

Hudson-Mohawk Vernacular Architecture

Virtual Touring in the Age of Covid

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Until such time as it becomes possible to resume our monthly tours, there are a number of ways by which you can satisfy your need to explore historic buildings and sites.

Walking, Driving and Biking Tours

The Columbia County Historical Society has posted several “Drive Through History” maps for driving tours in the county at <https://www.cchsny.org/drive-through-history.html> These include themed tours such as Sacred Sites, Artifacts of Industry and Patriots and Patroons. They also manage a Dutch Farming Heritage Trail, a walking tour in Kinderhook. Information on it can be found at <https://www.cchsny.org/dutch-farming-heritage-trail.html>

The Village of Kinderhook has posted a walking and biking tour, at <https://villageofkinderhook.org/downloads/walking%20tour%20brochure.pdf>

A biking tour of Brooklyn New World Dutch farmsteads can be found at <https://bertspaan.nl/dutch-farmhouses-of-brooklyn/>

A walking tour of Athens, Greene County, from 2003 has been posted to that county’s genweb site. Link to it and print it out at http://www.tracingyourrootsgcny.com/bicentennial_walking_tour_of_athesn_2003.htm

A guide for a walking tour of Historic New Bridge Landing in Bergen County, NJ for your mobile phone can be found at <https://www.bergencountyhistory.org/mobile-app> where a map can also be found.

A number of other historical organizations have posted driving and walking tours to their websites—check out your local historical society’s webpage, or take a tour of a place you’ve never been to before!

Virtual tours

A technology increasingly used by realtors during the pandemic has been the “virtual tour,” generated by use of 360° cameras strategically placed in interior spaces, and sometimes supplemented by the use of drones, this technique has also been adapted by a limited number

of house museums, which have used it to provide access to their sites while they remain closed to the public.

Among the latter is the David and Fanny Crawford house in Newburgh. From the website of the Historical Society of Newburgh Bay and the Highlands comes this description:

“Built in 1830, the home was commissioned by David Crawford and his wife, Fanny, who raised two daughters there. Crawford made a fortune in freighting goods on the Hudson River, contributing to the growth of Newburgh and Orange County.

Guests can explore the first floor of Crawford’s neoclassical-style mansion, which has a 40-foot tall portico and elaborate wood carvings. Inside, clickable info boxes relate the stories behind the Society’s collection of Hudson River School paintings and 19th century decorative arts. Among the featured items are a pianoforte and Gothic chair, both crafted in the city during Crawford’s lifetime.

The tour was filmed and edited by Seth Colegrove, a Newburgh native. Colegrove used drones and a 360° camera to create panoramas of the mansion’s rooms.”

Use this link to access the tour: <https://www.newburghhistoricalsociety.com/new-page-3>

The Albany County Historical Association, which maintains the Abraham and Elizabeth van Rensselaer Ten Broeck house in Albany, Albany County, has also posted a virtual tour. The house, constructed in 1797-98, was one of three on the HVVA’s tour for May 2019. See <http://hmvarch.org/tourhandouts/2019-05-albany-tour.pdf> for the tour handout, which contains information on the house. The virtual tour of the Ten Broeck house is located at <https://my.hudsonvirtualtours.com/public/vtour/display/1197959#!/>

Other organizations have posted photographic tours of their sites. Among these are the Township of Wayne, NJ, which has posted a virtual tour of their early-18th century Van Duyne house at <https://waynetownship.com/van-duyne-house-tour.html>

Also in the Township of Wayne, you can watch a video documenting the Van Riper-Hopper House Museum (built in 1786 for Uriah and Maria van Riper) or scroll through photographs of the interior and exterior at https://www.waynetownship.com/van-riper-hopper-house-tour.html?utm_source=BestofNJ&utm_medium=Outbound&utm_campaign=Feature_Best_Virtual_Tours

The Schenectady County Historical Society has posted a “virtual map” on their website, where you can learn the history of each of the structures located on the Mabee Farm Museum property. Link to it at <https://indd.adobe.com/view/b8a497d1-8ca2-4d13-b61c-cdd88d9ed8a1>

There are many others, which you can find by typing in keywords and phrases such as “virtual tour” and town or family names.

Real Estate Sites

Websites that aggregate real estate listings such as realtor.com, or Zillow, are an invaluable resource for accessing the interiors of houses which may have previously been inaccessible for examination or documentation. Some of these sites include virtual 3-D tours, similar to those which have been posted by historical societies, as in the above examples. The majority have interior and exterior photographs and sometimes mapping, together with information on the house. The quality of the photographs and information varies considerably. Usually, the construction date presented has been collected from assessment rolls and is not reliable. These sites are great for discovering buildings that have previously been overlooked.

Here are a few examples of current listings:

The Ackerson house (c. 1773) <http://tours.tourssellhomes.com/public/vtour/display/762303#!/> at 142 Pascack Road, Park Ridge, NJ

56 Nellis St, a stone center passage house at Palatine Bridge, Montgomery County, NY at <https://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-detail/56-Nellis-St-Nelliston-NY-13410-M92382-19558>

813 Flatbush Road, Kingston, Ulster County, NY, a bent-framed house with kitchen wing that retains its exposed beams, see it at <https://www.murphyrealtygrp.com/listing/20192132-813-flatbush-road-kingston-ny-12401/>

Old House Aficionado Sites

There are also websites that collect information from realtor's listings and other sources, and some include original research. Among these are *Old House Dreams*, which recently covered the Van Buren house in Castleton, Rensselaer County <https://www.oldhousedreams.com/2017/05/04/1763-dutch-colonial-castleton-on-hudson-ny/> and *Brownstoner*, whose postings typically cover the history of specific buildings, but occasionally as at <https://www.brownstoner.com/history/walkabout-going-dutch-in-new-york-state-part-one/> are thematically driven.

Mapping History project

Ken Walton's *Mapping History*, hosted on the HMVA website at <http://hmvarch.org/resources/hvva-mapping-history.pdf> provides a series of maps that record locations of houses and other structures, organized by county. Information on the construction date, original owner, and sources of information is linked to each pushpin locator, together with excellent photographs by Ken.

Conferences

Finally, a number of organizations have moved their annual conferences online. You can either sign up for one of these conferences, or visit the organization's website afterward, as many have posted some or all of the papers presented online, via a streaming service. An example of this is the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG), headquartered in England, but which has as its subject vernacular architecture across the globe. Recently the VAG hosted a conference entitled "Houses And The Hearth Tax In Britain" during which several papers on the subject were presented. These presentations have been uploaded to Youtube. Links to them can be found at <https://www.vag.org.uk/conferences.htm>

The Construction History Society has similarly uploaded papers and some of the presentations from its recent conference. They can be found at <https://www.arct.cam.ac.uk/research/history-theory/building-histories/the-seventh-annual-conference-of-the-construction-history-society/conference-proceedings> By way of a shameless plug, let me recommend a paper found in the portion of that conference that dealt with the 18th century <https://www.arct.cam.ac.uk/research/history-theory/building-histories/the-seventh-annual-conference-of-the-construction-history-society/conference-proceedings/eighteenth-century> which presents some of the later history of New World Dutch construction in our area.

The Vernacular Architecture Forum is having its conference online this year, on 21-22 May; you'll need to register in order to see the presentations, however. Their conference website is at <https://www.vernaculararchitectureforum.org/page-1821821>

I hope you find these suggestions interesting and informative. I look forward to seeing you all in the field when we are able to be together!

Regards,

Wally