

History of the house and occupants at 26 Hardy Street, Salem

by Robert Booth, for Historic Salem Inc., 25 Jan. 2006.

According to available evidence, this house was built for Edward Bennett, shipwright, in 1851. For many years, 1868-1905, it was the home of John B. Bettis, cordwainer, trader, book agent, and wine merchant. In the mid-20th century the house was turned 90 degrees, moved from its original foundation, and set on its present spot. Very recently it has been completely remodeled, with the addition of a large enclosed water-side porch, by the present owners, Sandy and Mark Connelly, in whose family the house has descended.

On 28 April 1851, for \$600, Charles H. Allen sold to Edward Bennett, Salem shipwright, a piece of land which was bounded easterly on Salem Harbor, northerly by Hardy Street, westerly 168' by William Allen's land, and southerly by land of Joseph C. Ward (ED 444:111). On this land, Mr. Bennett had a house built, probably in 1851; and on Dec. 4th of that year, for \$300, he mortgaged a piece of his land (not all of it) to Thomas Maxfield, perhaps to help defray the costs of building a house (ED 454:82). Mr. Maxfield was the watchman at the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company mills, on Congress Street.

Edward Bennett was born (in 1800) in Newfoundland, as was his wife, Martha. Nothing is known of their lives on "the rock," except that they left it between 1830 and 1833. It is likely that Edward had made the acquaintance of fishermen from Massachusetts, who voyaged out to the Grand Bank of Newfoundland and occasionally visited the outports of Newfoundland for repairs or supplies. Edward may have been trained as a shipwright in Newfoundland, or he may have taken up the trade after he came to the United States. It is certain that Edward and Martha were living in Marblehead by 1839, for on October 25th of that year their son Charles Henry was baptized in Marblehead's Methodist Church, of which the Bennetts were active members. Probably the Bennetts were in Marblehead by 1835, for in October of that year, a child died in Marblehead, eight months old and surnamed Bennett.

In 1840 (per Marblehead census, p. 99), the Edward Bennetts resided in Marblehead, evidently in the small house that is now numbered 33 Harris Street. At that time, the family consisted of Edward, 40, his wife Martha, in her 30s, and five children, three boys (one under five, one 5-10, one 15-

20) and two girls (one 10-15, one 15-20). Presumably Edward was working as a shipwright in Marblehead, whose leading boatbuilding firm at that time was Topham & Robinson, which had a shipyard off Front Street, at Homans Cove (now Leslie Cove).

In the 1830s, Marblehead was primarily a fishing port, with a large and profitable fishing fleet. A shoe-making industry was beginning in town, led by various entrepreneurs: the Orne brothers, John & Adoniram, Ebenezer Martin, Thomas Garney, and Samuel Sparhawk. In the early 1830s, only very cheap shoes (“roan shoes”) were made in the town, using the lowest grade of sheepskin. In 1837 Jonathan Brown, a fish dealer, began manufacturing shoes on a large scale; and William T. Haskell followed suit in about 1840 (see *Salem Gazette*, 4 April 1861).

The advent of railroads and canals in the 1830s diverted both capital and trade away from the coast. American goods were being produced in such quantities that imports—the cargoes of Salem and Marblehead merchant vessels—were not so much needed as in the past. The interior of the country had been opened for settlement. People moved west, including some Marbleheaders, and the economic attention of the merchants turned westward with them.

As shoe-making and shoe-manufacturing grew in importance in Marblehead in the 1840s, Edward Bennett looked toward Salem for a livelihood. There, ship-building was still carried on, and a foreign trade was conducted with East Africa, requiring regular ship repairs and even occasional construction of new vessels. In 1841 the Edward Bennett family moved to Salem. At first, they resided at then-9 Turner Street (per 1842 directory), and by 1844 they lived in the Dorrit house, at then-29 Turner Street (per 1844 street books). By 1845, Edward Bennett was listed as a ship carpenter residing at 48 Essex Street, as were Sarah L., milliner, and William, cabinet-maker. These last two were, perhaps, the Bennetts’ older children. They remained there, in a house owned in part by William D. Waters (per 1848 street book), through 1850.

