

HISTORIC SALEM, INC.

**HOUSE HISTORY AND PLAQUE
PROGRAM
FOR OWNERS
ANDREW AND NAN GREER**

**42 CHESTNUT STREET
SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS**

November 21, 1999

**42 CHESTNUT STREET
SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**Built for Miss Maria Ropes
1858**

Chestnut Street has been called one of the most outstanding streets in the United States because of its beauty and its place in the history of Salem and the early years of this country. During the seventeenth century the land between Broad Street and what is now Essex Street included a large lot belonging to John Pickering and land known as Thomas Maule's Meeting House Field.(1) Mr. Thomas Maule purchased the northern section of his lot from Mr. Benjamin Gerrish on January 22, 1683/4 and the southern section from the estate of Mrs. Elizabeth Spooner on November 1, 1687.(2) In 1688 Mr. Maule erected a meeting house for Quakers on the northwestern corner of the lot. This Quaker Meeting House faced current day Essex Street and was in use until a new building was built across the street in 1718. Even until 1780, this area was relatively rural with many open fields crisscrossed by major roads leading to Marblehead, Swampscott, and "Ye Broadfield" to the southwest.(3).

The lower end of Chestnut Street, between Summer Street and Cambridge Street, is somewhat older than the upper part toward Flint Street. The street began as a lane running from Summer to what is now Cambridge Street which ran through from Essex to what is now Broad Street where the Burying Hill is. Chestnut Street along the present line of the street from Summer to Flint Street was laid out by the town with a width of forty feet on October 26, 1796 through land owned by fifteen families. John Pickering, who lived in the present Pickering House and who owned land abutting the new street on the south side, offered to give land to provide forty more feet to the width of the new street, and Pickering Dodge, for \$400 paid by the town, guaranteed to satisfy all other owners of land required to provide the additional width.

Squabbles among the land owners about the street's width resulted in the construction of a wall by John Pickering and Pickering Dodge to divide the uncooperative landowners land from the new street. When the Captain Phillips House, 17 Chestnut Street, was being built each workman was instructed to carry away a stone at the end of each day until the wall disappeared. The final layout of the street with a width of eighty feet was completed on December 10, 1804. Why the street was named Chestnut is unknown since the first owners planted elm and Lombardy poplar trees. The poplar trees were blown

1. Perley, Part of Salem in 1700. No.5, Map
2. Ibid
3. Philips, Salem in the 18th century, Map – Salem around 1780

down in a storm in 1815.(4) The land over which the street ran consisted of fields with apple trees scattered about, and, to the south, was owned by John Pickering and other owners. Other than a shop where Tater Moses had sold candy and egg pop for three cents a glass and a lumber yard where Hamilton Hall now stands, it is doubtful that there were any other buildings on the street except for a two and a half story gambrel-roof house on the corner of Chestnut and Flint Streets. There was a lane that ran from Chestnut to Essex Street at about the location of No.42 which was known as Mullet's Court. It was named for George Mullet the blind town crier who lived in a wooden house on the court.(5)

By the first quarter of the nineteenth century many of the present houses on Chestnut Street had been built. The land on which No.42 was built was purchased by Miss Maria Ropes from Joseph Hodges on May 22, 1857.(6) Maria was born June 2, 1802, died December 18, 1878. No record of her marrying could be found. She is buried in the Harmony Grove Cemetery and was a member of the illustrious Ropes family. Her father was Captain Joseph Ropes, merchant, commander of the privateer America in the war of 1812. Her mother was Sara Burchmore who died in 1842 while her father died in 1850. She had a sister Sarah.(7)

In order to make her odd shaped lot, which she purchased from Joseph Hodges, rectangular and buildable, she and her future neighbor on her left, the Reverend James W. Thompson, sold to each other separate triangles of land for one dollar each. Maria sold about 220 square feet of hers bordering Chestnut Street to Thompson who sold to her about 195 square feet which would become the northeasterly corner of her property.(8)

Maria's house at number 42 was designed by Foster and Emerton and constructed in 1858. It is interesting that this land originally known as Mullet's Court which connected to Essex Street saw the construction of a wooden Gothic Revival church building on Essex Street, also built in 1858 and designed by Foster and Emerton. This church was replaced by the present Grace Church in 1926.(9)

4. Essex Institute Historical Collections Vol.LXXV July, 1939 No.3
5. Salem Historic District Study Committee, Report 1968 V.1-3
6. Essex County Registry of Deeds (E.C.R.D.) Book 551, Leaf 300
7. History of Salem, Massachusetts 1626 – 1637, Perley Vol 1 p.346
8. Essex South District Registry of Deeds Book 566, Pg.52
9. Architecture in Salem, Tolles

