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

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The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

November – December 2009 **Newsletter**

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From the Editor...

Triumphantly – our humble little group has managed not only continue to function through another year but also has achieved some important goals for our broader historical community. I have written in the past about the need for “society” in order to achieve the mission of HVVA, and this year truly epitomizes that idea. Our organization came together in the form of a work party to give a spring spruce up in the Peter Sinclair Gallery located in the Ulster County Historical Society’s Bevier House Museum. Later we would supply copy for the UCHS’s famous Gazette. Thank you, Greg Huber and Maureen Nagy for doing your part.

In good turn the UCHS returned the favor by hosting the ticket sales for the “County Seats Tour” which for the first time in 20 years embraced the peoples architecture by spending two full days on the west bank of the river working collaboratively with Hudson River Heritage, HVVA members made a notable contribution to the celebration of Henry Hudson’s Quadricentennial year of discovery by showcasing the largest physical monuments of the Dutch legacy in North America – in the form of vernacular architecture. Which still give shape to many of our lives today. This Herculean two-day tour could never have come about with out the tireless efforts and generosity of HVVA members and most particularly those who selflessly opened their doors and welcomed in the masses eager to see exactly “what’s Dutch.” It was inspiring to see that many of the homeowners thought they were the privileged ones to be asked to participate in the tour – it just goes to show the ancient order of Dutch hospitality still pervades the very houses and hills we call home. Truly the friendships made over the many months of planning the tour will far out last the memory of that busy weekend.

Later in October HVVA collaborated with the Winnakee Land Trust supplying many knowledgeable docents for their “Tour of Historic Barns and Working Farms.” Many HVVA members participated in the tour, which made for a very receptive audience

and produced a very successful day. Most notable effort were supply by Bob Hedges and Roberta Jeracka who helped bring the collective HVVA knowledge to the benefit of others. In both the of tours the true spirit of what makes HVVA great, shines like a huge beacon – is the generosity of our members. The thought that information should be collected from obscurity and then widely dispersed to a broad audience is the keystone of HVVA’s mission. I know, the idea of educating the masses to bring about appreciation and eventually preservation seems like a long shot but it’s our only hope!

In a continued effort to share knowledge, HVVA has organized the first lecture series for Ulster County held in Persen House in Kingston, and provided ideas and speakers to the Senate House State Historic Site, Hudson River Heritage and Historic Huguenot Street. We thank John Stevens and Walter Wheeler for their willingness to enlighten us.

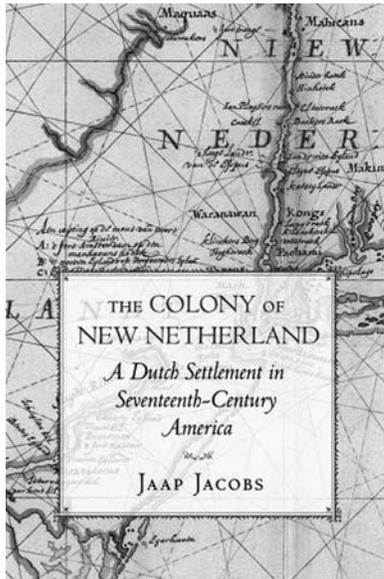
As we make final preparations to bring this busy year to a close, we once more look to The Friends of Historic Kingston, our allies in preservation, whom we have teamed up with to make possible a first class gallery presentation of the latest drawings of HVVA’s Founder, Peter Sinclair. The exhibit will feature more than a hundred works of the artist, included are many recognizable faces, both of the flesh and the stone kind!

So, as you can see by this short listing, the work is endless but so are the rewards of friendship. In the coming year be resolved to do your part, become an active member, it’s not just about the relationships we have within our own organization that makes HVVA so unique – it’s our relationship to the World that makes the difference.

Peace in the New Year!

Rob Sweeney – HVVA’s sheepdog

Book Review



The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth Century America

The Dutch involvement in North America started after Henry Hudson, sailing under a Dutch flag in 1609, traveled up the river that would later bear his name. The Dutch control of the region was short-lived, but had profound effects on the Hudson Valley region. In *The Colony of New Netherland*, Jaap Jacobs offers a comprehensive history of the Dutch colony on the Hudson from the first trading voyages in the 1610s to 1674, when the Dutch ceded the colony to the English.

As Jacobs shows, New Netherland offers a distinctive example of economic colonization and in its social and religious profile represents a noteworthy divergence from the English colonization in North America. Centered around New Amsterdam on the island of Manhattan, the colony extended north to present-day Schenectady, New York, east to central Connecticut, and south to the border shared by Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, leaving an indelible imprint on the culture, political geography, and language of the early modern mid-Atlantic region. Dutch colonists' vivid accounts of the land and people of the area shaped European perceptions of this bountiful land; their own activities had a lasting effect on land use and the flora and fauna of New York State, in particular, as well as on relations with the Native people with whom they traded.

Sure to become readers' first reference to this crucial phase of American early colonial history, this book is a multifaceted and detailed depiction of life in the colony, from exploration and settlement to governance, trade, and agriculture. Jacobs gives a keen sense of the built environment and social relations of the Dutch colonists and closely examines the influence of the church and the social system adapted from that of the Dutch Republic. Although Jacobs focuses his narrative on the realities of quotidian existence in the colony, he considers that way of life in the broader context of the Dutch Atlantic and in comparison to other European settlements in North America.

A must have holiday gift for the Dutch enthusiasts in your life, now available in paperback for around \$25.

Events

The Society for the Preservation
of
Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture
presents

Peter Sinclair “Drawing on the Past”



at

Friends of Historic Kingston
Museum Gallery
(Corner of Main and Wall Street)
Kingston, New York

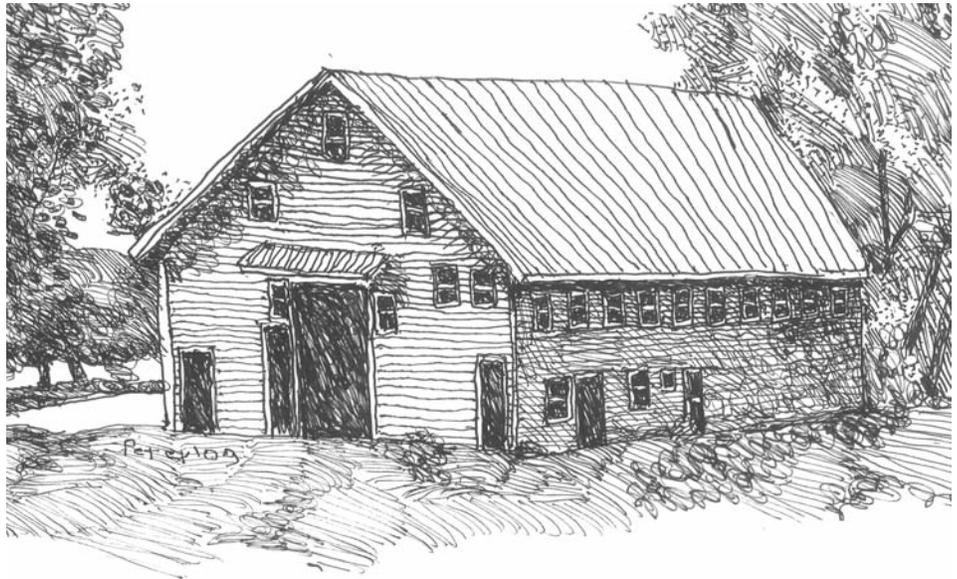
Show open every Saturday
through December 19, 2009
1:00 to 4:00 PM

and by appointment
845.339.0730

Two Sets of Eyes Are Better Than One

By Greg Huber

There's no doubt about it. Two sets of eyes are better than one. It's almost miraculous. This is a truism and it certainly is so in regard to the examination of architectural features in vernacular buildings. Many times this author has gone at first into historic barns and houses by himself and observed a number of features in a particular building. Often lists are made of the various aspects that were found. In subsequent visits I am occasionally accompanied by another person into that building who points out certain things that were never seen or focused on during the first visit. Incidents of diverse responses by different people seeing different things are just natural phenomena. Many of my "architectural friends" and colleagues report the same kind of thing.



