

53 Washington Square North, Salem

Built for
William Hunt, merchant, 1842



Eng^d by A.H. Ritchie.

Wm Hunt

History of the House & Occupants

53 Washington Square, Salem

by Robert Booth for Historic Salem Inc

According to available evidence, this house was built for William Hunt, merchant, in 1842. Mr. Hunt was engaged primarily in trade with Africa.

On 14 Oct. 1841 William Hunt, merchant, for \$1100 purchased from Isaac Cushing, merchant (of 107 Essex Street), a lot of land at the corner of Brown¹ and Pleasant Streets (ED 327:211). The bounds were given as: south 52' on Brown Street, east 100' on Pleasant St., north 78' of court or street, and west 100' on land of Kimball. On this lot, probably in 1842, Mr. Hunt proceeded to have a contractor build this house as his family residence. Its style is Greek Revival, and it has handsome marble chimney-pieces and other elegant features.

William Hunt Jr. (1804-1883) was born 15 April 1804 in Salem, the son of baker William Hunt and Mary Dean. Salem was, at that moment, the wealthiest place in America, with a world-spanning trade carried on by more than 150 vessels, sixty of them trading to the orient, and to India especially. William was a little boy when Salem's twenty-year boom came to an end with a crash in January, 1808, as Jefferson and the Congress imposed an embargo on all shipping in hopes of forestalling war with Britain. The Embargo, widely opposed in New England, proved futile and nearly ruinous in Salem. As a hotbed of Democratic-Republicanism, Salem's East Parish and its seafarers, led by the Crowninshields, loyally supported the Embargo until it was lifted in spring, 1809. Shunned by the other Salem merchants for his support of the Embargo, the eminent Billy Gray took his large fleet of ships—fully one-third of Salem's tonnage—and moved to Boston, thereby eliminating a huge amount of Salem wealth, shipping, import-export cargos, and local employment. Gray soon switched from the Federalist party, and was elected Lt. Governor on a ticket with Gov. Elbridge Gerry, a native of Marblehead.

Salem's commerce with the world was repeatedly interrupted by the British, which intercepted neutral trading vessels and often impressed American sailors into their navy. Despite many warnings

¹ Brown Street was the old name for the road running from pleasant Street to St. Peter Street; only a part of it is now called Brown Street, the rest having become "Washington Square North."

and negotiations, the British refused to alter their policies, and pushed President Madison into a position where he had few choices other than hostilities. In June, 1812, war was declared against Britain.

Although the merchants had tried to prevent the war, when it came, Salem swiftly fitted out 40 privateers manned by Marblehead and Salem crews, who also served on U.S. Navy vessels, including the frigate *Constitution*. Many more local vessels could have been sent against the British, but some of the Federalist merchants held them back. In addition, Salem fielded companies of infantry and artillery. Salem and Marblehead privateers were largely successful in making prizes of British supply vessels. While many of the town's men were wounded in engagements, and some were killed, the possible riches of privateering kept the men returning to sea as often as possible. The first prizes were captured by a 30-ton converted fishing schooner, the *Fame*, and by a 14-ton luxury yacht fitted with one gun, the *Jefferson*. Of all Salem privateers, the Crowninshields' 350-ton ship *America* was most successful: she captured 30-plus prizes worth more than \$1,100,000.

Salem erected forts and batteries on its Neck, to discourage the British warships that cruised these waters. On land, the war went poorly for the United States, as the British captured Washington, DC, and burned the Capitol and the White House. Along the western frontier, U.S. forces were successful against the weak English forces; and, as predicted by many, the western expansionists had their day. At sea, as time wore on, Salem vessels were captured, and its men imprisoned or killed. After almost three years, the war was bleeding the town dry. Hundreds of Salem men and boys were in British prison-ships and at Dartmoor Prison in England. At the Hartford Convention in 1814, New England Federalist delegates met to consider what they could do to bring the war to a close and to restore the region's commerce. Sen. Timothy Pickering of Salem, the leader of the extreme Federalists, did not attend; and the Convention refrained from issuing any ultimatums. Nevertheless, it seemed almost treasonous to have convened it; and it signaled the beginning of the end for the national Federalist party.

At last, in February, 1815, peace was restored.

In 1816 or 1817 William Hunt Jr., twelve, was apprenticed to Jonas Warren, a storekeeper at Danversport, where he learned the duties of a clerk. In a short time he returned to Salem, where he became a clerk in the store of Nathan Blood on lower Derby Street, near English Street. Nathan Blood, the husband of William's cousin

Tamar Hunt Blood, was a prosperous ship chandler who helped William Hunt to learn a great deal and to make many business contacts over time.

Post-war, America was flooded with British manufactured goods, especially factory-made knock-offs of the beautiful Indian textiles that had been the specialty of Salem importers for 30 years. Britain, dominant in India, had forced the Indians to become cotton-growers rather than cloth-producers; and the cheap Indian cotton was shipped to the English industrial ports and turned into mass-produced cloth. American national policy-makers reacted, in 1816, by passing a high tariff on cheap imported textiles, in order to protect and encourage America's own budding manufacturing capacity. The net result was to diminish what had been the most abundant and lucrative area of Salem's pre-war trade. Salem's merchants rebuilt their fleets and resumed their worldwide commerce, without a full understanding of how difficult conditions had become. For a few years, their efforts were rewarded with reasonable profits, and it seemed that Salem was once again in the ascendant, with almost 200 vessels sailing to Europe, the Orient, the Caribbean and South America, and the southern ports.

The pre-war partisan politics of the town were not resumed, as the middle-class "mechanics" (artisans) became more powerful and brought about civic harmony, largely through the Salem Charitable Mechanic Association. Rev. William Bentley, keen observer and active citizen, died in 1819, the year in which a new U.S. Custom House was built on the site of the George Crowninshield mansion, at the head of Derby Wharf. Into the 1820s foreign trade continued prosperous; and new markets were opened with Madagascar (1820), which supplied tallow and ivory, and Zanzibar (1825), whence came coffee, ivory, and gum copal, used to make varnish.

At the end of his apprenticeship, aged nineteen, William went to work in 1823 for the merchant Robert Brookhouse (1779-1866), who had recently commenced trade with Africa. This was very fortunate turn of events for William Hunt.

Robert Brookhouse Jr. was born in Salem during the Revolutionary War. When he was an infant his father, Capt. Robert Brookhouse, the brave master of the privateer *Lively*, was lost in a storm with his vessel and all hands. The boy grew up on High Street in straitened circumstances. After a little schooling he went to work in a shop on Lynde Street to learn the trade of a silversmith and watch-maker. Small and wiry, he was a smart, hustling fellow, and eventually

became a dealer in guns, silver, and jewelry. His success at the shop enabled him to buy shares in merchant vessels, and here again he prospered, and finally was able to open his own merchant house, trading mainly to Madagascar and the west coast of Africa, with commerce to Patagonia and the Fiji Islands as well.

Salem's general maritime foreign commerce fell off sharply in 1824, as a second major tariff act was passed by Congress, to the benefit of manufacturers and the detriment of importers. Many of the goods that Salem had been importing were supplanted by goods that were now being produced in great quantities in America. The town's prosperity began to wane, and many people saw no future locally. The interior of the country was being opened for settlement, and some Salemites moved away. To the north, the falls of the Merrimack River powered large new textile mills (Lowell was founded in 1823); and in general it seemed that the tide of opportunity was ebbing away from Salem. To stem the flow of talent from the town and to harness its potential water power for manufacturing, Salem's merchants and capitalists banded together in 1825 to raise the money to dam the North River for industrial power. Over the course of three years, the effort gained momentum, but ultimately the enterprise failed, and several leading citizens moved to Boston, the hub of investment in the new economy.

Mr. Brookhouse prospered in trade even as others began to fail. He acquired a large tract of land in the Clifton section of Marblehead, and had a summer residence by the sea. In 1835 he purchased the former Hasket Derby house,² corner of Washington and Lynde Streets, coincidentally across Lynde Street from the old Hunt house, William's family's ancestral mansion, dating from 1698.

After a few years, Mr. Brookhouse gave William Hunt an ownership share in the Brookhouse business, which assured his success. Their offices were located at then-163-165 Essex Street. On 24 March 1831, aged 26, William Hunt married Anstiss Slocum, the daughter of Ebenezer Slocum and Sarah Becket, of the East Parish. They would have four children.

In 1830 occurred a horrifying crime that brought disgrace to Salem. Old Capt. Joseph White, a rich merchant, resided in retirement in a mansion on Essex Street. His wealth was legendary, not least among the denizens of the nearby Salem Jail, where plots had long been hatched to break in and steal the Captain's putative treasure chest.

² Demolished; site of Masonic building today.

One night, an intruder did break in and clubbed him to death in his sleep. All of Salem buzzed with fear and rumors; and within two months it was discovered that the murderer was a Crowninshield (he killed himself) who had been hired by his friends, Capt. White's own relatives, Capt. Joe Knapp and his brother Captain Frank (they would be executed). The murder, and related lurid events, tarnished Salem further, and more families quit the now-notorious town.

In October, 1833, for \$1400, William Hunt, merchant, purchased from Capt. John Story, shipmaster, a half-house on Andrew Street, which would be the family residence for some years. Mr. Hunt was a man of high intelligence and much repute as a merchant. He read widely in literature and filled many positions of civic trust. He was also quite philanthropic, in the tradition of Robert Brookhouse, and made many charitable donations.³

Salem had not prepared for the industrial age, and had few natural advantages. The North River served not to power factories but mainly to flush the waste from the 25 tanneries that had set up along its banks. As the decade wore on, and the new railroads and canals, all running and flowing to Boston from points north, west, and south, diverted both capital and trade away from the coast. Salem's remaining merchants took their equity out of local wharves and warehouses and ships and put it into the stock of manufacturing and transportation companies. Some merchants did not make the transition, and were ruined. Old-line areas of work, like rope-making, sail-making, and ship chandleries, gradually declined and disappeared.

Robert Brookhouse and William Hunt were partners in the ownership of many trading vessels over the decades. In 1836 they purchased from the Rogers Brothers the bark *Active*, 211 tons, commanded by Abraham Pickering.⁴

Salem slumped badly, but the voters decided to charter their town as a city in 1836—the third city to be formed in the state, behind Boston and Lowell. City Hall was built 1837-8 and the city seal was adopted with an already-anachronistic Latin motto of “to the farthest port of the rich Indies”—a far cry from “Go West, young man!” The Panic of 1837, a sharp, nationwide economic depression, caused even more Salem families to head west in search of fortune and a better future.

³ Much information about Hunt and Brookhouse comes from Hurd's *History of Essex County* and from R.S. Rantoul, et al, *Records of the First Fifty years of the Old Ladies Home*.

⁴ see EIHC vol. 39; many of their vessels may be seen under their names in the indices of the Essex Institute *Historical Collections*, especially volumes 40-44.

Throughout the 1830s, the leaders of Salem scrambled to reinvent an economy for their fellow citizens, many of whom were mariners without much sea-faring to do. Ingenuity, ambition, and hard work would have to carry the day. One inspiration was the Salem Laboratory, Salem's first science-based manufacturing enterprise, founded in 1813 to produce chemicals. At the plant built in 1818 in North Salem on the North River, the production of alum and blue vitriol was a specialty; and it proved a very successful business. Salem's whale-fishery led to the manufacturing of high-quality candles at Stage Point, along with machine oils. The candles proved very popular. Lead-manufacturing began in the 1820s, and grew large after 1830, when Wyman's gristmills at the head of Salem Harbor were retooled for making high-quality white lead and sheet lead. These enterprises took Salem in a new direction. In 1838 the Eastern Rail Road, headquartered in Salem, began operating between Boston and Salem, which gave the local people a direct route to the region's largest market. The new railroad tracks ran right over the middle of the Mill Pond; the tunnel under Washington Street was built in 1839; and the line was extended to Newburyport in 1840.

Stephen White, the nephew and adopted son of the murdered Capt. Joseph White, had moved to Boston in 1830; and in 1835 he and the heirs of his brother for \$2200 sold to merchant David Becket the lower White's Wharf, off White Street.⁵ Mr. Becket died within five years, and in July, 1840, his heirs sold the same for just \$1300 to merchant William Hunt.⁶ Thus White's Wharf became Hunt's Wharf, which would be used for shipping and storage for many decades.

As has been mentioned, William Hunt purchased the empty lot here in 1841, and had this dwelling built in 1842 (per Street Books, in vault of City Hall). It was then known as One Brown Street. Up to that time, he resided at then-16 Andrew Street (see 1837 & 1842 Salem Directories).

In 1844, William Hunt, merchant, would buy another house on Andrew Street for \$1400 (ED 346:113). In 1845, Mr. Hunt was on the committee of proprietors of the East Church who purchased the site of the new church building on Washington Square (now the home of the Salem Witch Museum).

⁵ Essex Deeds book 282 page 226.

⁶ ED 319:295, 320:2

In the face of Salem's changing economy, some members of Salem's waning merchant class continued to pursue their sea-borne businesses into the 1840s; but it was an ebb tide, with unfavorable winds. Boston, transformed into a modern mega-port with efficient railroad and highway distribution to all markets, had subsumed virtually all foreign trade other than Salem's continuing commerce with Zanzibar. The sleepy waterfront at Derby Wharf, with an occasional arrival from Africa and regular visits from schooners carrying wood from Nova Scotia, is depicted in 1850 by Hawthorne in his cranky "introductory section" to *The Scarlet Letter*, which he began while working in the Custom House.

Although Hawthorne had no interest in describing it, Salem's transformation did occur in the 1840s, as more industrial methods and machines were introduced, and many new companies in new lines of business arose. The Gothic symbol of Salem's new industrial economy was the large twin-towered granite train station—the "stone depot"—smoking and growling with idling locomotives. It stood on filled-in land at the foot of Washington Street, where the merchants' wharves had been; and from it the trains carried many valuable products as well as passengers. The tanning and curing of leather was very important in Salem by the mid-1800s. On and near Boston Street, along the upper North River, there were 41 tanneries in 1844, and 85 in 1850, employing 550 hands. The leather business would continue to grow in importance throughout the 1800s. In 1846 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company completed the construction at Stage Point of the largest factory building in the United States, 60' wide by 400' long. It was an immediate success, and hundreds of people found employment there, many of them living in tenements built nearby. It too benefited from the Zanzibar and Africa trade, as it produced light cotton cloth for use in the tropics. Also in the 1840s, a new method was introduced to make possible high-volume industrial shoe production. In Lynn, the factory system was perfected, and that city became the nation's leading shoe producer. Salem had shoe factories too, and attracted shoe workers from outlying towns and the countryside. Even the population began to transform, as hundreds of Irish families, fleeing the Famine in Ireland, settled in Salem and gave the industrialists a big pool of cheap labor.

