

ACKERMAN-DEWSNAP (BISHOP) HOUSE, BARN  
176 East Saddle River Road  
Saddle River  
Bergen County  
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-990

HABS  
NJ  
2-SADR,  
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HABS  
NJ  
2-SADR,  
6-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ACKERMAN-DEWSNAP (BISHOP) HOUSE, BARN

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Location: 176 East Saddle River Road, Saddle River, Bergen County, N.J.;  
.02 miles from corner of East Allendale Road, 350' in (east)

USGS Quad: Park Ridge, New Jersey, quadrangle  
Also see "Description" below

Significance: One of twelve known remaining Dutch framed (anchor bent) barns in Bergen County. The ACKERMAN-DEWSNAP BARN is the only extant Dutch framed barn in Saddle River. Its 18th century origins and later alterations reflect accurately the changing circumstances of this cross-roads hamlet.

Description: The barn is situated in the Saddle River Department of Public Works (DPW) recycling, parking and storage area, 450 feet north of East Allendale Road, 200 feet north of the Saddle River Police/Fire Facility. East Allendale road runs perpendicularly to the barn's other border road, East Saddle River Road. The house associated with the barn, the Bishop House, is on East Saddle River Road. The house and road are 225 feet and 350 feet, respectively, due east of the barn. (MAP No. 5, p. 5)

The barn was originally a four bent three bay Dutch barn, gable-ended with the peak running north to south. The interior was three aisles, with two side aisles and a center threshing floor. The building is constructed of hewn white oak and chestnut timbers, with white oak diagonal braces sawn in a mill. The span of the bent ("H" frame) is, between columns, 20' 9 1/2". The distance from the outsides of the columns is 22'1". The anchor beam tenons are chamfered and wedged, protrude 10", are 3" thick and 11 1/2" wide, with trunnels (wooden pegs) here and elsewhere being consistently 1 1/4" diameter. The anchor beam itself is 9 1/2" wide and 11 1/2" deep, and 23' 9" in length.

Columns are rectangular in section, 9 1/2" X 7 1/2" with the wider side accommodating the anchor beam mortises. The columns (originally) were roughly 16' tall plus a 3" tenon for the plate. The bents are arranged south to north, which is to say that the numbering (Roman numerals I-IV) begin their sequence at the south bent. The wind (or sway) brace mortises are numbered thusly: (from south bent I) (I), (II III), (IV V), (VI), the single numbers indicating end bents. (see DRAWING No. 1 p. 6)

The barn was substantially altered in the 19th century, with the northernmost bent (IV) taken apart and its columns used to form corner posts perpendicular to the east side of the remaining three bents, 11' 4" from bent to post (Inside measure). The alteration changed the foot print of the barn to a rectangle from its former rough square. The purlin plates were swung 90 degrees, and used to join the new corner posts to the bents; all wind bracing was removed at this time.

Additional plates were added laterally, at each end, to tie the structure further. The roof peak was changed to east/west from north/south, with the original long hewn rafters used for framing; replaced with sawn oak rafters they meet at an (added) ridge pole. Nails are late machine cut nails, siding is flat (not beveled) sawn clap board of pine, with some areas clad in "novelty" siding (molded and lapped). The barn is red with white trim. Soffets,

overhanging eaves and a cupola were added. Wagon doors were opened on the new east end, in addition to the original openings, themselves reduced in size. Passage doors for humans were added on the north, south and east sides.

