

Town of New Paltz Landmark Nomination Form  
Continuation Sheets

FREER – DUNN HOUSE  
70 Brookside Road., New Paltz, NY

## DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY CONDITIONS

Like most stone houses in the town and county, the existing building does not clearly reflect its original appearance. Centuries of changing living patterns and design expression have resulted in a fundamentally different appearance. The stone perimeter is intact to the earliest physical documentation of the house recorded on a 1798. A 1776 construction date has been estimated to the stone dwelling based on a date stone, although portions of it may date back to the marriage date of Joseph Freer and Sartie Terwilliger in 1766. Short of dendrochronology, no particular physical evidence supports these dates.

The house presents a two-and-a-half story façade to the east, exposing the basement level at grade. The west façade is a typical story-and-a-half scale for a stone house. The unusual tall side has been pictured as the principal façade in numerous publications, but the original front may have been on the shorter side. Also, the grade around the house has been changed to expose more of the basement on the south side than as originally intended, making the house look more like a bank house than a more conventional stone house with the basement kitchen at grade in one corner. There is evidence of one of the windows on the upper story having been a door.

The split-level plan on the kitchen or south end of the house associates the house with other 18<sup>th</sup>-century houses, such as the Abraham Hasbrouck House on Historic Huguenot Street. Both buildings have brick chimneys bisecting their stone end walls that vented jambless fireplaces in the basement. The John Lefever House in Kettleborough also has a split-level kitchen wing. This is a design feature distinctive to New Paltz. Bank houses are not characteristic of the Huguenot community, but the house's proximity to Marlboro, where bank houses were common have been a factor in the house's design considering that the Freer family intermarried with people of English heritage from Marlboro.

## SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The Freer – Dunn House is significant example of 18<sup>th</sup>-century stone domestic architecture in the Town of New Paltz. One of only eighteen early stone houses surviving in the town, the house represents an important artifact of New Paltz's formative era and cultural development. Stone houses are iconic in the history of the town and Ulster County, and they are important symbols of the Dutch heritage in the Hudson Valley. Unlike the more numerous and less permanent wood buildings built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, stone houses have survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although generally revered as relics of a primitive past, they were the elite houses in their period and provide valuable evidence of architectural traditions, construction methods, material life.

The design of the Freer – Dunn House is unusual in this context. Its two-and-a-half-story east façade suggests that it was built as a bank house more in keeping with houses in the British settlement in neighboring Marlboro. In spite of this potential association, the house also contains a split-level kitchen wing with a brick end chimney for a jambless basement fireplace, which is a clear Huguenot feature.

The New York State Historic Preservation Office has determined that 18<sup>th</sup>-century stone houses are individually eligible for the National Register and that the changes that have occurred in subsequent

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historical periods contribute to that significance. In the New Paltz context, all of the surviving stone houses in the town are worthy of local designation and protection.

CHAIN OF TITLE & CHRONOLOGY

- 1715            Patent for 1200 acres on the Plattekill south of New Paltz granted to Hugo Freer, Sen. And his sons Hugo Jr., Thomas and Isaac.
- 1766            Joseph Freer (1735-1780), son of Isaac, married Sartie Terwilliger, daughter of Jacobus Terwilliger and Antje Hornbeck of Plattekill.
- 1776            Date stone incised with J.F. 1776
- It has been commonly believed, though not documented, that Joseph and Sartie Freer built the house. The condition of the house was evaluated as “out of repair” in 1798. This may have been the result of neglect during the Revolutionary War in which Joseph served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Ulster County Militia, was imprisoned by the British. Although he was released, he died in 1780 before the war ended*
- 1780            Joseph Freer died and at some later time, the house appears to have come into the possession of his brother Benjamin.
- Benjamin Freer (1748-1829) married Anna Parker (1751-1851) in 1777 in Marlboro. In 1790 Benjamin I. Freer was enumerated as a head of household in New Marlborough with his wife, children and four slaves. Perhaps Joseph’s widow continued to live in the house until (or even after) the conveyance was made.*
- 1798            U.S. Direct Tax Assessment Roll for New Paltz  
Benjamin I. Freer
- Schedule A: stone house 45x24 ft. x 1 sty with 6 windows, near Plattekill, out of repair, with 2 acres, \$380
- Schedule B: Dutch Barn 50x45 ft., hay house 30x18 ft., 198 acres “at Plattekill join David Freer & Derrick Jansen (\$2380), 6 acres in Lot. No.5 Plattebinnewater (\$12), 8 acres in No.11 East of Great Meadow (\$24)
- Schedule C: 2 male and 4 female slaves, 1 female aged 12-50 and subject to taxation
- 1799-1804      Town tax lists with assessments for Benjamin I. Freer
- 1810            U.S. Census  
Benjamin Frere
- 2 free white males <10 (grandchildren?)  
1 free white male 16-25

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1 free white male 45+ (Benjamin)  
1 free white female <10 (grandchild?)  
1 free white female 26-44 (unidentified daughter?)  
1 free white female 45+ (wife Anna)  
1 other free person  
1 slave

1829 Benjamin Freer died.

1851 Anna Freer died

*Presumably Benjamin's widow continued to live in the house following his death. Upon her death, their three daughters Maria, Wintje and Eunice (they had two sons who had died in infancy), administered the estate with Eunice Freer Hardenberg's daughter, Lucy, and her husband Robert Dunn obtaining title to the farm.*

1854 & 1858 Ulster County Maps  
House identified with R[obert] Dunn

1875 Ulster County Atlas  
House identified with H[arvey] Dunn

*Harvey Dunn was Robert and Lucy Dunn's son. He had married Margaret Hasbrouck. Their daughter Rachel married Oliver Hasbrouck and they inherited the farm. When Oliver died, Rachel married for a second time to George Shambach, who at 20 years of age was 33 years younger than his wife. When he died, Rachel Dunn Hasbrouck Shambach lived out her days on the farm until her decease in 1945.*

1945 Property was sold to Helmer Petersen,

*Subsequent owners include Rudolph Nystrom, Frank C. and Aletta Knieval, and the current owners, David and Judi Roehrs.*

## SOURCES

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New Paltz NY. Elting Memorial Library. Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection. "House Books," obituary and marriage records, vertical and photograph files.

\_\_\_\_\_. Huguenot Historical Society Archives, Town Records Collection. Manuscript assessment lists for 1798 U.S. Direct Tax, town tax lists.

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