

ALBANY COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

# PROSPECT



TEN BROECK MANSION, 9 TEN BROECK PLACE, ALBANY NY 12210 518-436-9826

## Under the Same Roofs: Slavery at the Ten Broeck Mansion in the Late 18th Century

By Matthew Kirk, Corey McQuinn

FOR NEARLY A DECADE, THE ACHA, Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., and dozens of students explored the site of a former carriage barn north of the Ten Broeck Mansion. The barn was razed due to safety concerns in 1998, and the archeological excavations were conducted as part of several week-long educational camps. The excavations produced a wealth of data and artifacts relative to the barn. At the time of the barn's demolition questions were raised by many concerning its age, changing functions over time, and its possible use as living quarters for mansion staff, servants, and perhaps slaves. The archeological explorations, it was hoped, would help to answer some of these questions.

Although the analysis of the voluminous archeological data is not complete, it appears that the artifacts recovered from within and around the barn mostly post-date the 1840s. In all, there is a surprising lack of material from the end of the 18th century and first quarter of the 19th century, when the Ten Broeck family inhabited the house. The implication seems to be that the carriage barn (although it perhaps utilized recycled materials from an earlier structure) was not placed on site until the 1840s.

So were there earlier outbuildings on the lot before the 1840s? More recent historical research and limited archeological excavations during the past several years has revealed that the answer is "yes."

The Ten Broecks built the mansion in 1798 following a great conflagration that burned most of the northern end of the city of Albany, including almost 250 houses. At the time Abraham

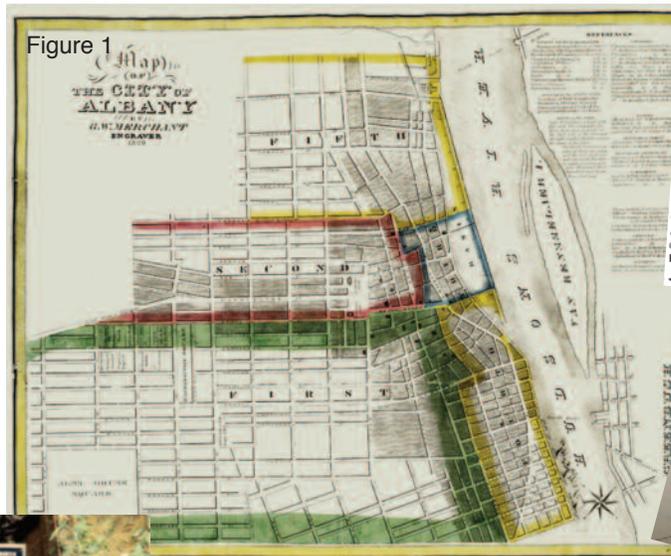


Figure 1

**VALUABLE REAL ESTATE FOR SALE.**—The subscriber offers for sale the HOUSE, OUT HOUSES, ORCHARD and GROUNDS, now owned by him, formerly the Mansion of the late Gen. Abraham Ten Broeck, situated on ANKOURN HILL, in the city of Albany. For excellence of soil, purity of air and elegance of prospect, this Seat is not surpassed by any situation in this state. It is within a few hundred yards of the principal avenue leading to the city, North Market street, having a commanding view of the Albany Basin and the Erie Canal, and besides an extensive prospect for many miles on the North River.

The Mansion House is a substantial two story brick building, of four large rooms on a floor. The out-houses of brick, and room in proportion.

To a gentleman wishing to enjoy the pleasures of a city, with that of a country life, no place can present a more inviting aspect, and to the professional or mercantile man, it will afford a pleasant and interesting retreat. The fruits are of superior quality, and the ground tastefully laid out. The title is indisputable. For terms apply to

Albany, Sept 25. **GEORGE** Figure 2

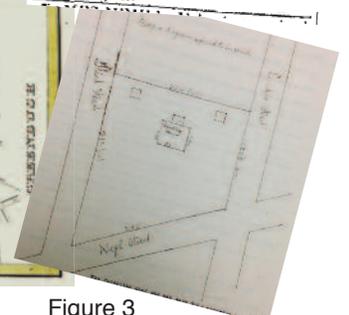


Figure 3

Figure 1 George Merchant, owner of the Ten Broeck Mansion between 1821 and 1831, produced this map of the city of Albany in 1828.

