Odell Tavern

Statement of Historical Significance

Researched and compiled by
The Irvington Historical Society Preservation Committee

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Irvington, New York

Introduction:

The structure commonly known as the "Odell Tavern" sits in the northeast corner of a 10-½-acre, privately-owned parcel, located at 100 South Broadway (Route 9) in Irvington, New York. (Figure 1.) Its name derives from the Odell family who occupied it from the 1750s to the 1820s and used it as a farmhouse and roadside tavern. The charming homestead is a prime example of 17th and 18th century Dutch Colonial or "Dutch American" architecture. The original small, square, stone structure, built in 1693, is still visible as part of the outer, east wall of the building, as are wood-framed additions with clapboard siding, including an eighteenth-century lean-to section in the rear. (*See* Figure 2.) Facing south, the house has a covered porch across the front, topped by dormer windows above.

Figure 1

The Odell Tavern is the oldest, extant building in Irvington, with parts of its existing stone structure dating from the late 17th century and its later, wooden additions dating from the mid-18th century. The original section of the house exemplifies architectural trends of the 17th-century Dutch colonial period, when the eastern shore of the Hudson River just north of New York City consisted of the vast tenant farms of Philipsburg Manor. A rare surviving example of a Dutch farmhouse, the Odell Tavern is possibly only one of the two remaining tenant farmhouses – the other being the Sherwood House in Yonkers, built circa 1740 by Thomas Sherwood – constructed at Philipsburg Manor.

The Odell Tavern is also a living testament to important historic, economic and architectural developments in the region. These developments include: (i) early settlement patterns during the colonial period of Westchester County, (ii) the operations of the manor system at Philipsburg Manor, (iii) the practice of slavery in the Hudson Valley, (iv) the experience of the Revolutionary War in the no-man's land between the lines, (v) regional development during the period of the New Republic and Market Revolution, (vi) the gentrification of the Hudson River Valley in the early nineteenth century, and (vii) Irvington's

rise to prominence in the twentieth century as a suburban retreat for wealthy New Yorkers. Because the Odell Tavern's structure was modified several times to meet the changing needs of its residents, it stands as a record of evolving architectural styles that reflected shifting settlement and economic patterns in Westchester County.

The Odell Tavern is an essential and unique "living museum" right in our midst, and its historical resonance is amplified by its position within the larger network of historic structures in the region. The Odell Tavern stands today with other, well-known extant historic sites in Westchester, including Philipse Manor Hall and the Sherwood House in Yonkers, Philipsburgh Manor Upper Mills and the Old Dutch Church and Burying Ground in Sleepy Hollow, Washington Irving's Sunnyside in Tarrytown, and the Odell House Rochambeau Headquarters in Hartsdale. Together, these historic structures speak to the experiences of life in the lower Hudson Valley and the social, political and cultural changes during several important eras in the history of the Village, County, State, and Nation.

The historical and architectural significance of the Odell Tavern, as well as its role in the local and regional development of Westchester County and the lower Hudson River Valley, makes it a prime candidate for designation as a Local Historical Landmark for the Village of Irvington.[1]

History and Significance of The Odell Tavern

Jan Harmse

The original one-room, square, stone structure that forms the core of the Odell Tavern was constructed around 1693 by Jan Harmse (1658-1741) on land that was part of Philipsburg Manor, a large English manor owned by Frederick Philipse (1626-1702) north of New York City. Harmse was a tanner by trade, served as captain in the militia during the French and Indian War, and was a member of the Old Dutch Church in Tarrytown. The single room farmhouse consisted of a low, square structure with four thick, stone walls. The house had an attic that was accessible by a ladder, and a fireplace that was built into the center of its northern wall. Harmse's original stone structure forms what is now the eastern portion of the building, and it is still visible, surrounded by later wood framed additions with clapboard siding. Harmse leased the property

[1] A longer, more detailed, and fully-referenced version of this Report can be found here.

from the Philipse family and used the stone structure as a farmhouse, store, and possibly as an inn.

