



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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368 Hooker Avenue,
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Photo by Neil Larson.

What is vernacular architecture?

At the stuffing party preparing the last issue of the newsletter for the mail, a conversation started over what “vernacular” actually meant. This is not an unusual question in response to the announcement that one studies vernacular architecture or is the member of a group named Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture. But it is a question that we should be able to answer and a term we needn’t waste time debating its meaning. Simply put, vernacular means local, and vernacular architecture is architecture that derives its meaning or significance primarily from local contexts. It may respond to influences from broader geographical contexts, global cultural movements or universal published sources, but these are perceived through the lens of the local experience and applied within the local social framework.

According to Webster’s *Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, the word derives from the Latin *vernaculus*, which means native. The French word *verna* refers to “a slave born in his master’s house,” another way of saying native. The principal definition reads, “using a language or dialect native to a region or country rather than a literary, cultured or foreign language.” Rather pejorative, but you get the point.

Wikipedia provides the following definition for vernacular architecture. “Vernacular architecture is a category of architecture based on localized needs and construction materials, and reflecting local traditions. Vernacular architecture tends to evolve over time to reflect the environmen-

tal, cultural, technological, and historical context in which it exists. It has often been dismissed as crude and unrefined, but also has proponents who highlight its importance in current design. It can be contrasted against polite architecture which is characterized by stylistic elements of design intentionally incorporated for aesthetic purposes which go beyond a building’s functional requirements.”

The Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World defines vernacular architecture as “comprising the dwellings and all other buildings of the people. Related to their environmental contexts and available resources they are customarily owner- or community-built, utilizing traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of life of the cultures that produce them.”

Many definitions of vernacular architecture use terms such as simple, ordinary, unsophisticated, which limits our attention to the most mundane buildings. However, if we use the operative meaning of vernacular as being local, then any building existing in a local context is considerable, from the meanest dwelling to the most elite mansion. Today, most scholars of vernacular architecture consider it to be a perspective for the study of a place rather than a category of building.

And what is the value of studying architecture in the local context? To quote Eudora Welty, “One place understood well helps to understand other places better.”

Tour of Historic Properties in the Town of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County – Saturday, April 20, 2013

An unexpected inquiry from a new owner of an old house in Poughkeepsie resulted in a rather spontaneous tour of the Town of Poughkeepsie. Until very recently the house had been owned by the Kimlin family, who settled there in the 1850s; however, it is reputed to have parts dating back to the 18th century. The owner has removed accumulated finishes to expose some of the skeleton of the house, which allowed us to see for the first time, if that was the case. Included on the tour was the Kimlins' cider mill, which for many years was a popular local landmark. It now is owned by a local preservation group that endeavors to restore it to its original, folksy grandeur.

We made a stop at another 19th-century Poughkeepsie house and barn before having lunch at "Coppola's on 9," which occupies an old Westervelt House built in the late 18th century and still retains noteworthy architectural features even though used as a restaurant for many years. After lunch, we enjoyed a walking tour of New Hamburg, a rare and wonderful surviving 19th-century Hudson River landing.

Our thanks to James Papp, Cider Mill Friends of Open Space and Historic Preservation, and Sarah Johnson of the New Hamburg History Group.



Kimlin House from SE.



AT RIGHT, FROM TOP:
Kimlin House from NW.
Kimlin House interior.
Kimlin Cider Mill.

Kimlin House from NE.





LEFT, FROM TOP:
 Westervelt House, South Rd.
 House and stores, Main St., New Hamburg.
 House on Conklin St., New Hamburg.
 Detail of porch on Main St., New Hamburg.

ABOVE:
 Brick house on Water St., New Hamburg.



BELOW:
 Original H.R.R.R. tunnel (1850), New Hamburg.



BOTTOM:
 St. Nicholas Church, Point St., New Hamburg.



Style and Vernacular Architecture

By Neil Larson

Introduction

Style is an emotionally charged word in the study of historic architecture. In some circles, it is the end-all and be-all of criticism; that is, if a building cannot be classified in a manner or taste, then it can have no significance as architecture. In others, consideration of style is regarded as an act of pretension that deflects our analysis of architecture from a natural (and honest) realm into a profane world of wealth, class and power. Each of these extremist views wields style as a club in an ideological battle that is more about contemporary attitudes toward history than about history itself.

In the study of vernacular architecture, the controversy over style has motivated most scholars to avoid it altogether. The rationale is that style in traditional buildings is an individualistic, subjective phenomenon that cannot be reliably interpreted other than in the broadest of terms and that the deeper meaning of the architecture is in its physical (as opposed to metaphysical) fabric. As a result, while we have grown fluent in vocabularies of types, forms and plans and skilled in methods for finding patterns in organization and function, our ability to articulate the substance of a building's emotive content or to discern the range and diversity of its expressive power has developed to a far lesser degree. As we have become attuned to the complexities of vernacular buildings, we have continued to refine our interpretive frameworks to accommodate new empirical data. Meanwhile, we continue to approach style in the most general way, relying on casual, often uncritical, references to established paradigms (as we would never do for house form or function) and on universalizing terminology (such as Georgian or Picturesque) without really responding to the specific nature of the object.

Furthermore, as we have come to recognize that physical changes in a building can serve as indicators of cultural transformations in an individual or a society, we seldom regard differences in style as profoundly. As a result, by avoiding the issue of style in vernacular architecture, we deprive ourselves of a valuable tool in the search for its meaning and, more important, severely limit our opportunities for interpreting it as a "cultural system," to borrow Clifford Geertz's term.

What follows are two case studies that demonstrate how a more rigorous and critical analysis of style enhances our understanding of vernacular architecture, particularly in situations where form, plan and function do not provide much insight into the cultural system of which the architecture is a part. In the first, we look at some late-19th-century German houses in Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, that challenge our resourcefulness in identifying the source of their style. In the second, we examine the preservation and transformation of traditional Dutch design features in an early-19th-century houses in Dutchess and Rockland counties that reflect the cultural turmoil experienced within rural society at that time.



