



HVVA is a not-for-profit corporation formed to study and preserve the vernacular architecture and material culture of the Hudson Valley

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The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

July – September 2012

Newsletter

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Hosts of our September 15th tour in Berkshire County. Left to right, Sharon Genin, Jack Sobon and Ted Andrews, along with HVVA member Russell Lea at Ted's "Shaker Farm" in Richmond, MA. Photo by Neil Larson.

The Board of Trustees Meeting

From the *Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting* held at the Annual HVVA Picnic in Hurley on July 14, 2012:

- Treasurer Rob Sweeney reported there were 291 members in the organization—most of them up-to-date with their dues – and a balance of more than \$5,700 in the general fund.
- Ken Walton, chair of the Education & Research Committee reported on the progress of the current project to catalog and digitize the HVVA archives.
- A list of members' e-mail addresses has been compiled for conveying time-sensitive information using Mailchimp. (See notice on the last page of this newsletter.) The list is incomplete and if any members have not received Mailchimp e-mails, please provide your address to Corresponding Secretary Rob Sweeney at gallusguy@msn.com.
- The Nominating Committee will meet to create a slate of new and returning trustees to present at the January annual meeting. Please send Michele VanHoesen the names of candidates to consider (including yourselves) at michelevh8@yahoo.com

To view of the actual minutes visit www.hvva.org.



ABOVE: Harmon Vanderzee House, Coeymans Hollow.
Photo by Roberta Jeracka.

BELOW: Remains of the house at 67 Sheridan Avenue, Albany.



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2012, 10:00 AM

Tour of Houses and Barns in Feura Bush, Albany County

The tour will originate at the one room school house behind the Dutch Reformed Church on Rt. 32, Indian Field's Road, Feura Bush. There is plenty of parking behind the church. We will depart for the first stop promptly at 10:00; car pooling is encouraged. The tour will be conducted by Roberta Jeracka, who lives in the area. Members of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society will be joining us and will be holding a business meeting at lunch. Visit hvva.com for more information.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2012, 7:00 PM

Documenting 67 Sheridan Avenue

Lecture by Walter R. Wheeler

Midtown Tap and Tea Room
289 New Scotland Ave., Albany.

Program presented by Historic Albany Foundation
Reservations required, go to historic-albany.org

With the support and cooperation of a sympathetic property owner, Wally Wheeler and others spent several days in November and December of last year examining and documenting the house 67 Sheridan Avenue before it was razed. John Wolcott had initially identified it as an early house; it was found to date to the late 18th or very early 19th century, making it one of only a handful of structures in the city from that era. In addition, the framing system used in its construction was of a rare type, variations of which are known from several other examples, none of which are in the city of Albany. This talk will present the findings of work at the house and provide a context for understanding this early example of a row house and the way it was built.

Volunteers Wanted

As you all are aware, HVVA is a low-budget volunteer organization. While our tours are our most visible activity, the organization has other areas of concern, such as maintaining an archive of materials relating to historic architecture in the Hudson Valley (the only collection dedicated solely to this area of study), developing and delivering educational programs, supporting the publication of articles, studies and books on local architecture, and promoting new tools for the assessments of historic buildings, such as dendrochronology (tree-ring dating). Our Education & Research Committee, chaired by Ken Walton, has been working to formalize some these ideas and put them into action. Recently, the committee has implemented a project to

organize and digitize the HVVA archives, the core of which is material collected by our founder, Peter Sinclair, during his many years of field work. With the help of volunteers, we can make short work of this task and then set about working on ways to build on this valuable collection and making it accessible to scholars, professionals and the general public. We don't need much of any one individual's time, as long as there are members out there willing to chip in. You can also volunteer to join our Education and Research Committee and help us with realizing some of the other goals we have set.

Please contact Ken Walton at kaw9862@optonline.net.

Evidence of Pantile Roofs in Ulster County

A Comparison of Features of the Persen house in Kingston, and the Elmendorf house in Hurley

By John R. Stevens



I became acquainted with the Persen house in 2007. Its complicated history has been studied by Kenneth Barricklo, architect, and Joseph Diamond, archaeologist, who have tried to sort out the phases of its development. Its history is complicated by the fact that all its historic wood elements were destroyed when Kingston was burned by the British in 1777.

The oldest part – the north-west corner – fronts on Crown Street (west elevation) with one side wall on John Street (Fig. 1). On the east wall of the basement are the remains of a brick trimmer arch to support the hearth of a jambless fireplace. This arch springs directly from the stone wall of the basement without it being seated on the usual corbel course projecting from the stone wall. The only other known example of this feature is found in the Elmendorf house in Hurley (Fig. 2). Coincidentally, the Persen and Elmendorf houses as built, were almost the same size: the Persen house measures 25 feet 9 inches across its front; the Elmendorf house is 26 feet 1 inch. The Persen house is 21 feet 4 inches from front to back; the Elmendorf house is 21 feet, 9 inches.

Both of these houses originally had been gable-fronted, like the Pieter Bronck house (late 17th century?) at West Coxsackie, Greene County, and the Bevier-Elting house (early 18th century) on Huguenot Street in New Paltz, Ulster County (Fig. 3). This follows the building tradition of the Dutch and other Northern European countries that supplied the colonists to the New Netherland colony. The Elmendorf house had its old roofs removed about the middle of the 18th century, after two additions had been made to it. The steep front-gable roof of the oldest part and the roofs of the two additions perpendicular to it were replaced with the present moderate-pitch roof with its ridge

Fig. 1 (left) – Persen House, John & Crown sts., Kingston, NY, view from NW. Photo by Jim Decker, 2012.

Fig. 2 (above) – Elmendorf House, Hurley, NY. Photo by Jim Decker, 2012.

Fig. 3 (below) – Elmendorf House, Hurley, NY. Reconstruction of south elevation. Drawing by John Stevens.





Fig. 4 – Pantile fragments found in Elmendorf House, Hurley, NY. Photo by Jim Decker, 2012.

