



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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Kitchen ell, Tompkins-Scribner House, Yorktown, Westchester County.
View from southwest. Photo by N. Larson.

With all the attention given historic architecture in the Hudson Valley by local and regional groups, like HVVA, and numerous scholars, public historians and old house buffs, some things remain a mystery, particularly the older things get. Yet, by networking with other people, going on house tours, visiting other homeowners and reading up on what surfaces in newspaper columns, glossy magazines, real estate advertisements, historical society newsletters and the occasional research paper, we add more to our personal and collective knowledge. The big picture is hard to grasp, and those who think they have finally figured it out usually get their comeuppance with the next unexpected view around the bend. Where every house or barn has features that associate it with others, it also has just as many that set it apart. It's a random order out there. It's all about continuity and change, complexity and contradiction.

Sometimes new discoveries help bring vague ideas into better focus. Take for example the little building pictured above. Those of us who went on a tour of houses in Yorktown, Westchester County in October were introduced to this little 18th-century gem awkwardly attached to the rear of a fancy 19th-century farmhouse. The owners and some local historians understood it to be an older house but had no architectural context in which to interpret it. Our group was prepared to ponder its meaning but knew nothing of its history. This fortuitous interface has imbued this building with new significance, for it appears to be a very rare, if not unique, example of a tenant dwelling on the Cortlandt Manor, with a history possibly as early as 1724.

Further study of this building is necessary to document its age and significance, but the process was initiated by some of us going on a tour to see old houses in another place and learning from new people. (See the associated article on this house in this issue.) This is how we build our knowledge and understanding of Hudson Valley vernacular architecture and build our organization. Sign up for a tour and see firsthand how it works.

NOTICE: Readers are directed to the Dutch Barn Preservation Society Newsletter for future installments of Greg Huber's series on the barns of Monmouth County, New Jersey.

Tour of Historic Properties in the Town of Yorktown, Westchester County, Saturday, October 19, 2013

By J-F De Laperouse



Fig. 1 – House on Croton Heights Road, view of south façade. Photo by N. Larson.

The town of Yorktown in northern Westchester County occupies what was once the Middle Ward of the Manor of Cortlandt, which encompassed a territory of about 86,000 acres to the north of the confluence of the Croton and Hudson Rivers – an area known as *Keakitits* by the local Mohegan tribe of the Algonquin nation. Dutch settlers arrived in this area in the middle of the 17th century establishing a hamlet known as Crompond or “crooked pond” after one of its many small glacial ponds. After the death of Manor Lord Stephanus Van Cortlandt in 1700 and the division and sale of his land holdings by his heirs, an influx of new settlers arrived from southern New York and Connecticut. Mostly of English background, these new inhabitants renamed the growing community Hanover after the ruling house of England. French-speaking Huguenots – most notably the Strang family – as well as African slaves and freemen were also among these newcomers.

Due to its strategic position on high ground between New England and the Hudson Valley, this area served as the stage for important events during the Revolutionary War including the march and encampment of French troops

under General Rochambeau and the Battle at Pines Bridge during which white colonists died alongside Native and African American troops while defending the only bridge spanning the Croton River against Loyalist forces. After the war was over, the town was renamed Yorktown in honor of the final engagement that secured American independence.

Yorktown was primarily a farming community until the late 19th century when country estates began to appear and large numbers of laborers came to work on reservoir projects on the Croton River and its tributaries that were designed to serve the rising water needs of New York City. Increased development and suburbanization has occurred during the last half-century during which many historic structures were lost. Nevertheless, a significant inventory of early houses in various states of preservation still attests to the area’s long history. (*See the article on the Knapp House in the previous newsletter*).

On a beautiful Saturday in October, I was pleased to welcome HVVA members and members of the Yorktown

Historical Society and the local Landmark Preservation Commission on a tour of four houses and two barns in Yorktown. The first stop was at the Tompkins-Scribner House on Baptist Church Road that comprises a Federal period main structure connected to an intriguing earlier structure at the back that Neil Larson examines in more depth an accompanying essay in this newsletter.

