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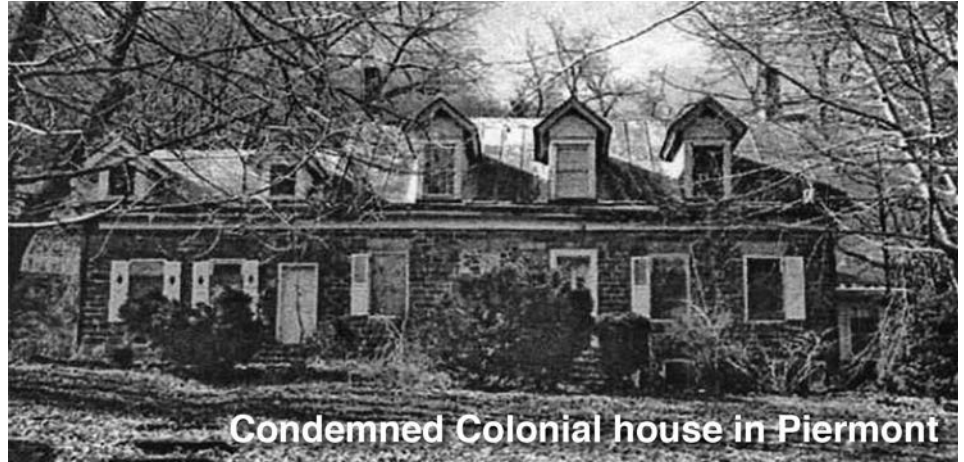
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The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

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Onderdonk House rescued

More often than we wish, we find ourselves reporting on the demise of a historic house in our valley. Back in the HVVA's February-March, 2007 issue [<http://hvva.org/hvvanews9-2,3.pdf>], Rob Yasinsac wrote an article about Onderdonk House in Piermont, Rockland County. With a history possibly going back to 1711, it was sitting abandoned and condemned with a very grim future. When I saw it at the end of 2008, it looked very much like the photograph in Rob's article. I had not been back to the area since.

On May 3rd of this year, I met with a group of friends to do a bike ride on the Old Erie Path rail trail to Nyack. After returning from the ride, I became curious if the venerable sandstone house was still standing. To my surprise not only was it still extant, but in totally pristine condition with marvelous landscaped surroundings. The most obvious renovations to the exterior are the new roof, dormers, windows and porch. One can only hope they saved whatever original features there were on the inside. They appear to have kept the original fenestration on the first floor including the two front entryways... a good sign the floor plan may have been kept mostly intact.

Ken Walton



Gable-fronted houses, a legacy from the Old-World Dutch

By John R. Stevens



Fig. 1 – View of New Amsterdam, 1756. Lithographic copy of a view published in the second edition of Adrian Van der Donck's *Description of New Netherland* from D.T. Valentine's *Manual of the Common Council of New York* (1852).

The author has previously dealt with the subject of gable-fronted houses in the Dutch-American context in the *Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture Newsletter*, notably in the June and July 2007 issue and the May-July 2009 issue. In the latter newsletter, he provided a tentative listing of houses that either remain in gable-fronted form or contain clear evidence that they started their existence in that way.

The gable-fronted Dutch house is important because it is the type that best exemplifies the type of house brought by the Dutch to North America in the second quarter of the 17th century. It was primarily an urban style of building and can be seen in early views of New Amsterdam produced at that time, in particular the print published in Adrian Van der Donck's *Description of New Netherland* in 1656 (Fig. 1).¹

The oldest surviving Dutch-American houses are not, nor ever were, gable fronted: the Pieter Wyck-off House, in Brooklyn, dated to the 1650s; the John Bowne House, in Queens, dated at 1661; and the Jan Martense Schenck House, also in Brooklyn (now reconstructed in the Brooklyn Museum), ca. 1670.² They all are of timber-frame construction.

Outside of the New York metropolitan area, houses or any kind of building constructed before 1700 are almost non-existent. The stone gable-fronted Pieter Bronck House at West Coxsackie may be an exception. It has been dated at 1663, the year before the

takeover of the Dutch New Netherland colony by the English, but there are reasons to question that it is so early. (The beams in the house have not been dendro-dated.) It is gable-fronted and most likely dates before 1700.³

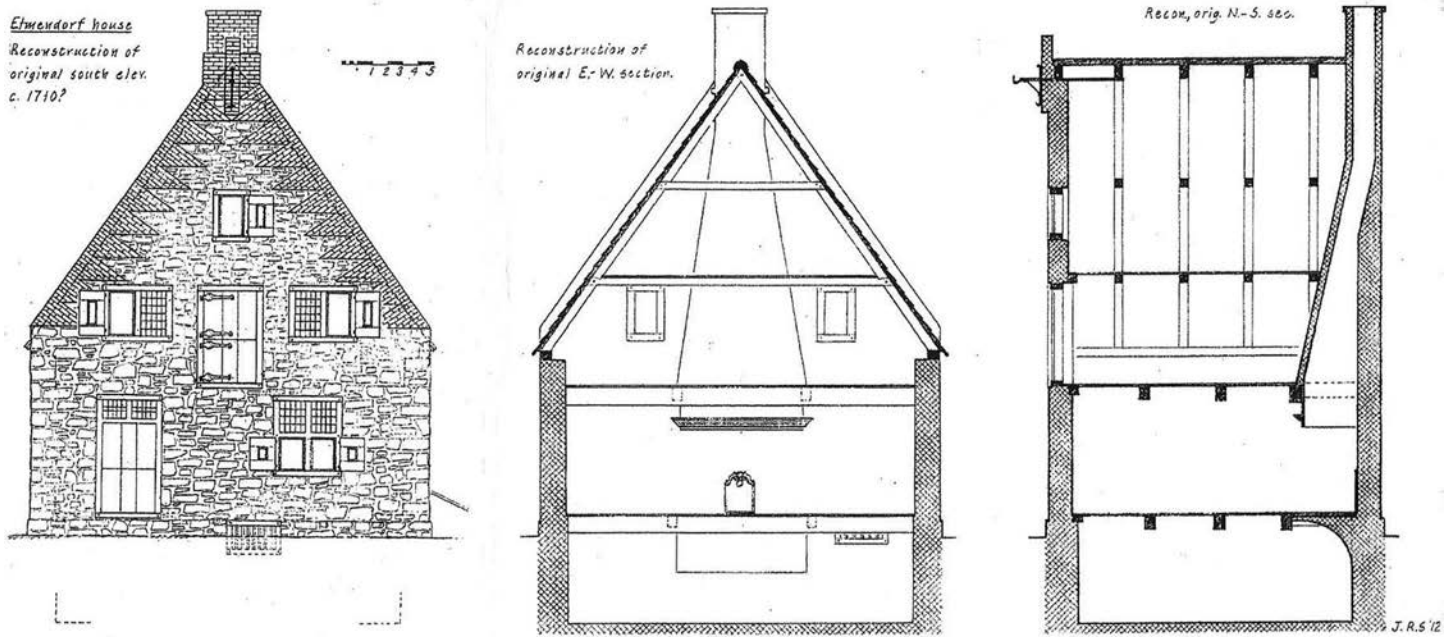
From the 18th century, we have the stone-walled Ostrander-Elmendorf House at Hurley, the oldest section of which was built c.1710 in gable-fronted form: a one-room house that measured 26 feet wide and 21 feet, 9 inches deep (*Drawing Set I*). These measurements are consistent with other one room houses that have been measured, whether built of timber or stone and gable-fronted or with side wall entrances. The beam structure and floorboards of the first and second floors of the original part of Ostrander-Elmendorf are original. The hearth of the original jambless fireplace that had been centered on the back wall was supported by a trimmer arch, which is exceptional in not being based on a corbel course protruding from the foundation wall. The only known parallel to this is in the Mattys Persen House in Kingston whose original walls survive from its having been burned by the British in 1777. The measurements of this house are almost identical to the Ostrander-Elmendorf House.⁴