Fig. 1 – Wurtemberg Farmhouse, ca. 1870, Rhinebeck, NY. All photos by Neil Larson unless otherwise indicated.



Fig. 2 – Henry Delamater House, 1844, Rhinebeck, NY, Alexander Jackson Davis, architect.

Case Study I

The style of late-19th-century German houses in Rhinebeck

When considering the style of houses built by German families in Rhinebeck during the last half of the 19th-century, it is easy to categorize the design as American Picturesque, especially in the Hudson Valley where the design taste popularized by native-son Andrew Jackson Downing was widely expressed (Fig. 1). When compared to a text-book example like the Delamater House, built a generation earlier in Rhinebeck, there are certain visible similarities (Fig. 2). Both houses have square massing and symmetrical facades dominated by central gable dormers and broad porches. They have hipped roofs, deep eaves and little bay windows on the parlor side. Their floor plans are roughly the same, although the architect's version plays with the arrangement of interior spaces a bit more, and, of course, the Delamater House is replete with high-end Gothic ornamentation, which is absent on its vernacular cousin. Yet, should we assume that the style of the vernacular house is simply a watered-down, popular-culture version of the architect-designed model, or is there more to the comparison than meets the eye?

While these houses clearly share a design vocabulary, it is revealing to identify more precisely what that vocabulary is and

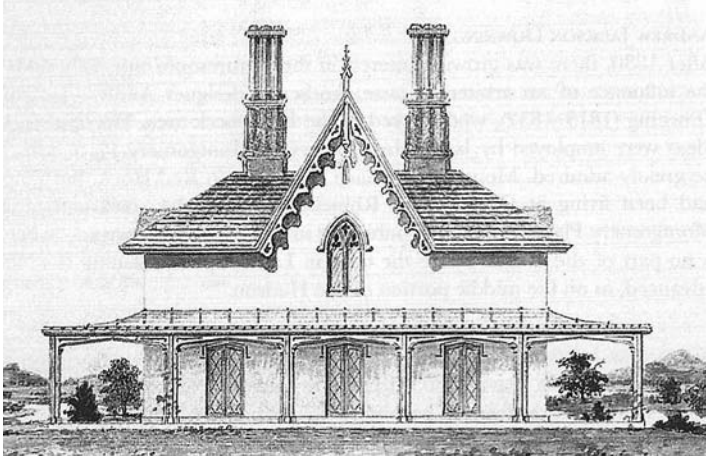


Fig. 3 – Front Elevation for Linden Hill, 1842, Rhinebeck, NY (not extant), Alexander Jackson Davis, architect. From Nancy Kelly, *Rhinebeck's Historic Architecture* (2009), 90.

how it is applied in a given situation before leaping to match it to a prototype in known source material (Fig. 3). Such differences in the expression of a style can mean more than simply deviation from a published norm. In a broader context, the pattern book itself can be seen as only one of many approaches to presenting a style.

If we focus on this farmhouse and consider its square massing and hipped roof, we will recall that although these features generally correspond with the pattern book example, the form and plan is not unique to the American Picturesque. They also evince Classical ideals: orderly forms and ornamentation that Picturesque tastemakers disavowed in favor of more “natural” asymmetrical shapes and patterns. Likewise, the cross-gables were as likely borrowed from Renaissance precedents, although in the Romanesque example they were made more pointed in the design plate to contribute to the Gothic feeling of the design.

On closer examination, then, the Classical sources in the farmhouse design become apparent, and its relationship to the pattern-book model becomes increasingly coincidental. What is overlooked by beginning our reading of style with this comparison is that the farmhouse is actually a compact, rectilinear, balanced, two-story house with pedimented facades and an interplay of pedimented and arched elements over windows and doors much more in the Palladian tradition than in a Picturesque one. Of course, there are indisputably Picturesque flourishes, such as the bay window and the veranda, but these popular modern features alone in no way should determine the source of the style.

Once we begin to probe the possible sources of the stylistic features of this farmhouse, other opportunities for comparison emerge that are at once plausible and provocative. The most obvious question in this case is if there are any German precedents to which these Rhinebeck builders were making reference. For example, a late 18th-century German Rhineland house, described as a “typical Osnabruck house,” appears to be an equally appropriate source for the Rhinebeck farmhouse as an American pattern book, particularly for German immigrants and builders intent on referencing a European cultural heritage (Fig. 4).

The Rhinebeck community of Wurtemberg where the farmhouse is located remained an ethnic German enclave into the 20th century, and we should expect its material culture to express a nostalgic spirit of preservation and reflect periodic efforts at revitalization. And, if we review the course of German architecture in the late 18th and 19th centuries, we learn that it was characterized by a persistent taste for Classicism, particularly in the south, where the Renaissance and Baroque influences of Italy and France never fully dissipated. Even when the international Picturesque movement hit southern Germany in the early 19th century, it manifested itself in a Romantic Classicism that recalled Romanesque architecture, known as *rundbogenstil*. (This anti-Gothic movement influenced American architects, such as Richard Upjohn.)

Enough examples of this 19th-century house form are extant in Rhinebeck (as well in neighboring “German” towns) to distinguish it as a distinctive local type (Fig. 5). However, it is not my intent here to expound on the particularities of this German-American house type, but rather to speak to the matter of our use of style as a diagnostic tool. Style need not be construed simply as the expression of a fashion or taste or the measure of status, cultural change or assimilation. There is a more complex anatomy to a style, even in vernacular houses, where it is used selectively and conditionally, and we are at a disadvantage in “reading” the building if we are not informed to its stylistic vocabulary.

Thus, when we encounter a house like the Shultz House, built c. 1854 in Shultzville, another German hamlet near Rhinebeck, we can look at it either as a quirky attempt to imitate a popular American Picturesque prototype, or as reflecting a design tradition that extends back to the Renaissance and Classical buildings in Germany such as the Brunswick Council Chamber built in 1764 (Figs. 6 & 7). If we begin with a broader sense of the stylistic context in which builders operated and a more detailed understanding of Classical (and Picturesque) architecture, the

Fig. 4 – Typical Osnabruck house, 1780-1800. From Watkin & Mellinghoff, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal*, Fig. 226.





