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# The Society for the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture

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## Newsletter

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Chimura family in front of house, ca. 1950.

## The people of the Felten-Ten Broeck House

*By Ken Krabbenhoft*

### The Felten Years (1748-1803)

It's easy to forget that words in everyday use didn't always mean what we understand them to mean -- easy and forgivable, since what they used to mean is not necessarily relevant to how we use them now. The origins of words can nevertheless give us insight into changes of meaning that have only recently taken place and hint at changes to come.

Take the word "vernacular." Everybody knows it means "common" as opposed to "exceptional," "popular" as opposed to "elitist," and "traditional" as opposed to "cutting-edge." It comes as a surprise, therefore, to learn that "vernacular" comes from Latin "vernaculus" meaning "pertaining to slaves," from "verna" -- the word for a slave born in the master's house.

The point is that as recently as thirty years ago the majority of the old vernacular houses in our area were lived in by farmers or their descendants. Their status as "commoners" in the colonial and early American context was probably closest to the modern term "working class." With the demise of farming in the late twentieth century, the cost of maintaining these vernacular properties became prohibitive for many, and it was advantageous to sell. This is where a momentous shift took place,

because the new owners tended (and tend) to be middle- and upper-middle class individuals or, in the case of the larger houses and properties, members of an economic elite.

Of course it's not quite this cut and dried, because ownership and tenancy often went through alternating phases, from working class to middle- or upper-class and vice versa. It is nevertheless arguable that by the 1980s most historic homes in the Hudson Valley had ceased to be vernacular in **both** the historic-architectural **and** socio-economic senses of the word only to become vernacular **solely** in the historic-architectural sense. In other words, although they have never stopped having the charm of traditional and tried-and-true architecture, in the early twenty-first century our colonial and Federal properties very rarely belong to "commoners" because only a small class of people can afford them.

The social history of the Felten-Ten Broeck House is unusual in that it illustrates the background to this shift in an unusually poignant and often picturesque way. The Felten part of the story begins with European immigrants to Kingston in the early to mid-1700s – in this case not Dutch immigrants, though their story played out against the background of Dutch colonization, but Germans like the Felten from the Palatinate region in the southwest of modern Germany. English authorities aided the Palatines in their escape from the uncertainty and destruction caused by war with the French, settling them primarily along the Hudson River north and east of Kingston.

But in several respects their experience on these shores differed from that of the English. One difference in particular relates to the history of the Felten-Ten Broeck house. It has to do with the continuity of German culture in Kingston, made possible by the communal nature of their immigration, which allowed for perpetuation of language and customs from one generation to another. This was entirely unlike the fate of the English soldiers who were sent upriver from New York in the 1660s to establish the Crown's authority in the Hudson Valley. Because there were no English women in the area, they married into closely knit Dutch families. They had children who spoke Dutch and identified with Dutch traditions, and the only thing English about their children was their surname. By 1800, with a few exceptions like the Brodheads, the names of the first Englishmen in Ulster county – names like Biggs, Garton, and Nottingham

-- had all but disappeared from the Ulster County census.<sup>1</sup>

In 1748 a German immigrant named Johannes Maximilian (or Maximilion) Velde, Owner#1 (ca. 1707-?), acquired land in the Flatbush area of Kingston, including the site of the house that bears his name.<sup>2</sup> This house appears to have been built on or near the footprint of a structure dating to before 1748, parts of which may have been incorporated into the existing house.<sup>3</sup> Construction of the house is dated to 1751, the date inscribed on a stone in the south wall of the middle of the house's three sections.

Little is known about Johannes Maximilian Velde's life in America except that in 1732 he married Anna Margaretha Henrich or Hendricks (1711-?) of Livingston Manor, NY, known by the Dutch diminutive "Margrietje." She was the daughter of Palatinate German immigrants Lorenz Henrich and Anna Regina Volland née Helm (1673-?), whose first husband, Johann Wilhelm Volland, had died in Germany in 1709. Lacking documentary proof, the most reasonable assumption is that the second of Johannes and Margrietje's nine children, their eldest son, Johannes Jr. ("Johannes II", 1735-1799?) inherited the homestead, becoming Owner #2. His surname appears in documents in the Anglicized form "Felten," which replaced "Velde" in the Kingston area from then on. Like his father, Johannes II married a woman from the German community, Maria Schneider (Anglicized Snyder) (1742-?), whose paternal grandfather, Johann Wilhelm Schneider, was born in the Palatinate.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of a paper trail and reliable death dates for Johannes II and Maria complicates matters at this point. Their eldest son (the third of their ten children) was named Johannes like his father and grandfather. This Johannes III (1769-?) would have been expected to inherit the house and property, but there is no record of his life beyond the date of his baptism, nor is there any record of the property being inherited by any of his siblings. Two of his brothers, Wilhelmus and Abraham, married sisters from the Joy family of Kingston; they and one sister, Margitje, who married an Elmendorf, presumably remained in Kingston. Johannes III's other three brothers married and left Ulster County: two of them emigrated to Schoharie County and the other, after marrying a woman from Schoharie, to Illinois. One sister moved with her husband to a farm in Medusa, NY, near Albany. Two other sisters are, like Johannes III, known only by name and date of baptism.

If in fact Johannes Felten III died young or for some other reason was not able to take over the homestead, it may have passed to his brothers Wilhelmus or Abraham or to his sister Margitje. At this point all we have is conjecture. What we do know is that the next recorded sale of the homestead was not made by a Felten but by a Snyder – specifically Johannes Snyder, traditionally assumed to have been Maria Snyder Felten's older (much older) brother Johannes Snyder, Owner/Trustee #3 (1720-1815). Why the task of selling the property was entrusted to him (whether or not he actually owned it) is not known. If the homestead had been left to all of Johannes's siblings, or to a number of them, the complications of disposing of it and dividing the proceeds may have been so daunting that they left the job to their uncle. This might have been the case given that half of them lived far from Kingston.

