



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

30 North Market Street, Third Floor Frederick, Maryland 21701 (301) 600-1147



CASE NO. CR 22-10 NOMINATION TO COUNTY REGISTER STAFF REPORT

SUMMARY

Property: Reed-Stitely House
12520 Catoctin Furnace Road, Thurmont

Applicant: Kenneth M. Brink

Public Hearing for consideration of placing the property located at 12520 Catoctin Furnace Road, Reed-Stitely House, on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places. Submitted by Kenneth M. Brink, property owner of record, and supported by Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.

The public hearing for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places will be held at 7:00 p.m., or thereafter, on January 11, 2022.



Figure 1: Subject Property

DESIGNATION STATUS

The property is a contributing resource within the Catoctin Furnace National Register Historic District. The district is listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (F-6-45). Additionally, the property is individually listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (F-6-120) and was determined individually eligible for the National Register under Criteria A, C, and D. The entire parcel has a Maryland Historical Trust easement. The property contains the historic house, summer kitchen/wash house, springhouse, and garage. The nominated property encompasses approximately 1.28 acres of land.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

The applicant submitted a completed County Register nomination form, written historical and architectural narratives for the house, a summary of property ownership, and digital photographs.

SITE VISITS

Staff worked with the owner and resident of the property and scheduled site visits on December 16 and 17, 2022. Commissioners were notified of the pending nomination and encouraged to visit the site on these dates.

REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

1) Analysis

The documentation submitted by the applicant regarding the history and significance of the property clearly establishes the architectural and historical significance of the Reed-Stitely House, indicating that the property is eligible for listing under Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1D), and 6B(2A). The period of significance for the property is circa 1820 to 1903, the time the house was constructed through the end of the operation of the Catoctin Iron Furnace.

2) History Summary

The Reed-Stitely House was erected in circa 1820 as worker housing and is associated with the expansion of Catoctin Furnace, a colonial-era ironworks that operated for nearly 130 years before shuttering in 1903. Thomas Johnson, the first governor of Maryland, initially developed the industrial site on the eastern slope of the Catoctin Mountains in 1774, erecting a blast furnace along Little Hunting Creek.

Over the next three decades, Johnson's brothers (first James and later Baker) expanded the operation, which produced cast products such as hollowware. As part of the expansion, James Johnson and Co. created worker housing — both log and stone dwellings — south of the furnace.

On July 13, 1811, a public sale notice published in the Frederick Town Record listed the Catoctin Furnace complex and described it as containing 15 to 20 houses for the accommodation of workmen, all in good order. The Frederick County Tax Assessment Book for 1876 (No. 15, p. 80) described the furnace complex and included a count of 50 tenant houses. Today, ten of the original furnace worker houses (four stone houses and six log houses) stand adjacent to Old U.S. Route 15 (Catoctin Furnace Road) beginning approximately 600 feet south of the furnace.

The exact construction date of the Reed-Stitely log house is unknown, but it is assumed that it was constructed circa 1820 when the new owner, John Brien, built many dwellings for workers. Planned dendrochronology research may provide a more accurate date of construction; however, dendrochronology completed on other log houses in the village strongly suggests a circa 1820 construction date. The large number of enslaved workers owned by Brien (at least 22 in 1820) is strong evidence that this structure was constructed utilizing the skills of enslaved Africans. By the middle of the 19th century, the number of enslaved workers declined, replaced by European immigrants.

The Blue Mountain Iron Company shut down in 1892 due to the low price of iron. In 1899, the Blue Mountain Iron and Steel Company bought the property, beginning operations the following year. In 1903, the furnace shut down permanently and declared bankruptcy. On February 19, 1906, Joseph E. Thropp and his wife purchased the property and dismantled the iron furnace, taking the valuable equipment to his furnace in Pennsylvania. For a few years, Thropp kept the mines open at Catoctin and shipped the ore to Pennsylvania. While the furnace closed in 1903, Catoctin village continued with workers eventually purchasing the housing.

In 1923, Samuel Reed and his wife Julia purchased the property for \$600. This was a typical pattern for the former furnace employees: they purchased furnace houses when the opportunity finally arose and stayed in the village. House prices in general in the village ranged from \$250 to \$450. The Reed's purchase price of \$600 was most likely due to the larger size of the dwelling and lot. Following Reed's death in 1937, the property passed to his only daughter, Jessie Stitely, who remained in the house until her death in 1990. State Highway Administration purchased the property in 1997 and sold it in 2004 to William Stover. The current property owner purchased it in 2008.

3) Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Significance Criteria

The property is eligible for listing under this category for meeting criteria 6B(1A) and 6B(1D), as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(1) of the Frederick County Code:

- 6B(1A): *The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.*
- 6B(1D): *The property exemplifies cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of county and its communities.*

The property has significant character, interest, and value in the development and heritage of the County and exemplifies cultural, economic, social, and historic heritage of the county and its communities. The Reed-Stitely House is a contributor to the Catoctin Furnace Historic District (F-6-45). The National Register district is significant, as stated in the nomination, for its association with “American industrial history and industrial archaeology, and its related living quarters, (which) illustrates the growth and development of the iron industry between 1774 and 1904.”

The Johnson brothers began operation of the furnace in 1774. By 1803, Baker Johnson obtained sole ownership and expanded the furnace’s operation. Per the National Register nomination, following Baker’s death in 1811 Catoctin Furnace consisted of several thousand acres of land, the furnace and one stack, the Catoctin Manor house, two warehouses, a chopping mill, a stonemith’s shop, barns, stables, a corn house, a charcoal house, a casting house, a forge, and 15 – 20 workers’ houses. The Furnace was sold and in 1820 John Brien became the owner. It was during his ownership that the Reed-Stitely House was most likely built. He expanded the operation by adding a carriage house, an icehouse, two mills, and a large garden.

The Furnace produced ammunition for the Continental Army, the Catoctin stove, and other household items. According to the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society Inc.’s website, enslaved labor provided a large part of the work force at the Furnace. Enslaved people worked as blacksmiths, colliers, founders, and forge men. By the middle of the 19th century, the number of enslaved workers declined, replaced by European immigrants. The furnace went through many subsequent changes of ownership, finally closing in 1903.

The house may have been occupied by Samuel Reed prior to him purchasing the property in 1923. When he purchased the property, he was working as a carpenter with the furnace railroad. Samuel’s father Jacob also was employed by the furnace and in 1880 was listed as a manager of the ore bank in the Census. However, there is no evidence that Jacob Reed lived in the house. Interesting to note, the 1923 deed had a special condition stating that a spring of water was to be used as a public facility by the residents and neighbors. The springhouse is still located on the property.

4) Architectural and Design Significance Criteria

The property is also eligible under this category for meeting criterion 6B(2A) as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(2) of Frederick County Code:

- 6B(2A): *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.*

The Reed-Stitely House is an example of tenement worker housing that is characterized by its log construction, two stories, and side gable roof. This is similar to the design of other surviving furnace worker housing along Catoctin Furnace Road. The house may have been raised from a

one-story to two-story structure, probably some decades after construction, but prior to 1923. The dwelling includes an addition built in 2015 that replaced a circa 1920s rear ell.

Little is known about worker housing at iron plantations in the United States. Many of the surviving or reconstructed furnaces have long lost their company housing, particularly those constructed of log. What usually remains is an archaeological site. This is one of six remaining log structures in Catoctin village. Several restored stone worker houses at the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site in Elverson, Pennsylvania come closest to the cottages at Catoctin. Reportedly diminished to only 12 remaining houses, the worker tenements in Catoctin Furnace village are a rare property type in the State and within the region.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Reed-Stitely House for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places pursuant to Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1D), and 6B(2A) as described in Section 1-23-6B of the County Code.

If the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) recommends the property for local designation, the HPC will submit a letter of recommendation to the County Council for final action.

FREDERICK COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

30 N. Market Street, Frederick, MD 21701 (301) 600-1147

COUNTY REGISTER NOMINATION FORM

(Office Use Only)

Application No. _____

HPC Meeting Date _____

Council Hearing Date _____

1. PROPERTY NAME: Reed - Stitely House
2. LOCATION: Street address: 12520 Catoctin Furnace Road
Tax Map(s) and Parcel(s) #: 0032 0002 0007
3. PROPERTY TYPE: ☒ Single ☐ District

Property refers to the entire geographic area being nominated. It may be an individual building, site, structure, or object; or it may be a landscape consisting of numerous buildings, sites, structures, or objects. For example, a farmstead consisting of a main dwelling, tenant house, outbuildings, barns, sheds, fences, and agricultural fields is usually a single property that may have one or more parcels and one owner or multiple shared owners. A village or neighborhood consisting of several types of structures with different parcels and owners is a district.