The discovery of pantile fragments on the second floor of Ostrander-Elmendorf hinted at the possibility of the house once having had a pantile roof. Subsequently, more pantile fragments were found on the ground at some distance from the house and an

archaeological dig in this area uncovered many pantile fragments, some quite large. Incidentally, pantile fragments were also found by the same archaeologist, Joseph Diamond, in excavations at the Mattys Persen House in Kingston. If a house had a pantile roof, it would seem a given that it would have had gable parapets. Only one example of a stone house with brick gable parapets made with vlechtingen or “mouse-toothing” had been known to exist: Fort Frey at Palatine Bridge on the Mohawk River.⁵ But in 2007 it was discovered that the oldest stone section of the Cornelius Cool House in Hurley had gable parapets

with brick vlechtingen, which later had been cut back below the roof line.⁶ Finding this precedent made it highly likely that Ostrander-Elmendorf also had this construction feature.

The reconstruction of the Ostrander-Elmendorf House presents a house clearly displaying its Old World Dutch antecedents, as also do the brick-fronted, timber-framed Abraham Yates house of c.1725 in Schenectady and the brick fronted stone Teunis Slingerland House of 1762 at Feura Bush in Albany County.⁷



Drawing Set I – Elevation and sections of Ostrander-Elmendorf House. Drawings by author.

Studies of four gable-fronted houses:

Four early Hudson Valley houses that were built with gable-fronts are the subjects of this article. Three of them retain their original roofs, and two of these remain gable-fronted. The other example had its roof modified at a fairly early date, after additions were built on either side of it, the original section had its roof removed and a new roof was built over the three units at right angles to the original roof. This is what happened also to the Ostrander-Elmendorf House after a second addition was made to it in the third quarter of the 18th century.

Some of this study has to be speculative due to the fact that to varying degrees, structural changes made

to the original construction have obscured or obliterated elements of the as-built condition. In one case, permission could not be obtained from the owner to do a thorough study of the building.

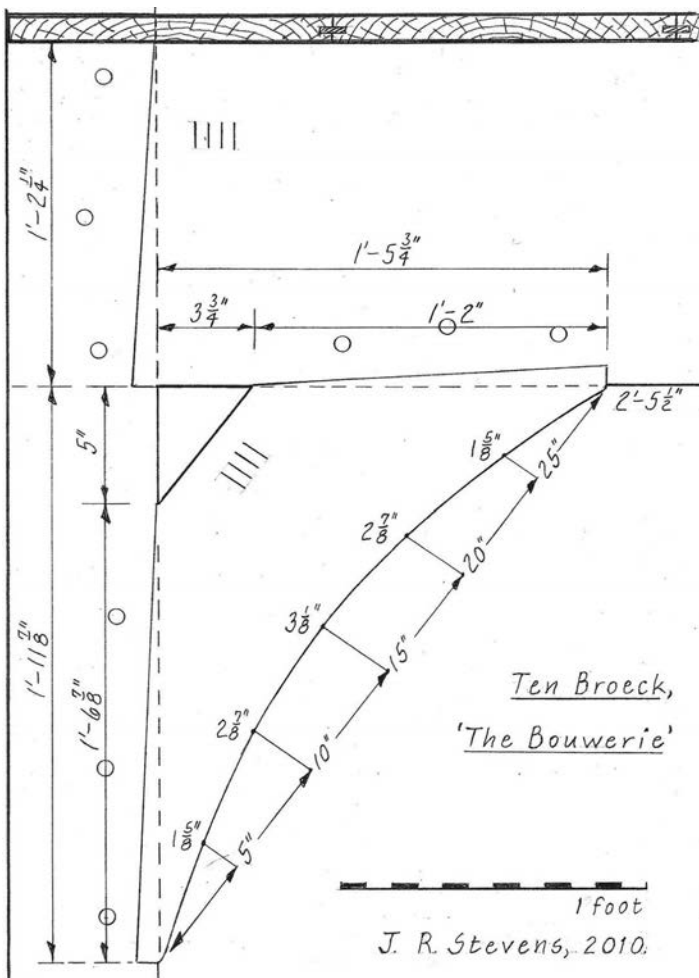
1. *Dirck Wesselse ten Broeck House* *Clermont, Columbia County*

Now a rear ell attached to the Ten Broeck Bouwerie in Clermont, the timber-frame dwelling was dendro-dated at ca. 1705. It was built by Dirck Wesselse ten Broeck (1638-1717) on the banks of the Roeloff Jansen's Kill, but because of the threat of flooding, it was moved to higher ground. At this point an addition-



Fig. 2 – View of the Dirck Wesselse Ten Broeck House, ca. 1705, Clermont, Columbia County, attached to rear of the brick Ten Broeck Bouwerie erected in 1762. Photo by author.

Fig. 3 – Measured drawing of corner brace in Ten Broeck House by author.



al room was added covering the original front-gable façade. The second-floor end beam has the disused mortices from a transomed doorway and a cross-window that had been part of the original facade. In 1762 it became the service wing to a grand two-story brick mansion with a gambrel roof, known as The Bouwerie, built by a later Dirck Wesselse ten Broeck (Fig. 2). In recent years the Bouwerie property was purchased by Dianne O'Neal who has employed HVVA member Conrad Fingado to do an extensive renovation to the building. Conrad's work has exposed the evidence of the earlier house.

The original structure was a gable-fronted, with one room. It was 21 feet, 2 inches wide by 18 feet, 10 inches deep (*Drawing Set II*). It consisted of five framing bents, the beams of the three interior bents having braces (korbeels) of an early form with open corners (Fig. 3). The height from the first floor to the underside of the second floor boards is 8 feet, 5 ½ inches. As previously noted, the front wall had a doorway with a mullioned transom and a cross window. There is evidence that the second floor end beam originally projected to create an overhang, like that on the

Pieter Winne House at Bethlehem, Albany County. The house was 1½ story with knee walls and had a steeply-pitched roof with two tiers of collar ties. While the pitch of the roof was reduced somewhat when the 1762 mansion was built, the original rafters were re-used. It was possible to ascertain the original roof pitch from the redundant collar tie mortices as having been 55 degrees. Centered on the back wall there had been a jambless fireplace about 7 feet, 6 inches wide. The framing bents have “marriage marks” from the façade end to the fireplace end.

