



HISTORIC SALEM INC

2 ½ Essex Street

Salem, MA

Built for
John Waters
Carpenter & Mariner
And wife
Mary Felt
1850

Researched and written by Amy Kellett and Robert Booth, Public History Services Inc.
December 2019

Historic Salem, Inc.
9 North Street
Salem, MA 01970
(978) 745-0799 | historicsalem.org
©2019

Owners & Occupants

Two and A Half Essex Street, Salem

By Amy Kellett & Robert Booth, Public History Services Inc., December 2019.

According to available evidence, this house was built for John Waters, carpenter & mariner, and wife Mary Felt, in 1850.

On July 30, 1840, Nathaniel Weston, Salem merchant (and wife Christiana), for \$235 sold to John Waters Jr., Salem merchant mariner, a dwelling house and land on Essex street which Captain Weston had bought of the estate of his mother-in-law, Christiana Waters (ED 320:85). The grantee was brother-in-law of the granter. No boundaries or measurements were given for the lot of land.

John Waters Jr., mariner and carpenter, held the property for ten years; and in 1850 he built a new house thereon-this one. The evidence is in the City Valuations. In the 1850 valuation book, p. 70, we find, for Ward One, in pencil "John Waters Jr., new house." The 1854 (p. 89) valuations show "John Waters, house 2 Essex Street, \$2500 (in pencil: \$2000), and personal estate \$1500 (in pencil: \$1000)."

John Waters (1791-1868) was born in Salem, the son of John Waters and Christiana English. His mother was the daughter of Philip English, the longtime sexton of the East Church, who owned a homestead here. His father, Capt. John Waters, died on a voyage at Baltimore, offever, in August, 1797, aged 42 years. John was just six at the time.

In 1814 the Philip English homestead (house and land) was sold to the widow Christiana (English) Waters (ED 230:275, 285). Evidently she and some or all of her children lived here in an old house that her father Philip English had bought in 1784 from the Cann heirs (ED 137:213). In that deed, the land was described as bounded south on the main street, east on the sea or salt water, and north and west on land of Masury.

In 1741 John Cann, tailor, had bought from John Masury, baker, for 70 li a house and land bounded as in 1784, Canns to English (ED 82:55). Possibly this is the site of the George Hodges house, standing by 1667, sold to Thomas Roots in 1681, willed to Katherine (Hodges) Daland, and sold in 1700 to John Masury (per Sidney Perley, "Part of Salem in 1700, No. 19" in "Essex Antiquarian" magazine).

As a young boy in Salem in the 1790s, John Waters Jr. saw the old post-war seaport transformed into a center of world commerce. New foreign markets brought great riches to the Salem merchants, and raised the level of wealth throughout the town: new ships were bought and built, more crews joined more shipmasters, new shops and stores opened, new partnerships were formed, and new people moved in. Salem's first bank, the Essex Bank, was founded in 1792, although it "existed in experiment a long time before it was incorporated," per Rev. William Bentley. From a population of 7921 in 1790, the town would grow by 1500 persons in a decade. At the same time, thanks to the economic policies of Alexander Hamilton, Salem vessels were able to transport foreign cargoes tax-free and essentially to serve as the neutral carrying fleet for both Britain and France, which were at war with each other.

In 1793-4 there was a quasi-war at sea with Britain; and in the late 1790s, there was agitation in Congress to go to war with France, which was at war with England. After President Adams' negotiators were rebuffed by the French leaders in 1797, a quasi-war with France began in summer, 1798, much to the horror of Salem's George Crowninshield family (father and five shipmaster sons), which had an extensive trade with France, and whose ships and cargos in French ports were susceptible to seizure. The quasi-war brought about a political split within the Salem population. Those who favored war with France (and detente with England) aligned themselves with the national Federalist party, led by Hamilton and Salem's Timothy Pickering (the U.S. Secretary of State). These included most of the merchants, led locally by the Derby family. Those who favored peace with republican France were the Anti-Federalists, who later became aligned with Jefferson and his Democratic-Republican party; they were led locally by the Crowninshields and Whites. For the first few years of this rivalry, the Federalists prevailed; but after the death of Hasket "King" Derby in 1799 his family's power flagged.

