



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, Trustee Emeritus*
West Hurley, Ulster County, NY

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

Maggie MacDowell – *Vice President*
New Paltz, Ulster County, NY
(845) 255-2282
mmacdowell@hvc.rr.com

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

Bob Hedges – *Trustee*
Pine Plains, Dutchess County, NY
(518) 398-7773

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

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

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

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

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

Ken Walton – *Trustee*
Gardiner, Ulster County, NY
(845) 883-0168
kaw9862@optonline.net

The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

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Newsletter

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From the Editor:

Welcome! It's a simple greeting, but simple and uncomplicated is often the best approach! Welcoming people was an important part of the Dutch culture in the Hudson Valley. To the skeptics it was strictly based on a practical business model – as it is difficult to make money off your enemies and the wise Dutch folk knew this full well. Peace does make for prosperity. But at their very core these early settlers knew that offering hospitality had its reward in the spiritual realm as well as in the halls of commerce. The former motto of the Old Dutch Church in Kingston was taken from the book of Hebrews 13:2 – “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.” The use of this text serves as affirmation of this well-established practice of hospitality brought with these settlers from Patria so long ago.

For those of us who continue to live in the Hudson Valley and dwell in and around the places once inhabited by these early Dutchmen it is our responsibility to welcome others to our community, our organizations and our homes. When we embrace the truth that each person has a role to play in keeping our history present and live for the future, we come to the resolution that though we may be different we share a common kinship, here to support the work of each other as common members of a society. HVVA has so often benefited by those who own and care for our vernacular architecture and without their sincere welcoming our study tours would be a great disappointment and our work in collecting and publishing information on these fascinating structures would quickly come to a close. To all those who have opened their homes, barns and museums to our membership – THANK YOU! You are the guardians of hospitality and the cultivators of humanity.

Therefore it should come as no surprise that your generosity would inspire the new HVVA motto – “Opening the Doors to History” – for that is exactly what our HVVA Members and Friends have been busy doing for over a decade. Our new motto also comes with a symbol, the Dutch vernacular ring-latch with a heart shaped escutcheon. This heart-shaped escutcheon – more than any other object of Dutch material culture – speaks to me about how

these earlier inhabitants viewed their homes and also offers us some insight to how these house should be used in the present time. For it is through the heart we are welcomed into the home. With our modern minds bombarded with trite and cutesy heart-shaped objects that fill of our daily life, the symbolism of this iconic escutcheon is easily lost. But it is through these, time-tested and weatherworn latches a powerful testament to the idea of home and hospitality can clearly be seen – if we but only look.

The Dutch were known for their penchant for partying. Feasting was a mainstay of hospitality for these people, birthdays, going away, homecomings, births, baptisms, lying-ins, funerals, a new house, recovering from sickness, inauguration of a lottery, weddings and anniversaries all cried out for the need to celebrate. In fact very little pretext at all was required for the

gathering in of guests. These early latches give us insight and inspiration on how we should view our homes today, whether they are centuries old or just newly build, and how we must also be vigilant to maintain this attitude of heart felt welcome within the “house” of our organization. In this age of isolationism, where each person has his or her own rigidly marked space and human interaction is increasingly on the decline, HVVA has been truly blessed by its welcoming and inclusive approach. The reward of this attitude is the fellowship of; scholars, craftsmen, writers, designers, organizers, and generous members who pay their dues, (and often more) all of which comes together to produce this newsletter and makes possible the work of preservation through education. “Our HVVA” is a welcoming group and I believe that in this spirit of openness and hospitality we have not only blessed each other with friendship and respect, but have also “entertained angels unaware.”

So, with that, I look forward to greeting you this summer, within the welcoming walls of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture.

Rob Sweeney – HVVA's sheepdog



Palatine Tri-centennial - Notes on Germanic Buildings

By John Stevens



The West Camp House, Ulster County, New York



View showing the North-East corner of the West Camp House, circa 2003.

Interior view of the West Camp House showing the restored hearth, circa 2003.



West Camp House

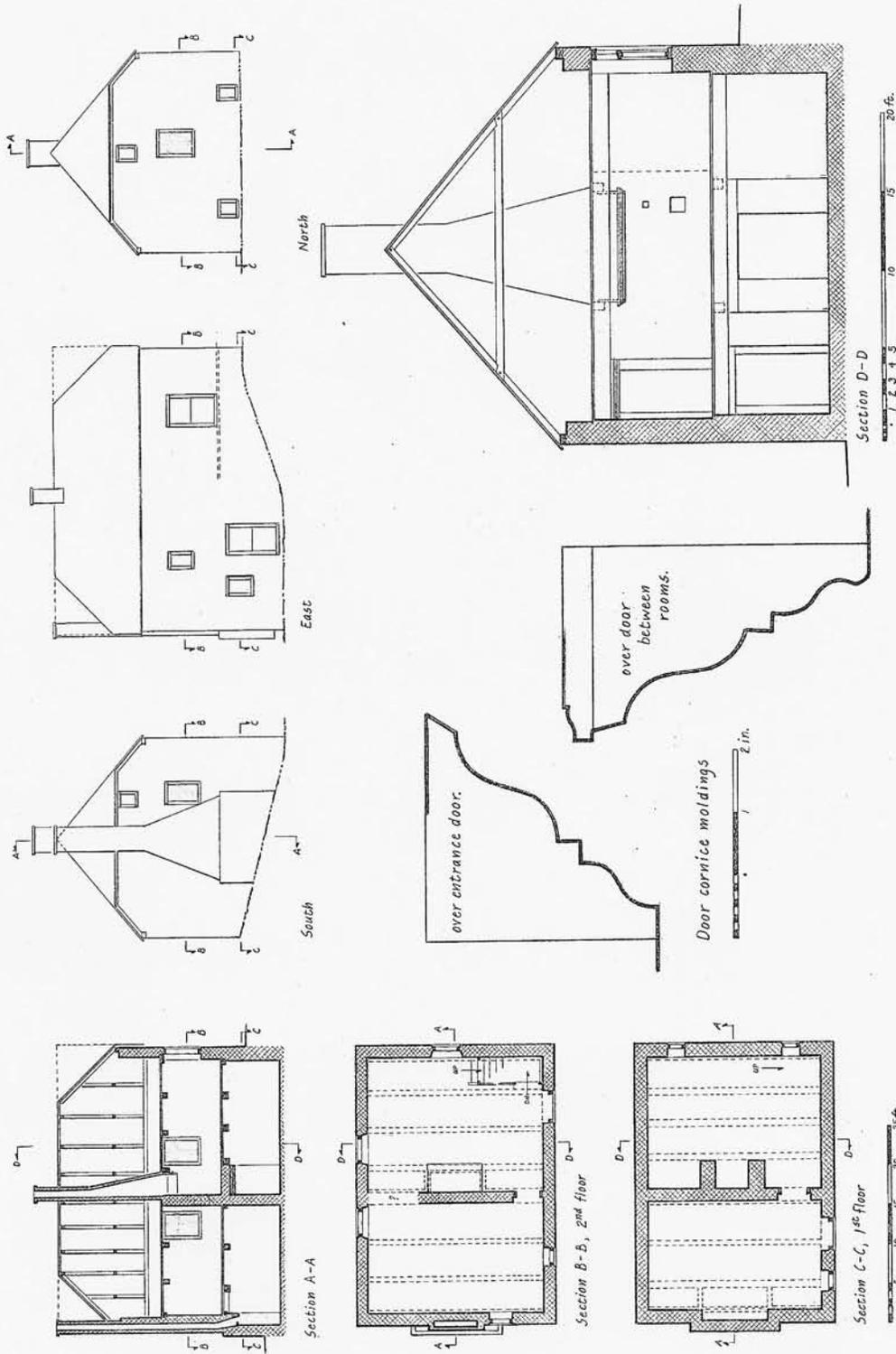
2010 is the Tri-centennial year of the arrival of the Palatine Germans in the Upper Hudson Valley, at Livingston Manor, to produce 'naval stores' for the British Crown – basically pitch/tar distilled from the sap of pine trees. A 'fly in the ointment' for this project was the fact that the wrong kind of pine trees grew in the area these people had come to, so the project came to an end! It is a good time to pay some attention to legacy of surviving buildings of these Germanic people.

