

Background and Social History of the site and Occupants of the John Evert and Anne Fryenmoet van Alen House.

**Walter Richard Wheeler
Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc.**

The Van Alen property prior to the construction of the house, to 1793.

The Van Alen house is located on a site which was historically within the bounds of the manor of Rensselaerswyck. The manor was established on lands owned and occupied in the precontact period by the Mahican people. Established in 1629, a patent was granted by Governor Thomas Dongan in 1685 and title to the lands within Rensselaerswyck was held by the Van Rensselaer family until the late nineteenth century when decades of “anti-rent wars” brought their stewardship to a close.

Previous to the occupation of the property which is now the site of the John Evert van Alen house, the site was leased by John Goewy [a.k.a. Goeway]. Goeway’s 183.6 acre farm was surveyed in 1788 by John Evert van Alen as part of his mapping of the east manor during 1788-1790.¹ He described the property in the following terms:

This farm adjoins the New City and Landing Roads. The soil is considered good except about 40 acres in the SE corner which is light & stoney but has a good deal of wood on it- it is well watered has a sufficiency of Meadow Land and is in general considerably well timbered.

The *New City* road is what is today known as the Troy Post Road, or US Route 4/NYS Route 40. *New City* was the original name for Lansingburgh, which is approximately ten miles to the north. The *Landing Road* was later known as the Albany-Sand Lake Turnpike, and is today known as Washington Avenue Extension. The Quackendary Kill is noted on the accompanying manuscript survey map as running along the south side of the property and a waterfall was noted in its vicinity. This small stream and waterfall still exist, running almost directly south of the Van Alen house. Native trees noted as landmarks in the survey included soft maple, hemlock, white pine, and pitch pine.

In November of that same year (1788) Goewy’s property was valued by tax assessors at £4, and his personal property at £2, and he was taxed 6 shillings. The lands and house of his neighbor Martinus Sharp were valued at £9 and his personal property at £6. The Sharp house still stands, and is an anchor-bent framed wood structure of two rooms on a full basement, and was constructed c.1730. Goewy’s immediate neighbor to the east, David M. DeFreest, was

¹ 1788-1789 “Map of that Part of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck which is Called Green Bush, surveyed in 1788 and 1789” by John E. Van Alen; traced to blue print form, c.1910, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

assessed as having £3 worth of real property and £2 of personal property.² The Goewy house was a one and a half story wood frame dwelling constructed c.1780, and of smaller dimensions than the Sharp house. The Sharp property was roughly equivalent in size to that leased by Goewy, and the lands occupied by DeFreest were the largest of the three. This suggests that the Goewy house was somewhere between the DeFreest house and the Sharp house in quality and size, and that it, too, was a wood-framed dwelling.

John Evert van Alen purchased the lease of the property on 10 May 1790, contingent upon his payment of an annual rent of 18 bushels of wheat, four fowls and one day of service.³ On May 1, 1845, the Van Rensselaers released the rent for \$500 to Evert Van Alen.⁴ The Goewy house was not mentioned in the survey.

An additional 31 acres of land was leased by Van Alen on 2 May 1798 for the annual sum of four bushels. The parcel was located southeast from the Van Alen farm, on the east side of the New City road, and was not contiguous with the remainder of the property. It was purchased outright by Evert van Alen on 1 May 1845 for \$144.64. Van Alen recorded that this parcel “is altogether Pitch Pine land, and has no living water on it that I have seen.”⁵

Bleecker’s 1767 *Map of the Manor Rensselaerwyck* depicts the Jurian Sharp farm to the north of what is now the Van Alen property. This house was constructed c.1730-1740 and still stands, although in much-altered form. Adjacent parcels were occupied by the Van Iveren, Vandenburg, De Freest, and Witbeck farms.⁶ The Goewy name is not mentioned on this map, suggesting that he occupied the farm sometime after 1767. Alternately, the Goewy house may have been on a larger parcel, later subdivided, sometime between 1767 and 1788.⁷

² “A Tax List of the Inhabitants of Rensselaer Wyck District agreeable to a Law of the Legislature passed...November 1st 1788.” A 1201, Box 2 Folder 26, New York State Archives, Albany, New York.

³ Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, SC 7079, Box 126. Record of leases granted...1766-1797, 33. New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York. Alternately East Manor Rent Ledger A¹⁻².

⁴ Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, SC 7079, Box 127. Record of leases granted...1766-1797, 195-196. New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

⁵ John E. van Alen, field book, “An Unimproved Lot on the East side of New City Road & adjoining the Farm of David M. DeFreest.” Rensselaer Manor papers SC 7079 New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

⁶ John R. Bleecker. *A Map of the Manor Rensselaerwyck, 1767*. D. Vaughan. Mid-19th century lithograph copy in *The Documentary History of the State of New York* Vol. 3, by E. B. O’Callaghan (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1850), between 916 and 917.

⁷ John E. van Alen. “Map of that Part of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck which is Called Green Bush, surveyed in 1788 and 1789.” Blue print copy, c.1910, New York State Library Manuscripts and Special Collections. John R. Bleecker. *A Map of the Manor Rensselaerwyck, 1767*. D. Vaughan. Mid-19th century lithograph copy in *The Documentary History of the State of New York* Vol. 3, by E. B. O’Callaghan (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1850), between 916 and 917.

John Evert van Alen: Family background

Benjamin Taylor van Alen, grandson of Evert van Alen, recorded the early history of the Van Alen family in America.

The Van Alen family in this country are undoubtedly from the direct and ancestral lineage of Lourens von Hallen, who came to Amsterdam from the Town of Hallen, lying between Amsterdam and Utrecht, in The Netherlands....The Kinderhook family, and a large majority of descendants adopt[ed] the spelling, Van Alen.

Pieter Van Halen, born in Holland about the year 1630, presumably a grandson of Lourens Von Hallen, was the first of the Van Alen family to come to America, sailing from Utrecht in the year 1658 on the ship *De Vergulde Bever* ("Gilded Beaver"), captain Jan Reyersz Van der Beets, accompanied by his wife, two small children and a boy.

He settled at Beverwyck (Albany) in 1658, pursuing his trade of a tailor, and speculating as a trader in beaver skins.

He was evidently a justice of the peace, as there are two records in 1664 where he took acknowledgments, and in the same year was surety for Jan D. Van Eps, who had purchased a brewery, the payment for same being made in beaver skins of the value of 1150 guilders.

No record has been found indicating the demise of his wife, yet in the year 1669 he married Maria Teller, daughter of Wilhelmus Teller, the wachtmeester (watchman) of the fort-presumably Fort Orange- Albany.

A grant of land was made to him at Kinderhook, in the then county of Albany (now Columbia county), and province of New York, on June 26, 1668, by Colonel Richard Nichols-commanding the English military force- and who was the first English governor of the province, his commission bearing date June 12, 1665. Pieter Van Halen died at Kinderhook, N. Y., January, 1674, leaving three sons, namely: Pieter, Wilhelmus and Johannes.

No record can be found of the marriage of the son Pieter. Wilhelmus married Marytje Van Patten in 1694, and Johannes married Christina Ten Broek in 1701; their children being Pieter, Adam, Maria, Christina, Lourence, Dirck and Lena.

Their son Adam, born 1703, died 1784, married Maria Roseboom June 20, 1732. Their children were: Abraham E., Lourens E., Jacobus, Adam E., Dirck and John Evert.

Abraham E., their oldest son married Mary Freyenmoet February 18, 1771....Lourens E. married Margaret Van Schaack, sister of Peter Van Schaack,...an eminent and distinguished jurist....Jacobus married twice, his wives being Christina Van Buren and Cathrina Kittle...Dirck married Elbertje Van Buren.⁸

⁸ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family embracing a Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 11.

Johannis Evert van Alen

Johannis Evert van Alen, son of Maria Roseboom and Adam van Alen, was born in Kinderhook in 1749.⁹ Among the earliest references to Johannis [later known as John] in the historical record is mention of his services as the “Clerck” of Captain Jacobus van Alen’s Company of Foot of Kinderhook, in a muster roll dating to 1767.¹⁰ Jacobus was John Evert van Alen’s brother, and husband of Christina van Buren, aunt of future president Martin van Buren. Jacobus makes a brief appearance in Pliny Moore’s “Journal of Drink” as a drinking partner “in The Meddow” in July 1774.¹¹ He served as Justice of the Peace beginning in 1786.¹²

A second brother of John Evert—Dirck—married Elbertje van Buren, Christina’s sister. John was also related to James Isaac van Alen (1776-1870), who was a half brother to Martin van Buren. James Isaac held the position of Justice of the Peace (1801-1804) and later served in the US House of Representatives during the Tenth Congress (1807-1809), as a representative of New York State’s 8th District.¹³

John Evert van Alen was in Claverack by April 1768, when he opened an account with Hendrick van Rensselaer. His purchases included boards, flour, wheat and flax.¹⁴ The earliest surviving surveys conducted by Van Alen also date to this period.¹⁵

⁹ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family embracing a Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 14.

¹⁰ *Third Annual Report of the State Historian of the State of New York, 1897* (New York & Albany: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1898), 859.

¹¹ Pliny Moore. *Journal of Drink* (Champlain: The Moorsfield Press, 1929), 11-12.

¹² Franklin Ellis. *History of Columbia County, New York*. (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 222. Jacobus was appointed to this position in 1786, 1789, 1792 and 1798. Other Van Alens appointed Justice of the Peace included Lucas van Alen (1795); James I. (1801-1804); Cornelius (1801); John L. Jr. (1810-27); and Adam (1810-13, 1815, 1818 and 1821). John Evert held the same position in Rensselaer County.

¹³ Franklin Ellis. *History of Columbia County, New York*. (Philadelphia: Everts & Ensign, 1878), 222. Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774- Present, www.bioguide.congress.gov, accessed 29 March 2004.

¹⁴ Hendrick I. van Rensselaer, Ledger, page 186. MS-697, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

¹⁵ A *Plan of Albany* dated 1764 is sometimes attributed to Van Alen, but he would have been only 15 years old when it was executed. A second survey, entitled *New Lots laid out on the Gallows Hill* dates to 1768, probably represents some of his earliest work. Both drawings are at the Albany County Hall of Records, Albany, New York.

John E. was appointed a Justice of the Peace of Albany County on 10 December 1770.¹⁶ Together with Barent van Alen, a John van Alen is listed among the patentees for Bayard's Patent of 50,000 acres, in 1771. It has not been possible to verify if this last reference is to John E. or not, but it is likely.¹⁷

"John A. Van Alen" was appointed one of three "Officers for viewing and examining...Flour...[and as] Repackers of Beef and Pork intended to be shipped or laden on board of any Vessel in the City or County of Albany, to be thence exported out of this Colony" along with John Roseboom and Peter Vosburgh on 16 February 1771. The act appointing him an inspector expired on 1 January 1773.¹⁸

John E. van Alen married Anne Fryenmoet on 30 April 1771.¹⁹ Their marriage licence describes him as a "merchant."²⁰ Anne's father, Johannes Casparus Fryenmoet, was the first pastor of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Schodack and served as Domine for the Kinderhook congregation as well.²¹ By 1 October 1771 the couple had moved to Schodack in Rensselaer County. Van Alen's account book survives from this period and documents his activities as a general merchant until at least 25 August 1774.²² Apparently soon after that date Van Alen went into bankruptcy, since on the following 1 September he wrote his friend Peter van Schaack, then in New York, about his desire to "discharge all the demands of my Creditors against me." In the same letter he spoke of "Berkshire County Adjoining this Province- where I Intend Shortly to go for some time to render my present situation more easy," apparently to avoid demands of payments from the same creditors.²³

¹⁶ Harry J. Van Allen. *The Van Allen (Van Alen) Family* (Utica: The Author, 1935), 194. A "John van Alen" was appointed Justice of the Peace for Albany County on 18 June 1772. It is unknown whether or not this is John Evert van Alen, or the John van Alen who lived in Albany at that time. Nathaniel Sylvester. *History of Rensselaer Co., New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), 61.

¹⁷ Nathaniel S. Benton. *A History of Herkimer County, including the Upper Mohawk Valley, from the Earliest Period to the Present time* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1856), Appendix 2, 476.

¹⁸ *The Colonial Laws of New York for the Year 1664 to the Revolution, Volume 5* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1894), 198-199.

¹⁹ New York State Secretary's Office. *Names of Persons for whom Marriage Licenses were Issued by the Secretary of the Province of New York, previous to 1784* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1860), 146.

²⁰ Harry J. Van Allen. *The Van Allen (Van Alen) Family* (Utica: The Author, 1935), 194.

²¹ George Baker Anderson. *Landmarks of Rensselaer County New York* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1897), I:464.

²² Collection New-York Historical Society, New York, New York. An index to this important document has been published by Paul R. Huey as *Index to the Account Book of John Evert van Alen of Schodack, New York, 1771-1774* (Pine Brook, New Jersey, 1968).

²³ Individual accession mss. 8022, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

John E. van Alen's profession as a surveyor—in addition to being a merchant—is documented throughout this period. The account book of Leonard Gansevoort of Albany records expenses associated with a large number of lawsuits that Gansevoort was involved with as attorney. Van Alen's name occurs a number of times between 10 June 1771 and 29 December 1785, apparently for services as surveyor in land disputes.²⁴ His master in the art of surveying has not been identified.

It was likely in his capacity as surveyor that Van Alen was appointed as one of several Commissioners for "Regulating the Highways and Public Roads for the District of Claverack" on 6 February 1773.²⁵ He was reappointed to this position by an Act of 3 April 1775. Both appointments were established "for better laying out, regulating, and keeping in repair the Public Roads and Highways in the City and County of Albany and County of Tryon."²⁶

Although later correspondence suggests an acquaintance with the Pittsfield area of Berkshire County, there are no contemporary documents to indicate the length of residence by Van Alen and his wife in that area; it may have occurred in the autumn of 1774 and been motivated by the desire to escape creditors. Their return occurred by 3 April 1775, when John was appointed highway commissioner for the Claverack district, as noted above. On 20 October 1775 John was commissioned Lieutenant of the 8th Regiment, 1st Claverack Battalion.²⁷

A deposition by John E. van Alen from early 1778 documents his activities during the years 1776 and early 1777. He noted that on 1 May 1776 he

sailed as Passenger from Middle Town in Connecticut in the Sloop Delight, Ebenezer Egleston Master to New Orleans in the River Mississippi, where they arrived about the 12th Day of August then next- That some time after his arrival there he entered Mate of the said Sloop. A few days after which the said Capt Egleston exchanged the Sloop with a Frenchman for a Schooner call the Judith and received about Four Hundred Dollars in Exchange. That they went up the River in the Schooner to the Plantation of Messieurs Watts & Flerier [?] at Baton Rouge where the Captain purchased a Cargoe of Staves at the price of Thirty Dollars per Thousand to the best of his [recol]lection- That while he ...was take[~~text missing~~] [car]goe the Captain went to Pensacola to obtain British Register & c which effected- that he returned a few Days before the Vessel was ready to sail- that they left the...Mouth of the Mississippi about the first of December and were taken off the Bay of Mancas in the Island of Cuba on or about the 17th of the same Month by the Chance Privateer Captain Armitage. That the Captain and Hands except one were taken on Board the Privateer- and the Deponent being left on board the Schooner and furnished with a Set of Hands was directed to Carry the Vessel into Charles Town South Carolina Which he did- and where the Vessel and Cargoe during the Deponents Residence there were condemned and Sold as a

²⁴ Leonard Gansevoort Account book 1771-1789, MS 758, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

²⁵ *The Colonial Laws of New York for the Year 1664 to the Revolution, Volume 5* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1894), 462.

²⁶ *The Colonial Laws of New York for the Year 1664 to the Revolution, Volume 5* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1894), 789.

²⁷ Mss. 172, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

Lawful Prise....on the Passage to the Mississippi he messed with the Captain, did the Chief part of his writing both at sea & in the Mississippi and had Knowledge of most part of his Transactions respecting the Voyage- That he has no Particular Recollection of the property of Gordon Whitmore on board the Sloop...That when he left [Charles Town] he left his Chest with its Contents in the Hands of a person there- in which he left a Bundle of Papers Sealed up. Some of which to the best of his Recollection contained Matters respecting the Voyage that he has since rec'd that chest but that several of the articles that were left in it were missing among which is the Bundle of Papers...that he recollects Mr. Whitmore was apprehended before the Deponent sailed from Middle Town on as Suspicion of contriving and aiding the Escape of some British officers then Prisoners at North Hampton- and that he Does not recollect ever to have seen Mr. Whitmore since the time he sailed from Middle Town.²⁸

Ebenezer Egelston was a native of Middletown, Connecticut, and married Abigail Cande there on 10 June 1777.²⁹ In Van Alen's papers is a copy of an inventory, dated January 1777, of the goods left behind on that trip.³⁰ Included were an array of surveyor's instruments and books, and the aforementioned bundle of papers. He listed his place of residence as Kinderhook, suggesting his possible removal to that place between October 1775 and May 1776.³¹

Soon after the initiation of his voyage—apparently on 8 May 1776—and probably because of suspicions arising from his involvement with Whitmore, who was aiding the escape of prisoners, a warrant was issued :

Sir- You are hereby required and Commanded forthwith to proceed to the houses of...John van Allen...there to receive and take all their Arms and Ammunition, Side arms excepted; for which arms, etc., you are to give a receipt And bring said arms, etc., to the Chairman of this Committee without delay...³²

Within a day of his return to Kinderhook, Van Alen was placed under arrest for his refusal to sign an oath of allegiance. On 1 April 1777 he petitioned the President and members of the State Convention at Kinderhook for his release.