In 1850 this house was occupied by merchant William Hunt, 45 (owns \$7,000 in real estate), wife Anstiss 45, children Mary D., 16, Sarah B., 15, William D., nine, and Lewis, six; also maid-servants Catherine Carpenter, 22, born Ireland, and Rose McGuire, 20, born Ireland (per 1850 census, house 454, ward two).

In 1851, Stephen C. Phillips succeeded in building a railroad line from Salem to Lowell, which meant that the coal that was landed at Phillips Wharf (formerly the Crowninshields' India Wharf) could be run cheaply out to Lowell to help fuel the boilers of the mills, whose output of textiles could be freighted easily to Salem for shipment by water. This innovation, although not long-lived, was a much-needed boost to Salem's economy as a port and transportation center. Salem's growth continued through the 1850s, as business and industries expanded, the population swelled, new churches (e.g. Immaculate Conception, 1857) were started, new working-class neighborhoods were developed (especially in North Salem and South Salem, off Boston Street, and along the Mill Pond behind the Broad Street graveyard), and new schools, factories, and stores were built. A second, larger, factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was added in 1859, at Stage Point, where a new Methodist Church went up, and many neat homes, boarding-houses, and stores were erected along the streets between Lafayette and Congress. The tanning business continued to boom, as better and larger tanneries were built along Boston Street and Mason Street; and subsidiary industries sprang up as well, most notably the J.M. Anderson glue-works on the Turnpike (Highland Avenue).

In 1855, Robert Brookhouse and William Hunt (along with Robert Brookhouse Jr. and Joseph H. Hanson) owned vessels including the 242-ton bark *Ann & Mary*, Capt. John Goldsmith, engaged in foreign trade (see EIHC vol. 39).

As it re-established itself as an economic powerhouse, Salem took a strong interest in national politics. It was primarily Republican, and strongly anti-slavery, with its share of outspoken abolitionists, led by Charles Remond, a passionate speaker who came from one of the city's notable black families. At its Lyceum (on Church Street) and in other venues, plays and shows were put on, but cultural lectures and political speeches were given too.

By 1860, with the election of Abraham Lincoln, it was clear that the Southern states would secede from the union; and Salem, which had done so much to win the independence of the nation, was ready to go to war to force others to remain a part of it.

The Civil War began in April, 1861, and went on for four years, during which hundreds of Salem men served in the army and navy, and many were killed or died of disease or abusive treatment while imprisoned. Hundreds more suffered wounds, or broken health. The people of Salem contributed greatly to efforts to alleviate

the suffering of the soldiers, sailors, and their families; and there was great celebration when the war finally ended in the spring of 1865, just as President Lincoln was assassinated. The four years of bloodshed and warfare were over; the slaves were free; 800,000 men were dead; the union was preserved and the South was under martial rule. Salem, with many wounded soldiers and grieving families, welcomed the coming of peace.

Through the 1860s, Salem pursued manufacturing, especially of leather and shoes and textiles. The managers and capitalists tended to build their new, grand houses along Lafayette Street (these houses may still be seen, south of Roslyn Street; many are in the French Second Empire style, with mansard roofs). A third factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was built in 1865.

In 1866, Robert Brookhouse died at the age of 87, having made many charitable donations, including the orphanage on Carpenter Street and the homes for aged women and for aged men on Derby Street. In 1870 Salem received its last cargo from Zanzibar, thus ending a once-important trade. By then, a new Salem & New York freight steamboat line was in operation. Seven years later, with the arrival of a vessel from Cayenne, Salem's foreign trade came to an end. After that, "the merchandise warehouses on the wharves no longer contained silks from India, tea from China, pepper from Sumatra, coffee from Arabia, spices from Batavia, gum-copal from Zanzibar, hides from Africa, and the various other products of far-away countries. The boys have ceased to watch on the Neck for the incoming vessels, hoping to earn a reward by being the first to announce to the expectant merchant the safe return of his looked-for vessel. The foreign commerce of Salem, once her pride and glory, has spread its white wings and sailed away forever" (per Rev. George Bachelor in *History of Essex County*, II: 65).

Salem was now so densely built-up that a general conflagration was always a possibility, as in Boston, when, on Nov. 9, 1872, the financial and manufacturing district of the city burned up. Salem continued to prosper in the 1870s, carried forward by the leather-making business. In 1874 the city was visited by a tornado and shaken by a minor earthquake. In the following year, the large Pennsylvania Pier (site of the present coal-fired harborside electrical generating plant) was completed to begin receiving large shipments of coal. Beyond it, at Juniper Point, a new owner began subdividing the old Allen farmlands into a new development called Salem Willows and Juniper Point. In the U.S. centennial year, 1876, A.G.

Bell of Salem announced that he had discovered a way to transmit voices over telegraph wires.

In this decade, French-Canadian families began coming to work in Salem's mills and factories, and more houses and tenements were built. The better-off workers bought portions of older houses or built small homes for their families in the outlying sections of the city; and by 1879 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton mills would employ 1200 people and produce annually nearly 15 million yards of cloth. Shoe-manufacturing businesses expanded in the 1870s, and 40 shoe factories were employing 600-plus operatives. Tanning, in both Salem and Peabody, remained a very important industry, and employed hundreds of breadwinners. On Boston Street in 1879, the Arnold tannery caught fire and burned down.

In 1880 William Hunt, 76, was still working at his office at #16 Asiatic Building. His son Lewis Hunt lived nearby at 24 Winter Street. This house was numbered 51 Washington Square by 1880 (see 1881 directory).

On 3 August 1883, William Hunt died. He was publicly remembered as having been an eminent merchant, having owned twenty ships and barks. "Mr. Hunt enjoyed a high reputation as an intelligent and honorable merchant. He was also a man of much intellectual culture. His reading was very extensive, he being familiar with all the best authors."⁷

In September, 1883, the other Hunt heirs sold their interests in this homestead to their brother Lewis Hunt of Salem (ED 1115:203). He lived here for awhile, and in 1885 moved to Lexington (per directory), and the house was leased to Dr. William Nicholson, physician (directory, 1886).

In 1890 (per 1890-1 Naumkeag Directory), the house was occupied by Mrs. Lucy Sutton, widow of William Sutton Jr., and by her son (?) Harry Sutton, a clerk at a business in Peabody. Here too lived Joshua G. Towne, bookkeeper in a bank, and his family (if any). Starting in 1895 or so, John B. Etherington, a funeral undertaker, occupied this house with his family. It was then numbered 53; and #51, the other side, had been set apart as a residential unit and was occupied by people named Draper. Mr. Etherington was a partner in Sheplee & Etherington, successors to Charles S. Buffum, with funeral parlor at 64 Washington street (see advertisement, appended).

⁷ see Hurd, *History of Essex County*, p.237; and engraving of portrait.

John B. Etherington (1867-1918) was born in Rome, New York, and was educated at Pulaski (NY) Business College. At twenty he became an undertaker and then worked for nine years in Rochester, New York. He married Mary P. Hill of Pulaski, NY, and they would have three children. He came to Salem and entered into a partnership with Oliver C. Sheplee.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Salem kept building infrastructure; and new businesses arose, and established businesses expanded. Retail stores prospered; horse-drawn trolleys ran every which-way; and machinists, carpenters, millwrights, and other specialists all thrived. In 1880, Salem's manufactured goods were valued at about \$8.4 million, of which leather accounted for nearly half. In the summer of 1886, the Knights of Labor brought a strike against the manufacturers for a ten-hour day and other concessions; but the manufacturers imported labor from Maine and Canada, and kept going. The strikers held out, and there was violence in the streets, and even rioting; but the owners prevailed, and many of the defeated workers lost their jobs and suffered, with their families, through a bitter winter.

By the mid-1880s, Salem's cotton-cloth mills at the Point employed 1400 people who produced about 19 million yards annually, worth about \$1.5 million. The city's large shoe factories stood downtown behind the stone depot and on Dodge and Lafayette Streets. A jute bagging company prospered with plants on Skerry Street and English Street; its products were sent south to be used in cotton-baling. Salem factories also produced lead, paint, and oil. At the Eastern Railroad yard on Bridge Street, cars were repaired and even built new. In 1887 the streets were first lit with electricity, replacing gas-light. The gas works, which had stood on Northey Street since 1850, was moved to a larger site on Bridge Street in 1888, opposite the Beverly Shore.

More factories and more people required more space for buildings, more roads, and more storage areas. This space was created by filling in rivers, harbors, and ponds. The once-broad North River was filled from both shores, and became a canal along Bridge Street above the North Bridge. The large and beautiful Mill Pond, which occupied the whole area between the present Jefferson Avenue, Canal Street, and Loring Avenue, finally vanished beneath streets, storage areas, junk-yards, rail-yards, and parking lots. The South River, too, with its epicenter at Central Street (that's why there was a Custom House built there in 1805) disappeared under the pavement of Riley Plaza and New Derby Street, and some of its old wharves

were joined together with much in-fill and turned into coal-yards and lumber-yards. Only a canal was left, running in from Derby and Central Wharves to Lafayette Street.

In 1900 (per census, house 307) the house was occupied by John B. Etheridge, 32, wife Mary, 36, his mother Sarah, fifty, a widow, and children Sarah H., five, and William H., four. They were attended by servant Mary Sullivan, 25. They continued to reside here; and in 1903 Mary had a third child, Hugh. In 1910 the family resided here, with Miss Sullivan still working as servant, but with Mrs. Sarah Etheridge no longer here. A boarder, Isidor Goldberg, evidently resided here too in 1910 (per census, house 1, ward two).

Salem kept growing. The Canadians were followed in the early 20th century by large numbers of Polish and Ukrainian families, who settled primarily in the Derby Street neighborhood. By the eve of World War One, Salem was a bustling, polyglot city that supported large department stores and large factories of every description. People from the surrounding towns, and Marblehead in particular, came to Salem to do their shopping; and its handsome government buildings, as befit the county seat, were busy with conveyances of land, lawsuits, and probate proceedings. The city's politics were lively, and its economy was strong.

On June 25, 1914, in the morning, in Blubber Hollow (Boston Street opposite Federal), a fire started in one of Salem's fire-prone wooden tanneries. This fire soon consumed the building and raced out of control, for the west wind was high and the season had been dry. The next building caught fire, and the next, and out of Blubber Hollow the fire roared easterly, a monstrous front of flame and smoke, wiping out the houses of Boston Street, Essex Street, and upper Broad Street, and then sweeping through Hathorne, Winthrop, Endicott, and other residential streets. Men and machines could not stop it: the enormous fire crossed over into South Salem and destroyed the neighborhoods west of Lafayette Street, then devoured the mansions of Lafayette Street itself, and raged onward into the tenement district. Despite the combined efforts of heroic fire crews from many towns and cities, the fire overwhelmed everything in its path: it smashed into the large factory buildings of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company (Congress Street), which exploded in an inferno; and it rolled down Lafayette Street and across the water to Derby Street. There, just beyond Union Street, after a 13-hour rampage, the monster died, having consumed 250 acres, 1600 houses, and 41 factories, and leaving three dead and thousands homeless. Some people had insurance, some did not; all received

much support and generous donations from all over the country and the world. It was one of the greatest urban disasters in the history of the United States, and the people of Salem would take years to recover from it. Eventually, they did, and many of the former houses and businesses were rebuilt; and several urban-renewal projects (including Hawthorne Boulevard, which involved removing old houses and widening old streets) were put into effect.

Very suddenly on February 23, 1916, John B. Etherington was felled by heart disease, and died while taking a short walk with his daughter. He was in his 49th year. The funeral was held from the house. The Etherington family would continue to reside here into the 1950s and perhaps beyond.⁸

By the 1920s, Salem was once again a thriving city; and its tercentenary in 1926 was a time of great celebration. The Depression hit in 1929, and continued through the 1930s. Salem, the county seat and regional retail center, gradually rebounded, and prospered after World War II through the 1950s and into the 1960s. General Electric, Sylvania, Parker Brothers, Pequot Mills (formerly Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co.), Almy's department store, various other large-scale retailers, and Beverly's United Shoe Machinery Company were all major local employers. Then the arrival of suburban shopping malls and the relocation of manufacturing businesses took their toll, as they have with many other cities. More than most, Salem has navigated its way forward into the present with success, trading on its share of notoriety arising from the witch trials, but also from its history as a great seaport and as the home of Bowditch, McIntire, Bentley, Story, and Hawthorne. Most of all, it remains a city where the homes of the old-time merchants, mariners, and mill-operatives are all honored as a large part of what makes Salem different from any other place.

--Robert Booth, Sept. 2009.

⁸ In October, 1948, The Hunt heirs sold the premises, 51-53, to Mrs. Mary P Etheridge and her daughter Sarah H., ED 3628:403.

Glossary & Sources

A figure like (ED 123:45) refers to book 123, page 45, Essex South registry of Deeds, Federal Street, Salem.

A figure like (#12345) refers to Essex Probate case 12345, on file at the Essex Probate Court, Federal Street, Salem, or on microfilm at Mass. Archives, Boston, or at the Peabody Essex Museum's Phillips Library, Salem.

MSSRW refers to the multi-volume compendium, *Mass. Soldiers & Sailors in the Revolutionary War*, available at the Salem Public Library among other places.

MSSCRW refers to the multi-volume compendium, *Mass. Soldiers, Sailors, & Marines in the Civil War*, available at the Salem Public Library among other places.

EIHC refers to the Essex Institute Historical Collections (discontinued), a multi-volume set (first volume published in 1859) of data and articles about Essex County. The indices of the EIHC have been consulted regarding many of the people associated with this house.

