



Hudson-Mohawk Vernacular Architecture

Oct – Dec 2022

Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 4

Lost Landmarks

A recent rural historic district project in the Webutuck Valley in far eastern Amenia, Dutchess County, has drawn attention to this lost architectural relic. Built in 1761 for Hendrick Winegar, it was constructed in the Dutch stone house manner with massive beams spanning from front-to-back, it was abandoned and derelict when listed on the National Register in 1975. A group of Winegar descendants and other locals had hoped to save it. The house was demolished after its roof collapsed in 1996.



Garrit & Anna Catherine Winegar House, 1761, not extant. From National Register Nomination Form, 1975.

Hendrick Winegar (1723-1797) was born in the Oblong shortly after his parents Gerhard (Garrit) Johannes Winegar and Anna Catherine Schneider moved into the contested lands along the Connecticut border with a group of other Palatine families from East Camp (Germantown) on Livingston Manor. Garrit Winegar (abt. 1702-1755) grew up in East Camp after arriving there with his parents Ulrich and Susanna. He obtained a deed from the Native tribe in 1724 and secured title to his homestead from Hawley & Co., proprietor of the Oblong Patent, which was created from the "equivalent lands" Connecticut ceded to New York in the colonial boundary agreement in 1731.

In 1739 Winegar purchased 300-400 acres across the border in Connecticut from Daniel Jackson of Sharon. The land included a mill site on a small tributary of the Webutuck where Winegar erected the first grist mill in the area. The mill and the houses in which Gerrit and Anna Catherine Winegar lived and raised fourteen children no longer exist, nor do any of those associated with other Palatine settlers in the Oblong.

Peering Closely at the Early Buildings of Lansingburgh



Fig.1: Abram Van Vleck House, ca. 1775, 524-526 First Ave. This two-story, five-bay center-hall brick house with a gambrel roof was built for Abram Van Vleck, a merchant. From 1824 until his death from cholera in 1832, this house was the home of Horatio Gates Spafford, a native of Bennington, VT, who wrote the widely-read *Gazetteer of New York State*, published in 1813 and updated in 1824. All images by Marissa Marvelli, 2022, unless otherwise noted.

Lansingburgh, or the Burg as it is more affectionately known, has a remarkable concentration of late 18th- and early 19th-century Federal-period buildings for an urban area. The Burg is the northernmost neighborhood of the panhandle-shaped city of Troy. Its survival is largely due to long-term economic stagnation that set in during the Great Depression. It also helped that it was bypassed by

urban renewal programs of the day. However, its provenance is not readily apparent at first glance. The trained eye must see past layers of 20th-century imitation cladding, late 19th century Queen Anne-ifications and earlier pretentious Italianate expansions. With enough study and squinting, one can still glimpse the early shape and feel this speculatively gridded market town.

An English-Dutch Hybrid

The earliest surviving houses in the Burg date to the early and mid-1770s, following the settlement's conception by Albanian Abraham Jacob Lansing (1720-1791). A notable feature common to them is the gambrel roof, which, according to an excellent 2004 article on the subject by HMVA trustee Walter Wheeler, is an English form introduced in the Colonies in the early 18th century, most commonly in New England.¹ Lansingburghers, like other upper Hudson Valley residents, a population of mostly New York Dutch and New Englanders, married the English gambrel roof with the Dutch tradition of H-bent construction, a post-and-beam structural system encased in brick or clapboard-sheathed walls. Wheeler identifies at least twelve surviving Burg houses with such forms. Three notable brick examples are located on or near the Hudson River, all having five-bay facades, center-hall layouts. And

end chimneys. Two of them are two stories in height and the other is a story-and-a-half (Figs.1 & 2). They were built early landowners who were merchants. Incredibly, two clapboard-sheathed examples have also survived into the 21st century. Unlike their brick-faced counterparts, these two examples have three-bay fronts and side-hall plans (Figs.3 & 4). The facades of both were later updated in the Queen Anne style. The one at 499 Sixth Avenue was built for James Boggs Jr. near what was then the sparsely developed eastern edge of the village. (Boggs's occupation remains a mystery.) Its estimated 1790 construction date makes it a late gambrel roof according to Wheeler, the form having fallen out of popularity after the Revolution.

