



# The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

April-May 2007

## Newsletter

Vol. 9, No. 4-5

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

**Peter Sinclair** – *Founder*

West Hurley, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 338-0257  
hvvernar@netstep.net

**Jim Decker** – *President*

Wallkill, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 895-3272  
jdeck@frontiernet.net

**Dennis Tierney** – *Vice President*

Wappingers Falls, Dutchess County, NY  
(914) 489-5262

**Maggie MacDowell** – *Secretary*

Gardiner, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 255-2282  
mmacdowell@hvc.rr.com

**Robert Sweeney** – *Treasurer*

Kingston, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 336-0232  
gallusguy@msn.com

**Paul Spencer** – *Past President and Trustee*

Ancramdale, Columbia County, NY  
(518) 329-2616  
spencer212@aol.com

**John Stevens** – *Sr. Architectural Historian*

Huntington, Suffolk County, NY  
(631) 239-5044  
dutchjam@optonline.net

**Joyce Berry** – *HVVA.org Webmaster*

St. Johnsville, Montgomery County, NY  
ajberry@frontiernet.net

**Todd Scheff** – *Trustee*

Germantown, Columbia County, NY  
(518) 537-6993  
ctscheff@valstar.net

**Bob Hedges** – *Trustee*

Pine Plains, Dutchess County, NY  
(518) 398-7773  
rmhedges@taconic.net

**Conrad Fingado** – *Trustee*

Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County, NY  
(845) 635-2714  
cfrestoration@hvc.rr.com

**William McMillen** – *Trustee*

Glenmont, Albany County, NY  
(518) 462-1264  
judyb@aol.com

**Walter Wheeler** – *Trustee*

Troy, Rensselaer County, NY  
(518) 270-9430  
wtheb@aol.com

**Karen Markisenis** – *Trustee*

Lake Katrine, Ulster County, NY  
(845) 382-1788  
kmarkisenis@hvc.rr.com



Welcome our newest HVVA Member – **Willa Louise Spencer-Shimkin**, born March 6th, 2007 at 3:08PM (6 lbs 15oz), the newly born daughter of our Past President and trustee, **Paul Spencer**. Congratulations to both Paul and Mary!

## From the Editor

This past month the HVVA office has seen a great deal of activity. With spring weather approaching our little outbuilding of an office is close to becoming a reality. It is hoped that we will plan a bit of a celebration including the customary bowl of punch, when it is complete. The tentative date will be July 21, 2007 and we'll combine the dedication with our annual picnic and a small house study tour. So mark that date on the calendar!

In an effort to document several "new" structures in Ulster County our meetings for the next couple of months will be split over the Shawangunk Range. In April we will continue to meet at the Bevier House in Marletown. In May, we cross over the ridge to meet at the Bevier/ Elting House, in New Paltz. Each of these days will begin at 10:00 am with a business meeting and will include a Study Tour which will end up at a local lunch spot. All members are encouraged to attend these meetings.

Membership input is greatly needed for our newest project, the brick Van Housen House, near Hudson, New York (see article by David Voorhees). This superb example of 18th Dutch Architecture is in need of an owner that is able to protect and preserve it. HVVA has been asked to help out in this effort. It is obvious to everyone that has seen this house that it is very special and a rare example that must be saved.

But the question is where will the money come from; our pockets, the state and federal treasury, local businessmen? And then

the problem of what it should be used for, office and archive, meeting house, museum? Perhaps it should just be preserved as a wonderful relic of the past. In order to debate these issues your elected trustees need to hear from you. Please use the email addresses in the side bar to offer your opinions to the board. As resolutions are made this newsletter will help keep our membership informed.

I would also like to extend a thank you to those who have been renewing their dues on the honor system and thank the many folks who have contributed beyond the stated amounts. We do rely on these contributions to keep us running. Thank you!

Also I would like to inform everyone that Peter Sinclair is making progress in his recovery and enjoys the mail he receives from his many friends. Work is being done by Bob Hedges and Alvin Sheffer to prepare Peter's home for his arrival in the near future. HVVA's great friend Roberta Jeracka, gladly prints and delivers email messages to Peter a couple times a week. If you wish you may send your greetings using her address: rjeracka@hartgen.com

I look forward to visiting with everyone during the spring season.

Happy house repairs to all!

**Rob Sweeney** – HVVA's sheepdog

Upcoming Events

Fort Edward  
Introduction to  
Historical Records

Friday, April 13, 2007  
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Washington County Municipal Center  
383 Broadway, Bldg. B  
2nd Fl. Classroom  
Fort Edward, NY

FREE. Registration required.

Historical or archival records have long-term value not only for the organization that created them, but also for use in research. This workshop will discuss methods to ensure that these records are identified, organized, properly stored, available for use, and preserved. It will also suggest ways to develop support for these activities. Attendees will be encouraged to discuss issues related to their historical records with the instructors and with other attendees. Although this workshop is presented by local government records staff, most of the information will be useful to anyone responsible for the care of permanent records.

For more information or to register, contact Denis Meadows at 518-798-5717 or dmeadows@mail.nysed.gov



Early Days with Peter Sinclair

by Greg Huber

It was thrilling for me to visit the Old Stone Fort in Schoharie in Schoharie County, New York in early October 1988 and learn that an upstate New York based organization was formed that was dedicated to the preservation of Dutch-American barns. They called themselves *The Dutch Barn Preservation Society* (DBPS). I thought – “other people share the same interest as I do. It is about time.” I could not wait to join and learn of their specific interests and the kinds of activities they were pursuing. I then learned the name of Shirley Dunn who headed the group at that time. My dad was very sick at that point and as things turned out I did not send in my ten dollars for dues until about the middle of January 1989. In about a week I received a packet of information including the first issue of the Newsletter and I found out that the group was having a tour of barns in the general Guilderland area of Albany County on Saturday, February 10. Goodness. I believe I called Shirley and asked her a few questions of the group.

