

14 Chestnut Street

Built for John Clarke Lee  
Merchant  
1834

Robert Booth  
27 Oct 1977

## 14 Chestnut Street

This house was built for John Clarke Lee, Salem merchant, in 1834.

The house lot was assembled by Mr Lee on 9 May 1834 by two purchases: for \$1000 he bought from the heirs of Gabriel Holman a swampy piece of land fronting 67' 8" on Chestnut Street and running back 160'; for \$600 he bought of Abijah Northey of Boxford a piece fronting 40' and 160' deep, lying to the west, and adjoining, the first piece. (276:109, 109). Very early a stream had run through the property; by 1834 the stream had vanished, leaving in its place very marshy ground that required a great deal of fill before construction of the house could commence. The larger piece had belonged to the Quaker merchant & author Thomas Maule in 1700, and later to his heirs, who sold it to Holman. The smaller piece was owned by the Croade family in 1700, and then by the Neal, Adams, and Bacon families before Mr Northey bought it in 1813.

Once the land was filled, construction work proceeded rapidly, and the present house was substantially complete by the end of 1834. RH Wiswall (see EIHC 75:224-5) assigns the house a date of 1835, while Willson states (see EIHC 15:44) the house was built & occupied in 1834. The city valuation records show that by summer 1834 JC Lee owned an "unfinished house" on Chestnut Street worth \$4000; by summer 1835 it was valued at \$6000; it was not considered to be completely finished until 1838 (when it was valued at \$7000), although it seems likely that the Lees had been living here since late in the year 1834. Before the house was built, the Lees had resided at 35 Chestnut Street.

The appended biographical sketch indicates that John Clarke Lee (1804-77) was leading the life of an independently wealthy gentleman when this house was built for him; his chief interests at the time were his growing family, travel, and his extensive North Salem orchards. In 1848 with George Higginson he founded the Boston banking house of Lee & Higginson, from which he retired in 1862.

Mr Lee died on 19 Nov 1877, leaving his wife Harriet Paine (Rose) Lee and five sons and four daughters, all adults. Mr Lee's total estate was valued at about \$376,000, an extraordinary fortune in its time. The house and land on Chestnut Street were valued at \$8,000 and the household articles therein were worth \$3000 (#45168).

Mrs Harriet P Lee lived here with her son Francis H Lee and his wife Sophia. Mrs Lee died on 14 Aug 1885, at which time the homestead was valued at \$10,000 (#62594). Soon after, on 11 Jan 1886, the other siblings released to their brother Francis Henry Lee, for \$8000, all their rights to the premises (1165:247). Mr Lee and his wife (they had no children) lived here until his death on 7 Oct 1913; he bequeathed all his property (14 Chestnut was valued at \$15,000) to his wife, Sophia E (Wilson) Lee (#117032).

Mrs Lee owned the estate until 21 Oct 1924, when she sold the estate to the celebrated painter Frank W Benson and his wife Ellen P Benson (2616:390). The house had been in the name of Lee for exactly 90 years.

Mr Benson died on 14 Nov 1951, leaving three daughters, a son, and his wife Ellen Perry Benson, to whom he bequeathed all of his property (#235974). Mrs Benson survived her husband until 3 Oct 1954, at which time the "frame house, garage, and land at 14 Chestnut Street" were valued at \$20,000 (#245950).

On 1 Mar 1957 the Benson heirs granted the homestead to Eunice M Merrill of Marblehead (4351:466); she moved to Salem and occupied the premises, selling out three years later, on 25 Aug 1960, to Warren R Mayne of Salem (4698:573). He owned the estate only a year, granting it on 6 Sept 1961 to Dr & Mrs David S Johnson, then of Brookline (4813:193). The Johnsons moved in, and lived here for several years.

On 22 Sept 1975 for \$115,000 Dr & Mrs Johnson granted the premises to the present owners, Mr & Mrs John H Brown Jr, who live here with their two small sons (6198:613).

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#### Notes

This house, built in 1834, is the grandest (and one of the earliest) example of the Greek Revival style to be found in Salem.

A figure such as EIHC 123:45 refers to Essex Institute Historical Collections, vol. 123, page 45. A figure such as (123:45) refers to So. Essex Co. Registry of Deeds book 123, page or leaf 45. A figure such as (#12345) refers to So. Essex County Probate docket 12345.