History:

The ACKERMAN-DEWSNAP (BISHOP) HOUSE BARN is centrally situated amidst former fields on a rich alluvial plain. The broad, sloping valley extends from New York State to Paramus and was created over thousands of years by the actions of the Saddle River. The Munsee (Indian) trails that followed the river, and the path through the hills, border the land in question, and are known today as East Saddle River and East Allendale Roads. Circa 1750-1760, Abram Ackerman built a house and water-mill here; his farm appears on Robert Erskines' Revolutionary War maps; created for General Washington, who was, in fact, a guest of Abram's during the war. The property (except for a small lot on East Allendale) was deeded to the descendants of Abram, until 1864 when his great grandson, John A. Ackerman sold to James Dewsnap, a plumbing and gas fitting contractor. The barn itself is unrecorded in the deed records of Bergen County; secondary structures do appear, however, on the approximate site, on the 1840 USCS map, and the 1913 Atlas of Bergen County, published by the Bromely brothers. (MAPS No. 2,4 pgs. 10,13)

The Ackermans were farmers and millers, according to the genealogies and "Atlases". The sale of the land to the tradesman such as James Dewsnap is an indication of the social and economic changes that had taken place since the settlement of the valley. The house associated with the barn, the Ackerman-Dewsnap-Bishop House, was structurally and stylistically altered circa 1870 and is still in existence today; it seems likely that the changes in the barn occurred more or less simultaneously.

The structural details and tool marks of the remaining original frame, for example:

- One: A high degree of skill apparent in joinery and hewing;
- Two: Chamfered anchor beam tenons with wedges;
- Three: The lack of pilot screw-holes in mortise floors;
- Four: Ghosts of 18th century Dutch style hinges;
- Five: Appropriate mortises for lateral struts (not extant) indicate that the barn was constructed circa 1780, with an assumed width (based on other Bergen Dutch barns) of 44 feet by 38 feet in length (based on distance between surviving bents).

It is possible, perhaps likely, that the barn occupies its original site, as its location is central to fields, house and roads, and the original bents maintain their traditional north/south orientation.

The 19th century alterations to the barn completely changed its function and operational capacity, in these respects:

- One: The floor became one level, as opposed to the bi-level Dutch arrangement;
- Two: Doors were now on three sides, allowing carts, carriages and wagons to enter and exit without backing up, and getting in each other's way;
- Three: Stables were installed along the west end, allowing access to individual horses;
- Four: Ground level feed boxes were built.

**ACKERMAN-DEWSNAP (BISHOP) HOUSE, BARN**  
**HABS No. NJ-990** **(Page 3)**

In short, the barn was transformed from a general purpose agricultural purpose to that of a stable/carriage house. The exterior was formalized somewhat, in a picturesque way, with the aforementioned paint, molded trim, soffeted eaves, and a cupola/ventilator as a finishing touch (no longer extant). (see NJOCES, Historic District Survey, Individual Structure Form: Ackerman-Dewsnap House. Negative file #1-2)

By 1870, Saddle River was no longer the isolated Jersey-Dutch hamlet it once was. Small industry (forges, mills, broom factories, etc.) employed some, and many still farmed, but there was a significant commuting population, employed in the cities, who were the first to want the "country home". Trains from nearby Allendale allowed people like James Dewsnap to live and work in two different places. He needed a three horse garage. The changes in the house reflect changes in style and a certain sophistication, but the barn's alterations reveal the prosaic aspects of change.

Sources:

The sources for "Description" are as follows:

1. Measurements, observations, and research conducted by George Turrell (barn restorer, timber framer, historian) at the Ackerman-Dewsnap Barn, the Van Ripper-Tice Barn (Upper Saddle River), the Wortendyke Barn (Pascack), and two Hopper Barns in Nanuet, N.Y.
2. New Jersey Office of Cultural and Environmental Services, Historic Preservation Section, Historic District Survey Saddle River, N.J., and specifically:
  - A. Individual Structure Report: Ackerman-Dewsnap House
  - B. Individual Structure Report: Tice-Ackerman-Blackledge House  
(The New Jersey Office of Cultural and Environmental Services, Historic Preservation Section, no longer exists and has been re-named the Office of New Jersey Heritage which is within the Division of Parks and Forestry, which is a division of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and Energy)
3. The Borough of Saddle River, Municipal Facility Map, available at the Town Hall, Saddle River, N.J.
4. Fitch, John, The New World Dutch Barn. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, N.Y. 1968
5. Prudon, Theodore H.M., The Dutch Barn In America: Survival Of a Medieval Structural Frame, article published in Readings in American Vernacular Architecture, UGA Press, N.Y. 1986
6. Dutch Barn Preservation Society Newsletter, Spring 1991, article "Machine Made Nails Aid in Dating Old Barns" by Harold Zoch, DBPS, Rensselaer, N.Y.

