

NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION

INDIVIDUAL STRUCTURE SURVEY FORM

HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY NO. 16

HISTORIC NAME: O'Brien's House  
LOCATION: 220 East Saddle River Road

COMMON NAME:  
BLOCK/LOT 1105/34

MUNICIPALITY: Saddle River  
USGS QUAD: Park Ridge  
OWNER/ADDRESS:

COUNTY: Bergen  
UTM REFERENCES:  
Zone/Northing/Easting

Richard Cosgriff

DESCRIPTION

Construction Date: circa 1848, between 1840-61, south wing: Source of Date: plaque on buildings, tradition; maps.  
Post Wall south wing: Eleanore Pettersen  
Architect: Builder:

Style: vernacular Downingsque

Form/Plan Type:



Number of Stories: A: 2, B: 2 1/2, C:1

Foundation: low, covered with cement

Exterior Wall Fabric: clapboards

Feenestration: A: 2 bays, 4/4, 2/4  
B: 1st story: double window, second story: 2 bays

Roof/Chimneys: gables except C is flat; added exterior chimneys on N. side of B and E. side of A

Additional Architectural Description:

Boxed eaves,  
wide frieze

Section A has side entrance with double doors, transom.

Across E facade of Sections A and C is a 4 bay open porch with spandrels

PHOTO Negative File No. 8-5 slide

Map (Indicate North)



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, OFFICE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION, 100 WEST STATE STREET, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625 (609) 292-2025

**16 SITING, BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION, AND RELATED STRUCTURES:** 4.02 acre property. House faces west and is located on a hillside which slopes downward to west. Setback about 100' from road. Gracious lawn with trees and shrubs. N. of house is garage with gable roof and shiplap siding. <sup>in E (rear) yard</sup> is stone accessory building with rubble stone E wall and part of south and north walls. West section of this small, gable-roofed 1 story building is frame with shiplap siding. To NE is a metal windmill and N of it is a small, frame building with shiplap siding and gable roof. The property also has a lily pond with circulating waterfall.

**SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:** Urban  Suburban  Scattered Buildings   
 Open Space  Woodland  Residential  Agricultural  Village   
 Industrial  Downtown Commercial  Highway Commercial  Other

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The O'Brien House is a well-preserved vernacular Downingsque house with interesting accessory structures contributing to its ambience, which is of local historical significance due to its association with one of the more prominent people in Saddle River's history, Dr. Bernard O'Brien. Dr. O'Brien was a physician, mill owner, and the borough's first mayor.

The 1861 Hopkins map associates the house with J. O'Brien, Bernard O'Brien's father. Beginning in 1856, the O'Briens began acquiring the grist mill from John Van Buskirk and surrounding land. With John P. Demarest, an in-law, they erected a factory for making woolen yarn and subsequently knit woolen goods. It is likely the O'Brien House was built in the late 1850's. John transferred 22 acres to Bernard in 1867 (SRHC files), probably indicating the date Bernard became a full-time manufacturer and owner of this house.

Bernard had trained to be a physician under Dr. Charles Hasbrouck (obituary) who was a leading Bergen County doctor practicing in Schraalenburgh (Dumont) from 1839 to 1854 and then in Hackensack (1854 on). Hasbrouck was Bergen County's first President of the Medical Society of New Jersey. A list of physicians practicing in Northern Bergen County between 1800 - 1940 lists O'Brien under Saddle River and circa 1854 as the date he started his own medical practice (Nevin, Early Physicians (cont.))

**ORIGINAL USE:** Residential  
**PHYSICAL CONDITION:** Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor   
**REGISTER ELIGIBILITY:** Yes  Possible  No  Part of District   
**THREATS TO SITE:** Roads  Development  Zoning  Deterioration   
 No Threat  Other

**COMMENTS:**

**REFERENCES:** NJHSI 0258-18  
 1861 Hopkins Map: J. O'Brien. Heritage News, Sept., 1980 p. 2.  
 1876 Walker Atlas: Bernard O'Brien. 1887 Driving Map: B. O'Brien  
 1902 Robinson Map: D. O'Brien.  
 1913 Bromley Atlas: Frank DePell.  
 1964 Inskeep Map: J. O'Brien 1850, Bernard O'Brien, MD - 1867.  
 CKT List.  
 SRHC files: Cannon note book clipping, Dr. O'Brien obituary, 1-19-01.

**RECORDED BY:** TRB  
**ORGANIZATION:** BCOC&HA

**DATE:** 11-17-83

## SIGNIFICANCE: (continued)

of Northeastern Bergen County p.49), but O'Brien's obituary states that he practiced medicine in the Paramus Valley in the 1850's retiring because of poor health.

While the O'Brien involvement in the mill was constant, other partners changed. At differing times John Denares, Augustus Bogert (c. 1880) and J. Augustus Thurston were partners in the mill operation. The woolen factory closed and the building burned in 1897. While a hosiery mill was erected on its site (see 0258-47), the O'Brien House is the extant structure most closely associated with the history of this hydro-power industrial enterprise.

Bernard O'Brien occupies an important place in local political history. For 6 years he was a Hohokus committeeman. In 1894 he was elected mayor of the newly formed Borough of Saddle River, a position he held for five years. O'Brien died in 1901.



Rubble and frame accessory building and metal windmill. Looking NE. neg. file #19844-16 slide



Frame accessory building Looking N. neg. file #19844-17 slide