It would seem that after the house had been moved to higher ground, perhaps by dismantling it (we have no way of knowing if the orientation of the house was changed in the move), a twelve foot addition was made to it. This had one interior bent and an exterior



Fig. 4 – View of extant door frame in Ten Broeck House. Photo by author.

Drawing Set II – Plan and sections of the ca. 1705 Ten Broeck House. Drawings by author.

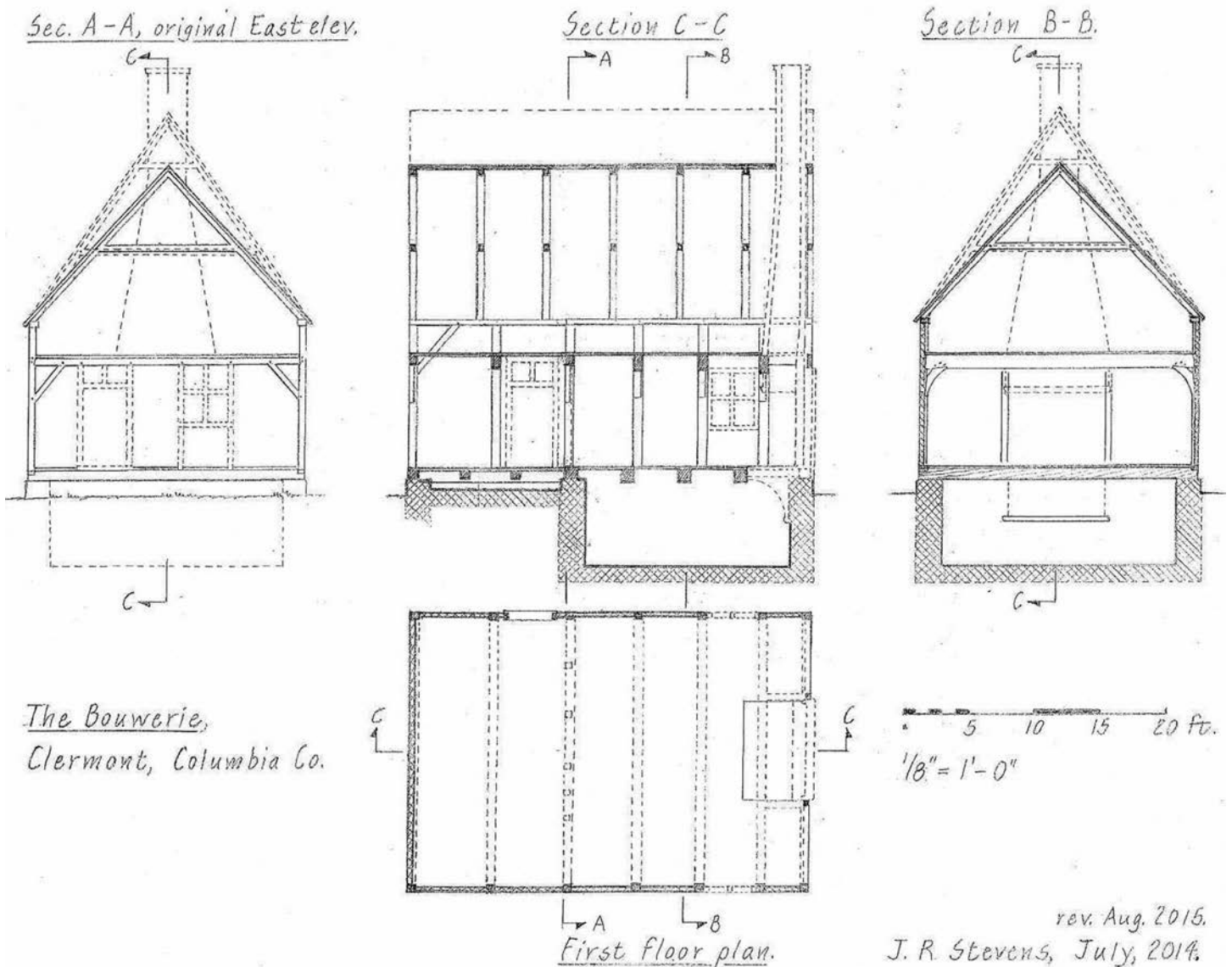




Fig. 5 – View of Cantine House from south, construction dates unknown. Photo by author, 2007.

doorway with a mullioned transom set right against the corner post of the original structure (Fig. 4). The craftsmanship of the addition is noticeably inferior to the original work. The posts of the south wall, original and new, were given marriage marks on their exterior faces about 21 inches above the sill level numbering them from east to west. The exterior walls are infilled with brick (nogging) which was plastered on the interior, but leaving the faces of the wall posts exposed about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch. There is clear evidence of there having been a cross-window on each side wall between the second and third posts from the fireplace end. The exterior was weather-boarded. There is a basement under only the original part of the house which suggests the addition was built some time after the move. At an unknowable date, the jambless fireplace was rebuilt with jambs. At the time of construction of the 1762 mansion the roof pitch was reduced to 47 degrees so that its ridge came below the top of the lower slope of the gambrel roof.

2. Cantine House

Marbletown, Ulster County

The whitewashed stone house on Jacobsen Lane south of Stone Ridge is believed to have been built by a member of the Cantine family, although a detailed documentation of the building has yet to be done

(Figs. 5 & 6). It is illustrated on page 179 of Eberlein and Hubbard's *Historic Houses of the Hudson Valley* (1942) simply as "Long Whitewashed House, Stone Ridge".

It is a more-or-less typical example of an Ulster County stone house that has grown from a single-cell unit with two linear additions and a continuous roof line. In 2007 it was empty and Jim Decker and the author examined it from the exterior. We could see through the windows of the center section that the second floor beams were parallel to the ridge – not at right angles

Fig. 6 – View of Cantine House from north. Photo by author, 2007



to it as would be the normal circumstance. This evidenced that the house, like the original section of the Ostrander-Elmendorf House, originally had a gable-fronted configuration. One of the front window frames of this part of the house appeared to have been converted from a cross-window frame by the removal of the mullion and transom (*Fig. 7*). This section of the house measures 25 feet in width, and 21 feet, 6 inches in depth, very similar to the Ostrander-Elmendorf House.

Earlier, the house had been for sale and several HVVA members had an opportunity to examine its interior, among them the late Maggie MacDowell. She supplied the author with copies of photographs she had taken inside the house, several of which showed,

Fig. 7 – Measured drawing of window frame, south wall, Cantine House by author.

Cantine house, Window frame, south wall.