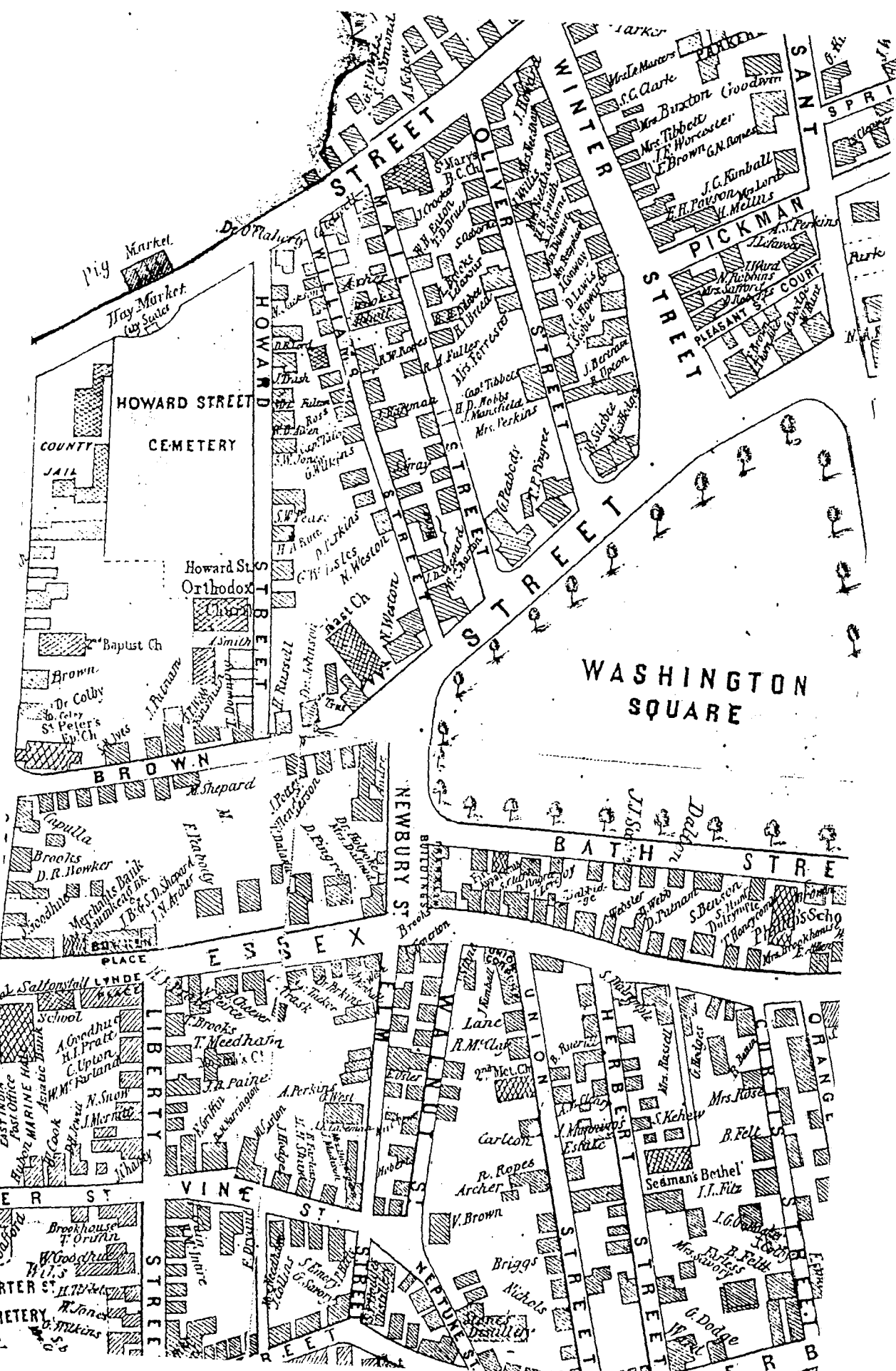
The six-volume published Salem Vital records (marriages, births, and deaths through 1849) have been consulted, as have the Salem Directory and later Naumkeag Directory, which have information about residents and their addresses, etc.

Sidney Perley's three-volume *History of Salem, 1626-1716* has been consulted, as has the four-volume *William Bentley's Diary*, J. Duncan Phillips' books, some newspaper obituaries, and other sources.

Salem real estate valuations, and, where applicable, Salem Street Books, have also been consulted, as have genealogies.

There is much more material available about Salem and its history; and the reader is encouraged to make his or her own discoveries.

--Robert Booth

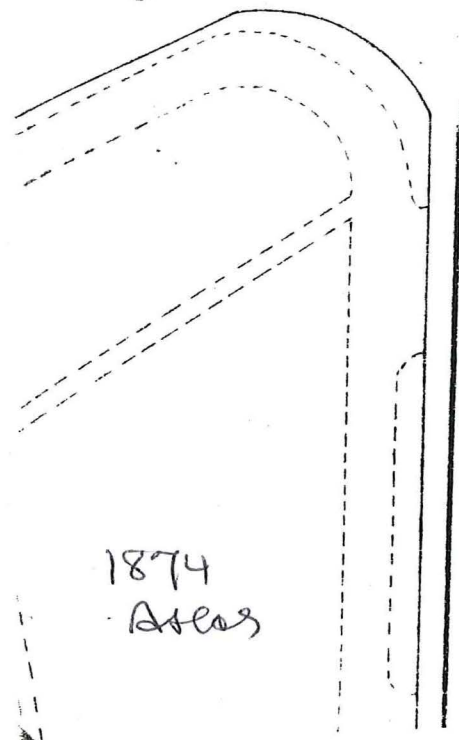


1851 Atlas

Mary E Worcester
 T. D. Poustland Heirs
 Heirs D. Lord
 Saml C. Clark

Misses Bond
 J. S. Perkins
 Safford
 Roberts

Wm Hunt
 Geo Dodge
 Geo Dodge
 W. H. Brown
 DODGE
 HUNT
 BROWN



SPRING
 Mary S Ames
 D. Tipton
 James West
 W. Kelman

PICKMAN
 Chas. Millett
 Wm B Parker
 Chas. Millett
 Kimball
 Jas. S. Kimball
 Mrs. B. Barnes

ANDREW
 James Trefren
 N. A. Kimball
 F. C. Bulman
 Mrs. Brooks
 Mrs. Stokes
 L. C. Brooks

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1897-8 Directory

SALEM ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT.

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(Successors to CHAS. S. BUFFUM.)

Undertakers,

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Castors, Silver Ware, Clothes Washers of all kinds, etc., etc.

229 Washington Street, Salem, Mass.

Easy Payments.

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GERMAN LOSS

IN WINDS OF VERDUN
The German drive against Verdun, which has been reported today, has been found in the fold of five of the steamer that had been in the five days.

FRENCH EVACUATE BRABANT SUR MEUSE
Paris, Feb. 24.—French troops have evacuated Brabant sur Meuse, north of Verdun, the French war office announced today.

The Germans have also succeeded in capturing the most of the positions in the Verdun sector, and the French war office reported today that the German offensive against Verdun is continuing with unabated violence.

Further assaults are being made by the Germans against the French positions near Haumont, but the war office said that all have been repulsed so far.

At Samogneux, despite the launching of enormous numbers of men in gas formation attacks, the Germans were frustrated in their efforts to try the French positions by storm.

Brabant, which the German drive compelled the French to give up, is six miles north of the Verdun fortress, upon the eastern bank of the Meuse. It was a strongly fortified position in the sector known as the heights of the Meuse. It is directly southeast of Consegnoye, where the Germans made their first attacks in the big offensive campaign.

SWEDISH STEAMER SUNK
Copenhagen, Feb. 24.—The Swedish steamer "Roland" which sailed for the Baltic from Harleup just after concluding a voyage from Philadelphia, has been lost in the North Sea, it was announced today. The ship was carrying 327 tons and was built in 1906. Its home port was Helsingborg.

ANOTHER MOEWE VICTIM
London, Feb. 24.—The British steamer "Moeve" which was taken by the German commerce raider that captured the liner "Appam" has been scattered outside that port by the German captors, according to a dispatch received by Lloyd's today.

The German officer in command of the "Moeve" was informed by the British authorities in the Canary islands that the ship would have to be or be interned. He immediately ordered steam up, took the vessel outside of the Spanish waters and had the prize sunk. The German crew returned to port in small boats and were interned until the end of the war.

The dramatic destruction of the steamer is another thrilling chapter in the story of the mysterious commerce raider practically identified as German skipper Moeve, and the end not yet. Despite the fact that the fish warships have been seeking "Moeve" since the Appam was sent into an American port, the man raider is still afloat and active in his career of capture and destruction.

INTERMED GERMAN ESCAPES
London, Feb. 24.—The German steamer "Hochfeld" which was interned in the Azores early in the war, has escaped, according to a dispatch from Madrid. The Hochfeld is a steamer of 3889 tons and was built in 1911. It fled from Madeira under cover of night.

The escape of this interned vessel explains the act of Portugal in allowing Teuton ships yesterday.

FRENCH EXPERT'S VIEW
Paris, Feb. 24.—The military expert the Echo de Paris is explaining operations around Verdun, voices confident note, saying: Although the enemy is making a great effort which is absolutely not precedent so far as artillery is concerned, the fact that he is not advancing constitutes a brilliant success for France. The German prince has so far obtained not a single important advantage, nor will

he ever be able to offset the French defense in time to realize that his troops are combating opposition more terrible than ever dreamed of.

Many military officers are still unable to believe the German commanders capable of committing the supreme folly of trying to storm the fortress of Verdun, which they point out, is now swarming with tens of thousands of fresh troops who have been rushed forward to reinforce General Humbert's army.

The fortress bristles with the most modern and destructive guns known to warfare and is stocked with enormous supplies of provisions and ammunition. More than 20 forts surround the city, not counting the redoubts and other defensive works which have been built since the Germans invaded France.

BELGIAN AND SERBIAN FUTURE
London, Feb. 24.—Territorial gains for Belgium and Serbia will result if the Allies win the war.

This was the construction placed upon the speech of Premier Asquith in the house of commons on Wednesday afternoon, when he said: "We shall never sheathe the sword which we have not lightly drawn until Belgium, and I will add, Serbia, recover in full measure all and more than they have sacrificed."

There is only one direction for Belgian expansion and that means the adoption of part of northwestern Germany. If the central powers go down to decisive defeat Serbia will probably get a slice of Albania as well as of Bulgaria.

POWDER MILL BURNED
Wilmington, Del., Feb. 24.—The dryer mill of the Du Pont powder plant at Carney's point was destroyed by fire early today. Several hundreds pounds of powder also burned. Four men in the mill leaped from windows and escaped death by a narrow margin.

FURTHER GERMAN ADVANCES
Berlin, Feb. 24.—(by wireless)—Rapid strides are being made by the German forces in their great drive upon Verdun, according to today's official report issued by the war office. The Germans have made further advances on the east bank of the Meuse, the report stating that they have captured the villages of Brabant, Haumont and Samogneux. They have also taken all the forest district to the northwest, north and northeast of this region.

By their advance the Germans have taken possession of Baumont as well as Herbebois, the report adds.

BELGIAN STEAMER BLOWN UP
Amsterdam, Feb. 24.—The small Belgian steamer "Zobregue VIII," was sunk by a German submarine off Noordhinder lightship yesterday. After the crew had left the vessel was

blown up in the North Sea. The steamer was carrying a cargo of coal and was bound for Rotterdam.

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SUDDEN DEATH OF UNDERTAKER

John B. Etheridge Stricken With Heart Trouble While on Street; Taken Into House Where He Expired

John B. Etheridge, a well-known Salem undertaker, died very suddenly yesterday afternoon from heart failure. He was on his way to Washington square, accompanied by his daughter, about 2 o'clock. He had gone but a short distance when he was stricken by illness, and was assisted into a neighbor's house. Two physicians attended him, but he passed away in a few minutes after their arrival, death being due to a heart trouble.

Mr. Etheridge was born in Rome, N. Y., Nov. 21, 1857, was educated in the Rome High school, and subsequently took a course at the Pulaski business college. He began as an undertaker in 1887, and for nine years had full charge of the large undertaking establishment of A. W. Mudge of Rochester, N. Y. He then came to Salem, and entered into a partnership with the late Oliver C. Shepley. In 1895, the firm name being Shepley & Etheridge. Later, Mr. Shepley sold out his interest, and Mr. Etheridge continued the business alone up to the time of his death.

Of a kindly, sympathetic nature, always polite, attentive to every detail, he made many friends and numbered among his patrons the most prominent Salem families. He was a member of the Salem Chamber of Commerce and of the Salem and Communicant at St. Peter's church.

He leaves a widow, formerly Miss Mary P. Hill of Pulaski, N. Y.; two sons, William H. and Hugh P. Etheridge; a daughter, Miss Sarah H. Etheridge, all of Salem, and a mother, Mrs. A. B. Etheridge of Rome, N. Y. His father, Ahris B. Etheridge, died in Rome, N. Y., Jan. 21.

MORE IMITATION SNOW FLURRIES
The much mooted question for the last 36 hours seems to be whether rain will arrive to take away the snow that is still firmly embedded thickly on most of the streets. People generally

conversant with the duties of the town clerk and treasurer say that the two offices should be held by the same party, or there should be an entire rearrangement of the offices. One person for both offices would be least expensive.

Among the Societies.
At the First Baptist church, Friday evening, Rev. Herbert Whitelock of Allston will preach at 7.30. There will be special singing by Mrs. Churchill and Miss Small.

The installation of officers of St. Teresa church, N. C. O. P. will take place this evening in K. of C. hall.

A large delegation of Peabody people will attend the St. John's Prep. College minstrel show to be given at the Peabody Institute in Danvers Friday night. This will be the first public appearance of St. John's boys on the outside, except in debates.

The debate two years ago in Peabody town hall was a treat to the people of Peabody and as it was free it was doubly appreciated. Peabody people always generously support anything conducted by St. John's and all those attending the performance at Danvers are assured of a pleasant and enjoyable evening. The show will begin at 8 o'clock.

A meeting of Warner camp, S. of V., will be held this evening.

Personal Mention.
Nathan H. Poor and George H. Jacobs leave town today for a sojourn at Miami, Fla.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry F. Whidden and son Donald, left town today for a month's trip to Cuba and Florida. The annual reunion of the Pugnacious was held last evening at the home of Clarence E. Joll, Orchard street, with nine or 10 members present, among them Harry O. Good of New York, associate editor of the N. Y. Musical Courier.

William F. Sawyer, the well known dry goods dealer on Main street, has been quite seriously ill the past few days from severe and persistent attacks of bleeding from the nose. His condition this morning was considerably improved.

Rev. Livingston D. Lord, his son-in-law, conducted the short funeral service of the late Henry A. Chesley at the chapel in Cedar Grove cemetery yesterday afternoon. Mr. and Mrs. Lord and Mr. and Mrs. Campbell accompanied the body from Brookline, N. Y. Rev. Dr. Lord and his wife returned last night but Mr. and Mrs. Campbell will remain in Salem for a few days.

Mrs. Newman Perkins, formerly of this town, died last night. Her funeral will take place Friday P. M., from Mrs. George W. Mansfield's, Salem.

The Strand Maklog Good.

The N. H. Ware Co., owners and managers of the new Strand theatre, are to be congratulated on the success of their new enterprise. The new

vard, 1860); Edward Woodbridge, August 3, 1842; and Catharine, July 7, 1844.