Getting a second party to look at a building that you have "seen" is like asking for a second opinion. Maybe particular kinds of features or construction elements are more easily seen or discerned by certain people. In my own experiences among other features I very particularly look at the actual wood – its grain and patina – and the species of wood that the timber framers chose to work with. My own earlier familiarity with wood going back to the late 1960's may have primed me in this regard.

One very recent experience with getting a "second opinion" occurred during my time of being a tour guide at the Elmendorf Dutch-American barn off Route 213 near High Falls during the October 4th 2009 "What's Dutch" week-end. I paired with Tom Colluci as a tour guide at the barn. I had actually never met Tom before that Sunday the day of the tour. I knew of him as a trustee as his name was on the list of officers and trustees on the front page of the HVVA Newsletter. I learned that he was a historic preservation contractor. Tom and I more or less took turns pointing out various architectural features to many of the visitors to the barn.

Between visitors during the day we would point out certain things to each other in the barn. That was fair enough. It keeps awareness of architectural features of barns in the blood going. We had no real differences of opinions about anything in the barn for a few hours. But at one point Tom made a comment about the upper tie beams (above the anchor-beams) in two

of the bents. He said there was only ever one upper tie per bent in the second and third inner bents. I said – "What – what are you telling me." I proceeded to point out to Tom why I thought he had erred in his judgment of the condition with the upper ties. I pontificated on a few things a bit that I "knew" were correct. The only difficulty I had was that my assertions were wrong.

Tom saw some things that I did not. He was dead right about the ties. I made a statement in the Elmendorf barn article I wrote that was included in the August to October 2009 Newsletter that the Elmendorf barn was the only Dutch related barn that I was aware of that had three ties (an anchor-beam and two higher ties) in two bents. What Tom did was show me way down on the concrete wagon floor that the braces of the tie several feet down from the H-frame posts' tops in the middle bent were not pegged in the normal manner. They were nailed on. He also mentioned one or two other aspects about the bent that I had to agree with. One of them concerned the boards that were nailed onto the inner sides of the posts to help provide support to what was a re-positioned tie. Tom proved the adage – two eyes are better than one. Indeed.

So what actually happened in the barn was this. I have it straight now – I hope. The second and third bents each originally had an upper tie beam that was located only about a foot below the tops of the H-frame posts. No other "upper ties" ap-

peared on the bents. The barn probably at some point in the 1880 to 1920 time frame had a re-modeling where the upper ties of the bents were removed and then re-located several feet down from their former placements. In the process the tenons and/or mortises of the original positions of the ties were left exposed. When I examined the barn a number of weeks back in preparation for the article I looked at the empty mortise spots and also saw the other lower down ties and rather quickly concluded both the bents had double ties high on up the posts. That was an incorrect conclusion.

What is the appropriate phrase right now to use – oh yes – what is the moral of this story? Simply this – you have to look as closely as you can as timber connections to ascertain if the unions of the various joints are definitely original – at least as much as possible. I learned this: look at the joints themselves and OTHER aspects around the joints very carefully. If you do – you increase the chances that you will make correct assertions about certain aspects of the building that you are looking at. Any depictions in the Elmendorf article that shows a tie several feet down from the tops of the H-frame posts in the second and /or third inner bents are not accurate.

Thank you Tom – I learned something. By the way, in recently going through some notes I discovered another barn that had two higher up ties in a single bent. How about that? ■

Around the Neighborhood

By Ken Walton

As I vaguely alluded to in my first column, about a year ago, I had started a project to find all the extant houses in the Hudson Valley of the colonial period including up to and surrounding the birth of our great nation. Arbitrarily, I made the cutoff year 1815, so that I would not run into the Greek Revival period. The reason I started the project is simply when I began to seek out these structures, I quickly discovered the only listings available to the public are partial at best, restricted to a limited geographical area usually no bigger than a township and are separately located at various facilities or websites. My goal is to create a single access point where anyone wanting to know about any extant colonial house in the entire Hudson Valley region can find, at the very least, the basic information about it. I was looking for a more visual media approach than a database, so I decided to go with cataloging the sites on a GoogleTM map. A place can be looked up by either clicking on a “flag” on the map or by the listing on the left, which is in alphabetical order by the name commonly associated with the building. When the editor of this newsletter, upon hearing about this project, offered the use of the HVVA website as a portal for the map, it seemed like a great fit even if the scope of the map is a bit more general in criteria than vernacular architecture. The scope of the project by its definition includes the homesteads of all settlers and their descendents regardless of their point of origin, occupation, status of wealth, etc... This means the list goes beyond just vernacular architecture. It does include the more elaborate mansions, such as Clermont, Montgomery Place and Maizefield to name a few. Culturally, it includes the Dutch, English, Huguenots, Palatines, Quakers and others.

As I began to plot the houses on the map, I developed a format to help keep the entries consistent. First, you will notice different colored flags on the maps. They are used to differentiate the construction materials used for the house. Blue is for stone houses (my personal favorite). Red is for brick constructed or brick facade houses. Green is for wood frame houses covered with clap or weatherboard. Some flags have a black dot in the middle., others do not. The black dot is a means for myself to keep track of the places I have visually confirmed are there. The flags without the dots are places I have heard/read about as existing sometime in the past or present, but I have yet to spot myself. This will be slowly phased out over time, not just because I plan to eventually visit every one of them, but I have found it easier to track them on a spreadsheet instead.

It soon became apparent while on the quest, that other structures, such as churches & mills ought to be included as well. The churches are designated with yellow flags, mills with purple. Even ruins still visible (such as the Louw-Bogardus place in Kingston) are marked with a magenta colored flag. A friend of mine and I soon discovered another component of this project – dining in the old colonial places that have always been or since converted into a place where the public can eat and lodge. The old inns, taverns as well as those converted into modern-day restaurants or Bed & Breakfast are marked with the turquoise colored flag.

Since one of my favorite hobbies is photography, I try to get a photograph of every place I have visited and I attempt to include them on the maps. Click on the picture and it will load a larger size of the image. If there is a historic marker or plaque about the place, I try to include them too. In the description text is the postal address of the location in most cases. Keep in mind that the postal address may differ in the name of the locale. For instance, my

home is located in Modena, but my postal address is listed as Gardiner. The placement of the flag marks the geographic location of the building. I try to include build dates, but often times these conflict among the different sources and I will attempt to list further dates when major alterations have occurred. Dates marked on houses will be listed. Listed next is whether the property is private or public, since it is very important that we respect the private owners’ wishes as they post around their property. If the public place is a museum, library, etc. with a website, I will try to provide a link. I attempt to include a list of reference publications more commonly known if one wishes to find more information. I try to include HVVA newsletter articles in the reference listing if I am aware of them. The last item is a hold over from when this started as a more personal project and that is the date when I had spotted, toured or dined at the building.

It was not until after I joined the HVVA that I learned about the significance of the New World barns (or even barns in general), so they are missing from the maps. Currently, I have no plans of adding them as it is beyond my current resources, but I am more than willing to work with whoever would like to tackle adding this facet to the project.

Over the course of the year, it has become obvious this is a long-term project. One that will continue to evolve over time as I learn more information about the “neighborhood” as well as the capabilities and limitations of GoogleTM Maps. For instance, I have already come across one pretty severe limitation. Originally, I had planned on making one map with everything on it. I soon found out there is a limit of only 200 flags that can be placed on a map. So there are currently 25 maps, broken down by county and then some counties had to be broken down by townships. I also started off by breaking some regions into Colonial and Federal periods. Most of the period maps I have consolidated again and I am still hoping I can consolidate the remaining ones. Be sure to click on the link “See all 25 maps” to view them all. Not ideally how I had wanted to organize it, but I am open to suggestions that may help reduce the number of maps even further. Also, please keep in mind, that at this point, the maps are no where near complete. At the time of this writing, there are over 350 sites plotted. I have at least another 150 to plot that I have already photographed (yes, I am a little bit behind) and I have over 200 more on the spreadsheet (and some still on the maps) I have yet to look for. I always want to hear about others I may have missed, so if you don’t see one on the map you know of, please drop me a note.