### Yankees Passing Through (1803-1805)

The parties involved in Johannes Snyder's 1803 sale of the Felten-Ten Broeck House are emblematic of an important moment in the nation's history: the beginning of the migration of Americans inland from the eastern seaboard to seek their fortune in upstate New York and farther west, in the new state of Ohio and beyond, in the Northwest and Illinois Territories. In that year Snyder conveyed the house and seventy acres to William H. Prince and his wife Rebecca, Owner(s) #4, from Weston in Fairfield County, Connecticut. The house opened its doors to New Englanders, and the Felten-Snyder occupancy ended.<sup>5</sup>

Internet research suggests that the new occupants were William H. Prince (1777-1853) and Rebecca Hall Prince (1780-1853), both born in Weston, Connecticut.<sup>6</sup> The Princes' paid £750 for the property, where they spent only two years before moving to Dutchess County, which turned out to be another stepping stone in their journey. In 1809 they left Dutchess Co. for Catharine, New York, in Schuyler Co., where they are buried. This kind of restlessness was uncommon prior to the early nineteenth century. You made do with what you had; there were crops to sell, and the proceeds were invested in the land. It was a pattern brought over from Europe, where generations of peasants and yeomen spent their entire lives within a radius of a few miles of their birthplace.

We'll never know the reasons why the young Princes (ages 32 and 28) chose to homestead in a hamlet two

hundred miles west of Kingston, but there is a more superficial clue that takes us back to their birthplace in Connecticut. It turns out that four of the founding fathers of Catharine, beginning in 1799, were also born in Fairfield Co. The emigrant Princes belonged there as much as the Feltens of their generation belonged in Kingston -- and half of the Feltens also emigrated farther upstate. William Prince in fact became one the first trustees of the Catharine Library Association, founded in 1817, the year his daughter Ruth was born.<sup>7</sup>

### The Ten Broecks (1805-1869)

The brief Anglo-American episode was followed by the sixty-four year Ten Broeck residency in the Felten house, which divides into two periods of roughly thirty years each. The first period began in 1805, when William H. and Rebecca Prince sold the homestead and seventy acres to Benjamin Ten Broeck, Jr., Owner #5 (1770-1810), for \$1,875.<sup>8</sup> The property was bounded to the north and east by the lands of John Ten Broeck (?-1853?), probably a cousin or an uncle.<sup>9</sup> Benjamin married Elizabeth Van Keuren (1782-?), and they had four daughters, the youngest born a year before his death in 1810. Benjamin's will, if indeed he wrote one, seems not to have been entered in the Ulster County Archives.

The next sale related to the Felten-Ten Broeck property, which initiated the second phase of the Ten Broeck occupancy, was made by Benjamin's widow Elizabeth, Owner #6, in 1831. We know that Elizabeth and her four daughters retained ownership after Benjamin's death because they, along with Elizabeth's second husband Daniel Warren, were the "parties of the first part" in the sale of the house and acreage to John Ten Broeck (probably the same John mentioned above). In that year he paid \$381.85 for a "certain parcel of land being part of the farm of Benjamin Ten Broeck" abutting land that John already owned.<sup>10</sup> That Elizabeth, now twice widowed, and her three unmarried daughters remained in the homestead is apparent from the terms of the sale of the house and eighty acres for \$1,500.00 in 1849 to the fourth daughter, Elizabeth (1807-?), her husband Peter Marquart (?-?), and his brother David (?-?), Owner(s) #7.<sup>11</sup>

Nothing more is known about the Marquart brothers or Elizabeth Ten Broeck Marquart's life after she and her husband acquired the homestead. The wikipedia entry for the Benjamin Ten Broeck House is of no help

in this regard. It states that Elizabeth Marquart (i.e. Marquart) lived in the house until 1820. This may be true, but it is an odd thing to say about a thirteen-year old girl who was presumably living there with her sisters and her mother, also named Elizabeth. The confusion would be explained if wikipedia conflated the mother and the daughter, except that mother Elizabeth's second husband was named Warren, not Marquart. We also know that, according to the 1849 deed, Warren had died by that date and twice-widowed Elizabeth remained on the property along with David and Peter Marquart (and presumably daughter Elizabeth, Peter's wife).

At any rate, in 1861, for reasons unknown, Peter and Elizabeth Ten Broeck Marquart sold the homestead and fifty acres to Elizabeth's sister Sarah Catrina Ten Broeck, Owner #8 (1805-?), for \$300.<sup>12</sup> Eight years later, in 1869, Sarah, the last Ten Broeck to live in the Felten-Ten Broeck house, sold it and fifty acres to Gideon Baxter, Owner #9 (1812-1888), a native of Cold Spring in Putnam County.<sup>13</sup>

## The Baxters (1869-1898)

Gideon Baxter married Eliza Ann Denney (1813-1884) of Putnam County, and they raised their three sons and four daughters on a farm near Oscawana Lake, also in Putnam County. The Baxters may have been among the earliest lower-Hudson Valley folks drawn north to Ulster Co. by its rural charms. It is recorded that Gideon "sold his farm, and removed to Ulster County, NY, and purchased an estate near Kingston, where he passed his days." Eliza Ann Baxter died in 1844 and Gideon four years later, having enjoyed nearly twenty years of peace and quiet in the Flat-bush. Both of them are buried in the Cold Spring Cemetery.<sup>14</sup>

There is no known documentation of the ownership of the house for the next fifteen years, 1888 to 1893, though there is no doubt that it was inherited by the seven Baxter children, their spouses, and a nephew or cousin named George W. Baxter, Owner(s) #10 (we have no death dates for Olivet or Gilbert, the two children who are not named). Their names as they appear on the 1893 conveyance are: John Baxter and his wife Mary née Tompkins, Esther Jemima Travis and her husband Jeremiah Travis, Martha J. Baxter, Asenath A. Baxter, Phoebe E. Tompkins and her husband William A. Tompkins, and George W. Baxter. They jointly conveyed the Benjamin Ten Broeck

homestead and fifty acres of land, with rights of possession, to Patrick McNerney of the town of Ulster, Renter #1, for \$7,500.<sup>15</sup> This was not an outright sale, however, but rather a mortgage, as title to the property remained with the Baxter children, their spouses, and George W. Baxter. This may explain the enormous sum of money loaned to McNerney, which would presumably be repaid in installments with interest.