In 1800, Adams negotiated peace with France and fired Pickering, his oppositional Secretary of State. Salem's Federalists merchants erupted in anger, expressed through their newspaper, the Salem *Gazette*. At the same time, British vessels began to harass American shipping. Salem owners bought more cannon and shot, and kept pushing their trade to the farthest ports of the rich East, while also maintaining trade with the Caribbean and Europe. Salem cargoes were exceedingly valuable, and Salem was a major center for distribution of merchandise throughout New England: "the streets about the wharves were alive with teams loaded with goods for all parts of the country. It was a busy scene with the coming and going of vehicles, some from long distances, for railroads were then unknown and all transportation must be carried on in wagons and drays. In the taverns could be seen

teamsters from all quarters sitting around the open fire in the chilly evenings, discussing the news of the day or making merry over potations of New England rum, which Salem manufactured in abundance" (from Hurd's History of Essex County, 1888, p.65).

The Crowninshields, led by brother Jacob, were especially successful, as their holdings rose from three vessels in 1800 to several in 1803. Their bailiwick, lower Derby Street, seemed almost to be a foreign country: in the stores, parrots chattered and monkeys cavorted, and from the warehouses wafted the exotic aromas of Sumatran spices and Arabian coffee beans. From the wharves were carted all manner of strange fruits and blue and red patterned china and piles of gorgeous silks and figured cloths.

By this time, John Waters Jr. had been apprenticed, evidently to a carpenter; but he would earn his living as a mariner for many years.

The greatest of the Salem merchants at this time was William "Billy" Gray, who owned 36 large vessels-15 ships, 7 barks, 13 brigs, 1 schooner-by 1808. Salem was then still a town, and a small one by our standards, with a total population of about 9,500 in 1800.

Its fierce politics polarized everything. The two factions attended separate churches, held separate parades, and supported separate schools, military companies, and newspapers. Salem's merchants resided mainly on two streets: Washington (which ended in a wharf on the Inner Harbor, and, above Essex, had the Town House in the middle) and Essex (particularly between what are now Hawthorne Boulevard and North Street). The East Parish (Derby Street area) was for the seafaring families, shipmasters, sailors, and fishermen. In the 1790s, Federal Street, known as New Street, had more empty lots than fine houses. Chestnut Street did not exist: its site was a meadow. The Common was not yet Washington Square, and was covered with hillocks, small ponds and swamps, utility buildings, and the alms-house. As the 19th century advanced, Salem's prosperity would sweep almost all of the great downtown houses away (the brick Joshua Ward house, built 1784, is a notable exception).

The town's merchants, among the wealthiest in the country, had, in Samuel McIntire, a local architect who could help them realize their desires for large and beautiful homes in the latest style. While a few of the many new houses went up in the old Essex-Washington Street axis, most were erected on or near Washington Square or in the Federalist "west end" (Chestnut, Federal, and upper Essex Streets). The architectural style (called "Federal" today) had been developed by the Adam brothers in England and featured fanlight doorways, palladian windows, elongated pilasters and columns, and large

windows. It was introduced to New England by Charles Bulfinch in 1790. The State House in Boston was h'is first institutional composition; and soon Beacon Hill was being built up with handsome residences in the Bulfinch manner.

Samuel McIntire (1757-1811), who was self-educated and who made his living primarily as a wood-carver and carpenter, was quick to adapt the Bulfinch style to Salem's larger lots. McIntire's first local composition, the Jerathmeel Peirce house (Federal Street), contrasts with his later Adamesque designs. In place of walls of wood paneling, there now appeared plastered expanses painted in bright colors or covered in bold wallpapers. The Adam style put a premium on handsome casings and carvings of central interior features such door-caps and chimney-pieces (McIntire's specialty). On the exterior, the Adam style included elegant fences; and the houses were often built of brick, with attenuated porticoes and, in the high style, string courses, swagged panels, and even two-story pilasters. The best example of the new style was the Elias Hasket Derby house, co-designed by Bulfinch and McIntire, and built on Essex Street in 1797-8 (demolished in 1815), on the site of today's Town House Square.

