

HA-1477

c. 1888

French-Stephens House
539 Rock Spring
Bel Air
private

This elegant L-shaped front gable Victorian house has a typical floor plan: side hall and parlor in the front building, dining room the whole width of the back building, and kitchen behind. The kitchen shed addition has been raised to two full stories and a single story addition with bedroom and bath added to that. An unusual second story bay window is on the south side.

The house has recently been renovated into law offices.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC
French-Stephens House
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
539 Rock Spring 1st
CITY, TOWN CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Bel Air VICINITY OF
STATE COUNTY
Maryland Harford

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: law office

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Lester Jones Telephone #: 838-3131
STREET & NUMBER
539 Rock Spring
CITY, TOWN STATE, zip code
Bel Air VICINITY OF Maryland 21014

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Harford County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
Main Street
CITY, TOWN STATE
Bel Air Maryland

Liber #:
Folio #:

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
DATE
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN STATE
_FEDERAL _STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This two and a half story, three bay, aluminum sided house is at 539 Rock Spring Avenue in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. It has a gable roof and a front gable with a round-headed 2/2 double-hung sash window in it. The side gables have flat 2/2 windows; all the other windows in the main block and back building are also 2/2 except for the two front (west) windows which are 2/4. Behind the back building and attached to the northeast corner of it is a single story gable roofed cinderblock addition. It has a horizontal sliding glass and aluminum window high in north and south elevations and a large multi-paned picture window in the rear (east) elevation. All windows in the frame house except the one in the front gable have louvered shutters.

The front door is in the north bay of the west elevation, a 9 pane over 2 panel door. Sheltering the door is a one bay gable-roofed porch on square posts. It is probably 20th century.

From the back of the house one can see that the original gable-roofed back building was only one bay wide (the north bay). It has been extended another bay to the south, perhaps with the enclosure of a two story porch, for that portion has a shed roof. There is a unique second story hexagonal bay window in the second story. It overhangs a side 9 pane over 2 panel door which is painted scarlet. There is another door, a 6 pane over 2 panel door in the south bay of the rear (east) elevation. A corbel cap chimney is in the middle of the ridge of the original back building.

The house has a north side hall in the main block. An open-string dog-leg staircase with turned balusters and a slender Victorian newel rises along the north wall. To the south, a pair of French doors leads to the former parlor. To the rear (east) is the former dining room, and the kitchen which occupy the back building. To the rear of that, in the single story addition is a bath and a large room with a recent granite fireplace which takes up most of the north wall. This addition was built to accommodate the invalid wife of an owner before the Turners, one of the Stephens ladies.

The woodwork is entirely plain. The house was built for central heating, so there are no fireplaces in the frame section. The dining room steam radiator has a large plate or bread warming section.

The second floor has three bedrooms, a hall room, and a bath.

Mr. Jones and his associate have their offices downstairs. The upstairs is being renovated. Jones will either rent those rooms or take another associate.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1888

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This handsome house is a typical Victorian house from the front, but the south elevation of the back building has a unique hexagonal bay window in the second story.

The house was built by William A. French around 1888 on land he bought from next door neighbor James Dean for \$240 (63/16). By 1891 the house was there. Mr. French got into financial difficulties, and in 1896 the house was sold to Rebecca Treadwell for \$950 (89/453). That suggests a very small house. Perhaps the back building had not yet been built. In 1899 Mrs. Treadwell sold it to John Reckord for \$600 and the assumption of a \$450 mortgage (96/462). It appears Mrs. Treadwell may have added to the house.

Reckord sold the house to his daughter Jessie in 1901 (102/345). She paid \$1500. Jessie Reckord by then Mrs. William West sold it to Clinton Reckord (a brother?) in 1911 for \$2000 (134/284). Reckord and his wife sold it to Charles T. Stephens in 1918 (160/71). Stephens bought the lot next door to the south and the lot achieved its present size. Unfortunately Stephens defaulted on a mortgage to Edwin Webster and the property was sold to F. Royston Stifler in 1923/(186/150). In 1925 Mrs. Stephens regained the property (195/340). By 1972 both Mr. and Mrs. Stephens were dead. Charles T. Stephens, Jr. sold it to his wife Catherine (890/554). Mrs. Stephens, then Catherine Burcham, sold it to Robert N. Turner, Jr. (965/353). Turner has just recently (1979) sold it to lawyer Lester Jones who has his office there.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property occupies parcel #174 in the Town of Bel Air.

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

STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Marilynn Larew, Architectural Historian

11 December 1979

ORGANIZATION

Town of Bel Air

DATE

838-8700

STREET & NUMBER

39 Hickory Avenue

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

TITLE: 539 Rock Spring

1979
Robert N. Turner, Jr. & Joan
to
Lester Jones

965/353 8 January 1975
Catherine S. Burcham, formerly Catherine B.
Stephens
to
Robert N. Turner, Jr., & Joan

890/554 28 January 1972
Charles T. Stephens, Jr., Personal
Representative of the Estate of Charles
Theodore Stephens
to
Catherine B. Stephens
Both Charles T. Stephens and Marguerite
T. Stephens are dead.

