

The Corneles Couwenhoven House
Pleasant Valley
Holmdel Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey
VICINITY

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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13- HOLMDEL

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The Corneles Couwenhoven House
Pleasant Valley*
Holmdel Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Owner: Mrs. Marshall Geer, Fairhaven, New Jersey
(Mr. and Mrs. Wilson N. Conover, occupants)

Date of Erection: Minor unit 1700; major unit
before 1735

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Corneles Willemsse Van Kouwenhoven (Couwenhoven)
(1672-1736)

Present Condition:

Original, but with modern chimney rebuilt on
outside of gable end wall of minor unit and
four windows cut in that wall. Modern hood
to main entrance door and unfortunate refac-
ing of fireplace with rock-faced stone.

Number of Stories: One and one-half, and cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry
Exterior walls - timber frame, wood shingled
Interior walls - frame, plastered
Chimneys - brick (see mentioned above)
Roof - gable, wood shingled

*The house stands in the Pleasant Valley region, some
3½ miles southeast of Matawan on the east side of the
main Holmdel - Matawan Road, State Highway 34.

Historical Data:

Corneles⁴ Willemsc Van Kouwenhoven^(a) born in Flatlands, Kings County, Long Island, 29 Nov. 1672, son of Willem Gerritsz Van Kouwenhoven and his second wife Jannetje Pieters Monfoort, had removed by 24 June 1696 to Middletown Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey. On that date he with Garret Schenck and Peter Wickoff brought in their respective cattle marks to be recorded by the town clerk^(b).

(a) His great grandfather, Wolfert¹ Gerritsz Van Kouwenhoven, at times called "Van Amersfoort" but usually by his patronymic only, obviously came from an estate named Kouwenhoven in the neighborhood of the city of Amersfoort in the province of Utrecht, the Netherlands, and arrived on Manhattan Island in 1625 as one of the five head farmers sent over there from Holland by the West Indian Company. He removed to Flatlands, L.I., 1636, and died there in 1662. The letter C as a variant of K came into the Dutch alphabet soon after the time of his arrival and was so used by some of his descendants in spelling the surname and often omitting the prefix Van. His son Gerrit² Wolferts who came with him, died in Flatlands about 1645, having issue by his wife Aeltje Cornelis Cool, a son Willem³ Gerritsz, born there 1636, who married 1st. Altje Joris Erinckerhoff in 1660, and 2nd Jannetje Pieters Monfoort 12 Feb. 1665. (See Lincoln C. Cocheu, The Kouwenhoven-Conover Family, publ. in N.Y. Genealog. & Biogr. Record, 1939, pp. 230, etc. and 1940, p. 159).

(b) George C. Beckman, Early Dutch Settlers of Monmouth County, N.J., publ. 1901, pages 1, 24 (photo of the house before alterations to east end), and 26.

Corneles⁴ Willemsse Couwenhoven* had returned to Flatlands for his marriage on 8 September 1700 to Margaretta Schenck^(b). He with Garret Rolofse Schenck, Stephen Court Van Voorhees and Peter Wyckoff jointly had purchased from William Bowno, a merchant of Middletown abovesaid, a 500 acre tract in that township. Van Voorhees and Wyckoff sold their interests in the same to Garret and Jan Schenck and they released 125 acres to him on 24 December 1700. Probably he had built the smaller unit of his house thereon shortly before his marriage to their sister in the same year as above stated, and desired his share of the tract surveyed to him. The larger unit of the house was evidently added very soon after 1700, and the result is a good example of early Dutch House in Monmouth County, being fitted with panelling and built-in cupboards. A Dutch door was sold from it in 1927 for \$1200^(c).

Corneles⁴ W. Couwenhoven* abovesaid died in this house 16 May 1736, aged 64-5-17 and his wife Margaretta Schenck on 6 December 1751 aged 73-8-27, the inscribed gravestones being found in the Schenck-Conover Burial Ground nearby^(d). His will dated 22 November 1735, proved 22 June 1736, described him as of Middletown Township, devises to wife Margaret the use of all his estate and a negro woman; to his elder son William two negro men, 156 and 120 acre tracts of land; to son Roeloffe two negro men and 125 acres received from Garrat and John Schenck on 24 December 1700 (as abovesaid) and other smaller tracts; requires son William to pay legacies to the daughters - Leah, Catherine, Yacomiskey, Margaret and Rachel, and son Roelof to the daughters Mary, Sarah, Neelkye, Allkye, Yannikce and Anne^(e).