The second stop was my own house on Croton Heights Road about which discouraging little original documentation has yet been found. This house may have started as a bank house with a large hearth with a beehive oven on the left side on the lower level with a loft above that was subsequently enlarged into a two-story center hall structure with two rooms on each floor and chimneys at either end (*Figs. 1 & 2*). Although the original entryway sidelights still remain on the middle story of the southern exposure, the doorway itself has been filled in with a modern casement window. The two-story porch that provided access to this entrance has long-since been removed with the entire exterior resided with shingles. The hewn, scribe marked and sequentially numbered roof rafters suggest that this

house was fully erected by late 18th or early 19th century. After lunch the group visited the site of Hallock's Mill on the Saw Mill River, the first industrial settlement in the Yorktown Heights area, where the present house is located above the fieldstone dammed millpond (*Fig. 3*). At the core of the present house is a story-and-a-half dwelling having a three-bay front façade with an offset entrance and a side-passage plan – clearly the most common house local type built during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The miller Hallock was the master of a post office in this house.

The house was enlarged to a full center hall plan sometime later, which also was common practice. Since then, it has gained appendages and additions as it evolved as a country house in the 20th century, and renovations continue to take place today. A large L-shaped barn complex behind the house consists of a 19th century structure that appears to be original to the site and a large addition constructed in the early 20th century as a seasonal inn using reused early timbers with a massive central fireplace. Our final stop was the Henry Strang House on Old

Fig. 2 – House on Croton Heights Road, basement fireplace. Photo by J-F DeLaperouse.





Fig. 3 – House at Hallock's Mill, view of south façade. The three-bays and entrance on right side represent the dimensions of the original house. Photo by J-F Delaperouse.

Crompond Road where three building phases paralleling those in the previous house also could be discerned (Fig. 4). The original two-story house dates to the late 18th century with a three-bay front façade and side-passage plan with back-to-back fireplaces in the two rooms on each floor. Rooms were added on the south side of the passage during the Federal period, which balanced-out the plan and the symmetry of the front façade, as well as doubling living space. Fortunately, a good deal of the original woodwork and hardware in these early sections has been preserved. The last building phase consists of mid 20th century additions on the southern end of the house that fulfills the domestic expectations of a modern family with minimal disruption to the original fabric. Finally, as the sun was setting, an examination of the post and beam barn at the end of the yard revealed that it can be dated to the 1840s. Thanks are due the owners who allowed us to explore their properties and the HVVA members whose expertise helped elucidate many details and resolve some long-standing questions. The hunt is now on for even better candidates for the next Yorktown tour!

Fig. 4 – Henry Strang House, view of south façade. The three-bays and entrance on right side represent the dimensions of the original house. Photo by J-F Delaperouse.



Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture Archetypes: The Tompkins-Scribner House, Yorktown, Westchester County, New York

By Neil Larson

A recent HVVA house tour in Yorktown, Westchester County introduced members to a variety of houses that reflect the English role in the early architectural history of the Hudson Valley. Our tour organizer, J-F DeLaperouse provides an overview of these buildings elsewhere in this issue, but a distinctive Federal Period house on Baptist Church Road, which the owners were kind enough to fully open to visitors from basement to attic, receives a little more attention here (*Fig. 1*). Outwardly, the two-story house displayed the characteristics of a large farmhouse with a five-bay front façade centered with a prominent pedimented entrance surmounted by a tripartite second-story window with tracery in the side lights. This stylish treatment was repeated in an elegant doorway with sidelights and an arched transom on the west end of the house, which can be seen in the accompanying photograph.

Once inside, it was discovered that a nearly identical doorway was located on the east end of the house, opening on a screened porch. The staircase in the center hall had a robust turned newel post characteristic of design taste in the 1830s, but the rest of the first-story trim did not have the sharp angular edges of the era. The original plan had square rooms with end-wall fireplaces in the front and small unheated anterooms in the rear, but the dividing partitions had been removed creating single rooms on both sides of the hall. On the second floor, however, doorways and windows were trimmed with wide moldings and corner blocks more appropriate to the 1830s. The plain Greek Revival-style mantles with their massive lintels were preserved on both floors.

On closer but still cursory examination, it appeared that the front and end entrances were Colonial Revival-period replacements along with the renovations to the first-story rooms and trim. This was not a surprising development in the history of Westchester County where depressed old farms often were acquired by New York week-enders in the early 20th century with plans opened up, ceiling joists exposed and decoration aggrandized to fit antiquarian country-house tastes.

The deed history of the house was included in the tour materials, which provided some context for the architectural evolution. Amos Tompkins purchased a 146-acre farm from John Watts, Jr. in 1789 (Westchester County Deeds, Book O Page 208), but the form and proportions of the house do not reflect the domestic architecture of that period. A story-and-a-half house would be more appropriate, although no evidence was found of the house having been enlarged.



Fig. 1 – View of Tompkins-Scribner House from southwest.
Photo by N. Larson.

