



# The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

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## 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.

**Peter Sinclair** – *Founder*  
West Hurley, Ulster County, NY

**John Stevens** – *President*  
*Sr. Architectural Historian*  
Greenlawn, Suffolk County, NY  
(631) 239-5044  
dutchjam@optonline.net

**Bob Hedges** – *Vice President*  
Pine Plains, Dutchess County, NY  
(518) 398-7773  
rmhedges@taconic.net

**Maggie MacDowell** – *Secretary*  
Gardiner, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 255-2282  
mmacdowell@hvc.rr.com

**Robert Sweeney** – *Treasurer*  
Kingston, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 336-0232  
gallusguy@msn.com

**Jim Decker** – *Past President*  
Hurley, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 338-8558  
jdeck8@frontiernet.net

**Dennis Tierney** – *Trustee*  
Wappingers Falls, Dutchess County, NY  
(914) 489-5262

**Joyce Berry** – *HVVA.org Webmaster*  
St. Johnsville, Montgomery County, NY  
ajberry@frontiernet.net

**Conrad Fingado** – *Trustee*  
Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County, NY  
(845) 635-2714  
M\_Nordenholt@yahoo.com

**William McMillen** – *Trustee*  
Glenmont, Albany County, NY  
(518) 462-1264  
judytb@aol.com

**Walter Wheeler** – *Trustee*  
Troy, Rensselaer County, NY  
(518) 270-9430  
wtheb@aol.com

**Karen Markisenis** – *Trustee*  
Lake Katrine, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 382-1788  
kmarkisenis@hvc.rr.com

**Tom Colucci** – *Trustee*  
High Falls, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 532-6838  
tcolucciconstruction@gmail.com

**Sam Scoggins** – *Trustee*  
Hurley, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 339-4041  
s\_scoggins@yahoo.co.uk



## From the Editor

I heard it said that “the view is owned by who ever looks at it.” I hope the same holds true for old houses and barns. HVVA has spent the past 10 years opening the door to history by sharing the view of the Hudson Valley’s architectural heritage and giving our members a unique perspective into the past. A lot of what we have looked at, studied and documented has been included in our newsletters and viewed by thousands on the web. We have given everyone a chance to build a healthy portfolio of the Valley’s best vernacular structures. So now it’s time to pay the “taxes,” and there are a few ways to do it. First, make sure your membership stays current. Your dues and donations keep HVVA moving forward. We are people-powered, and the amount of time given by our volunteer members is invaluable. You can add to your volunteer “account” by writing a short article for the newsletter, or sending in an update on your historic house research or restoration project. Pass the name of HVVA on to historic homes owners; give them an HVVA membership as a house warming gift, after all, “preservation begins at home.” Organize a tour of your area. Use your voice and connections to protect threatened architecture. Stand out in front of that bulldozer, it won’t hit you, a settlement will cost more than a restoration these days. Once your voice is heard, more will join in. Keep up the fight and encourage each other to continue. The heritage we save today will be our legacy for the future.

How about spending an evening in the HVVA office? There is plenty to do as we prepare to enlarge our Internet footprint. How about opening the door to history? Yes, that means allowing a documenting team to come in and measure your buildings. But it also means bringing people into your homes; the best way to preserve a historic structure is to allow people to sense the innate quality of the structure. People really “get it” once they open their eyes, and those people (converts) are how we are going to build that critical mass we need to preserve history. So if you have read this far and think you got off the hook because you don’t have a historic structure, you are mistaken. We just found a superb building which needs you to keep its doors open to history, the Matthewis Persen house (pictured above). It’s located on the corner of Crown and John Street in Kingston, and it’s planned to be opened each Saturday, May to October. We need HVVA members to volunteer for this special project. Please contact me with your availability (gallusguy@msn.com or call 845-336-0232). One Saturday will get you off the hook for a year! Do you feel inspired yet? I hope so! If we each do some small part, we can accomplish an enormous amount, and that you can bank on!

**Rob Sweeney** – HVVA’s sheepdog

### Coming Events



**The Kiersted House** – one of Saugerties' sixty-eight stone houses.

May 16, 2009

## Saugerties Historic House Tour

Saugerties has an outstanding number of 68 stone houses within its boundaries, all constructed from stone that was locally quarried and all but a handful in pristine shape and inhabited.

To celebrate this historical treasure, the Town of Saugerties Historic Preservation Commission is holding its first Stone House Tour on Saturday, May 16, 2009 from 11:00 AM to 5 PM (torrential rain date, May 17th).

Eight houses will be shown as examples of the changing life and architectural styles between 1750 and 1943.

Tickets are limited and cost \$10 if bought in advance, either at Smith's Hardware, Hudson Valley Guild Book Trader, and Muddy Cup/Inquiring Mind (all on Main St. in Saugerties), or by mail.

Make checks out to:

#### **Town of Saugerties HPC**

(with Stone House Tour on memo line) and send to:

#### **Stone House Tour**

P.O. Box 296, Saugerties, NY 12477.

Advance sales begin April 17.

Any tickets remaining on the day of the tour may be bought for \$20 at the tours' starting point, the Visitor Information Booth, at Rte. 212 McDonalds, opposite the north bound Thruway entrance.

## President's Letter

March 2009

Since Peter Sinclair's stroke in October, 2006, Rob Sweeney has taken over the editorship of the HVVA Newsletter and with the layout skills of Jon Dogar-Marinesco has produced 12 issues of the publication, which are a credit to the organization.

It had been hoped, after Peter's illness that it would be possible to continue with monthly issues of the Newsletter as Peter managed to do since he started doing it in the late 1990's. Initially this schedule was adhered to, but it became necessary after a time to combine several months in one issue. One has to admire what Peter was able to achieve, putting out, month after month, substantive issues of the publication.

Where do we go from here?