The surviving gambrel roof on the above-cited examples is a telltale sign of their earlier construction. However, for a number of other buildings in the Burg, the



Fig 2: Unknown merchant's house, ca. 1775, 580 First Ave. This is the only story-and-a-half brick house with a gambrel roof found (so far) in Lansingburgh.



Fig.3: Fitch Skinner House, ca. 1800, 513 ½ Second Ave. This house is an example of a wood clapboard sheathed Dutch gambrel-roof hybrid. It was the home and workshop of Fitch Skinner (1777-1844), a well-respected master cabinetmaker from East Windsor, CT, in the early part of the nineteenth century.



Fig.4: James Boggs Jr. House, ca. 1790, 499 Sixth Ave. The facade of this early wood clapboard house was later updated to reflect contemporary architectural trends, as is the case with most of the early examples in the district.

modification or complete removal of the gambrel roof makes it more difficult to date them from exterior observation alone. A prime example is the pair of attached two-story townhouses on Second Avenue, the Burg's historic commercial artery (Fig.5). At first glance they appear to have been built in the 1870s, judging from their mansard roofs and ornate facade details. In actuality, they were built ca. 1790 as a single five-bay-wide center-hall residence with a gambrel roof for physician Michael Henry and his wife Abigail. They sold the house in 1815 to Elisha Alvord, a merchant married to Helen Lansing, a granddaughter of the village founder.² The Alvords had the house "thoroughly renovated" and converted a store in the south part of the ground floor into a parlor.³ In 1850 another physician, Casper W. Burton of Albany, purchased the property to serve as his private residence while maintaining an office on the ground floor. Then, in 1879 the house was partitioned and the north end, No. 553, sold to David Burton, also a physician (of no apparent relation to the previous Burtons). He expanded it with an additional bay and put on the mansard as a fashionable solution for extending the old gambrel roof over the new bay.⁴ The original brick end wall is visible as a gambrel-shaped shadow in aerial views of the house. Its neighbor at No. 551 got a matching mansard roof around 1900.

The Burg As a Regional Market Center

Abraham Jacob Lansing shrewdly saw the potential of a regional market center for agricultural products from the upper Hudson and Mohawk river valleys, capturing this trade before it reached Albany. To realize his vision, he engaged Joseph Blanchard (1729-?), a surveyor from Dunstable, Massachusetts, to plat a 60-acre section of his Stone Arabia patent (as the area was known before 1770) for the purpose of establishing a village. Blanchard platted an orthogonal grid of streets and alleys with a central public square. The plan borrows the signature elements of the earlier and much larger gridded plans for Philadelphia, laid out in 1682 by Thomas Holme for William Penn, and Savannah, surveyed by James Oglethorpe in 1733.

Lansing's vision was realized in his lifetime. He capitalized on the western migration of restless Yankees seeking better land, lower taxes, and escape from oppressive Puritanism. Their numbers increased dramatically in the years following the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783. Many of these new settlers sought economic opportunity as members of the growing mercantile class of New York. By 1790, enough of them had settled in the village to make it advantageous to incorporate, at which time it was officially christened "Lansingburgh" in honor of its founder. One visitor to the village around this time described it



Fig.5: Henry-Alvord-Burton Houses, ca. 1790 & ca. 1879, 551-553 Second Ave. These two townhouse-like residences disguise an older five-bay, center-hall residence built ca. 1790 with a gambrel roof that was later modified into a mansard to accommodate the addition of a sixth bay. Photo by SHPO staff, 2022.

as “thronged with merchants, emigrants principally from New England, who have enjoyed very extensive and lucrative trade, supplying Vermont and the region on both sides of the Hudson, as far as Lake George, with merchandise.”⁵ Lansingburgh, which was on the high road to Saratoga Springs and Lake George, saw a lot of travelers pass through, including Thomas Jefferson, then serving as Secretary of State, and James Madison in 1791.

