

To Hist

115 NORTH STREET

THE

JOHN DUNCKLEY

HOUSE

in Salem, Mass.

ca. 1802

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THE
JOHN DUNCKLEY
HOUSE
IN SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

By the Road to the New Mills

North Street, according to early accounts, was probably one of the first roads or ways that established a route to the sea, since Indians were known to have come to their camps on the water at certain seasons and later retreat inland - probably directly related to the accessibility of wild game.¹ With a reputed background of practicality institutionalized well over three and a half centuries it's easy to explain and justify North Street's existence today.

North Salem, taken as a whole, has always been deleted from most scholarly works on the history of Salem - probably since less was ever written about this more rural, nevertheless active, section of the town in the first place. Its great claim to fame until now has always been "the place where the cannons were kept during 'Leslie's Retreat'".

The first most permanent settlement of Indians (the term 'permanent' being relative) was indeed north of the river rather than where they English later preferred to begin. Rev. John Higginson wrote: "But the Indian town of wigwams was on ye North side of the North River, not far from Symondes, and ye both ye North and south side of that river, was called Naumkeke".² William Bentley further enforced this statement by recording the discovery of Indian skulls and burial mounds somewhere about Barr Street near School as well as remnants on North Street where the old Upham School stood.

With drastic reductions in population due to epidemics and general illness, the Indians were never a threat to early white settlers and their former village sites were early divided amongst the commoners. The Symondes, Buffums, Walters among others lived in North Fields in the seventeenth century strictly as yeoman-farmers with North and Orne streets, together with Liberty Hill Avenue, being the only roads or paths.

Buffum, School, Dearborn and few other streets waited until at least 1800 before coming into existence, while additional side streets were not systematically laid out for the purpose of neighborhood residential development until about the 1840s when a burst of classical-revival (in some later cases "Victorianized Greek Revival") architecture sprouted up.

With North Street as the main road the earliest trade or commercial development spread, by about 1800, from the waterfront of the North River (by the bridge) further north on both sides of "the country road".⁴ It seems that the early dwellings and buildings were diversely spread across the full spectrum of style and function and were spaced with little consideration to aesthetics, together with functional out-buildings of all sorts. Between the river and Moody Square, cobblers, chaise and harness-makers, cabinet-makers, blacksmiths, all began trades.

Above Moody Square, in 1800, the buildings were still relatively sparse. Between the square and Ephraim Wood's house (earlier Edmund Johnson's cabinet workshop⁵ - ca. 1800) on the east side of the road once stood Captain Elias Grant's house (removed before 1850). On the west side of the road to Danvers, beginning at the square, was a nine acre tract of land with a tiny house located in its northern-most corner (later removed to make way for Symonds street - about 1802).

The latter large parcel was owned by Benjamin Daland of Salem, a yeoman, who sold his "certain tract of land" to Isaac Osgood,⁶ a trader or investor, on May 9, 1801, for 1800 dollars. Bounds:

Easterly by the road leading to Topsfield
Northerly by Elizabeth Symonds
Westerly by Joseph Symonds, and land formerly of
Samuel Symonds, now reputed to be John
Skerry's
Southerly by Dark Lane (now School Street)

"as the fences now stand together with the
appurtenances and privileges"

A definite trend took place about the turn into the nineteenth century in regard to development. Thought was

being given to a new Beverly - Salem bridge; the benefits of which undoubtedly entered into the opportunistic minds of many a Salemite as well as many North Salem "pigeons". It has been speculated that Dearborn Street's great breadth (finally laid out in 1810) attested to the serious consideration given Orne's Point for the purpose of the proposed Essex Bridge. Meanwhile new dwelling houses began appearing with increasing regularity.

