



ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ERIK KULLESEID
Commissioner

RESOURCE EVALUATION

DATE: November 4, 2020

STAFF: Jennifer Betsworth

PROPERTY: Peter Crippen House

MCD: Huntington

ADDRESS: 61 Creek Road

COUNTY: Suffolk

PROJECT REF: 20PR04211

USN: 10304.000219

- I. Property is individually listed on SR/NR:
name of listing:
- Property is a contributing component of a SR/NR district:
name of district:
- II. Property meets eligibility criteria.
- Property contributes to a district which appears to meet eligibility criteria.

Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possess high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- D. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Based on the information available, the Peter Crippen House, located at 61 Creek Road in Huntington is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a rare remaining seventeenth-century mill building on Long Island. It is additionally significant under Criterion B in the area of Ethnic History: Black for its association with Peter Crippen (ca. 1809-1875), a prominent member of Huntington's African American community during the nineteenth century. The property has a split period of significance to reflect these two areas of significance; the period is ca. 1674, when the one-and-a-half-story mill building was moved to this location, and 1864-1875, the years that Peter Crippen lived in the building. After Crippen's death, the house was expanded. These sections, which have experienced severe deterioration, postdate the period of significance and are nonhistoric.

Based on Huntington's town records, the building, which was originally constructed as a mill, appears to date to ca. 1658. The Town granted the mill site to Rev. William Leverich in 1657. Two years later, Leverich contracted with Henry Whitney for repairs to the building. The mill remained in use through 1672, when it was closed due to concerns about the unhealthfulness of its mill pond. A new mill (not extant) was built in Centerport in 1674. The former mill building was sold and moved to its current location ca. 1674 where it was

repurposed as a residence. Preliminary analysis of the building confirms its construction as an industrial building rather than as a residence. Its heavy timber framing, dimensions, and sturdy proportions are reflective of industrial Dutch framing of the period. The building is a rare, early surviving example of this building type and merits further investigation, documentation, and analysis.

While the house was moved away from its original site, the new location was similar, marshy land. In spite of its marginal location, the building was used by a series of owners as a home through the late nineteenth century. In 1864, Elbert and Elizabeth Walters sold the house to Peter Crippen. Crippen was born ca. 1809 at Gargatha plantation in Accomack County, Virginia. Thomas Crippen, the Quaker owner of the plantation, manumitted all of his enslaved people privately in accordance with Virginia's May 1782 law. As a result, Peter was born a free person. Freedom without financial assistance, dangers related to travel, and legal challenges to the 1782 law prevented Peter's family, like many others, from immediately relocating.¹ They remained on the plantation and in 1818, Sarah Crippen, who had inherited the plantation from her father, filed a new deed of manumission for Peter and his father "to promote the happiness of the aforesaid slaves."² Peter and his father moved to Accomac, the county seat. After Peter's father's death by the late 1820s and the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831, life as a free black person in Virginia became increasingly difficult. Around the same time, Gilbert Crossman, the owner of the Crossman brickyards in Lloyd Neck, began actively soliciting white and black workers from Accomack County. After hiring two white workers from Modest Town, the third-largest city in the county, he sent them back to encourage more to travel north. Peter Crippen arrived at the brickyard in 1836, after other African American workers had begun arriving.³ He worked in Lloyd Neck for several years before moving to Cold Spring Harbor and later, Huntington.

Peter Crippen played an important role in the local African American community. In 1843, he was one of the seven founders and trustees of the African Methodist Ebenezer Church in Huntington (currently the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, NR listed 1985). Soon after its founding, in 1845, the church, with 52 members, was recognized as the largest AME congregation in Suffolk County.⁴ The 1850 census reports Peter Cripid [sic] (30) with his wife, Clarissa (28), and children Harriet L. (10), William H. (8), and Sarah A. (4). He was described as a laborer; in the 1860 census, he is reported as a fisherman. Crippen purchased the subject house (the former mill) on November 9, 1864 from Elbert and Eliza Walters for \$275.⁵ The Walters owned a substantial amount of land between Huntington Harbor and Creek Road. While this property was not prime real estate, the building was old even then and on marginal land, this purchase reflected an important achievement for Crippen. As a landowner, he could assure a measure of safety and security for his family and for himself as he lived out his final years. The house was approximately a half-mile from the AME church and located within a small African American community; his neighbor to the west, Nelson Smith, was also a trustee in the AME church's incorporation. Land ownership by members of the African American community remained rare during this period. In addition to Nelson Smith and Peter Crippen, assessment records only confirm one other Black man, Allen Stokely, was a landowner at the time. The 1870 census reports that Peter (60) was a farm laborer and lived at the house with his son, William (25), daughter-in-law Lydia (20), and grandchildren William E. (11) and Sarah S. (3). Peter died on February 6, 1875, at about 65 years of age. William Crippen was his only remaining child. Peter was likely buried in the AME Churchyard.⁶ The Crippen family continued to own the Creek Road house into the early twenty-first century.

The Peter Crippen House is a one-and-a-half-story, two-bay by two-bay, side-gabled frame building; the two-story addition on its west elevation is severely deteriorated and falls outside the period of significance. The house retains wood clapboard under layers of asphalt and aluminum siding. The façade (south elevation)

¹ Eva Sheppard Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation: Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Nat Turner's Rebellion* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 53-56.

² Charla Bolton, "Peter Crippen," 1; Smith, Jr., *Register of Free Negroes*, Sarah (Sally) Crippin Deed of Manumission, April 3, 1818, Appendix F, Item 3, 112.

³ *Crossman Ledger*, Book 3, 122.

⁴ Charla Bolton, "Founding Fathers and Mothers," 1.

⁵ Liber 128 of Deeds, 564, dated November 9, 1864, recorded November 24, 1864, in the Suffolk County Clerk's Office, Suffolk County Clerk's Office Archives, Suffolk County Center, Riverhead, N.Y.

⁶ Letters of Administration, file #7741, Liber K of Letters of Administration, 20.

retains openings for a doorway and two windows. While access to the interior is limited, the building's heavy timber framing remains evident in its ceiling and support beams; the ceiling beams are approximately 8.5" wide, 30" apart, and covered in plaster over wire lath. A narrow wooden staircase framed tightly by walls leads up to the half story.

The Peter Crippen House is in poor condition, but it retains integrity and the ability to convey its historic significance. The house, which remains on the site it was moved to in ca. 1674, retains integrity of location and its association with Peter Crippen remains strong. The building retains integrity of design and workmanship to its use as a mill through its form and heavy timber framing. It is a rare survivor of early mill construction. The house retains its exterior and interior historic materials, even if under some later applied layers. The setting and feeling of the property have been compromised by the wastewater treatment plant which surrounds the property. As such, it meets five of the seven aspects of integrity. The Peter Crippen House is a remarkable and rare survivor illustrating two aspects of Huntington's history, seventeenth century industry and early African American landownership, and the community support for saving the building and sharing its history has been significant.

Sources:

1850, 1860, 1870 Federal Census, New York.

Bolton, Charla. "Founding Fathers and Mothers: African American Settlement in the Post-Manumission Period – Town of Huntington, New York, 1790-1870." Unpublished manuscript on file at NY SHPO.

Bolton, Charla. "Peter Crippen." July 4, 2020. Unpublished manuscript on file at NY SHPO.

Huntington Historic Preservation Commission. "Historic Designation Report for the Peter Crippen House, 61 Creek Road, Huntington." July 2, 2008.

If you have any questions concerning this Determination of Eligibility, please contact Jennifer Betsworth at (518) 268-2189 or Jennifer.Betsworth@parks.ny.gov.