Fig. 5



Fig. 6

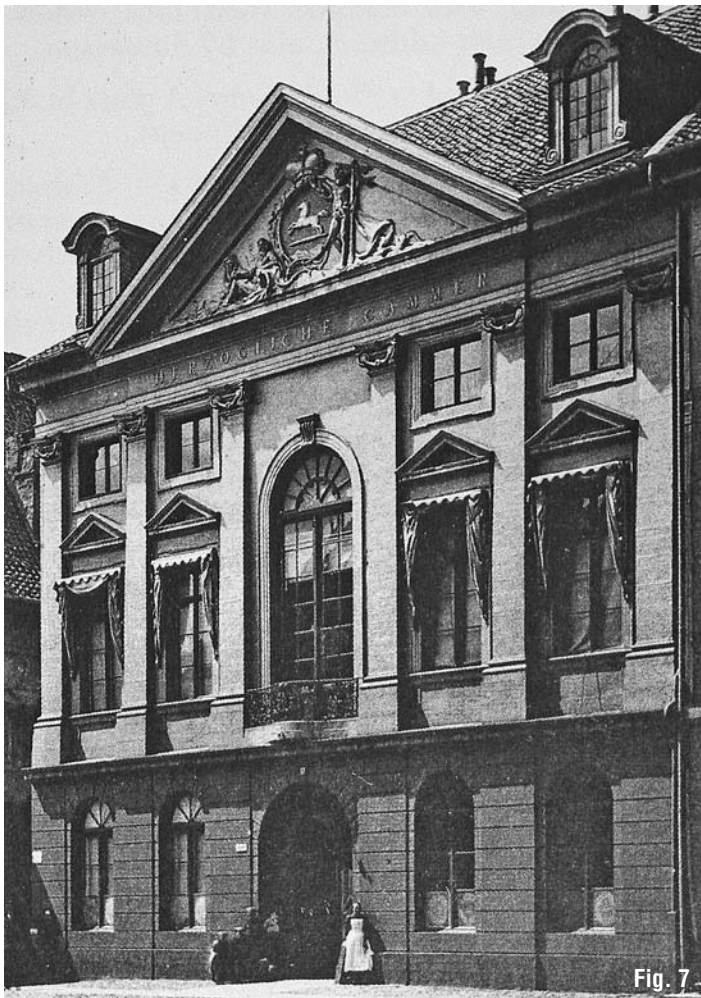


Fig. 7

idiosyncrasies of the Shultz house may be more effectively interpreted.

For example, the entrance to the Shultz House is composed of multiple layers of ornamented openings, which create the illusion of a processional into the house, a theatrical manipulation of forms and arrangements in a true Baroque spirit (Fig. 8). And the cacophony of freely interpreted ornamentation? Such a lavish display of contradictory elements is a blatant Baroque device. This effect (and its stylistic intent) is vastly different from the strict, controlled entrance and literal ornamentation of a Picturesque pattern-book house.

As we come to focus more and more on vernacular architecture from the mid- and later-19th century, we discover the limitations of the structural approach to buildings that serves so well in more functional architecture but now fails to adequately distinguish the cultural or design significance of houses when the role of style is more of a factor. We can acknowledge the superficiality of the generalist approach to style in American architecture, particularly as it relates to vernacular buildings, but when push comes to shove and we need a category for a design feature, most of us will fall back on this inherently flawed system. The point to be made in this case study then is that while the term “Picturesque” generally applies in one way or another to most 19th-century architecture in the Hudson Valley, in the analysis of these German farmhouses, it is so broad and unspecific as to be nearly meaningless. Would it not be more productive to consider these houses in cultural and design contexts that begin with the object and look to a universe that goes beyond the pattern books? What would we learn if we considered the distinctive design of a German farmhouse on Violet Hill in Rhinebeck, pictured here, in a global context that included a building such as Schloss Luisium, a late-18th-century villa near Dessau in Germany (Figs. 9 & 10)?

Some may say that to link 19th-century German-American architecture in Rhinebeck back to Germany is a stretch, and there is no hard evidence to support it. A cursory review of censuses from this period indicates that immigration was not a factor. Hardly anyone in Rhinebeck was enumerated as having been born in Germany. Yet Germans were coming to New York in huge numbers and how their presence affected those already here is a situation worthy of more attention. Was the old German community, perpetually marginalized by the Dutch and Anglo elite, feeling nostalgic and reaching out to newly-arrived Germans in the city? Some of these new Germans were employed in the building trades and landscape gardening on river estates, and at least one German architect is known to have worked for the Astors, who were Germans after all. But what has attracted my attention to this style issue is that traveling through other, later German settlements in the Catskills, Schoharie, the Mohawk Valley and in eastern Rensselaer County, the house forms and style features are remarkably similar to these Rhinebeck houses (Fig. 11). Until more research is done into the design of these houses, all we have to go on is this empirical evidence.

Fig. 5 – Pultz House, c. 1870, Rhinebeck, NY.

Fig. 6 – Shultz House, c. 1854, Shultzville, NY.

Fig. 7 – Council Chamber, 1764, Brunswick, Germany. From Watkin & Mellingerhoff, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal*, Fig. 166.



Fig. 8 – Shultz House, entrance detail

AT RIGHT, FROM TOP:

Fig. 9 – House on Violet Hill, Rhinebeck

Fig. 10 – Schloss Luisium, near Dessau, Germany, Frederick Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff, architect. From Watkin & Mellinghoff, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal*, Fig. 20.

Fig. 11 – Unidentified house, Schoharie, NY.



Case Study II Dutch house design in the late Federal period

This brings us to the second mini case study concerning how we consider the meaning of stylistic expression in vernacular architecture. Since our understanding of Dutch culture and architecture in the Hudson Valley is far more developed than that of the Germans, I will shift to buildings that we know and to the Federal period for which we have a more interdisciplinary context. Rather than identify stylistic features and sources, we will consider how we respond to them.

