals beyond the normal cows and horses stabled in side aisles. These animals may have been minor farm stock such as sheep or perhaps goats or pigs or even heifers or colts where the last bay might have been a place for breeding or birthing. The Bogart barn actually retains a very old manger stake area at one side of the last bay and may possibly be original. What can not be said with certainty was the purpose for the large about five-foot square opposing threshing like doors that are integral to the last inner bents in the two barns. The door openings measure 10.5 feet wide (centered) in the Bogart barn and over 8 feet wide (un-centered) in the Palen barn. These wide openings may have been used for the

passage of farm animals from the front wall to the rear bay but more likely were for the transport of farm crops so that stock could be fed in the last bay. The drop of the floor in the last bay assisted in part in gravity feeding.

The placement of the low positioned header (Bogart barn – a recycled hay barrack wall plate) or tie (Palen barn) and dropped floor of the last bay obviously prevented the exiting of hay wagons at the far end wall. (*Photo 4*) The first feature is not at all that uncommon in the Dutch barn realm where the last bay had a different appearance and function than that seen in the other remaining bays. This condition of the last bay as special is seen in a number of barns in both New York and New Jersey. Uniquely in classic type barns in Schoharie County that is northwest of the mid Hudson River Valley far end walls include no main wagon doors. In addition, none of these barns were constructed with the large doors as part of the last inner bent. This singular trait in part helps make the Bogart and Palen barns so exceptional. Special mention is given to the Henry Snyder barn whose traits will be discussed in the second article in this series. Both true U-barns have other very unusual traits which is especially true in the Bogart barn. For sake of creating a record and for comparison, a number of characteristics beyond a



description of the last inner bent and last bay will be reviewed for each barn.

### Bogart Classic Barn

The Bogart barn is a genuinely remarkable barn that retains a great deal of its original structure and various authentic features and remains one of the finest of classic barns in either New York or New Jersey. Peter and I documented in part this distinguished barn that sits on a back country road in December 1990.

Subsequent documentations were done especially in July 2001. Both Peter and I think that the Bogart barn is one of the greatest Dutch-American barns Ulster County has to offer. It is unquestionably an incomparable gem.

The barn measures 48 feet 3 inches at each end wall and 49 feet 6 inches at each side wall. Side wall height is 14 feet 8 inches. Nave is a wide 28 feet 1 inch and each side aisle is a normal 10 feet wide. A great deal of original horizontal pine weatherboarding survives on the near gable wall with attendant marten holes. Other original siding exists. Perhaps the single most outstanding feature of the barn is the nearly 100% original condition threshing floor doors. (Photo 5) Each door side or half is held together (in closed position) by what appears to be an original *mittelmanse* (*stiegel* in Dutch – little man in the middle) or thin post inserted in a small hole or mortise in the soffit of the end wall anchorbeam.



Seen are original wooden hinged single height doors at last interior H-frame in Bogart U-barn in Marletown, Ulster County, New York. Doors lead into the last bay, full of dirt. At sides of both door posts are remnant horizontal sheathing.



## A new book

"**Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830**, by John R. Stevens, is a significant and important contribution to architectural history and our understanding of the early Dutch settlers. It will be invaluable to those interested in Dutch-American architecture, buildings, and culture. Moreover, it is an indispensable guide to those restoring early Dutch houses."

Dr. Natalie Naylor  
Professor Emerita, Hofstra University

Houses, barns and mills are documented in xiv+449 pages, including 132 plates of drawings of building plans and elevations, construction features, details of doors, windows, stairs, fireplaces, moldings; 276 illustrations and 4 maps. 9" x 12".

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New York State address add 8%  
Ulster County Sales Tax and \$5.00  
(hardcover) or \$4.00 (softcover).  
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HVVA  
P.O. Box 202, West Hurley, NY 12491

Close-up of gable wall original threshing floor doors of Bogart U-barn in Marletown, Ulster County, New York. Four arms of pentice are original. Both door halves each consisting of upper and lower sections and also middle post or *mittelmanse* are original.

Close-up of threshing floor door of Bogart U-barn in Marletown, Ulster County, New York.

