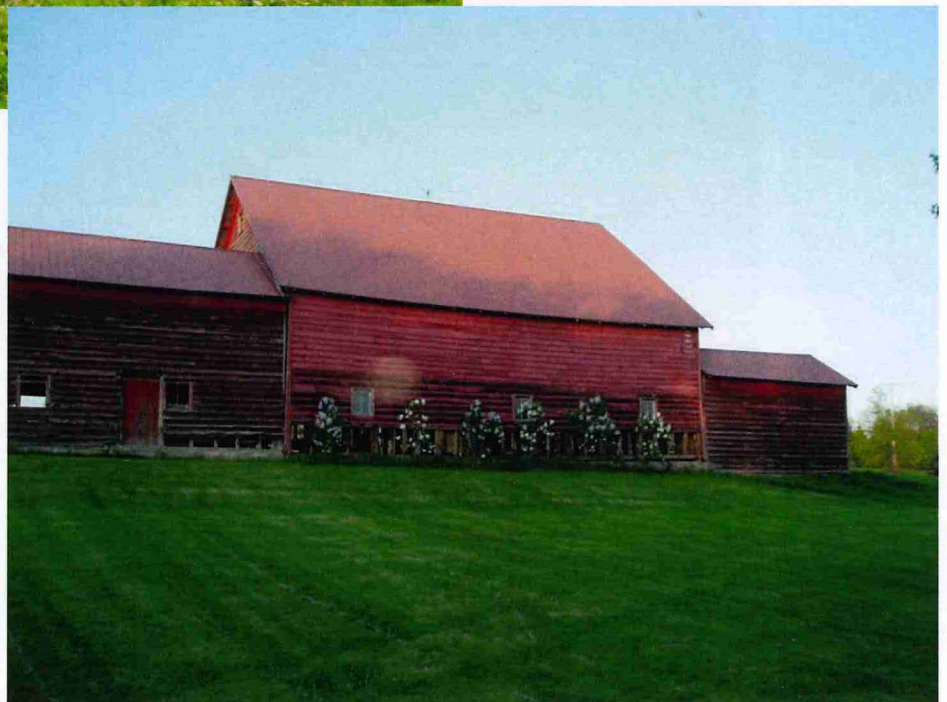


**Town of Guilderland, Albany County**

**Hudson Mohawk Vernacular Architecture Tour**

**September 16, 2023**

**Abram Hallenbeck Barn, Hawes Road, Altamont, NY**

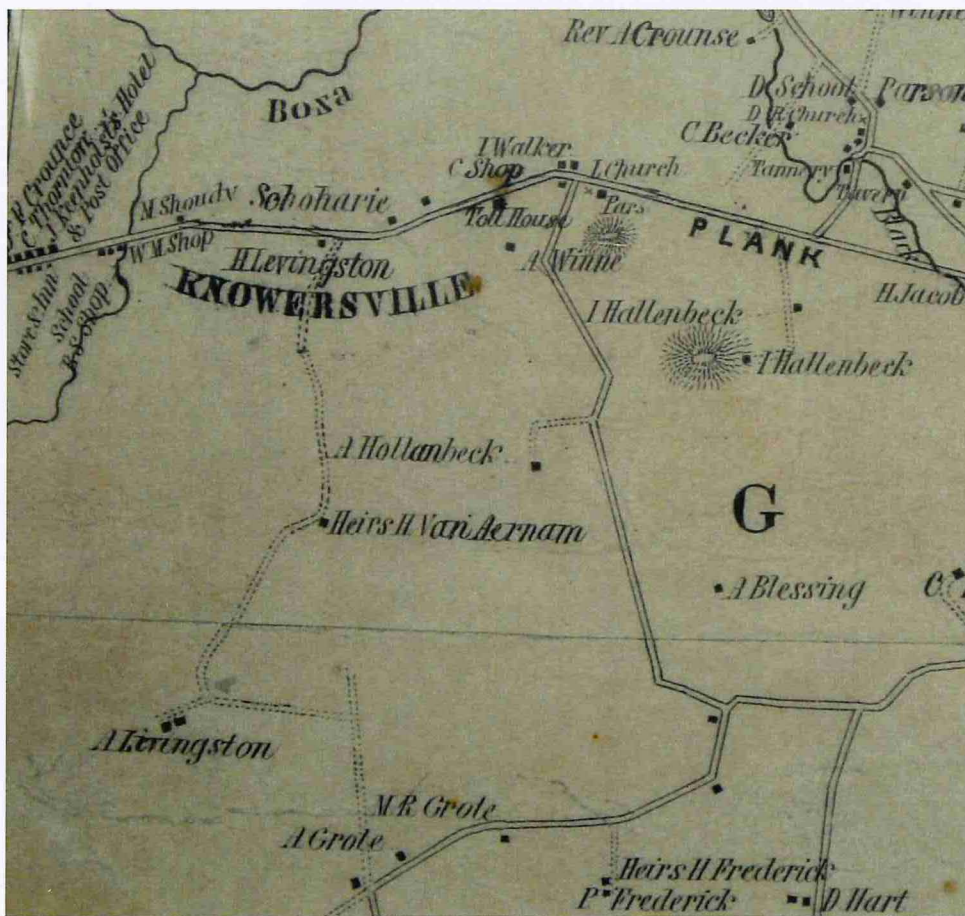


In October 2019, representatives of the Cornell Tree-Ring Lab collected samples from the barn for a dendrochronology study. The study concluded that all of the major timbers and most of the smaller posts that were sampled were felled between fall 1807 and spring 1808. This is consistent with the barn being a square rule barn and other features of its construction. However, two posts on the southern gable-end wall indicate a felling date of 1771 – 1775, so these posts may have been reused for an earlier structure.

The deed to the property states that the property was known as “formerly the Abram Hallenbeck farm” and was adjacent to lands formerly of Anthony Winne. The deed also refers to a beach (sic) tree and original corner marker B.W. 1788. Arthur Greg in *Old Hellebergh* (1975) states that one of the un-named homes (No. 82) on the Bleeker Map of the Manor of Rensselaerwick (1767), which is across Hawes Road and east of the Abram Hallenbeck farm, was the home of Isaac Hallenbeck, Abram’s father.

Abram (or Abraham) H. Hallenbeck was born in 1808 and died in 1868. He was one of six children of Isaac and Magdalene Hallenbeck. Given the dendrochronology of the barn, it appears that it was constructed by Abram’s father. Issac Hallenbeck received an indenture for the 138 and ½ acres of the Abram Hallenbeck farm from Steven Van Rensselaer on February 12, 1813. On August 13, 1841, Abram leased the farm from his father and paid Steven Van Rensselaer \$291.66.

The 1851 map below shows that the original entrance to the farm was along the northern property boundary, farther north on Hawes Road than the current driveway.



Map of Albany and Troy Vicinity, J.C. Sidney, 1851