Matthys Conklin

Around 1743 Matthys Conklin and his wife, Feytie "Sophia" Mabie, took over the leasehold for the property. Conklin, a descendant of English and Dutch settlers, doubled the size of the house by attaching a wood-framed addition, clad with 'weatherboard,' onto the west façade. A later wood frame lean-to expansion with clapboard siding was constructed on the north elevation of the original structure, and, at some point, the front façade on the southern wall was covered in stucco. Conklin also made related alterations that included a new roof and an enclosed stair to the attic. (Figure 2.) A stone tablet with an inscription is still visible on the western side of the south-facing wall. It includes the initials, "C," "M," and "S" – which likely refer to Matthys and Sophia Conklin – and the date of "May 8, 1746," either the date they took up occupancy or the date they expanded the house. The Conklins lived in this house with several of their children until about 1750, when they moved to Orangetown, Rockland County.

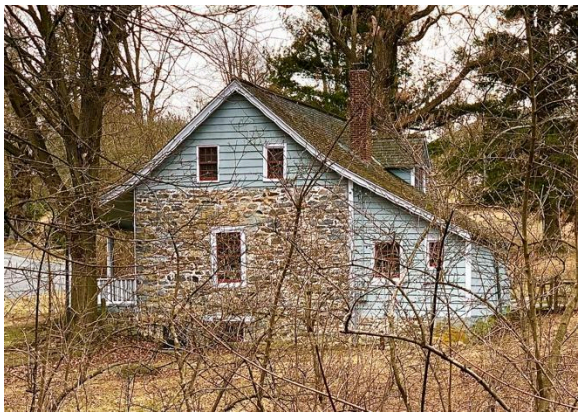

Figure 2

Conklin's modifications of the Odell Tavern reflect the adaptation of English architectural features to older, existing Dutch-built farmhouses and the changing patterns of domestic life. Although the resulting architectural style is often referred to as "Dutch Colonial" because of the dominance of Dutch building customs, architectural historians have applied the term "Dutch American" to these structures because they represent less a single architectural transplant from the Netherlands and more an integration of a variety of styles over time reflecting that of European settlers of various backgrounds.

Jonathan Odell

In 1756, the Harmse-Conklin leasehold was taken over by Jonathan Odell (1730-1818) and his wife Margaret Dyckman (1732-1783). Odell Tavern's social, economic, and political

role continued to expand under the Odells. This simple homestead, situated almost halfway between the Philipse Manor House and the Upper Mills, was typical of many Dutch farms up and down the Hudson Valley. Tenants of Philipsburg Manor who lived along the riverside benefitted from a temperate climate, productive soil, and a location far from the frontier and hostile Native Americans, yet close to New York City and its markets, where they could sell their surplus products at high prices and obtain a constant stream of products or luxuries from across Dutch and English global trade networks. Westchester's rocky landscape, while poor for wheat farming, was well-suited to grazing, and the Odell Tavern became a well-known stopping point on the King's Highway as one of the main routes used by cattle drovers. Cattle drovers delivered cattle from Westchester farmers to the buyers in New York City, stopping at various inns and taverns, and allowing the cattle to forage in the open fields near the inns.

Tavern Economy

The Odell site is a surviving example of tavern culture and economy in Westchester County during the 18th and 19th centuries. With its advantageous placement along the King's Highway leading from New York City to Albany, the Conklins probably used the building as a tavern by the late 1740s or early 1750s. An almanac by Nathaniel Ames of Boston dated 1771 mentions the Conklins' tavern as the second stop out of New York on the road to Albany and Quebec. The Odells continued this practice of using the farmhouse as a roadside tavern.