The lower door section of one door half has folk-like carvings that include flower motif elements.

## Surveying and Recording Barns in New York State

### 2007 NYS Barn Coalition Conference

October 19-21, 2007

Hosted by the

Dutch Barn Preservation Society at the Mabee Farm Historic Site, Rotterdam Junction, New York

#### OVERVIEW:

*Friday, October 19*

**Opening Reception** at the Schenectady County Historical Society, 32 Washington Avenue, in the Schenectady Stockade, with a **Walking Tour** of the Stockade neighborhood.

*Saturday, October 20*

**Tours of Historic Buildings, Programs at the Mabee Farm, Saturday Night Dinner** at Van Dyke or Stockade Inn.

*Sunday, October 21*

**Barn tour, bus trip** through Schenectady County.

#### Events:

Friday Business Meeting

Friday Dinner

Saturday Workshop

Saturday Dinner

Sunday Tour

#### Registration Fees:

Friday & Saturday \$225.00

Students \$100.00

Saturday Only \$125.00

Barn Tour \$ 50.00

#### Registration Deadline:

April 12, 2007

For additional information please visit

[www.barnalliance.org](http://www.barnalliance.org)



The original door latch and later included "pull-open" mechanism is intact. Each door side was originally of two halves - an upper and lower. Lower door halves are unique in that they are double sheathed. Very unusual folk like carvings were rendered on one of the lower door halves. (Photo 6) In addition, extremely rare original pentice arms survive which actually appear as poles that emanate from the first inner anchorbeam which then extends over the end wall anchorbeam and beyond close to 4 feet.

Bays vary in width from 11 feet 4 inches to 14 feet wide. Last bay is 12 feet 3 inches wide. Rafter pairs are seventeen in number and all rafters are flat edged on wall plates.

Purlin plates are single lengths of timbers. On the inner vertical face of the one purlin plate uniquely a carved name of Jacob Osterhoudt appears that Peter and I traced in 1990. On the opposite purlin plate are three sets of initials apparently of three barn builders. Purlin braces are hewn which is a usual pre 1800 construction trait. Verdiepingh is a medium length 8 feet 9 inches. Single raising holes appear on each H-frame post. Inner anchorbeams at their midpoints vary from 15 to 17 1/2 inches in height and tenons extend about one foot and variously have both round and square contours.

One tenon was cut off. It was determined that the anchorbeams are a supposedly very rare species of southern hard pine. H-frame posts are oak. H-frame braces are large and measure up to a remarkable 11.5 inches in width. One of the most interesting traits in the barn is the recycling of a number of ancient hay barrack beams including two rare apparent roof spars - one major and one minor. Much of the original threshing floor planks remain. The Bogart barn is in generally very good condition as it was recently repaired. Two one-aisle probable early nineteenth century barns stand adjacent to the classic barn.

#### Palen Classic Barn

While not as awe inspiring as the peerless Bogart barn, the Palen barn receives far better recognition to passersby as the nearly two hundred year old barn sits just to the west of Route 209 at the extreme northern tip of Marletown. It stands within only a few hundred feet of the site of the outstanding non-extant Pawling stone house featured (plate 82) in Helen Reynolds classic book - *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley before 1776*. The Palen barn is Fitchen barn number 66 which I first visited in the mid-1970s. Peter Sinclair wrote about the Palen barn in the *Dutch Barn Preservation Society Newsletter* several years ago.

The Palen barn is actually a banked structure as it nestles into a gentle slope of ground such that there is about a 4.5 foot difference in heights of the side walls. Exterior dimensions are about 50 feet at the each of the end walls and also side walls. The entire exterior envelope is not original including threshing floor doors which were installed in the last half dozen years.

