

# MAPLEWOOD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Designation Report for Historic Landmark

Landmark # 009-09

December 14, 2009

**1. Historic Name of Property:** Gildersleeve House

**2. Street Address:** 57 Jefferson Avenue  
Maplewood, NJ 07040

**3. Tax Map Information: Block:** 15.06 **Lot:** 16

**4. Description at time of designation, including size and placement on lot, outbuildings, etc.:**

## Site

The Gildersleeve House sits at a slight angle facing Jefferson Avenue on the north side of the street, mid-way on the block between Walton Ave. on the east and Kendal Ave. on the west. The orientation of the house suggests that which was typical of early settlements in the area, with the house being close to the road and the (then substantial) surrounding lands lying mostly to the rear and to the sides of the main structure. The house is situated on a lot that gently slopes downward from east to west. The front façade of the house faces south, and runs from east to west. Several mature trees dot the property. Recent landscaping efforts have left most of these trees intact. A low stone wall (as a result of 2009 landscaping project) extends around the west side of the house. An asphalt paved drive leads to a non-historic, detached, two-car garage at the rear and eastern edge of the property. The garage is a single story, gable front structure covered with wood clapboard siding, topped by a medium pitch asphalt shingle roof. There is an in-ground swimming pool in the rear yard.

## Description

The Gildersleeve House is a wood frame structure consisting of an 18<sup>th</sup> century section with subsequent additions. It is a vernacular building that illustrates the way in which a modest farmhouse was embellished with elements derived from popular contemporary styles. It reflects the changes in ownership and needs of numerous occupants over the years.

The oldest portion of the house is 1½ stories with a side-facing gable roof. Visual inspection suggests a date of the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (A plaque on the front states “c.1765” but that has not been substantiated.) There is a two-story, side-facing gable addition to the east. This portion likely dates to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A single story shed roof addition joins this portion of the house to the east. The Gildersleeve House is surfaced with clapboard siding, with

decorative fish scale wood shingles on the gable ends. The roof is surfaced with asphalt shingles.

*South (main) façade:* The 18<sup>th</sup> century section of the house consists of two bays with an entry on the east. There is a wood door of raised panels flanked by two multi-light sidelights. There are two, two-over-two double-hung wood windows, with louvered wood shutters. Two gabled dormers with two-over-two double-hung wood windows project at the roof line. A porch with a shed roof extends over the main entrance across the façade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century addition to the east of the original structure. The floor of the porch is made of wood planks rebuilt in 2009 and the roof is supported by three wood Doric columns. Recent renovations (c. 2009) do not appear to have altered the original design.

*West Elevation:* There are two symmetrically placed, two-over-two double-hung wood windows with louvered shutters on the first floor and two leaded-glass windows with multiple lights on the second floor. The gable end is surfaced with decorative shingles and a fan shaped louvered vent is located in the center of the gable. A red brick chimney is visible above the center point of the roof ridge.

Visible from this elevation are historical porches (dates undetermined) at the first and second floor level of the north (rear) elevation. Each porch features broad expanses of small-paned windows. A wood balustrade defines the top of the first floor and the second floor has a flat roof.

*East Elevation:* This consists of the gable end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century section of the house. A single story shed roof addition with paired two over two double-hung windows runs the width of this elevation. A two-story addition at the rear of the house visible from this elevation reveals a series of fixed-pane windows.

## **5. Ownership of Property**

1786? - 11/21/1810 Ezra Gildersleeve (1740-1810)  
11/21/1810 - 6/19/1846 Rev. Joseph Gildersleeve  
6/19/1846 - 3/10/1874 Ezra Gildersleeve (ca.1830 - 1887)  
3/10/1874 - 1/20/1886 Alice E. Riege, wife of Emil A. Riege  
1/20/1886 - 7/27/1897 Frederick F. Durand (in trust for Emil A. Riege, husband of Alice E. Riege, and their children Alice Bertha Riege and Rudolph Riege) by Alice E. Riege  
7/27/1897 - 1/4/1907 Alice Bertha Riege (unmarried) and Rudolph Reige (unmarried)  
1/4/1907 - 7/30/1920 Carrie R. Hatch and husband Edwin H. Hatch  
(Property sold on 7/30/1920 by Carrie R. Graham (formerly Carrie Hatch) and husband Byron U. Graham  
7/30/1920 - 4/26/1923 Arthur C. and wife Helen A. Zimmerman  
4/26/1923 - 5/26/1926 Arthur C. and wife Harriet Lang  
5/26/1926 - 6/20/1930 Albert D. and wife Clara S. Brokaw  
6/20/1930 - 9/30/1930 Ruth W. Nash and husband Stephen P. Nash  
9/30/1930 - 9/22/1943 Margaret Tompkins Wade and husband Leighten Wade  
9/22/1943 - 2/20/1963 Robert S. Trowbridge and wife Dorothy Salisbury Trowbridge