Mr. Phillips was an ardent lover of his native city, a man of overflowing public spirit, and with a heart which beat with warm sympathy in response to the appeals of his neighbors and fellow-townsmen in behalf of all deserving enterprises and charities. The educational interests of Salem won his early and constant aid and support, and for many years he presided over the board which had them in charge. In 1830 he was chosen State Senator, and in 1834 was chosen in the place of Rufus Choate, who had resigned his seat, to represent the Essex South District in Congress. His duties in Washington were ably performed, and by his generous spirit, his thorough integrity, his business methods and his kindly deportment, he won the confidence and friendship of both political friends and foes. The regard in which he was held by his brother Representatives was well illustrated by Mr. Hardin, of Kentucky, whom Mr. Cushing described as "the gray-haired Nestor of the House, and its perpetually snarling Thersites," who, in a reply to a speech of Mr. Phillips, said that "if all the members of the House were like this gentleman from Massachusetts, God would never have repented that he made man."

After one re-election, in 1836, Mr. Phillips retired from Congress, and in 1839 was chosen to succeed Leverett Saltonstall as mayor of Salem. He held office three years, and on his retirement gave the amount of his entire salary to the city for the improvement of the building occupied by the Bowditch and Fisk Schools. In 1848 and 1849 he was the candidate of the Free-Soil party for Governor, and during those and succeeding years was an active participant in those movements which resulted in the organization of the Republican party.

During the last years of his life he was confronted by adversities in business, and though beyond middle age, with a hopeful spirit and an undaunted courage, of which younger men might well be proud, he set himself about to repair and rebuild his fortune. He engaged in extensive timber and lumber enterprises on the St. Maurice and Three Rivers, in Canada, where his third son, George William, was established for their care and supervision. After a visit to the field of his operations, in 1857, he took passage at Quebec in the steamer "Montreal," for Montreal, on Friday, the 26th of June, with the intention of returning home. On the same afternoon the steamer took fire, twelve or fifteen miles above Quebec, opposite Cape Rouge, and only about one hundred and fifty of the four hundred passengers on board were rescued. Among those who lost their lives was Mr. Phillips. His son sent news of the disaster to Salem by telegraph the next day, stating that his father's body had been recovered, and would reach Salem on the following Tuesday. At sunset on Saturday, after the receipt of the sad news, all the bells of the city were

tolled, and on Sunday appropriate allusions to the death of Mr. Phillips were made in all the churches, and the flags of the shipping and armories and engine-houses were displayed at half-mast. On Tuesday, June 30, the funeral took place at Barton Square Church, and the remains of him, whom the city regarded almost as its father and every man as his benefactor and friend, were consigned to the grave. The *Newburyport Herald* said: "With a fortune or without it, we do not know the man that Essex County could not as well have spared. He was one of nature's noblemen, and as an able, honest, sincere Christian man, added worth to the human race by belonging to it." And every reader of the *Herald* said Amen.

WILLIAM HUNT.

William Hunt was born in Salem April 25, 1804. He was in the fifth generation from Captain Lewis Hunt, who came from England and settled in Salem about 1660. His father's name was William. When a mere lad he was employed by Mr. Jonas Warren, in his store at Danversport. After remaining there a short time he entered as clerk in the store of Mr. Nathan Blood, on Derby Street, Salem, where he remained until 1823, when he was employed by Mr. Robert Brookhouse, who had recently commenced in the African trade. After a few years he was given an interest in the business, which was continued until the death of Mr. Brookhouse, in 1866. They transacted a very large business, which was extended to the interior of Africa, from whence they imported large quantities of palm oil, gold dust, ivory and hides. At one time they owned more than twenty ships and barques. After the death of Mr. Brookhouse Mr. Hunt continued the business with Robert Brookhouse, Jr., Joseph H. Hanson and Captain Nathan Frye, until March 27, 1869, when the last voyage was completed, and he retired from business with ample means.

Mr. Hunt was married to Austis Slocum, daughter of Ebenezer and Sarah (Becket) Slocum, March 24, 1831. Two sons—William Dean and Lewis—and two daughters—Mary Dean Hersey and Sarah Becket Putnam—survive him. He died August 3, 1883.

Mr. Hunt enjoyed a high reputation as an intelligent and honorable merchant. He was also a man of much intellectual culture. His reading was very extensive, he being familiar with all the best authors.

He took a deep interest in all affairs of his native city, filling many positions of trust. In his charities he was very unostentatious, knowing but the need to give the required aid.

EDWARD D. KIMBALL.

The subject of this sketch belonged to a New England family, which moved from Ipswich, Mass., to Bradford and Haverhill, and later to Plaistow, N. H.,

H51

History of the House & Occupants 53 Washington Square, Salem

by Robert Booth for Historic Salem Inc

According to available evidence, this house was built for William Hunt, merchant, in 1842. Mr. Hunt was engaged primarily in trade with Africa.

On 14 Oct. 1841 William Hunt, merchant, for \$1100 purchased from Isaac Cushing, merchant (of 107 Essex Street), a lot of land at the corner of Brown¹ and Pleasant Streets (ED 327:211). The bounds were given as: south 52' on Brown Street, east 100' on Pleasant St., north 78' of court or street, and west 100' on land of Kimball. On this lot, probably in 1842, Mr. Hunt proceeded to have a contractor build this house as his family residence. Its style is Greek Revival, and it has handsome marble chimney-pieces and other elegant features.

William Hunt Jr. (1804-1883) was born 15 April 1804 in Salem, the son of baker William Hunt and Mary Dean. Salem was, at that moment, the wealthiest place in America, with a world-spanning trade carried on by more than 150 vessels, sixty of them trading to the orient, and to India especially. William was a little boy when Salem's twenty-year boom came to an end with a crash in January, 1808, as Jefferson and the Congress imposed an embargo on all shipping in hopes of forestalling war with Britain. The Embargo, widely opposed in New England, proved futile and nearly ruinous in Salem. As a hotbed of Democratic-Republicanism, Salem's East Parish and its seafarers, led by the Crowninshields, loyally supported the Embargo until it was lifted in spring, 1809. Shunned by the other Salem merchants for his support of the Embargo, the eminent Billy Gray took his large fleet of ships—fully one-third of Salem's tonnage—and moved to Boston, thereby eliminating a huge amount of Salem wealth, shipping, import-export cargos, and local employment. Gray soon switched from the Federalist party, and was elected Lt. Governor on a ticket with Gov. Elbridge Gerry, a native of Marblehead.

Salem's commerce with the world was repeatedly interrupted by the British, which intercepted neutral trading vessels and often impressed American sailors into their navy. Despite many warnings

¹ Brown Street was the old name for the road running from pleasant Street to St. Peter Street; only a part of it is now called Brown Street, the rest having become "Washington Square North."

Tamar Hunt Blood, was a prosperous ship chandler who helped William Hunt to learn a great deal and to make many business contacts over time.

Post-war, America was flooded with British manufactured goods, especially factory-made knock-offs of the beautiful Indian textiles that had been the specialty of Salem importers for 30 years. Britain, dominant in India, had forced the Indians to become cotton-growers rather than cloth-producers; and the cheap Indian cotton was shipped to the English industrial ports and turned into mass-produced cloth. American national policy-makers reacted, in 1816, by passing a high tariff on cheap imported textiles, in order to protect and encourage America's own budding manufacturing capacity. The net result was to diminish what had been the most abundant and lucrative area of Salem's pre-war trade. Salem's merchants rebuilt their fleets and resumed their worldwide commerce, without a full understanding of how difficult conditions had become. For a few years, their efforts were rewarded with reasonable profits, and it seemed that Salem was once again in the ascendant, with almost 200 vessels sailing to Europe, the Orient, the Caribbean and South America, and the southern ports.

The pre-war partisan politics of the town were not resumed, as the middle-class "mechanics" (artisans) became more powerful and brought about civic harmony, largely through the Salem Charitable Mechanic Association. Rev. William Bentley, keen observer and active citizen, died in 1819, the year in which a new U.S. Custom House was built on the site of the George Crowninshield mansion, at the head of Derby Wharf. Into the 1820s foreign trade continued prosperous; and new markets were opened with Madagascar (1820), which supplied tallow and ivory, and Zanzibar (1825), whence came coffee, ivory, and gum copal, used to make varnish.

At the end of his apprenticeship, aged nineteen, William went to work in 1823 for the merchant Robert Brookhouse (1779-1866), who had recently commenced trade with Africa. This was very fortunate turn of events for William Hunt.

Robert Brookhouse Jr. was born in Salem during the Revolutionary War. When he was an infant his father, Capt. Robert Brookhouse, the brave master of the privateer *Lively*, was lost in a storm with his vessel and all hands. The boy grew up on High Street in straitened circumstances. After a little schooling he went to work in a shop on Lynde Street to learn the trade of a silversmith and watch-maker. Small and wiry, he was a smart, hustling fellow, and eventually

One night, an intruder did break in and clubbed him to death in his sleep. All of Salem buzzed with fear and rumors; and within two months it was discovered that the murderer was a Crowninshield (he killed himself) who had been hired by his friends, Capt. White's own relatives, Capt. Joe Knapp and his brother Captain Frank (they would be executed). The murder, and related lurid events, tarnished Salem further, and more families quit the now-notorious town.

In October, 1833, for \$1400, William Hunt, merchant, purchased from Capt. John Story, shipmaster, a half-house on Andrew Street, which would be the family residence for some years. Mr. Hunt was a man of high intelligence and much repute as a merchant. He read widely in literature and filled many positions of civic trust. He was also quite philanthropic, in the tradition of Robert Brookhouse, and made many charitable donations.³

Salem had not prepared for the industrial age, and had few natural advantages. The North River served not to power factories but mainly to flush the waste from the 25 tanneries that had set up along its banks. As the decade wore on, and the new railroads and canals, all running and flowing to Boston from points north, west, and south, diverted both capital and trade away from the coast. Salem's remaining merchants took their equity out of local wharves and warehouses and ships and put it into the stock of manufacturing and transportation companies. Some merchants did not make the transition, and were ruined. Old-line areas of work, like rope-making, sail-making, and ship chandleries, gradually declined and disappeared.

Robert Brookhouse and William Hunt were partners in the ownership of many trading vessels over the decades. In 1836 they purchased from the Rogers Brothers the bark *Active*, 211 tons, commanded by Abraham Pickering.⁴

Salem slumped badly, but the voters decided to charter their town as a city in 1836—the third city to be formed in the state, behind Boston and Lowell. City Hall was built 1837-8 and the city seal was adopted with an already-anachronistic Latin motto of “to the farthest port of the rich Indies”—a far cry from “Go West, young man!” The Panic of 1837, a sharp, nationwide economic depression, caused even more Salem families to head west in search of fortune and a better future.

³ Much information about Hunt and Brookhouse comes from Hurd's *History of Essex County* and from R.S. Rantoul, et al, *Records of the First Fifty years of the Old Ladies Home*.

⁴ see EIHC vol. 39; many of their vessels may be seen under their names in the indices of the Essex Institute *Historical Collections*, especially volumes 40-44.

In the face of Salem's changing economy, some members of Salem's waning merchant class continued to pursue their sea-borne businesses into the 1840s; but it was an ebb tide, with unfavorable winds. Boston, transformed into a modern mega-port with efficient railroad and highway distribution to all markets, had subsumed virtually all foreign trade other than Salem's continuing commerce with Zanzibar. The sleepy waterfront at Derby Wharf, with an occasional arrival from Africa and regular visits from schooners carrying wood from Nova Scotia, is depicted in 1850 by Hawthorne in his cranky "introductory section" to *The Scarlet Letter*, which he began while working in the Custom House.

Although Hawthorne had no interest in describing it, Salem's transformation did occur in the 1840s, as more industrial methods and machines were introduced, and many new companies in new lines of business arose. The Gothic symbol of Salem's new industrial economy was the large twin-towered granite train station—the "stone depot"—smoking and growling with idling locomotives. It stood on filled-in land at the foot of Washington Street, where the merchants' wharves had been; and from it the trains carried many valuable products as well as passengers. The tanning and curing of leather was very important in Salem by the mid-1800s. On and near Boston Street, along the upper North River, there were 41 tanneries in 1844, and 85 in 1850, employing 550 hands. The leather business would continue to grow in importance throughout the 1800s. In 1846 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company completed the construction at Stage Point of the largest factory building in the United States, 60' wide by 400' long. It was an immediate success, and hundreds of people found employment there, many of them living in tenements built nearby. It too benefited from the Zanzibar and Africa trade, as it produced light cotton cloth for use in the tropics. Also in the 1840s, a new method was introduced to make possible high-volume industrial shoe production. In Lynn, the factory system was perfected, and that city became the nation's leading shoe producer. Salem had shoe factories too, and attracted shoe workers from outlying towns and the countryside. Even the population began to transform, as hundreds of Irish families, fleeing the Famine in Ireland, settled in Salem and gave the industrialists a big pool of cheap labor.

In 1850 this house was occupied by merchant William Hunt, 45 (owns \$7,000 in real estate), wife Anstiss 45, children Mary D., 16, Sarah B., 15, William D., nine, and Lewis, six; also maid-servants Catherine Carpenter, 22, born Ireland, and Rose McGuire, 20, born Ireland (per 1850 census, house 454, ward two).

the suffering of the soldiers, sailors, and their families; and there was great celebration when the war finally ended in the spring of 1865, just as President Lincoln was assassinated. The four years of bloodshed and warfare were over; the slaves were free; 800,000 men were dead; the union was preserved and the South was under martial rule. Salem, with many wounded soldiers and grieving families, welcomed the coming of peace.

Through the 1860s, Salem pursued manufacturing, especially of leather and shoes and textiles. The managers and capitalists tended to build their new, grand houses along Lafayette Street (these houses may still be seen, south of Roslyn Street; many are in the French Second Empire style, with mansard roofs). A third factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was built in 1865.

In 1866, Robert Brookhouse died at the age of 87, having made many charitable donations, including the orphanage on Carpenter Street and the homes for aged women and for aged men on Derby Street. In 1870 Salem received its last cargo from Zanzibar, thus ending a once-important trade. By then, a new Salem & New York freight steamboat line was in operation. Seven years later, with the arrival of a vessel from Cayenne, Salem's foreign trade came to an end. After that, "the merchandise warehouses on the wharves no longer contained silks from India, tea from China, pepper from Sumatra, coffee from Arabia, spices from Batavia, gum-copal from Zanzibar, hides from Africa, and the various other products of far-away countries. The boys have ceased to watch on the Neck for the incoming vessels, hoping to earn a reward by being the first to announce to the expectant merchant the safe return of his looked-for vessel. The foreign commerce of Salem, once her pride and glory, has spread its white wings and sailed away forever" (per Rev. George Bachelor in *History of Essex County*, II: 65).

