

SCHODACK LANDING FROM BEERS ATLAS OF RENSSELAER COUNTY (1876)

## HVVA Tour of Schodack Landing

11 October 2014

Today's tour offers a rare peek at five adjacent properties within the village of Schodack Landing, and within the Schodack Landing Historic District. Included are four 18<sup>th</sup> century houses and the village cemetery.

Figure 1. Detail from Beers Atlas of Rensselaer County (1876), showing Schodack Landing. North is at the top of this view.

### Background

A good background is provided in the history of the town published on the occasion of its bicentennial in 1995, and edited by Carol Walther:

According to available documents, European settlement in Schodack Landing occurred shortly after 1663 when farming began on Schodack Island and Lower Schodack Island, called "Moesimus Island" at the time.

A deed of 1663 records that, "An Indian, Wattawit, with his mother named Pepewits, sold to Volckert Jansen (Douw) and Jan Tomassen, 2d, their certain land lying on the Goojers kill on Apjen's island, or by the Indians called Schodack..." Aepjen, also known as Skiwias, was the chief sachem of the Mohicans.

An early map indicates a small community on the mainland, identified as "Scotac," with a dock for

sloops. By 1730, farms were leased by related families with the names of Barheyt, Van Alstyne, Van Valkenburgh, Jansen, and Schermerhorn. In 1734, the Barheyt property was divided for another related family, the Van Burens.

Although farming was the original intent of early settlers, this income was soon supplemented by the transshipment of goods both to and from interior areas and engaging in trades such as tanning and shoemaking. Cut lumber was a major commodity.

The community was large enough to establish its own Reformed Dutch Church in the mid-1750s. An account book from the store run by John E. Van Alen in the 1770s, includes transactions with customers from as far away as Kinderhook Lake and East Nassau, as well as local families.

Schodack Landing in 1880, according to Sylvester [who published a history of the County in 1880], “contains a Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, two hotels, a number of stores, and about 400 inhabitants.”

The village was also site of a station for the Hudson River Railroad, which opened in 1851. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century history of the village is recorded in the National Register nomination form for the District:

A new burst of prosperity occurred in the late 1800’s when the sale of river ice to the crowded cities, particularly New York City, became important along the reaches of the Hudson below Troy and Albany. Large ice houses were built at Rensselaer, Staats Island, Castleton and Schodack Landing, as well as farther south. When need for ice dwindled, Schodack Landing became primarily residential. Practically no new building occurred during the twentieth century.

The decline of the river ice business was brought on by the availability of electric refrigeration, and the dredging of the Hudson River for the creation of the Port of Albany in the late 1920s. Much of the spoils from the dredging was placed on Schodack and adjacent islands, changing the shape and extent of those land forms, and Schodack Landing’s relationship to the river.



Figure 2. General view east, showing the sites on today’s tour.



## 680 River Road—The Anthony Ten Eyck House

The Anthony (or Jacob C., if constructed for his father) Ten Eyck house was constructed c.1770. Anthony Ten Eyck was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1787-88. He served as a Rensselaer County Judge soon after the creation of the County in 1791, and as State Senator in 1797. The 1790 census lists two white males 16 and older, three white males under 16, four females and five slaves as occupants of the property at that time.

The house has a center-passage plan, with a large open stair in its wide hall. Small chambers are located in the east side of the house, behind the parlors. The second floor is divided into bedrooms, one of which, the southwest, contains a small fireplace. Some of the finishes on this floor appear to date to the very late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The house was renovated in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and received additional smaller alterations (chiefly woodwork) in the 1840s. A leanto was constructed against the north end of the east wall of the house at an early date; it was extended the full width of the dwelling sometime shortly after 1876 (it is shown to extend only along the north half of the house on the map of that date). One source, Alberta C. Conlin who owned the house in 1973, believed the work to have occurred in 1913, and that it replaced the “original kitchen wing”. The relatively modest finishes used in this leanto addition (pressed tin on wood framing), contrast with the brick and more elaborate bay window seen on the Jacob C. Schermerhorn house at 732 River Road. It is clear that the leanto on this house was modeled after the one constructed on that dwelling. An early window frame survives in the east wall in the leanto, and looking above the ceiling adjacent to it one can see an early treatment of the original exterior.