Two Dutchess County houses illustrate different perspectives of farmhouses built by Dutch farmers in the early 19th century. The view of the principal façade of the Van Dyck house, built in c. 1820 in Hyde Park, pictured here, emphasizes what is persistent and conspicuous in the design on Dutch houses in this period, as well as any other: a long, low rectangular form with restrained ornamentation (Fig. 12). In contrast to the diversity of house forms and styles proliferating in the region during this period, the image of this house is decidedly unchanging and

ardently traditional. But it is not sufficient to say that the style of the house is outmoded or conservative. Rather, both the Van Dyck house and the a Van Wyck house, built c. 1830 in East Fishkill, albeit displaying Greek Revival-style features, were designed in aggressive, contemporary manner (Fig. 13).

There is little in their materials, technology, space planning or decorative program that is not current with their period. Yet, there were choices made concerning the appearance of these houses in their form and structure that can only be considered intentional. Here are two houses whose builders wanted them to “look Dutch,” not simply to be Dutch by ownership, but in relation to all the other house styles appearing in the neighborhood to appear Dutch, unequivocally. These builders were using the language of style to participate in one of the most compelling social issues of the day: the struggle of the traditional ethnic agrarian society to preserve their identity in a period of rapid urban growth and cultural shifts. More simply put, for reasons



Fig. 12 – Van Dyck House, c. 1820, Hyde Park, NY.



Fig. 13 – Van Wyck House, c. 1830, East Fishkill, NY.



Fig. 14 – Blauvelt-Amos House, c. 1819, east façade, Blauvelt, NY.

both very real and fanatically exaggerated, the comfortable rural establishment in the Hudson Valley perceived that its supremacy were threatened by the onslaught of marauding city capitalists, bankers and industrialists, as well as those insidious Yankees swarming into and “improving” every vacant part of the region. Now, this view of regional history is neither new nor revolutionary; in fact, it has been the focal point of events in the Hudson Valley from Washington Irving on. This dialectic permeated all aspects of everyday life, so why wouldn’t we expect to see it expressed in art, architecture and material culture?

During the early 19th century, in every part of the region, the Dutch farmhouse of the previous century was carefully preserved. (This actually is the second instance of a preservation

movement. The first occurred a century earlier in response to the English conquest of New Netherland.) Style-wise, it was expressed subtly but significantly, largely to emphasize its persistence and the Quixotic nature of the situation. Proportions became more pronounced, edges harder, craftsmanship finer, ornament plainer. The traditional design was idealized and abstracted to serve as a symbol of ethnic identity and group affiliation. The houses became more distinctive for their expression than for their function. It was an architecture driven by style.

The Blauvelt-Amos House in Blauvelt, Rockland County epitomizes the iconic status of the late Dutch house (Fig. 14). Story has it that Jacob Blauvelt had the house built for his daughter and her new husband, John Amos. The house is one of the last masonry gambrel roof houses built in the lower Hudson Valley, and it attracts our attention for its persistence and its faithful preservation of the traditional house form in a time and place (and generation) in which its relevancy was in question. It is almost a “Dutch Revival” house of a very early date. (This is no exaggeration. Within only a few years, people like Washington Irving were lamenting the demise of “old” New York, both physically and culturally. And by 1840 Irving was building his Romantic replica of an old Dutch house at Sunnyside opening the world that had been lost.) Clearly, Jacob Blauvelt wanted to preserve the ideals of his Dutch heritage and traditional rural society in his daughter’s future.

All the primary design features of the Rockland County Dutch house were conscientiously executed and subtly accented in this building. The long, low massing of the house was maintained, the prominent gambrel roof was preserved with its signature bell-cast profile and deep overhangs front and rear. In the front, the roof spans over a broad piazza, noted by Peter Kalm, Mrs. Grant and other travelers far-and-wide as something curiously Dutch-American. By 1820 other more spacious and efficient two-story house designs were available to builders, and many older Dutch houses long ago had pushed up through their roofs to make their dormant attic spaces habitable. However, the Blauvelt-Amos house was built without rooms in the attic (the dormers pictured here are more recent).

The extreme attention to detail in the construction of the house indicates that the design was carefully considered and well crafted (Fig. 15). This was no accidental building, and its richness and sophistication dispels any thought of it as a casual, outmoded design choice. The exterior masonry is faithful to a traditional hierarchy of materials: brick on the front, laid in a Flemish bond, with brownstone trim, cut and tooled brownstone ashlar on the sides and rubble stone in the basement and on the rear wall, all displaying masterful and conspicuous craftsmanship. This precise manipulation of materials takes the architecture out of the usual functional and social contexts and elevates it to a symbolic realm.

The interior also was designed in a manner that artfully expressed continuity over change. The simplicity of decoration, the familiar archway dividing front from back and the old-fashioned twin-leaf Dutch door with strap hinges and bolt latches are traditional features preserved in the center passage (Fig. 16). One novel feature, a pocketed stairway, is the exception that proves the rule: this builder has revealed he could have chosen a far more contemporary treatment for this public space.

Fig. 15 – Blauvelt-Amos House, c. 1819, exterior detail, southeast corner, Blauvelt, NY. Wood frame wing added later.

Fig. 16 – Blauvelt-Amos House, c. 1819, center passage looking west, Blauvelt, NY.

Looking at it stylistically, rural architecture in the Federal Period is characterized by the abstraction of traditional design elements. In period terms, it was referred to as “plainness.” The term had originated years earlier as the antithesis of improvement, but in the early 19th century it had become the vehicle for describing rural taste and expression as churchmen and political leaders sanctimoniously exhorted their followers to repulse the vice and venality of urban-capitalist society in their battle with the forces of change. Now, this was not the first occurrence of the philosophy or the aesthetic. Similar primitive or purifying movements in art and culture go back as far as the ancient Greeks and as far forward as the Post Moderns, including numerous well-known examples along the way, such as 18th-century Neo-classicism (which also has its influence on Federal Period architecture), Ruskin, Puritans, Quakers and the Amish, the New Objectivity of High Modernists like LeCorbusier, and the Hog Farm. In every case, it has been a movement responding to disillusionment with established authorities in society or art and which attempts to distance, disassociate or purify itself through symbolic action. We know, though, that there is nothing that is primitive, plain or simple about this kind of art except its appearance, and even that abounds with clues to its irony. It is from this understanding that we can begin to interpret the style of the Blauvelt-Amos house and all the others.