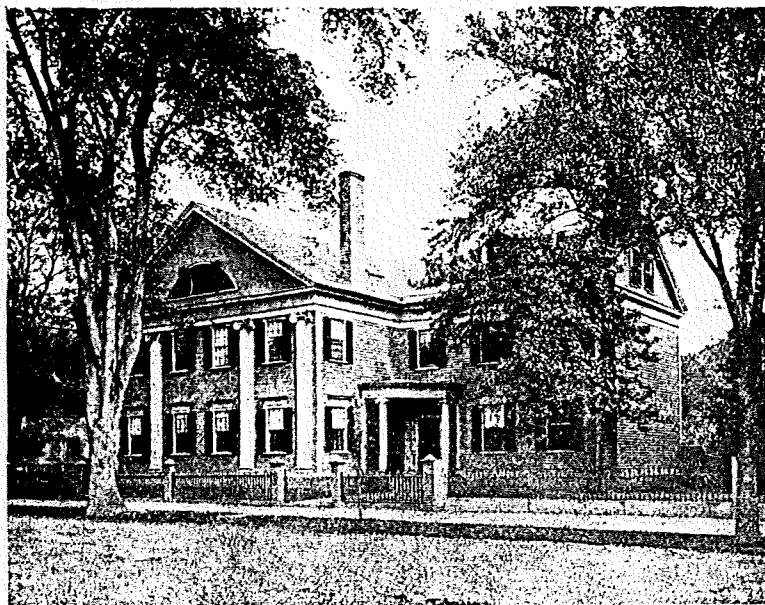
John C Lee joined the Salem Light Infantry in 1823; his certificate of membership in the Bunker Hill Monument Association reposes undisturbed in the archives of the Essex Institute in Salem.

A biographical sketch of John Clarke Lee is to be found in EIHC 15:35-62.

## LEE

John Clarke, only son of Nathaniel Cabot (1772-1806) and Mary Ann (Cabot) Lee, was born in Boston 9 Ap 1804; m'd in 1826 Harriet Paine Rose, who d. 14 Aug 1885. He was a graduate of Harvard College, 1823, was a merchant and banker, and died 19 Nov 1877 in the 74th year of his age. Children:

- 1) John Rose, 25 Ap 1827, m. 1856 Lucy Howard
- 2) Mary Ann Cabot, 11 Oct 1828, m. 1848 Samuel Endicott Peabody
- 3) George Cabot, 21 Mar 1830, m. 1857 Caroline W Haskell
- 4) Harriet Rose, 23 Nov 1831, unm'd in 1886
- 5) William Paine, 19 Ap 1833, m. 1858 Hannah Greeley Stevenson
- 6) Rose Smith, 24 Jan 1835, m. 1854 Leverett Saltonstall
- 7) Francis Henry, 23 Dec 1836, m. 1871 Sophia Edgell Wilson
- 8) Charles Jackson, 10 Feb 1839, m. 1864 Mary Ann Berry
- 9) Josephine Rose, 2 Dec 1843, m. 1867 William Guerdon Saltonstall



NUMBER 14

Illustration from photo in EIHC 75:224

Know all men by these Presents

That we Abijah Northey of Dorset in the County of Wex & Common-  
 wealth of Massachusetts, & Lydia his wife, and Jonathan Holman of  
 Salem in said County, in consideration of the thousand dollars  
 to us paid by John C. Lee of Salem, in said County, Gentleman,  
 the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge, do hereby give, grant,  
 sell and convey unto the said John C. Lee his heirs and  
 assigns forever, a certain lot of Land situated on the Northern  
 side of Chesnut Street, in Salem aforesaid, bounded as follows,  
 to wit; Southely on Chesnut Street sixty seven feet eight inches,  
 Easterly on land lately Hodge's one hundred and sixty feet, North-  
 uly on land of Jonathan Holman sixty six feet eight inches  
 more or less, Westely on land of Abijah Northey (this day sold to  
 said Lee) one hundred and sixty feet to bounds first mentioned  
 one third of the above described premises being in the right  
 of said Lydia, the other two thirds being the right of said Abijah  
 and Jonathan with all the privileges and appurtenances thereof,  
 to Have and to Hold the aforesaid premises to the  
 said John C. Lee his heirs and assigns, to his and their use and  
 behoof forever, against the lawful claims and demands of all  
 persons.

