

The Martin Berry House

A Tour



Pequannock Township Historical Society

September 2018

Introduction

Location: Front Porch

Welcome to the Martin Berry House!



The Martin Berry House, or MBH, was built on this spot in about 1720. The original house was smaller than what you see here. This is the result of the second major enlargement or renovation of the original construction as well as later renovations and remodelings. These will be described fully inside.

The MBH is owned by the Township of Pequannock and operated in partnership with the Pequannock Township Historical Society (PTHS). PTHS was formed in 2015 out of a movement that was original called the Friends of the Martin Berry House that had itself been initiated in 2014 to support the Township in its efforts to acquire the MBH. When the Friends organized as the PTHS, it was decided that a broader vision was needed so that both the house and its context could be preserved and interpreted.

The PTHS is an all volunteer and membership -based organization with a mission to preserve, interpret, and promote the history and diverse

heritage of Pequannock Township. We are working to preserve and maintain historic buildings, sites, and collections, and to create and present programs, exhibitions, publications, and other activities for the public that celebrate and interpret the history and heritage of Pequannock Township and neighboring communities. Our primary activities at this point, though, are centered around the preservation, restoration and management of the MBH as an historic learning center and living museum.

The PTHS meets monthly. A meeting may include a presentation on an historical topic, on PTHS business, or both. Our meetings are on the first Tuesday of the month at the American Legion Post, 700 Newark-Pompton Turnpike, Pompton Plains, at 7:30.

Information on meetings and activities can be followed on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/Pequannock History](https://www.facebook.com/PequannockHistory)) and on our websites www.PequannockHistory.org.

If you are interested in joining the PTHS, you

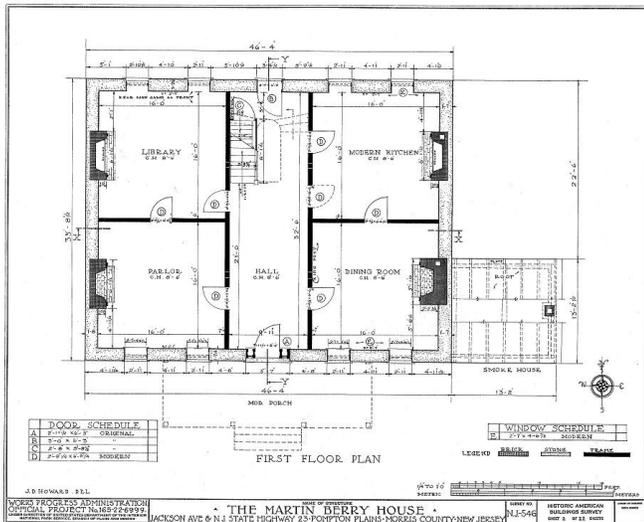


can download a [brochure](#), complete the form and mail it in or you can join online. Both options can be reached [here](#).

Preservation, Acquisition and Restoration

Location: Main Level, Center Hall, First Floor

Recognition of the historical value of the MBH began with the inclusion of the house in the Historic American Buildings Survey which was a Federal program in the 1939. The HABS report, plans and photographs are important resources that have been used repeatedly over the years. The original report can be accessed [here](#) in the Library of Congress.



The preservation of the MBH began with Eleanor and Charles Bogert purchased the house the 2.75 acres of land that surrounds it today in 1951. Lovers of history and historic buildings, it was their intent to restore the house as a Dutch Colonial manor. Along with the slow and laborious efforts of restoring the house they raised three children, briefly operated an antique shop, gave tours for local school and scout groups and became active in organizations such as the Highlands Historical Society. Their intent was to restore the MBH and to provide it to Pequannock Township as a museum.

In the winter of 2014 Mrs. Bogert informed the Pequannock Town Council and Township

Historian that she was ready to begin the process for selling the MBH to Pequannock Township. Township Historian Ed Engelbart and the Pequannock Township Historic District Commission began generating support and The Friends of the Martin Berry House emerged in June.

The Township submitted an application to and then received a matching grant from the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund to purchase the home in 2015 and then contracted with HMR Architects for a Preservation Plan.

The Plan was received in the winter of 2016. It recommended that the Township complete the purchase of the MBH and provided information regarding its renovation and interpretation. Final negotiations began with Mrs. Bogert and the sale was completed in January 2017. Negotiations then began with the PTHS on a management agreement that was adopted and signed in September 2017 in time for the PTHS to open the MBH to visitors for the Pathways of History Tour.