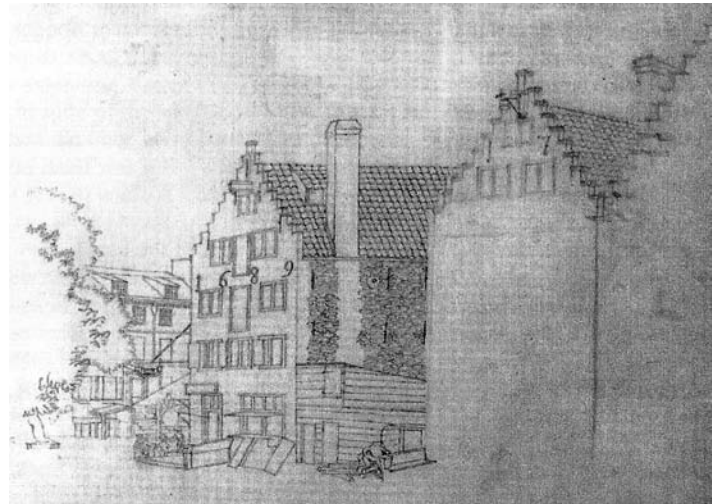


Fig. 5 – Drawing of houses in Manhattan, Pierre Eugene du Simitiere, 1769. From John R. Stevens, *Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830* (2005), p. 154.

parallel to the street. However, a number of the rafters from the earlier stages of the house were re-used in this roof, and from them the original roof pitch of 55 degrees has been ascertained.

While working on the second floor of the Elmendorf house, its current owner, Jim Decker, found fragments of pantiles near the front wall at the location of the side knee wall of the original section of the house, which had been removed before the present roof was constructed (Fig. 4). Subsequently, a large number of pantile fragments – some as big as a third of a pantile – have been excavated not far from the house. Some of these fragments have the lugs that hung the pantiles on the roof battens. Pantile fragments have also been found at the Persen house, but it is impossible to determine if the original steep roof of this house had survived until the house was burned in 1777. Pantile fragments associated with the Senate House Historic Site are at the New York State Museum.

An excellent illustration of pantiles in use, in a New York context, is the drawing by Pierre Eugene du Simitiere made in May, 1769 of a group of Manhattan houses, two of which are shown with pantile roofs (Fig. 5).¹ Another example, the Nicasius De Sille house in New Utrecht, Kings County (Brooklyn), was depicted with a pantile roof in a wood engraving after a drawing by Benson Lossing in the mid-19th century.² Some of those pantiles were preserved when the building was demolished and are now in the collection of the Brooklyn Historical Society (Fig. 6). In 2011, a number of pantiles were imported from the Netherlands for display at the Elmendorf house, and they are almost identical to the antique ones from the de Sille house (Fig. 7).

The maker of the pantiles used on the Elmendorf and Persen houses was in all probability Cornelius Hoogeboom who started in the business in New Amsterdam in the 1650's, and then moved to Beverwyck (Albany) after a few years, where he worked for established brick and pantile makers. About 1665 he moved to Kingston and established a brick yard and pantile manufactory in Frog Alley's vicinity.

Pantiles continued to be manufactured in the New York City area well into the 18th century. In 1769, Sir William Johnson purchased 3,000 pantiles from a New York company for 36 Pounds. However, some were still being imported from the Netherlands in 1785. The *New York Packet* of December 26 of that year has an entry: "Dutch Pan Tiles just imported...a quantity of Red Pan Tiles, which will be sold on reasonable terms – apply to the master on board. Murray, Samson and Co."³

Since there is substantial evidence that both the Persen and Elmendorf houses had pantile roofs at the time of their construction, it is a concomitant of this type of roofing that the gable walls would have been built with parapets. Such parapets, certainly in an American context, would have had edgings of brick triangles called by the Dutch *vlechtingen* and by the English, 'tumbling'. Examples of *vlechtingen* can be seen at the Luykas van Alen house (1737) at Kinderhook, Columbia County and the Leendert Bronck house (1738) at West Coxsackie, Greene County. These examples, and most others that survive with *vlechtingen* have it used in combination with brick walling. However, an example of brick *vlechtingen* used with stone walling has been known at Fort Frey (1739) at Palatine Bridge, Montgomery County.

¹ John R. Stevens, *Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830* (Kingston NY: HVVA, 2005), p. 154.

² *Ibid.*, p. 300.

³ Rita Susswein Gottesman, *Arts and Crafts in New York 1777 – 1779*, New-York Historical Society, 1954.

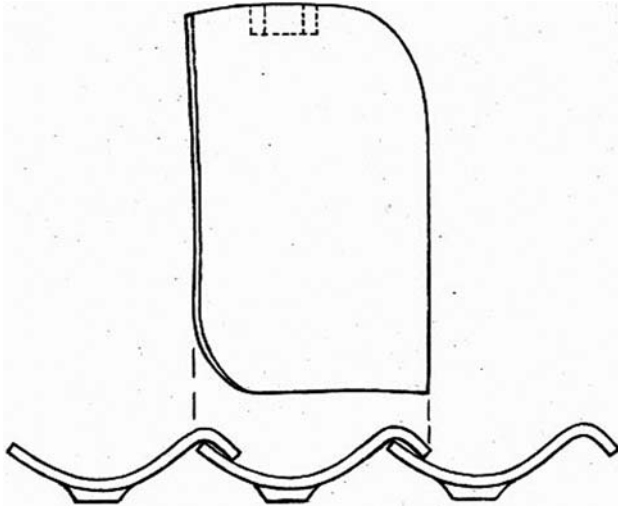


Fig. 6 – Historic pantiles in the collection of the Brooklyn Historical Society as drawn by John R. Stevens. From *Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830* (2005), p. 300.



Fig. 7 – Pantiles imported from the Netherlands. Photo by Jim Decker, 2012.

This Mohawk Valley example was thought to be unique until the discovery a few years ago of another example in Hurley. The Cornelius Cool house (early 18th century) on Old Route 209 is only a few miles from the Elmendorf house. No evidence has been found that the Cool house once had a pantile roof, but the exposed south gable of this stone house has the *vlechtingen* concealed under wide mid-19th century verge boards and invisible except for the tips of several of the *vlechtingen* units. In the attic of this house the *vlechtingen* of the original north gable, concealed within a later 18th century addition can be seen (Fig. 8). The knowledge that brick *vlechtingen* in combination with stone walling exists at the Cool house makes it highly likely that the same construction also applied to the Elmendorf and Persen houses (Fig. 3).