Major transportation projects undertaken in the early nineteenth century aided the village’s growth. In 1804 the connection between the Burg and points west including Schenectady were improved with the construction of a covered toll bridge, the first bridge to span the Hudson River. Known as the Union Bridge and ingeniously designed by Theodore Burr with a combined system of arches and trusses, it was located a mile above the village

and connected to Waterford where there had long been a ferry crossing. (It later came to be known as the Waterford Bridge.) Construction of the bridge coincided with the early development of turnpike roads connecting market towns to the hinterland. The 60-mile Northern Turnpike, completed in 1800, began at the present-day intersection of 124th Street and Fourth Avenue in the Burg and led in a northeasterly direction to Granville in Washington County at the Vermont border. The equally long Waterford and Whitehall Turnpike, completed six years later, began at the Waterford side of the Union Bridge and paralleled the Hudson River for much of its length to Whitehall. Both roads connected Lansingburgh to the communities in northeast New York and western Vermont. Two grand brick residences, both built about 1810 for merchants and both later expanded for institutional purposes, reflect the upward economic trajectory of

the village during this period. They are located on what would then have been the outskirts of the village, their lots originally comprising the entirety of their respective blocks. Their expansive private gardens contributed to the village's defining character at the time. These houses at 41 114th Street and 25 115th Street are five-bay, center-halls with gable roofs (Fig.6). Both are oriented south with their facades facing the cross street. No. 41 has parapeted end walls with two pairs of integrated chimneys for symmetry. The parapets once supported a wood balustrade running across the eave line. Such parapets became ubiquitous in the region in the following decades; none retain their balustrades today.⁶ The refined facades of such houses were appointed with Federal details, such as a fanlight over the door, a large three-part window over the entrance, which often were embellished with a festoon relief, and stepped keystone lintels on window heads. Of these details, only the stepped keystone lintels survive at 25 115th Street.

Erie Canal and the Rise of Troy

Perhaps no local infrastructure project was as hotly anticipated by Lansingburghers as the State Dam and Lock, completed in September 1823 at its southern boundary with the then separate village of Troy. The dam created a generous basin at the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson rivers, helping to extend the

shipping season and increase sloop capacity at Lansingburgh thanks to the lock. The project was part of the state's tremendous canal-building effort underway at the time. The 363-mile Erie Canal, begun in 1817, connected Buffalo and the Great Lakes region to the Hudson at Watervliet, seven miles north of Albany. The Champlain Canal, constructed at the same time, connected the Hudson to the southern tip of Lake Champlain. Its southern terminus was at Waterford. The State Lock and Dam was effectively the first lock of the Champlain Canal. However, the improvement was not the boon Burg residents were hoping for. The opening of the eastern section of the Erie Canal in October 1823 funneled most boat traffic through Watervliet to Troy, which had the advantage of being located at the head of tidal influence on the Hudson. The Burg, which could not accommodate larger ships, was bypassed. It marked the emergence of Troy as an economic powerhouse.

The Burg as a Center for Industry

While the Erie Canal was a nail in the coffin of Lansingburgh's continuation as a competitive river port, merchants had already begun relocating to Troy by 1810 on account of the poor river navigation. In their wake, the Burg transitioned to a center for light manufacturing. Early industries included slaughtering, tanning, brewing, shipbuilding, and gun making. Its two largest and

longest enduring industries, oilcloth and brushes, were started during this period. Factories, which were not reliant on the transportation of heavy raw products, were scattered throughout the village with their owners often living in proximity. Employment in factories attracted many new residents to Lansingburgh in the mid- and late nineteenth century, including Irish, German, and later Danish immigrants. This population growth is reflected in surviving commercial, civic, and church buildings, and social halls, as well as more diversified housing, large and small, reflecting hierarchies of class and wealth.