I got up very early on that Saturday morning at a friend’s house in Mahwah, New Jersey and at about 6:15 AM headed the radiator of my car north to the hinterlands of New York State with a destination not far from Albany – the state capital. I thought to myself – “whom would I meet. Who was actually interested in looking at these barns with hopefully discerning and wondering eyes?” I basically waited for this to happen for more than a dozen years. I would soon find out who these people were.

There were perhaps twenty people or so that I met in the adjacent parking lot to the historic Frederick house on Route 146 in Guilderland Center. But I do know one very definite thing – it was darned cold. As in C-O-L-D. I very distinctly remember the hulking presence of Vincent Schaefer. There was a large man. I was soon to find how



Peter Sinclair

large he really was in more ways than one. He was a prominent meteorologist and somewhat a friend of my silent mentor – Eric Sloane. I also recall Shirley Dunn and Chris Albright and I believe Mark Hesler being there. All of these people proved to be major figures in the Barn Society. But the person whom I most remember – by far – was Peter Sinclair. Here was a man approaching sixty years of age. Bald or mostly so I saw but still possessive of some very definite youth. There was also a certain quietude about him and yet a very definite enthusiasm shone through his reserved demeanor. This part of him was plainly obvious. It is quite curious – in view of the fact that Peter became far and away my closest friend in the society – that his name was the very first one that I recorded in my (ever present) notebook. His name appeared on the second page of my notes along with his phone number. His name came right after the entry of the SHBO (a Netherlands historic organization) that was mentioned at the trustee meeting. The only very distinct memory that I have of Peter during the barn tour were comments that he made at the so-called Altamont Orchards barn. He was pointing out certain traits of the H-frames. I was seeing things that were new to me that I had not seen in other Dutch barns that I had visited in the more southern

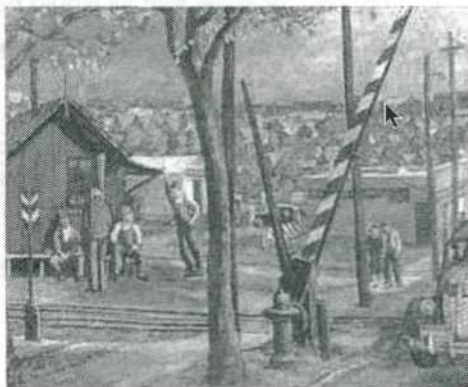
reaches of New York. Somehow I sensed that a friendship would ensue with this man who was close to twenty years my senior.

It was likely after the second DBPS trustee meeting that I attended in March 1989 that I went to see Peter at his homestead place in West Hurley in Ulster County New York. He had moved there about 1973. One got the instant impression that the place was that of an independent individual. The word iconoclast came to my mind. Later on I learned that this word very definitely applied to Peter. All manner of stuff was about the place that consisted of about twenty acres. There was a frame house of somewhat rambling type from the middle third of the nineteenth century. There was the obligatory garden and perhaps a few sheds. But most important of all, the biased person that I am, it had a barn – not of Dutch-American type, one can not have everything – that was of side wall entrance English type, maybe 1840 to 1850. The posts even had raising holes. Peter thought it was a Dutch derivative barn but I tried to steer him away from that idea. I don't know how successful I was. At least one of the nineteenth century landowners at the homestead was Van Steenburgh – a good and healthy and unmistakable Dutch name. The barn had wood working tools in it that Peter used on various projects. The roof at that point needed attention.

The interior of the house on the property was not fashionably decorated – that was not Peter's style – not by a very long shot. But important artifacts



from many sources adorned the walls and corners and what-not (and a few cob-webs). And he had hundreds of books on Indian lore and country life. In very short order I realized that Peter was in love with Indian life. And he could talk about them *ad infinitum*. In the first year or two that I knew him he sadly had to part with one of his treasured native masks – I guess from Africa – for many dollars as he was short of funds. I also learned that his Dad, Gerrit Sinclair, which is also the name of Peter's son, was a quite major



*Switchman's Shanty* – Gerrit Van Sinclair

artist in the mid-west. Gerrit depicted many genre scenes of the midwest and so the environment that I was introduced to at the Sinclair homestead was really a natural sequel to his father's orientation. If memory serves Gerrit also painted a number of barn scenes. Bless his soul.

I believe I stayed overnight at Peter's place that night and then left in the morning. In a few days I received some information in the mail from him and a note appeared that said – "You are welcome here anytime." I knew that I found a friend. In the ensuing months Peter and I attended many trustee meetings of the DBPS. He had become a trustee in the fall of 1988 and I later became a trustee in the fall of 1989. After the meetings I would often stay at his place. However, on one occasion we followed each other home and we got lost and nearly ended up in Massachusetts due to a wrong turn and I ended up not getting back to New Jersey until nearly 2 AM. Peter was never great on directions – something that he freely admitted.

## Upcoming Events

### Newburgh Let's Talk About the Role of the Municipal Historian

Monday, April 16, 2007  
10:00 am to Noon  
Newburgh Historian's Office

FREE. Registration required.

This informal roundtable will discuss the role of the municipal historian in theory as well as in practice.

To register, contact Dianne Macpherson at (914) 592-6726 or [lowerhudson@msn.com](mailto:lowerhudson@msn.com)



### Glens Falls Crandall Folklife Center Temporary Move

**Crandall Public Library** will begin a major renovation in April. During the renovation, the library's Center for Folklife, History and Cultural Programs will have a temporary home at the Southern Adirondack Library System headquarters in Saratoga Springs (22 Whitney Pl, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866). The tentative timeline is for the Folklife collections and staff to be located in their temporary home from April 2007 through the end of 2008. During this transition period, researchers will be able to access the collections by appointment only. In addition, artifacts from the folk art collection may be available to SALS member libraries as traveling exhibit cubes.