4. CRITERIA: (Check appropriate box(es))

- ☒ Significant character, interest or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of county, state, or nation
- ☐ Site of an historic event
- ☐ Identified with person or group of persons who influenced society
- ☒ Exemplifies cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of county and its communities
- ☒ Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture
- ☐ Represents work of master craftsman, architect, or builder
- ☐ Possesses significant artistic value
- ☐ Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction
- ☐ Represents an established and familiar visual feature of neighborhood, community, or county, due to singular physical characteristics, landscape, or historical event
- ☐ Is rare example of particular period, style, material, or construction technique.

5. REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES: (Consult staff on type, number, format)

- ☒ Map(s) showing location and proposed boundaries
- ☒ Photographs, including all buildings and prominent features
- ☒ Written property description, history, and significance statement. See *Nomination Form Instructions*. If listed in National Register or Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, attach copy of form

**COUNTY REGISTER NOMINATION FORM
PAGE TWO**

6. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT NOMINATIONS
(if applicable)

Contact Historic Preservation staff for further information and guidance

7. SIGNATURES OF OWNER(S) OF RECORD CONSENTING TO NOMINATION
(Attach extra sheets as needed)

A.

Printed name

Mailing address

Telephone number(s)

E-mail address

Signature

Date

Printed name

Mailing address

Telephone number(s)

E-mail address

Signature

Date

IF NOMINATED BY PERSON(S) OTHER THAN OWNERS: (Does not apply to district nominations)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

ATTACH WRITTEN LETTER OF CONSENT BY OWNER (S)



Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.

12610 Catoctin Furnace Road
Thurmont, Maryland 21788

President,
Elizabeth
Anderson
Comer

November 30, 2022

Vice President,
Ken Brink

Frederick County Historic Preservation Commission
30 North Market Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Second Vice
President,
Beverly Hoke

Re: Frederick County Historic Preservation Commission application
Reed-Stitely House, 12520 Catoctin Furnace Road, Thurmont, Maryland 21788

Third Vice
President,
Stephen Dill

Dear Commission Members,

Secretary,
Marilyn Smith

As the owner of the property at 12520 Catoctin Furnace Road, Thurmont, Maryland 21788 for which a Frederick County Historic Preservation Register designation is being sought, I confirm my willingness to support the project and hereby provide consent for this requested designation. I understand that my confirmation is a requirement of the Frederick County Historic Preservation Commission application and that such designation may impose a financial obligation upon the property owner and/or a legal encumbrance upon the property.

Treasurer,
Elizabeth
McGee

Sincerely,

Board member-
at-large, Rick
Smith

Kenneth Brink 

Emerging
Professionals,
Alyssa Watson
Anne Comer

Kenneth M. Brink,
Owner

President
Emeritus,
Christopher
Gardiner

Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.
240-288-7396

www.catoctinfurnace.org
Where History Changes Lives

12520 Catoctin Furnace Road – Reed-Stitely House

5. Required Attachments: Map, Photographs, and Property description

Description:

Constructed as worker housing for the Catoctin Furnace, this log house, now called the Reed-Stitely House, is a vernacular dwelling located south of Thurmont, in the village of Catoctin Furnace, in Frederick County.

Erected ca.1820, it is made of log and reveals a simple, two-and-a-half story side-gabled plan (which may have originally been a one story with loft structure, the same as the other worker houses). Just as the Collier's Log House was raised to be a full 2 story structure, the Reed-Stitely House second floor was probably added some decades after construction, prior to 1923. The exterior of the building, as viewed from the public right-of-way, retains a sufficient level of integrity to communicate its historical period and significance.

In 1998, a National Register of Historic Places nomination form (included in this package) was completed by Nancy Van Dolsen and Wendy Zug-Gilbert of Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc.

The Reed-Stitely House is situated on the west side of Catoctin Furnace Road approximately three miles south of Thurmont, in the southern part of the historic village. The village, consisting of the remaining buildings of the historic Catoctin Furnace complex, is strung along the former Frederick-Emmitsburg Turnpike. U.S. Highway 15, a divided four-lane highway, lies several hundred feet to the west. Beyond it is the green mass of Bobs Hill, a footing of Catoctin Mountain. Much of the land to the west and north is part of Cunningham Falls State Park, which includes the historic furnace complex. Little Hunting Creek, a stream that once powered Catoctin's first furnaces, lies east of the property. All the significant buildings of the village are within proximity to the house.