(Roof rafters were sawn and of square dimensions typical of the 1830s.) Tompkins owned the farm until 1874, so one way or the other he can be considered the builder of the house. In the latter year the farm was willed to Amos L. Purdy, who, according to the census, had been living and working there in 1870 (WC Wills, 118:380). Purdy's potential familial relationship to Tompkins has not been determined.

The 1880 census indicates that Purdy had moved to a better farm in Wappinger, Dutchess County, and in 1898 his brother, George Purdy, sold the property for \$7500 to Dorthea Wulf (WCD 1625:37). She may have been the German immigrant who arrived in New York from Hamburg in 1883 with her husband Heinz and five young children. This transition illustrates the decline of the agricultural economy in the region during this period and the efforts made by immigrant groups to eke out livings on out-dated farms. As sometimes was the case, the Wulfs defaulted on their mortgage, with Mamie Delaney, likely representing another immigrant family taking the place over (WCD 1646:358). In 1903 the farm was bought by Anne C. Scribner for \$7000 (WCD 4457:126). She was the wife of Howard S. Scribner, an insurance and real estate broker, who was the son of Gilbert Hilton Scribner, a prominent New York lawyer, insurance company executive, New York Secretary of State, and an avocational science writer. According to federal and state censuses, Howard and Anne were living in Pelham in 1900 and on Baptist Church Road in 1915 and 1925. They likely planned and executed the renovations and restyling that characterize the house today. The Scribners may have been aided in the renovation by Howard's brother, Osgood



Fig. 2 – View of Tompkins-Scribner House from northwest showing kitchen ell. Photo by N. Larson.

P. Scribner, a building contractor, to whom the title later was transferred (WCD 4471:55).

When Amos Tompkins built the house in c.1830, the kitchen was located in a story-and-a-half rear ell (*Fig. 2*). The owners drew attention to the fact that the framing looked older than the house and to the deed history, which stretched back to the 1720s. The small gable-roof adjunct is connected to the house by a flat-roof hyphen as if it once was separated from the house. These conditions suggest three possible scenarios. In one the kitchen was built to be separate from the house and later was connected to the house. There are a number of examples of detached kitchens (not summer kitchens, which rely on another kitchen existing in the house) in the Hudson Highlands where British families settled in the 18th century. Yet, if the house and kitchen were built at the same time, only separate, then it would be expected that their framing materials and methods would be the same, which they are not. The hewn frame of the kitchen, plainly visible in the attic, clearly is 18th-century.

Another scenario is that the small building or its frame was moved to the site from another location and incorporated into the house during construction. There is evidence in the north end wall of the kitchen for a large masonry fireplace that would have been left behind. The smaller chimney in the center would have been installed after the relocation, as by the 1830s stoves would have replaced hearths for cooking. A stair was built in the space left by the chimney on the north end. The stairs, as well as other finishes in the kitchen are consistent in date with the house. A question remains as to why the moved building was not joined directly to the house. The hyphen looks

awkward, but it served the purpose of increasing interior space.

The final scenario is that the small building now housing the kitchen was a small one-room dwelling that pre-existed the 19th-century house on the property. The deed history includes a reference to 1761 transaction conveying 200 acres in the Manor of Cortlandt to John Watts, Sr. and wife in consideration of 365 pounds and 5 shillings in 1761 (WCD 1:250). According to a 1900 Westchester County history, John Watts, Sr. (1715-1789) was married to Anne Delancey, daughter of Stephen DeLancey (1663-1741), a Huguenot refugee, prominent New York merchant and progenitor of a family that produced colonial governors and supreme court justices. (Unfortunately, their notorious loyalty to the crown during the Revolution diminished their historical role going on from there.) The deed described the parcel as Farm No. 1 in the west range of North Lot No. 2. These were lands once part of Cortlandt Manor north of the Croton River that had reverted to the crown after Stephanus Van Cortlandt's death. The land passed to John Watts, Jr. (1749-1836) upon his father's death. He was a member and speaker of the state assembly, representative to Congress from New York, and Judge of Westchester County. He also founded and endowed the Leake & Watts Orphan Home in New York.

The 1761 deed also mentioned that Cabel Barnett was a tenant on the farm. The deed account further purports that Cabel Barnett's father, William, had assembled the 200-acre parcel in 1724 before it "was lost to the crown and purchased by Watts." So, there is evidence of an occupant on the property prior to 1789 when John Watt, Jr. sold it to Amos Tompkins, which raises the question: Does the kitchen represent a rare surviving example of an 18th century tenant dwelling?