The Petition of John E. Van Alen Humbly Sheweth,
That your Petitioner after a twelve months absence was in a few hours after his return apprehended, and having been arraigned before a Committee of your Honourable House and by

²⁸ John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-3, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

²⁹ Frederick W. Bailey. *Marriages-1st Church, Middletown, Middlesex Co., Connecticut. Early Connecticut Marriages as found on Ancient Church Records Prior to 1800* (New Haven, 1896-1906), 6:92.

³⁰ John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-2, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York. See Appendix 1 of the full version of this report for a transcript of this document.

³¹ A letter from Anne van Alen to John E. van Alen from this period is said to have detailed a difficult move at about this time. This letter was seen c.1963 by Ellen Corey Nead, and was in the possession of a Mrs. Borman. It detailed the trip by wagon, during which it rained all the way. The house that they were moving into was not yet complete at the time.

³² Howell, George R. and Jonathan Tenney, editors. *History of the County of Albany, New York, from 1609 to 1886* (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co. Publishers, 1886), 413.

their order conveyed to the County Goal of the County of Albany where he is now Detained a prisoner in close confinement, and for no other Crime than asking time to consider of taking the oath of Allegiance to the State. That your Petitioner, on account of the too great number confined in this apartment, and many other weighty reasons which it may here be needless to tire your Honours patience with a Rehearsal of, finds his confinement so very uncomfortable that he is not without the greatest apprehensions it may prove prejudicial to his health, and cannot fail to give the greatest pain to a feeling mind to see his Family in a place like this and well convinced that your Honourable House wishes not to increase the distresses of those whose hard fortune it is to be detained as prisoners the more as the Honourable Committee before whom he was arraigned gave him the greatest encouragement that his confinement should be made as easy as possible & c. Your petitioner therefore most humbly begs the Honourable House to take into their wise and serious Consideration his really unhappy situation, and that prompted by Humanity, they may be pleased to direct the Committee of this City to remove him from this place, and order him to be confined either on Parole or Reasonable security in some private house, as near home as possible or in the Fort in this City (where a prisoner is now confined) to the end that he may live more comfortable and that his Family may have access to him...³³

John E. also corresponded with George Washington at this time.³⁴ Van Alen transmitted his petition to the State Convention to his wife, who wrote a cover letter—a direct appeal to Abraham Ten Broeck—on 9 April, asking for his intervention.

Sir: I am Encouraged by the Known Humanity of your Character to recommend the Inclosed Petition to your Particular attention and to request of you Sir that you will Procure it that Notice which a Multiplicity of Business of more Publick Concern might otherwise Prevent. Mr Van Alens situation is very singular he went away a year ago Publickly from hence to Connecticut from thence to the Missisipy where he has remained ever since, nor has it ever been pretended that he did or Cou'd take any part against the Publick Measures so far from it that he Cou'd have been Informed of the Transactions of the Country but very imperfectly. After his return he was not four & twenty hours at home before he was taken from his famely & friends, whom he had travelled Eight hundred Miles to see, and put into a nausious Jail. I hope Sir the Honourable House will take this Matter into Consideration. If they think he has not been Guilty of Crimes sufficient to Deserve such severity that they will give him such relief as they think right, and I trust Sir you will be so good as to obtain a speedy Consideration of this Matter in the house in which you will for ever oblide as well his other Friends as his Distressed wife who subscribes herself Sir,

Your Very Humble Servant,

Nancy Van Alen.³⁵

³³ John E. van Alen in the Albany Jail to the President and Members of the Convention of the State of New York, convened at Kingston, 1 April 1777. Original not located. Transcribed in *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, Relating to the War of the Revolution, in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, N. Y.* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1868), 65-66.

³⁴ Philander D. Chase, ed., et al. *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series* vol. 9, March- June 1777 (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 236.

³⁵ Nancy (Anne) Van Alen in Kinderhook to Abraham Ten Broeck [in Kingston?], 9 April 1777. Original not located. Transcribed in *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, Relating to the War of the Revolution, in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, N. Y.* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1868), 65.

John E. had become an “enlisted man” in the Albany County Militia sometime during this period, perhaps shortly before his departure to Connecticut.³⁶ Depositions on 21 March 1777 by fellow members of the 8th Regiment of the Albany County Militia provide some of the context for his hesitancy in signing the oath. Gerrit Herdick testified that Van Alen responded to an inquiry about the numbers of “Turn Coats” and the potential danger to Congress by saying “[I don’t] care how many or what bec[omes] of it, if we could but have peace...is that not better than that so many Thousands must die?...there [are] people that would Lay their Heads upon a Block if we could but have peace...” John Herdick recalled Van Alen saying: “I don’t care a Donder or Hagel, about it, if we could but have peace; otherwise it would yet perhaps cost the lives of Thousands.” Based upon this testimony it was resolved by the Committee for Detecting Conspiracies to require Van Alen present himself on 27 March 1777.³⁷ He was apparently jailed at that time or soon afterward. That Van Alen was a surveyor, and possessed knowledge of the landscape of New York useful to the British was also probably an important consideration for the committee when they decided to incarcerate him.

Van Alen was still in jail in May 1777 when he and his brother Abraham E., who was also incarcerated, petitioned the Albany Committee of Correspondence for their temporary release to attend the funeral of Domine Fryenmoet.³⁸ Later that same month, Van Alen was released for four days to a private residence in the City of Albany because he was “very Sick.” At the same time several of his relatives were ordered confined for “refus[ing] to give Evidence,” presumably against John E.³⁹

Van Alen apparently either escaped from jail or was released during the summer of 1777. A letter written by him in Kinderhook in November 1777 was received by the Albany Committee on the 8th of that month. He “pray[ed] leave to come in and take the Oath of Allegiance.” The Committee’s response was that “previous to his making any application to become a Member of the State he ought to surrender himself a Prisoner to the Sheriff of this County” as a demonstration of the veracity of his request.⁴⁰ Van Alen reported as suggested, whereupon the Committee ordered that he

³⁶ Frederic G. Mather, comp. *New York in the Revolution as Colony and State*, Volume 1 (Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1904), 110. This document states that he belonged to the seventh regiment, while others (herein noted) state that it was the eighth regiment. The seventh regiment is stated by this source to have been mustered from Kinderhook and Chatham.

³⁷ New York (State) Secretary of State. *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, relating to the War of the Revolution, in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, N. Y.* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1868), I:659.

³⁸ James Sullivan, ed. *Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, 1775-1778* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1923), 755.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 783.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 863.

be Liberated from Confinement upon his taking the Oath of Allegiance to the State of New York and entering into Bond with surety in the Sum of £200 to appear when called upon by any Authority of this State and answer such complaints as may be exhibited against him for any Treasonable Act or Acts by him committed against the United States of America since the first day of August last,

suggesting that he had either been released or escaped on or around that date.⁴¹ Per the Committee's requirements, both John and his brother Lourens signed bond agreements on 18 November.⁴² John E. was subsequently deposed in January 1778, and ultimately entered into a deed of trust with David van Schaack on 27 August 1778.⁴³ Suspicions respecting Van Alen's loyalties continued to be raised as late as September 1778 by Governor George Clinton, then in Poughkeepsie.⁴⁴ The case appears to have been dropped after that date.

Van Alen's friendship with Peter van Schaack may have influenced his politics and raised the suspicions against him. Van Schaack, related by marriage to Van Alen (John's brother Lourens E. married Peter's sister Margaret), was one of the most prominent jurists in the Colony of New York and an outspoken opponent to what he considered to be a civil war. He was eventually placed under house arrest, and removed to London in October 1778, staying there until August 1785. Van Schaack's departure may have had something to do with the subsequent dropping of charges against Van Alen after the autumn of 1778.

The 1779 real and personal property tax lists for the Kinderhook District of Albany County lists John E. van Alen as having no individually held real estate, but with personal property valued at £60. "Laurance E. Van Allen & Brothers" were possessed of a substantial amount of property, valued at £750.⁴⁵ John E.'s portion of his father's estate was probably included in this figure. A "John van Allen"—presumed to be the same as John E.—is listed in the Claverack district, possessing £1800 in personal property, placing him in the upper end of the middling class, below the landowners. A separate list enumerate his real estate, valued at £650.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ibid., 865.

⁴² Hun Papers, BK 346, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

⁴³ Misc. Mss. V, New-York Historical Society, New York, New York.

⁴⁴ Hugh Hastings, ed. *Public Papers of George Clinton, first Governor of New York* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1900), 4:43. See also 4:7-8.

⁴⁵ "Land Tax List of the District of Kinderhook in the County of Albany Pursuant to the Directions of an Act of the Legislature of the State of New York...passed 2 March 1779" and "Personal Tax List of the District of Kinderhook in the County of Albany Pursuant to an act of the Legislature of the State of New York...passed the 2^d Day of March 1779." A3210-77, Box 2, folder 33. New York State Archives, Albany, New York.

⁴⁶ "Personal Tax Lost of the West part of the District of Claverack...Pursuant to the Directions of an act...passed 2d March 1779." A3210-77, Box 2, folder 37. New York State Archives, Albany, New York.

By December of 1779, despite his previous troubles, Van Alen achieved a level of trust with the state government. Alida van Alstynne petitioned the governor on 13 December 1779 to allow John E. to transmit passports allowing her family and that of Annatie van Buren to move to New York with her loyalist husband.⁴⁷ His relation by marriage with the loyalist Van Alstynne and Van Buren families would have brought him under close scrutiny by either the Committee for Correspondence or the Committee for Detecting Conspiracies, and so he must have been self-assured of his innocence of loyalist tendencies to agree to undertake such a task.

Van Alen's activities during the latter part of the Revolutionary period are poorly documented, but it is clear from the previously-cited Gansevoort account books that he was engaged in surveying work for at least part of that period.

A letter from 31 July 1784 from Moses Ashley in Stockbridge, Mass., mentions that he heard that Van Alen was "surveying in the New State, and would not return till fall."⁴⁸ By this he probably meant Vermont, which was known by this designation. By November of that year Van Alen had returned, and was working in the service of Stephen van Rensselaer, patroon of Rensselaerswyck manor.⁴⁹ Van Alen continued as a general merchant during this period in addition to his survey work. A letter from P. R. Livingston dated 29 April 1786 complained of a charge for twelve shirts, which he did not receive.⁵⁰

Van Alen's presence in Kinderhook is documented by entries in John C. Wynkoop's ledger, in which Wynkoop records lending 40 shillings to Van Alen, whom he notes as living in Kinderhook, on 29 June 1786, and additional money to him on 13 February 1788 "To costs in his suit v. Zebulon Warner."⁵¹ The nature of this suit is not currently known. John and Anne van Alen continued to live in Kinderhook until their removal to Green Bush in Rensselaer County in 1790.

⁴⁷ Hugh Hastings, ed. *Public Papers of George Clinton, first Governor of New York* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1900), 5:419.

⁴⁸ John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-6, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

⁴⁹ Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, SC 7079, Box 76 (formerly individual accession 3187), New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

⁵⁰ Livingston Papers ACC 821-12, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

⁵¹ John C. Wynkoop ledger, 1784-1796. BV Wynkoop, John C., New-York Historical Society, New York, NY, fol. 19.

The John Evert van Alen family occupancy and cultural context, 1793-1807

John E. Van Alen leased the former John Goeway farm from Stephen van Rensselaer on 10 May 1790.⁵² Van Alen and his wife Anne moved to Greenbush between that date and 9 December 1790 when Peter van Schaack wrote a letter addressed to John E. at that place.⁵³ Their household was recorded in Rensselaerswyck on the 1790 census, which is reference-dated 2 August 1790. Because the actual information may have been collected at a later date, however, this fact does not conclusively prove that the Van Alen's moved to Greenbush during the summer of 1790. At any rate, Van Alen began an account with Leonard Gansevoort & Co. in Albany on 7 November of that year.⁵⁴

The Van Alens became involved with church activities and responsibilities soon after their arrival. John was appointed a deacon of the Reformed Dutch Church; Nancy (Anne) is listed as a member at that time.⁵⁵

Their household as enumerated in 1790, was comprised of two white males 16 or older, one white male under age 16, one free white female and six slaves.⁵⁶ John E. and Evert van Alen were the two older males, and Anne was the female, but the identity of the young male in their household is not known. Of the six slaves, five remained at the time of the 1807 inventory of John E. van Alen's estate. All but two had either been emancipated or died by 1819, when the inventory of Anne's estate was taken.

Van Alen's entry into the political arena was probably fueled by his continuing association with Peter van Schaack and others. A letter from Jeremiah van Rensselaer and Henry Oathoudt in Albany dated 12 April 1786, details some of the sentiments which may have lead to his seeking office.

...we are warmly engaged to support the Interest of the common people against the party who have last year gained the election by the influence and measures of the Great and oppulent; and this year are pursuing the same plan to oppose the Reelection of our old friend Abraham Yates Jr. as Senator...To us it appears evident a plan is forming by those people whom we may stile oppulent and Great; to engross all the offices and powers of government in their hands or in the hands of their friends or connections.

What otherwise would have caused the coalation of the Rensselaer Livingston Schuyler & Ten Broeck families with their connection. It is time and more than time that we and all the middling class of people should unite and oppose those Measures which may prove destructive to

⁵² Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, SC 7079, Box 126. Record of leases granted...1766-1797, 33. New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

⁵³ John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542, item 12, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

⁵⁴ Misc. mss. G, New-York Historical Society, New York, New York.

⁵⁵ Harry J. Van Allen. *The Van Allen (Van Alen) Family* (Utica: The Author, 1935), 194.

⁵⁶ *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States taken in the Year 1790, New York.* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1908), 38.

our Rights and privileges...If you Join in sentiments with us we expect you will use every Exertion in your power to promote the Reelection of Abm. Yates Jr. Should our Sentiments not meet your approbation let us observe that this letter is confidential.⁵⁷

Van Alen's response to this proposal is not preserved. He continued to work for Stephen van Rensselaer, one of the "Great and oppulent" obliquely referred to in the letter, and he was subsequently appointed de facto official surveyor to Van Rensselaer in 1789.⁵⁸ His association with John Jay, Lord Amherst, Peter van Schaack and Thomas L. Whitbeck suggests that he felt comfortable among the upper classes, and the house that he built in 1793-1794 indicates a modest aspiration to the role of gentleman farmer.

Van Alen moved to the newly-formed Rensselaer County less than a year before it was created, and so the possibility that this move was politically motivated must be considered. Connections with Stephen van Rensselaer, and the patroon's broader political interests may have influenced Van Alen's choice of new home. The move may have in fact been instigated by Van Rensselaer, who stood to gain by having close allies in the national political forum.

Van Alen immediately became active in the political arena. He was appointed Justice of the Peace and Assistant Judge in Rensselaer County on 15 April 1791.⁵⁹ He later served as assistant court justice.⁶⁰ He was nominated as Representative to Congress at a meeting of citizens in New City (Lansingburgh) on 1 January 1793. Thomas L. Witbeck, Van Alen's old friend and Stephen van Rensselaer's lawyer, was at the meeting and posted a letter to Van Rensselaer the next day. In it he represented that the patroon's own "friends particularly beg that you will assist them in supporting him [Van Alen] & forward a Circular Letter for that purpose."⁶¹

Van Alen was subsequently elected a member of Congress, but not without a contest of the election. In November of that year Witbeck informed Van Alen (already in Philadelphia) that "That Notoreous Villen HKVR is gone Down To Congress in order to Put you to some Trouble."⁶² He was referring to Henry K. van Rensselaer, who claimed that the ballots had been tampered with. One of the election officers had spent the evening after the close of the poll at

⁵⁷ Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.84, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

⁵⁸ Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, SC 7079, Box 76 (formerly individual accession 3197), New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

⁵⁹ Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester. *History of Rensselaer Co., New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), 60-62. A. J. Weise. *History of the Seventeen Towns of Rensselaer County from the Colonization of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck to the Present Time* (Troy: J. M. Francis & Tucker, 1880), 7.

⁶⁰ "North Greenbush Man County's First Congressman." *The Troy Record*, 6 May 1941, 19.

⁶¹ Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, SC 7079, Box 76 (formerly individual accession 785), New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York. The friendship between Van Alen and Witbeck is substantiated by the large number of letters that survive between the two.

⁶² John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-17, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

John E. van Alen's house, but this obvious irregularity was largely overlooked. The principal charge was "that [Van Rensselaer] had a greater number of votes in [Stephentown], than were returned to be estimated and canvassed." It was subsequently determined that even if this was the case, that it would not materially affect the results of the election.⁶³ Several persons gave depositions with respect to the charges, and no evidence of tampering was found.⁶⁴ Van Alen remained in office and served in that capacity until 1799. He was chiefly opposed by John Woodworth (1768-1858) of Troy in subsequent elections.⁶⁵

Oral tradition records that Evert van Alen, who had been "adopted" by his uncle, served as "secretary to John E. while he was in Congress."⁶⁶ Perhaps what was meant was that Evert conducted John's business at home while he was away, and forwarded letters to him in Philadelphia. Extant letters and notices of left letters to "Evert Van Allen of Rensselaerwyck" in local newspapers suggest that Evert continued to live with his aunt in Green Bush during the period of John E.'s sitting in Congress.⁶⁷

At the same time as he was making preparations to attend Congress in Philadelphia, John E. van Alen began work on an impressive new house, the subject of this report. A site was chosen to the west of the house Van Alen and his wife had occupied since 1790. It is possible that some of the materials from the earlier structure were reused. A brick bearing the number "1767" was found in the southwest chimney during renovations to the house in the 1970s, but this appears to have been a counting brick, rather than an indication of a date of production.⁶⁸

⁶³ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, at the First Session of the Third Congress* (Philadelphia: Childs & Swaine, 1793), 40-41 (24 December 1793).

