



The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

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Newsletter

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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.

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From the Editor

I thought for a change of pace I would let you all hear from the Founder of HVVA and its former Newsletter Editor, Peter Sinclair. Most know Peter suffered a major stroke in October of 2006 and up to that time he was a passionate and capable preservationist, who could rally an ever growing eclectic group of fellow vernacular groupies at a moment's notice. Peter was a great teacher, as soon as he discovered any little hole into an unknown realm he would work on opening it wide and sharing every bit of knowledge gleamed with anybody who would listen. His humble approach always made it easy to share ideas and he never overlooked the contribution of even the most novice enthusiast.

I am glad to say that Peter still is that generous teacher, despite challenged communication skills and somewhat limited mobility. He continues to show us all how to be optimistic. His mantra since his stroke has always been "One Day." Yes, "One day" that's right! All too often we are confronted with the, "I can't" mentality. How easily we offer that excuse comforting ourselves when we really just don't want to. Peter has showed us that – even having substantial obstacles to overcome – we all have something to contribute. Early in his recovery he could often be found with a pen and pad in hand. Many of the first drawings from that period were sad and often of a very repetitive theme. But as he has gained mobility and with the help of his dear friend Roberta Jeracka – who brings him to HVVA and other historically minded events – his drawings have become full and descriptive, each truly worth a thousand words! In his wish to contribute to preservation causes, Peter has given HVVA permission to reproduce his drawings for note cards, which will be for sale at HVVA events. Also, two gallery shows will take place this fall, where many of his drawings will be put up for sale to benefit the organization he founded. So it is only right to let Peter's drawings speak to you all. Listen to the teacher, "One Day!"

Rob Sweeney – HVVA's sheepdog

Coming Events

October 3-4, 2009

10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

**The 21st Annual
Country Seats Tour**



Hudson River Heritage
in partnership with
Hudson Valley
Vernacular Architecture
presents its
Quadracentennial Tour
of significant architecture
and treasured landscapes.

Visit rural, distinctive,
privately-owned Dutch-
American farmsteads,
some with period barns,
from Hurley to High Falls.

Experienced docents
share information about
genealogical connections,
the early landscape,
and how Medieval
Dutch building technology
was transformed to the very
first American house style.

For more information
call (845) 876-2474, or visit
www.hudsonriverheritage.org

Share observations about early
Dutch-American life and archi-
tecture at
www.WhatsDutch.org

Mattys Persen House

74 John St., Kingston, Ulster County, NY

By John R. Stevens

Becoming acquainted with this house last year, it was obvious that it had a complicated developmental history, having been built in four campaigns in the 18th century, with a final addition, in brick, in 1922.

The building's history is clouded by the fact that this house – like most existing in Kingston at the time – was burned by the British in 1777. It would seem that all wooden elements were destroyed, but I'm not completely certain of this.

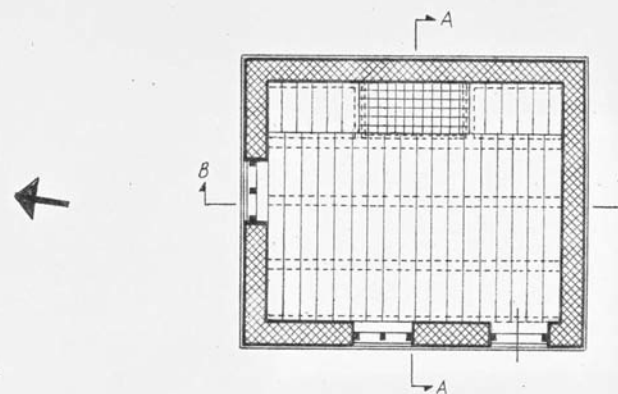
The oldest part, or the north-west corner, possesses a feature known to the writer in only one other example. On the east wall of the basement are the remains of a brick trimmer arch to support the hearth of a jambless fireplace. This arch springs directly from the stone wall without there being a corbel course to start it from. The only other known example of this feature is in the Elmendorf house at 53 Main Street in Hurley. Coincidentally, the Persen and Elmendorf houses are almost exactly the same size: the Persen house measures 21'4" from front to back; the Elmendorf

house 21'9". The Persen house measures 25'9" across its front; the Elmendorf house is 26'1".

Both of these houses had originally been gable-fronted, like the Pieter Bronck house at West Coxsackie, and the Bevier-Elting house on Huguenot Street in New Paltz. The Elmendorf house had its existing roof removed around the middle of the 18th century, when – following a second addition on its east side – a whole new roof was put on at right angles to that of the earliest part. This roof was less steep, but because it incorporates a number of re-used rafters from the first two stages of the house, we have been able to determine what the original roof pitches had been. Otherwise, the interior structure of the house was left undisturbed. Another rather similar example is the Kierstede house in Saugerties. In the case of the Persen house, after it burned out, it was reconstructed with the first and second floor beams running at right angles to the original ones.

2. *Mattys Persen house, Kingston, Ulster Co., N.Y.*

Hypothetical reconstruction of original condition.



First floor plan

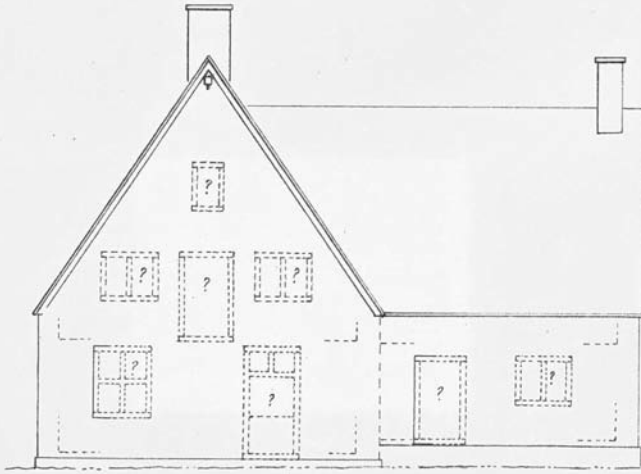
5 10 15 20 ft. $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$

J. R. S., '09

A. Elmendorf house, Hurley, Ulster Co., N.Y.

5 10 15 20 25 ft.

$\frac{1}{8}'' = 1' - 0''$



South elevation, Stages I and II

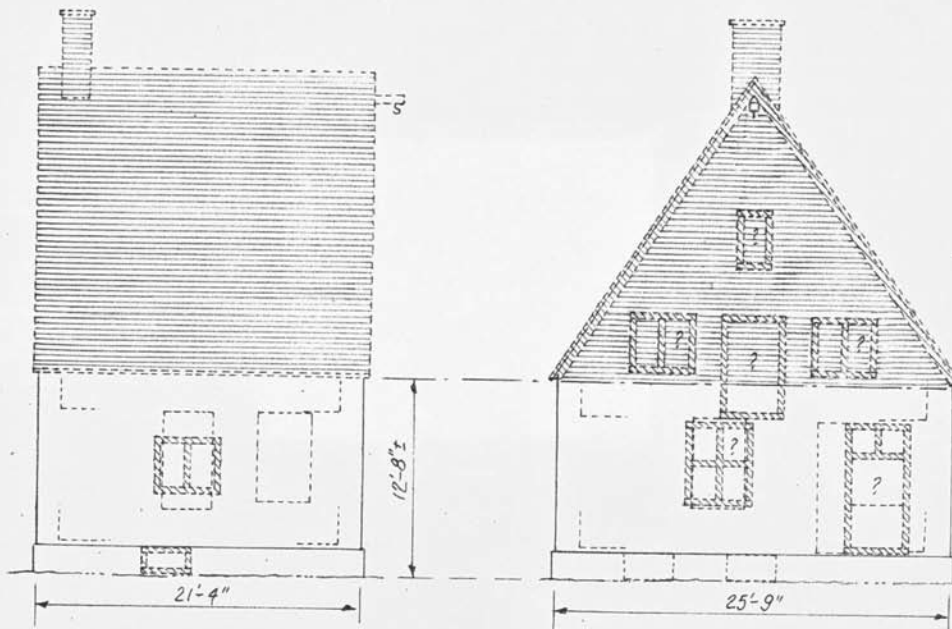
J.R.S. '09

In the north wall (John Street side) of the Persen house there is a filled-in opening showing in the stonework for a *bolkozijn* (mullioned window), and superimposed on this a narrower and taller filled-in opening for a double-hung window. On the other side of the wall, within the house there is the brickwork for a fireplace constructed after the 1777 fire. An early 18th century *bolkozijn* frame of similar size to the one that had existed on the Persen house can be seen in the east wall of the Elmendorf house.

