Living History

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PLIMOTH PLANTATION

From its beginnings in the 1940s to the present, Plimoth Plantation has become a model for regional living history interpretation. Recreating the village Pilgrims began in 1620 on the Atlantic coast just north of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, was a longtime dream of Henry Hornblower II. He was a native of the area and had a life long interest in the lives of the Pilgrims and the Indians of Plymouth and was disturbed to see visitors come to town and leave with little or no knowledge of the Pilgrims' life and times. He envisioned a living museum that would show how the veterans of the Mayflower survived after landing at Plymouth and what they accomplished during the early years.

In 1948, soon after acquiring a small piece of land near Plymouth Rock, he had a model of an early house constructed. It drew 390,000 people the first year. Work was begun on a second house, representing a later building style, from 1627. These structures, though no longer consistent with the most up-to-date study and archeology, are still used in conjunction with Mayflower II, a fullscale reproduction of the type of ship that brought the Pilgrims to America. Built in England, the Mayflower II was sailed from Plymouth to Plymouth in 1957; with its crew in period clothing, it remains a popular and impressive site at Plymouth.

In 1956, Plimoth Plantation acquired a larger site nearby on the Eel River, where a visitor center, a craft center, and a stockaded village have since been built. At Hobbamock's home site on the river's edge, Wampanoag Indian Program staff, some in twentieth-century clothing, tell the story of the native Wampanoag people and of Hobbamock and his family, who had come from Pokanoket (in present day Rhode Island) and helped the Pilgrims in the early years.

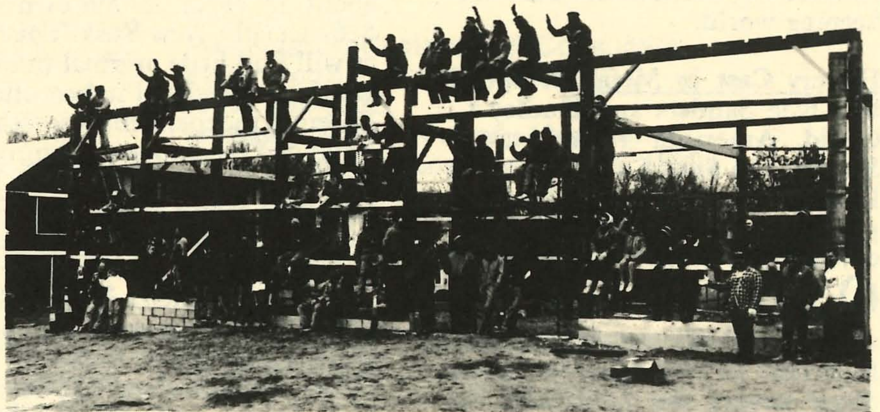
(continued on page 7)

A MICHIGAN BARN RAISING LOOKING BACK-LOOKING FORWARD

by Stephen Stier

Barn building in America was an experience of every rural generation for nearly 300 years. Neighboring families gathered together from miles around to work and to socialize. Today that long chain of shared experience has been broken for three or four generations, yet the mention of a barn raising will bring a smile of recognition from nearly everyone.

Even more than the farmhouse, the barn served as an anchor to the farmstead. Many of these icons of farm life are still standing but are ill-used and deteriorating. Barns have become the victims not only of rapidly changing agricultural circumstance, but also of our failure to recognize the worth of history and its lessons. I believe that the tools, skills, and knowledge of traditional barn building, as well as the barns that remain, have something important to teach us.



Barn Raising, Bill Sauders Farm, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Photograph by Paul Carlson, courtesy of Tillers International

In 1988, Bill Saunders, who grows grapes near Kalamazoo, Michigan, found that his circa 1870 barn was in bad enough shape that it was not usable. Bill called on M. Stitt Barn Restoration of Hesperia, Michigan, to do the necessary repairs. While the barn was jacked up to replace rotted sills, Mother Nature brewed up the strongest storm in years. High winds left the old barn a heap of broken beams. Feeling fortunate that no one was hurt, Bill Saunders was resolved to accept the loss, but Mike Stitt would not.

One of an extended family of barn repairmen with roots in the trade. Mike began painting and repairing barns with his father and brothers at a very early age. Soon after the Saunders barn was destroyed he began to collect the materials needed to build a new one, but in 1988 he could not foresee how long it would take, nor the course of events that would produce a new barn.

(continued on page 2 and 3)

BOOKS

Super Formulas, Arts and Crafts; by Elaine C. White; Valley Hills Press, 864 S. Ridgeland Drive, Starkville, Miss. 39759; 1993; 114 pages, $12.95 softcover.

The author of this well done book spent four years researching and kitchen-testing its 360 formulas for useful products that contain honey and beeswax. From a simple cheese wax, (13.5 ounces beeswax, 2.5 ounces vegetable shortening. Heat to 200 degrees F to combine. Dip cheese when wax reaches 160 to 180 degrees), to complex but careful step-by-step instructions for turning honey into Mead, perhaps man's first alcoholic beverage, this book covers it all. Super Formulas is for beekeepers, artists, and do-it-yourselfers, but anyone could benefit from its practical knowledge. The appendix of more than 50 suppliers is especially handy. This book has been well received in publications of the beekeeping world.

History Cast in Metal; compiled by Clyde Sanders and Dudley C. Gould, American Foundrymen's Society, 505 State Street, Des Plaines, IL 60016-8399; 576 pages, 400 illustrations, $30 hardcover.

One of the best books covering the history of iron in America from 1607 to 1890, *History Cast in Metal* covers the field from its beginnings to the era of large scale production. It describes the many uses of steel, the men who developed it, and the places it was manufactured. Write AFS for a catalogue listing over 100 books and manual on all aspects of cast metal. Including an English-Spanish dictionary containing 8,000 metal casting terms.

Peter Sinclair

Dutch Barns of New York - An Introduction; by Vincent J. Schaefer, Purple Mountain Press, Ltd., Box E-3, Fleischmanns, NY 12430; 80 pages, 8.5 x 11, 65 illustrations, softcover; $15 plus $3 postage and handling

It has been 26 years since the publication of John Fitchen's seminal work, The New World Dutch Barn, the first extensive treatise done on this major ethnic barn type of the northeast which originated in the early seventeenth century with the Dutch settlement of the Hudson Valley. This tradition of barn continued into the mid nineteenth century. Two editions of Fitchen's book were printed, the second appearing about 1975. Nothing has been readily available since.

This new book by Purple Mountain Press is a welcome addition. It is a valuable source of information for the general reader. Schaefer illustrates most of the salient features. He discusses the roof structure, the internal framing, pentices, marten holes, metal and wood hinges, and doors. There is also an emphasis on the variability of the design.

Beyond the general description of the Dutch/American barn, Schaefer's book is largely provincial. He briefly describes about 15 barns in his own area, Schenectady, New York. The reader will find little original information beyond what Fitchen offered. Recently independent research has expanded the understanding of the Dutch/American barn. They have now been found in about 25 counties of New York and New Jersey and one provence of Canada.

In Fitchen's book only 10 counties were represented, and he located only three barns in New Jersey. To date about 125 barns in New Jersey, and 400 to 450 in New York have been documented. New information has been revealed relating to the development and regional variations or subtypes of the barn. Although lacking this new information, Schaefer's book is a much needed reaffirmation of the existence of the Dutch barn which is rapidly vanishing from our landscape. Schaefer's book is a good introduction to the subject.

Greg Huber

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(A Michigan Barn Raising; continued from page 1)

My association with Mike began in early 1992 when we developed an educational exhibit about traditional barn-building tools and methods for the Michigan State University Museum. The museum had been called on by the Michigan State Fair Council to enhance agricultural and educational exhibits at the fair. The result was an agricultural living history area within the fairgrounds, named the Country Life Historic Park. Coordinated by the museum, interpreted exhibits and demonstrations were provided by living history farms and historical/educational groups from across Michigan provided exhibits and demonstrations. As exhibitors, Mike and I were delighted with the public's interest in the tools and processes of traditional barn building.

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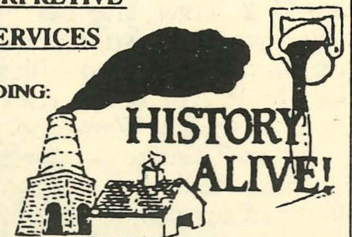

- Living History Programs
- Interpretive Training Workshops

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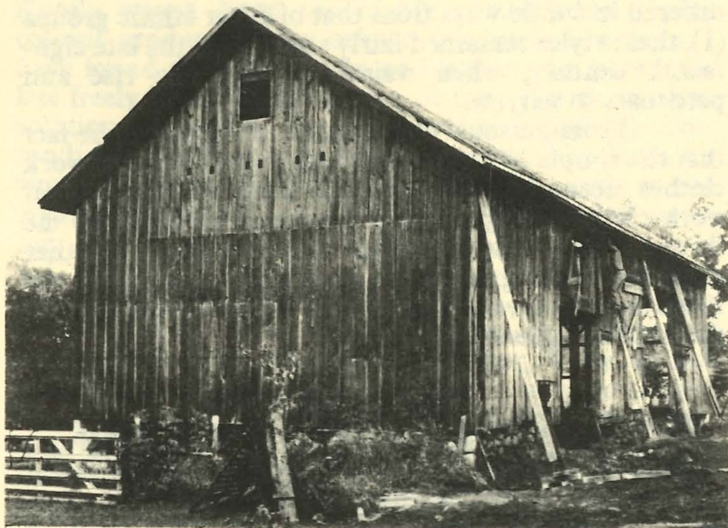
Another exhibitor at the fair was Tillers International of Kalamazoo, Michigan. This non-profit organization dedicated to preserving nearly lost rural arts and crafts. In 1993 Mike joined with Tillers to design and produce a living history workshop that would invite participants to use the old tools and methods to actually produce a barn. And the barn to build? Well, the one that Bill Saunders lost to the wind, of course.



Original Saunders Barn Before the Big Wind: The six small openings on the end wall of the ban are pigeon holes. Many traditional American farmers encouraged pigeons to roost in the lofts of their barns and they ate squab occasionally.

The workshop was divided into three parts; a one-day introduction to skills, a three-day beam work session and a one-day barn raising. The bulk of the frame joints were to be cut and fitted during the three-day session. The eight workshop participants were joined by an equal number of instructors and members of the Stitt family. In all, 20 people worked continuously for three days to complete the framing, doing the majority of the work with hand tools that would have been available 100 years ago.

It quickly became apparent that the work planned for three days would take nearly twice as long. Rain slowed our pace to a crawl for one whole day, reminding us that Mother Nature always has the upper hand.

Raising day broke chilly and grey, as if brooding over the decision of whether to rain or snow. There was a hum of activity at the site even before daylight as the sills were cut and placed on the foundation. By the first hour of daylight many people had arrived to join teams focused on a dozen different projects. Sills were morticed for posts. Plates and purlins notched for rafters. Girts were cut to length and tenons formed. Finally timbers were assembled and pegged together on the ground to form bents which were to be raised by people with pike poles and a team of oxen.

At midmorning the first bent was raised. Even the most casual observer was moved to see the huge timbers go up, moved only by human and animal power, to hear the shouts of encouragement and grunts of effort; the creaking sounds of the wood. Even though we know intellectually that our barns built before 1930 were raised in much this same way, the raising of the Saunders barn made that knowledge real, it was truly a remarkable experience and a vivid history lesson for everyone.

The day was not without setbacks. One of the bents had been assembled with parts reversed and the mortise of the door header was in the wrong place. In the large scheme of things, these were but minor delays. When you consider that several hundred joints were cut by 20 different people, over a three-week period and in two locations, everything went well indeed. There were no injuries and we felt blessed with good fortune and a good barn. Feelings that I'm sure we shared with barn builders of a century ago.

The success of this workshop has prompted planning for two others during 1994. Each will be a living history event and research tool to expand our knowledge of traditional barn building.

Stephen Stier, is a preservation contractor and consultant in Lansing Michigan.

For information on upcoming traditional timber frame workshops in Michigan write or call:

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Michigan State University Museum
History Division, East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 432-3358

M. Stitt Barn Restoration
P.O. Box 83, Hesperia, MI 49421
(616) 854-1778

Tillers International
5239 South 24th Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49002
(616) 344-3233

Oxen and Human Power Raise the Second Bent of the Saunders Barn

Photograph by Michael M. Smith

CLOTHES THAT WORK

Some Advises on Eighteenth Century Women's Work Clothes

By Karen Mullian

Introduction

It is unlikely that we shall ever fully understand the eighteenth century mind; and it can be hazardous to make generalizations about the lives played out against the backdrop of the American Revolution.

Some generalizations in the case of clothing, however, can be made with certainty. While fashions of the wealthy have always been at the mercy of whim, *haute couture* did not change as rapidly 250 years ago as it has in our day when what's in fashion today will most assuredly be old news tomorrow.

The fashionable lady's gown, the mantua, changed only gradually between the 1680s and 1780s, and the term continued in use into the nineteenth century. In rural communities and lower economic urban areas, women's clothing was altered little over that period. Hemlines and waistlines varied occasionally in pale imitation of the fasion of the better sort. By and large, though, the wives of farmers and chraftsmen and their "spinster" (unmarried) sisters carried on clothing traditions centuries old.

The clothes described in this article represent the basic garments worn by these women. Too few working garments of the period have survived to give a complete picture of their wardrobes. They tended to wear out, be cut down for other wearers, end up as patches, or be carted off by the rag man, but enough examples exist to give us a glimpse. Individual imagination, taste, economics, and morality lent a degree of variety, but eighteenth cntury working woman's clothing remained, to a great degree, a matter of form following function.

Part One

In Which a Question is Posed and Hopefully Answered

The question of what constitutes acceptable reproduction clothing for interpretation of eighteenth century women's work is often asked both by the public and by newcomers to the world of living history. This article deals with the clothing worn by the common housewife, whether living in town or in the country in southeastern Pennsylvania, and is intended to help answer that and others. I hope it may also open some doors to those interested in the history of clothing.

