

Barn Tour, Schoharie County, Ny

On Saturday, November 16, Harold Zoch led a tour for the trustees of six barns in the Schoharie-Middleburg area of the county. They were a mixture of Dutch and "German" barns.

Greg Huber and the Reporter spent the morning documenting the Joy Dutch barn in Ulster County which was being disassembled for re-erection. They then drove north and met with the tour group at the Parrot Restaurant. In the morning the 22 participants had visited three Dutch barns and after lunch the group visited two "German" and one Dutch barn. The "German" barns had side entrances, each with a massive swingbeam measuring 18" and 20" deep respectively.

The Pindar Dutch barn visited in Schoharie is a four bay barn with double raising holes. It was a close neighbor of the Schaeffer/Ingold barn which was moved in 1987 to the open air museum at the nearby Stone Fort. The Pindar barn contains a number of unusual features including 24" extended and unwedged anchorbeam tenons, the longest so far recorded. Adding to the exotic nature of its frame are English gunstock like corner posts,

Jaap Schipper and his wife Bix, two members of the DBPS from Holland, had come to view their first New World Dutch barns. Jaap is an architect and Bix is a textile specialist. The Schippers brought with them drawings and articles about barns in Holland. The group found great interest in these and asked many questions.

5th Annual Meeting of the DBPS Albany County, NY

On Saturday, November 2nd, 1991 about 25 members of the society met at the Wemp barn near Feura Bush for the annual meeting. The day began early with the fire charring and final preparations of the six 25 foot barrack poles which Ev Rau has been supervising. John Kaufman brought his tripod and tackle and the poles were set upright in their holes. Several methods of leveling the height of the poles were used and finally the poles were set vertical and six diagonal braces nailed from one pole to the next to hold them vertical until 1992 when the plates and rafters could be finished and set in place.

At noon the barrack crew broke for lunch and at one a business meeting was held. Fifteen ballots were submitted, and the following trustees elected to office... President, Mark Hesler; Vice President, Mike Bathrick; Secretary, Chris Albright; and Treasurer, Ev Rau...The following people were elected as Trustees until 1994, Lou Caputzal, Tom Lanni, Sheila Audet, Peter Sinclair, Vince Schaefer, Bob Andersen, Chris Albright, and Charles Gehring...The following were listed as present Trustees Shirley Dunn, Alicia Jettner, Greg Huber, Harold Zoch, Clarke Blair, Dave Carlon, Jack Sobon, and George Turrell.

At 2 PM Rod Blackburn gave an hour slide talk about the Okiek people of Southwest Kenya whom he has been studying since 1968. Rod pointed to its geographic similarities with the Hudson Valley which is the home of the New World Dutch barn and of the cultural and historic parallels with the contemporary Okiek people and the situation in the Hudson Valley 1620 to 50. Like the natives of the Northeast the Okiek are a hunter gatherer people who live in bark houses and have recently begun to practice farming maize. In a similar fashion to the Native American dependence on maple sugar, the Okiek maintain bee hives for honey. In the lowlands, large scale wheat farming is beginning. This mechanized farming is the work of absentee landowners.

The annual meeting ended with the barrack crew adding more bracing to the six pole barrack. It was felt the poles would not hold their vertical position and it was decided to drive a center stake and brace each pole to it.

Dutch Barn Dissertation by Columbia University Graduate Student, Ulster County, NY

Melissa Cohen, a graduate student of architecture at Columbia University in New York City became interested in the subject of Dutch barns and decided that she could incorporate them into her Masters thesis. She originally contacted Mark Peckham, a former trustee, who contacted Greg Huber. In June, 1991 Greg introduced Melissa to three Dutch barns in Bergen County, New Jersey to familiarize her with their design. Melissa needed to focus on one barn appropriate for her dissertation. They visited several more Dutch barns in Dutchess County, New York including the unique 11-bent barn near Rhinebeck. She also visited the Bronck and Skinkle Dutch barns. She visited the Bogart Dutch barn located in Marbletown, Ulster County, New York.

Peter Sinclair had shown her the many details and unusual characteristics of this barn and it was this one that Melissa decided to focus her attention on. She visited the barn for approximately 7 days taking many measurements and photographs with the help of Peter and Christina Diaz. She talked with local people who recalled the farm and she researched local records.

