

# Historic Salem Incorporated

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8 BECKFORD STREET

Built for  
MARY DERBY, widow  
by 1846

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**Eight Beckford Street**  
**Built by 1846 for Martha Derby, Widow**

**History of the Property:**

There have been at least two, and possibly three, houses on or near the site of the present-day Eight Beckford Street. The seventeenth-century structures that once fronted Beckford Street attest to the fact that it is one of the oldest lanes connecting Essex Street, or the "Main" street or highway, and the North River. It was laid out over a century before Federal Street came into existence, and property records refer to it alternatively as Beckford Lane (1657), the "street from Main Street to the North River" (1680), Kitchen's Lane (1783), Turner's Lane (1793), and finally Beckford or Bickford Street (1797).

The lot on which Eight Beckford Street sits was part of a much larger parcel extending from Essex Street to the North River granted to Thomas Cole, a husbandman, in the seventeenth century. After his death in 1679 and his widow's death the following year, the estate was divided equally between the two Cole sons, Abraham and John. Abraham Cole received the southern half, adjacent to Essex Street. In the same year that he came into his inheritance, Abraham sold a "middle lot", roughly approximate to the present lot of Eight Beckford Street, to Joseph Swasey, who promptly built a house upon it [Essex County Registry of Deeds, Book 5, leaf 103]. After Swasey's death in 1703, his widow and son Samuel continued to occupy the property until 1711, when they sold the house, "other buildings", and land "under and adjoining the same" to John Cook, a Salem mariner [E.C.R.D. Book 24, leaf 111].

Three generations of Cooks owned and occupied the parcel of land on Beckford Street throughout the eighteenth century, though the "old dwelling house" was probably pulled down by John Cook III after he came into possession of the property in 1766. After his death in 1804, his heirs, having inherited considerable properties in Salem, conveyed the Beckford Street estate to James Derby, another Salem mariner [E.C.R.D. Book 176, leaves 277-278]. A shop on the premises was noted in the transaction, indicating that the property was not owner-occupied by Cook and his family. James Derby and his family took up residence immediately but continued to lease out the shop.

James Derby died in 1838. His widow, Martha, continued to

resided in the old Cook house for several years, but in 1842 she moved next door, pulled her former house down, and awaited construction of a new Eight Beckford Street. "Uptown" Salem was then in the process of transformation from mixed-use (commercial and residential) dwellings to an exclusively residential neighborhood and larger Greek Revival and Victorian houses were replacing the smaller Colonial ones with their "shops". Construction of the new Derby house was completed by 1846 and Mrs. Derby resided there until her death in 1862. The new, shopless, Eight Beckford Street is clearly displayed on the 1851 Atlas of Salem. Martha Derby's estate was bequeathed indirectly to her Ross grandchildren through their mother, Martha Derby Ross, who also died about this time. By 1864 James D. Ross, a tanner, and Joseph H. Ross, a painter, had taken up residence at Eight Beckford Street [Salem Directories, 1851-64].

The Ross family owned, and various Ross siblings occupied, Eight Beckford Street until 1893. After 1878, some additions and revisions were made on the house, for which the Ross brothers acquired a mortgage. They also appear to have taken in boarders when there was room [Salem Directories, 1884-1983]. The individual members of the Ross family sold their quarter shares to Charles Fowler in 1893, and the latter conveyed it to his brother, through a mortgage deed, in the following year [E.C.R.D. Book 1378, pages 248-249, and 1418, pages 88-92]. Arthur Fowler, a Boston insurance broker, owned and occupied Eight Beckford Street until his death in 1925. Another round of additions and/or changes were apparently made on the house with the proceeds of a 1905 mortgage for such purpose [E.C.R.D. Book 1769, page 02]. In the early 1920s, Lucy Fowler, a daughter, held music lessons at the house.

