

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Stone House Inn

other names/site number Sisson, David, House

**2. Location**

street & number 122 Sakonnet Point Road  not for publication

city or town Little Compton  vicinity

state RI code 005 county Newport code \_\_\_\_\_ zip code 02837

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- other (explain)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Stone Houe Inn  
Name of Property

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County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/hotel

AGRICULTURE/animal facility

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/hotel

COMMERCE/tavern

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Italianate

OTHER

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation granite

walls granite, stucco, frame

roof slate, asphalt

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1854, mid-1880s, 1895, 1933, mid-1930s

**Significant Dates**

1854, mid-1880s, 1895, 1933, mid-1930s

**Significant Person**

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Kinnicutt, Richard (tap room, 1935)

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	9	3	1	6	4	4	0	4	5	9	2	6	0	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Edward Connors

organization Edward Connors and Associates date August 2007

street & number 39 Dyer Avenue telephone 401 595-0699

city or town Riverside state RI zip code 02915

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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**DESCRIPTION**

Located near the southwesternmost corner of Little Compton, Sakonnet Point, and about a third of a mile from Sakonnet Harbor, the Stone House Inn comprises a large mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century stone residential building and a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century barn set on a south-facing two-acre landscaped site overlooking to the south and west Round Pond and the Atlantic Ocean. This parcel is a small remnant of an extensive parcel that once encompassed much of Sakonnet Point.

The Stone House is sited near the top of a gentle slope, a little more than ten feet above sea level, on the south side of Sakonnet Point Road as it makes a 90-degree turn from south to west. To the north and west, the land is wooded with trees and shrubs; a cropped greensward extends to the south of the complex. The unpaved Round Pond Road circumscribes the east edge of Round Pond to the property's west.

The Stone House is an imposing three- and two-story L-plan, uncoursed-fieldstone, slate-hip-roof building with stuccoed one-story additions at the re-entrant angle of the L on the northwest and north of the ell. The main block is a south-facing three-story, seven-bay-façade block with off-center principal entrance in the third bay from the west set within a one-story, turned-column, flat-roof entrance porch with turned-spindle balustrade reached through three steps on its east and west sides.<sup>1</sup> Secondary entrances to the first story occur toward the north end of the west elevation and near the south end of the ell's east elevation. The entrance on the east elevation is within a low-shed-roof porch with round-arch bargeboards whose lower extremities terminate in pendants. An enclosed entrance with an end-gable-roof porch on the east elevation provides a stairwell down to the basement Tap Room. The original L-plan section is set on a granite ashlar foundation and has crude fieldstone quoining at its corners. There are three brick chimneys: two at the center of the main block symmetrically placed on the east and west slopes of the roof and one centered at the north end of the rear ell.<sup>2</sup> Two small gabled dormers are symmetrically placed on both south and north slopes of the main block; the ell has two asymmetrically placed dormers on its east slope and one centered on its west slope. An octagonal balustrade with rather thin Chinese Chippendale railings is centered at the crest of the ridgeline on the main block.<sup>3</sup> Windows are late-20<sup>th</sup>-century six-over-one vinyl sash below granite lintels.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the south, west, and north elevations were circumscribed by a two-level covered wraparound bracketed porch with turned-spindle posts and round-arch-carved beam with acorn pendants.

<sup>2</sup> One original chimney rising from the Living Room was removed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>3</sup> The balustrade marks the place of an octagonal cupola with paired round-arch windows on each elevation, paired-bracket cornice, wide eaves, and low hip roof; evident in a 1927 painting by Reginald Marsh, it likely was destroyed in the Hurricane of 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Original windows on the first and second floors were six-over-six, double-hung wood sash; those on the third story were paired three-over-three double-hung wood sash.

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The 60' x 30', three-story main block has an asymmetrical plan—modified from its original configuration but conveying some sense of that organization—that is unlike other known contemporary comparables. The double-pile plan provides three principal spaces in both the front and rear. The off-center double-leaf principal entrance opens into a small stair hall with semicircular-plan helical staircase that rises to the third story. The staircase has stout turned-walnut newel posts and painted turned balusters, one per tread. To the west of the stair hall is an almost-square-area chamber. To the east of the stair hall are two similar-sized rooms: the one adjacent to the stair hall open to the room to the north, and the one to its east, reached through a broad flat-arch opening, with a round-arch-firebox fireplace.