No information about Patrick McNerney's background has turned up on the internet, but the name is Irish, and immigration from Ireland to the United States during the Potato Famine was of epic proportions, involving half the population of the country. Patrick McNerney may well have belonged to the first major wave of immigrants, which arrived in 1847, but whatever his place of origin, his tenancy in the Felten-Ten Broeck house marks another key moment in the demographic history of our country. Between the Ten Broecks, Feltens, Schneiders, Princes, and McNerneys, by the end of the nineteenth century this old house had played a social role of uncommon importance among surviving examples of early vernacular architecture, a role that continued into the twentieth century, as we will see.

At some time between 1893 and 1898, Martha J. Baxter, Owner #11, was given sole title to the homestead and land by her siblings, or perhaps she bought them out. By March 5, 1898, Martha had obtained a court order against Patrick McNerney, his wife Mary A. McNerney, and an as yet unidentified Alfred Post, to force the sale of the property at public auction. The sale was refereed by Oliver P. Carpinter (1840-1909), a well-known lawyer and public figure in Kingston. McNerney was the highest bidder and, with \$1,010, became Owner #12 for as long as it took him to hand Martha the \$1,010, presumably the balance of the \$7500 rent agreed on in the 1893 conveyance.<sup>16</sup> It's hard to believe that the auction wasn't rigged. Be that as it may, now that the property was no longer encumbered, Martha sold the Benjamin Ten Broeck homestead and fifty acres outright four days later, on March 9, 1898, for \$1075, to John R. Tammany of Kingston, Owner #13.<sup>17</sup>

On the first of July, 1920, after only two years of ownership, John R. Tammany and his wife Annie C. Tammany sold the Benjamin Ten Broeck homestead and fifty acres to Cornelius Dumond and his wife Ida C. Dumond of Kingston, Owner(s) #14, for \$1.00.<sup>18</sup>

Such a token amount of money is often found in conveyances between family members. This raises the suspicion that Tammany's wife Annie and Dumond's wife Ida were sisters, as the middle initial C. would traditionally have come from their maiden name. Whatever the reason, the Dumonds seem to have bought the house for rental income, as only three months later, on October 4th of the same year, they leased it to Peter Korosi of the Town of Ulster, Renter #2, for \$5,000 and full right of possession of the homestead and fifty acres.<sup>19</sup> Korosi borrowed half the agreed amount, or \$2,500, from Dumond and after four years had not paid off the loan, or so it seems, for in 1924, the property reverted to Cornelius Dumond, who mortgaged it to Steve Chmura, Renter #3, for the same amount of \$2,500, plus four years' interest at 6%.<sup>20</sup>

## Immigration and Tenancy

Before moving on we should ask ourselves how Peter Korosi fits into the history of Felten-Ten Broeck House. His surname is of Hungarian origin; Peter's wife's name, Borbola Lascko, may also have been Hungarian. A gravestone in the Montrepose Cemetery in Kingston is inscribed with the names of Peter Korosi (1862-1928), Borbola Lascko Korosi (1866-1916), and sons Charles (ca.1888–ca.1951) and Benedict (ca.1904- ca.1915). The deaths of both Peter's wife and his fourteen-year old son Benedict in the same year makes one think of the epidemics that periodically raged through American cities, though 1915 doesn't stand out in this respect, unlike the Spanish flu epidemic that arrived in the U.S. from Norway in 1918. Peter and another son, probably Charles, continued to rent the house until 1924, probably because of its proximity to the Philip Goldrick & Sons brickyard, where Peter worked.<sup>21</sup> This part of the story introduces us to the next tenants, Steve and Anna Chmura.

The Chmuras add another national origin to the history of the Felten-Ten Broeck House, namely Bohemia, the most populous Czecho-Slovakian speaking part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which became an independent country in 1918 and in 1993 split into of two separate states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Steve Chmura's parents left Bohemia when he was a small child, following compatriots who had settled in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, a mining and railroad town west of Pittsburg. After Steve's father was killed in a mine accident, the family returned to Europe,

but Steve stayed on and found work repairing rail cars. He married Anna Raytek, who had also been born in the old country. They had six children before leaving McKees Rocks for Kingston, a move due in equal parts to Anna's dislike of the dirt and grime of Pittsburg and to a free round-trip rail ticket to any place in the United States that Steve had earned as a railroad worker.

It was not Steve but Anna who used the ticket in the early 1920s to visit a childhood friend of hers named Mary, also an immigrant, who had married a man named Nerone and lived in Kingston. Mary cooked for some of the workers at the Kingston brickyards and through them had gotten to know Peter Korosi. At Mary's instigation, the Korosis were asked if they were interested in giving up the lease to the Felten-Ten Broeck House. They slept on it, said "yes" the next day, and Anna told Steve, who had stayed behind in McKees Rocks, that they were moving. There's evidence that the Chmuras moved in almost immediately, even though official transfer of the lease didn't occur until 1924.

Although Kingston at this time was a hotbed of industrial activity, including building for the railroads, Steve Chmura changed professions upon arrival. After a spell on the 4:00AM shift at the brickyards, which were on the Rondout Creek within easy walking distance from the house, he took up farming in earnest on the Felten homestead's fifty acres, working odd jobs to make ends meet. He bought a horse and wagon, measured furrows, and planted crops. He harvested pears and Concord grapes that he sold in fifty-gallon barrels to wine makers. He raised cows, pigs, goats, and chickens, and during the depression maintained roads for the WPA (although Paul claims that he and his brothers did all the work).

One of Paul's many anecdotes stars his father's pet chicken, which used to perch on Steve's shoulder and sip homemade wine from a glass. There is also a poetic portrait of Steve and Anna thanks to Helen Reynolds, author of Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley, published in 1920. There is a photo of the Chmuras in front of the house accompanied by Miss Reynolds's description:

The plain around the house was pied with daisies, buttercups and grasses and brilliant sunshine ... Amidst such surroundings the wife of Steve Chmura – gentle, placid, Slavic – sat beneath the

shadow of the porch, relaxed in figure as one of Perugino's Madonnas, her youngest clinging to her as the Child by any old-world master clings to the Mother in the painting.<sup>22</sup>

A rare pastoral idyll wonderfully at odds with the reality of life on a working farm.

