

**JACKSON HOUSE
HOCKESSIN, DELAWARE**

**Architectural Description and
Statement of Significance**

By

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Site Name: The Jackson House
Owner's Name: Dr. Raymond Para
Property Location: 7503 Lancaster Pike
Hockessin, Delaware
New Castle County
Tax Parcel Number: 08-007.00-025
CRS # : None

Statement of Significance: The Jackson House is located near a major intersection in Hockessin and is significant for its association with several influential families in the community for over 200 years. These families - the Dixons, the Jacksons and the Garretts - contributed to the development of the village of Hockessin by maintaining large land holdings and operating mining and saw milling facilities in the vicinity. The house is also significant architecturally, documenting the shift from log to stone construction in the early nineteenth century and a stylistic shift to Georgian symmetry. Evidence suggests that there was a mid-eighteenth century log building on the property. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, members of the Jackson family were responsible for two key construction periods in the house, creating the large five-bay stone double parlor plan dwelling that stands today. Members of that same family were instrumental in the management and construction of the railroad that ran through Hockessin into Wilmington. Early accounts of the property associated it with a Revolutionary War hospital and there are local histories linking outbuildings that stood on this property in previous years as a final stop on the Underground Railroad from the south to the state border of Pennsylvania.

I. Architectural Description

The Jackson House is a large stone dwelling on the main turnpike from Wilmington, Delaware to Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Documentary evidence places a dwelling in this location from the middle of the eighteenth century on and this house has experienced four major building periods since that time. These periods of construction are identified in this section as periods 1 through 4 and are outlined in a further detail in Section III Building Chronology.

Located just north of Valley Road on the northbound side of Lancaster Pike in the town of Hockessin, Mill Creek Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, the Jackson House is a five-bay, double-pile, two-and-a-half story stone dwelling with a stucco finish on all walls. Capping the stone walls is a wood box cornice. The gabled roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The main block of the house has a full basement and there is a two-story kitchen wing to the rear that is set on a crawl space. The site is a small parcel that slopes steeply away from the road toward the northeast. There are several outbuildings including a frame garage next to the house and a small stone and frame springhouse located down the slope to the northeast of the dwelling.

The front façade faces southeast and has a center entrance with a small gabled portico. The portico has fluted pilasters and simple wood trim. There are three brick steps up to the main entrance door. The door has a stone sill, a paneled wood surround, and a glass window with three lights above. On the first floor two windows flank each side of the center entrance. These windows are evenly spaced and are double-hung with six-over-nine lights and paneled shutters. The five second floor windows align with the openings below and are double-hung with six-over-six glass lights and louvered shutters. Centered on the roof level are two arch-topped dormers with double-hung six-over-six windows.

The north elevation is a gable end of the main block and the side elevation of a kitchen wing that extends to the rear of the dwelling. There are two interior chimneys on this elevation placed asymmetrically to the ridge. There is an open porch with fluted metal columns supporting a flat roof spanning the full length of this end of the building.

The floor and framing of the porch are wood and there are concrete piers below each column location. A central door opening on this elevation is set a foot above the level of the porch and a second door opening to the west is set at porch level. There is a double-hung window with six-over-six glass lights to the east of the center door on the first floor level of this wall. On the second floor there is a double-hung window with six-over-six glazing located over the center door and another smaller window opening to the west.

The rear elevation faces west and is composed of two blocks. The northern block extends about six feet past the main block and is a two-story section with a low sloping shed roof. There is a central entrance on the first floor with two flanking windows on the first floor and second floors of this block. One additional entrance door is located in the sidewall of this block. The rear elevation of the main block has a door centered below the main roof on the first floor with a double-hung window with six-over-six glazing located on the landing of the stairway above. There is one other double-hung window on the first floor with six-over-nine glazing to the south of the door and a second floor window with six-over-six glazing aligned above. There is an exterior stairway to the cellar under this section of the building.

