

# Historic Salem Incorporated

P.O. BOX 865 SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS 01970 / PHONE (508) 745-0799 / FAX (508) 744-8255

## **124 FEDERAL STREET**

Built for Jonathan Ropes, Merchant  
1784

Rear ell erected for Joanthan Waldo, Merchant  
c. 1807

124 1/2 Federal Street built for Benjamin Shreve, Purveyor of Fine Goods  
c. 1877

Research by: Donna Vinson  
October, 1995

124 Federal Street  
built in 1784 for Jonathan Ropes, Merchant  
(rear ell erected for Jonathan Waldo, Merchant, circa 1807)

124 1/2 Federal Street  
built for Benjamin Shreve,  
Purveyor of Fine Goods,  
circa 1877

One Lynn Street  
built for Jonathan Waldo,  
Merchant,  
by 1811

#### History of the structures:

The early Federal house presently bearing the address 124 Federal Street was built in 1784 for Salem merchant Jonathan Ropes on or near the "100 poles" of land bequeathed to him by his father, John Ropes, Jr., in 1754 along with "a mansion house, shop and barn". The younger Ropes made few changes to his estate until after 1780 when he tore down the "ancient" homestead and began acquiring adjoining northerly properties along the "new road" (Lynn Street) lately laid out by his neighbor Benjamin Goodhue. By 1783, he had consolidated the property on which he would construct his new house in the following year.<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan Ropes bequeathed his entire estate to his only grandchild, Jonathan Waldo, in 1799. Waldo's professional occupation was that of an apothecary, but he referred to and conducted himself primarily as a "merchant" and also had many part-time public pursuits. In the 1790s he served successively as a

---

<sup>1</sup> Essex (South) County Registry of Deeds, Book 139, leaf 229 (October 15, 1782), and Book 141, leaf 35 (May 30, 1783); Salem Tax Valuations, 1784-85; James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

town official, major of the militia, and overseer of the repairs of Fort Pickering. Several years after receiving his inheritance, Waldo increased the assessed value of the Federal Street house by either erecting or extending the rear ell along Lynn Street in order to open a shop. In their valuations of 1807-1810, Salem's tax assessors indicate quite clearly that Waldo's new shop is located in his house, not adjacent to it. In 1810-1811, Waldo was assessed for an additional store, referred to as "a brick store" in mortgage deeds of 1811, 1813, and 1818. Presumably this structure is the present-day One Lynn Street, possibly built by Waldo's neighbor Nathaniel Chamberlain, a noted Salem bricklayer.<sup>2</sup>

After the death of Jonathan Waldo in 1817, his heirs bequeathed the entire estate, referred to as "a certain messuage consisting of a dwelling house and the land under and adjoining and the brick store and all other buildings thereon, bounding southerly on Federal Street seventy-eight feet more or less, easterly on Lynn Street one hundred and four feet more or less, northerly by land late of David Bancroft deceased about one hundred thirty-five feet, westerly partly by land of Ebenezer Shillaber deceased and partly by land of Nathaniel Chamberlain about one hundred and eighty feet or however otherwise bounded or reputed to be bounded" to John Holman of Salem, a mariner, who occupied the house until 1830 and owned the property until 1832. In the early 1830s, Holman appears

---

<sup>2</sup> Essex County Probate File #24175; Salem Tax Valuations, 1799-1813; ECRD Book 199, leaf 173 (April 15, 1811); ECRD Book 200, leaf 215 (April 5, 1813) ECRD Book 216, leaf 298 (September 19, 1818).

to have removed both himself and his business from Salem to New York, and consequently he conveyed "a certain messuage consisting of a wooden dwelling house and Brick House and barn and land under and adjoining the same....situated at the corner of Federal Street and Lynn Street" to the Reverend John Brazer, pastor of the North Church, in 1832.<sup>3</sup>

John Brazer and his large family owned and occupied 124 Federal Street, then designated alternatively 50 or 52 Federal Street, until the Reverend's death in 1845. Based on the tax assessments, there were no changes made to the existing structures of the estate during this time. The following year, Brazer's heirs transferred the property to Thomas Perkins of Salem, a relatively wealthy shipmaster and merchant.<sup>4</sup>

It is during Thomas Perkins' possession of 124 Federal Street (1846-1876) that the present-day One Lynn Street, the brick house adjoined to the wooden rear ell of the dwelling house on Federal Street, is officially listed as a separate structure in the Salem Tax Valuations. There is no evidence, however, that the brick building (with no address) was used as residence but rather as a warehouse or store for storage and/or display of Perkins' substantial goods in stock. The structure was certainly embellished during this period, as its assessed value increases considerably, as does that of the main house. Perkins likely added

---

<sup>3</sup> Essex County (South) Registry of Deeds, Book 216, leaf 299 (September 19, 1818); ECRD Book 263, leaf 230 (May 7, 1832).

