



Historic Silvermine House Tour  
September 18, 2004

ORGANIZED BY

Norwalk Association of Silvermine Homeowners  
Silvermine Community Association

SPONSORED BY

Norwalk Preservation Trust

SUPPORTED BY

Silvermine Guild Arts Center, New Canaan  
Silvermine Tavern, Norwalk  
Silver Hill, New Canaan



**HOUSES ON TOUR**

- 1** Merwine Raymond House, c.1815
- 2** Jacob St. John Homestead, c.1724
- 3** Old Blacksmith Shop, 19th century
- 4** Guthrie-Hutchens Barn, c.1844
- 5** The Old Mill House, c.1827
- 6** Riverside Grist Mill, c.1859
- 7** Phebe Comstock House, c.1824;  
Onesimus Brown Cottage, c.1845

**OTHER HISTORIC HOUSES**

- A** Ryder-Wright "Sun House", 1841
- B** Barnum-Lily Pons House, 1923
- C** Hyatt-Gregory House and Store, c.1834
- D** Platt-Hamilton House, c.1832
- E** Cynthia and Stephen Gregory House, c.1824

- F** Samuel Rider House, c.1803
- G** Roswell Hyatt House, 1840
- H** Hyatt-Byard House, c.1823
- I** Bradley and Deborah Nash House, 1823
- J** Buttery-Culpepper House, c.1895
- K** Mary Austin House, c.1835
- L** Harriet Platt House, c.1835
- M** Carrie L. Lockwood House, c.1906
- N** Edward and Wilhelmina Guthrie House, 1896
- O** The Blacksmith Barn, c.1900
- P** Rufus Rider House, c.1844

The Silvermine Tavern is plaqued as the Joseph Cocker Cotton Factory, c.1810



## Merwine Raymond House

Circa 1815

Merwine Raymond was born in 1776 and grew up in Norwalk. In the early 1800's Raymond married Phebe Marvin and moved to Silvermine. Around 1867, Thomas M. Raymond (Merwine and Phebe's son) sold the house to Edwin Reudell. Reudell had come to Norwalk from Guernsey in the Channel Islands. When Reudell died in 1887, his daughter and her husband inherited the property. The husband was a dairyman and had about 20 cows on the 16-acre property. From 1936 until the present, the original 16 acres have been gradually subdivided and the house now stands on 1.25 acres. This comfortable family home boasts 4 fireplaces the largest of which measures over 7 feet across and has a beehive oven built into the back wall (usually a feature of a pre-Revolutionary house). Some other points of interest are chestnut beams, original corner cabinets and a back porch that expands the entire length of the house. It has been fully restored by the present owner and her family.



## The Jacob St. John Homestead

Circa 1724

This very rare historical American house is believed to be one of the earliest homes still standing today. Jacob St. John, was deeded the land in 1722 by his father and gave it “as his homestead” to his only son, Abram in 1765. Many noteworthy historical features can be seen in each room and even though the structure has been worked on throughout its life, much early material remains. The front door features “clinch” nailing in a decorative pattern. The lean-to, housing the small kitchen and the dining room, was likely constructed when the house was originally built. The fireplace and chimney are extremely rare. The entire chimney of fieldstones has been held together for 300 years with clay and straw mortar. Additional architectural significance can be found in the “pumpkin pine” floorboards located in the Keeping Room. This unique wood, favored by early Americans for the golden glow it gives to floors, is now almost extinct. The house contains artwork by Dorothy Byard, an original member of the Silvermine Art Colony.





## The Blacksmith Shop

19th Century

This charming house frequently called “The Blacksmith Shop” dates from the early 1800’s and is nestled next to the Perry Avenue bridge with spectacular views of the Silvermine waterfalls. The large shop or barn doors are still in evidence at the front of the house. The house was used as a basketmaker’s shop in the late 19th century. It was purchased in 1913 by Frank Townsend Hutchens, fine artist, and housed a progression of singers, writers, and sculptors through the years. Proudly displayed in the house’s interior is a woodcut by Tony Balcom, one of the many artist residents of this house. Balcom was also one of the founders of the Silvermine Guild of the Arts in 1922.



## Guthrie-Hutchens Barn

Circa 1844

Referred to locally as Pond Cottage, this former barn structure (now a private residence) is believed to have originally been connected to one of the river factories. The earliest recorded mention of this structure was from a deed, which transferred ownership of “a dam, pond, factory, barn and other buildings...used in the business of cutting and packing of tobacco,” in 1848. In 1852, the property was deeded to Henry Guthrie and his family developed the property on both sides of the river into a thriving mill business. Several other owners used the barn to house their horses and wagons before Frank T. Hutchens (previously mentioned) purchased the property in 1917. Hutchens used the barn as a carriage house for his main residence, *The Old Mill House*. It is believed the barn was converted to a house in the early 1900’s and became the residence of Floyd Hutchens, Frank’s brother.

