



Standing still in time

A home lingers in the subtle beauty of its past

By NANCY POSTER for Spaces

Photographs by JASON PLOTKIN

THIS IS THE STORY OF A HOUSE. By 21st-century standards, the two-story stone farmhouse is modest — a kitchen, living room, dining room, center hallway, three bedrooms and one small bath.

Called the Schultz House, it stands at the end of a long lane off Locust Grove Road in Hellam Township, York County.

It likely has been since 1744 — 32 years before the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain.

Historic York Inc. believes it is the county's oldest two-story dwelling. A worn

date stone written in German and added into the home's second story indicates Johannes Schultz and his wife, Cristina, were the settlers who built the house.

The couple emigrated from Germany and were among a wave of settlers west of the Susquehanna River in the Kreutz Creek valley. The property likely reminded them of the German homeland they left behind.

After nearly three centuries and a long line of owners, the Schultz House and its immediate acreage was donated by the daughter of its most recent owner, Beatrice

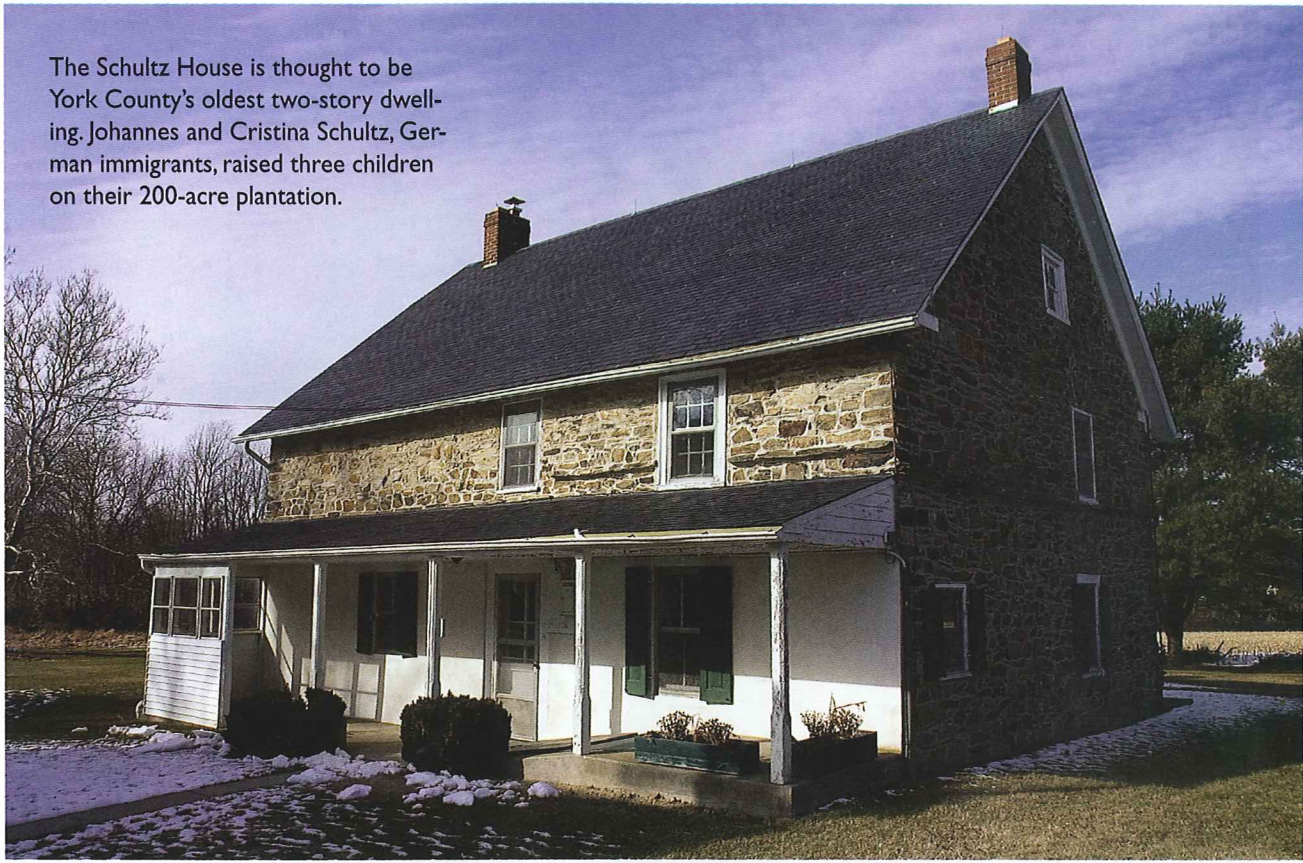
Rowe, to Historic York Inc.