359/375 28 June 1951
Anna Lee Wilson
to
Charles and Marguerite Stephens
straw

359/374 28 June 1951
Marguerite Stephens
to
Anne Lee Wilson

195/340 31 December 1925
F. Royston Stifler and Catherine
to
Marguerite T. Stephens

186/150 31 December 1923
Edwin H. Webster, assignee

to
 F. Royston Stifler
 defaulted mortgage
 2 parcels the house is on #1

#1
 160/71

4 May 1918
 Clinton L. Reckord & Isabel
 to
 Charles T. Stephens

134/284

26 September 1911
 Jessie Reckord West & William
 to
 Clinton Reckord
 \$2000

102/345

9 September 1901
 John H. Reckord & Lydia
 to
 Jessie G. Reckord (daughter)
 \$1500

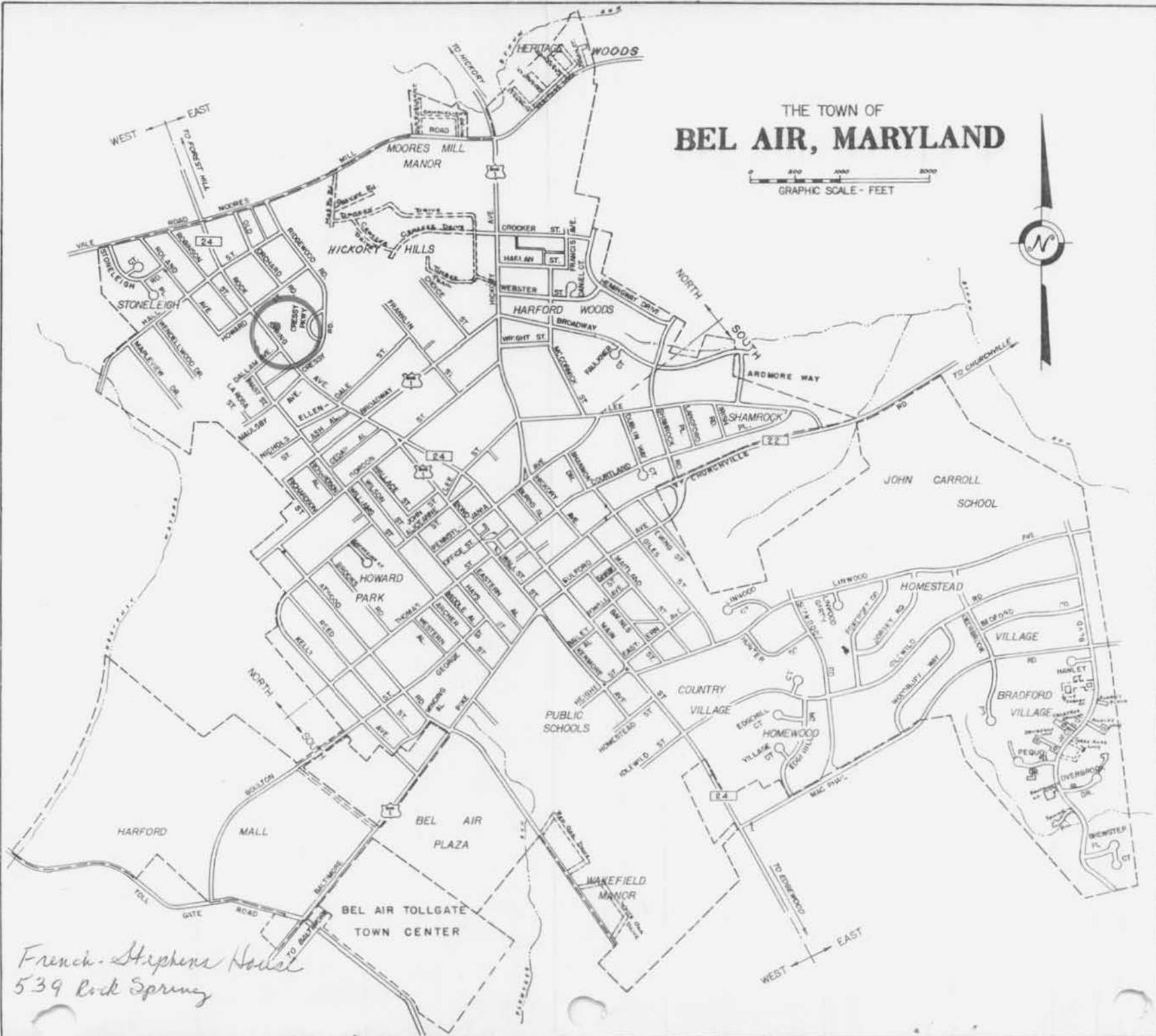
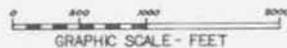
96/462

31 July 1899
 R. Rebecca Treadwell & William of
 Baltimore City
 to
 John Reckord
 \$600 & 450 mortgage (89/457)

89/453

12 December 1896
 S. A. Williams, trustee
 to
 R. Rebecca Treadwell
 \$950
 trustee in Frank H. Jacobs vs. William A.
 French
 equity 52/90 improvements on lot

THE TOWN OF
BEL AIR, MARYLAND



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539 Rock Spring