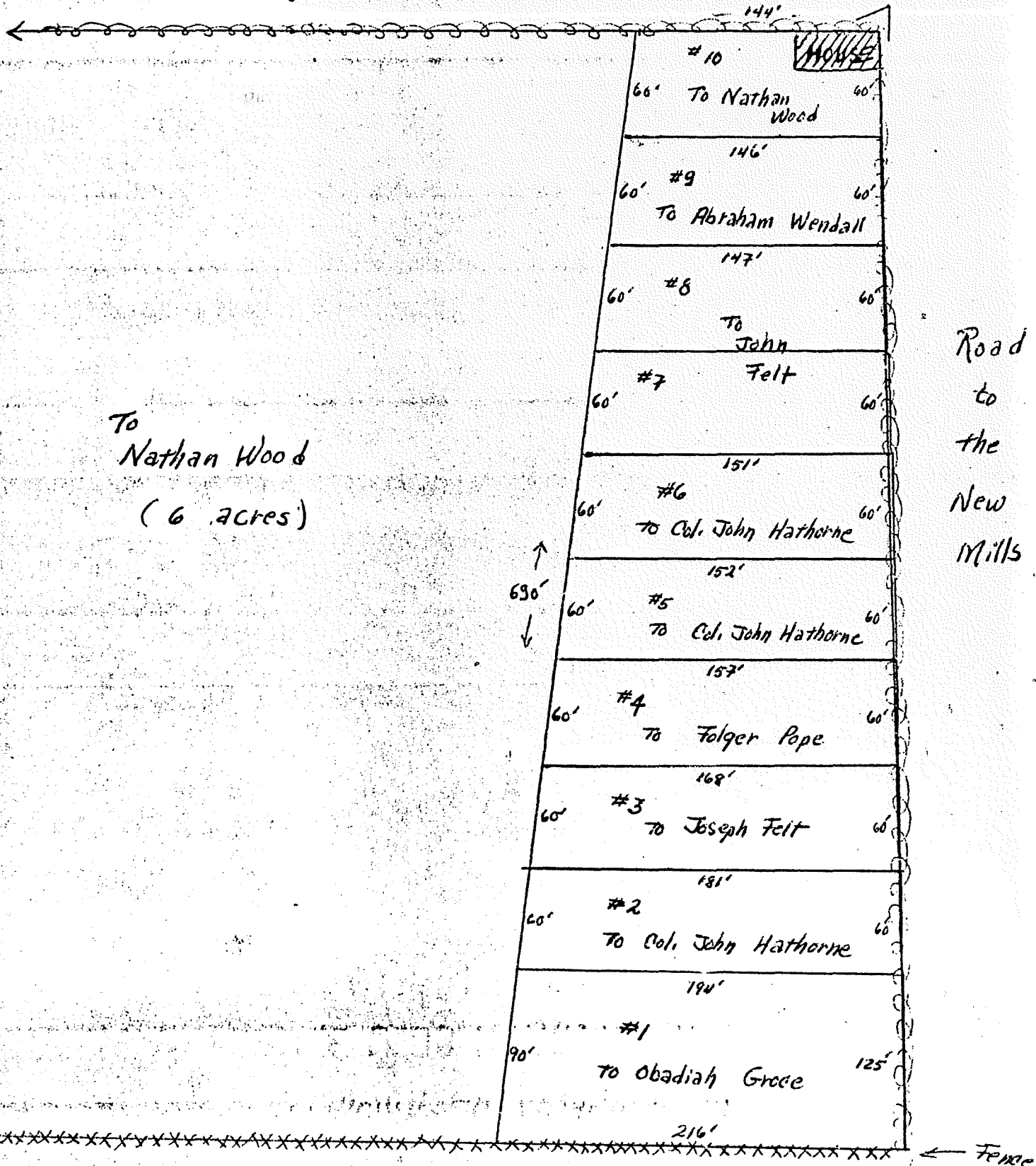
Isaac Osgood therefore became among the first to set his sights northward - although his net profit, after all was bought and sold, came to only 323 dollars on his initial 1800 dollars invested; relatively conservative. Ten lots were surveyed and sold bordering on North Street, while the remaining six acres to the west (including what later became Buffum Street north of School Street) was sold as a unit to Nathan Wood. The latter developed Buffum Street into house lots to their present situation. All of the transactions took place in 1801 and consisted of the lots on the following page.

Lots numbered two, three and five through ten sold for 110 dollars each, while number one (a double lot consisting of half an acre) brought only 143 dollars. Bryant Street presumably was laid out subsequently in the area of lots 7 and 8, while it could be assumed, as mentioned earlier, that Nathan Wood's interest in acquiring lot number ten was to lay out Symonds Street as access to his other lots and projected new street - although this is not yet a foregone conclusion.