There are sixteen pairs of hewn rafters and all rafters are flat edged on wall plates. The timbering is all oak (*Quercus* spp.) Bay widths are all about even with an average width of 12.5 feet. Nave is a wide 30 feet and each side aisle is about 10 feet wide. Each of the five H-frames has an





upper tie beam. Purlin braces are hewn. H-frame posts have an average size of 11 by 10 inches. Verdiepingh is 9 feet 2 inches. Single raising hole per post appears about 20 inches below post top. Anchorbeams are on the small size at about 14 by 10 inches. No two foot scribe marks appear and tenons of anchorbeams do not extend. Some sapling poles (tasliger - Dutch) stretch above adjacent anchorbeams. H-frame braces are hewn and average about 6 by 5 inches. One H-frame brace at the northeast end wall is curved - a rarity. Threshing floor appears to be mostly original.

Extremely rare horizontal wall sheathing appears on the last inner bent at both sides of the wide un-centered doors. Boards are 10 to 14 inches wide secured with cut nails. This inner

partition wall extended about 12 feet above the floor originally. The west side aisle is notably below the level of the east side aisle. One item that appears to not be accurate in Peter's newsletter article is his statement that the last or far bay was an open bay (to the exterior). (Photo 7) Symmetrically placed mortises likely for wall studs on the lowest tie beam at the far or southwest end wall is strong evidence that the end wall was originally fully closed and thus siding appeared sill to peak. In general the Palen barn is in quite good condition.

The second article in this two part series will focus on nine or ten other U-type barns in Ulster County and references to other U barns elsewhere in the Dutch-American barn realm.

Southeast gable wall of Palen U-barn shown here is with all non-original siding. West side aisle at the left is lower than the east side aisle closer to Route 209.

## 2007 Annual Workshop & Barn Tour

April 19-21, 2007 – Albany, New York

**If you are interested in barns and other rural vernacular architecture then this conference is for you!**

A variety of topics will be discussed, including: barn stabilization and restoration techniques, conducting barn surveys, forming a local or statewide barn preservation group, historic barn types – especially those in the Hudson River Valley, protecting the endangered American barn and other farm buildings.

### AGENDA:

*Friday, April 20*

#### **NBA Annual Business Meeting**

Open to all.

Find out what other states are doing and talk about the future of the NBA.

Dinner talk by noted barn historian Bob Sherman.

*Saturday, April 21*

#### **NBA Annual Workshop**

The latest information from nationally-known timber framers, barn historians & barn organizations.

Dinner talk by timber framer Rudy Christian on the history of the tradesman.

*Sunday, April 22*

#### **Barn Tour**

We will visit four barns in the Albany area, stopping for lunch along the way and returning to the hotel by mid-afternoon.

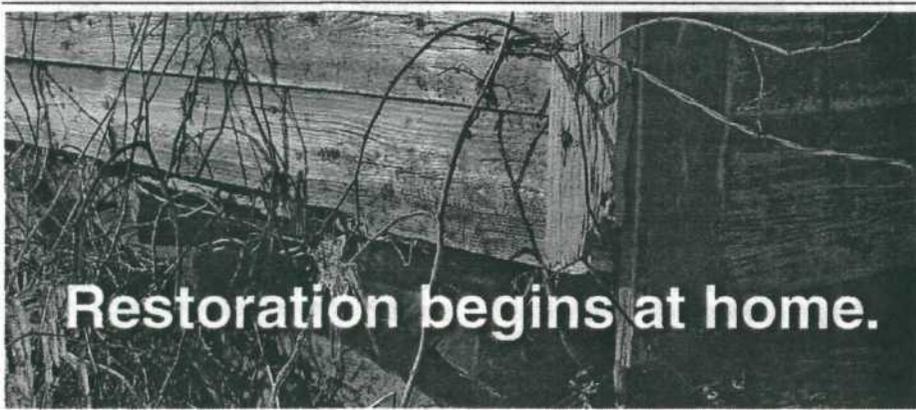
#### **Registration Fees:**

Friday & Saturday	\$225.00
<i>Students</i>	<i>\$100.00</i>
Saturday Only	\$125.00
Barn Tour	\$ 50.00

#### **Location:**

Best Western Albany Airport Inn  
200 Wolf Road, Albany  
518-458-1000

For registration materials, please contact Katie at 800-653-2276



**Restoration begins at home.**

## Exploring your own backyard

The Dutch Farm Survey is a volunteer-based exploration of all Dutch and Dutch-influenced farm buildings in the region that was New Netherland. The *Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture* (HVVA), is one of the co-sponsors.

