

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC The Van Alen House

AND/OR COMMON

The Van Alen House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Route 9H

CITY, TOWN

Kinderhook

☒ VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

029

STATE

New York

CODE

COUNTY

Columbia

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☒ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Columbia County Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

"House of History"

CITY, TOWN

Kinderhook

☐ VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE, Record Room, County Clerk's Office
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET & NUMBER

Columbia County Courthouse, 405 Union Street

CITY, TOWN

Hudson

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1934

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Adam Van Alen House, near Kinderhook, New York, is a one-and-a-half storey brick farmhouse built in two distinct parts. The larger southern section was probably built in 1737, while the northern wing was added sometime about 1750. The plan of the house is typical of a northern Hudson Valley style which prevailed until the 1750's, wherein rooms were aligned side by side, with outside entrances to each. Usually this would be no more than two or three rooms beside each other, and at the Van Alen House, it was at first two (1727) and then three (c.1750).

The steeply gabled building has its ridge line punctuated by three chimneys, each of which was originally an exterior end chimney, although the northern chimney of the 1737 building now finds itself at the center of the composition. That original building could hardly have been more simple, with two rooms on the ground floor, a kitchen and a living hall, and one great sleeping chamber above. A floored attic was squeezed above this into the gable, and a cellar was dug beneath each of the two ground floor rooms.

The heavy timbered ceilings, the plastered walls, and the sparse cold light within, except when all the windows and doors are open, created, then as now, an aura of colonial country life at its most plain and sparsely decorated stage. The severity of the interior was relieved by the tiled fireplaces where one could find colored scenes of biblical stories, myths and allegories. The Dutch were also wont to inject a little life into their interiors through brightly colored drapery and sometimes a warmly-colored brick floor in the kitchen. None of these survive today at the Van Alen House. The only real decoration on the exterior lay in the tie-irons, customarily used by the Dutch to secure the outer walls to the inner beams, although the mouse-toothing and the diapering of the brick are to some extent, visual elements in their own right.

Although none of the originals survive, all evidence points to the use of free-hung fireplaces, without jambs, throughout the house. This feature is typical of the Dutch style, and is best seen in the Jean Hasbrouck House, at New Paltz, where apparently, the only unreconstructed free-hung fireplace, with its hood and shelf intact, still remains. This type of work has now been reconstructed at The Van Alen House.

About 1750, a wing, consisting of a hallway and one room on each floor, plus cellar, was added to the north side of the original building.

The roof of the house has been extensively reworked, removing nineteenth century dormers. It too conforms to the style already mentioned, being steeply pitched, with straight-edged ends and elbows at the lower ends, rather than the perhaps more picturesque step-gables so common in New Amsterdam and, of course, in contemporary Holland. One shed dormer remains in the roof on the west side of the house.

Not a plot (drawing)

(Continued)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1737-1750

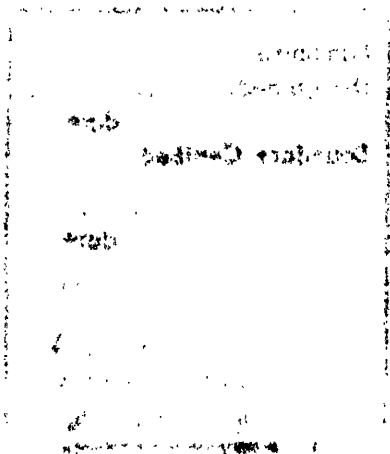
BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Van Alen House, near Kinderhook, New York, is a nationally significant example of an architectural type of Dutch colonial building which prevailed in the northern counties of the Hudson Valley. As such, it should be contrasted with the Dutch houses of southern New York and northern New Jersey which are another quite different type. The affinity of the Van Alen House lies with structures such as the Bronck House in Greene County, the Yates House, Schenectady County, and especially, the Hendrick Bries House (1723) at East Greenbush, New York.

Characteristic features of this Upper Hudson River Dutch colonial style include the straight-line gable (as opposed to the stepped), steep roof with end chimneys, a plan of rooms aligned two or three in a row, and fine cross-bond brickwork with a sharp "mouse-tooth" finish along the gable ends. Typically, the masonry was secured to the interior wooden frame by beam anchors of wrought iron, usually shaped into decorative features of the house.

