

"THE OLD STORE HOUSE"
Limestone, Tennessee.

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Tennessee

Historic American Buildings Survey
J. Frazer Smith, District Officer
W. Jeter Eason, Deputy District Officer
404 Goodwyn Institute Building
Memphis, Tennessee.

"THE OLD STONE HOUSE"
Limestone, Washington County, Tennessee.

Owner. Hugh M. Klepper

Date of Erection.

Architect. Seth Smith (Architect and Contractor)

Builder. James Gillespie

Present Condition. The house is in an excellent state of preservation but has had some departures from the original appearance. The wood porch and garage thereunder are recent additions to the house itself. A small addition in the form of a dormer for ventilation purposes has also been added since the original building. The original shingle roof has been replaced with galvaniz d iron. The little log smoke house at the rear is an original building and is in a reasonably good condition of repair also.

Number of Stories. Major section of house two story and attic, kitchen wing one story and cellar, log outhouse one story.

Materials of Construction. The foundations are built like all of the walls of the house of limestone rock and resting on rock. The walls at the foundations are 30" thick - 24" at first floor level and 18" at the second floor. Interior walls are wood stud construction with the exception of wall between kitchen wing and two story section which is 24". The flooring is of random width and length pine laid on hand hewn joists. These joists have all been covered with ceiling on the first floor, but are still exposed on the second. The joists themselves are very delicately done having tiny bead molds on the visible corners. Roof was originally of hand split shingles laid on round posts or trunks of small trees.

Other Existing Records. So far as is known there has been only one other publication of this house for general information and that is included in the "History of Homes and Gardens in Tennessee" published by the Parthenon Press of Nashville for the Garden Study

Club of Nashville. The records as to its ownership, etc. are in the possession of the present owner. It was from these records that I received my information.

Additional Data. The Old Stone House at Limestone is one of four houses built of limestone by Seth Smith whose principal occupation was that of stonemason, though in executing his work as stonemason, he was, perforce, the architect for his work. He was from Pennsylvania, presumably Philadelphia, and came into the Watauga Section of Tennessee in 1791 at which time he built the first stone house known to have been built in the State of Tennessee. It was the logical type house to build for one of his ability inasmuch as there was, and still is, an unlimited amount of excellent building stone at hand easily available. The first house which Mr. Smith built in 1791 is in such poor state of repair and is so small there it was deemed advisable to select this particular house, the one of James Gillespie, as an example. The Gillespie House was built one year later in 1792 and was followed by two others which likewise are not good examples due to lack of care.

A unique feature of the house architecturally speaking is the stair to the upstairs section of the two story part, it being a very tiny cramped affair in one corner of the living room and rising and turning quite abruptly to permit head room for door into kitchen wing and also to gain height before interruption by the chimney. This is fairly well illustrated in one of the accompanying pictures.

The house is interesting on the interior for the delicacy of handling in reference to the woodwork, mantles, etc., and it is equally as interesting to note the excellent state of preservation of this woodwork and the close fitting joists after all of the years that it has been standing. This is probably due to the strength of the foundation and wall materials and the base on which the house sits.

There is not a great deal of history associated with this house directly, but on examination of the records testifying for the transfer of ownership from its original builder one finds the original handwriting of some of the most outstanding of Tennessee's political men - Governors, Judges, etc. - who effected the titular changes. Governor William Blount's signature

appears on several of the documents and, as noted elsewhere in this Survey, Governor Blount was the first Governor of any organized form of Government in the State of Tennessee, previously known as the State of Franklin.

After the house had changed hands from time to time it eventually came into the Klepper family on April 29th, 1842, it having changed hands four times prior to the purchase by Jacob Klepper. From 1842 to the present it has been in the Klepper family going from father to son. It is unique in that at each transfer from father to son the house was deeded for a consideration, in most cases money, but in one case in consideration for the son's agreement to provide for his mother until her death.

During the Civil War it played a minor part inasmuch as during the Battle of Limestone the Union Soldiers used the house as a hospital but did not in any way damage the house. The dining room table, which I am told is still in use, was used as the operating table by the Surgeons of the Union Army. There were buried a few soldiers in the yard but their bodies have been removed since.

The Old Stone House now that its new porch has been added does not give the slightest impression of its true age. It has stood up well, its detail is in excellent taste, and with the proper care that it is now receiving it should stand as a monument to its builder as long as it has already stood and remain a constant reminder of the fact that building well is justified.