Edward Bennett (born. c.1800, Newfoundland) m. Martha L. _____ (born c.1801, Nfld.). Came to U.S. by 1833. Known issue:

1. *William?*
2. *Sarah L., ?*
3. *Jane F., 1830, Nfld., v. 1850*
4. *George E., 1832*
5. *Charles H., 1837*

In 1850 (per census, house 488) the Edward Bennett family was listed as follows on Essex Street, Salem: Edward, 50, ship carpenter, born Newfoundland, Martha L, 50, born Newfoundland, and George E., 17, Charles H., 13, both born in Massachusetts, and Jane F., 20, born in Newfoundland.

As has been noted, Edward Bennett purchased a piece of land on Hardy Street in April, 1851. On that lot, overlooking the Harbor—in fact, facing the west shore of Marblehead—Mr. Bennett had a house built. He may have conducted a shipyard or boatyard on this waterfront property. Salem's shipping was faltering at the time, and business prospects for a shipwright, while probably good in the short term, seemed shaky. Some members of Salem's waning merchant class had pursued 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 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 mean-spirited "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.

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. The Edward Bennetts continued to reside at 26 Hardy Street (per directories), and Edward and one Abraham Bennett, perhaps his brother, were, by 1853, trustees of the Lafayette Methodist Episcopal Society in Salem, whose church stood at the corner of Lafayette and Salem Streets, not far from Abraham Bennett's clothing store (see directories and ED 480:28). Not far away, a second, larger, factory building of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was added in 1859, down at Stage Point, where many neat homes, boarding-houses, and stores stood on 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).

None of this related directly to ship-building; and between 1856 and 1858 the Edward Bennetts moved away from Salem (see directories published in 1857 and 1859). They may have gone directly to California, where they were living in the 1860s. They held their Salem property for about ten years. Their tenants, in 1858, were William Kimball Jr. and John H. Whipple and their families (per 1859 directory). They were here in 1860 and beyond as well. In the 1860 census (house 1389), the Kimball family consisted of William, 37, a hatter, wife Angeline, 36, and child William D., nine. The Whipple family consisted of John H., 34, a sailmaker, Sarah A., 29 (born in Maine), children Mary A., 9, Sidney, five, and Arthur, 3, along with a domestic servant, Delena Smith, 19, a native of Nova Scotia.

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; a million 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 March, 1868, the Bennetts, of Forest Hill, Placer County, California, for \$2650 sold to John B. Bettis, Salem trader, "a certain lot of land with the dwelling house and other buildings thereon situate on Hardy Street," with flats and wharf, fronting 59' on Hardy Street and 168' on Salem harbor (ED 742:159). Mr. Bettis and his family probably moved in right away.

John B. Bettis (1826-1905), born Marblehead 12 Sept. 1826, son of Jonas L. Bettis and Mary Brown, died Salem 20 June 1905, 79th year, buried Greenlawn Cemetery. He m. 1850 (Worcester Co., Mass.) Harriet Hathaway Bacon, dtr. of Tileston Bacon. Known issue:

1. Mary E., 1854, m. William F. M. Collins; she died c.1902.
2. Horace Ingersoll, 20 April 1863, m. Celia ____; to Los Angeles.

John B. Bettis was born in Marblehead in 1826, the son of Jonas Laskey Bettis, a shoemaker, and Sarah or Mary Brown of that town. The name was spelled Battis, but it became Bettis later.

When John was a little boy, his parents moved their family from Marblehead to Salem. John had an older brother, Jonas, born in 1815; and four other children had died young between the birth of Jonas and the birth of John B. By 1830 the J.L. Battis family resided in South Salem (per 1830 census of Salem, p.419), close by Joseph Dixon, another displaced Marbleheader, an inventor (of the modern lead pencil among other things) and manufacturer.