The determining factors for choosing appropriate clothing for interpretation are: 1) time period, 2) geographic location, and 3) ethnicity, religion, and economic status of the person or people to be interpreted. Members of Past Masters in Early American Domestic Arts demonstrate household processes common among the English settlers of southeastern Pennsylvania at the time of the American Revolution. The colonists who settled the area south and west of Philadelphia were predominately English Quakers, augmented by Welsh, Irish, and Scots-Irish, German, Swiss, and Moravians, Huguenots Acadians, and Africans. Clothing of rural women and urban women of "the lower sort" (economically, not morally) drew upon styles that had their origins in peasant garb of the Middle Ages. While British clothing differed in subtle ways from that of other ethnic groups (1), these styles remained fairly static until the late eighteenth century, when waistlines began to rise and petticoats to narrow.

From personal experience I can attest to the fact that the simple construction of eighteenth century work clothes means that they really do work. I made my first work cloths four years ago, and they have served me through considerable weight fluctuations. Two other members of our group have worn clothing made in the 1980s through several pregnancies without discomfort or the need for alterations.

Part Two

In Which a Brief Description of Eighteenth Century Textiles is Offered for the Edification and Enlightenment of the Reader.

When independence was declared, there were textile mills in Philadelphia and a thriving weaving industry in Chester County, Pennsylvania. The major commercial textile production however was still based England, fabrics were imported for sale in the colonies.

The most common textiles used for clothing in southeastern Pennsylvania during the eighteenthth century were linen (once referred to as poor man's fabric}, wool and cotton. Sheep and flax were raised on farms, the wool and linen spun into yarn and sent to the local weaver for weaving into fabric; wool was then dispatched to the fuller for finishing. Spinning was women's work, for which spinsters received small renumiration. Once spun, wool or linen became the provenance of men. As with weaving, most dyeing was a commercial enterprise. Considering the never ending responsibilities of a housewife without servants or the equipment required for whole-lot dyeing. It seems unlikely that many women undertook more than spinning and sewing at home. The eighteenth century housewife did have an amazing spectrum of color and weaves from which to choose: reds, browns, grays, yellows, blues, and greens were available in a plethora of stripes, checks, and plaids (3). Silk imported from the orient was expensive and generally purchased by the wealthy, although plain silk gowns were not unheard of among the middling sort (3). Both plain and printed cottons were imported from England, where cotton grown in India was processed. The first cotton mill in England was established in 1742 (4); cotton however, was not a viable crop in America until well after the Revolution because of the extensive labor required for growing and processing.

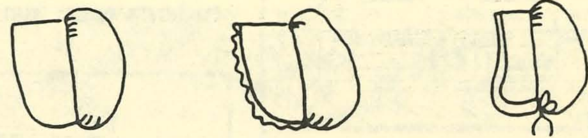
A word of caution about choosing fabrics for reproduction clothing:
Wool and "stout" (tightly woven, heavy weight) linen afford the best protection against injury due to fire. When burnt, wool gives off an offensive odor before extinguishing itself. Heavier linen will smoulder, giving the wearer an opportunity to douse any clothing that has begun to burn (5). Most cottons and lighter-weight, loosely woven linen are highly combustable. (Some cottons produced today behave amazingly like linen. I have found that the heavier and tighter the weave, the less freely it burns. Cotton can be treated with an alum solution to provide some flame resistance) (6). Cotton/linen blends, such as fustian (in which the fibers are woven not spun together), were available locally in the eighteenth-century and are appropriate for period clothing.

Beware of "unnatural" fabrics.
Unlike 100% natural fabrics, polyesters are unacceptable for reproduction clothing. They do not behave as natural fibers do: They do do wrinkle or have the same drape; and when they are burned, they melt, creating greater problems for the wearer than any burn received from wool, linen, or cotton. Be on guard against fabrics sold as "linen"--many have little or no linen in them. there are also some cottons today, while not sold as linen, look much like linen to the unaware. "Calico" is misleading term. In the eighteenth-century calico refered to a specific cotton cloth of varying quality, origionally made in India. It was often white, sometimes dyed other colors, sometimes printed or painted with floral designs. The "Little-House-on-the-Prairie" calicos, so prolific today, **ARE NOT** acceptable. In the absence of an experienced eye, and until you can consult with someone knowledgeable in textiles, a good rule of thumb is: When in doubt, leave it out.

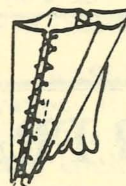
Part Three

In which the Reader is Introduced to the Principal Players: The Clothes.

SHIFTS. A direct ancestor of the peasant blouse popular during the 1960s and '70s, the shift (7) was the *only* undergarment worn by eighteenth century working women regardless of social standing (giving new meaning to the word "shiftless"). Worn beneath the stays, the shift absorbed body oils that would otherwise soil outer garments. Handsewen out of 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 yards of medium -weight white or natural linen, depending on the wearer's size and width of fabric, the hemline usually reached to midcalf. Elbows were always covered by the sleeves, as they were considered ugly. The basic design of the shift was an A-line made up of recangles for the body with long triangular gussets added for fullness, squares for the sleeves, and diamond shapes (squares cut on the bias) for the underarm gussets. If the fabric was wide enough, the body was cut entirely from one piece (8). Drawstrings of lucet cord or woven linen tape were used to adjust the neckline and sleeves. Clothing inventories reveal that some women had numerous shifts, although the age and condition of these garments are rarely indicated. It is likely that the average woman had two shifts-one to wear and one to wash (12).



CAPS. All women from infancy to death wore caps for warmth, cleanliness, and safety. Eighteenth-century houses were draughty, and hearth-fires caused soot and threw off sparks. Caps kept the head warm and the hair clean; and because hair was worn pinned or pulled up under a linen cap, it was protected from burning. The circular mob cap, gathered on a drawstring, was not fashionable until the Federal Period. Caps were also an indication of a woman's modesty: No one except a woman's husband saw her without a cap or stays.



STAYS. Also called bodices, or a pair of bodies, Stays (10) were worn by most women who cared about their reputations. Throughout England records of Overseers of the poor indicate that leather and cloth stays or materials to make them were issued to poor women who could not otherwise afford them. Cloth stays made of several layers of stout linen and stiffened with strips of whalebone or featherboning made from goose quills inserted into narrowly stitched channels were worn for more support or better dress. Staymakers advertising in Delaware Valley newspapers during the Revolution offered garments called "jumps" as well as boned stays among their wares (11), Jumps were probably a lightly boned upper body garment worn when little support was wanted or needed. Half-boned stays had boning in every other channel and were more rigid, allowing less freedom of movement than jumps. Full-boned stays were even more rigid, with boning in every channel. These were rarely worn by working women because they severely restricted movement.

Whether made of leather or boned fabric, stays provided support for the back, an important factor when a woman spent much of her time bending, lifting, and hauling, as well as presenting the figure dictated by fashion. Like women of every age, women of all classes in the eighteenth-century were interested in having the most current styles their status could purchase or needles could produce. And as with the cap, a woman appearing in public without stays was, for obvious reasons, considered "loose."