The sources for "History" are as follows:

1. Tobey, Barbara W., The Ackerman Family, (Genealogy) Ackerman Family Association, Hackensack, N.J. 1988, 1990.
2. Erskine, Robert and Watkins, 1777-80 Maps for General Washington, Archival copy courtesy C.K. Tholl, Upper Saddle River, N.J.
3. McMahon, Reginald, Werimus article in Bergen County History, 1974 Annual, Bergen County Historical Society, River Edge, N.J.

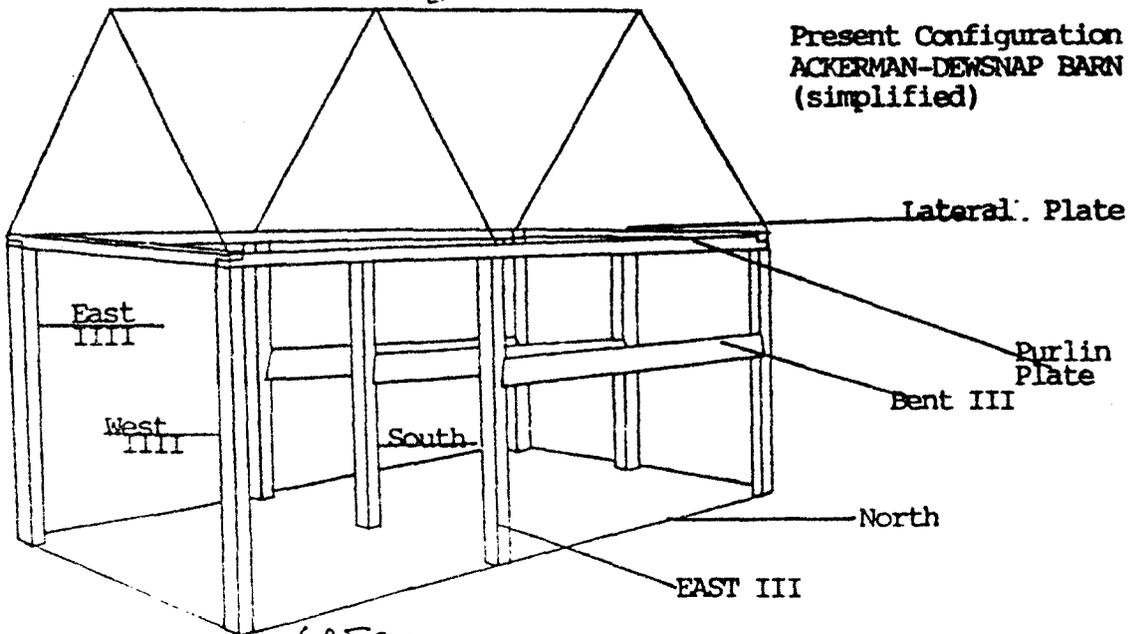
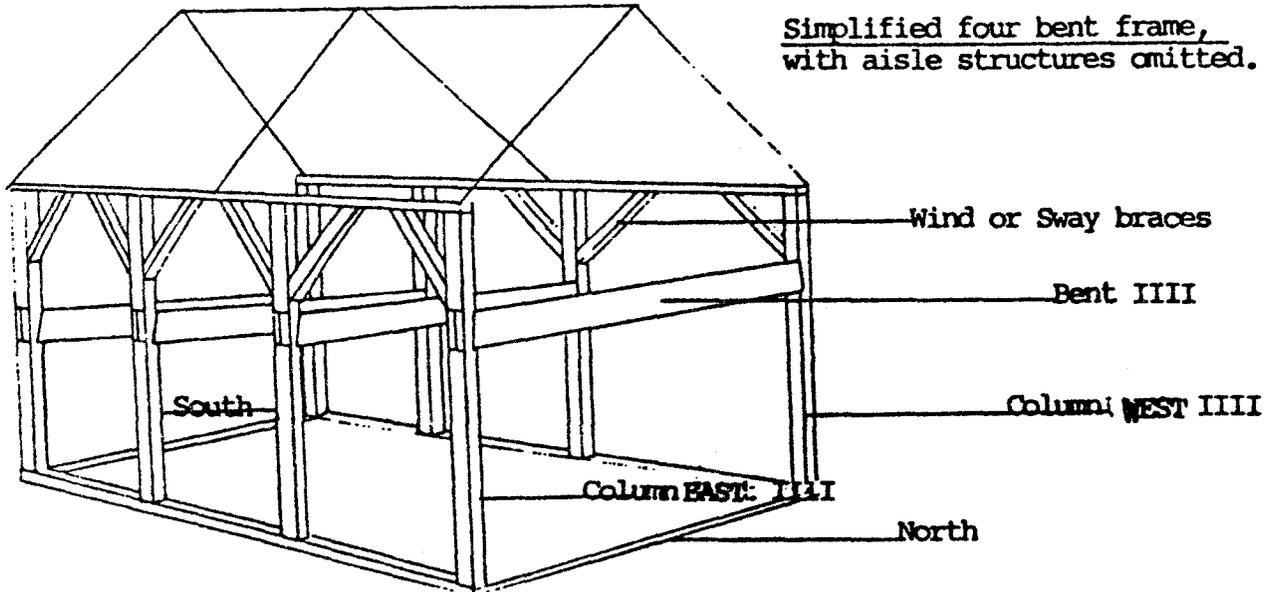
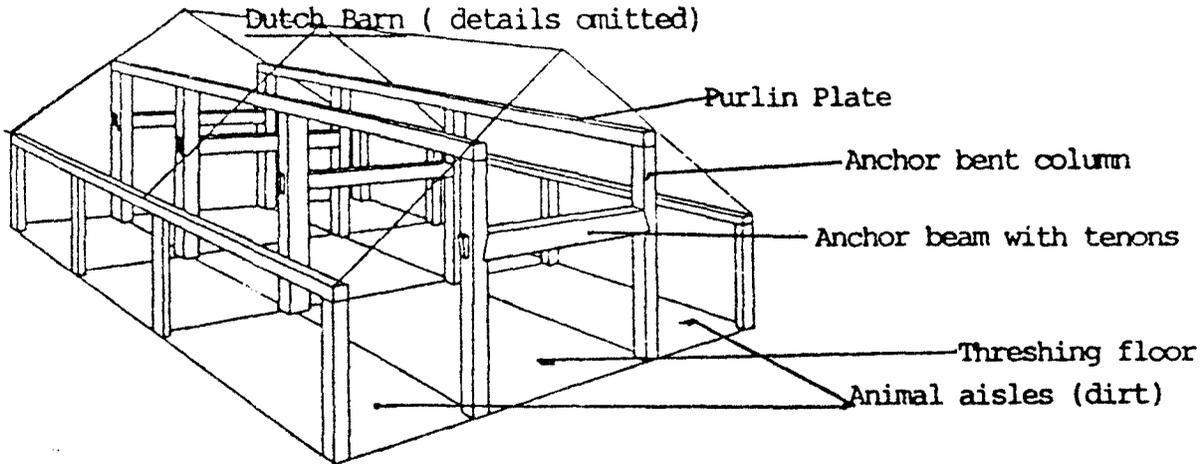
4. Saloman, Julian Harris, The Munsee: Indians of the Lower Hudson Region, Historical Society of Rockland (N.Y.), New City, N.Y. 1982.
5. Searching Vaults, Bergen County Court House Registry, Administration Building, Hackensack, N.J. (deeds to 17th century)
6. HABS Surveys (1936) #s NJ-156, NJ-486, No. 6-330
7. Walker, A.H. Atlas of Bergen County 1776-1876, C.C. Pease Co., Reading, Pa. 1876
8. Underhill, Roy, The Woodwright's Work Book, Chapter 9, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1986
9. Fabend, Firth Haring, A Dutch Family in the Middle Colonies, 1660-1800. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J. 1991
10. Downing, A.J., The Architecture of Country Houses, Dover Pub., New York, N.Y. 1969. (Originally Pub. 1850)
11. Bailey, Rosalie Fellows, Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York, Dover Publications, New York, N.Y. 1968. (first pub. 1936)