So if you have not done so already, click on the “Mapping History” link on the homepage of the HVVA website. Visit often as updates are being made at a steady pace. I hope you enjoy it.

In the Neighborhood

In August, the HVVA membership had the opportunity to tour the Maplestone Inn south of New Paltz on Route 32. This house had almost succumbed to the ravages of time, both physically and historically. The present owners have done a heroic effort to convert a ruinous shell with little to no original “fabric” left to the interior into a charming bed & breakfast. All the owner could tell us of its history was that he was told it was probably built in the 1790s by one of the descendents of the Jenkins family from nearby Jenkinstown. Recently, I have acquired a book about the families that settled the area which in 1853 became known as the town of



P. Overpaugh House at 172 Clove Valley Road, Town of Rochester

Gardiner. In it, I discovered a little bit more information about this particular house. John L. Jenkins, who made his living as a mason, built this house shortly after his father's death on July 13, 1799 and married Mary Oliver Brodhead on August 24 of the same year. The house was probably erected in 1800.

In 1793, at the age of 18, John L. came along when his father, Lambert, moved his family (including his parents) from New Jersey. (With the Shuart-Van Orden house mentioned in the last issue being less than two miles away and noted its builder also was from New Jersey, is it more than just coincidence?) Shortly after his arrival, Lambert purchased land from Cornelius DuBois. This land was part of the 3,000 acres patent granted to New Paltz Patentee, Louis Dubois, Cornelius' grandfather. The stone house Lambert built is at 46 Jenkinstown Road and is designated with a NYS Historical Marker. It claims the descendants of the family still reside on the farm which spans both sides of the road. The barns are across the road from the house. The stone portion of the house is the closest section to the road and faces east with a screened-in porch that covers up most of the stone on that side of the house. This is why I also included a photograph of the rear or west side of the house as well as on the map. To the south are several wooden sections that have been added over the years. The exterior stone walls are painted white to match the wooden sections of the house. It wasn't long after Lambert built his farm that he died (as mentioned above) in 1799 after becoming ill, just prior to being able to see his eldest son (John L.) marry. James, the second eldest son, took over his father's farm. It did not take James long to develop the land into a very successful business establishment. In the first

years of the 19th century, he built three mills, two gristmills and one sawmill. He also built a general store selling everything from cloth to tools and included a post office. Around 1820, James built a two story wood frame house just a few hundred yards east of his father's house. An unusual feature of this basic Georgian style house is the second story has only three windows in the front facade. The area eventually became known as Jenkinstown in James' honor.

The book I found this information in is a very good resource for the area between Hurley, New Paltz and Shawangunk, especially on the subject of genealogy. It also lists family cemeteries. In it as well are photographs of some of the homesteads and gravestones of these early settlers. The book is titled, *The Road to Gardiner* by Ed Thompson and can be purchased for \$25.00 at the Gardiner town hall. The proceeds from the book go towards supporting Majestic Park in town.

Just a few hundred yards north of and across the street from the John L. Jenkins house (aka Maplestone Inn) is another stone house at 520 Route 32. If one was not paying attention, they would drive by it quite easily as it is surrounded by a stockade fence blocking most of the charm of this very vernacular appearing structure. Throughout the generations that resided in the home, the original footprint was never changed or expanded. The house is now owned by Sanford Levy, proprietor of Jenkinstown Antiques. According to his website, the house was built in 1726 by the Freer family, most likely as a tenant house. One possible tenant could have been John Sloat during 1779, identified by historian Kenneth E. Hasbrouck. The property being only a half mile



Where, oh! where could this house be?

south of the Terwilliger house of 1738 was part of the same Freer patent and was owned by the same Hasbroucks that lived in the Locust Lawn estate. The house was inhabited continuously until about 1970, when the last of this particular Hasbrouck line donated Locust Lawn and the Terwilliger houses to become museums and sold off the tenant house. Acquired in 1973, it has taken the current owner thirty years to restore the place back to as near the 18th century as modern living would allow. Added to the property is a circa 1790's summer kitchen found at a yard sale right in New Paltz, where it was about to be replaced by a office building. Also on the property is the 1792 Hallock House saved from demolition in 1986 and moved from its original location 36 miles south in Orange County.

The Nosy Neighbor

I have a couple of puzzling places that have been taunting me for quite some time now. The first is quite an intriguing looking house. It is up on the Shawangunk Ridge in the Clove, just north of Minnewaska State Park at 172 Clove Valley Road (across from Ginger Rd.). It is a bank house where the cellar has partially exposed stone walls at the east elevation. There is a seam in the stone wall showing the current footprint was built as two sections. The south end elevation shows the stone up to the first story. The rest of the house is clapboard. It looks like the roof line may have been raised and eyebrow windows added. Knowing nothing about

the history of the house, to me it looked like a homestead that started with early modest beginnings and was expanded in phases over time. The first time I came across it, I felt it had to be old enough to have a place on the map. Then I came across the Rochester Reconnaissance Survey of 2008, which stated it was the house of P. Overpaugh built between 1830-50. Disappointed, I took it off the map. Recently, I saw a real estate ad (its been for sale for quite some time), that described the house as circa 1740. Now I am wondering if perhaps my initial theory is true and the humble beginnings of the place does have roots in the 18th century. If there is somebody who knows the origins of this house, please contact me. I'm hoping that I may once again be able include it on the map.

In visiting over 400 houses in the past year, I'm surprised I have not lost track of a far greater number than I have. There is only one house which I have taken a photograph of, that I have lost the location to. Since taken back in last November, I have not been able to retrace my steps in order to find this place again. If anyone recognizes this place, please let me know where it is.

Anyone that can add more information to any of the mentioned houses or has any other comments they wish to send, please drop me a line. I can be contacted by email at kaw9862@optonline.net or by snail mail:

Ken Walton, 12 Orchard Drive, 2nd Floor, Gardiner, NY 12525.
On the subject line of the email, please include 'HVVA,' so I can expedite a response. ■

Wagon Doors in Dutch-American Barns (Part One)

By Gregory D. Huber

Where are the biggest doors in Dutch-American barns? In classic three-aisle barns they are seen on gable end walls of course. On less frequently seen side wall entrance barns original or otherwise, wagon doors appear on only the side walls or in certain cases both on an end wall and a side wall. These are the main threshing floor doors also known as wagon doors and they can assume large dimensions. In the Dutch-American realm about 25 original end wall ones (perhaps more) survived into the last third of the twentieth century, that along with “remnant” door elements in perhaps a dozen or so other barns. On maybe another dozen side entrance barns (possibly more), original wagon doors have survived. Keep in mind that out of the 50,000 to 100,000 estimated barns that were built in the Dutch settled realm, a few dozen barns represents an extremely small percentage of the original total. With the exception of two barns in New Jersey, all of the original wagon doors have been discovered in New York State.

This is the first installment of a three-part article on the subject of wagon doors that are seen in Dutch-American barns. Subject matters covered in the three parts are discussions on any structural elements related to wagon doors and the pentices above and certain concepts related to possible governing principles that may have determined the size of the doors. A section on Dutch wagon doors in barns in the Netherlands is included. Certain other items related to doors have also been examined and are discussed.

Although wagon doors have experienced all kinds of use and abuse and the vast majority of them have been destroyed and/or replaced in the past 250 years, their basic characteristics can still be discussed. They were, after all, of paramount importance in the functioning of the barns, as they allowed access of wagons into their big interiors. As it is, about three dozen doors and certain other door remnants can render some sense of what was so common 150 to about 275 years ago.