Around the Neighborhood

By Ken Walton (photos by author unless otherwise noted)

As a reminder, in my last article, I had written about the settlement of Wagendaal and those houses of the Van Wagenen family that still exist today. Fortuitously, I had the opportunity to learn more about them while working with the Walkkill Valley Land Trust on their third annual historic house tour, which took place in the Town of Esopus on June 1, 2013. Previously, I mentioned that Jacob Aertsen's youngest son, Isaac, had crossed over to the east side of the Rondout Creek to start his farmstead in now what is considered the Esopus Township. The WVLT elected to place this house on their tour, about which I will discuss my further findings here. As an extra bonus, there was another settler's house on the tour that Helen Wilkinson Reynolds covered in *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776* (1929), for which I also will provide further detail below.

Isaac Van Wagenen House

Located on Van Wagner Road, between the hamlets of St. Remy and Rifton, is the house of Isaac Van Wagenen (Fig. 1). This road existed to reach the ford in the creek used by the family to access lands they owned on both sides of the creek. Isaac was the first of his family to create a farm on the lands along the east side of the creek. The current owners still have in their possession the date-stone incised with the year 1745 on it. It is currently standing vigil in the basement as its original position in the south elevation was removed to put on an addition about thirteen years ago. This would suggest that originally the south elevation was considered the front of the house, but all known historic views of the house picture the north side as the front.

Isaac's house started off as a two-room, one-and-a-half-story stone house typical of the area, possibly with an exterior door for each room. However, this house was constructed with a center chimney with either back to back jambless fireplaces or one fireplace with a five-plate stove in the west room. Although both current fireplaces are twentieth century replacements, there is the usual evidence of the original jambless fireplace in the east room in the form of the header beam being larger than the other ceiling beams and trimmer beams still extant. A corbel support for a hearth still exists in the basement wall beneath the eastern hearth. Ceiling beams in both rooms are finished with beaded bottom edges. Now with the modern renovations, it is difficult to determine the original status of the two rooms, that is, which was the kitchen / general purpose room and if the other had higher status as a "Grote Kamer."

In the last quarter of the 18th century, a one-room stone addition was constructed on the east end of the house. The beams in this room, although significantly smaller than the



Fig. 1 – Isaac Van Wagenen House. In 1745 Jacob Aertsen's youngest son, Isaac, erected this stone house on the other side of the Rondout Creek from where his siblings resided.

others in their dimensions were still meant to be exposed as they also are planed smooth and chamfered on the bottom edges. A fireplace and chimney were built on the west side of the room against the original east exterior wall. When the house was converted to stove heating, as evidenced by the circular patches in the ceilings of each room, the fireplace in this eastern addition was removed, although the chimney still exists in the second floor and is part of the exterior's aesthetics along the roofline. The backside of the chimney, now exposed upstairs, shows a mixture of 18th- and 19th-century brick. During this period, the chimney for the jambless fireplace(s) in the center of the house was demolished and a smaller chimney for stoves built reusing the 18th-century brick.

What I found quite unusual about this house was the existence of purlins as part of the roof structure in the second story. Since the late 1940's, the upper floor has been partitioned into three spaces corresponding with the rooms below with the ceilings open to the rafters, exposing purlins on both sides on which the collar tie ends appear to rest. The purlins are mounted on queen posts that rest on the floor beams. The purlins appear to be one piece and extend through and across the stone addition, so apparently they were put in either during or after the construction of the eastern addition and were not part of the original 1745 design. This method of roof support is common in houses with plans more than one room deep but is not characteristic of stone house construction. It also is a standard feature of Dutch barn roof systems. In this case, it seems that some sort of catastrophic roofing failure occurred deeming the reinforcement necessary.



Fig. 2 – Isaac Van Wagenen Barn. This Dutch barn would be a good subject for an HVVA study project.

Fig. 3 – Van Wagenen-Krom House. Benjamin Van Wagenen built the house in c.1810 as a timber-frame, three-bay, side-entrance edifice in the Federal style. In the 1970s Ray Krom encased the exterior with stone shifting the entrance to the center. It took three years to complete the work.

This house along with the farm remained in the Van Wagenen family until the Great Depression when it was subject to a foreclosure. The current owner's father, Frank Tesler, acquired the property in 1941. By that time, the house was in a ruinous condition, with the floor rotted right through to the cellar in one room and the fireplaces crumbling, still with no indoor plumbing or electricity. Yet, he renovated it using whatever local resources available to him. The living room fireplace was reconstructed with bluestone from the property. He tried to keep as much of the original character as intact as he could, while introducing modern conveniences. He kept the beams exposed and created a fireplace mantel that mimics the cornice woodwork that would have hung from a jambless hood. In the other room he added paneling that gave the fireplace a more English look. Also on the property is a large Dutch barn with the gables oriented north and south with a side aisle to the west side of the nave; the aisle on the east side was replaced with a smaller lean-to addition (*Fig. 2*). It is certainly worthy of a more intensive inspection at some point in the near future.