Isaac Osgood, Grantor
1801

Elizabeth Symonds

stone walls



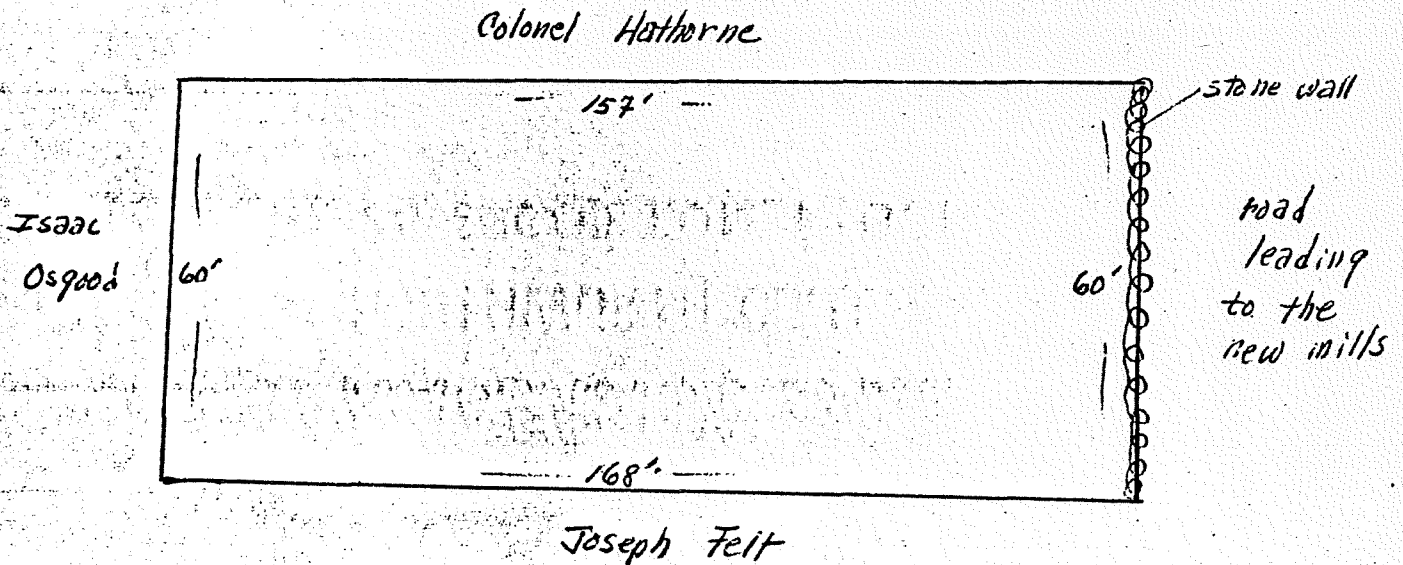
To
Nathan Wood
(6 acres)

Road
to
the
New
Mills

Road leading to Frye's Mills
(formerly Dark Lane)

John Dunckley - Blacksmith

Lot numbered four on Isaac Osgood's plan was conveyed on May 23, 1801, for 100 dollars to Folger Pope of Salem, a sadler and chaise-maker, as "a certain lot of land" notably void of buildings. For a profit of 15 dollars Pope re-conveyed his land about a year later (August 12, 1802) to John Dunckley, a Salem Blacksmith, "a certain lot of land numbered four in a division of lots formerly of Isaac Osgood" which consisted of 40 poles and bounded as follows:



John Dunckley's success at his trade would seem apparent insofar as his purchase of the land and subsequent erection of a substantial house was accomplished at the age of 32. Little is known of his background and career or even where he was born in 1770. The first record of his existence appears in the form of Dr. Wm. Bentley, of the East Church (formerly on lower Essex Street), noting him among his "singers" on at least three occasions in 1789 and 1790.¹³

By the mid-1790s Dunckley's career steadily strengthened and he was known to have done blacksmithing for Elias Hasket Derby on his vessels¹⁴ - presumably in port. With his talents more advanced than exclusively shoeing horses the Commonwealth hired him to work on gun carriages in 1814 during the war. The following excerpt lists "Duncklee" together with A. Wendall¹⁵ a neighbor and wheelwright, among the expenditures:

THE ESSEX GUARDS

251

LOCAL CONDITIONS IN 1814-1815.