For more information contact Director Todd DeGarmo at (518) 584-7300 x214 or [degarmo@crandalllibrary.org](mailto:degarmo@crandalllibrary.org)

While at Peter's place we would discuss barns for hours on end and what we could do to document them but mostly in his area of Ulster County. I soon learned that he had a quite interesting system of categorizing barns in certain ways relating to their locations. It must not have been until sometime in 1990 that I learned of the full extent of the barns that Peter knew most of which were in his county. They amounted to a few dozen barns – a number of which I was not aware of. I copied many of the notes that Peter had taken over the course of perhaps two years and except for the Napanoch barn (off Route 209 near the prison), the Rest Plaus barn (in Marbletown off Route 209) and the excellent "Dutch/Anglo" barn with the ninety degree re-oriented roof in the Katsbann area northwest of Saugerties I was ultimately able to see all the barns on Peter's list. I deeply regretted not seeing the last barn as it had in its core pre-Revolutionary War era framing.

It appears that the first Dutch barn that Peter had ever been in was the superb Nieuwkirk-Kaufman barn on Hurley Mountain Road west of Kingston. He related that he wanted to learn some of the characteristics of Dutch barns before he attended his first DBPS trustee meeting that likely occurred in April 1988. Little did he know at the time that his first barn visit proved to involve a barn that remains one of the most interesting Dutch style barns in either New York or New Jersey!

The mention of this barn brings up an interesting story. Peter and I were working on a new documentation form in the late summer of 1991 and we of course had to choose our first barn to document. We decided on the Kaufman barn. One of us had called John Kaufman, the owner of the barn, to tell him that we wanted to take a number of measurements. John had lived at the homestead since about 1953 or so. He indicated that he would not be there but that he would leave some electric leads for us to



use. We both knew John quite well at that time so he knew that all would be okay. Peter and I got into the barn with our new forms and Peter became busy connecting the electric lines. I put the lights in front of the first inner anchorbeam and then sat in front of the first inner H-frame on a pile of hay while Peter was finishing with the connections. Peter flipped the switch and the light shone brightly on the bent and there before me in the middle of the anchorbeam was a carved date of 1766 and the letters AHM. I let out a scream. Peter rushed over and saw the date for himself.

AHM 1766

It turns out, amazingly, that no mortal man in at least the last half of the twentieth century had ever seen the date. This was Fitchen barn number 42. At first we believed that the letters were initials of the farmer or perhaps builder (unlikely). We only later found out that the letters meant *Anno Heerem Machem* (Made in the year of our Lord). John had never known that the date and letters were on the anchorbeam as the light source at the roof peak did not shine on that face (lay-out face) of the H-frame. John's son later that day told John of the date and letters. Peter had always thought that this was one of his greatest discoveries in a Dutch barn. It certainly was for me. This is the barn that Jack Sobon has called the most European-like barn in North America that he had ever seen. We finished our form and went rather gleefully home that day.

One barn that I knew about in the 1970s that was apparently in the Lamontville area of Marbletown but that I was never able to find was very likely the greatest barn that Peter ever showed me, the superb Bogart barn off Route 209. I just marveled at this barn. It was so original and it had the privilege of retaining interesting features – to say the least. This was a U-barn – a term that originated with Peter. In this case the Bogart barn was what I later called a true U-barn as dirt surrounded the threshing floor at three sides forming the letter "U." A number of variations on the basic format exist. What particularly interested us both were the miraculously intact virtually 100% original threshing floor doors with the first rate folk-like carvings on one of the door halves. These Peter traced. Another virtually unique feature in the barn is the fully carved name of Jacob Osterhoudt on one of the purlin plates. This Peter traced too. Later we documented the barn in part with the help of Mike Bathrick in late 1990.

Although I knew a number of Dutch related barns in Ulster County before joining the Barn Society, it was only by way of association with Peter that I learned how truly great the barns of Ulster really were. It took me about four years to fully appreciate this. Currently, Ulster easily has the greatest number of Dutch barns and remnant ones in the entire Dutch barn kingdom at 113. It also likely has the greatest diversity of barn subtypes. There are other Ulster County barns that were among Peter's favorites. These included the circa 1770 Scolnick barn off Route 212 near Woodstock, the circa 1810 Shultis barn near Woodstock, the circa 1760 Oliver barn (with addition) on Route 209 in Marbletown, the circa 1825 Henry Snyder variant U-barn south of Saugerties, the circa 1820 one aisle Vinicor barn near Woodstock and the circa 1820 John Snyder "Dutch/Anglo" barn off Route 212 near Veteran. It was particularly the last barn and the homestead itself that Peter probably found the most intriguing. This was a

side entrance true open bay barn. Inner almost all original threshing floor doors appear at the first inner H-frame. Anchorbeams from an earlier barn were recycled into the H-frames. The one side bay contained remnants of a very old hanging type horse partition wall. Curious pigeon nesting boxes adorn the front façade wall. I would venture to guess if Peter had to choose among a favorite barn of his that he has seen, it just might be the Snyder barn. He has gotten to know the owner Kenneth Snyder very well in the last nearly twenty years.

One other barn that held high prominence in Peter's list was the circa 1810 Joy barn not far from Saugerties that was re-located to south of New Paltz in late 1991. The fact was that Peter passionately wanted to save this barn as the land and the barn were being threatened by "official intrusions" – shall we say. He met many government people to tell them of the importance of the barn. I believe that he even wanted to hire a lawyer at his own expense. Peter also formed *The Joy Farm Preservation Society* and published several issues of a newsletter. All this was to no avail. I am sure that he learned much from the experience, none the least of which were the obstacles in trying to convince people "in power" of the importance of saving local cultural heritage. His efforts in trying to save the Joy barn probably made the greatest impression on me in knowing his true level of dedication.

It was during the first three years that I knew Peter Sinclair – 1989 to 1991 – that each of us had visited close to one hundred Dutch type barns. Peter had gotten to know a great deal about these barns and he likely knew more than John Fitchen ever did about the barn types. And that was good since he could help a number of people in educating them about their fundamental structural and functional nature. Membership in the *Dutch Barn Preservation Society* had swelled to about 250 members then and everyone knew Peter was the main person

to contact in the mid Hudson River Valley for information. But it was true too that he had visited a number of other counties in New York State and even made a few trips to New Jersey, one of which was the double-day tour of barns for the *Barn Society* that I put together in late September 1990 in both centrally located Somerset County and northern Bergen County. Early Society members such as Alicia Jettner, Bob and Amelia Andersen and Shirley Dunn attended the tours. Actually Peter had made a preliminary trip with me to Somerset County in the early part of that month when we made a tour of barns in the county with Ursula Brecknell. With these trips to New Jersey Peter gained a good deal of knowledge of the structure of barns south of his area of Ulster County. He had helped me so much in his area, I felt that I in a sense returned the favor by showing him "my" area of New Jersey.