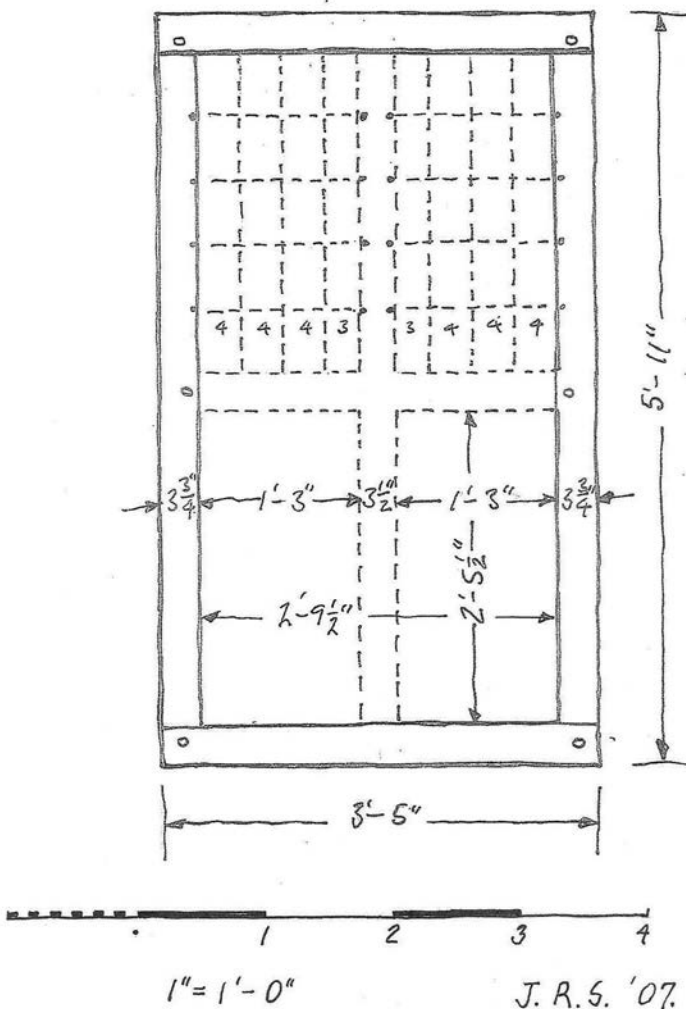


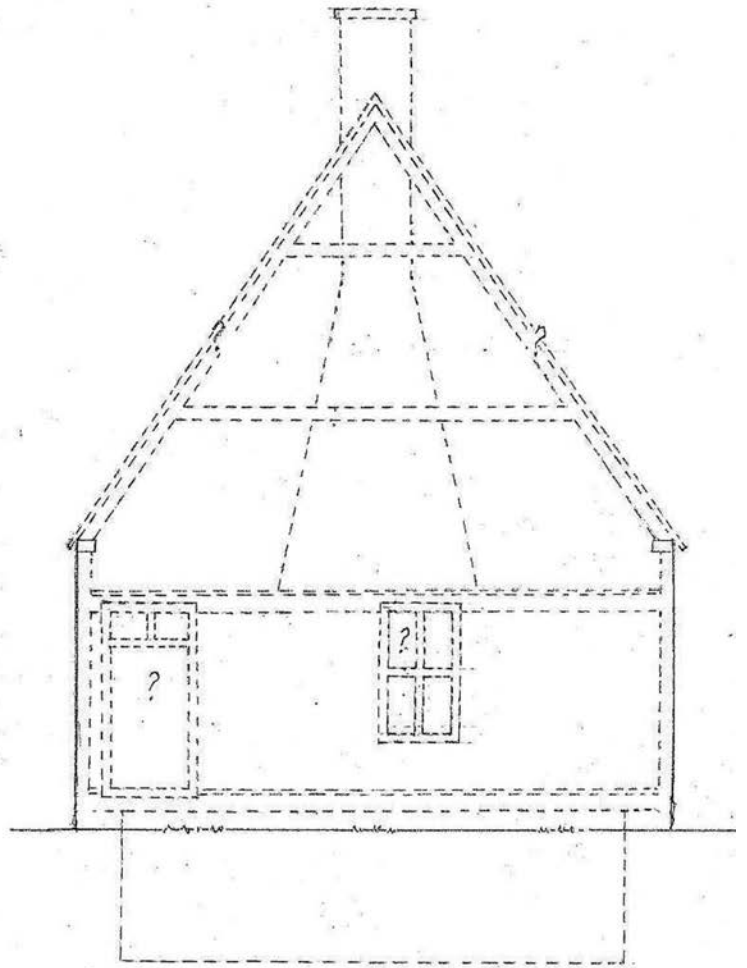
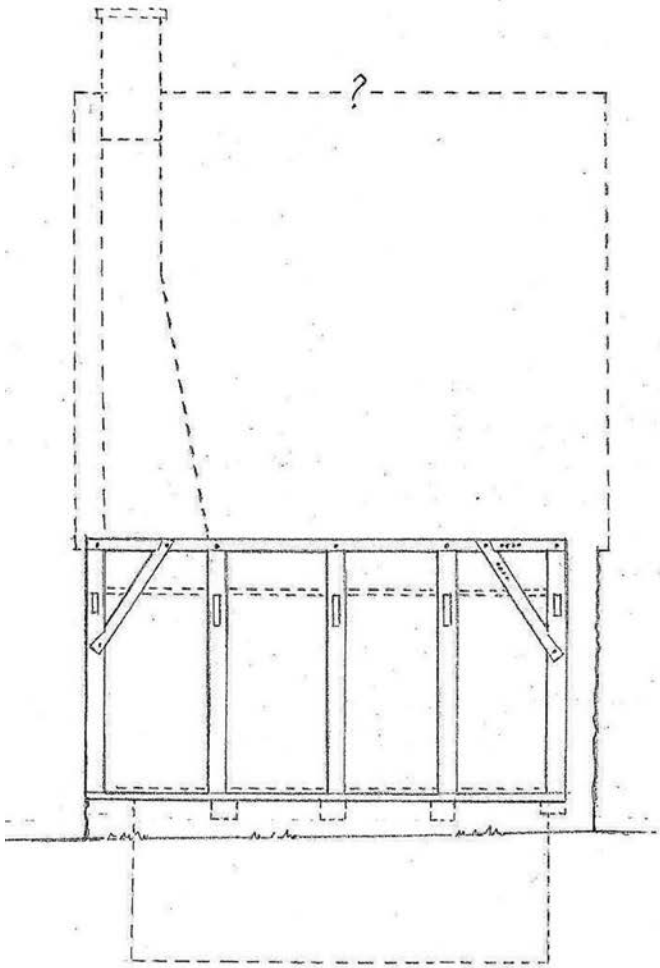
Fig. 8 – View of wall framing, Cantine House. Photo by Maggie MacDowell, 2006.

surprisingly, that the side walls of the center section were of timber frame construction (*Fig. 8*). The house was purchased by an English woman who the author has approached her several times for permission to document the interior, but such permission has not been granted.

The original unit of the house would seem to have been a "stone-ender" with the stone end wall extending across the south corner posts. The north end (fireplace wall) has stone infill between the corner posts and above and below the end wall second floor beam. The drawings included here show the main features of the original form of the house, and have to be regarded as tentative until such time as the house can be thoroughly studied and accurate drawings can be made of it (*Drawing Set III*).

West elev.

South elev.



Cantine house, Stone Ridge, Ulster Co.

