

De Boerenwoning

February/March 2000

The Farmhouse

Volume II, Issue I

Caretaker's Journal by Wendy Carroll

Life in the Lott Farmhouse: According to local history the Eastern portion of this Historic Dutch farmhouse was built in 1720 and relocated to its present site in 1800 when Hendrick I. Lott incorporated it into his grand new home for his young wife from the city.

Today only three-quarters of an acre survive the original 200+ acre parcel. Two-story homes built in the 1920's have replaced acres of bean (string beans), cabbage, corn, and potato fields. We have hot water and electricity, however on the cold days of January I find myself in the basement resetting the main power fuse quite often. The wind howls and the pipes freeze, and I imagine the days of the 1800's: Gathering wood, coal in the later days, going to the well for water, to the ocean and to the creek for protein, and to the garden for greens. I often think of the workers, the owners, and their daily lives: Digging, planting, keeping warm, their clothing, the sounds of music in the fields, the difficulty involved with a Manhattan visit, and the final hours of the day shared by the fire. They did see the sunrise and the sunset. We do share the colors of dusk and dawn.

As part of my role as caretaker I planted a garden for the Lott House this past summer. Many of the vegetables planted were the same as those farmed by the Lotts. We even grew corn in Brooklyn again. Our garden had fresh greens for omelets on Sunday morning, pink and red poppies, blue morning glories, fragrant white moonflowers, and 10' high sunflowers.

The archaeologists work to reveal the farmhouse's history. Treasures are found in the ground and in the house to help tell the story of the Lott family. There are old bottles, a steel child's leg brace, ceramic doll heads, and hand carved garden implements.

A rewarding aspect of my involvement with the farmhouse is its Landmark status. Being able, as caretaker, to watch the restoration be undertaken and executed with integrity. To eventually see the hand hewn

forged hardware restored, the original woodwork reconstructed. The craftsmanship and attention to detail will be imperative and the reconstruction has the potential to reveal the many faceted layers of the farmhouse's history. Presently the puzzle pieces are still being investigated and there are many more questions. Why does the bathroom window frame extend beyond the

ceiling? Where did the owners and workers sleep? Was there a blacksmith in residence? These and many other questions are still unanswered, the unraveling process intrigues me. Ultimately, the restoration will enable visitors in the future to experience the growth and change of daily life in and about the Farmhouse, a reflection of our culture and society.

As caretaker I see to tall the small day to day tasks that make the Lott House

a home once again like maintaining the garden and shoveling the snow. Having the neighbors stop to say hello or share from the garden has also helped make the Lott House a home again. I am fortunate and proud to be part of the Lott Farmhouse. Yes, it seems that the work of endless projects still abound but, one day all will be able to visit the farmhouse.



Photos courtesy of Alyssa Loorya

A Letter From the President

It seems appropriate at this time of year to think about where you have been and where you are going. As you pass the Lott House it may seem little has been done, in fact, much has been accomplished towards our goal of purchasing, restoring and operating the house as a community educational center. The purchase of the house by the Historic House Trust is on schedule to occur this spring. With the purchase, the Historic House Trust agrees to maintain the house and site and the Hendrick I. Lott House Preservation Association, our community group, agrees to be responsible for the restoration, day to day activities and programming.

The responsibility for restoring the house and creating a community educational center shifts the focus squarely onto the Hendrick I. Lott House Preservation Association's shoulders. Therefore, our goals for the upcoming year must be more ambitious than ever before. We must prepare and implement a fund raising plan, create educational programming and create a research library. Preparing these plans requires the work of experts in the various fields such as historians and museum specialists along with the input of the community. Efforts have begun with the organization of committees to address each of the specific areas of need.

In order to address the fundraising needs both public and private sources will be identified, grant applications will be written and follow up meetings will be arranged.

The continued support of the Marine Park community is critical to our success. We will be planning many more community events, like the Christmas Tree lighting ceremony at the house, during the coming year. Your attendance at these events is uplifting to our efforts and shows funding prospects that there is community support.

At the back of the newsletter you will find a list of committees, their chairpersons and an address to contact them. If you are or know of someone who wants to be involved please feel free to contact the appropriate party.

Thank you for your support and we wish you a Happy New Year.

Gary Silver - President, HILHPA

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Goodbye & Thank you

In January Scott P. Heyl, left his position as Executive Director of the Historic House Trust. Scott has taken a new position as Executive Director of the New York State Preservation League. This move is an upset not only to the Historic House Trust and the NYC Parks Department but also to the entire Lott House Project. Scott has been one of the project's greatest supporters and many do not realize it, but without Scott Heyl this project would not be as far along as it is today.