Paul Chmura doesn't know when (or if) his father purchased the house from Cornelius Dumond, but he is certain that between June 1941 and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor tenancy passed to a lawyer from New York City. Those terrible months following December 6 must have slowed things down, because the deed to the Felten-Ten Broeck House and 59 acres is dated May 11, 1942.<sup>23</sup> The buyer was William T. Chisholm of 567 Tenth Street, Brooklyn, Owner #15, who later the same year appears in the records as a registered corporation. He subsequently sold the property to his incorporated self and his wife Charlotte V. Chisholm.<sup>24</sup>

Nothing is known about the Chisholms' years in Kingston except for scuttlebutt, according to which William lived and worked in New York City and used the house as a hiding place for his wife, who was an alcoholic.<sup>25</sup>

## The Last Twenty Years

The next owner after the Chisholms was Charles Markentes or Markantes of Box 323, Flatbush Road, Owner #16, about whom nothing had been found on the the internet.<sup>26</sup> He bought the Felten-Ten Broeck House and 50 acres on November 28, 1948, for \$10.00 and assumed responsibility for \$2,110.56, the unpaid balance of a loan of \$3,500 taken out by Chisholm on May 11, 1942 from the Savings and Loan Association of Kingston.<sup>27</sup> He also assumed responsibility for \$462.78, the unpaid balance of a loan of \$800.00 taken out by Chisholm and his wife on May 4, 1943.<sup>28</sup> A complicated affair that may help to explain why Charles and his wife Anna held the property for only six months, selling it to Andrew B. and Anna A. Demeter of Kingston, Owner(s) #17, on May 24, 1949, for \$1.00.<sup>29</sup> Demeter, a stone mason, and his wife owned the house for the next fifty-five years. Their children Andrew G. and Bruce M. Demeter and Elizabeth A. Amendola, Owner(s) #18, inherited it in turn and on May 7, 2004, sold it to the current owner (#19), who happens to be Robert David Sweeney, the presiding President of the HVVA, a.k.a. Rob.<sup>30</sup>

## ENDNOTES

- 1 U.S.Census Schedules, Ulster County, 1790-1840. Ancestry.com.
- 2 Copy of conveyance in possession of Robert Sweeney. Search of Gustave Anjou, *Ulster County Probate Records* (1906) turns up no wills or testaments relevant to Felten or Ten Broecks.
- 3 Information from the current owner, Robert Sweeney.
- 4 The following sources have provided information about the Velde/Felten and Schneider/Snyder genealogies Ancestry.com. *Descendants of Johannes Maximilian Velde*, typescript, n.d. dunhamwilcox.net. geni.com. Norm Hopkins, email to Robert Sweeney, July 5, 2004. NRHP application for Felten-Ten Broeck House. oksner.com. Lila Roney, *Old Dutch Church, Kingston: Baptismal Records, 1810-1838*. Copy on dunhamwilcox.net.
- 5 Ulster County Deeds, Liber 16, page 654.
- 6 genealogy.com.
- 7 Mary L. Cleaver, *History of Catharine, Schuyler County, New York* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 1945), passim.
- 8 Ulster County Deeds, 17:98-99.
- 9 A search of the names and dates of Velde/Felden descendants from 1707 to 1860 has failed to establish the identity of this John Ten Broeck with any certainty. Information about the Ten Broeck, Snyder, Swart, Van Keuren, Van Gaasbeck, Marquart, Delameter, and Dumond genealogies comes from Samuel Burhan, *Burhan Genealogy*. (New York: 1894). hrvh.org. NRHP application for Felten-Ten Broeck House. oksner.com. Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776* (New York: Dover Publications, 1929; rpt. 1965). William B. Rhoads, *Ulster County, New York: The Architectural History & Guide* (Delmar, NY: Black Dome Press, 2011). Lila Roney, *Old Dutch Church, Kingston: Baptismal Records, 1810-1838*. and other online genealogy sites.
- 10 Ulster County Deeds, 37:85-86.
- 11 Ulster County Deeds, 73:42.
- 12 Ulster County Deeds, 117: 413. Note that the conveyance includes fifty rather than eighty acres. The difference may explain why the Marquarts received from Sarah Ten Broeck \$1,200.00 less than what they paid for the property in 1849. Or maybe they owed her the money.
- 13 Ulster County Deeds, 54:382-384.
- 14 Information about the Baxter and Travis genealogies comes from Frances Baxter, *The Baxter Family: Descendants of George and Thomas Baxter* (NY: Tobias Wright, 1913). cptravis.tripot.com. karsen-sheppard-studios.com. findagrave.com.
- 15 Ulster County Deeds, 309:602-603.
- 16 Ulster County Deeds, 342:576
- 17 Ulster County Deeds, 342:626-627.
- 18 Ulster County Deeds, 476:343.
- 19 Ulster County Deeds, 478:279. Ulster County Mortgages 333:125.
- 20 Ulster County Deeds, 506:216.
- 21 Paul Chmura, Interview with Ken Krabbenhoft, June 2016. This information and most of what follows comes from Paul Chmura, Steve and Anna's son, now 91, who still lives in Kingston.
- 22 Reynolds, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776*, 222.
- 23 Ulster County Deeds, 625:322.
- 24 Ulster County Deeds, 626:248.
- 25 Paul Chmura, June 2016.
- 26 Ulster County Deeds, 722:91.
- 27 Ulster County Mortgages, 458:196.
- 28 Ulster County Mortgages, 464:51.
- 29 Ulster County Deeds, 733:568.
- 30 Thanks to Joseph Amendola for confirming the inheritance conveyance. For the Sweeney instrument, see Ulster County Deeds, 733:568.

