

Commentary

Born of a Dutch barn

By Richard Babcock

As a great Dutch barn was recently saved by a moving, so were the barns of the first settlement of the Hudson River Valley, including Albany (Fort Orange) and Troy, New York areas, after the American Revolution. A barn known to the Dutch Barn Preservation Society as the "Greater Wemp Barn" was disassembled and moved this year from Fort Hunter to New Scotland by master builder Clayton Babcock.

This move has prompted me to reveal some of my findings from approximately 30 years of moving, restoring barns, and searching their histories through Registries of Deeds and Surrogate Court wills in a small part of my book, *Barns of Roots America*.

It is important to realize that these barns were saved in two ways. One was by disassembly, moving and setting them back up as they were originally except for some original working parts such as hay racks for horses being left out. They were set against a hillside on the new site, with a ramp built of stone to enter the barn from the side, which allowed hay to be brought into the center of the barn by wagon, the roadway created by using anchor beams as the supports. You could still recognize them as a Dutch barn. The other way was by using all the parts of a Dutch barn and some new hewn longer posts and girts in the creation of a new barn architecture, which I long ago labeled the "New York state barn." My reason for this is that this new creation was born out of the old; and it was the first new barn architecture in New York State after the Revolution.

I believe a German master builder transformed Dutch barns into a new architectural form sometime in the later 18th or early 19th century, himself perhaps several generations removed from the 1710 migration of Germans. It is unlikely the Dutch would have had the heart to alter barns so much a part of their heritage. The new creation like most was born out of necessity. Dairy farming was beginning in America, and barns with greater hay storage and more room for cattle were needed. Ice houses were built, and ice was harvested from ponds and coves of the rivers to keep the dairy produce cool. These things plus the availability of old Dutch barns, no longer useful where they

were, led to the creation.

The new architecture incorporated the original Dutch barn designed to store and dry wheat harvested early in the fertile fields along the Hudson, the floor system of which, kept in tact, provided the base for the new. The beams hewed and framed by the first settlers were preserved, and most prominently displayed were the main beams or great beams minus their protruding tenons which spanned the thrashing floor of the original, used again as the center part of the new creation. The posts that supported the main beam or "anchor beams" of the Dutch barn were used as floor beams. New, longer posts were hewed replacing the shorter posts. These raised the roof of the "new from old barn" to a great height for increased hay storage. Side wall posts were also added which were longer, but the sills and plates of the old Dutch barn were used again as sills and plates. The rafters of the old barn were also used by shortening them a slight bit to form a roof of lesser pitch than its Dutch predecessor.

I have also found many later barns of this architecture hewn out totally new, which bears out my findings.

It should also be known that the black slave worked the lands which filled these great barns. Though the unmarked graves of most have been wiped away, they'll be visible one day through the wills recorded prior to 1830. In my book I call these people the lost sheep of America's beginning.

And so it is, this incredible recycling ability of Dutch barns preserved them and their histories for this and future generations of Americans to appreciate and understand. By this conversion many were saved which would have been lost. We could actually disassemble and remake the originals again. These new barns were born of the old, born with the birth of our nation and will serve now as monuments to its beginning.

A recent celebration of the saving of the Dutch barn, the Greater Wemp Barn, circa 1710, at its new site, the home of Carl Touhey, New Scotland, brought to close a page of history and prompted me to write this. He has set the site off in a preserve to never be anything but a Dutch barn. A preservation such as Carl Touhey's is a rare exception to the usual fate of these old barns.

Capitol Hill Notes

By Richard J. Conners

I had the opportunity two weekends ago to visit New York City and Long Island to inspect veterans' facilities in the downstate area.

A highlight of the trip was an inspection of the Long Island State Veterans Home in Stony Brook, which was scheduled to be open by now but which is now scheduled to be open sometime around Memorial Day 1991.

The 350-bed skilled nursing home will be operated by the Health Sciences Center at the State University at Stony Brook, which will make it the first university-based nursing home in the country.

The campus-like setting is a half mile east of University Hospital at Stony Brook. It will be the second such nursing home in the state, the first being at Oxford north of Binghamton which was originally built for Civil War widows.

