The Society for the Preservation of
Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

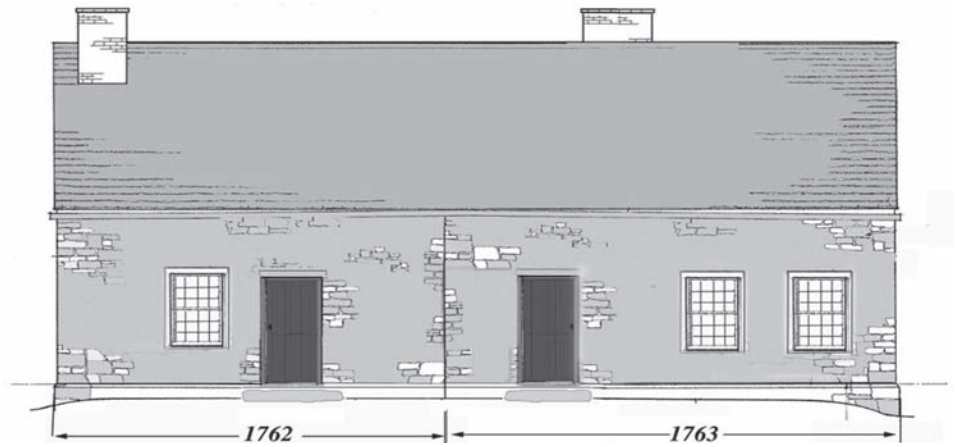
July – September 2014 **Newsletter** Vol. 17, No. 7- 9

You can't tell a book by its cover

It is natural for us to look at a building and assume that it's being truthful. Well, buildings (and our eyes) don't lie, but they often are not revealing everything we need to know to find that truth. Especially stone houses whose materials seem to be immutable. Sometimes, as in the case of the house pictured here, there are clues to changes having been made. Seams in stone walls and brick in-fill around windows are common to many stone houses, but they don't always provide the answer. The classic front façade with a center entrance flanked by windows appeals to our innate sense of symmetry, as it did to the owner that created it in this example more than a century after the house was built, but it belies the ambivalence for order and conformance in earlier times. The lesson here is to not believe your eyes.

We also can't believe everything we read. The traditional assumption for this house is that it was built in 1694 by Hugo Freer, one of the original New Paltz Patentees. Inexplicably, the New York State historical marker next to it states it was built in 1720. A more critical analysis of the building and dendrochonology leading to a historic structure report in 2010 have shown these accounts to be inaccurate. With beams having cutting dates in 1762 and 1763, it is now clear that the house was not built by Hugo Freer, but by his granddaughter. (Structural members from Hugo Freer's wood frame dwelling appear to have been reused in the 1763 section.) Yet, misinformation abounds in pre-existing publications and abetted by the Internet. For example, visit

http://www.hvnet.com/museums/huguenotst/freer.htm.



Early Brick Houses in Ulster County, New York

By Neil Larson

Fig. 1 – Ezekiel Elting House, New Paltz, 1800. View of house from southwest, c.1880. From Huguenot Historical Society Archives. The south end of the house was constructed of stone and parged, scored and painted to resemble brick.

When Ezekiel Elting's massive, brick-fronted stone house was completed in the village in 1800, it was the most modern and unusual building to have been constructed on Huguenot Street since Jacob Hasbrouck erected his huge stone dwelling nearly eighty years earlier ***(Figs.1 & 2)***. The fact that the two houses were located in direct view of each other has fueled stories about the competition between these two families and the stores they reputedly operated in their houses. Whether it was to go one up on his Hasbrouck neighbor or to break away from the antiquated stone house tradition, enjoy the fruits of his success, or express the optimism he had for the future, Ezekiel Elting built the first new house of the Federal Period in the village.[1] In scale its center passage plan with two full rooms on each side rivaled the Hasbrouck House, but its two-story height, five-bay front façade symmetrically organized around a central entrance, and more subtle gambrel roof (later replaced with a gable roof) set it apart from its neighbor. Elting's house also presented a stylish brick façade to the street utilizing a Flemish bond that identified with a taste and craftsmanship that was not common in New Paltz. Similarly, the gambrel roof – a practical engineering solution that obviated the need for the huge truss system employed to span the unusual depth of the Jacob Hasbrouck and other early double-pile stone houses – was unprecedented in the village.[2] These were radical departures from the established norm and signaled that Ezekiel Elting had leapfrogged to the highest rank in the community.

Traditionalists in the town may have seen the new house as an indication of Ezekiel having moved, perhaps too far, into the mainstream culture.[3] He was a merchant of unusual scope for New Paltz, and the range of his business interests extended far beyond the historic confines of the local community. By 1800, in addition to the store his family maintained in the village, Ezekiel and his cousin-partner, Philip Elting, supplied a store at New Paltz Landing (now in the Village of Highland) managed by Philip's brother Noah. The Eltings were the first New Paltz family to capitalize on the Hudson River trade directly and provide building materials and commodities to the scores of newcomers establishing homesteads on lands in the eastern side of the patent. A third store was established at the saw, flour and fulling mills on the Dashville Falls (formerly known as High Falls) managed by his daughter Dinah and her husband, Cornelius Schoonmaker Broadhead. Rather than haul his goods from Dashville to landings in New Paltz or Kingston, Ezekiel invested in property at another landing in the Town of Esopus directly east of his mill. It appears that his principal sources of supply were initially based in Kingston, but once he established interests in the river landings, he dealt directly with

Fig. 2 – Jacob Hasbrouck House, New Paltz, 1722. View of house from southeast. From Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776 (1929), 258.

suppliers in New York City and distributed goods from storehouses at the landings and in his home. Perhaps better than any other figure in New Paltz at the end of the 18th century, Ezekiel Elting's experience represents the process by which the insular Colonial community was gradually drawn into the social and economic networks of the larger region and state.

Brick houses were rare in New Paltz in 1800. Only four brick houses were recorded in the town two years earlier in the Direct Tax assessment list. One of them belonged to Ezekiel's cousin, Josiah Elting, and it had been recently built north of the village on the road leading from New Paltz to Kingston ***(Fig. 3)***.[4] It is the only one of the four that has survived. It is a one-and-one-half story, gable-roof building with brick on its south and west facades, and stone on the other sides. Its front is oriented to the south and contained a central entrance flanked by single windows. The brick walls were laid in a Flemish bond with flat brick arches – soldier courses – over the windows identical to the Ezekiel's house, although all but one of the window openings have since been altered. The coincidence of the masonry method and the family associations suggest that the same masons were employed for the work.[5]

The 1798 assessment list also identifies three brick and stone houses that no longer exist. One was of similar scale to Josiah Elting's house. It was owned by Peter Hasbrouck and occupied by his son, Roelif, and located on the west side of the Wallkill in Springtown. This was essentially in the same neighborhood where Hasbroucks and Eltings intermingled north of the village. The assessor ranked the house as "good" rather than "new" – just as he had Josiah Elting's house. The Hasbrouck house was valued at $600 while the Elting house was considered worth $525. The story of this house's demise is not known, and its precise location has not been determined.