As a brief sidebar, this house also has significant historical value in regards to the escape of Sojourner Truth from slavery. In 1826 Isaac D. Van Wagenen, grandson of the builder, and his wife Maria, took her in when she was fleeing from her owner, John J. Dumont, and they eventually bought her freedom.

Benjamin Van Wagenen House

Nearby at 15 Van Wagner Road, lies another Van Wagenen farm with the last occupant being Leon Van Wagner, who continued the run the farm to 1960 when he turned the place over to Ray Krom (*Fig. 3*). It was Leon who decided to change his last name from Van Wagenen to Van Wagner; as the road is named. The place did not receive electricity until 1964 and running water until 1976. The source for wa-

ter before then was an underground spring about fifty yards away. The house was built around 1810 as a timber-frame dwelling by Benjamin Van Wagenen, brother of Isaac D. mentioned above. However, the house no longer appears as it once was.

The one-and-a-half-story house was originally configured with a three-bay front façade having an entrance offset on the right side and back-to-back fireplaces. The current owner changed the entrance to the center and moved a window to the right to make the front symmetrical. He then decided to erect stone exterior walls using beams from old barns as lintels above the windows and doors giving the place the look of old stone masonry. The beams now exposed inside are significantly smaller than those in the neighboring house despite their long span reaching across the rooms; they show signs of having been once covered over with lath and plaster. An unusual surviving feature of this place is the bluestone nogging used instead of brick within the walls; dressed to fit between the posts and braces and laid in courses (*Fig. 4*).

The house is built on a knoll with the barn on the slope between the road and the house and dominates the landscape. The barn is not typical Dutch construction, but takes advantage of the sloping topography to make use of three levels (*Fig. 5*). The south end uses an unusual H-bent variant of two anchor beams of significant size. The first anchor beam is only about six feet above the floor with the second one approximately four feet above the first. This barn warrants closer study. Inside the barn is a 1927 Model T Ford pickup that Leon used to transport his produce to the Rondout waterfront for shipment to New York City.

Hendrick Smit House

Helen Wilkinson Reynolds states the only reason the Smit house on Churchill Road in Rifton was included in her



Fig. 4 – Van Wagenen-Krom House. Interior view showing original timber frame and stone nogging.

Fig. 5 – Van Wagenen-Krom House and Barn. This view shows the relationship between the house, barn and the topography of the land. The barn takes advantage of the slope of the land to create three levels. The southern portion has an H-bent frame, but with two anchor beams per bent in an odd spacing.

book, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776*, was to benefit the student of economics and of social conditions in the Hudson Valley. The lore told to her by the then owner of the home and a descendant of the early settler Hendrick Smit was that he arrived in the New World in the late 17th century and is thought to have borrowed the money for his voyage from Jacob Rutsen, a Kingston merchant traveling home on the same ship. To pay back the money owed, he worked for Rutsen for several years. Perhaps, with Rutsen's move to Rosendale in 1700, Smit found his opportunity to obtain a life-long lease for eighty acres of land in the Swarte Kill neighborhood of the Hardenbergh Patent. Johannes Hardenburgh was Rutsen's son-in-law and he continued running the Kingston mercantile enterprise after 1700. During the life of the lease, Smit's annual rent for the property was a hen and a rooster. Before he died, he did obtain a deed for his farm and it remained in the family through the first quarter of the twentieth century by direct male lineage in alternating generations of Hendricks and Willems (that's over 200 years!). Unfortunately, the 1798 tax assessment list does not support this claim as it only lists in the Swarte Kill area a farm belonging to Johannes Smith (Schmitt) adjacent to James Archmoody. The house is described as one story high, 28 x 20 feet in plan, frame construction with clay walls and two windows and a value of \$172.50.