0 5 10 15 20 25 ft. $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$ J. R. S. June, 2014.

3. Du Puy House

Marbletown, Ulster County

This house is something of a discovery. It is not in any book the author is aware of. It is located on the west side of Van Wagenen Lane which starts at Hurley Mountain Road near its south end, just past the bridge over the Esopus Creek (Figs. 9 & 10). It faces approximately east. In the central part of the façade are four inscription stones, one of which displays the date 1722. Other stones are carved with initials that suggest the house was built for a Du Puy. The datestone which is centered on the end wall of the addition shows AKS ND and 1733 (Fig. 11).

The original one-room unit measures 26 feet in width, and 21 feet, 8 inches in depth (Drawing Set IV). The distance from the first floor to the underside of the second floor boards is 8 feet, 3/8 inch. The addition is 18 feet, 8 inches in depth. The first floor level of the addition is set 1 foot, 2 1/2 inches higher than that in the original unit. The distance from the first floor to the underside of the second floor boards in the addition is 8 feet, 1 inch. The original part had a jambless fireplace centered on the back wall, from which the original hearth support would seem to survive. There is no indication as to how the addition was originally heated, but possibly by a five-plate stove. The door and window units are obvious replacements. The present window is narrower than what was originally used, which may have been a cross window. In the south wall of the addition, between the second and third beams from the west end is a *bolkozijn* frame similar to a unit in the second addition of the Ostrand-Elmendorf House (Fig. 12). A similar unit would seem once to have been in the north wall as well.

The present roof pitch is slightly more than 40 degrees. It is probable that the original roof pitch had been more like 55 degrees. Investigation of the rafters may show if they are re-used from the original roof, and collar tie mortices would give the original roof pitch.



Fig. 9 – View of Du Puy House from east. Photo by author.

Fig. 10 – View of Du Puy House from northwest. Photo by author.

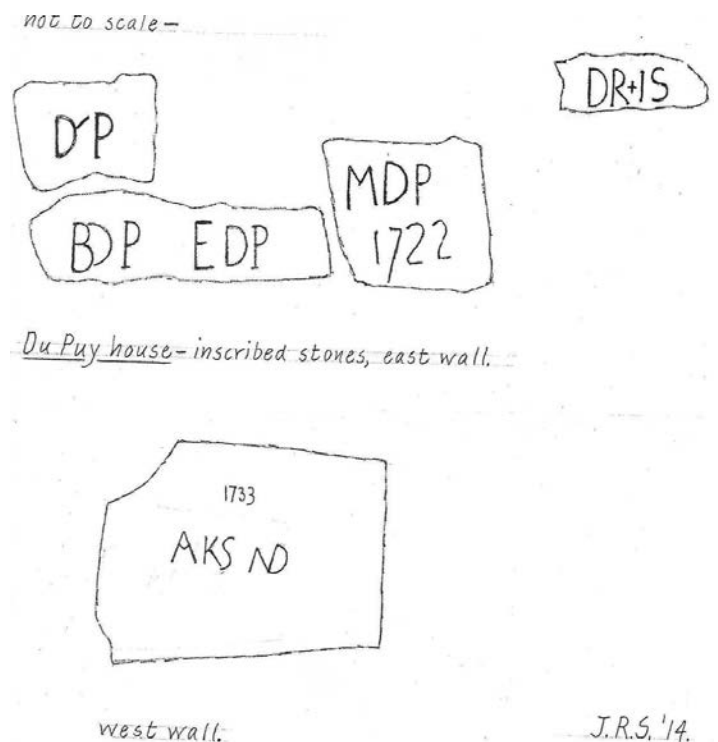
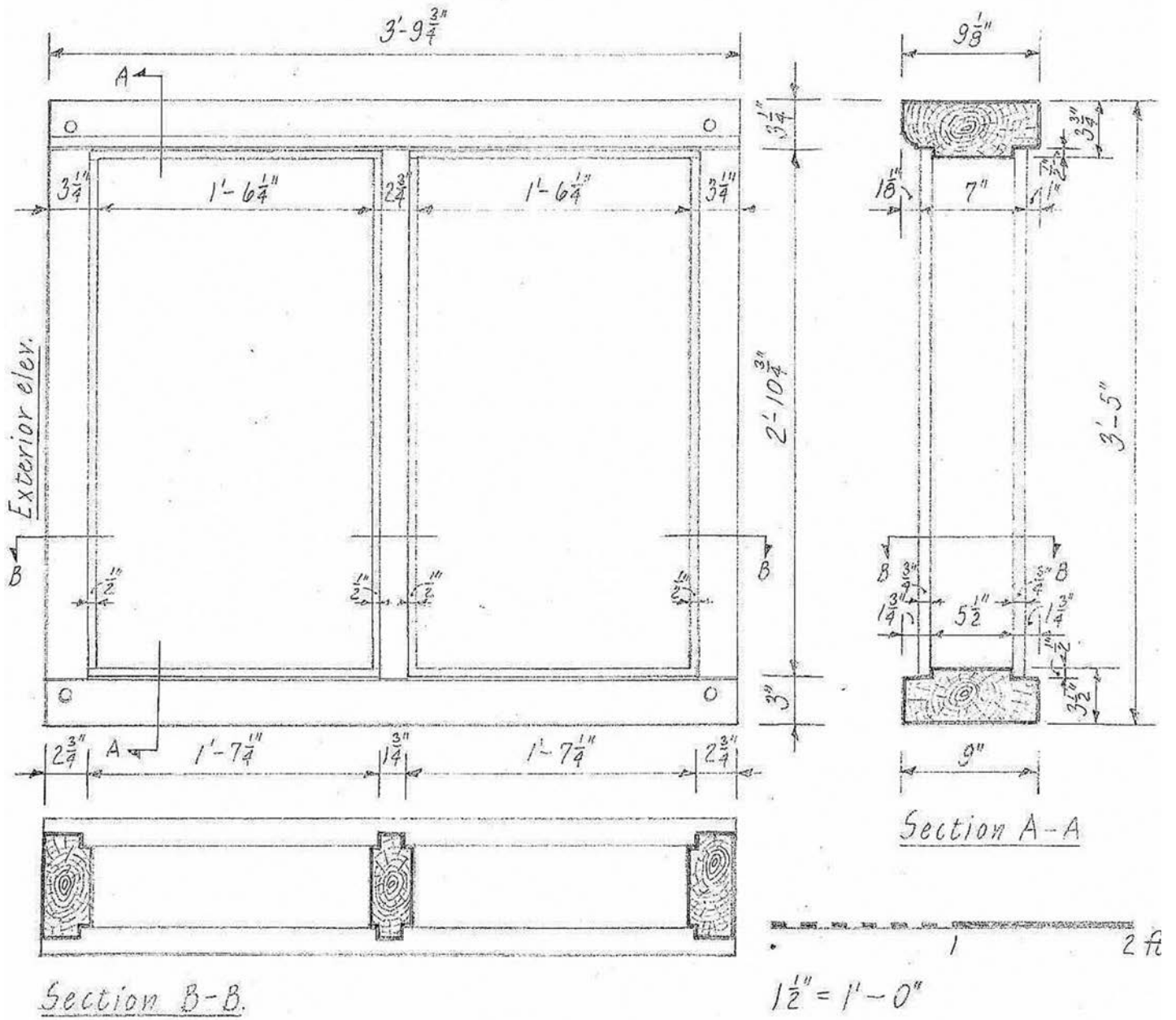
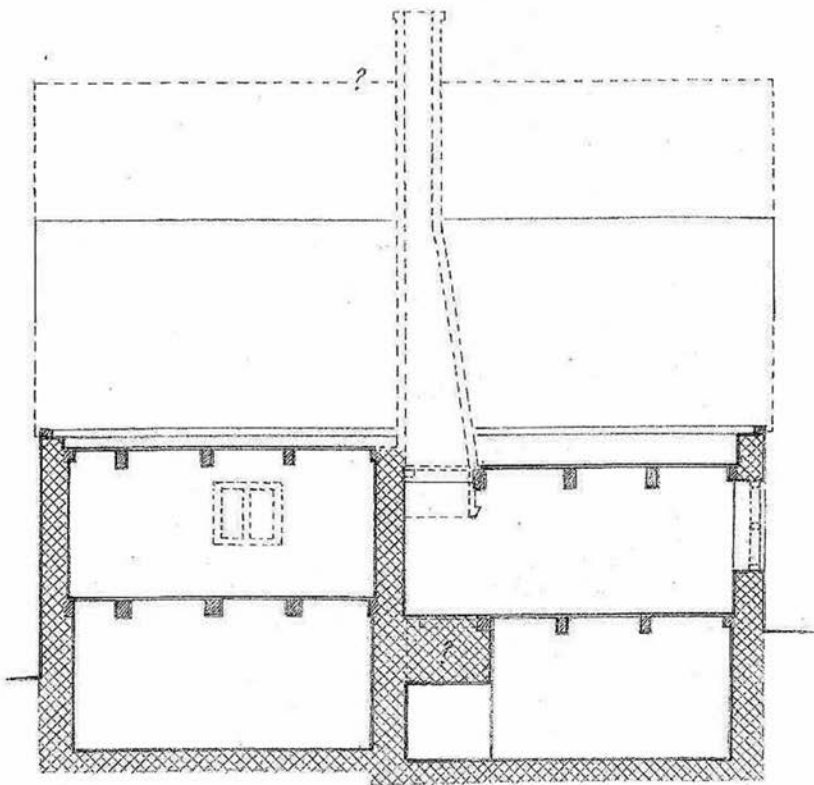