Another brick and stone house was owned and occupied by Joseph Hasbrouck, and it was located in Guilford south of the village and outside the bounds of the original New Paltz patent. It was the most highly valued house on the 1798 list where the two-story building was categorized as "new." A line drawing of the farm drawn by Dr. Alfred Hasbrouck in the 1840s depicts it as only one room deep in plan with a gable roof and a one-story lean-to on the rear, and this is confirmed by the shallow dimensions recorded in the assessment: 55 feet in length and 28 feet in breadth ***(Fig. 4)***. From the drawing it would appear that the south and west walls of the house were constructed of brick since they were the facades visitors saw as they approached the house from the Shawangunk to Kingston Road that passed west of the farm. This house burned around 1850 and was replaced with a new brick house.[6]

The third brick and stone house was located just south of Joseph Hasbrouck's Guilford farm on the road to Shawangunk. It was owned and occupied by Abraham Hardenbergh, another of the town's wealthy and influential citizens, in 1798. This house measured 33 feet in breadth indicating that its plan was a room-and-a-half deep. An old photograph of the house shows the one-and-one-half-story, five-bay, center entrance front façade of the house ***(Fig. 5)***. The brick pattern is sufficiently discernible to see that it was laid in a Flemish bond. However, of equal importnce in the photograph is the presence of a gambrel roof designed to span the deeper plan. The construction date is not recorded; in the assessment lists it is simple stated that its condition was "good." The house was valued at $625 comparable to the others. Although no longer extant, the Hardenbergh House in Guilford may have been the first gambrel roof house in New Paltz.

Twenty-five years earlier in the neighboring Town of Marlborough (now Plattekill), Johannes Shuart, a settler from New Jersey, established a 500-acre farm on which a brick and stone house with a gambrel roof was built. If he and not one of his sons built the house, it would rank as one of the first brick houses to have been built in the area. Yet, it may have been constructed shortly after 1799 when Revolutionary War veteran Philip Van Orden purchased the property.[7] Like the Hardenbergh house, this surviving house has a center passage plan one and one-half rooms deep spanned by a gambrel roof. In this case both of the potential builders were native to northern New Jersey where this plan-form with gambrel roof had established itself prior to the Revolution. There are examples of similar houses in Bergen County, New Jersey and adjacent Rockland County, New York.[8] The arched heads of the window openings on the front façade are considered Germanic feature that supports the assertion that Johannis Shuart, a German, rather than Philip Van Orden, a Dutchman, was the builder.[9] The documentary record is scant and inconclusive on this distinction; tree ring dating of floor beams may provide an answer.

Fig. 3 – Josiah Elting House, Middletown (Town of New Paltz), 1786. View of house from southwest, Old Kingston Road in foreground. From Ralph LeFevre, History of New Paltz (1903), 495.

Fig. 4 – Joseph Hasbrouck House, Guilford (Town of Gardiner), 1798. View of house from southeast, drawing by Dr. Alfred Hasbrouck, c.1840.

Fig. 5 – Abraham Hardenbergh House, Guilford (Town of Gardiner), c.1790. From LeFevre's History of New Paltz, 459.

Fig. 6 – Second Reformed Dutch Church, New Paltz, 1771-1774. Woodcut image from LeFevre's History of New Paltz, 153.

These cases illustrate the emerging status of brick as the high-end building material in Ulster County. Stone had held that position for the entire 18th century, and it remained a popular medium in the decades following the Revolutionary War as a new wave of house construction occurred. However, while brick could not supplant the established tradition of stone masonry, it was used by certain individuals to identify themselves with more progressive and cosmopolitan elements of the regional society. It was a given that these were prosperous and influential men who had a clear desire to break with tradition. It would not be until the following generation that enough traditional baggage was shed by clients and builders to abandon stone as a wall material entirely. Ezekiel Elting's brick and stone house was a precursor to this architectural trend.

Brick was an urban material. Unlike stone, although often quarried and dressed, brick was entirely manufactured and artificial. The rural economy and mentality were oriented to organic materials and natural cycles and relationships. In cities physical and social orders were more reasoned and humanistic. Before the English Conquest (1667) the New Netherland authorities required brick exteriors for buildings in Manhattan and Albany as a fire prevention measure. The use of brick in house construction in rural areas was a matter of taste rather than of code in 18th-century New York, and as commercial brick manufacture outside of the cities was slow to develop (it is believed that brick was molded and dried on the site of buildings where they were used) it was available only to the wealthiest farmers. And whereas the Albany area became the locale for a distinctive type brick domestic architecture in the 18th century, Ulster County builders favored stone, which was ubiquitous in the region. Yet, at the opening of the new century and the emergence of a new national identity, stone became considered an outdated and inelegant material when compared to brick.

Gambrel Roofs

The second Reformed Dutch Church built in New Paltz 1771-1774 was probably the first gambrel roof building constructed in the town ***(Fig. 6)***. The gambrel was a roof form gaining popularity for Dutch church design in the period. Major churches had been built in Albany and New York City in the 1730s using the gambrel roof, and lesser churches followed suit. The builders of these urban churches came from Boston where the taste is believed to have originated. Ezekiel Elting would have been familiar with this major

New Paltz building project, which was located in full view of his childhood home. Ironically, the Eltings were staunch members of the renegade Conferentia Church located on the west side of the Wallkill River, and contributed nothing to the gambrel roof building's construction.[10] Up to that point, it is possible that Cornelius Wynkoop of Stone Ridge owned the only gambrel roof house in Ulster County.[11]

By 1799 the gambrel roof could be found on many houses in the lower Hudson Valley, on Long Island and in northern New Jersey. Both Dutch and English builders utilized the feature to span the larger plans of houses one-and-one-half and two rooms in breadth. (Few houses one room deep had gambrel roofs.) In some elite houses, the gambrel roof frame was used to create the external appearance of hipped roofs.[12] Consistent with the prevailing cultural confrontation, the Dutch developed their own characteristic framing methods for gambrel roofs. In the English method, rafters formed the top parts of a truss created with an attic floor beam serving as the bottom chord. The Dutch simply severed the rafters for a gable roof above the collar beams and mounted upper rafters on boards serving as intermediate plates. Abraham Hardenbergh's brick house in Guilford, which was extant when the 1798 tax assessments were made, had a gambrel roof of Dutch proportions.[13] This was likely framed in the same Dutch manner as the roof that was built on Ezekiel Elting's house, except the latter was perched on a two-story house.

