Each year, according to law, the Secretary of the Interior reports to Congress on threats to National Historic Landmarks nationwide. Each year, every State Historic Preservation Officer supplies up-to-date data on the status of threatened Landmarks to the Secretary to assist in this process. And each year Maine's State Historic Preservation Officer has reported on the threat which coastal erosion poses to Colonial Pemaquid. It can only be hoped that the Landmark status in the near future will directly (through a special appropriation, for example) or indirectly (through heightened awareness of the site's significance on the part of non-federal funding sources) lead to effective erosion control measures.

Each year, thousands of people from across our country and from many foreign nations visit Colonial Pemaquid State Historic Site to walk among the excavated, stabilized, and interpreted structures, to climb the steps of the reconstructed stone bastion, and to pass through the on-site museum. Some are casual tourists. Others are maintaining a Pemaquid tradition dating from the earliest days of the settlement: they are launching their boats to go fishing. Still others are students of historical archeology, who know before they even enter the park that they will see structures and artifacts which span virtually the entire period of the Thirteen Colonies. Wherever they are from, if they are researching Anglo-American sites of the 17th or 18th centuries, Pemaquid is likely to help them. For that reason alone, America is fortunate that the repeated destructions and abandonments of Pemaquid in the Historic Contact period ironically contributed to the site's archeological preservation. Exactly 200 years ago the significance of the site's history and its remains were first recognized. It can only be hoped that 200 years from now the significance of the Colonial Pemaquid State Historic Site National Historic Landmark will be equally recognized and that there will still be intact archeological deposits to preserve.

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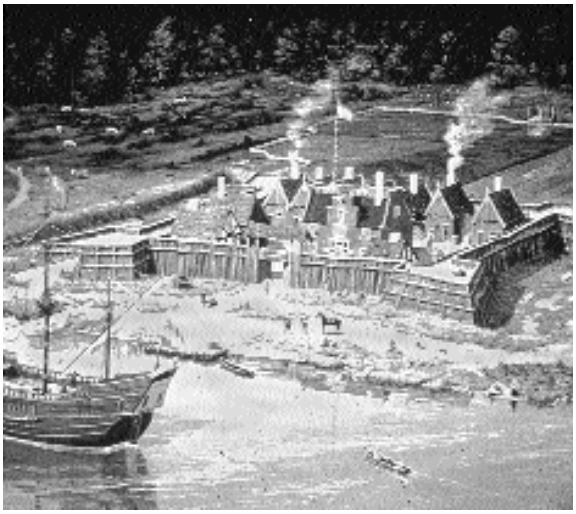
Paul R. Huey

# The Fort Orange and Schuyler Flatts NHL

*Detail of the ruins of the Schuyler house. Photo by Paul R.Huey taken after the 1962 fire.*

Twenty-five years ago in the Hudson Valley of New York State there began a series of unprecedented archeological discoveries in historic sites. These discoveries opened a window of knowledge into the earliest period of that area's historic Dutch settlement, known previously only through an incomplete documentary record as well as through many traditions. Public interest and excitement were intense as the remains of an ancient, almost mythical, historical past suddenly became a physical reality as the result of a new initiative in archeological research.

Flowing to the Atlantic Ocean for hundreds of miles and cutting through the eastern Appalachians, the Hudson/Mohawk River system is unique in North America. The Hudson, a tidewater river reaching inland for more than 150 miles to the point where it joins with the Mohawk, provided an access deep into the North American continent and naturally attracted trade-oriented Europeans such as the Dutch early in the 17th century. Near the present city of Albany, New York, the Dutch established a small fort in 1614 to trade for furs with the Indians, but this installation was replaced in 1624 with a new post, Fort Orange, built some distance away. New Amsterdam was established in 1626 at the mouth of the Hudson and later became New York City. After 1630, farming and agricultural settlements were developed under the direction of Kiliaen van Rensselaer in the fertile valley area around Fort Orange, independent of the West India Company fur trade at the fort, and a small village that grew up adjacent to Fort Orange was officially set up as



*Fort Orange, 1635, reconstruction. Oil painting by Len Tantillo.*

the Company town of Beverwyck in 1652. This town developed into the city of Albany, while in 1658 a second town called Wiltwyck was established in the mid-Hudson Valley and later became present Kingston, New York. Finally, a third Dutch town, Schenectady, was established in the lower Mohawk Valley in the early 1660s, shortly before the English took the entire colony from the Dutch by force during peacetime in 1664.