The façade (south elevation) of the Elmendorf house has clear evidence near its west side of the original entrance door location, and there is even better evidence for this

Fig. 8 – Detail of interior wall in Cornelius Cool House, Hurley, NY, showing evidence of brick *vlechtingen* in stone gable. Photo by Jim Decker, 2012.



doorway placement inside the house (Figs. 2 & 3). There is however no evidence of the location of the original façade window, which probably was a *kruiskoziijn* (cross window) because of alterations to the stone walling when the present doorway and windows were installed about the middle of the 18th century. There is evidence of the form of wooden blocking on the second floor at the front of the house for the former existence of a central granary door. As the second floors were used primarily for storage, such a door was a usual fixture, and it can be surmised that a similar door once existed at the Persen house. The original façade door and window locations on the first floor of the Persen house might possibly have been in the locations of the present units, but we cannot be sure of this.

The construction date of the Elmendorf house is believed to have been c. 1710, and because of the trimmer arch evidence mentioned earlier, and the fact that both houses originally had pantile roofs, it is possible that the Persen house was built about the same time- possibly by the same builders as the Elmendorf house. The houses are only a few miles distant from one another. It is important that at some point funds can be found to date the Elmendorf house, and some of the other early houses in Hurley by dendrochronology. By dating the Elmendorf house, I think we will have very good idea of the age of the Persen house, too.

A presentation on the pantile fragments found at the Persen and Elmendorf houses and their architectural significance was given at the annual meeting of the New York State Archaeology Association, held at Poughkeepsie on April 28 and 29, 2012. The presentation was given by Joseph Diamond (SUNY New Paltz) with the assistance of John Stevens and James Decker. It was titled "Investigations: Recreating the Original Roof Lines of Two Early 18th Century Dutch Houses in Ulster County, New York".

The Germantown Parsonage in 1946: Architect Charles S. Keefe and Clients Edward and Friedl Ekert

By William B. Rhoads

The building erected in the 18th century to shelter the pastor of the German Reformed Church in Germantown, Columbia County, is among the few surviving landmarks of the early Palatine settlement of the Hudson Valley (Fig. 1). The 1878 History of Columbia County (274) cited “the old parsonage of the Reformed church . . . a stone building still standing, bearing the date 1767.” The building standing today at 52 Maple Avenue has been studied by John R. Stevens and other HVVA members (see Peter Sinclair’s Journal, HVVA, March 2004), and archaeological exploration of the site has been undertaken by Bard College Professor Christopher Lindner since 2009 (Fig. 2).

My interest in the building stems from my study of the life and career of Charles Schoonmaker Keefe (1876-1946), a Kingston architect with a national reputation as a designer of houses in the old Colonial manner. In 1946 Keefe began to design alterations to the parsonage for its owners, Edward E. and Friedl C. Ekert, alterations that would restore its 18th-century character while making it a pleasant home with modern conveniences as well as the Ekerts’ antique furnishings. However, Keefe died before final plans were made, and the Ekerts were reluctant to proceed without the guidance of their architect and friend.

The Ekerts purchased the house in 1943 or 1944. Part of its appeal for them was undoubtedly its Germanic origins. The 1940 census identifies Edward, a 43-year-old widower and chewing-gum production engineer, as born in New York (Brooklyn according to his obituary) and residing in Queens in 1935 and 1940. However, the census identifies his daughter Maria, age 19, as being born in Germany and residing there in 1935. Peter Sinclair described the Ekerts as “recent immigrants from Germany,” and Friedl (who married Edward in 1942) may well have been born there.

The parsonage was in far from pristine condition when purchased by the Ekerts. The late Town of Germantown historian Walter V. Miller wrote that it showed “the ravages of time and years of neglect.” Writing in 1976, Miller could report that the Ekerts were responsible for the “patient and careful restoration and refurbishing [which] have resulted in a restoration that has been a source of wonder and admiration to all who have had the pleasure of visiting the old place. No effort or expense was spared when it came to having the restorations and replacements conform with the time and period of the originals. The result has been a building sound and livable, yet conforming in both materials and details with those in use two hundred years ago.” Photos of the Ekerts’ living room, filled with antiques, were used by Miller to indicate their “patient care and careful research” in “locating pieces of suitable vintage” (Fig. 3).

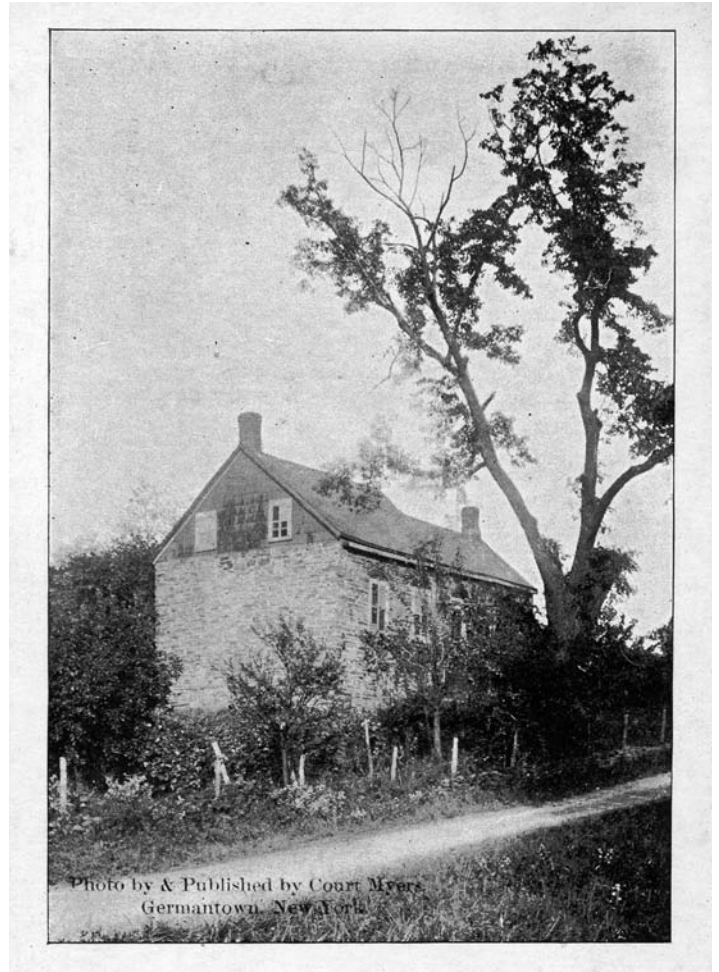


Fig. 1 – Germantown Parsonage. Early 20th-century post card, photo by Court Myers. Collection of the Germantown History Department.