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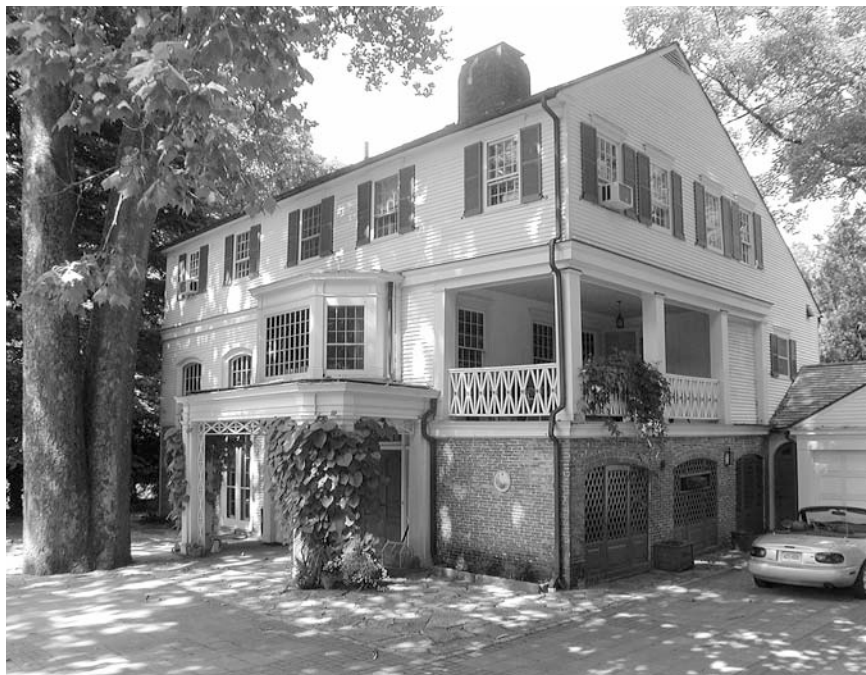




## The Old Mill House

Circa 1770

In 1827, Andrew Aiken purchased the property on the river. In deeds of the time, the mill is first referred to as a cotton batting mill. In the mid 1840's, the mill was sold to John Quigley who used the property for cutting and packing tobacco. The property changed hands several times and in 1850 it was sold to John Rider who set up a saw mill on the site. In 1855, Henry Gutherie purchased the saw mill as part of a larger operation located at the present day Silvermine Tavern. By 1911, Frank Hutchens acquired the mill and had it converted to a residence by raising it above the high water mark and harnessing the power of the mill race to provide electricity. The residence later became home to portrait painter Edwin Fox and more recently to famed mystery writer, Evan Hunter, who had the house opened up to the river and modernized. Under the present owner, a lap pool was integrated into the landscape so that it follows the line of the river. The old shaft and turbine are still located beneath the house.



## Former Riverside Grist Mill

Circa 1859

One of 12 original known mills situated on the Silvermine River. Most disappeared when steam and electric power arrived in the 20th century. In 1859, William L. James built a gristmill on land that he had purchased the prior year from Carrie Lockwood. It is uncertain how long the mill operated, but documents from 1925, when the mill and approximately two acres were sold to Edwin and Harriet Georgis, make considerable reference to the mill equipment, leading one to conclude that it was still functioning at that time. The Georgis, who also acquired several surrounding plots of land, are most likely the owners who converted the mill into the residence that stands today. Several remnants of the house's industrial days remain; the mill mechanism, which can be seen through a lattice door on the south side of the house; a number of millstones; and the mill race, a channel that diverted water from the corner of the pond to under the house and back to the river.

**HOUSE SPONSORED BY RINGS END**







## Phebe Comstock Homestead

Circa 1824

The original footprint of this house dates to between 1752 and 1792. In 1840, Phebe Comstock, a member of one of the original settling families of Norwalk with vast landholdings in Silvermine, purchased the house and thirteen acres from a cousin. She added a vertical extension and front and rear dormers, and updated the house to reflect the latest style of the time (Late Federal). Yet with its central chimney and cooking hearth, the house is truly an early colonial to its core. The property also has a forge barn, likely pre-dating the area's blacksmiths, which is built into the stone retaining wall, underneath large sheltering fir trees. In addition to her nine foster children, Comstock inherited a slave named Onesimus Brown, whom she had known since childhood. In 1845, she built a cottage for "On-e", as he was known, in the back corner of the property. Onesimus became known as "the last slave in Connecticut" by refusing his freedom when slavery was abolished in Connecticut in 1848.