The façade of the Elmendorf house has clear evidence, towards its west side of there having been a *kruiskozijn* (cross window) and it might be expected that the Persen house was similarly equipped. The existing front doorway of the Elmendorf house is not the original one, even though it is from the 18th century and there is no evidence as to where the original one had been located – probably a bit west of the present location. The façade door and window locations of the Persen house were quite likely in the locations of the existing units, but we are not sure of this.

1. Mattys Persen house, Kingston, Ulster Co., N.Y.

Hypothetical reconstruction of original condition.



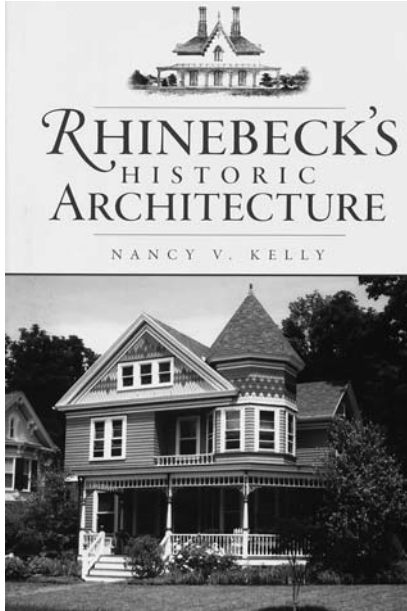
North (John Street)

West (Crown Street)

5 10 15 20 ft. $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1' - 0''$

J.R.S. '09

Book Review



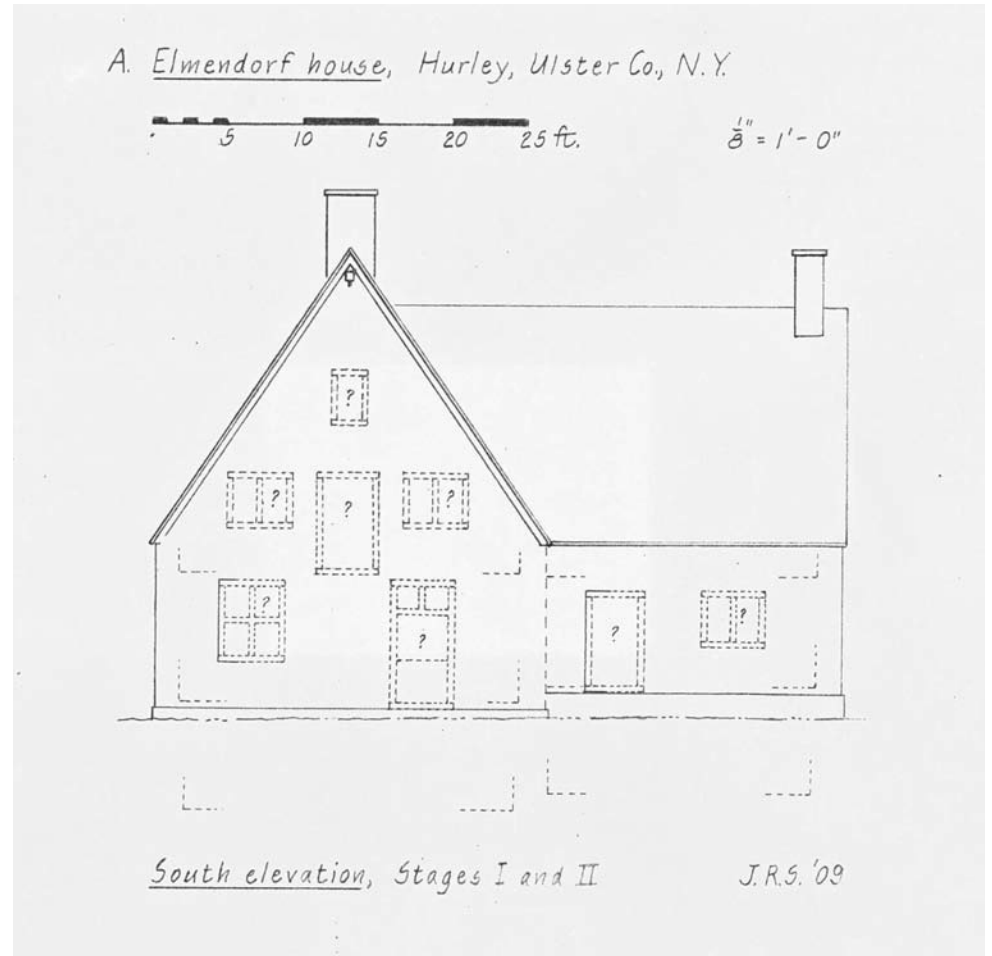
HVVA Member and life long resident of Rhinebeck, New York, Nancy V. Kelly has just completed her latest book, *Rhinebeck's Historic Architecture*.

The 188-page soft bound volume covers over 250 years of building tradition in the town – from 1700 to 1948 – touching on each generation's preferred style or form and their contribution to architectural history. Each of the ten Chapters are broken into an overview of the period and the influences which brought them to bear, followed by a concise history of the noteworthy examples found in Rhinebeck. Most entries are illustrated with remarkably clear black and white photographs taken by Tom Daley. These photographs not only add to the richness of the entry but will serve as to document our moment in time for generations. Nancy has shown in a very succinct manner that Rhinebeck truly holds some remarkable structures which cover the breadth of American building culture.

Rhinebeck's Historic Architecture is available on-line and through local book purveyors at the cost of \$19.99.

The construction date of the Elmendorf house is believed to have been about 1710 and because of the trimmer arch evidence mentioned it is possible that not only was the Persen house built about the same time, but it may have been constructed by the same builders? The two houses are

only a few miles from one another. It is important that at some point funds be found to date the Elmendorf house, and some of the other early houses in Hurley by dendrochronology. By dating the Elmendorf house, I think we will have a very good idea as to how old Persen house is, too. ■



Addendum* to list of Gable Fronted Houses

	Name	Town	County	Date
1	Cornelis Lamberts Brink**	Saugerties	Ulster	1701
2	Cantine**	Stone Ridge	Ulster	?
3	Delamater(?)**	Hudson	Columbia	?
4	Houghtaling Tavern	Hurley	Ulster	?
5	Osterhoudt	Town of Ulster	Ulster	1740
6	Mattys Persen**	Kingston	Ulster	?
7	Vernoy-Bevier*	Wawarsing	Ulster	?

* See HVVA Newsletter, June-July 2007, page 7.

** Houses rebuilt with roofs re-oriented at right angles to original position.

A Two-Aisle Barn for the Record

By Gregory D. Huber

Dutch-American builders most often liked the number three when they built their barns. Apparently, considerably less often they were drawn to the number one. And it seems they really had little attraction for the number two. Here, of course, the reference is to the number of aisles that were originally incorporated into Dutch-American barns by builders 150 to 250 years ago and beyond.

