

**Description and historical assessment of the Jeanne and Peter Wehnau house
[a.k.a. the Haywood-Craver-Wehnau House],
Bloomingrove Drive, Bloomingrove, New York.**

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Structural description.

The Wehnau house is a two-story five-bay wide gable roofed house with a two-story flat roofed addition, or wing, to the northeast. In plan the house typifies the 'one and a half room' deep center hall plan, featuring as it does a suite comprised of a large square room backed by a half-square chamber on either side of a central hallway, almost eight feet in width. The first floor of the house is approximately 7'-5" in the clear; the second floor 6'-10" in height.

The foundation of the house is constructed of mortared fieldstone, and is capped with six courses of brick above the exterior ground surface, laid in common bond. The level of this brick coping follows the slope of the ground along the north elevation, and continues down to the level of the basement floor on the east elevation of the wing. The basement is entirely above grade at this point, and was modified to accommodate a garage early in the twentieth century. This wall appears to have been rebuilt subsequent to the destruction of the original wing that occupied this area. It is probable that the original wall in this location contained the kitchen fireplace as there is no evidence for a cooking fireplace elsewhere in the house. The basement under the main block of the house is divided by brick and wood partitions. The wood framed partitions are lathed and plastered, and feature machine split lath. A 12" x 10" hand hewn beam supports the staircase above. While the original flooring material is no longer present, or visible, it was likely of dry laid brick; such a treatment remains in the former kitchen area of the basement.

The superstructure of the house is comprised of a braced wood frame. The floor joists of the first floor are visible in the basement, and are constructed using a mixture of hand hewn beams, sawn members and hewn logs. Most of the floor joists in located under the central stair hall are hand hewn; under the remainder of the rooms the joists are largely hewn logs. Because the ceiling of the basement was never intended to be plastered, the depth and spacing of each of the floor joists is irregular.

Although the studs in the walls of the first and second floor were not accessible for this assessment, those in the attic vary between 2.5" to 4" in width, and are consistently 4" in depth. The studs are placed at distances as great as 1'- 6", but frequently less. The studs for the first and second floors are likely arranged in a similar configuration. The internal partitions on the first and second floors are typically 5.75" thick.

The structure of the attic floor is comprised of sawn joists averaging 6.5" high by 3" wide, covered by boards measuring from 4.25" to 1'-0.25" in width . The floor joists of the second floor are likely of the same dimensions.

The roof rafters are all of similar size, being 4.25" x 4" placed two feet on center. They are joined to a central ridge plank measuring 4" x 1". The roof sheathing boards measure from 7" to 1'-1" in width, and are 1" deep. Most of the boards are closer to the larger dimension in width. The roof was originally sheathed with wood shingles; the roof planks have gaps between them to promote their drying out between storms. Some of these shingles remain in place on the part of the roof that was covered by the c.1880-85 addition. These are visible in the crawl space over the addition.

The principal façade is the west elevation. What appears to be the original front door was relocated- according to photographic evidence- by c.1890 to the north elevation. The present front door is the third, Colonial Revival in style [c.1920], and replaced a glazed Victorian era door, which appears in late nineteenth century photographs.

Use description of the rooms of the house.

Some of the original uses for the several rooms of the house can be determined from evidence contained in the rooms as well as a knowledge of how similar houses were occupied. The following occupational description proceeds from the basement to the attic.

The whitewashed room in the north side of the basement, currently divided by a later partition into two spaces, was likely a work or storage room associated with the kitchen. The kitchen appears to have been located under the east wing of the house. The fireplace requisite for a mid-nineteenth century kitchen appears to have been removed when the wing was rebuilt in the 1880s. The remainder of the basement was likely used for storage.

The first floor, as originally configured, would have featured two parlors, a bedchamber, an office [connected with the farm] and a family dining room. This latter may have been located over the kitchen in the wing. When the addition was rebuilt the kitchen was moved to its present location in the rear of the first floor of the wing. One of the parlors likely served as a dining room during more formal occasions. Both parlors share the same decorative trim.

The decorative programme for both of the major sleeping chambers on the second floor is identical, and renders speculative the location of the master bedroom. The smaller chambers to the east of each of the two major sleeping rooms on this floor may have served as dressing or bathing rooms. That associated with the master chamber may have seen duty as a nursery as well. The remainder of the rooms on the second floor- those in the east wing- were probably children's bedrooms.

The attic was probably used as a work space. No suggestions of occupation, either by slaves or farmhands, was identified. Traditional female craft activities, such as weaving or spinning, typically took place in the attics of homes such as this.

Decorative programme of the house.

The exterior trim of the house makes use of details that, while retaining qualities associated with the earlier Federal style, clearly partake of the Greek Revival style. These details include the pilasters, cornice and frieze that formerly comprised the front door surround, and the bold cornice and frieze that follows the roof line of the main body of the house. While the cornice associated with the door surround was removed when the Italianate porch was installed, and the pilasters on each side of the door were modified to accommodate the installation of a wider door [probably at the same time], most of the details of this door surround remain in place. The simple architraves that surround each window opening are also typical of Greek Revival detailing.