Fig. 2 – Germantown Parsonage in 2012. Photo by author.



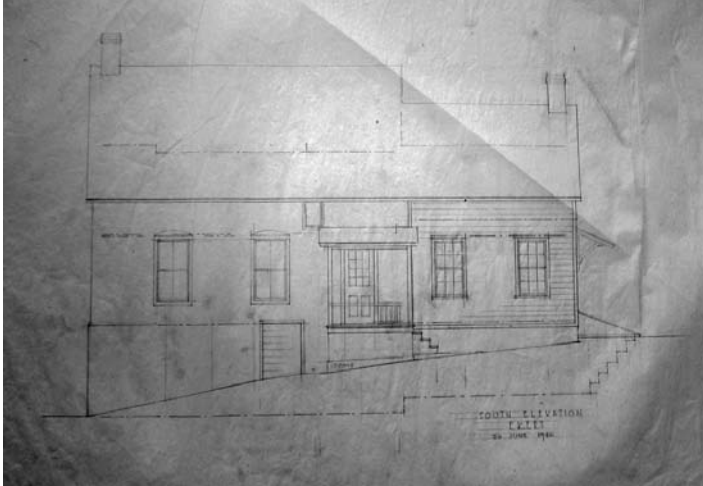


Fig. 3 – Living Room as furnished by the Ekerts. From Walter V. Miller, *History of 18th Century Germantown* (1976).

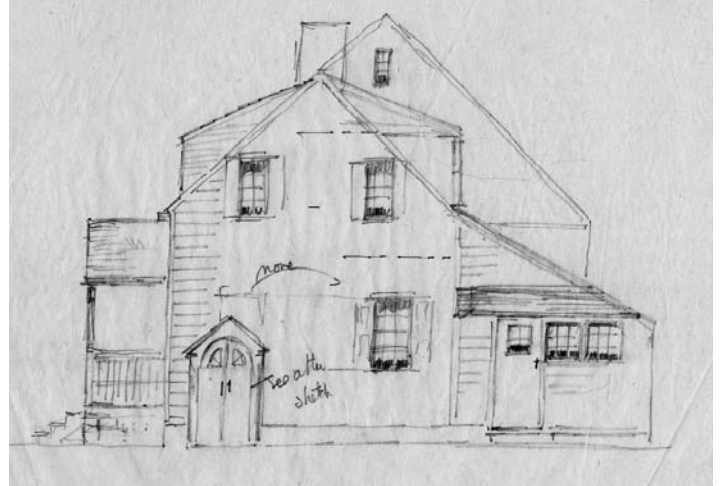


Fig. 4 – South Elevation, Germantown Parsonage, drawn June 26, 1946 by Charles Keefe or his draftsman. Friends of Historic Kingston's Collection.

The result, thought Miller, was “a building wherein the atmosphere and styling are those of 200 years and more ago, but that is also a comfortable and attractive home.”

Charles Keefe should have been the architect overseeing the restoration and refurbishing of the old landmark. How the Ekerts first came into contact with Keefe is unknown, but in February 1946, when the Ekerts were still residing in Rego Park, Queens, Keefe responded to Edward's inquiry about the architect's fees, which Edward feared would be

too expensive. Keefe explained his fees in detail, and assured the prospective client, “My work varies from very small houses to large ones and they all have the same careful attention.” He invited Edward to come to his office in Kingston (located in Keefe's home on Lucas Avenue): “I can then show you photographs of my work so you will know what to expect.”

The Ekerts were apparently won over to become clients, and drawings (dated June 26 and 27, 1946) of the current

Fig. 5 – South Elevation, proposed restoration of Germantown Parsonage for the Ekerts by the Estate of Charles Keefe, May 25, 1947. Collection of the Friends of Historic Kingston.



appearance of the house were made under Keefe's supervision (*Fig. 4*). These and other drawings for the Ekerts by Keefe and his office staff, in particular John O'Connor, are preserved in the archives of the Friends of Historic Kingston. (I hope they will prove useful as John Stevens attempts to unravel the mystery of early appearance of the parsonage.) The June 1946 drawings indicate the fireplaces but nothing of the early paneling and doors. (Peter Sinclair notes that "It is said that some of the paneling and perhaps some of the doors were parts of the first church.") These drawings also record two-over-two window sash in the stone portion of the house and a bracketed hood over the east doorway, elements that architect and clients would have been eager to remove in their restoration.

Before his death, July 19, 1946, Keefe made a number of pencil sketches for the restoration. (The sketches are initialed "C.S.K." probably by John O'Connor after Keefe's demise.) For the south front, he envisioned adding a quaint stoop and porch with a pair of benches such as graced many a new Dutch Colonial house in the 1920s (*Fig. 5*). However, Keefe would place the numerals "1767" in the porch gable, the date then given to one section of the house. For the east side of the frame portion of the house, Keefe proposed a more formal arched entranceway to the cellar that would require walling up a window (*Fig. 6*). Windows generally would be fitted with smaller-paned sash and paneled shutters. Shed-roofed dormers would be added on the south front.

Following Keefe's unexpected death (in Vermont on a construction supervision trip), John O'Connor in August completed the restoration design for the clients' approval. O'Connor adhered closely to Keefe's preliminary sketches. It fell to the architect's widow, Grace Keefe, to deal with the Ekerts, who doubted that O'Connor's drawings represented Keefe's own ideas. Although Keefe's sketches show that he was planning to add dormers, the Ekerts wrote to Grace

Keefe that her husband "pointed out to us that great care would be required to restore the outside of the stone house so that no structural harm would be done to the old walls. In particular, he cautioned against disturbing the old slate roof which has a depression. I was of the opinion that it required straightening out – Mr. Keefe jokingly said, "A man of 80 years has no straight back and if you want to straighten his back out you would break it." Recalling this we now doubt whether it would be wise to install the dormers which you proposed." They also objected that "the closing up of the window in the east room over the cellar entrance seems to us to be an alteration he would not have approved," although, again, Keefe's sketches called for this change.