Yes – two-aisle barns are very rare in the Dutch barn kingdom in the New World. One of these very rare birds appears in the Lake Hill district of Woodstock about four miles west of the pulsating sometimes “bursting at the seams” community of Woodstock village in northern Ulster County, New York. The barn that is the focus of this article is on Sickler Road. The famed local county historian Alf Evers – author of the much acclaimed book *Catskill* – lived only about two miles east of the barn in Shady. In certain ways Alf and the barn were quite similar – they both had their places of residency in relative isolation. Likely few readers of this newsletter have been to the Lake Hill district of Woodstock. Travel only two miles north of the barn and you will find yourself in the verdant world (in the spring and summer) of Greene County.

Before discussing the Sickler Road barn we can focus a bit on the number of aisles found in Dutch related barns. Of the barns that remain three-aisle constructions abound of which a few hundred survive. One-aisle barns – if you really look around about 25 of them are to be found – perhaps more. It seems that only a very few two-aisle barns may be lurking about. There is even a circa 1830 three-aisle barn in Dutchess County north of Poughkeepsie that has an original partial fourth aisle 22 feet long seen at the side of one of the side aisles. Dutch barn builders reached their limit here. Further, they had a distinct aversion to the number five.

Sickler Road Two-Aisle Barn

Just off Sickler Road in the very rural area of extreme northern Ulster County sits a two-aisle barn. How can we

Upper end of east end wall of barn includes three marten holes that are common in the Dutch barn realm. Such holes are not normally included in exterior boards that are secured with later style wire nails.



Exterior of Sickler Road two-aisle barn west of Woodstock, Ulster County. Seen is non-original novelty siding on west end wall and regular north side wall siding that is also not original. The north wall includes wagon door of sliding type that is not original.

be sure that this barn was originally constructed with only two aisles? Rest assured it was. When this writer first visited the barn in the early 1990's what might be called a heightened level of skepticism healthy or otherwise initially filled his mind. The question immediately arose as to whether the barn was originally a three-aisle barn that had one aisle removed or a one-aisle barn where a side aisle was added at a later date. The definitive answer to this query was uncovered with the following.

First, however, it should be said that the barn has a distinct salt-box appearance which came from the lean-to section of the barn. This section contains the side aisle that faces the main road. Thus the main aisle is on the side away from the road.

Reasons for Originality of Two Aisles

One – The rafters appear as single length timbers from roof peak to side wall plate at each barn side. So, importantly, no splicing or jointing of timbers is seen at the point where the two aisles join at the roof where if this condition were present aspects that would reflect the addition of the side aisle would be evident.

Two – The manner in which the rafters join or articulate to the wall plate at the far side of the barn is indicative of originality – that is – no side aisle at the far side ever appeared there. If the rafters at this side of the barn originally extended out beyond the far wall plate over another side aisle then the rafters as they now appear would never wear the aspect the way they presently do. The rafters join to the plate in a true manner meaning there is no accommodation from a former condition of the rafters extending out over a third aisle. A third aisle simply never existed.

Three – On the lateral faces of the main posts of the main



A common rafter system is seen in the Sickler Road barn. Many barn rafters are hewn and are of yellow birch. Above rafters are original roofers with natural waney bark edges. At bottom is upper tie beam of bent.

aisle that abut the side aisle there would be innumerable nail holes that would indicate the former placement of horizontal exterior weatherboarding if the barn was originally one aisle. Such nail holes are not to be seen.

Four – There are numerous framing elements such as vertical wall studs and braces on the far wall of the main aisle that is indicative of the placement of horizontal exterior weather-boarding. All these elements as part of the full side wall are original. Thus there is another reason to know that there was never a side aisle originally at the far side of the barn.

It is from these reasons it is clear to see that the Sickler Road structure was originally a two-aisle barn.

Exterior of Barn

The barn sits 55½ feet “south” of the road. Family tradition here says that the barn was moved from across the street (perhaps its original location) about the year 1925. Consequently, the barn may have then had a different orientation. The side wall that fronts the road faces fifteen degrees west of north (or nominally – north). The original main wagon entry however is on the opposite or south side wall. The north side wall is only about 10½ feet high – somewhat too low for a normal size hay wagon to enter.

The exterior dimensions of the barn are the following – each end wall is 38 feet 3 inches long and each side wall is 45 feet 6 inches long. The near side wall height is 10½ feet high and the opposite side wall is about 19 feet. The roof peak is close to 30 feet in height.

The roof covering is now modern asphalt shingles which were installed only in the last few years. The roof condition is excellent.

The entire exterior is covered with non-original horizontal siding. On the west end wall appears novelty siding and on the remaining three walls there is regular horizontal

weather-boarding. All siding is secured with wire nails. The original siding was horizontally applied as indicated by the vertical interior wall studding.

On the north eave wall is a single section sliding type 11½ foot long wagon door. On the south wall is a two-section sliding 11½ foot long wagon door. The window just under the eaves on this wall is of course not original. On the east end wall three marten holes appear (see Fitchen).

Interior of Barn

There are sixteen pairs of rafters. All rafters are hewn except two or three that were left in the round. All rafters are flat edged on the wall plates. The nailers or roofers above the rafters are very likely original. Many of them have curved natural bark edges.

The barn was constructed with three bays. Bay widths are – east end bay is 15 feet 2 inches, middle bay is 18 feet and west end bay is 12 feet 2 inches – all measurements taken – layout face to lay-out face. The width of the main aisle is 28 feet and the width of the side aisle is 10 feet 2 inches.

The wagon entry appears at the middle aisle on the far side wall of the barn. Basically, wagons could only enter the middle bay for the width of the main aisle and perhaps some of the side aisle (doubtful). The low positioned ties in the middle two bents would prevent any movement of wagons into either of the end bays. The low ties at the end bents would also prevent any movement of wagons through the end walls. Thus the mobility of wagons was severely restricted in the barn and limited to only part of the full width of the middle bay.

Tree Species

All or almost all of the timbers of the bents and other framing members are softwood which is likely a mixture of pine (*Pinus spp.*) and hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). This makes

East end wall of barn is seen with a marten hole in exterior siding. Resting on top of upper tie are farm tools including old yoke. Purlin plate rests on top of main post of end wall bent and brace unites two beams. Above plate are common rafters that extend at left into side aisle.



a great deal of sense since the barn is at the extreme north end of the county and softwood barns actually appear with some frequency whose basic southern terminus appears more than twelve miles south of the Sickler Road barn. South of this the great majority of timbers in barns were of hard woods mostly oak. There was an apparent transition of major tree species in the mid Ulster County area in the primeval forest and first generation succession forests and timbers of varying species used in local barns reflected certain forest conditions. In the Sickler barn some of the braces are actually oak (*Quercus spp.*). A number of the rafters are yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*).

Bents

Since the barn is of three-bay construction there are four main transverse bents – two inner bents and two end bents. Each end wall bent has two ties. Each of the inner bents in the main aisle consists of three tie beams. It would be rather misleading to call the bents H-frames. The lowest ties can not accurately be called anchor-beams although they are of fairly substantial size – west bent tie is 11 by 14 inches and east bent tie is 11 by 13 inches. None of the ties have extended tenons often indicative of a post 1820 era of construction.

The highest ties on each inner bent appear about one foot below the tops of the posts. The middle ties appear 6½ ft. below the posts' tops. This might be referred to as the *verdiepingh*. The tops of the middle ties appear about 11'3" – and the lowest ties a few feet – above the floor.

