

Timber Framers Guild 7th Annual Meeting at Troy NY

The Timber Framers Guild of North America a group with a membership approaching 1,000 held its well attended annual four day meeting at Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy New York, June 13 to 16, 1991. There was a display of historic tools and examples of traditional joinery. 25 company booths displayed the products of publishers, tools, panel systems, and computer graphics. There were tree plantings, lectures, and demonstrations of hewing and joining timbers.

Historic timber framing was a prominent topic. Abbott Lowell Cummings of Yale University spoke on domestic architecture of colonial Connecticut, Merle Adams of Montana about the history and traditions of timber framing in Western North America, and Dr. Paul Petrescu of Bucharest about log and frame buildings in Romania.

Of special interest to the DBPS were three excellent slide talks, Anglo-Dutch Barns of New Jersey by Alex Greenwood of the New Jersey Barn Company in which he showed and explained drawings and photographs of a number of interesting transitional Dutch frames, New England influence on Dutch Architecture in the Hudson Valley by Don Carpentier in which he explained a number of 18th century frame houses, some of which he had moved, primarily in Rennselaer County, and Raising Holes by Jack Sobon where a number of possible uses were described for this elusive feature of the New World Dutch barn.

The DBPS is now a \$25 institutional member of the The Timber Framers Guild of North America which makes Guild membership, normally \$50 a year, available to DBPS members for \$25. This includes a subscription to their excellent quarterly journal. The Guild plans to meet in Ontario, Canada next year. Timber Framers Guild, P.O. Box 1046, Keene, NH 03431

Somerset County, New Jersey Dutch Barn Documentation

Greg Huber and Ursula Brecknell were awarded a grant from the New Jersey State Historical Commission to do a farm yard siting of Dutch barns in Somerset County. About 30 Dutch barns were documented. Some barn measurements were taken and drawings were made of each farm showing the orientation of the buildings and road.

It was found that Dutch barns in Franklin township which was the first settlement in Somerset County had 8 to 11 foot high side walls whereas 14 to 15 feet were typical of other townships. Only four barns in the county had four bays all others were three bay barns. Copies of the report will go into the New Jersey State Archive as well as the DBBS.

During the study the remains of two barracks were found on a farm and the 75 year old farmer who was interviewed had used them with his father. He had not thought about them in 30 years.

Barn Saved and Looking for Friends in Glen, New York

Ev Rau answered an ad in the "Swap" column of Yankee magazine recently offering the frame of a Dutch barn free to someone who would have a good home for it. Erik Schnackenberg, the owner was aware of the historic importance of his barn and wanted to keep it on the original site but felt he could not afford the necessary repairs.

Ev went to see the three bay barn in Montgomery County and talk with the owner to whom a contractor had given an estimate of repair cost. The estimate included repairing the barn, its addition, a silo, and some out buildings. Ev suggested the owner shore up the original barn and forget the other structures for now. He said the Dutch barn could be saved where it stood at a much lower cost if he focused his efforts on preserving it.

Ev said that the owner originally joined the DBPS hoping that we might be a well funded group able to assist financially in preserving his barn. Ev explained to him that we are a small and relatively new group with very little money but that as preservationists we were dedicated to saving Dutch barns, and especially saving them on their original site and with as much of their original condition as possible.

Ev stressed that the barn owner must have the idea and motivation to preserve the barn before the DBPS can be effective. Based on a brief inspection of the structure he thought there would be some necessary repairs on the purlin plates and a missing side wall replaced as well as new roofing. He felt the main structure was probably sound but that soon after the owner removes the hay from the barn a small group of DBPS people should look it over more closely and test some of the joinery with a metal pick.

This barn is number 63, page 110, in The New World Dutch Barn by John Fitchen. If you are interested in knowing more about this project and might contribute money or time to it please contact Ev Rau (518-355-04211) or the Reporter.

#### July 20, Workshop & Recreation Day at the Wemp Barn

About 100 people attended the Workshop and Recreation Day activities sponsored by the DBPS at the Touhey/Wemp barn at Feura Bush, in Albany County, New York. There were activities for the children, good country food for everyone, homemade dark beer, and a wonderful sharing of interests.

Despite the 90 degree heat it was a busy place. Chris Albright and Ev Rau were preparing to raise a hay barrack. They had four tapered oak poles and parts of the plates. There were a lot of holes to drill and a good number of people got to experience the use of early boring tools. A hand boring machine which Ev inherited from his grandfather cut a 2 inch diameter hole with surprising ease.

Later inside the barn, Charles Gehring gave a slide talk on Dutch grain farming which included early Hudson Valley Dutch barn architecture and tools, showing some of their European origins. Willis Barshide came from Palatine Bridge and brought early examples of local tools from his Dutch barn museum. The sith (or Flemish scyth) and the mathook were especially interesting. Almost unknown today, they were the hand tools of the grain harvest used by the Dutch well into the 19th century.

Harold Zoch showed slides and held a discussion concerning the chronology of nail types. It is an ongoing study of his and he welcomes information on the subject. Make it a part of your next barn documentation. It is a tool which is important in dating barns.

Ev Rau held a demonstration of Wheat Threshing and Handling. He used some wheat and oats brought by Bob Anderson from The Helderberg Mountains, a gift from the last farmer to grow wheat in Albany County. John Kaufmann of Hurley, New York showed some techniques of knotting the sheaves of grain which he had learned as a boy in Delaware County. Fortunately, Kathryn Boardman, an associate Curator from the Farmer's Museum at Cooperstown was there to record all these practices.

#### Visit to Bull Homestead

On June 15th about ten members of the society met at the Bull homestead in Cambell Hall, Orange County for a tour organized by Greg Huber. Mike Brown the curator gave an informative tour of the Dutch Barn and two story Dutch stone house which was built by William Bull in the 1720's. The early barn shows evidence of later alterations. The barn was retored by Sam Phelps of Walden, New York, who also retored the Decker/Bienstock barn in Walkill. The Bull barn contains a number of unique features and is the only Dutch Barn known in Orange County.

#### Letter from the Editor

The Spring issue of the DBPS Reporter fell victim to a fever. It did not get lost in the mail. It plans to continue as a quarterly publication and welcomes the news and views of the membership.

The DBPS is looking for information about **obtaining affordable liability insurance**, the lack of which has held up a more active program of barn tours. It is sometimes asked, "Why can't we waive our liability?" and it is sometimes cynically answered, "Because then the lawyers and the insurance companies would have nothing to do."

I recently asked the question of a successful person in the field of law, "Why can't people just sign or swear away their liability and promise not to sue." and I was told that, "If a person could do so the privilage would be abused." It is a very interesting topic.

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Editor

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If you have not yet done so, please mail your membership dues to,  
The Dutch Barn Preservation Society  
Box 176, Rensselear, NY 12144  
Student \$5, Regular \$10, Contributing \$20, Supporting \$25  
Thanks

(The Somerset County study will be included in the upcoming issue of the DBPS Research Miscellany, currently available to trustees and \$25 members of the DBPS)