The gable end of the main block forms the south elevation. There are two interior chimneys at the ridge of the roof with a small window at the attic level between them. Two pairs of windows are symmetrically placed on the first and second floors of this elevation. These match the windows on the main elevation.

The interior of the house is organized around the center entrance and stair hall. The current plan has two parlors to the south of the entrance hall and a larger single parlor to the north with the kitchen wing behind the north parlor. Architectural and documentary evidence suggests that this house was constructed in four periods. The first period section is not extant as it was replaced by the back-to-back parlors. The second period expansion included the large room to the north of the entrance hall. Of the two windows on the front wall of this room, details of the one closest to the current entry indicate that this was previously a door opening. The wood trim around this opening varies from the other windows across the front wall and the baseboard has been patched. The rear wall in this room is a stone wall and has a door opening out to the kitchen wing. There is evidence of a former window opening behind the plaster finish on this wall.

There is a small fireplace centered on the gable end wall of this room flanked by a door and a window to each side. A patched floor opening in front of the door suggests that at one time there was a stair box to the left of the fireplace. A winder stair box, currently located on the opposite wall of this room, connects the cellar to the attic.

The Period 3 section of the house was likely constructed between 1820 and 1825 and included the creation of a center entrance and stair hall and double parlors to the south, creating exterior massing for the extant double pile plan. In the entrance hall there is a wood switch-back stair connecting only the first and second floors. The stair railing has simple ½" x 1" square spindles and turned newel. There are front and rear parlors to the south of the entrance door. Each parlor has a shallow fireplace with a curved wood mantel and surround. The trim and the mantels in the parlors are similar in style and period dating to sometime after 1830. There was a plaster wall between the parlors originally but this was removed in a modern renovation. A layer of plaster was installed over sub-flooring in the both Period 2 and Period 3 sections of the house, providing dust protection for the basement that had been enlarged for additional food storage. Wide floor boards were installed throughout the house.

The current kitchen is located to the rear of the Period 2 section of the house. This is a modern kitchen with two doors to the rear yard and one door to the side porch. There is a chimney on the north gable elevation in the kitchen section but there is no existing hearth or fireplace in the modern kitchen. The second floor layout follows the first floor with chambers front and back above the parlors and less formal layout over the period two and period four sections. The attic is open over the Period 2 section. Sawn roof rafters are mortised and tenoned and pegged at the ridge of the main block. Collar ties are mortised and spiked to the rafters. There are partial stone walls extending to the underside of the roof strengthening the argument for the varying periods of construction for the house.

The cellar is divided into two sections. The front portion spans across the length of the house and reaches to the rear wall of the north parlor in depth. The floor joists are whitewashed. There is a jog in the rear masonry wall in the cellar indicating the break between the Period 2 and Period 3 sections of the house. There are large beams below the hall walls spanning front to back and the opening for the original stair on the north

gable wall is clearly patched. There are small relieving arches at each fireplace and these are similar in construction. There is a third section of cellar below the rear parlor that has an exterior door and stairs to grade level. The relieving arch for the parlor hearth above matches those in the main section of the cellar.

II. Property History

Situated on the hill above Hockessin on the Lancaster Pike, the Jackson House faces the town with its broad white stucco façade. Originally part of a 200-acre farm, this property and its owners have been a key part of Hockessin history for almost 250 years. Construction of the house occurred in four building periods identified as Periods 1 – 4 in this section and discussed in detail in the following section titled Building Chronology. Figure 4 shows a first floor plan of the Jackson House indicating the periods of construction.

Like most of Hockessin, the land was part of the original 15,000-acre Stenning Manor granted to Laetitia Penn Aubrey by her father William Penn. The property on which the house currently sits was purchased from Aubrey's attorneys by Henry Dixon in 1726 and was passed on to his son Samuel. The Dixon family were large land holders in the Hockessin area from the mid-eighteenth century thru the late-nineteenth century. In 1771, Samuel Dixon sold 200 acres of land around the intersection of the main turnpike from Wilmington to Lancaster and the "Hockessin Road" (Valley Road) to James Jackson of New Garden, Pennsylvania. With this purchase, the Jackson family began a long history of land holding, farming, saw milling and mining in the Hockessin area.