The Odell Tavern is located about halfway between two of the milestones or guide stones authorized by Post-Master General Benjamin Franklin in the 1760s to set rates for mail delivery, and set up at one-mile intervals alongside postal roads from New York City to Albany and Boston. Its location on Broadway midway between these two historical milestones is a visible reminder of the importance of "the greatest street in the world" and the historical forces which helped to make New York "The Empire State." Thus, the Odell Tavern is not just a single structure, but part of a tapestry of historical sites that offers a rich picture of the region's economic development in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Slavery

The Odell Tavern is also witness to the history of slavery as practiced in the Hudson Valley, and a physical reminder of the global trade network that enabled slavery. Throughout the

18th century, a substantial portion of New York's economic wealth was produced by the slave trade and enslaved labor. The Philipse family who owned Philipsburgh Manor were engaged in global trade, including the slave trade. Enslaved persons of African ancestry performed household duties and fieldwork that contributed to the prosperity of many of the Manor's tenants, including on the Odell farm. Federal Census records for Jonathan Odell's household list the presence of four (4) enslaved persons in 1790, six (6) in 1800 and five (5) in 1810. Enslaved persons not only performed house and field labor, but could also serve as a badge of status and were used in transactions for land, as security for mortgages, and to raise cash or repay debts. The names of most of the enslaved persons living and working on the Odell farm have been lost to history, save for one named Caesar, who, according to a family tradition recorded in the late nineteenth century, protected the farm's bounty from raids during the Revolutionary War. Thus, the Odell Tavern speaks to both the history of slavery and to the African American experience in New York and stands today within a network of African American heritage sites across Westchester.

Revolutionary War

The Odell Tavern played a significant role in the events of the Revolutionary War. During the summer of 1776, when the New York Committee of Safety's members fled British-occupied New York City and traveled up the eastern shore of the Hudson River towards safety, they stopped on August 31 at "the house of Mr. Odell, Philipse's Manor." While at the Tavern the Committee received a communication from General George Washington in the wake of the defeat at Long Island. Committee members immediately drafted a reply to General Washington regarding the establishment of fortifications for the defense of New York City and the formation of militia, and also resolved that residents of New York City should drive their cattle, horses, hogs and sheep into the interior to prevent their seizure by the British army. For that one day, the Odell Tavern was effectively the seat of the New York State government.

The Odell Tavern continued to play an important role throughout the War for Independence. On November 5th, 1776, after the Battle of White Plains, a combined force of British and Hessian troops marched toward the Hudson River and set up a camp for six days on Odell's Hill, the high ground west of the King's Highway and adjacent to the Odell Tavern. During this encampment, British and Hessian troops cut down Jonathan Odell's orchards,

destroyed almost 1,000 bushels of wheat, and killed all of Odell's hogs. Jonathan Odell, along with four neighbors, was arrested and jailed at the Sugar House prison in New York City; although the four neighbors died in prison, Jonathan Odell escaped and made his way back to his farm. Throughout the rest of the War, when Westchester County became effectively a no-man's land subject to raids by either side, Odell's Hill was frequently occupied by British and Hessian forces.

Jonathan Odell's sons also played major roles in the war, serving as soldiers for the patriot cause in both the local militia and in the Continental Army. Jonathan's son John Odell served in the militia in Westchester, as a lieutenant in the Continental Army in the Mohawk Valley, and as a mounted guide to Continental Army officers including General George Washington in Westchester. On November 18, 1783, mounted Guide John Odell escorted General Washington along Broadway, where they rode past the Odell Tavern, as the general went to oversee the evacuation of British troops from New York City.

Early Republic and Market Revolution

After the Revolutionary War, many of the former tenants of Philipsburg Manor purchased their leaseholds from the Commissioners of Forfeiture, who re-distributed lands seized during the war from loyalists such as Frederick Philipse III. On December 6, 1785, Jonathan Odell bought the 463-acre farm, which included the Odell farmhouse, for £1,203 16s. He and his wife continued to run the property as both a tavern and an inn, catering to travelers heading north from New York City along the King's Highway. Enslaved persons of African ancestry continued to live and work on the Odell farm after the Revolutionary War until New York State's gradual emancipation acts abolished slavery by 1827.