## Vanished Vernacular II

# The Abraham DeGraaf House and the Beukendaal Massacre Town of Glennville, Schenectady County, New York

*By Walter Richard Wheeler*

### Introduction

The De Graaf house, a modest center-chimney bent-framed dwelling once located on present-day Sacandaga Road (Schenectady County Route 147), remains overshadowed by the history associated with it—the Beukendaal Massacre of 18 July 1748. This bit of local history has been the subject of legend as well as historical discourses and a book-length treatment. Despite this, information on the house itself survives only in disparate bits and pieces found in various uncollected accounts. The intention of this article is to present surviving accounts of the historical background of the site, collect all the available descriptive material relating to the house, and to supplement that information with data collected from contemporary houses in the region to provide as clear a sense as is presently possible of what the house once was.

### The Beukendaal Massacre

The best sources for the outline history of what happened on the property are a letter to Sir William Johnson and a recollection in a Schenectady newspaper, dating to the 1830s. The letter to Johnson was written by Albert van Slyck, is dated 20 July 1748, and is the only contemporary account of the massacre. Its spelling and punctuation have been retained:

On Monday the 18th Instant, Daniel Tol, Dirk Van Vorst, and a Negro, went out to Poependal, about three English Miles North of our Town, to fetch their Horses; but not finding them in the Pasture, they went into the Woods to a Place call'd the Clay-Pit, where they observ'd a Number of the Enemy; which made them hasten back; but the Enemy pursuing, fir'd, and kill'd Daniel Tol, and wounded Dirk in his Arm, and made him a Prisoner; but the Negro escaped by running away.

This firing was heard by some People at work at Maalwyck, about two English Miles Distance, who...immediately sent a Messenger to Town, to acquaint us with it.... Our People, with some of the new Levies posted here, under the Command of Lieutenant Dearing, of Connecticut,

to the Number of 70 Men, went out towards Poependal: They search'd the Fields and Pastures as far as the Lands of Simon Groot, but discover'd nothing of the Enemy: Mean while the Negro of Daniel Tol (who was fled) came and told me; that his Master and Dirk were kill'd, near the Clay-Pit. I furnish'd the Negro with a Horse immediately, and sent him to acquaint our People, where his Master lay dead; which he did, and found about 40 of our Men near Poependal, at Abraham De Graaff's House, who directly thereupon enter'd the Woods with the Negro, where they found the Body of his Master: They immediately then perceiv'd a great Number

of the Enemy, and gave them a Volley, with a Shout, at the same Time discharging about one half of their Musquets: Upon this the Enemy gave a Shout, and fir'd a Volley upon them: Two or three of our Men fled, but the Rest behaved courageously, and fought 'till 18 of them lay dead upon the Spot (notwithstanding they found they were surrounded by the Enemy on every Side, on the Space of about two Acres of Ground). Of the Inhabitants of Schenectady, 12 are killed, and 5 are missing; of the new Levies, 8 are dead, (among whom is Lieutenant Dearing) and 6 are missing, in all, 20 killed, and 11 missing; hope the later may have the good Fortune to be made Captives.

...Our People found one French Indian dead about 300 Yards from where the Fight happened: I suppose his Comrades cou'd not find him to carry him off. I don't doubt but the Enemy have a great many kill'd and wounded, as our Men understood firing, and made several Vollies. There is but about 9 or 10 Men return'd that were in the Height of the Engagement, and am even surpriz'd there are so many escap'd, insomuch as the Enemy's Number were superior to ours by six to one. When I with my Men came in Sight of Abraham De Graaf's House, we found the Enemy had surrounded it, in order to catch 9 of our Men that went out first, who had taken Refuge there; but they tood to their Heels as soon as they espy'd us. We went to the Field, where the dead Men lay, but as it was near Night, and having no Waggon

with us, we were oblig'd to leave 'em till next Day; when they were fetcht off.

As this melancholly Affair may be related diverse ways, I send you this Account to inform you of the Truth of it, as near as possible I can collect.<sup>1</sup>

An account by Giles F. Yates was published in 1836, and adds significant additional detail gathered from other witnesses.

In the beginning of the month of July, 1748, Mr. [Daniel Toll] and his favorite servant Ryckert, went in search of some stray horses at Beukendal, a locality about three miles from this city. They soon heard as they supposed the trampling of horses; but on a nearer approach, the sound they mistook for that made by horses hoofs on the clayey ground, proceeded from the quaits [sic – quoits – i.e. horseshoes] with which some Indians were playing.

Mr. Toll discovered his danger too late and fell pierced by the bullets of the French savages, for such they were. Ryckert more fortunate took to his heels and fled. He reached Schenectady in safety and told the dreadful news of the death of his master, and the presence of the enemy.

In less than an hour about sixty volunteers were on their march to Beukendal.... Those in advance of the main body, before they reached the enemy were attracted by a singular sight. They saw a man resembling Mr. Toll sitting near a fence in an adjoining field and a crow flying up and down before him. On coming nearer they discovered it to be the corpse of Mr. Toll with a crow attached to it by a string.

This proved to be a stratagem of the Indians to decoy their adversaries. The Schenectadians fell alas! too easily into the snare laid for them and were in a few moments surrounded by the Indians who had been lying in ambush. Thus taken by surprise they lost many of their number, and some were taken prisoners before they could make good their retreat.

They however succeeded in reaching the house of Mr. De Graaf in the neighborhood which had been for some time deserted.... On reaching Mr. De Graaf's house they entered, bolted the doors and ascended to the second floor. Here they tore off

all the boards near the eaves and thro the opening thus made fired with success at the savages and succeeded in keeping them at bay.... On the approach of the Schenectady militia under Col. Jacob Glen the party in Mr. De Graaf's house were relieved from their perilous situation and the enemy took up their line of march for Canada.

On this occasion there were thirty-two citizens killed....The bodies of De Graaf and Glen were found lying in a close contact with their savage antagonists with whom they had wrestled in deadly strife.