While some of the German immigrants moved on to other areas, like the Schoharie Valley and Pennsylvania, a residue of them remained on the Livingston lands and their descendants still reside there. One can ask, "what buildings traditions did these people bring with them?" In the next section, is discussed a Germanic house in Halifax, Nova Scotia, that represents a pretty direct transfer of constructional technology from the Old World to the New. And in Pennsylvania we can cite the Christian Herr house of 1719 in Lancaster (*see HVVA Newsletter, January 2003*) for the same thing. Both of these buildings are obvious transplants from the Old World. In Pennsylvania and Nova Scotia the settlers were on land on which there were no other Europeans present and therefore nothing on the ground to influence the types of buildings they erected – except the impermanent buildings of the aboriginal population.

In the Hudson Valley the situation was complicated by the presence of an ethnic building technology that was well-established – that of the Dutch. And the surviving early buildings of the Germans, both on the Livingston Manor and in the Schoharie Valley seem to owe much more to the Dutch way of building than to the background of the Germans. Since the oldest surviving buildings only date to around the middle of the 18th century, maybe we are missing something in that the buildings from the first thirty years after the arrival of the Germans do not exist, nor do we have a record of what they were like. These no-longer-existing structures may have had a closer affinity with Old World prototypes. We have no way of knowing this.

I have some research on the West Camp house prepared by Mr. Gemberling, who owned it as a summer retreat in 1994, the year that a number of HVVA members examined it for the first time. According to Mr. Gemberling, the house had been – from 1710 to 1739 – the home of the Reverend Kocherthal and his wife and daughters, and also functioned as a Lutheran Church. The head of the door frame on the basement level has the date '1735', with the initials 'WE' painted on it in a rather convincing period style. But in fact we know from a dendrochronological study carried out on the house in 2005 that it was actually built in 1755. Is it possible that this painted inscription has some validity, and that whoever repainted it mistook a '5' for a '3'?

This one-and-a-half storey stone house stands on the east side of route 9W in Ulster County, a few miles north of Saugerties. It is approximately opposite the Village of Germantown, on the opposite (east) side of the Hudson River. Its main elevation faces approximately east (we need better compass orientation for the house). It is 36 feet east-west in length, and 25 feet, 7 inches in depth. It is built end-on into a bank so that there is a full-height exposure of the basement walls at the south east corner. The south basement room was a finished



JOHN R. STEVENS
 Architect
 150 Broadway, New York
 1898

WEST CAMP HOUSE
 WEST CAMP, N.Y.
 JULIUS COHEN, ARCHT.
 1898

1898 DEC. 15, 2003

space, with the first floor beams and the underside of the floor boards carefully planed. There is a doorway in the east wall (with the date mentioned painted over it) having a divided door. To the south of the doorway there is a casement window. There is a shallow fireplace on the south wall having a brick bypass flue that shows prominently against the stone of the south wall. The north room shows rough-hewn floor beams, and rough-sawn floor boards. The fireplace hearth for the floor above is supported on stone piers engaged with the partition wall. Access from the first floor is by a stair in the north east corner, underneath that to the attic.

The first floor is divided into two rooms, the north one being the larger. Mr. Gemberling re-created a jambless fireplace in this room using the evidence on the second floor framing. The hood beam and trimmers have rabbets to house the top edges of the hood drop-boards. Also, one of the side drop boards has managed to survive, with paint evidence for a crown moulding. The original attic stair, in the north east corner, survives within its vertical board enclosure. On the east side of the fireplace, the doorframe exists with a crown moulding. The entrance doorway into the north room also has an interior crown moulding. The divided door existed in 1994, but was stolen in the period since when the fate of the house has been 'in limbo'. The south room had been a 'stove room' heated by a five-plate jamb stone fired from the jambless fireplace side. The firing opening was to the west side of the back of the jambless fireplace – evidence for it was uncovered by Mr. Gemberling, who installed a reproduction (?) stove – which has also been stolen from the house.

The original casement window frame with its shutter survives in the east wall, centered in the south room. Mr. Gemberling found double-hung windows- two in each of the first floor rooms, and mistakenly determined that the house originally had cross-windows, which he had made up and installed.

In the attic, Mr. Gemberling found good evidence that the house originally had 'docked' gables, and restored these. Several other houses survive with similar evidence – notably Rob Sweeney's Benjamin ten Broeck house; the Mathew ten Eyck house on Hurley Mountain Road in Hurley (see *DVAinNA, Plate 30B*), and the Jonathan Hasbrouck house (Washington's Headquarters) in Newburgh (See *DVAinNA, Plate 19*). These three houses are contemporary with the West Camp house.

Summary: 'Germanic' characteristics of the West Camp house might be:

(a) its being built end-on into a bank to provide a full elevation for a basement kitchen. This feature has been found in a number of houses on both side of the Hudson River in the area where the Palatine Germans are known to have settled. The Lutheran Parsonage in Schoharie (c. 1743) is a timber-framed example (See *DVAinNA, Plate 20*), and the stone-built Lutheran Parsonage in Germantown can also be considered. This could be the topic of a comparative study.

(b) Another 'Germanic' feature is the use of five-plate jamb stoves to heat a 'stove room'. The earliest surviving examples of their use would seem to be in the Jean Hasbrouck and Bevier-Elting houses on Huguenot Street in New Paltz (See *DVAinNA, Plates 30A, 12*). The builders of these houses – French Protestants – had spent time in Germany before emigrating to North America, and would thereby have been familiar with their use.

Distinctive 'Germanic' hinges have been seen in a few houses although they are not present in the West Camp house (See *DVAinNA, Plate 100A*).



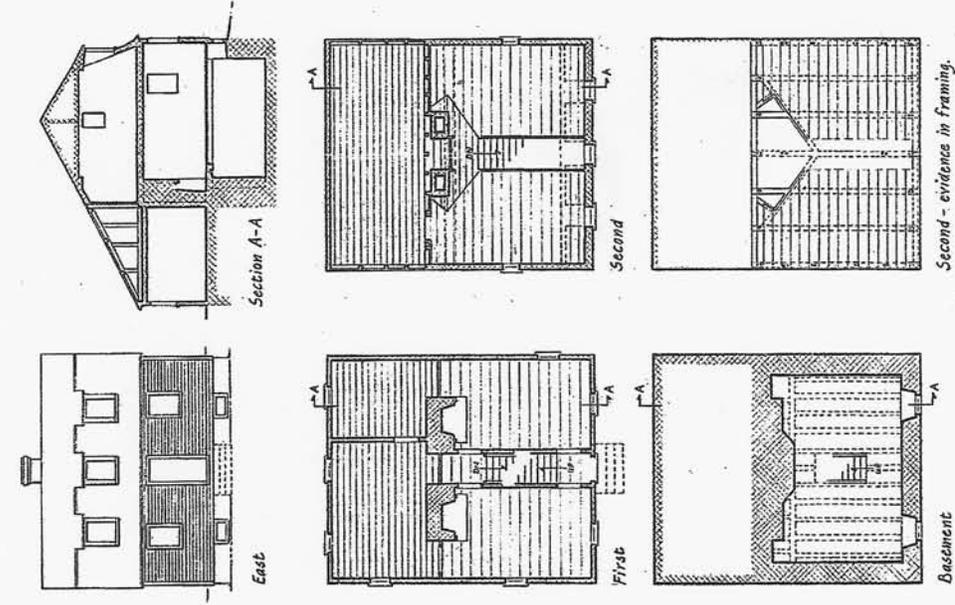
Conrad Burge House, Barrington Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, circa 1968.

Conrad Burge House

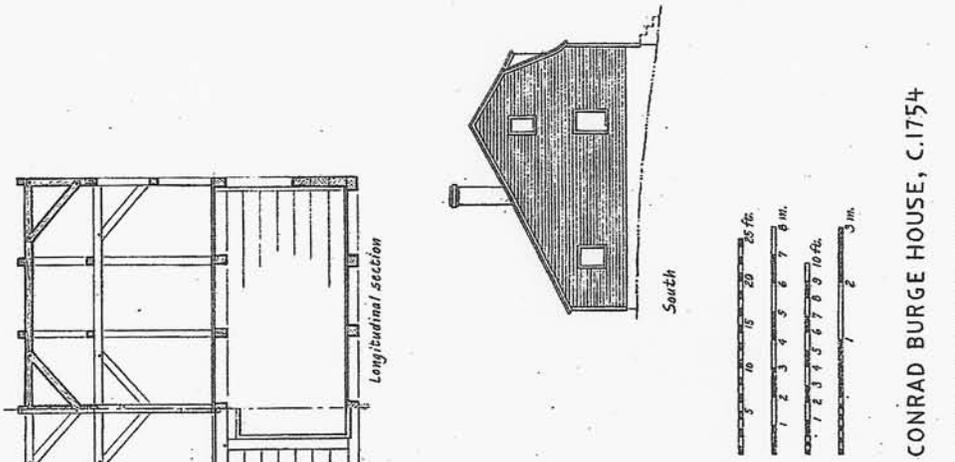
Nova Scotia was originally named Acadia by the French, who – under Samuel de Champlain – 'discovered' it in 1605. The British early on made a claim to it and its 'ownership' was contested until a Treaty in 1713 ceded it to the British, except for Cape Breton Island. The French thereafter constructed a grand fort and port at Louisburg on the north-eastern tip of Cape Breton Island.

Until almost the middle of the 18th century the British presence in Nova Scotia was very small. They maintained a garrisoned fort at Annapolis Royal (former French Port Royal) on an inlet off the Bay of Fundy, but the population of the Province consisted mostly of French Acadians and Micmac Indians. The Acadians almost exclusively lived and farmed on the Bay of Fundy side of the Province. Conflict between the French and the British heated up again at the time of the Seven Years' War (1756-63). One move to secure the Province against the French resulted in the 'expulsion' of the Acadians and their replacement by 'Planters' from the American colonies. To counter the threat posed by the French fortress at Louisburg, the British picked a fine natural harbour on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia to build a fortified base of their own, which included a naval dockyard for the support of the Royal Navy. Halifax was founded in 1749, and St. Paul's Church, which was built soon after the establishment of the Town, was the subject of an article in the HVVA Newsletter, March-April 2008.

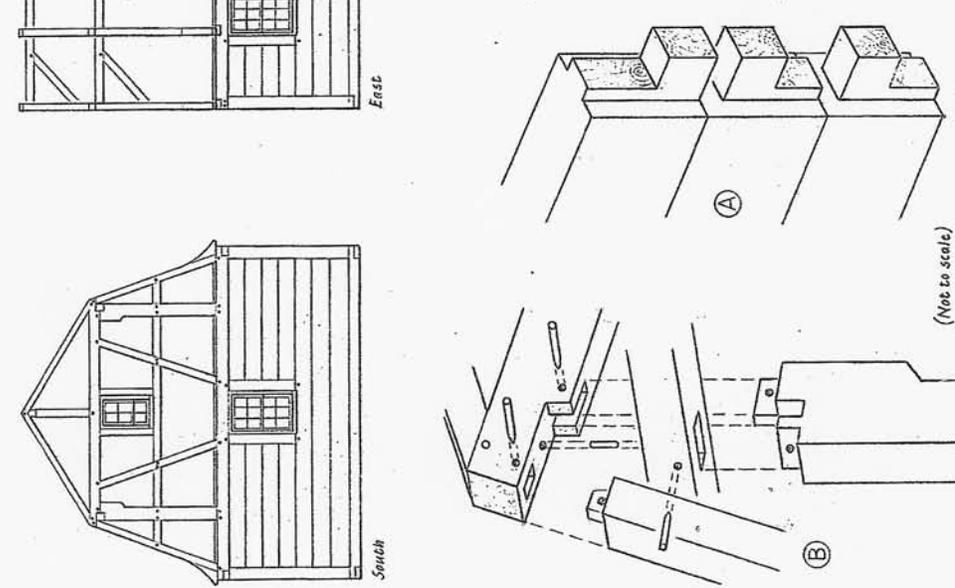
The British needed colonists for the new settlement, but the Englishmen brought over for this purpose proved to be a wholly unsatisfactory lot! A decision was made to import 'Foreign Protestants' who had a reputation for being hard-working people that could be relied on to be satisfactory settlers. These people were largely German 'Palatines', not all that different from the ones who had settled on the Livingston Manor in 1710, although there were some French-speaking Protestants as well. A subdivision was set aside for them in the north part of Halifax, adjacent to the Dockyard. In this area they were provided with a church, said to have been converted from a dwelling which still exists, the 'Old Dutch Church.'



JOHN F. STEVENS
 ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN
 1 SINCLAIR DRIVE
 GREENLAWN NY 11740-9807



CONRAD BURGE HOUSE, C.1754
 JOHN R. STEVENS, 2003





Side view of the Burge House.

When I was working on the Halifax Architectural Survey, 1963-65 with my wife Marion, I was intrigued by a small half-gambrel house on Barrington Street, not far from the 'Old Dutch Church' and also close to the naval dockyard, which now serves the Royal Canadian Navy. While I was able to make an interior inspection of this house, modern finish almost completely concealed its structure, except for the underside of the first floor, and wall framing inside a lean-to addition.

We were back in Halifax in 1968, and driving by this house I saw that it had been heavily vandalized and in fact, the whole rear slope of the roof had been pulled off! I did a crash recording job on it, and the accompanying drawings are the result. I might note that at the time, the house was owned by the

Detail of the Burge House framing joint, circa 1968.



City of Halifax which had taken it for a road access scheme – it was near the end of the bridge across Halifax Harbour to the City of Dartmouth. What I found was a one storey, two-room house of horizontal log construction using corner and door posts into which the logs were morticed with complex joinery. The roof framing was a particularly fine example of 'Germanic' timber-framing. Marion researched the property at the Halifax Court House and determined that the house was built by Conrad Burge (also spelled Burgie) about 1755. My suspicion is that he came from a part of Germany adjacent to Switzerland, and possibly from Switzerland itself. The mode of construction is akin to that called by the French *piece-sur-piece a tenon en coulisse* – which was adopted by the Hudson's Bay Company for the construction of trading posts in the West, where it was called 'Red River Frame.'

Examples of this type of construction survive in Pennsylvania. It can be seen in the construction of the Golden Plough Tavern in York, where it is used for the first storey. There have been several articles in *Early American Life* dealing with this variant of log construction. One of them, *Unique Log Architecture of Central Pennsylvania* by James W. Mauch, page 48, February 2005, has his comments as follows: he discovered "... that the corner post method of log house construction seems characteristic only of the Central Susquehanna River Valley, a region originally settled by those of German and Swiss extraction."

An article by Linda Harbrecht in the February 2009 issue, page 19 – *A New Life for an Old Homestead* – discusses a horizontal log-and-corner post house built c. 1739 by Jacob Schock, born at Hessen in Germany near the Swiss border. Originally located "in a valley of the Susquehanna River called Turkey Hill", in 2004 it was taken apart and stored for sale, and the pieces were purchased by Bob and Susan Highfield, who re-erected it at an 'historical development' called 'Brittany Common' in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The wall construction is much like that of the 'Golden Plough Tavern', previously mentioned. It looks to me as if had been constructed as one-and-a-half storey, but later raised to a full two storeys with horizontal logs having conventional dovetail cornering.

In spite of my attempts to persuade City of Halifax officials to preserve the Conrad Burge house, it was demolished

The Burge House after a fire in 1968.





The restored Golden Plough Tavern, York, Pennsylvania.



Dimock House, Pereau, Kings County, Nova Scotia, circa 2005.

not long after I measured it. It was certainly the oldest surviving house in Halifax, and quite possibly in Nova Scotia, too. The type of construction exemplified by the Burge house I am sure was represented in the County and the Town of Lunenburg on the Atlantic Coast, which was a major settlement area for German 'Palatines'. I am not aware of any survivals in Lunenburg County like the Burge house. However I have seen several examples of houses of later date (late 18th, early 19th centuries) in 'semi-demolished' state that employ a construction technology perhaps based on Germanic precedent. These have heavy main posts that have rabbets for the reception of the bare-face tenons on the ends of approximately three inch thick horizontal planks. I am not aware of anyone having done a study of houses of this construction.

In 2005 I heard about an unusual house at Pereau, in Kings County on the Bay of Fundy side of Nova Scotia that had basic English-type framing with corner posts, etc., but the sills and plates had rabbets for bare-face tenons on the ends of vertical four inch planks. I had an opportunity to investigate the house, which was in a semi-demolished state – meaning that little of constructional interest was concealed. The owner of the house gave me a set of beautifully detailed drawings of it prepared by an architect for the Province of Nova Scotia. The Province had at one point intended to preserve the house, but apparently gave up the idea. ■

The “Face” of HVVA in the 21st Century

Recently I have created an HVVA group on **Facebook** and have recently begun posting HVVA events as reminders, which are automatically sent to all the members of the group.

The reason I created the **Facebook** group for HVVA was to advertise it to my friends, especially the college-aged ones. I would like to see the younger generation more involved in the preservation movement, and I believe this is an avenue to do it, but for all this interfacing to work we need all our members to join our **Facebook** group regardless of age!

Facebook is a social networking site that allows you to connect with family and friends around the world for FREE!

