

HVVA's Athens / Catskill Study Tour Handout – September 17, 2016

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(formatted & edited by Ken Walton
with use of HVVA's "Mapping History")

☞ **The Willows at Brandow Point**

480 Route 385 [at the intersection of Howard Hall Road (CR 53), nearly halfway between Catskill and Athens.]

➤ Owned by The Greene Land Trust & is on the National Register of Historic Places.

➤ **From the Greene Land Trust website:**

The house was built in 1788 for William Brandow and sits on a hill overlooking the Hudson River. The Willows is a relatively large home for the period and is built in the Hudson Valley Dutch Georgian style. It retains much of its historic character including two original split Dutch doors. It was originally built with four bays Dutch style and was subsequently expanded to six bays.



The farm was owned by the Brandow family for nearly 200 years being

purchased by William Brandow from Annake Witbeck in the late 1700s. There is evidence that William's father Johannes had leased the property for a number of years prior to the purchase. The Brandow, family came to the Hudson Valley with the 1710 Palatine German immigration.

The Greene Land Trust purchased this historic home from Scenic Hudson on October 1, 2009. In November 2009 the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A group from Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture visited the house and published an article (*in the March 2003 issue*) about it that is available at their website.

➤ 13 years later, its time for a revisit with additional sets of eyes.



➤ **Features:**

- Timber-framed house built in 1788.
- Original Dutch divided doors; front & back of center hall.
- Two large shallow brick fireplaces; one with raised paneling & fluted pilasters in the Georgian style.
- The original basement fireplace still exists.
- Some modifications over the years in the Victorian & Colonial Revival styles.

Narrative Description of Property

The William Brandow House, popularly known in the community as "the Willows," is located one mile south of the village of Athens along NY Route 385. The frame one-and-one-half story house is situated on a 2.3 acre parcel east of the road with its primary entrance oriented east. The east side of the house is oriented toward the Hudson River, approximately 500 feet to the east. A fieldstone wall structure is sited along Route 385 and was likely begun in the eighteenth century. A large mid-nineteenth century hay barn was present on the nominated property until the 1990s when it was destroyed by fire.

Architecture and Construction of the House

Architecturally, the house reflects the regional framing practices of the second half of the eighteenth century as well as the symmetrical plan and elevations commonly associated with the Georgian style. The house was erected with a series of 14 transverse bents consisting of continuous full width beams each mortised into a pair of posts. The pre-assembled bents were positioned and linked by wall plates. This system was widely used by ethnic Dutch and German joiners during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for houses, barns and mills and contrasts with the different English system of framing employing a combination of beams and smaller joists. Wall cavities were filled with mortared brick nogging for additional strength and insulation. The large but shallow brick fireplaces are typical of the period and appear to be original features of the house. Hinges and door hardware, particularly as exhibited in the Dutch doors, are typical of wrought ironwork in the region during this period.

The house is rectangular in plan with its gable roof ridge oriented north and south. The house has a distinctive profile due to its prominent dormers, tall chimneys, and shed roofed additions. It is built into a gentle hill which falls away to the south and east so that the basement of the house is level with grade at the southeast corner. The house is built with a timber frame above fieldstone foundation walls and contains a full basement and attic story living space. The exterior is sheathed in narrow clapboards and wall interiors are filled with brick nogging.

The overall structure includes alterations to its original c.1788 plan, with significant modifications made in the late-nineteenth century Victorian period and early-twentieth century with Colonial Revival styling. As originally built, the house included a wide center hall and two flanking rooms with five-bay center entrance elevations at the east and west. In the second half of the nineteenth century, shed-roofed additions were added to both the north and south gable ends of the original house. Fenestration generally consists of twelve-over-twelve double hung sash with several exceptions.

Six dormer windows contain early twentieth century six-over-six double hung sash windows and the north gable end windows in the attic story contain small square window sash with stained glass surrounds dating from the late-nineteenth century. The shed additions contain what appear to be reused twelve-over-twelve sash (original windows were at one time removed from the original west and south elevations) as well as a shed dormer with a fixed ribbon window of multi-light sash which appears to date from the early-twentieth century.