Peter had become a Vice-President of the *Barn Society* in the early 1990's and was then the editor of what was called *The Reporter*. This was actually a means by which the *Barn Society* disseminated information on various related current barn activities in a number of the counties where barns had been found. *The Reporter* was rather short lived as Peter had become disgruntled with the *Barn Society* in which his level of active participation was much diminished for perhaps close to two years. Peter and I had maintained our closeness and I had continued to see him in Ulster County innumerable times where our documentations of area barns grew ever more extensively. As early as January 1992 he suggested to me that we form an informal group to

study barns. For a period of over one and one-half years that wish did not materialize. Later it would.

Things really started to formulate in Peter's mind about what he wanted to do as far as publishing his own newsletter. It was in 1991 that he started his *Living History* journal – which lasted for close to four years – the pursuit of which he very much enjoyed. I provided some seed money and I wrote one article that Peter included. The publishing of *Living History* in a very real sense catapulted Peter into a position of meeting many people fairly prominent in the historic preservation field. His name was basically affixed on the proverbial map. Ultimately *Living History* went the way of other good publishing ventures that lost steam in early 1995.

By the time spring 1992 had arrived Peter was exploring certain areas of Dutchess County and had discovered a few barns whose locations he shared with me. This supplemented my own visits to barns in the county that had first started with John Adriance in the fall of 1990. These visits provided me with knowledge to do a barn talk in Hyde Park in April 1992. One of the attendees was Anne Bienstock who still owns the wonderful Decker homestead with a dated 1750 three-aisle barn in southern Ulster County. It was sometime in 1992 that Peter, myself and John Stevens got together at the excellent four-bay classic barn owned by Mike Kelley in Coeyman's Hollow in Albany County. This is one of the four Albany County barns with anchorbeams that had the very distinctive extended tenon contours. This was likely the first examination of a building that Peter, John and I did together. I very clearly recall that Peter and I showed John the very distinct two-foot scribe marks on the very big anchorbeams. These very much impressed John. This circa 1805 barn has one of the very widest naves seen in any classic barn in either New York or New Jersey at just over 32 feet. I believe John attended the Dutchess County

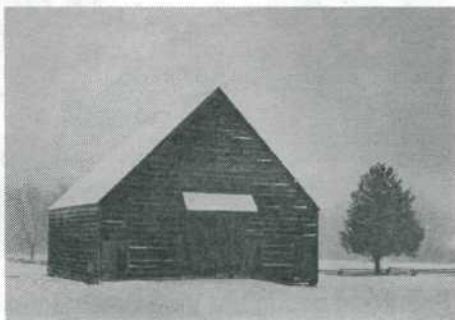
barn tour that I put together for the Barn Society in May 1992. That same time I conducted classes for second and seventh graders in Albany County for one of the schools in the Ravena area. Peter had originally put me in touch with the head teacher Pat Schuler who arranged the program.

We visited the re-located Wemp barn in Feura Bush – in June 1992 – where students were exposed to many of the principles of barn construction techniques. Then in late September 1992 both John and Peter attended the Rensselaer County barn tour that I put together again for the *Society*. John later commented that he thought that was one of the best barn tours that he had attended as several new barn sub-types were introduced to him. Peter and I had first actually met John at the 1990 annual meeting of the *Barn Society*. It was at this time that we also met Richard Babcock.

One barn re-location project that Peter and I became somewhat involved in was Fitchen barn number 43 that was located in Greene County on the west side of Route 32.

The barn was to be moved only about two miles or so away and we both helped the new barn owners with understanding fundamentals of Dutch-American barn framing. It was also a good opportunity to document an original Fitchen barn. In this project the chores were more or less split – I did much of the documentation and Peter did much by way of conversation with the owner and visitors to the homestead. Peter's one particular intrigue with the barn was the regional method of gable wall pentice support that he explained to various people. Peter also thrilled to the fact that the name of Sinclair apparently held a prominent position at some point in either the ownership or use of the homestead land. This was one of the few times I had ever seen Peter become very openly excited. Fitchen called this barn the Sagh barn when the name was actually Sax – a fact that Peter uncovered.

It should be said that when Peter would call me at the time he made a new barn discovery and most especially when a new construction technique revealed itself, his enthusiasm and wonderment really manifested itself. This made my friendship with him so worthwhile. We were really reveling in reflected glory in old ways of early vernacular timber framing. I remember the time in the early 1990s that Peter found original Dutch framing recycled into a very improbable late nineteenth century gambrel roofed barn in the Lyonsville area of Marletown in Ulster County. He said in a very pronounced way – “By God – there was Dutch framing in that barn.” Another barn that Peter became very enthused about was the circa 1820 Bruce Ratner three-bay barn not far from Krumville in Olive Township in Ulster County. This was a variant U-barn with a very unusual open bay somewhat reminiscent of the Snyder barn near Veteran. It also had a rare haar-hung door.



Peter and I made a trip to Staten Island in November 1992 to see Richmondtown and Bill McMillen for the first time. When we first went to the main desk I made the inquiry – “Yes – we would like to see your file on Dutch barns.” Peter chuckled at this knowing full well that no such file existed. The last Dutch type barn came down on the island perhaps fifty or more years beforehand. Bill believes his father Loring may have seen a Dutch barn earlier in the twentieth century.