James Jackson ran a saw mill and farmed on the land he purchased from Samuel Dixon. Tax assessments for James indicate that he owned a log and stone dwelling in 1798 (Period 2), and a large stone house in 1817 (Period 3?). When he died intestate, Thomas, his fourth son petitioned the orphan's court his share of the property. In 1818, Thomas was granted the 194-acre property purchased from the Dixon family and shown in an Orphan's Court plot (Figure 1). In 1822, tax assessments for Thomas Jackson owned 194 acres with a house, and barn valued at \$1960. By 1828, he owned 189 acres with a frame house and barn with a total value of \$6615. Though the house Thomas owned was probably not frame, the value of his property had increased dramatically in six years, suggesting changes to outbuildings or possible renovations to the dwelling. These renovations may have been the Period 3 building period that created the five-bay center entrance double parlor plan that exists today.

Thomas Jackson and his wife Jane had two sons, James C. and John G. In his will, written in 1851, Thomas split his property into two portions for their inheritance. John received the southern section of the property, located along Valley Road and containing the lime quarry and a saw mill. James was granted 94 acres of the northeastern section of the property, where the Jackson House is located. Thomas's will also named Jane's niece, Jane Griffith, as an heir. In the 1870s Jane Griffith became Hockessin's first postmistress and operated a store and post office on the corner of this property at the turnpike and Valley Road.

The 1849 Rea Price Atlas (Figure 2) and the 1868 Beer's Atlas (Figure 3) both show J(ames) C. Jackson as the owner of the Jackson House on the Lancaster Turnpike. While there is not much information on James C. Jackson during this time, his brother John Jackson became an engineer and surveyor and served in the State Legislature. John Jackson went on to serve on the first board of directors for the Wilmington and Western Railroad Company and he was chief engineer for the railroad, holding this position until its completion in 1871¹. John Jackson operated the family's limestone quarry through the 1870s. In his book on Hockessin history, Joseph R. Lake Jr. proclaims John C. Jackson as "the most famous Victorian to live in Hockessin."²

In 1868 the Jackson House on the Turnpike was sold out of the family. Members of the prominent Garrett family owned this property from 1875 to 1926. The Garretts operated the snuff mill in Yorklyn for several generations.

There are many local histories with claims about the Jackson property. Some local histories recount that during the Civil War the Jackson House was a prominent stop on the Underground Railroad. Located less than a mile from the Pennsylvania boarder, the barn on this property was said to have housed hundreds of slaves fleeing to freedom. Another history places the Jackson House, or "Strathworth" as it was called, as a hospital during the Revolutionary war.³ While planting shrubbery, a twentieth century owner

¹ J. Thomas Scharf, *A History of Delaware*, Philadelphia:L.J. Richards & Co. 1888. p.928-930.

² Joseph R. Lake Jr, *Hockessin: A Pictorial History*, Dover, Delaware: Joseph R. Lake Jr., 1997. p.29.