The corpses were brought to Schenectady the evening of the massacre and deposited in the large barn of Abraham Mabee, being the identical one now standing on the premises of Mrs. Benjamin, in Church street. The relatives of the deceased repaired thither to claim their departed kindred and remove them for interment.<sup>2</sup>

John Sanders, 19th century Schenectady historian, provides additional details, including an account of a barn raising which was happening that day.

...a body of inhabitants, mostly from the country, yet some from the city, upon invitation, as is usual upon such occasions, on the 18th day of July, 1748, attended the raising of the frame for a barn 50 by 60 feet, constructed of heavy, yellow pine timbers, still in excellent state of preservation [in 1879], as has been seen by myself within a few weeks past, at the time of raising being on the farm of Nicholas De Graff [sic], who lived in the old, red, frame dwelling-house yet standing adjacent to the Sacandaga turnpike, at a point called "Beukendal" (Beech Valley), now owned by and not far from the residence of Philip R. Toll, Esq., in Glenville, distant about three miles from Schenectady.

Those friends, to the number of forty, were engaged in their work, not suspecting the vicinity of an enemy (although Captain Daniel Toll and his hired man, Dirk Van Vorst, while hunting for strayed horses, had been barbarously [sic] murdered at a place called the "Klaykuil," not more than about one-half of a mile distant north from Beukendal, on the morning of the same day), when they were attracted by a noise resembling that of wild turkeys, a choice game then common in this section, a sound which the Indians could



Fig. 1 – Map showing location of the house and its relationship to areas of engagement. From George S. Roberts. Old Schenectady (1904).

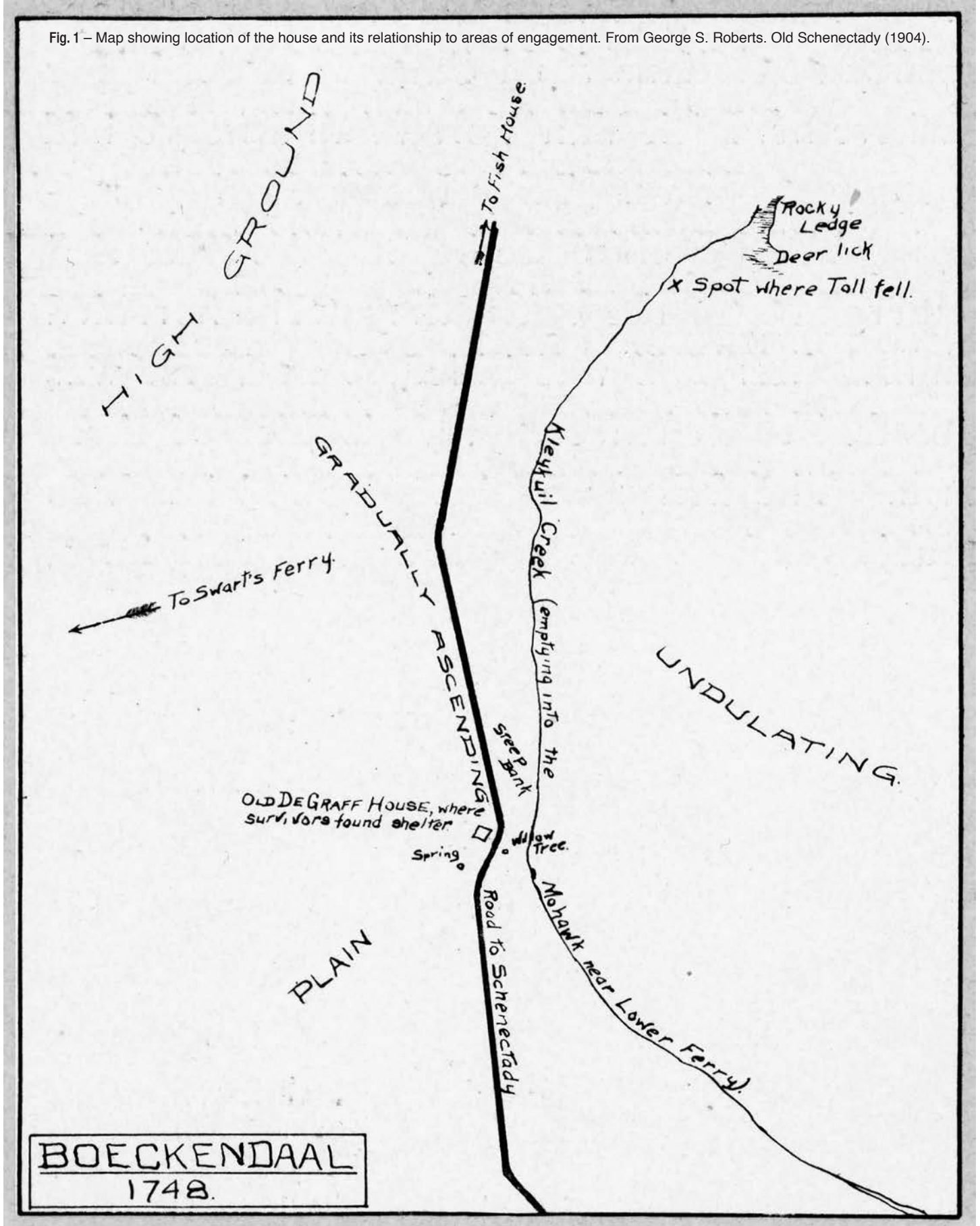




Fig. 2 – View of the house and outbuildings, ca. 1883, by Junius W. MacMurray (author's collection).

imitate almost naturally. Clearly deceived, most of them seized their guns, rushed up the valley from whence the sounds proceeded, and miserably fell into an ambush of more than 100 French and Indians.