Conclusion

For us to effectively interpret this metaphysical component of architecture, we need to adopt a posture in analyzing it that takes us beyond the bounds of historical documentation and into the realm of criticism. Over the past 30 years, the study of vernacular architecture studies has successfully revised long-held historical attitudes about the complexity of traditional material culture, but it has done little to break with the universalizing and reductionist tendencies of conventional art history when it comes to considering style. Instead, we should be utilizing the methods of critical disciplines that give us the opportunity to interpret the expressive aspects of vernacular architecture. Manfredo Tafuri commented in the opening of his book, *Theories and Histories of Architecture*, “To criticize... means to catch the historical scent of phenomena, put them through the sieve of strict evaluation, show their mystifications, values, contradictions, and internal dialectics and explode their entire charge of meanings.”

The study of vernacular architecture is an interdisciplinary discipline, and in confronting the complexity and contradiction inherent in it, we should utilize other critical perspectives, particularly from literature and from contemporary art and architecture, apply them where helpful and experiment with new ideas that may emerge to facilitate our search for meaning. Our writing should reflect this search for meaning as well. To communicate about the meaning of architecture, we are forced to articulate expression that is wordless. Much of the information about vernacular architecture is unavailable to us, both by circumstance and by design. It requires us to search for ways to find access to the inaccessible, to express the inexpressible and to convey the paradoxical nature of our interpretation.

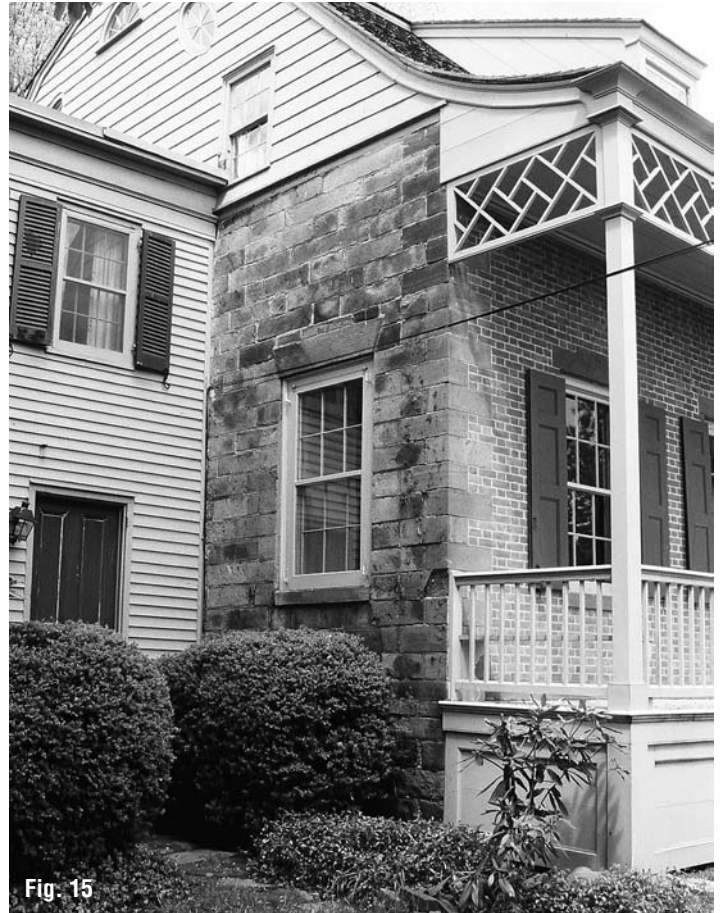


Fig. 15



Fig. 16

ARCHITECT'S NOTEBOOK

The Ariaantje Coeymans Mansion and its North House*By John Stevens*

Editor's Note: This is the first of two articles concerning the restoration of the North House, an annex to the Coeymans House near Albany, long in disrepair. In this installment, the author recalls his discovery of the house and his assessment of its conditions. The narrative is accompanied by a series of photographs intended to provide visual detail.

In 1967 the writer commenced work as architectural historian consultant at Old Bethpage Village Restoration – a project of the County of Nassau on Long Island. His first major assignment was to research details of buildings of the 17th and early 18th centuries as an aid to understanding the c. 1730 Minne Scheck house that had recently been moved to the museum village site from Manhasset – where an upscale shopping mall was being built. Armed with Helen Wilkinson Reynolds' *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776* (1929) and Eberlein and Hubbard's *Historic Houses of the Hudson Valley* (1942), he made a list of sites of potential value to this research. One of these was the Ariaantje Coeymans mansion located at Coeymans, New York, in the south-eastern corner of Albany County (Fig. A).

The stone Ariaantje Coeymans mansion faces east towards the Hudson River and immediately to its south is Coeymans Creek that provided the power for the Coeymans' family mills, which created their wealth, a manifestation of which was this magnificent house (see Stevens, *Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America* [hereafter *DVA*], Plates 31, 32). The Coeymans house is one of four large stone 'mansion houses' that have survived from the early period of New York. It can be compared with the c.1680 Christopher Billop house at Tottenville on Staten Island (*DVA*, Plate 3) which has survived basically in its original form. Both houses are two-and-a-half stories in height. Also to be considered are the Glen-Sanders house at Scotia in Schenectady County (*DVA*, Plate 33) and the Jean/Daniel Hasbrouck house in New Paltz, Ulster County (*DVA*, Plate 30). The first of these is dated 1713, with iron numerals wrought into the wall anchors in the façade. It was originally one-and-a-half stories with a central façade gable, but its walls were raised to a full two stories in the 1770s. The Hasbrouck house has recently been dated to the early 1720s by dendrochronology. It is exceptional in being two rooms deep, and as a consequence is dominated by an enormous roof. It is one-and-a-half story in height. Like the Coeymans house, the Billop, Glen-Sanders and Hasbrouck houses have center halls.

