



The Terhume House at Hackensack

In 1664 the ownership of slaves was made legal in New Jersey, and with the ample labor thus available the Dutch began to build houses of stone instead of wood. Slaves quarried the red sandstone from beds in the valley of Hackensack River, trimmed it roughly into blocks, and laid it up in walls with a mortar made of river mud mixed with straw. When the mortar had dried out thoroughly, it formed a surprisingly strong and durable bond for the stonework, and much of it still survives. Where necessary, in later years, the joints were repaired with lime mortar, which accounts for the sharp white jointing, sometimes conspicuous in many of these houses today. The walls were about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick, which helped to keep the interior warm in winter and cool in summer. Door and window frames were built into the masonry. For protection from storms the settlers fitted the windows with heavy paneled wooden shutters and doors making the panels in the Dutch manner, with the corners cut off at a 45-degree angle.

When these Dutch pioneers first began to build houses in the New Jersey wilderness, they quite naturally tried to make them look as much as possible like their country houses in Holland. Particularly they remembered the great overhanging eaves that projected 4 or 5 feet beyond the front wall. Nearly every Dutch house was built facing south, permitting the winter sun, low in the sky, to shine on the wall under the eaves. The eaves also protected the doorway from rain and snow, and on warm summer days, when the sun was high, they shaded the whole front of the house.

Many of the early houses consisted of just two rooms and an empty attic reached by a ladder. They were probably planned much as the log cabins that stood there before them. To save space there was no hall between the rooms and, for privacy, there was no connecting door but separate front entrances. Beside each door was one great window facing the south and sometimes a second smaller window in the rear wall. The houses were built with few windows because glass was expensive and because it did not keep out the cold or heat very well.

There was usually only one fireplace, built in the west hall of the house, but it was wide enough to take big logs and high enough to swing the cranes that held the heavy iron kettles in which Dutch housewives prepared the family meals. There was always a cellar, reached by outside steps beside the front doors. Beams for the rafters and the joints under the wide plank floors were hewn out of trees cut from the land, roughly squared and adzed. The gable ends of the houses were shingled above the top of the masonry wall, and the roof was covered with thatch. When the thatch wore out, it was replaced in later years by shingles.