⁶⁴ Depositions by Aaron Ostrander, John van Valkinbergh, Jacob Barhayt and Jacob C. Schermerhorn on behalf of John E. van Alen were conducted in December 1793. John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-18, 20, and 22, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

⁶⁵ James Dole to John E. van Alen, 14 February 1797. Roswell Randall Hoes Genealogy Collection, Senate House State Historic Site, Kingston, New York.

⁶⁶ Notes from interview with Mr. and Mrs. Walter van Alen by Nancy Swanson, February 1975.

⁶⁷ *American Spy* (Lansingburgh, NY), 15 July 1794, records a letter left for Evert van Alen at the Lansingburgh Post Office on 1 July.

⁶⁸ In support of this interpretation, a second brick with the number 659 inscribed on it was also found during the course of renovation work.

On 22 December 1793, Evert wrote from Blooming Grove to his uncle, then in Congress in Philadelphia that

Our Domestick affairs at Home as I have wrote you before are all in good order we have this last week got snow Enough to Make it Very fine Slaying and we was well prepared for it...Our Servents I Can again tell you behave themselves Very well and we live in pece and quietness...⁶⁹

Given John E. van Alen's exposure to high style Philadelphia culture during these years, it is remarkable that he did not purchase mantles, hardware or lighting fixtures of the latest design while in that city. There is evidence, however, that he acquired some furnishings, including Windsor chairs and at least one mirror, while in Philadelphia. Even more surprising is the fact that the Van Alens did not purchase high-style furnishings in neighboring Albany, where John maintained an office. The design of the house, rather, makes use of details that had been utilized in better houses of the upper Hudson Valley since the middle of the 18th century. The details of the mantles, door trim, paneled doors and baseboards, with notable exceptions, could have been designed a generation earlier. Their presence is probably attributable to two influences.

The Van Alen family, although long-involved with urban life in Albany by 1793, had its strongest ties to rural life and aesthetics of present-day Columbia County. For all of his connections to Patroon Stephen van Rensselaer as his principal surveyor, and pretensions to the status of gentleman farmer, the Van Alen's were ultimately just tenants on the Van Rensselaer Manor. Perhaps this put a damper on the incorporation of the urbane in the house. Notably, the high style furnishings known to have been in the house were few, and were gifts to Anne van Alen from Martha Washington. The Van Alens did not own a couch, and there is no record of their ever having entertained state visitors. They are, however, known to have possessed silver tea equipage and other accouterments of entertainment including a china punch bowl.⁷⁰

During this period a cultural sea-change was underway in the upper Hudson Valley. Large numbers of "New England men" were arriving, chiefly from Connecticut and Massachusetts. People in Van Alen's circle wrote at the time of an anxiety that these new people might at some point represent a larger voting block than the older Dutch families, and so they went out of their way to accord them representation in government, so as to court their support.⁷¹ This desire to find favor with the Yankee newcomers in the region may have been an influence in the selection by Van Alen of his house form and contents. Despite this, there is no doubt that a number of the articles listed in extant inventories of the house were inherited from his ancestors.

⁶⁹ Evert van Alen to John E. van Alen, 22 December 1793. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.87, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

⁷⁰ Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court Papers, on file at Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, New York.

⁷¹ Letter from Jeremiah van Rensselaer and Hendrick Oathoudt in Albany, 12 April 1786 to John E. van Alen. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.84, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

These are thought to have included a large kas, which is now in a private collection. The house was complete by November of 1794, when it was painted and the shutters primed.⁷²

During the construction of the house Evert continued to oversee the farming of the land in his uncle's absence. In a letter of 22 March 1794, he describes his plans for sowing the fields for the upcoming season, and gives details of the plantings undertaken the previous year.

As you Desire to know from me Concerning what part of the Farm to plant & sew this Spring I had Proposed to plant with Corn the West part of the Farm along the Road which was ploughed up last fall & plough it twice this spring then to sew Peas adjoining the Corn Nearer home. The peas I have Engage from Mr. Witbeck Eight Bushels More or less as you would wish to have Sewed Oats I had thoughts to sew on the level piece between the House & *Fransen Bergh* at the South Side of the Road which leads through it and flax on the North side of that Road. I had thought to get some Buck Wheat & sew that on the Nole wher we had wheat last year the south End of Fransen Bergh or on the Hill South of the House where where we had Oats last year. Uncle Kittle was here yesterday. I Related the above to him and he approved of it you might say sew Oats likewise on the New land along the Road Uncle Kittle tells me it will not do if we propos to sew it with wheat in the fall but planting of Courn & Sewing peas will be of Benefit to it. I would like to know whither you Intend to have the O[ther] piece (Called it Wy lant) Sewed with wheat in the fall....let me know whither you would lik[e]....[the] Orchard planted or Sewed & with what....we have yesterday & today been about mending up the fences about the House- the wheat out of the Cow Stable amounted to 72 ½ Bushels, the whole of which is Sold, from the Horse Stable 54, Bushels with 16 Bushels of which I have been to Mill last week. The Remaide which is 38 Bushels we stored the white wheat on the Balck. We are about thrashing & think we have a great plenty of Fodder such as Hay & straw and the Cattle are in good Order.⁷³

A few weeks later Evert wrote his uncle stating that

I have Hired a Man who is at work in the Meadow, we have not yet ploughed nor None of our Neighbours as we have since the begining of this Month had Very hard frosts Every Night and Cold North winds; tho I intend to begin to pough on Monday and likewise begin to garden- I have a good Deal Employ of Surveying which I attend to as much as Possable so as not to Neglect the Farming Buseness. I find myself well Employed to keep both a going. We have yet a Plenty of Fodder and our Creatures are in good Order.⁷⁴

Subsequent letters from Evert to his uncle include references to hogs, horses, cows and oxen on the property.⁷⁵ He continued to keep his uncle informed with respect to farm concerns and domestic affairs throughout John's period of service in Philadelphia. John E. was likely home during the crucial period of construction of the house, since Congress was in recess

⁷² Evert van Alen to John E. van Alen, 8 November 1794, Roswell Randall Hoes Genealogy Collection, Senate House State Historic Site, Kingston, New York.

⁷³ Roswell Randall Hoes Genealogy Collection, Senate House State Historic Site, Kingston, New York.

⁷⁴ Evert van Alen to John E. van Alen, 12 April 1794. Roswell Randall Hoes Genealogy Collection, Senate House State Historic Site, Kingston, New York.

⁷⁵ For example, Evert van Alen to John E. van Alen 1 December 1795. Roswell Randall Hoes Genealogy Collection, Senate House State Historic Site, Kingston, New York.

between 10 June and 2 November 1794. John E. leased additional parcels from the patroon on 2 May 1795 (31 acres) and 4 November 1797 (242 acres). These added to the 183.6 acre parcel which the house was constructed on gave him farmlands totaling 456.6 acres.⁷⁶

During his time in Congress, Van Alen received requests typical of those sent to persons in his position. These included requests for compensation and pensions, and other small favors. He served the balance of his time in Philadelphia without controversy. During his stay he and his wife are said to have become acquainted with Martha and George Washington. At least two invitations from the president to Van Alen survive, and a mirror and silver mounted coconut shell are known to have been given to Mrs. Van Alen by Martha Washington. An oral tradition states that George Washington visited the Van Alen house in Green Bush on one occasion.⁷⁷ While Washington is known to have visited Albany on a few occasions, this purported visit is not otherwise documented and cannot be substantiated.

Van Alen attended the 3rd, 4th and 5th Congresses.⁷⁸ His tenure was largely uneventful and he appears to have voted along party lines as opposed to by conscience. Of interest is his nay vote on 15 June 1797, on an act which was designed to “prevent citizens of the United States from privateering against nations in amity with, or against citizens of, the United States.”⁷⁹ Legislation such as this could not have failed to evoke memories of his experience in the Gulf at the onset of the Revolution. In February 1798 he was appointed chair of a committee to investigate alterations necessary on “an act making provision for the debt of the United States,” and reported on 28 February.⁸⁰ Van Alen remained active in the political life of Rensselaer County during his tenure in Congress, continuing as Assistant Judge and Justice of the Peace for a second three year term beginning in 1794, and again as Assistant Judge in 1797.⁸¹

⁷⁶ East Manor Accounts. Staats Family Papers, MG 15250, Box 3. New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

⁷⁷ “North Greenbush Man County’s First Congressman.” *The Troy Record*, 6 May 1941, 19.

⁷⁸ Third Congress, 4 March 1793-3 March 1795. First Session, 2 December 1793-9 June 1794. Second Session, 3 November 1794-3 March 1795. Forth Congress, 4 March 1795- 3 March 1797. First Session, 7 December 1795- 1 June 1796. Second Session, 5 December 1796- 3 March 1797. Fifth Congress, 4 March 1797- 3 March 1799. First Session, 15 May 1797- 10 July 1797. Second Session, 13 November 1797- 16 July 1798. Third Session, 3 December 1798- 3 March 1799. It is presumed that Van Alen passed most of his time in Greenbush when Congress was not in session.

⁷⁹ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, 1789-1873*, 15 June 1797. The Library of Congress, American Memory website, accessed 16 April 2002.

⁸⁰ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, 1789-1873*, 28 February 1798. The Library of Congress, American Memory website, accessed 16 April 2002.

⁸¹ Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester. *History of Rensselaer Co., New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), 60-62.

Little of the extent of Van Alen's political and social circles in Philadelphia is known, and it is not known where he stayed while there. Hints of his cohort are found in personal correspondence of the period, including a letter from James Gordon, a representative who sat for New York State from 1791 to 1795. Gordon was a Federalist, and appears to have been not only an acquaintance—as could be expected—but a friend of Van Alen. In a letter from January 1797 from Albany, where Gordon was serving in the state legislature, Gordon asked that Van Alen “Remember me to Mr. Moore & Mr. Grove” and inquired “How is Mr Dean, and Old Messr Mate [sp?] the Doctor? Mr. Robison & Family, and all our old acquaintances—and your Colleagues!”⁸²

That Van Alen also continued to work as a surveyor at this time, when Congress was not in session, is clear from a number of documents. He surveyed the farms of Matthias and Jacob I Van der Heyden, laying them out into the building lots that are the core of the City of Troy in 1793.⁸³ At the suggestion of Barent Bleecker of Albany, John Porteous of Little Falls retained Van Alen to conduct a new survey for canal of the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company in the autumn of 1798.⁸⁴

Van Alen was engaged by James Constable through Tench Coxe while in Philadelphia to survey a tract along the St. Lawrence River.⁸⁵ Probably related to this is a record of a journey back from a surveying trip in the summer of 1795, during which Van Alen and his company were accompanied by the French traveler Duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt. The travelers had been in Canada, and were awaiting the arrival of an American vessel to hire passage to Albany.

25 July 1795

...we discovered a vessel approaching. The [British] soldiers, who have learned hatred and contempt of the Americans along with the manual exercise, perceiving the attention with which we observed her approach, said to us, “Why, gentlemen, that is nothing; she is but a vessel of the damned Yankees;” and it was exactly a vessel of the Yankees, we wished to obtain. Mr. [John E.] Vanallen, an American, who resides in the vicinity of Albany, commanded the vessel; he came on shore shortly after, to procure some fresh provision, of which he stood in need, and to cure himself of an intermittent fever, that he had caught in the woods. From want of an inn, he had no opportunity of buying any at the fort; the officers might have easily supplied him with some vegetables; but in the opinion of a British officer, it is neither necessary nor decent to succor a Yankee.

⁸² James Gordon in Albany to John E. Van Alen in Philadelphia, 12 January 1797 (New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, 8045).

⁸³ A. J. Weise. *History of the Seventeen Towns of Rensselaer County from the Colonization of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck to the Present Time* (Troy: J. M. Francis & Tucker, 1880), 17.

⁸⁴ John E. van Alen to John Porteous, 30 October 1798. (Collection Karen S. Fisher, DeFrestville, New York.) John Porteous in Little Falls to Barent Bleecker [in Albany], 28 December 1798. (Transcribed in Richard Buckley. *Early Entrepreneurs of Little Falls, N. Y.* (Little Falls: Little Falls Historical Society, 1996), item 323.

⁸⁵ John E. van Alen Papers CK 542-48 and 49, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York; Tench Coxe to John E. van Alen 4 March 1795, Individual Mss. accession 8052 and John E. van Alen to Tench Coxe 29 June 1795, Individual Mss. accession 8023, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

Mr. Vanallen, although thus disappointed in his hope of finding in Oswego the necessary succor for his recovery, yet promised us two places in his vessel. He could not however set sail for Albany sooner than the next day, or perhaps in two or three days, after having been joined by three other vessels, which he expected, and in quest of which he returned to a certain point on the lake.

Two whole days elapsed, and the third began to press heavy upon us, when, being alone in the fort, I at last descried two vessels with my telescope, which was constantly pointed to the coast, whence I expected my deliverance; my effects were soon packed up and my stores collected. Whether these vessels belonged to Mr. Vanallen or any other person, we were determined to seize upon the first opportunity of departing from Oswego. It was Mr. Vanallen: he had been joined but by one of the vessels, and had resolved not to wait for the rest; yet as it was already noon, as his vessels were heavy laden, and the *rapids* two miles from Oswego, which he was obliged to pass, would have detained him too long to make much way the remainder of the day, he proposed to us, to follow him on foot, at four o'clock the next morning. We thought it better, to share his tent with him that very evening.

We set out at break of day, and yet were not able to advance more than ten miles, the whole day. The navigation of the river Oswego is extremely troublesome, as there is but very seldom sufficient water, even for pushing the vessel along. Each of our vessels, it is true, carried about one ton and a half, but each was worked too by three men.

Mr. Vanallen, in whose vessels we took our passage, is member of the congress for the county of Albany in the state of New York. He is also a geometer and surveyor. His age, and, no doubt, his talents, seem to have procured him the confidence of his country. He is charged with the commission of surveying upwards of half a million of acres, situated on Lake Ontario and the River St. Lawrence. Mr. Vanallen is justice of the peace, and for this reason styled 'Squire by his people, if he do not swear at them. He is about fifty years old, is said to possess a tolerable share of information, and seems in fact to be a worthy and intelligent man.

After a navigation, which ran constantly between woods, and in the course of which we saw, in a tract of country of eleven miles in length, not one felled tree, we reached at last, partly by rowing, and partly by pushing the vessel along, the rapids of the Three Rivers. All superfluous people were here obliged to leave the vessel. Mr. Vanallen, therefore, as well as myself, went on shore, and repaired to a small cottage.

...Our 'Squire, who had purchased in Kingston flour for six dollars a barrel, and pork for sixpence a pound, and from the connivance or extraordinary blindness of the English officers, conveyed it to the River Oswego, thought now of selling it here with considerable profit. He had already disposed of some barrels of flour for eight dollars a barrel at the Oswego Falls, and intended to transmit his whole cargo to Salt Springs, where he hoped to sell it for ten dollars a barrel. But he learned here, that the meeting, relative to the treaty with the Indians, was not to take place; that the country was full of provision; that it was sold at a much lower price than he demanded; and that specie was very scarce. He was, therefore, necessitated to give up his fond hopes, and embrace the resolution of proceeding somewhat farther in quest of purchasers.

I entertained some hope that, on account of this disappointment, we should this afternoon proceed some miles farther, when a vessel arrived, on board of which were Messrs. [Stephen van] Rensselaer, [John V.?] Henry, and Stouts [Henry Staats?], all inhabitants of Albany of great respectability. The first was not yet perfectly recovered from a fever, which had left him in some measure, but still carried all the symptoms of an intermittent. These gentlemen intended not to proceed farther. Mr. Vanallen proposed to delay his departure until the next morning, to travel in their company; he introduced us to them, and a glass of good wine, which they carried with them (they traveled all much at their ease), consoled Dupetitthouars as well as myself for this new delay.

The passage to Lake Oneida was attended with less difficulties, than that of the preceding days; we found it excellent traveling in the company of the gentlemen of Albany, one of whom was brother to the deputy-governor of New York, the second one of the richest merchants of Albany, and the third a very respectable lawyer; their behavior was frank and polite.

At Rotterdam Mr. Vanallen found an opportunity of selling his whole cargo, as well as one of his vessels, but at lower price than he hoped to obtain. His flour he sold for eight dollars a barrel, and at the Oswego Falls for eight dollars and a quarter.

We counted on advancing a few miles on the Wood Creek, before we should stop, when we fell in with our company from Albany, who had halted at the mouth of the lake. A fit of the ague had

obliged Mr. Van Rensselaer to put a period to this day's journey at two o'clock in the afternoon. The gentlemen proposed to us, to stop likewise; our conductor accepted the proposal, and our consent was a matter of course.

Although our party had formed the bold resolution of pushing on to the head of Mohawk River, we halted at Canada Creek, resolved to let the vessel proceed onwards in moonshine, and to pursue, ourselves, the voyage on the next morning at break of day.