Fig.6: Merchant's residence at 25 1155th St., ca. 1810. Stepped keystone lintels had survived later alterations.



Fig.7: Elijah & Phebe Janes House, 1 116th St., ca. 1795. Original Federal features with later Greek Revival overlays.

More than 230 buildings, a substantial proportion of the buildings in Central Lansingburgh date to this post-Canal period, reflecting the prosperity and stability that came with the development of small industry. The interior blocks of the village became more developed. New houses of merchants and manufacturers were built on spacious double lots on Third, Fourth, and Fifth Avenues. Other owners chose to update older homes. A prime example is the two-story, L-shaped house at 1 116th St, built ca. 1795 for Elijah and Phebe Janes and sold to a new owner in 1837 who likely updated the symmetrical five-bay facade soon after (Fig.7). Today, it exhibits original Federal features overlaid with Greek Revival elements that had come

into vogue by then. Both street elevations have stepped keystone marble lintels at all windows and a Greek Revival entrance covered by a portico with a dentil cornice.

The Greek Revival style is best reflected in the 1846 James and Catherine Van Schoonhoven House at 538 Third Avenue (Fig.8). The two-story brick house has a nearly square footprint with a low pyramidal roof, tall frieze, and an impressive, pillared entrance portico. The home is centered on its double lot. At its rear on the alley is a 70-foot-long brick carriage house with living quarters for house staff. James (1815-1850) was descended from an old New York Dutch family based in Waterford and his

wife Catherine (1820-1898) was a Lansing. By the time the Van Schoonhoven house was constructed, Greek Revival had become the de facto style for houses of all economic stations as well as for churches and schools.

This article draws from the recently submitted National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Central Lansingburgh Historic District. It was completed by Marissa Marvelli and Neil Larson. It was greatly aided by research by Walter Wheeler.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Walter R. Wheeler, "The Introduction of the Gambrel Roof to the Upper Hudson Valley." *The Hudson River Valley Review, A Journal of Regional Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Autumn 2004, 1-11.
- ² Their son, Thomas G., was the prominent lawyer, merchant and politician known as "Old Salt," a nickname derived from his business in the salt industry of Syracuse and on and off membership in the New York Assembly spanning almost forty years.
- ³ Thomas G. Alvord, "Thomas G. Alvord's Reminiscences. The Old-Time Gentleman of Leisure. Article Sixth," *Troy Northern Budget*, Dec. 1893, page unknown.
- ⁴ See the above-cited Wheeler article for a discussion of the differences between the English gambrel and French mansard roofs.
- ⁵ Arthur James Weise, *History of Lansingburgh, N.Y., from the Year 1670 to 1877* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1877), 5.
- ⁶ Recent architectural overviews have inaccurately referred to these parapeted gables as "Waterford gables," claiming them to be a vernacular feature specific to that place when in reality such gables were common all over the region and beyond.



Fig.8: James & Catherine Schoonhoven House, 538 Third Ave., 1846. Distinctive example of a large house designed in a Greek Revival style.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN ACTION