English communities in neighboring Orange County were building gambrel roofs on their larger houses after the Revolution. However, these roofs were not framed in the English manner; rather they were more Dutch in the methods they used, suggesting that in the Federal Period local builders, whether Dutch or English, had been trained in the hybrid regional manner. Old English communities in the Hudson Valley had lost touch with New England building traditions. The gambrel roof on the Brick House probably has more of a connection to the modern design of Post-Revolutionary-War-Era dwellings in Orange County than to the early-18th-century Dutch gambrel roof of the Second Reformed Dutch Church.

In a practical sense, Ezekiel Elting chose a gambrel roof to span his two-room deep house plan, avoiding the tall, steep gable roofs of its predecessors, such as the Jacob Hasbrouck House. But he also was introducing a modern feature of regional domestic architectural design, along with the two-story scale and brick as an exterior material, which had little or nothing to do with any Dutch precedents.

---

[1] If one-upmanship was a factor, Josiah Hasbrouck, who occupied his grandfather's stone house in this period and operated a store in one of its front rooms, would build a far more exquisite modern house, though of wood not brick, twelve years later in nearby Plattekill. See Crawford & Stearns & Larson, *Jean Hasbrouck House Historic Structure Report* (2002) and Waite Associates, *Locust Lawn Historic Structure Report* (1999).

[2] Jonathan Hasbrouck's house in Newburgh, New York (Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site) acquired a roof similar to that on his cousin Jacob Hasbrouck's house in 1775 when a new row of rooms was added to the west side of an existing stone house. The profile of the roof is recognizably similar, although the rafter system, which incorporates the earlier roof, is different in design. See Neil Larson, *The Jonathan Hasbrouck House* (New Paltz: Hasbrouck Family Association, 2000). Based on photographs of buildings covered by Helen Wilkinson Reynolds in *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776*, at least two other houses had similar roof structures: Coenradt Bevier House in Napanoch (p. 242), Johannes DeWitt House, Green Kill (p.253). Another house built by Hendrickus DuBois in Libertyville south of New Paltz in 1775 was nearly identical in scale and design to Jacob Hasbrouck's 1721 house in the village. It was demolished and reconstituted into another two-story, brick and stone house by Hendrickus's son, Methusalem, and grandson, Philip, in 1817. Dimensions recorded in the 1798 Direct Tax assessment lists and reused rafters in the existing house are the bases for the comparison. Conclusions regarding the Hendrickus DuBois House are based in unpublished field work documentation.

[3] Many architectural historians would regard the design as evidence of a gradual process of the cultural assimilation of the Dutch into the English. However, this is a simplistic and Anglo-centric interpretation of the cultural interaction (and competition) between the Dutch and English in New York that is much more complex and significant. Technically, having been built in 1799, the Elting house cannot represent Colonial Era cultural dynamics; rather, it is a player in the Federal Period where Old World cultural differences were less important and other social and economic factors prevailed.

[4] Ralph Le Fevre reported the construction date as "about 1786," although he provides no source for it. *History of New Paltz*, 494. Josiah Elting married Hester Brodhead in 1783 and they settled on a farm set off from his father Alexander's homestead. Thus LeFevre's approximation seems accurate.

[5] Members of the Van Wagenen family are known to have been stone masons. An unidentified and undated account for building a house found in the SHS Elting Collection – perhaps pertaining to Ezekiel's house – lists large amounts of brick and records payments to Levi, Daniel, and Aaert Van Wagonen "for masoning."

[6] This property was documented and listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Guilford Bower Farm in 1999.

[7] The Shuart-Van Orden Stone House was documented and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. The house is located on Allhusen Road in the Town of Plattekill.

[8] Rosalie Fellows Bailey, *Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York* (1936; rpt. NY: Dover, 1968). For example see Pl. 54.

[9] These Germanic arches also can be seen on the 1775 section of the Jonathan Hasbrouck House (Washington Headquarters State Historic Site) in Newburgh. The earliest portion of this house is associated with a German owner.

[10] LeFevre, 148-156. Walter Wheeler, "the Introduction of the Gambrel Roof to the Upper Hudson Valley," *The Hudson River Valley Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Autumn 2004), 1-11.

[11] Reynolds, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776*, 287.

[12] The Van Cortlandt Mansion in the Bronx (c. 1740) has such a roof.

[13] For a fuller discussion of how the Dutch and English framed gambrel roofs differently, see Wheeler above.

From Carl's Scrapbook: The Uline Mill, West Sand Lake, Town of Sand Lake, Rensselaer County, New York

By Walter Richard Wheeler

This is the final installment of this series. While Carl's scrapbook contains many additional pages of newspaper clippings pertaining to local history, the photographs which accompany this article are the last of the group that represent his documentation efforts undertaken during trips throughout the Hudson Valley in the late 1950s with his parents.

Rensselaer County historian Nathaniel B. Sylvester recorded that "Joshua Lockwood and William Carpenter built the first grist-mill at West [Sand] Lake, in 1768. Barnhart Uline subsequently came into possession of the mill and operated it a great many years. It is now owned by a descendant, William Uline." Sylvester suggests that Uline built the first house in the village.[1]

West Sand Lake was known as Ulines or Ulinesville as late as 1836. At that time it contained Lutheran and Methodist churches, a grist mill, a saw mill, two stores, two taverns and "about 50 dwellings." It was noted as being equidistant—seven miles—from Albany and Troy.[2] Just six years later, the village had grown to hold 250 people (but living in "40 houses"), added a second Lutheran church, two additional stores, a new grist mill, and two new factories.[3] A map showing West Sand Lake in 1861 gives the location of the mill. It can be seen within the loop of the Wynantskill,

Fig. 1 – Inset map from Map of Rensselaer County, New York, 1861.