In the northern tier of the first story are a bathroom, north of the west chamber; a wide narrow area, open to the middle room of the first tier, with a section of reception desk at its east end; and, to the east, an almost square room, known as the Dining Room, with another section of the reception desk at its southwest corner and a fireplace on its south wall.<sup>5</sup> The Dining Room has the most elaborate interior finishes in the building, including a colossal Ionic-column-framed two-story chimney breast with glazed-tile firebox surround and mirror in the second story, paneled wainscoting, picture rail around the circumference of the room well below the top of the wall, and broad paneling and cornice on the ceiling—all in stained walnut; a large rosette is centered in the ceiling. To the Dining Room's north is a hall with a secondary entrance from the east and a secondary staircase leading to the cellar and two guestrooms on the second floor (Sunset Suites) and a single guestroom on the third floor (Garrett Room).

The second floor of the main block comprises six guestrooms. The original plan likely comprised two or three bedrooms and a large 28' x 16' ballroom with anteroom. At some point in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the ballroom was subdivided into two separate guestrooms now named the Ballroom Suites. The anteroom likely served as a room for socializing away from the activities of the ballroom. The ceiling of this anteroom is decorated with a grid of thin trim boards and inset stars installed sometime in the 1920s or '30s, hence the name Star Suite. The third floor of this block comprises six additional guestrooms. The ell at rear provides a service area on the ground floor with a stairwell. A single story addition wraps around the north and west elevation of the 2-story ell. It west section houses a 20' x 16' kitchen and another stairwell leading down to the Tap Room. The north section houses an 11' x 15' office area and the living room of a staff apartment.<sup>6</sup>

A relatively recent, single-story, 37' x 22' north elevation addition to this apartment space provides two bedrooms and a dining area. A 21' x 27', single-story, stuccoed addition is in the re-entrant angle of the main

<sup>5</sup> The original configuration likely included in the first tier one room to the west of the stair hall and two discrete rooms to the east and in the second tier three rooms, the largest in the center.

<sup>6</sup> A historical photo entitled "Residence of FM Bird" shows what appears to be a paneled garage door on the west wall of this chamber. Bird owned the Stone House between 1902 and 1922. Modern, sliding glass doors are now in this location. The original photo is found in the front parlor of the Stone House.

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block and the kitchen. This room, providing a dining area for the guests, comprises one open area lit by five casement windows placed along the west and north walls. This addition likely dates to the 1920s or 1930s.<sup>7</sup> The five casement windows are not original to the Dining Room; these appear to date to ca 1960. In the cellar, accessible from the rear staircase and from the outside through a staircase descending from the east elevation is the Tap Room, a bar and restaurant created in the 1930s; notable among its Colonial Revival treatments are paneled walls, a rustic stone fireplace and wooden booths at each end of the 27' x 57', low-ceilinged room.

A highly-detailed, two-tiered porch appears in the earliest known photograph of the Stone House (ca 1880). This ambitious structure, built on the south and west elevations, appears to have been fabricated of iron and wood. An 1895 photo shows the porch in its original two-tier, roofed configuration. By early in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, the second tier roof had been removed. Although there is speculation that the 1938 hurricane destroyed the structure, a 1927 painting of the building's east elevation by Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), whose family summered nearby in a house built ca 1910 overlooking Sakonnet Harbor, gives no indication of a porch at the southeast corner of the building. A series of short iron supports set into the masonry of the south and west elevations are all that remains of the elaborate structure. The first-story entrance porch on the east elevation appears to be contemporaneous with or a remnant of the larger two-tiered porch; its detail matches that of the destroyed porch. At the time of construction, the overhanging roof was supported by a series of widely spaced Italianate brackets placed below a wooden crown molding at the gutter. The brackets appear in the 1927 painting and were also likely destroyed in 1938.

The barn (ca 1886), is a gable-roof, one-and-a-half-story, shingled building with an asphalt-shingle roof, about 60 feet wide and 50 feet deep. The principal entrances are in the east and west walls. The south wall is evenly divided into four bays, with an entrance in the eastern center bay. Both entrances and windows were reconfigured in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. . The first story of the interior originally comprised two spaces, each approximately 30 by 50 feet, the west one a carriage room historically associated with maintaining horses and the east a main hall historically associated with agricultural use. Modern entrances replace original barn doors, and larger modern windows replace the small originals. The most significant surviving interior details are found in the carriage room, where detailed millwork of the original horse stalls survives as adapted in the 1960s for use as a bar and kitchen.