Original Doors in Other Barn Types

At the outset, for the sake of both comparison and perspective, it is noted that there

are hundreds of barns in Pennsylvania that retain their original wagon doors or at least significant remnant amounts of them at particular barn sites. They are often of a frame construction type, which is rarely seen in Dutch related barns. Of course there are far more barns in Pennsylvania of fore-bay type or of one-level ground type, than exists in New York or New Jersey where Dutch-American barns are located. True too, as the Dutch three-aisle structure was rarely constructed after about 1830 or 1840, many thousands of fore-bay type barns and a number of ground barns were built after 1840.

A number of swing beam barns with side wall entries in New York and New Jersey have been seen with original wagon doors and they are often of frame construction. So called swing beam barns (either of one or two levels) with side wall entries have one bent that flanks the wagon bay with an often large sized transverse tie beam (14 to 24 inches in height) that appears about seven feet above the floor. An outstanding example of original wagon doors has survived on a circa 1810 swing beam barn in Hunterdon County, New Jersey, where a frame shed attached to a side wall has

protected the wagon doors for likely more than 150 years. The wagon doors and an adjacent human door are in almost pristine condition. In one side wall entrance English barn on Long Island amazingly one single door that stretches the entire width of the wagon door opening has survived. Almost all wagon door openings were constructed with double or side-by-side doors in barns across North America in the pre 1840 era. So this single door (with a ten foot width) is likely extremely rare or perhaps unique.

Basic Wagon Door Construction

The major types of construction seen in wagon doors in barns in the northeast will now be delineated. One of the best treatises in general on doors thus far to appear – albeit a rather short one (25 pages in one chapter) – is seen in C.F. Innocent’s classic book *English Building Construction* published in 1916. He outlined many of the aspects of doors and there are a number of citations of features of barns in England. There is a discussion of a number of ways the handle sides of

Possible pre-Revolutionary War era Gebhard double log crib Switzer barn east of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Original side wall wagon door is seen at the one side of door opening. Note the three tapered horizontal bars and two diagonal bars that are framed into single vertical stile at extreme left of door. Note logs of log crib at the left.



doors were fastened. He further stated that there were two methods of fastening the doors on the opposite side of the handle side of the doors. The harr was the first method and the hinge was the second. As will be seen, in Dutch type barns the hinge method was far more prevalent while the harr method at least as seen in the last few decades is very rare.

The vast majority of wagon doors in barns in the northeast were built with two major construction modes – batten or ledged door construction type and frame construction type. In three-aisle Dutch barns in New York State most original doors had wooden hinges that rather often included horizontal reverse side battens. As seen below a very few wagon doors were built in the harr-hung style.

The first type or the batten door type is the most common in northeast barns. Innocent states that the type is the oldest door form constructed of more than one board. It has been used from the earliest times until the present. If this was true in England it may well have been true in the Netherlands. In Dutch-American barns batten wagon doors in the great majority of instances occurred in barns in the southern reaches of New York State and virtually always in New Jersey barns. Evidence suggests that the East of Sharon barn (Fitchen barn number 33)

in Schoharie County in New York State probably originally had batten doors that swung outwardly. This wagon door type also appears on many barns in Pennsylvania.

In order that the front vertical boards of batten doors were properly reinforced two or occasionally three horizontal battens appear on the rear face of the doors. One board is seen near both the tops and the bottoms of the doors. Also when doors are single height doors (full height of wagon door opening) there are mid-point boards which are often the widest. Top and bottom battens are regular flat boards and are most often about an inch thick and they vary in their widths from about ten to twelve or more inches. Middle battens when they occur are wider by two to four inches. Since battened doors have a definite tendency to sag, diagonal battens (braces) were placed batten to batten – from the “heel” of the inner or hanging edge of the door of the lower batten to the opposite end of the upper batten. Only very rarely are braces or diagonal battens oriented the opposite way.

In most cases of wagon doors with battens exterior face wrought metal hinges were affixed in line with the battens. The metal hinges vary in their lengths to a fair degree. Occasionally the hinges are joined to the battens via clinched nails

(most often wrought nails in pre-Civil War barns) and sometimes are connected by means of rivets.

The second type of door is the frame construction type. Here the normal front face vertical boards are seen but no regular board type battens normally appear. Rather there are horizontal wood pieces or bars (rails) that are often rectangular in cross section such as 2 by 3's or even larger. They extend most often across the full widths of the doors. Often these bars that are usually three in number are evenly spaced and are often tapered. The reason for the tapered condition is not definitely known but may be related to weight or weight distribution where doors may swing more easily than if there were untapered battens. Other possibilities may exist. The horizontals join to a single vertical wood piece or stile on the attachment side of the door. In addition, there are diagonal wood pieces that stretch from the stile to the horizontal pieces. All of the horizontals and often the diagonals are brought together by means of mortise and tenon and pegged joinery. This joinery is not at all normally seen in battened wagon doors.

This barn door type must not have been that unusual as the artist William Sidney Mount (1807 – 1868) depicted a barn (among other barn scenes seen at the Long Island Museum of American Art) in a painting that had a side wall entry with frame wagon doors. Enough detail is included that this door construction type is clearly seen.

Colluci side wall entry English barn near Gardiner in southern Ulster County with three section nearly original wagon doors. Full height door appears at the left and two half door sections are seen at the right. Pentice is seen over the wagon doors.



Only a very few Dutch related barns had wagon doors that were frame constructed. One such barn is also actually the earliest known Dutch three-aisle barn – the circa 1725 Bull three-bay barn (see below) in Orange County, New York. Another was the four-bay Muller barn in Schoharie County (Fitchen barn number 21). This barn is now either nearly completely ruinous or its remnant pieces were removed in the last few years. Another barn but of one aisle is the Vinicor barn west of Woodstock in Ulster County. It has original frame doors that appear on its one side wall but they are only half height but do maintain the side-by-side double door status. Obviously regular size wagons could not enter through these doors.

Harr-Hung Door Variety

One distinctive type of frame constructed wagon door was the harr-hung variety.



William Bull dendro-dated 1726 three-aisle barn near Goshen in Orange County, New York. View of far end wall with one frame wagon door section is shown.

Perhaps half a dozen Dutch barns have been seen with them. The vertical wood pieces (stiles) of these doors have wood pin extensions (several inches long and integral to the stiles) that engaged circular holes in the soffit of the overhead door lintel (anchor-beam) and also the floor sill. Thus the door pivoted on this vertical piece. A much altered pre-Revolutionary War era barn near Red Hook in Dutchess County, New York apparently had harr-hung wagon doors. Another barn of eighteenth century vintage in Hunterdon County, New Jersey near Oldwick also likely had harr-hung doors. Another but much altered barn in Columbia County on County Route 11 had the door type at least at one end wall. The dated 1770 nave only remnant barn near Red Hook in Dutchess County had a harr-hung wagon door. The doors themselves in all the barns are non-extant but the circular holes in the overhead beams are still plainly evident. Four or five barns in southeast Pennsylvania have intact harr-hung wagon doors. So – not including any harr-hung doors on barns possibly existent in New England such particular frame constructed doors in regular sized hay barns are very un-common in the northeast. Perhaps locally in certain areas they may be seen.

As will be seen, the main focus of this article is the wooden hinged wagon doors of original type that are found in 3-aisle Dutch-American barns. Many aspects of these doors are discussed below.

Musings on Dimensions of Wagon Door Openings

Before any discussion ensues on many of the particular aspects of wagon doors in Dutch-American barns a general overview will be offered on some considerations on why wagon doors assumed the basic dimensions they did.

Most of us would agree that sizes or dimensions are always important in discussing any architectural feature. Here the variability of sizes of doors is presented. First a few things will be said on dimensions of the door entries and a few ideas will be presented on the sizes of these openings.

Farmers raised a variety of crops in the fields at their farms and they of obvious necessity needed a means of transporting the crops from the fields (after harvesting) to be stored in their barns. They used “regular sized” wagons and perhaps smaller carts. What ultimately dictated the size of the wagons can not be said with certainty. Traditions concerning wagon door size first used in the earliest of settlements in North America are not exactly known. But standards that were likely borrowed from European manners were possibly quite closely followed in general at traditional farms for the next 250 years in

Double log Switzer is seen in Weisenberg Township in northern Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. Top end pin extension of vertical wood stile of rear wall wagon door of frame construction is inserted into hole in lintel above door opening. Wagon door opening is 11 feet 10 inches high by 15 feet wide.