This could, and should be an exciting year for Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture since we are celebrating the 'Quadricentennial' of Henry Hudson's discovery of the river that now bears his name (but was for a long time called only 'the North River'). What Hudson was trying to do, was discover the fabled 'Northwest Passage' so that ships would have a westward shortcut to the Far East – where the treasures of China and India lay. He would later – in 1611 – make another effort to find the Northwest Passage, through Hudson Bay (which he discovered). But some of the crew mutined; he and his son and a few loyal crewmen were set adrift in the ship's boat and presumably died of hypothermia or starvation.

Hudson's voyage in 1609 was sponsored by the Dutch East India Company, established in 1602. His discoveries gave the Dutch Republic a claim on the mainland of North America. Amsterdam merchants commissioned Adriaen Block to explore and map the new Dutch American possessions. In his 1614 voyage Block's ship the 'Tyger' was acciden-

tally burned, and the crew built a new vessel, the sloep 'Onrust' and exploration continued of the Hudson, Housatonic and Connecticut Rivers. He sailed up the Connecticut River as far as Hartford (where in 1633, a Dutch trading post – Fort Huys de Goede Hoop – was established). A reconstruction of the 'Onrust' is reaching its final stages at the Mabee Farm, Rotterdam Junction (near Schenectady) and will be in the water this year.

The Dutch West India Company was established in 1621 to exploit the resources of the Americas, with particular emphasis on South America and the Caribbean where they challenged the hegemony of the Spanish and Portuguese. The foothold provided by Hudson and Block in North America encouraged the West India Company to establish a base of operations, first on Nutten (Governor's) Island, and then on Manhattan where a fortification was laid out in 1625. In 1626, Peter Minuit 'purchased' Manhattan from the Indians.

By the middle of the 17th Century, New Amsterdam on the southern tip of Manhattan Island was the governing center for the colony of New Netherland, and consisted of streets of houses and even a canal. From pictures available to us, particularly a watercolor drawing of Augustine Herrman made about 1650 we can see that the houses of New Amsterdam resembled the ones in the Netherlands, and indeed were similar to wooden houses that survive in the Zaan region north of Amsterdam, in the village of Broeck-en-Waterland.

King Charles II of England was persuaded by the New England colonists that the Dutch in New Netherland were a threat to them, and the excuse of one of the recurrent wars between the English and the Dutch gave the opportunity to get rid of the Dutch

intruders in North America. The King's brother James, Duke of York was the Admiral of the Royal Navy and commissioned Col. Richard Nichols with a fleet of small warships to capture New Netherland. Peter Stuyvesant surrendered to the English in September, 1664 without a shot being fired! The colony and the city were renamed in honor of the Duke of York.

The British administrators who took over, largely let the Dutch continue in their established ways, keeping their language, religion and customs. And the Dutch continued to construct their buildings as they had before, as they remembered them from their homeland. So it is possible to see buildings built well into the 18th century, like the Abraham Yates house in Schenectady, the Pieter Winne house in Bethlehem, and Albany's oldest house – the Johannes van Ostrande house, built in styles familiar to a Netherlander, but which would have been considered 'old fashioned' at the time they were built. As the 18th Century progressed, British stylistic elements took over from the Dutch, particularly at the 'high end' of society. But for all that, characteristic Dutch building traditions persisted well past the middle of the century, as can be seen in the Teunis Slingerland house of 1762 at Feura Bush. Utilitarian structures, like the 3-aisled Dutch barn, continued to be built into the 19th century. A certain conservatism by the Dutch led them to persist in the use of jambless fireplaces in their working kitchens, particularly in Northern New Jersey, so that you find houses with high-style woodwork – like the Vreeland house of c.1818 in Leonia, with their kitchen wing having exposed beams and a jambless fireplace! One has to wonder why the use of these hopelessly inefficient fireplaces persisted for such a long time?

The buildings that survived in the former Dutch areas into the 20th

Century, and are still with us today, never attracted the same level of attention as did their Anglo-American counterparts in New England, Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas – except for a number of 'high end' buildings that exhibited Georgian or Federal stylistic elements. Helen Reynolds and Rosalie Fellows Bailey, in their publications about pre-Revolutionary Dutch houses, produced for the Holland Society in the late 1920's and early '30's, tried to balance the picture. But it is only in the last 40 years, since John Fitchen's book on the New World Dutch Barn in 1968, the establishment of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society in 1986, and Peter Sinclair's founding of The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture in the 1990's, that a really intensive effort has been made to identify, understand, and record the vernacular buildings with 'Dutch' elements that have managed to survive for us to study and appreciate.

Many of these findings have been introduced in the pages of the HVVA Newsletter. Hopefully, we can involve more people in these studies so they will devote their time to identifying Dutch houses and features – and learn how to make a record of what they have discovered in the production of photographs, measured drawings and the writing of descriptions. The writer has certainly derived a lot of pleasure from this pursuit and is incredulous at the amazing discoveries that continue to be made! He trusts that many of you who read this piece will also derive pleasure both from the study of these early buildings, and the association of others with like interests.

Respectfully,

**John R. Stevens**  
HVVA President

HVVA

## Out and About



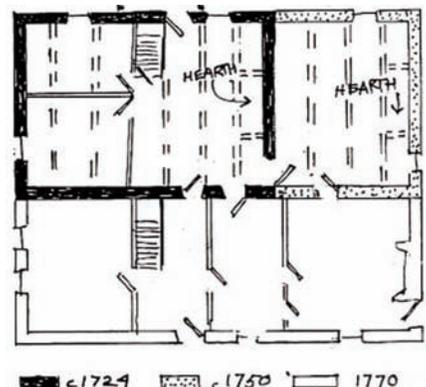
A view of Washington's Newburgh headquarters, taken at HVVA meeting in February.

A gathering of the minds!



The mob assembles!

Washington's Headquarters floor plan as drawn by Peter Sinclair.



## Unique Oliver Homestead in Marbletown, Ulster County with Four Dutch-American Barns

by Gregory D. Huber



View of south walls of three Oliver barns on Route 209 in Marbletown in Ulster County, New York – four-bay one-aisle barn at the left, three-bay barn in middle and the four-bay classic barn on right. Cladding on all three barns is not original.