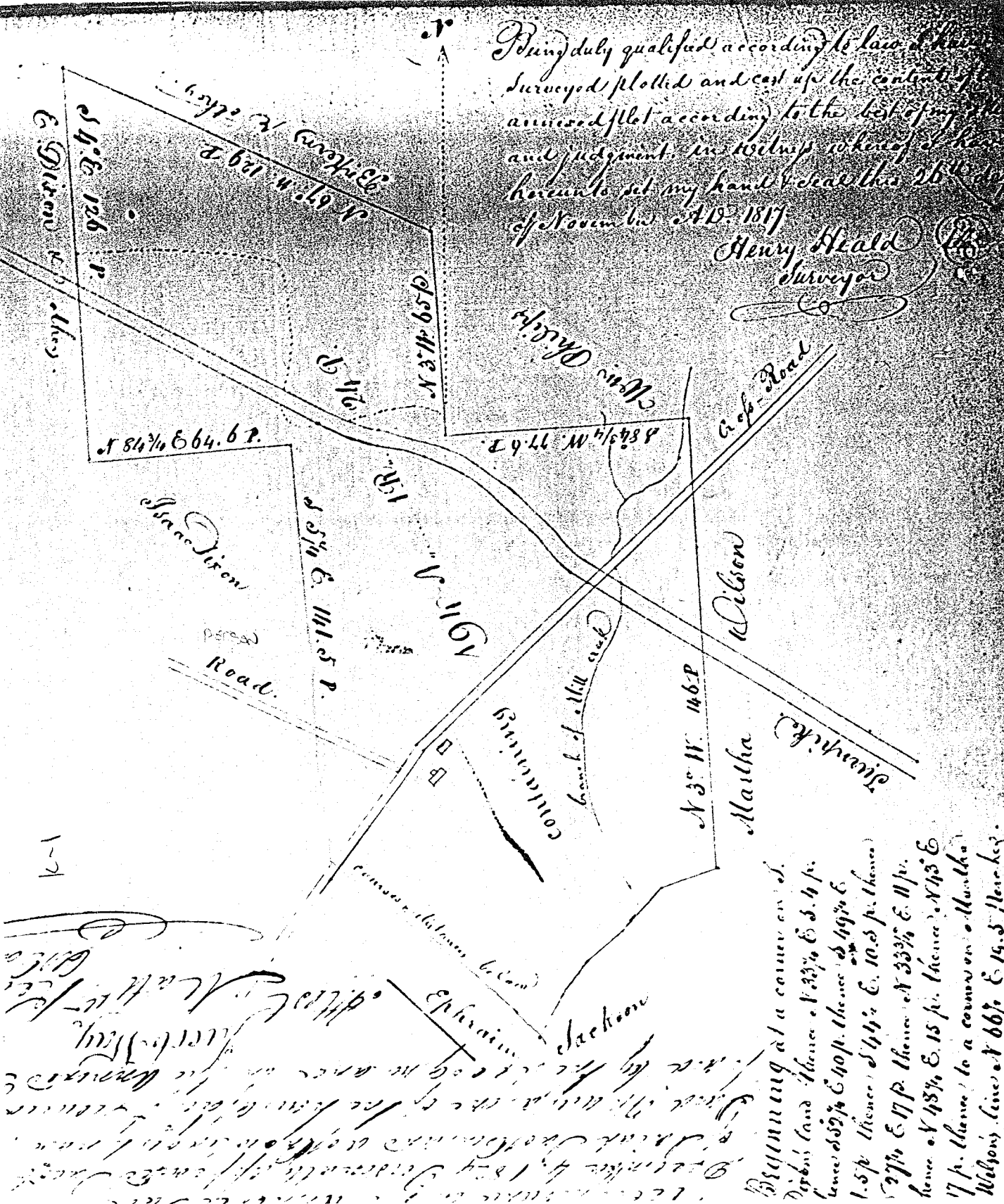
³ *ibid*, pps. 30,106.

discovered a grave in the front yard containing the remains of British and American colonials.

Located near a major intersection in the town of Hockessin for over 200 years, the Jackson House is significant for its association with several influential families in the community as well as its architectural documentation of the shift from log to stone construction in the early nineteenth century with the stylistic shift to Georgian symmetry.

Being duly qualified according to law, I have surveyed, plotted and cast up the contents of the annexed plot according to the best of my skill and judgment. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand & seal this 26th day of November A.D. 1817

Henry Heald
Surveyor



1-7
 The above is a true and correct copy of the original survey as made by the Surveyor General of the State of Georgia, Henry Heald, on the 26th day of November 1817. The original is deposited in the office of the Surveyor General at the City of Savannah.