<sup>7</sup>Jonathan Rawson in 1985 described the dining room as being "of recent vintage, having been added to the main structure within the last forty years." It appears that he meant within forty years of his purchase of the property in 1959, rather than forty years before publication of the book in 1985. *Inn For Keeps*, p. 17

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Stone House Inn  
Little Compton, Rhode Island

Date: August 2007  
Photographer: Edward Connors

Photo#1: Long view of the house, south elevation

Photo #2: South (right) and west (left) elevations

Photo#3: East elevation

Photo #4: Porch pendants, east elevation

Photo#5: North elevation

Photo #6: Main stairway, facing west

Photo #7: Front parlor (southeast corner of house), facing northeast

Photo #8: Dining room, facing southeast

Photo #9: Typical guest room, north side of first floor



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**SIGNIFICANCE**

Commonly known as The Stone House, the Sisson House achieves significance in the history of architecture as building unique in southeastern mainland Rhode Island. Built in 1854 for a Providence-based industrialist, David Sisson, upon completion it was the largest single-family dwelling in that region and the only one built of stone. For nearly a century it has served as an inn, for most of that time the only public accommodation for travelers in this intensely private seaside community almost exclusively dominated by single-family houses.

**HISTORY**

David Sisson (1803-1874) was born in Portsmouth, RI, on the island of Aquidneck, into one of the early English-colonial families to settle in Little Compton. By the middle of the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, his father, Lemuel (1769-1849) had relocated the family to the Sakonnet Point area, where he continued to farm as a tenant, perhaps on a portion of the 242-acre parcel that includes the land on which this house was built. Sisson worked on his father's farm before beginning his career in Providence in 1826 with the Fall River Iron Works, manufacturers of barrel hoops and iron fittings for shipbuilding. His association with the Fall River Iron Works continued until at least 1866, at which time he appears to have retired. In addition to the iron works, he formed his own company, David Sisson & C<sup>o</sup>, sperm and whale oil merchants, around 1848 in Providence, first on South Water Street and later on India Street.<sup>8</sup> The firm became French, Sisson & C<sup>o</sup> by the mid-1850s, then French & Pierce after 1858, with Sisson no longer involved. Sisson also had financial interests in the American Print Works, the Globe Print Works, the American Linen Mfg. C<sup>o</sup>, the Providence Tool C<sup>o</sup>, the Franklin Mutual Fire C<sup>o</sup>, and the Firemen's Mutual Insurance C<sup>o</sup>.

Sisson married Sarah Ann Bailey (1805-1895), member of another prominent Little Compton family whose land, also on Sakonnet Point Road, lies to the north of this property. David and Sarah Sisson had two sons, William Henry (1828-1829) and Henry Tillinghast (1831-1910). Between the mid-1830s and mid-1850s, the family lived south of Downtown Providence in Elmwood, a neighborhood then part of Cranston but later annexed to Providence, in a large Federal house on Elmwood Avenue between Peace and Plenty Streets. About the time that Sisson built the Little Compton house, he sold the Elmwood house and boarded for several years in Providence at various locations, including the City Hotel and several locations on College Hill. By 1862, he seems to have been living mostly full time in this house, where he remained until his death. Mrs. Sisson presumably continued to live in the house until her death.

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<sup>8</sup> Sisson was no doubt introduced to the oil business because of the Fall River Iron Works C<sup>o</sup>'s business connections with the whaling industry, then flourishing in southeastern Massachusetts.

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David Sisson had transferred title to the house to his son, Henry, in 1857.<sup>9</sup> Educated at the Gorham Academy in Maine and University Grammar School in Providence, he joined his father as a clerk at the Fall River Iron Works in 1845. He showed early interest in both the military and invention, joining a Marine Artillery as quartermaster in 1849 and in 1859 acquiring a patent for ring binder he invented. His interests seemed to turn to manufacturing, for he went into business the following year manufacturing the binder he invented. He joined the First Rhode Island Detached Militia as a lieutenant in 1861, rapidly advanced to colonel, and demonstrated considerable leadership, including the rescue of two regiments trapped by a Confederate blockade. He mustered out for medical reasons in 1864 and returned home a hero. In 1870, he married Emily Josephine Brownell; the couple reared four children born between 1873 and 1885. Following the Civil War, he worked for the A. & W. Sprague Mfg Co, managing its textile mills at Quidnick and Arctic in West Warwick until that company's failure in the Panic of 1873. His whereabouts and employment after 1873 remain unknown, but he may well have inherited money following his father's death in 1874. From 1875 to 1877, he served as Rhode Island's Lieutenant Governor, a largely ceremonial post at the time.

Following his terms of office, the family lived in this house. Local histories mention unspecified interior improvements to the house in the late 1870s and early 1880s. These surely include the mantelpiece wainscoting, cornice, and ceiling ornamentation in the Dining Room, all in the Queen Anne style then popular. The barn to the northeast of the house probably also dates from this period. Sisson was fond of equestrian activity and was reported to have laid out a racetrack on the property around this time as well.