One story told about the Odell Tavern after the war is that Alexander Hamilton, who frequently traveled from New York City to Albany, stayed overnight at the Odell Tavern and the next morning was driven to White Plains by Colonel John Odell, son of Jonathan. As they approached White Plains, Hamilton is reported to have requested a side trip to Chatterton Hill, site of the Battle of White Plains, and to have explained that it was the first time he had visited the spot since the battle of 1776.

Jonathan Odell lived on his farm until his death in 1818, deeding the homestead to his son, William. Over the next fifteen years, different portions of the original Odell farm were sold

off by Jonathan Odell's Executors and heirs. In 1835, for instance, the southern part of the Odell farm, which was known as the "Cox Farm," was purchased by James Hamilton, the son of Alexander Hamilton, for his nearby estate, called "Nevis."

Construction of the Croton Aqueduct

In the mid-1830s, another important infrastructure project of the Early Republic again shaped, and was shaped by, the Odell Tavern property: The Croton Aqueduct. In 1832 when cholera first reached New York City, residents began clamoring for a clean water supply from beyond the city's limits. The following year plans for the Croton Aqueduct began, and the route for the underground water tunnel ran directly across the property that had once been part of Jonathan Odell's farm, immediately west of the Odell Tavern. The Odell property thus played a role in the growth, development, and sanitation of nearby New York City.

Into the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The Odell Tavern also witnessed, and benefitted from, the gentrification of the Hudson River Valley in the early nineteenth century, and Irvington's rise to prominence in the twentieth century as a suburban retreat for wealthy New Yorkers. The Odell Tavern remained relatively protected as later owners constructed and lived in larger homes adjacent to the Odell Tavern, without destroying or removing the Odell Tavern itself. In 1851, John Daniel Wendel purchased a twelve-acre parcel of the former Odell farm on the west side of Broadway, which included the Odell Tavern. The Wendel Family owned the Odell Tavern and surrounding property for over 80 years until 1931, when it was bequeathed to family friend Isabel G. Koss, who owned the property until 1978. The large Bedford stone mansion on the hilltop above the Odell Tavern was built in 1938 (designed by Aymar Embry 2d, who also designed the George Washington Bridge). The current owner, "100 South Broadway, LLC" (2014), operates the Monte Nido Rivertowns Residential Eating Disorder Treatment Facility on the property.

Architectural Significance

Over the years, different owners of the property protected the Odell Tavern from destruction or significant alteration, and even contributed to the maintenance and restorations of the original structure by replacing the roof, stripping layers of paint from the front door, repairing

the wooden window frames, and reinstalling some original 17th- and 18th-century windows. The house maintains many of its original, distinctive characteristics and methods of construction, reflecting the use of indigenous materials and craftsmanship of Dutch Colonial farmhouses, as well as new architectural styles that were integrated into the Odell Tavern over the years.

The upper story of the Odell Tavern is divided into five bedrooms and an early 20th century bathroom. (Figure 6.) Some accounts suggest that the upper story bedrooms were used as guest rooms in the 18th century when the structure was used as an inn. The stone ledge in the largest upstairs room is the roofline of the original 1693 structure. The addition of a second floor also necessitated the altering or rebuilding of the roof. (Figures 7, 8 & 9.) New roof styles were adapted to cultural norms of Hudson Valley farms, which often have extended eaves along the primary façade, regulating light and temperature. A porch across the front of the Odell Tavern is supported by six hexagonal shaped wood columns. (*See* Figures 1 & 3.) Other, later additions to the house reflect changing architectural trends, including Romanticist and Victorian decorative features. Eaves of the main roof have decorative, carved wood verge boards, and matching, running trim features are applied to the porch eaves and along the open rakes of the gabled dormers. Verge boards were hand-crafted picturesque elaborations influenced by the English Gothic Revival and the Romantic Period. The jig-sawed trim was made popular through plans in publications by Andrew Jackson Downing, and was used in Carpenter Gothic and Folk Victorian architecture during the mid-to-late nineteenth century in North America.