Another bone of contention relates to a question posed by today's investigators of the house's early fabric: Was one of the two south windows lighting the cellar room of the stone house originally a doorway? Drawings by Keefe and O'Connor do not call for the restoration of such a doorway, but the Ekerts wrote Grace Keefe that "Mr. Keefe . . . spoke much about the restoration of the old entrance to the basement room which now has been made into a window" (*Fig. 7*).

The clients were also concerned that Keefe's proposal that the restoration and alteration be carried out in stages over four years was being ignored. During the first year, the exterior of the building and the basement room would be restored and reconditioned, and a garage would be built in the style of the stone house. Year two would see the restoration and reconditioning of the west room on the first floor and work on the second floor, including provision of space for a bathroom (*Fig. 8*). Year three would involve installing running water and electricity for the kitchen and bathroom, while central heat would be installed in the fourth year.

Fig. 6 – East Elevation, sketch by Charles Keefe for proposed alteration of Germantown Parsonage for Edward and Friedl Ekert, 1946. Collection of the Friends of Historic Kingston.

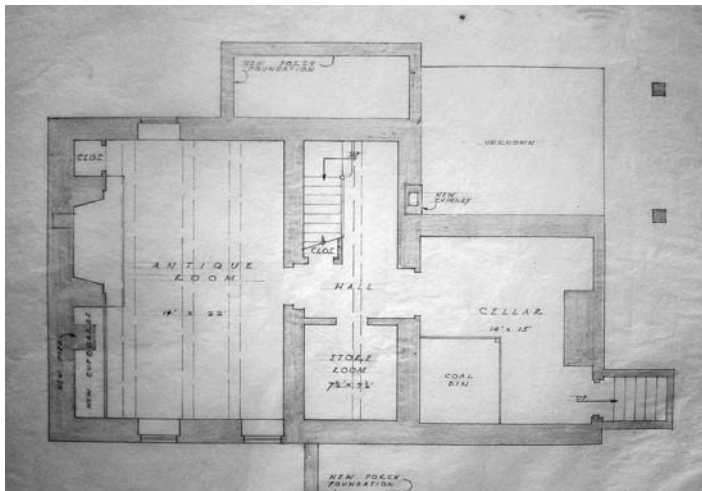


Fig. 7 – Cellar Floor Plan, proposed restoration of Germantown Parsonage for the Ekerts by the Estate of Charles Keefe, May 25, 1947. Collection of the Friends of Historic Kingston.

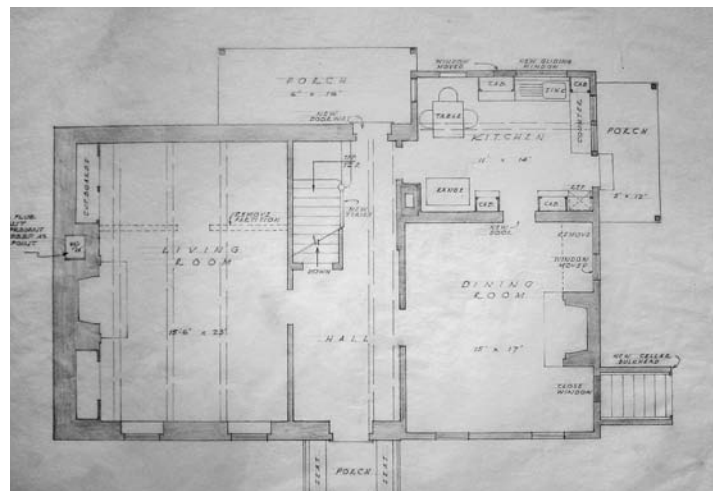




Fig. 8 – First Floor Plan, proposed restoration of Germantown Parsonage for the Ekerts by the Estate of Charles Keefe, May 25, 1947. Collection of the Friends of Historic Kingston.

Keefe's plan would allow expenditures to be spread over an extended time and would permit greater flexibility and better thinking through of each phase. Keefe also encouraged his clients to view house construction as a joy, and so the Ekerts believed that progressing slowly through the improvements would give them "something to look forward to." In fact it appears that the Ekerts had come to appreciate Keefe as more than simply an architect going about his job. They wrote Grace Keefe: "We are indeed sad to have lost a very good friend. Our hopes which had been so high have faded as we do not see how we can ever get the work done as Mr. Keefe knew it should be done."

The transformation of the Parsonage into a comfortable home filled with antiques was accomplished by the Ekerts, apparently with only limited use of the Keefe-O'Connor plans. Devotees of early vernacular architecture regret that the Ekerts did not pass along documentation of the changes they made to the fabric of the house. (Edward eventually became a chemist and executive with Warner Lambert Corp. and served as vice president of the Columbia County Historical Society and chairman of the Germantown Planning Board.) The Ekerts willed the house – but not its furnishings – to the Town of Germantown whose History Department now occupies the building.)

We may or may not regret that Keefe's plans, which called for alterations and additions having little relation to the original form of the building, were for the most part ignored. Unlike his contemporary and friendly rival, Myron S. Teller, Keefe was not interested in carefully studying the early architecture of Ulster or neighboring counties. Teller took Keefe to task for using Teller's reproduction Colonial hardware in historically inaccurate ways, but Teller himself was no purist when turning an old stone house into a pleasant and attractive 20th-century home. This Teller and Keefe had in common with other Colonial Revivalists of their generation.

Sources:

Miller, Walter V. and Charles E. Ramsey. *History of 18th Century Germantown*. Germantown-on-Hudson Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Rhoads, William B. "Charles S. Keefe: Colonial Revivalist." *Preservation League of New York Newsletter*. Sept.-Oct. 1985, pages 4-5.

Edward E. Ekert's obituary, *Star-Register*, Hudson, NY. undated [c. 1988].

Germantown, NY. Town of Germantown History Department. Ekert-Keefe correspondence.

Kingston, NY. Friends of Historic Kingston. Keefe Collection.

The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Marguerite Riter, Germantown Historian, as well as Richard Coons and Alvin W. Sheffer, Germantown History Department, and George Fox of Yadack-Fox Funeral Home; also by Jane Kellar and Peter Roberts of the Friends of Historic Kingston.