The Sisson genealogy suggests that Henry Sisson squandered the family fortune in his later years. Several undertakings relating to this house support such an assertion. In April of 1883, he rented this house for the summer season to A.F. Copeland of Boston.<sup>10</sup> Beginning in 1884, he defaulted on his mortgage for three years; the fact that the house was even mortgaged further suggests that he was somewhat strapped for cash. In the early 1890s he formed the Seaconnet Point Land Company to subdivide a large parcel of land at Sakonnet Point into a summer settlement known as Seaconnet Park, a 646-parcel plat with 36 roads named after American states. The subdivision extended south of this house as well as west of Round Pond (rechristened Lake Josephine, after his wife) south of Sakonnet Point Road and Sakonnet Harbor to the ocean. The only remnant realized, and still extant, is Columbia Road on the east side of Round Pond. He was also involved in the exploitation of a nearby graphite mine. Both the real-estate and the mining ventures failed. By 1902, the house, barn, and its immediate 35 acres were posted for public auction and purchased for \$3000 by Frank M. Bird of Canton, Massachusetts.

<sup>9</sup> The senior Sisson may have taken this action to avoid any jeopardy to the property occasioned by the Panic of 1857, which bankrupted others involved in Rhode Island manufacturing.

<sup>10</sup> "Newport County News, Little Compton," *Newport Mercury*, 14 April 1883, p. 8.

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The property had two owners in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Bird, who owned it until 1921, and Dr Richard F. Bundy, whose widow sold it following his death in 1958. During the years of the Bird and Bundy occupancy, the house was used first as a boarding house and then as a country inn.<sup>11</sup> By the time of the Bird occupancy, the roof of the porch's second level had been removed. The one-story dining room in the re-entrant angle between house and ell was constructed during Bundy ownership. Also during the Bundy occupancy, a large room on the second floor was divided into two separate bedrooms. Following the end of Prohibition in 1933, Dr Bundy hired architect Richard Kinnicutt to design a tavern, the Tap Room, in the low-ceiling cellar under the front part of the main block, reached from the outside by a separate entrance and also from the stairs at the side entrance; the Hurricane of 1938 flooded the tavern, which remained closed for more than two decades, and destroyed the cupola.

In 1962, Mrs. Bundy sold the property to Jonathan and Eugenia Rawson, who undertook a large-scale rehabilitation of the property as the Stone House Club. The Rawsons installed central heat, improved the electrical system, gutted and rebuilt the kitchen, restored the Tap Room, painted and repapered the rooms on the interior, and furnished it with simple, appropriate decorative arts. In 1972, the Rawsons sold the inn to Brad and Janet Beers, who, in turn, sold it three years later to Virginia B. and Everett L. (Tod) Moore, Jr, who operated the inn for more than 30 years until its recent purchase by Stone House LLC. The new owners plan to restore the building to its original appearance, including reconstruction of the porches and the cupola.

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Stone House achieves architectural significance in both of its uses, first as a single-family dwelling and subsequently as a lodging house. As both house and inn, the building must be understood in the very idiosyncratic context of the community in which it has stood for more than a century and a half.

Located in the southeast corner of Rhode Island, Little Compton juts into the Atlantic Ocean at the mouth of the East Passage of Narragansett Bay, also known as the Sakonnet River. Despite its ample coastline, the absence of a deep, natural harbor has long discouraged significant maritime development. Lack of significant moving water similarly discouraged any industrial development in what was once one of the most heavily industrialized states in the country. Distance from major transportation routes, both road and rail,

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Rawson, *Inn for Keeps* (Pittsburgh, 1985), p. 5.

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further increased its remoteness. Even today, Little Compton remains fiercely idyllic, still “like the places one goes to on the way to sleep,” as Sarah Orne Jewett wrote of it more than a century ago.<sup>12</sup>

Its physical and psychological setting has produced a distinctively local architectural heritage. Typical Southern New England vernacular forms dominate, and many date—and equally importantly *appear to date*—to the 18<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Houses, the town’s predominant property type, are characteristically simple, rectangular-plan, gable-roof houses, sometimes with added or integral ells, all with wood frames and routinely clad in a combination of clapboard and shingle or all shingle. Before the community’s transition into a summer retreat in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the many waves of architectural style that washed over most of the rest of the country were merely ripples in Little Compton: wide corner boards and entablature on both house and principal entrance represent the maximum influence of the Greek Revival, brackets and square- or octagonal-plan-column porches on a handful of houses were this community’s slight nod toward the Italianate, and only one surviving house deigned to adopt the exposed strutwork and pierced bargeboards of the Gothic Revival. The town’s architectural forms were perfectly accommodated a community where “nothing much of any great amount occurred during the day.”<sup>13</sup>