Remember the well known song ‘America the Beautiful’ that contains the famous line “God shed his grace on thee?” Well, Katherine Lee Bates, the song writer, was not likely familiar with Dutch-American barns, but had she known the number of homesteads in Ulster County that retain truly great local traditional barns she might have pointed in the direction of God for possibly having been responsible for blasting a remarkable beneficence into a good number of the county’s old farms. The Oliver farm was bestowed with a particular blessing in having not one, or two or even three, but four surviving barns built under Dutch influence.

The Oliver homestead in Ulster County appears about one mile northeast of Marbletown on Route 209 on the southeast side of the road. The four barns appear only a few dozen feet from the road at the left side of the driveway. The imposing stone house complex appears at the right. The well known Davis stone tavern appears right across the road.

### The Four Barns

The four Oliver barns are all connected – one to the next. As one approaches from the driveway the first two seen at the left are one-aisle barns. The first is a four-bay barn and the second is a three-bay barn. Then to the north of the three-bay barn is the four-bay three-aisle classic barn. This is the best known of the barns and it was originally a three-bay barn. Last is what may be basically classified as a three-bay three-aisle barn. All four barns have their own distinctive nature and each tells a story. The Oliver homestead is unique as the only Dutch-American farm in either New York or New Jersey that has four Dutch related barns. The Bogart farm in Marbletown discussed in an earlier issue of the HVVA Newsletter has three Dutch related barns – the superb circa 1790 four-bay classic barn and two one-aisle barns.

### Lack of Recognition of One-Aisle Barns

Let us put first things first. One-aisle barns have received little acknowledgement or discussion in Dutch-American architectural

literature. Save for Peter Sinclair and the author’s few writings on this barn form, one-aisle barns have been relegated to barn classification and recognition oblivion. Bless John Fitchen for what he did 40 plus years ago, but he only identified the three-aisle barn. In the opinion of this writer the only thing that can be said about a barn at a Dutch-American homestead is this: If a barn – of whatever form it may assume – after close scrutiny appears to be built under the governing principles of the local early dominant cultural tradition then that barn may be classified with the ethnic name neatly tucked into its title. Hence so-called one-aisle barns that appear at Dutch-American farms may rightly in almost all cases be called Dutch-American one-aisle barns. Readers may make of this what they may but let us not forget that one-aisle barns appear in the Netherlands. This is not at all to imply that the European version dictated its appearance in North America.

One troublesome point that this writer experienced starting in the early 1990’s was the difficulty that several observers (not all) had in assigning one-aisle barns as genuine Dutch built barns. It appears that Fitchen’s work at that point was still regarded as basically the bible in the field (partially correctly) and he did not include in his writing any mention of anything other than a three-aisle structure. Therefore in the minds of many of those early interested parties the three-aisle barn was in effect the only barn that could exist in the Dutch-American kingdom. Anything else then was to them not acceptable as a Dutch built barn. That assertion – the grand assumption that it is – is simply not correct.

### The One-Aisle Dutch-American Barn

Perhaps it may be said in a slanted way that the one-aisle barn is fundamentally a three-aisle barn but without the side aisles. Hence there is only one aisle. It has been suggested by a Holland scholar that these barns be called no-aisle barns. Ignoring that perspective, nevertheless, the one-aisle barn always retains H-frames in its construction mode. It is difficult to say how many one-aisle barns appear at certain Dutch-American farms but likely there remain at least 20 to perhaps 30 barns in both New Jersey and New York.

The fair to large sized cross ties or what may be called anchor-beams that always appear in one-aisle barns do not have extended tenons since they would be outside the confines of the barn interior. It is important to know that certain agricultural one-aisle buildings in the Netherlands do have extended tenons outside the building. Importantly, the anchor-beams in American one-aisle barns appear at decidedly various heights. Some ties are rather low in certain barns while in other barns the ties appear at the normal heights above the floor.

Three traits that are so often found in three-aisle barns are the presence of raising holes, two-foot scribe marks (in the 1785 to 1820 era) and the ever present H-frames. These traits also appear in one-aisle barns (some later one-aisle barns do not have two-foot marks) but do not provide absolute proof that these barns are Dutch related ones but it does provide very good evidence that they most likely are. Two-foot marks indicate a date of construction before about 1825. Raising holes of course were definitely utilized in barns in a number of cases a few decades

after 1830. All of this taken as a sum, almost unquestionably, builders who built three-aisle barns also built one-aisle barns.

It would appear that one-aisle barns were constructed for general farm crop storage and perhaps for stabling of farm animals. Much research is needed along these lines for more definitive answers. Barns that had different level anchor-beams may have had different functions.

The four Oliver barns will be described in the order that they are seen in the homestead driveway.

### Four-Bay One-Aisle Barn

The ridgeline of the four-bay barn is perpendicular to Route 209. The barn measures 40 feet 6 inches at each side (eave) wall and 24 feet 3 ½ inches at each end (gable) wall. The roof peak is 25½ feet high and the side wall is 15 feet high.

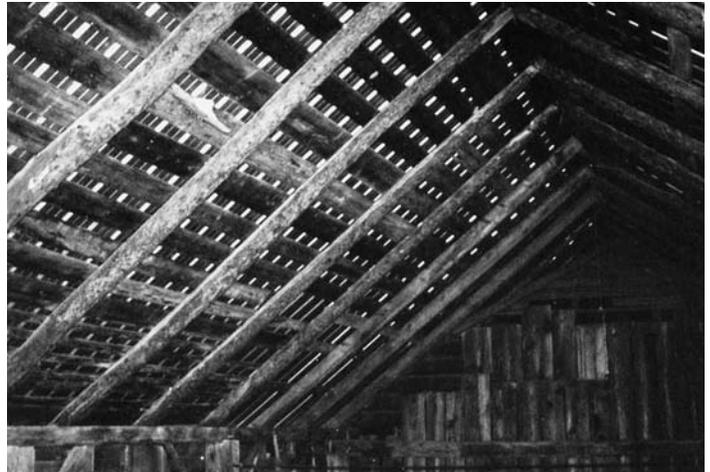
All exterior cladding where it appears is novelty siding secured with cut nails for the width of two bays. At the one end wall toward the west to wall plate height is lattice work secured with cut nails. Lattice work also appears on the south side wall only a few feet in height. It is very unlikely that this cladding and lattice-work are original. On the south wall toward the bottom of the last three bays are open areas for the admission of wagons and for general access. This was likely not the original condition of the barn.

