

Index

Introduction	2
Part one: The Stone House Erected	3
Part two: General Whidden Takes the Helm	6
Part three: The Advent of the Livingstones	8
Part four: Breathing Life into Stone	14
Part five: Four Seasons at the Stone House	15

Introduction

Settled by enterprising colonials in the earliest days of the nation, the rugged lands of Eastern Maine are home to a number of architecturally and historically fascinating structures. Many of these buildings still remain, and it's both a pleasure and a possibility to spend gratuitous amounts of time admiring the multitude of Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Federalist, and Italianate structures found along the old city roads.

Amongst these distinguished buildings, some examples exist that defy traditional classification due to their outright uniqueness. One such structure is the Stone House, located next to the river St. Croix. So-named for being composed primarily of locally quarried granite stone, the Stone House has stood for almost two centuries on the azure banks of the river's estuary.

The story of the Stone House is one that pays testament to the changing times. Built in the age of expansion and speculation to promote the briefly booming granite trade, the structure fell into disrepair not long after its construction. Under new ownership, it was used as a marine store, a shipping wharf for granite, and a summer residence for several decades. A century and a half after it was built, the house finally enjoyed its first year-round residents, Brand and Mary Livingstone.

Brand and Mary conducted numerous renovations to the building to make it suitable for all seasons, and in 1984, the Stone House was registered in the registry of national historic homes. Brand has kept detailed records of the house and compiled extensive information on its former inhabitants. Much of this pamphlet is based on his research.

Written by Lura Jackson of the St. Croix Historical Society, 2015.

Part One: The Stone House Erected

While detailed information on the intention and initial construction of the Stone House does not exist, the facts that are available allow us to frame a fascinating impression of its erection. Built at the start of the 19th century from massive pieces of hand-cut granite blocks weighing as much as a ton or more, the two-and-a-half story structure looms over the riverbank like a medieval fortification. How and why was such a building built, and by who?

To answer that question, we'll begin with a look at the first owner of the property.

At the beginning of the 1800s, the United States was expanding rapidly. The Louisiana territories were purchased in 1803 and the Lewis and Clark expedition traveled to the distant West Coast a few years later. The value of the young nation's natural resources was becoming rapidly apparent, and industries were soon set in motion to take advantage of the land's bounty.

In the northeastern part of Massachusetts—a vast, unclaimed land that would later become Maine—enterprising families set out to forge a living on the wild frontier. Drawn by the tales of guides and fur trappers, settlers discovered a land resplendent with lumber, fish, and granite. As more and more families arrived, the settlements steadily grew into villages.

One of the first to arrive as Calais became officially organized as a city was Theodore Jellison, a young man from Ellsworth. In his early twenties, Theodore was fourth of fourteen children, and he may have worked in his father's saw mill in Ellsworth during his youth.

During his first years in Calais, Theodore bought and sold properties for income until he met Shubael Downes. Among his many professions (including mayor, church deacon, and state senator), Downes was also an entrepreneur that started the

successful Calais Inn and Tavern. Theodore found steady employment at the inn for several years.

In 1817, Theodore married a young girl by the name of Mary Christopher, who had caught his fancy earlier that year. The couple became civically active with Theodore participating in a number of committees consistently until 1823, when his involvement noticeably drops.

Tax records from this time indicate that Theodore most likely made a land purchase, presumably along the St. Croix River where the Stone House now sits. In 1825, he was charged taxes for a pair of oxen, which would certainly be an advantageous possession for the purpose of moving blocks of solid granite.

In the same year, Theodore was taxed for a wharf. The wharf was the first constructed on the American side of “the Ledge”, located at the head of navigable tide for the sailing schooners of the time. Granite quarries lined both sides of the river, and from these two clues we can gain an inkling of Theodore’s intentions. Demand for granite was on the rise in the expanding cities to the south. Having an ample source connected to a private wharf would certainly have seemed like a viable business investment.

The development of the design of the Stone House remains open to speculation, though it was evidently intended to showcase the construction that could be accomplished with granite stone. There were a number of Scottish and Italian immigrants in the area at the time, many of whom worked in the local granite quarries. Traditional techniques exist in both countries that lend to the cutting and shaping of stone for the purposes of building, and it is a strong possibility that Theodore employed the talents of at least one master stoneworker for the task. A team of men would have been required to extract and transport the stone, a task aided by the

acquisition of another pair of oxen in 1826. A year later, Theodore claimed no oxen, indicating the completion of the work.