The main façade of the house faces east toward the river and retains its original split Dutch door with sidelights at the center. In the late-nineteenth century, a spindle-work porch with a hipped roof was built over the entrance. This, in turn, was modified late in the twentieth century with a noncontributing and reversible glazed enclosure. The west front of the house facing the road retains its original split Dutch door and is protected by a late-nineteenth century Stick style version of a traditional stoop or porch roof above a platform surfaced in concrete. Three smaller entries at the shed additions contain varied gabled or shed style porch roofs.

The interior of the house reflects a vernacular adaptation of Georgian architecture in its simple and symmetrical plan and distribution of windows. The first floor of the original house contains a wide center hall with stairs flanked by single rooms at each side. The hall and rooms are spanned by fourteen continuous beams indicative of the Dutch practice of framing with a series of post and beam units or bents. These beams are planed smooth and measure five inches in width and between eight and ten inches in depth. At the first story, floors are covered in pine boards fastened with cut nails. Walls are typically plastered with wood panel wainscots. Both of the principle rooms contain shallow brick fireplaces with bluestone hearths centered on the former gable end walls. The north wall of the north room is finished in eighteenth century Georgian style paneling combining raised panels and fluted pilasters. The paneling appears to be date to the eighteenth century, but it is uncertain if it represents an original feature of this house. The south room fireplace has been modified with mid-twentieth century delft tile in the Colonial Revival taste. This is additionally surrounded by paneling. The south addition appears to have been built to accommodate a kitchen at the basement level which later became relocated to the first floor during the twentieth century. The original basement fireplace is extant but has been filled. The north shed encloses a single room possibly used as a bedroom.

The attic story contains bedrooms and a bathroom and appears to reflect a combination of later nineteenth century remodeling and early-twentieth century improvements. The distinctive dormer windows date from the early twentieth century remodeling of the house in the Colonial Revival style. The basement includes stone walls and hearth supports and an original bulkhead door with steps at the west side. The large hewn beams and flooring above are exposed. All surfaces in the basement are coated with whitewash. The house contains a modern oil hot water furnace. There is evidence that the house at one time employed a coal furnace.

Two small barns are located immediately south of the house. The barn nearest the house is built of light frame construction with novelty siding. It appears to have been built in the late-nineteenth century as a small utility building. Window sash in the building appear to be older and possibly reused from the main house. The barn more distant from the house is also of light frame construction with novelty siding and appears to have been built as a wagon and or carriage barn.

History of the House and the Brandow Family

The Brandow family arrived to the Hudson Valley in 1710 as part of the British Crown's efforts to resettle Palatine German refugees. While many of the Palatine fled to Schoharie County after the failure of the crown's initiative to produce Naval Stores, the Brandow family

remained in Greene County and eventually would amass large tracts of land south of the present day Village of Athens. A 1748 deed documents Johan Wilhelm Brandow's purchase of land from Gilbert and Hannah Lane, with strict specifications outlining his two sons, Johannis and Godfrey's role in the running and inheriting of an active farm. The deed also reveals that the primary product coming from the Brandow Farm was fruit and wheat, and that the family did keep several slaves. It would seem that in addition to holding land, the Brandow's leased adjacent properties for farming and around 1786, William Brandow, son of Johannis, purchased the present day site from John and Annake Witbeck, who had had previously leased the land to his father. From this period on the area is noted on maps as Brandow Point.

Two dates are likely to be related to the possible construction of the house. "1781" was reportedly carved on a timber in the former barn on the property, and although the barn appears to have been built or altered in the mid-nineteenth century, the date may still be reliable in recalling the establishment of the farm. The 1884 History of Greene County reports that the house was built in 1788. The widespread use of cut nails in the construction of the house suggests that it is unlikely that the house was built much before this date since early cut nails are believed to have become commonly available only after 1790.

In William Brandow's 1789 will, the document makes efforts to sort out the complexity of the of the family's land holdings, at one point noting eight hundred and eighty four acres of land commonly owned with his four sisters. Throughout the farms period of significance, the size of the land has grown and decreased through various land acquisitions and subdividing. Studying the land surrounding Brandow point is akin to reading a who's who of Greene County's early settling families, including Bronk, Houghtaling, Van Loon, and Groom, whom all intermarried with the Brandow's.