America. This is not to say that all wagons were necessarily of very similar dimensions. But when it is realized that wagon door openings in the great majority of three-aisle barns were quite similar in size the possibility emerges that the wagons may have been built with quite comparable sizes. Wagons entered the barns and proceeded along the length (or most of the length) of the barn (in non U-barns) beneath the anchor-beams. Crops were then distributed above the anchor-beams.

In view of all this it might be said that sizes of wagons, dimensions of wagon doors (and their openings) and the clearance beneath the anchor-beams all acted synergistically. That is - all the sizes or dimensions basically acted in concert with one another. The size of one thing reflected the size of the other two although not all the sizes themselves were the same. But the dimension of one of these elements would have to have had an effect on another element.

Something else to ponder in the determination of the fundamental dimensions of wagon doors (wagon door openings) is this. Farmers in their fields gathered their various crops. For a quarter of a millennium they used hay forks of one type or design to fill their hay wagons. How far could a man throw up his harvested crop into a wagon on a practical and sustained basis? This topic was discussed by Clayton Ray. He helped write a book called – Wagon Making in the United States during the Late Nineteenth Century and Early Twentieth Century. Such a height, what ever it was may have been one of the prominent factors in the ultimate determination of the basic size of a wagon door opening and therefore wagon doors. The height of a wagon door could only exceed the height of hay in a loaded hay wagon by “just enough.” The determination of the positioning of the bottom of anchor-beams in turn was reflected by the size of the wagon door opening. All of these elements mirrored each other in important and obviously related ways.

Wagon Door Openings on End Walls

It should not be assumed that all three-aisle barns had wagon doors at both end walls. The very definition of U-barns (true or variant types) precludes the inclusion of wagon doors at the “far end” of the barn. So a number (a minority) of three-aisle barns had only one wagon door entry. However, nearly an entire county such as

Schoharie County saw most of its barns (a few dozen) that each had a single wagon door entrance. The reason for such a distinct anomaly is not known.

It seems that at least a few of the very early remaining barns seen in the last fifty years had only one end wall wagon door entry. One example was the early eighteenth century Van Bergen barn formerly in Leeds, Greene County. John Stevens stated this as such in his book on Dutch architecture. John Fitchen in his description (barn number 37) did not include this feature. It appears that the dated 1750 five-bay Decker barn near Wallkill in Ulster County may not have had a “far” end wall wagon entry. In addition, the original section of the three-aisle Oliver barn of pre-Revolutionary war era status in Marletown in Ulster County also had just one wagon door entrance. The eighteenth century re-located Sands barn (side aisles removed) at Port Washington on Long Island had just one end wall entry. Even the original three-bay section of the circa 1800 Bartholf barn in Bergen County, New Jersey appears to have had only one wagon entry.

So it is plain to see that a three-aisle barn format did not guarantee that two wagon entries were incorporated in the design of the barn type. However, the manner in which wagons would enter and then exit one end wall entry barns would seem rather complex. Nevertheless, this condition certainly would seem not to have been a distinct problem as this was the

case seen in countless thousands of bank barns (with just one wagon door entry) in Pennsylvania and other areas. Entry and exit for wagons in two end wall wagon doors would appear to be much more easily accomplished.

Peter Kalm: Observations in 1748 – 1749

The fact that Dutch-American barns apparently commonly had wagon doors at their end walls is seen in a statement made by a mid-eighteenth century traveler named Peter Kalm from Sweden. It is included here.

Peter Kalm visited America in the late 1740's and kept journals of many observations that he made that included comments on many vernacular buildings in both New Jersey and New York among other areas. He made specific comments on barns in the general Trenton area of New Jersey. His descriptions of the barns clearly indicate that they were of Dutch type. He stated – “... both ends of the building were large doors so that one could drive in with a cart and horses through one of them and go out the other.” The doors that Kalm refers to are of course wagon doors.

Size of Wagon Door Openings

In Dutch-American barns the dimensions of wagon door entries are fairly standardized. In many cases the openings approxi-



Near end wall of Bull barn is seen with its interior surface of full single height door section. Note four horizontal bars that join to side vertical stile in frame constructed door patterned after possible original wagon doors.

mate being square. The low end of their widths is about ten feet as seen in the circa 1810 three-aisle three-bay Van Ripper-Tice barn at the Goetschuis House Museum in Upper Saddle River, Bergen County, New Jersey. Upper limit for widths is about 12 ½ feet as seen in the circa 1830 “Pumpkin Hollow” three-aisle four-bay barn along Route 11 in Columbia County, New York. Most wagon door openings in various barns have widths from 10 to 10½ feet. The heights of most wagon door openings are 11 to 11½ feet. Heights do not often fall below about 11 feet.

Agreements Between Builder and Farmer

All the dimensions just given are the optimal sizes of openings that were in the minds of the barn builders and perhaps the farmers themselves. It would be fascinating to know or even have a glint of the conversations (if any) that went on between the farmer and the builder in the actual determination of wagon door openings. It may be that discussions between farmer and builder were much more intense regarding certain features of barns than other aspects. Perhaps some very general insight into the topic of construction of buildings agreements between certain parties may be gleaned from certain seventeenth century Dutch-American contracts that focus on particular types of communications among contractors and owners. However, most of these contracts

Bartholf circa 1800 three-bay three-aisle barn with one-bay addition is seen on Route 202 in Mahwah, Bergen County, New Jersey. Barn only had one end wall wagon door opening.



concern houses but they may reveal some certain underlying truths of how the parties involved in the construction of any vernacular building talked among themselves. More research is needed along these lines.

Wagon Doors in the Netherlands

Charles Gehring in his thirty plus years of research on Dutch culture in America has said that the earliest reference he has uncovered concerning an apparent Holland style barn in America is 1630. This writer has found a few references to barns (and house-barns) built in the 1630's but never a reference prior to 1630. The question can be asked - did wagon doors on barns of whatever type that existed in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century influence the disposition and appearance of wagon doors in Dutch-American barns built in the first half of the seventeenth century and beyond? Since no barns remain from the seventeenth century in America it would seem that the best answer would be to make a comparison of wagon doors in the earliest surviving barns in America with those early barns that remain in the Netherlands.

In order to obtain some sense of the general appearance of an early seventeenth century barn in the Netherlands the following is offered. An article by Shirley Dunn – “*Influences on New York's Early Dutch Architecture*” published by HVVA in October 2003 includes a detail from a well known engraving – “*Tobias and the Angel*.” The scene is of a house-barn by Abraham Bloemaert in 1620. How standard this barn type was at that time is not known. At the front of the side wall wagon door is an apparent hay wagon or a hay cart. The size of the wagon is distinctly smaller than the wagons depicted by John Heaten (see below). The engraving shows that the hay wagon door opening had to be higher than the regular slope or height of the roof to accommodate the height of the hay wagon. Many extant barns in the Netherlands have this same “expanded roof” hay wagon entry section. A few Dutch-American barns extant today also have this expanded roof feature. This is not to imply necessarily that the Netherlands example acted as prototypes of American examples.

The homestead at the Van Den Bekken farm in the Kessel area of Limburg near the Maas River in the Netherlands was visited by this writer in April 2003. The

barn had original frame constructed eave wall wagon doors and they opened into the barn. The farm buildings were in a court yard arrangement (*carre*) and there was a date of 1818 in irons at the front gable wall of the house section. At the time of the visit the barn was apparently 185 years old. The doors had an appearance and size just like they were right out of New York State. All the rear face wood framing elements were mortised and



Van Den Bekken farm is located in Kessel area of Limburg near Maas River in the Netherlands. Barn has original frame constructed wagon doors that open into barn. Farm buildings are in court yard arrangement. A date of 1818 in irons is seen on homestead house.

tenoned with pegs. It seems likely that the doors were based on traditions that went back at least a century or two or more before the barn was constructed. The barn had classic ankerbalk (anchor-beam) oak construction with extended and wedged tenons nearly identical to Dutch-American construction.

