

# **NOMINATION REPORT**

**369 Claremont Avenue**  
*The James Howe House*

**BLOCK 405**  
**LOT 1.01**



**Prepared By:**  
**Township of Montclair**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**205 Claremont Avenue**  
**Montclair, NJ 07042**

**July 2007**

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This report has been prepared in accordance with **Montclair Code Section 347-135B(1)**.

347-135B(1):Nomination Proposals. The party proposing for designation under this section shall prepare and submit to the Commission a nomination report for each proposed property, site or district. For individual landmark designations, the report shall include one or more photographs, the tax lot and block number of the property as designated on the Official Tax Map of the township and a physical description and statement of significance and proposed utilization of the site.

## **I. Executive Summary**

The Township of Montclair Historic Preservation Commission was created by ordinance in June of 1994. The Historic Preservation Commission is charged with accomplishing the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of especially noteworthy examples or elements of the township's environment in order to:

- (1) Safeguard the heritage of Montclair by preserving resources which reflect elements of its cultural, social, and architectural history
- (2) Encourage the continued use of historic and/or noteworthy buildings or structures
- (3) Foster civic pride in the history and architecture of the Township
- (4) Promote the economic welfare of the township through the preservation of historic sites and landscapes
- (5) Enhance the visual and aesthetic character, diversity continuity and interest in the township and its neighborhoods
- (6) Discourage the unnecessary demolition or other destruction of historic resources
- (7) Encourage beautification and private investment in the township
- (8) Promote the economic welfare of the township through the preservation of its historic sites and landscapes

As per **Montclair Code Section 347-135A**, criteria for designation, "the Commission shall consider as worthy of designation those buildings, structures, objects, sites and districts that have integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- (1) Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- (2) Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- (3) Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; that represent the work of a master; that possess high artistic values; or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- (4) Have yielded or may be likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.
- (5) Are otherwise of particular historic significance to the Township of Montclair by reflecting or exemplifying the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, region or community."

## **II. Property Fact Sheet**

### ***Zoning Description***

Address: 369 Claremont Avenue  
Block: 405  
Lot: 1.01  
Zone: R-2 Two Family Zone  
Property Size: 6,546 square feet (subdivided from 24 Upper Mountain Avenue in 1996)

### ***Physical Description***

Year Built: Circa 1780  
Style: Vernacular  
Stories: 2 stories with basement  
Exterior Finish: Stained Shingle  
Roof: Gabled Roof  
Foundation: Stucco over stone

### ***Historic Significance***

369 Claremont Avenue is part of the Mountain Historic District which was listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places on September 29, 1986 and the National Register of Historic Places on July 22, 1988.

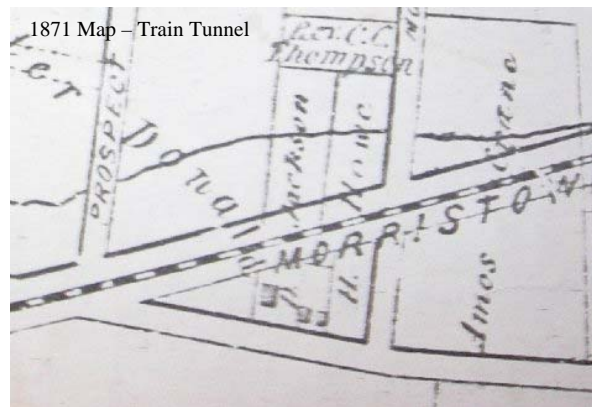
### III. Statement of Significance

The original old road and primitive path is Claremont Avenue. Israel Crane built Bloomfield Avenue around 1800 as a toll road to facilitate agricultural transport for a fee. There were 4 stagecoach arrivals and departures to and from the ferryboats at Hoboken from historic stagecoach house, just below Crane's Gap. The farmlands or "lea" below Crane's Gap were extremely important during the Abolitionist period thanks to the elevated moral and intellectual culture of the local community.



One of the most remarkable gestures in our local history was that of Major Nathaniel Crane, whose family built Bloomfield Avenue and founded our town. He gave an extremely valuable 6-acre property, today resulting in MKA's playing field on Upper Mountain, 24 Upper Mountain and the adjacent "Freed Slave House" or "Howe House" property on

369 Claremont Avenue to James Howe, who he legally freed from slavery in 1831 (see attached will). This gesture seems to express Major Crane's desire for the abolition of slavery and respect for the concept of American Democracy. This gesture is emblematic to our Montclair community. This property, just below Kip's Castle also has a 1400 ft test bore train tunnel, running under Crane's Gap that probably served as a safe passage for many people.