Into this simple, stolid architectural tradition, the Stone House represented an imposing—if not quite monumental—new presence. In size and material alone it erupted from its flat, almost-sea-level setting. The probable lack of large trees and shrubs in what was still then fertile waterside farmland surely made it visible from quite a distance, stonily looming over both the rolling low plains and the few small wood houses then nearby. It also introduced into Little Compton a much more site-referent design than seen there theretofore, with its extensive two-tier porch and high central cupola from which to view to the west the nearby Sakonnet River and the shores of Aquidneck Island just beyond and to the south the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. Indeed, the creation of space specifically for leisurely viewing represented a departure in spatial planning for a place like Little Compton; no other documented house would provide such for almost thirty years.

Beyond sheer size and choice of building material, both unusual in this context, the Stone House is remarkable for what it is *not*. Despite the size of both the building and its incremental building components, the house lacks scale and monumentality: the small scale of the windows and doors, similar to those found contemporarily in other houses of the community, and the relatively small floor-to-floor height of its stories are demure, lost in the big-blocked mass. The asymmetry of the façade’s seven-bay articulation, especially in such a rigidly structured mass, is unassertive and fails to command the presence expected in a house of this size and in this setting. On the inside, the plan is essentially that of a traditional center-stair-hall, four-room

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Franklin Wilbour, *Notes on Little Compton* (Little Compton, 1970), p. 254.

<sup>13</sup> Diary entry of Francis Gifford, 20 April 1860, quoted in Wilbour, *op.cit.*, p.64.

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configuration extended on its east end with two more rooms.<sup>14</sup> Contemporary houses of this size built for rich families tended to develop more sophisticated spatial sequences, even if following traditional organizational constructs. As on the outside, individual interior components are similar in scale to those found on contemporary smaller houses typical in the community: tightly wound semi-helical front staircase with small newel posts and balusters, modest size rooms with modest moldings, and small-scale mantels. The interior's rooms give no clue that this is a big house. This is a house that was no doubt calculated to impress, especially to the unsophisticated architectural context in which it was built, but it appears as though those who created and built it had no idea how to impress other than building big and in stone. What it fails to achieve in monumentality, however, is more than compensated in its delightful, engaging provinciality.

As a lodging place, evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from boarding house to inn, the Stone House significantly documents the most recent phase of Little Compton's summer-retreat boarding architecture. By 1850, the community's first hotel, Seaconnet House stood at the west side of the south end of West Main Road, at its juncture with the east end of Sakonnet Point Road. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Sakonnet Steamboat Corporation's liners, the steamers "Queen City" and "Awashonks," made daily round trips from Providence to Sakonnet Point during warmer months. That company operated a shore-dinner hall located at Sakonnet Point and near it in 1887 built the Sakonnet Inn, a two-and-a-half-story shingled building wrapped with a wide porch. Both dinner hall and inn were destroyed by hurricanes in the twentieth century.

Not purpose built as an inn, the Stone House emerged from another local tradition, taking in boarders for brief periods during the summer season. Farming families in Little Compton began to bring into their homes individuals and families as early as the 1850s, around the time that seasonal visitors were beginning to swell the summer populations of other Newport County municipalities, especially Newport and Jamestown to the west. Beginning in the 1880s, Little Compton residents began to rent entire houses to summer visitors; Henry Sisson's renting to A.F. Copeland of Boston in the summer season of 1883 was a phenomenon then becoming increasingly common.

As Little Compton became increasingly appealing as a low-key summer retreat, the use of the Stone House as a boarding facility, especially given its size and number of small rooms, seems almost obvious in the context of Little Compton. Its evolution in the years between the two world wars into an inn with dedicated dining room and lounge is consistent with the upper-middle-class infiltration into the community; during those years, many affluent—not necessarily rich—individuals and families built and relocated seasonally in Little Compton, and the Stone House provided a pleasant setting to lodge extra house guests and to enjoy cocktails

<sup>14</sup> The spaces indicated as Living Room and Reception Area on the plan were originally two discrete areas, as revealed by examination of the existing structure; only further analysis based on partial demolition could reveal how these two spaces communicated with each other.