The owner of the Coeymans house at the time, Richard Anderson, allowed him full run of the house, and subsequently he made a number of visits to it over a period of several years. One of its most interesting features was a cross-window frame on the north wall, at its east side, the lower part of which could be seen in the 'connector' between



Fig. A – View of Coeymans mansion and North House from the north east. November 1967. Photos by J.R. Stevens.

the stone house and the timber-framed 'North Building'. The inside of the window was hidden under lath-and-plaster inside a closet beside a fireplace on the first floor. Mr. Anderson gave him permission to uncover the window. The frame and the inside of the shutters still had their original paint in good condition. All that was missing from it was the fixed leaded glass in the top openings. While the lower openings have rabbets for casements, such were never fitted (*DVA*, Plate 74A). The split lathing used to cover over the window was applied with an early form of cut nails having what appears to be hand-made heads. These nails are 1¾ inches long. This work was carried out in the latter part of the 18th century, when the stone house underwent a great remodeling and achieved its present appearance. The cut nails would seem to date this work being done about 1790, the approximate date when cut nails first made their appearance. It has to be determined when cut nails became available in that part of the Hudson Valley.

Helen Reynolds, in her *Dutch Houses of the Hudson Valley Before 1776*, dated the construction of the Ariaantje Coeymans house between 1716 and 1723. Dendrochronology recently carried out on timbers of the house has revised the construction date to c.1700. In the Reynolds book is an 18th century illustration of the house showing its original appearance. It is presented in the book as an oval vignette (Fig. B). However, there is reason to

believe that the vignette shows only a portion of the original version that showed other buildings at the site. The inference is that in its original form, it may have been like the Van Bergen overmantel painting in the collections of the New York State Historical Association (*DVA*, page 39). The original version was owned by a Miss Charlotte Amelia Houghtaling (1838-1933), who presented it to the Holland Society in New York. Its present location – if it still exists – is not known. It shows the house's steep roof and prominent façade gable. Towards the end of the 18th century, while the house was in the possession of the Ten Eyck family, the original roof was replaced with the present gambrel roof. The casement windows were replaced with frames having double-hung sash, with one exception already noted. The interior of the house was retrimmed, and lath-and-plaster concealed the beams. The timber structures of the first and second floors are the only original internal features that survive apart from the magnificent original staircase from the first floor to the attic.

Thirteen feet north of the stone house in a timber-framed structure- or rather a portion of one- that has been believed to be of greater antiquity than the stone house (Fig. C). The dendrochronology program that revised the dating of the main building came up with a date in the early 1720's for the 'North House'. This pretty much corresponds with the date of the marriage of Ariaantje Coeymans (1672-1743) to David Verplanck in 1723.

The 'North House' is 21 feet 6 inches in width, contrasted with a width of 28 feet for the stone house. At the time of the alterations to the stone house carried out by the Ten Eyck's it was reduced in length to 24 feet 6 inches by the removal of its west end. Archaeological investigation has determined that it was originally about 38 feet long. The original steep-pitched roof was removed, and a new one- built at right angles to the original- was constructed from the north wall of the 'North House' to the north wall of the stone house,

Fig. C – Reconstruction of the early 18th century appearance of the 'North House' and the Coeymans mansion, view from northeast. Pen-and-ink drawing by J. R. Stevens, 1970.

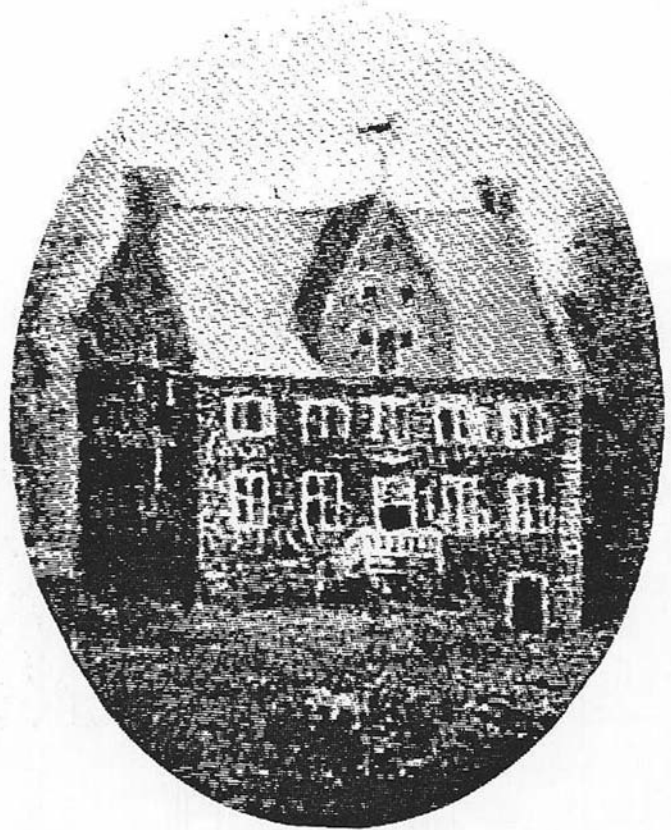


Fig. B – Historic image of Coeymans mansion. From Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776* (1929), page 9.

covering the space between the two buildings. The roof had a moderate pitch, and re-used some of the old rafters. This 'connector' was given an east wall made of re-used elements from an unknown source, including a door frame and a window frame. By the 1970s this wall was in poor condition, and was replaced with all-new construction featuring a large area of glass. Unfortunately, an inadequate record exists of the old work. The original wall plates of the 'North House' were re-used. The south plate was used for the west plate of the new roof configuration and survives, missing only a few feet of what had been its west end. The former north wall plate was re-used for the east side of the new roof. Roof leaks caused so much damage to this timber that it has not been possible to save it. The east wall of the 'North House' was of brick in a Dutch cross-bond pattern over a high stone foundation.

