

Historic Salem Incorporated

OFFICE AT OLD TOWN HALL

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19 Bentley Street

House of

GEORGE BOWDITCH, mason

by the year 1854

Research by,

Joyce King

Oct. 1981

*"to preserve Historic Sites, Buildings and objects,
and to work for the education of the community
in the true value of the same."*

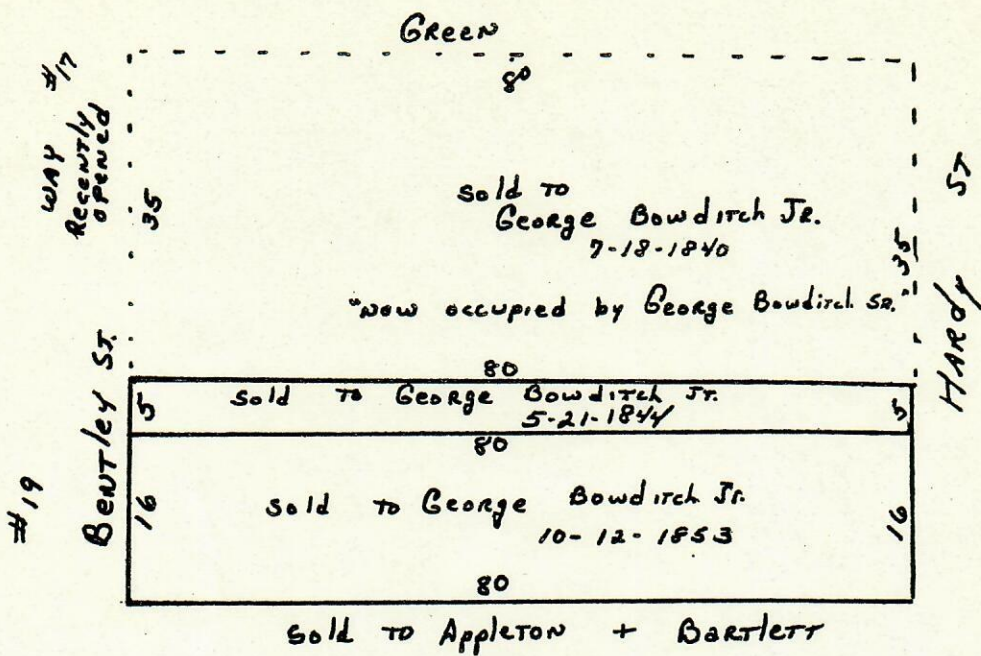
19 Bentley Street

The house at 19 Bentley Street is described in the Salem Historic Commission District Study as: "This small wooden building is actually two structures joined together; that nearest the street is a one-story plus gambrel roof structure covered with shingles. Beyond it there is a small two-story plus pitch roof shingled building. The house appears to be only one room wide. Both the chimneys are of recent vintage. The proportions of the gambrel roof are not typical of Salem. Undoubtedly, tourists wandering in this neighborhood consider this a quaint house."

The lot on which this house stands was a portion of Rev. James Diman's estate. Rev. Diman was the minister of the East Church, which stood on the south-west corner of Essex and Hardy Streets, from 1737 until his death in 1788. Rev. Diman lived at 8 Hardy St. and owned most of the west side of Hardy St. (which included the east side of Bentley St.). After Rev. Diman's death the property descended to his daughters, Mary Diman and Lois Green, then bequeathed by them to Ezra Green and James D. Green. On June 25, 1817 Ezra Green sold his share in the estate to James D. Green, then a student at Harvard College. (book 214 page 100)

Mr. Green sold off portions of his land starting in 1840. The lot now known as 19 Bentley was sold to George Bowditch Jr., mason, in two transactions. The first was a long narrow piece conveyed on

May 21, 1844. (book 455 page 183) The second parcel was sold by James D. Green to George Bowditch Jr. for the sum of \$286.50:



(book 484 page 229)

The first mention of a building on the 19 Bentley St. land is in 1854 when George Bowditch Jr. is taxed for three houses and land (17 & 19 Bentley St. and an old house on Hardy St.). In 1855 the valuation is given George Bowditch Jr. 9 Bentley (since renumbered 17) and an old house both valued at \$1,200, also a small house. In 1856 George Bowditch Jr. house 9 Bentley, old house and house #11 Bentley (now #19).