You create a profile (or website) for yourself, on which you can display as much information as you wish. You can join groups and fan pages, post photos, videos, and links, add applications, play games, write notes (a sort of blogging or online journaling), add friends, send messages to anybody, write on peoples' "walls" (a sort of public comment space on their profile), and create ads for your business to advertise to **Facebook** users.

Get started by searching **Facebook** on your web browser!

– Meredith Gorres

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Union County Tour Summary

By Carla Cielo

On April 17, 2010, ten HVVA members and two guests met at the Dr. Robinson house in Clark, NJ. This circa 1690 English-style, one-and-a-half story farmhouse, although conjecturally restored, retains at least 90% of the original framing. The partially banked basement has full-width beams spanning front to back and are notched for “dust strips.”

The main level floor plan consists of a large central kitchen flanked by a narrow bay on the left with two small rooms (interpreted as a bedchamber and an office) and a narrow bay on the right with re-created cook hearth and stairs. The four bent frame is symmetrically arranged to align with this plan. The tie beams of the center bents support a massive summer beam (10” high x 20” wide x 17 feet long) which supports small beams running front to back over the kitchen area. The summer beam/tie beam connections consist of 3 to 4-inch deep bearing seats and a lapped half dovetail. The two small gable end bays are framed with small joists running side to side and bearing on the tie beams. Posts are flaired and the posts and summer beams are adorned with chamfered corners ending in a lambs tongue.

The upper tie beam of the east gable end bent is also massive. It lies horizontally, cantilevered over the lower wall surface to form a jetty. It is supported on two ornamented brackets and extended front and back rafter plates.

Next we visited the Drovers and Merchants Tavern in Rahway NJ (*HABS NJ-36*) which was a stage coach stop on the historic road between Elizabethtown and Princeton. Built in three phases (1790, c. 1798 and 1820) the interesting features of this four story framed building are found in a comparison of the finished details that are

Dr. Robinson House, Clark, New Jersey.



Rear view, Merchant and Drovers Tavern, Rahway, New Jersey.

characteristic of each phase. The upper two stories were added in 1820 and do not have fireplaces in any of the room or chair rail molding but does have Greek Revival style back bands on the door and window trim. The circa 1798 11-foot extension to the original foot print includes lovely fireplace with coved detailing on their mantels. The original section has Federal style molding, chair rail molding and interior doors hinged on pintles.

The last stop brought us to three early homes on East Jersey Avenue in Elizabeth. The circa 1760 Elias Boudinot House (*HABS NJ-476*) is a frame, high-style Georgian manor house built on a raised sandstone foundation with a four room, center hall plan. It was restored in the 1940s by the WPA and exhibits exceptionally fine woodwork in all 8 rooms.

The Belcher-Odgen Mansion, circa 1742 (*HABS NJ-13*), was remodeled and enlarged in 1750 for the Royal Governor Jonathan Belcher who was appointed by King George II. The circa 1742 date of the oldest remaining section came from a dated fire back found in a late 19th century renovation. It is distinguished from the 1750 addition by a vertical line in the brickwork. The exterior is Flemish bond brick with glazed headers crowned with a plaster coved cornice and slate roof. The oldest remaining



Boxwood Hall, Elizabeth, New Jersey.

section is a single room deep, two-story, side-entry with a three bay facade. Marked coloration in the brickwork between the first and second floor windows and a series of patched joist pockets indicates that it once had a pent roof or portico across the front and back facades, part of which remained in the 1930s HABS documents. The 1750s addition created a center hall plan of regal proportions. Since it is a single room deep house, each room is well lit with front and back windows. The 1750s work is exceptionally crafted and includes three rooms with paneled walls derived from Georgian pattern books (two rooms in the 1750s addition and one in the circa 1742 section). My favorite features are a small bathroom with mini fireplace, a painted shell motif in a built-in cupboard and paneled window treatments with bench seats. The recreated kitchen wing from the 1960s interprets what is believed to have been the oldest part of the house which may have dated to the 17th century.

The Nathaniel Bonnell House is believed to have been constructed before 1700 and possibly as early as 1680, by Nathaniel Bonnell, a French Huguenot from Connecticut. Bonnell's Connecticut tenure apparently influenced his tastes for English detailing as seen from the mantel treatments in the two main level parlors, however the frame of this 1½ story farmhouse appears to have been constructed with "H" bents. The two room center hall floor plan is above a raised basement with kitchen (modified). Its steeply pitched roof is framed with hewn common rafters and one tier of hewn collar ties that supports the floor of the cockloft above the garret. There is a roof door in the back that extends onto the roof of the 1850s addition and the eaves flair. No measurements were recorded and the mantels were not examined closely to verify age due to site constraints. Dendrochronology was recommended.

The tour was well received by all who attended and we look forward to extending our reach for knowledge into New Jersey in the future. ■



Governor Belchers drawing room, Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Bonnell House, Elizabeth, New Jersey.



Around the Neighborhood

By Ken Walton (photos by author unless otherwise noted)

In paying tribute to the Palatines in the last issue, I was aware that I would not be able to mention them all. I deliberately, left some out to use as a segue into this column (more on this later). But soon after submission for print, I realized I made some serious omissions. Fortunately, the year-long celebration gives me a few more opportunities to place here the ones I did not get in prior columns.

For example, one of the main features of last issue's column should have been the Konradt Lasher house, on Route 9G in Germantown in the northwest corner of the intersection with Jug Road – also identified by the New York State historical marker as the “Stone Jug.” Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, in the nomination report submitted, it is mentioned this is the only extant house of the three brothers that built their stone houses in close proximity of each other so as to share one well for water. The report states that the ruinous foundations of George and Johannis' homes are still visible on the 9.67 acres property after being demolished between 1845 and 1873. It is believed that all three brothers erected their houses at the same time. There is an inscription carved in the stone lintel above the east door with the year 1752 and the initials “K.E.L. & J.” The origins of the Lasher family in the New World goes back to Bastin Lescher or Lasher, who was part of the 1710 emigration and choose to remain in East Camp as a tenant farmer. The nomination report, submitted in 1977, goes into much detail about the architectural composition of the house and can be accessed through a link on Wikipedia, which in turn can be reached by clicking on the link on the house's placemark on the HVVA Columbia County map site.

Konradt Lasher house (1752) in Germantown. Showing the west & south elevations still original to the house. Note the diamond designs in the brickwork of the gable.



The Willows at Brandow's Point south of Athens. A preliminary visit by the HVVA placed this house in the 1760's time period. For further details, see the newsletter archive.



The lean-to additions on either side of the Brandow house appear to be built soon after the main section as evidenced by the exposed brick noggin seen here in the north addition.

Another family that came to the Hudson Valley with the 1710 Palatine German immigration was the Brandow. Evidence of their legacy is the former farm known as The Willows at Brandow's Point on Route 385, south of Athens in Green County. It was a wonderful wood H-frame house built in 1788 for William Brandow after his purchase of the tract from Annake Witbeck. There is evidence that his father, Johannes, had leased the property for a number of years prior to the purchase. There is a thorough article of this house in the March 2003 issue of the HVVA newsletter and can be accessed from the website. Updates since the last visit are, the Greene Land Trust purchased the property from Scenic Hudson in October of 2009. In November, the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They are planning to make repairs to the house as funds allow for use to support environmental and historical education programs and in the future will also plan to use part of the building as office space for the land trust.

I am pleased to report, two of the unknown houses mentioned in the last issue has been identified. The house at 6 Primrose Hill Road in the Town of Rhinebeck is the estate of the late Randi Boehm. The property, adjacent to and west of the Captain Matthias Progue house (1763), is 53.9 acres and the family was originally looking to subdivide the property for development. The current house is to be sold with 6+ acres. The listing states it was built in 1860. The family is now considering conservation easements for the remaining property. Nancy Kelly, the town historian, states Matthias' son, Peter, acquired about 100 acres to the west of the homestead in 1797 (the same year two of his older brothers acquired their father's home) and the house is shown on a map dated 1802, drawing the conclusion the house was built between these years. Also, the quaint wooden 1½ story house at 246 Spring Lake Road in Red Hook has been confirmed to have Palatine connections as a tenant house on the Feller farm next door. Most likely its origin is 18th century, but more investigation will be required. Thanks to Alvin Sheffer for forwarding this information on both these houses.