The total cost of the construc-

tion project is \$25 million with about 65 percent of the money coming from the federal government.

The biggest cost will be operating the home, which will be borne largely through the Medicaid system's long-term care program which is shared by the state and federal governments.

The home will serve veterans who require skilled nursing care and is expected to be filled largely by men and women from Nassau and Suffolk counties which have nearly 90,000 veterans who are 65 or older.

Admissions will be based on the seriousness of the medical condition of the prospective patients.

The Stony Brook Home will have a 25-bed unit for patients with respiratory problems and another 25-bed unit for patients with dementias including Alzheimer's disease.

Out of My Head

John Addyman



Ralph the dog is finally for real

Well, we got a dog. I was running out of excuses and my children were running out of patience.

Getting a dog for us — for me in particular — is quite an undertaking. I'm allergic to dogs. I sneeze, I wheeze, I break out in hives. Like that.

Still, after Gayle and I had been married for a couple of years, we bought a dog one day, a miniature Dachshund, and that dog was our child for five or six years. When our new baby, Amy, and the dog didn't get along, we had to ship the dog to Gayle's parents.

I know I can tolerate a small dog, especially one that doesn't shed. But when you've got four children, a small dog is likely to get hugged to death, and we needed something bigger.

So, I called Dr. Ed Becker for advice. I told him the circumstances, and asked what he recommended we do.

"Try a terrier," he said. "A big terrier. Come on over to my office some afternoon, bring your kids, and you can look through our dog books."

A week later, my three children — this was a few months before Se Joon arrived — were in Dr. Becker's office, looking through dog books. We decided a standard Schnauzer was the breed we wanted. The dog was big and strong and faithful and has a good reputation for tolerant behavior. In our house, we practice lots of tolerance.

"That's a good choice," Dr. Becker told my kids, "but it's also a pretty rare breed." He brought out a small book that listed people who breed dogs, and we found out we could skip right on over to the two nearest breeders — one was in Georgia, and the other was in North Dakota.

"I think we'll look a little harder at the books," I said, and we spent another hour talking about dogs, looking at pictures, and thinking what we could do.

Finally, my kids decided a Border Terrier was just what we wanted.

Don't know what a Border Terrier looks like? Neither did any of the books we looked in. We knew how big an adult was, what the coat looked like, and a bit about the dog's temperament ... but no picture.

And, strangely enough, there's a Border Terrier breeder in this state, near Fonda. One phone call and we were off to see one of the puppies. The woman owned a horse farm, and she was only too happy to show us the last of the litter — all the rest had been sold off quickly as show dogs.

Don't get the wrong idea about "show" dogs. To get an idea of what a Border Terrier looks like, picture the dust gloves that

chambermaids in hotels use — those things that look like a mound of fake gray and brown scraggly fur. Get that image in your head, and add two brown shiny eyes at one end, four stubby legs underneath, and a short tail that looks like it was left behind by another dog. Got that? You're looking at a Border Terrier.

"These are show dogs?" I asked the owner, disbelief ringing in my voice.

"Sure are," she said. "The daddy is a champion."

I thought the daddy was a toilet seat cover rolled up and tossed into the corner until he barked at me.

"How much are they?" I asked, just out of curiosity.

"This last one is \$450," the woman said. "She has a little bit of an overbite."

I could tell right away who was getting bitten. But the kids seemed to like the dog, and my wife was kind of warming up to it, too. In fact, the dogs did have a kind of strange charm.

"They're so little," I muttered out loud, a thought I had really meant to keep to myself.

"Don't worry about them," the owner said. "They can take care of themselves. The mother has already killed eight woodchucks."

I stared at the mother. She was half the size of old dad — a rolled-up, fake-fur toilet seat cover.

"Naaah," I said.

"These are cute dogs," the woman said seriously, "but they can take care of themselves. We keep ours fenced in because if they see another dog on the hill over there (she gestured to a hill half a mile away), they'll go after that dog."

I took another look at the mother and her last puppy. The mother had a "So there!" look on her face.