Salem was now so densely built-up that a general conflagration was always a possibility, as in Boston, when, on Nov. 9, 1872, the financial and manufacturing district of the city burned up. Salem continued to prosper in the 1870s, carried forward by the leather-making business. In 1874 the city was visited by a tornado and shaken by a minor earthquake. In the following year, the large Pennsylvania Pier (site of the present coal-fired harborside electrical generating plant) was completed to begin receiving large shipments of coal. Beyond it, at Juniper Point, a new owner began subdividing the old Allen farmlands into a new development called Salem Willows and Juniper Point. In the U.S. centennial year, 1876, A.G.

John B. Etherington (1867-1918) was born in Rome, New York, and was educated at Pulaski (NY) Business College. At twenty he became an undertaker and then worked for nine years in Rochester, New York. He married Mary P. Hill of Pulaski, NY, and they would have three children. He came to Salem and entered into a partnership with Oliver C. Sheplee.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Salem kept building infrastructure; and new businesses arose, and established businesses expanded. Retail stores prospered; horse-drawn trolleys ran every which-way; and machinists, carpenters, millwrights, and other specialists all thrived. In 1880, Salem's manufactured goods were valued at about \$8.4 million, of which leather accounted for nearly half. In the summer of 1886, the Knights of Labor brought a strike against the manufacturers for a ten-hour day and other concessions; but the manufacturers imported labor from Maine and Canada, and kept going. The strikers held out, and there was violence in the streets, and even rioting; but the owners prevailed, and many of the defeated workers lost their jobs and suffered, with their families, through a bitter winter.

By the mid-1880s, Salem's cotton-cloth mills at the Point employed 1400 people who produced about 19 million yards annually, worth about \$1.5 million. The city's large shoe factories stood downtown behind the stone depot and on Dodge and Lafayette Streets. A jute bagging company prospered with plants on Skerry Street and English Street; its products were sent south to be used in cotton-baling. Salem factories also produced lead, paint, and oil. At the Eastern Railroad yard on Bridge Street, cars were repaired and even built new. In 1887 the streets were first lit with electricity, replacing gas-light. The gas works, which had stood on Northey Street since 1850, was moved to a larger site on Bridge Street in 1888, opposite the Beverly Shore.

More factories and more people required more space for buildings, more roads, and more storage areas. This space was created by filling in rivers, harbors, and ponds. The once-broad North River was filled from both shores, and became a canal along Bridge Street above the North Bridge. The large and beautiful Mill Pond, which occupied the whole area between the present Jefferson Avenue, Canal Street, and Loring Avenue, finally vanished beneath streets, storage areas, junk-yards, rail-yards, and parking lots. The South River, too, with its epicenter at Central Street (that's why there was a Custom House built there in 1805) disappeared under the pavement of Riley Plaza and New Derby Street, and some of its old wharves

much support and generous donations from all over the country and the world. It was one of the greatest urban disasters in the history of the United States, and the people of Salem would take years to recover from it. Eventually, they did, and many of the former houses and businesses were rebuilt; and several urban-renewal projects (including Hawthorne Boulevard, which involved removing old houses and widening old streets) were put into effect.

Very suddenly on February 23, 1916, John B. Etherington was felled by heart disease, and died while taking a short walk with his daughter. He was in his 49th year. The funeral was held from the house. The Etherington family would continue to reside here into the 1950s and perhaps beyond.⁸

By the 1920s, Salem was once again a thriving city; and its tercentenary in 1926 was a time of great celebration. The Depression hit in 1929, and continued through the 1930s. Salem, the county seat and regional retail center, gradually rebounded, and prospered after World War II through the 1950s and into the 1960s. General Electric, Sylvania, Parker Brothers, Pequot Mills (formerly Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co.), Almy's department store, various other large-scale retailers, and Beverly's United Shoe Machinery Company were all major local employers. Then the arrival of suburban shopping malls and the relocation of manufacturing businesses took their toll, as they have with many other cities. More than most, Salem has navigated its way forward into the present with success, trading on its share of notoriety arising from the witch trials, but also from its history as a great seaport and as the home of Bowditch, McIntire, Bentley, Story, and Hawthorne. Most of all, it remains a city where the homes of the old-time merchants, mariners, and mill-operatives are all honored as a large part of what makes Salem different from any other place.

--Robert Booth, Sept. 2009.

⁸ In October, 1948, The Hunt heirs sold the premises, 51-53, to Mrs. Mary P Etheridge and her daughter Sarah H., ED 3628:403.

info@HistoricSalem.org

From: Robert Booth [abe@abecsw.org]
Sent: Monday, February 02, 2009 12:00 PM
To: WitchcitySalem@aol.com
Cc: info@historicsalem.org
Subject: report on house

Hello Bobby

My attachment should have gone through to you, but since it did not, I am not re-sending it; instead I am sending its contents as an email message (below) which may be too large for your computer to handle. If so, sorry.

Regards

Bob

History of House & Occupants **53 Washington Square, Salem**

By Robert Booth for Historic Salem Inc., Jan. 2009

According to available evidence, this house was built for William Hunt, merchant, in 1842.

On 14 Oct. 1841 William Hunt, merchant, for \$1100 purchased from Isaac Cushing,
[\[1\]](#)

merchant (of 107 Essex Street), a lot of land at the corner of Brown and Pleasant Streets (ED 327:211). The bounds were given as: south 52' on Brown Street, east 100' on Pleasant St., north 78' of court or street, and west 100' on land of Kimball. On this lot, probably in 1842, Mr. Hunt proceeded to have a contractor build this house as his family residence. Its style is Greek Revival, and it has handsome marble chimney-pieces and other elegant features.

William Hunt (1804-1883) was born 15 April 1804 in Salem, the son of baker William Hunt and Mary Dean. He was a little boy when Salem's twenty-year boom came to an end with a crash in January, 1808, as Jefferson and the Congress imposed an embargo on all shipping in hopes of forestalling war with Britain. The Embargo, widely opposed in New England, proved futile and nearly ruinous in Salem, where commerce ceased. As a hotbed of Democratic-Republicanism, Salem's East Parish and its seafarers, led by the Crowninshields,

2/3/2009

loyally supported the Embargo until it was lifted in spring, 1809. Shunned by the other Salem merchants for his support of the Embargo, the eminent Billy Gray took his large fleet of ships—fully one-third of Salem's tonnage—and moved to Boston, whose commerce was thereby much augmented. Gray's removal eliminated a huge amount of Salem wealth, shipping, import-export cargos, and local employment. Gray soon switched from the Federalist party, and was elected Lt. Governor on a ticket with Gov. Elbridge Gerry, a native of Marblehead.

Salem's commerce with the world was repeatedly interrupted by the British, which intercepted neutral trading vessels and often impressed American sailors into their navy. Despite many warnings and negotiations, the British refused to alter their policies, and pushed President Madison into a position where he had few choices other than hostilities. In June, 1812, war was declared against Britain.

Although the merchants had tried to prevent the war, when it came, Salem swiftly fitted out 40 privateers manned by Marblehead and Salem crews, who also served on U.S. Navy vessels, including the frigate *Constitution*. Many more local vessels could have been sent against the British, but some of the Federalist merchants held them back. In addition, Salem fielded companies of infantry and artillery. Salem and Marblehead privateers were largely successful in making prizes of British supply vessels. While many of the town's men were wounded in engagements, and some were killed, the possible riches of privateering kept the men returning to sea as often as possible. The first prizes were captured by a 30-ton converted fishing schooner, the *Fame*, and by a 14-ton luxury yacht fitted with one gun, the *Jefferson*. Of all Salem privateers, the Crowninshields' 350-ton ship *America* was most successful: she captured 30-plus prizes worth more than \$1,100,000.

Salem erected forts and batteries on its Neck, to discourage the British warships that cruised these waters. On land, the war went poorly for the United States, as the British captured Washington, DC, and burned the Capitol and the White House. Along the western frontier, U.S. forces were successful against the weak English forces; and, as predicted by many, the western expansionists had their day. At sea, as time wore on, Salem vessels were captured, and its men imprisoned or killed. After almost three years, the war was bleeding the town dry. Hundreds of Salem men and boys were in British prison-ships and at Dartmoor Prison in England. At the Hartford Convention in 1814, New England Federalist delegates met to consider what they could do to bring the war to a close and to restore the region's commerce. Sen. Timothy Pickering of Salem, the leader of the extreme Federalists, did not attend; and the Convention refrained from issuing any ultimatums. Nevertheless, it seemed almost treasonous to have convened it; and it signaled the beginning of the end for the national Federalist party.

At last, in February, 1815, peace was restored.

In 1816 or 1817 William Hunt, twelve, was apprenticed to Jonas Warren, a storekeeper at Danversport, where he learned the duties of a clerk. In a short time he returned to Salem, where he became a clerk in the store of Nathan Blood on lower Derby Street, near English. Nathan Blood, the husband of William's father's cousin Tamar Hunt Blood, was a ship chandler who did an extensive business, and in his new position William Hunt learned a

great deal and made many business contacts.

Post-war, America was flooded with British manufactured goods, especially factory-made knock-offs of the beautiful Indian textiles that had been the specialty of Salem importers for 30 years. Britain, dominant in India, had forced the Indians to become cotton-growers rather than cloth-producers; and the cheap Indian cotton was shipped to the English industrial ports and turned into mass-produced cloth. American national policy-makers reacted, in 1816, by passing a high tariff on cheap imported textiles, in order to protect and encourage America's own budding manufacturing capacity. The net result was to diminish what had been the most abundant and lucrative area of Salem's pre-war trade. Nevertheless, maritime commerce was Salem's business, and its merchants rebuilt their fleets and resumed their worldwide commerce, without a full understanding of how difficult the new international conditions had become. For a few years, their efforts were rewarded with reasonable profits, and it seemed that Salem was once again in the ascendant, with almost 200 vessels sailing to Europe, the Orient, the Caribbean and South America, and the southern ports.

The pre-war partisan politics of the town were not resumed post-war, as the middle-class "mechanics" (artisans) became more powerful and brought about civic harmony, largely through the Salem Charitable Mechanic Association (founded 1817). Rev. William Bentley, keen observer and active citizen during Salem's time of greatest prosperity and fiercest political divisions, died in 1819, the year in which a new U.S. Custom House was built on the site of the George Crowninshield mansion, at the head of Derby Wharf. Into the 1820s foreign trade continued prosperous; and new markets were opened with Madagascar (1820), which supplied tallow and ivory, and Zanzibar (1825), whence came coffee, ivory, and gum copal, used to make varnish. This opened a long-standing trade that Salem would dominate; and its vessels thus gained access to all of the east African ports.

At the end of his apprenticeship, aged nineteen, he went to work in 1823 for the merchant Robert Brookhouse (1779-1866), who had recently commenced trade with Africa. This was very fortunate turn of events for William Hunt.

Robert Brookhouse was born in Salem while the Revolutionary War was being fought. When Robert was an infant his father, Capt. Robert Brookhouse, master of the privateer *Lively*, was lost at sea in a storm with his vessel and all hands. The boy grew up on High Street in straitened circumstances. After a little schooling he went to work in a shop on Lynde Street to learn the trade of a silversmith and watch-maker. Small and wiry, he was a smart, hustling fellow, and eventually became a dealer in guns, silver, and jewelry. His success as a shopkeeper enabled him to buy shares in merchant vessels, and here again he prospered, and finally was able to open his own merchant house, trading mainly to Madagascar and the west coast of Africa, with commerce to Patagonia and the Fiji Islands as well.

Salem's general maritime foreign commerce fell off sharply in 1824, as a second major tariff act was passed by Congress, to the benefit of manufacturers and the detriment of importers. Salem imports were supplanted by the goods that were now being produced in great quantities in America. The town's prosperity began to wane, and many people saw no future locally. The interior of the country was being opened for settlement, and some Salemites moved away. To the north, the falls of the Merrimack River powered large new textile mills

(Lowell was founded in 1823); and in general it seemed that the tide of opportunity was ebbing away from Salem. To stem the flow of talent from the town and to harness its potential water power for manufacturing, Salem's merchants and capitalists banded together in 1825 to raise the money to dam the North River for industrial power. Over the course of three years, the effort gained momentum, but ultimately its many investors failed to implement the plan, which caused several leading citizens to move to Boston, the hub of investment in the new economy

Mr. Brookhouse prospered in trade even as others began to fail. He acquired a large tract of land in the Clifton section of Marblehead, and had a summer residence by the sea. In 1835 he

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purchased the former Hasket Derby house, corner of Washington and Lynde Streets, coincidentally across Lynde Street from the old Hunt house, William's family's ancestral mansion, dating from 1698.

After a few years, Mr. Brookhouse gave William Hunt an ownership share in the Brookhouse business, which assured his success. Their offices were located at then-163-165 Essex Street. On 24 March 1831, aged 26, William Hunt married Anstiss Slocum, the daughter of Ebenezer Slocum and Sarah Becket, of the East Parish. They would have four children.

William Hunt purchased a house on Andrew Street, which was the family residence for some years. Mr. Hunt was a man of high intelligence and much repute as a merchant. He read widely in literature and filled many positions of civic trust. He was also quite philanthropic,

[3]

in the tradition of Robert Brookhouse, and made many charitable donations.

In 1830 occurred a horrifying crime that brought disgrace to Salem. Old Capt. Joseph White, a rich merchant, now retired, resided in a mansion on Essex Street. His wealth was legendary in Salem, not least among the denizens of the nearby Salem Jail, where plots had long been hatched to break in and steal the Captain's putative treasure chest. One night, intruders did break in; and they stabbed him to death in his sleep. All of Salem buzzed with rumors; but within a few months it was discovered that the murderer was a Crowninshield (he killed himself) who had been hired by his friends, Capt. White's own relatives, Capt. Joe Knap and his brother Frank (they would be executed). The murder, and related lurid events, tarnished Salem further, and more families quit the now-notorious town.

Salem had not prepared for the industrial age, and had few natural advantages. The North River served not to power factories but mainly to flush the waste from the 25 tanneries that had set up along its banks. As the decade wore on, and the new railroads and canals, all running and flowing to Boston from points north, west, and south, diverted both capital and trade away from the coast. Salem's remaining merchants took their equity out of local wharves and warehouses and ships and put it into the stock of manufacturing and transportation companies. Some merchants did not make the transition, and were ruined. Old-line areas of work, like rope-making, sail-making, and ship chandleries, gradually declined and disappeared. Salem slumped badly, but, despite all, the voters decided to

charter their town as a city in 1836—the third city to be formed in the state, behind Boston and Lowell. City Hall was built 1837-8 and the city seal was adopted with an already-anachronistic Latin motto of “to the farthest port of the rich East”—a far cry from “Go West, young man!” The Panic of 1837, a brief, sharp, nationwide economic depression, caused even more Salem families to head west in search of fortune and a better future.