Single raising holes are present in each of the eight main posts of the four bents and appear about two feet below the posts' tops.

The middle bay is formed by flanking bents that consists of ties, posts and braces. The lay-out sides of both bents face the same direction. In almost all side entry English type barns the lay-out faces of bents that flank the wagon bay face each other – that is – in opposite directions.

All the braces in the barn are milled and are joined four feet by four feet to their articulating posts and ties or plates depending on the placement in the barn.

All tie beam to post junctures are square shouldered. A number of the timber unions are triple pegged. In certain later built barns in the nineteenth century this pegged condition is seen to a fair degree. Very often however, the three pegs at a timber union are more often seen in pre-1790 classic Dutch-American barns and sometimes later barns. These unions most often occur at anchor-beam to H-frame post unions. In the Sickler Road barn most pegs at the joints appear to be oak but at one joint the pegs are hardwood but not oak.

None of the tie beams could be observed with two-foot scribe marks. It is plainly evident that the barn is of square rule type framing.



View of many timbers uniting with main post of inner bent at the west side of wagon bay. Purlin plate is seen at top of post with purlin braces seen at either side of post. At left is braced upper tie beam that joins at top of post. Below at left is braced middle tie. At right is longitudinal tie just above level of middle tie that adds stability in barn. Above purlin are common rafters.

The wagon bay appears to have most of its original floor planks intact.

Middle Bent at the West Side

The bent that abuts the middle bay at the west side has a series of seven rather substantial studs below the lowest tie. This lowest tie is very large at 14 inches in height. Boards may not have ever been attached to the studs and so the function of these studs remains a mystery.

The part or length of the highest tie between the two end braces was removed many years ago. A little more than five feet below the top tie is the middle tie that is also braced at its ends. Between this tie and the lowest tie (with attached studs) are two symmetrically placed fairly thin vertical studs.

The main posts of the bents are quite large at close to 10 by 15 inches.

Short Longitudinal Tie Removed

There was a curious inclusion in the construction of the barn with a relatively minor member that acted as low positioned longitudinal beam in the middle aisle where the main aisle meets the side aisle. The beam was several feet above the floor and stretched horizontally from the main bent post to a now gone post that extended from an upper



Tie at right unites to post of bent with triple pegs. High placed longitudinal tie at upper left corner joins to post. Beyond at the left is side aisle.



Post of inner bent is seen with outer end or housed tenon of middle tie of bent whose outer edges are chamfered. End of tie is flush with the outer face of post. Post and tie joined with three pegs. At right is longitudinal tie that joins to post with two pegs.

longitudinal tie about 10 feet above the floor to the floor. The distance from the east post to the nearest or adjacent main bent post or west post is about 17 feet. The function of this post or stated another way the reason for the appearance of the opening created by the post in conjunction with the main post is not known.

Side Aisle

In the side aisle are low positioned transverse ties. These ties of course add transverse stability to the barn.

Summary

The Sickler Road barn is in a very out-of-the-way place. Its two-aisle status is also very much removed from the norm. Why a builder or farmer would chose to build such an unusual barn it can not be said. Perhaps the farmer could not afford to build a full three-aisle barn. Perhaps the farm and storage needs did not require a full sized barn. Perhaps the builder or the farmer just liked the number two.

The barn retains more than 90% of its original framing. And while all the secrets of why particular framing was chosen by the builder will remain as secrets, we do know almost completely what most of the appearance of the various framing elements were as originally conceived in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Date of Construction

Despite the fact that the Sickler Road barn is such an unusual barn that pre-eminent aspect of the barn as a two-aisle structure does not preclude a good educated guess of its construction date. The broadest range of years as the best possible era of construction is 1830 to 1860. It is quite unlikely that the barn was erected before this time frame or after. The most likely ten year era the barn was constructed was 1840 to 1850. The barn is very definitely a square rule era structure and nothing at all reflects anything in the construction or fabric of the barn before 1820 or so. Similarly but at the opposite end, the chance that this barn was built after the Civil War is also very unlikely. Barns with hewn rafters in this era are extremely rare.

Research Request



For a chapter in a book he is writing on the vernacular architecture of the upper Hudson and lower Mohawk valleys, Walter Wheeler is looking for examples of intentional artifact deposits at building sites.

These would typically be discovered during renovation or demolition work and might be found under thresholds, under hearth stones, or within walls

or other locations. Examples of deposits of shoes, quartz crystals, coins, and earthenware are known in the region. He is also interested in hearing from readers about examples of "hex" signs or other inscriptions found in houses. Known examples have been found particularly in the vicinity of doors and fireplaces.

Please contact him at wwheeler@hartgen.com with any examples!

Other Ethnic Type – Possibly English

It is possible that the Sickler Road barn may be of English origin. Since no-one alive today can ask any of the builders of the barn what cultural influences they felt or experienced more than 150 years ago we can entertain the possibility that the barn may have been built under a cultural dominance other than Dutch. English builders could have erected the barn and in their minds may have just wanted to add a lean-to section that created the two-aisle effect that we can still see today. So it might be said that a regular English barn with a lean-to is in effect a two-aisle barn. Ultimately, who can really argue that either barn style is not the proper designation for the barn? A case might be made for either distinguishing title to be applied to the barn. ■

John Wood House

121 McKay Road, Huntington Station, Suffolk Co., N.Y.

By John R. Stevens

Back in the days when I was working at Old Bethpage Village Restoration and we were living in the Village of Huntington, I occasionally passed an obviously very old house on McKay Road in Huntington Station. It looked like something that would be an appropriate addition to the museum village. It was something that the village

did not have – a two-storey ‘saltbox’ (lean-to house), a type probably fairly common on Long Island at one time. The museum village has a one-and-a-half-storey ‘saltbox’, the Peter Cooper (inventor and philanthropist) house, but it was not built in this form, which it achieved after a mid-18th century reconstruction. A two-storey version would be more fitting. Actually, we did have a two-storey salt box in the Lawrence house from College Point in Queens, built about 1750. But in the early 19th century its rear wall was raised to a full two-storey height and the roof modified but retaining the original front slope rafters.



The John Wood House, view from the South East (photo taken in 1971).