Historian:

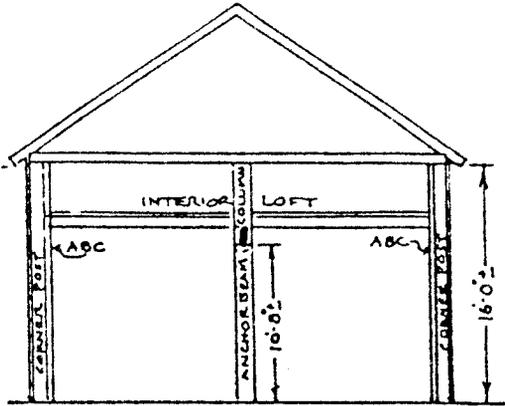
Mr. George B. Turrell  
Barn restorer, timber framer, historian  
September, 1992

References to the Chain of Title to the land upon which the structure stands are in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Justice Center, Hackensack, New Jersey.

- 1862 Deed, February 12, recorded in Volume Q5, pgs. 532-534.  
Garret A. Ackerman, wife maria to John A. Ackerman (son).
- 1864 Deed, July 19, 1864, recorded in Volume X5, pgs. 316-317.  
John A. Ackerman, wife Sarah, to James Dewsnap.
- 1903 Deed, August 5, 1903, recorded in Volume 566, pgs. 539-541.  
James Dewsnap, wife Mary Jane to Milly Helmes.
- 1944 Deed, September 9, recorded in Volume 2743, p. 25.  
Clarence Helmes to Catherine Hart Bishop.
- 1980 Deed, December 12, recorded in Volume 0733, p. 258.  
Catherine Hart Bishop to Borough of Saddle River.