A new bank, the Salem Bank, was formed in 1803, and there were two insurance companies and several societies and associations. The fierce politics and commercial rivalries continued.

On Union Street, not far from Bentley's church, on the fourth of July, 1804, was born a boy who would grow up to eclipse all sons of Salem in the eyes of the world: Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose father would die of fever while on a voyage to the Caribbean in 1808. Untimely death was all too typical of Salem's young seafarers, who fell prey to malaria and other diseases of the Caribbean and Pacific tropics.

In 1806 the Derbys extended their wharf far out into the harbor, tripling its previous length. This they did to create more space for warehouses and shipberths in the deeper water, at just about the time that the Crowninshields had built their great India Wharf at the foot of now-Webb Street. The other important wharves were Forrester's (now Central, just west of Derby Wharf), and Union Wharf at the foot of Union Street; and then, father to the west, a number of smaller wharves extended into the South River (filled in during the late 1800s), all the way to the foot of Washington Street. Each had a warehouse or two, and shops for artisans (coopers, blockmakers, joiners, etc.). The waterfront between Union Street and Washington Street also had lumber yards and several ship chandleries and distilleries, with a Market House at the foot of Central Street, below the Custom House. The wharves and streets were crowded with shoppers, gawkers, hawkers, sailors, artisans

("mechanics"), storekeepers, and teamsters; and just across the way, on Stage Point along the south bank of the South River, wooden barks and brigs and ships were being built.

The ferment of the times is captured in the diary of Rev. William Bentley (1760-1819), bachelor minister of Salem's East Church and editor of the *Register* newspaper. His diary is full of references to the civic and commercial doings of the town, and to the lives and behaviors of all classes of society. By the end of 1806, when Rev. William Bentley reflected in his diary that (Dec. 2 entry), "while Salem was under the greatest aristocracy in New England, few men thought, and the few directed the many. Now the aristocracy is gone and the many govern. It is plain it must require considerable time to give common knowledge to the people."

Salem's boom came to an end with a crash in January, 1808, when Jefferson and the Congress imposed an embargo on all shipping in hopes of forestalling war with Britain. The Embargo, which was 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, 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. He removed a large amount of Salem wealth, shipping, import-export cargos, and local employment. Gray soon switched from the Federalist party, and was elected Lt. Governor under Gov. Elbridge Gerry, a native of Marblehead. Salem resumed its seafaring commerce for three years. We see John Waters at sea in 1811, aged twenty. He had probably completed an apprenticeship as a carpenter, and had chosen to try the life of a mariner.

John was 5' 5" tall, light-complected and fair-haired, when a seaman on board the Salem 240-ton ship "Mary Ann," departing for Russia on May 6, 1811 (SCL). He was home by early 1812: on Jan. 31, 1812, the 220-ton brig "Diomedé" cleared for Madras, India, with John among the crewmen.

The British preyed on American shipping; and in June, 1812, war was declared. 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 their weaker opponents; and, as predicted by many, the western expansionists had their day. At sea, over time, 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. Perhaps one was John Waters.

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 led the extreme Federalists in proposing a series of demands which, if not met by the federal government, could lead to New England's seceding from the United States; but Harrison G. Otis of Boston and the Federalist moderates prevailed in sending a mild message to Congress.

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

Post-war, the Salem merchants rebuilt their fleet and resumed their worldwide trade, slowly at first, and then to great effect. Many new partnerships were formed. The pre-war partisan politics of the town were not resumed, as the newly powerful middle-class "mechanics" (artisans) brought about civic harmony, largely through the Salem Charitable Mechanic Association (founded 1817) ..