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(after 1933—at least legally) and a meal. Its reworking and reorganizing as the Stone House Club, membership required, in the early 1960s, speaks to the exclusivity that Little Compton had by then come increasingly to cherish. Membership in the Stone House, unlike the nearby golf and beach clubs, was generally readily available, but nonetheless carried the obligation of membership. The remodeling of the barn, beginning in the 1960s, into an assembly space, with requisite bar and catering kitchen, made this facility the largest such venue in Little Compton. The Stone House's evolution as a temporary residential recreational facility is consistent with the social atmosphere of Little Compton in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: informal boarding house in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; inn in the early/mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; remodeling, upgrading, and privatization in the mid-/late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Stone House eloquently embodies specifically local architectural attitudes toward design and use. Its proposed restoration will enhance those attitudes expressed by those who created it more than a century and a half ago and those who have overseen its evolution into the remarkable resource into which it has evolved and, one hopes, make explicit and celebrate those attitudes that so define its strong sense of time and place.

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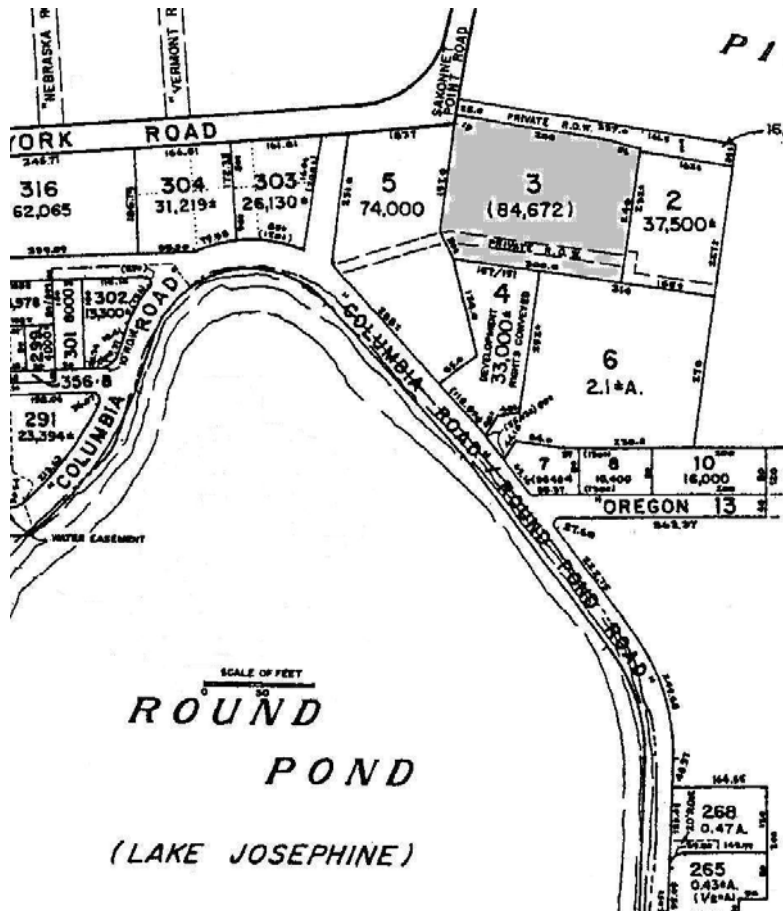
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Stone House Inn are contiguous with those of Little Compton Tax Assessor's Plat 9, Lot 3.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries, comprising about two acres, define the land most closely associated with the Stone House following subdivision of the larger Seaconnet Farm property in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