In the whole course of our navigation on the Wood Creek, twenty-four miles in length, we saw not one building, and found but one spring, called Oakorchard, which was four minutes filling a small glass, and the water of which was but of a middling quality. Messrs. Van Rensselaer and Vanallen, the two sick members of our party, made the tour on horseback; Mr. Henry, Mr. Stouts, and myself, traveled on foot; and Dupetitthouars, passionately fond of vessels and navigation, followed the boats to help them along.

Having, at length, reached the place on the River Mohawk, where we were to embark, we found Mr. [van] Rensselaer in a fit of the ague. An hour after, arrived the mate of Mr. Vanallen's vessel, seized with the same illness, and last of all came Dupetitthouars, the Hercules of our party, complaining of pains in his limbs, head-ache, and cold shiverings. Independently of my apprehension for my companion, I most devoutly wished to see the end of this passage, and yet our arrival in Albany was continually delayed by new obstructions. The navigation of the Mohawk River is fortunately not like that of the rivers we have passed lately. We descent gently with the stream; and although its channel is in some places obstructed with trees, yet they may be easily cleared.

[Some description of travel on the Mohawk and arrival in Schenectady is given, and omitted here.]

In Skenectady we took our leave of Mr. Vanallen, who, in addition to the civilities shewn us in the whole course of our voyage, declined also to accept any money for our passage, on the ingenious pretence, that, as we carried our provisions with us, we had not in the least increased his expense. We remain, therefore, in many respects, under great obligations to this gentleman.

Mr. Vanallen had business to transact in Skenectady.....⁸⁶

During his sitting as a Representative in Congress, John E. van Alen remained active in Rensselaer County politics. He was chairman of the committee that nominated Anthony Ten Eyck as senator of the eastern district of New York for United States Congress in March 1797. The committee also nominated John I. van Rensselaer as candidate for the county's representative to the New York State Assembly.⁸⁷ Van Alen is recorded as chairing a committee of three concerned with the appointment of State Assemblymen and Senators, which also included Leonard Gansevoort and John Stephens from the town of Greenbush, in 1799.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Duke Francois Alexandre Frederic De La Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois and Upper Canada in the Years 1795, 1796, 1797*. (London: Davison, 1799). Reprinted in and copied here from Joel Munsell, comp., *Annals of Albany* 4 (Albany: Joel Munsell, 1853), 220-224; 226.

⁸⁷ *American Spy* (Lansingburgh, New York), 28 March 1797, 3:4.

⁸⁸ *Northern Budget* (Troy, New York), 16 April 1799, 1:3.

Evert entered into public service in a modest way about his time as well, serving as clerk to a meeting of freeholders of the Town of Greenbush on 19 March 1798. John Jay and Stephen van Rensselaer were supported in their bid for reelection to the offices of governor and lieutenant-governor, respectively, and John I. Van Rensselaer was endorsed as candidate for the Assembly.⁸⁹

In 1797, Van Alen was championed by Peter van Schaack and John Jay as representative for Lord Amherst's land interests in the United States, which exceeded 20,000 acres. Van Alen would be responsible for surveying the tract as well as entering into lease agreements with tenants.⁹⁰ Amherst accepted Jay's recommendation, and Van Alen served in this capacity, chiefly as a land agent, for Baron Jeffrey Amherst (1717-1797) and later Earl William Pitt Amherst (1773-1857), his nephew, until his death in 1807.⁹¹ Evert conducted much of the survey work while John E. was in Congress.⁹²

With increased public exposure, Van Alen was invited to membership in prominent groups and organizations. He was elected to the New York Agricultural Society in 1798. While "members of the Legislature" were among the honorary members, it is clear that Van Alen was elected for his social standing, since he was a member in full. Thomas L. Whitbeck, his long standing friend, was elected during the same year. Among the other prominent members of the organization were the Patroon, Stephen van Rensselaer, John Jay, Robert R. Livingston, George Clinton, Pierre De La Bigarre, Simeon De Witt, Horatio Gates, Philip J. Schuyler, Pierre van Cortlandt, Jr., Elkanah Watson, David Hosack, Noah Webster, Jr., Charles Edward Genet, Albert Gallatin, James Renwick, John Tayler, DeWitt Clinton, Isaac Hutton, Peter Gansevoort, Samuel Stringer, John Lincklaen and John Stevenson.⁹³

⁸⁹ *The Albany Centinel*, 3 April 1798.

⁹⁰ Lord Amherst to John E. van Alen 2 April 1799. John E. van Alen Papers CK 542- 102, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

⁹¹ Numerous letters from 1797 onward support this assertion.

⁹² John E. van Alen to Evert van Alen, 10 May 1798. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.96, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

⁹³ Membership Roll, New York Agricultural Society, 1 April 1795 and 1798. Mss. 704, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

The Van Alens and Washington Irving

That John E. Van Alen was known by Washington Irving is documented by the following anecdote recorded by the author.

Do you remember our fishing expedition in company with Congressman Van Alen, to the little lakes a few miles from Kinderhook, and John Moore, the vagabond Admiral of the lake, who sat crouched in a heap in the middle of his canoe in the center of the lake, with fishing rods stretching out in every direction like the long legs of a spider? And do you remember our piratical prank when we made up for our bad luck in fishing, by plundering his canoe of its fish when we found it adrift; and do you remember how John Moore came splashing along the marsh on the opposite border of the lake, roaring at us, and how we finished our frolic by driving off and leaving the Congressman to John Moore's mercy, tickling ourselves with the idea of his being scalped at least.⁹⁴

Irving's intimacy with the Van Alen family is further indicated by his inclusion of Katrina Van Tassel, "a girl renowned for her beauty and coquetry" in his "Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Katrina is known to have been modeled on Catherine van Alen, daughter of Dirck, and a cousin of John E.⁹⁵ Irving's association with other members of the extended Van Alen family will be introduced later in this chapter.

John E. van Alen's late activities, and more on Washington Irving

It is likely that Van Alen's appointment as land agent to Lord Amherst motivated his decision to decline reelection to public office, a decision which he first announced in November 1797, but which he apparently reconsidered since he served until March 1799.⁹⁶ However, this decision did not preclude his continuing involvement in the political affairs of the region.

On 25 March 1799 John E. van Alen chaired a meeting "for the purpose of nominating a proper candidate for Senator for the Eastern District at the ensuing election." Moses Vail was selected as candidate at that meeting, held in the house of Captain Riley in Greenbush.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Washington Irving to Jesse Merwin, 12 February 1851. Printed in Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family embracing a Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 13. The letter is published in Irving's Collected letters, with a note indicating the editor's belief that Irving meant Jacob I. Van Alen, but they seem unaware of John E. as an alternate possibility. In the original collected letters there is no note to indicate which "Congressman Van Alen" was meant. Ralph M. Aderman, Herbert L. Kleinfield and Jenifer S. Banks, eds. *Washington Irving, Letters, Volume IV, 1846-1859* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 243.

⁹⁵ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family embracing a Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 13.

⁹⁶ *The Albany Centinel*. 28 November 1797, reprinting an article from the *Commercial Advertiser*.

⁹⁷ *The Albany Centinel*, 2 April 1799.

One week later, on 1 April, Van Alen was appointed as one of the board of directors of a turnpike company established “for improving the road from the village of Bath to the Massachusetts line...” He was at least in part responsible for surveying

a good and sufficient road from the village of Bath in the county of Rensselaer, in the nearest and most direct route to the house of James Main in Petersborough in said county and from thence to the line of the State of Massachusetts, where the road from Williamstown to the city of Albany crosses the said line.⁹⁸

In 1799 Van Alen was appointed as one of three commissioners, together with Harmanus P. Schuyler and James van Ingen, “to make a partition among the Proprietors...of...[a] tract of land...in the county of Schoharie...containing seven thousand three hundred and fifty acres,” which had been granted by the State of New York to members of the Livingston family and others in 1786.⁹⁹

The census of 1800 recorded three free whites (John, Anne and Evert) as well as seven slaves living in the household.¹⁰⁰

After serving in Congress, Van Alen again served as judge for a year beginning 27 February 1800, and in 1801 became a member of the New York State Assembly.¹⁰¹ He was member of a committee to select the site of the Farmers’ Bank in Troy, appointed in March 1801.¹⁰² During that same month his nephew Evert married Derkje (Derica) Knickerbocker at the Dutch Reformed Church in Schaightcoke. Derkje came from a prominent family, made famous in *A History of New-York...by Dietrich Knickerbocker* by Washington Irving.¹⁰³ Derkje’s brother Herman was the “cousin-german, the congress-man” upon whom the figure of Dietrich was modeled.¹⁰⁴ Irving had previously used members of the Kinderhook branch of the Van Alen family as character models in his short stories of Hudson Valley legend.

⁹⁸ George Baker Anderson. *Landmarks of Rensselaer County, New York* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Company, 1897), 77-78. Includes more descriptive information re the construction of the road.

⁹⁹ *The Albany Centinel*, 25 May 1799.

¹⁰⁰ *Population Schedules of the Second Census of the United States*, New York Vol. 5, Rensselaer County, New York. Microfilm copy, New York State Library, Albany, New York.

¹⁰¹ “North Greenbush Man County’s First Congressman.” *The Troy Record*, 6 May 1941, 19.

¹⁰² A. J. Weise. *History of the Seventeen Towns of Rensselaer County from the Colonization of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck to the Present Time* (Troy: J. M. Francis & Tucker, 1880), 22.

¹⁰³ *A History of New-York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, by Dietrich Knickerbocker (New-York: Inskeep & Bradford, 1809).

¹⁰⁴ *The Late Judge Knickerbocker*. [1855]. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.80, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

Derkje moved into the house, and the couple named their first child, who was born in early 1802, after John E. This child did not survive infancy, and a later child was given the same name. A daughter was born in 1804, and was named in honor of Evert's aunt, Ann Maria.¹⁰⁵ Subsequent children were named after various relatives and given middle names of prominent Albany families allied with the Knickerbockers.

A number of letters between Derkje and Evert testify to the closeness which remained between the Van Alen and Knickerbocker families, and the frequent visits undertaken by her to relatives in Schaghticoke and the family of Rev. Benjamin C. Taylor in Bergen, New Jersey.

John E. van Alen served as secretary for a county meeting of the Republican electors of Rensselaer County on 7 April 1803 and was a member of a committee of correspondence with other county Federal Republican groups in determining candidates for the Eastern District of the state.¹⁰⁶ Thereafter he retired from public office. His death on 27 February 1807 was recorded in two succinct obituaries.

Died. At Greenbush, on Friday last, very suddenly, John E. Van Alen, Esq. formerly one of the representatives in Congress from this state.¹⁰⁷

A second obituary records that his death occurred "while sitting at table."¹⁰⁸

Peter van Schaack "my respected friend" was one of four executors of John E.'s will. Other executors were his wife Anne, his brother Lourens E. and nephew Evert.¹⁰⁹ Evert and Anne published a notice dated 2 June 1807, for "all persons having demands against the Estate...and all those indebted to the said estate" to come forward and settle their accounts.¹¹⁰ Thomas L. Witbeck died by 2 September 1807. A document of that date refers to the sale of his property, noting that he was deceased.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Evert may have been married once before. A letter to John E. van Alen from Anne van Alen dated 25 February 1798 mentions in her closing that "Evert and Lanah Join [in] their Love." Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.93, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

¹⁰⁶ *Lansingburgh Gazette*, 19 April 1803, 3:4.

¹⁰⁷ *Lansingburgh Gazette*, 3 March 1807, 3:5.

¹⁰⁸ *The Northern Budget* (Troy, New York), 3 March 1807, 3:4.

¹⁰⁹ John E. van Alen. Last will and testament. Transcribed in Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 18.

¹¹⁰ *Republican Crisis* (Albany), 9 June 1807.

¹¹¹ Tibbits Family Papers KM 13256, Box 31, folder 6, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

Slaves and free blacks in the Van Alen household

Slaves were an integral part of the Van Alen household from its inception. The census of 1790 indicates the presence of six slaves on the farm.¹¹² According to the census of 1800, seven slaves lived on the property.¹¹³ Most of these are known by their first names only. Tom is mentioned by name in John E.'s will of 1793 as part of the inheritance due Evert; he is described as a "boy" at the time.¹¹⁴ The inventory of John E.'s estate in May 1807 names Jim (valued at \$200.00), Pomp (valued at \$125.00), Gus (valued at \$180.00), and Jack and Dine (no value given). Another woman named Mol, together with Gus are mentioned in John E.'s will as deserving of manumission at the death or marriage of Anne, "in consideration of the faithful services rendered."¹¹⁵

A number of letters written in the 1790s to John E. van Alen while in Congress provide clues relative to the relationship between Anne and Evert and the African-Americans sharing their household. Evert reported to his uncle in December 1793 that "Our Servents I Can again tell you behave themself[s] Very well and we live in pe[a]ce and quietness."¹¹⁶ In January 1794 Anne wrote to John saying that "Agreeable to you Desire I remembered you to our Domesticks and read to Jim that part of Your letter which relates to their Behaviour and...they all Exclaimed they would be very Good but Poor Jim is yet apt to forget himself, tho I think is altered a little for the better."¹¹⁷

¹¹² *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States taken in the Year 1790*, New York. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1908), 38.

¹¹³ *Population Schedules of the Second Census of the United States*, New York Vol. 5, Rensselaer Co., N.Y. Microfilm copy, New York State Library, Albany, New York.

¹¹⁴ John E. van Alen. Last will and testament. In Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 18.

¹¹⁵ Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court Papers, on file at the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, New York.

¹¹⁶ Evert van Alen to John E. van Alen, 22 December 1793. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.87, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

¹¹⁷ Anne van Alen to John E. van Alen, 11 January 1794. Maher Family Papers MSS-005, Box 1(R-4), folder 9, The Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections, University of Toledo, Toledo Ohio.

Nicholas Kittle, John E.'s brother in law, reported on 2 February 1794 that "I have made a particular Inquiry Respecting your Servents. Evert this morning Informed me in presence of Mrs van Alen that Gus behaves himself Extraordinary well as likewise all Your Servents."¹¹⁸ On 1 March Anne wrote that

"...I blame myself for informing you of the misstep of our Gus, but Evert was much alarmed and indeed I was myself at his unusual stay. He has wrote you by which you will see that he met him and that he was very sulky, but when I spoke to him he it seems had recollected himself and...which is...[a] sign for me. I told him we had wrote to you. He said he was sorry and would do so no more, and I am in hope he won't."¹¹⁹

On 12 April 1794 Evert wrote his uncle saying that "our Domestick affairs I think are yet in Good Order."¹²⁰

Evert wrote his uncle on 2 January 1796, saying "I cannot help remarking how well our domestics have behaved themselves in keeping Christmas and New Years. Gus has yet his usual faults in being out of night, exceptive of this never could a family with the number of them that we have live more in peace and harmony than we do."¹²¹ Anne wrote her husband on 25 February 1798 "What has poor James done that you Never Mention him- his Mother is Curious to hear from him- tell him our little Pompey Goes alone- and that I hope to hear he is a Good Boy"¹²² This suggests that Jim went with John E. to Philadelphia, probably initially during the 1797 session of Congress. It also gives telling details. His mother was among the slaves in the household, and Pompey was a small child at this time. The tone of the letter suggests that young slaves in the Van Alen household were permitted to indulge in at least some of the activities of childhood.

Evidence in the house itself suggests that the southeast room on the second floor of the main portion of the building was used by the slaves. This room was originally whitewashed, and its interior partitions were merely whitewashed boards. A steep open stair led from this space to the attic, which is thought to have served as a sleeping area and work space. It is probably the location of the several spinning wheels recorded in the inventories. Oral history conveyed by past owners suggests the many small rooms in the basement as home to the slaves in the household.

¹¹⁸ Nicholas Kittle to John E. van Alen, 2 February 1794. John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-36, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

¹¹⁹ Anne van Alen to John E. van Alen, 1 March 1794. Original lost; transcribed in JED (pseudonym) "Interesting Old Van Allen (sic) Papers." *The Argus* (Albany), 18 June 1902.

¹²⁰ Evert van Alen to John E. van Alen, 12 April 1794. Roswell Randall Hoes Genealogy Collection, Senate House State Historic Site, Kingston, New York.

¹²¹ Reprinted in Benjamin Taylor van Alen, *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 21.

¹²² Anne van Alen to John E. van Alen, 25 February 1798. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.93, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

Per John E.'s will, Moll and Gus were manumitted at the death of Anne in January 1819. One slave remained in the household in 1820, a young male under fourteen years of age. Two free black women, aged under fourteen and 45 or older, lived in the house as well. The latter may have been Moll.¹²³ Anne van Alen devised to "my black woman, Moll, one Pair Linen Sheets, two Pair Pillow cases, two Blankets, one Shift and bumbazett gown."¹²⁴

The 1830 census records the presence of two freed persons of color in the household, a male under age 10, and a woman between the ages of 24 and 36.¹²⁵ These may have been mother and son. This woman, whose name remains unknown, may have been the same person as the free black girl recorded in the 1820 census and so would have been born around 1806. She may, in turn, have been the daughter of Moll.

At least one of the Van Alen's former slaves adopted their last name after manumission; "Pomp Van Allen" died on 26 September 1833 in Troy, New York and was buried in the Troy Burial Ground.¹²⁶ The later lives and final resting places of all but Pomp van Alen are not known. It is possible that an African-American burial ground exists somewhere on the lands now or formerly part of the Van Alen property. By 1840 there were no more African Americans living in the Van Alen household.¹²⁷

An African-American man named Prince van Alen (alt. Van Aller, Van Alles), appears in most of the Troy City Directories beginning in 1836.¹²⁸ His profession is listed variously as a laborer and whitewasher in subsequent directories. He died on 25 April 1873, aged 85, and so would have been born c.1788. His obituary called him "a very respectable colored gentleman" and records that "He was for many years janitor of the old Farmer's Bank,"¹²⁹ the same financial institution that John E. van Alen had help site when it was first established. It has not been verified whether or not he was one of the former slaves in the Van Alen household. If he was, he was listed under another name in the census' and Van Alen wills.

