

25 Linden Street, Salem

Built for
Rev. George Batchelor
Clergyman
1872



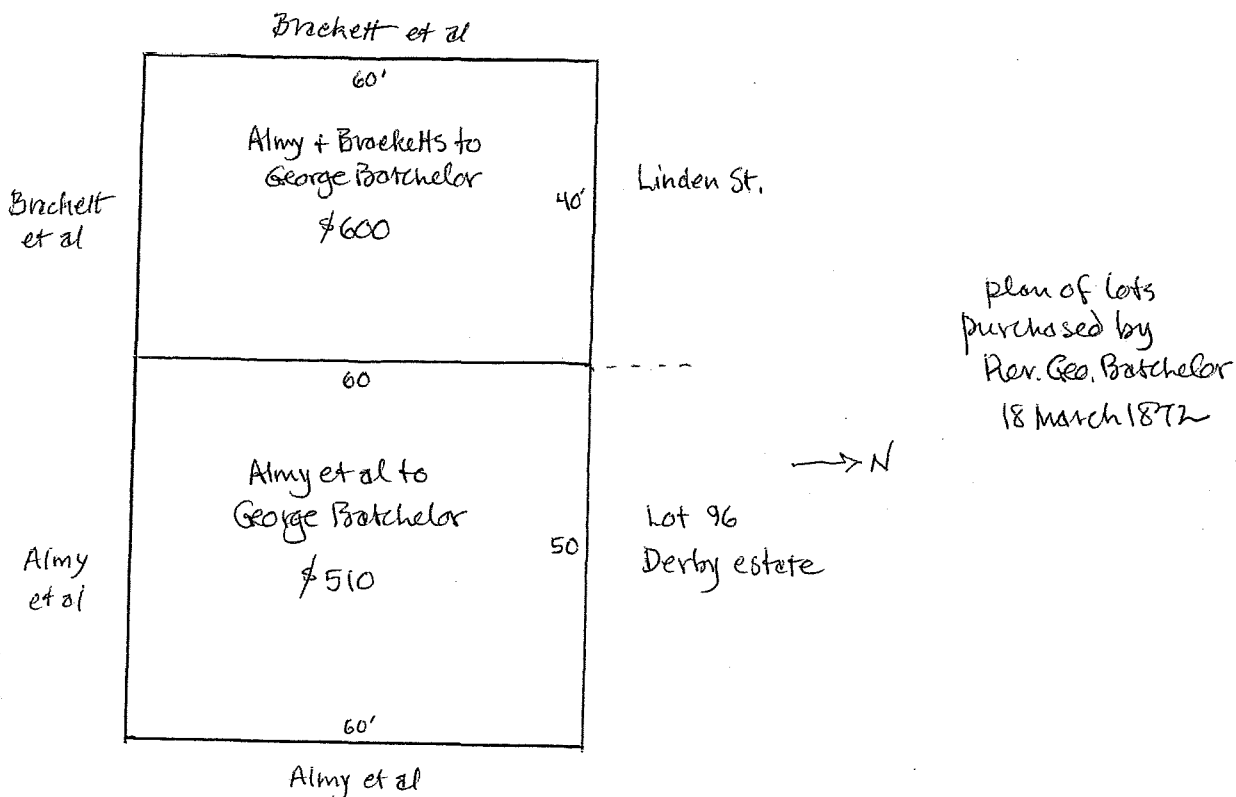
Copy of photo c.1890 of Calvin R. Washburn (1846-1926),
Treasurer of Almy, Bigelow & Washburn Inc., and owner
of this house from 1882 forward.

**25 Linden Street, Salem:
A History of the House & its Occupants**

By Robert Booth, for Historic Salem Inc., 17 May 2006

According to available evidence, this house was built in 1872 for Rev. George Batchelor, the minister of Salem's Independent Congregational (Barton Square) Church, Unitarian.

On 18 March 1872 for \$510 Nathaniel Wiggin, James Almy and Charles Clark sold to George Batchelor a parcel of land, part of Lot 95 on a plan of the Derby Estate, bounded running easterly 50' by Lot 96, running southerly 60' by the grantors' land, running westerly 50' by land of the grantors, running northerly 60' by other land that Batchelor had just bought; and it was stipulated that Mr. Batchelor's way to the premises was to be over his other piece of land (ED 850:263). On the same day, Sarah E. Brackett and James F. Almy for \$600 sold to George Batchelor an adjoining parcel of land, also part of Lot 95 on a plan of the Derby Estate, bounded north 40' on Linden Street, east 60' by other land that Batchelor had just bought, south 40' by land of the grantors, and west 60' by the grantors (ED 850:263).