One finding of Melissa's was the usage of short leaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) for the anchorbeams. The presence of this wood was unexpected for this area, as virtually all forestry books indicate that short leaf pine's northern-most reach is about 50 to 60 miles south of the New Jersey State Line. Greg reconfirmed this finding with Melissa's advisor, Professor Martin Weaver.

For her study thesis, Melissa proposed to conserve the barn as a living museum and to partially rehabilitate the structure for an agricultural history camp. Her proposal included replacement of deteriorated timbers and the introduction of a number of elements to facilitate the usage of the barn by young people in a normal camp setting.

Melissa's presentation of her thesis at the University, attended by Peter and Greg in September 1991, saw a number of excellent architectural renderings of both exterior and interior views of the Bogart barn and several proposed rehabilitation sketches. All were very impressive. Her dissertation was an 87 page report including discussions, photographs and drawings of the barn.

Hopefully this experience of the people involved will demonstrate that Dutch barns can provide a useful and worthwhile activity for students, on all levels, to become involved in. It can help fulfill their requirements and stimulate interest. For experienced researchers and historians it can help provide enjoyment and a much needed source of barn documentation.

LHC Workshop Rockland County, NY

On November 18 the Reporter attended a workshop which the The Lower Hudson Conference organized entitled, "Wagons on the Lawn: Collecting and Interpreting Agricultural History in the Suburbs." It was held at the Historical Society of Rockland County at New City and attended by 13 people. There was a large and interesting display of books and publications. Lynne Belluscio from the LeRoy Historical Society, and Kathie Boardman from the Farmers Museum were the speakers and shared their experiences and made suggestions.

Kathie showed a video tape of an excellent 6 minute documentary film done in Germany in the 1960's. It shows the peening (cold-hammering of the tempered steel) and whetting (with a stone) of the sith blade and the use of the sith with the mathook in harvesting a grain field. She said the Farmers Museum is replicating an antique sith in their collection to be used at some future time. These are the harvest tools which were characteristic of 17th and 18th century New World Dutch farmers.

Lynne related the special problems which her museum, with its limited space, has had in presenting historic farming and agriculture near Rochester, New York. One interesting project is a model 3-bay English barn which is about 4 feet high and 6 feet long. It takes 2 hours for a group of youngsters to assemble it and come away with a good understanding of timber frame construction.

Wemple Barn, Examination and Clean-up, Schenectady County, NY

A clean-up day of the 18th century Wemple/Dellamont Dutch barn was scheduled for Saturday, January 11, 1992 by its owners Livio and Carolina Lazarri. Greg Huber of Bergen County, New Jersey, arrived the day before to document the floor boards. These boards were slated to be picked up and piled to one side. He did a detailed drawing of the threshing floor and measured the outside dimensions of the barn which are 47 feet wide and 56½ feet long. It is the longest 4-bay barn known.

Greg cleared away loose hay and exposed 44 floor boards. Much of the original floor has disappeared and other areas are covered with concrete. Only 14 boards have about 2/3 of their original length intact. The nave is 28 feet wide and most of the 14 boards were in the 2nd bay. All the boards but one were tapered and staggered. The wide end of 5 boards were toward the left column range and the wide ends of 8 boards to the right. On the underside the boards were found to be roughly hewn but notched smoothly to receive the sills.

The use of tapered floor boards in a Dutch barn is extremely unusual. It was done in this case to utilize the natural taper of the tree and may indicate a primitive method of wood utilization. Apparently the boards originally ran the entire width of the floor a very unusual occurrence. The floor boards are 5½" thick and there are no wooden pegs or iron spikes holding them down. Perhaps their great weight alone eliminated the need for positive attachment. It was calculated that 8,625 board feet of wood were used in the floor. This is a staggering amount of wood.

The clean up consisted of removing loose hay from the floor and dismantling 20th century partitions and debris from the right side aisle. Eight DBPS Trustees attended, Vince Schaefer, Tom Lanni, Chris Albright, Lou Caputzal and family, Ev Rau, Greg Huber, Mark Hesler and Shirley Dunn. For lunch an excellent stew was served and enjoyed. A few artifacts were found including an iron blade thought to be a coulter from a hog plow. Two "W"s (Wemple) were found carved in the clapboard siding to the right of the threshing floor. There was talk about putting together a booklet about the Wemple homestead in a year or two.

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If you have not done so, please mail your 1992 membership dues to...
The Dutch Barn Preservation Society, Box 176, Rensselaer, NY 12144.
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