This is the first study to embrace all of New Netherland's territory, and to record all known – and particularly unknown – buildings in a central database that is thorough, consistent, and accessible to all researchers.

The project is a vast one, and is counting on much help from local volunteers who either know their area's history or who want to know more – and who would enjoy spending an afternoon or two exploring their countryside for forgotten treasures. Survey personnel will provide training and often (depending on location) companions for the field work. The year 2009 has been targeted for the completion of the survey, since that year marks the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage, which led to the establishment of New Netherland in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and surrounding areas.

The survey was developed by the DBPS, HVVA and the Institute for Farm Research in Arnhem, the Netherlands (SHBO), which is a scientific documentation center specializing in rural traditional architecture.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has awarded a seed grant of \$25,000 to the survey, specifically to promote "rural resource preservation efforts as part of an intergenerational community-development program." Besides creating an essential historical database, the goal is to foster "a life-long appreciation of local heritage" in youth and other local citizens.



People who would like to take part in this enjoyable exploration, or have information to share, should contact Robert Sweeney of HVVA:  
845-336-0232  
gallusguy@msn.com



### 3138 Richmond Terrace House, circa 1810, Mariner's Harbor, demolished 2004

by *Dennis Tierney*

This frame house, overlooking Newark Bay was clad in tar-paper. It was visited and documented by John Stevens in 2004 shortly before it was demolished. It was a two-room side-hall house, with a kitchen addition off the back. Behind it was a separate kitchen building. From the Federal fireplace mantle, plastered ceilings and from the modified Dutch framing using girts and joists, John estimated it as built in 1810. Under the tar paper was preserved the original beaded weatherboard siding. The structure of the porch roof was original but the posts were modern as was the solid railing structure.

This is one of the 70 Staten Island houses that will be featured in a book that Dennis Tierney is putting together for HVVA. In the spirit of this Society, it is a way of preserving the architectural heritage of a region through publishing early photographs. Many or most of the houses illustrated are gone but their images preserve information otherwise unavailable. It was fortunate that John Stevens was able to document this house and kitchen before they were destroyed. We live in a time of rapid development where little value is given to these artifacts of our vernacular culture and they are rapidly disappearing.

Vernacular architecture is the product of regional culture and history. It is the common way of building. In the Hudson Valley the roots of its tradition were planted when it became a Dutch colony soon after the visit of the *Half Moon* in 1607. Based on 17th Century traditions of architecture in the Netherlands and Northern Germany, it was built by craftsmen and inhabited and used by people of many European and African backgrounds yet throughout the colonial period a Dutch based architecture persisted. It developed a more American character during the 19th Century but Dutch elements survived well into the 20th Century.

This house built on the sandy shore of Newark Bay was probably built by an oysterman. Newark Bay and surrounding waters whose beauty and open expanse of salt meadows is unrecognizable by the industrial wasteland it is today. There are still a few remaining houses of this once serene settlement known as Mariner's Harbor.

The following by Peter Kalm, the Swedish naturalist, describes what the area was like where this house was situated.

"Near the inn in Elizabethtown where we had passed the night, we were to

cross a river, and we were brought over, together with our horses, in a wretched half-rotten ferry... The country was low on both sides of the river, and consisted of meadows. But there was no other hay to be got, than such as commonly grows in swampy grounds; for as the tide comes up in this river, these low plains were sometimes overflowed when the water was high. The people hereabouts are said to be troubled in summer with immense swarms of gnats or mosquitoes, which sting them and their cattle. This was ascribed to the low swampy



meadows, on which these insects deposit their eggs, which are afterwards hatched by the heat.