¹²³ *Population Schedules of the Fourth Census of the United States, 1820*. Microfilm copy roll 68, New York, Volume 7 (Washington, DC: The National Archives, 1959), New York State Library, Albany, New York.

¹²⁴ Anne van Alen. Last will and testament. In Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 19.

¹²⁵ *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830. Population Schedules New York*. Microfilm copy, vol. 22 (Washington, DC: The National Archives, 1955), 231. New York State Library, Albany, New York.

¹²⁶ Burial Records, Troy Burial Grounds (Corporate and other), 1 March 1833-27 February 1891. Troy Room, Troy Public Library, Troy, New York.

¹²⁷ *Population Schedules of the Sixth Census of the United States, 1840*. Microfilm Roll 332 New York Volume 32, Rensselaer County (pt.) (Washington, DC: The National Archives, 1967), 156. New York State Library, Albany, New York.

¹²⁸ N. Tuttle. *The Troy Directory for the year 1836-7* (Troy: N. Tuttle, 1836), 94.

¹²⁹ *Troy Daily Times*, 26 April 1873, 2:6, 3:2.

A second free black man with the surname of Van Alen was among the prisoners in Sing-Sing in the 1830s. A witness in an investigation into abuses at that prison referred to him as “insane,” and that he had been beaten so that “his legs [were] badly swollen, and his shirt adhered to his back, and the blood came through it. I told the Agent of it when he came into the yard; I told him Van Alen was not able to work on account of his legs swelling, and he told me to send for some grease.”¹³⁰

Oral history recorded in 1993 that the house formerly standing at 1729 Washington Avenue Extension was “rented by one of J. E. Van Allen’s freed slaves.” Maps from 1851 and 1854 do not associate an owner with this property, but an 1861 map notes John E. van Alen as the owner at that time.¹³¹ The adjacent property at 1731 Washington Avenue Extension remains standing and is associated with “Mrs. A. M. Van Allen” on that same map. Both structures are recorded as “reputed to have been constructed for freed slaves from the Van Alen family” on structure inventory forms completed in 1985.¹³²

John E. van Alen’s library

Upon the death of John E. van Alen in 1807, his small library was inventoried. The greater portion of the twelve different titles were reference books. The *Laws of the State of New York* and the *Laws of the United States* are the only titles specific enough to facilitate identification of editions.¹³³

Other books in Van Alen’s library included nine volumes of “United States Journals”-- probably the *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, for the sessions that Van Alen attended-- the third, fourth and fifth congresses.¹³⁴ Van Alen also had twelve paper-bound volumes of the Journals, and “Several Loose Papers Relative to Congress.” Since his

¹³⁰ *The Hudson River Chronicle*, 1 October 1839. Many of the documents pertaining to this investigation are in the Tibbits Family Papers, KM 13256, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

¹³¹ Joseph Sopko. *Cultural Resources Survey Report: PIN 1528.35.111, I-90 Interchange 8 Connector to Route 4, Town of North Greenbush, Rensselaer County, New York, Addendum, June 1993* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department, The New York State Museum, 1993), 22.

¹³² Hartgen-Swanson-Miller/Town of N. Greenbush/Greenbush Historical Society. Building-Structure Inventory Form for 11-29 G (1731 Washington Avenue Extension) and 11-32 G (1729 Washington Avenue Extension), on file at Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

¹³³ *Laws of the State of New York*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Albany, New York: Charles R. and George Webster, 1802), and *The Laws of the United States of America, In Three Volumes* (Philadelphia: Folwell, 1796).

¹³⁴ Two volumes were published for each of these congresses. These include *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, at the First Session of the Third Congress* (Philadelphia: Childs & Swaine, 1793); the volume for the second session of the third congress (Philadelphia: Francis Childs & John Swaine, 1794), and that for the first session of the fourth congress (Philadelphia: Francis Childs, 1795).

personal papers were not included in the inventory, these were probably drafts or published versions of bills or laws.¹³⁵

Van Alen also had a number of reference books, including “Brices Geography,” “Brices English Dictionary,” and “Brices French Dictionary” all of which remain unidentified. At least one of these was probably A. Boyer’s *Royal Dictionary* (London: Clarke, 1761), which is mentioned in the 1777 inventory of Van Alen’s effects. Four French language books are otherwise unidentified in the inventory. These may have included the French language *New Testament* and the “French Navigation book” mentioned in the 1777 inventory.¹³⁶ Their presence suggests at least a tolerable knowledge of that language. A single document in French by Van Alen testifies to his continuing facility in that tongue.¹³⁷ A Dutch bible is also noted as being among the books in the 1807 inventory.

Among those books not mentioned in the 1807 inventory but noted in that from 1777 were Stone’s *Euclid’s Elements*, a book, possibly also by A. Boyer of grammar, and *The Seaman’s Assistant*. This last may have been either Thomas Haselden’s *The Seaman’s Daily Assistant* (London: Mount & Page, 1764) or John Hamilton Moore’s *The Practical Navigator; and Seaman’s New Daily Assistant* (London: B. Law, 1776, 3rd ed.).

Van Alen’s personal papers descended to Evert upon his death. From Evert, the larger body of these documents were inherited by his son John E., who bequeathed them in turn to his son, Herman van Alen, who gave the bulk of them to the Albany Institute of History and Art. A newspaper article dating to c.1900 indicates that Mrs. Herman van Alen had deposited copies of John E. Van Alen’s papers in the New York State Library at about that time, but these may have been destroyed in the capitol fire of 1911, since they do not appear in the current catalogue.¹³⁸ Whether these documents were copies of those given to the Institute, or a second group of material is not known. The Van Alen papers that survive in the New York State Library are scattered throughout its manuscripts collection, and do not appear to have been deposited as a group.

¹³⁵ We know that Van Alen’s personal papers were not inventoried since a portion of what must have been a substantial collection survives in disparate collections, including the Albany Institute of History and Art and the New-York Historical Society.

¹³⁶ See Appendix 1, which accompanies the complete version of this report.

¹³⁷ John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-1, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

¹³⁸ Undated newspaper clipping, pasted into the cover of the Van Alen genealogy at the Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

The Anne van Alen and Evert van Alen occupancy, 1807-1819

Little is known of Anne van Alen's life after the death of her husband. She survived him by twelve years. It is possible that the Anne Van Alen who is listed in the Albany city directories for the years 1816-1818 as a widow and a teacher may be the same.¹³⁹ While this would be unusual for a woman left a substantial estate, it is possible that she undertook the work because it was convenient to do so. Evert was frequently in Albany during that period, engaged in the surveying work that would culminate in his map of the City of Albany in 1818.

The census of 1810 recorded a total of thirteen persons living in the Van Alen house. Seven of these individuals were slaves. Family members included Evert and his wife and their three small children— John Evert, Ann Maria and Elizabeth Magdalen— and his aunt Ann.¹⁴⁰

Evert was active in local business and public affairs at this time. Upon the death of his uncle he was appointed agent to Lord Amherst, a position which he apparently attended to with indifference, and which he does not seem to have held after 1820.¹⁴¹ In 1816 he served on the building committee for the neighboring Bloomingrove Dutch Reformed Church. The contract for the building was signed in February 1816, and it was built for \$2,550. The building was replaced in 1869 and no images of it have been located.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ In *The Annual Register and Albany Directory, for the Year 1816* (Albany: Packard & Van Benthuisen, 1816), 64, she is listed as living at 181 South Market Street. In *The Albany Directory, for the Year 1817* (Albany: Packard & Van Benthuisen), 70, she is listed as living at 171 South Market Street. In *The Albany Directory, for the Year 1818* (Albany: Packard & Van Benthuisen), 62, her address is given as 22 Washington Street.

¹⁴⁰ *Population Schedules of the Third Census of the United States*. Microfilm copy, Roll 35, New York, 453. New York State Library, Albany, New York.

¹⁴¹ Correspondence from 1820 supports this assertion. See in particular, John Jay to Peter van Schaack, 19 May 1820, John Jay Papers, Rare Books and Manuscript Division, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, New York, and Robert Troup to Evert van Alen, 19 July 1820, HH 1969.95, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

¹⁴² From a history of the church by Liston, published in 1934. Information from notes taken by Sam Swanson; no copy of this book was able to be located.

The Evert van Alen occupancy, 1819-1854

Apparently around this time the small village which grew up around the house was known both as “Van Alen’s” and as Blooming Grove. The small community was described in 1824.

There is a small Village at Van Alen’s, *Blooming Grove*, 2 miles E. of Bath, on the Williamstown turnpike, a Dutch Reformed Church, a tavern, and some 5 or 6 houses.¹⁴³

A post office was established in Blooming Grove on 6 March 1827, with Obadiah Lansing as postmaster. The name of the post office (and presumably the village) was changed to DeFreestville on 16 April 1832.¹⁴⁴ That name acknowledged the contribution of the DeFreest family to the community. The David M. DeFreest house was located immediately to the east of the Van Alen property¹⁴⁵. A hotel operated by the family was the center of the community for nearly a century and a half; it burned in the second quarter of the 20th century.¹⁴⁶ Several farms and the local hotel were run by members of the DeFreest family, and the DeFreest hotel was site of the post office in the mid-19th century.¹⁴⁷

A gazetteer from 1836 notes that “*Blooming Grove*, now called *Defriestville*, 3 miles from Albany, has 1 store, 1 tavern, 1 Dutch Reformed church, 6 dwellings” and a post office.¹⁴⁸ By 1842 the village had “about 15 dwellings” in addition to the other buildings noted in 1836.¹⁴⁹ It was said to contain twelve houses in 1860.¹⁵⁰ The locale was still sometimes called Blooming Grove as late as 1872,¹⁵¹ and the community cemetery still retains the Blooming Grove name.

¹⁴³ Horatio Gates Spafford. *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York* (Albany: B. D. Packard, 1824), 207.

¹⁴⁴ Lee S. DeGraff, compiler and editor. *Post Offices of New York State, 1792-1969*. (Ft. Johnson, New York: The Author /Empire State Postal History Society, 1969), 158.

¹⁴⁵ This house stood until c.1982, after having fallen victim to arson in 1977. David M. DeFreest died on 6 April 1835, aged 79 years, 8 months and 7 days; his tombstone has been moved to the Blooming Grove Rural Cemetery. (Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester. *History of Rensselaer Co., New York*. [Philadelphia: Everts & Peck], 1880, 349). The house was constructed c.1780; its framework was a braced version of the Dutch bent frame system.

¹⁴⁶ Photographs dating to the 1930s show the building standing in a dilapidated condition. Photos of the later 1940s show the foundation only. Collection of the North Greenbush Town Historian.

¹⁴⁷ See *Defreestville* inset map on *Map of Rensselaer Co., New York* by D. J. Lake and S. N. Beers (Philadelphia: Smith, Gallup & Co., Publishers, 1861), and *County Atlas of Rensselaer, N. Y.* by F. W. Beers (New York, NY: F. W. Beers, 1876).

¹⁴⁸ Thomas F. Gordon. *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, printers, 1836), 643.

¹⁴⁹ J. Disturnell. *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York* (Albany: J. Disturnell, 1842), 140.

¹⁵⁰ J. H. French. *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Syracuse: R. Pearsall Smith, 1860), 557.

¹⁵¹ Franklin B. Hough. *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Albany: Andrew Boyd, 1872), 560 n. 2.

Evert van Alen had lived with his aunt and uncle since at least 1793 and is probably among those enumerated in the 1790 household census. Whether he lived with his aunt and uncle before their removal to Greenbush is not now known. Son of John's brother Abraham E., Evert had essentially been adopted by the childless couple after the early death of his mother.

John trained Evert in his profession of surveying. Among the earliest of the recorded surveys conducted by Evert is a map of lands owned by John Bloemendall (Bloomingdale) of Rensselaer County, dated 1790.¹⁵² Evert served as one of four assistants to Charles C. Broadhead in the surveying of the Penet's Square tract in western New York State in 1795.¹⁵³ Evert had a distinguished career, was responsible for several important surveys, and created a comprehensive map of the City of Albany in 1818 which he revised in 1832.¹⁵⁴

Evert van Alen as agent to Lord Amherst

After the death of John E. van Alen, Evert was appointed manager of Lord Amherst's properties in the place of his uncle. He was recommended by Peter van Schaack, who was acting in his capacity as executor of John E. van Alen's estate. Van Schaack noted in a letter to John Jay that while he did not know Evert personally, his reputation recommended him for the job.¹⁵⁵

Documents in the John Jay papers at Columbia University suggest that Van Alen mismanaged his responsibilities to Amherst. A frustrated Lord Amherst proposed to John Jay that another agent be found in June 1818, and indicated in a subsequent letter that he hadn't heard from Van Alen since March 1815.¹⁵⁶ Evert's aunt, who lived in the house with his family, was ill during this period, possibly giving an explanation for his acting irresponsibly.

The troubles with Lord Amherst were only resolved through the intervention of John Jay and Peter van Schaack. Jay suggested to Van Schaack in a letter of 19 May 1820 that "on such

¹⁵² Evert was later a witness to John Bloemendall's will, dated 21 January 1833. Rensselaer County Surrogate Court Papers, Rensselaer County, Troy, New York, wills 12:316-17, file 99, collection Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, New York.

¹⁵³ "Field Notes of Penet Square by John Campbell, Evert Van Alen, John Young & Luke Castel Henmen, Assistants of Charles C. Broadhead, A. D. 1795." LeRay box, Jefferson County Historical Society, Watertown, New York.

¹⁵⁴ Both of these maps were engraved and published; numerous copies exist. The originals do not appear to have survived.

¹⁵⁵ John Jay to Lord Amherst, 5 January 1808. John Jay Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, New York.

¹⁵⁶ Letter of Lord Amherst to John Jay, 17 June 1818, mentioned in a letter from Jay to Lord Amherst, 5 September 1818. John Jay Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, New York. Peter van Schaack to Evert van Alen, 20 July 1819. John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-94, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

occasions I think Mr. Van Alen would do well to avail himself of your Judgement and Prudence.”¹⁵⁷ In the mean time, Lord Amherst wrote to Robert Troup in Geneva, New York, asking him to collect any information re his lands from Evert van Alen. He sent a letter of inquiry on 19 July 1820.¹⁵⁸ Evert countered with mention of a second letter from Amherst to him, which authorized him to continue to work as his agent. Evert also offered explanations for the various delays and mis-communications, citing a health crisis in February 1814, and delays in the mails.¹⁵⁹ Amherst eventually sold all of his American properties, obviating the need to resolve the disagreement.

Evert van Alen's military and public service

Evert was appointed “cornet” to the second squadron of the Rensselaer County calvary under Rensselaer Schuyler, Major on 30 October 1800.¹⁶⁰ He rose to rank of 1st Lieutenant on 2 April 1803¹⁶¹, and became Captain of the Second Squadron, 2nd Reg. calvary on 5 June 1811.¹⁶² On 3 July 1812 he lead his troop of Calvary (as Captain) in their attendance at the interment of General Peter Gansevoort in Albany, at the request of Governor Daniel D. Tompkins.¹⁶³ His regiment served during the war of 1812, were quartered in the nearby barracks at Greenbush, but saw no active duty.¹⁶⁴ Van Alen was a member of the calvary as late as March 1821.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁷ John Jay to Peter van Schaack, 19 May 1820. John Jay Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, New York.

¹⁵⁸ Robert Troup to Evert van Alen, 19 July 1820. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.95, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

¹⁵⁹ Evert van Alen to Robert Troup, 8 August 1820. John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-96. Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

¹⁶⁰ Hugh Hastings, ed. *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointment of the State of New York 1783-1821* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1901-02), I:537-538.

¹⁶¹ Hugh Hastings, ed. *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointment of the State of New York 1783-1821* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1901-02), I:690-691.

¹⁶² Hugh Hastings, ed. *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointment of the State of New York 1783-1821* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1901-02), I:1280.

¹⁶³ Hugh Hastings, ed. *Public Papers of Daniel D. Tompkins, governor of New York 1807-1817* (New York & Albany: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1898), I:348-349.

¹⁶⁴ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 22.

¹⁶⁵ Hugh Hastings, ed. *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointment of the State of New York 1783-1821* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1901-02), I:2301.

On 2 April 1813 Evert was elected a Justice of the Peace for Rensselaer County.¹⁶⁶ In April 1819, Evert and several others were appointed as Commissioner of Rensselaer County by DeWitt Clinton. In this role he was expected “.to take the proof and acknowledgment of Deeds and Discharges of Mortgages, the acknowledgment of Special Bail, and any Affidavit, or other Oath.”¹⁶⁷

Evert van Alen's land transactions

Van Alen was active in numerous land transactions as early as 1 March 1805. At that time he leased a 200 acre farm in Greenbush from the patroon. He appears to have remained living with his aunt and uncle, however. On 13 January 1822, he leased additional lands, assuming the lease of William and Eve Vandenberg. Van Alen exchanged this lease for that of another parcel, totaling 77.5 acres, on 17 April 1823.¹⁶⁸

Anne van Alen died at home in early 1819. Abraham A. and Derica van Alen conducted the inventory.¹⁶⁹ According to the terms of John E. van Alen's will, Evert inherited the house and John's surveying equipment. Modest renovations, including a new mantle in the southwest chamber on the first floor—apparently used by both John and Evert as an office—were undertaken soon after Evert's coming into ownership of the property.