Other things to look for: A moulded watertable extends around the base of the principal elevations of the house. An early shutter is preserved in the basement, nailed to the underside of the first floor. The south room in the basement appears to have originally served as the kitchen for the house. Be sure to check out the 4-hole privy to the northeast of the house!



*Figure 3. 680 River Road, looking east-southeast, 2014.*



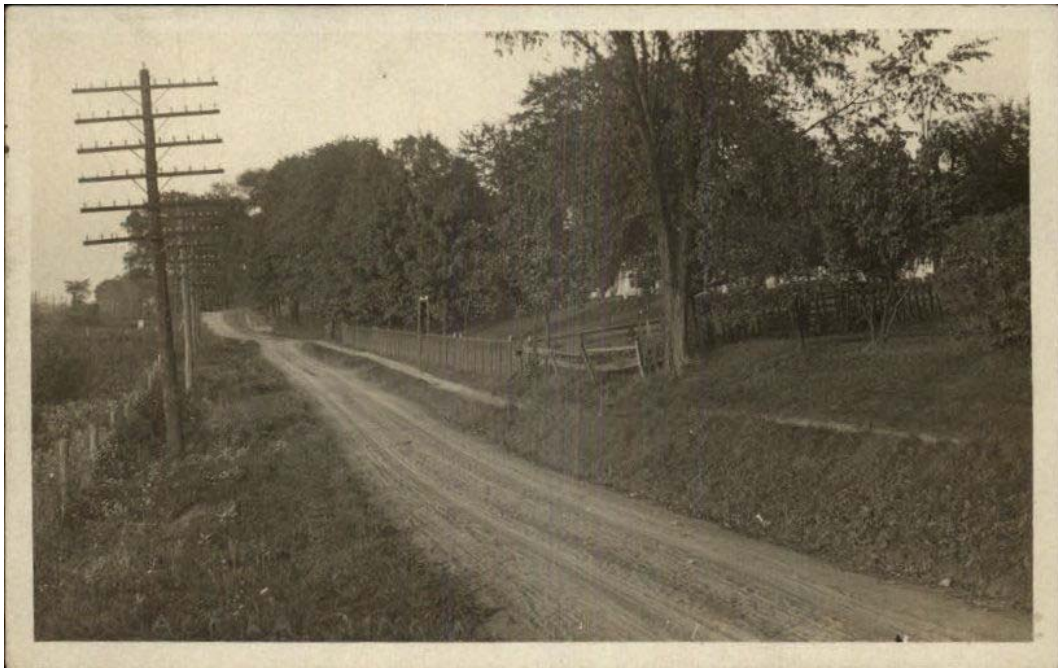
*Figure 4. 680 River Road, looking north-northwest, 2014.*

An inventory form completed in 1973 notes that “the top of [the] gambrel roof [was] raised slightly inside, probably to improve drainage.” This is not immediately evident on the exterior; we’ll check this out during our visit.

The current owner, Pat Adams, has occupied the house since 1975.

## **Ten Eyck Family Burial Ground/ Schodack Landing Cemetery**

This cemetery began as a burial ground for the Ten Eyck family. Some of the earliest burials date to the 1780s and 1790s, and are for members of the Egberts family. The Schodack Landing Cemetery was established here in 1840 and was formerly organized in 1866.



*Figure 5. View north from in front of 680 River Road, looking toward the cemetery, 1910.*



## 706 River Road—The Daniel C. Schermerhorn house

Thought to have initially been constructed c.1780 for the Daniel Schermerhorn family, the oldest portion of this house now forms a wing to a larger center-passage dwelling constructed c.1800. The two were altered by the addition of a porch and arched windows c.1880. A New World Dutch barn, early corn crib and a shop believed to date to 1848 are associated with the house.

Schermerhorn appears to have sublet the property from Andries Ten Eyck in November 1775, and entered into a lease for the same property with Stephen van Rensselaer in 1792. Lou and Pat Rubenstein have owned this property since purchasing it from the last member of the original family in 1974.



*Figure 6. 706 River Road, looking southeast, 2014.*



*Figure 7. The New World Dutch barn, looking east-northeast, 2014.*

## 712 River Road—The Martin Egbertse house

The oldest portions of this house are believed to have been constructed c.1790 for Egbertse, a tanner who was arrested in 1781 as a British conspirator but later released. The central passage may be the result of later alterations; note the irregular arrangement of the second floor beams. The leanto is an early addition. The basement contains some early cabinetry.