Figure 3

While the windows in the original Harmse farmhouse were most likely leaded casement windows typical of early rural Dutch settlement structures, they were replaced by double hung sashes with twelve-over-twelve, eight-over-eight, and/or six-over-six panes (lights) when the wood framed additions were constructed. (*See* Figures 7 & 9.) At some later point, windows on the south and west façades were replaced by six-over-six sashes. In the early 2000s, the then-current owner repaired and restored the surviving windows.

Other features of Dutch Colonial architecture are represented in the Odell Tavern. A brick chimney protrudes through the roof where

the fireplace is located in the center of the original Harmse stone structure and may be a replacement of an original stone chimney. (*See* Figures 4 & 8.) Another brick chimney emerges through the ridge of the portion of roof that was extended over the west addition. This older chimney was built to serve a brick fireplace and beehive oven in the then "new" kitchen.

The interior of the Odell Tavern retains many structural and architectural details of the 18th century. For example, the tap room on the east end of the building is a portion of the original 1693 Harmse farmhouse structure. (Figure 5.) The front door's exterior has been treated with moldings, stiles, and rails of a Georgian style paneled door, due to English influences. (*See* Figure 7.) The expansion of the house in the Post-Revolutionary War period, serving not only as a home and a roadside tavern but as an inn, reflects the adaptive uses of the Odell Tavern. Yet as the surrounding community evolved all around it – from rural farmland to roadside commercial hub to elite summertime retreat to contemporary suburb of New York City – the architectural integrity of the Odell Tavern has remained remarkably intact for most of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Figure 4

Summary

As this brief history illustrates, the small one-room farmhouse that eventually became the Odell Tavern changed significantly as infrastructure developed throughout the Hudson Valley both before and after the American Revolution. What began as an isolated subsistence farm expanded into a store and tavern and eventually into an inn and postal depot as the roadway just steps from its front door developed from a rural "highway" into one of the major postal roads between New York City and Albany. Land from the property next to the Odell Tavern used for the construction of the Croton Aqueduct played a role in delivering clean water and healthier lives to a booming metropolis. The structure and purpose of the Odell Tavern both reflected this changing economy while supporting the development of the entire New York Metropolitan region. Because the Odell Tavern's structure was modified several times to meet the changing needs of its residents, it is valuable as a material record of evolving architectural styles reflecting the shifting settlement and economic patterns in Westchester County. The Odell Tavern

embodies and reflects unique and significant architectural features and design that support its eligibility for designation as a National or Local Historic Landmark.

Addendum

Works Progress Administration Architectural Drawings

Odell Inn

Irvington, New York

WPA Off. Proj. No. 65-1715, Survey No. NY 4109

(May 1936)