In the spring of 1993 came a pivotal point in Peter Sinclair's “walk of life” in documenting vernacular buildings in the mid Hudson River Valley. It seems

that Roger Scheff of Red Hook became aware of Peter's interest in barns and invited him to give a talk at the Elmendorph house in Red Hook in Dutchess County. Roger was a person that Peter very much vibrated to and a friendship ensued. A few months later in the fall I gave a barn talk in the High Falls area of Ulster County. Both Peter and Roger attended the meeting. I suggested that interested people get together periodically and compare their notes of places and buildings they visited. Then the idea was introduced that meetings be held every month. The idea was accepted and the monthly informal gathering of people – *The Barn Enthusiasts Group* – was born. The first meeting held in August 1993 was put together by Peter and total attendance was eleven people including Maggie MacDowell, Joe Naccarato – the owner of the Joy barn and myself among others. The second meeting was held at Madeline Bleecker's barn in Lyonsville in September and was attended by nine people. Attendees were John Kaufman, owner of the excellent 1766 Nieuw Kirk barn, Bob Andersen and Maggie. Peter showed six gambrels (pig leg stretchers) and indicated there were cultural regionalisms among them. Tools were of course a favorite topic of his. He also showed Don McTiernan's slide collection of Ulster County Dutch barns some of which date to the mid 1970's.

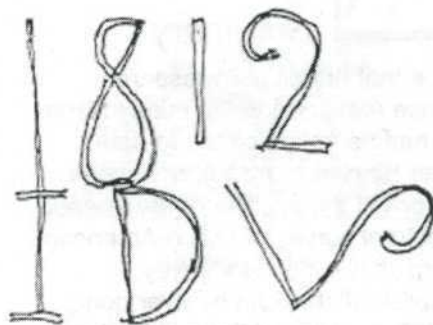
And so it went. The *Group* usually met the third Sunday of each month. We would go to a barn owner's place and document the barn and exchange our latest ideas of interest and memories of places we had been to. Most of our meetings were in Ulster County and a few occurred in Dutchess County and even one in southern Columbia County. Peter moderated most of the meetings. The January 1994 and the March and June 1995 meetings were the best affairs as twenty one people (first meeting) and twenty four people (two other meetings) attended. Besides Peter and me, the Scheff brothers and Maggie were the most regular attendees. John Stevens

attended his first *Barn Group* meeting in April 1994 where we documented the two-bay circa 1770 Richers barn in the Katsbann area and the Brink-Muller variant U- barn in Mount Marion south of Saugerties. John made some interesting comments on the very peculiar notches in the H-frame posts. John became quite a regular attendee at that point. We also met at several historic houses and several of us compared notes. The last meeting of the *Group* was in June 1995. A total of about twenty meetings were held. Peter gave a talk at the Senate house in Kingston in May 1994 attended by a rather remarkable number of about 75 people. He showed an excellent array of barn slides that went much beyond the Hudson River Valley. Shots included barns on Long Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia along with a number of buildings in the Netherlands.

Of primary importance it seems in Peter's partial shift from an almost exclusive interest in barns to vernacular houses was the *Group's* July 1994 visit to the Gemmerling Dutch stone house on the east side of Route 9W north of Saugerties in the so-called West Camp area of early eighteenth-century German Palatine settlement. The house, besides possessing the very rare jerken-head roof and several (probable) original Dutch doors with pancake hinges, had a very intriguing cellar kitchen that was of particular interest to John Stevens. Of course he added many other general comments on the house as he had studied Dutch type houses for more than twenty five years.

Enter Bob Hedges in the *Group* at about the start of 1994. Bob and Peter of course became close friends and remain so to this day. Bob put us on to the quite interesting Stissing Mountain Road or Hamm barn in Pine Plains in north-central Dutchess County that ten members of the *Group* visited in February 1994. Both Scheff brothers, John Kaufman, Bob Andersen and Maggie attended. The

Stissing barn has over-sailing rafters – a very rare trait in Dutch-American barns shared by only one other barn, the non-extant three-bay DeMott barn in Franklin Township in Somerset County. We visited a total of four barns that day that included the Wendell Hinkey and Lobotsky barns. Bob has been a quite major source of information on barn and house locations on the east side of the mid-Hudson area in the last twelve years. He, as everyone knows, has much enthusiasm for pre-Civil War buildings. The *Group* later made a trek back to the Hamm barn in October 1994.



At the Stissing Mountain Road meeting of the *Group* Peter showed us all a copy of his 1945 book printed of *Old Dutch Houses of Brooklyn* by Maud Esther Dilliard. At this point Peter had shown a growing interest in old houses for perhaps a year, the active study and pursuit of which that was quite lacking in our friendship and historic site visits from early 1989 to the first few months of 1993. I strongly believe that it was John Stevens who influenced Peter by far the most to appreciate Dutch houses. John had been studying and documenting houses in New York State and to some degree in New Jersey since the mid to late 1960s. John at that point could add a perspective on house construction techniques that no one else could. Peter increasingly took advantage of John's insights and enthusiasm to the benefit of everyone. I was still concentrating on barns then that houses took a back seat to, although early houses had interested me then for almost two decades. The new focus on houses gave Peter a better general overall understanding

of Dutch-American culture that in turn actually helped him in knowing the cultural milieu that fostered the environment in which Dutch type barns proliferated. John in turn benefited greatly from Peter's ability to find a wide array of buildings in the Hudson River Valley that John had not been really subjected to prior to about 1990 as far as many out-of-the-way places were concerned. I very vividly recall John saying at one point: "No matter how much you think you know there are always places and buildings out there that you are not familiar with." Amen. There are still to this very day places that are being discovered whose understanding are for the betterment of all.

On a November 1994 day Peter and I documented for about two hours the dated 1766 Hoornbeck Dutch barn near Accord off Route 209 in Ulster County. This was very important for two reasons. One – the barn would soon fall into a heap of timbers. Two – the structure was remarkably similar to the 1766 Nieuwkirk barn. Both barns were marked with AHM. To make a comparative study between the two barns proved to be really informative. The fact that ostensibly the same builder constructed two barns in the same year is basically unique to our experience anywhere in the northeast and the documentations were very revealing of many of the dynamics of barn building technology. The fate of the Hoornbeck barn was one reason I chose to write the article in *Ulster Magazine* in late 1994 – *The Disappearing Barn*. On the front cover was Alf Evers, our mutual friend – the remarkable historian who wrote the book *Catskill*. I first interviewed Alf in April 1976. He wrote an article on barns as early as 1951 that I told Peter about.