June 9, 1814. After dinner we were alarmed about the enemy, as two ships were off, a 74 & Frigate. A Tender had passed within Misery Island & boats without & pursued a schooner which put into Beverly shore & there was burnt two miles below the town. The Inhabitants appeared & the cannon were brought upon the Neck, but the enemy retired immediately.

June 10. The late event has roused the Government in Boston.⁵ The Governour has ordered two brass field

Boston, June 15th, 1814.

Sir

By a Resolve of the Genl Court, I am directed to cause to be removed the Gun House, Cannon, Carriages, &c., the property of this Commonwealth, now in the Town of Salem, on Winter Island, so called, to a more safe and convenient place in said Town.

You will please to contract with some suitable person or persons, to remove the said house to a spot that Maj. Genl Hovey shall direct. I think it would be convenient to place it near your present Gun house.

You will have the Carriages & Waggons put in order without loss of time, & inform me what implements, Harness, &c., remain, belonging to them, that are fit for service; what is wanting shall be supplied as soon as the house is in readiness to receive them.

You will be prudent in your expenditures, & your Bills, if accompanied by proper vouchers, shall be paid at sight, by

Sir,

Yr Obt. Servt

Amasa Davis, Quartr Masr Genl

Jno Russell, Esq

Lt. Colo Commt Artillery, 1st B, 2d Div.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Dr. to John Russell.

To sundry expenditures, in the removal of the Commonwealth's Gun-House from Winter-Island to Washington-Square in Salem, and in the fitting for service a pair of Iron 12 pounders, agreeably to the orders of Amasa Davis, Esq., Quarter-Master General of the Militia of said Commonwealth,

.....viz.....

To Cash paid Honeycomb & Osborne, for the removal of the Gun-House, and putting the same in complete repairs, as per Bill.....	155...
" Cash paid John Todd, for the removal of the Guns, & sundries, as per bill.....	10...
" Cash paid A. Wendell, for repairing Wheels, &c., as per bill.....	39...
" Cash paid J. Duncklee, for blacksmith's work on Gun Carriages, as per bill.....	23.31
" Cash paid W. Luscomb, for painting Carriages and Wagon, as per bill.....	12.62

Abigail Porter and John Dunckley were married July 15, 1794, in Salem and subsequently had at least two children: Elizabeth and Louisa - although no record of them having any children is available.

The following is a list of tax records as they appear in the ledgers. Their meaning as yet is not totally clear, since houses are not specifically identified - nor are shop locations. Folger Pope's absence in 1802 would fit but whether or when Duncklee had a blacksmith's shop with his house at an early date or at another location, is not clear, looking at the taxes exclusively.

- "1800 - ward 2 John Dunclea - Pt House & $\frac{1}{2}$ Shop - 700
ward 4 Folger Pope - Pt House & shop - 1300
- 1801 - ward 2 John Dunclea - Pt House & $\frac{1}{2}$ Shop - 700
ward 4 Folger Pope - Pt House & shop - 1300
- 1802 - ward 2 John Dunclea - Pt House & $\frac{1}{2}$ Shop - 1000
Ward 4 Folger Pope - Pt house & Shop (gone) - 1200
- 1803 - ward 2 John Dunclea - pt House & shop 1000
Folger Pope unlisted
- 1804 - John Dunclea ditto 1803
- 1805 - ditto 1803
- 1806 - ditto 1803
- 1807 - ditto 1803
- 1808 - ditto 1803
- 1809 - ditto 1803
- 1810 - ditto 1803
- 1811 - ward 2 - John Dunclea - part House & Shop (See No 4)
800.
- 1812 - ward 4 John Duncley - House & Shop - 800.
- 1813 - John Duncley ditto 1812
- 1814 - ditto 1812
- 1815 - ward 4 John Duncley - house & Blk Shop - 900
- 1816 - ward 4 John Duncley - House & Shop - 900