The following paragraph is from "Montclair - The Evolution of a Suburban Town" by Edwin B. Goodell (1934 Pg. 11).

"The old road (for we cannot capitalize it at this point) now runs pretty directly up the hill to the top of the gap, where it again touches the turnpike and passes almost immediately to the right and up over the very summit. But let us pause again for a moment about half

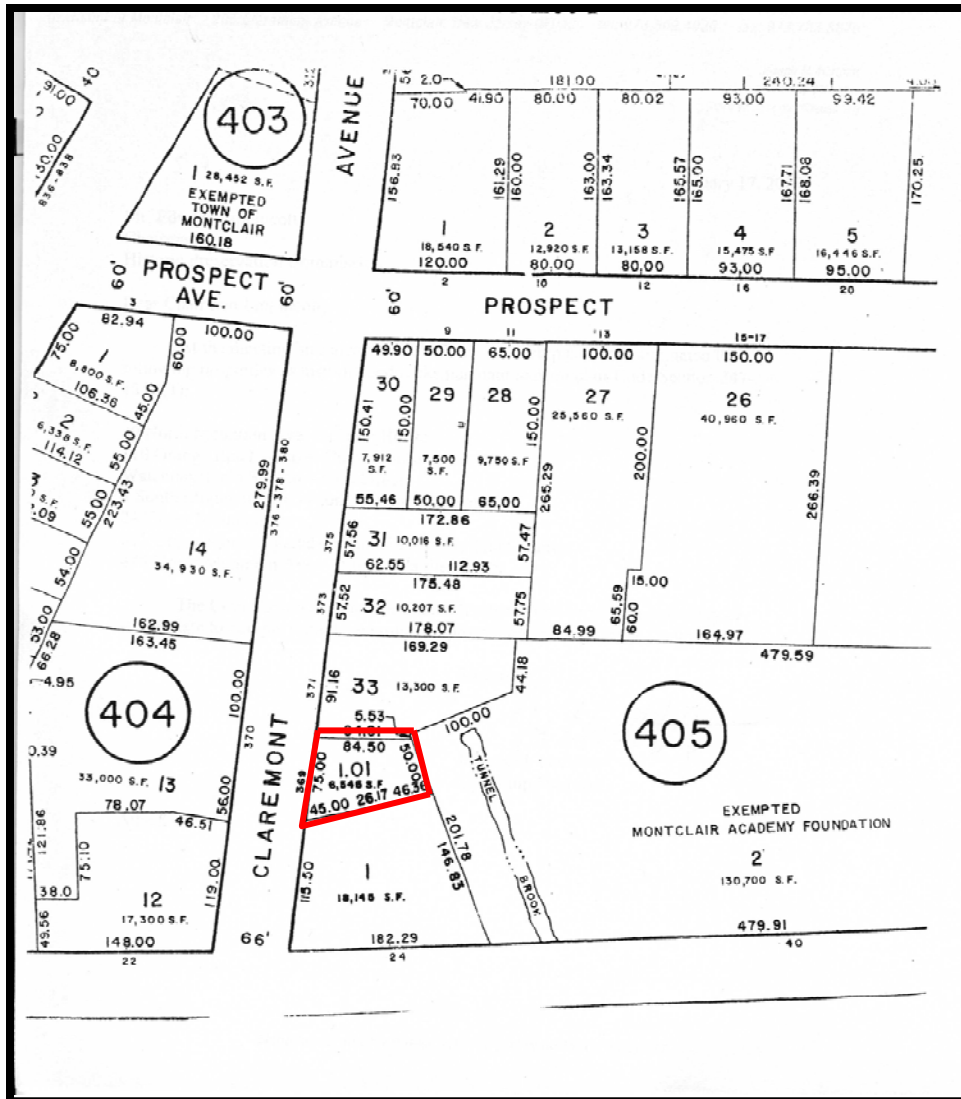
way up to look at a small cluster of mean houses standing on the north of the road. They are occupied by Negros. The origin of this little settlement lies in the Last Will and Testament of the late Major Nathaniel Crane, who died a bachelor some twenty years before we are taking our walk. Among other things in this will, he left "six acres to James Howe, a colored man, late a slave, whom I manumitted." This little settlement is destined to remain, in part at least, in the possession of James Howe, his heirs and assigns, much longer than some of the white people that are about to come to this hillside will desire, for it occupies one of the most eligible sites in town."

**Appendix A**



# Appendix B

## Block 405 Lot 1.01





## Appendix C

### LAST WILL AND TESTIMENT DOCUMENT OF NATHANIEL CRANE

1831 (transcribed by Frank Gerard Godlewski 2007)

I Nathaniel Crane of Bloomfield Essex County New Jersey being of sound mind and memory do make and publish the following as my testament and last will.