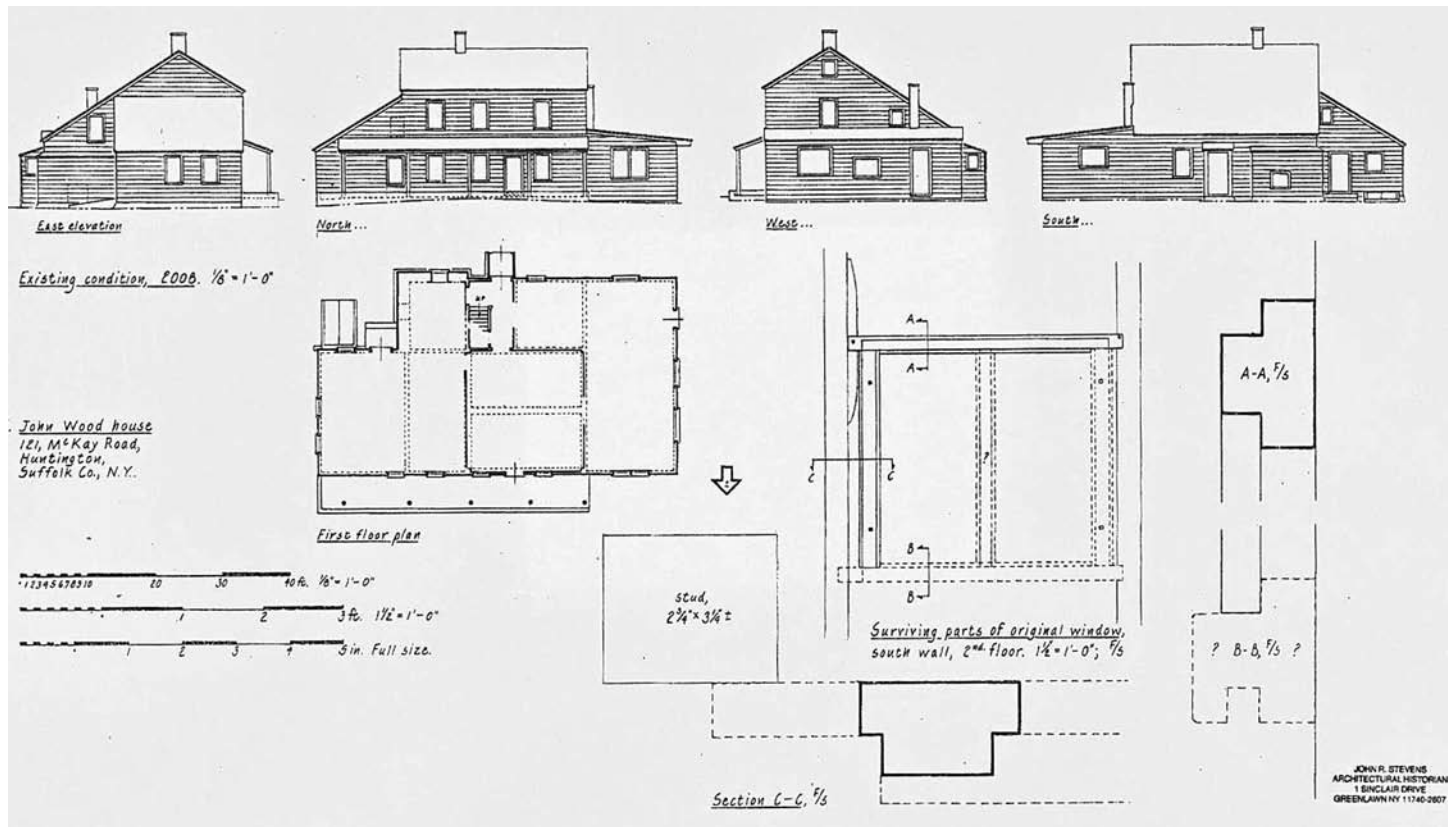
McKay Road takes a bit of a bend going by the old house, and also narrows at that point. Modern traffic almost demanded that the house be removed so the road could be straightened. I found out that it was called the ‘Old Homestead’, and took photographs of it in February 1971

(reproduced in this article, next to an early 20th century view). I was not able to inspect the interior of the house and, as it was not on the market for sale, I put it out of my mind.

In 2003 I was invited to sit on the Huntington Historic Preservation Commission where I had contact with Reginald (Rex) Metcalf who is the leading authority on the oldest houses of the Town. He had a recent involvement with

Left: Detail of the South wall, original second floor exterior, showing casement frame head and west jamb.

Below: John Wood House – Elevations.



FAMILY PHOTO, JOHN WOOD HOUSE



FROM SOUTH WEST.

mid-18th century, a lean-to was built across the south side. Additionally, it was lengthened on its east end and a shed addition built against this. At that point, the north side became the front. Within the second floor of the lean-to, the south wall framing of the original structure is exposed. Several lengths of riven shingle lath (framing timbers and lath are of oak) survive. The shingle lath is gained into the corner posts, and the corner braces are set in the thickness of the lath so that the lath passes over them. This is also done in the c. 1730s Minne Schenck house at Old Bethpage Village Restoration. In about the middle of the wall are the remains of a casement window frame, of which the sill and the east jamb are missing. It may have had a mullion, but I am not clear on this. There is no evidence of infilling in the walls. The interior is lathed with riven plaster lath- that covering the interior of the casement frame has a slightly different character to the rest.

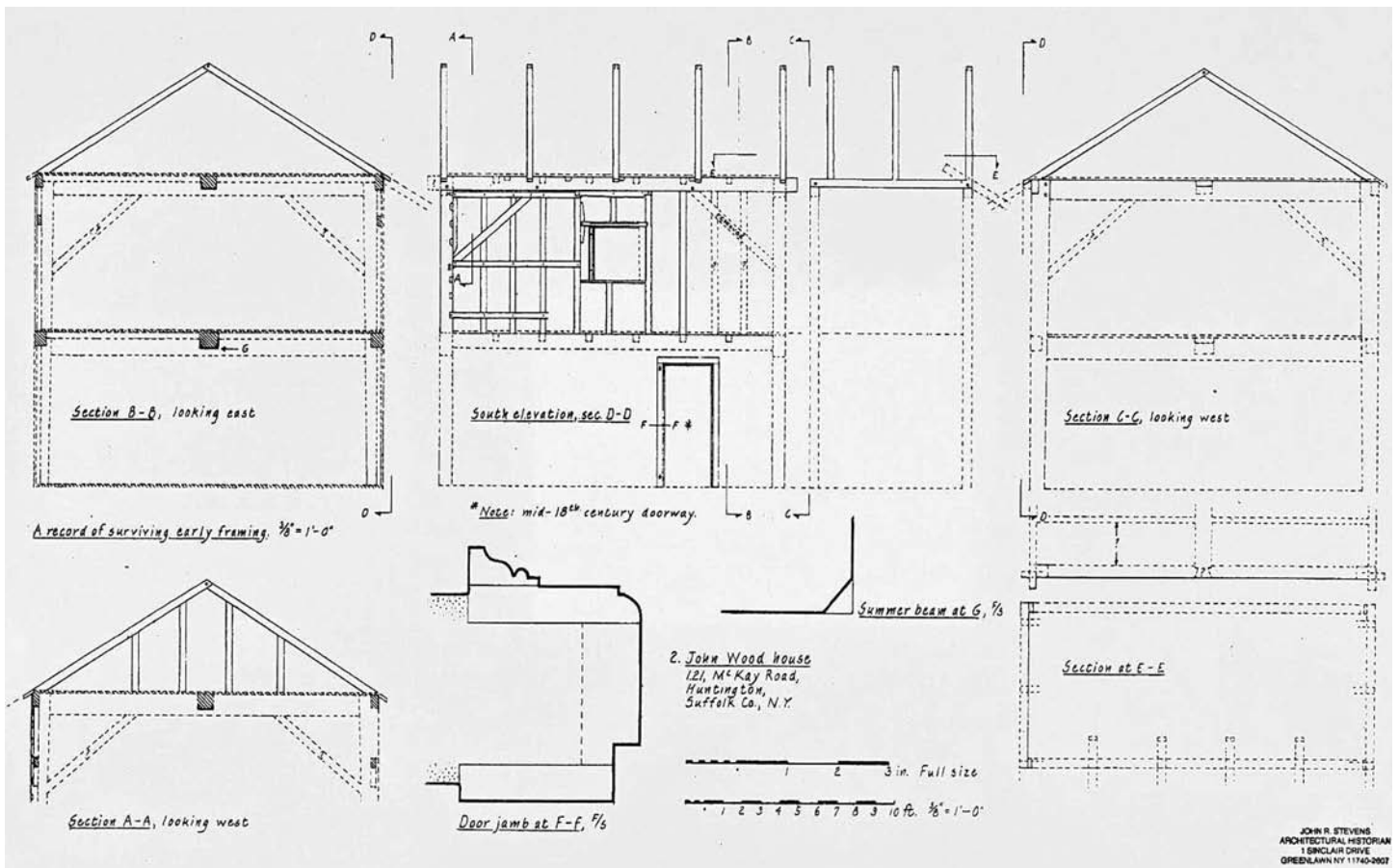
The original house frame is 18 feet, 4 inches square and two storeys in height. There is no basement, nor am I aware of a crawl space. There are summer beams in

Above left: Vintage family photo of the house.