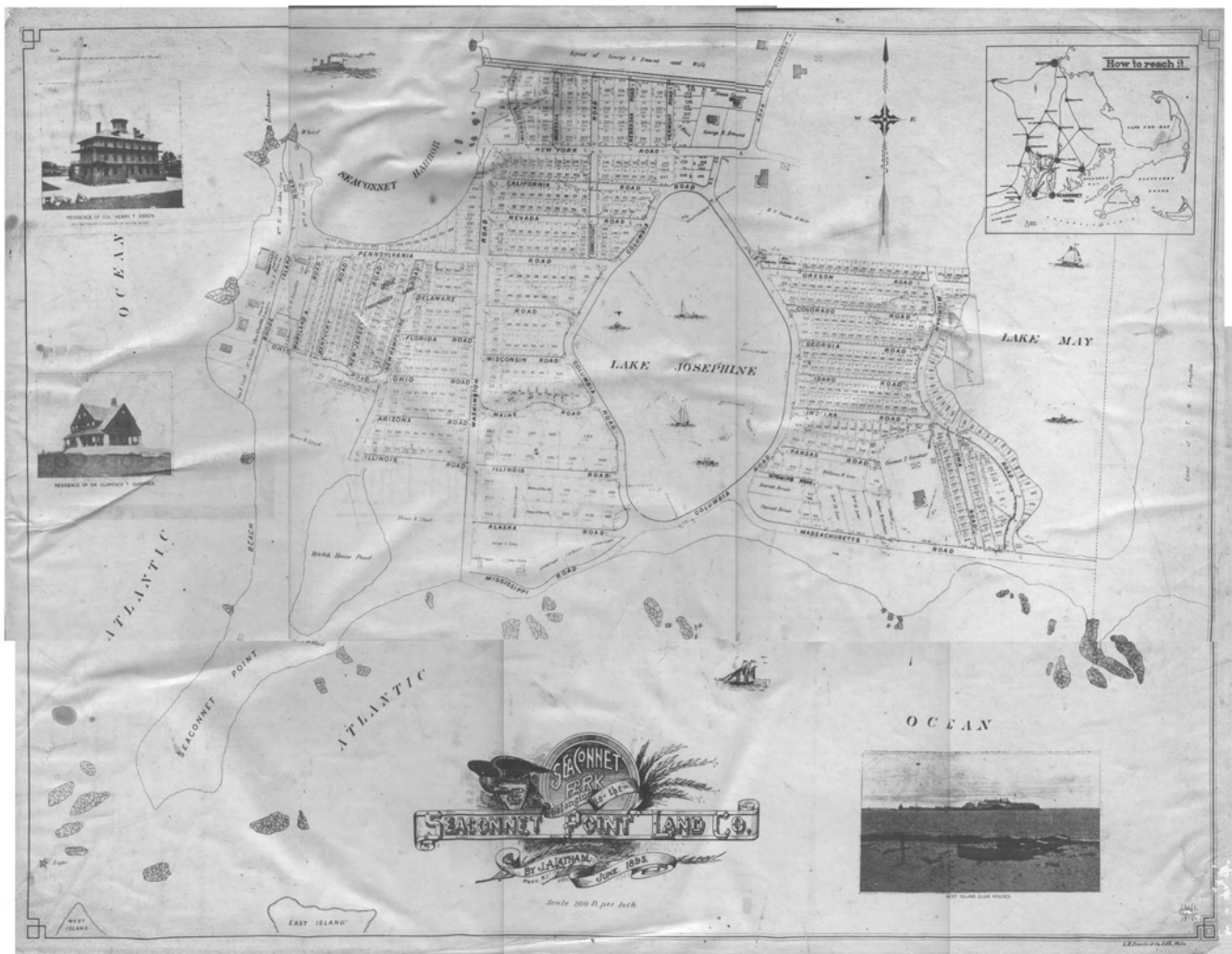


Figure 1  
Seaconnet Park Belonging to Seaconnet Point Land Co. (1895)

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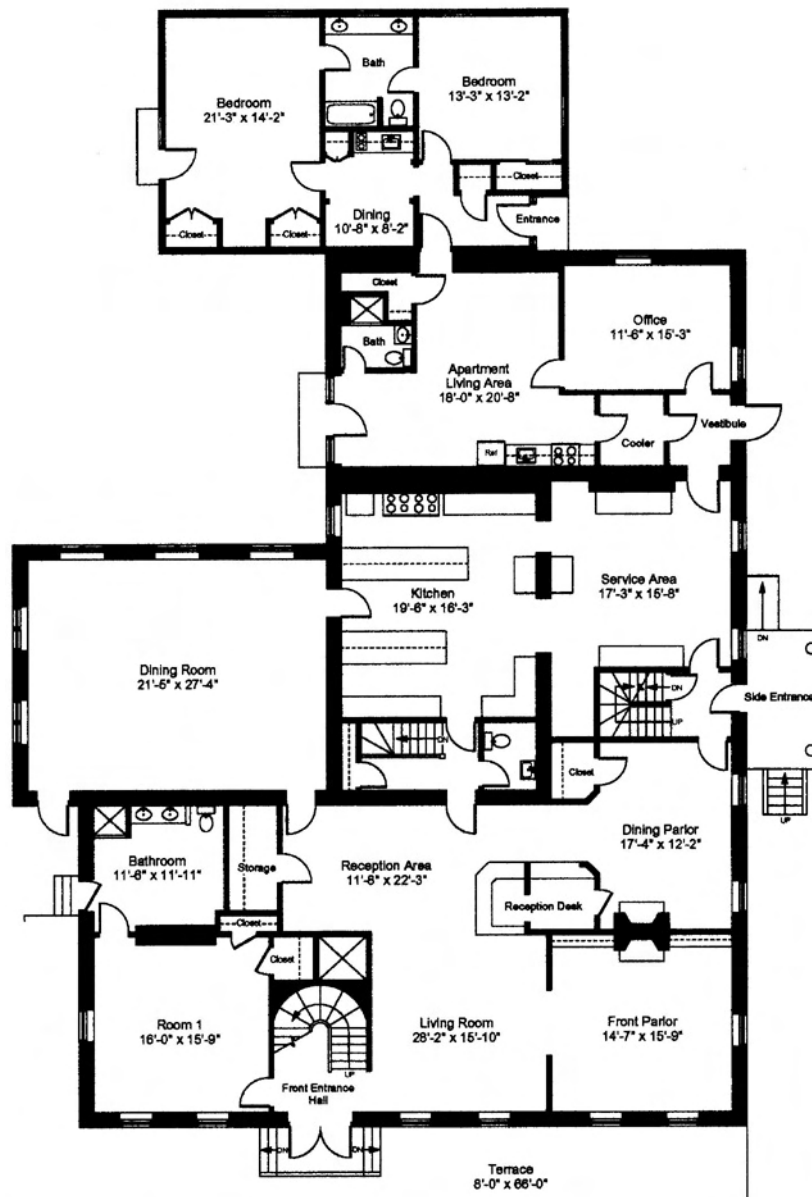