Arthur Fowler's children and heirs conveyed Eight Beckford Street to Elizabeth Lehan and Catherine Heffernan in 1926 [E.C.R.D. Book 2645 page 24]. Lehan and Heffernan, apparently overextended financially, sold the heavily-mortgaged property to William and Mary O'Shea of Salem in the following year [E.C.R.D. Book 2683, page 273]. The O'Sheas owned the property for only two years and never occupied the house. In 1928 they sold the still heavily-mortgaged property to Ethel R. Gauss of Salem [E.C.R.D. Book 2757, pages 483-484]. Ethel Gauss and her husband John, President and co-owner of Newcomb & Gauss Company, book and commercial printers at One City Hall Avenue in Salem, owned and occupied the house until 1950. After her husband's death, Ethel Gauss sold Eight Beckford Street and other properties for a nominal sum to an apparent relative, Nathalie H. Gregware of Salem [E.C.R.D. Book 3788, page 292], though Mrs. Gauss continued to reside in the house. After her death in 1960, Miss Gregware conveyed Eight Beckford Street to Roger and Virginia L'Heureux of Salem, who bought an adjacent lot from Elizabeth Kiernan in 1983 [E.C.R.D. Book 4711, page 308 and Book 5125, page 167]. Mr. L'Heureux, an engineer at Sylvania Company, and his wife owned and occupied Eight Beckford Street until 1977, when they conveyed it in two parcels to its present owners [E.C.R.D. Book 6363, page 548].

**Documentation:**

**Essex County Registry of Deeds, Book 5, leaf 103**

**Grantor:** Abraham Cole of Salem, Mariner  
**Grantee:** Joseph Swasey of Salem, Mariner  
**Consideration:** 40 Pounds  
**Conveyance of:** the "middle" Cole lot  
**Date recorded:** August 9, 1680

**E.C.R.D. Book 24, leaf 111**

**Grantors:** Samuel Swasey, Shipwright, and Elizabeth Swasey, Widow, both of Salem  
**Grantee:** John Cook, Jr. of Salem, Mariner  
**Consideration:** 95 Pounds  
**Conveyance of:** house and land on "way to the North River".  
**Date recorded:** January 8, 1711

**E.C.R.D. Book 121, leaf 142**

**Grantors:** Benjamin Cook of Salem, Fisherman  
**Grantees:** John Cook III of Salem, Fisherman  
**Consideration:** "Just Sum" of 29 Pounds, 15 Shillings  
**Conveyance of:** "....a small piece of land situate in Salem aforesaid in the Lane commonly called Kitchen's Lane....with an old Dwelling House on said land".  
**Date recorded:** December 12, 1766

**E.C.R.D. Book 128, leaf 221**

**Grantor:** Samuel Buffum of Salem, Glazier  
**Grantee:** John Cook of Salem, Fisherman  
**Consideration:** 10 Pounds, 13 Shillings, 4 Pence, Lawful Money  
**Conveyance of:** "....part of a dwelling house with the land under and adjoining the same in said Salem".  
**Date recorded:** March 18, 1771

**E.C.R.D. Book 176, leaves 277-278**

**Grantors:** Elizabeth Crosby, Widow, Guardian of the estate of Peggy Tarrant of Salem, Minor, Phineas Richardson, Chaisemaker, and Peggy his wife, both of Salem  
**Grantee:** James Derby of Salem, Mariner  
**Consideration:** \$975 and \$1000 (the first half share being sold at public auction to Derby, the highest bidder)  
**Conveyance of:** two undivided halves "of the described piece of

land and the buildings thereon, excepting a shop belonging to Kimbell, situate in said Salem, with the appurtenances....being the estate whereof John Cook late of said Salem Mariner died seized".

**Date recorded:** October 15, 1805

**E.C.R.D. Book 970, leaf 245**

**Grantor:** Joseph Henry Ross of Salem, Painter

**Grantee:** Nathaniel Ross of Salem, Hairdresser

**Consideration:** \$400

**Conveyance of:** "one undivided fourth part of a certain lot of lands in Salem with the buildings thereon situated in said Salem which was conveyed to James Derby by a deed from Phineas Richardson and Peggy Richardson and by a deed from Elizabeth Crosby, guardian of Peggy Tarrant....the said estate therein described as follows: 'beginning at the southwest corner and thence running northerly bounding westerly on Bickford Street 47 feet 6 inches, thence running easterly bounding northerly on land of Benjamin Shillaber 65 feet and 6 inches, thence running southerly bounding easterly on land of John Punched 47 feet and 6 inches and bounded southerly partly by land of John Warden and partly on land of Robert Cowan 63 feet and 10 inches', intending to hereby convey one fourth part of the estate."