Below: John Wood House – Construction.

the 'Old Homestead' which he identified as the John Wood House. He believed it to have been built in the 1690s. Arrangements were made with the owner, Mrs. Bohlen, for us to get into the house and give us an opportunity to photograph

and measure it. While a lot of the finer points of construction were concealed under 20th century finish, enough could be seen to permit the preparation of a set of drawings, herewith reproduced. The house originally faced south but in the





Top: The nearby Sammis House on West Neck Road, Lloyd Harbor, Town of Huntington, showing summer beam similar to the one found in the John Wood House.

Middle: Shown here is the John Whitman House, West Hills, SE corner showing original white washed surface within the corner brace.

Above: Chimney girt and summer beam in the East room of the John Whitman House.

the second and attic floor framing. The joists are covered with modern finish and their size and spacing could not be recorded. The summer beams are chamfered, and the chamfers run off short of the connections with the end girts. The wall plates extend 7½ inches beyond the end faces

of the corner posts. In standard English construction, the end tie beams pass over the corner posts and wall plates and the end rafters are tenoned into them. In the Wood house, the end tie beams are tenoned into the interior sides of the corner posts, a constructional detail I have never before seen. There is no visible evidence as to where the original fireplace(s) or staircase had been located.

A stair is located in the south lean-to, and could be contemporary with the construction of the lean-to. The adjacent doorway from the lean-to into the original part of the house retains its 18th century backband molding. The door is missing but had been hung on strap hinges, the pintles for which survive.

Several weeks ago, my wife Marion and I were on our way to a 'Senior' event at the Huntington High School, a short distance away from the John Wood house. This put us on McKay Road which I had not been on for several years. I understood that the Town of Huntington was going to have a new roof put on the Wood house, and as we approached its site, I speculated whether this had actually been done or not? What we saw was not a new roof on the house, but virtually no roof at all! We do not keep up with the local papers or TV news, so we had missed the reporting of a fire at the house. I found a report on the fire on the Internet, from the Long Island paper *Newsday*, stating the house had burned during the night of February 15. The *Newsday* article said that it had been placed on the National Register of Historic Sites in 1985, and had been listed as a landmark by the Town of Huntington in 2005. At a recent meeting of the Huntington Town Council, its landmark status was revoked. The house will be demolished, and I am attempting to arrange with the owner, with the help of Huntington Town Historian Robert Hughes, to gain access to it so that additional details can be recorded. To be continued!

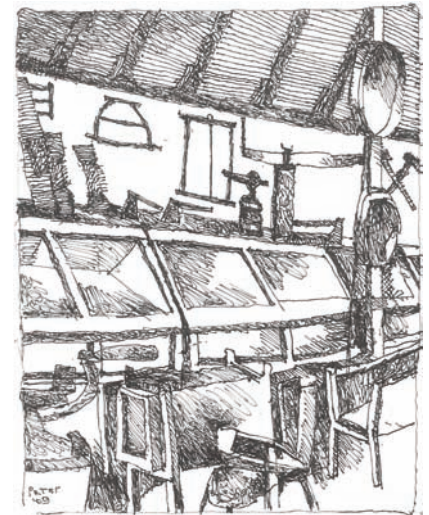
The Town of Huntington is particularly rich in the survival of 'first period' houses like the John Wood House. These are all in private ownership, and the owners would seem to be people who want to keep their houses 'under wraps'. I have been lucky enough to have seen the interiors of two of these houses, and photographs of them accompany this article. Of course, owners of old houses have a right to their privacy, but in any event there seems to be a regrettably low level of interest in the area's heritage of early buildings. ■

HVVA

Out and About



HVVA members putting our hands to work at the Bevier House Museum, readying the **Peter Sinclair Gallery of Early American Crafts and Trades** for the upcoming season.



Five Date-stones on Saugerties House Tour and other Local Cryptic Carvings

By Gregory D. Huber

It is dauntingly hard to know how just many buildings in Ulster County have a date carved into either a stone or timber incorporated into their construction. A number of them do. Especially those built before the Revolutionary War. But on the week-end of May 16, 2009 a number of date-stones on several houses showed their faces a few of which have not been seen by any of the regular people who often attend the HVVA associated tours.

An Ulster County tour – in the Saugerties area – of eight homestead houses was sponsored by the Town of Saugerties Historic Preservation Commission. A very well assembled tour booklet was provided for all tour attendees. Many of the statements on family lineage in this article are based on the contents found in the booklet. Fully five of the houses had date-stones either plain to see or rather obscure, or an inscription that appeared on one of their walls. In addition, a house in extreme northern Ulster County was visited after the tour by six people including the McMillens, the Stevens, Jim Decker and the author. Further, two buildings north of Saugerties, with very unusual and cryptic carvings, were photographed by this writer the day before the tour.

SAUGERTIES HOUSE TOUR – May 16, 2009

First Homestead

Mynderse House – 1743

This is a house that has a commanding view of the Hudson River on Mynderse Street just east of the City of Saugerties. It has been owned by Fran Numrich for the past dozen years. She owned the wonderful Andries DeWitt homestead on Hurley Mountain Road in Marletown for nearly 40 years. The Mynderse house is briefly discussed in Helen Reynolds book. She says that a great great grandson of Myndert Mynderse lived in the house as late as 1930. The land was purchased by a Jan Persen in 1712. In 1748 he gave his land to his daughter Vannitsee, the wife of Myndert Mynderse. Unfortunately, no early barn remains on the property.

On the Mynderse house just to the left of the main door on its front façade at the north end a date-stone of 1743 appears. Three lines comprise the stone (*top photo*). The first line has “MM JM,” the second line



Mynderse House – Date-stone of 1743 that appears on the front wall of the Myndert Mynderse stone house facing the Hudson River. House is east of Saugerties in Ulster County.

has “PM SM” and the third line has “Juni 18 Ao (Anno) 1743.” The house section at the south end is thought to date earlier than this dated section. One house section has a fireplace hood beam with a height of 14 inches that is fairly large for an Ulster County house. A very interesting and unusual built-in cupboard is seen in one room at its end wall that has very old doors with wrought hinges.

Second Homestead

Cornelius Persen House – Inscription

The Persen house on Old Kings Highway just off Route 32 north of Saugerties lacks a date-stone but nonetheless has a very intriguing stone with an enigmatic inscription over the front door. The stone (*below photo*) says – Begeven tot Herbergende. Certain people translate this to mean – “We share with those we shelter.” Another historian supplies another interpretation – “Given to Meibergende.” This name apparently appears nowhere in the chain of property ownership. Other explanations are possible.

1700s Persen Inscription – Here is the mysterious inscripted stone over the door in the Cornelius Persen stone house on King’s Highway. Scholars can not seem to agree as to its exact meaning.



The house has two very old and possibly original doors. One is an interior false panel single height door with excellent Dutch wrought hinges with standard pancake disks. A double Dutch basement level door is also seen with pancake disks. It was the metal ware that Jonathan Nedbor looked at with admiring eyes.