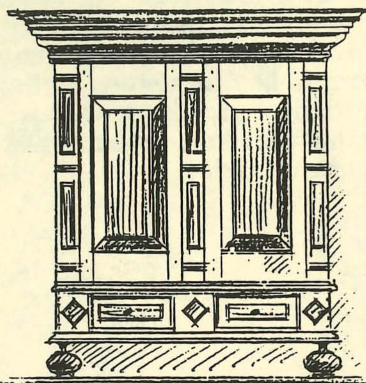
(continued page 10)

ISABELLA COUNTY, MICHIGAN BARN and FARMSTEAD SURVEY

A survey of all the barns and farmsteads of Isabella County in central Michigan was recently organized by a small group of concerned people there who have worked with local FFA (Future Farmers of America) and 4-H groups, of high school age. The students have completed the initial documentation and photographed external features on farm buildings built before 1950 in the townships of Nottawa and Fremont.

Using an eight-page training and field manual which contains a brief history of the settlement and of the development of farming in the county, the students were instructed to note certain external features and record them on a two-page documentation form. These include the roof style, lay out, and condition of the barns, as well as an evaluation of the historic integrity of the farm, which is determined by evidence of alteration and additions.

These initial surveys will now be organized and analyzed, and certain farmswill be chosen for a more detailed inspection that will include a description of the internal structure of the barn.



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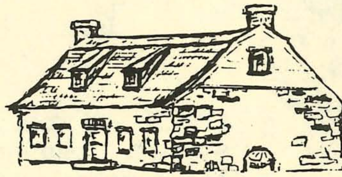

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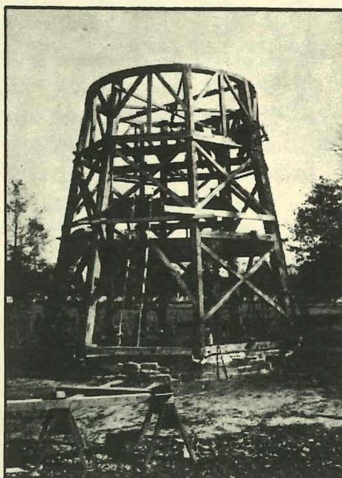

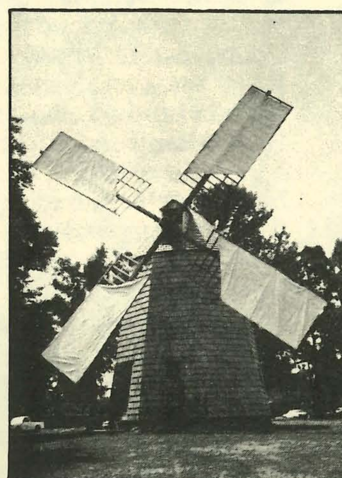

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The Isabella County survey manual of June 1993, lists three goals of the project:

1. To identify rural buildings and farmsteads that contribute to the unique character of the community or illustrate it's agricultural development.
2. To heighten local awareness of the decline of older farm buildings.
3. To help participants and others gain a greater appreciation for the value of agricultural life and heritage.

Structural Preservation and Adaptive Reuses of Michigan Barns (*), has been helpfull in the survey. This excellent book touches on most aspects of barns. It includes a large bibliography and four case studies of barns in Washtenaw County. Although it does not cover the round and multi-sided barn, it does describe the development and structure of six common types of Michigan barns, including the nineteenth-century heavy timber frame barns with gable and gambrel roof styles, two later types of balloon-frame barns with truss-supported roofs, and a recent barn with laminated rafters that form a Gothic arched roof.

The book suggestes, "An ideal way to preserve large barns is to preserve the economic and social system that produced and depended on them. This may seem to be a utopian solution for keeping barns and other farm structures in the Midwestern landscape., but arguments for protecting and promoting family farming are being heard from quarters besides the historic preservation community. A National Research Council report (1989) has pointed out that a large farm is not always more efficient than a small one. In addition to being efficient economically, small farms may have substantial ecological advantages."

★★★

(*) Structural Preservation and Adaptive Reuse of Michigan Barns, by Hemalata C. Dandeckar, Robert M. Darvas, and Eric Allen MacDonald, pub 1992, a 171 page illustrated book is available from Publications, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan, 2000 Bonisteel Boulevard, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2069. $15 postage included.

For information on the Isabella County Barn and Farmstead Survey contact:
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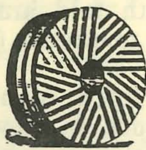
MILLSTONE DRESSING



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CENTRAL VIEW
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(Plimoth Plantation; continued from page 1)

The present village and its interpretation developed slowly over many years, as the plantation experimented with a wide range of techniques. Today's interpretation is the result of years of research into the historic record and archaeology of the region. At first it simply reflected the norms of indoor history museums. The earliest program employed somewhat fanciful Pilgrim houses, antique furnishings of the late seventeenth century, mannequins, and captioned signs.

View of Hobbamocki's (Wampannog Indian) Homesite
photo courtesy of Plimoth Plantation

In 1960 Plimoth Plantation launched a series of excavations at several sites pre-dating 1650. A wealth of new information came to light, including the fact that the early houses were built with post hole methods and not with stone foundations, as had been thought. A 1966 report on the village's architecture suggested corrections to the material setting, and so began a new direction in the development of the plantation.

In demonstrations, careful reproductions of articles replaced antiques. Costumes were produced in accurate fabrics and patterns. In 1969 the mannequins were removed from the village, and guides became interpreters who no longer simply talked about Pilgrim history, instead they used the village and its artifacts as tools with which to develop discussions on a number of topics, such as religion, economics, the military and medicine. Modest experiments with role-playing began in 1971, with the introduction of scripted events.

First-person interpretation was instituted in 1978. Visitors now meet individuals with personal stories to tell, men and women speaking in dialects, performing daily chores, contending with dust and flies. This reinforces the village environment, conveying a vivid sense of a different time and culture. Today the material culture of the household, including tables, chairs, and tools, are reproductions; the visitor is encouraged to sit on a bench beside the hearth while a woman cooks, or to try out an empty bed in a dark corner of a small earthy dwelling. "Ask any question you wish", interpreters urge the visitor, "but remember; This is 1627. "

(continued on page 8)

(**Plimoth Plantation**, continued from page 7)

To interpret the livestock breeds of 1627, the cattle, goats, pigs, sheep, and poultry at the plantation are carefully chosen and bred for historic accuracy. This is possible only because of the growing interest worldwide in preserving historic breeds. Milking Devon, unique to America, and Kerry, thought to be one the purest surviving descendent of the Celtic shorthorn brought to the British Isles in the second millennium B.C., were chosen to represent cattle that were likely used at Plymouth Colony.