Turpin Bannister Chapter  
**Society of  
 Architectural Historians**  
**Spring 2007 Schedule**

**April 10, Tuesday**

Clifton Park-Half Moon Library  
 475 Moe Road, Clifton Park.

*Talk at 6:30, followed by a tour.*

The new Library opened in December 2006. Bill Connor, of the architectural firm Woodward Connor Gillies & Seleman will speak to us and lead the tour. The Library is certified as a "green" facility as part of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Program.

**April 22, Sunday**

Self-drive tour of Dutch houses in and near Schenectady. Teller House, Stockade; Teller-Schermerhorn House, Wemple House and Barn (now Lazzari); details to follow.



**May 22, Tuesday**

Kevin O'Connor on Patrick Keely, at St. Peter's Church in Troy, which was designed by Keely in 1848.

**May 30, Wednesday**

Annual Dinner, Tosca's in Troy

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Likely by the end of 1995 Peter and I had documented to varying degrees more than one hundred barns in both New York and New Jersey. Today this would not be possible as many of the barns we visited and measured are now gone. The passage of time takes its toll and documentation of barns is no exception. Since 1995 Peter has likely added another one hundred barns or more to his total list. That and many dozens of houses – of frame, stone and even brick construction were also recorded.



**Summary**

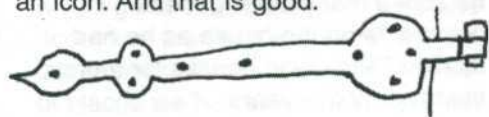
It is true that not all barn research (or house research) in the mid-Hudson Valley has been completed to date by Peter Sinclair or myself or anyone else. Nor will the apparent broad based architectural survey of Dutch-American buildings that is now underway accomplish all that can be ever done in the few counties of the mid Hudson area and elsewhere. That time will be in the distant future if it ever comes. All of this is of course self-evident. Any individual in the next several decades or beyond can come along and far exceed what any of us has ever done in this area since the 1980s as far as overall insight and knowledge of barns is concerned, assuming that the barns will still be around for extensive studies to be undertaken. But most importantly and this is never said (but known by everyone subconsciously) – that what Peter did in discovering so many barn locations in a ten-year period from 1988 to about 1998 will never be repeated. While it is true that John Fitchen came across six barns in the county during his research, and I knew of several barns before Peter got involved in barn research (even John Kaufman knew of a number of barns), Peter's list of barns is unique. When I first met Peter in early 1989 his barn list included about 35 barns. After that it basically exploded. It is important to point out that very few barn locations have been revealed since 1998 in Ulster County. The county has been gone over

in fine toothed comb fashion in the last nearly twenty years that it is very unlikely that even a few barns lurking in the background will be uncovered. Why? It is because one man has already done it – Peter Sinclair.

He was the man whom fate chose to have the necessary enthusiasm, energy and intelligence to accumulate the basics or fundamentals of so many of the barns of Ulster County such as locations and structural timbering of the great majority of the barns. Peter has laid the groundwork. No one before him, and no one during his time of barn visits did what he did. Now the baton must be passed on.

It must be so gratifying to know that no person can ever do again what you first did in a particular endeavor. Peter Sinclair can say that. So could that other fellow (in his own field) – Charles Lindbergh. Peter did not do everything as far as the fundamentals are concerned but he came remarkably close.

Many individuals and organizations have benefited from Peter Sinclair's assiduous efforts in documenting and promoting the preservation of vernacular buildings in the mid-Hudson River Valley. I knew – only a short while after I first met Peter in February 1989, when he was just starting out in his quest to know and understand barns built in his area 150 to 250 years ago – that I had met someone who had to be reckoned with. But I never thought that his influence would run as deeply as it eventually did. He has become rather an icon. And that is good.



I know that he deeply influenced me. If it were not for Peter Sinclair, son of a mid-west artist, I would still be likely roaming the back dirt roads and old farm lanes of Ulster County trying to find those remarkable barns built by artisans influenced by Dutch folk customs more than 150 years ago. Peter Sinclair helped transform my life. And for that I am eternally grateful. Perhaps we should all feel that way for what he has done.



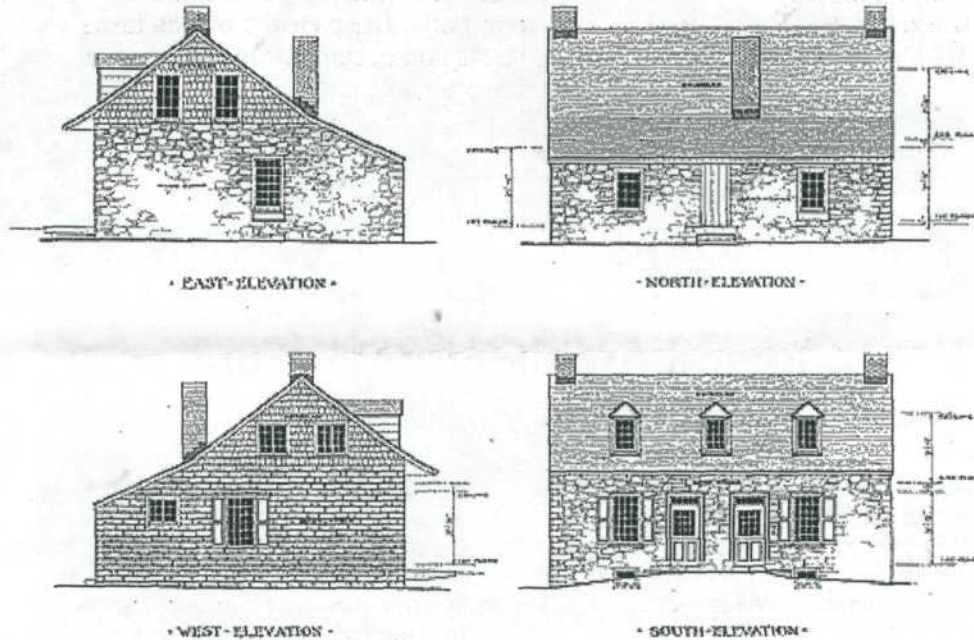
## ENDANGERED: The Naugle House in Bergen County