Third Homestead

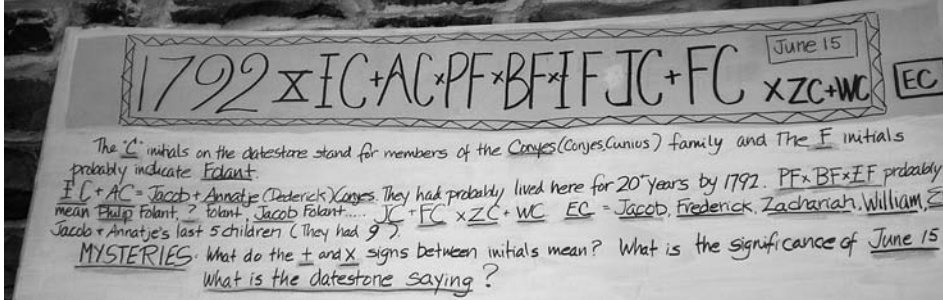
First Brink House – 1701

Although quite small, the supposed very early Brink stone house on King’s Highway south of Saugerties is very large in intrigue. Anyone who visits this place knows that this is a special Dutch settlement spot. We are fortunate that it survives and has been well maintained.

Helen Reynolds says that in 1701 Cornelius Brink expanded the original square house section that doubled its length and that the house was raised to 1½ stories. The apparent date of 1701 and the initials “CLML” appear on the wall that faces away from the highway.

At this point the projecting stones at the one house corner are legendary and very few houses or other stone buildings of any type have been seen in the northeast with this refinement. The author has seen a unique stone ground barn in Maryland, called the *Hermitage*, at a French settlement – supposedly built in the late 18th century – that has such stones. The presence of these unusual stones at the Brink homestead has a family story: the ascending of the stones afforded a place for detection of possible marauding Native Americans.

The Brink house appears as plate 61 in Reynold’s book. Exposed good sized ceiling joists are seen on the first floor room that includes a 15½ inch high hood beam.



Conyes – This is the drawing of the rare stone on the infrequently visited, probable mid-eighteenth century Conyes stone house on Schoolhouse Road, south of Saugerties. It is quite likely that the Conyes house dates a few decades before the date of 1792 indicates.

In the basement is a very old false panel door with Dutch hinges and the door is not in its original location. Oak ceiling joists are also large up to 16 inches in height. The basement fireplace support was of the early type that included a projecting stone corbel that is close to 8 feet long. The supporting angled beams with planks above and stone and "mud" in-fill no longer exists as seen in the 1720s Jean Hasbrouck house in New Paltz.

Fourth Homestead

Conyes House – 1792 but likely earlier

The Conyes stone house set back quite a bit from Schoolhouse Road is located south of Saugerties. The house was not known by most regular HVVA tour people. The house has a rather steep roofline and that together with the fact that the house sits on an area of land that overlooks a meadow creates a very pleasing visual effect. A stone on the rear wall includes a date of 1792 – probably not the construction date, but the house is quite likely earlier by a few decades. The house is not far from the Henry Snyder homestead with the variant U-barn that was featured in an earlier HVV newsletter.

The date-stone appears on the wall away from the main road. A proper photo could not be taken. However, someone took the time to re-produce the appearance of the stone with all its letters and numbers on a long poster board and this was recorded (*above photo*). At the top of the stone at the extreme left is the date of 1792 and to the right appear the initials "IC + AC + PF + BF + IF JC + FC x zc + wc." At the upper right hand corner is "June 15." The letter "C" stands for the Conyes family name – Jacob and Annatje Conyes. The letter "F" may signify the Folant family name. The other initials that include the "C" letter refer to the last 5 names of the children. They had 9 children in all.

The Conyes family sold the farm in the mid 1930's after having owned the farm for

about 180 years. After this, the owner ran the place as a popular vacation rooming house when it was popular to escape to the Catskill Mountains. The current owner bought the place in 1971 and went about to restore the house that was in very neglected condition.

Fifth Homestead

Snyder House – 1750s

A very sharp eye can see the Aaron and Malius Snyder stone house on the west side of the New York Thruway especially in the winter when tree foliage is not a concern. This house is on Churchland Road and its front façade faces east toward the Thruway. A stone at the front of the house that bears the date 1751 was partially covered by recent construction work that involved the front porch. An appropriate photo of the date-stone could not be provided. The current owner relates that there are supposedly many initials included on the date-stone.

The house has a rather steep roof. At the north end wall associated with a non-extant jamb-less fireplace is a very large hood beam over 16¼ inches in height.

This size approaches the maximum seen in any Ulster County house. The greatest size ceiling joist in any Ulster County house thus far seen is a remarkable 18 inches in a ruinous house near the "1701" Brink house. The wood appears to be tulip poplar. The trimmers in the Snyder house at 11½ by 7 inches are very large and inner edge to inner edge is 7½ feet which is about normal. The other hood beam at the opposite side of the house is very slightly larger at 16½ inches in height.

In the basement are two surviving jamb-less support stone corbels. Around each corbel are later-built stone arched supports for English jambed fireplaces. An exterior door has three horizontal battens. The top batten has an associated Dutch hinge with a not always seen blunt finial.

POST TOUR HOMESTEAD

Cole House – 1841

After the Saugerties house tour, six tour attendees led by Bill McMillen in his car went to the homestead of David Elwell who works as a lighting technician in Hollywood movies. Very recently he worked with Jodie Foster in New York City where the controversial movie "The Brave One" was filmed. The Elwell place is located on Blue Mountain Road about three miles from the Greene County border. The homestead house has a date of 1841 with the name of Cole on a stone on the east side wall. This date most likely refers to some occurrence other than the construction time of the building as there are early type wrought nails in what appears to be original floor boards on the first floor.

The house is of small proportions. The attic is quite unusual in that it was never partitioned into rooms. Many attics in Ulster County houses were not originally constructed with rooms. Rooms were built in attics quite often after about 1840 or so but sometimes before that time. The collar beams along with the original floor-boards survive although the boards are now covered up. The ceiling joists on the first floor are still exposed but are not large. The original floor-boards on the first floor are up to 15 inches wide.

The barn on the property is not at all Dutch related but is an English side-entry frame ground (no basement) barn dating from the last third of the 19th century. All of the framing elements, joinery and other construction expressions agree with a post 1870 date of building. It appears that no Dutch barn beams of any kind were re-cycled into the building.

VISIT ON MAY 15, 2009

Two Buildings with Superb Cryptic Carvings – North of Saugerties

On the day before the Saugerties House Tour, a brief visit was made by the author to three buildings north of Saugerties to

1841 Cole – The date on the rear wall of the stone house located on Blue Mountain Road, west of Saugerties, just a few miles south of Greene County. The house likely dates several decades prior to the date on the stone.



photograph very unusual stones with carved dates. Two were in the immediate Katsbaan area and another a few miles away off Blue Mountain Road. It was discovered that one of the buildings in the Katsbaan area that was intended to be recorded was destroyed several years ago.

First Building – 1742

The first building was the Eleigh – Wolven – Myers homestead off Blue Mountain Road. The homestead house is of post 1850 frame construction. Two stones incorporated into the stone foundation on the rear wall contain carvings of a very unusual nature. The stones appear about four feet from the ground. The left stone (*below photo*) is 31 inches long and five inches in width and the adjacent stone at the right is 21 inches long. It is obvious that the two stones were recycled from a much earlier building.

The left stone has 20 carvings which are the following “ANO 1742 FR CR * M 21.” Along with these carvings are certain cryptic symbols. Between the date and the “FR” is a circle with three intersecting lines that divide the circle into six equal pie-shaped sections. At the end of the lines are short perpendicular lines. Does any reader know what this signifies? Between the “FR” and the “CR” is an upside down heart with a swiggly mouse-tail-like line at the bottom of the heart. To the right of the asterisk-like carving are three very unusual carvings (see photo). Very interestingly, the “M” at the left of the “21” has a quite short horizontal line that intersects the right line of the “M.” The significance of this is unknown.

