

*HVVA Study Tour April 18th at 10:00
at the
The Reformed Dutch Church, Claverack, N.Y. - 1767*



The Reformed Church of Claverack had very humble beginnings in 1716 when there were very few inhabitants between what is now Hudson and Hillsdale. It wasn't until 1726 that an actual church building was erected about a mile from the present location of the Reformed Dutch Church.

The current church is built on land deeded by John Van Rensselaer, of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck, in 1767 and was started and completed in that year. It is said that it was constructed of local brick and brick from Holland. The church in 1767, was not as long as the present building by some thirty feet. There was, however, a quaint little belfry on the front part of the roof.

There was the usual dissatisfaction among some of the churchgoers because of the change in location between the old and new churches. However, the canopied pew erected for the Lord of the Manor achieved the greatest protest with threats of "hew it down."

The present tower, and the wings, at the back of the church were not added until some time later. The building of the church tower was done in 1828 followed by the parsonage in 1845. The wings at the back of the church were added about 1854. The pulpit and the pews were reversed with the pulpit now placed in the center of the wings and the pipe organ was installed in 1867. In the latter part of

the 20th century there was a major renovation to structurally reinforce the roof and walls. The majority of that effort can be seen in the church's attic.

It must be noted that there have been some very fine pastors over the years since 1716 when Dominie Petrus Van Driessen was asked to assist the new church as pastor. However, there is one pastor who not only provided excellent service to the church but also had a great interest in education. Dominie John Gabriel Gebhard, from Germany and living in New York City, at 26 years of age was forced to flee New York after occupation of the British and on July 4th 1776 was called to Claverack. The problem was that he preached in German and the congregation was Dutch. He was asked to learn the "Low Dutch" language which he accomplished within 3 months.

It was primarily his great interest in education that in 1777 he was instrumental in establishing the Washington Seminary which was similar to a high school or college preparatory school. One notable attendee was Martin Van Buren. The Seminary eventually became, in 1831, the Claverack Academy and then in 1854 The Claverack College and Hudson River Institute. This was a very prestigious co-educational and military institute attracting students from outside the United States. The college consisted of many buildings and a massive 4 story complex. Sadly in 1902 the College ceased to exist and all building were soon torn down.

Van Ness / Armstrong Homestead - ca 1730



144 Route 9H North, Claverack

The Van Ness house was built by Willem Van Ness probably around 1730. It was built on a 194-acre piece of land along what is now known as Route 9H. The house at the time was considered large and was a Dutch-style farmhouse with a nearby barn complex. The house had a large addition extending to the south side circa 1800 and more than likely some of the front windows were repositioned or enlarged at that time. The house was built in an area, primarily, between two Manors, Rensselaerswyck and Livingston.

Willen Van Ness who married Gertrude Hogeboom was a landed farmer as opposed to a typical tenant farmer. As a landed farmer he acted something as go between the Lords and the tenants collecting rents, advancing claims of the Livingstons for new lands and at times of tenant unrest directing the militia.

Just north of the house Willems grandson, William, built the federal style "Talavera" a grand house in the Federal style.

Ludlow / Armstrong House - ca 1784



495 Route 23B West, Claverack

The first national style popular throughout the colonies was the Georgian style. Georgian houses are generally large in scale with rigid symmetry. The houses were built using a variety of materials, but brick was the most popular material in the Hudson River Valley region. Claverack's prominence and wealth has its early beginnings at the end of the Colonial period and is reflected in a number of its Georgian style houses.

This impressive early house was the residence of William H. Ludlow (who likely built it about 1784) while he was constructing his later home next door. At first constructed as a full two story house with a side hall and main room and rear ell, it was soon expanded (ca. 1789) to a center hall house by adding a matching room to left and enlarging the ell. Some Federal period update of woodwork, but original Georgian moldings, including cornice moldings throughout, still exist and are painted in period colors. During the Greek Revival period (ca. 1835) the exterior received a front door portico and the eaves and entablature were expanded in a compatible form. Since then almost nothing has been changed except the addition of a screened rear porch.

The famous 1797 Penfield manuscript map (7' x 11') of the original Van Rensslear Lower Manor (one third of Columbia County which had recently been sold to Mr. Penfield by Jacob Rutsen Van Rensselaer) shows this house (labeled "J. R. Van Rensselaer" who then owned and lived in the house) with a one-story

addition to the left, a small structure nearer the road (perhaps an office) and a barn to the rear.

In 1997 the house and property were placed on the National Register of Historic Places as well as on the New York State Register of Historic Places. The house consists of a brick five bay main block. Outside dimensions are: 53' wide 26' deep plus the ell of 27.5' wide and 12' deep, total 2700 sq ft on two living floors. Finished cellar is 23' x 50' (1150 sq. ft), attic about the same, partially finished two rooms.

Miller/Van Deusen Dutch Barn - ca 1760



1st Barn on Van Wick Lane off of Route 23East

This barn was last visited by a few members 16 years ago in 1999. “The original 2-bay Van Deusen Dutch barn measures 32-feet wide and 21 feet deep. It has a 12 foot nave and 10-foot side aisles making it the smallest Dutch barn known. There are 6 pairs of rafters. The center bent has 7x9-inch columns and a 12x7-inch anchor beam. The braces are hewn and the tenons extend and have one wedge on the center, internal bent. The shoulders are diminished indicating it could be an 18th century example. The 2-bay addition to the original barn contains a number of re-used parts. The frame house with gambrel-roof dates to about 1760.” (copied from the July 1999 Newsletter of the Mid-Hudson Chapter of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society)