Beginning at a corner on S. Digby's land thence N 33 3/4 E 5.4 p. thence S 52 3/4 E 40 p. thence S 49 3/4 E 1.5 p. thence S 44 1/2 E 10.5 p. thence S 27 1/2 E 17 p. thence N 33 3/4 E 11 p. thence N 43 3/4 E 15 p. thence N 45 E 17 p. thence to a corner on Martha Wilson's line N 66 1/2 E 14.5 p. thence

Being duly qualified according to law of this State
I have surveyed, plotted and cast up the contents of
the annexed plot according to the best of my skill
and judgment in testimony whereof I have hereunto set
my hand and seal this 26th day of November A.D. 1817

Henry Heald
Surveyor

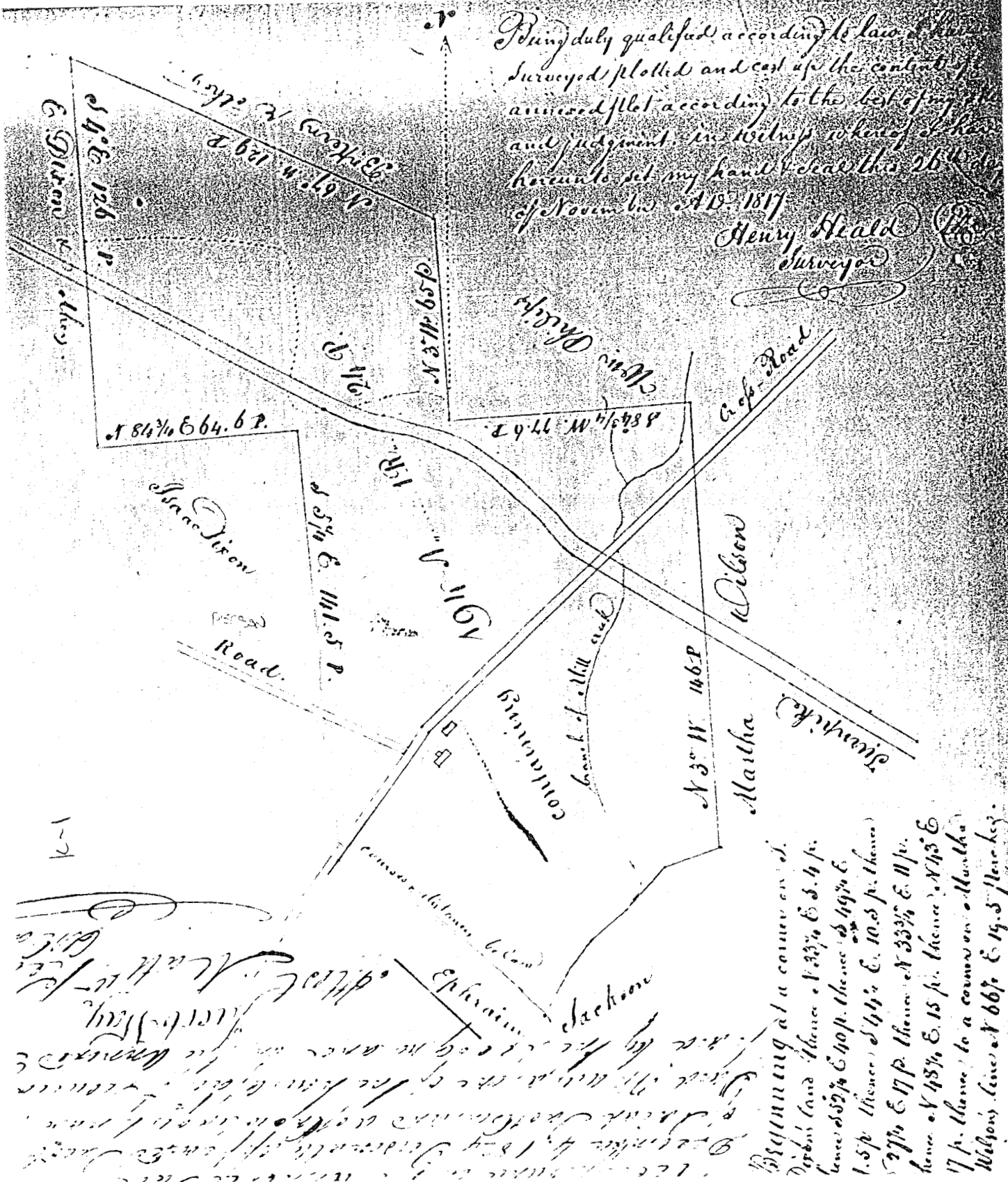


Figure 1: Orphan's Court Map of James Jackson's land as settled on his son Thomas in 1818