John Waters resumed his seafaring as a merchant mariner on board the brig "Mercator," which departed for South America on Aug. 30, 1816. John would have a berth on this vessel, commanded by Samuel B. Graves, for the next several years, during which he rose to the rank of Second Mate (1817) and then First Mate (in November, 1818). In the years 1816-1823 he made ten voyages on board the "Mercator," usually to Brazil, but finally to Antwerp (departing May 21, 1823) (SCL).

During this period, too, he purchased (in 1820, from Joseph Waters) a homestead at then-19 Daniels Street (ED 225:30). John, 25, had married a widow, Mary (Felt) Kinsman, 31, in August, 1816; and they may have had children by 1820.

Rev. William Bentley, keen observer and active citizen during Salem's time of greatest prosperity and fiercest political divisions, died at the end of 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, hides, and gum copal, used to make varnish. This opened a huge and lucrative trade with East Africa in which Salem dominated.

John Waters found a new berth on board the Salem brig "Mercator," commanded by his brother-in-law Nathaniel Weston (1793-1868). From 1826 to 1830 he made nine overseas voyages on board this vessel, always as First Mate, and always under Captain Weston except for the last voyage, to Havana, departing Sept. 15, 1830, under Capt. Seth Rogers. Usually there were 5-8 crewmen on board. Most of these voyages were to ports in Brazil, to get cargoes of hides for the leather trade; some were described as having the West Indies (Caribbean) as the destination.

Salem's general maritime foreign commerce fell off sharply in the late 1820s. Imports in Salem ships were supplanted by the goods now being produced in great quantities in America. 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), whose cotton cloth, sold at home and overseas, created great wealth for their investors; and it seemed that the tide of opportunity was ebbing away from Salem. Salem's merchants and capitalists were already prospering from ownership of an iron-products factory in Amesbury and from a textile factory they had built in Newmarket, NH, so they saw the potential of manufacturing in Salem. In 1826, in an ingenious attempt to stem the flow of talent from the town and to harness its potential water power, they formed a corporation to dam the North River for industrial power; but the attempt was abandoned in 1827, which further demoralized the town, and caused several leading citizens to move to Boston, the hub of investment in the new economy.

In 1830 occurred a horrifying crime that brought disgrace to Salem. Old Capt. Joseph White, a wealthy merchant, resided in the house now called the Gardner-Pingree house, on Essex Street. One night, someone broke into his

mansion and killed him in his bed. All of Salem buzzed with the news of murderous thugs; but the killer was a Crowninshield (a fallen son of one of the five brothers; he killed himself in jail). He had been hired by Capt. White's own relatives, Capt. Joseph Knapp and his brother Frank (they would be executed). The results of the investigation and trial having uncovered much that was lurid, and several respectable families quit the now-notorious town.

John Waters "swallowed the anchor" and came ashore in early 1831, aged about forty, old for a mariner. Thereafter, he evidently worked in Salem as a carpenter. He and his wife Mary had two children by then, Eliza and Edward.

As the decade wore on, Salem's remaining merchants took their equity out of wharves and warehouses and ships and put it into manufacturing and transportation, as the advent of railroads and canals diverted both capital and trade away from the coast. 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 in 1836 the voters decided to charter their town as 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, brought economic disaster to many younger businessmen, and caused even more Salem families to depart in search of fortune and a better future.

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. 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, the production of alum and blue vitriol was a specialty; and it proved a very successful business.

Some Salem merchants turned to whaling in the 1830s, which led to the building of two small steam-powered factories producing high-quality candles and machine oils at Stage Point. The manufacturing of white lead began in the 1820s, and grew large after 1830, when Wyman's gristmills on the Forest River were retooled for making high-quality white lead and sheet

lead (the approach to Marblehead is still called Lead Mills Hill, although the empty mill buildings burned down in 1960s).

These enterprises started 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.

The 1840s proved to be a decade of explosive growth in Salem's leather industry, still conducted largely as a mass-production handicraft, and its new textile manufacturing, applying leading edge machine technology.