Despite the rich 17th-century Dutch history of this region, coinciding almost precisely with the great Golden Age of Dutch culture in Europe, archeological research before 1970 in New York State had been limited mostly to sites of the 18th-century colonial British and Revolutionary War periods, although other archeologists who had worked at prehistoric Indian sites had also extended their work to include research at 16th- and 17th-century contact sites. As archeological sites and historic buildings were lost at an alarming rate in the 1960s, however, New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller in 1966 established the New York State Historic Trust. Placed within the Division of Parks of the Conservation Department, the Trust later became the Division for Historic Preservation within the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Historic Trust functioned as the State Historic Preservation Office at the same time it was given control of the system of about 30 State Historic Sites, many of which were already National Historic Landmarks. Charged by Governor Rockefeller with finding "new ways to use history to enrich the present," the Trust was to acquire, develop, interpret, and preserve the State Historic Sites as "tangible reminders of the sacrifices and accomplishments related to our heritage."

The State Historic Sites today reflect the different preservation philosophies and management policies that were followed at different times throughout the system's long history beginning with the acquisition of the first State Historic Site in 1850. Archeological resources were usually ignored and often were destroyed, but many of the State Historic Sites had become National Historic Landmarks by the time the Historic Trust established a statewide archeological research and management program for the Historic Sites under professional direction in 1969. Of all the State Historic Sites, at least three were representative of some aspect of New York's 17th-century Dutch history. In Kingston, the stone Senate House was built in 1676 on the prime corner lot of the stockaded town laid out in 1658. In Yonkers, Philipse Manor Hall stands probably where Adriaen van der Donck settled between 1646 and 1652, and, far up the Hudson River across from Albany, Crailo is an old Van Rensselaer family home that evidently stands where Dominie Megapolensis built his house in 1642. Each of these sites still has significant but finite buried archeological resources that, to varying degrees, have escaped destruction during previous site development. Crailo and Philipse Manor Hall were among the first sites in New York State to be designated as National Historic Landmarks, both having been listed on November 5, 1961.

Kingston in 1969 was experiencing urban renewal which threatened many archeological resources within the area of the 17th-century town. In May 1969, the Historic Trust excavated several test units near one of the old stone houses of the town in search of evidence of 17th-century occupation, and this work uncovered small-sized red bricks the full significance of which was not immediately recognized. Nevertheless, stratigraphy was also identified that suggested early grading and the proximity of a corner bastion of the stockade, and these discoveries delighted the public. The newspapers reported in detail what was found, but the excitement was nothing compared to that of July 1970, when Bert Salwen and Sarah Bridges uncovered actual remains of the 17th-century stockade wall of the town directly across the street from Senate House State Historic Site, where urban renewal plans called for a new street to be graded and built. Bert Salwen and Sarah Bridges had been enlisted by the Historic Trust to do this work.

Upriver, in Albany, where not even a single 17th-century structure remained standing in the old city since the last was demolished in 1941, construction during 1970 of a new arterial highway along the river constituted a potential threat to archeological sites dating from the city's earliest history. Of concern to the Historic Trust was

the route of this highway which was headed directly toward where documentary research indicated that Fort Orange had stood from 1624 until 1676. Working with the State Transportation Department, the Historic Trust arranged for a test excavation to be dug by machine at a specified location to search for 17th-century Dutch material that might relate to Fort Orange. At this time, no distinctively Dutch 17th-century artifacts had ever been excavated in Albany, and the material that had been found in Kingston was too limited in amount to form a basis for the identification and study of 17th-century Dutch material culture.

The results of the initial test excavation at the presumed site of Fort Orange early in the morning of October 20, 1970, exceeded all expectations. At first, nothing was found as the machine excavated though 19th-century cellar fill into the natural clay below; the cellar of the house, built in the 1790s, had obliterated the remains of Fort Orange, although it was well known among 19th-century historians that Simeon DeWitt had built this house on the then-visible remains of the post. Then, as the excavation was widened to extend beyond the cellar wall, the first glass trade beads, mouth harp, and fleur-de-lis pipe stem appeared, indicating that material remains of 17th-century Dutch colonial culture had at last been discovered in the modern city of Albany. The mechanical digging was stopped immediately, and the point of origin of the artifacts was soon determined. Careful hand excavation quickly revealed cultural stratigraphy in the area beyond the cellar wall of the DeWitt house, and attention was then focussed on recording the soil profile and clearing an area in which to reveal features.