2/20/1963 - 7/2//1984 Robert T. Sigmann and wife Gertrude E. Sigmann  
7/2/1984 - 11/13/1992 Ronald M. Boag and wife Kay Boag  
11/13/1992 - 2/25/1999 James B. Sharp and Eileen T. Sharp  
2/25/1999 - 6/5/06 David and wife Linda Blaskey  
6/5/06 to Present Michael Stocker and Anthony Dark

## History

The first European settlers in what is now Essex County came to Newark from the Connecticut colony, led there by Robert Treat in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> 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, 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 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> 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 (sometimes known as Hillside), Tuscan and Valley. Another important artery, the Newark-Springfield Turnpike, was built in 1806. Because those who settled here primarily came from England, 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 Gildersleeves and the Heddens bought large plots of land and eventually members of these extended families owned considerable property throughout the area.

The area around Jefferson Avenue that connected the “ridge” or “mountain” road (now Ridgewood Road) with the saw, grist and woolen mills in the valley at the East Branch of the Rahway River was primarily rural. The loose settlement of houses to the south and a little to the north was called Jefferson Village. South Orange Village to the northeast was larger and in the early days would have been the major source for provisions and for mail. Several of Maplewood’s earliest families held property in the vicinity of this house throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the prominent early families that settled along Jefferson Avenue included the Balls, the Durands, the Crowells and the Beaches.

The Gildersleeves, a family of English origin, were among the earliest landholders in the area. John Gildersleeve (1706-1790) was brought, as a child, to East Jersey by his father, Asa Gildersleeve, from Hempstead Long Island. John eventually owned extensive lands used for farming and cattle in the mountain district of Newark, which included the South Orange/ Jefferson Village area. A deed dating to 1753 refers to the Crooked Brook and mountain road and very well may cover the land on which 57 Jefferson Avenue is built. John was a founder of The Mountain Society, a satellite church of First Presbyterian Church in Newark, and a key influence in the settlement of the area.

John's son Ezra (1740-1810) was also a successful farmer in Orange (including the Jefferson Village area) and was a member of The Mountain Society. His grave as well as his father's is found in the First Presbyterian Church cemetery in Orange. A deed dating to 1786 refers to a transfer of land by John to his son Ezra. A portion of this land may have included that of 57 Jefferson Avenue. The dwelling may have existed at this time. (This requires further investigation.)

Upon Ezra's death in 1810, he bequeathed to his son Joseph (1775-1846) "all those lots of land and buildings on the north side of the road upon which he now liveth." Joseph would have been 35 years old. This could very well refer to the dwelling at 57 Jefferson Avenue and indicate that it was standing prior to 1810. Joseph probably farmed and according to one reference, wove rag rugs. In addition, in 1810, he was called to head up the Jefferson Village Baptist Society as its minister. A small white church was built by the congregation of about 30 very near Joseph's house, on land donated by Caleb Durand at the corner of the current streets, Claremont Avenue and Ridgewood Road. Rev. Joseph Gildersleeve was well regarded and served the church until his death in 1846. The church continued as a Baptist Church for only a few more years and was eventually taken over by the local Methodist congregation and moved to a different location.

In his will Joseph gave his grandson Ezra (1830-1887), then sixteen, "all of the lands hitherto not disposed of lying on the north side of the road leading from the said railroad (the Morris and Essex which came through the area in 1838) to said church." This undoubtedly included the dwelling at 57 Jefferson Avenue because Joseph went on to show uncharacteristic concern for his wife for the time "hereby reserving to use and full control of said property to my said wife Mary Gildersleeve during her natural life." Mary Gildersleeve followed her husband in death within a few years.

By the 1850 census, Ezra aged 19, occupation farmer, appears to be living in the house with his father Caleb D. Gildersleeve, as head of household. Also in residence were his mother, two siblings, a tenant farmer and another Gildersleeve relative. Over the following two decades Ezra may have rented the property out or used it as a secondary property. The 1870 census shows him as living as a prosperous farmer with his family in Hillsboro, NJ.

The property left the ownership of the Gildersleeve family in 1874 when Ezra sold it to Alice E. (Hicks) Riege and her husband, Emil Riege, of Prussian birth. By 1886 Alice Riege, perhaps due to financial difficulty or debilitating health, sold the property to prominent third generation Jefferson Maplewood resident Frederick Durand in trust for her husband and children. True to his word in eleven years he passed the ownership of the house to the Riege children who in turn kept it for a decade, selling it to Carrie Hatch, wife of Edwin H. Hatch, who was a broker in New York.