Throughout the 1830s, the leaders of Salem scrambled to re-invent an economy for their fellow citizens, many of whom were mariners without much sea-faring to do. Ingenuity, ambition, and hard work would have to carry the day. One inspiration was the Salem Laboratory, Salem’s first science-based manufacturing enterprise, founded in 1813 to produce chemicals. At the plant built in 1818 in North Salem on the North River, the production of alum and blue vitriol was a specialty; and it proved a very successful business. Salem’s whale-fishery led to the manufacturing of high-quality candles at Stage Point, along with machine oils. The candles proved very popular. Lead-manufacturing began in the 1820s, and grew large after 1830, when Wyman’s gristmills on the Forest River, at the head of Salem Harbor, were retooled for making high-quality white lead and sheet lead. These enterprises were a start toward taking Salem in a new direction. In 1838 the Eastern Rail Road, headquartered in Salem, began operating between Boston and Salem, which gave the local people a direct route to the region’s largest market. The new railroad tracks ran right over the middle of the Mill Pond; the tunnel under Washington Street was built in 1839; and the line was extended to Newburyport in 1840.

In the face of these changes, some members of Salem’s waning merchant class continued to pursue their sea-borne businesses into the 1840s; but it was an ebb tide, with unfavorable winds. Boston, transformed into a modern mega-port with efficient railroad and highway distribution to all markets, had subsumed virtually all foreign trade other than Salem’s continuing commerce with Zanzibar. The sleepy waterfront at Derby Wharf, with an occasional arrival from Africa and regular visits from schooners carrying wood from Nova Scotia, is depicted in 1850 by Hawthorne in his cranky “introductory section” to *The Scarlet Letter*, which he began while working in the Custom House.

Although Hawthorne had no interest in describing it, Salem’s transformation did occur in the 1840s, as more industrial methods and machines were introduced, and many new companies in new lines of business arose. The Gothic symbol of Salem’s new industrial economy was the large twin-towered granite train station—the “stone depot”—smoking and growling with idling locomotives. It stood on filled-in land at the foot of Washington Street, where the merchants’ wharves had been; and from it the trains carried many valuable products as well as passengers. The tanning and curing of leather was very important in Salem by the mid-1800s. On and near Boston Street, along the upper North River, there were 41 tanneries in 1844, and 85 in 1850, employing 550 hands. The leather business would continue to grow in importance throughout the 1800s. In 1846 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company completed the construction at Stage Point of the largest factory building in the United States, 60’ wide by 400’ long. It was an immediate success, and hundreds of people found employment there, many of them living in tenements built nearby. It too benefited from the Zanzibar and Africa trade, as it produced light cotton cloth for use in the tropics. Also in the 1840s, a new method was introduced to make possible high-volume industrial shoe production. In Lynn, the factory system was perfected, and that city became the nation’s leading shoe producer.

Salem had shoe factories too, and attracted shoe workers from outlying towns and the countryside. Even the population began to transform, as hundreds of Irish families, fleeing the Famine in Ireland, settled in Salem and gave the industrialists a big pool of cheap labor.

As has been mentioned, William Hunt purchased the empty lot here in 1841, and had the dwelling built in 1842. In 1850 (per census, house 454, ward two) the house was occupied by William Hunt, 45, merchant (owns \$7,000 in real estate), wife Anstiss 45, children Mary D. 16, Sarah B. 15, William D. 9, and Lewis, six; also maid-servants Catherine Carpenter, 22, born Ireland, and Rose McGuire, 20, born Ireland.

In 1851, Stephen C. Phillips succeeded in building a railroad line from Salem to Lowell, which meant that the coal that was landed at Phillips Wharf (formerly the Crowninshields' great India Wharf) could be run cheaply out to Lowell to help fuel the boilers of the mills, whose output of textiles could be freighted easily to Salem for shipment by water. This innovation, although not long-lived, was a much-needed boost to Salem's economy as a port and transportation center. Salem's growth continued through the 1850s, as business and industries expanded, the population swelled, new churches (e.g. Immaculate Conception, 1857) were started, new working-class neighborhoods were developed (especially in North Salem and South Salem, off Boston Street, and along the Mill Pond behind the Broad Street graveyard), and new schools, factories, and stores were built. A second, larger, factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was added in 1859, at Stage Point, where a new Methodist Church went up, and many neat homes, boarding-houses, and stores were erected along the streets between Lafayette and Congress. The tanning business continued to boom, as better and larger tanneries were built along Boston Street and Mason Street; and subsidiary industries sprang up as well, most notably the J.M. Anderson glue-works on the Turnpike (Highland Avenue).

As it re-established itself as an economic powerhouse, Salem took a strong interest in national politics. It was primarily Republican, and strongly anti-slavery, with its share of outspoken abolitionists, led by Charles Remond, a passionate speaker who came from one of the city's notable black families. At its Lyceum (on Church Street) and in other venues, plays and shows were put on, but cultural lectures and political speeches were given too.

By 1860, with the election of Abraham Lincoln, it was clear that the Southern states would secede from the union; and Salem, which had done so much to win the independence of the nation, was ready to go to war to force others to remain a part of it.

The Civil War began in April, 1861, and went on for four years, during which hundreds of Salem men served in the army and navy, and many were killed or died of disease or abusive treatment while imprisoned. Hundreds more suffered wounds, or broken health. The people of Salem contributed greatly to efforts to alleviate the suffering of the soldiers, sailors, and their families; and there was great celebration when the war finally ended in the spring of 1865, just as President Lincoln was assassinated. The four years of bloodshed and warfare were over; the slaves were free; 800,000 men were dead; the union was preserved and the South was under martial rule. Salem, with many wounded soldiers and grieving families, welcomed the coming of peace.

Through the 1860s, Salem pursued manufacturing, especially of leather and shoes and textiles. The managers and capitalists tended to build their new, grand houses along Lafayette Street (these houses may still be seen, south of Roslyn Street; many are in the French Second Empire style, with mansard roofs). A third factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was built in 1865.

In 1866, Robert Brookhouse died at the age of 87, having made many charitable donations, including the orphanage on Carpenter Street and the homes for aged women and for aged men on Derby Street. In 1870 Salem received its last cargo from Zanzibar, thus ending a once-important trade. By then, a new Salem & New York freight steamboat line was in operation. Seven years later, with the arrival of a vessel from Cayenne, Salem's foreign trade came to an end. After that, "the merchandise warehouses on the wharves no longer contained silks from India, tea from China, pepper from Sumatra, coffee from Arabia, spices from Batavia, gum-copal from Zanzibar, hides from Africa, and the various other products of far-away countries. The boys have ceased to watch on the Neck for the incoming vessels, hoping to earn a reward by being the first to announce to the expectant merchant the safe return of his looked-for vessel. The foreign commerce of Salem, once her pride and glory, has spread its white wings and sailed away forever" (Rev. George Batachelor in *History of Essex County*, II: 65).

Salem was now so densely built-up that a general conflagration was always a possibility, as in Boston, when, on Nov. 9, 1872, the financial and manufacturing district of the city burned up. Salem continued to prosper in the 1870s, carried forward by the leather-making business. In 1874 the city was visited by a tornado and shaken by a minor earthquake. In the following year, the large Pennsylvania Pier (site of the present coal-fired harborside electrical generating plant) was completed to begin receiving large shipments of coal. Beyond it, at Juniper Point, a new owner began subdividing the old Allen farmlands into a new development called Salem Willows and Juniper Point. In the U.S. centennial year, 1876, A.G. Bell of Salem announced that he had discovered a way to transmit voices over telegraph wires.

In this decade, French-Canadian families began coming to work in Salem's mills and factories, and more houses and tenements were built. The better-off workers bought portions of older houses or built small homes for their families in the outlying sections of the city; and by 1879 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton mills would employ 1200 people and produce annually nearly 15 million yards of cloth. Shoe-manufacturing businesses expanded in the 1870s, and 40 shoe factories were employing 600-plus operatives. Tanning, in both Salem and Peabody, remained a very important industry, and employed hundreds of breadwinners. On Boston Street in 1879, the Arnold tannery caught fire and burned down.

In 1880 William Hunt, 76, was still working at his office at #16 Asiatic Building. His son Lewis Hunt lived nearby at 24 Winter Street. This house was numbered 51 Washington Square by 1880 (see 1881 directory).

On 3 August 1883, William Hunt died.

In September, 1883, the other Hunt heirs sold their interests in this homestead to their

brother Lewis Hunt of Salem (ED 1115:203). He lived here for awhile, and in 1885 moved to Lexington (per directory), and the house was leased to Dr. William Nicholson, physician (directory, 1886).

In 1890 (per 1890-1 directory), the house was occupied by Mrs. Lucy Sutton, widow of William Sutton Jr., and by her son(?) Harry Sutton, a clerk at a business in Peabody. Here too lived Joshua G. Towne, bookkeeper in a bank, and his family (if any). Starting in 1895 or so, John B. Etherington, a funeral undertaker, occupied this house with his family. It was then numbered 53; and #51, the other side, had been set apart as a residential unit and was occupied by people named Draper. Mr. Etherington was a partner in Sheplee & Etherington, successors to Charles S. Buffum, with funeral parlor at 64 Washington street (see advertisement, appended).

John B. Etherington (1867-1918) was born in Rome, New York, and was educated at Pulaski (NY) Business College. At twenty he became an undertaker and then worked for nine years in Rochester, New York. He married Mary P. Hill of Pulaski, NY, and they would have three children. He came to Salem and entered into a partnership with Oliver C. Sheplee.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Salem kept building infrastructure; and new businesses arose, and established businesses expanded. Retail stores prospered; horse-drawn trolleys ran every which-way; and machinists, carpenters, millwrights, and other specialists all thrived. In 1880, Salem's manufactured goods were valued at about \$8.4 million, of which leather accounted for nearly half. In the summer of 1886, the Knights of Labor brought a strike against the manufacturers for a ten-hour day and other concessions; but the manufacturers imported labor from Maine and Canada, and kept going. The strikers held out, and there was violence in the streets, and even rioting; but the owners prevailed, and many of the defeated workers lost their jobs and suffered, with their families, through a bitter winter.

By the mid-1880s, Salem's cotton-cloth mills at the Point employed 1400 people who produced about 19 million yards annually, worth about \$1.5 million. The city's large shoe factories stood downtown behind the stone depot and on Dodge and Lafayette Streets. A jute bagging company prospered with plants on Skerry Street and English Street; its products were sent south to be used in cotton-baling. Salem factories also produced lead, paint, and oil. At the Eastern Railroad yard on Bridge Street, cars were repaired and even built new. In 1887 the streets were first lit with electricity, replacing gas-light. The gas works, which had stood on Northey Street since 1850, was moved to a larger site on Bridge Street in 1888, opposite the Beverly Shore.

More factories and more people required more space for buildings, more roads, and more storage areas. This space was created by filling in rivers, harbors, and ponds. The once-broad North River was filled from both shores, and became a canal along Bridge Street above the North Bridge. The large and beautiful Mill Pond, which occupied the whole area between the present Jefferson Avenue, Canal Street, and Loring Avenue, finally vanished beneath streets, storage areas, junk-yards, rail-yards, and parking lots. The South River, too, with its epicenter at Central Street (that's why there was a Custom House built there in 1805) disappeared under the pavement of Riley Plaza and New Derby Street, and some of its old wharves were joined together with much in-fill and turned into coal-yards and lumber-yards.

Only a canal was left, running in from Derby and Central Wharves to Lafayette Street.

In 1900 (per census, house 307) the house was occupied by John B. Etheridge, 32, wife Mary, 36, his mother Sarah, fifty, a widow, and children Sarah H., five, and William H., four. They were attended by servant Mary Sullivan, 25. They continued to reside here; and in 1903 Mary had a third child, Hugh. In 1910 the family resided here, with Miss Sullivan still working as servant, but with Mrs. Sarah Etheridge no longer here. A boarder, Isidor Goldberg, evidently resided here too in 1910 (per census, house 1, ward two)

Salem kept growing. The Canadians were followed in the early 20th century by large numbers of Polish and Ukrainian families, who settled primarily in the Derby Street neighborhood. By the eve of World War One, Salem was a bustling, polyglot city that supported large department stores and large factories of every description. People from the surrounding towns, and Marblehead in particular, came to Salem to do their shopping; and its handsome government buildings, as befit the county seat, were busy with conveyances of land, lawsuits, and probate proceedings. The city's politics were lively, and its economy was strong.

On June 25, 1914, in the morning, in Blubber Hollow (Boston Street opposite Federal), a fire started in one of Salem's fire-prone wooden tanneries. This fire soon consumed the building and raced out of control, for the west wind was high and the season had been dry. The next building caught fire, and the next, and out of Blubber Hollow the fire roared easterly, a monstrous front of flame and smoke, wiping out the houses of Boston Street, Essex Street, and upper Broad Street, and then sweeping through Hathorne, Winthrop, Endicott, and other residential streets. Men and machines could not stop it: the enormous fire crossed over into South Salem and destroyed the neighborhoods west of Lafayette Street, then devoured the mansions of Lafayette Street itself, and raged onward into the tenement district. Despite the combined efforts of heroic fire crews from many towns and cities, the fire overwhelmed everything in its path: it smashed into the large factory buildings of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company (Congress Street), which exploded in an inferno; and it rolled down Lafayette Street and across the water to Derby Street. There, just beyond Union Street, after a 13-hour rampage, the monster died, having consumed 250 acres, 1600 houses, and 41 factories, and leaving three dead and thousands homeless. Some people had insurance, some did not; all received much support and generous donations from all over the country and the world. It was one of the greatest urban disasters in the history of the United States, and the people of Salem would take years to recover from it. Eventually, they did, and many of the former houses and businesses were rebuilt; and several urban-renewal projects (including Hawthorne Boulevard, which involved removing old houses and widening old streets) were put into effect.

Very suddenly on February 23, 1916, John B. Etherington was felled by heart disease, and died shortly after taking a short walk with his daughter. He was in his 49th year. The funeral was held from the house. The Etherington family would continue to reside here into the 1950s and perhaps beyond.

By the 1920s, Salem was once again a thriving city; and its tercentenary in 1926 was a time of great celebration. The Depression hit in 1929, and continued through the 1930s. Salem,

the county seat and regional retail center, gradually rebounded, and prospered after World War II through the 1950s and into the 1960s. General Electric, Sylvania, Parker Brothers, Pequot Mills (formerly Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co.), Almy's department store, various other large-scale retailers, and Beverly's United Shoe Machinery Company were all major local employers. Then the arrival of suburban shopping malls and the relocation of manufacturing businesses took their toll, as they have with many other cities. More than most, Salem has navigated its way forward into the present with success, trading on its share of notoriety arising from the witch trials, but also from its history as a great seaport and as the home of Bowditch, McIntire, Bentley, Story, and Hawthorne. Most of all, it remains a city where the homes of the old-time merchants, mariners, and mill-operatives are all honored as a large part of what makes Salem different from any other place.