<sup>4</sup> Salem Tax Valuations, 1820-1848; ECRD Book 373, leaves 122-124 (October 24, 1846).

the Greek Revival entrances and bay windows to both structures at different periods in his thirty-year occupation.<sup>5</sup>

The west wing of 124 Federal Street, or 124 1/2 Federal Street, was built after the Perkins heirs conveyed the property to Benjamin Shreve in 1876. Shreve, "importer of French goods, watches, and jewelry" and founder of Shreve, Crump & Low in Boston, purchased the Perkins estate as an addition to his many rental properties in Salem. The first tenant of 124 1/2 Federal Street, Samuel Pitman, a currier, appears in the 1878 Salem Directory. In that same year, Franklin Tyler, a "morocco dresser" is listed as living in the house on "Lynn near Federal" and William H. Carter, an importer of wines in Boston, takes up residence in 124 Federal Street shortly thereafter.<sup>6</sup>

124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street were occupied by a succession of tenants, both short-term and long-term, during the Shreve family's ownership (1876-1929). The main house's occupant of longest duration was Frederick Broadhead, an insurance broker (1901-1917), while Frank A. Laws, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, lived in the addition from 1907 until 1920. In 1929, the trustees of Benjamin Shreve's estate conveyed "the property now numbered 124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street and Number One Lynn Street" to Rebecca Dembofsky of Salem, a mortgage broker and real estate agent who partitioned the estate and

---

<sup>5</sup> Salem Tax Valuations, 1848-1855.

<sup>6</sup> ECRD Book 2802, pages 557-558 (May 30, 1876); Salem Directories, 1876-1884.

promptly sold off its component parts in the following year.<sup>7</sup>

The Cooke sisters, purchasers of 124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street in 1930, lived at the latter address and leased out the main house. David Limauro, a physician, lived and practiced at 124 Federal Street in the early forties and this use continued after Dr. Melvin Goodman and his wife Alyce purchased the property from Florence and Lilla Cooke in 1945. The Goodmans owned, occupied, and practiced in 124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street for nearly fifty years, after which its present owners purchased the house from the executor of Alyce Goodman's estate in 1995.<sup>8</sup>

#### History of the property:

The land on which 124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street and One Lynn Street were eventually built was part of the original seventeenth-century land grant of Richard Bishop (d. 1674-75), which was conveyed successively to his son Thomas and grandson Richard Bishop. Robert Kitchen purchased the Bishop property in the early 1690s, and quickly turned it over to Joseph Neal, one of the largest landowners in the neighborhood. Neal possessed the property, which adjoined his "mansion house" on the main street (Essex Street) for several years, after which it was transferred to

---

<sup>7</sup> ECRD Book 2826, page 427 (November 1, 1929); ECRD Book 2845, page 508 (May 17, 1930); ECRD Book 2843, page 518 (May 3, 1930); Salem Directories, 1884-1930.

<sup>8</sup> ECRD Book 3415, pp. 457-460 (June 15, 1945); ECRD Book 13053, page 179 (June 6, 1995).

the Ropes Family.<sup>9</sup>

The Ropes brothers, John Jr. and Samuel, built and possessed half-interests in a house and outlying buildings on their property, all of which was conveyed to Jonathan Ropes in 1754. After the laying out of Federal Street (after 1766) and Lynn Street (after 1780), Ropes greatly enlarged the property, probably with the aim of increasing its access to the North River. A representative purchase came in 1782, when Nathaniel Lang of Salem, a silversmith, conveyed to Jonathan "a certain piece of land adjoining a new road lately laid out by Benjamin Goodhue junior from the new street in said Salem so called down to the water side". Additional parcels of land (on the western side) were added to the property after the construction of the new Federal house in 1784 and its additions by both Ropes and his heir, Jonathan Waldo. There were few or no changes made to the property for most of the nineteenth century, until Benjamin Shreve added the circa 1877 addition to the main house. The division of the Ropes/Shreve estate came in 1930, when 124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street became legally separated from One Lynn Street.<sup>10</sup>

**Transfers of title:**

**Essex (South District) Registry of Deeds, Book 216, leaf 299**

---

<sup>9</sup> ECRD Book 9, leaf 69 (December 22, 1691, February 7, 1692-93); ECRD Book 17, leaf 33 (June 4, 1695); ECRD Book 21, leaf 164 (November 7, 1709).