In the Neighborhood

Last May, Town of Saugerties Historic Preservation Commission did an excellent job in conducting their very first Stone House tour. Brief mention of the notable ones on last year's tour will start with ones also included in Helen Reynolds' book on Dutch houses. The first is also one of the first to be built in the area, the Cornelius Lambertsen Brink house with a datestone of 1701. Another treat to tour was the Myndert Mynderse house on the east side of the village possibly going back as far as 1712. Other fine houses on the tour, in no particular order, were the Jacob Conyes house, mentioned in previous HVVA newsletters, has an extraordinary datestone. In the Kaatsbaan area, the Cornelius Persen house where in he also maintained a store. Also further north on the same road is the Sebring house, which was saved from the brink of collapse by the current owner's father in 1975 and nearby, Dillonhurst, constructed in 1795 in the more Federal style by its Irish owner, Reverend Robert Dillon. Martin Snyder settled in the Churchland area and built a house in 1750/51 that incorporated two walls of his first stone house after he arrived from Germany in 1726.

This year's tour on May 22nd, is themed around the Palatine houses in the town. While, the group is keeping the houses of this year's tour under wraps, let me mention a couple more candidates aside from the ones I mentioned in the last issue.

I did receive some leads from another member for the several Myers' houses in the town, which I have yet to follow up on, but there is one Myer house in the village that is documented. At the beginning of Myers Lane is a two story early Georgian, said to be owned by Petrus Myers, built in 1759. Actually it is more like a 1¾ story, as the windows on the second floor are slightly shorter (8 over 8)



The Petrus Myer house of 1759 probably looked much different at first and was "modernized" into a Georgian style about fifty years later without going a full two stories. The fanlight on the second story adds character to the place and helps single it out from all the other Georgian springing up around town at the time.

than on the first floor which are 12 over 12. By my observation, it appears the northeast corner of the house is part of the original smaller house and some fifty or so years later expanded into the Georgian style. A nice feature about this one is the use of the fanlight as the center window on the second floor.

Last time, I wrote how a map can help find old structures, such as an old stone house being on Stonehouse Rd. Same can be true by searching for roads with Palatine names (and Dutch for that matter). For instance, at 100 Ralph Vedder Road in the Blue Mountain area of town, you will find a stone house built by Ralph Vedder in 1743. In January, when I drove past this house there was a "For Sale by Owner" sign in front of it. A quaint looking place overlooking a mountain stream, the exterior features, such as exterior chimneys at both ends and wide dormer with three windows, point to major interior modifications during the last century.

Ralph Vedder's house (1743). The exterior chimneys and dormer across the second story hints to a 20th century total remake of the interior. At the time of the photo (Jan, 2010), the place was for sale by owner. Anyone interested in it enough, could report back what they find on the inside!



The Nosy Neighbor

Libraries, books, internet are all great tools in seeking out old houses, but nothing beats just driving down a road where I have never traveled before and finding that historic looking house. Of course the downside is little chance of finding any background about the place unless a well informed owner happens to be about and is willing to share what they know. Maybe there might be a year given on a sign or somewhere on the structure – even less likely a marker or plaque. A stone bank house at 266 Old Route 32 in the Town of Saugerties was discovered in such a way. Unfortunately, there was no one around to ask about the place. (An unexpected side benefit to writing this column is the increasing nerve to approach strangers to inquire about the houses they reside in, so old house owners BEWARE ... expect the door bell to ring at any given time.) The house was obviously built in phases, but in a bit of an unusual twist. Instead of seeing sections of a linear expansion, each floor level appears to be a newer phase. The partially exposed cellar is made of crude field stone probably gathered on the property and is perhaps has its origin as part of an older Palatine house. The next level's walls are of a roughly cut limestone, more likely from a nearby quarry, laid in courses, but with still sparse fenestrations. The third level is not quite a full story and the stone is smoothly dressed bluestone laid in tight courses. The house is situated only a few yard from a cascading stream with a stone dam near the road. No doubt the original owners operated a mill as well as the farm stretching out from the other side of the house.

Another house in Saugerties that I suspect might have some Palatine connection is at 21 Teetsel Street – a little dead-end road on the south side of Route 32 as one is heading out of the village towards the Thurway (I-87). The Daughters of the American Revolution's Bicentennial pamphlet makes mention of a two story Georgian in the village built by Johannes Myer in the 1760's. This house has the number "1763" on its portico which probably attributed to the year built. Is this J.M.'s house?

Since the last issue, I received some great feedback from the membership towards resolving some of the mysteries surrounding these historic houses. Please keep it coming. I'd like to hear some background on the houses mentioned above as well as anything more you may have to add on previously written subjects. ■

For more information about most of these houses and more, go to www.HVVA.org and click on the "Mapping History" tab. Anyone that can add more information to any of the houses mentioned there, or has any other comments they wish to send, please drop me a line by email at kaw9862@optonline.net or by snail mail: Ken Walton, 12 Orchard Drive, 2nd Fl., Gardiner, NY 12525. On the subject line of the email, please include 'HVVA,' so I can expedite a response. Until next time... happy hunting!



The development of this house at 266 Old Route 32 was definitely in an upwards direction first rather than in the more commonly seen outward expansion. Anyone with information about this place, please drop a line.



At the corner of Teetsel Street and Ulster Avenue (Rt. 32), is this Georgian style stone house said to be built in 1763. Is this the house of Johannes Myer?



Wagon Doors in Dutch-American Barns (Part Three)

By Gregory D. Huber

This is the third and last installment of the three-part article on wagon doors in Dutch-American barns. The first installment covered a number of general topics that concerns wagon doors. They included basic wagon door construction, size of wagon door openings, wagon doors in the Netherlands and sizes of hay wagons among other topics. The second installment included discussions such as wood hinged wagon doors in New York State barns, the Wemple barn as a classic example of traditional wagon doors, pentices and *mittelmanse* and original lengths of barns.

This third installment covers the following topics:

- Pre-Revolutionary War era barns (7)
- Post-Revolutionary War era barns (6)
- New Jersey barns (2)
- Inward versus outward swinging doors
- Replacement doors
- Summary and Conclusions

Other Early or Pre-Revolutionary War Era Barns

Following the Bull barn, the next oldest barn seen in the past several decades was probably the Van Bergen barn. This barn had just one end wall with wagon doors. Fitchen did not mention this but John Stevens in his book on Dutch architecture did. Another early 18th century barn was the Teller-Schermerhorn barn that Vincent Schaefer discussed in his book on (New York State) Dutch barns. Original wagon doors with wooden hinges may have existed in the Teller barn. However, Schaefer's photos of the barn indicate that the original doors at the end wall at the "front" of the structure did not survive.

The following is a selected list of barns and is therefore not comprehensive. All of them have or had wagon doors with wooden hinges. A number of other barns could be discussed but this list is only intended to provide a general or broad overview of a number of wagon door conditions and particular design elements found in certain barns. They are probably

representative of many barns in New York State in the pre-1810 era. It is strongly recommended that readers focus on the differences in the manner in which the various builders expressed various components and fine points of construction of the doors. These expressions were of course the builders' various specific intents at the time the doors were constructed. Eight out of the fifteen, or almost 50% of the listed pre- and post-war barns in both states, have been located in Ulster County.

South of Catskill Barn

An early barn south of Catskill in Greene County retains its original wagon doors at its north or far end wall (away from house side). The door height is 10 ft. 4 inches. Outer door edge of one doorpost to outer edge of other post is eleven feet. At the one side is a single height door with one long diagonal batten and a mid-height horizontal batten. No battens appear at the top or bottoms of the door. The top wood hinge of full door width is seen within about six inches or so of the top edge of the door. The bottom wood hinge appears almost at the very bottom of the door. Both hinges swing on their original pintles.

At the other side of the door opening are two half-door sections – an upper and a lower. Each door has a diagonal batten but only the top door retains its' original hinge pintle. Both original wood hinges of each half door are intact.

All wood hinges appear to be oak. They are tapered and the "thickened" sections at the attachment ends are about eight to ten inches long.

Decker Barn – Dated 1750

The five-bay three-aisle dated 1750 Decker barn is located at the early eighteenth century homestead near Walkkill in extreme southern Ulster County. At the house side end wall slots are seen in the original wagon doorposts. The slots indicate that there were two half-door sections at each side of the wagon door opening for a total of four sections. This barn lost its original wagon doors perhaps when the barn experienced a radical change when its roof structure was greatly altered in the nineteenth century. The opposite end wall has some evidence of never having a wagon door opening.

Van Alstyne Barn – Circa 1760

The very large six-bay three-aisle Van Alstyne barn (*Fitchen Barn Number 11*) is located about three miles northwest of Kinderhook in Columbia County, New York. The far end wall (away from the 1760's brick house) retains its probable original wagon doors with wooden hinges. The door opening is close to ten feet wide. The one side of the door opening has a single full height door. The door is 4½ feet wide and 10½ feet high. The other side of the door opening has two half-door sections. The upper section is 4½ feet wide and 5½ feet high. The other door half was about five feet high.