New Information on an Old Place: The Henry Brodhead House on Nottingham's Burnt Orchard

By Ken Krabbenhoft



Fig. 1 – View of Henry Brodhead House from southeast. Photo by Neil Larson.

It was exciting to see a picture and plan of the “John A. DeWitt Tenant House” on page 9 of Tom Ryan’s article on Marletown architecture in the April-June HVVA Newsletter as this is the house that Ferris Cook and I have been restoring under the tutelage of HVVA’s Jim Decker, John Stevens, Conrad Fingado, Tom Colucci, and Bill McMillen (Fig. 1). This work has led us to draw some conclusions regarding the history of the house, which I would like to share here.¹

Names and dates have a way of sticking to old houses, and sometimes a lot of scrubbing is needed to get them off. At the beginning, we had no reason not to accept the common knowledge that our house dated to the 1750s and that it had been built by William Nottingham (about whom there

will be more later). Then came the scrubbing, and this house needed a lot of it. Ivy growing through the roof, failed beams, termite-eaten floors, a collapsing chimney support, one stone wall tilted half a foot off plumb. Because the structural work required was so radical, it brought to light evidence that a more cosmetic restoration would never have turned up. Archival research into wills and indentures, archeological finds and dendrochronology have provided fresh evidence that points convincingly to a different builder and a later construction date. The identity of the builder is still somewhat conjectural, as we shall see, but there is no longer any doubt that this is not an example of a stone house of the late colonial era; rather it is a house built ca. 1784, at the beginning of the post-Revolutionary War building ‘boom’.



Fig. 2 – View from NE corner of north room during dismantling. Photo by Ken Krabbenhoft.

Reading What Is No Longer There

Part of the confusion was due to the disappearance of the house's Federal-period features. As sheetrock came off old plaster and strip flooring was pulled from wide pine boards, the full extent of the damage done by 'modernization' in the 1920s and '30s was revealed. There were mortises in the floorboards for the studs of the hallway wall (north) that had been pulled down, and nailers imbedded in stone and plaster for the original stairs that had been ripped out and replaced by modern stairs, which were moved to the opposite (south) wall (Fig. 2). Ryan's sketch plan shows these changes, along with a fireplace on the north gable wall (Fig. 3). When we acquired the house in 2010, this firebox and the chimney, as well as the cellar support beneath them, were in a state of imminent collapse. In the process

of removing them, we discovered that the north room had been built without a source of heat, and the decision was made not to replace the fireplace, even though it had been built with 18th-century bricks (Fig. 4). Finally, as Ryan points out, the 1798 Federal Direct Tax survey states that the house had four windows, not the five that appear in his sketch plan. The extra window, to the west of the fireplace at the rear of the north gable wall, was a 20th-Century addition.

These are only the most obvious alterations that turn up in the sketch. It is clear from his article that Ryan knew the building's symmetrical façade and the central hallway were at odds with a mid-18th construction date; at the same time, the alterations inside ruled out the correction of that

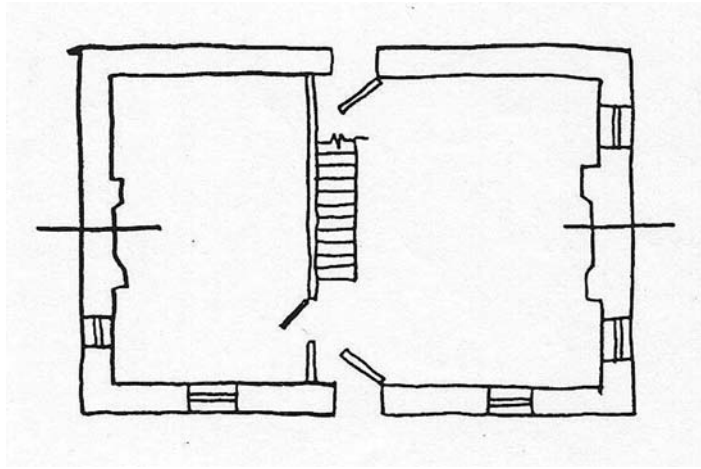


Fig. 3 – Sketch plan of John A. DeWitt Tenant House from Thomas R. Ryan, "Revisiting the Ulster County Cultural Landscape from the 1798 Federal Direct Tax," HVVA Newsletter, April-June 2012.

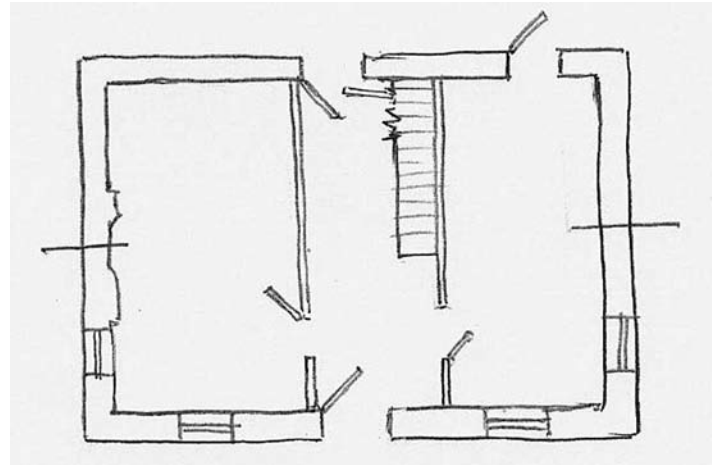


Fig. 4 – Amended sketch plan of John A. DeWitt Tenant House (a.k.a. Henry Brodhead House) drawn by Ken Krabbenhoft.

date that we are now in a position to make.² And because we have had the great good fortune to be able to return the interior of the house to a more authentic version of its original self, there is no longer a discrepancy between inside and outside. In addition to removing the north parlor fireplace, we have restored the center hallway with a complete set of stairs, front and rear doors, side doors in their frames, studs, and hand-split lathe from the ca. 1766 Graham house in Orange County (Figs. 5 & 6). The "fifth" window has been removed. At some point I hope to chronicle all of these changes in detail, along with the many others that have been made to the cellar, garret, and kitchen extension.

