

# Historic Salem incorporated

OFFICE AT OLD TOWN HALL

POST OFFICE BOX 865 SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS 01970 / PHONE (617) 745-0799

21 BECKET STREET

Built for

ALEXANDER DONALDSON, blockmaker

in 1806

Research by,  
Joyce King  
July 1986

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

21 BECKET STREET

BOOK 191 PAGE 109

DATE - March 28, 1794 (recorded Sept. 10, 1810)

CONSIDERATION - 23 pounds, 4 shillings

GRANTOR (seller) - The heirs of

GRANTEE (buyer) - William and Elizabeth Peele

DESCRIPTION - Piece of land, about 22 poles  
North - Samuel Watkins  
East - Nathaniel Sparhawk  
South - John Becket and Peele's other land  
West - Becket Lane

BOOK 191 PAGE 109

DATE - September 8, 1810

CONSIDERATION - \$700

GRANTOR (seller) - William Peele

GRANTEE (buyer) - Alexander Donaldson, blockmaker

DESCRIPTION - Piece of land  
Alexander may have the right to erect a fence and gate on Becket Street and William reserves to himself the right to use the gate in common.

Alexander Donaldson mortgaged the property to William Peele for \$700, on the same day. Mr. Donaldson took a second mortgage on October 3, 1810 from Clifford Crowninshield. Alexander Donaldson died in 1825 leaving both mortgages unpaid. Mr. Crowninshield assigned the second mortgage to William Peele in March of 1829.

BOOK 265 PAGE 208

DATE - June 21, 1832

CONSIDERATION - Mortgage for \$1,000

GRANTOR (seller) - William Peele, blockmaker

GRANTEE (buyer) - Thomas Saunders

DESCRIPTION - Piece of land with house  
Also half interest in a strip of land  
2 feet in width from Becket Street  
running east north 54 feet

PREVIOUS REFERENCE - I purchased of Alexander Donaldson as  
recorded in deed book 191 page 110,  
with all improvements

BOOK 370 PAGE 173

DATE - July 16, 1846

CONSIDERATION - \$1,325

GRANTOR (seller) - Charles Saunders executor of the will  
of Thomas Saunders

GRANTEE (buyer) - Thomas Barker, shipbuilder

DESCRIPTION - Land and building

PREVIOUS REFERENCE - All right conveyed to Thomas Saunders  
by William Peele on June 21, 1832 and all right since acquired  
by Thomas or his heirs or assigns by virtue of a writ of  
Haberis Facias issued in favor of said Thomas on November 28,  
1842 and possession given under said writ to Thomas by  
Nehemiah Brown, Deputy Sheriff on November 29, 1842.

BOOK 1004 PAGE 103

DATE - August 29, 1878

GRANTOR (seller) - Charles A. Ropes and Henry M. Barker trustees under the will of Thomas Barker

GRANTEE (buyer) - Edward L. Barker, Harriet A. Blount, B. B. Ropes and George A. Ropes  
1/4 interest to each

DESCRIPTION - Land and dwelling house 21 Becket St. (also a parcel on Allen St.)  
North - Henry Barker  
East - William Gray  
South - Stephen Goss  
West - Becket Street

PREVIOUS REFERENCE - Same estate conveyed to Thomas Barker by deed of Charles Saunders exc. of Thomas Saunders

BOOK 1004 PAGE 105

DATE - August 29, 1878

CONSIDERATION - None given

GRANTOR (seller) - Edward Barker, Eugene V. Blount and Harriet Blount in her own right

GRANTEE (buyer) - B. B. Ropes and George A. Ropes

DESCRIPTION - Land and dwelling house at 21 Becket Street

PREVIOUS REFERENCE - None given

BOOK 1618 PAGE 535

DATE - September 6, 1900  
CONSIDERATION - TAX DEED  
GRANTOR (seller) - Francis Newell collector, all property  
assessed to B. B. Ropes  
George A. Ropes released his rights  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Harlow Rogers

BOOK 1700 PAGE 50

DATE - August 29, 1902  
CONSIDERATION - RELEASE  
GRANTOR (seller) - Harlow H. Rogers  
GRANTEE (buyer) - B. B. Ropes  
DESCRIPTION - Property acquired by tax deed

BOOK 1703 PAGE 389

DATE - April 29, 1903  
CONSIDERATION - None given  
GRANTOR (seller) - George F. Ropes  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Albert Smerczynski  
DESCRIPTION - Land and buildings  
PREVIOUS REFERENCE - For title see deeds book 370 page 73  
and book 1618 page 535