*Figure 8. 712 River road, looking northeast, 2014.*

## 732 River Road—Jacob C. Schermerhorn- Peter Gansevoort Ten Eyck house

This house is believed to have been constructed for Jacob C. Schermerhorn (1743-1822), and was, beginning in 1840, occupied by Peter G. Ten Eyck and his descendants. The house may have been constructed c.1770, like the gambrel-roofed dwelling at 680, built for Anthony Ten Eyck, or may have been constructed at an earlier date. A dwelling house occupied by Schermerhorn is depicted on this site on the 1767 Bleeker map of Rensselaerwyck. Jacob C. and Daniel C. (at 706 River Road, in a much more modest house) were brothers.

According to the 1790 census, the property was occupied by four males over 16, two males under 16, seven females and 11 slaves at that time. Schermerhorn served in the army during the Revolution and afterward became Lieutenant Commandant of the Regular Militia of Albany. He served as a member of the State Assembly in 1795.

The house was altered in the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the addition of a porch, dormer, changes to its roof and entry, and extension of its leanto, all of which occurred before 1876. Marble mantles were installed in the parlors at that time as well.



While we are not able to get inside this house today, we have been invited by the owners to look around the property, and to examine the exterior of the house at close range.

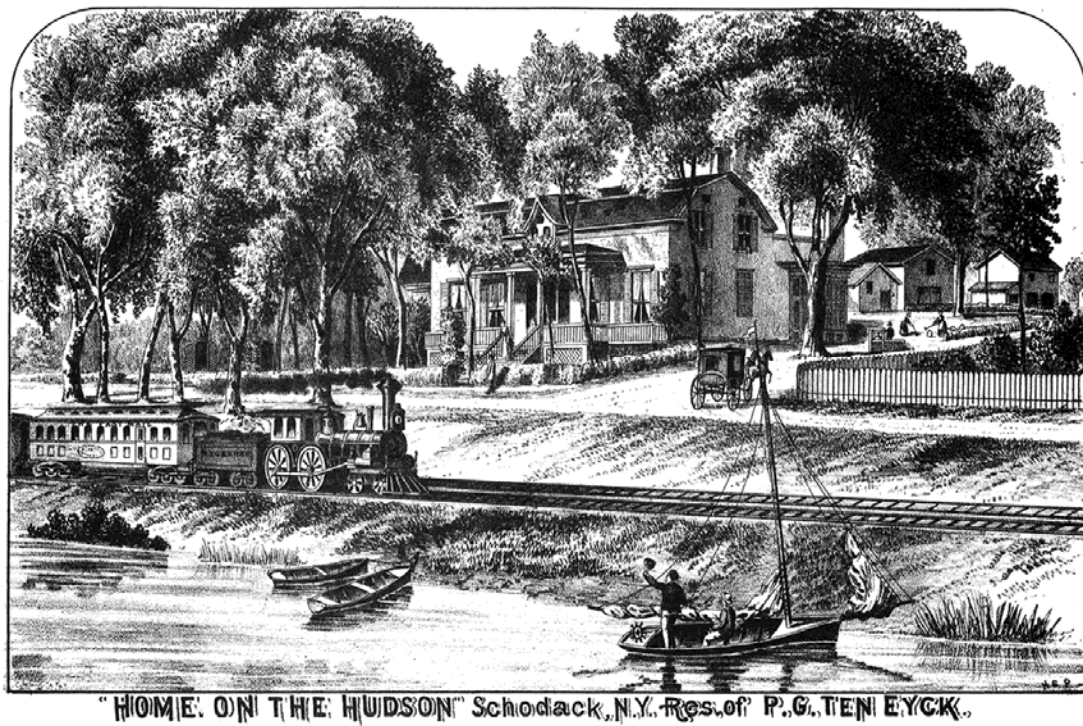


Figure 9. The Jacob C. Schermerhorn house, later the Ten Eyck house, 1876.



Figure 10. 732 River Road, looking east-northeast, 2014.



Figure 11.  
Dwight and Vira  
Miller in front of  
their house, 732  
River Road, in  
1910.

Figure 11 shows the southeast corner of the house in 1910, before the brick endwall was modified to its present condition. Similar to 680, this house had a bay window and squared wall added to the south end of its leanto, which was expanded to this form by 1876.

## Sources

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Walter R. Wheeler

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