The Human Record

The DeWitt name has long been associated with the house. John A. DeWitt evidently purchased the house in the late 1780s or early 90s, as he is listed as the owner of the property in the 1798 Direct Tax assessment roll. Ownership eventually passed through his son Andries to a grandson named John. This grandson was in all likelihood responsible for building the Greek Revival kitchen wing in the 1850s, and for the Greek Revival soffit and windows in the stone house that visually tie the two parts together. However, for most of the 18th century, the property on which the stone house stands, and the earlier dwelling it seems to have replaced, were in the hands of the Nottingham family.

The Nottinghams were descendents of an English soldier named William Nottingham who arrived in New Amsterdam in 1664 as part of the expeditionary force led by Colonel Richard Nicolls to take over the Dutch colony in the name of the Duke of York. Nicolls remained in New York, the first governor of the new colony. Nottingham and other English soldiers were granted land in Ulster County as part of an effort to extend the English presence in the mid-Hudson

Valley. For our story, the most important of Nottingham's colleagues was the captain of his company, Daniel Brodhead, who was accompanied or joined by his wife Anne Tye in the New World. They and others from the expedition force took up residence in the Dutch town of Wiltwyck, renamed Kingston by its new rulers.

Captain Brodhead died in 1667, and two years later his widow married William Nottingham. They had a son William Jr. and a daughter Elizabeth. William Sr. died in 1680, and Anne married again. She had had three children by Brodhead and would have a daughter, Anne, by her third husband, Thomas Garton.

In 1702, William Nottingham Jr. married Margaret Rutsen, a third-generation Hudson Valley Dutch native, and almost at once began buying land along the Esopus Creek in Marbletown, including an area known as the Burnt Orchard.³ There are records of half a dozen purchases, for which William Jr. paid everything from 'a valuable consideration' (to Hendrick Bogart, in 1709) to 'a hiffer bigg with Calfe' (to Cornelis Tack, in 1710). By 1710 William and Margaret had left Kingston to live on their Marbletown property, which in 1709 had grown by more than 60 acres deeded to them by William's mother Anne; it grew by an additional 65 acres by the terms of Anne's will. Indentures and wills from the period are very specific about land boundaries and personal property, especially money, livestock, and slaves; they have little or nothing to say about houses, however, beyond stating that they exist. Consequently there is no way to know what kind of house William and Margaret lived in ca. 1710.

The cellar of our stone house contains three large finished beams cut from trees felled much earlier and suggests reuse of wood from the first floor of a pre-existing frame or stone house, quite possibly the 'mansion' William refers to in his will of 1730. William and Margaret had twelve chil



Fig. 5 – View of north wall of north room with fireplace removed. Photo by Ken Krabbenhoft.

Fig. 6 – View of east end of center hall showing added stairs and doors. Photo by Neil Larson.



dren altogether, of whom eight survived infancy, three boys and five girls. In the normal course of events, they all married and left the homestead, with the exception of Stephen, baptized on March 14 of 1707/1708, who inherited it upon his father's death in 1731.

The woman who would be Stephen Nottingham's wife, Neltje or Nealtie (Nellie) Brodhead, was his half cousin, a daughter of his father's half-brother, Richard Brodhead, sons both of them of the uxorious Anne Tye (three years later Stephen's sister Anne carried on the tradition by marrying Neltje's brother John). Stephen and Neltje were married in 1734 and began a life that is chronicled in Marbletown records. In 1742, Stephen was listed as a yeoman residing on the Burnt Orchard. The Marbletown Slave Census of 1755 certifies that Stephen owned one male and two female slaves -- a little more than the average for the 39 slave owners in the township. During the French and Indian War, he discharged his civic duty as Captain of the Marbletown militia, which did active duty in Ulster County and was posted briefly to Fort Edward in 1757. Stephen was also present in Kingston at peace negotiations with the Delaware and Tuscarora Indians, among other tribes, in 1761.



Fig. 7 – View of south room from west. Photo by Neil Larson.



Fig. 8 – View of fireplace on north wall during dismantling. Photo by Ken Krabbenhoft.

Stephen and Neltje had no children, and when he wrote his will in 1776, he left everything to her. He died in 1778; Henry Brodhead, a Rochester blacksmith and nephew by blood of both Neltje and Stephen, was named administrator of the estate; and Neltje most likely remained on the Burnt Orchard. We know that Henry married Jemima Newkirk the year of Stephen's death and that he moved to Marletown from Rochester by 1784 when Neltje sold him the Burnt Orchard 'for and in Consideration of the Natural love and Affection which she hath and beareth unto the said Henry Brodhead and in Consideration of the sum of six hundred pounds Current money of the State of New York'.⁴ Because it was customary for elderly parents, aunts, and uncles to live with their children and younger relatives, Henry and his family may well have looked after Neltje in the last eight years of her life, until her death in 1792.

It seems she was the last Nottingham to live on the family homestead. There are gaps in the record that with luck will some day be filled. What we are fairly certain of from the documentary record is that after Neltje's death the house on the Burnt Orchard has belonged, successively, to Henry Brodhead; four or five generations of Dewitts (to 1910); Benjamin and Josephine Bush, then Herman and Jennie Bush (to 1929); Nellie K. Rowland (to 1978); Norma Roth (to 2010); and finally to us. In all fairness I should add Jessie and Nettie Dubois, who before selling the Burnt Orchard to the first two Bushes, were its owners for exactly two minutes of its long life, from 3:01 PM to 3:03 PM on January 7, 1910.

Seeing the Forest for the Trees...

...or, rather, seeing the forest "from" the trees – 'forest' here meaning the general picture that ties people and dates together, and 'trees' meaning just that: the source of the beams and floorboards that the Burnt Orchard house is made from.