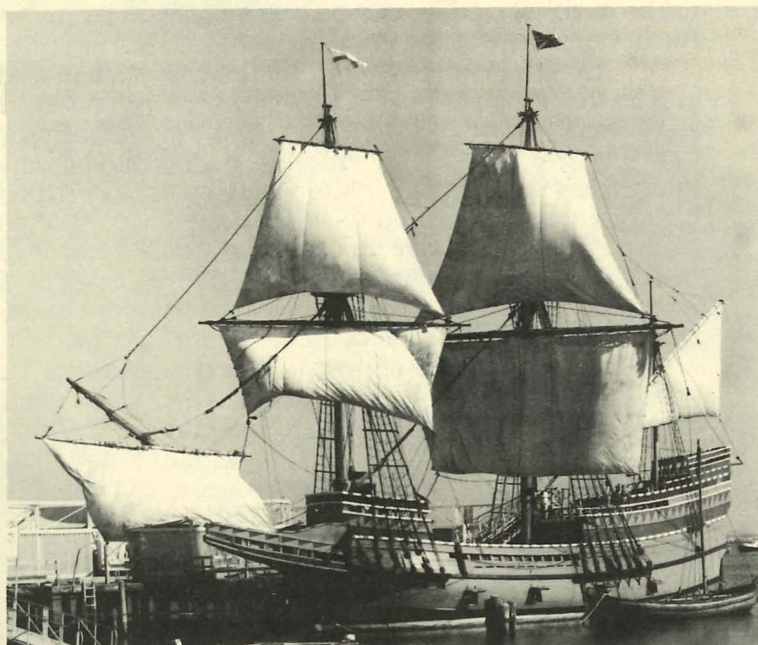
Both the Milking Devon and the Kerry are listed as critical by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (1), which is working to preserve 93 endangered breeds of horses, pigs, and poultry. Of these 37 are listed as critical, meaning that there are fewer than 200 annual registrations in North America and fewer than 2,000 animals worldwide. Living history sites like the Plantation are an important link in the network of livestock preservation.

Isaac Allerton House, Plimoth Plantation August 1973, Dr. Henry Glassie, folklorist, instructs his volunteer helper, Joseph Saviola, how to drill a 1627 hole with a circa 1875 twist bit auger. The house plan is based on Henry Glassie's field work in the British Isles.
photo by Don McTernan

There are a growing number of historic sites in North America that take great care with the accuracy and effectiveness of their presentations. Historic crafts and costume are the tools of the trade at open air museums today, and first-person interpretation is increasingly popular (2), Plimoth Plantation is one of a small group of sites (3) with a focus on the early Americanization of European folk culture which predated the Renaissance, a style expressed in the northeast by the Georgian center-hallway house plan and adopted classical details.

James Deetz is an historic archeologist closely associated with the evolution of Plimoth Plantation's interpretation (4). He describes the way the medieval style and conservative outlook of early New England was expressed in its architecture, material culture, and foodways, and how this folk style persisted in the countryside, resisting the symmetry, separateness, and vanity of the Georgian style, which would not affect Americans, farmers and yeomen until after 1760. Plimoth Plantation is important because it preserves the roots of our culture and helps correct the colonial stereotypes we have all inherited.

Today the annual budget of Plimoth Plantation approaches $7 million dollar, 60 percent of which is generated by admissions and 23 persent by sales. With 2,500 members, a staff of almost 200, and another 200 volunteers donating 16,000 hours of help, Plimoth Plantation is a complex operation. In addition to on-site interpretation, Plimoth Plantation's programs have been brought to more than 15,000 students, many outside New England in classrooms of New York City, St. Louis, Baltimore, Texas, and Chicago.



Mayflower II at her berth at State Pier in Plymouth
photo courtesy of Plimoth Plantation

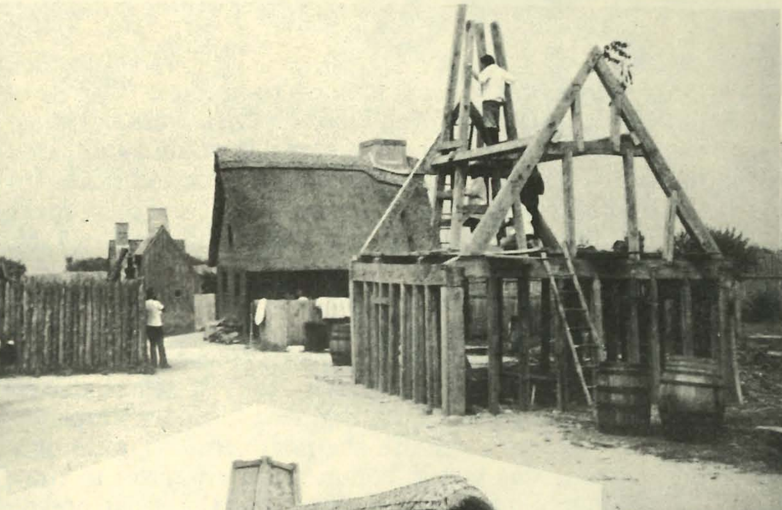
In June the author and three fellow Dutch barn enthusiasts from the Mid-Hudson Valley visited Plimoth. They rented a 1745 English barn in Barnstable on Cape Cod for two-nights (5), spent a day and a half exploring the Plantation, and one day, with a copy of Open Houses in New England (6), visiting three later Pilgrim homesteads that have been restored and interpreted.

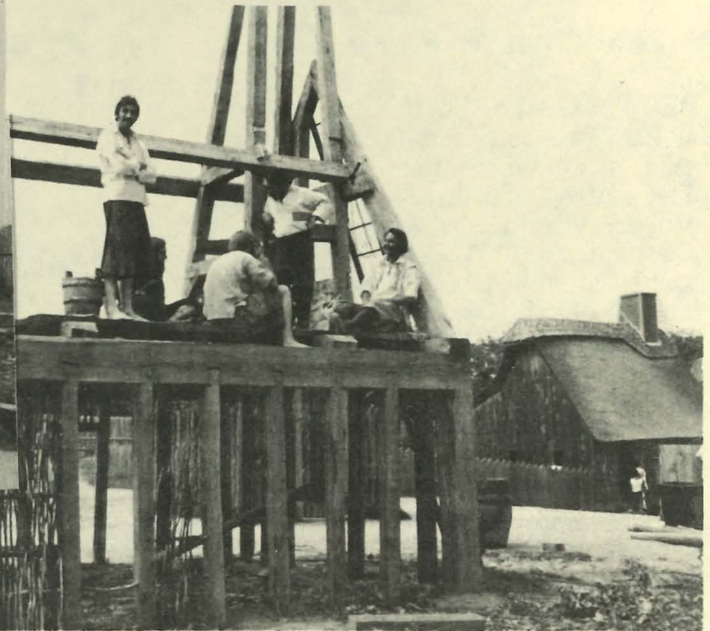
The older of the four enthusiastic travelers wore a "Question¡Authority" button on his cap, had a broken camera on a strap slung over his shoulder, and carried a brand new Hudson Valley sith under his arm. He had an informative talk with a thatcher. The blacksmith, playing the role of a Pilgrim who had come here by-way-of Holland, knew right away what the old fellow had under his arm. The shopkeeper and the chairmaker both told him there would be no market for siths or mathooks (7) at Plimoth Plantation.

The four Dutch barn enthusiasts enjoyed themselves very much in New England, and went back to New Netherland having spent, for the three days, only $67 each, plus gas, tolls, used books, and ice cream.

★★★

Peter Sinclair





(LEFT) **Isaac Allerton House, Plymouth Plantation 1976.** The house. is finished with riven clapboard and roofed with reed thatch.. photo by Don McTernan

(ABOVE) **Isaac Allerton House, Plimoth Plantation August 1973** Henry Glassie (right) and crew with Don McTernan (left) enjoy the view having the frame ready for wattle and daub.