"As soon as we had got over the river, we were upon Staten Island, which is quite surrounded with salt water. This is the beginning of the province of New York. Most of the people settled here were Dutchmen, or such as came hither whilst the Dutch were yet in possession of this place. But at present they were scattered among the English and other European inhabitants, and spoke English for the greatest part. The prospect of the country here is extremely pleasing, as it is not so much intercepted by woods, but offers more cultivated fields to view. Hills and vallies still continued, as usual, to change alternately. "The farms were near each other. Most

of the houses were wooden; however, some were built of stone. Near every farm house was an orchard with apple trees. Here, and on the whole journey before, I observed a press for cyder at every farm house, made in different manners, by which the people had already pressed the juice out of the apples, or were just busied with that work. Some people made use of a wheel made of thick oak planks, which turned upon a wooden axis by means of a horse drawing it, much in the same manner as the people do with wood; except that here the wheel runs

upon planks. Cherry trees stood along the enclosures round corn fields.

"The corn fields were excellently situated, and either sown with wheat or rye. They had no ditches on their sides, but (as is usual in England) only furrows, drawn at greater or lesser distances from each other.

"In one place we observed a water mill so situated that when the tide flowed, the water ran into a pond, but when it ebbed, the flood gate was drawn up, and the mill driven by the water flowing out of the pond.

"About eight o'clock in the morning we arrived at the place where we were to cross the water in order to come to the town of New York. We left our horses here and went on board the vacht: we

## Ulster County Honors Peter Sinclair

On Friday, December 15, 2006, Peter Sinclair of West Hurley – a Preservationist and Hudson Valley Dutch Culture Leader – was presented the **Pride of Ulster County Proclamation** by David Donaldson, Chairman of the Ulster County Legislature and Karlyn Knaust Elia, Ulster County Historian.



### Ulster County recognizes and honors Peter Sinclair for these major contributions:

Peter Sinclair has made significant contributions in the area of preservation, education and our understanding of early Dutch culture in Ulster County, the Hudson Valley and in New York State.

In 1991, Peter Sinclair began publishing *Living History*, a quarterly publication that provides news and information about our relationship to our past focusing on the study and preservation of America's material culture, architecture, tools and objects of our rural past and the heritage of our regional traditions.

In the mid 1990's Peter Sinclair formed the Mid-Hudson Chapter of the *Dutch Barn Preservation Society* which eventually led him to found the *Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture* (HVVA). This Society studies and preserves this vernacular architecture and material culture in Ulster County and the Hudson Valley. The society continues to arrange tours of early Dutch houses and barns, assist with workshops in teaching the skills of thatching, hay barrack construction, and barn moving.

Peter Sinclair has selflessly provided advice to historical societies and owners of early stone homes. He has been a curator for numerous exhibits pertaining to Dutch culture.

For the past ten years Peter Sinclair has published and edited the newsletter for the *Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture*, an invaluable resource of surveys of local and regional dwellings, agricultural structures, and information that accurately interprets the past.

New England Chapter of the  
Vernacular Architecture Forum

## Winter Meeting

March 3, 2007  
Old Sturbridge Village

## A Sampling of Current Research on New England Architecture

**Finding Meaning in New England  
Churches: The Material  
Transformation of Connecticut's  
Churches, 1790-1840.**

**Exhuming Old Ship: New Evidence  
for Original Features at the Hingham  
Meetinghouse.**

**The Orientation of Houses in the  
Village of Deerfield: Archaeological  
and Documentary Evidence of  
Change in the Eighteenth Century.**