Figure 2. Shortly before his death, George Merchant placed the mansion for sale. This advertisement from September 28, 1826 in the Albany Argus announces the sale of the property and describes "out-houses made of brick" in addition to the mansion.

Ten Broeck was ending his tenure as mayor of the city, and the new mansion lot was just outside of the corporation limits in the town of Watervliet and the Manor of Rensselaerswyck. Ten Broeck, an in-law of the Van Rensselaer family, was an important agent and administrator of the Manor from 1769 to 1784.

Following the death of Abraham and Elizabeth Ten Broeck the house was eventually sold to George Merchant, a noted Albany businessman, politician, and surveyor. Merchant is perhaps best remembered by historians for the wonderfully detailed map of Albany that he created in the 1820s (Figure 1). Luckily, Merchant also provided a description of the mansion grounds in a newspaper advertisement (Figure 2) and also a sketch of the mansion lot (Figure 3) between 1826 and 1831 as he was preparing to sell the property just prior to his death.

The map of the Ten Broeck lot depicts the mansion house with two, small detached outbuildings, or dependencies, that flank it to the west. In 1798, the Ten Broecks' new house was perched at the top of a prominent hill that



Figure 4

Figure 3. This 1831 map of the property was part of the deed that transferred the property from the estate of George Merchant to James King. Here the two small flanking structures (dependencies) can be clearly seen west of the main house.

Figure 4. An archeological excavation revealing the brick rubble of the former southwest dependency of the Ten Broeck Mansion.



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HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

TEN BROECK MANSION

9 Ten Broeck Place

Albany NY 12210 518-436-9826

wendy@tenbroeckmansion.org

www.tenbroeckmansion.org

Hours Open for tours May-Oct

Thursday & Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday - Sunday 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

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*PROSPECT* newsletter is published four times annually by the Albany County Historical Association, 9 Ten Broeck Place, Albany, NY 12210. The ACHA is a New York State chartered educational corporation and has 501(c)(3) non-profit status from the IRS.

## Executive Director's Corner

IF YOU HAVEN'T VISITED US IN A WHILE THEN YOU'RE MISSING A WHOLE LOT! We've been working around the clock and the Mansion is looking better than ever. Thanks to the tireless planning of our Trustee Donna Passaretti and generous donations from Trustees Keith Bennett and Jay Jakovic our bathroom has been completely redone and is looking incredible. We've also received a generous donation from another Trustee allowing us to reinterpret the first floor orientation room to its original use as the Olcott Family Dining Room. Long used as a space for storage and to show collections, the room is finally going back to its former glory. We've ac-

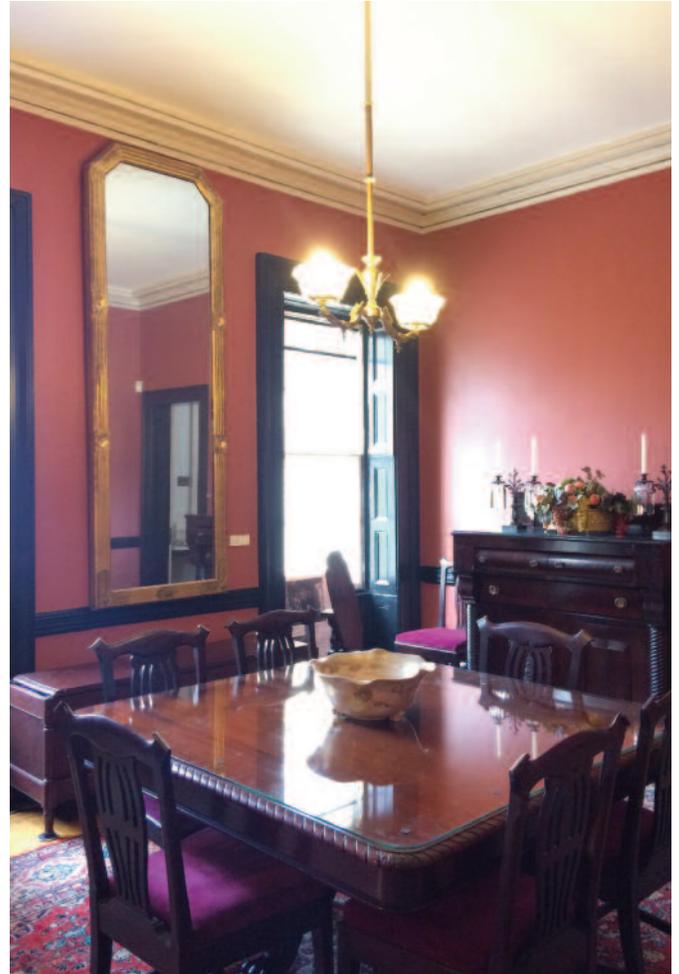
quired a beautiful table and sideboard set that is believed to have belonged to the Olcott's during their occupancy in the Ten Broeck Mansion.