The Van Alen family became close friends with the Reverend Benjamin C. Taylor, of the nearby Dutch Reformed Church, during his stay there from 1822-1825. They maintained close connections with the Domine and his family after their departure to Bergen, New Jersey, and their children Jacob Pruyn van Alen and Mary Taylor later married. Two Van Alen daughters married residents of Bergen, thus cementing the family's connection to that place.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 22.

¹⁶⁷ Appointment of Evert van Alen and others by DeWitt Clinton, 14 April 1819. 10191 (26), New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

¹⁶⁸ Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

¹⁶⁹ Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court Papers, on file at Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, New York.

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 25, 31, 36.

Evert sent his son Harmon G. to the Albany Academy for a year beginning in December 1827.¹⁷¹ He received the 1st Premium in Arithmetic in 1828.¹⁷² No other Van Alen sons are known to have attended this institution. Jacob P. boarded at Abraham J. Hardick's house during the autumn of 1840 while taking private lessons from Lemuel C. Holcomb.¹⁷³ No record of the education of any of the Van Alen daughters has been located, although a family account states that his financial success "enabled [Evert van Alen] to suitably provide for and educate his extensive family of children."¹⁷⁴

Harmon's education and the fact that he was early given a lot of ground to build a house upon, directly across from his father's house¹⁷⁵, together with his selection by Evert as apprentice in the surveying business, all point to his probable status as favorite son in the family. He was described as giving "marked attention to the culture of fruit and to his efforts can be largely attributed the growth and development of the fine orchards of apples, plums and pears which future generations so greatly enjoyed when visiting the "old home."¹⁷⁶

Evert was appointed a land commissioner for the estate of John C. Cuyler c.1824, and was active for the next four years in surveying and subdividing the tract.¹⁷⁷ A ribbon commemorating the 1824 reception for Lafayette in the City of Washington and bearing the handwritten name of "John E. van Alen" appeared at auction in January 2005. While it is possible that a 13-year old John may have made the trip to Washington, perhaps with his father, it is more likely that the ribbon was acquired at a similar reception in Troy or Albany from the

¹⁷¹ It was during the course of this same year that "two brothers named Van Alen" beat Garrit Steer to death at "a house of ill fame" located "half a mile from the city of Schenectady, on the Troy road..." The identities of these two Van Alen family members are not currently known; the relative rarity of the spelling of the surname suggests the possibility of a close relationship, however. *Eastern Argus*, 10 July 1827, reprinted from the *Albany Daily Advertiser*.

¹⁷² Henry Hun. *A Survey of the Activity of The Albany Academy, The Ancestry and Achievements of its Students, Its Undeveloped Material and its Finished Products* (N. P., 1935), Volume 5, V-1. Typescript on file at the New York State Library, Albany, New York.

¹⁷³ Abraham J. Hardick to Evert van Alen, 18 October 1840. Original not located. Photo-reproduced in Benjamin Taylor van Alen, *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 38.

¹⁷⁴ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 21.

¹⁷⁵ This lot was later referred to as "Harmon's Lot" and given by Evert van Alen to his son Harmon.

¹⁷⁶ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 31.

¹⁷⁷ Evert van Alen. "Expences of Travel & Board & c in going to and Exploring the Lands of the Heirs of John C. Cuyler..." John E. van Alen Papers, CK 542-99, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

same tour.¹⁷⁸ In 1828 Evert van Alen surveyed the Village of Gibbonsville (part of the present-day City of Watervliet in Albany County), laying it out “into village lots, with streets and alleys.”¹⁷⁹

Evert was involved in the survey work for the Erie Canal, and was employed for two years “as surveyor and engineer upon the eastern end of that extensive work.”¹⁸⁰ He also participated in the planning of the Albany basin, and surveyed, in conjunction with Boston engineer Loammi Baldwin, a route for a proposed canal connecting Troy and Boston, intended to bring all of the New England-bound Erie Canal traffic through the former city. Although never undertaken, the project was described by Theodore Dwight as costing three million dollars for just the section between Troy and the Connecticut River, with 78 miles of canal, four miles of tunnel through the Hoosac Mountain, and 611 feet elevation change negotiated by locks.¹⁸¹ It had been initiated by the citizens of the City of Troy in November 1825, probably at the instigation of George Tibbits, then mayor of the city. Tibbits personally paid Evert van Alen on 6 October 1825 “To Making a Map Representing the Hudson & Hoosick River Poesten Kill as also other streams & with the Contemplated Canal from Troy to Messachusetts.” Tibbits noted on back that this work was a “Bill for Making Boston Canal.”¹⁸² Baldwin presented the project, with an estimated cost of six million dollars, in his proposal to the Massachusetts State Legislature in November 1826.¹⁸³ Evert apparently engaged in the selling of trees, at this time as well, since in May 1828 he receipted \$2.00 for “10 trees commonly called gages” from Garret Y. Lansing.¹⁸⁴ These may have been cuttings from the plum trees raised by Harmon.

¹⁷⁸ This item, identified in the catalog as a “framed ribbon-badge worn by John E. Van Alen at reception for General LaFayette, Wash DC, 1874 [sic]” was auctioned by Stuart Holman of Cincinnati on 7 January 2005. Its present whereabouts are unknown.

¹⁷⁹ Howell, George R. and Jonathan Tenney, editors. *History of the County of Albany, New York, from 1609 to 1886* (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co. Publishers, 1886), 976.

¹⁸⁰ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 21.

¹⁸¹ Theodore Dwight. *The Northern Traveller* (New York: G. C. Carvill, 1828), 41.

¹⁸² Tibbits Family Papers KM 13256, Box 37, F6, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

¹⁸³ For a related project, see DeWitt Clinton and Loammi Baldwin. *Letters of Governor Clinton, and of Colonel L. Baldwin, improved as evidence before the Joint Committee of the Legislature of Massachusetts, on the petition of Samuel Hinkley and others, for the extension of the Hampshire and Hampden Canal, February, 1828* (Boston: Dutton & Wentworth, 1828).

¹⁸⁴ Lansing Papers KT 13324, Box 17, Folder 19, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

Evert's family continued to strengthen its ties to the Knickerbockers and their circle in Schaghticoke through marriages and business relationships. Evert and Derica's daughter Elizabeth married William van Vechten of Schaghticoke at the house at 6 pm on 4 December 1828.¹⁸⁵

The 1830 census recorded a total of fourteen persons living in the Van Alen household. Among these were two free persons of color and ten of the Van Alen's eleven living children. They had a total of twelve children, including John Evert (1802), Ann Maria (1804-1896), Elizabeth Magdalen (1807-1877), John Evert (1810-1872), Abraham Evert (1811-1899), Harmon G. (1814-1837), Christina C. (1816-1883), William Knickerbocker (1818-1903), Stephen van Rensselaer (1820-1905), Cornelia van Rensselaer (1822-1880), Benjamin Taylor (1824-1870), and Jacob Pruyn (1825-1867).

An Albany paper of 14 April 1832 included a proposal of Evert van Alen "to publish his improved map of the city."¹⁸⁶ On 21 December 1833, Derica, Evert's wife died. Her obituary was long for the period, and indicative of the high esteem and affection with which she was held.

Died...On Saturday last, at Blooming-Grove, Rensselaer co., Mrs. D. Van Allen, consort of Evert Van Allen, Esqr. aged about 55 years. In the death of this amiable lady, society has lost one of its brightest ornaments, the church a worthy member, the poor a kind and benevolent friend, and her bereaved husband and children an affectionate wife and mother, who will long be remembered by them with affectionate regret.¹⁸⁷

Evert's son Harman died a few years later. On 29 August 1837 Evert wrote to Teunis van Vechten, Mayor of Albany and a relative, noting that

...myself and Family have all been up with Harman last Night, his Fever was Very high and took no Rest, his Case this Morning was Considered Doubtful. I have Sent for Doctor McClannel of Nassau who is to be here about 2 o'clock his Simtoms are no Better.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ *Lansingburgh Gazette*, 16 December 1828, 3:4.

¹⁸⁶ Joel Munsell, comp. *Annals of Albany*, vol. 9 (Albany: Munsell & Rowland, Publishers, 1858), 247.

¹⁸⁷ *The Troy Budget*, 27 December 1833, 2:7.

¹⁸⁸ Evert van Alen to Teunis van Vechten, 29 August 1837. Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, SC 7079, Box 81, New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

Evert had begun to prepare Harman for a profession in surveying. The sole known example of Harman's surveying work was completed less than two months before his death, which occurred on 18 September 1837.¹⁸⁹ Evert's health was declining as well. Again, writing to Teunis van Vechten, he apologized for his inability to do surveying work.

[I] am not as yet able to Perform- I have a Rheumatism in...my Right Sholder & arm which Disenables me to use my Staff, and also Pains in my Right Side and Sholder Blade. I am using all Possible means for Releaf...¹⁹⁰

The 1840 census recorded seven persons living in the household: 1 male aged 15-20 (Jacob), two males aged 20-30 (William and Stephen), 1 male aged between 60 and 70 (Evert), one female aged between 15-20 (Cornelia), 1 female between 20-30 (Christina), and one female aged 30-40 (Ann Maria). Three persons were engaged in agriculture at that time. Two of Evert's four sons had left the house at this date. Abraham E. was married to Maria Schermerhorn on 27 March 1834 and had relocated to what was sometimes referred to as the South Farm, which was southeast of the homestead.¹⁹¹ This structure was probably constructed at about the time of the marriage. John Evert was married on 27 December 1835 to Mary Ann Sanders.¹⁹² It is not known where he was living in 1840. There were no hired hands or free blacks living with the family at that date.¹⁹³

Tenant farmers on the Van Alen farm: An account by John Lemley

An interesting account of the lives of tenant farmers on the Van Alen farm exists in the memoirs of John Lemley. He recalled arriving from Albany to the east side of the Hudson at Bath via the ferry in the spring of 1848.

At Bath we took the highway leading out to Blooming Grove, reaching a point in the road where there is a stone quarry, a little before noon, and a generous German family living in a house just west of the

¹⁸⁹ *Map of the estate of Philip Schuyler, town & county of Saratoga, N. Y.: which is caused to be surveyed and laid into farms and lots and numbered as above, represented with the quantity of acres inserted in each farm and laid down..27th July 1837.* New York: Lith. of G. Endicott. 74748 (1837 99-6517) New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York. For Harmon's obituary, see the *Troy Budget*, 19 September 1837, 3:2.

¹⁹⁰ Evert van Alen to Teunis van Vechten, 5 July 1838. Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, SC 7079, Box 81. New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

¹⁹¹ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family embracing a Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 29.

¹⁹² Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family embracing a Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 28.

¹⁹³ *Population Schedules of the Sixth Census of the United States, 1840.* Microfilm copy, roll 332, New York Volume 32 (1-371), Rensselaer County (pt.) (Washington, DC: The National Archives, 1967), 156. New York State Library, Albany, New York.

ledge, on the south side of the road, kindly invited us in, gave us a dinner and we rested for several hours. In the mean time the man and my father went out, presumably to look for a place...after we had thanked the kind people for their hospitality and reached Blooming Grove, we turned south on what is known as the Troy road. South of this village, a half mile or so, we took up our abode in a little frame tenement house on the farm of a man named Van Allen. Here we passed our third night. I do not remember whether there was any furniture in the house or not. Presumably there was none, as such houses usually stand empty. But I know all we had was the contents in the large traveling bag. Not a chair, no bedding of any kind, no furniture, not even dishes to eat out of. We must have reached this house late in the afternoon, perhaps four o'clock. Do not remember seeing Mr. Van Allen or any member of his family at the house that evening.

How to make a commencement was the wonder of my mother. I remember she sent brother and I out for some bread and milk. And I have often wondered why we did not go to the house of the proprietor, but instead to a house down a road leading to Albany, and back a little from it. The name of the owner I afterward learned was De Freest. It was an old-time farm-house, with ample surroundings. When we reached the dining-room door, the family were seated at the supper table, and a colored lady, large and fat and real motherly-looking, with a yellow dress, her hair done up in a pyramid shape on the crown of her head, and a white fillet about it, waited on the table. It was a sight that struck us with great surprise, but my New York experience had impressed me that these colored people were human after all. The family must have understood German, for we knew no other language, and they were real kind, gave us bread and milk and dishes to carry the food in. As the colored woman handed me the can of milk, grinning, showing her white teeth, I trembled with terror. She said something, but we did not understand.

Upon our return home, we told mother all about it, and she explained that the colored people were clever and good-hearted, and when we met them not to be afraid, as they were perfectly harmless. I often saw this colored servant afterwards, and her quaint dress and black face were a study to me.

I have no remembrance of date of months as yet, and hence can only reckon time by the seasons. This must have been the last of May or the first of June, 1848, for corn was just coming up. My father went to work, but he could draw no wages till he had earned some, so there seemed no alternative for us but to live on charity. This was very trying to mother. She grieved much over the thought that her children were now compelled to go from door to door and ask bread for a living.

Life, indeed, looked dark and wearisome to her.

Being the oldest of the family, I had to take the lead in this dreaded and unpleasant task...All summer I had to do this....

But by degrees one article after another was added to the household, and living became endurable. Whether father drew any of his wages from Mr. Van Allen I never knew. My recollection is that he did not. We never saw or heard anything of it in the home. That he was industrious and worked hard to provide for his family, I have always believed, and yet nothing came into the house. As the summer passed into the autumn, and unpleasantness grew up between Mr. Van Allen and my father. What the cause of it was I never learned. It was the common talk in the family, and we learned it when it was too late, that this man Van Allen, made it a practice to procure foreign help who were ignorant of the laws and usages of this country, and have them work through the season and then turn them away without their wages. This, it seems, was the unhappy luck of my poor discouraged father. Oh, it went so hard with him! Mr. Van Allen was not only mean, but ugly, that I know, for after the season of farm labor had closed, and he had withheld my father's wages, he tried to get rid of us altogether.

We had to go from the little dwelling to the stock-yard for the water we used. This, at the close of my father's services, he forbade us to do. We disregarded his unreasonable requests and obtained water as before. Indeed it was the only place where we could obtain it. One Sabbath, at the request of mother, Peter and I went to the stock-yard pump for some water. Mr. Van Allen saw us, and shouted to us to pour the water upon the ground. This we refused to do. Upon this he fired a gun, the report of which frightened us and we ran to the house. I do not suppose it was loaded, but was only intended to scare us. which it certainly did. But then we were poor and helpless, knew nothing of the laws of the land or of our rights under them, and so we endure these insults as best we could.

Coming to a new country and among a strange people, one meets with constant surprises, both in society and in nature. For example: My boyish curiosity was aroused to its utmost tension to

see the farmers string their corn-fields with twine and bits of shining tin. It was such a beautiful sight to see these gleam and sparkle under the noon-tide sun. And then the “scare-crows,” they were something wonderful...¹⁹⁴

The “Mr. Van Allen” of John Lemley’s recollections was probably a son of Evert van Alen, as the latter was elderly (76 years old) by that date, and could be expected to have turned over management of the farm to one or more of his sons. The location of the tenant farmhouse appears to have been on Route 4 near its intersection with Third Avenue Extension, and it may be the same structure as that small mid-19th century house, heavily altered, which is now located at 562 US Route 4. This portion of the farm was occupied by Evert’s son Abraham; he may have been the “mean” and “ugly” landlord.

Whether ugly and mean or not, Abraham later distinguished himself as a farmer and inventor. At the 1867 winter meeting of the New York State Agricultural Society, held in Albany on 14 February of that year, he won two dollars for the second best “grain and seeds” for 56 pounds of White Michigan rye.¹⁹⁵ Two years later, at the winter meeting of the same group held at the state capitol, Abraham “had on exhibition a flat iron, which is a fine invention.”¹⁹⁶

Late activities of Evert van Alen, and Some Notes on his Children

On 10 April 1849 an act was passed “to allow the president and directors of the eastern turnpike to sell a part or all of their road, and to form a plank-road from Albany to Sand-lake.” Evert van Alen was among the directors, as were Erastus Corning, Samuel S. Fowler, John DeFreest and others. A county history from 1880 notes that at that time “the planks of this road have almost all disappeared from the road-bed which were used in its construction”¹⁹⁷ A portion of this plank road was uncovered during construction in front of the Van Alen house in the early 1990s; it was salvaged by Sam Swanson and is now part of the collections in the house.

By 1848, William Knickerbocker van Alen, son of Evert and Derica, was living at 2 Cortlandt Street in New York and was awarded a diploma for the “second best compressed bullets” at the 21st annual fair of the American Institute held in New York City in October of that

¹⁹⁴ John Lemley. *Autobiography and Personal Recollections of John Lemley, editor of the Golden Censer, with Seven Years Experience as Editor and Public Speaker* [6th edition?] (Albany, 1901), 39-42.

¹⁹⁵ *Transactions of the New York State Agricultural Society for the Year 1866* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuysen & Sons, 1867), 183.

¹⁹⁶ *Transactions of the New York State Agricultural Society, with an Abstract of the Proceedings of the County Agricultural Societies, Volume XXVIII- 1868* (Albany: The Argus Company, 1869), 13.