In 1944, Beatrice and her husband, Clair, bought the home, its outbuildings and 132 acres of land that surround it.

Their daughter, Patricia Walters, lived in the home from her birth to 1964. Her parents have passed away.

Walters said two things make her childhood home unique: the 2-foot-thick stone walls "with every stone coming from the land back there," and the construction by the Schultzes at a time when homes were much more primitive.

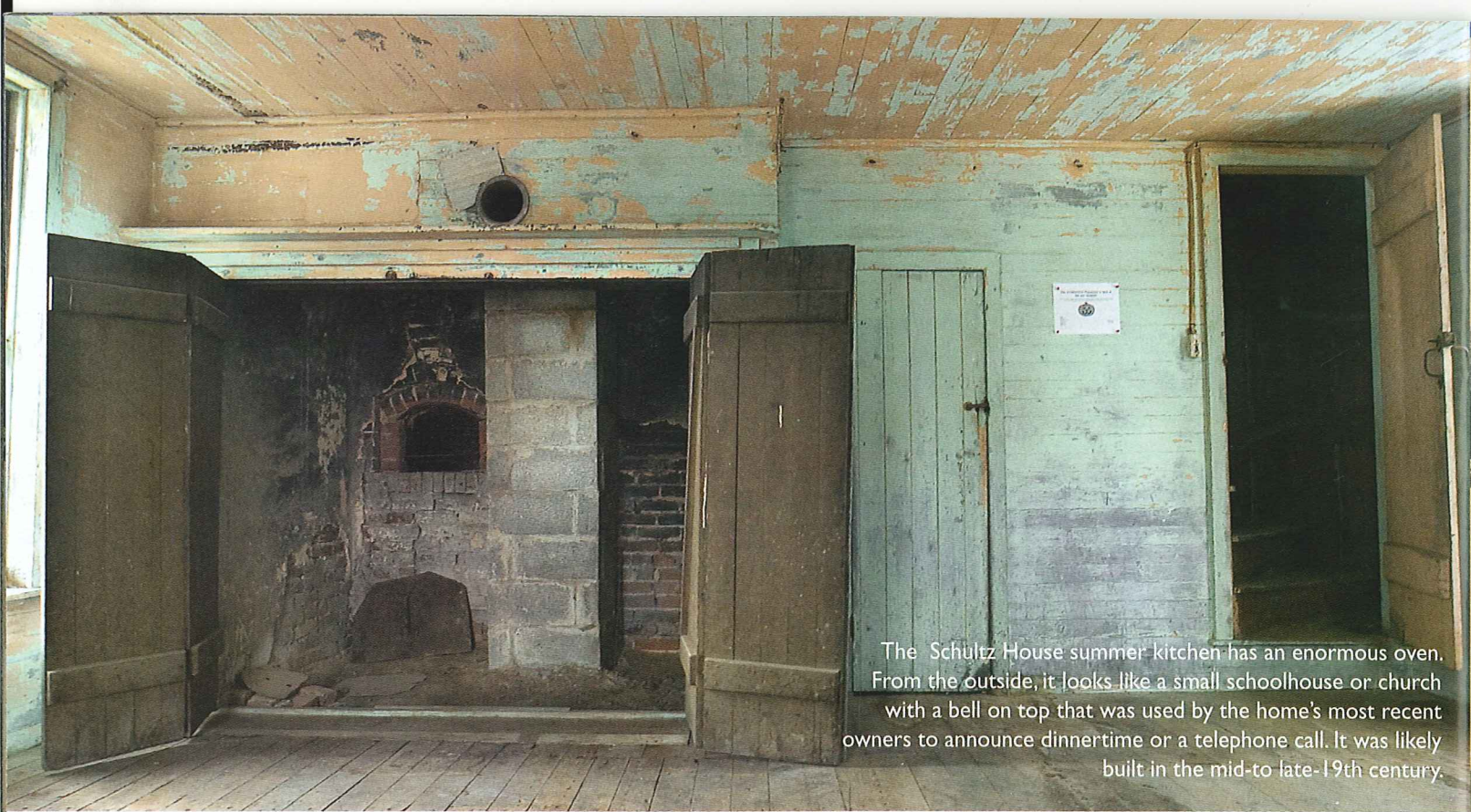
The Schultz House is thought to be York County's oldest two-story dwelling. Johannes and Cristina Schultz, German immigrants, raised three children on their 200-acre plantation.