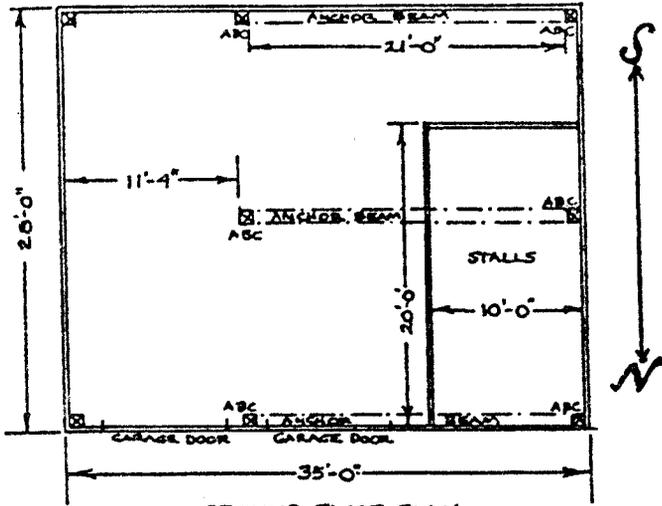
G.B. TRENKLE



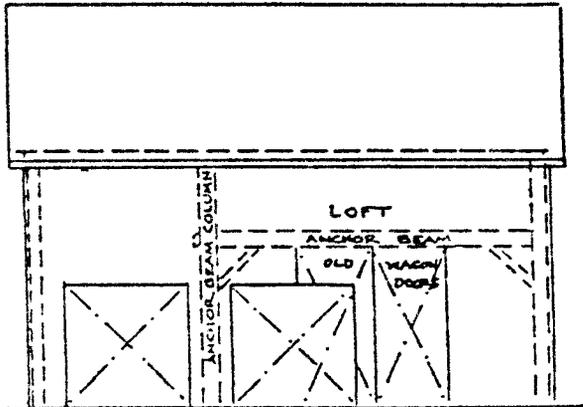
EAST ELEVATION  
*(Siding removed)*

Drawings not to scale

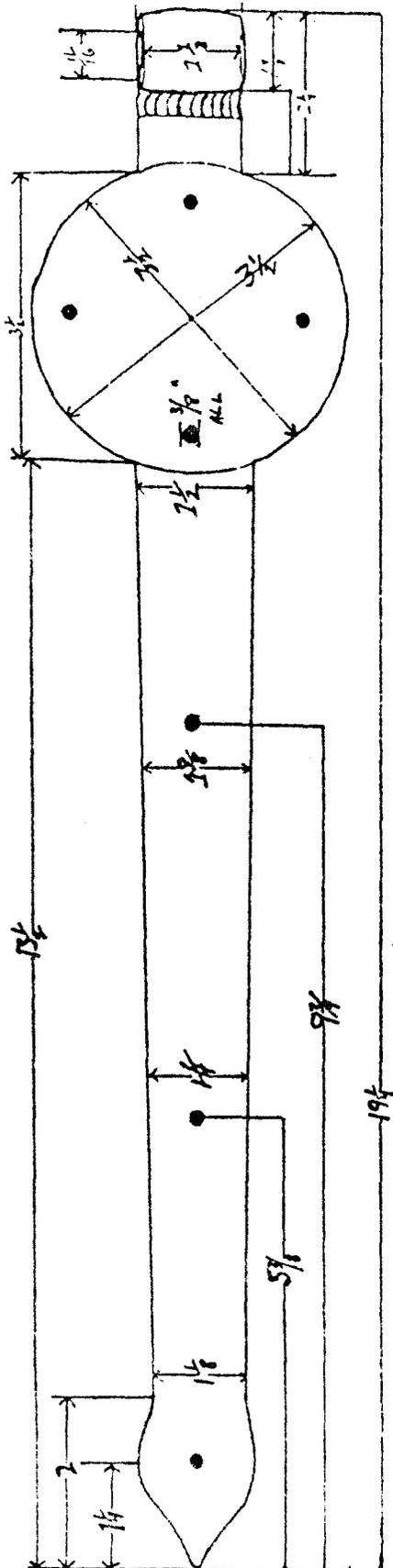
Present day elevations and  
 floor plan.  
 Drawings: C.K.Tholl



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



NORTH ELEVATION



Drawing made from hinge ghost  
 north side, permanently closed  
 (nailed shut) door.