John Waters, of 19 Daniels Street, appears in the Salem Directory in 1837 as a laborer, and thereafter, through the 1840s, as a carpenter. Perhaps he had become a building contractor, or perhaps a specialist in some aspect of carpentry such as stair-building.

The tanning of animal hides and curing of leather, a filthy and smelly enterprise, took place on and near Boston Street, along the upper North River. In 1844, there were 41 tanneries; a few years later, that number had doubled and in 1850 they employed 550 workers. Salem had become one of the largest leather-producers in America; and it would continue to grow in importance throughout the 1800s.

In 1847, along the inner-harbor shoreline of the large peninsula known as Stage Point, the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company completed the construction of the largest steam cotton factory building in the world, four stories high, 60' wide, 400' long, running 1700 looms and 31,000 spindles to produce millions of yards of first-quality cotton sheeting and shirting. It was immediately profitable, and 600 people found employment there, many of them living in new houses on The Point. The cotton sheeting of The Point found a ready market in East Africa, and brought about a revival of shipping, led by the merchants David Pingree (president of the Naumkeag company) and John Bertram.

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 changed, as hundreds of Irish families, fleeing the famine in Ireland, settled in Salem and gave the industrialists a big pool of cheap labor.

The Gothic symbol of Salem's new industrial economy was the outsized twin-towered granite-and-brick train station-the "stone depot"-smoking and growling with idling locomotives, standing on filled-in land at the foot of Washington Street, on the site of shipyards and the merchants' wharves.

In general, foreign commerce waned: in the late 1840s, giant clipper ships sailing from Boston and New York replaced the smaller vessels that Salem men had sailed around the world. The town's shipping consisted of vessels carrying coal and importing hides from Africa and Brazil, and Down East coasters with cargoes of fuel wood and lumber. A picture of Salem's waterfront is given by Hawthorne in his mean-spirited "Introduction" to *The Scarlet Letter*, which he began while working in the Custom House.

In September, 1850, John Waters, identified as a mariner, for \$1225 sold the Daniels Street homestead to Dennis Lynch, trader (ED 434:1). It would seem that this house {2½ Essex) had been built by then, as we find in the 1850 valuation ("new house"). It is unknown if the old house, once John's grandfather English's, was still standing by then.

John Waters (1791-1868), born May, 1791, son of John Waters & Christiana English, died on May 17, 1868, aged 77 years, paralysis. Hem. 19 Aug. 1816 Mary Felt {1785-1859}, dtr. of John Felt & Susannah Ropes, died 30 June 1859, paralysis, 74th year. She had m/11806 Jacob Lakeman (died 1814). Known issue, surname Waters:

1. *Edward, 1819, died 2 Jan. 1821, 17 mos., consumption.*
2. *Elizabeth, 1823, died 2 Feb. 1882.*
3. *Edward, 1826-1911, m. Elizabeth Ellen Mullen {1833-1906}, dtr. of John Mullen (b. Scotland) and Sarah Trefry of Marblehead; she died 12 Nov. 1906, Chelsea.*

In 1850, still residing at Daniels Street, the Waters family (census, h. 113) consisted of John, 59, carpenter, \$800 in r.e., Mary, 63, and offspring Eliza, 27, and Edward, 24, a mariner.

The family moved that year, into the new house here.

Edward Waters was a diligent young mariner, starting at the age of fifteen, on board the bark "Brenda," Capt. Andrew Ward, departing Oct. 13, 1841, for Ceylon and Bombay. Edward was then 4' 9", light complected and fair-haired (SCL). For the next few years he shipped out as a seaman on eight more voyages, one to India, two to Zanzibar, four to South American ports, and one to Cayenne. In 1849, at 22, he had a growth spurt and went from 4' 11" to 5' 4". He sailed as Second Mate of the brig "Gambia", Capt. George E. Bailey, for South America, departing June 6, 1849. He then rose to First Mate,

sailing in April 1851 on board the brig "Garland," Capt. Richard Savory, for Paramaribo, Surinam, and in August, 1851, on board the brig "Elizabeth Felton," Capt. Henry B. Manning, for the same port.