As it became clear that a rich stratigraphic sequence of 17th-century occupation levels with associated Dutch yellow bricks, delft sherds, beads, tobacco pipes, delicate glassware, and many other artifacts had in fact been found, a brief statement and press release was prepared. The next day there was sensational but remarkably accurate press coverage in the two Albany newspapers and on the three local television channels. As the exposed soil profiles were carefully cleaned and recorded, additional discoveries included a fragment of Rhenish Westerwald salt-glazed stoneware with a seal dated 1632, misread at first as 1612. This, too, was reported by the newspapers, and a snow fence was erected for safety while interpretive hand-out sheets were prepared for the growing crowd of eager, interested onlookers who gathered to watch each day. A regular visitor to the site was Albany Mayor Erastus Corning, who, with a life-long personal interest in Albany history, was as thrilled as any citizen of the city could be. He continued unobtrusively to provide constant support, encouragement, and assistance throughout the duration of the project. From this moment there began, it seemed, to be a general public reawakening of interest in and appreciation for Albany history; what for so long had been the intangible, romantic myth of Dutch history in a distant 17th-century past suddenly become a physical, archeological reality. The effect was almost magical.

*Fort Orange—-Helderberg Workshop student during initial work.*

As the magnitude of the discovery became apparent, the Transportation Department rearranged its construction schedule to permit a maximum amount of time for the investigation. The small crew of Historic Trust archeologists under this writer's direction, assisted at times by a number of volunteers who had previous professional training, worked the entire winter of 1970-71. It was a record cold winter, with heavy snow, but the work continued non-stop under a shelter erected by the Transportation Department. The work continued until the portion of the site was completely excavated that otherwise would have been damaged and disturbed by the construction of the crash walls built between the northbound and southbound lanes of Interstate 787. There was, of course, strong public interest in stabilizing and preserving *in situ* the fragile remains that were uncovered by redesigning the highway to bridge over the site, but there was neither the technology nor the funding for such a project. Instead, by the time the excavations were completed in March, the site had produced a wealth of new information about 17th-century Fort Orange and the Dutch material associated with it. Remains of four separate structures inside the fort, a section of the south moat, part of a stone ravelin, and a section of the path leading from

*Schuyler Flatts—Schuyler house, c. 1940s.*

the east entrance and the Hudson River had been found.

Many other fragmentary archeological sites from the 17th-century Dutch period undoubtedly remain to be found in the oldest parts of the city of Albany, as well as outside the city, but these resources are extremely limited and finite. Outside of Albany, only a few Dutch colonial farm sites of this century have been located. One of these, the historic Schuyler Flatts farm, was also threatened in 1971. Located north of Albany, the site was fortunately west of Interstate 787, the new arterial highway, but it was close to the route of a new sewer line also being constructed that year. It was on land owned by a restaurant company, and although the Flatts farm was on the fertile alluvial Hudson River flood plain, commercial development of the property with a new restaurant as well as a housing complex seemed inevitable.

The Schuyler Flatts is perhaps most famous as the subject of much of the book *Memoirs of an American Lady* by Anne Grant. She described the farm during the French and Indian War when it was the annual campground for British troops in the campaigns against Canada. The historic Schuyler house described by Anne Grant stood at the Flatts until it burned in 1962, vacant and abandoned. The farm had been purchased by the Schuyler family in 1672 from the Van Rensselaers, but the farm had been established 30 years earlier. Well situated on the trade route to Canada, the Flatts was the most fertile area of land north of Fort Orange, and in 1642 Adriaen van der Donck settled there against the wishes of Kiliaen van Rensselaer. Van Rensselaer ordered Van der Donck to move elsewhere in 1643, and prominent Dutch trader and frontier diplomat Arent van Curler built a new farm house on the farm that year.