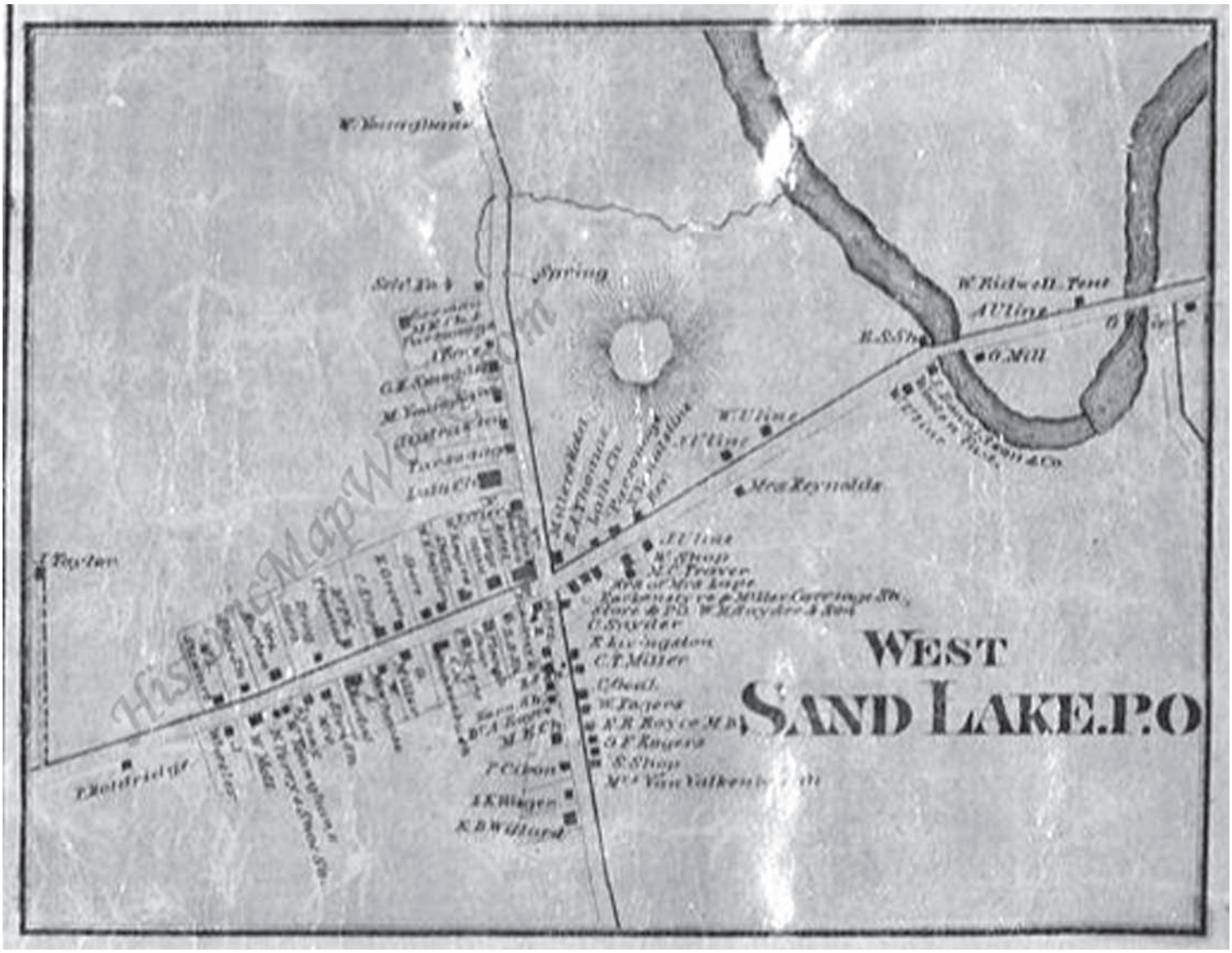


Fig. 2 – View of the Uline Mill looking southwest from NY Route 43, winter of 1955/56, all photos by Carl Erickson.

to the right in that image **(Fig. 1)**[4]. As late as 1870 the Uline family retained considerable acreage within the village—the whole of which was originally within their leased tract—and which they continued to farm. In that year, William Uline is noted as owning 50 acres and being the operator of the "grist mill and [a] farmer."[5] The village continued to grow, with an increasing number of mill and factory sites. In 1880 there were four churches (two Lutheran and two Methodist, one of which was German), a hotel, "several stores," and "a woolen-, stocking- and a grist mill, and about 400 inhabitants."[6] Today the unincorporated hamlet is home to 3,369 people, living in 944 houses.[7]

There seems to be some confusion whether the mill that Carl photographed in the winter and summer of 1955-1956 was the 1768 building or a later structure. A recent history of the town favors the latter interpretation, suggesting that shortly after settling in the area in 1798, Barnet Uline built the building as a grist and fulling mill.[8] Another source suggests that Uline's lease of the land from patroon Stephen van Rensselaer (325 acres, including additional annual rent of $20 for use of the grist mill on the site, or its water privilege) occurred in 1793, and suggests that the earlier mill—the first on the Wynantskill—was kept in operation by Uline.[9] The Ulines made improvements to the furnishings of the mill during their long tenure—in 1890 the press noted that "F. H. Uline is adding a new machine to his grist mill."[10]

A local newspaper announced the intention of the last owner of the grist mill to disassemble it in 1956. It appears to have been the opinion at that time that the building dated to the 1790s.

A landmark of West Sand Lake more than 150 years old, the Brookner Grist and Cider Mill, will soon be torn down to make way for modern times. Nelson A. Brookner, owner of the land on which the mill stands is negotiating for the sale of the one and a half acres to the Lynwood Swift Homes Inc. and the sale is expected to be completed this week. Henry Linett, president of the firm, plans to build three model homes on the Brookner lot for exhibition purposes. He says the old mill will be torn down by May to make way for his project….About the turn of the 19th century the land was leased from [Stephen] Van Rensselaer by the Uhlein family. West Sand Lake was formerly known as Uhlein Corners. The Brookner family brought [sic] the land from Frank Uline in 1914. The old Dutch spelling of Uhlein had been changed to Uline. The grist mill had operated to grind

Fig. 3. View of the Uline Mill looking northwest, winter 1955/56.

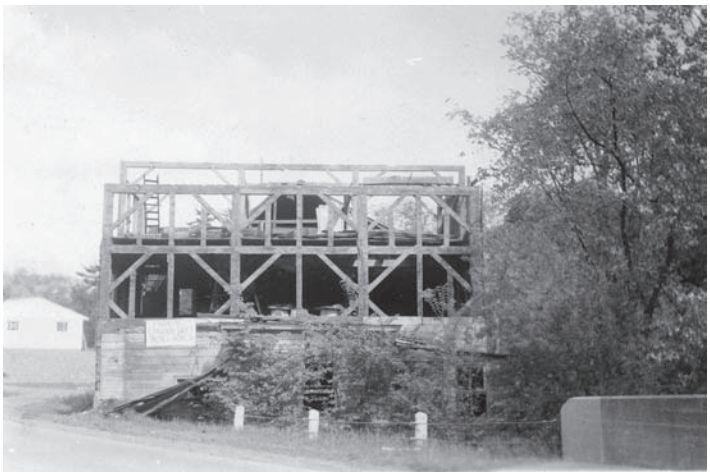


Fig. 4 – View of the mill reduced to its braced frame, looking east from NY Route 43, summer 1956.