Fig. 11 – Drawing of date and initial stones on Du Puy House by author.

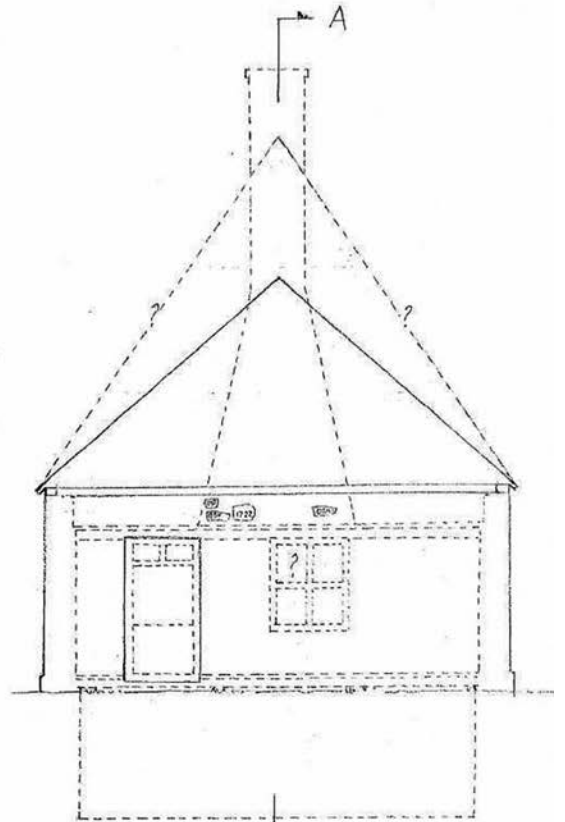


Du Puy house - window frame in south wall of 1733 addition J.R.S. '14

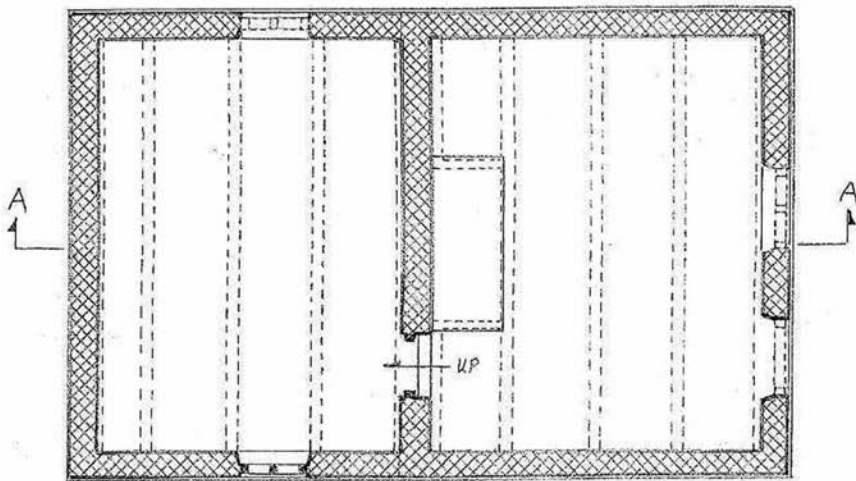
Fig. 12 – Drawing of window frame in DePuy House by author.



Section A-A



East elev.



First floor plan.

Du Puy house

Van Wagenen Lane,
Lomontville, Ulster Co.

0 5 10 15 20 25 ft.

1/8" = 1'-0"

J. R. Stevens, June, 2014.
- rev. VII-28-15

4. *Vernooy-Bevier House* *Wawarsing, Ulster County*

The Vernooy-Bevier house is located at the end of a lane off the east side of route 209, a short distance north of the Village of Ellenville (Fig. 13). There is a brief description of it on page 233 in Helen Wilkinson Reynolds' *Dutch Houses of the Hudson Valley Before 1776* (1929), and is illustrated there by a photograph taken in 1906 identified as "The small house near Wawarsing" (Fig. 14). This house was first visited and photographed by the author on September 18, 1994 in field trip with Peter Sinclair prior to the founding of the HVVA. I saw it again on August 19, 2006 with a sizeable contingent of HVVA members. The elderly lady living in the house would only allow Jim Decker to see the interior; I took the opportunity to measure the exterior of the house.⁸ Eight years later I was able to get interior measurements.