BOOK 1786 PAGE 203

DATE - July 11, 1905  
CONSIDERATION - \$1 and other valuable consideration  
GRANTOR (seller) - Albert Smerczynski of Ipswich  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Mary E. Mooney  
DESCRIPTION - Land and buildings  
PREVIOUS REFERENCE - The same conveyed by George F. Ropes  
on April 29, 1903

BOOK 1791 PAGE 329

DATE - August 21, 1905  
GRANTOR (seller) - Mary E. Mooney  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Joseph F. Quinn  
DESCRIPTION - Land and buildings  
North - Fanning and Berry  
East - Gauss and Chase  
South - Becket Street  
West - Bennett

BOOK 1802 PAGE 68

DATE - November 10, 1905  
CONSIDERATION - \$1 and other valuable consideration  
GRANTOR (seller) - Joseph F. Quinn  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Katie Sokol  
DESCRIPTION - #21 Becket Street  
North - Barker  
East - Barker  
South - Gauss & Chase  
West - Becket Street  
PREVIOUS REFERENCE - Being the same estate conveyed by  
deed of Mary E. Mooney on August 21,  
1905

BOOK 1834 PAGE 463

DATE - July 31, 1906  
CONSIDERATION - \$1 and other valuable consideration  
GRANTOR (seller) - Nicholai and Katie Sokol  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Rose Bik wife of Powel  
DESCRIPTION - Land and building  
PREVIOUS REFERENCE - The same conveyed to Katie Sokol by Joseph F. Quinn on November 10, 1905

BOOK 2273 PAGE 510

DATE - September 10, 1914  
CONSIDERATION - \$525, subject to mortgage of \$2,009.72  
GRANTOR (seller) - Paul Bik administrator of the estate of Rose Bik  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Max Shribman  
DESCRIPTION - Land and building  
PREVIOUS REFERENCE - None given

BOOK 2309 PAGE 237

DATE - October 11, 1915  
CONSIDERATION - None given  
GRANTOR (seller) - Max Shribman, unmarried  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Rebecca Katz  
DESCRIPTION - Land and building  
PREVIOUS REFERENCE - Being the same premises conveyed to me by Paul Bik adm. of the estate of Rose Bik

BOOK 2582 PAGE 524

DATE - December 6, 1923  
CONSIDERATION - None given (mortgage \$2,500)  
GRANTOR (seller) - Rebecca Katz wife of Abraham B. Katz  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Helen Gesek wife of John  
DESCRIPTION - Land and building  
PREVIOUS REFERENCE - Being the same premises conveyed to  
the grantor by deed of Max Shribman  
October 11, 1915

BOOK 7115 PAGE 549

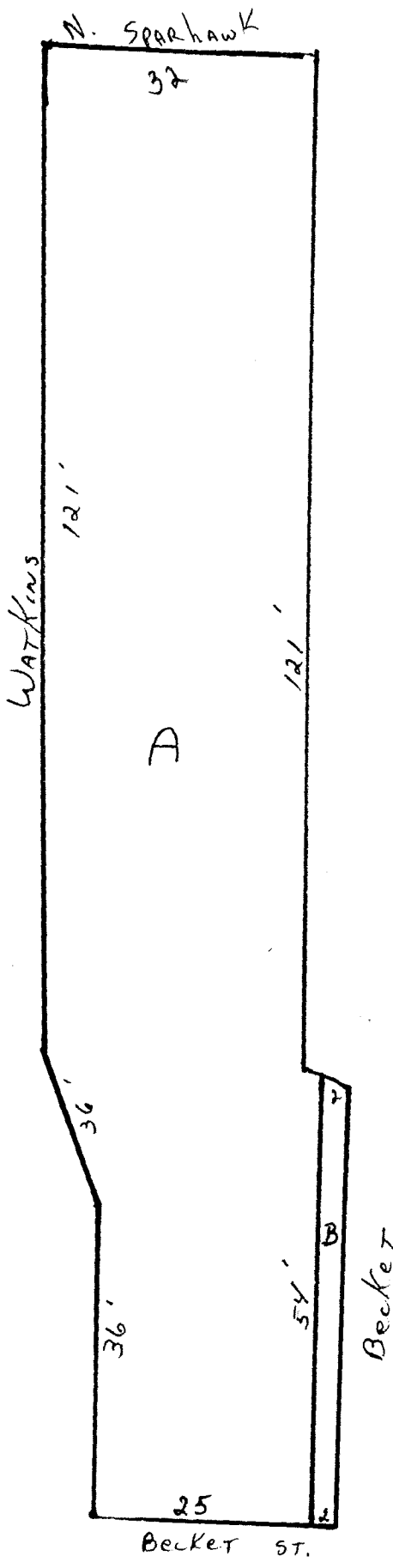
DATE - April 8, 1983  
CONSIDERATION - \$58,000  
GRANTOR (seller) - Caroline H. Gesek of Danvers  
GRANTEE (buyer) - Frances J. Wirta  
DESCRIPTION - Land and building 21 Becket St.  
North - Fanning and Berry  
East - Gauss and Chase  
South - Becket Street 27' 5"  
West - Bennet  
PREVIOUS REFERENCE - Being the same premises conveyed to  
Helen Gesek by Rebecca Katz December  
6, 1923



BOOK 7393 PAGE 492

DATE -	May 1, 1984
CONSIDERATION -	\$117,500
GRANTOR (seller) -	Frances J. Wirta
GRANTEE (buyer) -	David E. Williams and Sharon A. Hughes
DESCRIPTION -	Land and building 21 Becket St.
PREVIOUS REFERENCE -	Meaning to convey the premises described in deed of April 8, 1983

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.



A - Sept. 8, 1810  
 Book 191 page 109

B - June 21, 1832  
 Book 265 page 208

21 BECKET STREET

NOTES:

The house at 21 Becket Street first appears on the Salem tax rolls in 1806:

Alexander Donaldson "new h(ouse)" valued at \$800

It is apparent that William Peele allowed his son-in-law, Alexander Donaldson, to build a house on the land he purchased in 1794. Since the land remained in the family they evidently did not deem it necessary to draw up legal papers.

Alexander Donaldson, son of Alexander and Elizabeth (Graham) Donaldson, was born in Belfast, County of Antrim, Ireland on December 23, 1773. He arrived in Salem on August 8, 1795 and married Elizabeth Peele on December 14, 1800. Mr. Donaldson died in Salem on March 5, 1825. (Essex Institute Historic Collections)

The first Salem directory, published in 1837, gives a list of occupants for that year:

Daniel Bray 3rd, mariner

Mrs. Elizabeth Donaldson

Samuel King, grocer

Robert Peele, revenue boat

Robert Peele 4th, pump and block maker

*Memento mori*  
In Memory of  
M<sup>rs</sup> ALICE WOOD,  
Confort of  
M<sup>r</sup> Thomas Wood,  
who died Feb. Y<sup>e</sup> 23<sup>d</sup> 1795,  
Ætat. 47.

In MEMORY OF  
Mr<sup>r</sup> MARY THE  
WIFE OF M<sup>r</sup>  
EDWARD WOOD  
WHO DIED DECE<sup>r</sup>  
THE 26<sup>th</sup> 1779  
In THE 89<sup>th</sup> YEaR  
OF HIS AGE

In MEMORy OF  
Mr<sup>r</sup> MEHITABLE  
WOOD THE WIFE  
OF M<sup>r</sup> MOSES  
WOOD WHO  
DIED March THE  
11<sup>th</sup> 1781 In  
THE 64<sup>th</sup> YEaR  
OF HER AGE

Mr<sup>r</sup> MOSES WOOD,  
departed this life  
March, 5<sup>th</sup> 1799,  
Ætat. 82.

*Memento mori*  
Sacred to the Memory of  
M<sup>rs</sup> RUTH WOOD,  
Confort of M<sup>r</sup> Samuel  
Wood, who died May the  
15<sup>th</sup> AD. 1790, Ætat. 80.

Hear what the voice from heaven proclaim  
For all the pious dead,  
Sweet is the favour of their names,  
And soft their sleeping head  
They die in Jesus and are blest'd,  
How kind their slumbers are!  
From sufferings and from sins releas'd,  
And free'd from ev'ry snare.  
Far from this world of toil and strife,  
They're present with the Lord;  
The labours of their mortal life  
End in a large reward.

*Memento mori*  
In Memory of  
M<sup>r</sup> SAMUEL WOOD  
who departed this life  
Oct. 3<sup>e</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> AD 1792.  
Ætat. 71.

HERE LIES  
BURIED THE  
BODY OF  
MR<sup>s</sup> SUSANNA  
THE WIFE OF  
M<sup>r</sup> JOHN WOOD  
WHO DIED  
MARCH 28  
1759 IN Y<sup>e</sup> 33<sup>rd</sup>  
YEAR OF HER AGE

#### WILL OF WILLIAM WITTER.

The will of William Witter was proved in June, 1661. The following is a copy of the original instrument on file in the office of the clerk of courts at Salem, volume VI, leaf 142.

