

THE HOFFMAN-SAULPAUGH-BRISTOL HOUSE

A lack of records from this time period makes it impossible to be certain of who actually built this house, but the form and design of the structure suggests it dates to the middle of the 18th century. The original house is typical of vernacular German house architecture in Rhinebeck. Constructed of locally quarried bluestone, 41' 4" wide by 26' 6" deep, it had two rooms with jambless fireplaces on the main floor plus a basement kitchen and storage area. A gable roof rested on a short knee wall, or half story, that created a garret under the eaves. A central partition wall separated the two main floor rooms. The ground around the house sloped away so that the cellar at the southeast corner of the building was at ground level. This provided the cellar with direct access to the outside.

There will probably always be ambiguity as to the identity of the builder and first occupant of the stone house, as the public records are inconclusive. While the jambless fireplaces suggest construction in the early 1700s, the beaded ceiling beams on the main floor, suggests this wasn't the case. This is a more sophisticated finish and indicates a construction date of no earlier than 1750.

After examining several possible scenarios, it seems likely that the house was built by Petrus Hoffman around 1752. Petrus' grandfather Martin Hoffman was born about 1625 in Revel Sweden and migrated to Esopus NY in 1657. Tragically, Petrus died in 1754 at age 27, only a year or so after the birth of his daughter Jannetje. His wife Catharina could have remained on the farm, running it with the assistance of slaves and her brothers-in-law. Jannetje and her husband Zachariah, son of Petrus' brother Martinus, are shown as owning the property in 1800, and they are probably the ones responsible for anglicizing it with a center hall, English fireplaces and chair rails shortly after their marriage in 1772.¹

Sometime in the 1920s, the roof was raised to accommodate four bedrooms and a bathroom under a gambrel roof. In the attic you can see the stone ends of the house within new framed walls. The owners added electric, indoor plumbing, the kitchen on the south, and redecorated the interior in the current style.

Our efforts this summer have been focused on the living room, hall and dining room -- what is left of the original house. We've pulled up two layers of floor, replastered the walls, replaced mouldings removed in the '20s, and replaced the 1920s windows with 12 over 12s. We also stabilized the original bypass chimney behind the English fireplace, constructed a mate for it in the living room, and uncovered an original west door frame.

We hope you enjoy the tour,
Donna Brown and Elliott Bristol

¹ Extracted from Neil Larsen's Historic Documentation of the house done in 2003.