1817 - ditto 1816

1818 - ditto 1816

1819 - ward 4 John Dunkley - House & Shop - 700

1820 - ditto 1819

1821 - ward 4 John Dunkley - pt house and shop - 400

1822 - ward 4 John Dunkley - pt house and shop - 300

1823 - ward 4 John Dunkley - pt house and shop - 200

1824 - ward 4 John Dunkley - pt house and shon (dead) 200

1825 - ward 4 John Dunkley - dead"

John Dunkley's greatest problem (probably second only to sorting out the different spellings of his name) was his health - specifically epilepsy - an affliction of which he eventually died at the age of 55 on April 29, 1825, in Salem. The following inventory copy not only reaffirms the existence of a working building on Dunkley's property but a complete list of the contents of his dwelling house as well. 18

Dated: Aug. 6,

To the Honorable Daniel A. White, Esquire, Judge 1825

of Probate for the County of Essex.

Pursuant to a warrant from your honor, we, the subscribers, the committee therein named, having been first sworn, have made the following

Inventory and appraisement of the estate of John Dunklee

late of Salem in said county, Blacksmith deceased, testate,
as shewn to us by the administrator

Real Estate.

A two story dwelling house & Barn with the Land
under and adjoining situated in North Salem \$800.00

Personal Estate - 185

One grind Stone 2.00 - two Anvils 3.00 - - - - 5.00
 two Hand Saws 2.00 - One pair Bellows 2.00 4.00
 One Old Desk 1.00 - Lot of Staples 1.25 2.25
 A Lot of tools 3.00 - Small desk 1.00 4.00
 One Chaise Carriage 10.00 - - - - 10.00
 One Old desk 5.00 - two tables 5.00 - 10.00
 One Old block 3.00 - two tables 3.00 - 6.00
 Six Chairs 3.00 - three Writors 1.25 - - - 4.25
 One fire Stove 4.00 - four Chairs 2.00 - Night table 1.00 7.00
 Lot Crockery 2.25 - One Feather Bed 5.00 - 7.25
 One Bedstead 1.00 - One Bed quilt 1.00 - One Bed 6.00 8.00
 One Small Secretary 5.00 - One quilt 1.00 - 6.00
 12 Chairs 6.00 - One Carpet 7.00 - One Bed 6.00 19.00
 One Bedstead 3.00 - One chest 1.00 - - - 4.00

~~Amount Paid Over~~ \$ ~~191.00~~

~~Amount brought forward~~ \$ 99.00

12 Sheets 6.00 - 2 Blankets 2.00 - - - - 8.00
 12 Pillow Cases 1.25 - A Lot of Books 1.25 2.50
 Knives & forks 2.75 - Silver tea spoons 2.00 - 4.75
 Lot Iron & tin ware 2.75 - Brass Kettle 3.00 5.75
 One fire Stove 1.25 - One trunk 1.00 - 2.25

129.22

~~Balance of~~ }
 Estate of }
 Ebenezer Putnam in Bridge Street } 30.00

\$ 152.32

The foregoing was part of the probate record (# 8373) of "John Duncklee, Salem, blacksmith" and the entirety was dated the fifth of July, 1825. Abigail Duncklee was listed as the widow.

Abigail, as widow of the deceased, remained in the house until her death at age 73 on June 7, 1842, whereupon she was taken ill with "consumption"²⁰ - an affliction of such diverse and conflicting definition it's never been known exactly what the problems were. After her husband's death, Abigail rented to boarders. An 1831 manuscript Salem Directory (kept for reference by Salem assessors) lists John Bryant, jr., (a cordwainer whose shop was further down North Street) as an occupant of Widow Dunkley's house.²¹ The next "directory", of 1837, listed Joseph Joye, jr., as a tenant.²²

The two Duncklee daughters, Elizabeth and Louisa, took over both occupancy and ownership of the family house after their mother's death. "The Misses Dunkley" were milliners and kept a shop at 21 St. Peter Street until about 1850 when the business moved to 295 Essex Street.²³ Boarders, meanwhile, were maintained as the following excerpt from an 1845 assessors' notebook attests.²⁴

"North St."

