



Samuel Ferris House c.1760



1 Cary Road, Riverside, CT (as viewed from the Post Road)

The Samuel Ferris House, built c.1760, is the only eighteenth-century building remaining in private hands on the Post Road/Putnam Avenues in Greenwich. Although some development took place along this thoroughfare in the nineteenth century, most of the road between Stamford and the New York border was developed in the twentieth century. Large farm acreages were subdivided and most of the historic farmhouses were demolished. It is not known how many houses like the Ferris House were lost, but it is the only surviving Colonial house in this area today.



The house was built about 1760 by Samuel Ferris (1732/33–1798) soon after his marriage to Susannah Peck (1734–1798). He was the grandson of one of the original patentees of the Town of Greenwich and great grandson of Jeffrey Ferris (1610–1666). In 1947 the property was sold to the Town of Greenwich by Mabel Louise Olmstead ending almost two centuries of ownership by the Ferris family. It was at this time that the veterans’ housing was constructed on the about 30 acres of the site’s contiguous farmland,

leaving the house untouched on its one-acre lot. In 1957 the Town sold it to private owners.

At the turn of the 20th century, the local newspaper, The Greenwich Graphic, ran a series of articles for several years profiling the town’s historic homes. In 1902, the Samuel Ferris house was illustrated, “On the Banks of the Mianus / The Ferris House 200 Years Old / Possibly the first house built on this River – When the road was nothing more than a path”. Early in the article is a

description of an old-fashioned latch opening with a string (which would go on to figure prominently in the house’s adaptive-reuse). The article noted that the road where the house stands was not built until the old Boston Turnpike was changed from “its devious course” through Dumpling Pond (today’s Valley Road) to a more direct route. The article further mentioned that the homestead was called “The Plantation” when sold for 100 pounds by Samuel Ferris to his son, Samuel.

cont.



“On the Banks of the Mianus, The Ferris House 200 Years Old, Possibly the first house built on this River – When the road was nothing more than a path.”

The Greenwich Graphic 1902



An advertisement for “Latch String” in The Greenwich News & Graphic in 1936, described the house and its new use – “As unusual attractive new eating place, featuring Southern cooking, recently opened in quaint colonial atmosphere in the old Ferris homestead, one of the oldest houses in Greenwich, built in the 18th century during the reign of King George III.” By 1943, the restaurant was renamed “Ferris House”.

In 1947, a different use for “Latch String” was announced – “233-Year-Old Ferris House on Olmstead Tract to Give Shelter for Greenwich Vet”. The house along with its 33 acres, was recently purchased a month prior for \$40,000. When considering how to use the historic structure, the First Selectman, Wilbur M. Peck, stated, “The best thing we can do is to let a veteran occupy the house. It certainly would serve no use, at least in these times of housing shortages, to demolish the house.” While unconfirmed, the article stated that this would not be the first time the house served to help an American soldier. In the Revolutionary War during the British raid on

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First Selectman, Wilbur M. Peck, 1947

Greenwich, several of General Putnam’s soldiers found refuge in the Ferris house. Additional information noted that all its doors had latches thus inspiring the naming of the house, “The Latch String”. The article ended, “The historical house will serve as a living shrine for the needs of one who served”.

Today, the house is positioned to continue to serve as a priceless reminder of the Town’s history and a rare example of mid-18th century architecture. Its oversized lot and proximity to many conveniences offers the next generation a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.



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