Because of its poor condition, Mr. Anderson considered demolishing the 'North House'. The writer persuaded Mr. Anderson to let him remove its lath-and-plaster interior, and this was carried out with the assistance of Daniel Hopping and Charles Tichy. We found an inscription in pencil 'A. Joal March 8 1871' indicating when the lath-and-plaster had been installed. Exposing the wall posts and the second floor beams allowed a detail study to be carried out of the interior of the building, and it was saved from destruction (Fig. D).

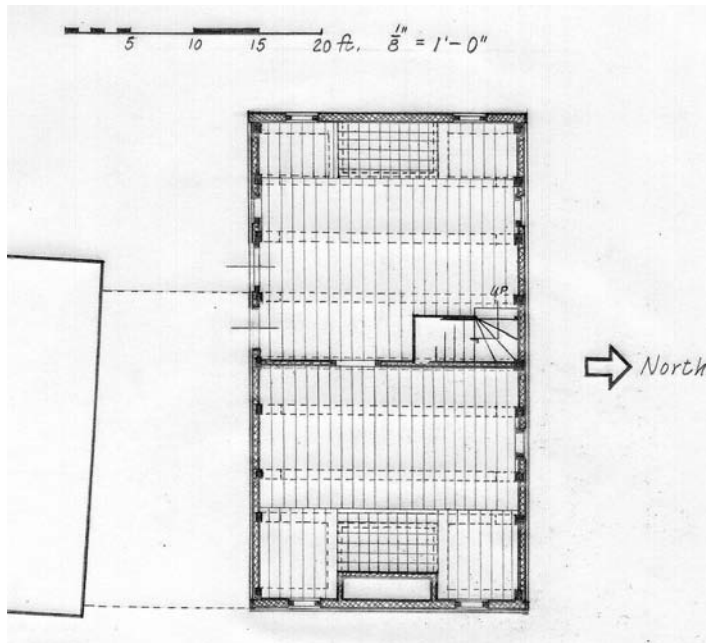


Fig. D – First floor plan of North House. Drawing by J.R. Stevens, 2013.

It was evident on the exterior that there had been two windows in the brick east wall that had been removed and the openings filled in with brick. On the inside it could be seen that these windows had flanked a fireplace, evidently of the jambless type. Where the hood frame had returned into the wall was plainly visible. However, this fireplace had been removed at an early date and replaced by one in the basement for which a smoke hood was built against the north wall of the first floor, mostly covering an original window frame. This was a 'kloosterkozijn' with two openings in vertical alignment, the top one originally having fixed leaded glass, and the lower one a shutter. This was the same type of window as the two that had been in the east wall. The smoke hood had been removed in the 1871 rebuild, and replaced with a square brick flue for use with a stove. The ghost of the old smoke hood still existed, and it could be seen that its west side was plumb and the east side had sloped inward from the first floor to the second floor boards. To install it, a second floor beam (second bent) had been cut back, and supported on a header carried by the hood beam of the former jambless fireplace and a third floor beam. The removal of the 'korbeel' exposed the interior of its mortise into the wall post (DVA, Plate 75B).

There are five surviving 'H' bents with irregular spacing. In the original configuration there had been two additional 'H' bents. The wide spacing between the east wall and the first bent was not only to accommodate the jambless fireplace hood for the first floor, but also the flue for a basement fireplace. The wall posts measure 6 inches deep and 9 inches wide, and are set on sills 6 inches wide and 3 inches high, let into the ends of the first floor beams which are of oak, about 12 inches square. The second floor beams, wall posts and plates are pine. The first beam (hood beam) is 14 inches high and 9 inches wide; the other beams are 12 inches high.

The beams have braces ('korbeels') to the wall posts except the fourth beam. At this position, channels 4 inches wide and 1½ inches deep were cut in the center of the posts to engage bricks of a partition that divided the interior into two rooms. This distance from the surface of the first floor beams to that of the second floor beams is about 9 feet. The wall posts extended upward to make a knee wall 3 feet 10 inches in height, including the wall plate.

The original door frame and door in the east foundation wall exists, as does a small window frame in the north foundation wall near its east side, which had fixed leaded glass on the exterior. There is also a doorway in the south foundation wall, dating from the time that the 'connector' was built. The south wall of the timber frame construction, exposed within the 'connector' shows as whitewashed plaster. This is the original wall finish. The walls are infilled with clay bound with straw, and supported on riven sticks set in holes cut in the sides of the wall posts on about 6 inch centers. The inside faces of the wall posts are exposed by about one inch, but the outside faces were hacked so that plaster would adhere to them. The plaster is about two inches in thickness over the wall posts. On the north wall in the 19th century, the plaster was cut back flush with the outside surfaces of the wall posts, and weatherboarding was applied. The exterior surfaces of the original window frame were likewise cut back.

With its west wall removed, the 'North House' served for a time as a garage. About 1970, the Coeymans house was sold to Messrs. William Pillsbury and Robin Michel. These gentlemen basically restored the interior of the stone house to its later 18th century appearance and rebuilt the roof with insulation on the exterior of the roof boarding. They did little to the 'North House' beyond taking down the deteriorated brick east wall and replacing it with concrete block veneered with four inches of the original brick. Unfortunately, the mason did not understand how to recreate the Dutch cross-bond appearance.

About 1987, the Coeymans house was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Lawler. In 1999, the Lawler's hosted a visit by members of HVVA. In 2009, the Lawler's acquired a Dutch barn from Middleburgh (*Dutch Barn Preservation Society Newsletter*, Fall 2009) and it was re-erected across the road from the 'North Building'. The axis of the barn is north-south. On its east side at the north end, an addition was built to serve as a woodworking shop. In 1910, Mr. Lawler made the decision to reconstruct the 'North House' to its original configuration, and engaged architect Keith Cramer, who had supervised the barn project, to direct this project. Keith in turn asked the writer to participate in it. At the time of writing, the basic structure has been completed; the roof boarded, and most of the brick west wall laid in correct Dutch cross-bond and with carefully executed 'vlechtingen'. New window and door frames have been constructed in the woodworking shop attached to the barn. It is a very interesting project, and will, hopefully, be the subject of a further article.

