

MAPLEWOOD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Designation Report for Historic Landmark

Landmark # 080-09
March, 2010

1. Historic name of property: The Old Stone House
Also known as the “Montgomery-Ogden House” (name given the house when recorded by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS)).
2. Street Address: 22 Jefferson Avenue
Maplewood, NJ 07040
3. Tax Map information: Block 13/8 Lot 00001/0000
4. Description at time of designation, including size and placement on lot, outbuildings, etc.:

The Old Stone House consists of a one-story wood frame 18th century portion with a later early 19th century stone addition, and a mid-20th century one-story wood frame rear addition. The house is located on a site that is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre and is set amidst mature trees and shrubs. The house faces east-southeast and the NJ Transit Morris & Essex (Delaware, Lackawanna & Western) Rail line to the east, and is set back from Jefferson Avenue to the north. A broad gravel driveway and parking area accesses the house.

The masonry wing of the house is constructed of evenly coursed ashlar brownstone laid with tight joints. It has a side-facing gable roof and double-hung wood windows (many likely dating to the early 20th century). The single-story wood frame section, the earliest portion of the house, has a projecting pent roof, a massive stone hearth and exposed chimney back. The 20th century addition, to the rear of the earliest portion of the house, is surfaced with wood clapboard and has a gable roof. The date of either wing of the house is not certain at this time, however, visual inspection indicates that the earliest portion of the house likely dates to the second half of the 18th century and the stone portion to the first quarter of the 19th century.

The exterior of the house is remarkably intact with a high degree of architectural integrity. The interior retains a number of significant original elements as well as historically sympathetic “interventions.” The setting of the Old Stone House is notable for the blue stone patio that surrounds the house on three sides and extensive landscaping that dates to the Freed ownership.

The Old Stone House was recorded by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s.

Southeast Elevation

The stone portion of the main façade (southeast elevation) consists of a single entrance, with stone lintel and sandstone steps. The top step is incised with a conjoined “JH,” possibly the initials of Joseph and Hephzibah Pierson. The wood door consists of nine glass lights above two raised panels. The two 6/6 double-hung wood windows have stone lintels and sills and wood raised paneled shutters. The shutters were added sometime after the mid-1930s (the HABS drawings depict board and batten type shutters). There are two small fixed pane windows, each with stone lintels, at the level of the cellar. Two pyramidal roofed dormers, with 6/6 windows, project from the roof, which is surfaced with asphalt shingles.

The stonework throughout the masonry portion of the house is of warm brown sandstone. On the main façade, the stonework is particularly fine, with ashlar laid with tight joints in a pattern evocative of Flemish Bond of brickwork.

The earlier one story wood frame portion of the house is surfaced with wood shingles (an early photograph and an 1866 sketch attributed to Frederick Durand indicate that the wing was originally surfaced with wood clapboards). The exposed foundation is random rubble. A central wood door (similar to the door of the stone wing), and a series of bluestone steps, are flanked by two 6/6 windows with flower boxes. The side-facing gable roof is surfaced with asphalt shingles and a pent roof projects over the entrance.

Southwest Elevation

The side elevations of both the wood frame and masonry sections of the house are visible from the southwest. Wood shingles surface the gable end of the stone wing. There are three irregularly placed windows in the gable end. A 6/6 double hung to the south and to the north, a nine light fixed window in the apex of the gable. A single 6/6 window is located directly above bulkhead doors to the cellar.

The wood frame section is dominated by the exposed chimney back of coursed brownstone. A “beehive” oven would originally have projected from the wall. A brick chimney projects at the apex of the gable. A 6/6 window is offset in the gable end. The pent roof extends over the front entrance at the southeast. A bluestone patio extends from the house and is sheltered by a wood framed grape arbor. There is a small contemporary garden structure and a wood well (depicted on the HABS drawings alternatively as “old well” and “cistern”). An earlier well structure is visible at the same location in an early photograph.

Northwest Elevation

A single-story wood frame addition (the location of the current kitchen) with a gable roof extends from the rear of the wood frame section of the house. The stone section has a single door with two raised panels and nine glass lights above, and a wood lintel. A simple bracketed shed roof shelters this entrance. There is a 6/6 window at the location of an interior stair; an additional 6/6 window is located on the ground floor and a pair of 6/6 windows in a shed roof dormer projecting from the roof.

Northeast Elevation

The northeast elevation, which is the stone portion of the house, faces the gravel drive and Jefferson Avenue. There are two 6/6 windows with stone lintels at the first floor level. A stone chimney extends above the roofline. At the second floor, there are two 6/6 windows, each with stone lintels. The windows of the ground floor have raised paneled shutters as on the main façade. The eaves are close formed with no overhang. The ashlar stone is laid with tight joints. A bluestone path leads from the gravel parking area to the front entrance on the southeast side of the house.

