

MAPLEWOOD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Designation Report for Historic Landmark

Landmark # D-004-06

Public Hearing: February 13, 2006

1. Historic name of property: **Jonas Ball House**
Other name(s): The Spring House
2. Street Address: 88 Tuscan Road
3. Tax Map Information: Block 28.6, Lot 46
4. Description at time of designation, including size and placement on lot, outbuildings, etc:

The house is located close to the south side of Tuscan Road and is slightly skewed from the street. The house is close to the street at north with larger yard to the south rear. The primary entrance is approximately 100-degrees off of the street and faces southeast. Several building campaigns are evident in the variety of design, materials, massing, and alignment.

The original one-story stucco portion with punched windows, which is the north half of the structure, is emblematic of the early functional springhouse use of the structure. The stucco portion of the house is rectangular in plan with deep set punched window openings indicating thick masonry walls. A rectangular plan is efficient in reducing perimeter area and the thick masonry walls developed a significant heat sink that would have provided consistent interior spring house temperatures.

This portion of the house has a second floor faced with wood shingles and a steep sloped gable roof which extends beyond the southeast façade to cover the open porch. The second floor of this portion has many Queen Anne or Craftsman Style embellishments including courses of decorative fish scale and diamond pattern siding shingles. The northwest façade has a verge board with a decorative cut near the eaves. The northwest or rear façade includes a two-window projecting bay supported by decorative carved brackets on the first floor. There is a second story dormer with hipped roof and a pair of 6/9 double hung windows in the southeast facing roof.

The front porch below the roof is 1-bay deep and 2-bays wide and is supported on stucco finished masonry piers. The stairs are in the south bay. The roof is supported by square posts and lintel trim formed from simple rectangular boards. The porch has wood flooring and simple railing and square balusters. The wood stairs appear to have more contemporary over-scaled newel posts and banister. Above the porch railings are Queen Anne Style 3/4 circular arched tracery that span between the posts and corner brackets between the posts and lintels. The first floor window behind the porch is a 6/9 double hung.

Most of the windows in the house are 6/9 double hung units with narrow muntins. One basement window on the northwest façade is a 4 light single hung sash.

The southwest half of the house is clad in horizontal clapboards, part is two stories and the southwest-most portion is one and one-half stories. The roof over the

two story portion maintains the same roof pitch as the rest of the house but the ridge is northwest of the main portion resulting in a lower overall roof and a recessed southeast façade. The one and one-half story portion of the house has a 6-lite awning type window in the southeast and a 4-lite unit in the southwest elevation of the upper floor. This separate addition with a separate wood porch retains most details found in the rest of the structure but does not have a roof over the porch.

The main chimney was on the southwest end of the original structure and probably built when the use changed from springhouse to residential. It has now been surrounded by the southern half of subsequent additions and is at the center of the current structure. There are 2-flues visible, both are stucco clad above the roof line.

Contemporary modifications to the house include aluminum gutters and downspouts on both the southeast and northwest facades and dimensional asphalt shingles. A zero-clearance type chimney with stucco cladding has been added outboard of the north façade. Anecdotal information indicates that the framing of an historic attic level oval window remains behind the north chimney. All chimneys have modern stainless steel screens and hoods.

Outbuildings and Other Significant Appurtenances:

There is one extant outbuilding, a 2-car garage at the south end of the lot which is clad with clapboard similar to the other clapboarded portions of the house. The roof is finished with asphalt shingles with aluminum gutter and downspouts. It has been reported that there was once a one-car garage earlier in the 20th century. This structure, with two overhead garage doors and a single double window, may be from a later reconstruction possibly from the mid 20th century.

There is a fine sweet gum tree about 75-feet tall, between the house and garage, near the southeast property line, that is reported to be more than 200-years old.

There are two driveways, one along the west side of the property which extends to the garage in the rear of the property. There is also a gravel finished parking space between Tuscan Road and the picket fence, along the east side of the property. There is a contemporary adaptation of a traditional painted wood picket fence and gate, at the end of the gravel parking space, between the house and east property line

5. Ownership history for property:

ca. 1750 Jonas Ball and his wife, Hannah Bruen.

ca. 1770, Joseph Bruen.

1810 Esther Bruen Young.

1828, Mary (Mrs. Stephen) Bruen

Ca. 1828, Abel and Clarissa Atwood

March 1842, William Courter

1889 David B. Courter

May 15, 1917, Reginald MacMahon (acquired additional five foot strip in 1920)

July 15, 1921, Harriet S. Smith

October 2, 1933, William S. and Edith P. Knichtel

November 17, 1940, Edith Gidley, f/k/a/ Knichtel

March 26, 1942, Erville M. Hall

1972, Anthony J. And Patricia Grigal
February 7, 1997, current owners Dave and Meg Gilbert

History

The first European settlers in what is now Essex County came to Newark from the Connecticut colony, lead 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 developed along old Indian trails, eventually becoming South Orange, Springfield and Clinton Avenues. Settlers from the colony, in search of land to farm, moved west along these roads. They established farms where they grew wheat, rye, Indian corn and fruit trees. Over the course of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a small settlement developed in the western part of what is now Maplewood, eventually taking the name of Jefferson Village. A few local roads developed creating links between farms in the area, including Ridgewood, Elmwood, Parker, Tuscan and Valley Streets. Because those who settled here were primarily of English descent, their farmhouses general followed English traditions and were built close to these main arteries. Early families such as the Balls, the Crowells, the Beaches, and the Browns bought large plots of land and eventually members of these extended families owned property throughout the area.

