



Hudson-Mohawk Vernacular Architecture

Tour of Schuyler Mansion, Albany and Crailo, Rensselaer, Albany and Rensselaer counties, New York 18 April 2026

Schuyler Mansion—built 1761-65

Things to look for:

“Tomahawk” mark on the stair rail, discussed in the *HMVA Newsletter* of April-June 2025.

Graffiti in the attic—Enslaved people are believed to have lived in this space. Later in the 19th century the house was used as an orphanage. Who do you think made which marks?

Can you see evidence of the original partitions in the basement?.....In the attic?

Crailo— west portion has been dendrodated to 1707; current form ca. 1762

Things to look for:

Beaded edges remaining on lower corners of first floor beams, close to the outside walls

English bond brick pattern on the rear wall of the house seen in the attic

Evidence of the original roof configuration and for a jambless fireplace in the second floor—
found in the attic

their own children and their spouses, and a large contingent of family was usually in residence there. Taken together with Schuyler's slaves, thirteen being listed in the 1790 census, it is apparent that the number of people to be housed was quite large.³

List of Real Property

A "List of real property belonging to Philip Schuyler . . ." prepared by Schuyler in 1798, provides a wealth of information about the appearance of the house and its outbuildings, although the list was much altered by Schuyler and is difficult to read because of additions and deletions. Following is the part of the list pertaining to the mansion and its immediate appendages, a transcription which incorporates both additions and deletions in the text in order to extricate the greatest amount of information from it:

A brick dwelling house, erected in 1761 and now in good repair, of stone brick and lumber, commonly called a brick house, 62 feet in front and 47 feet in depth, two stories high with a shingled roof, and contains 26 windows each having 24 panes of glass and each pane 10 inches by 12 inches, also 6 windows each containing eighteen panes of glass of the same size. Also six windows in the roof of the house, each containing 12 panes of glass and each pane 7 inches by 9 inches.

Also 6 windows in the cellar, the aperture of each is 19 inches by 24 inches. At one of the angles of the main house are a brick office and brick nursery, each 20 feet by 24 feet one story high, with two windows in each, and with a circular aperture in each of 28 inches diameter and without cellar.

An enclosed passage of a brick wall 7½ feet high with windows in it is connected to the main house by a shed roof and forms a passage of communication between the main house, office, nursery, kitchen, and yard. In this wall are 4 windows each containing 9 panes of glass 10 in. by 12 in. and 2 windows each containing 12 panes of glass 7 in. x 9 in.

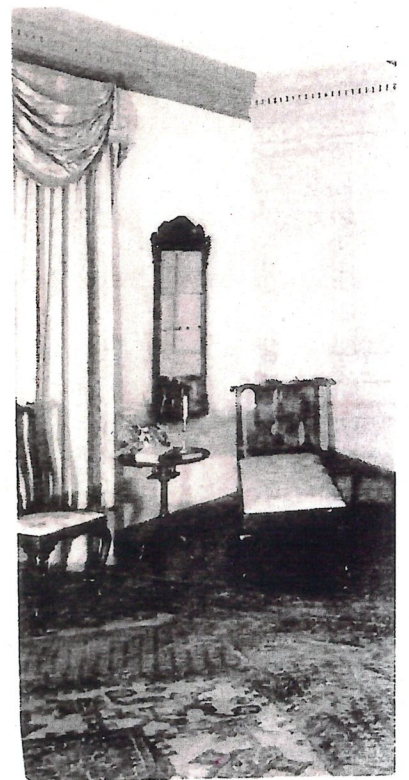
Adjoining to the nursery is a brick kitchen 24 feet by 26 feet one storey high, without cellar, with 2 windows each containing 16 panes of glass 9 in. x 11 in. and a window in the garret containing 9 panes of glass 7 in. x 9 in.⁴

This description of the house and its appendages would probably have been accurate for most of the years the house had been in existence. The kitchen and enclosed back yard are definitely established by 1781,⁵ and lack of evidence of a kitchen in the cellar suggests that the arrangement existing in 1798 was not too dissimilar from that at the beginning of the family's residence at the mansion.

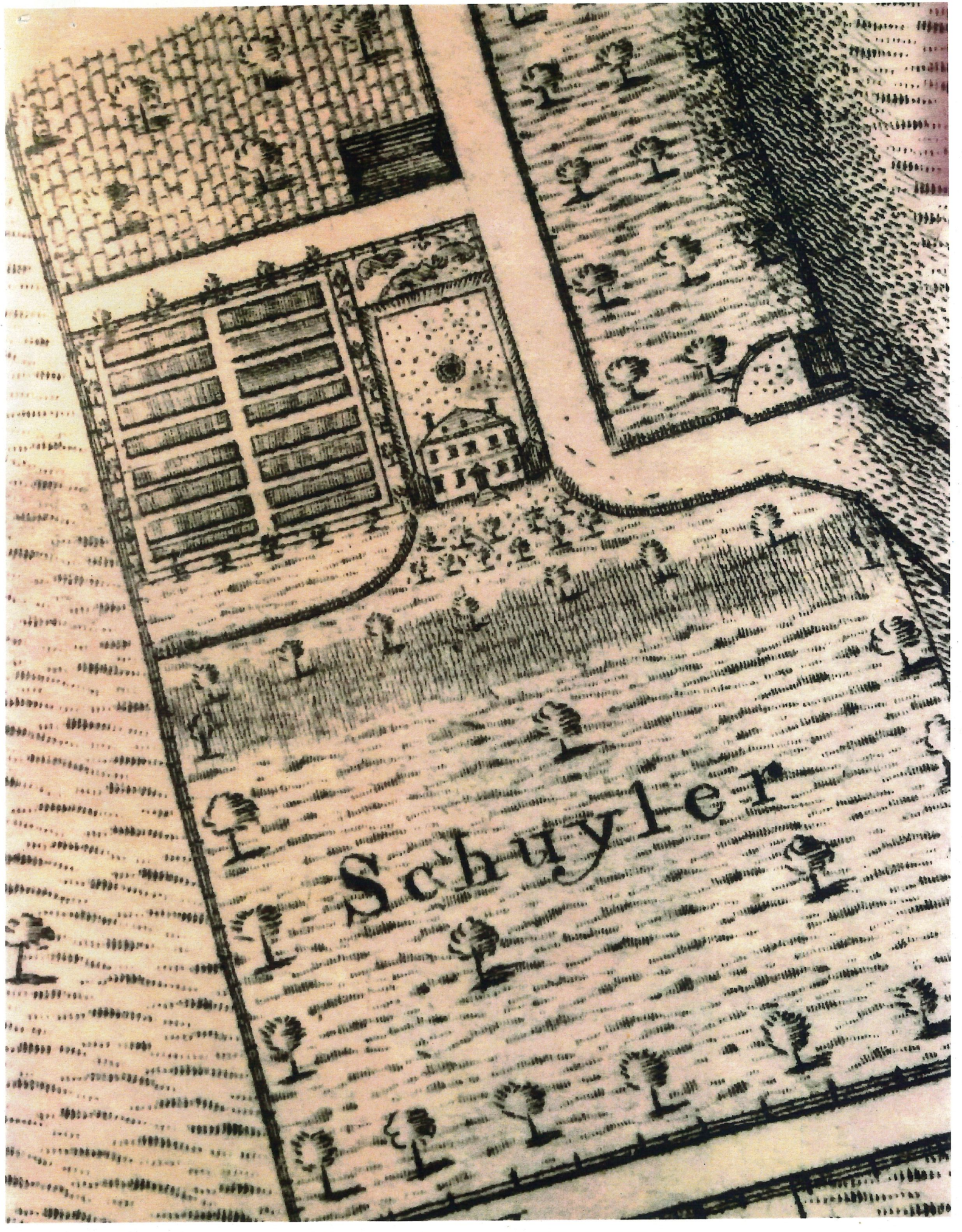
This list is as valuable for what it does not include as for what it does. For instance, the detailed description of the panes of glass in the main house does not include mention of any

Handwritten manuscript text, likely a transcription of the original document. The text is partially obscured and difficult to read due to the cursive script and some fading. It appears to be a list of property or a description of a building, similar to the printed text on the left.