**The Building Frame Trade of  
Coastal New Hampshire**

**Where We Lived: An Experiment in  
Accessible History.**



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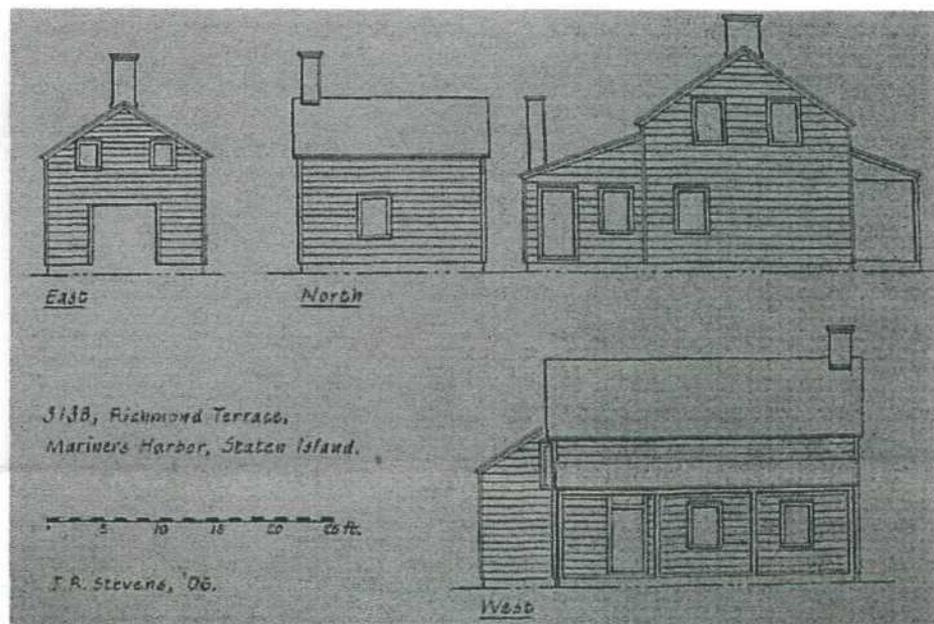
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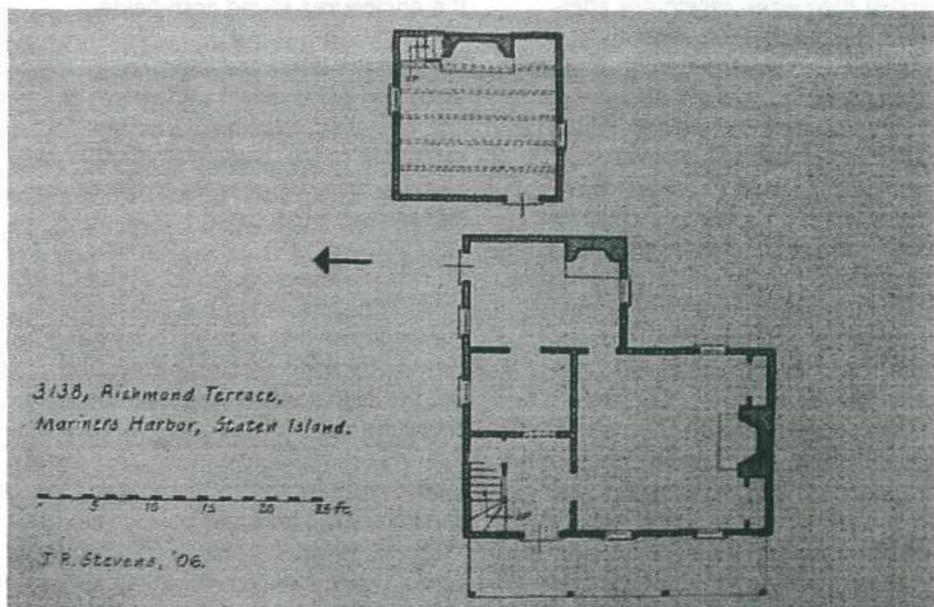
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were to go eight English miles of sea; however, we landed about eleven o'clock in the morning at New York. We saw a kind of wild ducks in immense quantities upon the water; the people called them blue bills, and they seem to be the same with out Pintal Ducks or Linnaeus's Anasacuta; but they were very shy. One the shore of the continent we saw some very fine sloping corn fields, which at present looked quite green, the corn being already come up. We saw many boats in which the fishermen were busy

catching oysters; to this purpose they make use of a kind of rakes with long iron teeth bent inwards; these they used either single, or two tied together in such a manner that the teeth were turned towards each other."

To preserve the vernacular architecture heritage we must study and document what is left. We must work with private owners in maintaining historic properties and work toward developing public sites and readily available information that accurately interpret the past.