All of these features may be seen at The Van Alen House in very fine condition, one of the few remaining examples of the style not badly dilapidated or "improved" by subsequent alterations.



9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- R. H. Blackburn and R. Piwonka, Historic Structures Report for The Van Alen House (MS. Sept, 1972, Kinderhook, N.Y.). (Copy now in NHL file).
Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).
Helen W. Reynolds, Dutch Houses in The Hudson Valley Before 1776 (New York, 1929).
H. D. Eberlein and C. Van Dyke Hubbard, Historic Houses of The Hudson Valley (New York, 1942).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 33

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 607020 4693140
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 18 607820 4692780
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 18 607760 4692440
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D 18 607040 4692880
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James Dillon, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project March 1975

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington

D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Landmark Designated: Dec 24, 1967
Boundary Certified:
DATE 3/4/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 5/1/77

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

Description:

The Van Alen House

The walls of The Van Alen House are laid in a Dutch cross-bond, giving a diapered appearance, with the commonly-featured mouse-toothing used here. This device, which the English refer to as "tumbling-in," is a method of arranging brick near the gable, at right angles to the gable, thereby giving a saw tooth line against the regular horizontal courses. Although an interesting visual element, the mouse-tooth finish derives from the attempt to make the exposed copings more weatherproof than the use of only horizontal courses would have made them. Some repointing and raking of the joints has taken place as well as some rebuilding of the fieldstone foundation during recent restoration work.

Condition

The Van Alen House was acquired by the Columbia County Historical Society in 1961, and following a careful assessment of the situation by several architectural historians, archeologists, and historians, restoration work was carried on over a period of years. The house was a pastiche of eighteenth and nineteenth century features when work began, and still contains a mixture of old and new work. The restoration's guiding principle has been to adhere to the style of work known to be prevalent in this area during the early to mid-eighteenth century. At times original work was not reconstructed when early features of the house survived. A number of the partitions for example are not original, but are authentic eighteenth century survivals, and, as such, have remained in place.

A staircase from the now-demolished Bries House was used in the ground floor hall, since it is possibly of a type that was used at the Van Alen House in the eighteenth century but later replaced.

Space does not permit, nor does it suit our purpose here, to specify the history of all of the various parts of the house. Suffice it to say that a careful restoration has been carried out after painstaking architectural, archeological, and historical research, and that the details of each and every conclusion and action are fully described in the Historic Structures Report which happily, is now part of the National Historic Landmark file. The Van Alen House is more today than in the recent past, an outstanding example of a style of Dutch architecture which prevailed in the northern counties of New York (Albany, Schenectady, Columbia, and Rensselaer) until about the 1750's. The Van Alen House is well maintained by the Columbia County Historical Society, and is regularly open to the public during the Summer months.

(Continued)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Geographical Data (Verbal Boundary Description): The Van Alen House

The land on which this house stands was purchased by the Van Alen family, and probably by Johannes Van Alen, father of Adam Van Alen, from its Indian owner, Wattawit. Genealogical and land records concerning this property, from the settlement of Kinderhook in the seventeenth century to the present day, are quite complete and are detailed in the Blackburn-Piewonka Structures Report included in the National Historic Landmarks file. The parcel of land acquired by the Columbia County Historical Society in 1961 is doubtless the last remaining piece of the original holding, and, as such, naturally constitutes the boundary of the National Historic Landmark.

Another structure has recently been moved onto this site, a one-and-a-half-storey frame building south and east of the house (see photo), supposedly associated with Washington Irving, the writer. This building does not contribute to the national significance of the NHL.

It has also been suggested that the Van Alen House was the basis of Irving's "Van Tassel House," and that one of the Van Alen daughters was the inspiration for Irving's character, "Katrina Van Tassel." Within two miles, lies the Van Ness House (which we call "Lindenwald" since the occupancy of President Martin Van Buren) where it is known that Washington Irving visited.

The accompanying deed map of the Columbia County Historical Society, titled "Property of William T. Van Alen," prepared by New York State licensed surveyors Rockefeller and Nucci of Claverack, New York in 1963, shows the boundary of the National Historic Landmark in red pencil. Adjoining state highway Route 9H, the landmark is entirely surrounded by light woodland, with a picturesque fire pond east of the house.