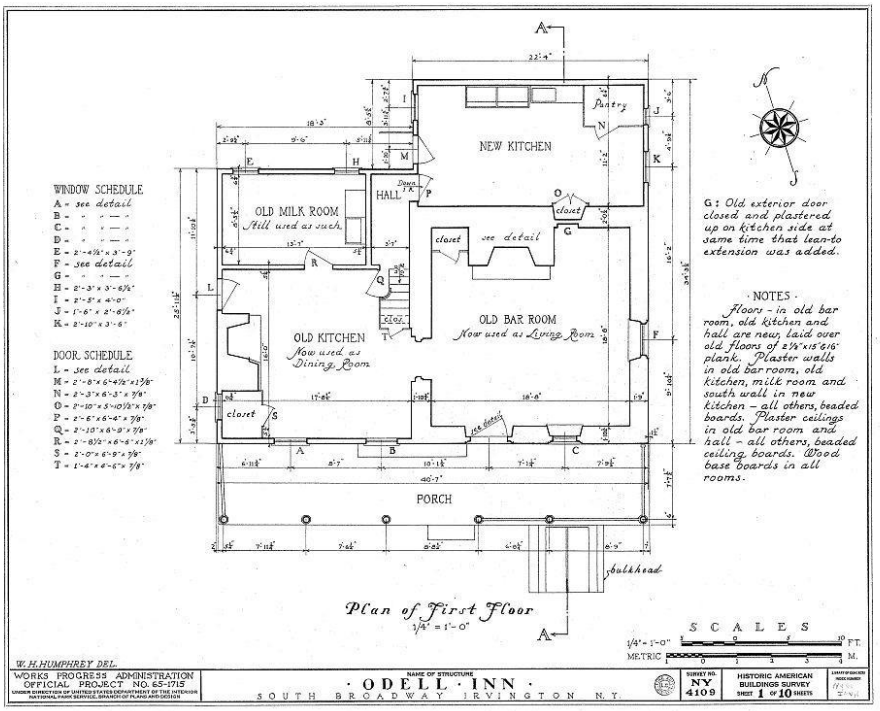

Figure 5

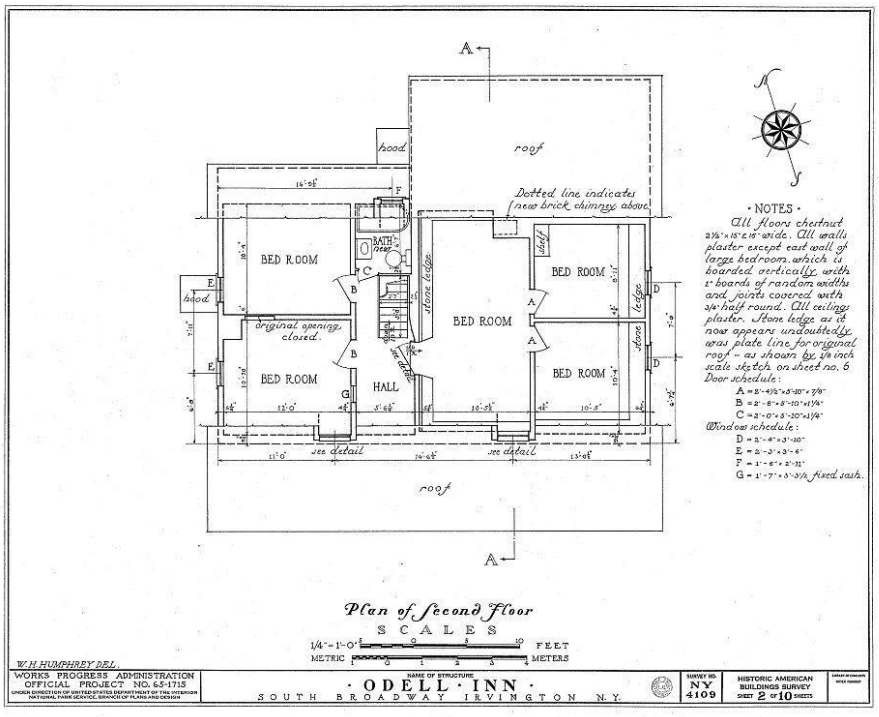

Figure 6

