



HVVA Tour of New World Dutch Bent-Framed Houses in Berkshire County,
Massachusetts.
15 September 2012.

Today's houses all share a familiar framing strategy, applied to New England house forms.

First stop: The Hollenbeck house, Townhouse Hill and Creamery roads, Egremont.

This house was dendrodated by Bill Flynt of Historic Deerfield in 2009. His sampling revealed harvesting dates of 1808 and 1809 for the hemlock used in the frame of the earlier portion of the house, suggesting a construction date of c.1810. The single bay addition to the south was dendrodated to 1837. The house was constructed for the family of Michael Hollenbeck, who had formerly lived on the Livingston Manor lands. Its framing is modified New World Dutch; its plan is derived from lobby entry houses of New England.

The earliest known photograph of the house dates to the 1880s, and shows it much as it appears today (Photo 1).



Photo 1. Photo of the house taken in the 1880s, looking southeast. The 1837 single-bay addition is seen at center right, with its leanto.



Photo 2. Photo looking north-northeast from Creamery Road, taken in 1946. The wing seen on the back of the house no longer stands.



Photo 3. View looking southwest, May 2010 (all photos unless otherwise attributed are by W. Wheeler).

The house has been undergoing renovation by its current owners, Guy and Sharon Genin, since 2009.

Second Stop: The Wheeler house, 817 South Main Street, Great Barrington.

The summary paragraph from the National Register nomination written by our own Neil Larson, gives a good introduction to the history of the site:

The Wheeler Family Farmstead is located on the southern edge of the city of Great Barrington in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts. The once rural area, with East Mountain a prominent eastern backdrop, has developed into a busy commercial strip along U.S. Route 7, which follows the course Housatonic River through Connecticut and Massachusetts. With its headwaters in Berkshire County, the Housatonic is a major interstate watershed located midway between the Hudson and Connecticut rivers, supporting scores of agricultural and industrial centers along its route to Long Island Sound. At its peak, the Wheeler Family Farm contained 130 acres extending west from the nearby Housatonic River and west across the Rt. 7, then known as the Sheffield Road. Now without its farm setting and separated from the river, the nominated property contains 1.5 acres with the historic house and farm buildings that have accumulated there since 1764 or earlier. Five generations of the Wheeler family occupied the farm and each has left its imprint on it. The family's progenitor, Truman Wheeler (1741-1815) began assembling land for the farm in 1768, and in 1771 he purchased the house in which he apparently had already been living and operating a store since his arrival in Great Barrington from Woodbury, Connecticut. The house is distinctive for its combination of both Dutch and English framing methods, a regional feature resulting from the interplay of cultures along the New York-Massachusetts border, which was in dispute during most of the 18th century. Later alterations to the house reflect the changing composition of households and local taste over the ensuing 200 years. Two 18th-century farm buildings survive, a wagon house attached to the house and a workshop that may have originated as a barn. Other buildings illustrate the periodic improvement of farm practice, such as a late 19th-century hay barn, and early 20th-century cow house and silo.

The Wheeler family retained ownership of the house until 2007, when it was purchased by the Great Barrington Historical Society.

The house has a number of unusual and interesting features and components. Among these is the single-room bent-framed dwelling that was later encapsulated in the expanded house. Interestingly, there never seems to have been an attempt to cover the exposed posts of the frame. This contrasts with the highly-finished south parlor, which features a fine paneled wall and wainscot (Photo 6). A large structure—the original use of which remains unclear—was attached to the back of the kitchen wing. It's framing—currently being restored by Jack Sobon—is something you'll want to see.



Photo 4. The house as it appeared in May 2010, looking northeast.



Photo 5. An historic aerial view of the Wheeler farmstead. Many of the associated outbuildings and barns remain on the property. (Collection Great Barrington Historical Society)



Photo 6. Paneled wall and wainscot in the south parlor, looking north-northeast, 2010.

Third stop: The Daniel Hand (aka Andrews) house, 1431 Dublin Road, Richmond.

The following description is modified from the National Register nomination form for the property, which was written by Anthony J. Ardito in 1995. It has been changed slightly to reflect the results of the dendro-sampling undertaken at the site by Bill Flynt.

The property was originally part of the 1000 acre Joseph Dwight Grant of 1762. The grant was subsequently subdivided into homestead lots and sold as 50 and 100 acre parcels. Some of the parcels were further subdivided into homestead lots of varying acreage. The boundary covered by the National Register nomination follows the lines of the original ten acre homestead lot owned by Daniel Hand, a weaver originally from New Lebanon, New York. Hand built the house that is now called Shaker Farm ca. 1785. The original homestead lot was still intact when the property was purchased by Edward Deming and Faith Andrews in 1937.

An examination of the roof's structural system revealed that the northern portion of the roof appears to have originally had a greater slope, but since that time it has been raised. An interior brick chimney pierces the roof ridge at its center. The chimney is not original, dating from the 1938-39 renovation of the house.

The 1938-39 renovations consisted of repairing the roof and chimney, replacing the clapboard siding, plastering the walls, removing the lathe and plaster ceiling, which exposed some intact heavy wooden beams, replacement of doors, and windows, replacing rotted flooring and beams, painting, and installing Shaker cupboards and doors. The primary goal of the renovation was to recreate the Shaker ideals of an atmosphere of harmony, peace, tranquility and simplicity within the home. The renovation followed the Andrews' interpretation of the Shaker esthetics and simplicity of being, as well as elements from the then-popular Colonial Revival style. Indoor plumbing and central heating were never installed at Shaker Farm, further illustrating the intact nature of the house.

Further renovation was completed in 1970, when Faith Andrews had the roof reshingled using the same type of wooden shingles that had previously been used to cover it. In 1989, about twenty percent of the clapboard siding on the west elevation was replaced, and the house was repainted. In addition, the stone foundation was taken down and rebuilt, a drainage system was installed around the house, and a wooden knee brace was installed in the second-floor to support a portion of the roof during this same period. Clapboards, gutters and some trim date from both periods of renovation. The house has some earlier fenestration, and trim, including the west rakes and two casement windows.

During a recent visit to the house it became apparent that the original plan likely incorporated a lobby entry and a central chimney. In addition, the house was clearly built in at least two (and likely more) major campaigns, with the older portion of the dwelling taking in the entry and west end of the house. While appearing straightforward at first, the evolution of this house eludes easy interpretation.



Photo 7. View of the house in 1937, looking northeast, before renovations (from the National Register nomination).



Photo 8. Interior view from *The Golden Treasury of Early American Houses* by Richard Pratt, showing the appearance of the main room of the house as occupied by the Andrews' in the 1960s.

Ted Andrews, the current owner and grandson of Faith and Edward Deming Andrews, has been renovating the house, most recently improving its structural integrity with additional framing designed by Jack Sobon. He has removed the Beaverboard interiors installed on the second floor by his grandparents, and has begun refinishing the spaces on that floor with more modern finishes.

Dendro sampling of the structural members in the house by Bill Flynt in 2011 has not been entirely conclusive, insofar as generating a construction date is concerned. Various years ranging from the early 1770s into the 1780s are indicated as cutting dates.



Photo 9. Looking northwest, July 2012.



Photo 10. View looking west, in the leanto, second floor, July 2012.

The dendro reports for the Hollenbeck house and for the Hand house have been posted to the HVVA website, along with the other dendro reports posted on the Research & Resources page.

W. R. Wheeler
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