Figure 2  
First Floor Plan

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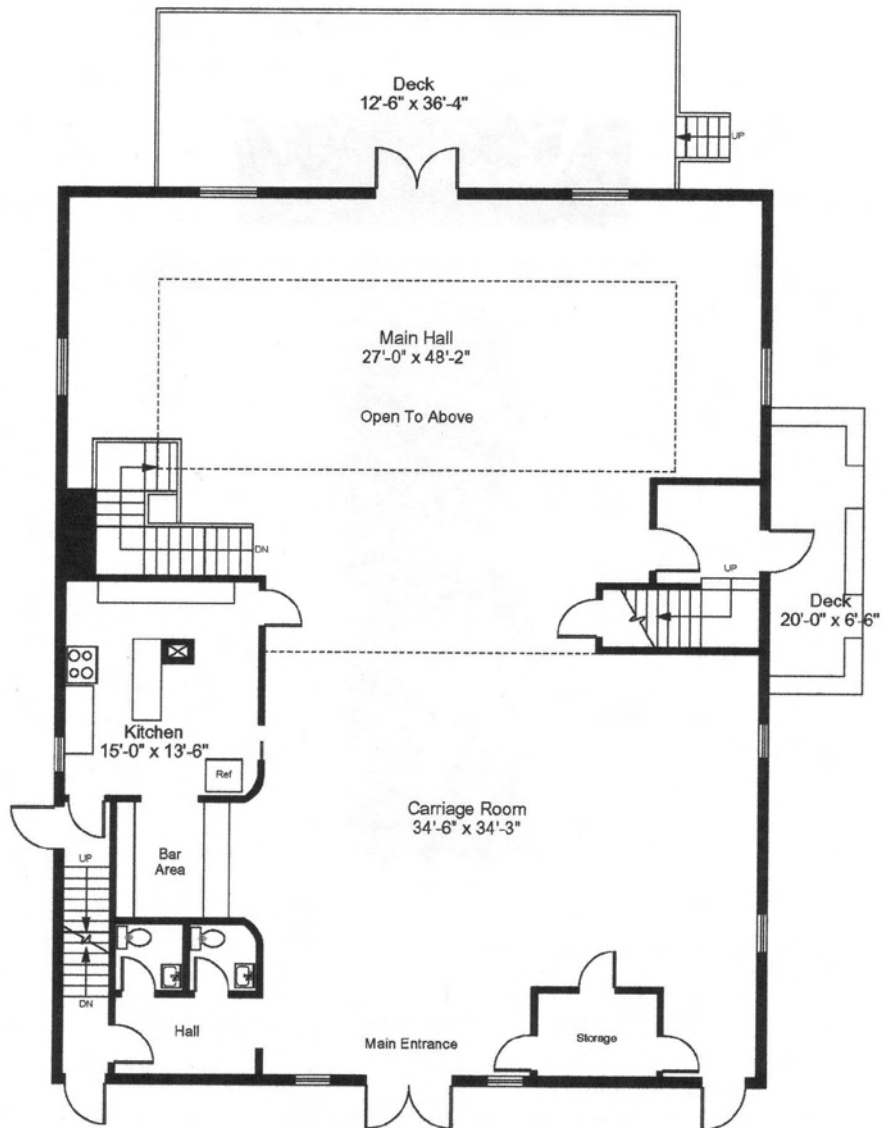


Figure 3  
Barn Plan























TAP ENTRANCE