--Robert Booth

Glossary & Sources

A figure like (ED 123:45) refers to book 123, page 45, Essex South registry of Deeds, Federal Street, Salem.

A figure like (#12345) refers to Essex Probate case 12345, on file at the Essex Probate Court, Federal Street, Salem, or on microfilm at Mass. Archives, Boston, or at the Peabody Essex Museum's Phillips Library, Salem.

MSSRW refers to the multi-volume compendium, *Mass. Soldiers & Sailors in the Revolutionary War*, available at the Salem Public Library among other places.

MSSCRW refers to the multi-volume compendium, *Mass. Soldiers, Sailors, & Marines in the Civil War*, available at the Salem Public Library among other places.

EIHC refers to the Essex Institute Historical Collections (discontinued), a multi-volume set (first volume published in 1859) of data and articles about Essex County. The indices of the EIHC have been consulted regarding many of the people associated with this house.

The six-volume published Salem Vital records (marriages, births, and deaths through 1849) have been consulted, as have the Salem Directory and later Naumkeag Directory, which have information about residents and their addresses, etc.

Sidney Perley's three-volume *History of Salem, 1626-1716* has been consulted, as has the four-volume *William Bentley's Diary*, J. Duncan Phillips' books, some newspaper obituaries, and other sources.

Salem real estate valuations, and, where applicable, Salem Street Books, have also been consulted, as have genealogies.

There is much more material available about Salem and its history; and the reader is encouraged to make his or her own discoveries.

--Robert Booth

[1]

Brown Street was the old name for the road running from pleasant Street to St. Peter Street; only a part of it is now called Brown Street, the rest having become "Washington Square North."

[2]

Demolished; site of Masonic building today.

[3]

Much information about Hunt and Brookhouse comes from Hurd's *History of Essex County* and from R.S. Rantoul, et al, *Records of the First Fifty years of the Old Ladies Home*.

H51

History of the House & Occupants 53 Washington Square, Salem

by Robert Booth for Historic Salem Inc

According to available evidence, this house was built for William Hunt, merchant, in 1842. Mr. Hunt was engaged primarily in trade with Africa.

On 14 Oct. 1841 William Hunt, merchant, for \$1100 purchased from Isaac Cushing, merchant (of 107 Essex Street), a lot of land at the corner of Brown¹ and Pleasant Streets (ED 327:211). The bounds were given as: south 52' on Brown Street, east 100' on Pleasant St., north 78' of court or street, and west 100' on land of Kimball. On this lot, probably in 1842, Mr. Hunt proceeded to have a contractor build this house as his family residence. Its style is Greek Revival, and it has handsome marble chimney-pieces and other elegant features.

William Hunt Jr. (1804-1883) was born 15 April 1804 in Salem, the son of baker William Hunt and Mary Dean. Salem was, at that moment, the wealthiest place in America, with a world-spanning trade carried on by more than 150 vessels, sixty of them trading to the orient, and to India especially. William was a little boy when Salem's twenty-year boom came to an end with a crash in January, 1808, as Jefferson and the Congress imposed an embargo on all shipping in hopes of forestalling war with Britain. The Embargo, widely opposed in New England, proved futile and nearly ruinous in Salem. As a hotbed of Democratic-Republicanism, Salem's East Parish and its seafarers, led by the Crowninshields, loyally supported the Embargo until it was lifted in spring, 1809. Shunned by the other Salem merchants for his support of the Embargo, the eminent Billy Gray took his large fleet of ships—fully one-third of Salem's tonnage—and moved to Boston, thereby eliminating a huge amount of Salem wealth, shipping, import-export cargos, and local employment. Gray soon switched from the Federalist party, and was elected Lt. Governor on a ticket with Gov. Elbridge Gerry, a native of Marblehead.

Salem's commerce with the world was repeatedly interrupted by the British, which intercepted neutral trading vessels and often impressed American sailors into their navy. Despite many warnings

¹ Brown Street was the old name for the road running from pleasant Street to St. Peter Street; only a part of it is now called Brown Street, the rest having become "Washington Square North."

and negotiations, the British refused to alter their policies, and pushed President Madison into a position where he had few choices other than hostilities. In June, 1812, war was declared against Britain.

Although the merchants had tried to prevent the war, when it came, Salem swiftly fitted out 40 privateers manned by Marblehead and Salem crews, who also served on U.S. Navy vessels, including the frigate *Constitution*. Many more local vessels could have been sent against the British, but some of the Federalist merchants held them back. In addition, Salem fielded companies of infantry and artillery. Salem and Marblehead privateers were largely successful in making prizes of British supply vessels. While many of the town's men were wounded in engagements, and some were killed, the possible riches of privateering kept the men returning to sea as often as possible. The first prizes were captured by a 30-ton converted fishing schooner, the *Fame*, and by a 14-ton luxury yacht fitted with one gun, the *Jefferson*. Of all Salem privateers, the Crowninshields' 350-ton ship *America* was most successful: she captured 30-plus prizes worth more than \$1,100,000.

Salem erected forts and batteries on its Neck, to discourage the British warships that cruised these waters. On land, the war went poorly for the United States, as the British captured Washington, DC, and burned the Capitol and the White House. Along the western frontier, U.S. forces were successful against the weak English forces; and, as predicted by many, the western expansionists had their day. At sea, as time wore on, Salem vessels were captured, and its men imprisoned or killed. After almost three years, the war was bleeding the town dry. Hundreds of Salem men and boys were in British prison-ships and at Dartmoor Prison in England. At the Hartford Convention in 1814, New England Federalist delegates met to consider what they could do to bring the war to a close and to restore the region's commerce. Sen. Timothy Pickering of Salem, the leader of the extreme Federalists, did not attend; and the Convention refrained from issuing any ultimatums. Nevertheless, it seemed almost treasonous to have convened it; and it signaled the beginning of the end for the national Federalist party.

At last, in February, 1815, peace was restored.

In 1816 or 1817 William Hunt Jr., twelve, was apprenticed to Jonas Warren, a storekeeper at Danversport, where he learned the duties of a clerk. In a short time he returned to Salem, where he became a clerk in the store of Nathan Blood on lower Derby Street, near English Street. Nathan Blood, the husband of William's cousin

Tamar Hunt Blood, was a prosperous ship chandler who helped William Hunt to learn a great deal and to make many business contacts over time.

Post-war, America was flooded with British manufactured goods, especially factory-made knock-offs of the beautiful Indian textiles that had been the specialty of Salem importers for 30 years. Britain, dominant in India, had forced the Indians to become cotton-growers rather than cloth-producers; and the cheap Indian cotton was shipped to the English industrial ports and turned into mass-produced cloth. American national policy-makers reacted, in 1816, by passing a high tariff on cheap imported textiles, in order to protect and encourage America's own budding manufacturing capacity. The net result was to diminish what had been the most abundant and lucrative area of Salem's pre-war trade. Salem's merchants rebuilt their fleets and resumed their worldwide commerce, without a full understanding of how difficult conditions had become. For a few years, their efforts were rewarded with reasonable profits, and it seemed that Salem was once again in the ascendant, with almost 200 vessels sailing to Europe, the Orient, the Caribbean and South America, and the southern ports.

The pre-war partisan politics of the town were not resumed, as the middle-class "mechanics" (artisans) became more powerful and brought about civic harmony, largely through the Salem Charitable Mechanic Association. Rev. William Bentley, keen observer and active citizen, died in 1819, the year in which a new U.S. Custom House was built on the site of the George Crowninshield mansion, at the head of Derby Wharf. Into the 1820s foreign trade continued prosperous; and new markets were opened with Madagascar (1820), which supplied tallow and ivory, and Zanzibar (1825), whence came coffee, ivory, and gum copal, used to make varnish.

At the end of his apprenticeship, aged nineteen, William went to work in 1823 for the merchant Robert Brookhouse (1779-1866), who had recently commenced trade with Africa. This was very fortunate turn of events for William Hunt.

Robert Brookhouse Jr. was born in Salem during the Revolutionary War. When he was an infant his father, Capt. Robert Brookhouse, the brave master of the privateer *Lively*, was lost in a storm with his vessel and all hands. The boy grew up on High Street in straitened circumstances. After a little schooling he went to work in a shop on Lynde Street to learn the trade of a silversmith and watch-maker. Small and wiry, he was a smart, hustling fellow, and eventually

became a dealer in guns, silver, and jewelry. His success at the shop enabled him to buy shares in merchant vessels, and here again he prospered, and finally was able to open his own merchant house, trading mainly to Madagascar and the west coast of Africa, with commerce to Patagonia and the Fiji Islands as well.

Salem's general maritime foreign commerce fell off sharply in 1824, as a second major tariff act was passed by Congress, to the benefit of manufacturers and the detriment of importers. Many of the goods that Salem had been importing were supplanted by goods that were now being produced in great quantities in America. The town's prosperity began to wane, and many people saw no future locally. The interior of the country was being opened for settlement, and some Salemites moved away. To the north, the falls of the Merrimack River powered large new textile mills (Lowell was founded in 1823); and in general it seemed that the tide of opportunity was ebbing away from Salem. To stem the flow of talent from the town and to harness its potential water power for manufacturing, Salem's merchants and capitalists banded together in 1825 to raise the money to dam the North River for industrial power. Over the course of three years, the effort gained momentum, but ultimately the enterprise failed, and several leading citizens moved to Boston, the hub of investment in the new economy.

Mr. Brookhouse prospered in trade even as others began to fail. He acquired a large tract of land in the Clifton section of Marblehead, and had a summer residence by the sea. In 1835 he purchased the former Hasket Derby house,² corner of Washington and Lynde Streets, coincidentally across Lynde Street from the old Hunt house, William's family's ancestral mansion, dating from 1698.

After a few years, Mr. Brookhouse gave William Hunt an ownership share in the Brookhouse business, which assured his success. Their offices were located at then-163-165 Essex Street. On 24 March 1831, aged 26, William Hunt married Anstiss Slocum, the daughter of Ebenezer Slocum and Sarah Becket, of the East Parish. They would have four children.

In 1830 occurred a horrifying crime that brought disgrace to Salem. Old Capt. Joseph White, a rich merchant, resided in retirement in a mansion on Essex Street. His wealth was legendary, not least among the denizens of the nearby Salem Jail, where plots had long been hatched to break in and steal the Captain's putative treasure chest.

² Demolished; site of Masonic building today.

One night, an intruder did break in and clubbed him to death in his sleep. All of Salem buzzed with fear and rumors; and within two months it was discovered that the murderer was a Crowninshield (he killed himself) who had been hired by his friends, Capt. White's own relatives, Capt. Joe Knapp and his brother Captain Frank (they would be executed). The murder, and related lurid events, tarnished Salem further, and more families quit the now-notorious town.

In October, 1833, for \$1400, William Hunt, merchant, purchased from Capt. John Story, shipmaster, a half-house on Andrew Street, which would be the family residence for some years. Mr. Hunt was a man of high intelligence and much repute as a merchant. He read widely in literature and filled many positions of civic trust. He was also quite philanthropic, in the tradition of Robert Brookhouse, and made many charitable donations.³

Salem had not prepared for the industrial age, and had few natural advantages. The North River served not to power factories but mainly to flush the waste from the 25 tanneries that had set up along its banks. As the decade wore on, and the new railroads and canals, all running and flowing to Boston from points north, west, and south, diverted both capital and trade away from the coast. Salem's remaining merchants took their equity out of local wharves and warehouses and ships and put it into the stock of manufacturing and transportation companies. Some merchants did not make the transition, and were ruined. Old-line areas of work, like rope-making, sail-making, and ship chandleries, gradually declined and disappeared.

Robert Brookhouse and William Hunt were partners in the ownership of many trading vessels over the decades. In 1836 they purchased from the Rogers Brothers the bark *Active*, 211 tons, commanded by Abraham Pickering.⁴

Salem slumped badly, but the voters decided to charter their town as a city in 1836—the third city to be formed in the state, behind Boston and Lowell. City Hall was built 1837-8 and the city seal was adopted with an already-anachronistic Latin motto of “to the farthest port of the rich Indies”—a far cry from “Go West, young man!” The Panic of 1837, a sharp, nationwide economic depression, caused even more Salem families to head west in search of fortune and a better future.

³ Much information about Hunt and Brookhouse comes from Hurd's *History of Essex County* and from R.S. Rantoul, et al, *Records of the First Fifty years of the Old Ladies Home*.

⁴ see EIHC vol. 39; many of their vessels may be seen under their names in the indices of the Essex Institute *Historical Collections*, especially volumes 40-44.

Throughout the 1830s, the leaders of Salem scrambled to reinvent an economy for their fellow citizens, many of whom were mariners without much sea-faring to do. Ingenuity, ambition, and hard work would have to carry the day. One inspiration was the Salem Laboratory, Salem's first science-based manufacturing enterprise, founded in 1813 to produce chemicals. At the plant built in 1818 in North Salem on the North River, the production of alum and blue vitriol was a specialty; and it proved a very successful business. Salem's whale-fishery led to the manufacturing of high-quality candles at Stage Point, along with machine oils. The candles proved very popular. Lead-manufacturing began in the 1820s, and grew large after 1830, when Wyman's gristmills at the head of Salem Harbor were retooled for making high-quality white lead and sheet lead. These enterprises took Salem in a new direction. In 1838 the Eastern Rail Road, headquartered in Salem, began operating between Boston and Salem, which gave the local people a direct route to the region's largest market. The new railroad tracks ran right over the middle of the Mill Pond; the tunnel under Washington Street was built in 1839; and the line was extended to Newburyport in 1840.

Stephen White, the nephew and adopted son of the murdered Capt. Joseph White, had moved to Boston in 1830; and in 1835 he and the heirs of his brother for \$2200 sold to merchant David Becket the lower White's Wharf, off White Street.⁵ Mr. Becket died within five years, and in July, 1840, his heirs sold the same for just \$1300 to merchant William Hunt.⁶ Thus White's Wharf became Hunt's Wharf, which would be used for shipping and storage for many decades.

As has been mentioned, William Hunt purchased the empty lot here in 1841, and had this dwelling built in 1842 (per Street Books, in vault of City Hall). It was then known as One Brown Street. Up to that time, he resided at then-16 Andrew Street (see 1837 & 1842 Salem Directories).

In 1844, William Hunt, merchant, would buy another house on Andrew Street for \$1400 (ED 346:113). In 1845, Mr. Hunt was on the committee of proprietors of the East Church who purchased the site of the new church building on Washington Square (now the home of the Salem Witch Museum).