The Martin Berry House will be formally dedicated on October 13, 2018 during an event that will last from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The Township of Pequannock received an award from the Morris County Historic Preservations Trust Fund for Phase I renovations in July 2018. Work will hopefully begin later this fall. Renovations will include new electrical throughout and refinished floors on the main level floors, rehabilitation of the windows and repairs to exterior woodwork all around the outside of the building (take a close look, you will see what needs attention), and the installation of parking among other work.

Preservation, Acquisition and Restoration, continued

Phase II and III work will move more intentionally indoors and focus on creating museum spaces, meeting rooms, ADA compliant restrooms and, of course, additional restoration work.

In the Center Hallway are some of the architectural drawings of HMR's Preservation Plan as well as furniture and reproduction maps and documents donated by Mrs. Bogert.

Much of the furniture that Mr. and Mrs. Bogert collected were donated to the Society when the MBH was purchase by the Township. The PTHS is currently considering options on how to interpret the house and is not actively seeking donations at this time. Offers of 18th and 19th Century antiques associated with Pequannock Township will be considered.

The images on this page are from the views of the MBH taken by Jesse May in the 1890s. Mrs. May was an amateur photographer and former owner of the MBH. She and her husband, Lockwood, called the MBH and its surrounding farmland *Mayfield*.



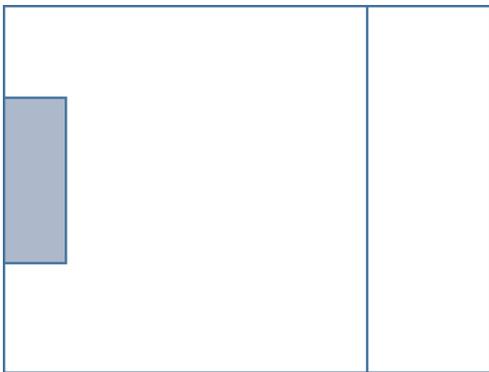
Original Construction and First Remodeling

Location: Main Level, Front Parlor (first room on left from front door)

The most surprising finding of HMR's historical architects and researchers was that the current form of the MBH was not also its original form. They based this finding on an analysis of the foundation walls, fireplace foundation, and timbers holding up the first floor alongside an analysis of buildings in Bergen and Morris Counties that were constructed during the same period.

The original house was located in the southeast corner of the current house where the front parlor is now located — and where you are now standing. It was comprised of a large main room with a large jamb-less fireplace, partial garret (that was reached by a ladder) and a smaller second room that included both front and back doors. All family life occurred in this main room: cooking, eating and sleeping along with crafts like weaving and basket making. The hallway was a place to store foodstuffs, farm and other equipment, and probably some animals — especially in winter.

This is an approximation of the original arrangement of the two rooms with the fireplace on the end wall.



Jamb-less fireplaces were a uniquely Dutch architectural style which featured a large open hearth of flat fieldstones or brick over which hung a chimney attached to the wall. There were no sides



to the fireplace. The fireplace was typically located in the center of the wall so that the fires could be reached from all three sides. This is a picture of the jamb-less fireplace in the restored Mabee Farm, a museum in Rotterdam Junction, Schenectady County, NY.

Sometime before 1785 Martin Berry and his sons expanded the original house to its current depth. The MBH now consisted of two rooms, an enlarged garret and an enlarged side room. The enlargement provided additional living, work and storage space for a house filled with Mr. and Mrs. Berry, at least two sons and their wives and their children. Mr. Berry's will from 1785 indicated a modest homestead, furniture, tools, clothing and two slaves.

The books on the shelves had all belonged to Mrs. Bogert. They include texts on antiques and American History as well as her casual reading interests. The PTHS anticipates that this room will be furnished in a late Victorian style because of donations of furniture it has received that was made by descendants of Martin and Maria Berry.

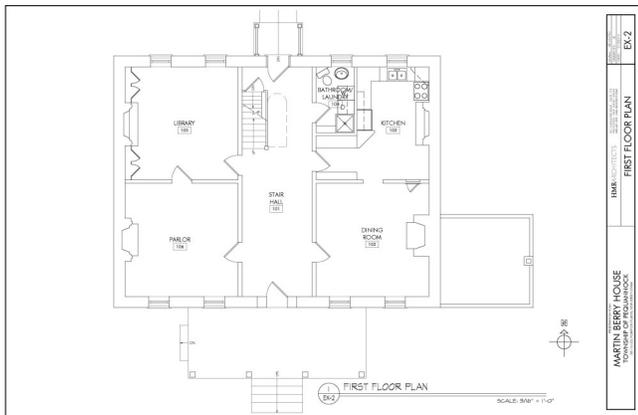
Second Reconstruction, The Berry Family and Other Owners

Location: Main Level, Dining Room (first room on right inside front door)

Owners of the Martin Berry House

The Martin Berry House was built about 1720 by Martin Henry Berry and Maria Roome. Martin was the son of Samuel Berry who had been one of the original investors who purchased land in the area in 1695. Martin was the eldest son of Samuel Berry and Cathalyntie Ryerson's 10 children.