*His signature to his will dated 22 Nov. 1735 is Corneles Couwenhoven, the original document, (now deposited in the vault of Secretary of Stato) having been examined for this account.

(a) R.F. Bailey, Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families (1936) pp. 398 and 418 (photo)

(d) See inscriptions publ. in (b), appendix p. iii

(e) Abstract of Will publ. in N.J. Archives XXX, 115

Roelyff⁵ Couenhoven (as he signed his will), the abovenamed son and devisee of the homestead (here considered), was born 5 October 1706 and died 20 August 1786, having married Sarah Voorhees, born 12 April 1710, who died 12 December 1789^(c). By his will dated 21 April 1767 and proved 30 August 1786, he devised to his son Cornelius all his lands and rights of lands, "with all and every the Edifices and Buildings thereto belonging," thus confirming to the son the homestead. He had already conveyed to him by deed of gift another plantation.

Cornelius⁶ R. Covenhoven, born 29 July 1740 son of Roelyff abovenamed, died 12 July 1796, having married Jane Denise who was born 19 August 1740 and died 26 March 1799^(d). In his will dated 16 January 1796 and proved 22 August following, he stated that (quote) My will is and I do order that the Plantation given to me by Deed of Gift from my father, Ruleff Cowenhoven, deceased, to be equally divided between my children; namely the two sons of my son Tunis, deceased, Stephen and Ruleff, to have one share, and my son Ruleff and my daughters Sally, Fransinete, Polly, Catherine, Peggy, Nelly and Jane to have one share out of the said Plantation.....He also devised to his son Cornelius after the decease or remarriage of the widow "all the Plantation and right of land, Buildings and meadows, whereon I now live, and belonging to the same." Thus the homestead here surveyed passed to the son Cornelius.

By 2 April 1833, the farm described as containing 190 acres in Middletown Twp. had come into possession of the heirs of Cornelius R. Conover, deceased intestate, on which date two of them, Jane and Lea Conover of Middletown Township, gave their deed releasing their two-thirds share of it to his son Holmes Conover of the same place. The same farm, described as being now in Holmdel Twp.*, was seized by the Sheriff after legal proceedings against Holmes Conover and sold by deed of 2 March 1859 to Alfred B. Dayton of Middletown Point. On 2 April 1860, the last named and his wife, described as being of Matawan Township and so not residing in this

* Holmdel and Matawan Twps. were created from Raritan Twp. 1857, which had been formed from Middletown Twp. 1848.

house, conveyed the same property to David Craig and Austin Reid of the same township. On the same date Craig and Reid passed title to George Schenck^(f) of Holmdel Township in consideration of the sum of \$20,687.00.

On 5 April 1880, Eleanor Schenck and her husband George Schenck gave deed of quitclaim for the same property to Edgar Schenck of Holmdel Township and he with his wife Lydia conveyed it on 17 February 1888 to Mary E. Conover of the same place. She was a daughter of George Schenck above-said, born 14 January 1864, died 26 April 1931, having married 10 November 1887 Hendrick P. Conover who was born 29 June 1864 and died 18 September 1931, a descendant of the original owner of the house, Corneles W. Couwenhoven, and resided there^(c).

By her deed of 16 August 1929, the above-said Mary E. Conover and her husband Henry P. Conover, of Holmdel Twp., conveyed the farm to Henry E. Butler of Rumson, N.J., but their son Wilson N. Conover continued residence in the house in 1936^(c). Finally, by deed of 20 October 1936, Butler and his wife, being of Fairhaven, N.J., conveyed the farm to Saranne E. Geer of that place, who remains owner at the time of our survey of the house in March 1940, Mr. Wilson N. Conover and wife being occupants thereof still.

(f) George Schenck, b. 1822, d. 6 Mar. 1892 ae. 70
About 1850 he remodelled a house across the road from the one here surveyed and resided therein. His wife was Eleanor Conover. See reference (c).

Bibliography:

Report on search of title in Land and Probate records of Monmouth County by Forrest N. Hangrove, H.A.D.S. abstractor, and in those of the Provincial Secretary now deposited in the office of the Secretary of State, by Oscar F. Benjamin, research editor

Lewis D. Cook

Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer

W 10/2/60