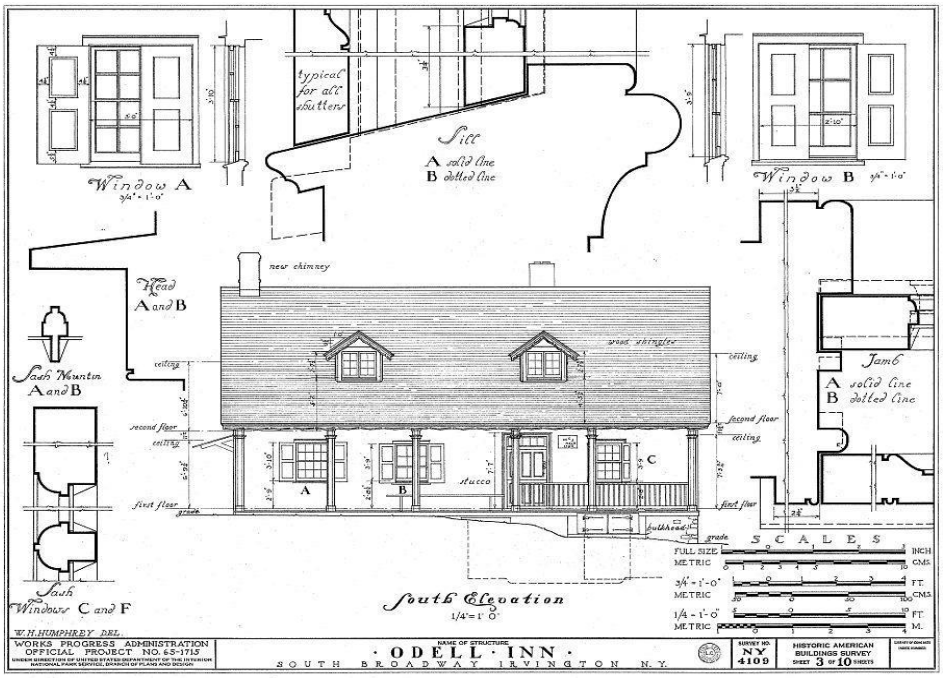

Figure 7

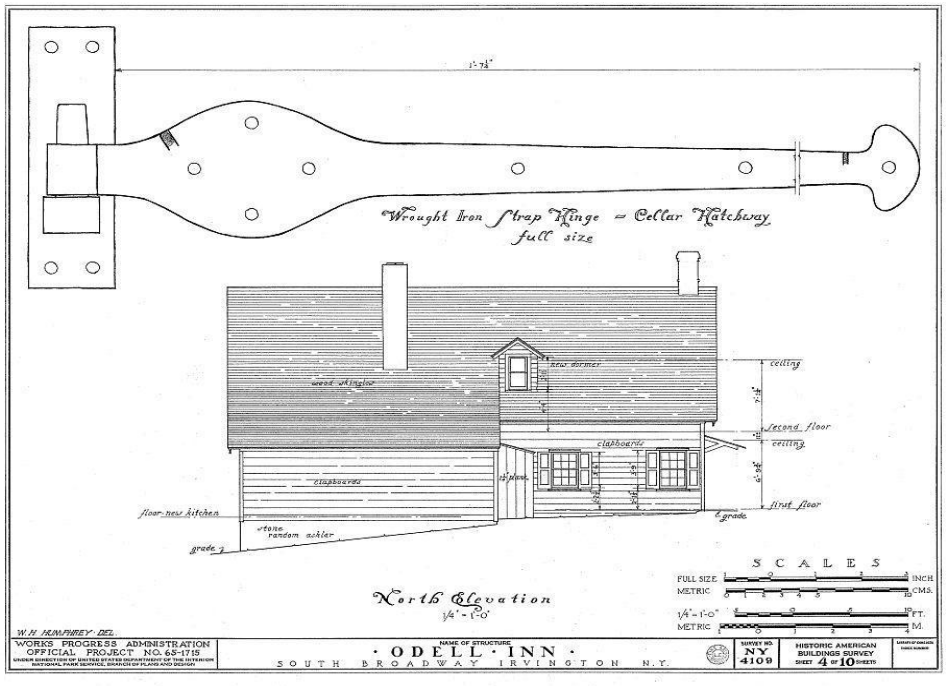

Figure 8