**Date recorded:** February 8, 18770

**E.C.R.D. Book 1009, leaf 110**

**Grantor:** Nathaniel Ross of Salem, Barber

**Grantees:** James D. Ross, Alice P. Palmer and Martha P. Palmer, wife of William Palmer

**Consideration:** \$1 and other goods and valuable considerations

**Conveyance of:** "....one undivided fourth part of a certain lot of land with the buildings thereon situated in said Salem."

**Date recorded:** December 24, 1878

**E.C.R.D. Book 1378, pages 248-249**

**Grantors:** James D. Ross, Moses and Alice McAlpine, and Martha P. Palmer, all of Salem

**Grantee:** Charles B. Fowler of Salem, Insurance Broker

**Consideration:** \$1 "and other valuable considerations"

**Conveyance of:** "a certain lot of land with the buildings thereon situated in said Salem....Our title being derived as heirs-at-law of Martha P. Ross, late of Salem deceased."

**Date recorded:** June 27, 1893

**E.C.R.D. Book 1418, pages 88-92**

**Mortgage Deed:** granted by Charles B. Fowler of Salem to Arthur B. Fowler of Salem for \$4000  
**Date recorded:** July 18, 1894  
**Mortgage Discharge:** January 1, 1908

**E.C.R.D. Book 1769 page 102**

**Mortgage Deed:** granted by William Weeks of Salem to Carrie A. Fowler, wife of Arthur B. Fowler, both of Salem  
**Date recorded:** February 11, 1905

**E.C.R.D. Book 2645, page 24**

**Grantors:** Dow and Lucy Emerson of Belmont, Donald A. Fowler and Arthur D. Fowler, both of Marblehead, and Roger A. Fowler of Salem  
**Grantees:** Elizabeth J. Lehan and Catherine F. Heffernan, both of Salem  
**Consideration:** paid  
**Conveyance of:** "the land in Salem with the buildings thereon, situated at and numbered 8 Beckford Street."  
**Date recorded:** June 25, 1925

**E.C.R.D. Book 2683, page 273**

**Grantors:** Elizabeth J. Lehan, Widow, and Edward and Catherine Heffernan, all of Salem  
**Grantee:** Mary A. O'Shea, wife of William H. O'Shea, of Salem  
**Consideration:** paid  
**Conveyance of:** 8 Beckford Street, "subject to a mortgage to the Salem Savings Bank of \$6500 and taxes of the year 1926, which the grantees are to assume and pay. The premises are conveyed subject also to a second mortgage of \$1500 to Donald A. Fowler."  
**Date recorded:** June 3, 1926

**E.C.R.D. Book 2757, pages 483-484**

**Grantors:** Mary O'Shea and William O'Shea of Salem  
**Grantee:** Ethel R. Gauss of Salem  
**Consideration:** paid  
**Conveyance of:** 8 Beckford Street  
**Date recorded:** March 12, 1928

**E.C.R.D. Book 3788, page 292**

**Grantor:** Ethel R. Gauss of Salem  
**Grantee:** Nathalie H. Gregware of Salem

**Consideration:** paid  
**Conveyance of:** 8 Beckford Street and part of the former Sparhawk Estate, Marblehead  
**Date recorded:** December 4, 1950

**E.C.R.D. Book 4711, page 308**

**Grantor:** Nathalie H. Gregware of Salem  
**Grantees:** Roger and Virginia L'Heureux of Salem  
**Consideration:** paid  
**Conveyance of:** 8 Beckford Street (additional land purchased from Elizabeth Kiernan in 1963: E.C.R.D. Book 5125, page 167.)  
**Date recorded:** October 13, 1960

**E.C.R.D. Book 6363, page 548**

**Grantors:** Roger and Virginia L'Heureux of Salem  
**Grantees:** John and Claire Cassella  
**Consideration:** paid  
**Conveyance of:** 8 Beckford Street (2 parcels)  
**Date recorded:** June 27, 1977