Photo Album of Pre-Restoration Conditions of the Coeymans North House



Fig. 1 – East elevation of the 'connector' between the Coeymans mansion and the North House. September 1969. All photos by J.R. Stevens.



Fig. 3 – Interior of east wall of the 'connector' showing a window frame. Note infill with vertical sticks. September 1969.



Fig. 2 – East elevation of the North House. September 1969.



Fig. 4 – Interior of 'connector' with a re-used stair from an unknown source set up against the south wall of the North House. Note the exploratory opening made in the wall to reveal constructional details. October 1969.



Fig. 5 – Detail of exploratory opening showing the end of a first floor beam; 3 by 6 inch sill let into the end of the beam; lower portion of a wall post showing hacking of its outside surface to hold plaster. Horizontal sticks set on about 6 inch centers to hold infill of clay bound with straw. October 1969.



Fig. 7 – Interior of the first floor of the North House looking towards its south-west corner. Original flooring is shown. The closet door and lath-and-plaster walls are work done in 1878. October 1969.



Fig. 6 – Basement of the North House, looking towards its south-east corner. Note the stain on the north face of the hearth trimmer from the iron hanger for the lintel of a basement fireplace. Note also the indication of the curvature of the trimmer arch that had supported the hearth of the first floor fireplace. The doorway at the right leads into the 'hyphen' and beyond there is a doorway into the basement kitchen of the Coeymans mansion. Both of these doorways are part of the late 18th century reconstruction of Coeymans. October 1969.



Fig. 8 – Interior of the first floor of the North House looking towards its north-west corner. Note the whitewashed wall post that has a channel cut down the middle of it to hold the bricks of an original partition. Note also the stove chimney in front of an original window frame and the header installed in the second floor framing to make an opening for the smoke hood of a basement fireplace on the north wall. At the right side of the photo can be seen the slanted line of the east side of the former smoke hood which was replaced in 1878 by the stove chimney. October 1969.



Fig. 9 – Like the last photograph, this shows the stove chimney in front of the 'kloosterkozijn' frame. Within the window openings can be seen the inside of the weather boarding installed at the end of the 18th century. October 1969.



Fig. 11 – Inside (north side) of the south trimmer of the first floor fireplace at the east end of the North House. Note the kerf marks of a water-powered saw on the timber, and near its west end, the ghost of a wooden hanger that had carried the drop hood. October 1969.



Fig. 10 – Interior of east wall of the North House, first floor, showing the central part of the wall. Note the sooty area that had been whitewashed over when the basement and first floor fireplaces were removed some time in the 18th century. There was clear indication of where the drop hood side members were housed in the brick. October 1969.



Fig. 12 – Interior of the south wall, first floor, of the North House at an early stage in the removal of the 1878 lath-and-plaster work. At this stage, most of the ceiling plaster was still in place. Note how the 'korbeels' were left protruding into the room space, and their exposed portions were whitewashed along with the plaster. September, 1969.

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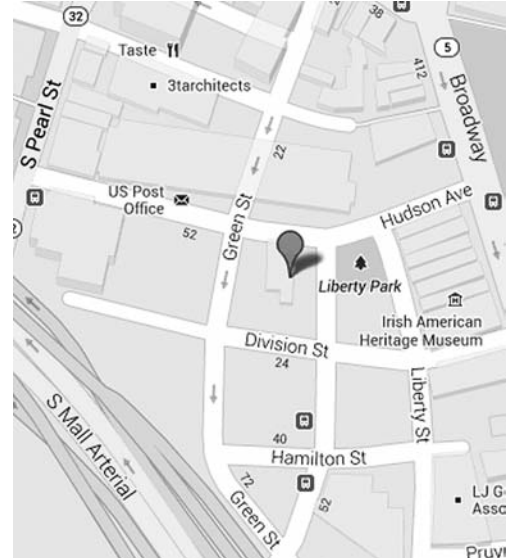
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Van Ostrande-Radcliff House, Albany, NY. Image by Historic Albany Foundation.

Historic Albany Foundation Acquires the Van Ostrande-Radcliff House

On June 3, 2013 Historic Albany Foundation announced that it had acquired the 285-year-old Van Ostrande-Radcliff House at 48 Hudson Avenue in Albany as a donation from Orion Enterprises LLC. Orion LLC has owned the building, the oldest documented structure in the city, since 2005.

The 1728 date of the Van Ostrande-Radcliff House was established in 2005 by dendrochronology. The Van Ostrande townhouse was built just outside of the city's stockade and a few hundred yards from the site of Fort Orange. Johannes Van Ostrande was a member of the Common Council and sold the building to Johannes Radcliffe, a shoemaker, in the 1750s. Number 48 Hudson was also used as the Jared Holt Wax Factory in the mid to late 1800s, and most recently served as Saul's Equipment for more than 50 years.

HAF president Mary Ellen Piche said, "We are grateful to Kevin and Brian Parker, of Orion LLC, for donating the building to HAF. This represents a great opportunity to build on HAF's successes over the past 40 years and establish a presence in the city's oldest building that will help forge our identity and broaden our base of support in the future, all while protecting a valuable piece of Albany's past." Historic Albany Foundation is a private, not-for-profit membership organization that works to promote and preserve the built environment, in and around the city of Albany, that have architectural, historical and civic value through technical services, education and advocacy.

Calendar of Upcoming HVVA Events

- July 13** Hurley Stone House Day & HVVA picnic
- July 20** Tour in Washington County, conducted by Bill Krattinger
- August 17** Tour in Greene County conducted by Don Hanzl
- September 21** Tour in Saratoga County conducted by Wally Wheeler
- October 19** Tour in Westchester County conducted by J-F De Laperouse
- November 16** Bus trip to Brooklyn Museum
- December 14** Holiday Tour and Luncheon in Kingston

For more information, please check www.HVVA.org