Fig. 5 – Interior view showing equipment, winter 1955/56.

grain through the years serving area farmers until 1942. There was also a cider press in the mill. The work of tearing down the mill is being done by Asa Delamater, who forty years ago [1916] brought feed to the mill with his father.[11]

The newspaper account was incorrect in stating that the mill was closed in 1942. Although Nelson Brookner established a "Kalamazoo store"—selling appliances—in 1949 in Troy, as late as October 1951, Brookner called on his neighbors to "bring your grain and apples" for processing at the mill.[12]

The impending demolition of the mill cited in the article is corroborated by photographs that Carl took during his visit to the site (Figs. 1-6). Water to power the mill was, as noted above, sourced from the Wynantskill, with "the water running down a 200 foot pipe to build up pressure for the turbine in the mill."[13] The building contained much of its equipment, including "the grindstones, the old fashioned gear wheels, drive shafts and the conveyor belts with cups to hold the grain." The contractor is noted as "remark[ing] on the hand hewn wooden beams held together with 18 inch wooden spikes…"[14]

The three "model homes" mentioned in the 1956 article were built on the property and remain there today. The impoundment formerly associated with the mill has reverted to woodland.

Description of the Mill

Carl's photographs were taken during the winter of 1955-1956 – apparently around the time when the final

Fig. 6 – Interior view showing sawn rafters and machinery, winter 1955/56.

newspaper article appeared – and in June of that same year, when it had been reduced to its braced frame ***(Fig. 4)***.

The photos show the mill complex to have consisted of two buildings at the time of their removal ***(Figs. 2-3)***. Both were wood-framed and clapboarded structures, approximately the same size, with gable roofs. Oriented roughly north-south was a three-story mill with loading doors located on each floor of its north gable end, which faced the adjacent road, today's NY Route 43 ***(Fig. 2)***. The approximately 45 degree slope of the roof, and the slight, sawn rafters used in its construction ***(Fig. 6)*** argue for a later eighteenth century date of construction, rather than the 1768 date of its predecessor, which is sometimes misidentified as this building. Immediately adjacent to it was a slightly shorter apparently two-story building that may have served as a saw mill or as a cider mill. Both buildings, sited at right angles to each other, crowded the bank of the Wynantskill for access to water power. They were connected by a hyphen.

The frame of what is thought to have been the earlier of the two (the first-described structure) was exposed in June 1956, when Carl returned to the site ***(Fig. 4)***. It was a conventional—although massive—box frame, arranged in three bays, with continuous top and bottom plates. The common rafter roof was supported by purlins. Carl recorded some of the equipment, still in place in January 1956 ***(Figs. 5-6)***.

Early 20th century postcard view of "the old stonehouse." (Courtesy of Rod Blackburn).

A note regarding the last installment of "From Carl's Scrapbook"

After reading about the two northern Columbia County houses in the July-September issue of last year, Rod Blackburn kindly sent me a copy of a newspaper article, published in the 23 July 1960 issue of the Chatham Courier. It was written by Ida Thorne and was titled, "A Bride, A Churn, An Indian Attack: These Are Basic Ingredients for Chatham Center's Famous Legend." The article described the second house presented in the HVVA newsletter as "the historic stone fort at Chatham Center," and included an illustration of the building showing it much as it appears in Carl's photo. The article relates three versions of a story, from among "at least a half a dozen," which recount an attempted Indian raid on the house. The various versions of the story are too long to go into here, but Thorne noted that all have in common a bride, a churn and an Indian scare. (I can send along a pdf of the article to any reader who is interested in more details.) Rod also sent along a scan of the early postcard view pictured here, which notes the construction date of the house as "1701."

Walter Richard Wheeler

[1] Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Rensselaer County, New York* (1880), 519, 523.
[2] Thomas F. Gordon, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (1836), 645.
[3] John Disturnell, *A Gazetteer of the State of New York* (1842)
[4] D. J. Lake and S. N. Beers, *Map of Rensselaer County, New York* (1861).
[5] Hamilton Child, comp. *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Rensselaer County, N. Y., for 1870-71* (Syracuse: Hamilton Child, 1870), 197.
[6] Sylvester 1880, 523.
[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Sand_Lake,_New_York, accessed 11 June 2014.
[8] Mary D. French and Robert J. Lilly. *Images of America: Sand Lake* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2001), 25.
[9] Robert J. Lilly, *The Wynants Kill: A Small Stream, But Mighty* (West Sand Lake, NY: aGatherin', 2005), 9.
[10] "West Sand Lake," *Times* (Troy, NY), 2 October 1890, 4.
[11] "Grist Mill Slated For Demolition," *The Times-Record* (Troy, NY), 9 January 1956, 9. The clipping is included in Carl's scrapbook.
[12] "N. A. Brookner Opens New Store Concern," *The Times Record* (Troy, NY), 23 July 1949, 14; French and Lilly 2001, 27.
[13] "Grist Mill Slated For Demolition," *The Times-Record* (Troy, NY), 9 January 1956, 9.
[14] Ibid.

Covered Bridges in the Catskills

By Barbara Brainerd

Contributor's note: *I came across this typescript paper in a box of ephemera that I purchased in an Albany, NY-area antique store. Although unsigned and undated it appears from internal evidence to have been written by Barbara Brainerd about 1943. The text records a trip she and her husband Raymond Brainerd – a noted photographer of covered bridges – made through Delaware, Sullivan and Ulster counties. I've tried to find out if she is still alive – if so, she'd be close to 100 years old – and the reason why she might have written this paper, but turned up nothing. All the same, it's a great record of a field documentation trip in the early 1940s. There were no pictures so I have included views from a number of sources.—WRW*

It was November and we were starting again for the Catskills. I always have a special thrill when setting out for this mountainous region. This feeling is not entirely because of those legends of Rip Van Winkle made famous in the writings of Washington Irving. In larger measure, it is due to the fact that there are numerous covered wooden bridges there, and also the splendid natural beauty of the rugged terrain.

In the autumn of 1941 my husband and I had secured photographs of the five wooden spans on the ten mile stretch of road between Arkville and Seager – an average of a bridge every two miles, even closer together than those on the Gaspé Peninsula in Canada. But on this trip the structures which we planned to photograph were situated in more scattered locations – at Halls [Mills], Willowemoc, and Beaver Kill. It called for a definite task of searching and gave promise of good hunting. Here was real fun for the covered bridge seeker.