"No.113 - Elizabeth and Louisa Dunkley - owners

Occupants: Wm Moneys (mov'd)
Allen Peabody (mov'd)
Daniel Peabody (mov'd)
Nathaniel Goodhue

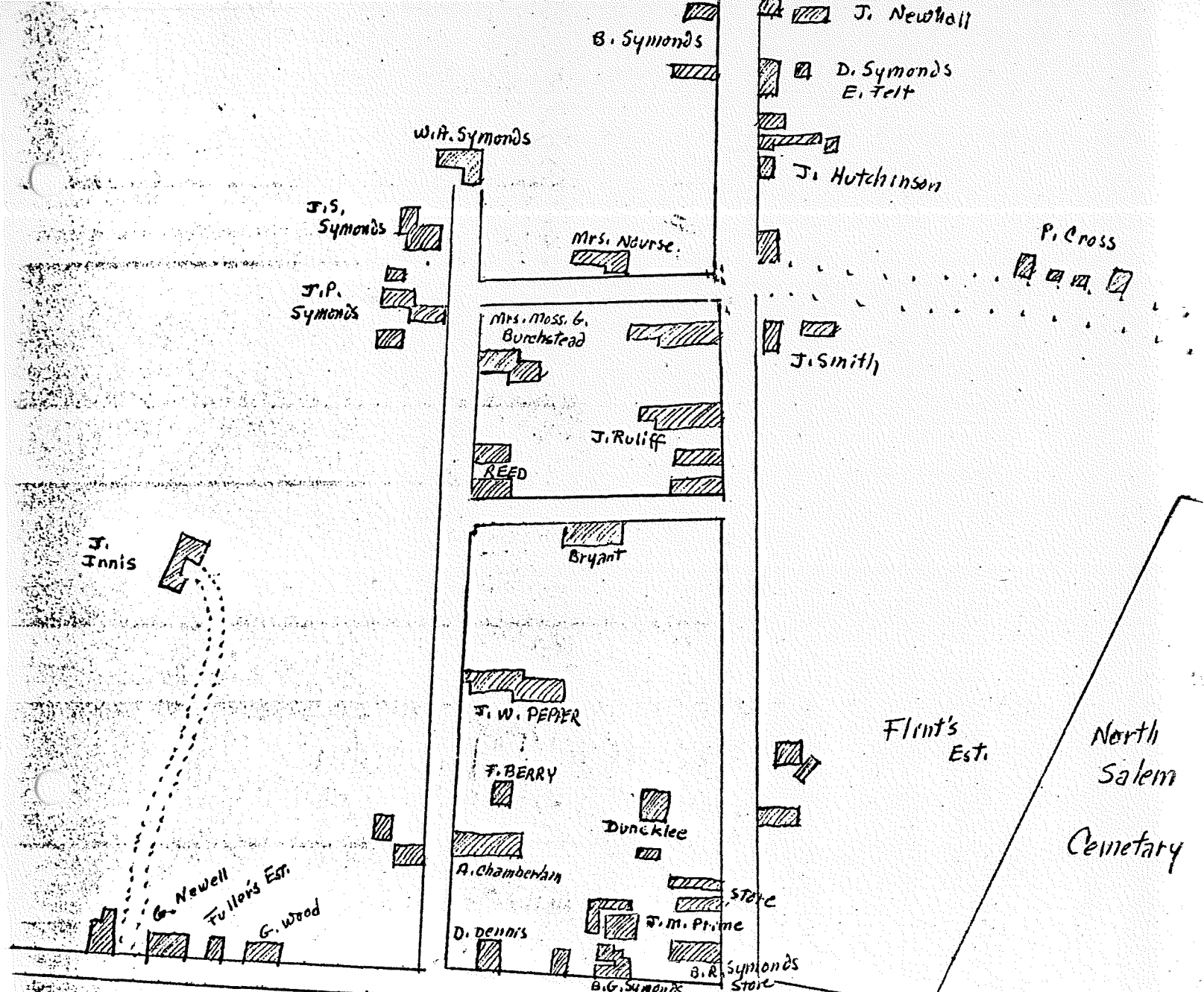
The taxes on the house in 1845 were as follows:²⁵

