

**MAPLEWOOD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
Designation Report for Historic Landmark

Landmark #D 006-06

1. **Historic Name of Property:** Ezekiel Ball House
2. **Street Address:** 250 Elmwood Avenue (aka 254 Elmwood Avenue)
3. **Tax Map Information: Block # 430002 Lot #163**
4. **Description at time of designation, including size and placement on lot, outbuildings, etc.:**

The Ezekiel Ball House is an eighteenth century vernacular wood frame two story farmhouse situated on an irregularly shaped lot. The earliest portion of the house may have been constructed as early as ca. 1694. It is located on the northern side of Elmwood Avenue between Brookwood Drive and Meadowbrook Place. The house is surrounded on three sides by mid-to-late 1920 single and two family homes built on Ezekiel Ball's original farmlands. The house faces south on Elmwood Avenue and is directly across from the Maplewood Gardens condominiums. It has been suggested that the original surface material of the house was wood clapboard. The house was surfaced with stucco some time after the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1904, 1911, and 1924 fire insurance maps indicate the house is wood frame.

The Ezekiel Ball house consists of the original portion of the house, a two story main block with a side-facing gable roof with close formed eaves. A two story addition, with a slightly lower roofline, was added to the west by Ezekiel Ball ca. 1750. There is a rubble stone cellar below the eastern, oldest section of the house. Steps enclosed by bilco doors lead from the cellar to the exterior southeast corner of the house. The ca. 1750 portion of the house, to the west, was constructed over a shallow, earth-floored crawl space. A single story lean-to was added to the west of the addition ca. 1810. The lean-to addition has a single window and a Dutch door (not original) in the front and two single and one paired double-hung windows on the western elevation. The lean-to addition continues to the middle of the north elevation, where it terminates in a small mudroom with a door to the raised wooden deck. A wood picket fence surrounds the deck area and continues along the eastern property line, ending in a gate at the east side of the front of the house next to the porch. With the exception of a six light 3/3 casement window flanked by two pivoting windows in the first floor of the north elevation addition, and an attic window in each gable end (also not original), all other windows are double hung 1/1 vinyl tilt-in replacement windows.

The main four bay portion of the house has a third floor walk-up attic under a side-gabled asphalt shingled roof with a normal pitch. There is a single attic window with a second story window offset below it on the west elevation and two second story windows on the

east elevation. There are two windows on the first floor of the east elevation. A single story porch on the main facade of the house front has a painted wooden plank floor and a dropped, single pitch, low sloped, side gabled asphalt shingled roof supported by four simple wooden posts. Three of the posts are chamfered and all sit upon square pedestals. Two interior brick chimneys, one in each gable end of the original two story house, vent the original fireplaces.

## **5. Ownership History for Property:**

Ezekiel Ball, 1747 -1802  
Edward Ball, 1802- April, 1815  
Captain Thomas Baldwin  
Cyrus Durand (no house deed) sold in 1826  
and Elias Osborn sold in 1823 to  
Samuel H. Gardner sold in 1836  
and George Price sold in 1835 to  
Joseph Price sold in 1840 to  
Henry A. Livingston sold in 1843 to  
William R. Sayre sold 11 acres for \$930 in 1844 to  
John Dunlop sold in 1848 to  
Andrew Greenaway  
William Greenaway sold 1922 to  
Mrs. Wheeler  
Steven & Florence Ronnie sold in 1946 to  
John J. Herman, (d. 1992)  
Christine S. Herman sold 2000 to  
Steven Favreau sold 2002 to  
Darryl & Catherine Thurston sold 2003 to  
Erkin Hussey & Amy Henry, current owners

## **Area History**

The first European settlers in what is now Essex County came to Newark from the New Haven Connecticut Colony, led there by Robert Treat in the mid-seventeenth century. By 1678, the outer limits of the Newark Colony stretched to the top of the First Watchung Mountain. Early roads from Newark were surveyed, often along old Indian trails, two of which eventually became South Orange and Clinton Avenues. Settlers from the Newark Colony, in search of land to farm or to develop early industry, moved west along these roads. They established farms where they grew wheat, rye, Indian corn and fruit trees, raised cattle and set up grist and saw mills.

Over the course of the early eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, small settlements developed in the western and eastern parts of what is now Maplewood. These settlements took on local names – that in the west eventually took the name of Jefferson Village, the

east, North Farms. A few local roads developed creating links between farms in the area, including Ridgewood, Elmwood, Parker, Tuscan and Valley. Another important artery, the Newark-Springfield Turnpike, was constructed in 1806. Because those who settled here were primarily of English descent, their farmhouses generally followed English traditions and were built close to these main arteries. Early families such as the Balls, the Crowells, the Baldwins, the Beaches, the Browns, the Smiths, the Heddens, and the Piersons bought large plots of land and eventually members of these extended families owned property throughout the area.