¹⁹⁷ A. J. Weise. *History of the Seventeen Towns of Rensselaer County from the Colonization of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck to the Present Time* (Troy: J. M. Francis & Tucker, 1880), 137.

year.¹⁹⁸ He moved to California in 1849, and was later recognized as an important early settler. He quickly rose to prominence in San Francisco, sitting on the Board of Supervisors during 1856-1858. His early experiences were recorded in the 1880s, and are preserved in the Bancroft Collection.¹⁹⁹ Despite his move a continent away, he continued to express concern for his family and its continuing occupation of the farm. Upon being informed by his brother Stephen of his other brother Jacob P. (known as Pruyn in the family) having sold his allotted part of the farm, he reacted by saying that

it certainly would have been gratifying for me to Know how much of Pa's gift to one of his sons has already so soon passed out of his hands into strangers. I have already hoped that none of my Brothers at home would sell their land or any part of it, but would be able to retain it all and pass it over to the next generation of our family. I mean each ones own children (*you excepted*). The best course my Brothers can pursue for their own interest is to act and do just as they think *Pa* would advise them if he was still living. The greatest respect we could show our deceased Parent is to follow such advice. I hope never to hear of any more land being sold of *Pa*'s gift unless one Brother sells it to another, but would rather they would live so as not be obliged to sell at all.²⁰⁰

The 1850 census lists John E. van Alen as the head of the household, aged 38 years, and that he was a farmer with personal property worth \$1,500. His wife, Mary A. was 29 at the time of the survey, which occurred on 17 August 1850. His sister Ann M., unmarried and aged 42, also lived at the house as well as his brother Stephen (28) who was listed as a farmer. Their children Harmon (11) and Evert (5) were recorded by the census. Evert van Alen was listed as a surveyor aged 78 years, with personal property worth \$50,000. Two servants or tenant farmers were in the household, Ann Gardner, aged 35 and Thomas Garrison, aged 45. Both had been born in Ireland.²⁰¹

The agricultural schedule for the same census lists John E. van Alen's farm as 92 acres in extent with 80 acres improved, with a value of \$10,000. Stephen van Alen's farm is the same size, with the same number of acres improved, with a value of \$8,000.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ *Seventh Annual Report of the American Institute, of the City of New-York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1849), 93.

¹⁹⁹ *Dictation from William Knickerbocker Van Alen*, mss. (1886-1889). Hubert Howe Bancroft Collection, University of California, Berkeley, California.

²⁰⁰ William Knickerbocker van Alen to Stephen van Rensselaer van Alen, 4 June 1856. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.104, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

²⁰¹ "Schedule 1 Free Inhabitants in the Town of Greenbush in the County of Rensselaer State of New York Enumerated by me on the 17th day of August 1850 R. M. Defreest. Page 616 (308). Transcribed by Mrs. George C. Derbyshire and published as *1850 Greenbush, Rensselaer County, New York Census* (Troy: Philip Schuyler Chapter, NYSDAR, 1984).

²⁰² "Schedule 4 Productions of Agriculture in the Town of Greenbush in the County of Rensselaer State of New York Enumerated by me on the 17th day of August 1850 R. M. Defreest. Page 616 (308). Transcribed by Mrs. George C. Derbyshire and published as *1850 Greenbush, Rensselaer County, New York Census* (Troy: Philip Schuyler Chapter, NYSDAR, 1984).

Evert was in sufficiently poor health to write a will in November 1852. He must have anticipated dying soon, since a letter which he wrote at that time possesses the air of finality.

To all my Beloved Children

The Inclosed contains a Division of all my property both Real & Personal in the form of a Will & Testament, and which I have endeavored to divide impartially among all my children according to the best of my Judgment and with which they I trust, all will be contented, and that there may be no discord, or contention, about the World's goods for which I have devoted my whole life to accumulate for the comfort of all my dear offspring to enjoy and, may the Lord incline your hearts, each and every one of you to live Devoted to his cause and hereafter be received as his Diciples is the sincere Prayer of your affectionate Father.²⁰³

He died on 14 August 1854. Joel Munsell, Albany's chief historian during the nineteenth century recalled him as "an ancient city surveyor, whose map of the city is so much referred to in title deeds."²⁰⁴ Howell & Tenny, later nineteenth century historians, described him and his career as follows.

Evert Van Allen, now deceased, was the surveyor who laid out the most part of the City of Albany. He was employed by the Mayor and Common Council to lay out streets and city lots, and his map is considered good authority, and is still referred to in titles to lots, etc. He was also surveyor for the Patroon for many years, locating and surveying lots in the Manor of Rensselaerwyck.²⁰⁵

The 1855 New York State census gives Evert van Alen's cause of death as due to a heart condition and records that he died on 14 August 1854, aged 82 years.²⁰⁶ A mahogany coffin, coffin plate and a rough coffin were purchased by John E. van Alen from J. E. Parsons on Broadway in Albany on that same date for \$35.00. John purchased a gravestone from Eaton & Hoyt of Greenbush for \$25.00 on 20 October 1854. An inventory of the estate was conducted on 11 November 1854, but this has since disappeared from the estate papers.²⁰⁷ Evert was given a glowing eulogy by his grandson Benjamin Taylor van Alen.

²⁰³ Evert van Alen to his children, 20 November 1852. Original not located. Photo-reproduced in Benjamin Taylor van Alen, *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 23.

²⁰⁴ Joel Munsell, comp. *Annals of Albany*, vol. 6 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1855), 336.

²⁰⁵ Howell, George R. and Jonathan Tenney, editors. *History of the County of Albany, New York, from 1609 to 1886* (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co. Publishers, 1886), 741.

²⁰⁶ "Marriages and Deaths...of the Town of North Greenbush in the County of Rensselaer taken by [David L. DeFreest] by the fifth day of June 1855. New York State Census, 1855, Rensselaer County, Town of North Greenbush, dwelling number 150, family number 286. Microfilm copy, New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²⁰⁷ Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court Papers, Evert van Alen file 129, Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, New York.

There was nothing unlovely in Evert Van Alen. He was an active and eminently useful citizen. He was neither rich nor poor. His ancestry were God-fearing people, intelligent and upright, without pretension, and without humility—hence his home was a home of probity, piety, and patriotism, and his actions were moulded in accordance with the strict rules of Christianity that governed his entire life. He was the incarnation of truth, and the embodiment of every lofty idea. His personal influence was always for the best. His kindness unflinching, and his very presence an encouragement to all who were brought in contact with him.²⁰⁸

Evert's will called for the dividing of the farm. John E. was to receive a parcel 90.5 acres in extent, with the homestead on it.²⁰⁹

The John E. van Alen family ownership, 1854-1870

John E. van Alen the younger was Justice of the Peace for Blooming Grove beginning in 1849.²¹⁰ The minutes book that he kept for the years 1849-1851 is preserved at the New-York Historical Society.²¹¹

A number of renovations are datable to the period just before the death of Evert van Alen, when the house passed into the hands of John E. van Alen and his family. The Surrogate's Court files for the Evert van Alen estate preserve invoices for a large number of boards and other materials purchased during 1853.²¹² The replacement of the original 12-over-12 double-hung sash in the parlors with 4-over-4 divided light double hung sash may have been undertaken at this time. A one story front porch, its hipped roof with a balustrade supported on two large fluted Doric columns, was added to the front elevation, and the center hall was wallpapered with a fashionable design patterned in imitation of *verde antique* marble blocks bordered by gold scrolls. This is also the probable latest date of construction for the one-and-a-half story wing on the east end of the house. The boards may have been intended for it.

²⁰⁸ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 22.

²⁰⁹ Evert van Alen, last will and testament, 27 January 1853. Van Alen Family Papers, HH.1969.159, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

²¹⁰ George Baker Anderson. *Landmarks of Rensselaer County, New York* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Company, Publishers, 1897), I:415. Nathaniel Sylvester says that he was Justice of the Peace in 1848. *History of Rensselaer Co., New York*. (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), 336.

²¹¹ John E. van Alen minutes book, in John Evert van Alen Account book, New-York Historical Society, New York, New York.

²¹² Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court Papers, Evert van Alen file 129, Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, New York.

Legal notice of the death of Evert van Alen recorded the places of residence of his now-scattered family. William K. and Stephen V. R. were living in San Francisco. Cornelia V. R. van Horn, John T. van Horn and Christina C. van Reypen were all living in Bergen, New Jersey. Benjamin T. was living in Jersey City, New Jersey.²¹³

Thanks to the census of 1855, we have a clear picture of the composition of the household just after the death of Evert van Alen.²¹⁴ “John E. Van Allen” was identified in the census as 45 years old and married, born and having lived in Rensselaer County all his life. He was a farmer by occupation, and owned the property. The house was described as a frame dwelling and was assessed at \$1,000.00 at that time, making it much more substantial than neighboring dwellings. Mary A. Van Alen, his 35 year old wife, had lived in the county for 19 years at that time. They had two children, boys Harmon (ae 14) and Evert (ae 9), both born in the county. John’s sister Anna M. (ae 49) and brother Stephen (ae 35) both lived in the house as well. Two servants and a boarder completed the household. Thomas Colligan, who gave his occupation as a farmer and servant, had been born in Ireland c.1810 and arrived in the United States c.1850. Margaret Cusack was aged 13, was born in Ireland, and had been in the United States for two years at the time of the census and was a servant in the Van Alen household. Matilda Wendell, born in Rensselaer County and aged eight years, is listed as a boarder.

In 1854 the Van Alen farm totaled 92 acres, with 70 acres having been improved. The farm was valued at \$7,000, average compared to his neighbors who were valued between \$900 and \$25,000. The value of his livestock was estimated at \$350, his tools and farm equipment at \$75. Both figures are under average compared to neighboring farms indicating the farm was smaller in terms of livestock. Ten acres were plowed in 1854. The farm had 10 acres of pasture and 10 acres of meadow which yielded 10 tons of hay. The Van Alen’s sowed 3 acres of oats, which yielded 35 bushels and sowed 7 acres of rye, which yielded 35 bushels. This is well below average compared to neighboring farms and suggests that the farm was not intensively worked. Six acres of corn were planted, which yielded 75 bushels and 1 acre of potatoes, which yielded 100 bushels. They had a small orchard which yielded 10 bushels of apples and 1 barrel of cider. The Van Alen’s also had twenty plum trees valued at \$30.

The Van Alens owned two “neat cattle” (a term that usually refers to pure bred ox or cow)- one that was under 1-year-old and one over one year old. The family had one cow butchered in 1854 for beef. They owned no working cattle and did not raise cattle for resale. They had no sheep or poultry. They owned nine pigs older than 6 years. They had two cows for butter and produced 200 lbs. of butter in 1854. They did not operate any other business from their farm, gunsmiths, carpentry, cooperage, etc.²¹⁵

²¹³ *Albany Evening Journal*, 16 September 1854.

²¹⁴ New York State Census, 1855, Rensselaer County, Town of North Greenbush, dwelling number 150, family number 286. Microfilm copy, New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²¹⁵ “Agriculture and Domestic Manufactures schedule, New York State Census, 1855, Rensselaer County, Town of North Greenbush, dwelling number 150, family number 286. Microfilm copy, New York State Library, Albany, New York.

The US census taken just five years later recorded dramatic shifts in the household makeup. John's brother and sister had moved out of the house in the intervening years.²¹⁶ John E.'s age is given as 49 years, and his real estate was valued at that time as \$9,250.00. His personal property was valued at \$1,100.00. Both of these figures exceeded those estimated for adjacent farms, indicating a relative level of success to that date. John's wife Mary was recorded as owning real estate valued at \$800 and \$2,000 of personal property. The couple's son Harman (misspelled as 'Hiram') is identified as a "farm labourer" aged 20. Evert, aged 16, is listed with no occupation. Two servants were part of the household in 1860. Both were recorded as 35 years of age, and having been born in Ireland. Thomas, probably incorrectly given the surname of Van Alen in the census, was a "farm laborer" and Bridget O'Neal, was a "servant."

Stephen van Alen constructed a house to the west of the family homestead sometime between 1855 and 1860, on his share of the subdivided estate. The first structure on the site was said to have been a small frame house, replaced by a larger dwelling, which still stands. It is sometimes known as the Rock Cut house, since it stands immediately south of the cut that allowed the straightening of the turnpike in that location. A bill of timber for construction of this house, in the collection of Marion Lape—one of Stephen's descendants—in 1984, detailed purchases from Harvey Hunter, "Dealer in Lumber, Shingles and Lath" at 188 Water Street in Albany, during the period 5 September- 4 November 1876. Expenses totaled \$256.36.²¹⁷

The 1865 New York State census listed the occupants of the house as John E. van Alen, a widower with two children, Herman, Evert, and Ann Marie van Alen, who was employed as a "h[ouse] keeper." Also listed were two boarders, John Appleton, an 18 year old male born in Germany whose occupation is listed as "laborer," and Rachel Rhinehart, a 17 year old female born in Rensselaer County, who was "servant" to the family.²¹⁸ John's wife Mary Ann had died on 18 June 1863 aged 43.²¹⁹

John Evert van Alen died on Sunday 26 May 1872, aged 62 years 4 months and 18 days. His funeral was held on Tuesday afternoon, 28 May at 3 o'clock "from his late residence in Blooming Grove."²²⁰ A family reminiscence described his character.

²¹⁶ U.S. Federal Census, 1860, New York State, Town of Rensselaer, Town of North Greenbush, dwelling 783, family number 976. Microfilm copy, New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²¹⁷ Sam Swanson. "Information about house built by Stephen Van Rensselaer Van Alen, Washington Ave., DeFrestville, April 18, 1984." Notes from an interview with Marion Lape. Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

²¹⁸ *Census of the Inhabitants living in the First Election District of North Greenbush in the County of Rensselaer, N. Y., on the 1st day of June, 1865.* [Enumerated on 29 June 1865], 57. Microfilm copy, New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²¹⁹ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family embracing a Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 28.

²²⁰ *Troy Daily Times*, 27 May 1872, 2:5.

Improvements in agriculture, turnpike roads, etc., found in him a steady promoter and advocate. He pursued the vocation of a farmer and displayed an untiring energy in that industry until his death.²²¹

The occupants of the house at the time of the death of John Evert van Alen were recorded in a document filed in 1901 with the Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court. The household included "Harmon Van Alen and his brother Evert Van Alen, both of whom at the time of the death of their father resided with an aunt in the same house with him"²²²

The Evert van Alen family ownership, 1870-1899

John Evert van Alen transferred ownership of the house to his son Evert van Alen by deed on 22 June 1870. In the transfer he stipulated that Evert "agree to...maintain and support [his father] in a good suitable and comfortable manner during his natural life at the homestead on the premises hereby conveyed" and to pay to him an annual rent of \$37.50." He also agreed that during the lifetime of John Evert van Alen that he would not convey or mortgage the property.²²³

At the time of the transfer, the village was described as containing "a Reformed church, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a wagon shop, a shoe shop, two groceries and about a dozen dwellings." The town of North Greenbush's residents were described as "extensively engaged in supplying the markets of Troy and Albany with Garden vegetables and milk."²²⁴

The only Van Alen recorded in the 1870 county directory was Herman, listed as being a farmer with a 90 acre farm.²²⁵ The 1870 census recorded the household makeup at that date. John E. was described as a farmer with \$18,000 worth of real estate. Ann M., his sister, was employed "keeping house", and had \$2,500 in real estate and \$3,000 in personal property. Harmen was noted as being a farmer, and was credited with \$4,000 in real estate and \$200 in personal property. The real estate mentioned is no doubt his share in "Harmen's Lot" which was devised to him and his cousin Harmen by his grandfather Evert van Alen. Evert was also occupied as a farmer, but had no real or personal property. A single domestic servant, Ann

²²¹ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 28.

²²² Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court Papers, Evert van Alen file 129, Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy, New York.

²²³ Deeds 147:372, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²²⁴ Hamilton Child. *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Rensselaer County, N. Y. for 1870* (Syracuse: Hamilton Child, 1870), 102-103.

²²⁵ Hamilton Child. *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Rensselaer County, N. Y. for 1870* (Syracuse: Hamilton Child, 1870), 169.

Colwell, who was 30 years old, white, and born in New York State, shared the household with them.²²⁶

The 1878 *County Directory* lists Evert, Abram, Harmon and Stephen as farmers, but records only the size of Harmon's farm, which was 90 acres in size. The same source characterized the agricultural activities of the town's farmers as "extensively engaged in supplying the markets of Albany and Troy with vegetables and milk."²²⁷

In 1880 the village of DeFreestville was described as

...sometimes called Blooming Grove, is a hamlet in the south part of the town [of North Greenbush]. Settlements were made here very early. It contains a Reformed church, a hotel, a blacksmith-shop, a wagon-shop, a store, and about twenty dwelling-houses. The post-office was established at an early period. One of the first postmasters, if not the first, was Jonas Smith.²²⁸

The Van Alen household had shrunken to three individuals by 1880. Evert van Alen, then 30, lived with his aunt Ann, then 75, and a domestic servant, Julia Jones, who was 17 years old and had been born in Vermont.²²⁹

"Abram Van Allen" was listed as a farmer with 12 acres of land in the 1886 Rensselaer County Directory. Evert van Alen (whose name is boldly printed) is noted as a farmer with 45 acres. Harmon van Alen has 45 acres as well. Stephen van Alen is recorded as having a 90 acre farm.²³⁰ All of these farms were in DeFreestville. Evert van Alen had retained the portion of the farm occupied by the John E. Van Alen house, and his farming activities were described at that time (1886).