Out of nearly thirty-five barns that were seen at many homesteads during the two week visit to a number of areas in the Netherlands the Kessel barn was the only barn with nearly completely original wagon doors. The visited barns dated from the early or mid seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century. It would appear that the Van Den Bekken doors were something of a rarity.

Barns in the Netherlands Cited in Books – Wagon Doors

Many views of wagon doors in barns in the Netherlands may be seen in the book by Ellen van Olst – *Uilkema, een historisch boerderij-onderzoek*. Many of the barns have expanded roofs to accommodate the wagon doors when they appear on side walls. A superb early appearing wagon door (of unknown date) that appears on an almost primitive looking side wall entry barn located in Drenthe is seen on page 81. Each door half consists of three or four wide exterior vertical boards. The doors are of single height and seem to swing outwardly on metal hinges. The barn is not a house-barn or *loshoes* and there is no roof extension to accommodate the wagon doors. These doors are distinctly not of the height of normal sized American wagon door examples.

Another barn that is in Friesland of seeming rather late date in Van Olst's book on page 121 has a tile roof and brick exterior walls. The barn has a very prominent roof expansion for inclusion of a wagon entry. This door entrance and the doors do approximate the dimensions of wagon entries and wagon doors in American examples. At the front of the barn at least three hay wagons of unknown vintage are seen.

A fairly early looking barn in Drenthe (unknown date) in the book on page 509 shows a side wall wagon entry where there is no roof expansion as in the examples cited above. This barn has a thatched roof and even has thatched side walls. The wagon doors collapsed into the barn interior. The doors seem somewhat shorter than American examples.

An excellent shot appears on page 558 of a building complex where there is a barn section at one side and what appears to be a house section at right angles to the barn at the other side of the complex. The large barn is several bays long and the wagon doors of fair height swing on metal hinges. The doors appear on the side wall but at the extreme end of the barn in a recessed area set back a few feet from the remainder of the side wall. It can not be said if this recessed area represents an addition to the barn but likely is not. Suffice to say the door location seems rather strange, at least in what is seen in relation to American examples. However, a barn in Friesland is shown on page 621 that shows a wagon door opening that

appears all the way at the end of the end wall that is immediately adjacent to the side wall. Here the door is recessed back from the rest of the end wall.

In another book – *De landelijke bouwkunst in Hollands Noorderkwartier* by L.Brandts Buys on several pages - 24, 26, 94 and 96 four other barns are depicted with wagon doors that appear at the extreme ends of their end walls. Other examples are seen in the book. On page 441 there is a depiction of a house-barn that was either built in 1706 or the drawing was made in 1706. The barn has a roof expansion to accommodate wagon doors. Each single height door at each side of the door opening swings outwardly on what appears to be three metal hinges.

A number of barns in both books show aisled barns with end wall wagon door entries that seem to be about equal to the dimensions in American examples. Many of the entries in the barns have arched tops. Most of these barns appear to be of rather late date or post 1850 or so.

A circa 1948 photo of a brick barn of unknown construction date is seen in G. Berends' book – *Historische houtconstructies in Nederland* – on page 29 where end wall wagon doors clearly open into the barn. No details can be seen as to what features constitute the interior surfaces of the doors.

A photo of a barn in John Stevens' Dutch architecture book on page 370 shows a house-barn located at the Netherlands Open Air Museum. A view is included of wagon doors that open inwardly. Doors consist of an upper half and a lower half at each side of the door opening. There is a *mittelmanse*. The door construction type is indeterminate.

From the foregoing citations in the books it is plainly seen that there was great diversity in the positions of wagon doors in many barns in a number of locations in the Netherlands. This condition is in distinct contrast with the locations of wagon doors seen in almost all American barn examples. This of course is disregarding considerations related to times of relative construction of the barns in both countries. It seems fairly safe to say however that there is a marked simplification of locating wagon doors in domestic barns here in America.

Before leaving this section on barns in the Netherlands it would be well to realize that

a potential source of knowing the disposition of wagon doors in early barns (possibly seventeenth century ones) is an examination of genre paintings of the Netherlands done by artists of that century and beyond. One book called – *Masters of 17th Century Dutch Landscape Painting* (563 pages) offers many scenes of rural environments. One painting by Aelbert Cuyp circa 1641 is called – *Farm Scene with Cottages and Animals*. Such a painting may offer certain opportunities if scrutinized very closely on the nature of barn doors. They might include wagon doors.

Far more research is needed to know the specific appearance of surviving original wagon doors in the Netherlands and how they may be compared and how they relate to the earliest examples or even later ones in America.

American Hay Wagon Sizes

It appears that almost nothing is known about any early Dutch-American hay wagons. No matter, not all wagons of course were identical in size and it is not known if there was a basic range of size of hay wagons (or their general appearance) used by the Dutch – across different eras of farming traditions in the era – 1650 to 1875. What can be said about the fundamental size of wagons? To get any sense

of wagon size we will look at wagons in Pennsylvania. Conestoga wagons from the late eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century have survived in the state. The earliest definitely authenticated one is 1807. These wagons built from about 1750 to 1850 were for transport of cargo across substantial distances. Clearly, these were not hay wagons.

Surviving early Dutch-American wagons either for transport across distances or that acted as hay wagons are extremely rare or non-existent. John Heaten the itinerant painter from New England apparently included classic Dutch wagons in two of his paintings. The first is seen in the famous circa 1735 Van Bergen over-mantel painting that depicts a Dutch-American homestead in Greene County. This rare scene includes what would appear to be a fairly regular sized wagon whose sides are prominently curved at their top edges. The back end of the wagon is about two feet higher than the front end. The other Heaten painting done in 1737 is a portrait of Abraham Wendell with a Dutch mill (on the Beaver Kill in Albany) in the background where a hay wagon is seen at the front of the mill. The wagon has the same distinctive curved upper edges (see book – *Remembrance of Patria* – Blackburn and Piwonka).

Pennsylvania hay wagon is shown at the Gruber Wagon Works north of Reading in Berks County, Pennsylvania. This wagon is an early twentieth century model. Wagon is four feet high on each of the sides.



It can not be said that these Dutch wagons were actually hay wagons but in both paintings productions that likely came from or were associated with farming seem to be contained within the confines of the wagons. This may imply that hay and other farm crops (grains) were also transported in the wagons.

As far as actual surviving early Dutch wagons are concerned apparently none are known but a few remnant pieces are supposedly in private collections. Little more can be said about eighteenth century Dutch type hay wagons.

It is not known what the exact dimensions of the two Heaten wagons might have been. The wagons might have approximated the basic size of a number of Pennsylvania German Conestoga wagons. Such wagons averaged about 24 feet long and 11 feet in height and four feet in both width and depth. One source in Pennsylvania states that hay wagons averaged from 18 to 22 feet long. These sizes may reflect the general sizes of Dutch hay wagons that may have been shorter. (For an extensive treatise on the Conestoga wagon see the book *Conestoga Wagon – Freight Carrier for 100 years of America's Westward Expansion* by George Shumway et al. 1964.)

Occasionally wagons are depicted in paintings of scenes in the Netherlands. One is a dated 1631 work by Salomon van Ruysdael – Road in the Dunes with a Passenger Coach. In it are shown two wagons, or more precisely, a coach and what looks like a farm wagon. Another painting by the same artist in the same year is called – Dune Landscape with Farmhouse and Wagon. The wagon may have farm produce in it. These are seen in the above mentioned book – *Masters of 17th Century Dutch Landscape Painting*. To what extent these wagons give any sense of what may have first appeared in America as far as hay wagons are concerned is difficult to say.

