

Greene County Gleanings

by Raymond Beecher

COXSACKIE — Pre-Revolutionary decorative ironware with architectural significance is relatively rare, and more so if such pieces can be connected with specific structures. Thus the Greene County Historical Society's Bronck Museum is to be congratulated in acquiring for its permanent collection seven such individualized pieces. They are the tierods from the recently demolished Colonel Anthony Van Bergen homestead sited on the northern bank of Cocksackie Creek at West Cocksackie, up the narrow lane just north of the *Greene County News* office. Acquisition of the decorative ironwork being catalogued by museum curator Shelby Kriele was the result of the mutual interests of several persons including the daughters of the late John Reis, Robert Baker, and William and Albert Matter.

As the name implies, tierods were a means by which outer brick or stone walls were fastened securely to the main structural frame of a building. It made for a firmer, more rigid unit, preventing the walls from spreading outward. The observable parts were generally between 1-1½ feet in length and approximately one inch square. If the owner was so inclined, and the blacksmith capable, instead of a simple length of iron with a few decorative marks at each end, the tierods might be shaped in the forms of the builder's initials and even the date of construction...such is the case with the "AVB 1761"

pieces being discussed.

From an early date, the division of the Cocksackie Patent permitted the Van Bergens to build homesteads of native stone along the Cocksackie Creek at West Cocksackie. Here also, close by, once stood the first building housing the Reformed Dutch Church congregation. The early Van Bergen-Adams cemetery is still maintained creek-side in that area.

In preparation for the marriage of their son Anthony, parents Peter and Christina Costar Van Bergen provided building land on which, in the year 1761, the newest Van Bergen residence was to be constructed. Here Col. Anthony Van Bergen and his wife Maria Salisbury of Leeds would reside after their wedding in 1762. And it was here that part of the wedding festivities would be held when their son Peter would marry Hester Hotaling, that couple residing in the James and Marcia Warren home.

The use of initialed and dated iron tierods was a established tradition for both the Salisburys and the Van Bergens, earlier members utilizing the same devices in lieu of datestones. The Peter Van Bergen house on Mansion Street, West Cocksackie is one surviving example, while the Salisbury decorative iron tierods salvaged from that Leeds fire in 1929 are in the Bronck Museum's architectural collections along with datestones and similar architectural pieces.



PRE-REVOLUTIONARY decorative ironware tierods denoting date of construction and builder's initials (AVB/1761) from recently demolished homestead of Col. Anthony Van Bergen in W. Cocksackie. Pieces were donated to GCHS Bronck Museum through efforts of the daughters of the late John Reis, Robert Baker and William and Albert Matter