The house as it exists today represents four construction phases with a front facade facing east (*Fig. 6*). At the southernmost end is a Victorian-era wood-frame summer kitchen 9 x 10 ft. in dimension with a ridgeline lower than the rest of the house. Next is a 15 x 26 ft., timber-frame kitchen with exposed ceiling beams. From its diminutive size and rough surface with evidence of early lath and plastering, it would be my estimate that this kitchen was constructed sometime after 1800. The third (and presumably the oldest) section of the house is built in the Dutch manner with timber "H" framing consisting of three center bents and two end walls with

a plan measuring 20 x 26 feet. The ceiling beams are of significant size reflecting an early construction period. The northernmost addition is constructed of stone masonry with a 16 x 26 ft. footprint. Reynolds claims this portion to be the oldest with the theory of a log cabin having pre-existing it along side. However, the ceiling beams in the stone section are not nearly the size of the center section, but are of a large enough size to suggest a pre-Revolutionary War construction date.

The house underwent a major renovation in 1998. A report made in 2010 by J.M. Kelly Ltd of Niskayuna, New York documented the renovation. While I don't agree with some of its conclusions, some of its findings are quite interesting. For instance, when the "Victorian" weatherboarding was removed from the center (oldest) portion, there was some "rather severe" weathering of the original framing members facing the exterior and remnants of whitewash on the clay infill on what would have been an exterior surface. While quite common in The Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe, this method of construction went out of favor quite early on in the American colonies, probably due to the severity of the winters here. This helps support the theory that this portion of the house was erected in 1715 or possibly even earlier. (Reynolds mentions a whetstone dated 1704 was embedded in one of the walls.) This also seems to coincide with the 1798 tax list description of a timber house with clay walls. Of course, if this were the same place, then that would mean the additions including the stone masonry one did not yet exist in 1798.

Removal of the plaster interior revealed the fenestration in the original section of the home has been changed over the years. What was considered the framework for the original entrance was discovered centered on the south gable wall and contained a small leaded casement window. Two other openings found were originally created for shutters alone, one in the west wall and a smaller one in the east. These



Fig. 6 – Hendrick Smit House. One of the oldest H-bent timber-framed residence in the Hudson Valley. Its construction remains a mystery after an extensive and poorly documented “restoration.”

two were recreated and fitted with early 18th century sash type reproductions. The north end gable wall of the original section was constructed of stone masonry and featured a jambless fireplace. The hearth opening was still intact and there was evidence of trimmer beams observed in the stone wall and on the first anchor beam making it the header beam. The report states that reproducing the jambless fireplace was not feasible due to current fire codes, so it was decided to replicate a later 18th century retrofit of a jambless fireplace with a conventional firebox and built-in cabinetry along the wall. When removing a window in the west wall constructed in the 19th century, a heavily molded timber was discovered as part of the window framing. It was determined to be an early (and somewhat crude) mantle tree or fireplace crown molding. A full sized replica was hand-made for the installation on the new fireplace and the fragment was donated to the collection of Eastfield Village in Nassau, New York. All the flooring in this section is believed to be original, cut from northern yellow pine of random widths with a thickness between an inch and a quarter to an inch and a half with very dense growth rings.

The report goes on to conclude the stone addition was constructed sometime in the last quarter of the 18th century and postulates that it was built as a separate dwelling, not connected to the older main section, for the eldest son who was to inherit the farm, when he got married. The features on which they base this conclusion is the addition had its own entrance (restored in the 1998 renovation); its own smaller fireplace and staircase to the upper level. However, I have a quite different take on the function of this addition based on the same features. First, as previously mentioned, from the 1798 tax assessment, I’m more inclined to believe the addition was constructed shortly after that date to function as a parlor. Stone construction gave it the status of prosperity. The separate entrance would allow guests into the best room without permitting access to the rest of the house, and of course the room meant to entertain

visitors would have the nicest finishes and newest fireplace technology of the times. The enclosed staircase next to the fireplace took advantage of the increased space to upgrade access to the upper level rather than continuing to use the ladder and trap door in the original house. The other staircase did not come about until the kitchen addition was put on later. According to the report, by 1998, this room was deemed to have had all its original trim stripped away.

The report also draws an interesting conclusion for the origins of the kitchen section. It claims the clay infill in the kitchen walls was identical to what was found in the “original part of the main house,” which indicated this section was constructed concurrent with or very soon after the original center section. Also discovered, was a small framed opening in the west wall two or three feet from the floor and against the main house. The report postulates this frame was similar to shuttered openings found in Dutch barns as a way to shovel manure out of an animal stall, implying livestock was originally kept in this section of the house as it was a well established custom in Holland and had occurred early on here in the New World. While an intriguing concept, it seems to contradict their finding of a center entrance and casement window in the south end gable of the center portion of the house. Why would a barn be attached to this end of the house?