to  
 John C. Lee.  
 276:109

In witness whereof, we the said Abijah Northey  
 & Jon<sup>as</sup> Holman, togither with Lydia Northey and Sarah Holman  
 do hereby attest our right of power in the premises have  
 mounted set in hand and seals this ninth day of May  
 in the Year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred thirty four  
 signed sealed & delivered  
 in presence of us  
 Minnie Holt  
 Abner N. Northey

Abijah Northey Seal  
 Jon<sup>as</sup> Holman Seal  
 Lydia Northey Seal  
 Sarah Holman Seal

Given at, May 9. A.D. 1834. Then the above named Abijah, Jonathan  
 and Lydia acknowledged the above instrument to be their free act  
 and deed. Before me  
 John Foster Justice of the Peace.  
 Given & Received June 11. 1834. Recorded & Examined by A. H. French Jy

Now all men by these presents

Abijah Northey  
to  
John C. Lee

276:109

That I Abijah Northey of Dorset, in the County of Essex and  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in consideration of Six hundred  
dollars to me paid by John C. Lee of Salem in said County  
of Essex aforesaid, Gentleman, the receipt whereof I do here-  
by acknowledge, do hereby give, grant, sell and convey unto  
the said John C. Lee his heirs and assigns forever, a certain  
lot of Land situated on the northern side of the Court  
Street, in Salem aforesaid, bounded as follows to wit:  
Beginning at the southwestly corner thereof on said Street, by  
land of the heirs of late James Bell, deceased, then running  
Easterly by Chestnut Street forty feet, more or less, to land of  
heirs of late Gabriel Holman, deceased, then running North-  
ly to land of said Holman one hundred and sixty feet  
more or less, and running westerly by land of the heirs of late  
James Bell, deceased, forty feet more or less, to land of said  
James Bell one hundred and sixty feet to the first mentioned  
bounds, containing twenty four rods and one quarter with all  
the privileges and appurtenances thereto, meaning to convey the  
same lot of Land sold to me by said John C. Lee as aforesaid  
as recited in Registry of said Book No. 2, p. 200.

So Have and to Hold the above premises to the  
said John C. Lee his heirs and assigns, to his own use  
and behoof forever. In witness whereof I the said Abijah  
Northey, with Lydia my wife who hereby relinquishes her right  
therein, in the presence of our friends have hereunto set our hands & seals this  
twentieth day of May in the year of our said one thousand eight  
hundred and thirty four.

signed sealed & delivered  
in presence of  
Sen<sup>r</sup>. Holman  
Harriet Webb

Abijah Northey      Seal.  
Lydia Northey      Seal.

She was Holman's eldest legal daughter,  
born 11 May 1794. A. C. 1804. With the above  
James Northey acknowledged the above instrument to be his  
free act and deed. Signed before Sen<sup>r</sup>. Foster Just. of Peace

Witness my hand June 11. 1804. Recorded & examined by J. H. French My

in trust, and the income paid whis or her wife or husband for life and at decease of such wife or husband paid over to such child or issue in manner aforesaid and if no issue of such child survives, to my heirs at law; the share of any child dying and leaving a husband or wife surviving but no issue shall be continued in trust and the income therefrom paid to such husband or wife for life and at his or her decease the principal shall be paid to my heirs at law; the share of any child dying after me and leaving no issue and no husband or wife surviving shall be paid over to my heirs at law.

Item fifth I appoint my trustees executors of this will and it is my will that my executors and trustees should be exempt from giving receipts on their

Probate Bonds

Signed and published

in our presence

John C Lee

A. Haggins

1. James J. Haggins

2. Francis L. Haggins

Boston September 19, 1832 - I do hereby make this my last will to my will above declared and published I desire my trustees to hold the property that may come to them by the fourth item of my will for the joint use of the Beneficiaries and that the excess of income over six percent per annum after paying charges not including taxes be added to the principal of that trust.

Signed and published in our presence

John C Lee -

Melvin Lord Jr  
S. S. Bartlett,  
John S. Kennell