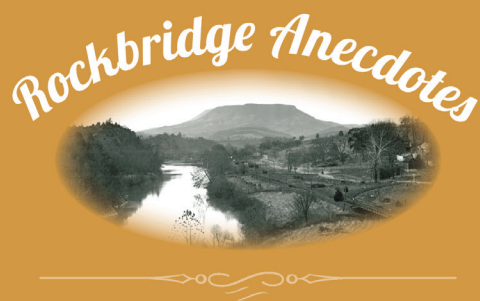




The Old Stone House



By Elizabeth Cain

THE OLD STONE HOUSE, as it has become known, is a 2½-story home at 708 North Main Street in Lexington, notable for its walls made of rubble and situated on a quarter-acre of land below Stono at Jordans Point — one of the oldest homes in Lexington. It's not "particularly grand" nor is it likely the very oldest in town, says its present owner, Historic Lexington Foundation, but its history tracks that of Lexington, and its "historical significance cannot be ignored."

Lissie Cain graduated from Washington and Lee University in 2009. She lives in Charleston, S.C., where she is restoring her own 1870 home. She owns and runs a pet-sitting business both there and in her native Richmond. She wrote this paper for an architectural history class taught by Pamela Simpson.

The original article has been updated to reflect recent developments about the Old Stone House.

The exterior walls are 22 inches thick. Its once-shingled, now-metal roof is gabled with chimneys at the north and south ends, one (at the south) of stone and the other of brick. A door that once opened onto Main Street has been blocked off, opening as it would directly onto the highway. The house survived a threat of demolition when the Highway Department was improving the street; area residents intervened because of its historical interest.

The upstairs, the kitchen fireplace, the floor in the attic and the rafters are original. The floors are old pine planks, three to seven inches wide; most of the first floor was rebuilt in the 1970s. Interior walls are plaster and the exterior was originally stuccoed because it was considered improper to show a house's foundation and to expose the rough stone from the old town quarry that had been used to build the walls, according to Tom Bradshaw, who owned the house in the 2000s.

The date of construction of the house is thought to be between 1780 and 1800. The rafters are connected by lap joints, a technique that was prevalent between 1780 and 1800. The floor planks are hand-shaved and carved, common until the 1830s, when lumber mills emerged.

THE PROPERTY was part of the 1739 Borden Grant that encompassed most of Rockbridge County. On November 18, 1749, James Trimble, more widely known as Moses, bought 345½ acres from Borden, long before the town of Lexington was laid out in 1778. Trimble had emigrated from Armagh, Ireland, in 1740, and settled in Augusta County. In 1779, Moses Trimble deeded the land to George Brown, and the land stayed in the Brown family until the



Fireplace and mantel in upstairs bedroom

locally famed builder and businessman John Jordan bought it on January 13, 1805. Near the stone house a bridge that John Jordan built across the North River, now the Maury, almost exactly where the U.S. 11 bridge crosses today.

By 1874, the building was valued at \$300 and the lot at \$350. John Jordan's son and heir Ira then sold the property to George Adams, a free Black man, but the transaction was deemed invalid because Blacks were not allowed to own property. Ira instead sold it on November 19, 1880, to William Jenks, a native of England who had come to Rockbridge County 10 years earlier without capital but with a stonemason's skills. Jenks worked at Virginia Military Institute for 13 years.

After William Jenks, the property passed through at least 13 more hands — W. A. Hudson, C. L. Tankersley, R. H. Mutispaugh, James M. Withrow, J. H. Brown, John J. Shaw, James M. Withrow and Leo G. Sheridan, Addie L. Withrow, Maud Shaw, M. H. and May B. Walker, C. B. Lotts, and finally a "Bechelbronn Company." As time passed, the house became run-down, having been kept

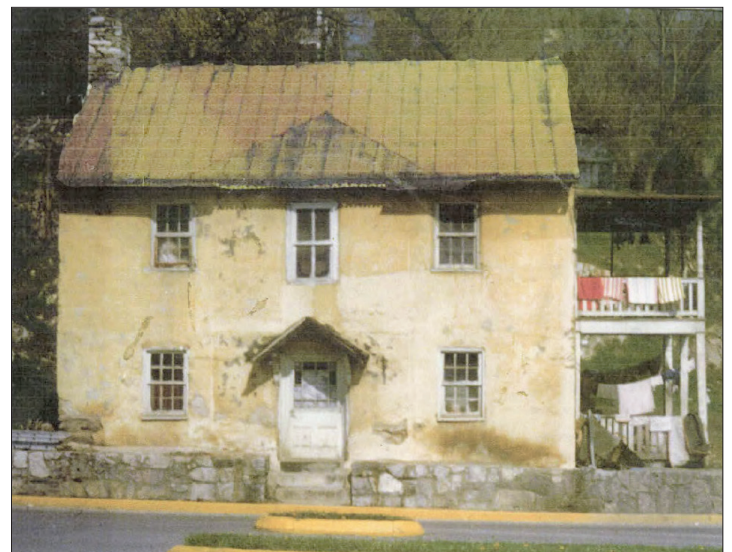
PURPOSE OF THE STONE HOUSE

My research shows that although the stone house was built for Scots-Irish immigrants, eventually it came to be occupied by enslaved people. After the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, the surrounding area was known as Freedman's Hill — a community likely consisting of recently freed Blacks — and then a neighborhood of tenements (i.e., apartment buildings, predominantly for lower-class residents, often crowded and modest in quality and features). Now called Diamond Hill, it has not entirely shed that character today.

— E.C.

as a rental investment rather than for family use. For a time in the 1930s the stone house was a house of ill repute, according to Col. William Cooper a Virginia Military Institute cadet at that time and later the institute historian, but otherwise it remained as a tenement.

IN 1996, Tom and Faye Bradshaw bought the dilapidated property, upgraded it and opened it as a bed-and-breakfast. (In 2009 it was profiled in a "Great Homes & Destinations" feature in *The New York Times*.) In 2018 the Bradshaws sold it to Donna Welch and William DeLaat. In 2025 Historic Lexington Foundation bought it with a plan to sell it after carrying out minor updates as well as adding perpetual deed restrictions that will prevent any future demolition or "non-historic" changes.



*Top: Rear of the house today.
Directly above: The Old Stone House in relative disrepair, 1974*