

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0666068

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED APR 8 DATA SHEET  
DATE ENTERED JUL 21 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Old Stone House; Webster-Martin-Ireland House

AND/OR COMMON

Old Stone House (preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

310 W. Myles Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Pennsboro

VICINITY OF

Third

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

West Virginia

CODE

54

COUNTY

Ritchie

CODE

085 ✓

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Ritchie County Historical Society, c/o Mrs. Ray Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Route 1, Box 37A

CITY, TOWN

Pennsboro

VICINITY OF

STATE

West Virginia 25415

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Ritchie County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

North Street

CITY, TOWN

Harrisville

STATE

West Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Stone House is presently being developed as a museum/cultural center by the Ritchie County Historical Society. Throughout most of its history it has served as a private residence that has been used as an inn and boarding house. The stone structure, with a long frame addition to the rear, is centrally located on an open lot.

Both stone and frame sections are rectangular in shape. The floor plan of the stone portion is a modified center-hall, single-pile arrangement, probably originally having two rooms on the northwest side and one on the southeast at each level (this has been much changed over the years to accommodate use as an inn). A side hall is along the first floor of the frame addition, and a center-hall pattern is followed on the second floor.

The gable-roofed unit of uncoursed field stone is 2 1/2 stories high and has a five-bay width and two-bay depth. The frame addition, with a hipped roof, has two stories and is irregularly broken into vertical bays, being approximately six by two.

Presently there is a one-story porch across the entire front of the stone section and porches along portions of the sides of the frame section. Windows and doors are irregularly placed, especially in the ell, but there is symmetry in the five openings on the front of each level of the stone building (two dormers have been added at the front of the attic and one has been installed at the rear), the two windows per floor on the northwest side, and the lack of openings on the southeast. Fenestration in the frame unit is random, with single windows in most rooms and series of adjoining windows in some.

Interior end chimneys are at each end of the stone house (that on the northwest side has no cap projecting from the roof at this time); the one to the northwest serves corner fireplaces while that on the southeast is flat against the wall. Two chimneys with corbeled brick caps are in the ell, and each houses two fireplaces on the first floor with the one to the southwest also serving two on the second floor.

The exterior is rather simple and quite devoid of decorative elements. Chamfering at the northwest corner of the frame section, lattice-work around the well housing on the south side, and the corbeled caps of the chimneys in the ell are the most distinctive.

Having served as an inn for a long period of time, it was only natural that the interior of the structure would have been altered and divided on occasion. Most of the present appearance probably dates to changes made early in the twentieth century. The multi-paned windows in the stone section were replaced by 2/2 light sash, paneled facings were put around windows and doors, and many of the old floors were apparently covered with narrower boards. Since the oil and gas industry played such an important role in the development of Ritchie County late in the nineteenth century, heating and lighting systems were upgraded to make use of available natural resources. Although gas lines still run along the walls, the method of

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lighting has since been changed to electricity.

The existing frame section (others had been erected and removed over the years) was added in the twentieth century (with the possible exception of the rear kitchen that still has a brick-lined fireplace with mounted crane) and includes woodwork similar in style to that which altered the stone portion. Unlike in the stone section, however, windows have 1/1 light sash, but trim throughout includes the paneled facings and simple door frames with worked corner blocks. Mantels, stairs and hardware probably date from the same period.

The only outbuilding on the property is the one-story, gable-roofed shed over the cellar at the rear of the ell.

Despite the numerous changes required to suit travelers and local guests over the years, Pennsboro's Old Stone House retains much of its original character.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Community Development
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1810? / 1910? BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Stone House at Pennsboro, Ritchie County, West Virginia, stands as a reminder of the importance, as well as the longevity, of the substantial houses that often came to serve as inns along a developing transportation system. What is the oldest residence still standing in the county has the distinction, too, of having served as the first post office in Pennsboro. In addition, it apparently was used as a meeting place of early sessions of the county court and was opened to church congregations on occasion.

It was about 1800 that John Bunnell is said to have built the first cabin dwelling in what is now Ritchie County. It was on this land, sold to John Webster of New England sometime in the first decade of the nineteenth century, that construction of the Old Stone House was begun shortly after Webster's arrival (traditions vary on whether he completed it before moving west). The property was conveyed to James Martin around 1815.

Martin, a native of Harrison County, had recently married Edith Wilson, daughter of Colonel Benjamin Wilson of the same county, and they removed to Pennsboro to take up residence in the large stone structure. The new owner quickly petitioned the Wood County Court (the community was then in that county) and received a license to keep an "ordinary" at his house. Business could continue under the condition that he provide "good Wholesome and cleanly lodging and Diet for Travellers and stablage fodder and Provender for Horses or pasturage for Horses as the season shall require...and shall not suffer or permit any unlawful Gaming in his House nor on the Sabbath Day suffer or permit and Person to tipple or drink more Than is necessary...." Thus began an enterprise that would continue for more than a century.