Before those not massacred, numbering eleven, could reach the shelter of De Graff's dwelling, twenty-six were left dead and subsequently scalped at or near the place of ambush; among them Nicholas De Graff, the proprietor of the premises...The party in the dwelling-house under Simon Toll, a brother of Captain Daniel, made a gallant defense, and held out heroically until relieved by reinforcements...The enemy assaulted the De Graff dwelling from behind the brow of a hill adjacent, and were protected by it, and several times attempted to set the house on fire, without success, the defense was so determined."<sup>3</sup>

## The House and Outbuildings

Schenectady historian Joel Henry Monroe claimed the house to have been constructed in 1723.<sup>4</sup> The source of this date is not known, but it may be the year the property was transferred to Abraham DeGraaf. Son

of Claas Andreise De Graaf and Elisabeth Brouwer, Abraham was born on 14 November 1688. He married Rebecca Groot in 1725.<sup>5</sup> Thus a construction date sometime in the second half of the 1720s seems reasonable.

The site of the house, on the west side of the Sacan-  
Fig. 3 – View of the house, 1900, by John Arthur Maney, From W. Max Reid. *The Mohawk Valley: Its Legends and Its History* (1901).



daga Road, is indicated in a map by George S. Roberts (*Fig. 1*).<sup>6</sup> The earliest photograph of the house that has been located was published in 1883, and was taken by Junius W. MacMurray (*Fig. 2*).<sup>7</sup>

## The House

The house was described in 1901 as typical of “many unpainted weather-worn houses” in the rural areas surrounding Schenectady at that time. A photograph, by John Arthur Maney and taken in 1900, was published in the same source (*Fig. 3*).<sup>8</sup> In 1914 it was described as having “remained in possession of member of the [DeGraaf] family since” its construction, and was owned at that time by Dudley Todd Hill, a descendant of the original owner.<sup>9</sup>

Additional information on the house and its immediate context can be inferred from the accounts transcribed above and from photographs. The presence of a “Place call’d the Clay-Pit” or “Klaykuil” in the woods not far from the house was likely the source for material used to make the brick chimney seen in the photo-

graphs of the building, and possibly noggin as well. That it was located “in the woods” suggests that it wasn’t being actively used for some other purpose. The distance of the house from a population center – three miles – further suggests that it served only local needs for this material.

A view from 1904 is one of the last photographs known to have been taken of the building (*Fig. 4*). In it the leanto on the north side of the house can be seen to have partially collapsed. This portion of the house was removed sometime afterward, and does not appear in the last known view of the house (*Fig. 5*).

One interior view survives – evidently taken shortly before the building was razed (*Fig. 6*). It shows the bent frame of the house, looking north-northwest. The corbels, posts and anchorbeams connected by groups of three pins are visible. A single pin is visible on the right hand post just below the corbel – this suggests that the leanto may have been an original feature, as a post-beam connection at that height, anchoring a lower range of beams that would have

Fig. 4 – View of the house, 1904, by William A. Wick. From Roberts, *Old Schenectady* (1904).



*DeGraaf House, Beukendaal, where the Settlers took Refuge.*

spanned the width of the leanto and connected to a line of posts on the north wall of the leanto (already razed in this image), is a typical feature of houses within integrally-built leantos.

There is no indication of vertical trenching on the sides of the posts seen in this image; this feature is commonly found in framed houses of this period in this region, and would have provided a means to secure the ends of sticking used as a support for wall finish, either plaster or mud and grass with a white-wash finish. An alternate support common during this period was brick noggin. The lack of evidence for either of these supports in this image may be further indication that this range of posts were originally interior to the building. Although it is certainly possible that neither wall systems were used in the construction of this house, the fact that the eighteenth century defenders of the house went to the second floor where they “tore off all the boards near the eaves” suggests that the wall finishes of the first floor had a solid substrate, and – additionally – that they did not extend to the second floor. This was typical for the period, particularly if the second floor was used for storage. Many surviving examples of houses from the period are finished in this manner.

Two windows were located on the south elevation; an additional two windows were located at the first floor level on the east side of the house. The irregular spacing of the latter windows may be an indication of

one of these having originally been a door. At the time the earliest image we have was created, in 1883, the door was located in the east wall of the leanto, an uncommon location for an entry door in the 18th century.

The windows seen in each of the available photographs are 12 over 12 sash, suggesting some improvements were made to the house in the later eighteenth or early nineteenth century. This work also included residing of the house in narrow clapboards, and possibly the removal of the original nogging; one of the photographs of the house appears to show studding between the posts, necessary only if the nogging had been removed. It would be reasonable to expect that the interior – possibly including the chimney – was modernized at the same time, although the house, which was rented out by nineteenth century members of the family to tenants, does not appear to have been remodeled again after these changes were made.

The plan of the De Graaf house appears to have consisted of two large rooms, with a central chimney; the division of space in the leanto is unknown. Whether the house featured two back-to-back jambless fireplaces, or if only one room was heated or if a close (or five-plate) stove was used in the second room, is unknown. All three arrangements were used in the vicinity and period in which the house was constructed. While the use of stoves in the Hudson and Mohawk valleys in the 18th century is more frequently associated with Palatine or Huguenot settlers, examples such as the Daniel Pieter Winne house in Bethlehem, Albany County (dendrodated; probably built in the spring of 1751) demonstrate that others adopted this heating technique as well. The chimney extant at the time the earliest photograph was taken of the house, in 1883 or before, was narrow, suggesting a single flue.

A leanto extended across the north elevation of the house. The length of this leanto – that is, whether it extended the full length of the house or not – is not presently known. No photographs of the north and west elevations of the house are known. Judging from the photographs and the spacing of the windows, the house was probably eight bents long. If the frame of the east window on its south elevation was three feet wide (a common dimension), the length of the house would have been 23 feet, with its width, including leanto, approximately the same size.

Fig. 5 – View of the house, 1904-1915 (author’s collection).