(ABOVE LEFT) **Plimoth Plantation 1973** photo by Don McTernan

NOTES:

(1) ALBC, Box 477, Pitsboro, NC 27312

(2) A new and highly recommended book, **Communicating in First Person: Perspective On Interpreter-Visitor Interaction,** by Stacy F. Roth, is available from her, Apt. 101, 190 Bristol-Oxford Valley Rd., Langhorne, PA 19047; $18 by mail, add $5 for Canada, and $8 overseas.

Interpretive Programming Resource Guide: A Listing of Historic Performers, Interpreters, and Craftpeople, is a recent publication assembled by ALHFAM (Association for Living Historic Farms and Agricultural Museums) $12 by mail; write Dale Jones, Baltimore City Life Museums, 800 East Lombard Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202.

The National Association for Interpretation, Box 1892, Ft. Collins, CO 80522, (303) 491-6434, is a newly formed organization that holds conferences and workshops.

(3) **The Living History Sourcebook,** by Jay Anderson, pub. 1985 by The American Association of State and Local History, 172 Second Ave. North, Nashville, TN 37201; *The best short over-view of the subject.*

(4) **In Small Things Forgotten,** by James Deetz, 1977, Anchor Books.

(5)The Lamb and Lion, POB 511, Route 33, Barnstable, MA 02630, (508) 362-6823

(6) **Open Houses in New England,** by Mary Maynard, a Yankee Books Travel Guide.

(7) *see, Mathook and Sith,* **Living History**, Winter 1993, Volume 3, Number 1.

For information and a full schedule of events, write:

Plimoth Plantation
P.O. Box 1620
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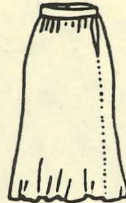
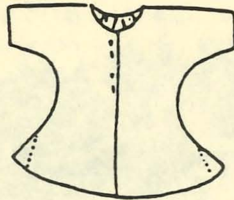
(508) 746-1622

View of 1627 Pilgrim Village at Plimoth Plantation
photo courtesy of Plymoth Plantation

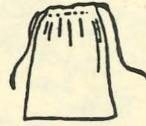
(Clothes That Work, Continued from page 5)

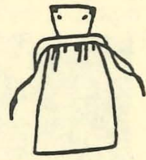


PETTICOATS. English women wore at least two petticoats (12), long skirts made most commonly of linen or wool. Two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half yards of fabric were needed to make up a single petticoat (13), depending on the width of the fabric. Two or three lengths of fabric were joined together, with pocket slits at the hips to reach the separate pockets. A variety of means were employed to close the petticoat at the waist, usually involving tapes or ties, rarely buttons. Both fashion and social status dictated the length of the hemline which, for working women, might be six to eight inches above the ancle. This variation was probably as much from necessity as from predilection: because women worked around fires their petticoats were apt to get singed and worn, and hems were undoubtedly shortened until the bounds of decency was reached. Many local museums display handsome examples of handquilted pettycoats. These were origionally worn as underpetticoats for warmth and were not highly decorated. Over time, quilted pettycoats became stylized and designs intricate and exquisite, leading to their being worn for show among ladies of the better sort. Less decorated quilted petticoats continued to be worn by working women throughout the century.



SHORTGOWNS. In the comfort of her own kitchen a housewife would certainly be considered decently covered wearing only a cap, a shift, petticoats, and stays (14). When receiving company, however, she put on a shortgown. Any garment that covered the upper body and petticoat was called a gown. A short gown, as the name implies was shorter than a full gown, was form fitting, and was worn over the shift and stays. There is a shortgown in the clothing collection of Chester County Historical Society in West Chester, Pennsylvania, that is constructed entirely of rectangles and triangles. These triangles or gussets, provide the necessary fullness at the hips (15). As with the cutting of shifts and men's shirts, this was the most economical approach with little wasted fabric. Most shortgowns attained additional shaping through the use of pleating at the center back. The more pleats, the snugger the fit. The bedgown, a variation of the shortgown, was less form-fitting and had only an inverted box pleat at the back neckline to take up any fullness across the shoulders. It is believed that sleeveless and quilted bodices were rarely worn without being covered by a shortgown. Buttons were uncommon in women's clothing. Jackets and shortgowns were laced or, more frequently, closed with straight pins. The fashionable jacket, caraco, and pet-en-l'aire were cut with narrow backs and tight sleeves, and it would be difficult to haul water or cook or race after small children in these restrictive garments. Women who wore these more formal upper body garments probably had servants (16).





APRONS. Aprons have long been a tool for keeping the housewife's clothing clean. Made of linen or light-weight wool, an apron might have a pinner front (a bib that was pinned to the shortgown; shoulder straps for aprons came in the next century), although it was just as common for an apron to simply cover the wearer from the waist down. Aprons covered the entire front of the petticoats, stroke gathered or pleated onto a waistband. White linen aprons were preferred but stripes and checks were equally acceptable.

ACCESSORIES. *Handkerchiefs* (19) potected the neck and upper breast from sun and cold as well as providing modesty in an age when upper-body clothing design often left little to the imagination. They were usually of fine white linen or checked or striped linen or cotton, with wool being worn in winter. *Pockets* were not sewn as part of women's petticoats. They were bag-shaped affairs with slits for easy access, usually sewn in pairs to a tape that was then tied around the waist either between the two petticoats or beneath both. Apparently, even finely embroidered pockets were not often exposed.

Petticoats were constructed with slits at the sides to enable the wearer to reach the pockets. Stockings were made of linen, cotton, or wool and were often long enough to be worn above the knee, were held in place by *garters* of linen, wool or silk, woven on a tape or garter loom. *Shoes* were expensive in the eighteenth-century. Made of leather or stout fabric called hempcloth, shoes had a long, wide tongue and two latchets that were either fastened with a metal buckle or tied with cording or ribbon. Usually they were straight last, which means there was no difference between the left and the right shoe. Buckles, particularly if they were of silver (something to which even the lower sort aspired), were often passed on as legacies. In more polite society, shoes were often works of art adorned by silver buckles set with paste or precious gems, but these were too costly, and undoubtedly too uncomfortable, for common folk to wear (18). *Jewelry* was not commonly worn by working women. Small gold or silver stud or hoop earings periodically turn up in inventories but were probably worn only for special occasions. Wedding rings appear not to have been common, although they, too, sometimes appear in inventories. Their scarcity might indicate that they were buried with their owners.

The Last Stitch. Properly researched and reproduced period clothing and accessories add credibility to our interpretations, whether we portray camp-followers, interpret housewifery, or guide tours at a historic site. Understanding why specific garments were worn and mde of specified textiles can help to shed new light on the lives of the women we honor through living history.

★★★

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: I would like to thank the following people for their helpful and insightful suggestions and sources for this article: Clarissa Dillon, Nancy Gardner, Kay Herb, Sue Huesken, Sue Lucas, JoAnne Mottola, Tom Mullian, Deb Jarrett Peterson, and Lynn Symborski. Artwork courtesy of Deb Jarrett Peterson.