There was already interest in the Town of Colonie in preserving the site, perhaps as a small park, but it was likely the property would soon be developed. With permission of the property owner and with the encouragement of the chairman of the Colonie Town Planning Board and, in particular, of Jean Olton, the town historian, the Historic Trust organized the first excavations at the site during the summer of 1971. The Flatts site offered the potential for useful research relating to the Schuyler family and to Philip J. Schuyler, the Revolutionary War general whose early military experience as a militia captain occurred at the Flatts in 1755. In 1762, he built a great Georgian mansion still standing in Albany and open to the public as Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site; it has been a National Historic Landmark since 1967. In addition, the 17th-century history of the Flatts site would make it a significant source for archeological comparisons with Fort Orange.

The initial excavations revealed interesting 18th-century and late 17th-century features including walls and a cobblestone courtyard. Prehistoric sites were also uncovered and recorded not far away directly in the path of the sewer line. The features were interpreted to the public and to fifth, sixth, and seventh grade Town of Colonie students during a three-day event organized by the Heldeberg Workshop, a local educational institution, and by the newly-formed Town of Colonie Historical Society. Tours of the excavations were given to 1,200 school children. This memorable event was featured in an article published in *Holiday Inn Magazine* the following summer, as excavations began in a different part of the site. These excavations revealed a much older feature which dated to the 17th century and was found to be the remains of a large, filled-in cellar. The cellar had been built of wood and was exactly the size of the cellar that Van Curler reported building in 1643. It had collapsed apparently between the time Van Curler died in 1666 and the farm was sold to the Schuylers in 1672.

Finally, in 1975 the Town of Colonie was able to purchase a part of the archeological site in order to preserve it for future development as a historical park. The site, however, extends into a large adjoining parcel of nine acres which the County of Albany acquired in 1981. By 1990, the County was considering the transfer of its property to the Town of Colonie, a proposal that was

greatly encouraged by the National Park Service Historic Contact theme study and the designation of the site as a National Historic Landmark in November 1993. The additional nine acres was conveyed to the Town by the County in February 1995, making the goal of developing the area into a historical park much more feasible.

There are many problems to be overcome and many threats, both potential and real, to the Schuyler Flatts as well as Fort Orange. The Schuyler Flatts site has suffered greatly from vandalism since 1974 as a result of illegal trash disposal as well as artifact looting. Remains of Fort Orange still lie safely buried under Interstate 787, but there have been recent proposals to rebuild Interstate 787 in an underground tunnel so that it does not separate the city of Albany so completely from the Hudson River. The designation of Fort Orange as a National Historic Landmark in November 1993 is a timely reminder that the site is buried there. Meanwhile, much work has been done with the collections from the Flatts and from Fort Orange, and much work remains to be done. Charlotte Wilcoxen, a volunteer, worked with the 17th-century ceramics for several years and published the results. The present writer based his doctoral dissertation on the Fort Orange material, and another graduate student, Lon Bulgrin of Binghamton University, is developing a dissertation proposal using the Schuyler Flatts collections.

The material from these sites has facilitated the development of a clearer understanding of 17th-century Dutch colonial material culture in the New World, and it also represents an important, if neglected, period of New York State history. The Fort Orange and Flatts artifacts enabled the immediate recognition of a 17th-century Dutch tobacco pipe, as well as Dutch yellow bricks and green-glazed floor tiles, that were excavated at Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site. Fragments of 17th-century roof pantiles were discovered at both Crailo and Senate House State Historic Sites and were compared to those from the Flatts and Fort Orange. Dutch floor tiles, bricks, and other building material from the 17th century were unexpectedly discovered in rescue excavations at Clermont State Historic Site, an 18th-century country estate on the Hudson River that became a National Historic Landmark in 1972. Dutch ceramics, trade goods, and other material that could be dated to the first half of the 17th century on the basis of the Fort Orange collection were found in a rescue excavation at Crailo, giving support to the early dating of that site. The beads and other trade material from the Flatts and Fort Orange provide a means of distinguishing Dutch from French and/or English trade material at Ganondagan State Historic Site, which was a Seneca Indian village in western New York from about 1670 to 1687 and has been a National Historic Landmark since 1964. In 1986 the 17th-century Dutch artifacts from the Flatts and Fort Orange formed the basis for a comprehensive permanent interpretive exhibit on the Hudson valley Dutch at Crailo State Historic Site. Such collections, rescued from threatened sites, provide a necessary regional context for the understanding and interpretation of preserved sites such as the State Historic Sites, where limited and finite archeological resources must be carefully protected and thoughtfully managed for both present and future research needs.

*Schuyler Flatts—Field school excavation Van Curles house site.*

**Additional Reading**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