When the work was completed, a two-and-a-half story structure stood proudly on the bank of the river. With a foundation measuring 31' x 41' made from a double layer of granite blocks 13" thick at the foundation, the Stone House was built to last. An unused foundation stone measuring 18" x 22" with a length of 56" was unearthed in later years; an estimated 80 stones of that size would have been needed to complete the first two levels of the wall. The stones have remained in place with minimal shifting for nearly two centuries.

The first floor of the house is held up by twelve enormous wooden beams measuring 8"x8" with a length of 26'. The twelve beams run west to east and are crossed by two carrying beams of a similar size. Each beam was hand cut with an adze; the cutting marks remain highly visible.

The Stone House was artfully designed to accommodate the drop in elevation resulting from the sharp slope of the riverbank. Viewing the house from the south as one approaches it from the street, it appears to be an unassuming cottage of a story and a half. Viewed from the river, however, the full stature of the house can clearly be seen.

The basement was designed to be a ship chandlery and general store providing the basic amenities necessary for naval transport. Immediately next to the basement, a wooden wharf measuring approximately 125' long and 18' wide extended into the river.

What seemed like a promising investment rapidly went sour with the advent of the steam-powered tugboat in combination with the construction of several wharves in Calais. The tugs enabled cargo vessels to travel further up the river to Calais, where

a newly installed railroad dramatically improved the transport of lumber.

Within a few years' time, Theodore was bankrupt and subsequently was unable to settle his debts. The Stone House and its land were sold for \$500 at a sheriff's auction on December 7th, 1832. The new owners were Isaac and John Pool, merchants from Calais.

The Pools most likely purchased the Stone House as an investment; no record exists of the brothers actually inhabiting the property. For the next four years, the house deteriorated from its exposure to the elements until being purchased by its next owners, who would thrive in the home for four decades.

Part Two: General Whidden Takes the Helm

On March 17, 1836, the Stone House was purchased by Rendol Whidden for the amount of \$1,987. At the age of 46, Rendol Whidden had spent his early life as a farmer before heading to Calais to ply his hand at the entrepreneurial trade. He would eventually purchase several properties in the Calais area including multiple quarries located near the Stone House.

The same year Rendol purchased the Stone House, he and Seth Tweed launched the Washington County Bank with a capital of \$50,000. Unfortunately, neither man could claim any banking experience, and the market crash of 1837 resulted in disaster for the new bank. Rendol's coffers survived the experience and he would later be hailed as the "wealthiest man in town".

In 1839, Rendol joined the state legislature and was appointed quartermaster of the Calais militia. In 1844 he was elected Major General, thereafter being known by most as "General" Whidden. In 1854 he became a state senator, and in 1861 he assisted in raising the first company of volunteers for the Civil War in Calais.

Though the unsealed and uninsulated Stone House was clearly not suitable for winter dwelling, Rendol and his family occupied the residence throughout the spring, summer, and fall. He was joined by his wife Sarah and his children, Charles, Rendol, Edgar, Amy, and Maria. During the winter months, the family stayed at another residence in Calais.

The Whidden family found great pleasure in the Stone House. The children delighted in the deep window sills produced by the 26" walls, enabling two of them to curl up and be entirely hidden by the draperies. The river provided a constant source of adventure as well as a steady supply of seafood as the children happily fished, dug clams, and caught crabs. Sarah maintained a vegetable garden, and the family owned multiple livestock for fresh dairy products and eggs. Water was drawn from a shallow well located 400' from the house.

Over the four decades of their ownership, the Whiddens made various modifications to make the home more habitable. The large open fire place in the kitchen and accompanying Dutch oven for baking proved inadequate for providing food for seven people, and a modern cooking stove was clearly needed. To meet this need, an abandoned one-story building was located on the County Road and transported via oxen to the Stone House property. The building was attached to the west face of the Stone House as an ell, providing a larger kitchen space that could accommodate a modern stove. Other modifications include the addition of a wrap-around pole porch to the exterior of the building, and the construction of out-buildings for the storage of firewood, livestock, and carriages.

In 1872, thirty-six years after purchasing the Stone House, Sarah Whidden died at the age of eighty-three. Rendol continued to own the property until selling it a few years later in 1875. A robust man, he would later die in March of 1887 at the age of 96.

Part Three: The Advent of the Livingstones

On December 10th, 1875 the Stone House was claimed by the family that continues to own it today for the amount of \$3,500. The appropriately-named Livingstones were originally a family of nine that had been living previously in Calais proper at the corner of Washington and Swan. James and Julia were joined by their children, Arthur, Frank, William, Mabel, Sarah, James, Charles, Sophia, and Guy.

