



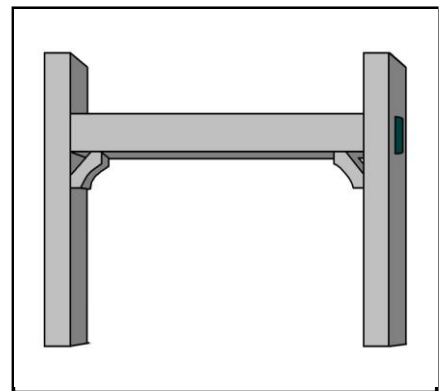
How You Know when You're Looking at a DUTCH HOUSE

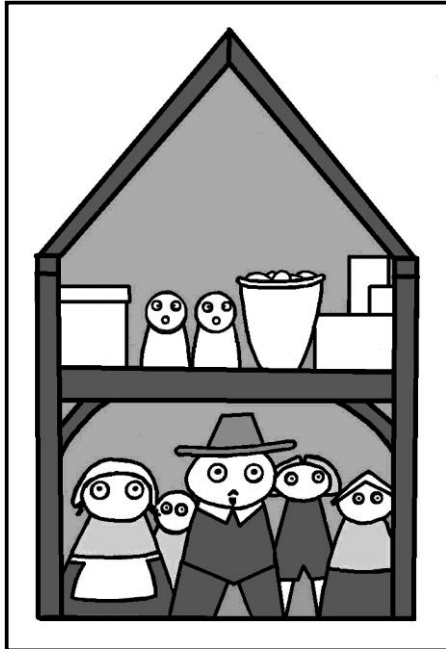
When Dutch farmers set up shop in the wilds of New York (which they called **Nieuw Nederland**), they brought a traditional type of architecture — and very little interest in large, comfortable houses!

Perhaps this isn't so surprising, since most people were here as tenants of rich landowners like Kiliaen van Rensselaer. They didn't know how long they could stay on the farm, and small houses were comparatively quick and cheap. Also, tiny houses were much easier to heat, and the Dutch weren't used to the cold, cold winters of America.

Whatever the reason, most of the Dutch pioneers and their neighbors built houses with only 1 or 2 rooms, and steep roofs. These are the most obvious features of the *outside* of the house — if the house hasn't been added to. But first let's take a look at the *inside* of old Dutch American houses, where we'll see why they are shaped the way they are.

The English and many other groups built their houses like boxes. (Imagine the edges of a box, and that's where the wood posts and beams would be.) The Dutch, however, chose to use the same sort of **H-frame** that made their barns so sturdy. Upright posts stand in the longer walls, every 4 feet or so. Heavy anchor beams

