

The John Wesley Gandy House

The John Wesley Gandy House was built in 1815 by Joseph Falkinburge as a tenant farmer house on a portion of the original Henry Young plantation. From 1815 to 1950, this house sheltered, and the land supported, generations of farmers, mariners, shipbuilders, weavers, preachers and public office holders.

Joseph Falkinburge was a wealthy businessman and politician, a post-revolutionary newcomer to Cape May County. Through most of the 1700's, rural and sparsely populated Cape May county was settled by whaling families emigrating from New England and Long Island and became owners of small plantations, two to five hundred acres, where they raised wheat, corn and cattle, and dominated the socio-political and economic power of the county for the next two, three or more generations.

Jeffrey Dorwart, in his book "Cape May County, New Jersey" explains "The first landowners embodied the English concept of "yeoman" as an owner of a small landed estate who cultivated his own land and held a respectable standing in the community, below the rank of gentlemen."

John Wesley Gandy, born 1847 and his wife Emma Lavinia Van Gilder Gandy were both descended from Cape May County pioneering families. John Wesley Gandy was descended from Thomas Gandy, the first of that name to come to Cape May County in 1694, and was one of the original 35 "Whaler Yeoman" who settled Cape May County.

John Wesley Gandy married Emma Van Gilder, who was descended from Abraham Van Gilder, who came to the county in 1757. They were married in 1872, and raised six children in this house.

John Wesley Gandy was a farmer, minister, constable and District Superintendent of Schools. He was a manager of the Cedar Swamp Meadow Company. Predeceased by his wife, he lived in the house until his death in 1929.

The Gandy family has a proud heritage in the settling of Cape May County, and in 1996, the heirs of Winifred Gandy donated the house and one acre of land on which it stands to the Historical Preservation Society of Upper Township, that it may be preserved and named to honor the memory of the Gandy family.

The house is pictured as one of architectural importance in "The Survey of Cultural Resources of the Historic Era, in the Watersheds of the Great Egg Harbor and Tuckahoe Rivers", 1982, by Alan R. Mounier, published by the Office of Cultural and Environmental Services, New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection.

The Gandy House appears on the 1872 Beers Map in the Cape May County Historical Museum in Cape May Court House, and is listed in the 1977 Cape May County Inventory of Historical Buildings.

On Nov. 12, 1999, the John Wesley Gandy House was entered into the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service, US. Dept. of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

The Restoration Project, under the direction of Historical Preservation Society members Lewis Albrecht and James Siegrist, is into its 5th year and thousands of their volunteer hours.

The project has been supported by the Historical Preservation Society general membership by holding the annual Strawberry Festival, Applefest, yard and cake sales, attending public relations events, presenting slide programs for schools and community organizations, conducting open house tours, etc.

The Upper Twp. Committee has been supportive and generous. Help with planting trees, grass cutting, etc. by the Upper Twp. Road Dept. has been invaluable. Community banks, merchants, women's clubs, school children, teachers and interested non-historical society members have contributed generously in many ways.

The ultimate goal of this Society is to create a period house farmstead museum to include a barn, root cellar, smoke house, woodshed, privy, grape arbor, orchard and crops, for the education and pleasure of the public.

Interesting physical characteristics of the House to look for:

- The original 17X20 footprint stands on granite stone piers and is of mortised and tenoned construction.
- Floor joists are oak logs with bark remaining on the underside.
- Large brick cooking fire place (opening is 4' x 6').
- Paneled fireplace wall and cupboard.
- Brick nogging, unique to this area.
- Brick are of a porous nature, providing insulating properties.
- The plaster walls contain a fine hair as a binder.
- Two sets of gun supports, fastened to the side of a beam are fashioned from tree branches.
- Floors are of hard pine, note the years of wear around the pine knots.
- A winder stairway to the second floor.
- Note the fireplace, floors, hand wrought hardware and paneled doors.
- Stairway to third floor attic.

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