Twelve round pole rafter pairs are seen and all rafters are pegged at their tops. As to be more or less expected the rafter pairs at the end walls are completely hewn. Both wall plates are hewn and interestingly enough are spliced. Side wall braces are hewn and this aspect helps to establish the date of construction likely in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The side wall studs are either round pole or milled and are secured to braces with cut nails. All wall posts (H-frame posts) have raising holes. Most wall posts are hardwood with oak as the major species. One post is softwood.

Since the barn is of four-bay construction there are five H-frames. Bay widths are each very close to 10 feet. Only the end wall frames currently have intact upper tie beams. Empty mortises toward the tops of the middle frame posts indicate possible former upper tie beams. Except for a staircase (not likely original) at the top surfaces of the anchor-beams an almost continuous floor appears where boards are secured with both wrought and cut nails.

Tops of the anchor-beams to the floor is 7 ½ feet. At least two inner anchor-beams have two-foot scribe marks (see second Fitchen book edition) with associated half-circles and marriage

View of south wall of three-aisle classic barn at right and two walls of three-bay one-aisle barn at left at the Oliver homestead.



View of roof structure of one of the one-aisle barns at the Oliver homestead. Rafters are round poles.

marks. The three inner anchor-beams have heights at their mid-points of 12" to 13". Between adjacent anchor-beams are large 7" to 10" diameter round poles to support the boards above them.

A full barn width transverse partition wall that consists of horizontal clapboards secured with cut nails separates the second bay from the third bay. Round pole studs provide the nailing surface for the boards. At the bottom of the wall appears a two foot high limestone footing as a foundation. It is likely that the wall is original to the barn. Thus the wall created two rooms.

This barn was originally placed immediately next to the adjacent three-bay one-aisle barn. This may be known from the fact that two tie beams on the east end wall have no mortises at either their top or bottom surfaces. This implies the lack of original studding which in turn dictates that no cladding was ever placed at that end of the barn. This in turn says that no cladding was necessary because it was placed adjacent to the three-bay barn.

### Three-Bay One-Aisle Barn

The next barn section that stands at the east side of the four-bay one-aisle barn and south of the main three-aisle barn is of three-bay one-aisle construction. Its ridgeline is perpendicular to the four-bay barn. The barn's one end wall toward the south is basically flush with the south side wall of the four-bay one-aisle barn. The barn dimensions are the following – width is 21'2" and length is 28'4½" inches. The roof peak is 26' high and the side wall height is 18'. The barn has overhanging eaves. Exterior siding is secured with cut nails. The south wall is covered continuously with horizontal cladding. The east side wall at the bottom is open for easy access to the interior of the first two bays toward the south end.

There are nine pairs of round pole rafters and all rafters are again pegged at their tops. It is possible that this barn may not have its original roof line. Four H-frames are seen and the tops of the anchor-beams are again 7½' above the floor. One anchor-beam at its mid-point is 12" by 9" inches in cross section. Anchor-beams have two-foot scribe marks with two concentric half circles. Anchor-beam to post junctures have square shoulders. All timbering is oak.

In at least two bays round poles stretch between the tops of the anchor-beams and boards appear above the poles as seen in the four-bay one-aisle barn. Above the anchor-beams crops were stored.



View of the substantially sized oak corner post in one of the one-aisle barns at the Oliver homestead. In upper left corner large round pole joists are seen to support floor above.

All the wall posts (H-frames) have raising holes. All the bent and side wall braces appear to be hewn. Wall studs are round poles and braces are secured with cut nails.

In the end bay next to the three-aisle barn is a door 6½ feet wide with boards secured with cut nails. An important feature of the end wall adjacent to the three-aisle barn is an upper tie beam whose soffit does not have mortises for insertion of any wall stud tenons. The implication is that the three-bay barn was originally adjacent to the three-aisle barn. That is, there was no need for cladding at this barn end and therefore there was no need for wall studding. In distinct contrast, the opposite end wall has an upper tie beam with soffit mortises for placement of studs for cladding. This south end wall was fully exposed originally.

### Four-Bay Three-Aisle Classic Barn

The main, biggest and best known barn at the Oliver homestead is the four-bay three-aisle classic barn to the immediate north of the three-bay one-aisle barn. This Oliver barn was discussed to some degree in an earlier HVVA article by Peter Sinclair. John Stevens and I looked over this barn and discussed some of its features at a very early pre-HVVA meeting in April 1999. This writer once gave a barn talk exclusively on the Oliver barns in late 1993. HVVA at one point had set up at least some of its operations in this section of the barn. John Kaufman the present day owner of Fitchen barn number 42 did some fairly extensive repairs a number of years ago.

This structure was originally a pre-Revolutionary War era three-bay barn that was later converted circa 1830 to a four-bay barn. The three-bay structure perhaps built circa 1760 originally had a major and minor rafter system. At some point, likely in the second quarter of the 19th Century, the rafter system was completely removed and a new common rafter system was installed.

### Major-Minor Rafter Systems

The original three-bay barn had a number of the features that are so often associated with major-minor rafter barns that apparently were extensively constructed in Ulster County prior to the Revolutionary War. These include cup (and crescent) marriage marks, short *verdiepingh* (changed during barn lengthening to four bays), purlin braces with lapped half dove-tailed joinery and purlin braces set very low – 39 ½ inches below the soffits of the anchor-beams on the H-frame posts. Other attendant features usually seen in certain barns are the following (that are not exclusive to major-minor rafter barns): a wide nave – 26 feet, lapped half dove-tailed H-frame braces, narrow (one inch) diameter pegs that unites anchor-beams to the H-frame posts and a diminished haunch condition at same timber unions. In addition anchor-beams never have two foot-scribe marks an often seen trait in a number of pre Revolutionary War era barns.