Nathan Wild Mill Office, Valatie, Columbia County

by Kathleen E. Johnsonn

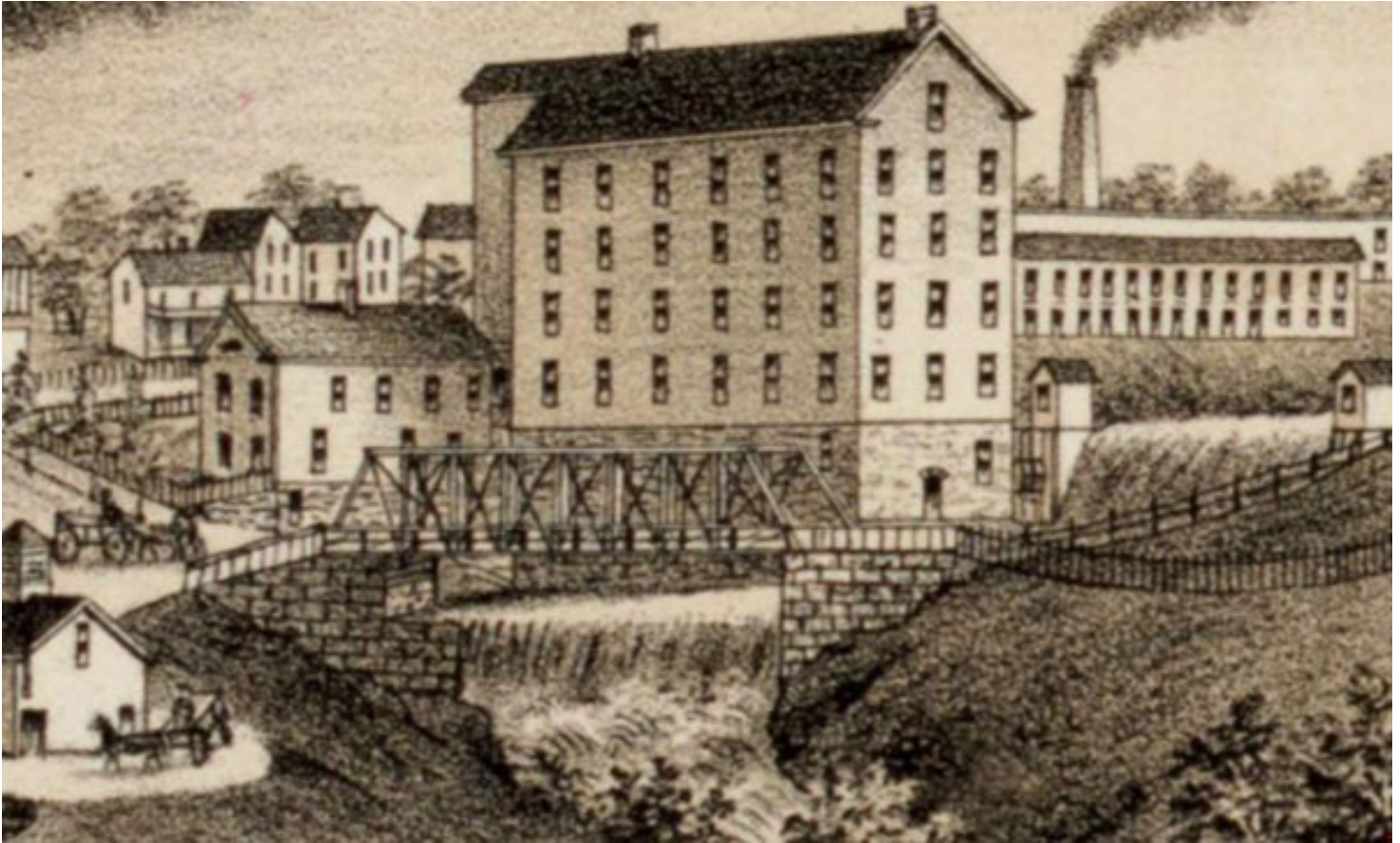


Fig.1: Detail of a bird's eye map of "Valatie, N.Y." published by H.H. Rowley & Co., 1881. Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center, Boston Public Library. In this image, the ca. 1828 Mill Office stands to the left of the bridge carrying Main Street across the Valatie Kill.

As former Governor Andrew Cuomo implemented his dream of a 750-mile Empire State Trail across New York State, one of the last parts to be completed was the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail. This leg, which opened for use in December 2020, mostly runs on or near the bed of a defunct electric trolley. The anticipated path of the hiking and biking trail would cross Main Street in the village of Valatie between a historic depot and, at the time of the planning phase, a ramshackle building and junkyard. In the spring of 2019, prior to the trail's installation, there was discussion between officials representing the Village of Valatie and the Hudson River Valley Greenway, the latter a lead project partner, about the future of the derelict building. Unbeknownst to them, it had been constructed as an office for Nathan Wild's Kinderhook Manufacturing Company ca. 1828 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, along with a monumental brick textile factory, now gone.