### **History of the Ball family and 250 Elmwood Avenue**

The original portion of the house may have been constructed for William Camp as early as 1694. Further architectural and archaeological investigation and research may be able to confirm that. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the house and surrounding property were owned by Ezekiel Ball, one of the nine sons of Thomas Ball. Thomas Ball's father Edward Ball was born, probably in Connecticut, about 1642. He lived in the New Haven Colony and Branford, CT where he married Abigail Blatchley. Edward Ball was a member of the original company that settled Newark with Robert Treat in 1666. He was appointed High Sheriff of Essex County in 1693. His son Thomas was born in Newark in 1688 and married Sarah Davis there about 1712. A constable in Newark from 1715-1716, he settled in 1718 in the North Farms area, between Hilton and Jefferson Village near what is now Maplecrest Park, working as a blacksmith and farmer. The earliest Land Patent issued in this section was to William Camp in April, 1694 and this William Camp Patent was apparently part of the lands purchased by Thomas Ball.

Ezekiel Ball was born in 1721 on the farm adjoining this property. By 1747 he had married Mary Jones of Sag Harbor, Long Island. It was about that time that Ball, a skilled carpenter, purchased the home and added the second oldest section. The east wing, the original section of this farmhouse, was reportedly built for the Camp family in 1694.

On November 28, 1748, Ezekiel Ball and his brothers Nathaniel, Aaron, Timothy (who constructed a house on Ridgewood Road), and Jonas were among the approximately three hundred men who stormed the Market Street gaol in Newark during the Land Riots. Families who lived on lands purchased from Indians were termed squatters. They were charged with the refusal to pay quit rents to the proprietors of those lands who refused to recognize the original Indian deeds. They were also charged with rioting and with breaking into gaols to release those incarcerated for refusal to pay quit rents. On November 28, 1748, Amos Roberts, a respected and well-known resident of what is now Irvington, was accused by Sheriff William Chetwood of being "an Up-country rioter" and committed to the Newark gaol. Upland residents, including the Balls, armed themselves with farm implements, stormed the gaol, and released Roberts. They then sent a letter to the New York Post Boy, stating that in 1743 and 1744, "the so-called proprietors had surveyed almost all of the unimproved land and many of the improved plantations in Essex County" and that "the so-called proprietors sold some of the lands so surveyed and offered the rest to sale, and withal served ejectments on the said surveyed lands...".

Ezekiel and Mary Ball's children were Edward, (Dr.) Stephen, Prussia, Samuel, Jane, Timothy, Mary, William and Oliver. In 1773, when Ezekiel Ball was 52 years old, he built a much larger house, "Tuskin Hall", near the current location of Maplecrest Park. It was an impressive home, called "The Mansion House" by neighbors. At that time, five of his younger children, ranging in age from seven to seventeen, still lived with Mary and Ezekiel.

After Tuskin Hall was built, the house at 250 Elmwood may have remained unoccupied for several years. It was used as a hospital for wounded soldiers during the Revolutionary War. Ezekiel's son Samuel Ball fought for the Revolution in two battles of Springfield on December 17, 1776 and February 1, 1777. Samuel Ball died August 14, 1780 of injuries received in the June 7 Battle at the Connecticut Farms Church.

After moving to Tuskin Hall, Ezekiel Ball was engaged in breeding and pasturing horses. He was hailed as a mechanical inventor for his creation of a road leveler, formed in the shape of a triangle with a device which cut off ridges and filled ruts.

Ezekiel Ball died December 19, 1804. His wife Mary lived to be 84 and died March 21, 1810. Two years before his death, Ezekiel, then 81, deeded the house at 250 Elmwood to his son, Edward Ball, a mason and also a Revolutionary War veteran. Edward added the lean-to addition to 250 Elmwood ca. 1810. He died in the house in April, 1815. Ezekiel's son Timothy inherited Tuskin Hall, while Timothy's brother William received 54 acres west of Tuskin Hall which he sold to John E. Courter in 1835. The Ezekiel Ball house was subsequently owned by Revolutionary War veteran Captain Thomas Baldwin. Baldwin was also referred to as "Thomas Baldwin, merchant". He operated a general store next to his homestead on property across Elmwood Avenue from the Ball house. Baldwin left the area for New Providence in 1819. His fieldstone store was razed before 1879 and part of Thomas Baldwin's original property was later known as Ward Homestead.

In 1844, Mr. & Mrs. John Dunlop came to 250 Elmwood with their neighbor's daughter, Jane Lowe, whom they later adopted. In 1848, the Dunlops sold the property to Andrew Greenaway, Jane's husband, and migrated to California searching for gold. The Dunlops returned in 1850 and lived in the house until their deaths in 1860 and 1861.

The Ezekiel Ball house was about a century and a half old when the Dunlops purchased it. The original deed was in the possession of the Greenaway family, who destroyed it but declared the house and the old Aaron Ball Homestead (at Parker Avenue until 1927) were the oldest houses then standing in Maplewood. The Ezekiel Ball house has/had structural characteristics of farm homes (ie: holes for muskets, a small smoking oven and an adjacent meat curing closet) built in the northeast in the period around 1696 to 1700.