First the forest. From everything that's been said, three plausible dates for the building of the house emerge:

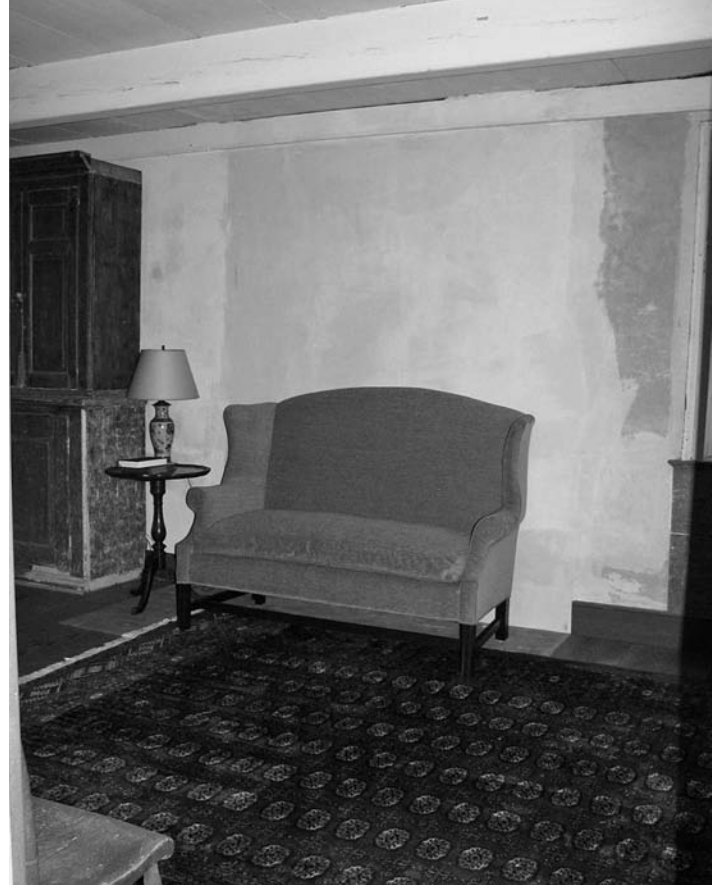
1. 1776-1778 makes sense if we assume that Stephen Nottingham was (a) interested in the direction vernacular architecture was taking in the Hudson Valley and (b) had a compelling reason to build a house at the very end of his life. The original building on the site, his father William's 'mansion', could have been a 60-year old derelict by this time, and Stephen may have wanted to provide something better for himself and Neltje. He may have had her future welfare in mind, as the records show that husbands often made specific provisions of property, cash, livestock, and even people (slaves) in their wills.
2. 1784 makes sense if we surmise that Neltje decided to stay on in the old house after Stephen's death but that the decision to build a new house came later. The only document that I have found from the date of Stephen's death to Neltje's own is the 1784 sale of the Burnt Orchard to Henry Brodhead.
3. Finally, 1792, the year of Neltje's death, makes sense if we assume that Henry (a) had not in fact been living with his aunt on the Burnt Orchard but somewhere else in Marletown and wanted to live on the property in a new house, the 'mansion' – or an undocumented successor to it -- being by then even older and more decrepit; (b) he and his family had been living with Neltje since 1784 but was content to stay in the old house or for some reason was not able to build a new house until she was gone.

And of course it is entirely possible that the real reason or reasons for the building of the house, at these or some other date, by these or other individuals, will never be known.

At the same time, all of these dates are problematic, beginning with 1776-1778. There seems to be agreement among historians that the ravages and anxieties of the Revolutionary War slowed the pace of building in the Hudson Valley as elsewhere. Kingston had been burned by the British in October 1777, and it seems logical to assume that local resources were channeled into reconstructing the city. If there is a connection between the rebuilding of Kingston and domestic architecture in Marbletown, it hasn't come to light, as far as I know. More persuasive even than the building's central hall and symmetrical façade are the original window moldings and chimney mantle, which, according to John Stevens and others, are clearly post-1770s, and the reduced Federal (as opposed to colonial) dimensions of the first-floor beams (Fig. 7).

As for 1792, the materials and style of the north room fireplace and chimney point to a late 18th century construction, but they are not original to the house (Fig. 8). Perhaps Henry Brodhead decided to put heat in the room after Neltje's death – and if not him by the DeWitts, the only other pre-19th Century owner – but that doesn't explain when the room he put it in was built. We determined the north fireplace was added because we found plaster on the wall behind it. However, this plaster may be the remnant of a jambless fireplace located on this wall or evidence for a central chimney in a previous house configuration, and just as older beams were reused in the basement, the north wall may be a feature of the Nottingham house incorporated in the late 18th-century renovation (Fig. 5).

When all is said and done, however, the most convincing evidence came from the dendrochronological analysis done in April 2011. The oldest wood tested were the reused beams mentioned above. There are three of them in the south part of the cellar, cut from trees that were felled around 1716. Of the three, only one provided a clear date, the core series from the other two being – in the words of the report – 'substantially and repeatedly disrupted with patches of reaction wood, interpreted in the laboratory as the after-effects of forest fires that severely stressed the growth without being fatal to the trees' – as close to a physical proof of the origin of the Burnt



Orchard's name as anyone has come. Core series from the only one of the beams in the north part of the cellar that had not been destroyed by termites suggest "a likely construction phase in the mid-to-latter part of the 1770's or perhaps a few years into the 1780's."

Of course it is entirely possible that the real reason or reasons for the building of the house, at one of these or some other date, by these or other individuals, may never be known. Yet, the data that has come to light so far during our restoration of the stone house on Nottingham's Burnt Orchard has given us a fuller appreciation of its place in the history of Marbletown and the Anglo-Dutch experience in the Hudson Valley, and we're confident that more will be revealed in the future.

¹ Ryan has provided more observations on the house and Marbletown's cultural landscape in a previous essay. Thomas R. Ryan, "Cultural Accommodations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Architecture of Marbletown, New York." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* Vol. 6 (1997): 137-149.

² *Ibid.*

³ The first reference I've been able to find to Nottingham's Burnt Orchard is in a 1709 deed by which Hendrick Bogart sells William Nottingham 'a part or parcel of that Certain old Esopus Creek or Kill Lying and being in Marbletown aforesaid adjoining to the orchard of said William Nottingham Called the burnt Orchard" (Ulster County Deeds Liber BB, p. 130).

⁴ Ulster County Records Liber LL pp. 218-219.

⁵ Edward R. Cook & William J. Callahan, Jr., "Dendrochronological Analysis of the Nottingham/DeWitt House, Stone Ridge, Ulster County, New York," April 2011.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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- October 20** Tour in Feura Bush, Albany County led by Roberta Jeracka.
- November 3** Winnikee Barn Tour, Rhinebeck, Dutchess County. \$45/person. For more information email to info@winnikeeland.org
- November 17** Tour of Colonial and Federal period houses in Gardiner and Plattekill, Ulster County, led by Maggie McDowell.
- December 15** Holiday tour and luncheon in Kingston hosted by Rob Sweeney.

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