
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
Historic Landmark Designation Case No. 10-10

The Robert and Lillie Stone House
4901 47th Street, NW (Square 1544, Lot 70)

Meeting Date: March 24, 2011
Applicant: The Tenleytown Historical Society
Owner: Adrienne Shaw and Matthew Hersey
Affected ANC: ANC 3E
Staff Reviewer: Kim Prothro Williams

After careful consideration, staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Review Board designate the Robert and Lillie Stone House at 4901 47th Street, NW under the Multiple Property Document: *American University Park in Washington, D.C.: Its Early Houses, Pre-Civil War to 1911*. It is further recommended that the application be forwarded to the National Park Service for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Completed in 1897, the Stone House is among the earliest and most intact of the seventeen houses built in the initial phase of development of American University Park following its residential subdivision in 1896-1897.

History and Architecture

The Robert and Lillie Stone House is a substantial, two-and-one-half-story, Victorian-era, stucco-clad frame house characterized by its Queen Anne-style massing, especially a prominent corner tower capped with a highly pitched octagonal-section roof and decorated with a distinctive cross-bracing ornament. The house is set upon a slight hill above the later, mid-twentieth century houses on the street forming the present-day neighborhood of American University Park. The house is named for its longest-term owner-occupants, Lillie Mae (Stewart) and Robert Stone, who lived at the house from 1903 until Lillie Stone's death (succeeding that of her husband) in the 1960s. Robert Stone was the son of David Stone who, in partnership with John D. Croissant, was the original developer of American University Park. By the time Robert Stone purchased the 47th Street property, he was already actively engaged in his father's real estate firm, David Stone & Company.



As fully detailed in the Multiple Property Document, Croissant and Stone platted American University Park in 1896-1897 for residential development with the expectation that the growth of the city, emerging infrastructure including a streetcar line, and the new, nearby American University, would encourage residential development in the area. In the period between 1896 and 1911, seventeen houses—substantial, free-standing Victorian “cottages”—are known to have been

constructed in the subdivision, giving rise to the belief that the area would soon become “one of the most popular residential areas” in the city. The original owner/builder of the house, a Maria Weems from Annapolis, Maryland, clearly believed in the potential of American University Park, and became one of the first people to speculate on building in the newly platted subdivision.

Maria Weems hired local builder, Barzilla H. Burgoyne, who was simultaneously erecting four other houses in the neighborhood, to construct her house. An early photograph of the dwelling appears in the 1897 promotional brochure for American University Park. When Mrs. Weems died three years later, she likely did so with the hope of success for the development still alive.

In 1903, when the property was purchased by Robert and Lillie Stone, the much anticipated streetcar branch line off Wisconsin Avenue and through the neighborhood had still not materialized, and confidence in the subdivision was slipping. As an active partner in his father’s business, Robert Stone perhaps bought the house to shore up confidence in the development. But shortly thereafter, residential development in the platted subdivision came to a grinding halt, marking Croissant and Stone’s American University Park as a failed nineteenth-century residential subdivision.

Evaluation

The Robert and Lillie Stone House meets National Register Criteria A (*Events*) and C (*Architecture*) under the Multiple Property Document *American University Park in Washington, D.C.: Its Early Houses, Pre-Civil War to 1911* and designation in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites under D.C. Criteria B (*History*) and D (*Architecture and Urbanism*) for the following reasons:

- *History*: The property is associated with historical periods and patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the development of the District of Columbia. The Stone House provides an excellent illustration of the second major phase in the evolution of the Tenleytown area as it grew from a rural community in the pre-Civil War era to a residential, middle-class suburb of the city. More particularly, the Stone house reflects the late nineteenth-century speculative development of the formerly rural land into the residential subdivision of American University Park and the importance that new modes of transportation played in the development of the city. Further, the property provides a significant and intact example of a suburban “cottage” illustrating the intentions of the developer to create a bucolic, suburban neighborhood within proximity to downtown
- *Architecture and Urbanism*: The property embodies the distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles, building types, and is an expression of urban planning to the appearance and development of the District of Columbia. In particular, the Stone House provides an excellent example of a late nineteenth-century frame house intended to be part of a larger “suburban” community of Victorian “cottages.” The building’s overall massing, Queen Anne detailing and its character-defining corner tower perfectly illustrate the building type and style.

The Period of Significance for the Stone House extends from 1897, when the house was constructed until 1963, the death of longtime owner/resident Lillie May Stone. The Stone House has been carefully maintained retains sufficient integrity to convey the values and qualities for which it is judged significant.