The Bowditch family had been residents of the old house on Hardy St. for many years prior to the purchase of the land by George Jr. in 1840. George Bowditch Jr. built a new home for his family at 17 Bentley and either built or moved a house on 19 Bentley for his

father and mother in 1854. The federal census of 1860 indicates that they were the only occupants of the house at that time:

George Bowditch	age 77	mariner	born Mass.
Sarah	"	" 76	" "

George Bowditch Sr. died on August 24, 1862, at the age of 79, and his wife Sarah (Stoddard) Bowditch died on February 17, 1867, at the age of 82. Mr. Bowditch held various occupations during his lifetime such as lamplighter and superintendent of hearses, but his principal vocation was that of a mariner and was called Captain at the time of his death.

After the death of his mother George Jr. rented the small house, in 1869, to Anstiss P. Hill, widow, and Annie Washburn, widow. The 1870 census gives a closer look at the occupants at that time:

Anstiss P. Hill	age 78	keeps house	born Mass.
Annie M. Washburn	" 34	works in shoe factory	" "
Ida M.	" 15	no occupation	" "

The house was listed as vacant during 1876 through 1878 and was finally rented in 1879 to William Selby and his wife as shown in the 1880 census:

William Selby	age 75	laborer	born Mass.
Abigail	" 65	wife - keeps house	" "

William Selby died on Feb. 9, 1886 leaving his widow Abigail who remained at "11 Bentley St." (This street was renumbered in 1888 giving this house its present number 19.)

4.

George Bowditch Jr. died on June 2, 1893. His obituary notice gives some account of his life:

"George Bowditch Jr., one of the oldest and best known "down-town residents" so called, died at his home on Hardy St. last evening, Mr. Bowditch was in his 78th year. He was a mason by trade, and had always lived and been closely identified with the lower part of the city.

He was a thoroughly good man, straightforward in all his dealings and unusually respected by all who knew him. His wife died some years ago. He leaves one son. The funeral will be held from his late home tomorrow, at 2 P.M. The interment will be at Harmony Grove."

June 5, 1893 - PARTING TRIBUTES OF LOVE

"The funeral of Mr. George Bowditch was held at the residence of his son, Mr. Thomas Bowditch, 6 Hardy St. yesterday afternoon, and was largely attended by relatives and friends. The Salem Veteran Fireman's Assoc.; Josiah B. Osborn, president, sent an elegant standing floral wreath; and were also present. Rev. O. A. Hillard officiated, and the body was interred in Harmony Grove."

The probate (#74383) of George Bowditch shows that all his property descended to his only son and heir Thomas Bowditch.

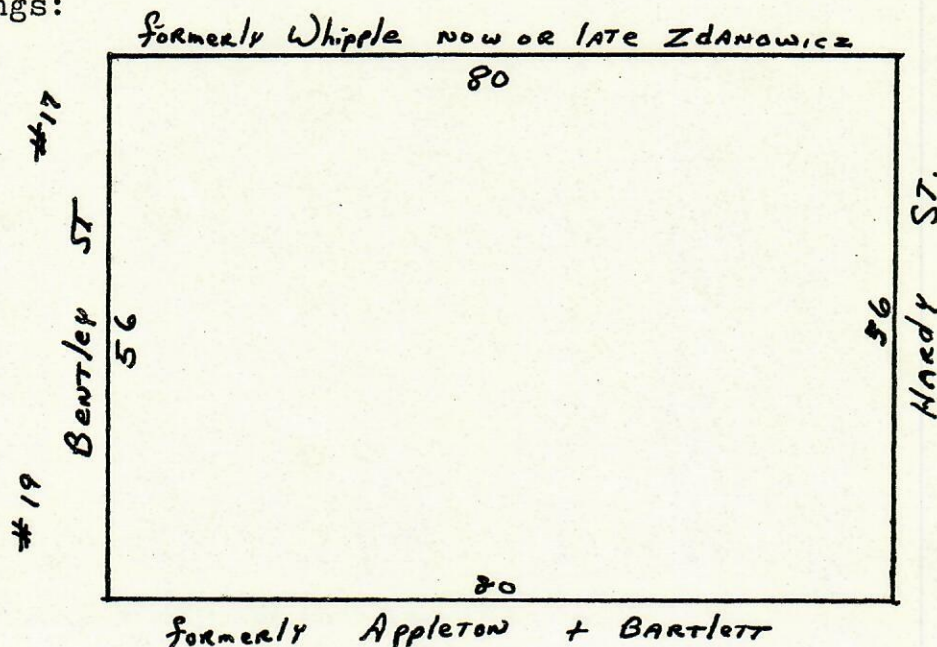
Abigail Selby died on Dec. 7, 1895. This simple obituary notice appeared in the Salem News:

Deaths - "Abigail Selby, wife of the late William, died at the

age of 81 years, 6 months (Funeral on Tuesday morning at 11 o'clock at house #6 Arbella St."

Once again, in 1895-6, the house is listed as vacant. Then in 1897 Thomas's newly married daughter May and her husband Charles T. Johnson, gas fitter, moved into 19 Bentley St.

On June 12, 1916 Annie E. Bowditch, widow; Charles and May L. Johnson; and George S. Bowditch sold to Martin and Antonina Witkos the land and buildings:



"Being part of the premises devised to us by will of Thomas Bowditch, late of Salem, deceased. Said Thomas Bowditch having acquired title by descent from his father George Bowditch, late of said Salem, deceased, and said George Bowditch having acquired title by three deeds from James D. Green." (book 2334 page 65)

6.

The Witkos family then made their home at 17 Bentley Street and rented out the 19 Bentley Street house. Martin Witkos died in 1932 leaving his widow Antonina all his estate. Antonina successfully conducted the grocery business (126 Derby St.) established by her husband until her death on April 1, 1947. The property remained in the Witkos family until Oct. 1978, when it was divided into five lots, 19 Bentley St. being named Lot D (appendix A). The heirs of the Witkos sold this lot on Oct. 30, 1978 to Robert C. Bramble, Trustee of Allyn Realty Trust, for the sum of \$28,000. (book 6534 page 478)

On Oct. 31, 1978 Robert C. Bramble, Trustee of Allyn Realty Trust, sold Lot D to Juliana Tache, Trustee of The 77 Trust, for the sum of \$37,500. (book 6534 page 507)

On June 26, 1979 Juliana Tache, Trustee of The 77 Trust sold Lot D to Michael Spector for the sum of \$41,000. (book 6605 page 542)

Notes: Reference to book and page are deed books at the Registry of Deeds. Probate numbers are cases at Probate Court, both offices are located in the same building on Federal St. All maps in this report are not meant to be exact, just for illustration purposes.

On Nov. 25, 1979 Sally Dee inspected the house at 19 Bentley St. at which time she wrote:

"A very puzzling house. North end (higher roof) probably added on c. 1890. No cellar under this. The gambrel roof section (two rooms down and two up) has chimneys that look c. 1850-60. The cellar shows the middle part to have timbers and construction resembling a building c. 1800 or a little earlier. The Bentley St. end (south end) has timbers that are quite different; later looking and running in opp. direction. The middle part upstairs has doors that look c. 1800.

My conclusion; a small c. 1800 building moved to this site and incorporated into a new house with full cellar in 1854, and added to some years later."

STREET

150

56'± (Deed)

34.67 (Meas.)

2.00 (Meas.)

2-sty. wd.
Dwelling

2-sty. wd.
Dwelling

N/f
ETALI

80.00 (Deed & Meas.)

80.00

LOT E
(AREA = 2,800 S.F.±)

Garage

LOT D
(AREA = 1,470 S.F.±)

29.00

36.21

11.00

STREET

A

20.5

22.5

10.

N/H
TOWN OF
SALEM

50.5 (Meas.)

50± (Deed)

(AREA = 1,401 S.F.±)

LOT B

3-sty. wd.
Building

14.00

(AREA = 937 S.F.±)

1 1/2-sty. wd.
Dwelling

11.50

30.00

(AREA = 681 S.F.±)

LOT A

1-sty. wd.
Building

22.33

53± (Deed)

30.67

22.33

30.92

33.62

DERBY

STREET

HARDY

PLAN Book 150
Page 81

REGISTRY USE ONLY

1978



468

1874



Ripple

HARD

PALFREY CT.