The Derby Estate to which the deeds refer was the former property of E. Hersey Derby, a very wealthy gentleman farmer, son of the merchant E. Hasket Derby, who had opened Salem's trade with the Orient in the 1780s. The Derby farm occupied much of the acreage of the Southfields, as South Salem was known. M.F. Corne painted a landscape of the farm c.1815. Eventually the Derbys moved on; and in 1867 James F. Almy and two partners purchased the entire property; and they developed it with new streets and subdivided lots. Mr. Almy offered to set aside several acres as a beautiful park, but the city fathers, some of them motivated by jealousy of his business success, refused to accept his gift. This house-lot (#25 Linden) is one of the many carved out of the old Derby farmlands as they were transformed into a new residential neighborhood.

Mr. Batchelor, the owner of the combined lots, had a new house built on the land, probably right away, for on 18 Oct. 1872 for \$3300 he mortgaged his homestead to the Salem Five Bank, the land being the same that he had bought by the two deeds, 850:263 (ED 866:47). This mortgage would be released on 6 Nov. 1876 (ditto).

George Batchelor was born 3 July 1836 at Southbury, Conn., the son of English parents who were Millerites, Christian fundamentalists who believed in the impending end of the world and re-appearance of Jesus. George absorbed his parents' piety but not their creed, and became a liberal Unitarian. He took some time to find his calling as a minister. He attended the Meadville Theological School (Penn.) to prepare for college, and graduated in 1863, during the Civil War. Many years later, in 1911, this institution conferred on him the Doctor of Divinity degree. He worked as a superintendent of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, in West Virginia, into 1865, and then came east, and was able to take his A.B. degree from Harvard in the class of 1866, aged thirty years; and he would receive his master's from Harvard in 1870. In September, 1866, he married Priscilla Stearns, 23, of Cambridge, the daughter of a minister.

Also in 1866, he was called to the pastorate of the Barton Square Church, succeeding Augustus M. Haskell, the pastor since 1862, who had served in the Civil War as chaplain to the 40th regiment. The Independent Congregational Church in Barton Square, a.k.a. the Barton Square Church, was a Unitarian society founded in 1824 by some progressive Salemites, most of whom had broken away from the First Church. Its first minister, Henry Colman, was celebrated for the model of his sermons, many of which were published; but his role in

the 1830 White Murder, in which he elicited confessions from the Knapp brothers, led to bitter criticism; and he resigned in 1832.

Salem in the 1860s was caught up in the events of the Civil War. Formerly a world-famous international trading port, Salem had not been able to sustain the prosperity of its maritime economy in the 1820s, primarily due to high tariffs on imports to protect America's manufacturers and to changes in the economy of India, Salem's largest trading partner, which, under British rule, was forced to become a cotton-grower instead of a cloth-producer. Throughout the 1830s and 1840, Salem had gone through a transition from seaport to manufacturing center. The Salem Laboratory, a chemical plant, and the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company, a huge textile factory, had led the way in this change.

In 1851, Stephen C. Phillips succeeded in building a railroad line from Salem to Lowell, which meant that coal landed at Phillips Wharf (formerly the Crowninshields' India Wharf) could be run cheaply out to Lowell to help fuel the boilers of the mills, whose output of textiles could be freighted easily to Salem for shipment by water. This innovation, although not long-lived, was a much-needed boost to Salem's economy as a port and transportation center. 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. A second, larger, factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was added in 1859, at Stage Point, where a new Methodist Church went up, and many neat homes, boarding-houses, and stores were erected along 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).

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. As has been mentioned, the Derby farm was purchased in 1867 and soon was subdivided for residential construction.

Mr. Batchelor was ordained on Oct. 3, 1866; and he would serve as minister in Salem for 16 years. He was a fine writer as well as clergyman; his Introduction in Hurd's *History of Essex County, Massachusetts* (published 1888) is one of the best essays ever written about Salem (see attachment); and he would go on to write many other essays and a book, as well as to work for years as editor of the *Christian Register* newspaper. His translation of La Marseillaise (1868) was published as a hymn. In 1870, Mr. Batchelor was chosen Secretary of the National Conference of Unitarians, a position he held for ten years, with two spells as president.

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. As an elegy, Rev. George Batchelor wrote, "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" (per *History of Essex County*, II: 65).