5. Ownership history for property: [research is ongoing]

Before 1759 Joseph Pierson I (1693-1759)

Bethuel Pierson (?)

1823 Joseph Pierson Jr. (?)

1823 – 1833 James Henderson (?)

1833? - 5/5/1837 Robert Henderson

1837 – 1864 Daniel and Betsy (Durand) Beach

1864 – [1886] Asher B. Durand

[1866]– [1905] Frederick Durand

1907 – 1914 Fidelity Trust, Mark Cox, Trustee

1914 – 5/23/1922 Helen Thompson Durand

5/23/1922 –9/23/1922 Minnie (Maria Louise) V. O'Brien, wife of J. Charles
O'Brien

9/23/1922 - 1929 Edmund V. O'Brien

1929 Nancy H. Ogden

1957 K. Montgomery Ogden, husband of Nancy H. Ogden added to deed

1966 – present Mr. Seymour and Mrs. Mary E. Freed

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 Old Stone House

The earliest years of the property are associated with the Pierson family, who owned mills along the east branch of the Rahway River (not thought to relate to the Pierson's of "Vaux Hall" further to the southwest on Valley Street). A reference in *From Maplewood Past and Present* indicates that Deacon Joseph Pierson, the son of Deacon Bethuel Pierson, owned and resided in the "stone house situated on the corner of Jefferson Avenue and the Road to Pierson's Mills." The original owner and builder of the house may have been Joseph Pierson, Sr. (1693-1759.) *The History of the Oranges to 1921*, states that Joseph Pierson, Sr., a miller and sawyer, settled in "South Orange." It cites a bill of sale that documents that in 1739-1740 Thomas and Aaron Ball "bought of Joseph Pierson the equal one-half part of a grist mill and a saw mill on the east branch of the Rahway River, near the dwelling house of Samuel Crowell." (Crowell's house is known to have stood at the corner of Valley Street and Parker Avenue, very near the Old Stone House.)

Joseph Pierson (Sr.) was the father of Deacon Bethuel Pierson. According to early Essex County tax records, Bethuel Pierson was a relatively wealthy landowner who owned a gristmill and interest in a sawmill. His son was Joseph Pierson, Jr., who eventually owned and operated a mill on the east branch of the Rahway River, and likely occupied the house. The Old Stone House is depicted on the ca. 1815 Cyrus Durand map as "J. Pierson." Joseph Pierson died in 1819 and in 1823 his property appears to have been sold through a sheriff's sale to large landholder, James Henderson. Robert Henderson, James' son, likely inherited the house in 1833. (By this time the mill or mills were probably abandoned.)

In 1837 Daniel Beach, a blacksmith from a neighboring family and his wife Elizabeth (Betsy) Durand Beach purchased the Old Stone House. Elizabeth was the sister of Hudson River School painter Asher B. Durand. An un-dated 19th century photograph shows the house, as it appeared when it was a flag stop for the Morris & Essex Railroad, referred to locally as the "Stone House Station." From ca.1838 to 1859, the old kitchen of the house (the wood frame portion) was used as a "waiting room." A small general store was set up there and later became the Clinton Valley Store on Valley Street. As depicted in early images, the wood frame section of the house was originally clad with wood clapboards and both wings had shingle roofs. The following is a description of the Old Stone House from "The Glen," by David Nelson Beach, in *Maplewood Past and Present*:

Just beyond the pond was the old Stone House. This was an ancient structure and in front of it was a platform constructed of masonry and earth, at which trains of the Morris and Essex Rail Road stopped in the earlier days. This house, with its squared brownstone cutting, was at one time the home of our father's second brother Daniel, who was husband to a Miss Durand, a sister of Asher B. Durand, an eminent artist, friend of the poet William Cullen Bryant, and at one time president of the National Academy. She, our beloved "Aunt Betsy," was a genius. Full of rhyme and sentiment and practical common sense, while her husband was an uncommonly skilled machinist.

Also from *Maplewood Past and Present*, a description of the house when it was the flag stop:

At the stone house of Daniel Beach there was no waiting room, only the kitchen-store where one could wait in bad weather. The railroad tracks ran closer to the house than now, and were at grade level. A stone wall and dirt bank in front of the house made a platform from which passengers climbed on or off the train. Stone House Station was only a flag-stop, and anyone wishing to board the train there had to wave a handkerchief or swing a lighted lantern at night.