The right stone (not shown here) with three carved letters may signify someone’s initials or something else.

Second Building

1732 – Many initials, one symbol

The second building is actually the Civil War era Katsbaan Church that is on King’s



1732 Katsbaan – On the King’s Highway, north of Saugerties, is the mid-nineteenth century Katsbaan stone church that replaced a 1732 church. Five stones – four of which are seen here – appear on the north wall of the church.

Highway that is north of the big bend that veers west on Route 32 that is northwest of Saugerties. This was apparently the second Church on the site that replaced the 1732 church. Five re-cycled stones appear on the north wall of the stone church. All the stones appear about in the middle of the wall and are about ten feet from the ground.

All five of the stones are very darkly colored in distinct contrast with most or all of the other stones that are light grey-blue in color – all of them being classic appearing lime-stone. Of the five stones there is a cluster of four stones arranged one over two over one. The bottom single stone is longer than the two middle stones.

The top single stone (of the cluster of four) contains the date “1732” at the top and “CM + A” appears below the date. The right lower corner of the “A” split off apparently from the “parent rock” when the stone was either extracted from the original 1732 stone wall or at some point afterwards.

The two middle stones are dissimilar in size, the right one being several inches longer than the left one. The left stone has “LS B DB.” Actually the “B” of “DB” is joined directly to the “D.” On the right stone both an upper and lower level of initials are seen. The upper level has “WTB + MSB” and the lower level has “WK+MM + BBH.” The “T” shares the vertical line of the “B” and the “K” shares the right slanted line of the “W” and the “H” of the “BBH” is immediately next to the right hand “B.”

The bottom stone is very long and is actually composed of three sections separated by vertical carved lines. The left section appears (not certain) to have “I I S symbol I M.” The “I”s have a very short horizontal line at their mid-points. This also applies to the “I” next to the “M.” The symbol is an isosceles triangle with a somewhat swiggly tail (mouse-like) at the bottom. The middle section has a widely separated “I” and “W + MM.” The right section has “H F.” The last initial all the way to the right looks like an “F” (not sure).

The other single stone near the cluster of four stones is also quite long (*photo at right*). The extreme left has an upper level and a lower level – the upper level has “HB” and the letters are very closely set together. The lower level has “S DB I.” The “DB” letters are very closely set. Then, to the right everything is of a single level “W S + MH = BR + F R.” The “M” and “H” share their closest vertical lines. The “B” and the “R” are almost superimposed on each other.

A blue state historic marker appears just to the side of the road and a few feet from the

1742 Eleigh – On the rear stone foundation wall of the 19th century Eleigh-Wolven frame house appears an extremely unusual date stone with carvings of a date, initials and cryptic symbols. The house is located off Blue Mountain Road west of Saugerties.



church. The marker states that the initials refer to builders of the original church. It would be very interesting to check local records to possibly learn who these builders might have been.

Third Building – Destroyed

The third stone building that this writer intended to visit and to record included a date-stone that was destroyed about six years ago. A stone in the stone foundation contained initials very similarly carved and arranged like the above two buildings. It can not be recalled exactly but the date was somewhere in the 1730 to 1750 range. This building was initially visited 8 to 10 years ago and it can not be said if photos were made of the stone. It also can not be said what the origin of the stone was. The stone may have been recycled from another building or it was on its original location on the building. The



1732 Katsbaan – This is the fifth stone with various carvings that appears on the north wall of the Katsbaan church north of Saugerties.

building was on the east side of the King's Highway and a little south of the Katsbaan church that was actually a (converted) 1920's house that at some point became the Katsbaan Golf Club club house. The story is told that the original building was a Dutch stone house that had the date-stone and initials. Then the stone walls above the level of the stone foundation were destroyed and a new upper frame house section was constructed.

Superb Early Dutch-Anglo Barn at Site

The 1920's house was apparently associated with the Dutch-Anglo side entrance ground barn that Peter Sinclair discovered about 1990. His original notes are very likely in the HVVA archives. It seems that Peter was not aware of the house foundation date-stone as he never mentioned its existence. This was a superb remnant barn of pre-Revolutionary status. It had so many of the traits that signify a major-minor rafter barn. Peter saved two very large size H-frame braces that were of the lapped half dove-tailed variety. Although I never saw the barn, I was able to save a

brace that I obtained from a fellow named Saint John in Woodstock. Thus three braces were rescued. Peter also saved a few other timbers. This barn was in reasonably good shape when Peter saw it. It was a gem of early Ulster County barn architecture, a pre-eminently important barn extremely worthy of preservation. It is now gone, but Peter's notes remain.

Summary

No census has ever been done on how many Ulster County buildings built prior to 1800 (or after) have carved dates somewhere incorporated into their structure. There must be a few dozen at the very least. Because of this it is not known which of the three major areas of Ulster County – Saugerties, Kingston or New Paltz have the highest proportion of date-stones in their early buildings. In any event the greater area around Saugerties is certainly not

lacking in date-stones. Many early buildings survive as witnessed by several of the houses seen on the May 16th Saugerties House Tour.

The case of the three buildings north of Saugerties having very similarly related stones with carvings strongly suggest a local folk tradition where a number of other buildings with such date and initial carvings may have existed at one time. Settlers from a particular area in Europe that came to the Saugerties area (directly or not) may have been responsible for the dates and strangely carved initials and symbols.

Perhaps a student of folklore may some day – if it has not already been done – come forth and interpret the carvings, and make sense out of an apparent development in Ulster County that transpired more than 250 years ago. This rare tradition may have existed in other Ulster County areas but to date no other cryptic carvings have appeared in other buildings – at least not exactly as seen in the three buildings north of Saugerties. ■

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A look back



East Facade of the Benjamin Ten Broeck House, Ulster County

Calendar

Northern Tour

Saturday, June 20, 2009 — 10:00 AM

Albany area tour lead by Wally Wheeler and Ned Pratt. Barns in the morning, houses after lunch! Meeting at the first site: the barn is on the corner of Deeb Drive and Winter Avenue Extension, Troy, NY 12180. For Mapquest purposes use 2 Deeb Drive, Troy, NY 12180-8409.

Hurley Stone House Day

Saturday, July 11, 2009 – 10:00 AM

HVVA will be present with a stand of photographs and artifacts to promote awareness of our organizations goals. Members are needed at the stand, at various times throughout the day. Please volunteer! Jim Decker will coordinate: (845) 527-1710. For more event information please visit: www.stonehouseday.org

Southern Dutchess Barn Tour

Saturday, July 18, 2009 – 10:00 AM

Southern Dutchess barn tour – guided by Bob Hedges – starting at 209 All Angels Hill Road, Wappinger's Falls, New York.

Clarksville Heritage Day

Saturday, August 1, 2009 – 10:00 AM

Town of Clarksville Community Church, HVVA demonstrations and book sales booth please volunteer! Contact, Alvin Sheffer at (518) 828-5482. Directions from Albany's City Hall: 12 miles (30-45 minutes) west on Delaware Avenue (NYS Route 443). 20 minutes southeast of John Boyd Thacher State Park.

HVVA Annual Picnic

Saturday, August 15, 2009 – 10:00 AM

Meeting in the parking lot of "Historic Huguenot Street" (across the street from Deyo Hall on Broadhead Avenue, New Paltz). This year – for the sake of convenience – we will have our picnic catered for \$10 per person (bring your own bottle). The picnic meeting is always a fun day, and this year will be no exception! We have some truly fine examples of local architecture scheduled for touring. Join us! Please RSVP to Rob Sweeney: leave a message at (845) 336-0232 or email to Gallusguy@msn.com