The disposition of the major-minor rafter system itself has been amply illustrated with drawings by Peter Sinclair in previous publications. Suffice to say for this article that barns with these rafter systems had the following aspects – a four sided “set on the diamond” ridge-beam, an upper purlin plate (about mid-way between normal or lower purlin plate and ridge-beam) and collar beams that unite major rafters in pairs. The major rafters appear above the level of the lower purlin plate at either every other rafter pair or every third rafter pair depending on the barn. Common rafters are lapped jointed to the majors and appear below the lower purlin plate. Common rafters appear between the majors from ridgeline to wall plate. Just three barns actually remain in Ulster County that have mostly intact major-minor rafter systems – the three-bay dated 1766 Nieuwkirk-Kaufman barn (Fitchen barn #42), the circa 1770 three-bay Solite barn and the circa 1770 Airport Road barn. Fifteen other barns are remnant ones (from barns with fully intact H-frames to single or double recycled timbers in other later built barns) that were originally major-minor rafter barns. One of those important barns is the dated 1750 Decker-Bienstock five-bay barn south of New Paltz.

### Original Oliver Barn Alterations

In the post 1825 to 1835 agricultural environment and beyond the basic mode of the very squat aspect (with very short *verdiepingh*, low side walls and steep roof) of major-minor rafter barns proved to be inadequate. Severe modifications had to be brought about in such barns for farmers in Ulster County to compete with other farms and barns in the northeast in the Industrial Revolution. The three-bay Oliver barn was no exception. Extreme innovation was employed at the homestead where uniquely the barn structure was actually separated in that the purlin plates were lifted and a new H-frame was then inserted between the end bent closer to the stone house and the first original inner bent. This new bent is presently the first inner frame closest to the house. The “new” anchor-beam has a two-foot scribe mark whereas the others following typical pre-Revolutionary War era tradition do not. The new H-frame posts have raising holes where the original frames do not. This last condition is due to the fact that new sections of beams were spliced onto the original upper post extensions of the H-frames. Thus the posts were lengthened

by about three feet or so. The “new” *verdiepingh* measures 75”. The new posts do not have raising holes.

From the foregoing modifications just outlined the barn was lengthened by about 10 feet or so to four bays and the roof was raised by at least three feet and its pitch was almost undoubtedly less steep than that found in the original barn. The original purlin plates were recycled and are found in the last three bays.

### Nineteenth Century Stabling Area

A 7½ foot high partitioned area for the stabling of farm stock appears at the west side aisle. This area extends from the west side wall out into the threshing floor area by about 4½ feet in the southern most two bays. The stable area also occupies the contiguous most northern bay of the adjacent three-bay single-aisle barn at its north end. The front boards and the flip down doors of the stable that face the threshing floor all have cut nails. It appears in general that this stable area was likely installed in the barn in post Civil War times. It was on the top or ceiling of this partitioned area that the original (likely) wagon doors with wooden hinges were found in the early 1990’s.

At some point in the 20th century the east side wall was removed and a new 6 ½ foot wide lean-to was erected on the east side of the barn. Vertical boards in line with H-frame posts have wire nails. The whitewashed area occupies three bays.

### The Main Oliver Barn

It can not be known without extensive archeological site research if the present day Oliver three-aisle barn is on its original site. It may have even been taken from another farm either of very

View of staircase in four-bay one-aisle barn at the Oliver homestead.



View of H-frame post that was later spliced circa 1830 in four-bay three-aisle classic barn at the Oliver homestead. Note hewn rafters in common rafter system in roof.

local origin or from a somewhat distant site. However, it likely is at its authentic place of construction. A very close examination of the threshing floor may help establish this. The end wall with the now intact wagon entry (nearer the stone house) faces 23 degrees west of south. The roof peak is 29 feet high. Side wall height is 12 ½ feet. Each end wall is very close to 45 ½ feet and each side wall is about 40 feet (unmeasured). On the south end wall are nine inch wide novelty siding boards secured with cut nails. There are overhanging upper roof edges. A door appears at the southeast corner (of the three-aisle section). To the east of the door is a modern lean-to.

The main wagon door entry at the south wall is off-centered to accommodate the width of the three-bay one-aisle barn. This off-centered condition is not original to the main barn. The pink colored wagon doors may be original to the time that the 2 one-aisle barns were erected.

The nave is 26 feet wide. Each of the side aisles is a few inches shy of 10 feet. It may be that the widths of the side aisles are not the original ones that were in the three-bay structure. Only the west side wall is presently intact. The wall plate is hewn but there are round poles that act as wall studs or posts. Circular sawn braces are secured to studs with cut nails. These wall posts have longitudinally oriented holes that may have acted as raising holes. Eight major wall posts have these holes – five of them appear in the four-bay barn and three of them appear in the newer three-bay barn at the north. What this says is that the side wall is actually one long framing unit along both barn sections and the



View of H-frame with long post in three-bay three-aisle barn at the Oliver homestead. Very long 15½' *verdieping* of H-frame. Note short purlin brace at top of post.

original side wall of the three-bay classic barn was eliminated long ago. Holes of such type are rare in side wall posts.

In the new four-bay barn no purlin braces appear in three bays but one brace does appear in the most southern bay and at both sides of the barn. Braces are milled.

It is important to know that the original three-bay structure may not have been a full drive through barn. No evidence exists at the north end wall anchor-beam that a wagon door was positioned at that end of the barn.

The layout faces of the original H-frames face away from the house. All the original anchor-beams have extended tenons of about 10" to 12". The tenons are double wedged and the anchor-beam to post unions are triple pegged. The last feature is expected as that is common in most pre 1790 New York state barns.