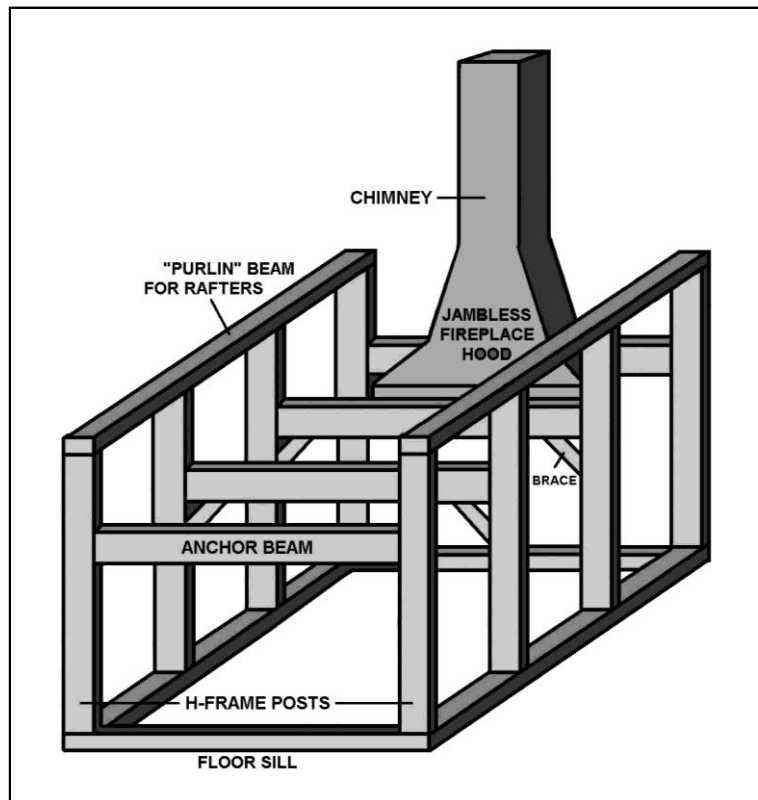




run across the room to connect the posts and form an H; these are up against the ceiling. The bottom part of the H is taller than the top part, so the downstairs room was one story high, but the upstairs was only half a story (except in the center). The upstairs space, called a **loft**, was used for storing food or belongings, or as sleeping quarters for children and servants. Another feature of the H-frames is the diagonal brace between the inside of the posts and the underside of the anchor beam. However, these have often been removed since the houses were built hundreds of years ago.

One of the most unusual features of an early Dutch house is also found inside: the **jambless fireplace**. Even more than the H-frame, the jambless fireplace is proof that you've looking at an early Dutch style of house — because other people didn't like them. (In this case the other people were right; jambless fireplaces aren't good producers of heat.)

Jambs are the sides of the fireplace and, in a jambless fireplace, there *are* no sides, just a hood above. The hood rises to the ceiling, and hangs over a rather large area in which people can walk around. The fire was built in the center. This is a dirty system, because the smoke often got out into the room, and downdrafts through the chimney might cover everything with ashes. Maybe the Dutch liked them because they looked like the fireplaces in the home country. Both the H-frames and the jambless fireplaces are found in houses dating back to the 13th century!





Now back *outside*. Because of the stubby H-frames, the early Dutch house is usually only 1½ stories tall. Because of the jambless fireplace, there is no brick column for the fireplace outside the house, though the chimney is at the end of the building, at least in the northern half of New Netherland.

The roof isn't just unusual because it's steep. In upstate New York, the Dutch didn't care much for overhangs — where the roof sticks out from the wall — so there are usually no roof overhangs. (Around New York City and New Jersey they do have curving overhangs.) Because the roof didn't jut out at the **gable wall** (where the roof makes an upside-down V), the Dutch built the wall to jut up above the roof, making a brick ridge or **parapet** (see the photo above left), and the slate roof tiles fit right up against the parapet.

We shouldn't forget the characteristic that has Dutch built right into the name: the **Dutch doors** (below right), where the door is cut into top and bottom parts. This allowed you to get some air into the house by opening to top, while you kept out animals (or kept in children) by leaving the bottom latched.

So, we have at least 10 things to look for when we're trying to recognize an early Dutch house in upstate New York. These have been underlined above. On the *outside*, we look for: (1) a very small house, with (2) a high-sloped roof, (3) covering just 1½ stories with (4) no overhang and (5) often parapets above the gables and (6) no outside chimney column; (7) the entrance will often have Dutch doors. *Inside* we look for: (8) the anchor beams of the H-frames (the side posts are usually buried in the walls), which are (9) spaced close, unlike beams in an English house, and (10) the jambless fireplace. There may also be braces holding up the anchor beams, but these have often been cut off.



That's a big problem: people have been changing these houses since the Dutch started building them over 300 years ago. Still, if we find enough of these characteristics, there's a good chance we're looking at an early Dutch house. And, if we find the jambless fireplace, we've got it made!



Some Things to Think About:

1. Why were Dutch houses usually small?
2. What are some differences between a jambless fireplace and a regular one?
3. Would you like to have a jambless fireplace in your home? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Dutch people wanted jambless fireplaces in their homes?
5. If we could see into the walls of a Dutch-style house, what would we see?
6. What are Dutch doors, and why would you want to make them?
7. If we can't get inside a house, can we tell if it's Dutch or not?
8. How are English and Dutch-style houses different?
9. If you built yourself a house, would you want it to be Dutch-style? Why or why not?
10. Would you like to sleep in a loft area like Dutch children?

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