<sup>10</sup> ECRD Book 139, leaves 228-229; see enclosed plan of "Land of Rebecca Dembofsky, Salem, Mass., Jan. 1930", ECRD Book 2838, pages 25-30).

**Grantors:** Charles F. Waldo of Charleston in the County of Middlesex, Gentleman, Edward W. Waldo of Salem in the County of Essex, Merchant, Mary R. Waldo of said Salem, Spinster, and Henry S. Waldo of Boston in the County of Suffolk, Gentleman  
**Grantee:** John Holman of Salem, Mariner  
**Consideration:** \$4030  
**Conveyance of:** "a certain message situated in Salem aforesaid consisting of a dwelling house and the land under and adjoining and all the buildings thereon, bounded....on Federal Street and Lynn Streets...."  
**Date recorded:** September 19, 1818

ECRD Book 263, leaf 230

**Grantor:** John Holman of Ithaca, New York, Trader  
**Grantee:** John Brazer of Salem, Clerk  
**Consideration:** \$3800  
**Conveyance of:** "a certain message consisting of a wooden dwelling house and Brick House or barn and land under and adjoining with all the buildings thereon, the forementioned is situated at the corner of Federal Street and Lynn Street in Salem aforesaid...."  
**Date recorded:** May 7, 1832

ECRD Book 373, leaves 122-124

**Grantors:** James W. Cheever of Salem, Merchant, Guardian of John Brazer, William Brazer, Anne Brazer, and Edward Brazer, minor children of the Reverend John Brazer, late of Salem, and Mary Brazer of Salem  
**Grantee:** Thomas Perkins of Salem, Master and Merchant  
**Consideration:** \$3750  
**Conveyance of:** "a certain message situated in Salem....on the corner of Federal and Lynn Streets...."  
**Date recorded:** October 24, 1846

ECRD Book 2802, pages 557-558

**Grantor:** Thomas Perkins, Executor of the will of Thomas Perkins, late of Salem  
**Grantee:** Benjamin Shreve of Salem  
**Consideration:** \$9105  
**Conveyance of:** 124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street; One Lynn Street  
**Date recorded:** May 30, 1876

ECRD Book 2826, page 427

**Grantors:** Octavius B. Shreve of Salem and the First National Bank of Boston, Trustees under the will of Benjamin Shreve, late of Salem



Grantee: Rebecca Dembofsky of Salem  
Consideration: \$16,000  
Conveyance of: "the property now numbered 124 and 124 1/2  
Federal Street and Number One Lynn Street in Salem"  
Date recorded: November 1, 1929

ECRD Book 2843, page 518

Grantor: Rebecca Dembofsky of Salem  
Grantees: Susie J. and Lilla Cooke of Lowell and Florence  
G. Cooke of Salem  
Consideration: paid  
Conveyance of: 124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street  
Date recorded: May 30, 1930

ECRD Book 3415, pages 457-460

Grantors: Lilla Cooke and Florence G. Cooke of Salem  
Grantee: Melvin Goodman of Boston  
Consideration: paid  
Conveyance of: "the land with the buildings thereon situated  
on 124 - 124 1/2 Federal Street in Salem"  
Date recorded: June 15, 1945

ECRD Book 13053, page 179 (Fiduciary Deed)

Grantor: Louis Kolow of Newton, temporary executor of the  
will of Alyce Goodman, late of Salem  
Grantees: Kevin and Deborah A. Guinee  
Consideration: paid  
Conveyance of: 124 and 124 1/2 Federal Street  
Date recorded: June 9, 1995

Salon  
1874

MUNROE ST.