Clearance of Anchor-Beams

When loaded hay wagons entered through end walls of three-aisle barns it is not known how far into the barns the wagons went. They had to settle in below the first or perhaps the second inner anchor-beam in three or four-bay barns. In five or six -bay barns (only in New York State) the wagons could have stopped below the third inner anchor-beam. Of obvious

necessity, there had to be the proper clearance of the wagons and their contents below the anchor-beams. Perhaps another way of saying this is that the anchor-beams needed to be a certain height above the wagon floor. (This is a classic case of – what came first – the chicken or the egg.) There may have been two stops along the way to unload the contents of the wagons.

In view of the fore-going it is interesting to note that there is a distinct consistency of height of the top of anchor-beams above the wagon floors in perhaps 90% of Dutch-American barns. As it is the tops of anchor-beams are 11½ feet to 12½ feet above the wagon floors. Quite often it is very close to 12 feet. The greatest height attained is close to 13 ½ feet. In the Wemple barn the height is just over 13 feet. The lowest heights are about 11 feet to 11 ½ feet found in a few of the generally diminutive sized barns in Bergen and Rockland Counties and sporadically elsewhere.

The average height of inner anchor-beams (non end wall anchor-beams) is about 14 to 16 inches. Full range of anchor-beams in barns is 9 to 25 inches. Taken from numbers just above in 90% of the barns the basic clearance below the anchor-beams varies from about 10 feet 3 inches to 11 feet 3 inches about 90% of the time. If we can assume that completely filled hay wagons were piled with farm crops to within about a foot or so below the soffits of the anchor-beams then it can be said that wagon door openings on average needed to be about 11 feet to a little more than 11½ feet high. End wall anchor-beams are on average two to five inches shorter in height (depth) than inner anchor-beams in any given barn. In the Wemple barn the difference is about eight inches. The loaded hay wagon height then would about make sense as this is the range that is found in end wall wagon door openings. The widths of the doors do not seem to be as critically important.

Perhaps the earliest reference to clearance under anchor-beams is found in Henk Zantkuyl's article – *"The Netherlands Town House: How and Why It Works."* He cites a contract between Johannes Winckelman and Pieter Cornelissen and Abraham Clock for the erection of a farmhouse (house-barn) at Achter Col in what is now Bogota, Bergen County, New Jersey. The structure was to be 90 feet long and 24 feet wide with two

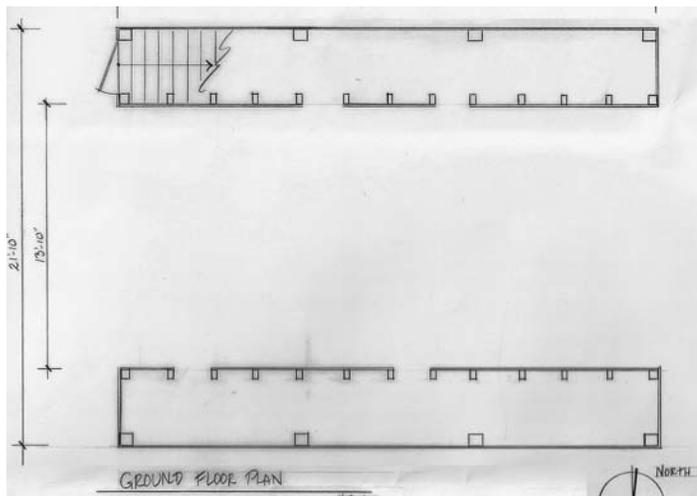
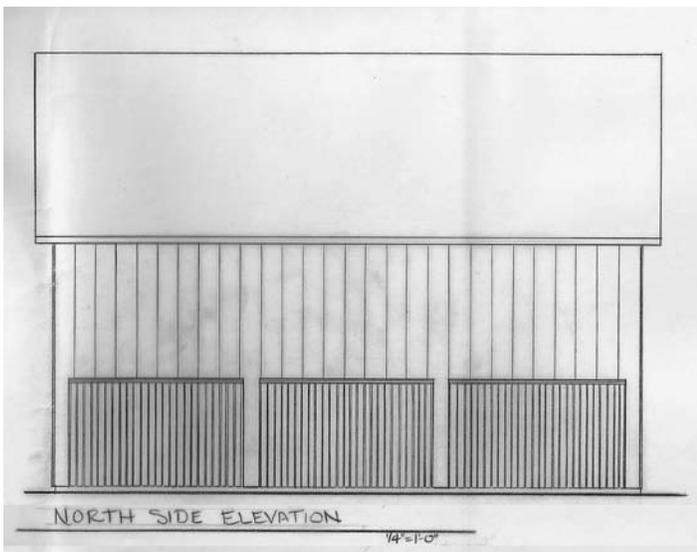
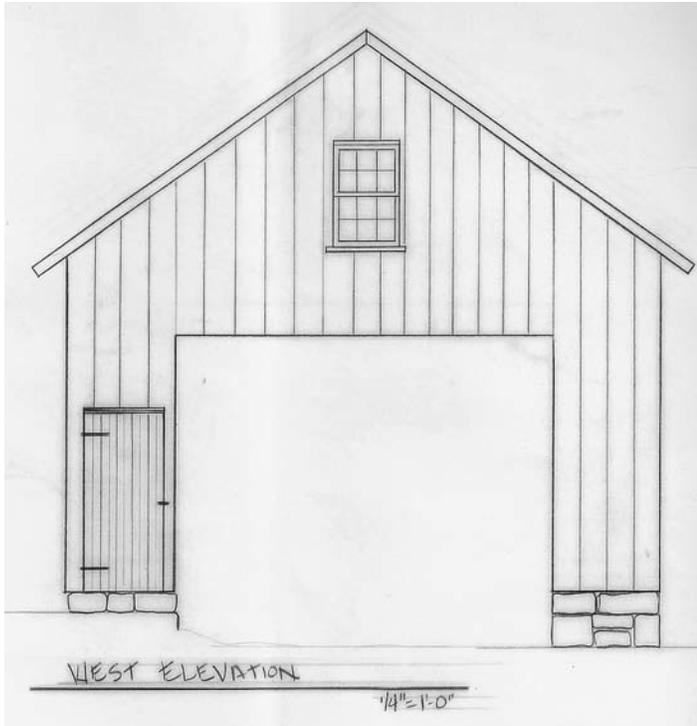
side aisles – nine and ten feet wide. There was to be a distance of 12 ½ feet under the beams. The beams almost certainly refer to the anchor-beams. However, it is likely that the 12 ½ foot distance was from the top of the anchor-beams to the floor. This height seems about right as it correlates to existing Dutch type barns.

Wood Species of Choice

It was just two wood species that were chosen in the making of wagon doors – namely oak and pine – most of the time. In the case of oak (*Quercus spp.*) this very strong wood was always the wood selected for wooden hinges in wooden hinged wagon doors in barns seen thus far. Oak was also often used for the bars (rails) and stiles of frame constructed doors. Oak was very frequently used in wood latches in the doors. Pine and very likely the white variety (*Pinus strobus*) was used as the front face vertical boards in all the door types and also the battens on the rear face of the doors. It is possible that hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) was also used occasionally in the same places where pine was used especially in later date barns or those built after about 1830 or 1840.

The actual procurement of trees from forest sources in various geographic areas is a story that has never been told in the making of Dutch-American barns. There were certainly innumerable dynamics that stood behind the determination of what species of wood was used in particular places in the various barns that were constructed. Timber framed barns were just that – made of timbers and far more could be said about how trees were cut and a myriad of other details than what is seen in the single short paragraph above. Suffice however to say that forests in both New York and New Jersey abounded with oak. In the northern reaches where Dutch barns were built pine was very plentiful. It seems that trees in pre 1820 or 1830 forests in most areas could still provide most needs of timber framers.

This ends the first installment of the three-part article on wagon doors in Dutch – American barns. The next installment discusses a number of the barns in both New York (most of the barns) and those in New Jersey (two barns) that retain their original wagon doors. The Wemple barn will be a major focus of discussion as this barn has the most complete set of wagon doors in any Dutch type barn. Pentice roofs will also be explored. ■



Charley Brown's Wagon House

FREE
to a good home!