In 1995 Scott Heyl stepped in to help bring together HILHPA and the local community in the united goal to save the Lott House. Unbeknownst to HILHPA and some residents of the Marine Park Community, both had contacted Scott to ask for advice with regard to the Lott House. At that time Scott was new to the Trust and to New York City and he had just stepped into an organization that had been without an Executive Director for over two years. Not only was he responsible for eighteen historic houses, that needed his attention, he had to find his niche within the City bureaucracy. Yet, when he was introduced to the Lott House he immediately fell in love with it and jumped onboard to help save this Brooklyn farmhouse.

Over the next five years Scott was a driving force behind the project. Without his continued support, advice, and ability to work within the City's system, the project would not be standing on the cusp of City ownership and eventual restoration.

Those of us who have worked within the historic preservation movement in New York City know just how much Scott supported this project. Many of us feel he gave more to us than some of the houses under his watch at the Trust. Whenever the project needed something from the Parks Department Scott was there to make sure it was done. Much of the work that the Parks Department has undertaken at the house since 1998 has been because of him. Without owning the house and property, the Parks Department was under no obligation to support the project using Park's resources, but Scott made sure that the Lott House received the support it so desperately needed.

It was Scott who convinced the Parks Department and the City of New York that the purchase and restoration of the Lott House was vital to New York City's history and that it should be a priority. His work is now paying off as we are less than a year away from having the City of New York purchase the Lott House.

Even though Commissioner Stern has reassured us that we have the continued support of the Parks Department despite Scott's departure, we feel that we have lost one of our strongest supporters.

The Hendrick I. Lott House Preservation Association we would like to formally thank Scott P. Heyl for all that he has done for this project. We wish him well in his new undertaking and know that he will continue to fight for the historic preservation of New York State.

Community Corner

by Marie Ciaccio & Nancy Izzo

The week of June 7th saw the start of Brooklyn College's second year of archaeological field study at the Lott House on East 36th Street in Marine Park. It was also our second year of volunteering on this project. We had been looking forward to this all winter. Last year the trenches were dug on East 36th Street, and this year we would be working on the East 35th Street side of the house.

Sifting through buckets of dirt that the students give us, we've found pieces of bone, a sheep's tooth, small blown glass "bubbles", buttons, pieces of pottery, pieces of a ceramic toothpaste container, rusty nails, pipe stems, a pipe bowl, and lots of oyster and clam shells. The students found an 1817 penny that was the size of our current day quarter. They also found two fully intact glass bottles. The artifacts on this side of the house duplicate those on the 36th Street side with the exception of large animal bones. We haven't found any of those yet!

A brick pathway from the side of the house was uncovered. Also, in a trench further away, another brick pathway was uncovered, but at a different level, and to where did these pathways lead?

This whole experience has been extremely interesting, and one we would never miss. Once you get started with the digging and sifting you don't want to stop - you get excited at the possibility of finding something truly unique from that time period.

We do get impatient when the students have to take exact measurements of their trenches and different soil layers, as that temporarily stops them from digging, and we tend to forget that it is, after all, a college class.

We're just fascinated with the whole experience and find it's a lot of fun. It has certainly whetted our appetite for something we wanted to do for long time.

Editor's note - Marie and Nancy have been volunteering on the Lott House Archaeological Project for the past 2 years. We asked them to write this since we thought you would like to hear from someone in the community who has been able to work on the project. Marie and Nancy have been a great help to the Archaeologists and all the students. We hope to see them again this summer. In the photo they are clearing a late 19th century path.



Collections Management

by Neil Duncan

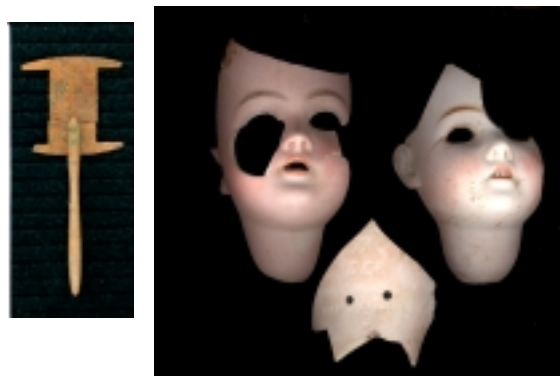
A researcher painstakingly excavates pottery shards from a dig site behind the Lott house carefully numbering each piece in a lab. Later the pieces are reassembled to their original form, a small porcelain cup. Debris is removed from the basement and in the process a wood pitchfork with the initials J.H.L (John Hendrickson Lott) is discovered. Further digging turns up two blown glass egg-like objects. A little detective work, and it is discovered that is exactly what they are, hand blown glass hen laying eggs. Apparently glass eggs like these were often placed under hens in order to stimulate egg production.