The inn probably did a thriving business from the beginning, located as it was on the state road (later to be part of the Northwestern Turnpike) between Clarksburg and Parkersburg. In addition, the house was sufficiently commodious (there were probably several outbuildings and dependencies) and Martin well enough established that when the first post office was opened in the community around 1820, he was named postmaster. After Ritchie County was formed in 1843, it is reported that a number of court sessions were held here with Mrs. Martin serving as stenographer.

Other uses being what they may, though, the Old Stone House was an inn and boarding house, first and foremost, from 1815 until well into the twentieth century. It is said that "Stonewall" Jackson and Sam Houston were among the prominent people who stopped here, and that seems plausible, indeed, when one considers that

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Hawk, Harold H. "Old Stone House in Ritchie was a Stage Stop Years Ago", Parkersburg (W.Va.) News, July 8, 1976.
- Hinkle, Carla. "'Old Stone House' is Rich in History," Parkersburg (W.Va.) News, January 15, 1959.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/2 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Pennsboro, W.Va.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 502390 4348170  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 C           
 E           
 G         

B           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 D           
 F           
 H         

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the intersection of the alley and W. Myles Avenue at the south corner of the stone house, thence northwestward along the street to the property line, northeastward along this line to the rear of the lot, thence to the southeast

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James E. Harding, Historian

ORGANIZATION Historic Preservation Unit  
Department of Culture and History

DATE

March 15, 1978

STREET & NUMBER Science and Culture Center  
Capitol Complex

TELEPHONE

(304) 348-0244

CITY OR TOWN

Charleston,

STATE

West Virginia 25305

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE X

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Clement Moran*

March 30, 1978

TITLE West Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Charles Atkins*

DATE

7.21.78

ATTEST

*R. B. ...*  
 CLERK OF COURSE

*...*  
 DATE 7.21.78

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the turnpike through the area was one of the earliest major roads in western Virginia and eventually extended to Winchester and eastward to Washington. Pennsboro was a major stop, no doubt, for it was located midway between Parkersburg and Clarksburg and was the major town between these points. The fact that the building was divided into numerous rooms and additions were made is also indicative of popularity.

Ownership remained in the Martin family until 1908, when the structure was sold to A. J. Philip Ireland. It was under his proprietorship that alterations took place to give form to what we see today. The stone house had been divided into many rooms by the Martins, but it was Ireland who built the twelve-room frame ell at the rear and renovated the older portion with woodwork and trim in keeping with early twentieth-century tastes. Probably due to the availability of railroad service after 1858 and improvements to transportation facilities in general, the need for a major hotel for transients was lessened by the turn of the century. Because of this the old inn soon became more of a boarding house that included some housekeeping units taken up by local couples, usually young marrieds. Finally, after the death of Mr. Ireland, it ceased serving this function completely.

The Old Stone House remained in the Ireland family until it was purchased by the Ritchie County Historical Society a short time ago. For the part it played in the development of this section of West Virginia and Ritchie County in particular, it has become a local landmark. Adaptive use as a museum and cultural center should revive its importance to the community.

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Internal improvements in Virginia, particularly in northwestern Virginia, prior to 1850 were progressing slowly. Washington's post-Revolutionary War plans for canal and road development had been only partially instituted, and the increasing populace of the northwest raised a constant cry for state and federal assistance in improvements.

In 1831, with the backing of a solidly organized Board of Public Works at Richmond, the Northwestern Turnpike, from Parkersburg to Winchester, was planned and financially supported. By 1838 it was completed, all the while being touted as an excellent facility meant to rival the National Road to the north. With a western terminus on the Ohio River and access to the Valley of Virginia and the national capital in the east, the road became heavily traveled as a nationally important through route strongly associated with the westward movement and early United States transportation history.

The town of Pennsboro had become the main center of activity between Parkersburg and Clarksburg in northwestern Virginia even prior to completion of the Northwestern Turnpike in 1838. The large stone inn operated by James Martin was a major stopping place for through travelers from the Ohio country and west who were heading to all eastern points and vice versa. And it was a convenient day's travel between the above towns, thus assuring that those passing through would almost certainly stop for refreshments and a night's lodging. Included in the list of visitors were numerous national figures on their way to and from congressional sessions in Washington or important political and business meetings in the east.

In this manner, the Old Stone House at Pennsboro played a role transcending even state lines. It was a major stopping and meeting place on a major road that witnessed the transportation of significant people attending to important business.

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Lowther, Minnie Kendall. History of Ritchie County. N.p., 1911 (Republication, 1967).

Morgantown, W.Va. West Virginia Collection, West Virginia University Library. Writers' Project Files and Wood County Court Records.

Sweeney, Edwin. "Ritchie Historical Society to Acquire Elegant Old Landmark," Sunday Exponent-Telegram (Clarksburg, W.Va.), September 26, 1976.

White, Helen W. "Webster Built Famous Old Stone House," Parkersburg (W.Va.) News, November 24, 1963.



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to the alley, and southwestward along the alley to its intersection with W. Myles Avenue. (The lot is approximately 175' x 125'.)