In the New York State 1850 Agricultural Census, Abram Hallenbeck's farm was listed as having 108 improved acres and 30 unimproved acres. The value of the farm was \$8,000, plus \$300 of equipment, and \$500 of livestock. He had four horses, eight milk cows, two working oxen, 12 other cattle, 19 sheep, and 13 swine. His largest field crop was oats (500 bushels), although he also grew rye (200 bushels) and "Indian corn" (200 bushels).

Abram was married to Jane Shaver (1811 to 1889). They had 11 children, with several dying in infancy or childhood. The 1860 U.S. Census lists his occupation as "farmer" with the value of his personal effects as \$230. The 1860 census also notes that he was blind. The 1866 Beers Map for the Town of Guilderland shows J. Livingston at the original farmstead and A. Hallenbeck on a subdivided portion of the original 138 acres south of the original farmstead. This is where he died in 1868, the house still stands several parcels to the south.

A notice of a Constable's sale in the Altamont (fka Knowersville) Enterprise shows that James Livingston owned the farm as late as 1885. After this the farm was owned by Robert S. (1835-1915) and Elizabeth Kirkpatrick (1847-1934) until November 1924. The farm was then sold to Joseph and Lillie Scandurra from Long Island who farmed the land until June 1939. Joseph and Eileen Rapant and their heirs owned the property until 2003 when it was purchased by the current owners.

With the help of a New York State Barn Preservation grant the barn has been restored. New sills have been installed along most of its perimeter. The north gable end wall and eastern sill post have been extensively repaired. A newer wagon door on the east wall has been closed in and the interior framing replaced.

## **The Barn**

The barn is oriented NNW-SSE. It is located approximately 225 feet to the southeast of the associated farm house.

The Abram Hallenbeck barn is a four-bay square rule New World Dutch Barn that is approximately 45' 6" x 50'. The side walls (verplank) of the barn are 16' 10". The width of the center aisle is approximately 23' 8". The barn is 34' 9" tall.