At thirty-eight years of age, patriarch James made his living working as a shipsmith on the banks of the St. Croix, though his health had deteriorated as a result. At the doctor's recommendation that he move south to allow his lungs to recover, the family began to consider a move to warmer climates. When the Stone House became available at a favorable price, the decision was made that the fresh air and outdoor living that the home promised would be remedy enough.

Despite the family's instant appreciation of the new home, it remained unlivable during the winter months. The Livingstones maintained their in-town residence for the colder season while returning to the Stone House as soon as conditions permitted.

Julia was a particularly willful and strong woman, and she more than demonstrated her capability of handling an ill husband and nine children. Even when disaster struck and two-year old William drowned in the well in 1876, Julia kept the family going. So pronounced was her humane spirit that she did not hesitate to take in the orphaned son of a neighbor that had been lost at sea, by the name of John Coe.

The eight surviving Livingstone children found much to explore in the Stone House and its surrounding grounds of many acres. Like the Whiddens before them, the children took great pleasure in growing their own meats and vegetables, digging for

clams, and fishing for flounders. The powerful tides of the Passamaquoddy Bay pull the river in and out two times a day, causing a shift of 24' in its height (28' in the spring). The exposed bed of the river's estuary proved exceptional for both clams and crabs, while the access to the bay allowed for plentiful boating opportunities.

The family maintained a steady supply of vegetables in the cleared six acres of fields and storage rooms, along with chickens and other livestock. After young William drowned in the well, a new source of water was located in a nearby quarry spring south of County Road. Wooden barrels were used to collect the water, and a piping system delivered it down the hill toward the Stone House. A horse and carriage provided transport for the five miles into Calais.

Over the course of their time at the Stone House, Julia and James performed other modifications to the home for the family's comfort. One such modification splendidly reveals Julia's strong-willed character. In need of a new stove in the kitchen to produce her famous rolled oat bread, Julia insisted that a new one be installed. James said he saw no way for the old stove to be removed. Julia stated that she knew a way and called for the sledgehammer to be brought in. Sledgehammer in hand, she proceeded to demolish the old iron stove, rendering it into pieces small enough to easily fit out of the front door.

Over the decades, the children grew up and moved away, though some of them continued to return to the Stone House on a regular basis. The voices of a new generation of Livingstones could soon be heard echoing in its granite halls.

In 1917, Charles married a woman by the name of Hilda Brandegee, and the couple enjoyed their honeymoon at the Stone House. Their stay was memorable enough that they decided to

build a log camp about 1000' feet away from the house proper. Over the years, the pair would return each summer to the Stone House, driving their three young boys (Phillip, David, and Brand) up from Massachusetts to permit them the benefit of the rural setting.

The environment provided by the Stone House proved favorable to James's health, and he would live to the ripe age of eighty-five. His endurance improved significantly in the country despite the continuation of his employment at the Calais docks. He died on August 23rd, 1922, sitting in a rocking chair on the porch after having spent the morning working in the fields.

Frank, the second eldest son, became a successful lawyer in Boston after apprenticing in Calais. His law office provided a way-station for many of the Livingstone children to broaden their horizons. Frank became well-acquainted with a talented architect in Washington D.C. and commissioned him to design a modern porch for the Stone House, completed in 1925. The porch has an attached screened-in sleeping room measuring 10' x 13', providing a comfortable place to enjoy the gentle river breezes. The construction of the porch enabled the addition of two dormer windows upstairs, increasing the natural lighting and airflow. The porch is supported by five 8" x 8" granite columns with a length of 7' each, in keeping with the original design of the house.

In the late 1920s, light was provided by kerosene lamps while heat was produced from the kitchen wood stove and fireplaces. The thick granite walls were slow to heat but similarly slow to cool, and with a steady supply of wood, a comfortable temperature could be reached. The interior walls were covered in laths and plaster, but there was no room for insulation. Upwards of 15-20 cords of wood may have been needed over the spring, summer, and fall, all of it harvested from their wooded lands.

The extended family enjoyed many happy summers at the Stone House, with Mabel and her husband Peck frequently bringing their children and grandchildren to join in the experience. At some point, Mabel and Peck constructed a small camp near the ice house, giving themselves and their children a place to get away from the occasionally crowded main building. The living room was the location of several grand dances in the 1920s, the evidence of which still remains in the worn floors.

Around the early 1930s, electricity was installed on the road leading east of Calais, and two-wire power was promptly run to the Stone House and its ell. The arrival of electricity improved living greatly at the house, and the two-wire system lasted well into the 1970s when rust finally claimed it.