Located in Holland Township, New Jersey this four-bent, single-aisle, one-and-a-half story, wagon house (21'-10" x 28') complete with wagon doors on east and west side, corn-cribs sections on north and south sides, stairs to upper level on north side. Door to the stairs is on west wall adjacent to the west wagon doors. Frame is circular sawn oak. 6½" x 7½" posts, 2 x 6 rafters of hemlock. Vertical board siding attached with wire nails suggests a post-1890 construction date. Slate roof, dirt floor at wagon bay, wood floors at corncribs. Corn-cribs sections extend to the rafters and are separated from the upper level with horizontal boarding. Corn could be loaded though a small opening on the west gable end with an elevator.

The owner would like this building to be saved and is a nice person to work with. It cannot stay where it is because of site line requirements for parking.

For further information please contact Carla Cielo at 908-284-9638.

Hinges

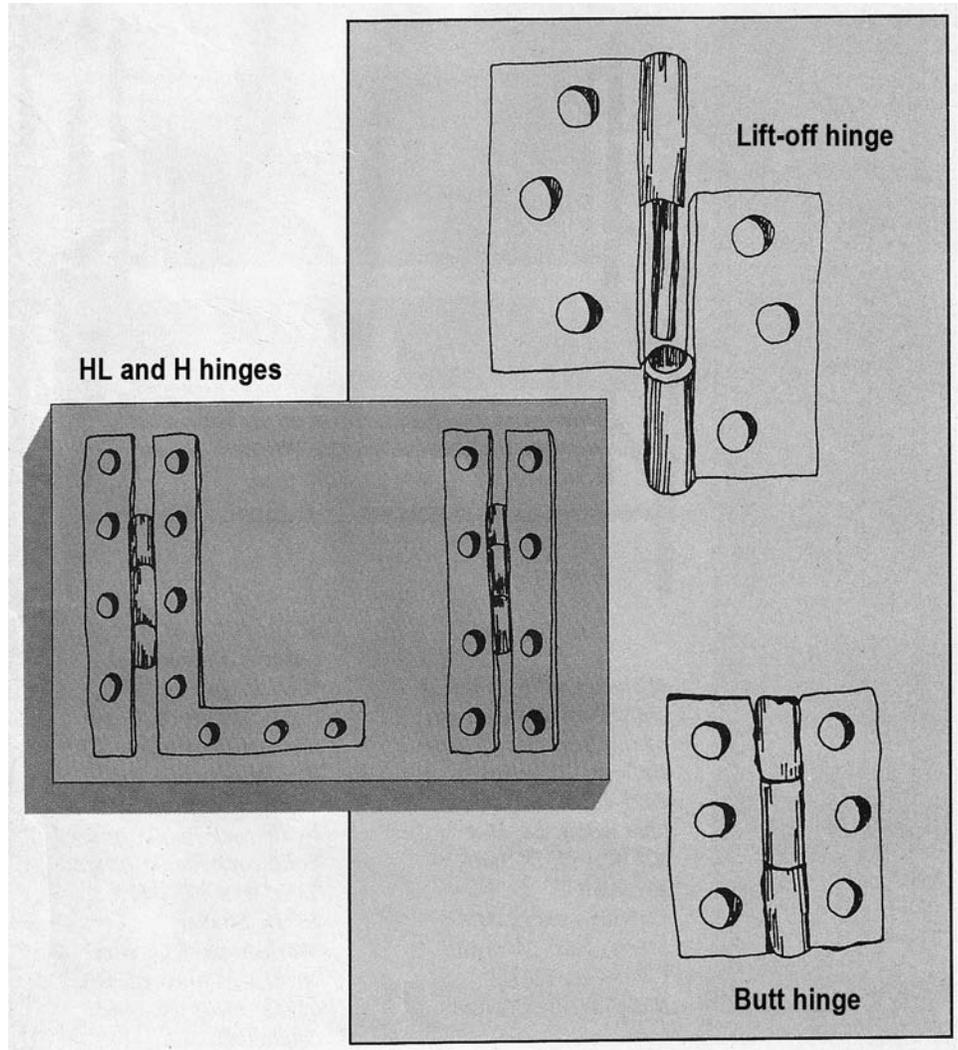
By Michael Dunbar

Throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, interior door hinges were mounted on the front or back surface of a door rather than on its edge. The HL hinge and simpler H hinge, named for their distinctive shapes, are the two best known types. Though most H and HL hinges had plain, square ends, a few early versions were decorated with shaped, or foliated, ends, sometimes with punch work decoration on their surfaces.

Today, we often paint H and HL hinges black to accentuate them, a practice probably dating from the Colonial Revival period. All the original H and HL hinges I examined were painted the same color as the door so as to conceal them. In finer homes, the leg attached to the door frame was often hidden under the molding.

Around 1800, the less obtrusive cast-iron butt hinge was introduced and quickly became very popular. A cast butt hinge is mounted in inlets (or mortises) cut into the door edge and the jamb. When the door is closed, only the hinge's knuckles are visible. While H and HL hinges were usually attached with clenched nails, cast butt hinges had to be attached with screws, as a nail driven into the edge of a door cannot be clenched and would pull loose under the door's weight. For a while it was common to find both types (butts and H or HL hinges) in the same house. Doors in important rooms were hung on butts, while H or HL hinges were used in lesser rooms.

Many H and HL hinges were imported from England, and colonial blacksmiths made them here, too. Cast butts were also made in England and exported to America. When imported cast hinges were not available, local blacksmiths sometimes made wrought-iron



butt hinges. During the Industrial Revolution, America began to produce more and more of its own hardware, including cast butt hinges. The cast-iron butt hinge remained standard until well after the Civil War. An interesting variation of the butt hinge was the two-part, lift-off hinge that allowed a door to be removed without withdrawing the screws. Both cast butt hinges and lift-off hinges often bear patent information that makes it possible to date them.

Cast butt hinges had a major drawback – they broke like glass when wrenched or bent. The introduction of stamped butt hinges during the second half of the nineteenth century solved the problem. Because these were formed from sheet metal, they were tough and difficult to break, and they are still used today. ■

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A look back



Many hands make for light work! Bringing in the hay at the **Benjamin Ten Broeck Homestead Barn** in Flatbush, Ulster County. Pictured are friends and members of the Chmura family, circa late 1930s.

Calendar

Peter Sinclair – *Drawing on the Past*

Every Saturday through
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At the Friends of Historic Kingston Gallery,
Corner of Main and Wall Street, Kingston.

Holiday tour!

Saturday, December 12, 2009 – 10:00 AM

We'll gather in the parking lot behind the Kingston School District administrative offices on Green St. (Green St. is the first right off North Front Street if you are coming via Washington Avenue) This event is by far the most fun tour of the year. Here we visit houses, have a great lunch and then proceed to the Friends of Historic Kingston's Gallery to view recent drawings created by our own Peter Sinclair. Cost of the lunch is \$20, payable on the day of the tour.

RSVP is a MUST to attend this outing! Contact Rob Sweeney at (845) 336-0232 or send an e-mail to: gallusguy@msn.com

From Saint Nicholas to Santa!

Wednesday, December 16, 2009 – 7:00 PM

Historic Elmendorf Tavern, Red Hook, NY.
Lecture presented by Washington Irving scholar, Elisabeth Funk.

HVVA Annual Meeting

Saturday, January 16, 2010 – 10:00 AM

Our annual meeting will be held in the Marletown Fire House, located just off on Route 209, north of Stone Ridge. Election of officers and planning for 2010 will be the agenda of the day. All members are welcome, lunch to follow. Bring something to "show and tell," it's a tradition! Coffee and doughnuts will be provided!

Flatbush – Take Off!

Saturday, February 20, 2009 – 10:00 AM

Explore some new discoveries in Flatbush and Rhinebeck. Meet at the Ten Broeck House, 1019 Flatbush Road, Kingston, NY. For more information call Rob Sweeney at (845) 336-0232.