The Hatches owned a large number of properties in Maplewood at this time, including the Durand-Hedden House and ran the Collinwood Farm, the last dairy farm in the western part of Maplewood. They lived in a large house on Ridgewood Road and likely used the Gildersleeve house as an investment and a rental or a tenant property. The Hatches sold off additional acreage so that the property took on the boundaries that it has today. Personal malfeasance led to the

incarceration of Mr. Hatch in federal prison and a divorce by Mrs. Hatch, who sold the property as Mrs. Graham in 1920.

[Further research of owners ongoing.]

## **6. Statement of Significance, incorporating criteria for designation:**

The Gildersleeve House is eligible as a Maplewood Historic Landmark as an original, intact structure from the earliest periods of local development, and satisfies Criteria (1), (2), (4) and (7) of section 7 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. (#2166-01)

Maplewood Code § 41-1, et. seq. requires that the Historic Preservation Commission consider for landmark designation “[a]ny buildings which merit landmark designation and protection, and possessing integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship” and which meet one or more criterion set forth in § 41-7(A) of the ordinance.

The Gildersleeve House possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials and workmanship because it stands at its original position close to one of the early main arteries of the township. It is possible that it retains its original foundation, as well as early additions that include original materials and stylistic details representative of the various eras of construction and renovations.

### **Criteria (1) [of] particular historic significance to the Township of Maplewood by reflecting or exemplifying the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the . . . community . . .**

The earliest portion of the structure was probably built between 1786 and 1810. It is reminiscent of the area’s farm/agrarian beginnings, shown by its placement on the property close to the road. The building suggests the importance of Jefferson Avenue as a connector between the two main sections of the early community. It is the only structure remaining from what was once a large parcel of land belonging to the Gildersleeve family. The original structure and its subsequent additions reflect the changing styles, needs and lifestyles of residents over many years, as the area evolved from its rural to its residential character. The building’s current placement amongst numerous early 20<sup>th</sup> century dwellings exhibits a continuity of this community throughout economic and population growth over two centuries.

### **Criteria (2) Associated with historic personage(s) important in...local history:**

One of the earliest owners of the house was Rev. Joseph Gildersleeve (1775-1846), founder/pastor of Jefferson Village Baptist Society, the earliest church in Maplewood (no longer extant) from – 1810-1846. He owned the house from 1810 until 1846. However its construction predated his ownership.

Another early owner was Frederick F. Durand (1838-1905) dentist, and son of noted 19<sup>th</sup> c. painter Asher B. Durand, born in Jefferson Village. Frederick was a

large landowner in Maplewood including several other early homes and appears to have purchased the house and held it in trust for the children of the previous owner, Alice E. Riege. His personal residence was on Ridgewood Road.

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

The styles of the two main sections of the building reflect distinctive characteristics of architecture and engineering for several important periods in the town's history. The earliest portion of the house was built as an East Jersey cottage type building, constructed in many rural locations in this general area, while the later (eastern) addition reflects common 19<sup>th</sup> century styles and is a simplified version of the then-popular Greek revival style. It is likely that the original foundation is intact as well as other original materials and architectural features.

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

Due to the long use of this building as a farmhouse and a residence, the structure, including the foundation, and surrounding site are likely to hold significant archaeological artifacts and care should be taken any time excavations, removals, demolition or renovations are undertaken. Study of such materials may produce valuable information about the agrarian life and economy of the area in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

**7. Sources:**

Ancestry.com

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Folsom, Joseph, ed. "South Orange", *The Municipalities of Essex Co., NJ 1666-1924*, Vol. I, Lewis Historical Publishing Co, NY, 1925

*Gildersleeve Family Collection*, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ

Griffiths, Thomas S., *A History of Baptists in N.J.*, Barr Press Pub. Co., Hightstown, NJ, 1904

Jacobus, Donald Lines, ed., *The Ancestry of Rev. Nathan Grier Parke and his wife, Ann Elizabeth Gildersleeve*, compiled by N. Grier Parke, II, Woodstock, Vermont, 1959

*Maplewood, Images of America Series*, Durand-Hedden House and Garden Association, 1998.

*U.S. Federal Census, Years 1840 - 1920*

Wills of Ezra Gildersleeve (1740-1810), Joseph Gildersleeve

Report prepared by Gary Nelson and Susan Newberry  
November, 2009

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Designation approved by Township Committee: February, 2010