Leaving Tenafly at eight o'clock in the morning, we drove on route 17 through Suffern, N.Y., following this highway almost as far as Monticello. At Goshen, near the site of the well-known race track, we took in two young sailors, and gave them a lift as far as Middletown. They were stationed at Norfolk, Va., after three years of service over-seas. In reply to my husband's question, "Have you a girl?" one of the boys proudly announced that he was engaged. The girl lived in Middletown, so we were pleased in feeling that we had aided the lad's arrival there during his brief furlough.

At a broad curve of the highway near Wurtsboro, looking across valleys and mountains, we enjoyed the fine view.

Fig. 1 – Halls Mills Bridge, Claryville, Town of Neversink, Sullivan County. Photo by Doug Kerr, 2011.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halls_Mills_Bridge_(New_York)#mediaviewer/File:Halls_Mills_Bridge_Apr_11.jpg.

Fig. 2 – Willowemoc Bridge, Livingston Manor, Town of Rockland, Sullivan County, from a mid-20th century postcard.

Thickly settled areas lay close by, and in the distance rose the higher elevations. A short way beyond this point we endeavored to concentrate our attention on finding the road which leads north from Rock Hill. "Rock Hill", we repeated. Here our search would really begin. Usually we had sped through this tiny village, entirely oblivious of its existence; but now we watched eagerly, desirous of not making a wrong turn. A few miles past Lake Louise-Marie, we saw a sign at our right, ROCK HILL, and made the sharp turn northward. After making inquiries at a farm house a little further on, we continued toward Halls [Mills].

Looking now on the map at the circuitous route by which we reached this hamlet the lines designating the roads appear as edges of a jig-saw puzzle; and similarly, as the pieces of such a puzzle are carefully fitted together, we made our way through various towns and villages until we arrived at Halls [Mills]. This place is not even marked on one map that we used; but on a supplementary map we could discern its minute dot. It had become thickly wooded along the road-side; and I do not recall seeing even a church or store by which the place might claim a name. While watching the river at our left, in an attempt to locate the covered bridge, we first noticed the roof of the structure as we began to descend a steep, winding hill. This roof is of metal, and in the late autumn, when the leaves are off the trees, it can be plainly seen between the bare branches. We parked the car and picked our way cautiously over the loose stones of a narrow side road that leads to the bridge.

This is a one-span Town lattice structure, 119 feet long, with sides and portals buttressed ***(Fig. 1)***. We photographed two views of it, one showing the side length and one of the portal at the west end. The sides are entirely boarded except for a narrow strip of opening directly below the roof. The abutments are of stone; and part of the truss has been reinforced with steel plates. In addition to the wooden pegs in the cross pieces, iron bolts have also been used. Some indication of the recent up-keep work on the structure may be seen on a beam and one of the abutments on which is a circle in bright red and aluminum paint with the date 1940 labeled next to it, and also the data: Sullivan Co. Bridge No. 192 – July 13, 1942.

Although the condition of the bridge is well maintained and it is located near a hard-surfaced road, the structure seems to be far removed from civilization. We could see no human habitation except a small dark-looking cabin, barely discernible on a precipitous hillside. There was no noise whatever except an occasional sound of hammering that came from the secluded abode.

This timbered bridge crosses the Neversink River. What a curious name – Neversink! "How could a river sink?" I queried, disregarding the probable Indian derivation of the name; yet similar phenomena have occurred. At Lost River, N. H., the stream recurrently disappears below massive rocks and then comes into evidence again; and some rivers have been known to change their courses and become

Fig. 3 – Livingston Manor Bridge, Livingston Manor, Town of Rockland, Sullivan County, in an early 20th century view. This bridge has also been known as the Mott Flats Bridge and the Vantran Bridge.

completely lost underground. Perhaps that might be called "sinking". Regardless of its appellation or of the caprices of other waterways this river in the Catskill Mountains proceeds on a well-ordered course. Its water was shallow and crystal clear.

Beyond Claryville, a few miles north of Halls [Mills], the road becomes third class and forks in two directions. We made a wrong turn at this point and learned later that we were going toward Big Indian, 22 miles to the north, instead of toward Willowemoc. The short distance that we drove on this road, however, revealed such rare woodland beauty that we were glad we had gone that way.

Signs posted at intervals informed us that the road runs through Wintoon Park, an extensive tract of land that is privately owned. At one side flows the rippling West Branch of the Neversink River; and ascending abruptly from the road's opposite edge, above large sections of craggy rocks, rise thickly-forested mountains. Wildcat Mountain, a name which indicates the nature of the surrounding land, is among the peaks nearby. Ferns and tall masses of rhododendron grew in thick clumps. Rocks and fallen tree trunks were overlaid with a mossy covering, a deep patina smooth as velvet. Trees which had long stood a forest sentinels now lay on the breast of Mother Earth, some of them partially covered with a soft blanketing of leaves. As we drove along there was a constant unfolding of glimpses into the heart of the woodland. We were reminded of similar scenes in the Chester-Blandford State Forest in western Massachusetts, where we have walked looking with rapt admiration at the exquisite loveliness.

After inquiring about the route, of a workman who was driving by (the only person we saw along the way), we turned and continued in the direction of Willowemoc. The road ascended a steep grade and became extremely rough and narrow. The forest growth appeared the same as in Wintoon Park; but we were able to see more clearly between the myriad trees due to the fact that the land on each side of the road was of the same elevation. Because of the unusual amount of rain the water lay in broad pools, surrounded by logs and fallen leaves. Between the rocks in the road were muddy puddles.

We drove for several miles without seeing any sign of a dwelling. Suddenly, as we approached a clearing in the woods, we observed a house and decided to stop to ask information about the condition of the road between that point and Willowemoc. We could see a woman washing windows at the front part of the domicile. "Do you think she can speak English?" I said, as my husband started up the path to the door. I hadn't considered what language I thought she would speak, but I had a discouraging vision, in the

midst of this wild area, of some incomprehensible kind of talk that even Raymond, accustomed as he is to foreign languages, would not be able to understand. However, such disconcerting thoughts were groundless. The woman had a pleasing manner and spoke in well-enunciated English.

The road continued narrow and stony. Here and there, through small openings between the trees, we could see men cutting evergreens. At the farm house, we had noticed turkeys that were being fattened for Thanksgiving; and here deep in the woods, was the beginning of preparation for Christmas. We spoke to one of the woodsmen and gave him a ride as far as his home, a number of miles further on. After passing round Pond and Long Pond we approached the church and store and a few little houses which mark the center of Willowemoc. The covered bridge is located two miles west of this point. Turning onto another winding dirt road we could see the bridge ahead of us ***(Fig. 2)***.