It would seem fair to say the original house was a 20 x 26 ft. one-room timber-frame building with clay exterior walls and its front elevation on the south gable end containing a center entrance door and small casement window with leaded glass. One shuttered window was centered on each of the eave walls, and a jambless fireplace was located on a stone wall on the north end.

If I have peaked your interest or at least captured your attention with this description, then I’m sure you would agree this is the kind of house HVVA should devote more study to and put through its paces with thorough documentation. This could very well be the finest gem of mid-Hudson Valley historic treasures. I’ll be waiting to hear from you and perhaps we can set up a study and documentation session at the house. Also, I welcome any feedback about the houses mentioned here. ‘Til next time, happy hunting...

For more information about most of these houses and more, go to www.HVVA.org and click on the “Mapping History” link under the “Research & Resources” heading.

Please send any comments you have to: kaw9862@optonline.net or by mail to: 12 Orchard Dr., 2nd Floor, Gardiner, NY 12525. If [HVVA] is at the beginning on the subject line of the email, it will help me expedite a response.

Demolition Archeology: Building History Revealed

By Neil Larson (author's photos)

The Osterhoudt Home Farm on 167 Lower Whitfield Road in Accord was documented as part of a farmstead survey undertaken in the Town of Rochester (Ulster County) in 2010 (Fig. 1). The documentation was more historical than architectural as the buildings were not available for close inspection. In this case, the history suggested that the patriarch of the Kingston family, Teunis Osterhoudt (1668-1746), owned the property by 1703 and that his son, Kryne Osterhoudt, built at least the first section of around the time he married Geertje Decker in 1722. Visible seams in the side walls clearly showed the stone house was built in two one-room stages. (The balloon-frame addition was added much later.) The gable end with its doorway facing the road gave the impression of early Dutch models and was supported by the early history of the house; however, when HVVA toured the house in 2011 and got a closer look, it was determined that the door to have been added later. The original front façade of the house faced west, which was concealed when the wood frame wing was constructed. The interior of the house was significantly altered to the extent that little of the original construction materials and finishes were visible. That was until the house was gutted down to its stone walls and rafters a few weeks ago (Fig. 2).

Although the loss of historic fabric is unfortunate, it has exposed features in the house that provide new information about its construction history. From what remains, it now appears that the north room represents the original one-room-plan stone house, constructed c.1722, with an entrance on the south gable end, a jambless fireplace and



Fig. 1 – View of Osterhoudt house from southwest, 2010.

small casement window on the north end, and a larger casement window on the west side. The house was enlarged with the addition of a smaller second room 30 years later, according to a stone on the west wall inscribed with the date 1752. When it was built an entrance and window were placed on the west wall and a boxed fireplace mounted on a stone base on the south wall, and a window on the east wall. Over the ensuing years, more doors and windows were added, chimneys were removed, and an entrance and porch built on the south façade to present a more prominent front to the street.

The following images illustrate some of what has been revealed.

Fig. 2 – View of house from southwest, 2013.





Fig. 3 – View of house from west, 2013. Seam between two sections visible in shadows to right of left door. Note larger stones and more even coursing on right side where door and window openings appear intact unlike openings on left side, which have been altered. View also shows roof framing of demolished addition.

Fig. 4 – Detail of west wall, 2013. Door and window opening on south section of the house with a date stone inscribed with numeral 1752 above door. The neatness of the masonry and the date displayed suggests that the south section was added to the north section in that year and was constructed by Kryne and Geertie Osterhoudt's son Cornelius shortly after his marriage to his cousin Helena Osterhoudt two years earlier. A stone below the date stone is incised with the initials I V W (Van Wagenen?), perhaps the mason as Osterhoudts occupied the house until 1946.

Fig. 5 – View of interior of south section looking west, 2013. Exposed stone walls and door and window framing appear to be intact. A heavy lintel spans the door opening and the window is neatly placed between ceiling beams. Note floor beams, which are logs flattened on the top for flooring, and finished beams and boards in the ceiling. The doorway on the left side of the image is in the gable end facing the street. The hole for the stairs is partially visible in the upper right corner of the view; the stairs and their enclosure were removed.





Fig. 6 – Detail of west wall, 2013. Door and window openings in what appears to be the original house built c.1722. The window opening was reduced in size probably when a casement window was replaced with a sash unit. The door appears to have been a still later addition, possibly cut through when the balloon-frame wing was added. The interior stone wall between the two sections is nearly flush with the right side of the doorway, which would align its exterior face with the seam.