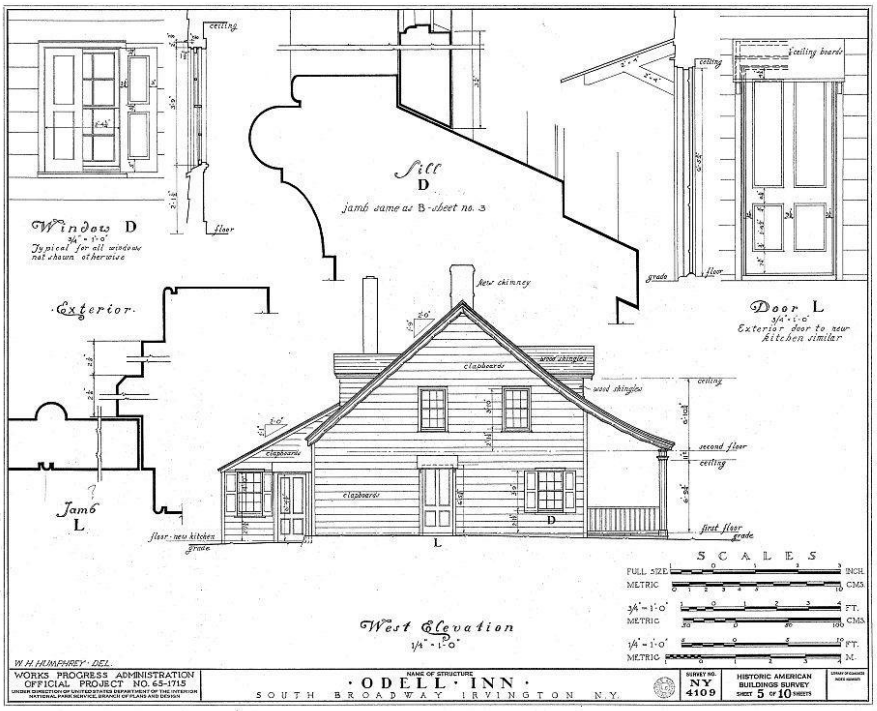

Figure 9

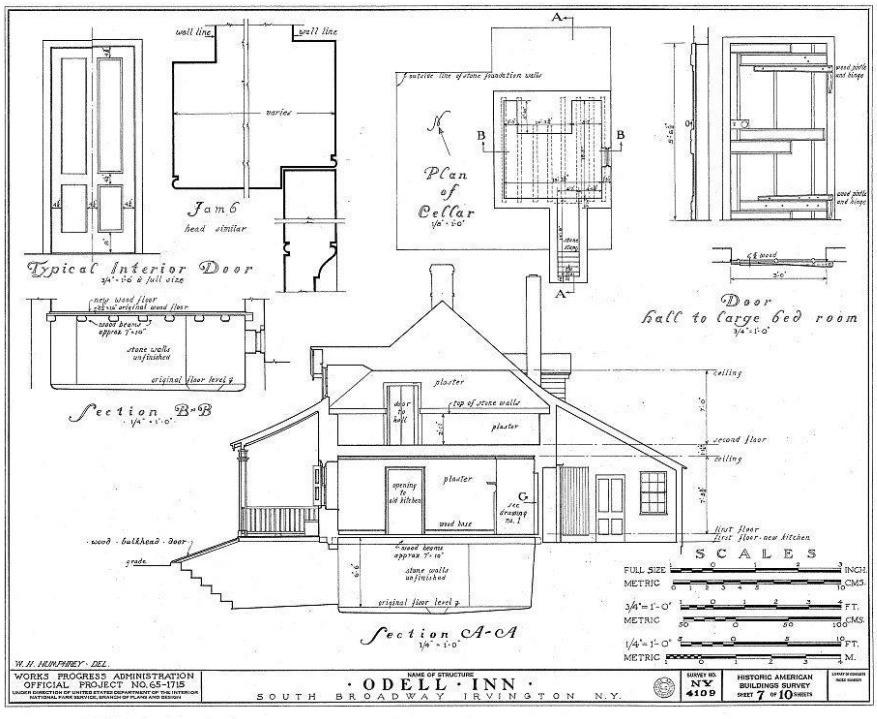

Figure 10