

= Old Stone House (Washington , D.C.) =

The Old Stone House is the oldest unchanged building in Washington , D.C. , United States . The house is also Washington 's last Pre @-@ Revolutionary Colonial building on its original foundation . Built in 1765 , Old Stone House is located at 3051 M Street , Northwest in the Georgetown neighborhood . Unlike many Colonial homes in the area , sentimental local folklore preserved the Old Stone House from being demolished .

The Old Stone House was constructed in three phases during the 18th century and is an example of vernacular architecture . During its history , the house was started as a one @-@ story building and gradually became a used car dealership later . After a renovation by the National Park Service (NPS) in the 1950s , the Old Stone House was turned into a house museum . The Old Stone House stands among the neighborhood 's stores and restaurants as an example of local history for tourists , shoppers , and students . The building is part of the Rock Creek Parkway urban natural area and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 . The Old Stone House is also a contributing property to the Georgetown Historic District , a National Historic Landmark . Today , the home is 85 % original to its 18th @-@ century construction .

= = History = =

In 1764 , Christopher and Rachel Layman bought Lot Three , a piece of land in Georgetown 's commercial district . They paid £ 1 10s. and financed the construction of a simple one @-@ room house the following year . The lot faced Bridge Street , now known as M Street , NW . The Laymans ' only possessions were Christopher 's tools , a stove , Bibles , and some furniture . When Christopher died unexpectedly in 1765 , Rachel remarried two years later and sold the house to another widow , Cassandra Chew .

Chew was a member of the upper @-@ middle class and owned several properties in and around Georgetown . Because of her wealth , Chew was able to finance the construction of a rear kitchen in 1767 and a second floor between 1767 and 1775 . The third floor originated in a property line dispute during the 1790s : the original west wall had been constructed six feet beyond the property line and had to be dismantled . Chew used the opportunity to add the upper floor and was completed by 1790 .

Following the American Revolutionary War , government officials had carved out land from Virginia and Maryland to use as the new nation 's capital . Pierre Charles L 'Enfant , appointed by President George Washington to design the city layout , arrived in Georgetown on March 9 , 1791 and began his work . Washington and L 'Enfant held their meetings at Suter 's Tavern , a former building owned by John Suter near 31st and K Streets , NW . At the time , John Suter Jr. was renting a room at the Old Stone House and for many years , locals believed that Washington and L 'Enfant had actually met at the Old Stone House instead . This folklore is the reason the house was never demolished , and for many years a sign hung over the front door which said , " George Washington 's Headquarters . " After some research done by the National Park Service , they found out that the folklore was not true . By that time they had they found that out , they already owned the House and the property .

When Chew died in 1807 , she bequeathed Old Stone House to one of her daughters , Mary Smith Brumley , who became the first of many owners who operated businesses out of the house . Like her mother , Brumley was a businesswoman and ran a successful merchant 's shop inside the home . The house , then known as the Layman home , remained in the family until 1875 .

Over the years , the house had been used as a shop for hats , tailors , locksmiths , clockmakers , house roofers and house painters . The Old Stone House was still privately owned in 1953 ? serving as used car dealership that used the back yard as a parking lot ? when the Federal government purchased the property for \$ 90 @,@ 000 (\$ 796 @,@ 000 today) and turned it over to the National Park Service . Between 1953 and 1960 the NPS removed the majority of 19th and 20th century intrusions to the home and the parking lot was turned into an English garden .

After the renovation , the Old Stone House was opened to the public in 1960 . It became a part of

the George Washington Memorial Parkway , but stewardship of the house was later transferred to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park . In the late 1980s stewardship of the Old Stone House was once again transferred , this time to the Rock Creek Park .

= = Architecture = =

Old Stone House is an example of vernacular architecture . The exterior of the house , constructed of blue granite and fieldstone , was quarried from a location two miles away near the Potomac River . The walls range from two to three feet thick . The oak used in the house was harvested from forests that were once predominant in Georgetown .

On the first floor , the original roof and front door were constructed of solid oak and cut with a pit saw . Marks left by the large saw can be seen on the first floor . The kitchen walls and fireplace contain irregular stones that were stacked and affixed with a mortar consisting of sand , lime , ash , and water . The kitchen 's hearth is large enough to heat the entire house .

The second floor architecture differs significantly from the first floor since Chew was able to afford higher quality building material . A second doorway and staircase were constructed for family members and guests . The original entrance was then reserved for workmen and deliveries . There are three rooms located on this floor , the dining room , a bedroom , and the parlor . The hallway between the dining room and two front rooms features a high ceiling for ventilation in Georgetown 's hot summers . The second floor walls were plastered and painted . Chair rails were added to prevent damage to the walls . In the dining room , a dumbwaiter concealed by recessed pine cabinetry delivered food from the kitchen below . A clock believed to have been made by John Suter Jr . , located in the dining room , is the only original piece of furniture left in the house . The clock dates back to the early 19th century . The bedroom features a carved wooden mantle that is believed to be of French origin .

The third floor , constructed of brick , was a private space . It was completed around 1790 . It is much plainer than the second floor , with unfinished paneling and unpainted walls . There are three rooms on this floor , believed to be children 's bedrooms and a storage area . A closet is attached to the third @-@ floor bedroom , an unusual feature in 18th @-@ century colonial houses . Closets were considered to be rooms by the British monarchy and therefore were subject to a " closet tax " . Due to it being built after the Revolutionary War , the Old Stone House 's closet was not subject to the tax .

The Colonial Revival garden , located behind the house and bordered by a white picket fence , is 399 feet (122 m) deep and 76 feet (23 m) wide . Roses , perennials , and bulbs are located throughout the garden .

= = Current usage = =

Visitors are greeted by Park Rangers who tell the history of one of the oldest structures in Washington DC . The kitchen , parlor and bedrooms , furnished as they would have been in the late 18th century , are open for viewing . A gift shop operated by Eastern National is located inside the front room of the house . The garden is used for simple wedding ceremonies and as an area for locals and tourists to rest while shopping or to enjoy a lunch break . The building is open to the public seven days a week , from 11 : 00am to 6 : 00pm (eastern time) and the garden is open every day from dawn until dusk .