The wide wooden planks in the Schultz House upstairs bedrooms slope across the floor but are still sturdy after more than 200 years.

The house's 'cave cellar' was used to bury root vegetables in the back end, made of mud. The cellar is cool in the summer but floods with heavy rains.





The Schultz House summer kitchen has an enormous oven. From the outside, it looks like a small schoolhouse or church with a bell on top that was used by the home's most recent owners to announce dinnertime or a telephone call. It was likely built in the mid-to late-19th century.



A date stone seems to say the Schultz House was built in 1734. Recent research puts the date about a decade later.

The intensity of the work is easily seen in the attic, where large, rough beams support the roof. A curved stairway with narrow steps extends from the second floor.

“Can you imagine getting that size beam as well as the heavy stone up there?”

Walters said.

The rest of the home's interior is a mixture of antiquity and modern updates, blending 1960s decorating styles with 18th-century history.

The modernized kitchen — complete with dishwasher — and carpeted bathroom is in stark contrast with the wide wooden floors, deep windowsills, low ceilings and doorways, and original walls in what had once been the Rows' upstairs den.

Another large room on the second floor runs the depth of the house. It's large enough to have accommodated rows of weary travelers who passed by on the nearby Monocacy Road, which is now Route 462.

“Because (the house) would have been out here by itself, (the Schultzes) probably took in travelers,” said Scott Butcher of Historic York, adding that members of the

Continental Congress likely “stopped in on their way to York.”

The barn, summer kitchen, smokehouse and acreage surrounding the farmhouse provided “lots of things to entertain me,” said Walters, the Rowe’s only child, who remembered hiking on the large property as well as the “long, and sometimes very cold, walk out that lane to get the (school) bus.”

“You could row a boat in there when you get heavy rains,” she said.

One of the most unique features of the house is a piece of furniture.

“There’s a cradle that was built by Johannes Schultz,” Butcher said. “It has been deeded with the house. It’s just a beautifully built large rocking cradle.”

Walters remembered the cradle sitting in the Rowe family’s living room. She was rocked to sleep in the cradle, as was her own daughter. (See page 3 for an image of the cradle.)

After Beatrice Rowe’s death, Walters sold the contents of the house. The cradle, however, remained there. Walters said she didn’t want to break the chain that Schultz established more than 200 years ago.

The future of the house, however, remains unclear.

While Walters said she doesn’t believe anyone would live in the old house, she would like to see her family home restored.

Historic York is “exploring options,” said Butcher, adding other historic homes the organization has acquired were later sold with covenants that required the structures be preserved. There are also questions about the age of the house and a date written on its date stone.

While it was long believed the house was constructed a decade earlier in 1734, research conducted by Historic York shows Schultz and his wife didn’t arrive in America until 1742, 10 years later than had originally been thought.

“The date stone says 1734,” said Karen Arnold of Historic York.

Also, one writing about the house states the date stone is in a gable wall.

That causes Arnold to question whether it’s the original date stone, if it had been re-carved, or if generations have been reading the German words incorrectly.

“Sometimes in German engraving 3s look like 5s,” she said.

She said it’s also possible several former

owners of the property, proud of the history of their home, might have “embellished” its age.

Still, Arnold said she believes the house likely continues to hold the distinction of being the county’s oldest two-story structure. ■



Currently owned by Historic York and unoccupied, the Schultz House’s future is unclear.