Upon the death of Maria Ropes, the house was sold to Margaret Hanson in 1879.(10) One finds many interrelationships in dealing with Chestnut Street houses. Margaret Hanson was married to J. Adams Hanson, but was sister to Gamaliel Hodges. Gamaliel Hodges would be the grandson of the Gamaliel Hodges who originally bought the land in 1845 from Isiah Burrill.(11) When Margaret C. Hanson died in 1878 she left an estate of over \$100,000, a very large sum in those days. Most of her estate was in railroad stocks. She left her house to her two daughters Elizabeth H. Hanson and Bertha P. Hanson.(12) Bertha sold her share to Elizabeth H. in 1891.(13)

Elizabeth H. Hanson married Charles H. Smith and the two owned the house. They sold it to Anna Maria Wheatland, (or Ann Marie Wheatland, one runs into both spellings), of Rangely, Maine, as the deed says, in 1917.(14) This is another prominent name, the same as Ann Marie Wheatland, widow of Stephen G. Wheatland, former mayor of Salem, who built the large house at 30 Chestnut Street in 1896. Trustees under the Will of 1917 included Richard Wheatland and Stephen Wheatland, all prominent Salem people. The house was sold to Helen O. Coxe, wife of Charles S. Coxe for \$1 in 1928 on the death of Anna Marie Wheatland.(15) The property of Helen O. Coxe was left to her two unmarried children in 1945.(16) They in turn sold it back to their father for \$1 each.(17) Upon his death, it was sold to Sylvia B. Benson and her husband Ralph B. Lawson in 1961.(18)

Upon the death of Sylvia B. Lawson, the property was bought for \$72,000 by Holly Mulvihill in 1979.(19) It was sold again in 1982 for \$160,000 to James C. Ayer of Marblehead.(20) The owners at the time of this research are Andrew and Nan Greer who purchased the property in 1996(21)

10. E.S.D.R.D. Book 1014, leaf 8
11. E.C.R.D. Book 357, leaf 74
12. Massachusetts Probate Will, Docket No. 64590, 1887
13. E.C.R.D. Book 1303, page 196
14. E.S.D.R.D. Book 2369, leaf 538
15. Ibid Book 2788, pages 379, 380
16. County of Essex Massachusetts Probate Court Record Book 1151, page 233
17. E.S.D.R.D. Book 3417, page 500
18. Ibid Book 4253, page 27 and Book 4753, page 409
19. E.S.D.R.D. Book 6590, page 623
20. Ibid Book 6937, page 362
21. Ibid Book 13782, page 3

Essex County Registry of Deeds
Transfers of Title: E.C.R.D., Book 551, leaf 300

GRANTOR: Joseph Hodges of Salem

GRANTEE: Maria Ropes of Salem

CONSIDERATION: \$1,500

Conveyance of: land in Salem bounded and described as follows:

SOUTHEAST: bound and running Westerly by Chestnut Street forty-nine feet.

NORTHERLY: in a line at right angle about seventy-one feet.

EASTERLY: by land of Joseph S. Burell twenty-seven feet and nine inches.

SOUTHERLY: by land of James W. Thompson seventy-nine feet and nine inches
to the point begun.

Date recorded: May 22, 1857

Essex South District Registry of Deeds
Book 566, Page 52

GRANTOR: Maria Ropes of Salem

GRANTEE: James W. Thompson of Salem

CONSIDERATION: \$1

DESCRIPTION: "A certain triangular piece of land containing about 220 square feet at the Southeasterly corner of my estate situate in Chestnut Street at Southwesterly corner of the land of said grantee, thence running Westerly on said Chestnut Street eleven feet -- then turning at right angles & running as the new fence now stands forty feet till it meets the land of said grantee -- then turning an acute angle and running Southeasterly bounded Northeasterly by land of said grantor & grantee to the point of beginning; it being the intention of said grantor & grantee by this conveyance and by a conveyance (from Thompson to Ropes; see below) to straighten the line between their respective estates so that it may run at right angles with Chestnut Street as the new fence now stands."