We didn't buy the Border Terrier. Visions of the dog chasing the woodchuck under our barn delighted me, but they were always followed with another vision of a Border Terrier flattened by a passing school bus. We weren't going to fence in our yard, so we forgot about the Border Terrier.

I forgot.

The kids didn't. "Daddy," my daughter Elisabeth told me one Saturday afternoon, "I really need a dog."

She explained as she had seen a show on television about kids and dogs. She said having a dog would teach her responsibility. She said she would feed it and bathe it and take care of it. And then she ticked off the names of all her friends who have dogs.

"I guess you can play with Ralph, then," I said.

"Who's Ralph?" Elisabeth asked.

Ten seconds later, I introduced my invisible dog, Ralph, to Elisabeth. Within half an hour,

she and Mary Kate had already taken Ralph for a walk and he'd been introduced to our neighbors up the street. Honest.

For a couple of months, I got away with Ralph. Every time the kids would start to talk about having their own dog, I'd offer Ralph's services, and that seemed to make everyone happy. I knew I was buying a little time.

And I knew the time was up when the kids started talking about Christmas, and Ralph's name started appearing on wish lists and drafts of letters to Santa Claus.

I started to scan the newspaper ads looking for a Jack Russell Terrier — a cross between a beagle and a bull terrier. The RCA Victor dog looks like it might be a Jack Russell Terrier.

These dogs are white with black spots and specks. They're quiet, affectionate, and rugged. My kids fell in love with the whole litter when we visited a breeder on Friday.

And the woman who was selling them, in Unionville, was ready to bargain. She was asking \$300, but she'd take considerably less.

"Mary Alice, how about \$150 for one of the remaining males?" I asked her the night we looked at the dogs.

"Fine," she said.

"YES!" my kids said in unison.

The next day, Mary Kate and I went to pick out a dog. She'd been given instructions on which one to choose by her brother and sisters, but she'd left all those instructions behind the second she closed the door of the car.

When we got to the farm, Mary Alice's mom and dad were there, and they let the males out to run around. I talked with them for a few minutes until mom got ready to close the sale.

"And which one have you decided on?" she asked.

"I don't know," I told her. "My daughter is going to pick one."

"Then that must be the one right there," she said, pointing off over my shoulder.

I turned around, and there was Mary Kate, half carrying and half dragging a puppy up the driveway. She had a smile on her face that spread from ear to ear.

We packed the puppy in towels for the trip home, bought supplies from the Helderberg Pet Center in Altamont, and settled in for the night with our new dog.

My daughter Amy had one lingering problem with our new dog, however.

"Dad, what are we going to call him?" she asked.

"What else?" Elisabeth answered for me. "That's Ralph."

Amy smiled and gave me a little punch on the arm.

Funny how kids grow up.

It will also have medical services provided by the clinical faculty at Stony Brook's School of Medicine. Patients will be transferred, when necessary, to either the University Hospital or the VA Medical Center at Northport.

The nursing staff is to work closely with the faculty at the Stony Brook School of Nursing. An adult day health care program will be offered to up to 30 patients at any one time.

The home will offer medical, dental, optometric, podiatric and speech-audiology clinics. It will have rehabilitation services (physical, occupational and recreational) through the School of Allied Health Professions.

I will confess to having a somewhat fatherly attitude toward the Stony Brook home since I worked for seven years with Assemblyman Paul Harenberg in getting the home approved and for another two or three years during construction.

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To the editor . . .

Rain nor snow . . .

To the Editor: Well, your mail delivery person delivers in the rain, sleet and snow, but what happens if there is no newspaper to deliver?

On Friday, Nov. 16, my daughter Pamela brought up the mail. I asked her for *The Enterprise* and she said it wasn't there.

I called the post office and they said maybe it will be in Saturday's mail, and that was that.

At 6 p.m., the doorbell rang and there was Anne Wilson, she usually delivers my mail with a copy of *The Enterprise*. I thanked her very much and said it wouldn't be Friday without reading *The Enterprise*. Anne said she felt the same way.

A great big thanks Anne. Marie Sbardella Altamont