We left the car by the roadside and proceeded on foot to the timbered structure. It was exactly one o'clock when we reached this spot—very good time considering the kind of roads we had been on and the numerous stops we had made. Of the three covered bridges which we photographed on the trip, this one is located in the most isolated setting; and as though Nature wished to give an additional touch of wildness to the scene, it began to snow at the moment when Raymond was adjusting the camera and I was preparing to make a sketch. In spite of the weather the photographs were successful, and the snow did not affect my crude drawing.

This is an unusually picturesque bridge, a single span Town lattice truss with buttressed portals, built by John Davidson in 1860. It is only 43 feet in length – more gracefully proportioned than the Halls [Mills] structure; but instead of having a soft gray appearance, the timbers are covered on both the inside and outside with a black creosote stain. As we walked through the bridge we learned the reason for this. Part of the wood had been eaten away, evidently by some animal. We speculated jokingly as to whether it had been a bear or a wildcat. Later a workman at Beaver Kill told us that hedge-hogs had done the damage, and the thick stain helped to prevent further demolishing. In one view which we obtained, showing part of the bridge interior, the lighter tone of the wood where it had been gnawed is plainly visible.

For observing the lovely setting, the south portal of the bridge offers a better vantage point than the north end. While my husband prepared to make another camera study, I walked across the road toward the woodsy ascent. The scene was a veritable Temple of beauty, a Shrine, a Sanctuary where one might worship. In quiet reflection my vision rested on the wooded hills. Rippling down between the trees and tall grasses a brook flows into the creek that runs under the covered bridge. Tumbling and splashing, the water divides into two rivulets, one above the other, forming

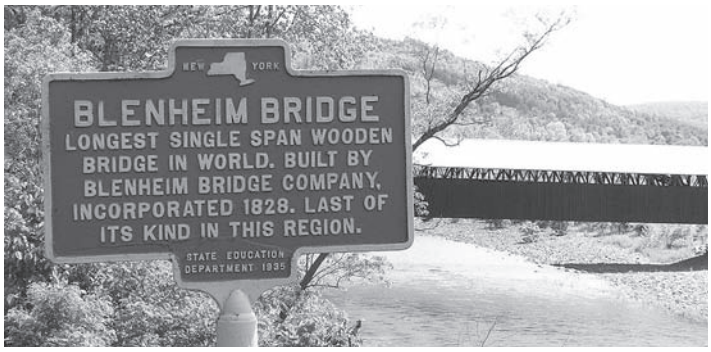
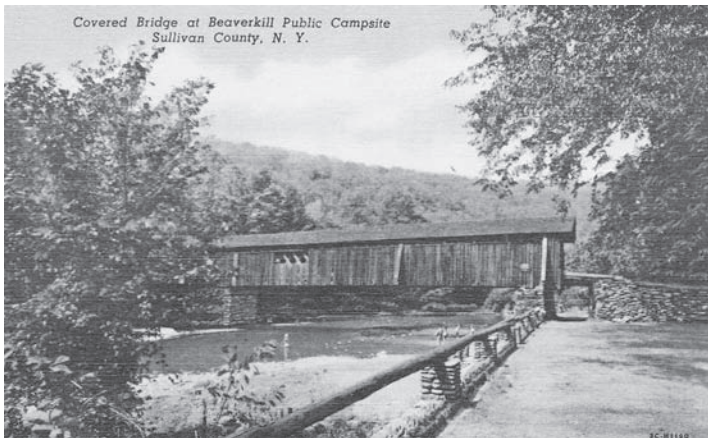


Fig. 4 – Blenheim Bridge, North Blenheim, Delaware County, with state historical marker, 2008. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BlenheimBridge.jpg

Fig. 5 – Beaverkill Bridge from south, Beaverkill State Campground, Town of Rockland, Sullivan County, from a mid-20th century postcard.



here and there miniature cascades as they make their way over the rocks. Tiny rills flow at different angles and merge with the main stream. The place is suffused with calmness, and except for the low murmur of the water the atmosphere is held in complete stillness.

My attention was abruptly distracted from this peaceful contemplation by a call from Raymond asking me to take the umbrella to him. The snow had turned to rain. Balancing the umbrella on one shoulder, he focused the camera and obtained an excellent photograph of the bridge. As we walked back to the car we noticed the rapid flowing of the creek. It is interesting to compare various river currents that flow under some of the covered bridges. The rapidity of this stream reminded us of Richland and Brush creeks in North Carolina and of rivers on the Gaspe' coast. These are in marked contrast to the slow sluggish course of Fort River under the timber span in Hadley, Mass.

The reddish dirt of the road made us think, also, of North Carolina; but here on the terra-cotta colored surface were greenish particles, like minute pebbles. Was it beryl, which is plentiful a short distance further east? It would be an interesting analysis for a geologist and I would be curious to know his conclusion; but at the moment we simply noted the sparkling color and hastened for shelter in the car as the elements became continually more severe.

Fig. 6 – Beaverkill Bridge from west, photo by Trish Kane, 2008. http://www.vermontbridges.com

In Debruce, a few miles West of Willowemoc, we stopped to eat our lunch of sandwiches and coffee which we had taken with us. The atmosphere was too unfavorable to have our picnic repast in the open, so we enjoyed it in the comfort of the car. The fact that it had begun to hail only added to our feeling of warm security and seemed to give an extra tang to the pungent flavor of the coffee which was steaming as we poured it from the thermos bottle into our cups. We turned on the heater for a few moments and looked about the countryside. The road ahead of us wound up a hill toward the left, and in the distance, on both sides, were a few farm houses. A large Esso sign was conspicuous near the base of the hill.

Fig. 7 – Lower Shavertown Bridge, Town of Hancock, Delaware County (Unidentified photographer, c.2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lower_Shavertown_Bridge#mediaviewer/File:Lower_Shavertown_Covered_Bridge_Back.JPG).

As we proceeded on our way we saw another wooden bridge, located at Livingston Manor ***(Fig. 3)***. We had photographed this one and the famous span in North Blenheim on a previous trip ***(Fig. 4)***. Leaving the village we turned directly north. After crossing the Catskill Forest Boundary we were given directions at an inn concerning roads leading to Beaver Kill Campsite, and soon we came within sight of the covered bridge which is set in a State park ***(Figs. 5-6)***. Raymond made three camera studies here. Except for a photograph of the timbered span at Henry Ford's Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Mich., and a few reproductions of the New Hampshire Flume bridge, these are the only pictures we have in our collection of a covered bridge within a public park.