The original one-room unit of the house faces east and measures 26 feet in width (*Drawing Set V*). It was 21 feet, 4 inches in depth. These measurements are typical for one-room houses, whether of stone or timber construction as will be noted from the previous examples. The present entry door location may be original, but the existing window is neither the size of the original, or in its location. Unfortunately the stonework of the wall does not provide a clue to the original window location. The 1906 photograph in the Reynolds book shows much smaller second floor windows than the present ones. The north and south walls have windows that are suggestive in their proportions of early



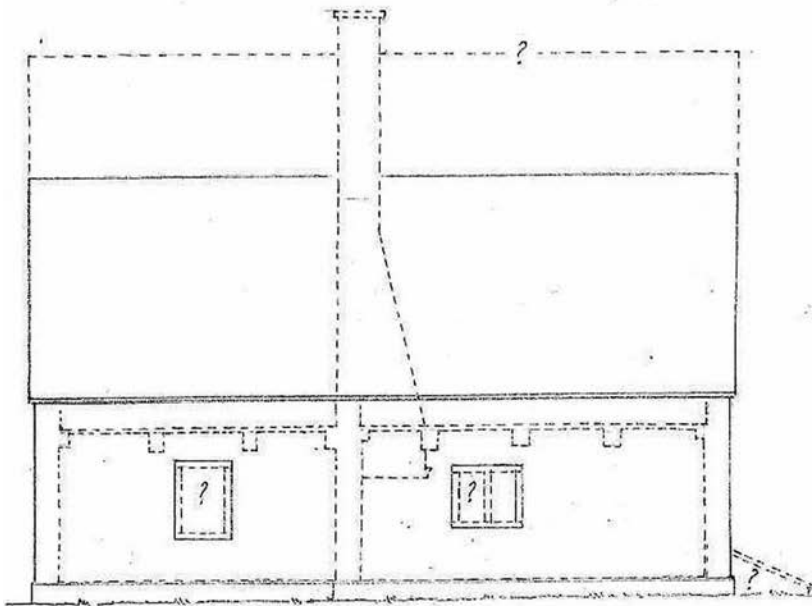
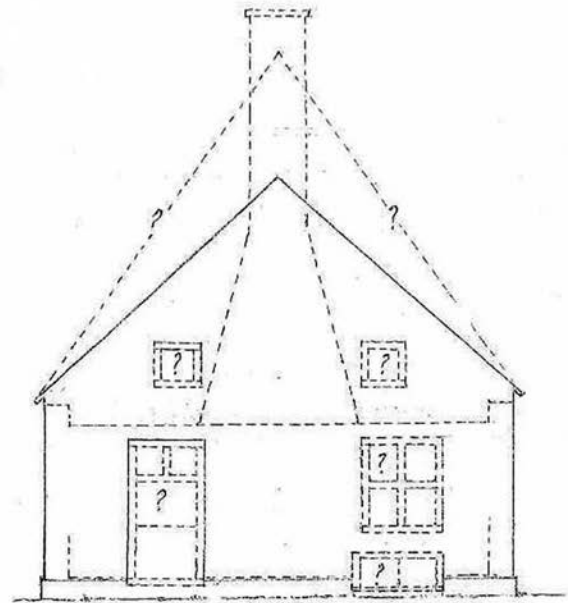
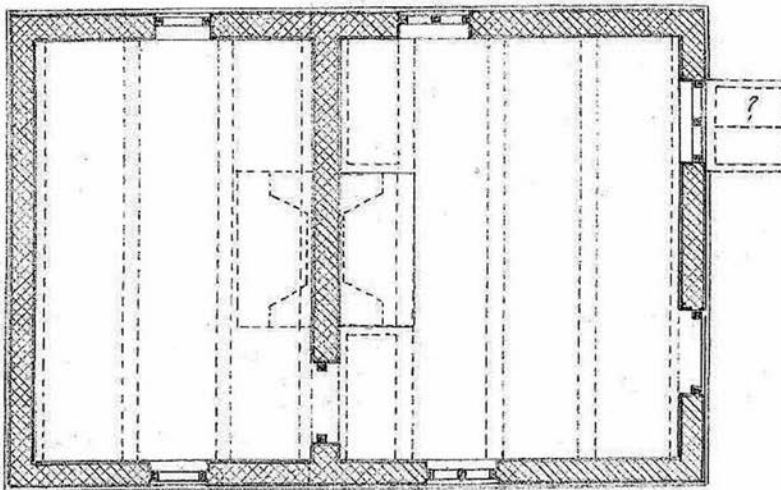
Fig. 14 – View of Vernooy-Bevier House, 1906. From Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776* (1929), 101.

ones – possibly *bolkozijns*. The date of construction of this house is not known, but it is undoubtedly from the first half of the 18th century. Depending on how early in the century it was built, it may have once had a much steeper roof. At an unknown date subsequent to the original construction a 16 foot, 8 inch addition was made to the west end of the house. Depending upon when this addition was constructed, it may have had a less steep roof than the original part. Alternatively, the present roof may date from the time of the addition. The existing rafters could not be examined.

The original section of the house has the usual three interior beams, with the western one being deeper than the others as it had functioned as the hood beam of a jambless fireplace, the presence of which is also confirmed by trimmer beams to support the sides of a jambless fireplace hood. The outside to outside measurement across these trimmers gives a jambless hood width of 8 feet, 5 inches. The height from the surface of the first floor to the underside of the second floor is 7 feet, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The addition has two internal beams, both have the same sectional dimensions and there were no trimmers. The addition may originally have been unheated, or possibly heated by a five-plate stove fired through an opening in the back wall of the jambless fireplace. At some point the jambless fireplace was removed and replaced with back-to-back stone jambed fireplaces. It is also possible that this development took place concurrently with the construction of the addition, but there is no way to know this. There are no early trim elements or hardware that would help date this house.⁹

Fig. 13 – View of Vernooy-Bevier House, 2014. from southeast. Photo by Neil Larson, 2015.



SouthEastFirst floor planVernooy-Bevier house

Route 209.

Wawarsing, Ulster Co.

 $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$

J. R. Stevens, Aug., 2014.

rev. VII-28-15

Drawing Set V – Plan, elevation and section of Vernooy-Bevier House. Drawings by author.

Endnotes

- 1 This view was a copy of a drawing made by Augustine Herrman that was intended to show the run-down condition of the town and its defenses, implying neglect by the Dutch West India Company. See John Stevens, *Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830* [hereafter referred to as *DVAinNA*], 7].
- 2 For illustrations see *DVAinNA*, Plates 14, 5A & 17.
- 3 For illustrations see *DVAinNA*, Plates 9 & 10.
- 4 For a more detailed description see *HVVA Newsletter* Vol.12, May-July 2009, 2-4.
- 5 For illustrations see *DVAinNA*, fig. 44.
- 6 See *HVVA Newsletter*, Vol.12, August-October 2009, 4-7.
- 7 For illustrations see *DVAinNA*, Plates 58B & 37.
- 8 See *HVVA Newsletter*, Vol.9, June-July 2007.
- 9 For additional information on the history of the Vernooy-Bevier house, see *HVVA Newsletter*, Vol.18, January – March 2015.