In 1932, after many happy decades summering at the Stone House, Julia passed away. The house was bequeathed to three children that she believed had enough interest and resources to continue caring for it: Frank, Mabel, and Charles. In the winter months, Mabel lived in nearby Milltown, New Brunswick, and she was able to keep a close eye on the Stone House. Charles lived in Massachusetts and Frank lived in Washington, DC, though both enjoyed commuting regularly to the family home.

In 1934, Charles ordered the digging of a foundation ditch around the north wall of the basement to improve drainage. Oscar Olsson was hired for the task. No longer used as a marine store, the basement had become the storage place for old mattresses and furniture. Under Charles's leadership, the basement was cleared of refuse, leveled, and topped with 6" of cement. The new space was habitable and provided a social space complemented by the massive basement fireplace.

Additional repairs to the Stone House and its grounds continued for several years. In 1935, the granite shore and pier was rebuilt by Olsson and his crew, and in 1936, the team built a support to augment the foundation of the north wall. In 1940, Olsson was hired again to complete the granite wharf, which had a width and length of 15'.

In 1935, the family's affection for boats became apparent with the purchase of the *Worry*, a boat built by the Whalen Brothers of Red Beach. The 30' boat was often moored in front of the Stone House, and provided the family and their guests with many day and overnight trips along the river and around the bay.

A boat house capable of housing the *Worry* was built just down the river in 1939. The boat house measured approximately 40' long and 15' wide and it had a second story with a dormitory area.

On February 27, 1937, Frank passed away in Washington, D.C. from a sudden heart attack. His share of the property was given to Mabel and Charles.

It was in this time period of the late 1930s that the Stone House resounded with melodious community concerts put on by the Livingstones. Hilda played the violin with niece Ellen Mundhank on the piano. Brand played the clarinet and David played the flute. The public was invited and many guests came to enjoy the entertainment.

With the arrival of World War II, development of the Stone House fairly ceased. Brand was inducted into the army and was told he would be sent overseas. Before departing, he proposed to his sweetheart, Mary Seeger, and she agreed. The two were married on short notice on July 18th, 1943, three weeks before

Brand landed on the shores of England, followed by France, Belgium, and then Germany. Two years later, Brand and Mary returned to the Stone House, finding peace in the rural landscape while the devastation of war continued overseas.

Mary was a skilled artist trained at the Massachusetts School of Art in Boston. She worked as a graphic designer briefly before working with the Harvard Radio Research Company. She resigned when she married Brand, and thereafter spent much of her time appreciating and painting the splendid natural scenery she found in northeastern Maine. During her time at the Stone House, Mary was a great boon to the community, becoming a founding member of the Eastport Art Gallery as well as participating actively with local gardening clubs. She sold and displayed hundreds of paintings, most often depicting scenes of wild majesty that she saw with her artist's eye as she traveled along the rugged coast.

In the late 1940s, Mabel's eldest son, George Haley, built a camp on the western edge of the Stone House property. Since George did not own the land the camp was built on, Phillip and Brand decided to give a total of three acres to him. The camp served the Haley family well until being torn down in the 1960s. After George died, it was left to his son, Bill, who later sold it to a member of the DelMonaco family. The DelMonacos did not rebuild on the land, but later sold it to Ellen (Livingstone) Mundhank Haycock.

Charles retired from his position as Vice President of the Vellumoid Company in Massachusetts in the early 1950s, and wanted to do a full rehabilitation of the Stone House at that time. However, since his sister Mabel and her family continue to utilize it, he made the decision to avoid disrupting their life. Mabel had developed vegetable and flower gardens there, and she enjoyed

spending afternoons cooking with her mother's stove. Charles located an alternative house in Red Beach and he and Hilda relocated there from their Massachusetts home.

In the late 1950s, Mabel could no longer afford the taxes and expenses of the property, and so she deeded her share of the Stone House to Charles. Charles would pass away on January 27th, 1963, leaving his properties to his three sons. David was given the Red Beach Property, Phillip was given the home in Massachusetts and half of the land by the Stone House, and Brand was given the Stone House itself and its remaining land.

Once in Brand and Mary's hands, the Stone House would find itself imbued with new vitality as the couple gradually sought to turn the residence into a year-round home.

Part Four: Breathing Life into Stone

It took several years for the legal formalities to be completed, and it wasn't until 1969 that Brand was given the deed to the Stone House. As soon as the ownership was official, Brand and Mary took out a loan from the Calais bank to begin the considerable rehabilitation needed by the old house. While the intention initially wasn't to move to the house permanently, the shifting politics at the New Hampshire paper mill that Brand worked at led the couple to the decision that relocation was in order.