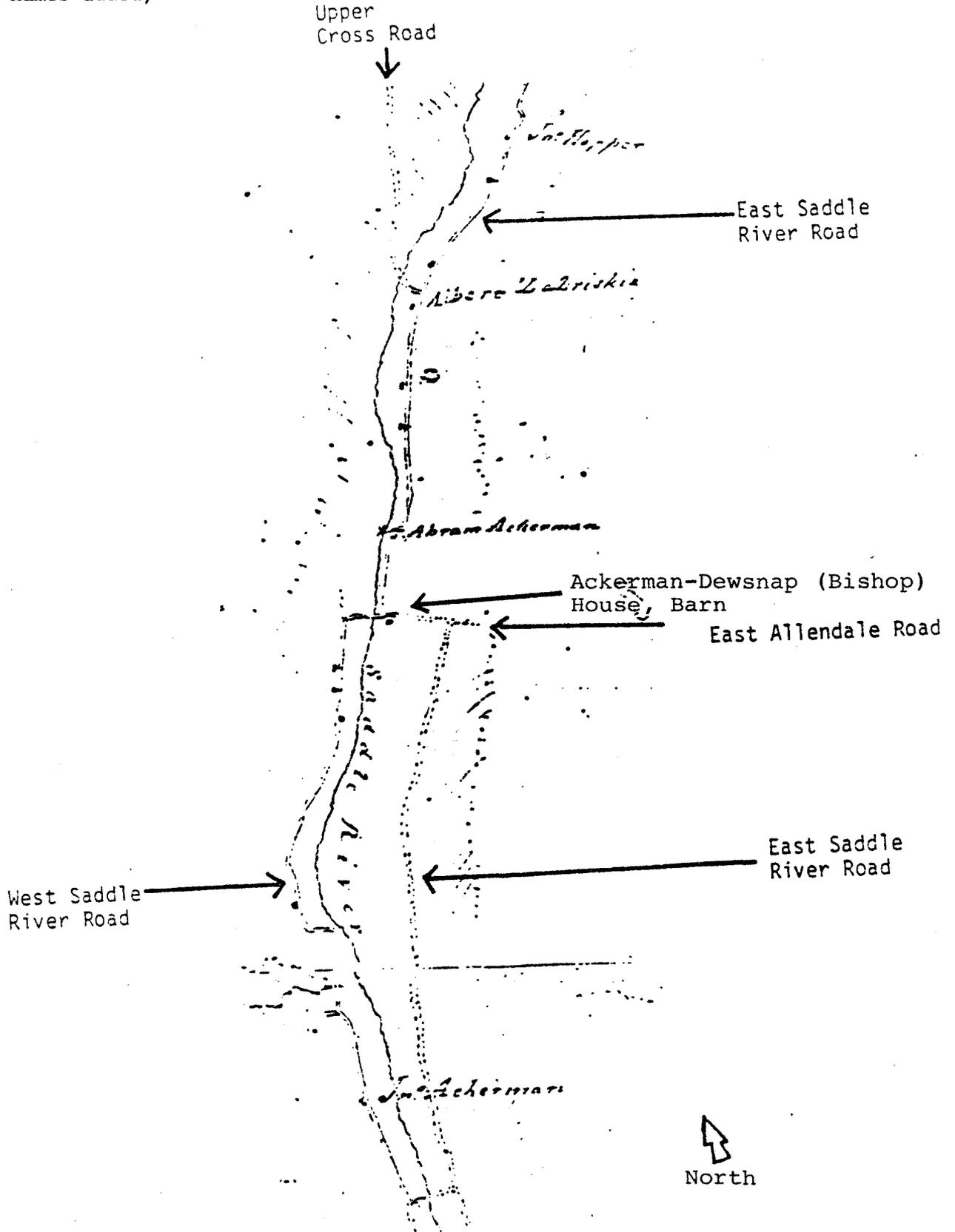
Eighteenth century Dutch iron  
 door hinge for use with driven  
 pintle .

One of three such ghosts.

Thickness of hinge averages 3/8 of an inch.

All measurements in inches.  
 ( not to scale )

Roads between Suffrans, Tappan, Kakeate, Paramus, Dobbs Ferry & c.  
#113, First Sheet, Robert Erskine, Geographer to the Army.  
September, 1780  
(Road names added)



Title: United States Coastal Survey Map of 1840, Map #132.  
"Map of Part of New York and New Jersey" F.R. Hassler,  
Superintendent