H-frame braces in the original bents in the three-bay structure were connected by means of regular mortise and tenon joinery and not lapped joinery as is sometimes seen in barns with major and minor rafter systems.

About one half of the original floor planks are intact. They are splined and several of them are 10" to 14" in width that stretch the full width of the nave. Planks are 2½" thick. Some planks butt up at the axial midpoint of the barn.

### Original Wooden Hinged Wagon Door Halves

Two of the original main wagon entry half doors (two half doors at one side) in the original three-bay barn apparently survive. It can not be absolutely said that the doors found in the loft

of the one side aisle in the early 1990's are from the Oliver barn but most likely they are the original ones. The one door half is virtually 100% original. In the long held tradition of Dutch-American barn building practices in Ulster County and areas north on both sides of the Hudson River hinges are substantial wood pieces and are oak. Each of the Oliver door halves is of the same dimensions – 64 inches high and 61 inches wide and each with two door width wooden hinges. The oak hinges actually extend beyond the edges of the attachment side of the doors by 5 inches. There is a single ten inch wide diagonal batten. Three vertical boards up to 19 ½ inches wide and a 4 inch wide board constitute the front of one of the doors. The other door also consists of two wide front boards although one board is missing. The one door apparently has its original latch. It can not be said if the other door half (at one side of the double door halves) was a full single height door or if there were two door halves. Original door posts are gone.

At the south end wall there are both hewn wall studs and round pole studs above the anchor-beam. The wrought nails in the studs may imply that the newly created four-bay classic barn was created before the three-aisle barn was built.

### Three-Bay Three-Aisle Barn

A three-bay three-aisle barn immediately adjacent and north of the main classic barn was added to the barn complex likely circa 1830 or so perhaps at the same time the fourth bay was added to the main barn. Upon first entering or viewing this three-bay barn section it might appear to some or even most observers that the barn is not actually a three-aisle structure. Part of this impression likely comes from the fact the anchor-beams are set very low on the posts. The fact remains however that the anchor-beam tenons extend beyond the posts by 2" to 4". Thus, this barn section, admittedly of strange construction, is of three-aisles.

As virtual proof that this barn section was originally placed adjacent to the main barn section it is seen that the top surface of the south wall anchor-beam has no mortises for placement of wall stud tenons whose presence would dictate the placement of horizontal weatherboarding. The no siding status implies that the structure has always been positioned adjacent to the main barn.

Eight pairs of round pole rafters are seen. The west side purlin plate is hewn and the east plate was mostly later replaced with modern dimensional lumber. Purlin braces are milled – which is appropriate for a post 1800 to 1810 era of construction. The braces are not long and appear far above the low set anchor-beams.

The bay widths are the following south to north – 8' 6", 9' 1½" and 9' 2". Thus this barn section has a length of almost 27 feet.

It is important to note that longitudinal ties were placed just above the positions of the anchor-beams between the H-frame posts in the three bays. Three are extant at the west side and one remains at the east side of the barn. Such a position precludes any major movement into the barn from the side aisles.

In addition, at the north end wall there was no access to the barn interior. However, there was apparently an entry at the west side wall as there is a header tenoned at each end which implies originality. Header is 7 feet from the ground and the apparent door opening was just shy of 12 feet and there is a middle-man hole in its soffit which is indicative of the inclusion of a double door.

### H-Frames

The anchor-beams are positioned so low on the H-frame posts that the *verdieping* in effect is a very long 15 ½ feet. The tops of the anchor-beams to the existing dirt floor is just 6 ½ feet.

This condition is very reminiscent of the one-aisle barn at the Bogart homestead in Marbletown. Both inner anchor-beams in this Oliver barn section have two-foot scribe marks and are associated with two half circles. When only half circles are prevalent (as opposed to full circles) they almost always appear at the side of the mark toward the mid-point of the anchor-beam. The reason for this great consistency remains rather enigmatic. One inner anchor-beam is just over 20 inches in height at its mid-point and remains one of the largest in the entire county. H-frame braces are quite small. In this H-frame is an upper tie beam. Perhaps strangely the other inner anchor-beam is more average sized at 14½ inches in height. The anchor-beams are braced.

## Unique Recycled Hay Barrack Posts

At the far (north) end wall is a uniquely positioned former hay barrack post in the same position where the anchor-beams are seen in the other bents. Such a spot for a recycled hay barrack post in an H-frame is unique in the experience of the writer. Actually in all the counties where Dutch related barns were built Ulster County may boast the most barns with recycled hay barrack timbers. Albany County is another county with several such barns. In Ulster County there are likely at least six such barns the single most outstanding one being the classic four-bay Bogart barn. Another is at the Richtmeyer-Richer homestead (above Saugerties near the remarkable Katsbaan stone church) in an accessory barn where the unusual two-bay circa 1770 barn appears. In addition, in the Oliver barn the upper tie beam at the north end wall is also a recycled hay barrack post. Both beams are oak. The holes on the lower beam are 14" on centers. Normally they are seen with a 12" on centers status. There are no holes for the bottom 7'3". This post is 8" by 10" in cross section and is rather large for a hay barracks post.

During a barn tour that Peter put together for the Dutch Barn Society Charles Gehring made comments on these posts upon his visit to the barn in September 1988. The upper tie beam has no holes for the bottom 8 feet. Both these posts should at some point be dendro-dated.

There are at least four recycled hay barrack beams in the barn complex – the two posts just mentioned and two roof plates both very surprisingly of oak. Seemingly, most plates seen in other recycled positions in other barns were made of lighter weight softwood.

With such low positioned anchor-beams there was naturally no drive through aspect for hay wagons.

H-frame posts average about 11 by 8½ inches in cross section. All braces in this barn section are milled.

Certainly farm crop storage occurred above the level of the anchor-beams. Below them there have may have been general storage or possibly the stabling of certain farm animals.

A full barn length roof peak hay track at the north end wall leads out to a hay door. The track extends about one-half way into the adjacent northern most bay of the main barn.

