

The Sylvester D. Russell House
89 Western Avenue
Morristown, Morris County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The Sylvester D. Russell House
89 Western Avenue
Morristown, Morris County, New Jersey

Owner (and occupant): Mabel E. Dutton

Date of Erection: 1820-1822

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Sylvester D. Russell (1776-1827)

Present Condition: Original (except front porch and roofing), well maintained, modern utilities installed

Number of Stories: One and one-half, cellar and loft

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry

Exterior walls - timber frame, clapboarded

Interior walls - lath and plaster on frame studding

Chimney - brick, built into inside of gable end wall

Roof - gable, slate covered

Historical Data:

The identification of the original owner and the estimation of the date of erection of this small house by him has been found possible by search of the title through thirteen transfers of the property as recorded in the County Archives reported as follows:

By deed of 13 October 1817, some 1270 acres in seven tracts, property of Israel Canfield and Jacob Losey was conveyed by the sheriff to Henry McFarlan of New York City for \$1200, his agent, Sylvester D. Russell, having made that bid at the public sale on 1st October previous at the tavern of Nathaniel Bull in Morristown, one of which tracts contained 93.92 acres in Morristown, lying on both sides of Jockey Hollow Road (now Western Avenue).

On 9 May 1820, this grantee, being still of New York City, sold to his said agent, Sylvester D. Russell^(a) of Morristown, for \$179.85 a 6.01 acre lot having a frontage of 267 feet on the northwest side of the said road, being part of the larger tract last mentioned.

The design and details of the house since built on this lot being of the Greek Revival period of 1820-1845, it appears accordingly that the last named grantee built it soon after his purchase of the lot in the former year. In his will dated 6 December 1822 and proved 21 March 1827, he as Sylvester D. Russell of Morristown devised all his estate to his wife Elizabeth during her lifetime, authorized sale of any part of the same, and appointed her sole executrix and as guardian of the estate of the children. The testament is concluded with these words: "I have only to declare that I die in my religion - a Christian - but to no sect allied, in politics a Federalist of the old school, and in perfect love and charity toward all the children of men, wishing and praying for to each - and every one of them, health and prosperity in this life and everlasting happiness in that which is to come."

(a) Sylvester Deering Russell, b. 1st Feb. 1776; son of Caleb and Lucretia (Pierson) Russell; d. 6 July 1837 (sic, 1827?) having mar. 8 Nov. 1800 Elizabeth Stiles who d. 25 May 1845 aged 61, and had issue. Sarah Gertrude, Anna Lucretia 1804-1825, Frances Antoinette d. 1828, Robert M. d. 1828, Mary E. 1809-1835, Morgan E. 1811-1812, Amelia Smith b. 12 Aug. 1813, unm. 1843, Eliza P. d. 1820, and Caroline P. d. 1836. (The Record of the First Presb. Church of Morristown, Part 2, p. 209, publ. 1895.) He was a trustee of St. Peter's Church, Morristown, 1826; president of the proprietors of Morris Academy, 1823; and served on the committee of most prominent citizens to arrange for the visit of Gen'l. Lafayette, 1825.

On 12 September 1843, Sarah G. and Amelia S. Russell of Morristown, evidently daughters and heirs of S. G. Russell abovenamed, conveyed 4 acres of the 6 acre lot with the house to Aram G. Johnson of the same place for \$225.

The last named grantee, being still of Morristown, made his will on 12 February 1886 (proved 16 August 1901) authorized his executors to sell his real estate and divide the proceeds among his children, Manuel, Lemuel and Jessie E. Johnson. Mention is made of "land lately laid out by me into building lots on the Jockey Hollow Road."

By deed of 10 August 1903, the executor above mentioned conveyed to the daughter, Jessie E. Johnson, the two lots of land on Jockey Hollow Road sold at public auction on 27 June previously, one of which was the 4 acre lot above-said and on which stands the house here considered. Miss Johnson held the property until 12 November 1907, on which date she passed it to her brother, Manuel Johnson. By deed of 18 January 1919, he sold to Ellen A. Pierson and husband, George W. Pierson, a lot 50 feet front on the northwest side of Western Avenue by 150 feet deep, being part of the 4 acre lot. From Ellen A. Pierson, widow, the property passed on 22 April 1919 to Angelo J. A. Bennell - and he devised all his estate to his wife Mary Ann by his will dated 8 August 1922 and proved 23 August 1924. The widow passed it to Eva A. and Florence M. Bennell, all of Morristown, on 15 November 1926, and they to the Jay Gee Company on 15 September 1937. The last named grantee conveyed the same house and lot to Mabel E. Dutton of Morristown on 29 March 1938, and she remains as owner and occupant at the time of our survey in July 1940.

Bibliography:

A search of title in Land and Probate records of Morris County by Thomas J. Riley, H.A.B.S. abstractor, reported 18 July 1940

Lewis D. Cook

Superwising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer