

Built For
CAPT NATHANIEL SILSBEE
Merchant
1783

27 Daniels Street
Salem

By
Robert Booth
12 Aug 1977

27 Daniels Street

This house was built for Capt Nathaniel Silsbee, merchant, in 1783.

In the 17th century, the land comprising this homestead was two separate house-lots, the northernmost being owned by John Ormes, who had his house here, and the southernmost being owned by Thomas Day, who also had a house here. The Silsbee lot also included the southerly portion of the lot that had been Thomas Jeggles' homestead in the 17th century.

By the time of the Revolution all of this property had come into the possession of the Foot family; only the Jeggles house was then standing, and by 1779 even it had been removed apparently. On 8 Sept 1779 the heirs of Isaac Foot for 60 li granted to Nathaniel Silsbee, Salem trader, a lot of land bounded about 56' on "Daniels Lane" and containing 24 poles of land (139:222). This was the old Ormes lot, with the southern part part of the Jeggles lot. Three years later, 1 Oct 1782, Samuel Foot, a mariner of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, for 68 li granted to Nathaniel Silsbee, Salem merchant, a 17.5 pole piece of land bounded westerly about 33' on "Daniels Lane, so called" (137:100). This was the old Thomas Day lot. Capt Silsbee thus assembled what would soon become his homestead lot.

Capt Nathaniel Silsbee (1748-91) was born in Salem, the son of William and Joanna (Fowles) Silsbee. He became a shipmaster in the West Indies trade when still a young man, and established himself as a favorite of his employer, the merchant prince Elias Hasket Derby. Capt Silsbee soon amassed a large fortune, and retired from the sea in order to go into business for himself, as a trader and an owner of vessels. In 1779 he, his wife Sarah (Becket), and their children (Nathaniel Jr, born 14 Jan 1773, was the eldest) moved into the house now standing at 111 Derby St. In October 1782 Capt Silsbee bought the last piece of land on Daniels Street, and construction of a new house was soon begun. On 19 April 1783--amidst the celebration of the end of the Revolutionary War--the Silsbee family moved into this, their new home.

The next three years were disastrous for the fortunes of Capt Silsbee, and the three years following were even worse. On 29 Oct 1788 the court awarded to John Collins, Salem mariner, the northern half of the Silsbee house and land, in satisfaction of an unpaid debt of about 278 li owed by Capt Silsbee (150:8). On 4 May 1789 the southern half of the house & land was set off to John Becket, Salem boatbuilder, for an unpaid Silsbee debt of about 337 li (150:106).

Having lost his fortune and his homestead, Capt Silsbee took to sea in his last ship in an attempt to recoup his former wealth. But fate had conspired against him, and at the end of one particularly disastrous voyage he died in New York at the age of 43 years. His body was buried there, in the cemetery of the New Brick Presbyterian Church. Capt Silsbee died on 25 June 1791; word of his death did not reach Salem until 1 July, when Dr Bentley noted in his diary: "News of the Death of Capt N. Silsbee. He entered life in the employment of E.H. Derby, had a good reputation, & a very respectable interest. By intemperance he fell from the public esteem, suffered his accounts to be deranged & had recourse to very indirect means with his creditors & finally sunk out of notice. He had been to the southward with the interest of some faithful friends."

Capt Silsbee left his wife Sarah (Sally) and four children: Nathaniel, Sarah, William, and Zachariah Fowle. Young Nathaniel, who had been obliged to leave school due to his father's reverses, had, like his father, entered the employ of Elias H Derby. He too distinguished himself, and before he was nineteen (in 1791) he was master of a vessel in the West Indies. Late in 1792, when only 19 years old, young Capt Silsbee set out for India in command of Derby's new 160-ton ship Benjamin. The voyage was a spectacular success, and thenceforward he became a favorite of Mr Derby. By summer, 1794, Capt Nathaniel was able to re-purchase the family homestead on Daniel's Street: on 26 Aug 1794 for 300 li he bought from John Collins the northerly part of the house & land, and on 30 Aug 1794 for 110 li bought back the southerly half (158:159, 159). He would own the estate for the next 46 years.

Capt Silsbee married Mary, daughter of George and Mary (Derby) Crowninshield, on 12 Dec 1802; in 1804 he retired from the sea to pursue a career in commerce. He was one of the founders of the East India Marine Society of Salem, and was elected a U.S. Representative (as a Jeffersonian Republican) at the close of the War of 1812. He served until 1821, when he declined re-election; he did, however serve as a state representative & senator until 1826, when he was chosen to serve a four-year unexpired term as U.S. Senator; he was then elected on his own for a full six-year term, finally retiring from public life in March, 1835, the year in which his wife died. He retired to Salem and the house he had built on the Common in 1819, and died here on 14 July 1850, in his 78th year.

On 19 June 1840 for \$1350 Nathaniel Silsbee had sold the Daniels Street homestead (he had not lived there for more than 20 years) to Thomas Melzard, Salem tobacconist (319:122). Mr Melzard owned it six years, selling on 7 July 1846 to John A Dodd of Boston (369:253). Mr Dodd sold it 26 Nov 1847 for \$1800 to Rufus L Gordon and Harrison G Sumner of Salem (390:223).

These two gentleman possessed the premises until 13 June 1868, when Mr Gordon sold his undivided half to Daniel C Manning of Salem for \$1300 (748:293). Mr Manning died 19 Ap 1882 (exactly 99 years since the Silsbee family had first moved in); he left the premises (& much more) in trust to his heirs (#58517). His half was then occupied until 1894 by Mrs Barbara Morrison, widow of Michael Morrison. On 5 Feb 1890 Mr Sumner died possessed of his undivided half of the premises, which half was valued at \$1200 (#69197). On 12 Sept 1890 the administratrix of his estate sold the premises for \$1500 to Joseph Wade of Salem (1290:98). On 26 Aug 1895 the trustees of Mr Manning's will for \$1000 conveyed his half of the premises to this same Joseph Wade (1454:178). At this point the house became a tenement.

Joseph Wade died 3 Jan 1908, at which time the "houses & land on Daniels Street #27 & 29 and in rear thereof" were valued at \$3000 (#102630). In late December 1923 Mr Wade's son Joseph P Wade came into full possession of the house & land (2583:127, 128), and on 27 Dec 1923 he sold the same to Bernard Grocki of Salem (2583:128). On 27 May 1925 Mr Grocki mortgaged the premises to Melia Sawyer of Salem for \$1000 (2641:534). This mortgage was foreclosed, and Melia Sawyer took possession on 18 Jan 1933 (2945:383).

Mrs Sawyer died 24 Jan 1936, having willed the premises to her daughter Lillian (#184001). On 8 May 1968 Mrs Lillian (Sawyer) Stone sold the estate to Mr & Mrs Chester Kenney of Salem (5526:767) and on 29 Sept 1969 the Kenneys granted the same to Mr & Mrs Thomas H Kenney of Salem (5640:615). On 9 June 1973 they conveyed for \$40,000 to L & A Realty Trust (5983:255), and on 12 July 1977 L&A Realty Trust sold the tenement & land to Leo H. and Martin L Jones, the present owners (6370:43).

Robert Booth
10 Aug 1977

Notes:

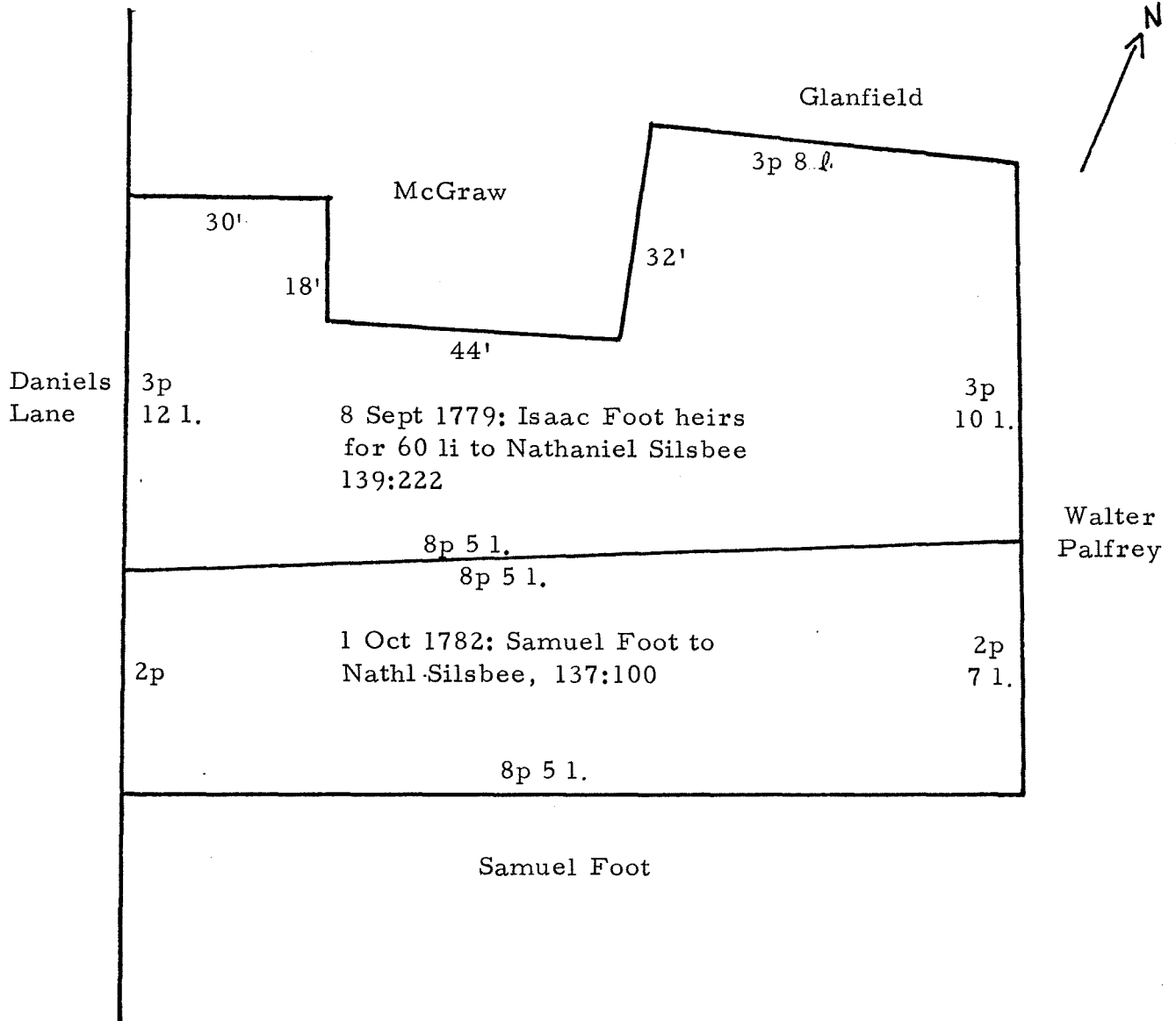
A somewhat comic theft occurred at this house on 25 Mar 1802, reported in Wm Bentley's diary: "A curious act of theft happened in Daniels' street one evening last week. A Miss Crowninshield visited at Capt. Silsbee's & left her muff, tippet, hat, & gloves in an opposite room to that in which she sat. A candle was burning in the room in which she left these articles. A Mrs Adams, lately from Danvers, with her husband, entered the room, took out the articles & with them the candle & candlestick. She was observed going out by a person descending the stairs. An alarm was made & several young men pursued her. She threw the brass candlestick over the first fence she passed, then the muff, & pursued from street to street & from yard & houses as she passed, she finally returned home & was seized in her own house. She made no decent apology & as a stranger her character was unknown. The effects were all returned, the house searched, and other inquiry made, on account of her husband, who appeared to be the greatest sufferer. They returned immediately to Danvers."

Notes:

There are two photographs of this house , showing its original features and lines, in the Essex Institute photograph collection; both of these would be of great help in restoring the house to its former dignity: Essex Institute negative #5010, Robinson's list #11; and Essex Institute negative #95, Cousin's list #95. Both these pictures appear to have been taken about the same time: 1891.

A figure such as (123:4) refers to book 123, leaf or page 4, deed books, So. Essex County Registry of Deeds; a figure such as (#1234) refers to So. Essex County Probate docket #1234.

Rough Plan of Homestead of Capt Nathaniel Silsbee (1748-91)



1 cm : 10'
 1 pole (p) : 16.5'
 1 link (l.) : 7.92''

R. Booth

From "Silsbee Family"
Essex Institute
Hist. Coll. vol. 17

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49 Nathl., Salem (41 W^m, 13 Nathl, 3 Nathl, 1 Henry).

	BORN.	DIED.	MARRIED.
49 Nathaniel,	9 Nov., 1743.	25 June, 1791.	1 Nov., 1779, Sarah Becket.

They had

	BORN.	DIED.	MARRIED.
73 Nathaniel,	14 Jan., 1773,	14 July, 1856,	12 Dec. 1802, Mary Crowninshield.
79 Sarah,	4 May, 1773.	4 Aug., 1776.	
80 Sarah,	23 Aug., 1777.	12 July, 1840,	12 Feb., 1804, Tim' Wellman, 4th.
81 William,	21 Mch, 1779,	15 Jan., 1833.	14 Nov., 1803, Mary Hodges.
82 Joanna,	21 Sept., 1780,	16 Aug., 1782,	
83 Polly,	23 Aug., 1781,	16 Sept., 1782,	
84 Zac'h Fowle,	9 Aug., 1783,	3 July 1873,	27 Nov., 1810, Sarah Boardman.
85 Joanna,	23 Sept., 1789,	4 Oct., 1789.	

"At a very early age Mr. Silsbee was entrusted with the charge of a vessel and cargo to the West Indies and subsequently he was the owner of several vessels employed in that trade. * * * He commanded the Grand Turk, on a voyage to the West Indies and afterwards to Spain. * * * He soon acquired what was then considered an independent fortune * * * but, kept on until reverses reduced his estate to a single vessel, in the command of which he once more braved the winds and waves where he had early sought and acquired fortune and fame. * * * At the end of a disastrous voyage, which terminated at New York, his valuable life was closed at the age of forty-three.

His remains were interred in the cemetery of the New Brick Presbyterian Church, fronting the Park." (Geo. A. Ward in "Curwen's Journal," etc., 4th ed., p. 655.)

For Sarah Becket born 15 Feb., 1749-50, died 30 Apr., 1832, see VIII, 142.

p. 286

73 NATHANIEL, Salem (49 Nathl, 41 W^m, 13 Nathl, 3 Nath, 1 Henry).

	BORN.	DIED.	MARRIED.
73 Nathaniel,	14 Jan'y, 1773,	14 July, 1856,	12 Dec., 1802, Mary Crowninshield.

They had

	BORN.	DIED.	MARRIED.
A daughter,	13 Sept., 1803,	15 Sept., 1803.	
112 Nathaniel,	28 Dec., 1804,		9 Nov., 1829, M. A. C. Devereux.
113 Mary C.,	19 Apr., 1809,		24 May, 1833, Jared Sparks.
114 Georgianna,	27 Jan., 1824,		30 Mch. 1845, F. H. Appleton.
			2nd. 12 Sept., 1855, Henry Saltonstall.

"Nathaniel Silsbee, born 14 Jan'y, 1773, commenced fitting for Harvard College, by the Rev. Dr. Manasseh Cutler at Hamilton, when nine and a half years old.

After four years he was compelled by pecuniary reverses to leave school, and at fourteen years of age commenced the life of a seaman.

At the end of six years, having made seven voyages to the East and West Indies, and having accumulated nothing for himself, he was given the command by Elias Hasket Derby of a new ship and sailed for the East Indies, being then under twenty and his mate under twenty-one years of age.