The nearly 200-year-old edifice, the only remaining building from the Wild's Mill complex, dates back to Valatie's founding as an industrial village (Fig.1). Its demolition would have been a huge loss for the area. The Mill Office has added significance in its association with Nathan Wild (1790–1867), the remarkable industrial entrepreneur and founding father of Valatie. And, in a broader architectural context, it is a rare surviving example of an early-nineteenth-century American office building. The structure's less-than-pristine condition and unsightly setting led village leaders and others to overlook its historical significance.

At the May 6, 2019, public meeting of the Columbia Friends of the Electric Trail (CFET), the group's president described a recent Earth Day volunteer clean-up effort near this building long owned by Robert Dedrick, a junk

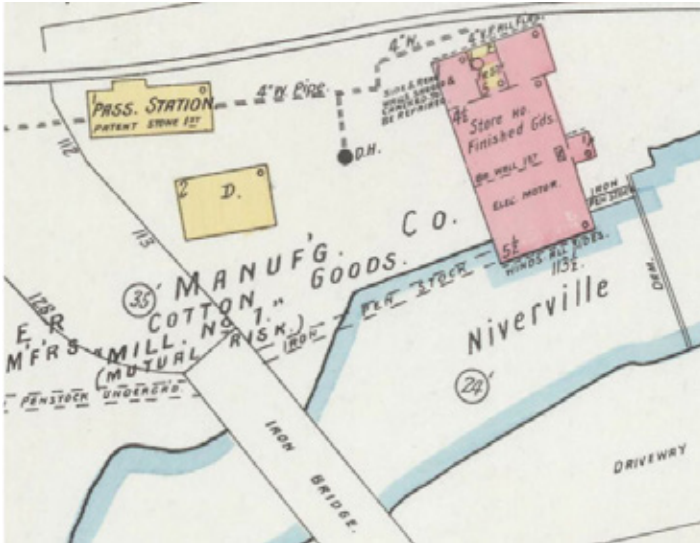


Fig.2: Detail of a Valatie Sanborn Fire Insurance Protection Map, September 1905. Library of Congress. By the early twentieth century, the building no longer had a factory use. Here the Mill Office is coded as a two-story wood frame dwelling. Note the railway ran on the west side of the station; the trail was routed on the other side between the station and office.



Fig.3: Photo postcard "Albany So. Rwy Sta, Valatie, N.Y.," ca. 1925. Collection of Jon Meredith. Operating under various names including the Albany Southern Railway, a hydro-powered electric trolley ran through parts of Columbia and Rensselaer Counties during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The Mill Office appears in many postcards of the trolley depot. View also shows the 1828 factory building, no longer extant. Note the fanlight window on the south end and the two doors on the west side of the Mill Office.

dealer. Discussion arose about the Greenway buying the building, tearing it down, and making the lot a pocket park next to the Electric Trail (Figs.2 & 3). The then-mayor of Valatie explained that the building was in the hands of a financial firm through a reverse mortgage agreement with Mr. Dedrick who had moved to a care facility. I was in the audience, and so brought up the age and history of the building, noting that it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. CFET board members and the mayor were completely surprised; I was told that I must be mistaken. After the meeting, I sent CFET's president a link to the Wild's Mill Complex National Register nomination. He forwarded it on to Greenway's Director of the Empire Trails Program and to the mayor.