First. I give and bequeath to my dear wife Hannah Crane all my household goods and furniture together with my wearing apparel for her to dispose of as she judge fit and proper.

Second. I give to my nephew the Rev. Noah Crane the sum of five hundred dollars and to my nephew Nathaniel Crane I give the sum of three hundred dollars and to James How a coloured man late a slave whom I manumitted I bequeath the sum of four hundred dollars and which legacies are to be paid out of my estate as soon after my decease as may be.

Third. I likewise devise to the above named James How to his heirs and assign my lot of

land lying north west of and adjoining Josiah W Cranes homestead containing about six

acres.

Fourth. I devise my two lots of land lying at the great swamp in the township of Caldwell

one equal third part to my nephew Nathaniel C. Gould to his heirs and assigns one equal

third part to the daughters of Nathaniel J. Crane Dec(ed) ( ) Dorinda Ha( ) Mary and

Nancy and to their heirs and assigns forever.

Fifth. I bequeath the sum of five hundred dollars to the trustees of the time being what is now called the Congregational Society of Caldwell to be applied for the support of the gospel among them.

Sixth. I give and bequeath one thousand dollars to the new Presbytery In Trust to be Appropriated by them exclusively for benefit of Bloomfield Academy to be paid by my Executor to the moderator of the said Presbytery and whose receipt shall be a sufficient discharge.

Seventh. My lot of Salt Meadow at the old ferry I dispose of as follows ( ) to my nephew Eleazar Crane and to his heirs and assigns I devise that part below the run about one half acre more or less and the residue I give to James How aforementioned to his heirs and assigns and to my nephew Nathaniel Crane Jr. to his heirs and assigns to be divided between them in such a manner that their respective portions may be equal including what Nathaniel Crane Jr. now occupies of his fathers.

Eight. I devise my lot of Salt Meadow at the Great Swamp containing three acres more or less to my nephew Nathaniel S. Crane to his heirs and assigns forever

Ninth. I bequeath to my beloved wife Hannah the use of all of the residues o of my estate both real and personal during her life and at her decease my will is that all my estate whatsoever and wheresoever not before devised be sold at the best advantage by my executors herein after named or the survivor of them and I do empower them or the survivor of them to make and execute good and sufficient title deeds for the same and for my will further is that all of the proceeds arising from such sale be given to the following persons in trust Sirs John Munn Mathaia Smith Elias B Crane Amos Crane and Caleb Baldwin for the benefit of the Presbyterian Society of Bloomfield to which I belong under the following conditions and restrictions ( ) these trustees above named or the survivors of them are directed to invest the amount of the bequest whatever it may be in the best and safest manner with the advise and approbation of the trustees of the said Presbyterian Society for the time being. This amount is so invested is to constitute a permanent fund the principal of which is not to be appropriated or expended for any purpose whatsoever but the interest accruing from this fund shall be applied to the payment of the ministers salary for the time of said Presbyterian Society yearly and every year as long as what is what is now called West Bloomfield may belong to and constitute a part of the same. But should division of said society at any future time take place and the people of West Bloomfield form themselves a separate Presbyterian Society and erect a church within one ( ) from the stone school house near where I reside in such case my will is that as soon as organized as Presbyterian Society the whole benefit of such fund shall be transformed to

them and be for their exclusive benefit forever upon the same conditions and restrictions as above directed with the regard to the Presbyterian Society of made with the concurring advise and approbation of the trustees of that Presbyterian Society which may at the time be entitled to the proceeds of it.

Whenever a vacancy may occur in the trust to whom I have committed the care and management of this fund by death resignation or removal to an inconvenient distance I authorize such vacancy to be filled by the persons of the church entitled to the annuity occurring from this fund provided that this person or persons so elected be a member of the church and that a majority of said trust always reside in what is now called West Bloomfield.

If the sale and conveyance of my estate should not be effected by my executors during their lifetime then I direct the trust ....above named.... To sell and convey the same in the same manner as I have authorized my executors to sell and convey it and to apply the proceeds according to the tenor of my will.

I appoint John Munn and Mathias Smith executors of the new testament and last will.

In witness where of I have here unto set my hand and seal this fourth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand and eight hundred and thirty one

Signed Sealed Published and declared by said Nathaniel Crane to be his testament and Last Will in presence of

Jos. S Dodd  
Nathaniel H Baldwin  
Timothy A Crane

his  
Nathaniel X Crane

## Appendix D

1. Price, Eleanor. "Individual Structure Survey: Site #0713332." Preservation Montclair, 1981.