



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING

Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

Steven C. Horn, Division Director
Kimberly Gaines, Director

TO: Frederick County Council

THROUGH: Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive

FROM: Steve Horn, Division Director

Kimberly Gaines, Director, Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

DATE: January 23, 2023

SUBJECT: Proposed Listing on County Register of Historic Places – Reed-Stitely House (CR # 22-10)

ISSUE:

Should the County Council add the property known as the “Reed-Stitely House,” located at 12520 Catoctin Furnace Road, Thurmont, to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places?

BACKGROUND:

The Applicant, owner of the subject property, has made application to list the property known as the *Reed-Stitely House* on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places ([Attachment 1](#)). The house, built circa 1820, is located on approximately 1.28 acres at 12520 Catoctin Furnace Road ([Attachment 2](#)). The property consists of the historic house, summer kitchen/wash house, springhouse, and garage. The property is listed as a contributing structure in the Catoctin Furnace National Register Historic District and on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) under survey number 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 was built as worker housing for the Catoctin Furnace. The Catoctin Furnace was an ironworks, first developed by Thomas Johnson, the first governor of Maryland. It was established in 1774 and expanded several times throughout its operation. To accommodate the expansions and need for workers, housing was built south of the furnace. At the time the Reed-Stitely House was built, John Brien was the owner of the furnace. The house was most likely built utilizing enslaved Africans. It remained as worker housing until it transferred into private ownership in 1923.

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.

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

property contributes to the Catoctin Furnace Historic District which is a nationally significant district 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 1903.”

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 stonemason’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 Hoke House was most likely built. He expanded the furnace 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 closed in 1903 but the village remained with workers eventually purchasing the housing.

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.

In addition to its historical significance, the property also has architectural significance. The Reed-Stitely House is an example of worker housing associated with the Catoctin Furnace ironworks. It 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.

Historic Preservation Commission Review & Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) voted to recommend the historic site known as the Reed-Stitely House be listed on the County Register of Historic Places at their January 11, 2023 meeting (Attachments 3 and 4).

In acting upon the application, the HPC determined, pursuant to Section 1-23-6 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, that the property was eligible for listing on the County Register, noting that the property should be designated based upon the following criteria listed in the Ordinance:

- The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.
- The property exemplifies cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of the county and its communities.
- The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.

The HPC included the entirety of the property within the proposed County Register designation. Contributing structures include the house, springhouse, and summer kitchen/wash house. The period of significance for this property is circa 1820 to 1903, the time the house was constructed through the last year the Catoctin Furnace was in operation. Once listed on the Register, proposed changes to the exterior of any structure or the site (including any visible site improvements such as driveways, signage, or significant alteration of the landscape) must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Frederick County Register of Historic Places

As of this date, there are twenty-eight (28) properties listed on the County Register (CR). Listing on the CR is a voluntary action initiated by a property owner or other party with an interest in the property. Special tax credits and county grant funding for preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation expenditures may be available to owners of CR properties. All exterior work undertaken to a CR-listed property must first be approved by the Frederick County Historic Preservation Commission under its Certificate of Appropriateness application process.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the application to list the Reed-Stitely House (CR# 22-10) on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places be forwarded to the County Council for a public hearing and approval.

Approve? Yes _____ No _____

**Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive
Frederick County, Maryland**

Date

FINANCIAL IMPACT: No

ATTACHMENT(S):

Attachment 1 – Application: County Register Nomination Form/Statement of Significance

Attachment 2 – Locator Map: Reed-Stitely House, Thurmont

Attachment 3 – HPC Meeting Agenda: January 11, 2023

Attachment 4 – HPC Approval Letter to Applicant (01/12/2023)