

Fort Neck House, (Tryon Hall)
Massapequa, Nassau County,
New York.

HABS No. 4-402

✓
HABS
NY,
30-MASAP,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No. 4
Southern New York State

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Wm. Dewey Foster, District Officer,
25 West 45th Street, New York City.

THE FORT NECK HOUSE
MASSAPEQUA, LONG ISLAND, NASSAU COUNTY, NEW YORK

History

Thomas Jones came to America about 1692, settling in Massapequa, and building a simple house of brick imported from Holland. This house stood right on what is now the Merrick Road, at the entrance to the Corroon Estate. It was known as "The Brick House".

Thomas Jones, a Major, held letters from the French ports to operate a privateer, which led to a tradition of piracy being attached to the name.

His son, David Jones, became a judge in New York. In 1770, David, finding his son Thomas engaging in too gay a life in the city, built the Fort Neck House, and required the wayward son to live there six months in the year.

Thomas Jones lived in the new house from 1770 until the Revolution. His sympathies were with the crown rather than the Revolutionists. His house he named Tryon Hall, after the famous British officer, Sir William Tryon.

After the capture, by the British, of General Silliman, who was taken in his own house in Connecticut, the Americans in reprisal, arranged to capture Thomas Jones, who was now become a Justice of the Supreme Court of New York.

Twenty-five men, under Capt. Hawley, left Bridgeport, crossed the to Stony Brook and eventually made the capture during a ball being held in Tryon Hall. Judge Jones was in the hall talking with a guest, Mr. Hewlett.

It is the opinion of Mr. George Stanton Floyd-Jones, who was the last Jones to own it, and who has given some thought to the history of the

The Fort Neck House

house, that the dance was held in the great west room in the basement, from which, he remembers as a boy in the 1850's, informal parties to have adjourned to the kitchen for refreshments.

The party under Capt. Hawley, receiving no reply to their knocks, broke through the front door, captured their man and escaped without the party being aware of the attack.

Judge Jones was carried to Fairfield, Connecticut, and remained in the custody of Mrs. Silliman until 1780, when the exchange was finally made.

He still felt so strongly favorable to the British cause that he gave up his American residence, and left for England in 1781, dying about 1792.

A cousin of Thomas, becoming engaged to one, David Richard Floyd, the father of Judge Thomas Jones, offered the Fort Neck house as a wedding present to the pair if the groom would formally add the name of Jones. This was agreed to and in 1788 the legislature at Albany passed a resolution giving the requisite permission.

Thereafter the family of Floyd-Jones held the house in their possession until about the time of the World War, when it was sold and has been variously used as a road house and inn, and is at present uninhabited except by a caretaker.

Architectural Description

The original house built in 1770 was of strong oak frame, brick filled, well put together and of unusually durable construction.

The plan was exceptionally large and well fitted for entertainment.

The field party measuring this building were fortunate in being able to enlist the memory of Mr. George Stanton Floyd-Jones, in recalling the use of the house before the more drastic alterations and additions were made. Mr. Floyd-Jones remembers back into the 1850's, when his father

The Fort Neck House

returned from Albany, where he was a member of the State Legislature, to take over the family mansion.

At that time the road passed to the north instead of the south as at present, so that the main entrance was under the staircase in the stair hall. The rooms on the south were thus exposed to the sunlight and were used for living purposes.

The main center room was known as the Living Room, the west room was called the Parlor, the northwest room was known as the Library, the east room was the Dining Room, which was used on formal occasions and in the warm weather. The northeast room which was smaller and easier to heat was used for informal occasions and during the winter.

There was no kitchen on the first floor and service at first was made up the stairs, until about 1854 or 1855, when a dumb waiter was installed for ease and quickness of service.

The Basement was an integral part of the life of the house; the large Kitchen below the Informal Dining Room, with its wide fireplace was evidently a center of much of the life of the family. The metal dutch oven, which was used for roasting, was pushed into the fireplace, while at the left a brick bake oven, into which hot coals were shovelled and later removed, for bread to be baked, are details which Mr. Floyd-Jones can remember. A pump in the kitchen floor evidently supplied water from early days.

The large room at the west was used for informal parties and dances. It had a large fireplace and is fitted with excellent woodwork, the light is good and it must have been a cheerful room. Mr. Floyd-Jones remembers the parties held in this west room and the guests coming into the kitchen for refreshments.

The Milk Room with its half brick, half wood floor and its tables

The Fort Neck House

suspended from the ceiling out of the reach of rats and mice, indicates a little of the rural character of the original building.

The small rooms in the center of the south side which later became servants rooms, Mr. Floyd-Jones believes were slave rooms in the original plan.

On the second floor there were originally six Bedrooms with no baths. In the general alteration at the time that the kitchen wing was added, about 1885, space was added to the second floor which later was made into Bathrooms. In this alteration the northeast Bedroom was rearranged to include attic stairs and a closet at the foot for the Bedroom. The original attic was reached by a scuttle from the hall with no staircase at all.

The south Porch was originally a small flight of steps about six feet wide. This in the 1850's was changed to a broad veranda about twelve feet wide and running across the main unit of the house. After the coming of the Merrick Road, to the south of the residence, this veranda was altered to be an enclosed Porch as at present.

The original entrance Porch on the north has been changed several times. The brick work seems very old, although of a different character ^{from} ~~than~~ the original chimneys ^{eyes}.

The staircase from first to second floor is of a most unusual character. It has no supporting string under the hand rail, but is constructed with what is known as three point support. The lower run of these stairs began to sag about 1885 and a supporting partition was built under the middle of the treads. At this time the vestibule and closet under the stairs were made.

After the beginning of this century, the building was sold by the Floyd-Jones' family and has been used as a road house. As such, demands

The Fort Neck House

30. MASAP

1-

of the Kitchen were too great for the original structure and additional Kitchen and Pantry rooms have been added. The original door from the Kitchen to the Dining Room has been moved to the east side of the fireplace in the Dining Room to serve from the new Pantry instead of the Kitchen.

The partitions between the Parlor, Dining Room and the Living Room were removed to make one large room, 20' wide and 86' long. The two closets, one in the Dining Room and one in the Parlor have been plastered up. The closet in the Dining Room was known as the secret closet, its door was flush with the wall and the wall paper was carried across so that it was nearly concealed; it was used for wines. In the Parlor, with its dado moulding, it was not possible to construct the closet in this secret manner.

The small closet opposite the stairs to the Basement was known as the Gun Room and was originally fitted with gun racks.

Generally, the building is in a fair state of repair. The oak frame is sound and firm, the brick work however, is beginning to show signs of disintegration and the paint that was added during the use as road house, of the bright blue and red, is far from the original intent of the building. The under coats show white or cream in all cases.

As this property is being surveyed for a real estate development, the prospect of this building's continued use is small. It is hoped that this survey will have served the useful purpose of preserving the design of this interesting building to future generations.

Written, May 7, 1934, by

Lester G. Chapin,
160 Harvard Avenue,
Rockville Center, Long Island

Approved: *Mr. Druey Foster*

Received 1936. H.C.F.

Lester G. Chapin