The full length of the wooden door hinges are each 5 feet and the extension itself where the wood pintle is engaged is six inches long. The hinges are 3½ inches wide and its corner edges are chamfered. In a perhaps unique expression the door hinges have battens behind them. Pintles are recessed into vertical grooves in the doorposts and this placement is the standard in north-country barns.



View of one end wall wagon door section – formerly part of Oliver barn on Route 209 in Marletown, Ulster County – showing the door that includes two wooden door hinges, diagonal batten and four front face vertical boards.

Oliver Barn – Circa 1760

Two detached half-wagon door sections (upper and a lower) were found in the early 1990's on the loft of one of the side aisles in the four-bay three-aisle barn at the Oliver homestead off Route 209 in Marletown in Ulster County. The original barn length was of three bays. It is assumed that the doors are original to the barn. It is also assumed that the doors

came from the south end wall of the barn and the same side of the wagon door opening. Only one end wall seems to have had a wagon door opening. Except for one vertical front face board on what appears to be the upper door half each door section looks completely original.

Unfortunately, the original end wall doorposts have not survived and so it was not possible to cross-reference certain aspects of the door with possible corresponding aspects of the doorposts to know if the doors definitely came from the south end wall. For example – if a certain distance was seen between the two upper slots (or two lower slots) in a post and the same distance occurred in one of the door halves then it might be said that the door half came from that location.

The one complete half door section in excellent condition appears to be the lower door section due to the location of the wooden door latch. The latch is seen about 3 ½ feet from the bottom of the door and this would seem to be about the right spot for the placement of a latch. This section is just shy of five feet wide by five feet 3½ inches high. Four vertical face boards front the door. Widths of the boards are 19, 18, 4½ and 19¾ inches. All are pine. The boards were never painted.

The two wood hinges are oak and they are each 5 feet 6 ¼ inches long. They are a tad over two inches in height along their full lengths and they taper in their widths – 2 ¼ inches at their non-attachment ends to 3 ¾ inches wide at their attachment ends. At the attachment ends there are flared out areas whose outer edge corners are not chamfered while the rest of the lengths of the wood hinges are very neatly chamfered. The wood hinges in the door sections are secured to the front boards via wrought nails where the nail heads appear on the exterior face of the boards. This is the method of securing wood hinges to doors in all the examined barns thus far.

View of one end wall wagon door of Oliver barn that shows flared condition of wooden hinge.



View of two piece door latch of one end wall wagon door section formerly part of Oliver barn. Both wood pieces are oak. Circular finger hole is barely visible below latch.

There is a single batten per door half and the batten is diagonally oriented and is 9¼ inches wide. The board is secured to the front boards via wrought nails and the heads appear on the batten side of the door.

The door latch consists of two pieces of wood. The vertical oak keep or retainer twelve inches long seems to be original and is secured with two wrought nails. The horizontal (slightly angled) lifter bar is likely original but the nail that attaches it to the door is not wrought and may have been a replacement of the original nail.

The end wall wagon doors now seen on the barn consists of four half-door sections – two per side. Each door section has seven front face vertical boards. There is a modern *mittelmanse*. The door opening is 11 feet 4 inches wide by 11 feet high. Doors swing inwardly and this feature is an unusual one for wagon doors that do not include wood hinges in its design.

Nieuwkirk Barn – Dated 1766

The Nieuwkirk three-aisle (now two aisles as one side aisle was removed many decades ago) three-bay barn is seen on Hurley Mountain Road west of Kingston. John Kaufman the current owner states that wagon doors with wood hinges were in position at the far end wall (away from the dated 1769 stone house side) when he first came to the homestead in the early 1950's. Then in the mid 1950's he started to re-model the barn and at that time he contacted certain people at a museum in New York State to see if they wanted the doors. A carpenter came to the farm several weeks later and he took a door section or two. Peter Sinclair later heard of the door story and went to the museum and found that the doors were not there.

Two half-door sections remain in the barn in a dislodged location. One door



Two end wall wagon door sections seen on loft of dated 1766 Nieuwkirk barn on Hurley Mountain Road west of Kingston in Ulster County. Note original wooden door hinges.

section is 5 feet 11 inches high by 5 feet 5 inches wide. The nearly six foot long wooden door hinges are tapered with chamfered corners. A ten-inch wide diagonal batten is seen. A wood door latch is intact. The latch keep is 15 inches long and the lifter bar is twelve inches long. All the front vertical boards are intact except half of the one at the non-attachment side of the door.

The other half door section has the same width as the other door but is shorter as it is 5 feet 3 ½ inches high. It seems apparent that this door section was quite likely the upper door half due to the fact that the latch is on the other door section and usually the shorter height door appears at the top of the door opening. This door section has parts of two boards ripped out. Two boards are up to 15 inches wide. The diagonal batten is six inches wide. The wood hinges taper in height and width.

Another wooden door hinge was saved from another door section.

Hoornbeck Barn – Dated 1766

The Hoornbeck barn on the south side of Route 209 near Accord in Rochester Township in Ulster County that fell to ruin in the mid 1990's did retain its original wagon doorposts. The slots in the posts indicated that there were two half-door sections per door opening side for a total of four half-door sections. This barn was very likely built by the same builder who built the Nieuwkirk barn seen above

as the two barns have a remarkable number of co-incident features.

Fredericks Barn – Circa 1770

The Fredericks homestead has the rare distinction of having two classic barns on the property. The older of the two barns is a three-aisle three-bay pine barn (plus single added bay). The barns are located a mile or so southeast of the Village of Altamont in the Town of Guiderland in Albany County. The older barn has at the one gable wall wagon doors that have intact original wooden hinges but the original exterior vertical boards have been replaced.

On the one side of the door opening a single full height door is seen. The hinges are of oak. In local tradition, the wood pintles are received into vertical grooves set into the original pine doorposts. The wood hinges are flared but run straight (with same height) across. On the opposite side of the door opening are double half doors. Door opening is about ten feet wide.



Original end wall wagon doors at the circa 1790 Bogart three-aisle four-bay barn in Marbletown, Ulster County, New York. Doors are in four half sections – two at one side and two at other side. Note mittelmanse at outside of doors. Above doors is partially original pentice.

Post-Revolutionary War Era Barns

Bogart Barn – Circa 1790

The magnificent three-aisle four-bay Bogart barn is located in Marbletown in Ulster County. This is one of only two true U-barns in the county. Having this form the barn only ever had one end wall entrance which is toward the homestead stone house end. Assuming the door latches are authentic the wagon doors are nearly 100% original. The wagon door opening is 10 ½ feet wide and 11 ½ feet high.

Unlike the Mahoney barn that retains its original pentice the Bogart barn has almost all its original weather-boarding on the end wall where the authentic wagon doors are positioned. It is clearly seen that an original board covers the end wall anchor-beam from which the pentice arms are in contact. It can only be assumed that this case of original boards covering end wall anchor-beams prevailed at other barns. This condition appears to be the situation at the Wemple barn.

At each half side of the door opening there are two half-door sections for a total of four sections – two uppers and two lowers. The vertical wood post or *mittelmanse* that is seen at the exterior of the doors may be the original one. The post that is hardwood (not oak) is tapered. At its mid-point it is 3¾ by 3 inches in cross section.

The interior faces of the door sections may be unique in the Dutch-American barn realm. The two upper door sections are basically normal where two wood hinges along with a diagonal batten per section are seen. Each of the lower sections has a feature seen in no other barn – horizontal sheathing (boards) appears from top to bottom. The boards in each door butt up against a single diagonal batten. The other section is without any diagonal batten. Wooden hinges are oak. The wood latch system is very interesting and is unique. Finally, in line with the third inner bent wooden hinged single height wagon like doors open into the last bay that has a full dirt floor.

Collins Barn – Circa 1805

This is a rare six-bay barn (nave very wide at 32 feet) seen on Route 143 west of the Village of Ravena in extreme southern Albany County. The end wall wagon doors here have a nearly unique condition in that the wood hinges end 16 inches short of the non-attachment ends of the doors. The reason for this distinct aberration is unknown. Another three-aisle barn has non-full door width wooden hinges. Exact location of this second barn went un-recorded.

DuBois Barn – Circa 1810

A three-aisle barn of probable three-bay construction was located on the west side of Libertyville Road (Albany Post Road) southwest of New Paltz in Ulster County. It burned to the ground on the night of June 1, 1977. It stood immediately across the road from the dated 1822 brick two-story DuBois house. Many photos

Three of the four door sections each have five vertical front face boards – all of pine. One of the lower door sections has six front face boards. One board is up to 14 inches wide. All the door sections are 5 feet 1 inch wide while the lower sections vary a bit from 5 feet 6½ inches to 5 feet 9 inches wide.