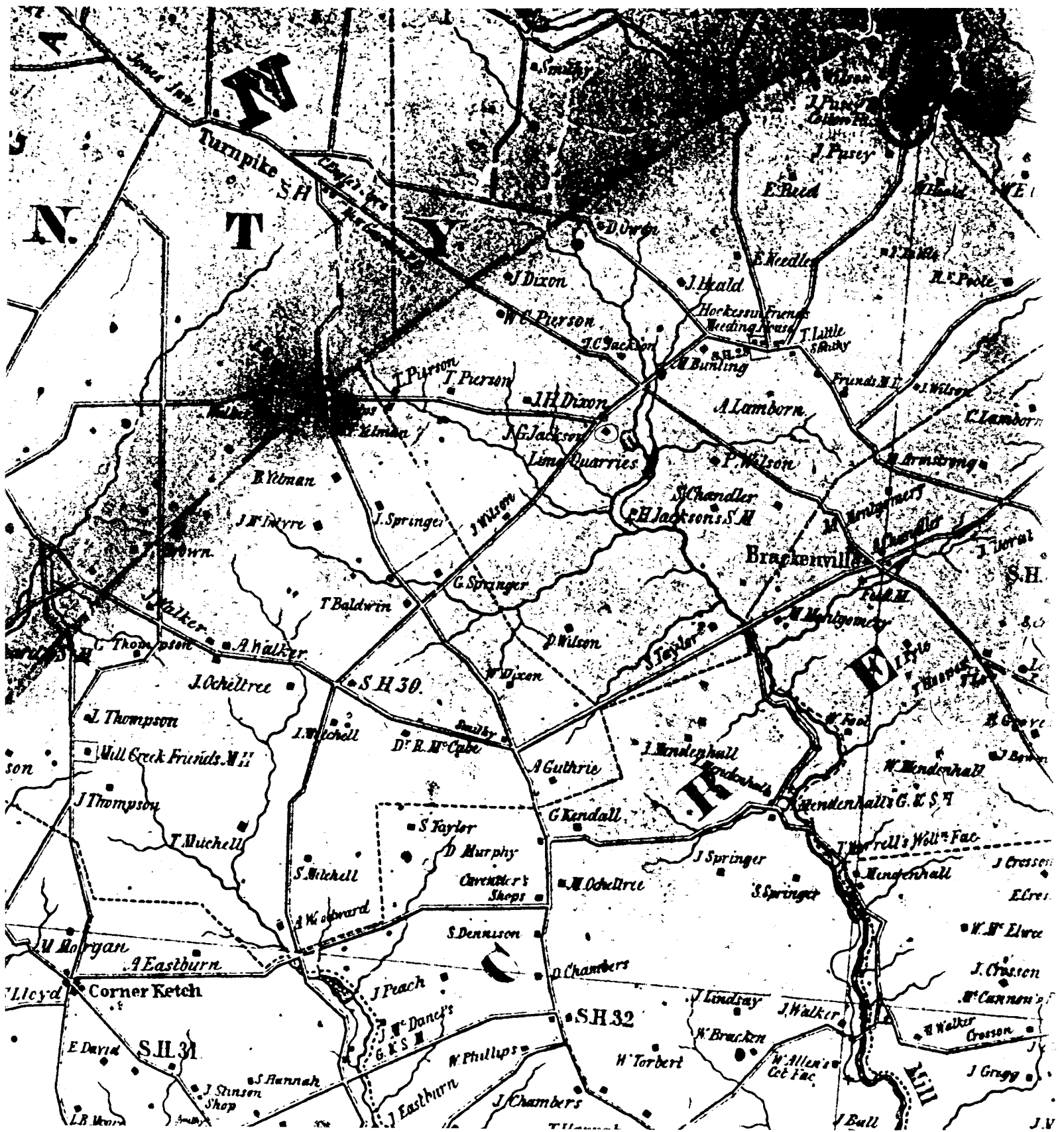


Figure 2: Detail of the Rea Price Atlas, 1849

MILL CREEK

C^o Del.
to the Mile.



Figure 3: Detail of the Beer's Atlas, 1868 – Mill Creek Hundred.

III. Building Chronology

The Jackson House is a large stone farmhouse located in Hockessin on Lancaster Pike at Valley Road. Architectural and documentary evidence suggests that this dwelling was constructed in four major building periods ranging