"ward 4 "

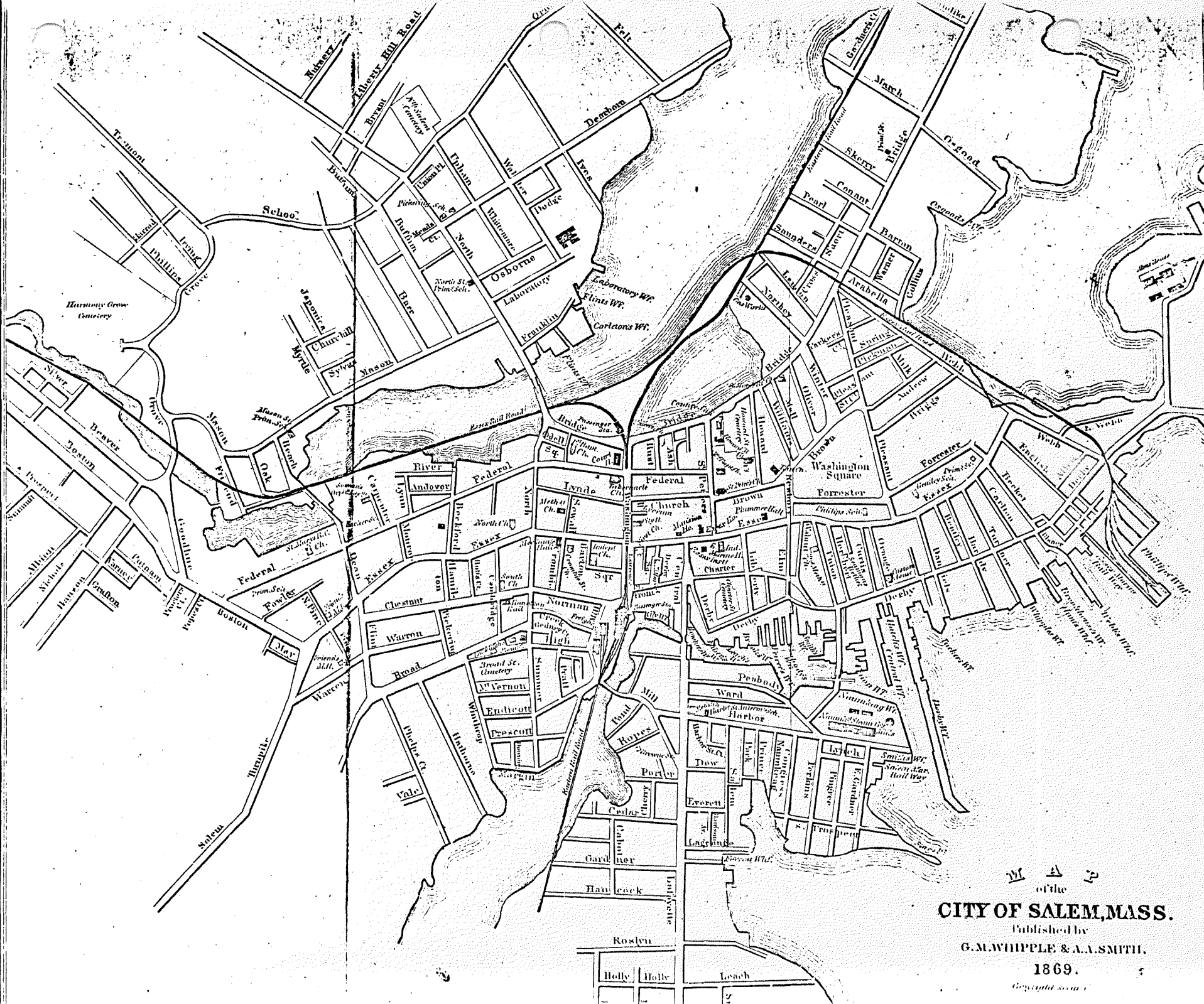
"E. & L. Dunkley - house (115 North) - (value) 1000"

By August 27, 1847, Louisa A. Dunkley decided to sell her half of the house and property to Elizabeth for 500 dollars.²⁶ Both ladies were yet single and the motivation behind the sale is unclear.