With the Brandow family occupying the site from 1788 to 1962, many of the alterations can be attributed to various generations of the Brandow's occupying the house. After the death of William Brandow in 1789, it would appear that house changed very little through the first half of the nineteenth century. The most notable changes to the property occur during William Brandow's great-grandson occupancy. Peter G. Brandow held title to the property from 1871 to 1895, with ownership passing to his wife, Helen Van den Bergh until 1909. During this time the property continued to be used for wheat and fruit farming and it appears that the land associated with the house had settled to just over sixty acres. From this period the house gained two c.1870-1880s one-story shed additions to the north and south of the property and other late-nineteenth century alterations including a Stick style stoop facing the roadside.

The house passed to Peter G. Brandow's daughter Anna in 1909. In her 1939 obituary, it is noted that the unmarried Anna was a well-regarded New York State fruit grower and horticulturalist. This also marks one of first references to the house taking on the name 'The Willows.' An annual report from the NYS Museum remarks about Ms. Brandow's and her farm's participation with the NYS entomologist regarding a study of the Cicada insect's presence the Hudson Valley. During this period, the changes to the property reflect the owners interesting in antiquarianism, with the addition of six Colonial Revival six-over-six sash dormers and a wide shed dormer to the south wing with a ribbon window of divided lights.

After Anna Brandow's death, the house transferred to her nephew Morton van Loon of Albany, who used the house as a weekend residence. Morton Van Loon is responsible for donating the extensive Brandow-Van Loon papers to the Vedder Research Library at the Bronck Museum (NHL 1967) in Coxsackie. In 1962 Morton's son sold the property to the Coxeter family, ending the Brandow's nearly two hundred year relationship with the lands adjacent to the Hudson River. In 2002, Scenic Hudson Land Trust purchased the sixty plus acres of land on Brandow Point to continue their goals of land conservation through the Hudson Valley. In 2006, the New York State Department of Energy Conservation announced the purchase of the lands on Brandow Point and the partnership with Scenic Hudson and Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District for the conservation and management of the land. The William Brandow House and barns currently sit on 2.3 acres of land adjacent to the road and surrounded by the conservation land. The Greene Land Trust is in the process of purchasing the house and converting the building into a visitors and environmental education center.

☞ **Hezekiah Wynkoop house & Dutch barn**

44 Anbach Rd. (a dead end road off of Embought Rd.)

➤ Current residents are Lisa & Jerry Jackson. They have occupied this house for 3½ years and lease it from the current owner.

➤ **Features – House:**

- Stone & wood frame house marked with three date stones in front wall. 1792 date stone is positioned in the lower original portion of stone wall with second date stone in later stone portion dated 1820 along with initials “WWK”. A third one is inscribed “Austin C. Sartori” 1972.
- The later stone work is of a different color and is of a more quarried nature. This newer portion raised the roof by an additional three feet increasing the vertical living space on the second floor of this 1½ story structure. The newer stone masonry can be seen on all four exterior walls, front, rear, & both gable ends. The original roof pitch was maintained during this modification to the structure.



- Large cut stone lintels over front windows & door.
- A prior owner, Marilyn Spilke, did major modifications to the house and grounds in the 1972 timeframe, adding yet a third date stone to the edifice.

➤ **Features – Barn:**

- Three bay “H”- bent barn measuring 50’ x 50’.
- It is set into a hillside thereby providing another 50’ x 50’ of usable space below grade.
- Tendons of anchor beams have flat wedge pins through them where they bear against the outside face of the columns. Most of the tendons are cut square, but one has its corners cut off.
- Structure has recently received a massive renovation/reconstruction. All siding, flooring and roofing was replaced.

Driving Directions:

☞ **Lunch – 12:00 (Noon) @ “394 Main St.”** [Name & address of eatery in the Village of Catskill]

➤ **Directions from 1st house:**

- South on SR 385 (for 2.8 mi.)
- Right turn onto Bridge St. (0.1 mi.)
- Right turn onto Main St., Village of Catskill
- Restaurant on right just before large brick municipal building on left.
- Parking on street, right turn after restaurant or behind municipal building.

☞ **Wynkoop House & Barn**

➤ **Directions from restaurant:**

- Return to Bridge St.
- Right turn onto Bridge St. (for 1.4 mi.)
- Left turn onto Route 9W South (2.5 mi.)
- Left turn onto Embought Rd. (2.7 mi.)
- Right turn onto Anbach Rd. (0.8 mi.)
- First house on right, look for Dutch flag.