⁵ Essex Deeds book 282 page 226.

⁶ ED 319:295, 320:2

In the face of Salem's changing economy, some members of Salem's waning merchant class continued to pursue their sea-borne businesses into the 1840s; but it was an ebb tide, with unfavorable winds. Boston, transformed into a modern mega-port with efficient railroad and highway distribution to all markets, had subsumed virtually all foreign trade other than Salem's continuing commerce with Zanzibar. The sleepy waterfront at Derby Wharf, with an occasional arrival from Africa and regular visits from schooners carrying wood from Nova Scotia, is depicted in 1850 by Hawthorne in his cranky "introductory section" to *The Scarlet Letter*, which he began while working in the Custom House.

Although Hawthorne had no interest in describing it, Salem's transformation did occur in the 1840s, as more industrial methods and machines were introduced, and many new companies in new lines of business arose. The Gothic symbol of Salem's new industrial economy was the large twin-towered granite train station—the "stone depot"—smoking and growling with idling locomotives. It stood on filled-in land at the foot of Washington Street, where the merchants' wharves had been; and from it the trains carried many valuable products as well as passengers. The tanning and curing of leather was very important in Salem by the mid-1800s. On and near Boston Street, along the upper North River, there were 41 tanneries in 1844, and 85 in 1850, employing 550 hands. The leather business would continue to grow in importance throughout the 1800s. In 1846 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company completed the construction at Stage Point of the largest factory building in the United States, 60' wide by 400' long. It was an immediate success, and hundreds of people found employment there, many of them living in tenements built nearby. It too benefited from the Zanzibar and Africa trade, as it produced light cotton cloth for use in the tropics. Also in the 1840s, a new method was introduced to make possible high-volume industrial shoe production. In Lynn, the factory system was perfected, and that city became the nation's leading shoe producer. Salem had shoe factories too, and attracted shoe workers from outlying towns and the countryside. Even the population began to transform, as hundreds of Irish families, fleeing the Famine in Ireland, settled in Salem and gave the industrialists a big pool of cheap labor.

In 1850 this house was occupied by merchant William Hunt, 45 (owns \$7,000 in real estate), wife Anstiss 45, children Mary D., 16, Sarah B., 15, William D., nine, and Lewis, six; also maid-servants Catherine Carpenter, 22, born Ireland, and Rose McGuire, 20, born Ireland (per 1850 census, house 454, ward two).

In 1851, Stephen C. Phillips succeeded in building a railroad line from Salem to Lowell, which meant that the coal that was landed at Phillips Wharf (formerly the Crowninshields' India Wharf) could be run cheaply out to Lowell to help fuel the boilers of the mills, whose output of textiles could be freighted easily to Salem for shipment by water. This innovation, although not long-lived, was a much-needed boost to Salem's economy as a port and transportation center. Salem's growth continued through the 1850s, as business and industries expanded, the population swelled, new churches (e.g. Immaculate Conception, 1857) were started, new working-class neighborhoods were developed (especially in North Salem and South Salem, off Boston Street, and along the Mill Pond behind the Broad Street graveyard), and new schools, factories, and stores were built. A second, larger, factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was added in 1859, at Stage Point, where a new Methodist Church went up, and many neat homes, boarding-houses, and stores were erected along the streets between Lafayette and Congress. The tanning business continued to boom, as better and larger tanneries were built along Boston Street and Mason Street; and subsidiary industries sprang up as well, most notably the J.M. Anderson glue-works on the Turnpike (Highland Avenue).

In 1855, Robert Brookhouse and William Hunt (along with Robert Brookhouse Jr. and Joseph H. Hanson) owned vessels including the 242-ton bark *Ann & Mary*, Capt. John Goldsmith, engaged in foreign trade (see EIHC vol. 39).

As it re-established itself as an economic powerhouse, Salem took a strong interest in national politics. It was primarily Republican, and strongly anti-slavery, with its share of outspoken abolitionists, led by Charles Remond, a passionate speaker who came from one of the city's notable black families. At its Lyceum (on Church Street) and in other venues, plays and shows were put on, but cultural lectures and political speeches were given too.

By 1860, with the election of Abraham Lincoln, it was clear that the Southern states would secede from the union; and Salem, which had done so much to win the independence of the nation, was ready to go to war to force others to remain a part of it.

The Civil War began in April, 1861, and went on for four years, during which hundreds of Salem men served in the army and navy, and many were killed or died of disease or abusive treatment while imprisoned. Hundreds more suffered wounds, or broken health. The people of Salem contributed greatly to efforts to alleviate

the suffering of the soldiers, sailors, and their families; and there was great celebration when the war finally ended in the spring of 1865, just as President Lincoln was assassinated. The four years of bloodshed and warfare were over; the slaves were free; 800,000 men were dead; the union was preserved and the South was under martial rule. Salem, with many wounded soldiers and grieving families, welcomed the coming of peace.

Through the 1860s, Salem pursued manufacturing, especially of leather and shoes and textiles. The managers and capitalists tended to build their new, grand houses along Lafayette Street (these houses may still be seen, south of Roslyn Street; many are in the French Second Empire style, with mansard roofs). A third factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was built in 1865.

In 1866, Robert Brookhouse died at the age of 87, having made many charitable donations, including the orphanage on Carpenter Street and the homes for aged women and for aged men on Derby Street. In 1870 Salem received its last cargo from Zanzibar, thus ending a once-important trade. By then, a new Salem & New York freight steamboat line was in operation. Seven years later, with the arrival of a vessel from Cayenne, Salem's foreign trade came to an end. After that, "the merchandise warehouses on the wharves no longer contained silks from India, tea from China, pepper from Sumatra, coffee from Arabia, spices from Batavia, gum-copal from Zanzibar, hides from Africa, and the various other products of far-away countries. The boys have ceased to watch on the Neck for the incoming vessels, hoping to earn a reward by being the first to announce to the expectant merchant the safe return of his looked-for vessel. The foreign commerce of Salem, once her pride and glory, has spread its white wings and sailed away forever" (per Rev. George Bachelor in *History of Essex County*, II: 65).

Salem was now so densely built-up that a general conflagration was always a possibility, as in Boston, when, on Nov. 9, 1872, the financial and manufacturing district of the city burned up. Salem continued to prosper in the 1870s, carried forward by the leather-making business. In 1874 the city was visited by a tornado and shaken by a minor earthquake. In the following year, the large Pennsylvania Pier (site of the present coal-fired harborside electrical generating plant) was completed to begin receiving large shipments of coal. Beyond it, at Juniper Point, a new owner began subdividing the old Allen farmlands into a new development called Salem Willows and Juniper Point. In the U.S. centennial year, 1876, A.G.

Bell of Salem announced that he had discovered a way to transmit voices over telegraph wires.

In this decade, French-Canadian families began coming to work in Salem's mills and factories, and more houses and tenements were built. The better-off workers bought portions of older houses or built small homes for their families in the outlying sections of the city; and by 1879 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton mills would employ 1200 people and produce annually nearly 15 million yards of cloth. Shoe-manufacturing businesses expanded in the 1870s, and 40 shoe factories were employing 600-plus operatives. Tanning, in both Salem and Peabody, remained a very important industry, and employed hundreds of breadwinners. On Boston Street in 1879, the Arnold tannery caught fire and burned down.

In 1880 William Hunt, 76, was still working at his office at #16 Asiatic Building. His son Lewis Hunt lived nearby at 24 Winter Street. This house was numbered 51 Washington Square by 1880 (see 1881 directory).

On 3 August 1883, William Hunt died. He was publicly remembered as having been an eminent merchant, having owned twenty ships and barks. "Mr. Hunt enjoyed a high reputation as an intelligent and honorable merchant. He was also a man of much intellectual culture. His reading was very extensive, he being familiar with all the best authors."⁷

In September, 1883, the other Hunt heirs sold their interests in this homestead to their brother Lewis Hunt of Salem (ED 1115:203). He lived here for awhile, and in 1885 moved to Lexington (per directory), and the house was leased to Dr. William Nicholson, physician (directory, 1886).

In 1890 (per 1890-1 Naumkeag Directory), the house was occupied by Mrs. Lucy Sutton, widow of William Sutton Jr., and by her son (?) Harry Sutton, a clerk at a business in Peabody. Here too lived Joshua G. Towne, bookkeeper in a bank, and his family (if any). Starting in 1895 or so, John B. Etherington, a funeral undertaker, occupied this house with his family. It was then numbered 53; and #51, the other side, had been set apart as a residential unit and was occupied by people named Draper. Mr. Etherington was a partner in Sheplee & Etherington, successors to Charles S. Buffum, with funeral parlor at 64 Washington street (see advertisement, appended).

⁷ see Hurd, *History of Essex County*, p.237; and engraving of portrait.

John B. Etherington (1867-1918) was born in Rome, New York, and was educated at Pulaski (NY) Business College. At twenty he became an undertaker and then worked for nine years in Rochester, New York. He married Mary P. Hill of Pulaski, NY, and they would have three children. He came to Salem and entered into a partnership with Oliver C. Sheplee.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Salem kept building infrastructure; and new businesses arose, and established businesses expanded. Retail stores prospered; horse-drawn trolleys ran every which-way; and machinists, carpenters, millwrights, and other specialists all thrived. In 1880, Salem's manufactured goods were valued at about \$8.4 million, of which leather accounted for nearly half. In the summer of 1886, the Knights of Labor brought a strike against the manufacturers for a ten-hour day and other concessions; but the manufacturers imported labor from Maine and Canada, and kept going. The strikers held out, and there was violence in the streets, and even rioting; but the owners prevailed, and many of the defeated workers lost their jobs and suffered, with their families, through a bitter winter.

By the mid-1880s, Salem's cotton-cloth mills at the Point employed 1400 people who produced about 19 million yards annually, worth about \$1.5 million. The city's large shoe factories stood downtown behind the stone depot and on Dodge and Lafayette Streets. A jute bagging company prospered with plants on Skerry Street and English Street; its products were sent south to be used in cotton-baling. Salem factories also produced lead, paint, and oil. At the Eastern Railroad yard on Bridge Street, cars were repaired and even built new. In 1887 the streets were first lit with electricity, replacing gas-light. The gas works, which had stood on Northey Street since 1850, was moved to a larger site on Bridge Street in 1888, opposite the Beverly Shore.

More factories and more people required more space for buildings, more roads, and more storage areas. This space was created by filling in rivers, harbors, and ponds. The once-broad North River was filled from both shores, and became a canal along Bridge Street above the North Bridge. The large and beautiful Mill Pond, which occupied the whole area between the present Jefferson Avenue, Canal Street, and Loring Avenue, finally vanished beneath streets, storage areas, junk-yards, rail-yards, and parking lots. The South River, too, with its epicenter at Central Street (that's why there was a Custom House built there in 1805) disappeared under the pavement of Riley Plaza and New Derby Street, and some of its old wharves

were joined together with much in-fill and turned into coal-yards and lumber-yards. Only a canal was left, running in from Derby and Central Wharves to Lafayette Street.

In 1900 (per census, house 307) the house was occupied by John B. Etheridge, 32, wife Mary, 36, his mother Sarah, fifty, a widow, and children Sarah H., five, and William H., four. They were attended by servant Mary Sullivan, 25. They continued to reside here; and in 1903 Mary had a third child, Hugh. In 1910 the family resided here, with Miss Sullivan still working as servant, but with Mrs. Sarah Etheridge no longer here. A boarder, Isidor Goldberg, evidently resided here too in 1910 (per census, house 1, ward two).

Salem kept growing. The Canadians were followed in the early 20th century by large numbers of Polish and Ukrainian families, who settled primarily in the Derby Street neighborhood. By the eve of World War One, Salem was a bustling, polyglot city that supported large department stores and large factories of every description. People from the surrounding towns, and Marblehead in particular, came to Salem to do their shopping; and its handsome government buildings, as befit the county seat, were busy with conveyances of land, lawsuits, and probate proceedings. The city's politics were lively, and its economy was strong.

On June 25, 1914, in the morning, in Blubber Hollow (Boston Street opposite Federal), a fire started in one of Salem's fire-prone wooden tanneries. This fire soon consumed the building and raced out of control, for the west wind was high and the season had been dry. The next building caught fire, and the next, and out of Blubber Hollow the fire roared easterly, a monstrous front of flame and smoke, wiping out the houses of Boston Street, Essex Street, and upper Broad Street, and then sweeping through Hathorne, Winthrop, Endicott, and other residential streets. Men and machines could not stop it: the enormous fire crossed over into South Salem and destroyed the neighborhoods west of Lafayette Street, then devoured the mansions of Lafayette Street itself, and raged onward into the tenement district. Despite the combined efforts of heroic fire crews from many towns and cities, the fire overwhelmed everything in its path: it smashed into the large factory buildings of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company (Congress Street), which exploded in an inferno; and it rolled down Lafayette Street and across the water to Derby Street. There, just beyond Union Street, after a 13-hour rampage, the monster died, having consumed 250 acres, 1600 houses, and 41 factories, and leaving three dead and thousands homeless. Some people had insurance, some did not; all received

much support and generous donations from all over the country and the world. It was one of the greatest urban disasters in the history of the United States, and the people of Salem would take years to recover from it. Eventually, they did, and many of the former houses and businesses were rebuilt; and several urban-renewal projects (including Hawthorne Boulevard, which involved removing old houses and widening old streets) were put into effect.

Very suddenly on February 23, 1916, John B. Etherington was felled by heart disease, and died while taking a short walk with his daughter. He was in his 49th year. The funeral was held from the house. The Etherington family would continue to reside here into the 1950s and perhaps beyond.⁸

By the 1920s, Salem was once again a thriving city; and its tercentenary in 1926 was a time of great celebration. The Depression hit in 1929, and continued through the 1930s. Salem, the county seat and regional retail center, gradually rebounded, and prospered after World War II through the 1950s and into the 1960s. General Electric, Sylvania, Parker Brothers, Pequot Mills (formerly Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co.), Almy's department store, various other large-scale retailers, and Beverly's United Shoe Machinery Company were all major local employers. Then the arrival of suburban shopping malls and the relocation of manufacturing businesses took their toll, as they have with many other cities. More than most, Salem has navigated its way forward into the present with success, trading on its share of notoriety arising from the witch trials, but also from its history as a great seaport and as the home of Bowditch, McIntire, Bentley, Story, and Hawthorne. Most of all, it remains a city where the homes of the old-time merchants, mariners, and mill-operatives are all honored as a large part of what makes Salem different from any other place.

--Robert Booth, Sept. 2009.

⁸ In October, 1948, The Hunt heirs sold the premises, 51-53, to Mrs. Mary P Etheridge and her daughter Sarah H., ED 3628:403.