## Summary and Dates of Construction

Part of the story of the Oliver homestead barns has been presented. It is a unique one where some insight into the considerable level of agricultural activities that occurred in four barns at a particular farm more than 125 years ago can still be seen. There are four main players – two three-aisle barns and two one-aisle barns. Once this homestead was fully established sometime near the start of the second quarter of the nineteenth century each barn section had its specific functions to fulfill. The farm lands under tillage in the mid part of the century and beyond



*View of recycled hay-barrack post at north end wall in bent in three-bay three-aisle barn at the Oliver homestead. Note holes at corner of post that functioned in raising and lowering of adjustable roof in former hay barrack. Round pole studs appear above and below the post.*

must have been quite extensive. A great deal of total volume was required for both crop storage and the tending of animals. The four barns provided such a volume capacity.

The great changes that occurred to the Oliver homestead barns were almost unquestionably a direct result of the Industrial Revolution. The major alterations to the main barn and the building of the three other barns occurred close to 1830 or so. It is possible that the main barn was first changed before the other three barns were erected. Such an array of buildings would not have been required at a pre-1820 homestead. But in order to compete with other farms in the northeast after about 1830 great modifications to existing farms and their attendant barns had to be made. The Oliver place was just such a place.

A few basic possibilities exist as to the evolution of the barns at the farm. The first scenario sees that all three later built barns, the two one-aisle barns and the one three-aisle barn, were all built at the same time. The second scenario views the possibility that the three-bay one-aisle barn was first erected. This was followed by the construction of the four-bay one-aisle barn. The later built three-aisle barn could have been built at any time either during the erection of either of the first two built later barns or perhaps even after the two barns were built. One area of possible insight into the situation that the three barns may have been built at the same time is the fact that there are so many round pole timbers used in all three barns. The quite extensive use of such beams implies on some level that perhaps the same builder erected all three barns. No easy proof of this assertion can be made.

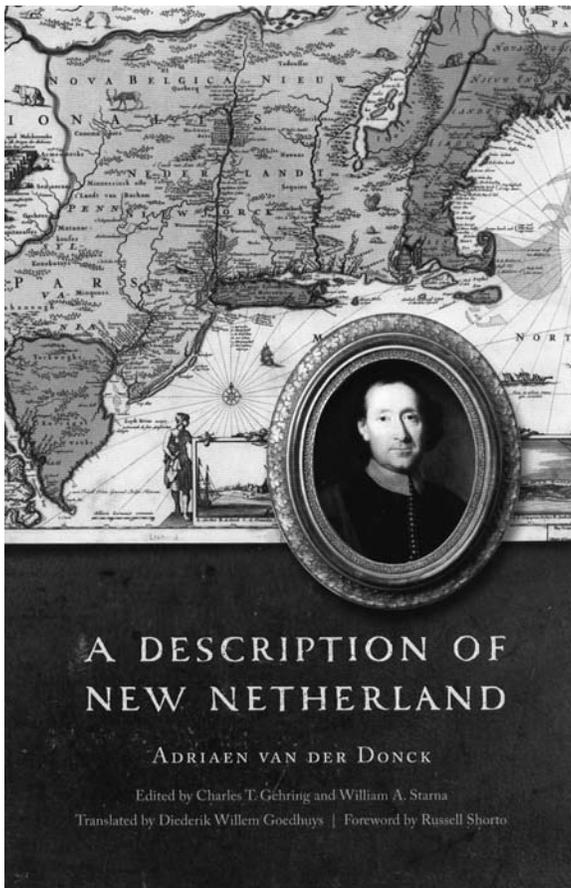
## Ages of Construction

It is quite likely that the original main barn at the Oliver homestead was erected in the 1750 to 1770 era or perhaps even before. The barn included a major – minor rafter system that followed the long building tradition in the county. The splicing of an H-frame into the structure of the original barn is unique. This practice may have existed in other county barns but if they did they have disappeared from the landscape.

The other barns at the homestead were likely built close to 1830. The fact that two-foot scribe marks are found in all three barns says that it is quite unlikely that they were built much after this time frame. It is very unlikely that they were erected before about 1820 or after about 1840.

The barns at the Oliver homestead are in generally very good shape and the current owner (Erussard?) is aware that the barns are worthy of preservation and that they deserve special recognition by historians and other concerned parties.

## Book Review



This edition of *A Description of New Netherland* provides the first complete and accurate English-language translation of an essential first-hand account of the lives and world of Dutch colonists and northeastern Native communities in the 17th Century. **Adriaen van der Donck**, a graduate of Leiden University in the 1640s, became the law enforcement officer for the Dutch patroonship of Rensselaerswijck, located along the upper Hudson River. His position enabled him to interact with Dutch colonists and the local Algonquians and Iroquoians. An astute observer, detailed recorder, and accessible writer, Van der Donck was ideally situated to write about his experiences and the natural and cultural worlds around him.

Van der Donck's *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant* was first published in 1655 and then expanded in 1656. (An inaccurate and abbreviated English translation appeared in 1841 and was reprinted in 1968). This new edition features an accurate translation by Diederik Willem Goedhuys and includes all the material from the original 1655 and 1656 editions. The result is an indispensable first-hand account with enduring value to historians, ethno-historians, and anthropologists.

Available online or through book dealers; list price is \$40.

## Letter to the Editor

It has recently been brought to my attention that the Rensselaer County Historical Society will be closing its doors due to lack of money. Once this happens, members and researchers will no longer have access to the vast collection that is currently available. I sent an email out to many people that are interested in historical research, asking if they knew of any other places that were facing a similar situation.

I received a response from John Stevens:

"We are sorry to read about the problems that Rensselaer County Historical Society is having, and surely other similar organizations are in the same boat! Last week I picked up copies of Long Island Press – the feature story is that the County of Nassau is closing all of its museums, including Old Bethpage Village Restoration, where I worked for 27 years, documenting buildings, preparing restoration drawings and supervising the work. Two of the buildings there, I found for the place – the Schenck barn, which is Fitchen's 'East of Sharon' barn from Schoharie County, and the Lawrence house from College Point in Queens. Neither of these buildings has been open to the public! Anyway, at OBVR the staff is going to be let go, and the buildings boarded up!"