From 1970-1976, Brand and his family camped out during the warm months, dedicating all of their time to the home. Several projects were planned and completed during that time, including the installation of an open fireplace in the kitchen, the demolition and reconstruction of a new ell in the footprint of the old one, the complete rewiring of the structure to meet Calais city code, the

installation of a new hot water system, the addition of a new septic system and the digging of a new well, the erection of a new barn, and the reconstruction of the stone wharf. Many efforts were taken to improving the sealing and heating of the house, including adding storm windows, adding insulation to the roof and attic space, and installing an oil furnace as well as an electric heating system for the upstairs.

Significant structural changes were completed during the rehabilitation. Rather than keeping the large room adjacent to the front entryway, the room was divided to allow the creation of a circular staircase leading to the basement. Prior to the installation of the staircase, it was necessary to go outside to get into the basement, a task that seemed undesirable in the snowy season. A lavatory was also added in the space, and a small downstairs bedroom was created next to the living room.

In 1977, the rehabilitation was complete, and the Stone House saw its first year-round residents.

Part Five: Four Seasons at the Stone House

Despite the good intentions of winterizing and insulating the 150-year old house, the first winter proved to be a challenge. Brand recalls it as being cold and expensive, with the family essentially living in the kitchen provided by the newly constructed and well-insulated ell. The open fireplace that had been added to the kitchen was inadequate for heating, and it was replaced by a cast iron stove. The fireplace was slated over in the same year. A fire-safe alcove was created in its location, thus fashioning an area that Mary would come to love for the opportunity it gave her to practice traditional cooking. So great was her affection for the art that she never used the electric cooking stove until one unusually warm summer.

As efforts to improve insulation continued, year-round living at the Stone House became more and more comfortable. Mary maintained the exterior gardens and engaged herself with her art while Brand harvested wood for the stove and spent time sailing and exploring the bay as well as playing his musical instruments. Brand would often set traps for crabs and lobsters, and he frequently caught halibut from his boat. One year, he caught a fifty-pound halibut that lasted the couple all winter.

Repairs continued throughout the early years of Brand and Mary's inhabitation of the Stone House. In 1980, the porch was stabilized after having gradually shifted due to the weight of ice. In the 1984, the right hand of the granite wharf was rebuilt after having collapsed. That same year saw the entry of the Stone House into the National Historic Registry.

Mary and Brand did significant work to restore the interior of the Stone House during their stay. One project that presented an interesting challenge was the replacement of the original wallpaper in the entryway. After close examination, it was determined that the faded wallpaper depicted the first manned flight of a hot air balloon in 1783 over Paris. Mary located a wallpaper store in Vermont that carried a reproduction of the same print, and the pair celebrated in its restoration.

For the next few decades, the couple enjoyed a happy existence on the banks of the St. Croix River. The two had an active social life and never found themselves wanting for something to do. Improvements continued to be added such as a greenhouse in 1997 and a woodshed designed by Mary and added in 2001.

After the turn of the millennium, Mary's health began to fade. As the need for reliable backup electricity became apparent, a

generator was installed in the woodshed. The need for more warmth led to the purchase of a propane kitchen heater in 2004.

In that same year, the deteriorated extension under the east basement door and porch was repaired. Bricks were taken up and the granite wall was taken down with the stones saved to the side. When the footing was removed, Brand was surprised to find a broken glass bottle filled with liquid and containing documents. After drying out the documents, he found that one was a note written by his uncle Frank that listed the names of his siblings. Brand included an updated listing of the house's inhabitants along with the old note in a plastic pipe, which was placed into the restored footing.

On September 20th, 2006, Mary passed away at the Stone House after a long struggle with a respiratory illness. Deeply affected by her loss, Brand chose to remain living on his own at the property that the couple had spent so many productive and peaceful years residing in.

Brand's Livingstone luck has been a valuable boon since that date. One morning in 2008, he was walking out on the stone pier enjoying the day. He went into the house for breakfast, and upon completing it, returned to find that a portion of the wharf had collapsed in the short interim. The wharf was rebuilt that same year.

Now approaching the middle of his ninth decade, Brand remains an example of the vitality that can be accomplished when one commits themselves to a simple yet industrious lifestyle. He continues to maintain the grounds single-handedly, taking full advantage of machinery to mow the fields and haul supplies. The vegetable and floral gardens continue to produce a steady supply of

food and beauty, and Brand delights in sharing the grounds with guests.

Nearly two centuries after it was constructed, the Stone House now stands transformed from an unloved derelict building to a home blessed with the affection of its residents. Reports from engineers over the years have labeled the house to be a testament to the skill of its original builders, a quality that will continue to lend to the structure's endurance.

To view photos of the Stone House, enter the following URL into your browser's address bar:

livingstonehouse.weebly.com