Daniel Beach died in 1862. In 1864, Asher B. Durand purchased the house and surrounding 15 acres at an auction offered by action of the Essex County Orphan's Court, likely in an effort to aid in his sister's welfare. The 1870 census shows Elizabeth Beach and their incapacitated brother Jabez living in the house and they probably did so until her death in 1882.

As depicted on an 1881 Essex County map, Asher B. Durand owned a large amount of property including the house in the old Jefferson Village portion of Maplewood. Asher's son Frederick inherited the house and property after Asher's death in 1886, though Frederick had to establish his right to them versus the claims of other landholders through an appeal to Chancery, which made a decree in his favor in 1901, four years before his own death in 1905. Frederick Durand's wife, Helen T. Durand, took possession of the house in 1914 after Frederick's estate was settled.

Helen T. Durand sold the house to Minnie V. O'Brien on May 23, 1922. Minnie O'Brien was the wife of J. Charles O'Brien, who was one of the most prominent realtors in Maplewood in the early 20th century. Within four months she then sold the house to Edmund O'Brien and his wife. In 1929 Nancy H. Ogden, wife of K. Montgomery Ogden, purchased the house following the couples return to America after several years abroad in China. Mr. Ogden was a commercial salesman of stocks, according to the 1930 census. He was also a 1902 graduate of Princeton, where his papers (1899-1938) reside in the Manuscripts Division of the library. The Ogden's owned the house from 1929 until 1966, when as a widower; Mr. Ogden sold the house to Mr. Seymour and Mrs. Mary Freed.

The Freeds evidently did extensive but sympathetic work in the house, as well as restoring a fieldstone wall. They discovered two very early documents between the ceiling and the beam adjacent to the fireplace in the old kitchen of the early portion, possibly pertaining to the ownership history of the house. Town Historian Beatrice Herman used these documents in her article "Secret of the Old Stone House."

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 Old Stone 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, and with the exception of the 20th century rear addition, remains essentially as originally constructed. The Old Stone House is one of two houses in Maplewood that was recorded by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) during the 1930s (the other was the Timothy Ball House).

The Old Stone House is:

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 Maplewood, the Old Stone House is an excellent and intact example of a vernacular building that represents a continuum of Maplewood's history, from 18th century agrarian life through the early industrial era. It retains the configuration of a small wood frame 18th century farmhouse with a more refined masonry addition, likely constructed in the early 19th century. The house remains to illustrate life in a small agrarian settlement, through the early industrial period and the coming of the railroad, to the 20th century, when an interest in colonial history and architecture inspired a desire to "restore" early houses. The house is also significant as the location of a "flag stop" for the Morris & Essex Railroad in the mid-19th century.

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

The Old Stone House has been associated with several early families important in Maplewood and Essex County History, such as the Piersons, the Beaches and Durands. The Piersons owned a large amount of land and operated mills along the east branch of the Rahway River. Daniel Beach was a blacksmith and noted mechanic. The Durands were an important Maplewood family of engravers, jewelry makers and artists.

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

The Old Stone House is a highly intact example of a mid- 18th century single room vernacular farmhouse, with a later, more refined, stone addition. The earliest portion of the house is an example of an "East Jersey cottage." Typically of wood frame construction, with a plan that consisted of one room, with a loft space above, characteristics of this type of house in the region are the end wall chimney with exposed fire back and the close-formed eaves of the roof. The ashlar stone portion of the house exhibits particularly fine stonework, and with its interior plan of formal parlors, illustrates a change in lifestyle and room usage from an earlier era, when everything from work, food preparation, eating and sleeping, took place in one room.

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

Because of its early date, and connection to prominent early Maplewood families, the Old Stone House, through both archaeological and architectural investigation, is likely to yield information important in the early settlement history and early industry of Maplewood and Essex County. Further study may yield valuable information about the agrarian life and economy in the area, as well as early industry from its settlement through the 19th century. Because the house has a high

degree of physical integrity, investigation of the house is likely to yield additional information about the existence of our buildings and on early construction techniques.

Sources

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

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Pierson, David Lawrence, *History of the Oranges to 1921, Reviewing the Rise, Development and Progress of an Influential Community, Vol. IV*, 1922

Record, Frederick W. and Sophia R. Record, editors, *Biographical and Genealogical History of the City of Newark and Essex Co*, 1898

Shaw, William H., *History of Essex and Hudson Counties, NJ*, 1884

“Secret of the Old Stone House,” in *The Trail to the Upland Plantation, Bea Herman*, 1976

Wills of Asher B. Durand, Frederick Durand, James Henderson, Joseph Pierson

Report Prepared by: Patty S. Chrisman and Susan Newberry
December, 2009

Public Hearing: December 14, 2009

Designation approved by Township Committee: February, 2010