Many farmers have engaged in growing garden vegetables and other staple products included in "truck-farming," denominated horticulture. A few acres are devoted to this branch, from which is realized a fair profit. The small farms near the city [of Albany] are almost wholly cultivated in this way. Among the men who are largely engaged in truck-farming may be mentioned...E. Van Allen...²³¹

²²⁶ *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States 1870*. Microfilm copy, roll 1083 New York Vo. 88 (1-415A), Rensselaer County (pt.) (Washington, DC: The National Archives, 1965), 158. New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²²⁷ Jeremiah H. Lant, comp. *Rensselaer County Directory, 1878-79* (Troy: n.p., 1879), 183, 188-189.

²²⁸ Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester. *History of Rensselaer Co., New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), 348.

²²⁹ *United States Census, 1880*. North Greenbush, Rensselaer, New York. Microfilm copy, FHL Film 1254922, National Archives Film T9-0922, 349B. New York State Library, Albany, New York.

²³⁰ Hayne & Williams. *The Rensselaer County Directory for the Year 1886* (Albany: Hayne & Williams, comp. & publishers, 1886), 178.

²³¹ Howell, George R. and Jonathan Tenney, editors. *History of the County of Albany, New York, from 1609 to 1886* (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co. Publishers, 1886), 334.

Oral history preserved by Evert's descendants recorded that "one sister [Ann] never married, [and] lived in [the] big house 'til 1896 when she moved across the road with her brother [sic- her *nephew*] Herman. [Herman] was twice a widower [and had] no children." "Evert's 12 offspring went away but they'd all come to the house once a year because of Aunt Ann."²³² Ann was described shortly after her death in a published source which is probably more accurate than Walter van Alen's recollection.

She was a woman small in figure, of delicate outline, exceptionally energetic, and possessing every quality that goes to make the perfect woman. Born in the village in which she died, and never having married, she became in early life the nestor of the family. How well and conscientiously she performed that duty, the lives of her brothers and sisters can truly testify.

A member of the Dutch Reformed Church for more than seventy years, and always prominent in all church life and activity, no church gathering being considered complete without the presence of "Aunt Ann."

She remained an inmate and head of the old homestead until May, 1891, when by reason of advanced age and declining strength, she was given a home with her nephew, Herman Van Alen, and there tenderly cared for by him and his wife until the time of her death.²³³

In the 1898 farm directory, Evert's farm is described as being 45.5 acres in extent, the same as his brother Herman. Stephen's farm was 91 acres, while Abram E. had a 12 acre farm.²³⁴ Journals found in the house suggest that chickens were being raised by the Van Alens as late as 1891.²³⁵

Walter van Alen described his father Evert as a "gentleman farmer" and that he had "lots of small jobs" including as a carpenter, and that they moved out of the house because he was "not much of a farmer." Evert was supposed to have been educated at the Claverack Academy. Herman "didn't like to farm either." Walter described his family as "never...wealthy but they always lived well."²³⁶ Although family tradition asserts that Evert reluctantly sold the homestead around 1900, documents in the Rensselaer County Clerk's Office reveal a different story.

²³² Nancy Swanson. "Notes taken during visit with Mr. & Mrs. Walter Van Alen, Feb. 1975." Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

²³³ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 27.

²³⁴ Jeremiah H. Lant, comp. *Rensselaer County Directory* (Troy: William H. Young, 1898), 159.

²³⁵ Specifically, the August 1891 issue of *The Poultry Keeper* was found in the house.

²³⁶ Nancy Swanson. "Notes taken during visit with Mr. & Mrs. Walter Van Alen, Feb. 1975." Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

Evert had mortgaged the property multiple times up to 1899, one each occasion to Thomas Jefferson van Alstyne.²³⁷ Van Alstyne (1827-1903) was a distant relative of the original owner of the house, John E. van Alen, and thus Evert van Alen as well. Van Alstyne's great great grandmother, Maria van Alen, was an aunt of John E. van Alen. It is not presently known if they were cognizant of their common ancestry, but there are multiple instances of intermarriages between these two families from the 17th through the 19th century. Van Alstyne was involved in numerous real estate transactions during the 1890s, and the mortgaging of the house may have been simply another speculative venture. In any case, Evert defaulted on the loan, and the house was offered at public auction on 5 July 1899. Thomas Jefferson van Alstyne purchased the house and farm (45.91 acres) outright at that time for \$1250.00. George V. Thacher acted as referee.²³⁸

The elder Evert van Alen's sons Stephen Van Rensselaer and Abraham [Abram] E., and John Evert van Alen's son Herman continued to work the adjacent farms. The directory of 1901 lists Herman as retaining his farm of 45.5 acres, Stephen retaining his 91 acre parcel and Abraham E. maintaining his 12 acre plot.²³⁹ In point of fact, however, Abraham had died in the summer of 1899. This was reflected in the 1905 version of the directory, which only lists Herman and Stephen, possessing the same amount of acreage as noted in 1901.²⁴⁰

After the sale of the house, Evert appears to have stayed on in the house and "pursued the life of a farmer until April 1900, when he...removed with his family to Albany..."²⁴¹ He later moved to a ¼ acre property on the north side of the Albany-Sand Lake Turnpike, conveyed to him by Ann Maria van Alen on 20 August 1891, but shrewdly only recorded at the County Clerk's office on 5 November 1900.²⁴² Three days earlier Evert sold additional property on the south side of the Turnpike to Thomas J. van Alstyne. This property was described as a parcel conveyed by Harmon van Alen to Evert.²⁴³

The fact that the house was lost by the family, rather than being sold, explains the sentimental attachment to the building that Herman and his wife would later express toward it.

²³⁷ Mortgages 172:98, 230:443, 232:196, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²³⁸ Deeds 268:303, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²³⁹ Jeremiah H. Lant, comp. *Rensselaer County Farmers Directory, 1901* (Troy: William H. Young, 1901), 180.

²⁴⁰ Jeremiah H. Lant, comp. *Rensselaer County Farmer's Directory 1905* (N. p.), 118.

²⁴¹ Benjamin Taylor van Alen. *Genealogical History of the Van Alen Family Embracing a Record of Births Marriages and Deaths also Biographical Sketches* (Chicago: The Author, 1902), 28.

²⁴² Deeds 276:194, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁴³ Deeds 276:195, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

The Thomas Jefferson van Alstyne ownership, 1899-1905

Thomas Jefferson van Alstyne was a lawyer, was appointed Albany County judge beginning in 1871, and sat on the bench for twelve years. He was elected to the 48th Congress in 1882. Nominated for mayor of the City of Albany, he was elected in November 1897 and served from 1898 to 1900.²⁴⁴ His attraction to the Van Alen property was perhaps related to his common experience in the U. S. House of Representatives with John E. van Alen. It does not appear that Van Alstyne ever lived in the house.

Dings family tradition asserts that Van Alstyne rented the farm almost immediately to James J. Dings. A contemporary newspaper article supports this contention, and gives further particulars.

A year or two since the forty-five acre division upon which the home stands was purchased by Judge Van Alstyne, of Albany, from Evert Van Alen, to whom it had descended by devise. James J. Dings, of Bath on the Hudson, leased the place for a summer residence, and is having the land tilled by a farmer occupying a portion of the dwelling. Mr. and Mrs. Dings are members of the local congregation....²⁴⁵

Despite the transfer of the house to Van Alstyne, the Van Alen family maintained some connection to the property. Under the aegis of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Dutch Reformed Church, Harmon's [Herman's] wife Martha lead the earliest known preservation movement on behalf of the house. The same newspaper article cited above gives details of this arrangement, and offers a description of the house at that time.

To Mrs. Harmon Van Alen, more probably than to any other one person is due the present activity of the Ladies Auxiliary, and the scheme to preserve the identity of the old homestead, by naming it "Colonial Hall" and making the ancient dwelling...[serve] in local church and social events.... Already monthly socials have been established, which are drawing attendants from Albany, Troy, Rensselaer, Bath on the Hudson and the surrounding country, and the ancient homestead is a sort of Mecca for people who...are interested in historical research and in learning by personal investigation the truth what they hear and read.

There is no exact record of the time it was built, but papers that were in possession of Miss Ann Marie Van Alen at the time of her death, have come to Mrs. Harmon Van Alen indicate that it was erected about the period of John E. Van Alen's Congressional career. Quite a number of copies of this literature was recently sent to the state library by Mrs. Van Alen, and a note of their reception from Librarian Melville Dewey....The house contains over twenty rooms, some of the walls being ornamented with painted decorations that are quite elaborate. The cellar has eight distinct rooms, which were designated as the vegetable cellar, the wine cellar, etc., besides quarters for the slaves that were owned by its proprietor....²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Cuyler Reynolds, ed. *Hudson-Mohawk Genealogical and Family Memoirs* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1911), I:49.

²⁴⁵ "Historic Landmark: A Movement...to Preserve an Old Colonie Homestead." Unidentified newspaper clipping, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

²⁴⁶ "Historic Landmark: A Movement...to Preserve an Old Colonie Homestead." Unidentified newspaper clipping, Van Alen Papers, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

From this it would appear that after the house was sold it was, within two years, rented to James J. Dings as a summer home. Dings apparently occupied the house and rented the lands only during summer months, during which he kept the fields tilled and planted. During the balance of these years, the property was rented to the ladies of the Dutch Reformed Church of Blooming Grove, for use as a site for dances and gatherings during the colder months.

It was during these few years, between 1900 and 1905, that the house was re-christened Colonial Hall, as noted in the article cited above. The name was no doubt meant to evoke connections to John E. van Alen, and was an outgrowth of the Colonial Revival movement which became increasingly popular after the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. Roots of this movement extended backward to the centennial celebrations of 1876, and were fueled by a xenophobic reaction to the influx of immigrants from non-northern European countries.

It is probably at this time that the house got its slate roof, which proudly proclaims the year of its construction as "1793." The date is picked out in red slates on a blue-gray background. Other houses in the immediate area have roofs of similar style and vintage. The roof of the Vandenburg house on nearby Vandenburg Avenue in Troy bears the date "1797" in near-identical style.

The James L. and Justus H. Dings families occupancy, 1900-1960

After Thomas Jefferson van Alstyne's death on 26 October 1903²⁴⁷, the house was sold by a referee. One of the two executors, Thomas B. van Alstyne, contested the will, and it may have been sold in order to consolidate the estate's assets. Among the defendants in this case were James L. Dings, who was apparently named a beneficiary of the will.

The house was auctioned on 4 December 1905 to Peter and Mary S. van Acker.²⁴⁸ The James L. Dings family appears to have maintained their occupancy of the house at this time, since when the property was sold for \$2725.00 to James L. and Emma L. Dings on 20 January 1913, the deed described them as "tenants."²⁴⁹ Their purchase of the property may have been connected to the final resolution of the Van Alstyne will since they also purchased, on 1 April of that same year, the former Herman van Alen farm.²⁵⁰

James L. Dings died on 28 April 1947, and the house passed to Justus H. Dings and his sister Edith Dings Hinkamp of Poughkeepsie. They sold an outparcel to Margaret van Acker, a

²⁴⁷ Frederick S. Hills, comp. and editor. *New York State Men: Biographic Studies and Character Portraits* (Albany: The Argus Company, 1910), 86-87.

²⁴⁸ Deeds 302:276, recorded 4 January 1906, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁴⁹ Deeds 344:328, recorded 21 January 1913, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁵⁰ Deeds 346:16, recorded 2 April 1913, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

tenant who may have been related to them and to the Van Acker's who owned the property previously, for \$5000.00.²⁵¹ Justus bought out his sister's interest in the combined farm properties on 19 April 1948.²⁵² He and his wife Gertrude would own the house for the next twelve years.

The above-quoted article in which it is stated that "James J. Dings...is having the land tilled by a farmer occupying a portion of the dwelling" also suggests something about the occupation of the house at the beginning of this period (c.1900).²⁵³ The portion of the house occupied was probably the wing.

That the property was actively farmed during the early years of the twentieth century is further substantiated by several documents which were found in the house during the course of renovations in the 1970s. Chief among these is James L. Dings' cash book, which covers the period from January 1898 to December 1922. Entries indicate that Dings was selling feed and foodstuffs at this time, and suggest that livestock, poultry, vegetables, berries and fruit were being grown and raised on the property.²⁵⁴

Also among the documents found in the house during renovations is a change order from Peter Henderson & Co. noting a substitution of an order of a quart of Yosemite Mammoth Wax Bush Beans with a quart of Wardwells Kidney Wax beans. This invoice is dated 31 May 1901.²⁵⁵ Several documents relating to bee keeping, spanning the years 1910-1914 were also found in the house, suggesting the continuation of agricultural pursuits through the first quarter of the twentieth century.²⁵⁶

During the second quarter of the twentieth century, one of the outbuildings on the property was used as a feed and seed store. Sam Swanson recalled that when he moved into the house that the roof was painted with the letters "G. L. F." A blank receipt from "J. H. Dings & Son" found on the property during the course of renovations calls their business a "G. L. F. Service" and contains a product list of "feed, seed, flour, cereals, fertilizers, motor oils, paints,

²⁵¹ Deeds 786:390, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁵² Deeds 802:225, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁵³ "Historic Landmark: A Movement...to Preserve an Old Colonie Homestead." Unidentified newspaper clipping, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, New York.

²⁵⁴ Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc, Rensselaer, New York.

²⁵⁵ Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

²⁵⁶ *Gleanings in Bee Culture*, 15 May and 15 July 1910 and 15 July 1911; *Root's Bee-Keepers Supplies*, 1911, 1914 and no date. In addition, fragments of pamphlets entitled "The Treatment of Bee Diseases" and "Bees," both apparently dating to this period, were found. Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

brooms.” It is dated 195—. ²⁵⁷ GLF was the acronym for the Grange League Federation, an agricultural cooperative that existed from about 1920, and which became known as Agway in 1965. ²⁵⁸

The participation of the Dings in the county Farm Bureau is documented by several items found in the house. A membership application card, signed by Daniel Connors of RD #1, Rensselaer, New York and dated 1949, together with a 1955 Rensselaer County Farm Bureau Membership Campaign form were found during the course of renovations. It is not currently known who Daniel Connors was. ²⁵⁹

The Jeremiah R. Nead and Ellen Corey Nead occupancy, 1960-1973

Jeremiah R. Nead and his wife Ellen Corey Nead, daughter of the New York State Historian, purchased the house and 3.59 acres of land from Justus H. Dings and his wife Gertrude W. Dings on 20 December 1960. ²⁶⁰ A student paper from that year records their occupation of the house in that month, as well as that of “another family” in the wing. ²⁶¹ Ownership was transferred to Ellen Corey Nead on 13 December 1966. ²⁶² The Neads installed modern bathrooms in the house, repaired the front porch and began a restoration program. Ellen Corey Nead was interviewed in 2003, and recalled a number of small alterations made to the house during her ownership.

²⁵⁷ An entire pad of these unused receipts was also found in the house. Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

²⁵⁸ www.agriculture.com, accessed 14 November 2003.

²⁵⁹ Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

²⁶⁰ Deeds 1084:542, recorded 10 February 1961, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office, Troy, New York. Edward De L. Palmer. “Appraisal of Residence and Approximately 3.59 Acres of Land on Washington Avenue Extension, Hamlet of De Freestville...as of September 15, 1970.” Collection Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., Rensselaer, New York.

²⁶¹ Terry Bird. “The Van Alen Home.” *Literary Club Review* (Columbia High School, East Greenbush, NY), Volume VI, Number 1 (December 1960), 6.

²⁶² Deeds 1179:260 and 263, recorded 15 December 1966, Rensselaer County Clerk’s Office, Troy, New York.

The Sam Swanson occupancy, 1973-1998

Ellen Corey Nead sold the property to Sam and Nancy H. Swanson on 5 October 1973,²⁶³ and transferred the mortgage of the house to them on the same day.²⁶⁴ The Swansons co-owned the property until 22 June 1983, when sole ownership was transferred to Sam Swanson.²⁶⁵

An extensive restoration programme was undertaken by Sam and Nancy Swanson, with the assistance of Don Carpentier, John Mesick, Jess Tuttle, and others. The restoration included refurbishment of all of the fireplaces, reconstruction of the south foundation under the older portion of the house and under the wing, repair of failing structural elements, repair of plaster and removal of twentieth century finishes from various rooms. Significant public interest in the restoration of the house was actively promoted by Mr. Swanson, who was the North Greenbush Town Historian. Numerous journal articles were published during the course of the restoration.²⁶⁶

The Hartgen Archeological Associates occupancy, 1998- present

Van Alen Properties LLC purchased the John E. Van Alen house from Sam Swanson in April 1998.²⁶⁷ At that time minor (and reversible) renovations were undertaken to convert the building to professional offices. The house has been occupied since 1998 as offices for Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., a cultural resource management firm. The house was accepted for listing on the State Register of Historic Buildings in November 2003. A National Register Nomination was completed during the winter of 2003-2004 by Walter Richard Wheeler with the assistance of Peter D. Shaver of the New York State Office of Parks and Historic Preservation. The John E. van Alen house was listed on the National Registers of Historic Places on 20 August 2004.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Deeds 1254:249, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁶⁴ Mortgages 1103:406, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁶⁵ Deeds 1359:1094, recorded 25 August 1983, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁶⁶ See bibliography for an exhaustive list of these articles, and references to public presentations by Sam Swanson.

²⁶⁷ Deeds microfilm reel 90:1656, recorded 17 April 1998, Rensselaer County Clerk's Office, Troy, New York.

²⁶⁸ The National Register number assigned to the Van Alen house is 03NR05164.