Rugged hills form the background of this setting; but in other aspects it is unique and totally different from the settings of other wooden bridges. The span extends between Sullivan County and Delaware County, over Beaver Kill; and a spacious clearing has been made on the Sullivan County side, bordered by rustic fences, within which are various recreational facilities. [Actually, both sides are within Sullivan County.] On of the first objects we noticed as we approached the place was a life-guard's white chair in a space between the stones of the bridge abutment and the ramp. Nearby is a bath-house, and there are numerous benches of the same log type. Stone fireplaces are an inviting feature. We made two photographs on this playground side and then walked across the timbered structure into Delaware County. Our camera study from here shows part of the interior of the bridge and an attractive portion of the stream.

Fig. 8 – The Delaware Inn, Stamford, Delaware County, from an early 20th century postcard.

Before starting on the road toward Stamford, N.Y., where we planned to spend the night, I made some notes supplementary to my sketch of the bridge. We had Richard S. Allen's data with regard to the builder and date of construction: Built by John Davidson in 1865. Among my own jottings are the items: Town lattice, buttressed; length 98 feet; roof shingled; all wooden pegs; no paint; on stringer, "No. 47"; photo from beside stone fire-place; yellowish hill above bridge, at right. This grassy slope made a delightful color contrast with the weathered gray of the bridge timbers. There was a flurry of hail while we were here, and we noticed snow on the roof of the bath-house as we left the park.

Our route from Beaver Kill ran northeast. A few miles beyond Lewbeach [sic] we made a sharp turn to the left on the road which winds down between Middle Mountain and Touchmenot Mountain. At the summit of a high ridge we stopped to observe the view that lay spread before us. It was a scene of superlative splendor. Range after range of hills and mountains stretched away into the distance. Our observing point was at such a high elevation that these other mountains were below us, and the panorama viewed in this way was given a majestic aspect, as though seen from a lofty throne. A thin mist seemed to pervade the scene, and yet the colors were amazingly clear and had a deep-hued opalescent quality. Subtle tones of green, gray, and blue predominated. There was no habitation in sight; but as we neared the hair-pin curve in the valley below, two farm houses came within vision. A few twisting wagon roads wound their way across the wet soil; and streams and rivulets, filled almost to overflowing, tumbled rapidly down steep ravines.

In Shavertown this route passes a small wooden bridge which is strikingly similar in appearance to the privately-owned one on the Orton farm in Marshfield, Vermont ***(Fig. 7)***. We had photographed this Catskill span in November, 1941.

Ye Olde Delaware Inn in Stamford offered pleasant hospitality ***(Fig. 8)***. We returned home the following day by way of Kingston and along the Hudson River, looking forward with anticipation to photographing more covered bridges in this beautiful region.

Editor's note: *Raymond Brainerd's photographs of covered bridges have been used in Arcadia publications of covered bridges in Vermont and Maine. According to the acknowledgments for Vermont Covered Bridges (2004), the Brainerds donated their collections to the archives of the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges in Hillsboro, New Hampshire (www.coveredbridgesociety.org). Founded in 1950, this organization maintains a world guide to covered bridges and a list of ongoing projects affecting them. It publishes a quarterly magazine and holds six meetings each year in different New England locations.*

On Thursday, October 9, 2014 there will be a Fall Foliage Covered Bridge Tour in New York that will visit bridges in Otsego, Albany, Rensselear and Washington counties. Interested parties can get registration information at the society's web site.

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.**

❑ Yes, I would like to renew my membership in the amount of $ .....

❑ Yes, I would like to make a tax deductible contribution to help the effort of preserving the Hudson Valley's Architectural Heritage. Enclosed please find my donation in the amount of $ .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

City .....

State ..... Zip .....

Phone .....

E-mail .....

Please mail checks to:

HVVA
P.O. Box 202, West Hurley, NY 12491

Designed by Jon Dogar-Marinesco jon@oldbrickhouse.com

OBITUARY

Albany Times Union

Donald G. Carpentier

Donald G. Carpentier, 62, passed away at home on August 26, 2014, after a long battle with ALS. A true renaissance man of his time, he was a self-taught craftsman, tinsmith, blacksmith, potter, carpenter, and mason, as well as a teacher, mentor, father, friend, husband, brother and uncle. Don was born on September 22, 1951 in Knoxville, Tenn., before eventually moving to New York in 1954, and finally to East Nassau with his parents in 1966. He graduated from Averill Park High School in 1969 before attending Hudson Valley Community College for civil engineering and then graduating from Empire State College in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in historic preservation. After becoming interested in antiques as a child, he started collecting bottles at 14 and began his first building, a colonial A-frame, at the age of 15. In 1968, he opened his first antique shop, Chicken Coop Antiques, where he bought and sold antiques, enabling him to fund his true passion, historic preservation.

Don's efforts to preserve historic buildings began in 1971 when he moved a blacksmith's shop into his father's "east field." He eventually dismantled and reassembled more than 20 historic buildings to create Eastfield Village, which serves as a working laboratory for students attending the Early American Trades and Historic Preservation Workshops, the longest-running historic preservation school in the country, now in its 38th year. Don became interested in mochaware pottery after discovering discarded shards while moving the William Briggs Tavern. He researched the era and techniques, rediscovered many lost skills and produced museum-quality reproductions of mochaware pottery that are in use by such prestigious institutions as Colonial Williamsburg and Old Sturbridge Village. Don was proud to discover recently that he had descended from the Bissett and Price families of potters dating back to the 18th century. Don traveled to England many times in an effort to help preserve priceless molds from the Spode Pottery factory in Burslem, England, as well as Falmouth, Jamaica, to help consult with the World Monuments Fund.

He has earned many prestigious awards from museums and historical societies, the most recent being the Anne Hyde Clarke Logan Cultural Preservation Award and the distinction of Honorary Fellow of the Nantucket Historical Association. Don was dedicated to his community and volunteered as an assistant Scoutmaster in Troop 279 of Latham for many years. He was also a member of the Nassau town board for nearly two decades, where he earned a statewide reputation for his advocacy of protection of community character and home rule. He was instrumental in the creation of the town's bicentennial program, committee on historic preservation and related programs, and particularly dedicated to expanding funding for highways and protections from toxic contaminations.

2014 Calendar of Upcoming HVVA Events

September 20	Ken Walton	Putnam Co.
October 11	Walter W. Wheeler	Schodack Landing, Rensselaer County
November 15	John Ham	Upper Red Hook, Dutchess Co.
December 13	Rob Sweeney	Holiday Luncheon

For more information, please check www.HVVA.org