The room is almost complete and will be ready in time for our Holiday House events. Be sure to stop in and take a sneak peek.

Even with all of this progress there is still much more work to be done. We've recently sent out an ACHA Angel letter detailing all of the upgrades and improvements we're planning for 2015. ACHA is grateful to anyone who has donated or still thinking about it as we encounter the Holiday Season.

As you can see, this is our busiest time of the year, and we're looking forward to sharing it with all of you. Make sure you stop in to see the Ten Broeck Mansion decked out in holiday cheer.

Jillian Altenburg



Olcott Family Dining Room

## Under the Same Roofs: *continued*

provided commanding views of both the city and the manor. As part of the overall neo-Palladian design of the mansion and grounds, the family included two flanking structures. Similar structures on contemporary estates are known to have been used as out-kitchens, laundries, pavilions, offices, and sleeping quarters for slaves and servants. According to the 1800 federal census, Abraham Ten Broeck housed ten slaves in his Watervliet home. Unfortunately this was not unusual, as the city of Albany had a population of 524 enslaved people and the town of Watervliet a remarkable 412.

Recent archeology conducted by volunteers during ACHA's Living History Day program has shed additional light on one of the flanking structures at the mansion. Archeologists are using the small assemblage of domestic artifacts and architectural items to determine the function and evolution of the building (Figure 4). Additional historical research on the Ten Broeck and Merchant families strongly suggests the use of the southwest dependency as living quarters for the estate's enslaved laborers.

Documentary research, archeology, and the history of enslaved people in the northeast are explored in greater depth on December 7, 2014, 2PM at the Albany Institute of History and Art. I will be presenting these findings in an illustrated talk supported by a grant from the New York Council for the Humanities. I hope you will join me to discuss the implications of these findings for our understanding and interpretations of the historic Ten Broeck Mansion.

## Upcoming events

### Champagne Preview Party Thursday, December 4th - 5:30pm – 8:30pm

Join us for a preview of the Mansion's gracious rooms and halls beautifully decorated for the holidays by community volunteers. Enjoy a light champagne reception, a Silent Auction, Holiday Gift Shop and a visit from Sinterklaas. \$70 per person

### Open House -Saturday, December 6 - noon – 3:00 pm

Begin the Albany holiday season with a visit to Holiday House at Ten Broeck Mansion's Open House. Let the children enjoy holiday crafts and a visit from Sinterklaas. \$5 per adult \$1 for children under 12

### Lecture, "Hanukkah." Thursday, December 11 - 1:00pm

Rabbi Cashman will discuss the history and traditions of Hanukkah. Admission is free

### Musicians of Ma'alwyck - Friday, December 12 – 7:00pm

"A Sprig of Mistletoe, A Garland of Ivy." Enjoy refreshments while listening to this talented duo play a variety of Christmas tunes of different nationalities and early music. \$25 per person.

### Holiday Tea at Ten Broeck Mansion - Saturday, December 13th - 1:00pm – 4:30pm

Enjoy a festive Holiday Tea served in the formal dining room. Seatings are from 1:00–2:30 pm and 3:00–4:30 pm. \$25 per person, \$20 ACHA member price. Reservations required.

### Children's Story Hour Saturday, December 20 - 10:30am - noon

Bring your children to hear Holiday stories read by Sinterklaas, play parlor games, crafts, decorate cookies and enjoy simple holiday refreshments. (Recommended ages 3 to 10). Free admission.

### Holiday Madrigals, Coffee & Desserts - Saturday, December 20 - 1:30pm – 4:00pm

Enjoy afternoon coffee & desserts and holiday songs performed by the full ensemble of the Helderberg Madrigal Singers. \$25 per person.