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 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 and Juniper Point. 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. As mentioned, Mr. Batchelor had the house built in 1872. It remains virtually unchanged in its essential features, including interior casings, maple strip floors, soapstone fireplace, and staircase. Under Mr. Batchelor, the Barton Square Unitarian Church observed its semi-centennial in 1874, and the church building was refitted in 1877 (see p. 98, *Sketch of Salem* by C.S. Osgood & H.M. Batchelder, 1879).

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.

By 1880 George & Priscilla Batchelor had four children: a son, Chauncey, one, and four daughters, Ellen, three, Ethel, seven, Mary, ten, and Edith, twelve (per 1880 census, SD 60, ED 239).

In 1882 Mr. Batchelor received a call to become pastor of a church in Chicago. He accepted, and preached his farewell sermon at the Barton Square Church on 29 Oct. 1882. Next day he and his family departed for Chicago (see *The Evening News*, Salem, 30 Oct. 1882). There, he took up the pulpit of the Church of the Unity, in which he served for only three years or so before resigning due to ill health. The rest of his career is related in the sketch from the *Dictionary of American Biography* (appended).

In October, 1882, Mr. Batchelor sold the homestead for \$3700 to Calvin R. Washburn (ED 1094:187).

Calvin Washburn (1846-1926) was a partner in the large Essex Street department store known as "Almy's", owned by the firm of Almy, Bigelow & Washburn. Mr. Washburn and his wife Mary then had three children, and would have three more. Mr. Washburn, a native of Vermont, had entered Mr. Almy's employ in 1867, aged twenty-one. He married Mary Crocker in 1874. They were members of the Tabernacle Church, and would have five surviving children, Walter, Frank, Mary, Helen, and William (born 1895).

James F. Almy, a Quaker farm-boy from Adams, Mass., came to Salem in 1853, clerked in W.W. Palmer's store for four years, then opened his own dry-goods store in the Bowker Block (still standing) on Essex Street, opposite the East India Marine Hall. Mr. Almy was a shrewd and sometimes ruthless businessman, and his store grew steadily over the years. He took Walter K. Bigelow as a partner, and then a Mr. Webber.

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 1889 Mr. Webber retired as a partner in the Almy's department store company, whereupon Mr. Washburn entered the firm as partner. The store was very large in its retail scope, and very successful. With some dips, Salem's diversified manufacturing base, including a large leather-making industry, remained productive. More factories and more people required more space for buildings, more roads, and more storage areas. This space was created by filling in rivers, harbors, and ponds. The once-broad North River 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 of Riley Plaza and New Derby Street, 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.

The partners were shocked and surprised in April, 1899, when Mr. Almy died by his own hand. Mr. Bigelow, Mr. Washburn, and E. Augustus Annable decided to keep on with the business.

In June, 1900, Mr. C.R. Washburn purchased from Emma Almy a piece of land, 50' by 60', adjoining the easterly side of the homestead (ED 1613:194). This became the final piece of the homestead lot. In October, 1905, Mr. Washburn transferred ownership to his wife, Mary E.

Washburn (ED 1798:501-2). In 1904, the Washburns' son Walter S. Washburn had a stabling business across from City Hall, and employed their son Frank in it too. Both sons were then boarding here at 25 Linden (per directory). In October, 1905, Mr. Washburn conveyed the premises to his wife Mary E. Washburn (ED 1798:501-2).

In 1910, the census taker reported the following regarding #25: Mr. Washburn, 63, born in Vermont, treasurer of department store, wife Mary E., 64, born in Ohio, married 36 years, 5 of 6 children living, with children at home being Mary W, 24, Helen, 19, (daughter), and William C., 14.

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 and north of Holly Street—not that far from Linden 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. There, 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 1923, it should be noted, Rev. George Batchelor died at his residence, 11 Traill Street, Cambridge, in his 87th year, having retired in 1911. He had lived a life of much striving and accomplishment.

Calvin R. Washburn was treasurer of Almy, Bigelow, & Washburn, Inc., until 1922, and remained active thereafter as vice-president. He died on 22 October 1926, in his 80th year, after a long illness. For more details of his life, see the attached obituary.

In the 1920s, Salem was once again a thriving city; and its tercentenary in 1926 was a time of great celebration (in July, 1926, Mrs. Mary E. Washburn sold a small strip of land to her neighbor, Gertrude Hood, to adjust their boundary line, per ED 2689:14). The house remained in the possession of the Washburn family for many years more.

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