The eastern side aisle is lower than the western. The interior face of the outer wall posts and underside of some of the remaining original girts on the eastern side aisle contain mortises, possibly due to the former presence of wooden stanchions. The anchor beam posts on the western side aisle have grooves on their southern and northern faces, at a height of approximately 27" above the threshing floor indicating the former presence of a hay manger on this side. These grooves are not present in the southeast corner where a granary was likely originally present.

It appears as if a granary was originally in the southwest corner as two mortises are present in the post sill and two corresponding mortises are present in the underside of the first interior girt. When the barn was renovated, this was the only area with tongue and groove boards had been used as flooring above the side aisle. Rodent holes in these boards which would have been the ceiling of the granary were covered with sheet metal patches.

The anchor beams are oak and have rounded tenons that extend approximately 11.5" beyond the anchor beam posts. The anchor beams are approximately 10" x 20". The edges of the tenons are slightly chamfered. The anchor beams are secured with two pins and two wedges. The bottoms of the anchor beams are 10' 7" above the threshing floor. The distance from the top of the anchor beams to the purlin is 10' 8". The purlin plate sway braces are relatively short, meeting the post about 4' 9" below the purlin. The anchor beam posts are approximately 9.5 x 11". The anchor beam braces are narrower and measure approximately 6 x 8". Remnant Guinea Fowl nest boxes are present where some of the braces join the posts.

Raising holes, approximately 2" in diameter, are present just above where the purlin plate sway braces join the anchor beam posts.

Three mortises are present on the north gable end of the barn for a pentice roof. Four mortises are present on the south gable end for a pentice roof.

A built-in ladder is present on the eastern side of the barn to provide access to hay stored in the maw. The ladder incorporates the anchor beam post as one of its sides. Schafer (Dutch Barns of New York, 1994) notes that this was a common feature in New World Dutch Barns in the Town of Guilderland.

Sometime in the late 1800s, sheds were added to the south and north ends of the barn. The southern shed is smaller (approximately 24 x 14.5'). Of interest is the reuse of the butt ends of four hay barrack posts as collar ties in this shed. When the barn was used for dairy cattle, their entrance was via a ramp in this shed and through an opening in the southwestern corner of the barn. The western side aisle was covered in concrete and stanchions were present. Some stanchions remain.

The northern shed was a larger three-bay carriage shed (approximately 24.5 x 42') with a loft for hay storage. This shed was built in part with reused barn timbers. This shed was built before 1882 as evidenced by the inscription by F.L. Hilton, dated November 14, 1882, which refers to "Knowersville", the Village of Altamont's moniker at that time. This shed was connected to the northern end of the barn and the original gable-end doors were removed. These doors had wooden hinges and pintles let into the door posts consistent with the remaining southern gable-end doors.

As part of the barn restoration, the southern section of this shed was removed to allow for the re-creation of the gable-end door. A large door, with forged metal hinges, which appears to be too large to be a missing gable-end door was used as flooring in the hay loft in this shed. Carved in this door are the initials "AHB", presumably standing for Abram Hallenbeck.



The barn was re-sided sometime before 1912, based on dates written on the new siding. Several pieces of the wide original siding remained on the north gable end wall where it has been protected by the northern shed addition added in the late 1800s. When the barn was resided wagon doors were created in the center of the eastern side wall. At the same time the southern gable-end doors were covered with siding. This protected these doors which remain on their full-door width oak hinges, attached with wooden pintles set in vertical grooves in the interior face of the door posts. The pintles had been repaired with numerous wrought nails. Because of this, some repairs have been necessary for the pintles. The doors open inward and measure approximately 11' 3" x 5'. (This contrasts with the forementioned "AHB" door that is 11' 8" x 5' 7"). The eastern door is divided and four boards wide.

On the exterior of the western full-height door, the initials "AH" are carved, presumably Abram Hollenbeck. On the exterior of the eastern door, the initials "SL" are carved in two places. This is believed to stand for Sanford Livingston who was the son of James Livingston who owned the farm in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sanford Livingston also marked his name on the face of an anchor beam with a date of January 7, 1876. Sanford Livingston went on to become an engineer for the New York Central Railroad and died in an accident at the West Albany Yard in 1912 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery within a half mile of the farm.



Vintage Aerial August 1, 1964