

# Spanning the Gap

## Restoration at Millbrook Village: the Garis House

By Ken Sandri

Garis House is not large in size, but it holds triple importance for the heritage of rural New Jersey in Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. First, the Garis House is on the National Register of Historic Places because it contributes to the historic appearance of the Old Mine Road Historic District. It is a remaining example of the many original structures along Old Mine Road to witness the commerce along that historic trace.

Secondly, Garis House is the recreation area's only restored example of an *Upper Delaware Valley House*, a distinctive kind of everyday home popular in the valley in the first half of the 1800s.

Thirdly, the house is important to historic interpretation at Millbrook Village. As a typical rural home in the later half of the 1800s, the house serves as a focal point for cooking and cultural demonstrations.

The designation of the Old Mine Road Historic District recognizes that historic landscapes, in addition to individual buildings, are worthy of preservation. Similarly, the identification of everyday styles of architecture, such as Garis House, acknowledges that modest homes preserve history, just as do the mansions of the famous.

The Upper Delaware Valley House is a common working man's interpretation of the Greek Revival style popular in this country in the 1820s to 1860s.



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Sliding window in the kitchen addition, as restored.



The northeast side of Garis House after restoration.



The southwest side of Garis House after restoration,

The house reflects the opinion of the local people about what was pleasing to look at and what was practical to build, and also reflects historical factors such as availability of materials and craftsmanship. Other areas of the state and country display different versions of this architectural style unique to their regions.

Garis House also presents an item of particular architectural interest, a kitchen addition which is a rare surviving example of a framing method called *plank construction*. Built in the 1860s, this supposedly temporary structure survived substantial alteration over the years, and is now restored to its original appearance.

Physical evidence, historic photographs, and documentation all played a part in restoring Garis House and its kitchen addition to their appearance in the 1860s. Preservation crews based most of their decisions on the physical investigations and repair work on the structure, such as construction details, architectural components, and paint colors.

The first phase of restoration began in 1994 with the stabilization of the structure, the removal of moisture damage and other physical threats, rehabilitation of the slate roof, repairs to the foundation, and cosmetic repairs to the house exterior and to the surrounding landscape.

The second phase in 1998 included the restoration of the kitchen addition, the restoration of plaster throughout the house, repair to the wood floors, and upgrading of the utilities. For safety and other requirements, other non-historic elements were added, such as fire-retardant materials, a modern steel flue for the wood stove, and hand rails for the stairs.

Stove repairs and the return of appropriate furniture were in process over the summer of 1999. Garis House can now welcome visitors to a typical rural home of the 1860s.

showing kitchen addition in back.



Garis House, Interior of Room 202 on second floor.



Front door.



(Above) Cellar door to house.

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