In March 1677, one Edward Ball surveyed the mountain land in connection with the acquisition of a large tract from the Lenape. Edward Ball's holdings may have comprised land on what are now Tuscan and Ridgewood Roads and Parker Avenue. Farming began near the foot of the First Watchung Mountain after 1681. Edward Ball's son, Thomas, married Sarah Davis Ball. In 1718, they acquired 418 acres on the north side of Tuscan Road and built a house. Sarah and Thomas Ball had had nine sons and three daughters, including Nathaniel, Ezekial, Aaron, Timothy and Jonas. In 1744, Jonas Ball married Hannah Bruen and built a home next to his father's on the north side of Tuscan Road on a 47.5 acre property that was a part of his father's original property. In 1750, Jonas Ball acquired 18 acres on the south side of Tuscan Road and built a stone structure now known as 88 Tuscan Road or the Spring House. That structure was used as a cooperage, taking advantage of a natural spring on the property, hence the name "Spring House." Members of the Ball family fought in the Revolutionary War and participated in the Battle of Springfield.

In 1770, Jonas Ball sold his property to Joseph Bruen. By 1828, Stephen Bruen's wife, Mrs. Stephen Bruen evidently owned both lots. She conveyed the "Homestead Lot and the Cooper's Lot" to Abel Atwood. In 1842, William Courter acquired the Atwood's holdings on both sides of Tuscan Road, including the Spring House. Courter ran a farm on the property, using the Spring House as a milk-shed. The William Courter Homestead on the north side of Tuscan Road (now 91 Tuscan Road) was built prior to 1850.

David Courter inherited his father's farm holdings, including the Spring House, in the late 1800s. In 1870, William, or his son David, converted the Spring House to a dwelling, adding a second floor and a dining room and kitchen on the first floor. David may have lived in the building. In 1899, David Courter renovated the Spring House, leaving a dated plaque in the wall of a new kitchen addition which read "D.B. Courter Apr 24 1899." In 1920, David Courter sold most of his property to the

Newark Realty Co. Newark Realty Company apparently subdivided the farm and created a development called Mountainview Terrace.

Within the first years of the 20th Century, more and more residences were built along Tuscan Road. In fact, during these years, the Township laid out roads, built sidewalks, improved access to the train station, constructed sewers and contracted with trolley operators on the several major streets. This period of time marks the transition of Maplewood from a rural community to a railroad suburb. By 1930, the Spring House appeared in realtor's listing as available for rental or sale. Subsequent records show that the property changed hands several times during the 20th Century before being acquired by the present owners.

6. Statement of Significance, incorporating criteria for designation:

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

Maplewood Code § 41-1, et. seq. ("HPO"), The HPO requires that the Historic Preservation Commission to 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 Spring 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 also retains its original rubble wall, as well as its later wood shingle and clapboard additions which include original materials and stylistic details representative of the various eras of construction and renovations.

The Spring House meets Criteria (1), (2), (4) and (7) of section 47-1(A) of the HPO:

- (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 evolving uses of the Spring House reflect the broad economic and social history of the town. Originally a built as a cooperage, it illustrates the self-sufficiency of commercial life during the Colonial period. At that time communities were sparse and isolated, obligating each community to have craftsman to manufacture necessities. In the 19th Century, the Spring House served as a milk shed for the Courter dairy farm. Such a function simultaneously recalls the rural, farming roots of the Maplewood area, and hints at the economic and population growth in the area. No longer part of an isolated community, a dairy farm can only survive if there is sufficient market to accept its products. Thus, the Spring House must have helped to feed the growing population in the area. In the 1920s, the Spring House's fate mirrored the 20th Century evolution of the town. No longer part of a farming complex, it stood as a residence on a small lot – albeit a little askew and a little too close to the road by modern standards. Maplewood had changed from rural farming community to residential, railroad

suburb and the Spring House had become a suburban residence. Thus, changes in the use of the Spring House mirror the broad cultural, economic and social history of the Township.

- (2) Associated with historic personage(s) important in ... local history; . . .

The Spring House is also closely associated with important persons in local history. It was built by Jonas Ball, the grandson of one of the founding surveyors – Edward Ball. The Ball family established a number of homesteads in the area of the First Watchung Mountain. Maplewood contains a number of other colonial era houses built by the family, including the Aaron Ball house and the Timothy Ball house. The Jonas Ball (or Spring House) remains significant as part of this first wave of settlement in the area.

Later, it was owned by the Courter's, a prominent 19th Century farming family in Maplewood. The Courter's presence in the Town was significant enough that a street has been named after them. They owned several hundred acres that were farmed in the 19th Century and subdivided into suburban building lots in the 20th Century.

- (4) An embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of architecture or engineering;

The Spring House's original walls and subsequent additions embody the distinctive characteristics of architecture and engineering for several important periods in the Town's history. These periods include the functional vernacular of the 18th century simple rubble masonry cooperage and springhouse, 19th century Queen Anne/Craftsman style fish-scale shingle wall siding and idiosyncratic decorative porch moldings, and 20th century clapboarding.

- (7) Able or likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Due to its long and varied use including cooperage, milk-house, and residential uses, the structure and surrounding site are likely to hold additional significant archaeological artifacts and care should be taken anytime excavations, removals, demolition or renovations are undertaken. During recent renovation projects, the Spring House has yielded important information about historic construction. Significant artifacts uncovered include a plumb bob, a plaque dated 1899 and a tin box dated 1931. In addition, the structure itself could provide insight into earlier building techniques.

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