The lower left door has what can be called true folk carvings. The full area of the carved area occupies a space of 9 by 10½ inches. At least part of the area contains a flower motif.

Interior of original end wall wagon doors at the Bogart barn with close-up view of unusual four piece all wood door latch release mechanism. Door was unlatched in interior of barn.





DuBois probable three-bay three-aisle barn that was formerly located on Libertyville Road near New Paltz in Ulster County. This barn had both an end wall wagon door with wooden hinges and perhaps uniquely a side wall wagon entrance with wooden hinges.

of the barn were taken but mostly exterior ones. Several visits to the barn were made – 1975 to early 1977. Don McTiernan of Dutchess County took interior shots of the barn in the mid 1970's.

This barn may have been unique in that the one end wall had wagon doors (south end) with wooden hinges in addition to the side (eave) wall wagon doors (east side) that had wooden hinges. It can not be said if the side wall wagon doors were in their original position as they may have been re-located from the north end wall. This barn also had another very rare feature in that at least the south end wall had horizontal weather-boarding of oak. Boards were secured with square headed cut nails.

Interior of John Snyder circa 1820 side entrance Dutch-Anglo barn on Route 212 west of Saugerties in Ulster County. View is shown of two lower half door sections with wooden hinges. On left door is two-piece door latch.



There was an attached one-aisle barn at the south end of the three-aisle barn that had very rare true knee braces that joined two tie beams to each of their corresponding wall posts. This was seen at the east side wall. The fire caused a great loss of two excellent barns.

John Snyder Barn – Circa 1820

The John Snyder side entrance three-bay barn (see location above) is another unique structure. It is open on its south wall – that is - there is no wall with cladding. Peripheral posts of course support the structure. The main wagon doors are in line with the first inner bent or H-frame that is parallel to the ridge-line. Peter Sinclair wrote about this barn and made many visits to the barn.

The interior wagon door opening is 11 feet 5 inches in height and 10 feet 1 inch in width. Each side of the opening has two half doors for a total of four half door sections. Each section has two full door width wooden hinges. They are of oak wood. Each section also has a diagonal batten and each batten varies in width – 11 to 13 inches. Each door section consists of four front face vertical tongue and grooved boards.

As often seen in typical Ulster County tradition the wood pintles sit on top of the door posts. Pintles are oak and five of the eight are original. Unlike anything seen in the north-country the bottoms of the pintles are widened and have a plate like



Interior of John Snyder barn and view of very long single piece wood pintle at right side of door opening that secures one wooden hinge of each of two half door sections.

aspect – they are three inches in height and vary in their widths – five to seven inches. Ken Snyder the owner replaced one of the original pintles in the 1990s that was patterned after the original where oak was used.

Various other items include the apparent original *mittelmans* that survives that was described above. Wagon doorposts are seven by six inches in cross section. The wood door hinges are tapered in their widths (not height) and there are no enlargements at the attachment ends. The main door latch appears at the lower door section on the left. It consists of two wood pieces. The angled keep often seen in the Dutch-American culture area (even in metal hinges) is 14½ inches long by 2 inches wide. The lifter bar is also 14½ inches long. Associated with the latch is a finger hole 1¼ inches in diameter easily seen on the “exterior” of the door. A finger was inserted into the hole from the outside to lift the wood piece to allow for entrance into the two “inner” bays of the barn.

Vinacor Barn – 1830s (?)

The Vinacor barn is a four-bay one-aisle structure and it appears on the north side of the Wittenberg – Bearsville road southwest of Bearsville in northern Ulster County. A carved date appears on the side wall doors and it seems to be in the 1830's. The doors discussed here may not be wagon doors at all as only two or side by side half height doors appear on the



Close up of two-piece all wood door-latch in interior placed wagon doors seen in John Snyder side wall entry barn. Note quite severe angle of door-latch keep.

Interior of John Snyder barn with close-up shown of circular finger hole in lower wagon door section. Finger was inserted into hole to free latch of door.



side wall. Each door is 5 feet high and 4½ feet wide (left side) and four feet four inches wide (right side). The left door has four front face vertical boards and right door has seven front face vertical boards. The door latch has a two-foot long lifter bar. The doors opened inwardly.

Both door sections are actually of frame construction with pegged mortise and tenon joinery. The one door on its interior face has no diagonal batten but the other door section does. Rear face horizontal battens are joined and pegged to the vertical oak door stiles.

The structure or framing of the side wall above the two door sections seems to be original and therefore the dimensions of the door opening are the original ones. In addition, the original *mittelmanse* seems to have survived but it has now been nailed in place.

In the early 1990's when Peter Sinclair and I first visited the barn there appeared to have been a similar door of about the same size on the opposite side wall. The question as to what the function of the two doors was can't be answered. The door opening about nine feet across may have been wide enough for a regular wagon to enter but it was not high enough. Perhaps these side walls allowed farm animals access into the barn. Diminutive sized wagons would not have passed through the side wall of the barn. These doors would also not have functioned for the passage of dung carts as the doors are too short for a human to pass through with convenience. They may have allowed for the entry and exit of short animals such as sheep or goats. It is difficult to know. In any event the doors are a very distinct aberration insofar as barns are concerned in Ulster County and other geographic areas.

This large barn (51 feet by 25 feet) likely had regular end wall wagon door openings.

Elmendorph Barn – Dated 1851

The Elmendorph variant U-barn along Route 213 near High Falls in Ulster County retains its four section end wall batten type wagon doors. View is shown of interior upper door section at north side of door opening with two horizontal battens and a single diagonal batten. Two wood pieces at bottom of door section holds modern bar that keeps the door shut.

New Jersey Barns with Original Wagon Doors

Only two barns in New Jersey and both of three-aisle construction have been located that had their original wagon doors in situ – at least at one end wall. Some side entry barns may have had original doors but none have been recorded.



Wagon doors seen at the Hopper-Goetschuis Museum barn in Saddle River, Bergen County, New Jersey. These re-cycled doors were found at a former site in a side entry Dutch-Anglo barn that stood on another road in town.

Van Ripper-Tice Barn – Circa 1810

The Van Ripper-Tice barn of three-bay construction that appears at the Hopper-Goetschuis Museum in Upper Saddle River in extreme northern Bergen County is within about one mile of the New York State line. The barn was first visited about 1977 when it was actually on another major road in the town about one mile away. At that location in its ostensible original place it was a side entrance barn. The barn was dismantled in 1989. Then the apparent original wagon doors were found on the loft. Only the original H-frames and purlin plates and braces and wagon doors were saved for the subsequent re-construction of the barn.

When the barn (barn timbers) was re-erected by George Turrell the following year as a three-aisle classic structure it was done so with conjecture as far as its roof slope and the nature of its side aisles were concerned. It was discovered that the wagon doors fit precisely into the space between the original wagon doorposts still in place in the barn.

The wagon doors of batten type construction at the new barn location were

Short height side wall frame constructed doors at Vinicor barn on Wittenberg Road west of Bearsville in northern Ulster County. Doors may have allowed sheep or other short farm stock into barn.



View of original end wall upper wagon door section at north side of door opening at the dated 1851 Elmendorph variant U-barn on route 213 near High Falls in Ulster County. Wagon door has two upper and two lower door sections and doors swing outwardly.

Inward versus Outward Swinging Doors

It is interesting to speculate as to why there were few wagon doors in barns in the southern reaches of New York State and no doors in New Jersey that swung inwardly. Most doors that swing inwardly had wooden door hinges. No such hinges appear on any doors in New Jersey or for that matter on Long Island. It can be assumed that the wagon doors in barns in Queens and Brooklyn a number of which survive in photographs had no wooden hinges.

Doors swung inwardly in many New York State barns likely because snow loads there were considerably more severe in season than in those areas where barns were more southerly located. Snow falls and/or drifts more than a foot or two high against end walls of barns could cause considerable difficulty for the movement (opening) of wagon doors.

It seems likely that traditions of wagon doors swinging into a barn or out of a barn were established quite early on in their respective locations. The fact that no barns in the entire state of New Jersey have ever been found that have inwardly swinging doors strongly suggests that traditions had been firmly entrenched there for a very long time. As it is, a few observers have found about 165 barns of Dutch type in the last thirty-five years in the state.