(NOTES on page 12)

Sources for ready-made and special order clothing, fabrics, accessories (including shoes), patterns, and books:

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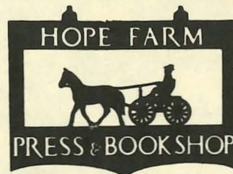

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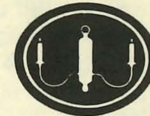

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(**Clothes That Work**, continued from page 11)

NOTES:

1. In The Buried Past: An Archeological History of Philadelphia (JL Cotter, DG Roberts, M Parrington, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, pp. 23-27), John Cotter cites the excavation of an early 18th century Chester County Lenape burial site in which were dicovered textile fragments identified as "possiblly cotton", brass buttons, brass buckles, and a silver broach made by the first known American goldsmith Cesar Ghiselin (d. Philadelphia 1733), a clear indication that Amerindians were consumers of both imported and domestic goods. Unfortunately, complete articles of clothing have not survived, so it is difficult to assess whether 17th and 18th century European and colonial textiles and clothing had the same impact on the Colonial Amerindian population as they did on the plains Indians a century later.
2. The term plaid must be used with understanding. In the eighteenth-century it was used to differentiate between woven checks or squares of uniform size and woven combinations of squares and rectangles separated by stripes. These plaids should not be confused with the Scottish word "plaid." JoAnne Mottola of Glen Mills Pennsylvania, who is working on her doctoral dissertation about Scottish settlers in the Deleware Valley, informed me "the word 'plaid' (or corruptions therof) was used from about the sixteenth century onward to describe a piece of Scottish clothing, not the weave which was called tartan or sett. As a result of the proscriptive Highland Dress Act of 1745, many tartans and setts were lost."
3. Armenians from Turkey were encouraged by the London Company to settle in Jamestown, Virginia in the early seventeenth century for the purpose of raising silkworms, apparently with some success. Vladimir Wertsman, Ed., The Armenians in America 1618-1976: A Chronology and Fact Book, Oceana Publications 1978.
4. Kyoto Costume Institute. Revolution in Fashion: European Clothing, 1715-1815, Abberville Press, New York 1989, p. 157.
5. One of the founding members of Past Masters had a harrowing experience as a volunteer at a prominent southern Pennsylvania site. She put on an apron she thought was linen; however, while working at the fire, the apron suddenly incinerated. It turned out to have been made of muslin. Fortunately, a milk pail stood nearby, and the fire was extinguished without injury.
6. The following information was prepared for a Past Masters presentation at the 1994 Association of Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) Conference, Troy, New York: Score of Hospitality: Selected Receipts of a VanRensselaer Family Albany, New York, 1785-1835 (rev. ed.), compiled and edited by Jane Carpenter Kellar, Ellen Miller, and Paul Stambach; Historic Cherry Hill, Albany, New York, 1986, p. 59: "Children's Cloth from Taking Fire, MVR [Maria VanRensselaer]. 'After being washed rinse them in a pan clean water in wich Allum has been disolv'd the Quantity to be what will give the water an Acid taste then dry them as usual this will prevent them from taking fire at least from blazing'" *[spelling and punctuation as it appears in text]*. Clarissa interprets this receipt as: "I teaspoon of alumn into I cup of water. Stir to dissolve. Saturate fabric completely after it has been washed and rinsed. Hang to dry. The above quantity is sufficient for an apron." Another refference, Sewing Common Clothes in the 18th century, compiled by Cynthia L. Boes-Palmer and Barbara Ziman for the Commoners Workshop, March 12-13, 1994: "Flame retardant solution: To make fabric more fire retardent, completely soak in the solution (recipe follows) and allow to drip dry. This solution will *not* make the fabric *fireproof*, but some say it may help to slow the spread of flames on a garment - Combine in a pan: 3 oz. boric acid, 7 oz. Borax, 2 quarts water." The above recipe, entitled *Fireproofing Fabric*, appears on page 94 of the Fabric and Fiber Sourcebook, by Bobbi A. McRae, Taunton Press, Newtown, Connecticut, 1989.
7. In the eighteenth-century Philadelphia and vicinity, "shift" seems to be the only term applied to this garment. "Chemise" is of French origin and probably not popular among the xenophobic English. It does not appear in Samuel Johnson's Dictionary. While fashion was transported across both the Channel and the Atlantic, apparently terminology did not always follow suit. Margaret B. Schiffer, in Chester County, Pennsylvania Inventories Schiffer Publications, Ltd., Exton, Pennsylvania, 1974, gives an 1828 Webster's Dictionary definition of chemise as "a shift or undergarment worn by females." However, only two "chemises" are mentioned in Cheter County inventories, and these in the 1840s. "Smock" appears only once in the inventories and only in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The term chemise was understood, however. A late century anecdote quoted in Cut of Women's Cloths 1600-1930, by Norah Waugh, Theater Arts Books, New York, 1954, p.123, relates that a merchant, upon learning the name of his wife's new gown, *chemise de la Reine*, said, "...what will the world come to when an oilman's wife comes down to serve in the shop, not only in her shift but in that of a queen."
8. For an economical approach to fabric use in shift production, see Kathleen B. Smith, *A Linen Shift: Plain Sewing Makes Most of Your Fabric*, Threads Magazine, February/March 1987.
9. Or, one would like to think, one for working and one for sleeping. Laundry was not the once-a-week ritual it is today; and it is staggering to the twentieth century senses to imagine an eighteenth century woman lying down in the same shift in which she has worked all day beside her husband who wears the same shirt in which he has worked all day in a bed that has not been changed in several weeks and is surrounded by bedhangings-with a chamberpot beneath and the window closed.
10. P. and R.A. Mactaggart in *Some Aspects of the Use of Non-Fashionable Stays*, Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society, 1973. pp. 20-28. writes, "...we may take it that [the Overseers of the Poor] would not have paid for anything that they did not regard as utterly indispenable for the moral or physical well-being of the person in question. It would would follow that, as far as they were concerned-and in this they will have reflected contemporary public opinion-stays were not to be considered solely as a fashion garment, but as part of minimal decent clothing." (My thanks to Lynn Symborski, a Deleware County, Pennsylvania *mantuamaker* (seamstress) and recognized authority on eighteenth-century dress, for bringing this invaluable article to my attention.)
11. "Richard Norris, origionally from London, opposite Mr. Stacy Potts in Trenton," New Jersey Gazette, December 31, 1778.
12. Evidence exists for the word "skirt" being used interchangeably with petticoat, Pennsylvania Evening Post, 1775-1784.
13. Charles Read, a prominent New Jersey sometime Quaker, wrote considerably about the subject of agriculture and other matters (see Carl Raymond Woodward's Ploughs and Politicks: Charles Read of New Jersey and His Notes on Agriculture, 1715-1774, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1941, p. 39. Read wrote: "Ye 14 yds. Striped Stuff made 3 gowns & petticoats. 3 yrds makes a petticoat." Fabric width is not specified. (My thanks to Clarissa Dillon for this reference.)
14. Check with your site to see if there is a specific guideline with regard to stays. The Mactaggarts support the opinion that there was nothing unusual or unacceptable in a woman being outside her house in just her cap, shift, petticoat, and stays (see note 10).