I was absolutely taken back, I have never visited Old Bethpage Village and had hoped to someday. Then, John continued with:

"If the place is really and truly shut down like the article says it will, I dread to think of what might happen to the buildings. And this in one of the richest Counties in the United States." Luckily, John had documented what he had done. I am documenting work that has been done at my job so that it will be someday published. In doing this, I went on line to see if some of what I was scanning would be available or not. It was relating to the Philip DeFrest house in North Greenbush Rensselaer County. There was information on line. The first was of the DeFrest family and the second link was the HVVA newsletter dated 2001, Editor Peter Sinclair. In this newsletter was documentation of the travels made by the HVVA group to several places and the information that was gathered.

This brought to mind the importance of the work that HVVA does. It also brought to mind the importance of documenting what we do and making it available for research purposes. So I am putting a call out to all HVVA members to stay involved and be pro-active. Let's find those places that have not been documented and let's record what we can. One day these structures may only exist in our records and it would be such a tragic loss not to do our best to preserve them while they still stand.

**Roberta S. Jeracka**

*Architectural Historian Assistant*  
Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc.  
1744 Washington Ave. Ext.  
Rensselaer, New York 12144

## So, what makes it Dutch?

by Rob Sweeney

In a recent exchange of emails with John Stevens regarding "Captain Storm's Dutch House" – an article in *Early American Life* – John questioned "what's so Dutch about it?" The house's interior appearance was pretty much Georgian. Admittedly, when I first read the article, I was ecstatic about seeing a Hudson Valley house in *Early American Life*, not to mention a Dutch one at that! But then I picked up my magazine for a closer, second look, studying each perfectly cropped photograph, and I saw that this house doesn't have the details that make for a Dutch house. So, with a quick thought to defend its Dutch house honor, I proclaimed "it does have an H-bent frame!" Isn't that enough to make it Dutch? According to our vernacular goddess, Helen Reynolds, it didn't even need that to be a Dutch House! All it needed was some Dutch DNA. According to the standards of the Holland Society of New York a house needed the provenance of a Dutch surname which would be qualified to join the Holland Society. Eligibility to membership in the Holland Society consists of descent in the male line from an male ancestor who was a citizen of New Netherland before 1675. That was the standard which was used to select the houses in Helen Reynolds essential book, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley before 1776*, which was published by the Holland Society. To that end, the Captain Storm's house can be called a Dutch house despite its lack of interior Dutch details. It just so happened that many of those houses selected for publication by the Holland Society displayed familiar Dutch house traits to a greater extent than the Storm house. But there's no denying the Storms were Dutch! With all that being said, I thought that I would put together a quick visual reference of ten less mysterious characteristics that show Dutch "DNA" in our Hudson Valley vernacular architecture.

### H-bent Framing.



Tie-irons to hold sheathing to the wooden frame.



Divided doors – a.k.a. Dutch doors.



Molded wooden cornice above doorways.



Handforged iron hinges with round nailing pad.



Dutch knocker latch found on many early doors.

### Jambless fireplaces.



Granary doors to load grain into the garret for storage.



Smoothly planed exposed interior beams.



Vlechtingen decorative brickwork found on gable ends of houses.

### 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 \$.....

Yes, I would like to make a tax deductible contribution to help the effort of preserving the Hudson Valley's Architectural Heritage. Enclosed please find my donation in the amount of \$.....

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Please mail checks to:

**HVVA**  
P.O. Box 202, West Hurley, NY 12491

### A look back



*This photo was given to HVVA by Prof. William Rhoads. Does anyone know this barn's true identity?*

### Calendar

#### Elmendorf House Tour

Saturday, March 21, 2009 – 10:00 AM

53 Main Street, Hurley. A brief meeting will be followed by lunch at the Hurley Mountain Inn. For more information call Jim Decker at (845) 527-1710.

#### Van Hoesen House Tour

Saturday, April 4, 2009 – 1:00 PM

Tour the Van Hoesen House, Claverack, NY during this special joint event for Hudson River Heritage (HRH) and HVVA members only. This circa 1730 Dutch American house was identified by the Preservation League of New York State as one of "Seven to Save" endangered properties for 2009. HRH successfully nominated the property. Ed Klingler, Van Hoesen House Historical Foundation president, will describe the history of the house and ongoing protection efforts. Rob Sweeney of HVVA will speak about the house's distinctive construction features. Continuous tours from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. For more information, call Hudson River Heritage at (845) 876-2474. Rain date: April 11, 2009.

#### UCHS at the Bevier House

Saturday, April 18, 2009 – 10:00 AM

2682 Route 209, Marletown. Workday at the Peter Sinclair Gallery of Early American Crafts and Trades, at UCHS. Help clean up the tools for their spring debut! Want to help? Contact Rob at (845) 336-0232.

#### Saugerties Stone House Tour

Saturday, May 16, 2009

Please see details on page 2.

#### Dutch History & Culture Festival

Saturday-Sunday, June 13-14, 2009

Experience the Dutch influence on the Hudson Valley through performances, demonstrations, food and hands-on activities. Fun and active learning for all ages; free admission. Saturday 11 AM to 4:30 PM, Sunday 1 to 4 PM. "Dinner of Discovery" featuring 17th Century food will be held on the Senate House grounds Saturday night starting at 6:00 pm. \$50 per person. Call for complete details: (845) 338-2786.

#### Albany Area Tour

Saturday, June 20, 2009 – 10:30 AM

Lead by Walter Wheeler. More TBA, check HVVA.org website.

#### Hurley Stone House Day

Saturday, July 11, 2009 – 10:00 AM

HVVA will host a table of photographs and artifacts to promote awareness of our organization's goals. Members are needed to person the table, for various points throughout the day. Please volunteer! Jim Decker will coordinate the day, (845) 527-1710. For more event information, please visit stonehouseday.org website.