Into the 1820s Salem's seagoing foreign trade faded, but 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. Although this opened a large, lucrative trade with East Africa, Salem's general maritime foreign commerce fell off sharply in the late 1820s. Imports in Salem ships were supplanted by the goods that were 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), which created great wealth for their investors; 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 1826 to raise the money to dam the North River, but the effort eventually failed, and several leading citizens moved 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, intruders broke into his mansion and stabbed him to death. Salem buzzed with rumors; but the fact was that the murderer was a Crowninshield (he killed himself). He had been hired by his friends, 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, more of the respectable 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 sharp nationwide economic depression, caused even more Salem businesses to fail and more 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.

It was during this period of the 1830s that John B. Bettis grew into boyhood and then into his teens. At about the age of thirteen, in 1839, he became an apprentice, evidently, to his father, and from him learned the trade of the cordwainer (shoemaker). At that time, the family resided on South (later Salem) Street in Salem. John resided with his parents through the 1840s. Between 1849 and 1854 he moved out—evidently his father died in these years—and he married (Harriet H. Bacon, in 1850), and he switched jobs: he and Edward Palfray formed a partnership and opened a

dry goods (textiles) store at 159 Essex Street. Edward resided at 10 Hardy Street, John at 15 Hardy Street. By 1856 they were in the same building, but probably no longer partners: Edward still dealt in dry goods, but John was in the business of machine sewing, and now resided at then-29 Pleasant Street (per 1857 directory). By 1858 he had switched again, and had become a book agent, still residing at then-29 Pleasant (per directory 1859). He and Harriet became parents of a daughter, whom they named Mary, in 1853; and in 1863 they would have a son, whom they named Horace Ingersoll Bettis, undoubtedly in honor of the man who then resided in the "House of Seven Gables," a lawyer and former minister, Horace Conolly Ingersoll, who had been a friend of Nathaniel Hawthorne when the latter lived in Salem.

In 1863 Mr. Bettis was described as the agent of Perkins, Stern & Co., of Boston, and resided at 34 Turner Street (per 1864 directory). The Civil war was going on at this time. Mr. Bettis did not participate. This Boston company did a large business in liquor and wine, and it imported wines from California, in which part of the business it would appear that Mr. Bettis specialized (note: Perkins, Stern & Co. bottled whiskey as well, and sometimes on-line services sell their old bottles with the name embossed in the glass).

In 1868, as has been mentioned, John Bettis purchased the Bennett homestead, not far away, on lower Hardy Street, and he and his family occupied it as their residence, looking across the harbor to the shore of Marblehead, his home town.

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 Bachelder in *History of Essex County*, II: 65).

John B. Bettis was the exception: a Salem man who made his living by shipping and trade. In 1870 (per census, ward one, house 229) he was

listed as “agent, California wines.” He probably traveled frequently to Boston by train, which nearly proved his undoing, for on August 26, 1871, he was “terribly injured” in a disastrous train wreck in Revere. He was never the same afterward.

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 capital 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. 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 May, 1878, for \$250, Mr. Bettis purchased some land to the southwest of his homestead, fronting 62’ on the court of Daniels Street then known as Lynch’s Court (ED 999:27). At about that time, the Bettis’ daughter, Mary, married a young lawyer, William F.M. Collins, and they resided here too. By 1880, Mr. Bettis was listed (per census, ward 1, house 112) as a retired merchant, aged 53, at home with wife Harriet, 50, son Horace, seventeen (at school), daughter Mary E., 25, and son-in-law William Collins, 26, a lawyer. Soon after, Horace I. Bettis was sent off to college in Vermont, at Norwich University, from which he would graduate and become a civil engineer.

John B. Bettis was a Democrat in politics, and in 1881 was elected to the board of Overseers of the Poor (and in 1885), and in 1884 was elected an alderman (also in 1889 and 1890), which was the precursor of city

councilor. He was much interested in matters of public health, and, as an alderman, led the successful effort to add a hospital for the insane to the city alms house on Salem Neck. In 1890 he was elected chairman of the Board of Health, and led the city effort to stamp out a diphtheria epidemic in Ward Five. He was widely respected in the city, and well known as a well-read gentleman and good public speaker (information taken from obituary in 21 June 1905 Salem *Evening News*).