from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Figure 4 shows the first floor plan of the house and the four periods of construction.

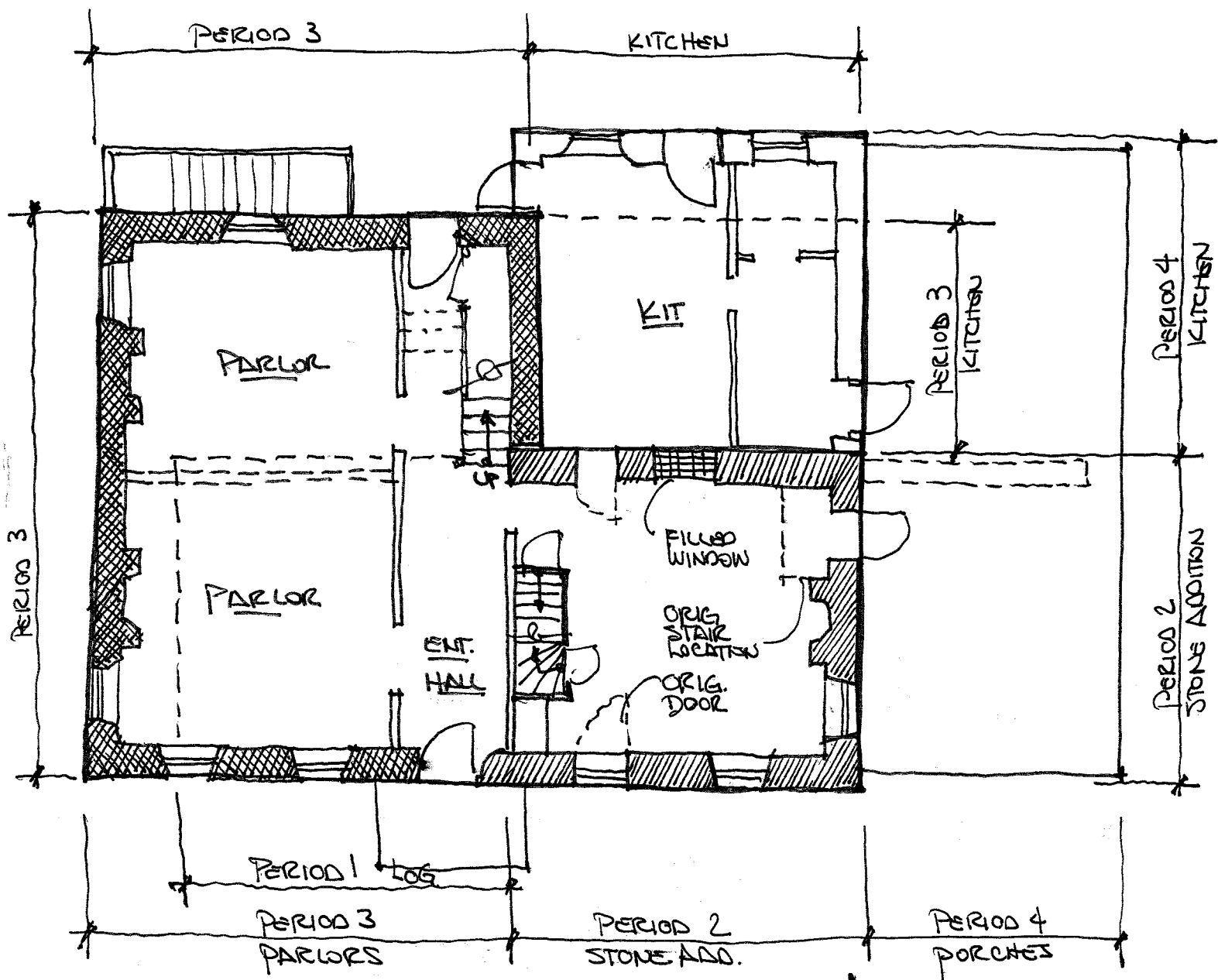
Period 1 would have been a one-room log dwelling, probably constructed prior to 1770 by the Dixon family. Local histories recount a building on this site during the Revolutionary War. No part of this dwelling remains in the existing Jackson House.