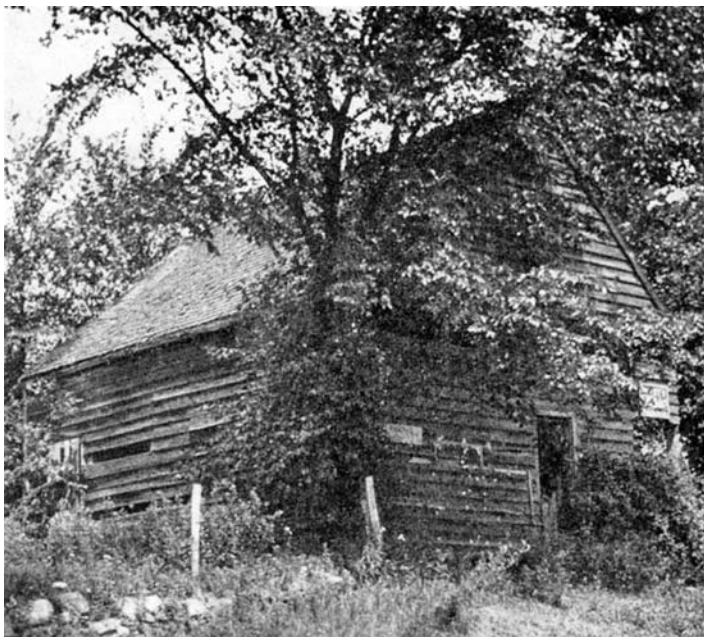




Fig. 6 – View from of the north range of anchor beam posts, corbels and anchor beams, ca. 1914. From Percy M. Van Epps, Contributions to the History of Glenville (1926).

The construction techniques used in the De Graaf house were similar to those found in the region's surviving wood-framed houses from the period ca.1715-1750, including the Abraham Glen house in nearby Scotia (ca.1730), the Sharpe house in DeFreestville (ca.1730), the Van Alen house in Kinderhook, Columbia County (1737), and the dendrodated Pieter Winne house in Bethlehem, Albany County (1723), Coeymans "north" house (ca.1720) in Coeymans, Albany County, and Yates house in Schenectady (ca.1726). Other examples include the Mammoth Spring house in North Greenbush, and the Goeway house in DeFreestville (destroyed by fire in 1977), both in Rensselaer County. All feature the use of curved braces (or corbels) to secure the anchorbeam-post connection.

The earliest surviving examples of corbeled frames typically made use of this structural feature on most if not all interior bents, excepting those which carried an interior partition, a stair or served as a location for a bed. Later examples – such as the Daniel Pieter Winne house in Bethlehem (1751), made use of two rather than three pins at the post to beam connection points. The Philip DeFreest house, in DeFreestville (undated, but possibly ca.1750s) is typical of later

examples which incorporate the use of corbels only in support of the hearth beam. The DeGraaf house appears to conform to the earlier mode in its use of corbels on all three of the interior bents seen in the photograph (Fig.6).

## Outbuildings

The De Graaf barn, mentioned in the first account above as being under construction in the summer of 1748 and extant in 1879, is no longer standing. From the brief description provided – its dimensions being 50 by 60 feet – it was likely a New World Dutch barn.

A small outbuilding – whether an outkitchen or a smoke house is not presently known – was located to the west-northwest of the house. It appears in the 1883 view of the property (Fig.2). It was a one-story structure with gable roof, the ridge of which was oriented east-west, like that of the house.

## Conclusion

The house was razed in 1915.<sup>10</sup> Larry Hart, Schenectady historian, attributed the destruction of the house to widening of the Sacandaga Road.<sup>11</sup> A picture of the former site of the house was published in 1931.<sup>12</sup>

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> "Extract of a Letter from a Gentlemen [sic] in Schenectady, to his Friend in New-York, dated July 20, 1748," *New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy*, 8 August 1748, 1.
- <sup>2</sup> Giles Fonda Yates. *Schenectady Democrat and Reflector*, 22 April 1836.
- <sup>3</sup> John Sanders. *Centennial Address Relating to the Early History of Schenectady, and Its First Settlers* (Albany: Van Benthuyssen Printing House, 1879), 225-227.
- <sup>4</sup> Joel Henry Monroe. *Schenectady Ancient and Modern* (N.p, 1914), opp. 112.
- <sup>5</sup> Jonathan Pearson, *Contributions for the Genealogies of the Descendants of the First Settlers of the Patent and City of Schenectady, from 1662 to 1800* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1873), 54-55.
- <sup>6</sup> George S. Roberts, *Old Schenectady* (Schenectady, NY: Robson & Adee, n.d. [1904]), 58.
- <sup>7</sup> Junius W. MacMurray, ed. (principal author Jonathan Pearson), *A History of the Schenectady Patent in the Dutch and English Times* (Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1883), opp. 298.
- <sup>8</sup> W. Max Reid. *The Mohawk Valley: Its Legends and Its History* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), 67 and 69.
- <sup>9</sup> Monroe, opp. 112.
- <sup>10</sup> Donald A. Keefer. "The Battle of the Beukendael" (Glenville, NY: The Town Board, 1948), n. p.
- <sup>11</sup> Larry Hart. *Tales of Old Schenectady, Volume 1: The Formative Years*. (Second edition, Scotia, NY: Old Dorp Books, 1975), 42.
- <sup>12</sup> Myron F. Westover, ed. *Schenectady Past and Present* (Strasburg, PA: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1931), 15.



ABOVE: Myron Teller 'restoration' of dining room at Appeldoorn Farm visited in 2012

BELOW: Stick lath in Vought Homestead, Clinton NJ, visited with DBPS in 2015

# AS SEEN...





**ABOVE:** Ballroom in tavern at Eastfield Village visited in 2011



**TOP RIGHT:** Interior in restored wing of Coeymans House visited in 2016



**RIGHT:** Interior of Crum Elbow Meetinghouse visited in 2011

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Wappingers Falls Post Office – now a police station – interior, 1939 (2014)

**BELOW:** Newel post in Orange County house visited in 2011



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### Upcoming Events

- March 18** Tour of Glebe House & Dutchess County Historical Society Archives, Clinton House, Poughkeepsie (Rob Sweeney)
- April 15** Tour of Hamlet of Wallkill, Ulster County
- May 20** Tour of Clermont barns with Dutch Barn Preservation Society
- June 17** Tour of Van Rensselaer house and mill, Claverack, Columbia county (Bill & Judy McMillen)
- July 8** Hurley Stone House Day & HVVA Annual Picnic (Jim Decker)

● All tours meet at 10 am with exception of March 18th tour which will convene at 10:30 am.