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 the late 1880s, Horace Bettis took a job in Boston as an auditor for an electric company, and moved to #14 Broad Street, Salem, and, after, to Beverly. In 1890, the senior Bettises were residing here with their daughter Mary and son-in-law Mr. Collins, the lawyer. In 1891 their son, Horace, moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where he managed the consolidation of the Atlanta street railways. This put him on a fast career track, which took him to New Jersey and then to Omaha, where he was auditor of the Union Pacific, one of the largest railroads, through 1903, after which he moved to Los Angeles and became a prominent executive in railroad, oil, and water companies (see *Who's Who in the Pacific Southwest*, 1913).

Unfortunately, Mary E. (Bettis) Collins died by 1902, by which time, it appears, Mrs. Harriet H. Bettis had also died. Mr. Bettis conveyed to Mr. Collins his deceased daughter's property on North Street, Salem, and in West Peabody (ED 1783:479). In May, 1903, he conveyed his homestead to his son Horace, of Omaha; but in October, 1903, Horace re-conveyed it to his father, John (ED 1704:533, 1723:65).

This homestead was something of an oasis in a city that was changing rapidly. More factories and more people required more space for buildings, more roads, and more storage areas—space that was created by filling in rivers, harbors, and ponds. The once-broad North River, which had become an open sewer, 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, 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.

John B. Bettis died on 21 June 1905, in his 79th year, here at home. By his will, he devised his homestead to Miss Elizabeth Smith of Salem. She was born 1880, the daughter of Irish-born parents. By 1910, Elizabeth, 30, resided here in one unit of the house, and in the other lived the family of Michael Finnegan, 58, in the furniture business, with wife Mary J., 55, sons Philip, 23, and Arthur, 16, a drugstore clerk, and grandson Walter R. Finnegan, three (see 1910 census, ward one, house 28). By 1914 Miss Smith married John T.F. Barrie, a car conductor on the street railway, and they resided here (see 1915 directory).

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. Seen from 26 Hardy Street, the great fire must have seemed both majestic and terrifying. 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.

In June, 1916, Mrs. Elizabeth (Smith) Barrie conveyed the homestead to her husband John; it then bounded 100' on Hardy Street and 238' on the Harbor (ED 2331:259). Mr. Barrie sold the place in May, 1920, to Walter & Mary Koltoniak of Chelsea; and in August they sold it to John Benirowski of Salem (ED 2451:164, 2461:64). Mr. Benirowski and his family (wife Stella and children) resided here, using the house as a two-family. By 1929 John was a foreman at a business on Canal Street, and his son John and daughter Wanda (shoe worker) boarded here; while in the other apartment resided the family of Walter Sowinski, a blacksmith and machinist who worked in Beverly (see Salem directories).

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 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, shipwrights, and mill-operatives are all honored as a large part of what makes Salem different from any other place.



9 North Street
P.O. Box 865
Salem, Ma 01970
978-745-0799

February 2, 2006

Mr. & Mrs. Mark Connelly
26 Hardy Street
Salem, MA 01970

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Connelly:

Enclosed please find the research paper completed by Mr. Robert Booth, on the property located at 26 Hardy Street, Salem, MA.

Please review the document and call this office (978-745-0799) if you have any questions. Please call Historic Salem, Inc. to approve the wording for your plaque which would read as follows:

Built for

Edward Bennett, Shipwright

1851

Very truly yours,

Richard P. Thompson
Executive Administrator
Historic Salem, Inc.

3520-9/9/06

2006 PLAQUE PROGRAM

TO: Bob Leonard, Ould Colony Artisans
FAX: 207-779-0707

FROM: Dick Thompson, Historic Salem, Inc.

DATE: September 8, 2006

New Plaque order as follows:

Built for

Edward Bennett, Shipwright

1851

Please ship to:
Mark Connelly
26 Hardy Street
Salem, MA 01970