Period 2 added a three-sided stone addition to the log dwelling. Tax assessments for the Jackson family in 1798 indicate that James Jackson owned a log and stone dwelling. It is not clear exactly when the stone addition was constructed but it is likely that Jackson expanded the log dwelling that was on the property he purchased from Samuel Dixon in 1771. The stone addition was two stories high with an attic and a cellar. A small winder stair connecting the cellar and all three floors was located next to the fireplace. This was a common form for farmhouses during this period in this area. This stone addition exists in the current house as the room to the north of the entrance hall. The log portion of the dwelling would have been the southern portion of the house, in the same location as the current entrance hall and front parlor. A large cooking hearth would have been located in the log portion of the original dwelling.

The Period 3 section of the house was probably constructed between 1815 and 1825. This was a major renovation that included the removal of the log portion and the construction of the stair hall and the double parlors to the south, creating exterior massing for the extant double pile plan. These changes created the symmetrical gable end on the south elevation. A small kitchen was constructed to replace the hearth demolished in the log portion of the dwelling and was located to the rear of the north parlor below the large gable roof. Documentary evidence suggests that it was probably Thomas Jackson who was responsible for this phase of construction of the house. Thomas acquired the property from his father James' estate in 1818 and tax assessments for his land show a dramatic increase in value from 1818 to 1826. Architectural styles current during the

1820s would support the construction of the large five-bay double parlor plan of the current house.

Period 4 construction probably occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century, several decades after the end the Jackson period. Renovations during this phase added a small porch on the north gable end and cut a door opening to the porch to the left of the fireplace in the north parlor. These modifications required that the stair box next to the fireplace be relocated to the opposite wall of that room. A later renovation extended the kitchen beyond the edge of the gable roof creating the small shed roof currently in place, expanded the porch on the gable end of the house, and opened an additional door to that porch from the expanded kitchen wing. The construction details and the Greek Revival style of the current porch suggest that this probably occurred in the 1930s. A partial foundation for the earlier porch remains under the current one and two different types of parging on the stone foundation wall of the house below the porch help to confirm the multiple periods of construction for the house and kitchen wing.



JACKSON HOUSE
FIRST FLOOR PLAN.

Figure 4: First floor plan – Jackson House showing periods of construction.