15. This garment was studied by a founding member of Past Masters. I have made this shortgown a number of times, most recently using less than a yard and an eighth of 54" wide fabric.
16. A detailed study of shortgowns, including drafts of extant examples, is Claudia Kidwell's "Shortgowns," Dress, 1978, 4: 30-65.
17. *Fichu* does not appear in Samuel Johnson's Dictionary. According to C. Willet Cunnington et al, in A Dictionary of English Costume, "fichu" did not have common usage before 1816 (Ellen Gehret, Rural Pennsylvania Clothing, Shumway Press, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1976, rep. 1991).
18. Mary Vespa, *18th century Sole Survivors*, Colonial Homes 1994; 20:88-93.

***

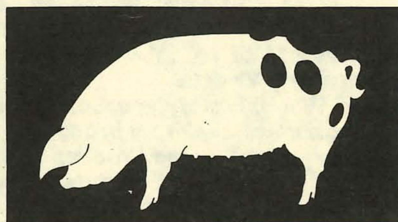
PIG UPDATE

The publisher of Living History and his family are involved with a network of people in a project to save the genetics of the Gloucester Old Spot(*), an historic breed of English pig. The Old Spot is considered critically rare in England. Don Bixby, Executive Director of The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC)(**), visited two of the Old Spot breeders in England in April. The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST) in England preserve 40 rare beeds of livestock, the ALBC lists 93, 27 of which are unique to North America. RBST census shows that there are now 167 registered Old Spots and forty breeders in England, many concentrated in Gloucesteershire. The conservation of this breed in England has been the result of twenty years of effort.

In North America the Old Spot is in an extremely critical situation with only four pure-breed animals and four breeders located in California, Vermont, Pennsylvania, and New York and one to be added soon in Ohio.

A recent lineage review of Gloucester Old Spots in America by E. Price Smith of Virginia Tech reveals that our two sows here in West Hurley are only 75% and King Henry, our boar, 100%, making the ten offspring that were born this spring, 87 1/2% pure Old Spot and not qualified to maintain a purebred line. We are now negotiating a way to get King Henry togther with two 100% sows in Pennsylvania. Eventually lines from England must be brought into the American gene pool but the immediate need is to establish a network of breeders here willing to invest time and money in preserving the Gloucester Old Spot. At the moment the distance between the animals is the problem and will necessitate transportation.

Why save the Glouchester Old Spot? Because they are part of our living history and are a hardy time-tested breed. Known as orchard pigs, they were bred to forage in orchards, fields, and woodland. They are a gentle breed and the sows are good mothers. Like the Tamworth and other heritage breeds, Old Spots are well suited for sustainable farming. We intend to rotate them on pasture (***).



The Gloucester Old Spot Pig

We had the vet out yeasterday. He vaccinated them, assessed their condition, and suggested a number of improvements in our operation. We walked the area of our future fields and he pointed to the weeds poisonous to pigs in this scrubby acre including, poke weed, night shade, and white snake root. He said that his father who farmed in western New York, kept Lineback and Devon cattle. He wished us well.

Peter Sinclair

(*)*Some Minor Breeders Visit Vermont*, Living History Winter 1994, Vol. 4, No. 1.
(**)ALBC, PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312; (919) 542-5704; contact them if you are interested in a maintainting an historic minor breed of livestock.
(***)Stockman Grass Farmer, PO Box 9607, Jackson MS 39206; (601) 981-4805. "Dedicated to the more efficient conversion of grass crops into money," a free sample of this publication is available on request. They also carry a selection of books, audio and video tapes.

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October 2 & 16, 1994
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Harvest Festival, taste, smell and see the riches of Pennsylvania's rural past. Call:
Burnside Plantation
(215) 868-5044

October 6 to 9, 1994
Troy, New York
"Folklore and the People" The 50th Annual Fall Conference. Call:
The New York Folklore Society
(607) 273-9137

Ocxtober 9, 1994
Staunton, Virginia
The Making of a Museum, restoration tour of four farmsites and a panel discussion; a behind the scenes look at the philosophies and techniques used. For full schedule of events call:
Museum of American Frontier Culture
(703) 332-7850

October 22-23, 1994
Leesburg, Virginia
One thousand Revolutionary war reenactment soldiers will encamp in Leesburg for the "Battle of Leesburg," the largest encampment and battle reenactment ever held in the Washington, D.C. region. For information, call:
Ken Clair
(703) 461-9500

October 26 to October 30, 1994
Boston, Massachusetts
The forty-eighth National Preservation Conference. Write:
National Trust for Historic Preservation
1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

November 11 to 14, 1994
Williamsburg, Virginia
Painted Wood: History and Conservation, a symposium to explore a broad range of topics, organized by the Wooden Artifacts Group of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. Call:
F. Carey Howlett
(804) 220-7076

December 1 to 3, 1994
Lancaster, Pennsylvania
Days of the Belsnickel, Pennsylvania/German country Christmas, tour and candlelight dinner. Call:
Landis ValleyMuseum
(717) 560-0401

February 4. 1995
Tifton, Georgia
Winter Homecoming, festival of historic food traditions, Shape note and gospel singing; contributions of the African/American culture. Call:
Agrirama, Georgia's LH Museum
(912) 386-3344

February 26 to 28, 1995
Boston, Massachusetts
Restoration 95, a large international gathering of restoration professionals, serrious homeowners and collectors; panel discussions, products and services from over 250 exhibiting companies, many from Europe. Call:
Andrew Burrell
(617) 933-9055

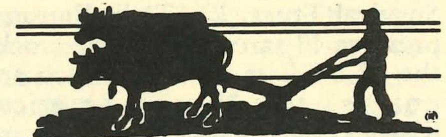
MAALHFAM INTERPRETATION CONFERENCE

The Mid-Atlantic Association For Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums (MAALHFAM) will explore the theme **"Interpreting Work by Gender of Children, Women and Men; Strategies for researching and Implementing Programs at Living History Sites"** at Landis Valley Museum, April 7, 8, and 9, 1995.

Proposals for papers and sessions are requested to supplement the information that will be shared by Landis Valley's staff participating in the Pennsylvania Humanities Council's "Raising our sites; Women's History in Pennsylvania." Submission deadline of proposals for papers, workshops or sessions is November 30, 1994. Send a one-page draft proposal to:

Landis Valley Museum, c/o Steve Miller MAALHFAM, 2451 Kissel Hill Rd, Lancaster, PA 17601, or FAX (717) 560-2147.

Steve Miller



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Searsville, Orange County, New York, circa 1914, Lilian Wolven Martin (left) and her friend Ernestine Ford (right) display a days rabbit harvest. Lilian's father, Edward G. Wolven and his wife Bell Oliver, moved from the Catskill Mountains of Ulster County south to the Ramapo Mountains of Orange County at about the turn of the century. The Ramapo Wolvens were a resourceful group that learned to drive automobiles and fix radios. They were not good letter writers and so were unknown to their Catskill relatives for almost 100 years. **The Next Issue of Living History** will be hunting out new stories and information and reporting on a visit to the Goschenhoppen Folk Festival in Greenville, Pennsylvania where it met some students of Pennsylvania/German culture.