ESSEX

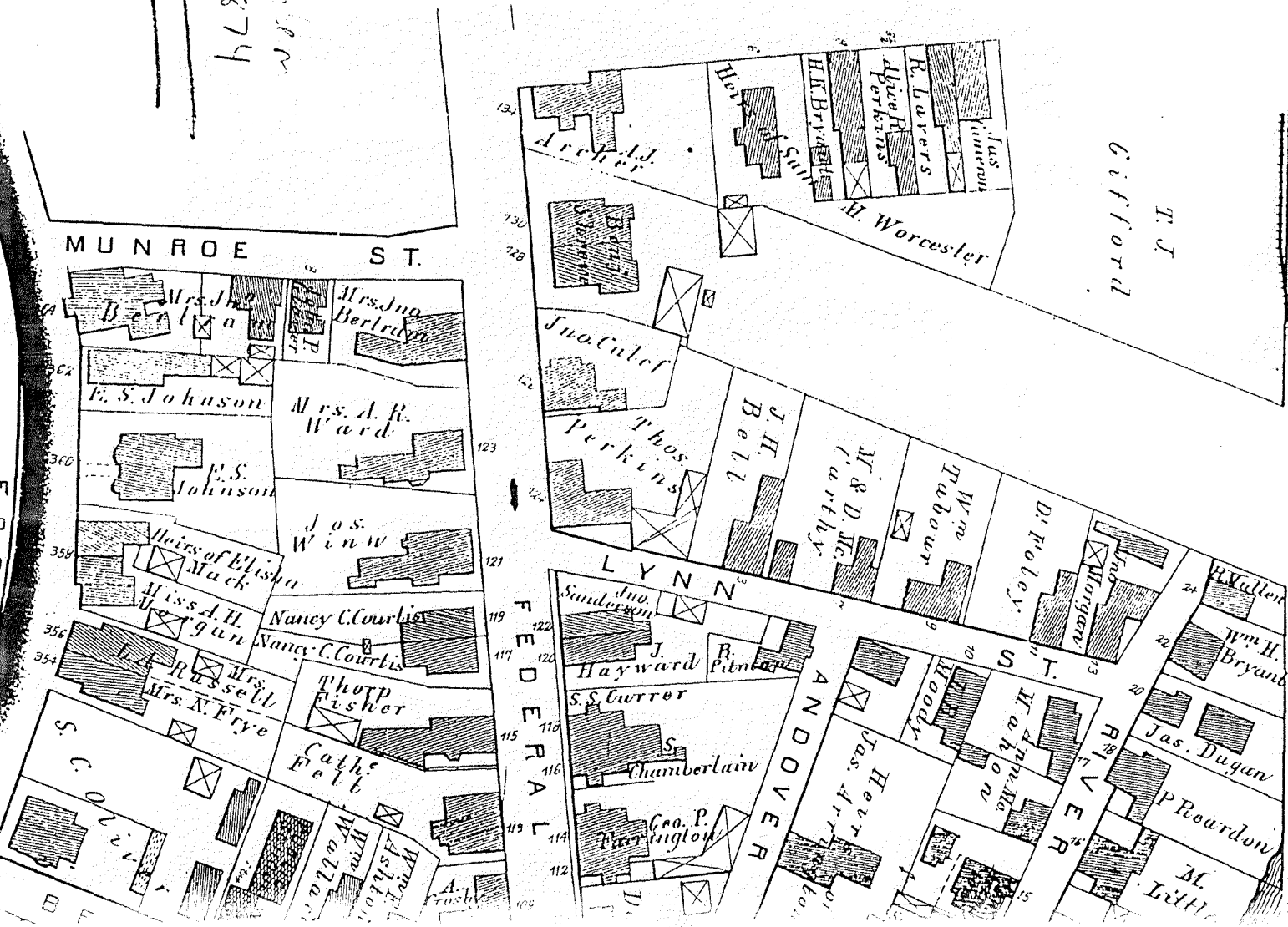
LYNN

FEDERAL

ANDOVER

RIVER

Clifford



# RIVER

EASTERN RAIL ROAD CO.