More hall-parlor houses in Europe

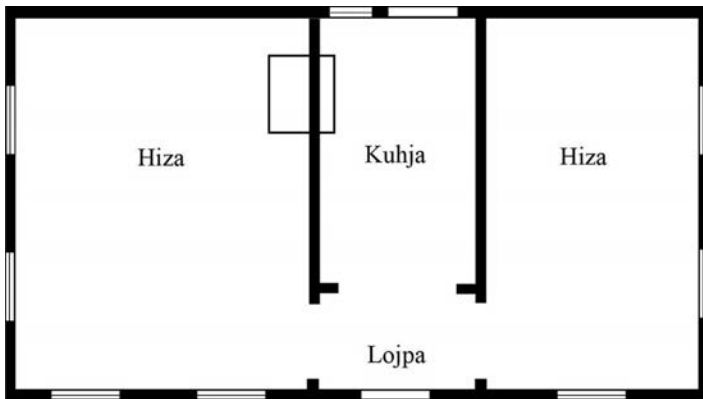


Fig. 1 – Floor plan of a typical Zagorje house. A tiled-stove heats the main “hiza” and backs onto the raised kitchen fireplace (“komen”). Plan courtesy of Jeffery Harris.

Fig. 2 – Early 19th-century Farmhouse at Skansa open-air museum, Stockholm. Photo by Neil Larson, 2015.



Fig. 3 – Model of traditional farmhouse at Moderna Museet. Photo by Neil Larson, 2015.



Michael Rebic’s article in the last issue on New England hall-parlor houses in the Town of Austerlitz, Columbia County was accompanied by an addendum about traditional houses in the Hravtsko Zagorje region of Croatia with a hall-parlor plans. It included the floor plan at right (Fig. 1).

In August the editor travelled to Sweden where he visited museums in Stockholm and toured the Lapland countryside. At Skansen in Stockholm, by their own claim, the world’s first open air museum (founded in 1891), there was a 19th-century farmhouse of identical plan as the Croatian house (Fig. 2). There was hall/kitchen on one side and a parlor on the other, divided by a central entry and a small well-finished room behind. This dwelling form was prevalent throughout northern Sweden. The Moderna Museet, aka the Museum of Modern Art and Architecture, had a display of models illustrating the history of Swedish architecture. One model replicated the traditional hall-parlor house (Fig. 3).

Virtually all the historic buildings were built of logs: houses, barns, granaries, as well as churches and schools (Fig. 4). In many cases, the logs were covered with vertical boards and battens. The wood roofs were particularly interesting (Fig. 4). Birch bark was laid underneath the planks for water-proofing with the edges left exposed at the eave. Sometimes the edge of the bark was cut in a saw-tooth for added decoration. Another novel feature at Skansa and elsewhere was the unusual angled pole fencing (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4 – Detail of log wall and plank roof construction, Skansa Museum. Photo by Neil Larson, 2015.

Fig. 5 – Typical Swedish fence. Photo by Neil Larson, 2015.



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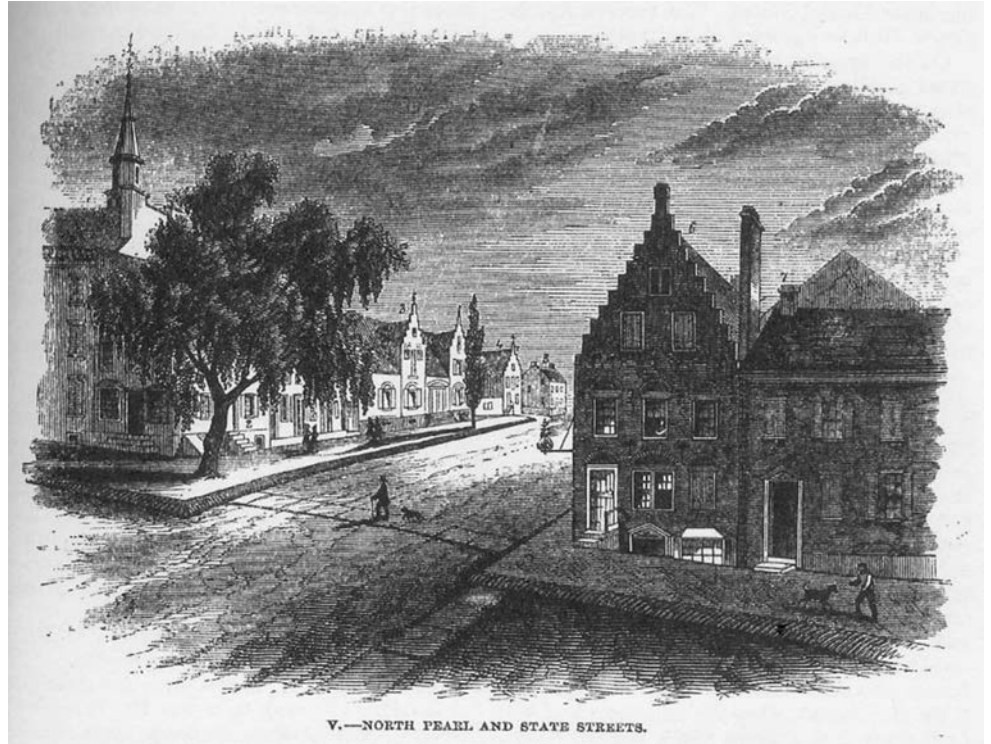
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More Front Gable Houses

An account of a front gable house in Albany from the politically incorrect "Albany Knockerbocker" created by Benson J. Lossing (1813-1891) for an article "Albany 50 Years Age" using engravings from James Eights' early 19th-century watercolors in the March 1857 issue of Harper's *New Monthly Magazine*. Thanks to Ken Walton for his transcription.



No. V exhibits the corners of North Pearl and State Streets, looking up Pearl. The most conspicuous objects are the ancient building known as the Lydius House (6), with its terraced gable, and the adjoining mansion (7) of William Pitt Beers. The corner house was built expressly for a parsonage, to accommodate the Reverend Gideon Schaets, who arrived in Albany in 1652, and became the pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church. The materials for the building were all imported from Holland — bricks, tiles, iron, and wood-work. They came over with the church bell and pulpit in 1657. When I was quite a lad I visited the house with my mother, who was acquainted with the father of Balthazar Lydius, the last proprietor of the mansion. To my eyes it appeared like a palace, and I thought the pewter plates in a corner cupboard were solid silver, they glittered so. The partitions were made of mahogany, and the exposed beams were ornamented with carvings in high relief, representing the vine and fruit of the grape. To show the relief more perfectly, the beams were painted white. Balthazar was an eccentric old bachelor, and was the terror of all the boys. He was fond of his pipe and bottle, and gloried in celibacy until his life was in "the sere and yellow leaf" Then he gave a pint of gin for a squaw, and calling her his wife, he lived with her as such until his death, in 1815. His fine old mansion was demolished in 1832, when it was believed to be the oldest brick building in the United States.

Calendar of Upcoming HVVA Events

- December 12, 2015** Holiday Tour & Luncheon in Kingston
- January 16, 2016** Annual Meeting at Elmendorph Inn, Red Hook

For more information, please check www.HVVA.org