After that, I visited the exterior of the Mill Office on several occasions to take photographs. The building had not been occupied for some time, with evidence of unauthorized people rummaging around in it (Fig.4). I saw that its owner, Reverse Mortgage Solutions, had placed a foreclosure notice on the door. I also found a loose historical plaque, part of a program undertaken by the village some years earlier, recognizing the building as the Nathan Wild Mill Office and dating it ca. 1830. At the time, I was the municipal historian for the Township of Kinderhook which includes Valatie. I sent a letter about the situation to Perry Teasdale, editor of *The Columbia Paper*. After the letter's

publication, community members routinely referred to the building as the "ca. 1828 Nathan Wild Mill Office, a building on the National Register of Historic Places."

Happy ending: The office building was put up for sale in 2022. According to Zillow, it sold on September 28, 2022, for \$129,000. An architect bought it, according to Valatie's current mayor. At the time of this article, restoration is underway. I observed the removal of twentieth-century asbestos-cement siding and a recent double-porch addition. Workers also jacked up the west wall to stabilize the stone foundation and to replace rotted sills and post ends (Fig.5). The eaves were sagging on that side, but now the roofline has been leveled.

Postscript: Over the winter of 2022–23, the 1913 brick gimp mill, the only other extant factory-related structure in Valatie, suffered a significant collapse. The dire condition of that building makes the preservation of the Mill Office even more important.

About Nathan Wild

In his 1878 *History of Columbia County, New York*, Franklin Ellis offered the following biography of the high-tech entrepreneur who played a notable role in the industrial history of the United States.



Fig.4: Photograph of Mill Office from the South, January 1981. Neil G. Larson, "National Register of Historic Places nomination, Wild's Mill Complex" (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; December 1981).

"NATHAN WILD was born at Manchester, England, in the year 1790. He and his brother James came to this country early in the present century and were identified with the history of cotton manufacturing for nearly fifty years. His first employment was with the Slaters of Rhode Island, and then with his brother at Columbiaville, in this county. In 1817 he settled at Valatie, forming, with his associates, Benjamin Baldwin and James Wardle, the Kinderhook Manufacturing Company, and began the spinning of cotton yarn and weaving cotton shirting by hand-looms in the mill now known as the Davis paper-mill. This process was continued till about the year 1825, when the power-loom was introduced.

... Under his energetic management the Kinderhook Manufacturing Company became the owners of the mills and water-power on the Valatie creek, where, in 1828, they built a brick factory for sixty looms (a large mill at that time). In 1833 the Kinderhook Manufacturing Company was dissolved, Mr. Wild taking the property on the Valatie creek. In 1845 he visited England, and soon after his return



Fig.5: Photograph of Mill Office, February 11, 2023, the author.

he erected a factory for ten thousand spindles and two hundred looms. He continued in business till 1858."

To learn more about the 1982 Wild's Mill Complex nomination, National Register of Historic Places, of which the Mill Office is a part, go to https://s3.amazonaws.com/NARAprodstorage/lz/electronic-records/rg-079/NPS_NY/82003353.pdf.

Membership info

If you have been receiving this newsletter, but your membership is not current and you wish to continue to receive the HMVA newsletter and participate in the many house-study tours offered each year, **please send in your dues.**

Membership currently pays all the HMVA bills and to keep us operating in the black. **Each of us must contribute a little.**

Membership dues remains at a low \$25 per year (\$15 for Students). So if you haven't sent in your dues or given a tax deductible donation to the HMVA mission, **please consider doing so now.**

You can join or renew online at HMVArch.org using PayPal.



Yes, I would like to renew my membership in the amount of \$ _____

Yes, I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to help in preserving the architectural heritage of the Hudson and Mohawk valleys. Enclosed find my donation in the amount of \$ _____.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Please mail checks to:

HMVA
90 Cty. Rte. 42, Coxsackie, NY 12051

Tour of Summer Kitchens in Red Hook, Dutchess County, October 2022



Interior of summer kitchen at 167 Crestwood Rd. (Photo by W.R. Wheeler)



Interior of summer kitchen at 71 Starbarrack Rd. (Photo by W.R. Wheeler)



Members assembled in front of summer kitchen at 71 Starbarrack Rd. (Photo by W.R. Wheeler)