These and other treasures found in and on the grounds will be part of the Lott house collection. Some will eventually be part of the house's permanent display while others may be carefully stored behind the scenes for use by visiting researchers or for educational purposes. Other unique finds are, some handmade painted porcelain doll heads, an 1817-penny, and a stoneware pipe.

Nothing of potential value is overlooked or disposed of. Approximately 30,000 pieces of shell and intact shells have been collected from the archeological digs. These bits of clam and oyster tell us the Lott's made good use of the nearby waterways. They may also tell an ecologist what species of shellfish were found in the area around 1720 as well as how the environment these animals were living in is different from today.

The Lott house is an important resource documenting and providing a tangible link to the past. Once restored it will be impressive in itself. Furnished with artifacts whether it's something as large as the dining room table or as small as the homesteaders' personal pipe a visitor will be given a clearer picture of life on the Lott homestead.

Every artifact is a piece of a puzzle, which tells us what life was like in and around a Dutch farmhouse more than two hundred years ago. Each day may reveal more treasures and pieces of the puzzle. We especially look forward to this summer when we can do more digging. Who knows what we will find next out in the yard or in a nook in the basement.



Just a few of the artifacts that will one day be part of the Lott House collection. A bone attachment for a spinning wheel and porcelain doll heads c. 1875. Photos on this page courtesy of BCARC.

Colonial Dutch Cooking 101

by Alyssa Loorya & Maura Smale

The Following recipes are from *The Sensible Cook* translated from the original *De Verstandige Kock* (1683) by Peter G. Rose (1989). *The Sensible Cook* focuses on Colonial Dutch Foodways and transcribes this seventeenth century collection of early Dutch recipes and methods of food preparation.

Apple taert

Take Apples, peel them and cut them in quarters and remove the cores, and then cut them into even smaller thin slivers, three quarter *pond* Currants washed clean and three quarter *pond* Sugar, a *loot* crushed Cinnamon, then place the Dough in the pan and first sprinkle Apples into it, then Currants, Sugar, Cinnamon and pieces of Butter. Repeat the layers until the pan is full; add some crushed Anise seed. Then a lid of Dough on top, cut a hole in the lid here and there and let it bake with fire underneath and on top.

Small Seed Cakes

This recipe was adapted to use modern measures.

½ cup butter

1 cup sugar

2 eggs

2 cups flour

1 tablespoon caraway seed, bruised in the mortar with a pestle

Cream the butter with the sugar. Add eggs one by one and incorporate thoroughly. Add seeds and flour a little at a time, stir well. Use 2 teaspoons to shape the cookies about the size of a nutmeg and place them on a buttered baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes, until the rims are browned. Makes 4 dozen.

Loot - about 14 grams

Pond - the English pound, approximately 454 grams

Taert(en) - a collective noun, indicating a baked good made from a short-crust dough containing a variety of mostly sweet, but sometimes savory fillings, resembling a tart, flan, patty, pie or pastry.



The cover of the original *De Verstandige Kock* (1683) reprinted from *The Sensible Cook* (1989) .

Historic Structures Report Underway

by Charles H. Henkels

Restoration of landmark buildings begins with a comprehensive historic structures report that conforms to an established format developed for all preservation projects. The HSR documents the construction history and subsequent alterations, along with current conditions. On-site surveys and laboratory testing evaluate the condition of the building, its materials and structure. Through the HSR we will develop a philosophy and plan for the restoration and interpretive program of the Lott House.

Last year HILPA retained Jablonski Berkowitz Conservation, Inc. (JBCI) a highly regarded preservation consultant to begin preparation of our HSR.