### A fire raging between the Elandstraat and the Elandsgracht.

The fire, according to the author, was "the biggest ever seen in this city" began on July 27, 1679. Four rows of houses were involved, many with flammable materials stored in them "Peat, whale oil and suchlike." The fire had a good start before van der Heyden arrived on the scene, and his pumps and hoses were used to fight it. "Of the fifty houses in flames, half were finally saved." An engraved version of this view was used in van der Heyden's 1690 folio book (English translation) *Description of the Newly Invented Hose Fire Engines*, also known as the *Fire Engine Book*.

## Jan van der Heyden Exhibition

by Marion F. Moore

Recently, two HVVA members had the privilege of viewing an exhibit of the work of the Dutch artist Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712) at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut. This is the first time an exhibition of his work has appeared in seventy years, and never before in the United States.

Born in a family of master craftsmen, by 1657 the van der Heydens ran a mirror manufacturing and framing business. Jan was trained as a *glasschryver* – a more skilled and varied profession than a glass maker, and included all aspects of that craft. Thus he was able to make stained and leaded glass, a craft which appeared in churches, public buildings and merchants' houses. All these skills served van der Heyden in his career as a painter of highly detailed cityscapes.

In the 17th century, van der Heyden was the pre-eminent Dutch painter of cityscapes and the first artist anywhere to record all the beauty of the urban scene. His art is distinguished by a thorough understanding of lineal and aerial perspective, sensitive command of atmosphere and tonal values

and he displayed a brilliant palette. The artist was the inventor of the architectural caprice and his paintings were famous for their wealth of detail.

Well known for his paintings, van der Heyden was equally well known for his inventions. At that time most of the urban buildings of Europe and the American colonies were constructed of wood and fire frequently ravaged them. At the age of 15, Jan had watched the burning of the Town Hall of Amsterdam. From that time onward, he was fascinated with fire, which is apparent in his paintings and drawings. It also inspired his inventions of fire fighting equipment. He perfected street lighting, designed canal dredging equipment and invented a fire pumping engine and hose to use with it that revolutionized firefighting throughout Europe. He also published in 1690 a sizeable folio volume on firefighting, illustrated with engravings from his drawings. A number of his original drawings for these illustrations are part of the exhibit. This book, with models of a fire pumping engine, hose and other equipment by the artist may also be seen in the exhibit.



Van der Heyden's paintings and drawings are on loan from the Louvre, the Prada museum in Madrid, the Uffizi in Florence, the National Galleries in London and Washington and other renowned galleries and private collections. The exhibition will be on view until January 10, 2007 and will thereafter travel to its only other venue, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.



### Membership info

If you have been receiving this newsletter, but your membership is not current and you wish to continue to receive the HVVA newsletter and participate in the many house study tours offered each year, **please send in your dues.**

Membership currently pays all the HVVA bills and to keep us operating in the black **each of us must contribute a little.**

Membership dues remains at a low \$20 per year (\$15 for Students). So if you haven't sent in your dues or given a tax deductible donation to the HVVA mission, **please consider doing so now.**



- Yes, I would like to renew my membership in the amount of \$.....
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## Condemned Colonial house in Piermont

by Rob Yasinsac

I finally got around to locating the Onderdonck House in Piermont (Rockland County) that I have heard about for some time. It is a sandstone house and was condemned in August of 2005. Now it is abandoned. The Onderdonck house is on Piermont Avenue, which is the main street and also called River Road in Grandview. It's the road that runs along the river from South Nyack to Piermont. The house is on the west side of the road, at the south corner of intersection with Ritie Street. It is north of the business district, set back on a sloping lawn but very visible. According to a Journal News article, "The site is said to be where Gen. George Washington stood while America received its first British gun salute as a new nation in 1783." And from an e-mail I received: "The

Onderdonck House, on Piermont Avenue, is on property that was part of an original patent and some of the house may be a remnant of the original built around 1711. It has been modified many times, but still qualified for National Register nomination this year. It has a Revolutionary War/ George Washington connection. The house has been abandoned for several years and has been condemned by the Village. The owners are aging and unwell and an attempt to buy the house by Piermont Historical Society fell through earlier in the year. Nobody knows what's going to happen to it, but it really should be saved. Needless to say, it's river front and worth a bundle right now." Just thought the group would like to know about this place.