After that, he probably sailed out of Boston

In 1855 (per census, h. 274), this was the home of John Waters, 64, carpenter, Mary, 69, Eliza, 32, and Edward, 29, mariner. At that time, John was making \$1 a day as a carpenter (see ED 461:82).

In the late 1850s Edward Waters married Elizabeth Ellen Mullen, the daughter of a Scotsman, John Mullen, who had married a Marbleheader, Sarah Trefry. They would live elsewhere.

Salem's industrial growth continued through the 1850s, as business expanded, the population swelled, new churches were built, new workingclass neighborhoods were developed (especially at The Point, South Salem along Lafayette Street, in North Salem, off Boston Street, and along the Mill Pond behind the Broad Street graveyard); and new schools, factories, and stores were erected. A second, even-larger factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was added in 1859, down at Stage Point, where a new Methodist Church went up in 1852; and many neat new homes, boarding-houses, and stores lined 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 antislavery, with its share of outspoken abolitionists, led by Charles Remond, a passionate speaker who came from one of the city's leading 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.

On June 30, 1859, Mrs. Mary (Felt) Waters died, of paralysis, aged 73 years. She was survived by her husband and two offspring.

With the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, 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.

In that year, this house (per census, h. 2016) was the home of John Waters, 69, carpenter, with r.e. worth \$2000, his daughter Eliza, 37, and his son Edward, mariner, 34, and Edward's wife Elizabeth, 26.

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.

At that time this house was occupied by John Waters, 74, carpenter, and his daughter Eliza, 42 (per census, h. 584).

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 Holly Street; many are in the French Second Empire style, with mansard roofs). Factory workers, living in smaller houses and tenements, wanted something better for themselves: in 1864 they went on strike for higher wages and fewer hours of work.

On May 17, 1868, John Waters died in his 77th year. The property descended to Elizabeth and Edward.

In 1870 Salem received its last cargo from Zanzibar. 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 Bachelder in *History of Essex County*, II: 65).

Edward Waters and wife Elizabeth moved to Boston. He added the middle initial S., for Stanley.

In 1870 (per census, h.161) Eliza Waters, 47, resided here, as did tenants Albert Cummings, a Maine-born merchant with \$4000 in property, and his son William, 21, born in New Hampshire.

In April, 1872, Edward Waters, of Boston, for \$1000 sold his half-interest in the homestead to his sister Eliza, who lived there and owned the other half (ED 853:132). The lot was bounded south on Essex Street and west on the Saul heirs.

Salem continued to prosper in the 1870s, carried forward by the leathermaking 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, most of it shipped by rail to the factories on the Merrimack. In the neck of land beyond the Pier, a new owner began subdividing the old Allen farmlands into a 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, large numbers of French-Canadian families came 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 1500 people (including hundreds of children) and produce annually nearly 15 million yards of cloth. Shoemanufacturing 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 (per census, h. 234), this was the home of Eliza Waters, 57, in one unit, and in the other Charles Converse, 44, a railroad engineer, wife Olive, 41, and son Frederick W., 20, a brass finisher.

Eliza Waters died on February 2, 1882, aged 59 years. She was survived by her brother, Edward S. Waters of Chelsea. Evidently she willed some or all of her property to Lakeman relatives of her mother's first marriage. In May, 1882, these heirs sold their interest in the homestead here to Edward S. Waters of Boston (ED 1083:117). He would lease it out for 13 years.

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.

In December, 1895, Edward S. Waters, of Chelsea, for \$2400 sold the homestead to John I. Comstock of Salem (ED 1465:102). The lot, which had not previously been described in dimensions, was recorded as fronting on Essex Street 76.5' and running back about 47' in depth.

Thus after 45 years the house passed out of the name of Waters. The land here had been in the family since 1784.