In any case the following excerpt, from a Map of Salem drawn by Henry McIntyre in 1851,²⁷ more clearly shows the house's situation at that time and is followed by an 1869 copy.



From:
 Map of Salem
 by Henry McIntyre
 1851



- 12 -

M A S
of the

CITY OF SALEM, MASS.

Published by
G. M. WHIPPLE & A. A. SMITH.

1869.

Copyright secured

Elizabeth Dunckley died a singlewoman on July 7, 1874,²⁸ and title to her father's house passed to a widow, Mary A. Hardy of Boston. Mrs. Hardy in turn conveyed the following described land "with the buildings thereon" to Catherine Dolan for 2500 dollars on August 17, 1882:²⁹

Bounded:

Northerly by North Street 59 feet, 8 inches
Northwesterly by Rogers, 137 feet, 8 inches
Southwesterly by Mooney, 60 feet, 7 inches
Southeasterly by Morse, 144 feet, 5 inches

Catherine Dolan then died and her heirs (John H. Dolan, Margaret Dolan and Annie Lally) conveyed the property to Carrie P. Sargent, (wife of Frederick C. Sargent, of Salem,) on July 16, 1904.³⁰ The property was described as follows:

Bounded:

Easterly by North Street, 59 $\frac{2}{3}$ feet
Southerly by Morse, 144 $\frac{5}{12}$ feet
Westerly by Mooney, 60 $\frac{9}{12}$ feet
Northerly by Handy, 137 $\frac{2}{3}$ feet

Observations and Conclusions

Presently somewhat hidden and set in contrast to its later, less-inspiring neighbors, the Dunckley house still remains as stately as originally intended - its federal dignity and pride undaunted.

After close scrutiny of the interior it can interestingly be concluded that the dwelling was originally designed to appear somewhat more or rather above its actual modest size. Having been built to consist of six rooms, the building's proportions and positioning achieved the apparent air of pretension - but in a desirable manner of extreme subtlety.

At first glance the hip-roof and front facade would almost appear Georgian rather than federal; the simple lines being utilized effectively.

The front doorway with its leaded fanlight is particularly interesting and well-designed; it nevertheless appears more typical to Portsmouth, N. H. rather than to Salem - thus making the dwelling as a whole very contrasting to this area's more typical trends in architecture.

Proportions of the interior, for the most part, follow the general scheme, with spacious rooms, high ceilings, and large fireplaces. The kitchen, which originally contained a fireplace and brick oven, was located on the first floor immediately to the right of the front hall - perhaps out of financial necessity in lieu of a more "fashionable" and out of the way kitchen - ell - as was indeed added later.

All in all the Dunckley house is remarkably original and certainly contemporary to 1802 - all features and building techniques considered.

SOURCENOTES

1. North Salem, by Wm. D. Dennis; Saturday Evening Observer, June 29, 1912.
2. Ibid
3. Archives of the Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.
4. Essex County Deeds:
5. The Johnson-Woods House in Salem, Mass., by D. Gavenda 1974
6. Essex Deeds: Book 167, Leaf 274
7. North Salem, by W. D. Dennis, 1912.
8. In the year 1801.
9. Essex Deeds.
10. Essex Deeds: Book 170, Leaf 269
11. Ibid
12. Salem Vital Records, Essex Institute
13. Diary of William Bentley, Essex Institute
14. Essex Institute Collections; Essex Institute
15. Ibid
16. Salem Vital Records, Essex Institute
17. Salem City Records, Salem, Mass.
18. Salem Vital Records, Essex Insitute
19. Essex Probate Records: # 8373
20. Salem Vital Records; Essex Institute
21. Essex Insitutue Archives, Salem, Mass.
22. Ibid
23. Salem City Directories; Essex Institute
24. Salem City Records, Salem Mass.

25. Ibid
26. Essex Deeds: Book 386, Leaf 151
27. Essex Institute Archives, Salem, Mass.
28. Essex Probate Records # 38112
29. Essex Deeds; Book 1089, Leaf 46
also: Book 1061, Leaf 241
30. Essex Deeds; Book 1748, Leaf 99

- END -

Al. Givens