

***The House*****Charles Kaufman****Self-published; ISBN: 9780988672901.****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v2i1.37>**

*The House* by Charles H. Kaufman is a thorough recitation of every fact likely ever to be known about the author's subject, a house he came upon in 1963 and "fell in love with;" a house he describes as a "dilapidated, Victorian wreck...a large, tottering, shack, set on a wild heath."

Such is the irrationality of love that Charles Kaufman, a musicologist, author of *Music in New Jersey, 1655-1860*, and former President of Mannes College of Music, spent the next sixty years of his life restoring the house, situated at 233 Wierimus Lane in Hillsdale, and researching its history. "Why do we do this," he asks, plaintively. "Why do we probe and scratch about in ancient papers from what we call the past, looking for fragments to put into a pattern that will form a mosaic of what we believe to be truth? Can we ever achieve this?" No, he answers, but we persist anyway, because the "probing and scratching are uniquely human endeavors, and we are the only creatures on the planet to contemplate, organize, record, interpret, and evaluate their own activities."

With this frame of mind feeding his desire to know, the hunt was on for the origins of *The House*, as he always calls it, and the Storms family long associated with it. In a deed of 1731 he finds the house situated "just north of the Musquapsink Brook on Wierimus Lane," in what was then Hohokus. He establishes that the first Storms came into the property in 1759. But, then, the author feels compelled to probe and scratch into the owners *before* 1759. These were originally Lenape Indians, and after 1695 a number of owners with patents from the English crown. This hunt involves much consulting of ancient deeds, the Bayard and Kakiat Patents, the dispersal of the Bayard Patent to the Vanderlindas, the Ramapo Patent, the "howling madness,"

as he calls it, of the long-disputed New York/New Jersey border, and countless maps and site surveys, and is the subject of Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Along the way, he digresses to consider the evidence for an even earlier house or houses on the property destroyed by fire. Hand-cut beams in the present basement with “unused tenons, empty mortises, and blank pegholes” suggest as much. Such is the level of detail that the author goes into throughout, along with copious supporting diagrams and photos. It is important to him to be as definite and definitive as possible in documenting the contours and mysteries of his enigmatic love object.

The present house, according to the author, was built in around 1850 by John Alfred Storms. John Alfred was a seventh-generation descendant of Dirck Storms, who emigrated to New Amsterdam in 1662 from Oss in the Netherlands, and to whom the book is dedicated (“for braving the Summer-season Atlantic in August 1662 and coming to New Netherland, so that [his] descendants eventually could build The House”). Dirck and his descendants in the Storms family are the subject of the final chapter, 6. (There are also five appendixes.)

The House, the beloved, is in the Italianate-ish style, as the author calls it (he has an endearing way with words), and there are charming photos of it throughout the book, taken from many different angles and in all seasons. For devotees of Bergen County history, this work will have great appeal, although few readers will yearn for more details.

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