The rectangular, approximately 1.28-acre (55756.8 square feet) lot holding the Reed-Stitely House is mainly level but rises to the west as it reaches the old Trolley right of way. Bounding the property to the north is a ca. 1820 log dwelling. A dwelling to the distant south is a mid 20th century dwelling. The Reed-Stitely House sits approximately 17' distant from the road. The property is minimally landscaped with a wooden one-story garage to the north (ca. 1925-1940). The remains of a spring are extant to the south of the dwelling.

The roughly 1,181-square-foot house, as with most of the dwellings in the village, is oriented on a north-south axis and faces directly onto the road. A steeply pitched side-gabled roof shelters the rectangular structure. It is sheathed with a metal roof. The roof is terminated with fascia at the north and south sides. A modern poured concrete porch has been added to the front elevation. The roughhewn log structure has been sided with wooden clapboards.

A historic kitchen addition was removed prior to 2008. An addition was added to the rear of the structure by the current owner ca. 2015. As the property is a Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) easement property, all changes have been approved by MHT.

The thick walls, measuring 30" at their greatest width, are made of chestnut logs. It is fenestrated with an irregular alignment of window openings. The openings, roughly in a 34" x 50" dimension, hold historic wooden windows.

The log dwelling has a modern addition to the west. There is an exterior door on the south elevation and a "front" exterior door on the east (main) elevation.

The house form is typical in the village and is one of 6 remaining log structures in the village. The majority of the building's original design and materials are evident and strongly communicate its period construction and historical significance.

History

The log structure at 12520 Catoctin Furnace Road has been a dwelling for more than 200 years and is one of the original worker houses built for the iron furnace workers. The "A" roof was tinned over shingle. The square, roughly hewn logs are covered with wooden siding.

The exact construction date of the Reed-Stitely log house is unknown, but it is assumed that it was constructed ca. 1820 when the new owner, John Brien, built many dwellings for workers. In the future, dendrochronology research may provide a more accurate date of construction.

On July 13, 1811, a public sale notice published in the Frederick Town Record listed the Catoctin Furnace complex and described it as containing 15 to 20 houses for the accommodation of workmen, all in good order. The Frederick County Tax Assessment Book for 1876 (No. 15, p. 80) described the furnace complex and included a count of 50 tenant houses. Today, ten of the original furnace worker houses (four stone houses and six log houses) stand adjacent to Old U.S. Route 15 (Catoctin Furnace Road) beginning approximately 600 feet south of the furnace. There are also furnace houses of later architecture existing east of stacks No. 1 and No. 2. The 1873 map by Lake shows 15 houses adjacent to the highway, 14 houses north and west of the furnace, and 17 structures adjacent to the highway and north of the furnace.

The Blue Mountain Iron Company shut down in 1892 due to the low price of iron. In 1899, the Blue Mountain Iron and Steel Company bought the property, beginning operations the following year. In 1903, the furnace shut down permanently and declared bankruptcy. On February 19, 1906, Joseph E. Thropp and his wife purchased the property and dismantled the iron furnace, taking the valuable equipment to his furnace in Pennsylvania. For a few years, Thropp kept the mines open at Catoctin and shipped the ore to Pennsylvania.

On July 16, 1923, Thropp and his wife sold the ruins of the furnace, the Catoctin Manor house, 10,600 acres, and the entire village of houses to Lancelot Jacques, Sr., the great-grandson of the original Lancelot Jacques, and Stanley E. Hauver (Liber 344, Folio 369; Deed Book S.T.H. no. 284, pp. 567-571).

In a 1982 interview, Mary Miller Martin told Elizabeth Y. Anderson that "there are strong traditions that certain houses at Catoctin Furnace were at one time slave quarters," although she did not identify specific structures. The Reed-Stitely house may have been built by enslaved or freed Africans, or served as their home.

After the furnace closed, the small dwellings were sold to private owners, mostly former workers in the mines and in the furnace. In 1923, Samuel and Julia (his wife) Reed family purchased this dwelling for \$500.00. This was a typical pattern for the former furnace employees: they purchased furnace houses when the opportunity finally arose, and they stayed in the village. The purchase price, \$600, was more than the average price (\$250 - \$450), most likely because it had a full second floor and included more than an acre of land. After the death of Samuel in 1937, his only daughter, Jessie Stitely inherited the home and lived there until her death in 1990. The State Highway Administration purchased the property and attempted to demolish it; however, the Maryland Historical Trust did not allow this. MHT placed an historic preservation easement on the property and sold it with the current owner purchasing it in 2008.

