

CT Trust Resource ID: 2242

HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY – BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

State Historic Preservation Office, DECD, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

*Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

Inventory form modified for the Creative Places - Arts & Letters Project

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common): Lane, Peter Clark, Jr. & Bertha James, House

Other Name(s) (Historic): Lane, Peter Clark, Jr. & Bertha James, House

Street Address or Location: 151 Old Boston Post Road, Old Saybrook

Town/City: Old Saybrook Village:

County: Middlesex

Designation(s):

Owner(s): DESILIO, HEATHER DOWNIE

Public/Private: Private

Latitude: 41.2871 Longitude: -72.3863

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Domestic: single dwelling

Historic Use: Domestic: single dwelling

Accessibility to public: No Exterior visible from public road? Yes

Interior accessible? If yes, explain: NA

Style of building: Vernacular craftsman style Date of Construction: 1918

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate) Clapboard

Structural Systems(s): Wood Frame

Roof(Type): Gable (Material): Asphalt Shingle

Number of Stories: 1 1/2 Approximate Dimensions: 20' x 21'

Structural Condition: Excellent

Exterior Condition: Good

Locational Integrity: On original site Moved, When: NA

Alterations?: No If yes, explain: NA

Related outbuildings or landscape features: Shed

Surrounding Environment: Residential

Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

113 Old Boston Post Road is located on the north side of the street, facing south, on a .46-acre parcel. Old Boston Post Road is lined with single-family homes, many historic structures of the late 18th century to the mid-20th century. This house was the childhood home of African-American writer Ann Petry.

Other notable features of building or site:

This is a 1 1/2-story vernacular-style house built in 1918-20. The gable roof has its ridge-line oriented north-south, with the gable-front façade facing the street. This is a two-bay façade with the front entry in the right (east) corner, a double-hung window to the left and two double-hung windows in the upper level. A full-width one-story porch wraps around the west side and has a shed roof supported by turned posts. The roof has a moderate overhang and sloped closed soffits. The east side has a wide shed dormer which provides a full-height space at the center of the upper level; this has two double-hung windows. Below, a diamond-paned sash at the left (south) corner lights the entry area while at the right corner a back door and kitchen window open to a rear porch. A small one-story addition extends north from the rear. The west side has a dormer treatment similar to the east. The building has a vernacular Arts and Crafts-style appearance, due to the dormers and the diamond-paned window. Siding is horizontal wood clapboards, stained, with white trim. A 1978 photograph shows that it previously was clad in wood shingle siding, and the windows had two-over-two double-hung sash. The roof is asphalt shingles. The house is set back from the street further than the neighboring older homes along Old Boston Post Road.

Architect: Peter Clark Lane, Jr. Builder/Maker: Peter Clark Lane, Jr.

Historical or Architectural importance:

The extended James and Lane family, African-Americans previously living in Hartford, purchased or built homes in the area surrounding the Old Saybrook South Green. The first property acquired was at 2 Pennywise Lane, where a pharmacy was established in 1901 by Peter Clark Lane, Jr., later known as the James Pharmacy. Peter Clark Lane, Jr. (1871-1949) and Bertha James Lane (1875-1956) built a new home at 151 Old Boston Post Road in 1918-20.

Peter Clark Lane, Jr. and Bertha at first lived in the upstairs apartment over the pharmacy. They had three daughters: Bertha Harriet (1903-1905), Helen Louise (1906-1988), and Anna (later shortened to Ann) Houston (1908-1997), and lived in the pharmacy apartment until 1920. They then moved into their new home at 151 Old Boston Post Road. Bertha's sister, Anna Louise James (1886-1977), took over the pharmacy and it was renamed the James Pharmacy (listed on the National Register).

Anna Houston Lane lived in this house with her parents and two sisters. Anna began writing a journal, and her first entry from 1920 described the house, detailing the front porch and a screen porch on the side, a charming stair railing, and new plumbing fixtures ordered from Hartford. The family moved in on May 22, 1920. Finishing touches included a generator to pump water, a chicken coop, and a pig (Petty, E., 2009, p. 24).

Anna attended the Connecticut College of Pharmacy in New Haven, where she made life-long friends among the daughters of New Haven's black elite. She then returned home where she worked for a time at the James Pharmacy. (See 113 Old Boston Post Road for the house where Ann and her husband lived in later years.)

Sources:

Interview by C. Hitchcock with Elisabeth Petty; 6/11/2014, in Old Saybrook.

Old Saybrook Assessor's Records <http://gis.vgsi.com/oldsaybrookct/Search.aspx> . Parcel ID: 029-023.

Andrews, Gregory E. 1994. James Pharmacy National Register Nomination No. 94000845. National Park Service.

Brockmeyer, Christine. 1974. Old Saybrook South Green Historic District National Register Nomination No. 76001984. National Park Service.

Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. Accessed at: <http://www.cwhf.org/inductees/writers-journalists/ann-petty> .

George, Nelson. 9/20/2013. Red and Black (Review). 'Harlem Nocturne,' by Farah Jasmine Griffin. New York Times.

Griffin, Farah Jasmine. January 2014. Ann Petty, brief life of a celebrity-averse novelist: 1908-1997. Cambridge: Harvard Magazine.

Normen, Elizabeth J., 2013. African American Connecticut Explored. Middletown: Wesleyan U. Press.

Old Saybrook Jr. Historical Society. 1978. Historic and Architectural Survey of Old Saybrook. Connecticut Historical Commission.

Petty, Elisabeth. 2005. Can Anything Beat White? A Black Family's Letters. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 2009. At Home Inside: a Daughter's Tribute to Ann Petty. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Thomas, Robert McG. 4/30/1997. Ann Petty, 88, First to Write a Literary Portrait of Harlem (Obituary). New York Times.

U.S. Federal Census, accessed at <http://persi.heritagequestonline.com/hqoweb/library/do/census/search/basic> .

Photographer: Charlotte Hitchcock **Date:** 6/11/2014

View: South view

Form completed by: Charlotte Hitchcock **Printed On:** May 23, 2016

Organization: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 940 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06517-4002

Threats: None known

Subsequent field evaluations:



151 Old Boston Post Rd., Old Saybrook - south view

FOR OFFICE USE:

Town # _____ Site# _____ UTM _____
 District ☐ S ☐ NR If NR, specify: ☐ Actual ☐ Potential