The result of this voyage, in a ship of 162 tons and with a stock of \$18,000, was the return in nineteen months of two ships with full cargoes of East India productions.

(over)

He made many voyages of much adventure and great risk successfully, until, at the end of 1804, he left the sea.

Engaging actively in commerce he took a leading part in everything relating to it, being one of the founders of the Massachusetts Life Insurance Company, and a member of most of the commercial institutions of the city of Boston. He was one of the half-dozen shipmasters who established the East India Marine Society of Salem, and its first treasurer. He was, together with all his and his wife's connections, a member of the East Society under the charge of the Rev. Dr. William Bentley.

They were all Jeffersonian republicans and supporters, with all their means, of the government, in the war of 1812 with England.

At the close of the war he was elected, against his wishes, to a seat in the House of Representatives in Congress, and the residue of his life was given to the public service. He remained in the House from March, 1817, to 1821, and declined a re-election; was sent to the State House of Representatives in 1821.

In 1823 he was chosen to the Senate of Massachusetts and was made its president, to which office he was elected three successive years, when, in 1826, he announced his intention to retire from all public offices. He was, however, unexpectedly notified of his election as a Senator in Congress, to supply a vacancy for four years, and at the expiration of that term was re-elected for another full term of six years, making a senator's life of ten years. He declined a further election and retired to private life in March, 1835.

He was twice chosen a member of the Electoral College for the choice of President.

He was one of the commissioners appointed by the President of the United States to receive subscriptions

to the United States Bank, and was a director, either in the Bank at Philadelphia or the Branch at Boston, until he sold his stock before voting, as a Senator, for its re-charter.

In politics, a conservative and whig through his long term of service in both houses of Congress, he was looked up to by all parties for information on business subjects and treated with universal respect, and regret for his resignation.

He twice received from his constituents the compliment of a public dinner.

During the recesses of Congress his house at Salem was visited by Members from all parts of the Union, and the representatives of foreign governments who came to New England.

In his later days he took little active part in politics and they were passed, for the most part, quietly at home."

He lived in his father's house on Daniels street and afterwards in the mansion, which he built on the northerly corner of Pleasant and Briggs streets (No. 16 on chart of 1874 and owned by Mr. E. D. Kimball), where he died.

Mary Crowninshield, born 21 Sept., 1778, died 20 Sept., 1835. was dau. of George and Mary (Derby), II: 162.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.¹

NATHANIEL SILSBEE.

My grandfathers and my great grandfathers, my grandmothers and my great grandmothers were, I believe, all born in Salem, were of English ancestry, and were all members of the East Religious Society, of this town. My father, Nathaniel Silsbee, was born on the 9th of November, 1748; and my mother (whose maiden name was Sarah Becket) was born on the 26th of February, 1750. I, the sixth of their children, was born on the 14th of January, 1773, in the house of my Grandfather Silsbee (which is yet standing) situated on the south side of Essex street, opposite the southern end of Pleasant street, the northern end of which house was then occupied by my father's family. Early in life, my father was intrusted with the charge of a vessel and cargo to the West Indies, and was subsequently the owner

¹This paper, printed substantially as it was left by the late Senator Silsbee, on his death in 1850, was intended solely for the perusal of the writer's family, and contains passages which may seem too personal in their nature for the general eye. It was found difficult to suppress the more private reflections indulged in by the writer, without impairing the continuity of the story, and the Institute has been kindly permitted to print the whole. It was written at various dates between January 14, 1836, his sixty-third birthday, and his death which occurred July 14, 1850.

or part owner of several vessels employed in that trade which was then the principal and almost the only branch of foreign commerce pursued from this place. In the year 1779 or 1780, my father removed his family to the so-called Eikins House on the south side of Derby street, and making the southeastern corner of Derby and Turner streets, where we resided until 1783.