J.H. & J.N. Parsons

Benjamin Webb

J. Holt

Mrs. M. h. d. m.

Daniel Leache

Wm. Weston

Wm. Weston

Jane Jackson

Goodhue

W. B. B. B. B.

Mrs. P. T. W. 19 m.

Brooks

Jno. Hurley

Wm. Weston

W. B. B. B. B.

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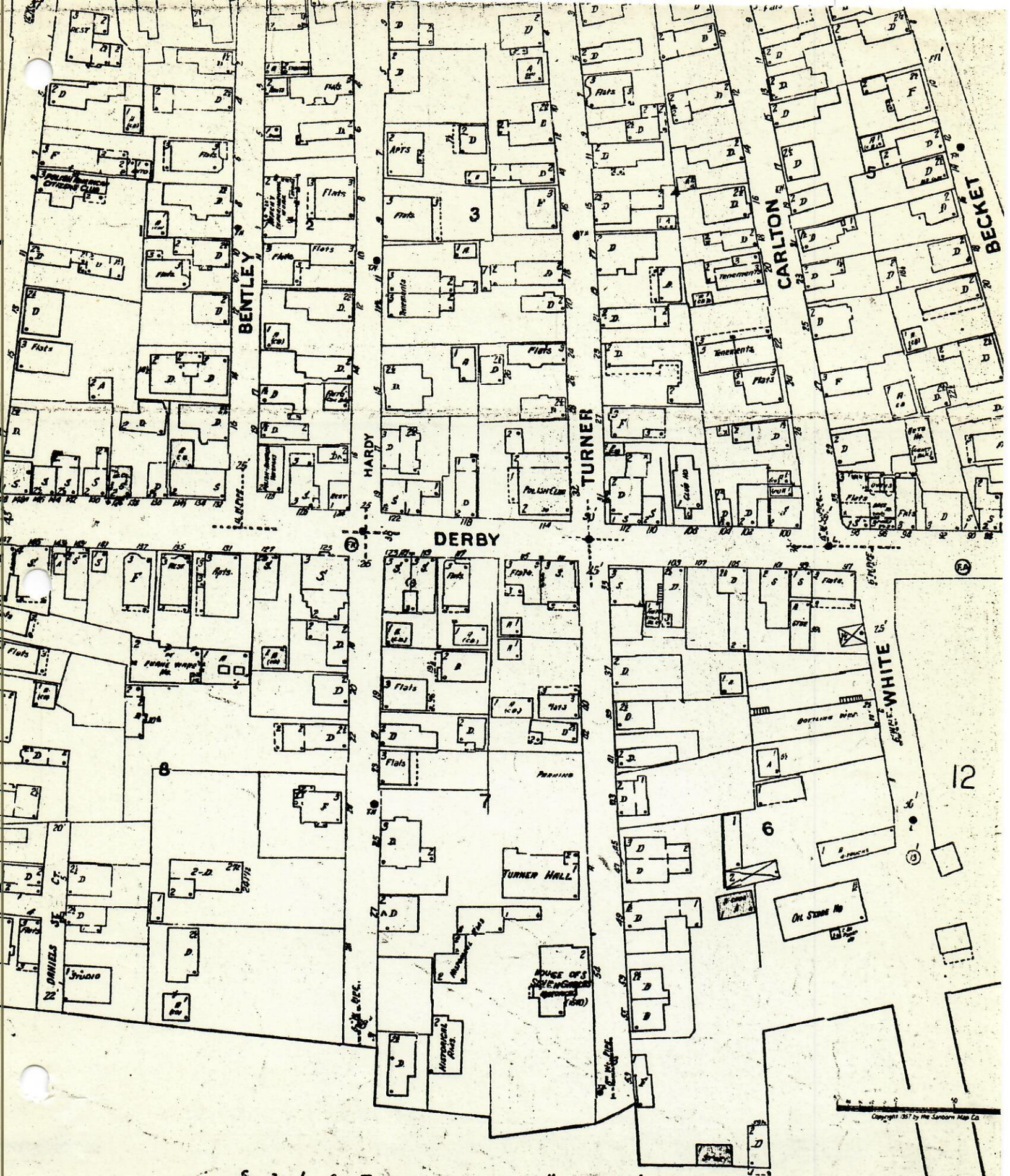
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