For more information on our schedule of events contact us at 518-436-9826 or [www.tenbroeckmansion.org](http://www.tenbroeckmansion.org)



Top: Shakespeare's, "The Tempest," in our gardens this summer.



Bottom: Young Archaeologist digging at our annual camp

## Staffing Changes

THIS PAST SPRING, the Albany County Historical Association said goodbye to its longtime Executive Director, Wendy Burch, who accepted a position with the National Alliance on Mental Health. During her tenure, our organization saw tremendous improvement and growth, and we are elated that Wendy has agreed to stick around as a volunteer.

We can attribute the success of so many of our events to Wendy, notably the hugely successful presentation of Shakespeare in the Gardens. Over the past few summers, hundreds have come out to take in the performance and relax in our stunning urban gardens. Word spread quickly and attendance improved with each showing. This type of programming is essential to our growth as a community organization, and Wendy recognized this. She also reorganized and ensured the smooth functioning of our working committees, which is no small task! The Albany County Historical Association has come a long way

since Wendy took the reins 7 years ago.

In 2011, Wendy and the board smartly hired an associate director who quickly showed an earnest commitment to local history and our organization's goals. Then-Associate Director Jillian Altenburg is thrilled in her new position as ACHA's Executive Director. Jillian brings a fresh vision to the organization and is eager to pick up where Wendy left off. The Mansion is in good hands!



Sinterklaas at Holiday House

## Annual Appeal

THE ALBANY COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION solicited for its annual appeal in June, and many supporters heeded the call. We were overwhelmed with the response! The appeal has raised \$11,401 to be used towards programming, operations, and beautifying the Ten Broeck Mansion and grounds. It is with deep appreciation that we publicly acknowledge the following generous donors:

Mr. & Mrs. Keith Bennett, Eileen Bird, Bill Bouchard, Tony and Mary Brankman, Dorice Brickman, Ms. Carolyn Burke George, Elizabeth L. Burns, Jessie Cogswell, Sue Denninger, Betty De Vries, Mr. and Mrs. James J. Eberlein, Joe and Marie Erkes, Tony Esposito, Joseph Fogarty, Worth Gretter, Robert Hedgeman, Robert L. Johnson, Sheila Jordan, Lyn Karig Hohmann, Barbara Kearney, Keeler Motor Car Company, Mr. and Mrs. Edward King, Jessica and Gavin Klami, Kyle Lanzit, Ms. Joyce Lavery, Keith C. Lee, Joe Lent and Bonnie Crocetta, Lynn Maloney, Mrs. Patricia McCord, Cathy McEneeny, Steven and Patricia Messinger, Hyla Minner, Bebe Morehead, Mary Catherine O'Neill, Georgiana Panton, Donna Passaretti, Ruth Ann Price, John F. Rausch, Norma Shiatte, Andor Skotnes, Euan and Patricia Somerscales, Joel M. Spiro, Dennis Stewart, Mary Stock, Norman and Nancy Tellier, Eric and Lisa Thaler, Inga Tomson, Katherine S. Updike Porter, Mary Carol and David White.



# HELP US PRESERVE A RICH HERITAGE

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

We cordially invite you to join ACHA and enjoy the benefits of membership, including free admission to the Mansion, newsletters and advance notice of upcoming events. Two Free admissions to the Holiday Tea\* (with advance reservations) are available at Patron level and above.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: NEW ( ) RENEWAL ( ) Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- Student/Senior \$ 25
- Individual \$ 40
- Family \$ 50
- Patron \$ 100
- Sustaining \$ 250
- Benefactor \$ 500

### ARBOR HILL RESIDENTS

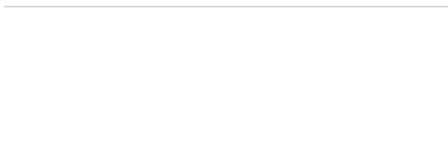
- Individual \$ 15
- Family \$ 30
- Business \$ 75

### CORPORATE MEMBERSHIPS

- Small Business \$ 200.00
- Corporate Benefactor \$ 500.00

*Complimentary use of Mansion for 2 hours with Small Business Membership and 4 hours at Corporate Level*

*\*reservations required – maximum 2 tickets*



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ALBANY NY 12210