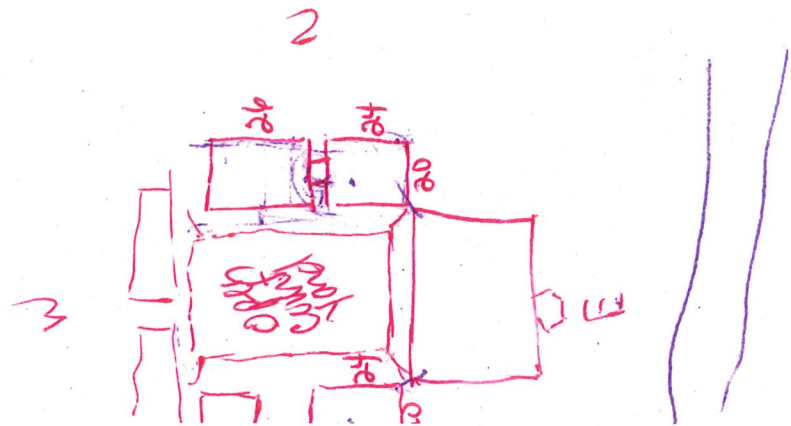
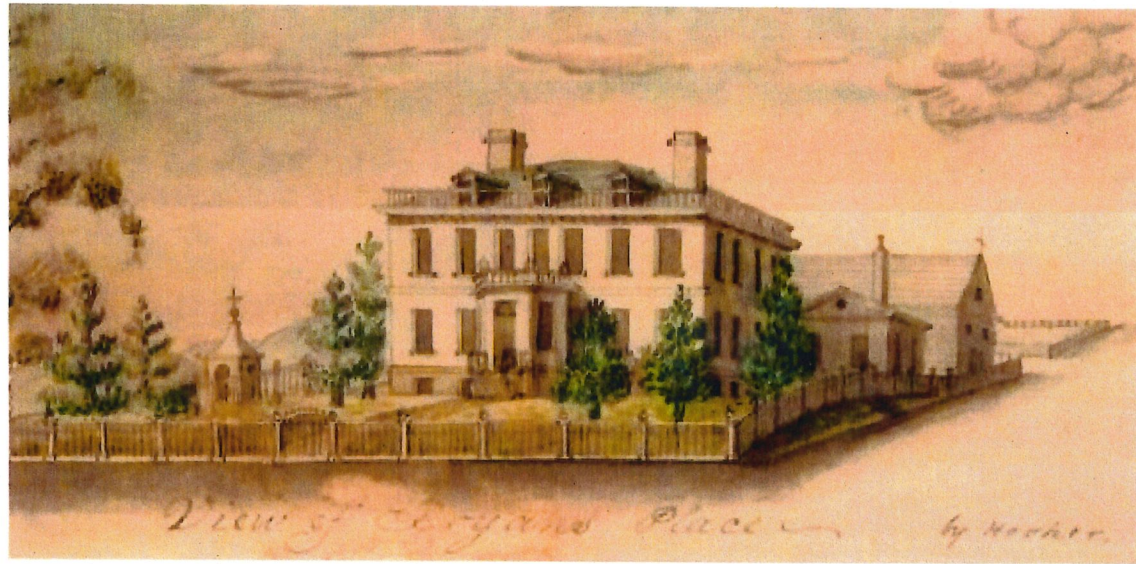
45. Detail of the "List of . . ." dated November 24, Schuyler cause difficulty in amount of information the Public Library, Manuscript



46. The southeast bedroom believed to be the room in entertained as prisoner-gue



Schuyler



Yellow Bedchamber

Originally decorated with flock wallpaper, this bedchamber is interpreted as in use by the 2 youngest Schuyler daughters, Cornelia and Caty, who would still have been living at home in 1790, and an enslaved woman as seamstress. Items here, such as books, art & writing supplies, embroidery and a filled trunk reflect the style of education the girls received at boarding school in NYC – a combination of humanities and “ornamental arts” considered appropriate for young ladies of their social rank. Portraits are Philip Jeremiah Schuyler (1768-1835) and his first wife, Sarah Rutsen (1770-1805).

Green Bedchamber

Bedchambers in the 18th century were generally public, versatile spaces in which people not only slept, but also bathed, dined, socialized, met with family, and directed the enslaved men and women who did the work of the house. The arrangement seen here illustrates the multifaceted activities Philip, Catharine, and the enslaved would have engaged in while in this room. The large size and elaborate furnishings were designed to impress the very important guests who were given this room for their own use: British General John Burgoyne, for example, was given this room while a “prisoner-guest” following his defeat at the Battles of Saratoga.

Back Courtyard

Today, none of the outbuildings or mansion appendages once located in the back courtyard survive. However, some are indicated by raised garden beds seen as you exit the mansion through the back door. The left bed represents the size and location of Schuyler’s office. On the right, the furthest bed from the mansion represents the kitchen, where enslaved women would have prepared meals for the family and guests; the bed closest to the mansion was the nursery (for plants). These buildings were connected by a covered walkway. Other work done here may have making soap, laundry, mashing meal, etc.

Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site

Schuyler Mansion was built for Philip and Catharine Schuyler between 1761-1765. It was the seat of an 80+ acre estate which included formal gardens, orchards, and farm. An enclosed courtyard was located in back of the mansion and contained out-buildings, including the kitchen, ash house, and Necessary House (outhouse). The courtyard was also where many of the men and women enslaved by the Schuyler family labored. They may have also lived in the garrets of a few of the out-buildings, as well as in the attic and cellar of the mansion.

Philip and Catharine (Van Rensselaer) Schuyler spent their lives in this house, along with their 8 surviving children (out of 15 born), up to 13 enslaved men and women, extended family, and numerous guests. Children are Angelica, Elizabeth (Eliza), Margaret (Peggy), John Bradstreet, Philip Jeremiah, Rensselaer, Cornelia and Catharine (Caty).

Front Hall

The front hall was a grand space intended to impress visitors. Twenty-six feet long with twelve-foot high ceilings, adorned with elaborate wainscoting and English hand-painted wallpaper called *The Ruins of Rome*, it was the first space in which Schuyler’s status, wealth, and desire to be fashionable were emphasized. This was underscored by family and guests being met at the door by an elaborately dressed enslaved man, possibly Prince, Schuyler’s head enslaved servant.

The hall was not only a passageway to other rooms, but during warmer months, might also be used as a room by the family for dining, entertaining, or visiting. However, the lack of a fireplace would prevent winter use when the hall would be extremely chilly.

The Best Parlor

At the time of Philip Schuyler's residence in the mansion, the Blue, or Best Parlor would have been the most formal and elegant room found in the house, perhaps in the city of Albany. Here the Schuylers would display their wealth and elegance to prestigious guests visiting the mansion, including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Marquis de Lafayette, and John Jay.

Conversation, playing music, singing, or an evening of games as seen here, were some of the 'refined' activities that took place. Often, special occasions and family events would be held in the most distinguished room of the house and so this room was the setting for the marriage of Elizabeth Schuyler and Alexander Hamilton in 1780.

Yellow Parlor

This room served as a slightly less formal gathering space, where family members and more intimate guests would gather to converse, write letters, read the family Bible (on table) and drink tea, as shown here. Equipped with stylish furniture that could accommodate different activities, it's possible that this room was heated and often used by the family during the coldest winter months as well. Portrait is youngest daughter Caty Schuyler (1781-1857) holding her baby daughter.

Library

While Philip Schuyler received little formal education, he was nevertheless a learned man and used this room for his private study. The breadth of his interests was a sign of wealth and culture – as was the size of his library. In an age when many people were illiterate, Schuyler's collection of over 200 books was truly extraordinary. He owned books in six languages: English, Dutch, Latin, French, German and Greek and had a wide range of interests: business, politics, finance, mathematics, and political philosophy. His collection was used by Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr and John Jay, among others. Schuyler also received and wrote letters

for his many political and military affairs in this room, likely served by Prince, an enslaved servant and Philip's personal attendant.

Dining Room

While the Schuylers likely continued the earlier practice of dining in the house where season and comfort dictated, by the 1790's having a formal dining room was both a symbol of economic success and indicative of a high level of refinement. High status guests would have dined here, eating numerous courses seen here, that would have taken the enslaved cook days of labor to prepare. Guests would have been served by liveried enslaved men/boys. Portraits are: (above sideboard): Philip Jeremiah Schuyler (1768-1835) and his 2nd wife Mary Ann Sawyer (1786-1871) and Cornelia Schuyler Morton (1776-1808) and husband Washington Morton (1774-1810).

Saloon

This spacious hall, adorned with painted wainscoting, hand-painted *Ruins of Rome* wallpaper, and an elaborate cornice, was likely used for receiving prominent visitors, and for dancing or other large gatherings. While a perfect place to sit and catch river breezes during the summer, the Saloon was a mere passageway to warm bedchambers in winter months. The image on the windows is a replica of one painted by Thomas Davies from near Schuyler's property in 1766, showing the view over the Hudson River.

Blue Bedchamber

This smaller bedchamber is interpreted as being in use by visitors. Schuyler's military, business and family affairs would have brought many visitors to the mansion. As travel in the 18th century could be long and arduous, hosting overnight guests - who carried bedding or even a bedstead as part of their baggage - was common. Furnishings would have enabled different activities such as hygiene, eating, socializing, or writing letters.