During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this house was known as the Greenaway house. The house and fifteen acres of adjoining land were sold by William Greenaway to Mrs. Wheeler in 1922. At that time, Meadowbrook Road, Brookwood Drive, Orchard Road,

and other streets were constructed on the farm as a new residential area of Maplewood was being built. Mrs. Wheeler sold to Steven and Florence Ronnie who kept the house until 1946. The house was then purchased by Mr. & Mrs. John Herman (Beatrice Peppard Herman). Beatrice Herman served as the Maplewood Town Historian. After Mr. & Mrs. Herman's deaths, their daughter Christine lived in the house until selling it in 2000.

Steven Favreau, the next owner, added the rear deck and added gravel paths to the front yard. The house was purchased in October, 2002 by Darryl and Catherine Thurston who made no significant changes to the property. They sold it in 2003 to the current owners, Eskin Hussey and Amy Henry.

## SOURCES

Bates, Helen B., ed. *Maplewood Past and Present*. Maplewood, N.J., 1948.

Herman, Beatrice P., *The Trail to the Upland Plantations, Bicentennial Year 1776-1976*.

Herman, Beatrice Peppard. *The Ezekiel Ball House, 250 Elmwood Avenue*. Reprinted in "A Walking Tour of Historical Maplewood, Essex County, N.J.". Marc Duchesneau, Maplewood, N.J., 1984

Other articles and research by Beatrice Peppard Herman

Personal records of Christine Herman

Klein, Robert C. *The Appraisal of 250 Elmwood Avenue*. May 17, 1992

McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York, 2005.

Wasserman, Emily. *Ezekial Ball house is one of the oldest*. "The News Record", August 6, 1964.

## 6. Statement of significance, incorporating criteria for designation:

According to the criteria set forth in Section 7 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance of the Township of Maplewood (#2166-01), the Ezekiel Ball house is eligible as a Maplewood Historic Landmark under criteria (1), (2), (4), and (7).

The house possesses integrity of location and design. It stands at its original location although the farm lands around it have been developed with twentieth century houses. Although it has been somewhat modified over the course of time, the house maintains many of its original materials. It is constructed of wood frame which still exists beneath

the later stucco finish. It has its original rubble stone cellar and a shallow, crawl space with earthen floor under the oldest portion of the house.

**1.) Of particular historic significance to the Township of Maplewood by reflecting or exemplifying the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community:**

As one of the oldest houses in town, the Ezekiel Ball House is an example of an early wood frame vernacular building that is a reminder of 18<sup>th</sup> century agrarian life in Maplewood. Its earliest owners added to the structure as their families and finances increased while maintaining many of the original characteristics. Few major exterior structural changes have been made since Ball's son Edward, who owned the house from 1802-1815 built the latest addition. As the population of Maplewood increased and more home sites were needed, the original farmlands surrounding the house were sold to various other owners. Now this historic farmhouse is the only remaining structure of Ezekiel Ball's farm. Except for a brief period when the house was vacant after Ball built Tuskin Hall and another when it served as a hospital for Revolutionary War soldiers, the Ezekiel Ball House has continued to be used as a single family residence.

**2.) Associated with an historic personage(s) important in national, state or local history:**

Members of the Ball family were among the earliest settlers of the area. Ezekiel Ball's grandfather Edward arrived in Newark in 1666 with Robert Treat and was appointed High Sheriff of Essex County in 1693. Edward's son Thomas, Ezekiel's father, was a Newark constable in 1715-1716 before settling in the Jefferson Village area in 1718. Ezekiel himself was a farmer, a skilled carpenter who built Tuskin Hall, a participant in the Newark gaol riots, and father to several Revolutionary War soldiers. Some of his original land holdings were subsequently sold by his heirs to other locally well-known families such as the Courters.

**4.) An embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of architecture or engineering:**

The Ezekiel Ball house is typical of an early 18<sup>th</sup> century vernacular farmhouse. The earliest portion of the house is a type called the East Jersey cottage. Typical characteristics of this type of house in the region are the one room deep plan, end wall chimney(s) and close formed eaves of the roof. The exposed beamed ceilings, musket holes, and a smoke oven are some of the features that remain on the interior of the house. While few major structural changes have been made to the exterior of the house itself, the dwindling size of the property surrounding it indicates how rapidly this area of Maplewood grew when the adjacent side streets were added ca. 1926.

**7.) Able or likely to yield information important in prehistory or history:**

Its early date renders the Ezekiel Ball house, through both archaeological and architectural investigation, likely to yield information important in the early settlement history of Maplewood and Essex County. Further study may yield valuable information

about the agrarian life and economy in the area from its settlement through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because of the age of the house and its relatively intact structure, it also can be likely to yield additional information on early construction techniques. Former owner Christine Herman mentioned turning over a loose board in the attic floor of the house with Ezekiel Ball's initials painted on it.

Form prepared by: Joanne Sockle  
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