Beginning in the 1960s, the construction of the new U.S. Route 15 through the Catoctin Furnace area threatened the homes and industrial heritage of the village. Local residents searched for ways to preserve the village and the ruins of the iron furnace.

On August 28, 1972, G. Eugene Anderson, Clement E. Gardiner, J. Franklin Mentzer, and Earl M. Shankle filed articles of incorporation for the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc., stating that the purpose of the organization was to foster and promote the restoration of the Catoctin Furnace Historic District for educational and scientific purposes. A second stated purpose was to “acquire and maintain the old country store and dwellings in the community of Catoctin Furnace so as to exhibit to coming generations our heritage of the past.”

Occupants of the Reed-Stitely log house:

Unknown furnace workers and their families (ca. 1820 – ca. 1923)

Summary of Property Owners:

2008 – present: Kenneth M. Brink

2004 – 2008: William Joyce Stover

1997 – 2004: State Highway Administration

1937-1990: Jessie Reed Stitely

1923-1937: Samuel Reed

August 1923: Lancelot Jacques, Sr. and Alice B. Jacques, his wife, Stanley E. Hauver, and Emma B. Hauver, his wife

1906: Joseph E. Thropp, and wife

1892: Catoctin Mountain Iron Company

1858: John Kunkel

1843: Peregrine Fitzhugh

1819: John Brien

1811: Willoughby Mayberry

1774: J. Johnson and Company

Property Description- 12520 Catoctin Furnace Road

The lot boundary encompasses the house and immediate setting, totaling 55756.8 square feet or 1.2800 acres.

On the west side of Catoctin Furnace Road (MD 806). The boundary is abutted by a lot holding a ca. 1820 log dwelling on the north and a (distant) mid 20th century dwelling on the south. The edge of the state road forms the east boundary, and the Potomac Edison (historic Trolley Right of Way) property forms the west boundary. The boundary is roughly an north-south oriented triangle containing approximating 1.2800 acres. It includes all the property historically associated with the house.

6. Historic District Requirements (Not applicable)

7. Signatures of Owners of Record:

On page two of submitted application

8. Designation Status:

The Reed-Stitely Log House is a contributing element to the Catoctin Furnace National Register Historic District. The district was placed on the National Register on February 11, 1972. The NR nomination is attached. A second (individual) NR nomination form as competed in 1998 and is also attached.

9. Criteria for Significance: (3 chosen)

- a) Significant character, interest or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of county, state, or nation
- b) Exemplifies cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of county and its communities
- c) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture

10. Statement of Significance:

The Reed-Stitely Log House is a contributor to the Catoctin Furnace Historic District (F-6-45). The National Register district is significant, as stated in the nomination, for its association with "American industrial history and industrial archaeology, and its related living quarters, (which) illustrates the growth and development of the iron industry between 1774 and 1904." The contributing worker houses were noted as important for illustrating the "stone and log domestic architecture at Catoctin," and specifically for their limited fenestration. The district is listed as eligible in the areas of Architecture and Industry.

Little is known about worker housing at iron plantations in the United States. Many of the surviving or reconstructed furnaces have long lost their company housing, particularly those constructed of log. What usually remains is an archaeological site. The several restored stone worker houses at the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site in Elverson, Pennsylvania, come closest to the cottages at Catoctin. Reportedly diminished to only 12 remaining houses, the worker tenements in Catoctin Furnace village are a rare property type in the state and within the region.

Constructed most likely in ca. 1820, the Reed-Stitely Log House is important for its architectural character and association with the history of Catoctin Furnace. Listed as a contributor to the Catoctin Furnace Historic District, the Reed-Stitely Log House possesses significant character, interest, and value as part of development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of Frederick County, Maryland, and the United States. It exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political, and historic heritage of Frederick County and Catoctin Furnace, and finally, it embodies the distinctive characteristics of iron worker housing, unique to Catoctin Furnace, affirming National Register designation in the areas of Architecture and Industry.

11. Consenting Owners:

November 30, 2022 signed letter attached

12. Nominator Identification:

Kenneth M. Brink

12520 Catoctin Furnace Road

Thurmont, Maryland 21788

And

Elizabeth A. Comer

President, Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.

12610 Catoctin Furnace Road

Thurmont, Maryland 21788-3007

443-463-6437