Since the house was built between 1720 and 1800 with numerous later modifications, it is crucial to date these changes. There are a number of methods. Nail analysis helps date work on different areas. Since nail making technology changed rapidly here in New York, with each improvement quickly adapted, nails provide a good means of dating. Nails from significant elements are removed, cleaned and examined under a microscope to determine if the nail is hand wrought or cut. Further microscopic analysis is done to determine the grain of the iron fibers. This nail analysis is useful to assist in dating modifications to the house. One example is the lath and plaster ceiling in the main room of the east wing (*editor's note - this is also known as the 1720 section*) of the house. It was placed over the original unpainted ceiling beams. The nails indicate that this ceiling could not have been installed any earlier than 1815 and possibly not earlier than 1830. JBCI studied nails from the chair rail and door molding on the south wall. These nails indicate that those moldings were not installed until after 1840. Curator Mary Jablonski observes "We're finding the construction history of the house is far more complex than one might guess on a casual visit, it's exciting."

Laboratory analysis is being used to examine the mortar and paint chromo chronologies. Using a wet-chemical analysis, JBCI has examined the mortar to determine the original components that were used by the builder's to make their mortar so that new mortar will have the same properties of the original, and not cause any damage to the sandstone or brick because of an increase in strength or density. Paint analysis using microscopy is identifying original colors and finishes. Trim colors in the house ranged from greenish grays to bright blues. Some areas were grained to look like fine woods.

Recent technological advances make nondestructive evaluation possible. Tools such as the boroscope, X-radiography and video probe inside wall cavities. Some of the wood framed walls are filled with brick nogging for *continued on page 5*

Recent and Upcoming Events

This summer the Brooklyn College Archaeological Research Center (BCARC) will once again be excavating at the Lott House. The Brooklyn College Summer Field School will be held June 5th - June 23rd and July 3rd - July 28th.

Volunteers are welcome at the dig site provided they contact and make arrangements with BC-ARC beforehand. If you would like to volunteer please email bcarc@brooklyn.cuny.edu or call (718) 951-4714.

If you cannot volunteer you can still follow the archaeologists progress on their web site. http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/anthro/dept/lott_archaeology.htm

Or participate online in the Interactive Lott House dig at Archaeology Magazine's website. <http://archaeology.org>

Also on the web . . . Recently the Lott House Project launched it's own web site. At the site you can take a virtual tour of the house interior and learn about the Lott family's history. In the coming months we will be adding information on the history of Flatlands and regular updates on the projects progress and scheduled events. Visit us at <http://www.lotthouse.org>

Christmas at the Lott House



Photos courtesy of Wendy Carroll.

Historic Structures Report Underway cont. from p.4

insulation and fire protection. Using dendrochronology (the examination of the wood rings from the heart of the wood to the bark) we can identify the year a piece of lumber was cut, thereby dating a particular part of the house. Unfortunately, dendrochronology is costly, and will have to await funding.

An HSR also identifies work needed to restore the house. One deterioration problem found by Jablonski Berkowitz is evidence of damage by wood boring insects. Since the house was constructed prior to kiln-drying of lumber this was not unexpected. While presenting no immediate danger, this will require measures to eliminate them prior to restoration.

As a Dutch farmhouse, we want to determine how the Lott house relates to others. For example, many early Dutch houses had a jambless fireplace that was open at the sides with a hood to collect the smoke. Was there ever a jambless fireplace here? No evidence so far.

The HSR will link the physical form of the Lott house to our interpretive program.

THE HENDRICK I. LOTT HOUSE
PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION WOULD
LIKE TO THANK:

THE HISTORIC HOUSE TRUST
THE MARINE PARK CIVIC
ASSOCIATION,
THOMAS HELBIG & THE EMPIRE
FITNESS CLUB
BROOKLYN COLLEGE, CUNY
THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS
PRESERVATION COMMISSION
TROOP 45, BOY SCOUTS OF
AMERICA
THE RESIDENTS OF EAST 35TH AND
36TH STREETS
AND
ALL THE POLITICIANS AND
COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO HAVE
CONTINUED TO SUPPORT OUR
EFFORTS.

THANK YOU

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Join a committee and work to help the Lott House Project

HIHLPA has put together a series of committees that will help develop programs, projects and materials for the Lott House Project. Among these committees are Community Interaction, Education, Architectural (measured) Drawings, Historic, Grants and Fund Raising, Publicity and Site Management.

We would like to invite people to join a committee. If you or anyone you know is interested please return this form to HIHLPA and a committee chair will contact you. The Hendrick I. Lott House Preservation Association, Inc, 5 Beekman Street - Suite 910, New York, New York 10038.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

I would like to join the _____ committee.



Drawing by Rebecca Leahy, age 7