East Allendale Road

Ackerman-Dewsnap (Bishop)  
House, Barn

Chestnut Ridge  
Road

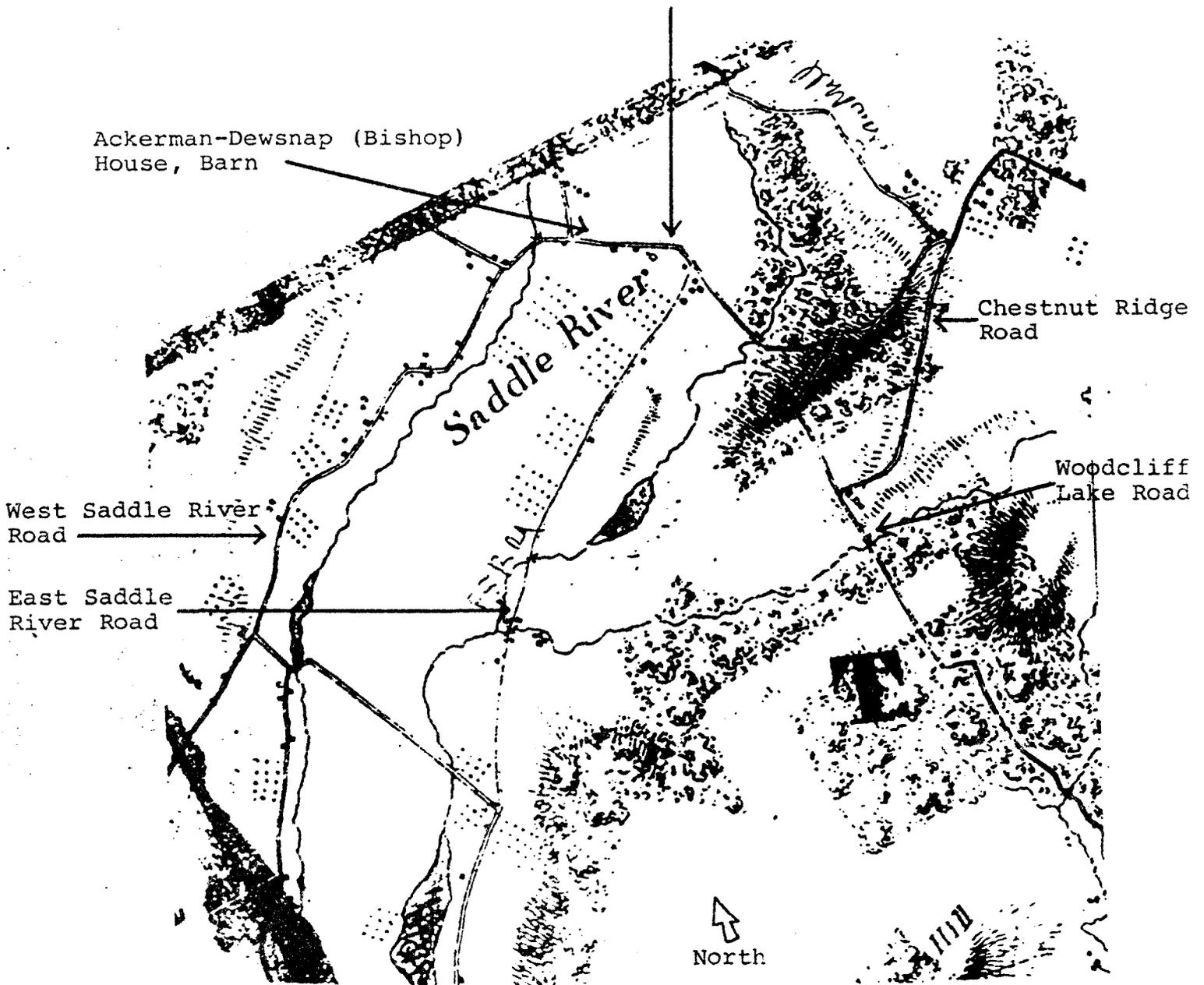
Woodcliff  
Lake Road

West Saddle River  
Road

East Saddle  
River Road

Saddle River

North



Title: Atlas of Bergen County, 1776-1876. Reading, Pa. C.C. Pease, 1876