By Greg Huber

Bergen County, New Jersey continues to lose its Dutch-American stone houses at perhaps one or so a year but still retains about 210 of them. One of the very best as far as a quaint "settled into the ground" look is concerned is the little stone house that sits just off East Saddle River in Ridgewood. It overlooks Rt. 17 on its east side and is now threatened with demolition. A few hundred thousand dollars will buy it and preserve one of Bergen County's finest. Its extreme closeness to the main road does not make it appealing to many would-be buyers. The house has been in full open view to motorists for years because of its immediate adjacency to the road and this condition poses as possibly its greatest challenge to preservation.

Rosalie Fellows Bailey wrote about the house in her classic book *Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families* (plate 73). She called it the Ackerman – Naugle house. Unfortunately, it is very likely that the Ackermans had nothing to do with the construction of the house. It appears that house dates to about 1800. The Naugle family lived at the homestead by the mid-nineteenth century. Houses with twin front façade doors which the Naugle house has are most often constructed after about 1790 in the county. Nothing on the interior of the house as far as elements of design, structure and fabric are concerned suggests a date of early 18th Century vintage which was Bailey's assertion. The east room of the first floor has rather small ceiling joists which in general is indicative of a later date of construction. The fireplace mantle may be original and is quite plain in appearance – not the often ostentatious look that so many Federal fireplace surrounds have. Two fully intact fireplace supports are seen in the cellar; one of which is arched and the other is a "flat at top with hewn timbers" type.

While the house may not have distinct advantages for family buyers, the house offers an excellent opportunity for some commercial interest to come in and save a very interesting piece of turn of the 19th Century Dutch-American architecture. Adequate parking would appear to be no problem and exposure on a main road would appear to be a major asset. This two-hundred year old house needs to be saved and time is of the essence.



**Restoration begins at home.**



### HVVA members attending the Forum.

Back row: Eddie Cattuzzo, Rob Sweeney, John Stevens, Bill Krattinger, Neil Larson, Walter Wheeler.  
Front row: Jill Fisher, Marion Stevens, Roberta Jeracka, Russell Ley. Robyn Bauw (not in the photo) also attended.



Top: John and Marion Stevens enjoying the lunch break at Sturbridge Village.

Above: Friendly but heated lunch time discussions.

Below: Interior detail of a Dutch barn in Sturbridge.



## New England Architectural Forum

A report by Marion F. Stevens

A sizeable contingent of HVVA members attended the winter meeting of the New England Chapter of the Vernacular Architecture Society on March 3, at Old Sturbridge Village.

The event was an informative and varied one with slides and/or drawings illustrating all talks. Each topic was followed by a lively question-and-answer session.

The program commenced with beautiful illustrations of the transformation of houses of worship from meeting houses to churches from 1790 to 1840. Perhaps the most exciting presentation was on new evidence for original features uncovered in 'Old Ship' – the famous 17th Century meeting house in Hingham, Mass. A complete original double door was uncovered as was evidence of the size of the original windows, which had much larger areas of glass than previously expected. The attractive historic village of Deerfield, Mass. provided surprising archaeological and documentary evidence of changes in the 18th century streetscape.

Following lunch, the group learned of New Hampshire's large and important trade in building frames. The trees were cut down, shaped, assembled, parts numbered and moved along New Hampshire's waterways on special watercraft [gundalows]. Some frames went to New England settlements and others were transported farther afield to the West Indies, Newfoundland and elsewhere along the East Coast.

The day concluded with photographs from among the 15,000 image HABS archive,

compiled from throughout the United States during the Depression. Covering the period from 1775 to 1840 when 'balloon framing' was coming into use, the last speaker, Jack Larkin chose a selection of these photographs, and added historic background material from his stunning new book *Where We Lived*, which was the basis for the talk. In addition to houses, we saw such structures as a Maryland smoke house and privy combined, a family home that was also a 'gaol' (jail) and a round church in Vermont that provided accommodation for five denominations.

Mr. Larkin is Director of Research at Old Sturbridge Village and affiliate professor at Clark University. Introduced by Bill Flynt, other distinguished speakers were James Garvin, State Architectural Historian at the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources and author of *A Building History of Northern New England* – who spoke on the timber frame trade; Robert Paynter, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst who spent many summers at Deerfield teaching students the rudiments of archaeological research; Brian Powell whose topic was the discoveries he made in the Hingham meeting house, spent ten years with the *Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities* (now *Historic New England*) and is now a contractor for preservation conservation, specializing in paint and decorative finishes. The first speaker was Gretchen Buggelin who taught for ten years in the University of Delaware's Winterthur program, and is now on the staff of Christ College, Valparaiso, Indiana.