John I. Comstock was a native of Lewiston, Maine. In 1900 (per census, h. 249, 2½ Essex) he, 40, resided here, working as the chief stationary engineer at the Pennsylvania Pier (large coal and railroad facility on Salem Harbor), with wife Anna/Annie (nee Henningsen), 39, and son George, 17, a piano tuner. Also residing here were Charles Kent, 38, a baker from Woburn, wife Rebecca (nee Liebsch), 30, and Charles' daughter by a first marriage, Josephine L., 13. Anna and Rebecca were perhaps cousins; the parents of both were born in Denmark, as was Annie.

John I. Comstock died of heart disease on January 10, 1904. His remains were interred at Greenlawn Cemetery. In March, 1904, his son George J.

Comstock, having moved to Washington, DC, conveyed the premises to his mother, Annie E. (Henningsen) Comstock, Salem widow (ED 1737:247).

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 (the Custom House had opened 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.

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, and by Sicilians, in the High Street neighborhood. By the eve of World War One, the bustling, polyglot city supported large department stores and 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.

In September, 1912, the Comstocks sold the homestead to Helen Zaborowski, whose husband was named Ignecy (ED 2167:458). For almost 50 years they owned the premises.

On June 25, 1914, in the morning, in Blubber Hollow (Boston Street at Proctor), a fire started in small wooden shoe factory. This fire soon raced out of control, for the west wind was high and the season had been dry. 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 of The Point. Despite the combined efforts of heroic fire crews from many towns and cities, the fire overwhelmed everything in its path: the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company factory complex exploded in an inferno. At Derby Street, just beyond Union, 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.

By 1920 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.

Salem 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 and Newmark's and Webber's department stores, various other retailers, and Beverly's United Shoe Machinery Company were all major local employers.

Eventually the Salem Savings Bank foreclosed on its mortgage and in 1961 conveyed the property Lauren R. L'Italien (ED 4754:160). That same year the premises were sold to Mary E. Carr & Mary E. Grocki (ED 4826:288). In 1994 the Grocki Family Realty trust sold to the Opie & Pelletier (ED 14006:147). In 2004 the Pelletiers sold to Sanprasert & Phongrong (ED 22741:381). The homestead has been sold several times since then.

Glossary & Sources

A figure like (ED 123:45) refers to book 123, page 45, Essex South Registry of Deeds.

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

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

MSSCRW refers to the multi-volume compendium, *Mass. Soldiers, Sailors, & Marines in the Civil War*, 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.

Salem Crew Lists (SCL), online at Mystic Seaport website.

The six-volume published Salem Vital Records (marriages, births, and deaths through 1849) have been consulted, and the Salem Directory and later Naumkeag Directory, with data 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 newspapers, 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.

-Public History Services

Weston,
to
Waters

320-85

30 July 1840

Know all Men by these Presents, That I ,

Mathaniel Weston, of Salem
in the County of Essex and State of Massachusetts, Merchant,

in consideration of Ten hundred thirty five dollars
to me paid by John Waters Junior of said
Salem, Merchant, Manumr

the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, do by these presents, grant, remise, release, and forever
QUIT-CLAIM, unto the said Waters

his heirs and assigns, all Right, title, interest, and estate, in and to a certain
Dwelling House with the Land under and
adjoining the same, situate on Essex Street
in said Salem and which the said Waters
has by conveyance to me as administrator of
the estate of the late Christiana Waters, widow,
deceased, being therein authorized by an
order of the probate Court issued in that pur-
pose, together with all the privileges and
appurtenances thereto in anywise appertaining.

To the said John Waters Junior, to him

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal of office at Salem in the County of Essex and State of Massachusetts, this 30th day of July 1840.

Mathaniel Weston

Witness my hand and seal of office at Salem in the County of Essex and State of Massachusetts, this 30th day of July 1840.

[Illegible text and signatures]

W

St. Nicholas
Orthodox Church

2 1/2 Essex Street



1897 ATLAS



H&H Propeller Shop

St. Nicholas
Orthodox Church

2 1/2 Essex Street

Webb St

Essex St

English St

\Yol ~"11\-\~.,~ ~ ~ Ov~