BOSTON & MAINE RAIL ROAD

Salter  
1897

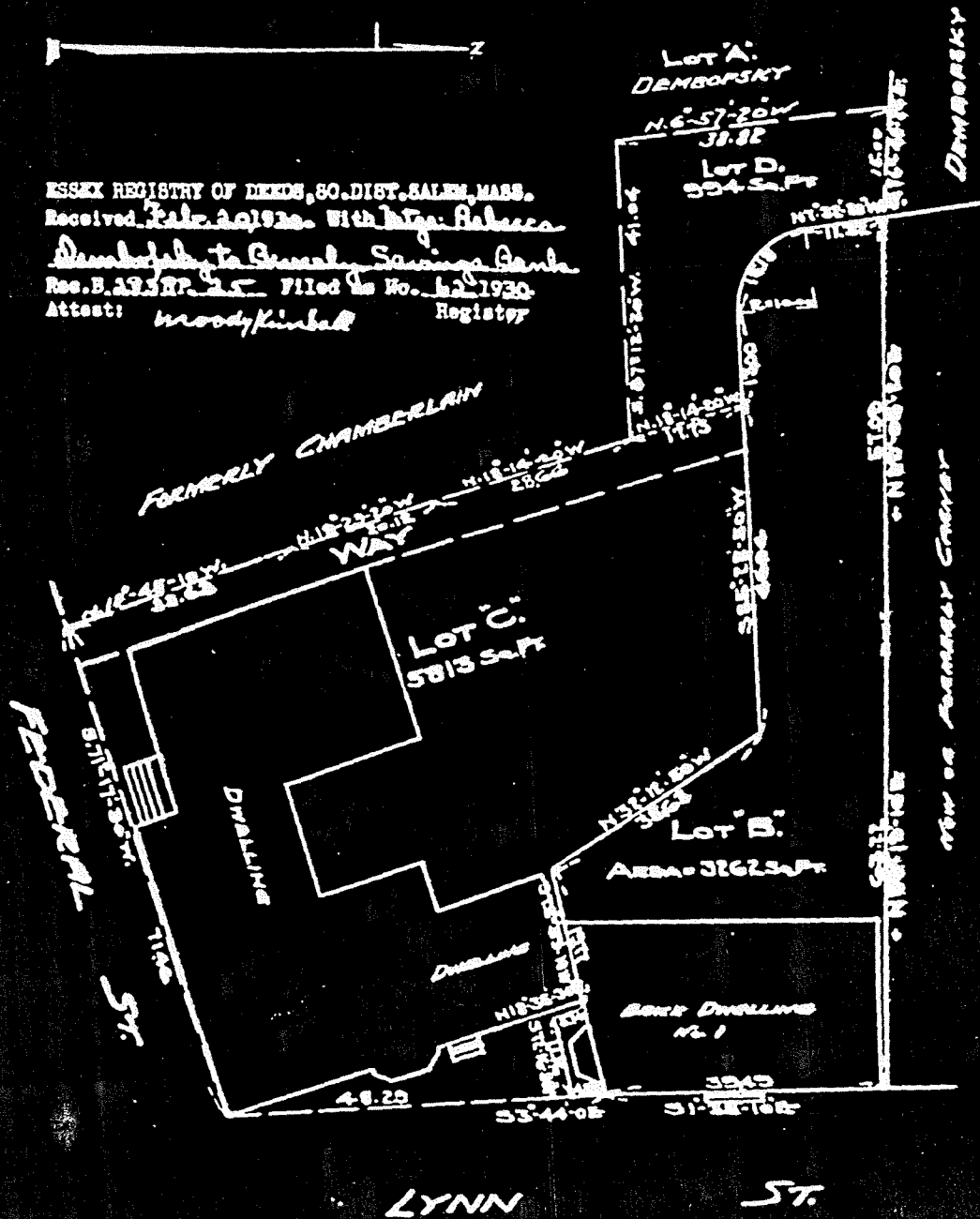


62  
1930

LAND OF REBECCA DEMBOFSKY  
SALEM, MASS  
SCALE 1 IN. = 20 FT.  
JAN. 1930.

*Thomas A. Applegate*

ESSEX REGISTRY OF DEEDS, SO. DIST. SALEM, MASS.  
Received Feb. 20 1930. With Map: Rebecca  
Dembofsky to General Savings Bank  
Res. B. 1930. Filed to No. 12 1930  
Attest: *Moody Kimball* Registrar



# Historic Salem incorporated

P.O. BOX 865 SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS 01970 / PHONE (508) 745-0799 / FAX (508) 744-8255

February 27, 1996

Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Guinee  
124 Federal Street  
Salem, MA 01970

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Guinee:

As you are aware, WGBH had retained Historic Salem to do a house history of your property which is a regular service we provide. At the time the history was completed, no plaque was requested.

We typically charge an additional \$75.00 for the painting and installation of house plaques.

In appreciation of the wonderful restoration which you have undertaken and the fine example of quality restoration which was represented to the national viewing public, we would like to extend to you a plaque as a gift. Please give Alice Clarke a call at our office (745-0799) to arrange for it's installation.

Sincerely,



John M. Wathne  
President

# Historic Salem Incorporated

P.O. BOX 865 SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS 01970 / PHONE (508) 745-0799 FAX (508) 744-8255

October 25, 1995

Mr. Bruce Irving  
Producer, This Old House  
WGBH  
125 Western Ave.  
Boston, MA 02134

Dear Bruce:

At long last, the house report you've been waiting for on 124 Federal St. Thank you for your patience. Fortunately the turn-around time for painting the plaque is about two weeks. Please remit the \$75.00 balance and we will get our painter going.

Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Debbie Hilbert  
Office Staff