

WHY DID THEY BUILD IT LIKE THAT?

DYCKMAN FARMHOUSE

Even in 1784, when the Dyckman Farmhouse was built, people had to be concerned about energy. Imagine building a house without any of the modern conveniences of central heat, air conditioning or electricity. What building choices would you make to help keep a house warm in the winter and cool in the summer?



In the summer, cooking was done in this separate building called the Summer Kitchen so that the main farmhouse could stay cool.

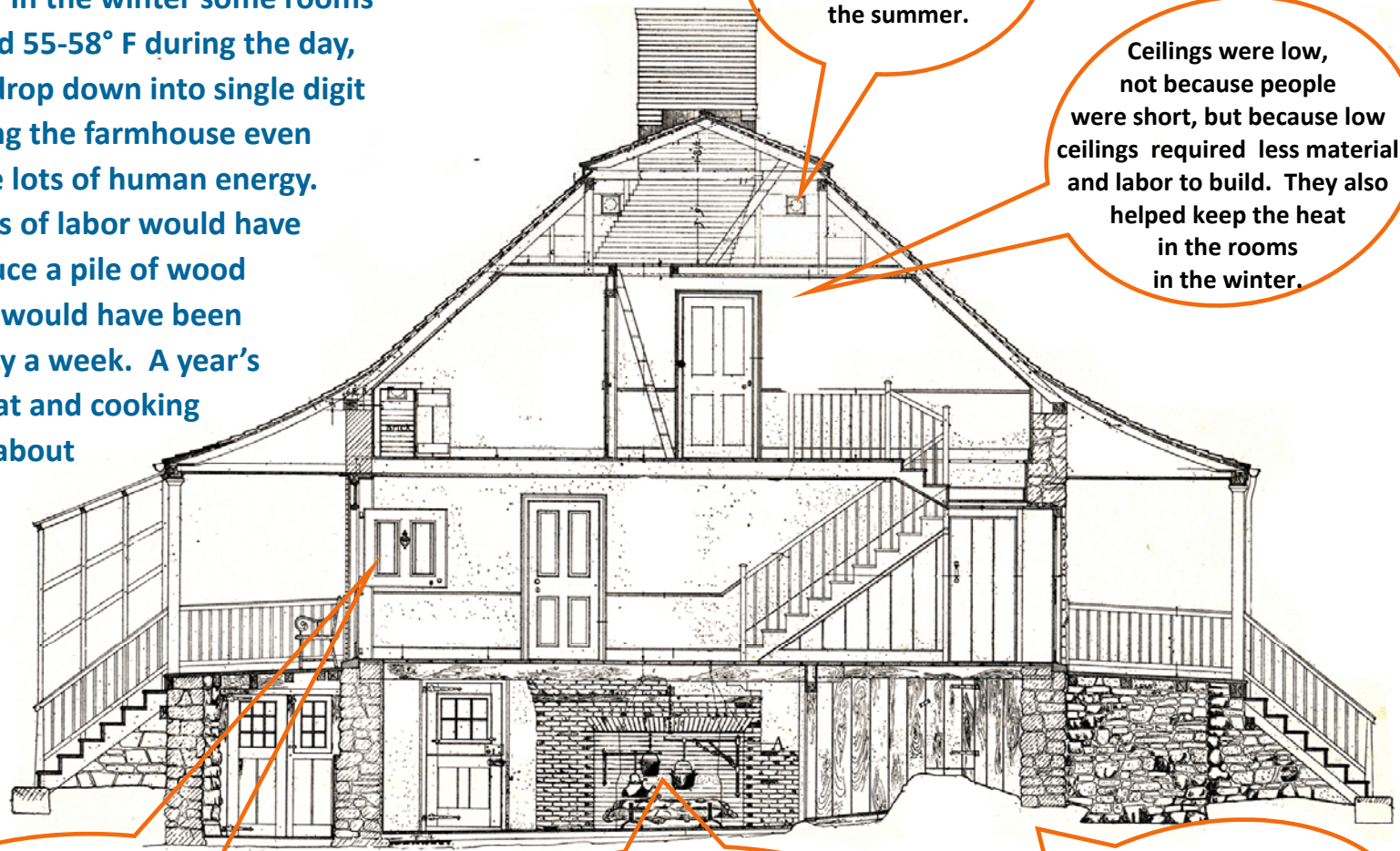
Four windows across the front of the farmhouse let in light but their small size also kept heat from escaping during the winter.

Two chimney stacks on the main farmhouse meant that rooms on both ends of the front of the farmhouse had fireplaces to help heat the interior.

The front and back porches shaded the interior from the harshest summer sun.

Shutters on the windows could be closed to keep the heat in during the winter and for protection during storms.

Despite these building features, it would have been impossible in 1784 to maintain the level of warmth in the winter and cool in summer that we are used to today. In the winter some rooms may have been around 55-58° F during the day, but at night it would drop down into single digit temperatures. Keeping the farmhouse even that warm would take lots of human energy. Approximately 5 hours of labor would have been needed to produce a pile of wood sized 4'x8'x16" which would have been enough to last roughly a week. A year's worth of wood for heat and cooking would have required about 255 hours of labor.



Small windows brought light into the attic and vented hot air out in the summer.

Ceilings were low, not because people were short, but because low ceilings required less material and labor to build. They also helped keep the heat in the rooms in the winter.

The front and back doors are called split or Dutch doors. The bottom can stay closed while the top is open. With the tops of both the front and back doors open, a nice cooling breeze could run through the house in the summer.

The fireplace in the kitchen provided heat in the winter. In the summer, cooking moved to the kitchen next door. This kitchen, built below grade and with thick stone walls, would be coolest summer spot in the farmhouse.

The farm house was built on top of a giant rock. The rock provided a good foundation and, along with the thick stone walls, helped to keep the cellar temperate.