The interior of the house preserves a number of stylistic details that, by themselves, would suggest a date of c.1840-55 for construction. These include eight inch tall baseboards featuring 1.5" high flattened ogee trim, used in both parlors and the two floors of the central hall. The door and window cases of the secondary rooms on the first floor, and the primary rooms of the second floor are plain in profile and make use of simple square corner blocks, varying between 5.25 and 5.75 inches square. The two larger chambers on the second floor and the secondary rooms of the first floor of the older part of the house share the same 7.75" high baseboard, finished with beaded trim. The secondary [rear] rooms on the second floor of the original section of the house feature plain baseboards 5.5" high; one of these rooms retains its original wide board floors. All of these elements appear to represent aspects of the original decorative programme; these broad flat details typify the Greek Revival style. The severe four paneled doors in place throughout the house are also in keeping with the Greek aesthetic. One original mantel survives in the house; while not currently installed [stored at present in the basement] it features the same flattened ogee trim used on the baseboards in the parlors and hallway, and so likely ornamented one of the parlors originally. That the mantel in fact saw use is attested to by the significant amount of charring and smoke damage that it evidences. The decorative elements of the main staircase, including turned balusters, newel and stringer facing, incorporate elements evocative of both the late Federal and Greek Revival styles.

A second decorative scheme is indicated by the Italianate details, added to the exterior of the house c.1880, and includes the brackets added to the cornice of the west elevation of the house and the small porch on the north elevation. A second porch formerly ornamented the west elevation of the house; it was razed during the middle of the twentieth century.

On the interior evidence for this second building campaign includes the diagonal narrow-board hardwood floors in the parlors, narrow board floors on the second floor, the bull's eye cornerblocks and broad pilaster trim around the doors and windows of the major public spaces on the first floor, and the cabinetwork associated with the present kitchen and dining rooms. A picture rail, which appears in an early photograph of one of the parlors, was probably added at this time. It has subsequently been removed, and is currently stored in the attic. The second floor of the northeast wing preserves details, including six-panel doors, beaded wainscoting, and base boards, that are more typical of the later nineteenth century. These likely date to the presumed c.1880-85 construction date of the wing. Despite the fact that the exterior details generally follow the Italianate aesthetic, the interior alterations are more typical of the Queen

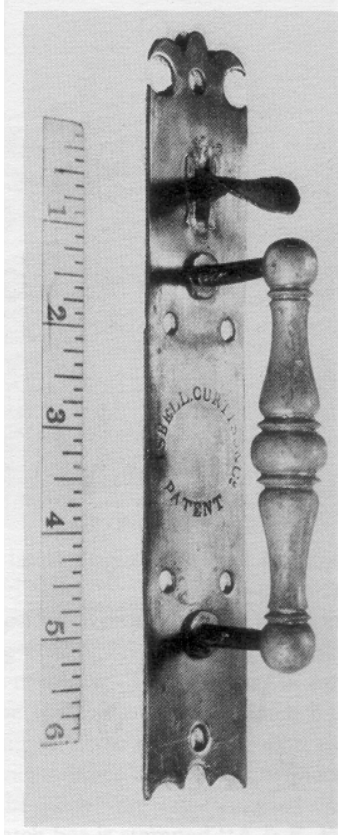


Figure 1 . Norfolk latch marked “Isbell, Curtis & Co. Patent.” This type of latch was patented by Harlow Isbell of Meriden, CT on 8 November 1834.

Anne and Aesthetic styles. All three stylistic modes were popular during the late 1870s and early 1880s. Architectural styles frequently met with such informal combining during the nineteenth century; it is equally common to see an aesthetic, such as the Italianate here, being used some time after it had faded from public favor in the larger urban areas.

Later alterations to the house occurred throughout the twentieth century. Included in these are the replacement of the original chimneys and fireplaces with mantels imitative of the c.1885 trim, featuring the same bulls-eye corner blocks. Little of the door and window hardware seen in the house can be dated to pre-1880; it is in fact possible that much of the extant hardware dates to after the turn of the nineteenth century.

That the house likely dates to the post 1834 period is further demonstrated by the presence of a Norfolk-type patent latch on the door that formerly led to the basement, under the main stairs. [Fig. 1] This door is of the single sided four-panel type that is used throughout the older part of the house to close doorways of a utilitarian nature. The machine split lath visible on the basement partitions further points to a date after 1830 for construction of the house.

Review of Historic Images of the Wehnau house.



Figure 2. The earliest extant view of the Wehnau house, looking northeast c.1875.



Figure 3. View of the Wehnau house, looking southeast, c.1898. The Italianate porches have been added, as has the flat roofed two-story wing at the northeastern corner of the building. Similar porches were added to the Philips house on Philips Road in East Greenbush, c.1878.



Figure 4. View of the Wehnau house looking southeast, c.1910. The roadside fence has been removed by this date.



Figure 5. Elmer C. Craver [b.1864] and friend c.1898, with the north elevation of the house in the background. Details of the basement wall are visible, as is a six-over-six double hung window, probably moved from the older part of the house.



Figure 6. Cyrus and Lois Craver in front of the barns, c.1910. All but the closest of the barns in this view have been razed. The existing barn's structure is comprised of a pegged braced frame.

Conclusion.

Based upon the above assessment of the structural elements and decorative programme of the house, and the chain of title, I would date initial construction of the house to c.1850. It was probably constructed by Daniel M. Haywood soon after receiving title to the property from his brother William F. Haywood on 12 April 1850. The east wing replaces a wing of similar dimensions, of one and a half stories with a gabled roof that was built at the same time as the main body of the house. Evidence for this being the case is seen in the attic, where a small part of the original roof for the wing is preserved. That there is no indication that the roof planks at the juncture of the roof of the main house and wing were ever shingled points to the fact that they were built at the same time. The extant wing was probably constructed c.1880-85. This date range is suggested by the extant decorative trim and door and window hardware.

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