Replacement Doors

Most barns had their original wagon doors replaced. Notes were not taken on replacement wagon doors concerning their sizes or dispositions. However, it can be



placed at the south end walls. The wagon door opening is 11 ½ feet in height and ten feet wide. The door consists of two single full height door sections of precisely the same size. Each door half possesses six vertical boards and are beaded at their long edges. The doors were apparently never painted. Only two long modern hinges each 3 feet 9 inches long are seen at each section. Counter to typical Dutch tradition the door eyes of the hinges are welded. Each door section has three horizontal battens and two diagonal battens. Nails securing the front vertical boards to the rear face battens are secured with wrought nails. Such early style nails appear on doors in innumerable vernacular buildings even until the Civil War. These nails could apparently be clinched more easily than cut nails.

Old York Road Barn – Circa 1810

A three-bay three-aisle barn on Old York Road in Branchburg in Somerset County retained its original wagon doors at its one end wall. Details were recorded in September 2002. At that point the barn had deteriorated to some degree since it was first visited in 1991. The notes were used to largely re-construct the wagon doors at the newly built Dutch-American museum barn in Readington in Somerset County off Dreahook Road.

There were single height doors at each side of the wagon door opening. Each of the two sections had a top and bottom metal hinge each of rather short length. Each section had three horizontal battens and two diagonal battens. The doors swung outwardly. In the Dreyhook Road barn the two sections actually had to be reduced in height from the original by roughly two feet. The door opening in the museum barn is only 9'7" high by a rather wide 11'4". One change in the museum barn was that the one side was made into two half-door sections.

The original H-frames used in the museum barn came from another structure that was dismantled by The New Jersey Barn Company at a Wyckoff farm in a nearby area. At that location the barn was a side entrance structure. The original H-frames themselves were re-cycled from an even earlier building that may well have been a pre-Revolutionary War era barn as the H-frame posts in the barn had only about a four foot *verdiepingh* one of the very shortest in any New Jersey barn outside of Bergen County.

The wagon doors of the museum barn on Dreyhook Road in Readington, Hunterdon County, New Jersey were patterned after the original end wall wagon doors of three-aisle barn on Old York Road in Branchburg in Somerset County, New Jersey seen here.

said in general that many replacement doors were of the sliding type. This door type started to come into use by about the 1830's or so. Most replacement doors either swung outwardly or were of the sliding door type. This is a study that requires further investigation.

Summary and Conclusions

Remember the bumper sticker "No Farmers, No Food?" Here's another: "No Doors, No Entry."

When a farmer first approached his barn it was a door that he first touched. He touched his barn door to enter his barn. A farmer who lived at the homestead where he made his home repeated this simple act thousands of times. He entered the barn to attend to all the chores and tasks that he assigned himself to. Although perhaps not always appreciated by people today, the door was a special element that was an essential part of a barn. This was true of all the doors whether they were wagon doors, animal doors or "human" doors.

In the making of a barn, the importance of the human hand was incalculable. It was hands of course that gathered all the materials natural or otherwise that were necessary in its fabrication. From sharpened tools to trees cut in a near-by woods or forest to forming all the myriad of wood pieces from small latches to giant anchor-beams all the things that constituted the total structure of a barn were originally touched by human hands or at least touched by the action of a tool set in motion by a human hand. A barn could be used for untold decades and many parts of the structure subsequent to its construction would never actually be brushed over by a human hand. But some parts were and unless the door was propped in place by a stick or something else (later to be "unpropped" at night) a hand always touched the door when someone, a farmer or other visitor entered the barn.

Doors either on houses or barns in the minds of their owners or their builders were duly venerated. Perhaps doors were molded and formed by people who built them and used them according to their own image. Certain writers acknowledged this. Author Helen Reynolds whom so many people have known wrote the first and later to be widely recognized book on Dutch architecture in upstate New York also wrote a book on the doorways of houses in Dutchess County. Other books (or major chapters in certain books) have



Replacement wagon doors at the Oliver 3-aisle barn in Marletown in Ulster County on south side of Route 209. Wagon doors are in four parts – two sections at left and two sections at right side. Doors swing inwardly that is likely not common for replacement doors in barns.

been written on house doors. They are representative of a man's particular expressiveness, aspirations and station in life. An elegant front door of a house might signify a man of opulence. An elemental door may reflect a man of little means and low social status. A middling front door might mirror a man of average means. Perhaps someday an extensive treatise will be written on barn doors.

What does a barn door say about his owner? That he was a man of practicality and that function was by far his main purpose. A barn door also belied simplicity. A man could flaunt certain things in his house and impress the world anew. Or maybe he didn't indulge himself in much of that. But one thing he almost never did was to make his barn doors fanciful, at least prior to Civil War times. An imaginative decorative barn door design – it might embarrass him.

Every last piece of a barn door had its pure function – from the tiny pegs in a frame door to wide front face milled boards of any type of door. Each piece with its duty to perform could last for generations. If it was protected and it avoided any calamity the door was sure to last, at least under certain conditions.

Cases where doors did last have provided most of the information that constitutes this article. General classes of basic wagon door construction in the Dutch-American culture area have been delineated and a number of examples of each have been seen. Perhaps the numbers of original wagon doors have surprised some people or perhaps not. Recall that Eric Sloane the first North American barn author and the first to elevate barns to new levels of recognition and appreciation more than half a century ago thought no barn doors with wooden hinges survived

into the last half of the twentieth century. Were they that rare that he never saw any of them? That apparently can be answered in the affirmative.

Despite this rather lengthy article many of the dynamics that helped determine the precise appearance and disposition of wagon doors have not been discussed. Many of the cultural forces at play going back into the eighteenth century have likely been lost forever to obscurity. Hopefully this article has provided a good number of the basic aspects and dimensions that compose the various wagon doors that have survived. But many other factors that influenced the uses, layout and sizes of wagon doors have not been addressed. Perhaps some day these topics will be researched and ideas about them disseminated.

One topic that this author has never heard discussed as far as Dutch-American barns are concerned is the inclusion of certain objects in or around doors to ward off evil. Such devices referred to as apotropaic while not yet detected in these barns have been brought to light in a number of barns in Pennsylvania. They may or may not be associated with wagon doors but apparently more often involved the frames of stable doors. Farmers wanted to protect their farm animals and often used small pieces of metal as a defense against imagined harmful forces. In the Dutch-American realm six-pointed barn stars (hex signs) have been observed on anchor beams in several barns. Their function is not exactly known. In Pennsylvania barns such signs beyond simple direct expressions of decoration may have been related to the expulsion of evil.

As it is enough wagon doors in Dutch-American barns have survived past 1968 when John Fitchen's classic book was published that a good number of their traits can now be delineated. We have seen variability expressed in the doors especially those doors that had wooden hinges as part of them. Many builders' ideas and sensibilities taken from many sources manifested themselves in the wood formations that they created. They are called barn doors. It was a very favorite topic of Eric Sloane. Read his books and see.

It is hoped that this tract on Dutch-American barn wagon doors might be an incentive for people to hold barn doors in higher regard than perhaps they did before. And also to be an urging to any barn owner to preserve as best they can the doors that remain on their barns – especially those that may be very old. ■

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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.**

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A look back



In this photograph is the Morris Canal - between Plane 8 in the Montville Village area (New Jersey) – south of Route 202. Looking carefully you can clearly discern two hay barracks, they are located in back of the Gladson house – which at the time of this Photograph (1905) was known as the Kayharts. Photographer: Olin F. Vought.

Calendar

Celebration in Stone

Saturday, May 22, 2010 – 10:00 AM

HVVA members will support the Historic Preservation Committee of the Town of Saugerties by combining our monthly study tour with this special stone house tour of Saugerties. Please note there is no regular 3rd Saturday event in May scheduled due to the excitement and popularity of this event among our members. Tickets are available the day of the tour from 11:00 AM till 2 PM at the Visitor Information Booth on Route 212, near “MacDonalds” and the NYS Thruway exit in Saugerties (\$25 each). See you on tour!

clear span wooden structure in the world), Dutch barns, a Swing beam barn and hop barns. The tour will be lead by Bob Hedges.



Stone House Day Hurley

Saturday, July 10, 2010 – 10:00

As tradition now has it the HVVA July meeting will be folded into a showcase for our organization at Hurley's Annual Stone House Day. Potluck picnic to follow (about 5:00) at the Elmendorf House on Main Street. Please let us know if you are willing to volunteer at the display table during the day. Email to: **Gallusguy@msn.com**

Schoharie Saturday

Saturday, June 19, 2010 – 10:00 AM

The June tour is set for the Schoharie County. Meeting at the Blenheim covered bridge at 10:00 am. The bridge is just north of north Blenheim on Rt. 30. Tour to include the bridge (the longest

For more information, please check www.HVVA.org