In the month of June, 1782, when about nine and a half years of age, I was placed under the tuition of the late Rev. Doctor Manasseh Cutler of Hamilton (then Ipswich Hamlet) to be fitted for college, in company with about twenty other scholars from Salem and some of the neighboring towns, most of whom were fellow boarders with me in Doctor Cutler's family. On the 19th of April, 1783. — the day on which the firing and other demonstrations of rejoicing took place in this town, on the occasion of the Peace which had then recently taken place between this country and England, — we (my father's family) removed to the house on Daniels street which my father had built for the accommodation of his family and which was then just ready for their reception, being the same house which was purchased by me in 1794, which is yet owned by me, and in which I have passed some of the most pleasant days of my life.

On the 11th of October, 1784, while at Salem in the course of a vacation, I met with an accident which caused my life to be despaired of for some time. On seeing a horse that was drawing goods belonging to my father, so much frightened as to have disengaged himself from the control of his driver, and being on the fall run, I, very imprudently, ran to and seized the bridle of the horse with the expectation of stopping him, instead of which, after being dragged by him for some distance, and after receiving such wounds as rendered me insensible, I fell and the cart-wheel passed over a part of my face. I was carried home senseless, and remained so nearly twenty-four hours; but after a confinement of two or three months, and with scars which I shall carry to my grave, I was enabled to resume my studies with Doctor Cutler, who on the occasion of my injury (having heard on Saturday evening that I was killed) read a note from his pulpit, on the next day, and prayed for the death of a member of his family. The decision of the physicians when called to me on that occasion was, without a dissenting voice, that my wounds were incurable, and that there was as little probability of a restoration of my mind as there was of restoring my body; and but for the ardent solicitations of my mother (my father was then at New York) the physicians would not have deemed it expedient to sew up and dress the wounds, in the manner they did. Of this I was subsequently informed by several of the physicians themselves; and the late venerable Dr. Holyoke who had the principal charge of the case told me that he considered it the

greatest cure which, in the course of his unusually long and successful practice, he had ever known. I have often thought how many anxious hours I should have escaped if my life had terminated at that time. I hope, however, and have the consolation to believe, that my good mother never had cause to regret the effect of her solicitations upon the physicians. At the time I was placed in Doctor Cutler's family, my father was in possession of what was then considered a handsome and independent property, but which in the course of four years after, became so much reduced by the vicissitudes which sometimes afflict those engaged in commercial pursuits, that in October 1786, he felt compelled to take me from the collegiate course of studies which I had been pursuing and prepare me for some other course of life; and, as my propensities were rather of a nautical character, I commenced the study of navigation.

In the month of May, 1787, at the age of a little over fourteen years I entered upon my first voyage, which was from Salem to Baltimore, in the capacity of captain's clerk, in a schooner of about eighty tons, employed in that trade, and made three such voyages in the course of that summer; from which time I was unoccupied and consequently uneasy and somewhat impatient, until December, 1788, when I shipped as clerk to the supercargo of the brig "Three Sisters" owned by the late Elias Hasket Derby (who was one of the earliest adventurers from this country to the East Indies) and bound on a voyage round the Cape of Good Hope. My wages for that voyage were five dollars a month, and all the property which my father could furnish me for an adventure was six boxes, containing six quintals of cod-fish, a part of which perished on the outward passage, and the cost of the whole of which was eighteen dollars. We proceeded on that voyage first to the Cape of Good Hope, and from thence to Batavia and China, where the vessel was sold and whence we (the officers and crew) returned to this country in a ship called the "Astræa," belonging to the same owner. From the captain of that ship (the late James Magee of Boston) I derived much information and advice, of a nautical character and such as was, subsequently, of great benefit to me. While absent on that voyage the present constitution and form of government of the United States, which had been recommended by a convention of delegates from the several states, held in 1787, was adopted by eleven of the then thirteen United States, and went into operation on the fourth day of March, 1789, with George Washington as President and John Adams as Vice-President of the United States.

In the course of a week or two after my return from the India voyage I went with my father in a small schooner of about thirty tons on a coasting trip to Penobscot; my father, myself and my brother William constituting the whole "ship's company" and having