1659 5<sup>o</sup>  
The last will and testament of William Witter being in perfit memory and first I commit my soule to god who gaue it and my body to the earth from whence it was taken. I giue to my wife Annis halfe my lands, houfing and chattels: but in case she chang her name, I bequeath to her but the thirds: and to my fonn Jofia I giue the other halfe of my lands, houfing, and chattels: but in case my wife mary, then I bequeath a duple portion to my fonn Jofia and his mother my wife fhall haue but the thirds, as aforefaid, provided that my fonn fhall not fell this his inheritanc, but in case hee die w<sup>th</sup> out isfeu: then I will that this inheritanc fhall bee infatated upon Robert Burdin and my dafter Hanna, for there posteritis I will my dafter Hanna Burdin fhall have a ew, and lamb this time twelfe mounts and I will that my wife Annis bee my sole executor in wites here of I haue caufed my hand to bee fet.

Robert Driver                      william witter  
william Harker

#### THE OLD HOUSE.

BY ANNA M. TUTTLE.

It stands in idle silence by the way,  
The bare old house, neglected, gaunt and gray,  
Low settled in the turf, yet reaching high  
A sagging roof-line, bold against the sky.  
Through its uncurtained windows, dim and small,  
Moonlight and sunlight, both unheeded fall;  
Bleared, sightless eyes, whence life has fled  
away;  
No hearth fire's gleam, no cheering candle ray  
Looks forth at night. The doors are barred and  
dumb,  
The scuttling rats retreat will answering come  
To all who knock, welcome is there no more;  
The fallen plaster on the slanting floor,  
The unsafe stairs and beams, the steps restrain  
When peering eyes invade the still domain.  
Yet how confidingly wild roses press  
Against the window their pale loveliness!

#### SALEM IN 1700. NO. 22.

BY SIDNEY PERLEY.

The map on page 23 represents that part of Salem which is bounded by Essex and English streets, the harbor and a line about midway between Carlton and Turner streets. It is based on actual surveys and title deeds, and is drawn on a scale of two hundred feet to an inch. It shows the location of all houses that were standing there in 1700.

Essex street was called ye street or highway in 1668; ye lane or street, 1670; ye towne street, 1701; the main street, 1711; and Essex street, 1797.

English street, which was originally called English's lane, was laid out by Philip English over land of himself and the owners of the lots shown on the map as bounding on the street about 1697, as far as the present Derby street, the dividing line of the lots having been midway of the street. That part lying southerly of Derby street was laid out by agreement of the adjoining owners, George Crowninshield and Retire Becket, April 13, 1802.\*

Becket street is partly modern. The ancient highway shown on the map as running near the water existed from the first settlement of the town by Endecott. That part of Becket court that runs paral-

lel with the water to the foot of English street is the only portion of it that survives. A lane from this highway to the site of the early Becket house was laid out by John Becket and Edmond Bridges before 1681; and the same way is still in use. When John Becket conveyed the Samuel Phippen lot, Sept. 15, 1675, he described it as being bounded easterly by "the highway that shall be backward through the whole breadth "of the grantor's homestead." July 2, 1675, Mr. Becket called it "a particular highway of ye said Becket."\* When Philip Cromwell purchased the lots of the Estate of Edmond Bridges and Abraham Purchase, he bought of Mr. Becket a right of way from the front side of the old Becket house to Essex street in the same place in which it is now located. The deed is dated Feb. 1, 1676, and describes the passage as "a cartway from the comon town street in Salem begining its entrance from ye house and ground of Michaell Combes on y<sup>e</sup> westerne side, & Thomas Sollas, his house & ground on ye easterne side to run through the land of ye said Beckett, home to the land which was formerly the land of Goodman Harwood & since the land of Jeremiah Boote-man, but now in ye possession of ye said Cromwell."† Mr. Cromwell conveyed the Estate of Edmond Bridges and Abraham Purchase lots to Edmond Bridges Sept. 21, 1680, and the next day he conveyed to him this grant of a right of way.‡ In Mr. Becket's will, in 1683, he provides that the lane shall be left as "a convenient highway" "for the use of my children to go to the high street." That part of the street from Essex street to Becket court was called the lane or highway in 1681; the lane or highway that leads into ye main street, 1687; ye lane that runs down by William Becket, sr.'s, 1716; a byeway going down to Becket's, 1721; Becket's lane, 1726; and a lane leading from ye main street to Mr. John Beckett's, 1734. In 1795, the street was extended to Derby street, and named Crom-

\*Essex Registry of Deeds, book 4, leaf 136.

†Essex Registry of Deeds, book 6, leaf 29.

\*Essex Registry of Deeds, book 170, leaf 179.







AMERICAN CORN CO  
ESTD  
1879

FOR

AMES

PRUSAK  
SQ.

WEBB

MC DONALD  
SQ

SATTERY BROS. TANNING CO.  
TANNER

COUSINS

ALLEN

9

5

POLISH  
FALCON  
HALL

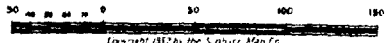
ENGLISH

ESSEX

6

BECKET

10



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