Fig. 7 – Interior view of north room looking northwest, 2013. The window opening is spanned by a wood lintel typical of 18th-century methods, although it does not fully span the original larger opening. The casing for the doorway is much later. Floor and ceiling beams are similar in dimension and tooling as those in the adjoining room.

Fig. 8 – View of house from northwest, 2013. The casement window on the north end of the house appears to be original. The wood frame upper story has later windows and siding appropriate to period when the ell was added and bed chambers created in the garret.

Fig. 9 – Interior view of north room from south, 2013. The casement window opening with its wood lintel appears to be intact. Evidence of a firebox back from a hearth later removed is visible at floor level in center. Trimmers surviving in ceiling and pockets in floor beams, as well as a shelf in the basement wall that once supported cribbing, all point to the prior existence of a jambless fireplace.





Fig. 10– View of house from northeast, 2013. The east wall of the house contains an added window in the north section and an added doorway in the south section. From the stonework, it does not appear that the c.1722 house had any openings on the east side. The window opening near the doorway appears to be in its original dimensions. Like the window on the opposing side of the room, it is positioned between beams on the interior. Unlike the windows in the original house, the windows in the 1752 addition were sash units. The seam between the two sections is visible in the center and the lintel for the original basement entry is just discernible under the window on the right and behind the tree parts. It was filled in with stone when a new door was created on the west side of the house.

Fig. 11 – Detail of north basement wall with shelf for hearth cribbing, 2013

Fig. 12 – View of house from south, 2013. The window and door on the first story and the basement door in this façade were added after the fireplace was removed from this end of the house in the 20th century. The second-story windows predate those below and possibly are original to this section. The stone coursing has been extended half-way up the gable whereas the entire gable is framed-in on the north side.

Fig. 13 – View of south end of east side of house, 2013. Evidence that the doorway has added later is visible in this view. The 1752 window opening is intact.

Fig. 14 – Interior view of chimney support on south end of house.



Fig. 15 – Interior view of stone wall dividing two sections of the house, 2013. The doorway is centered in the wall and retains its original 18th-century dimension and materials. However, the wall is overly thick, with ledgers recessed into both sides and not precisely aligned with seams in side walls and roof plates. It appears that this wall was reworked when the second section was constructed including the placement of the doorway. The stair location in the northeast corner of the south room seems to be historically appropriate, but ceiling boards have been removed in the north end and with it any potential evidence of a stair or ladder space in the original house.

Fig. 16 – View of rafters and plate in north section of house, 2013. Original hewn rafters remain in place. Joined collar ties were removed and replaced with nailed ties evidently to create more head room in attic spaces.



Fig. 17 – View of rafters in south section of house, 2013. No distinction can be made between the roof systems in the two sections suggesting that the entire roof was built in 1752.



Membership info

If you have been receiving this newsletter, but your membership is not current and you wish to continue to receive the HVVA newsletter and participate in the many house-study tours offered each year, **please send in your dues.**

Membership currently pays all the HVVA bills and to keep us operating in the black. **Each of us must contribute a little.**

Membership dues remains at a low \$20 per year (\$15 for Students). So if you haven't sent in your dues or given a tax deductible donation to the HVVA mission, **please consider doing so now.**



Peter Sinclair, Ye Old School, 2013

It has been a while since we last reported on our founder and inspiration. Peter has been healthy and doing quite well managing his condition with the help of his family, personal assistants and uber-care-giver, Roberta Jeracka, who makes sure he gets out and around. He still enjoys attending events and meetings about history, architecture and archeology in the region. His insatiable desire to draw continues unabated. Peter follows the progress of HVVA and studies newsletters. He is happy to receive news and glad tidings from his old friends. Keep him in your thoughts. Mail your greetings to:

Peter Sinclair, 84 Spillway Rd., West Hurley, NY 12491.

- Yes, I would like to renew my membership in the amount of \$
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2014 Calendar of Upcoming HVVA Events

- January 18** Annual Meeting, Elmendorph Inn, Red Hook
Catered lunch, presentations, show & tell
- February 15** HVVA Film Series, Community Room, Woodland Pond, New Paltz
- March 15** Tour of houses in Jersey City, led by Carla Cielo
- April 19** Tour of houses in Orange County
- May 17** Tour of houses in North Salem, Westchester Co.,
led by John Stevens
- June 21** Tour of houses in Marbletown, Ulster Co., led by Ken Krabbenhoff
- July 12** Hurley Stone House Day and HVVA Picnic, hosted by Jim Decker
- August 16** Bus trip to Hancock Shaker Village in Pittsfield, MA

For more information, please check www.HVVA.org