In 1785, Martin and Maria's oldest sons Henry and Jacob inherited the MBH. Henry's son Henry H. and his wife Elizabeth Mandeville undertook the most major renovation in about 1833 by adding the whole side of the house east of the center hallway, second floor, small dormer windows, attic and the stucco finish on three sides of the house. Finishing the MBH in the classic "Dutch Colonial" style was unusual for 1833 and was the primary reason everyone thought that the house was built whole in 1720.



The Graham's, owners of the Passaic Spring Brewery in Paterson, purchased the MBH in 1862. James R. and Julia Evans purchased the MBH in 1879. Evans became the postmaster, justice of the peace and was employed by the Greenwood Lake Railway. Evans received a Purple Heart for his wartime efforts while he was a resident of the MBH.

The Evans' sold the property to Lockwood and Jessie May in 1891. The May's added the large dormer windows, a large front porch (where the current porch is located), and some interior renovations on the second floor. Jessie May was an amateur photographer.

The MBH was bought by Warren and Ellis Eberle in 1916, Ludlow and Louise Meeks in 1921, the Home Owner's Loan Association in 1938, the Glens in 1941, and finally by the Bogerts in 1951.

The Berry Family

Martin Berry and Maria Roome had 9 children. The youngest sons, Henry and Jacob, remained in the MBH as farmers through their lifetimes. Third son Martin moved to a farm in what is now Riverdale and his descendants resided there into the 1880s while also establishing themselves as cabinet and furniture makers in New York City and Brooklyn. Oldest daughter Cathalyne married Johannis Ryerson of Oakland and one of their children was Martin J. Ryerson. He purchased the Ringwood Iron Works which is today Ringwood Manor State Park.

In 1850, there were 17 people living in the MBH including Henry H. and his wife Elizabeth, his mother Leah and sister Jane, and a collection of relatives and laborers. Residents ranged in age from 2 to 82. The enlarged house had certainly been put to good use.

Display

On display in this area today are items located by local metal detector enthusiasts earlier this year, books and other materials, as well as items that were donated to the PTHS by Mrs. Bogert.

The Second Renovation, Mrs. Bogert's Museum

Location: Lower Level, "Smoke House," Kitchen and Bedroom

The Lower Level of the MBH is comprised of the kitchen, bedroom and entry that are open today as well as a large room, a furnace room, and a pantry area that are not open.

Mrs. Bogert furnished and began interpreting most of the lower level as a museum in the mid-1960s. Countless numbers of children in scout and school groups toured these rooms well into the 1980s. The large room that is not open was used to present various crafts — spinning, weaving, dyeing, farming, basket making, candle making — as well as education and toys. The kitchen and bedroom areas are set-up today almost as they were left to us by Mrs. Bogert in January 2017 when she moved.



Before we talk about what is in the open rooms, it is important to remember that this area was part of the addition built about 1833 by Henry H. and his wife Elizabeth Mandeville, specifically the entry room known as the "smoke house," a kitchen, and a room that is currently finished as a bedroom.

We do not know what the original intended uses were for the entry room or the bedroom. The entry room, which was identified as a smoke house

in the 1939 HABS survey was almost certainly not used as smoke house. It was too close to the main house and the primary entry route for the lower level. In other words, it was too busy to be used for the controlled smoking of meats and fish. It may have been an entry area where dirty shoes were left along with some farm and barn tools, overflow pantry items and kitchen tools, and other miscellaneous items that the Berrys didn't want to leave outside or take into the house.

The bedroom may have been used as a large pantry and work area, may have included a bed and dresser for a servant or whoever in the family was designated to tend the fire and start breakfast. It was furnished by Mrs. Bogert with a combination of 18th and 19th Century furniture so that some aspects of family life could be discussed. Along with bedroom furnishings are a spinning wheel and corn shucks to fill the mattress as it became soft.

The kitchen is furnished with a variety of items that would have been found in a late 18th through early 19th century kitchen. There are cooking implements in the fireplace, a butter churn on the blanket chest, various porcelain dishes, bowls and jugs, "gourd-ware" and other items.

In the northeast corner of the kitchen is the remains of a dumbwaiter that was installed in the 1930s to lift meals up to the small restaurant in the dining room. Based on this, we know that this kitchen was in use until after the Meeks' moved in 1938.