## The Jan Van Hoesen House

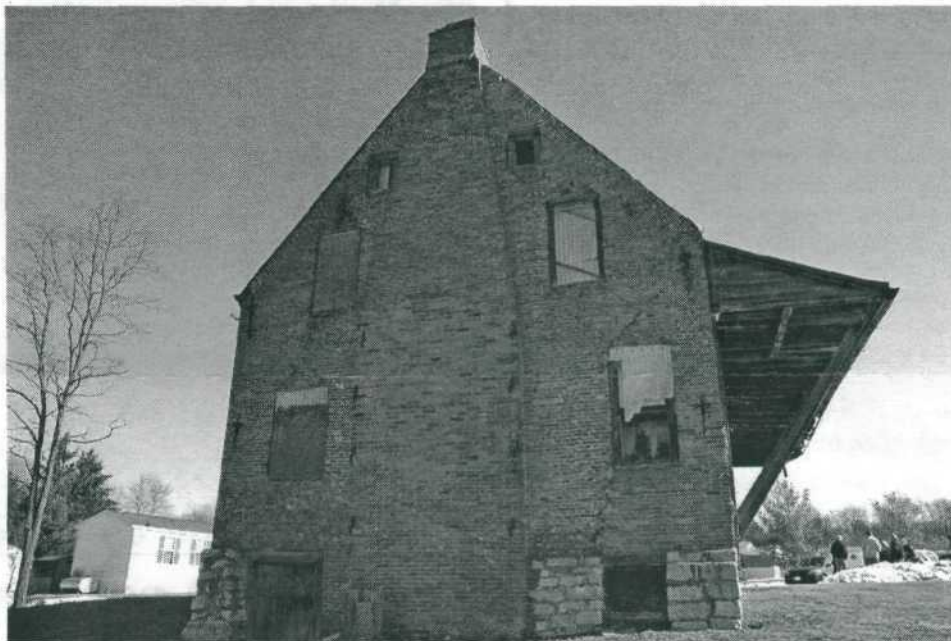
by David William Voorhees

Driving northeast on Route 66 from Hudson to Chatham, just east of Claverack Creek, stands sentinel a vacant medieval-looking brick structure over the Dutch Acres Mobile Home Park. Like the Columbia County Historical Society's Luykas van Alen house in Kinderhook, this steeply pitched roof, parapet gabled house is a rare surviving example of a type of rural house characteristic of the upper Hudson Valley in the first half of the eighteenth century.

**The house, built between 1715 and 1724, is one of approximately seven similar brick dwellings to survive into the 21st Century.**

Built usually in an elongated rectangular form of brick over a timber frame, these residences varied in the arrangement of windows, doors, and rooms according to the tastes of their owner. The style originated in the sixteenth-century Netherlands and was descendant of medieval long-houses. The form was introduced into New Netherland before the mid-seventeenth century, but did not become prevalent in the region of Columbia County until about 1715, a period of economic prosperity. According to cultural historian Ruth Piwonka, such brick houses are not merely farmhouses but substantial upper middle-class residences expressing tastes and prosperity in a northern European manner.

Originally the approach to the Dutch Acres' house was from the southwest and northeast on a road that led to Claverack Landing (present-day Hudson). In a reversal of the well-known Dutch urban house, which places the main entrance in the gable end, the house has its entrances in the side walls and its chimneys in the gables. The present back of the house was originally the front. Five openings of equal width, height, and spacing are indicated on this façade. These openings are marked by gauged flat arches in the masonry made decorative through the use of red vertical stretchers alternating with blackened Winker headers. These arches are a rare survivor of such decorative technique. All the openings are altered from their original form, either made smaller or changed in function.



The south gable of the Van Hoesen house, located on Route 66, north of the City of Hudson. The question remains: what will become of it?

(Photo taken during a HVVA Study Tour on March 24).

The house's southwesterly gable wall contains a thin engaged chimney flue that enabled the occupants to benefit from fireplaces in the cellar and on the main floor. This is also a rare example of such construction although it is known to have once been common throughout the region. The doorway at the corner leading to a cellar kitchen is original to the house as are the garret and granary window openings and frames. Wrought-iron fleur-de-lis beam anchors on both gables and iron gutter hangers are also distinctive surviving features. The tin roof is a later replacement for the shingled or possibly tiled original roof.

The easterly gable of the house contains five windows and a door. The first floor windows and door are later additions. The second floor windows are alterations of original windows and one even shows evidence of an early window frame. The granary windows are also original openings. The truly principal feature of this gable, however, are the initials "T" and "I V H" worked in the masonry in black klinker headers. These are the monograms of the first occupants of the house, Jan van Hoesen (1687-1745) and his wife Tanneke. Jan van Hoesen, who married in 1711 Tanneke Witbeck, a daughter of

Hendrick Witbeck of Claverack, was a grandson of Jan Franse van Hoesen. It was the elder Van Hoesen who in 1662 purchased from the Mohicans the tract of land that included the present city of Hudson and town of Greenport. Jan, nonetheless, served as a deacon in the Lutheran church at Lunenburg (present-day Athens) across the Hudson River and, along with his wife, was extremely active in Lutheran church affairs. Jan and Tanneke had eleven children, of whom three sons appear at the locality of this house at the time of the Revolution. And the house remained in the family for several generations.

As the most intact remaining example of a type of Dutch architecture unique to the Hudson Valley, the Jan van Hoesen house is significant. It reflects the tastes and life style of the prosperous Hudson Valley Dutch freeholder, who is often overlooked by an historical emphasis on the lifestyle of the manor lords. The house was nominated to the New York State Inventory of Historic Resources in January 1976.

*Reprinted courtesy of the Columbia County Historical Society. Special thanks to David Voorhees.*

### Membership info

If you have been receiving this newsletter, but your membership is not current and you wish to continue to receive the HVVA newsletter and participate in the many house study tours offered each year, please send in your dues.

Membership currently pays all the HVVA bills and to keep us operating in the black each of us must contribute a little.

Membership dues remains at a low \$20 per year (\$15 for Students). So if you haven't sent in your dues or given a tax deductible donation to the HVVA mission, please consider doing so now.



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### An important house tour! Save the date!



October 13, 2007

**HVVA and Friends of Historic Kingston**  
Will join forces to showcase the work of **Myron Teller**

Recommended by Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, "as an architect member of the Holland Society with specialized architectural knowledge of stone houses of Ulster County."

His restorations demonstrated "the possibilities latent in many old dwellings for the creation of artist modern homes." More information will be forthcoming in the next newsletter.

Think beautiful homes, beautiful foliage! Stay tuned...

### Upcoming HVVA meeting schedule

House and barn tours planned after each meeting. Lunch to follow at local restaurants. All members are welcome!

**April 21, 2007 – 10:00 am**

Bevier House, Route 209 just north of Stone Ridge, NY



**May 19, 2007 – 10:00 am**

Bevier-Elting House on Huguenot Street, New Paltz, NY