Date: March 3, 1858

**Essex South District Registry of Deeds
Book 566, page 52**

GRANTOR: Maria Ropes of Salem

GRANTEE: James W. Thompson of Salem

CONSIDERATION: \$1

DESCRIPTION: "A certain small triangular piece of land in the Northwesterly part of my estate situate on Chestnut Street... containing about 195 square feet, and bounded as follows, beginning at the North Easterly corner of land of said grantee and adjoining my land – thence running Easterly bounded Northerly by my land ten feet then running nearly at right angles and running along the line of the new fence as it now stands 39 feet till it meets the land of the grantee – then turning and running Northwesterly bounded Westerly by land of grantee 39 feet to the point of beginning..."

Date: March 3, 1858

**Essex South District Registry of Deeds
Book 1014, Leaf 8**

GRANTOR: George R. Harris, Trustee under last will of Maria Ropes

GRANTEE: Margaret C. Hanson

CONSIDERATION: \$5,300

Conveyance of: land in Salem with the buildings thereon, bounded and described as follows:

SOUTHERLY by Chestnut Street thirty-eight feet

WESTERLY by land of Curwin seventy-one feet

NORTHERLY by land of Burril and Bertram thirty-nine feet and nine inches

EASTERLY by land of Bertram seveny-nine feet

Date recorded: March 11, 1879

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Probate Court-Will
Docket 64590**

GRANTOR: Gamaliel Hodges, Executor under the last Will of Margaret
Hanson, widow

GRANTEES: Elizabeth H. Hanson and Bertha P. Hanson

CONSIDERATION: Paid

CONVEYANCE: The above property

Date recorded: May 10, 1887

**Essex County Registry of Deeds
Book 1303, leaf 195 and 196**

GRANTOR: Bertha P. Hanson of Salem

GRANTEE: Elizabeth H. Hanson of Salem

CONSIDERATION: \$2,500

CONVEYANCE of: land in Salem with the buildings thereon, bounded and
described as follows – one undivided half thereof:

SOUTHERLY by Chestnut Street thirty-eight feet

WESTERLY seventy-one feet

NORTHERLY by land of Burrill and Bertram thirty-seven feet and nine inches

EASTERLY by land of Bertram seventy-nine feet

Date recorded: March 14, 1891

**Essex South District Registry of Deeds.
Book 2369, leaf 538**

GRANTOR: Charles H. Smith and Elizabeth H. Smith (formerly Elizabeth H.
Hanson) of Salem

GRANTEE: Anna Maria Wheatland of Rangely in the State of Maine

CONSIDERATION: Paid

CONVEYANCE OF: the land in Salem with the buildings thereon, bounded and
and described as follows:

SOUTHERLY: by Chestnut Street thirty-eight feet

WESTERLY: by land of Josephine Looney, formerly of Curwen seventy-one feet
and five inches

EASTERLY: by land of Charles A. Brown, seventy-nine feet

Date Recorded: June 26, 1917

**Essex South Registry of Deeds
Book 2788, pages 379, 380**

GRANTOR: Richard Wheatland and Andrew J. Peters, Trustees under the Will of
Anna Maria Wheatland late of Salem.

GRANTEE: Helen O. Coxe, wife of Charles S. Coxe of Salem

CONSIDERATION: \$1

CONVEYANCE of: the above property

Date Recorded: November 21, 1928

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts, County of Essex
Probate Court Record Book 1151, Page 233
Probate Will 212403**

GRANTOR: Richard Wiswall, Executor under the Will of Helen Osborne Coxe
late of Salem

GRANTEE: Maryette A. Coxe and Louis O. Coxe all of Salem

CONSIDERATION: Paid

CONVEYANCE of: the above property

Date Recorded: March 8, 1945

E.S.D.R.D. Book 3417, Page 500

GRANTOR: Maryette A. Coxe

GRANTEE: Charles S. Coxe

CONSIDERATION: \$1

CONVEYANCE of: above property

Date Recorded: March 8, 1945

E.S.D.R.D. Book 4253, page 27

GRANTOR: Louis O. Coxe and Elizabeth Alsop Coxe, Executors under the Will of
Charles S. Coxe of Salem

GRANTEE: Sylvia B. Benson

CONSIDERATION: \$20,000

CONVEYANCE of: the above property

Date Recorded: March 2, 1956

E.S.D.R.D. Book 4753, page 409

GRANTOR: Sylvia B. Lawson (formerly Sylvia B. Benson) of Salem
GRANTEE: Ralph Lawson and Sylvia B. Lawson, husband and wife, as tenants
by the entirety both of Salem
CONSIDERATION: Paid
CONVEYANCE of: the above property

Date Recorded: March 24, 1961

E.S.D.R.D. Book 6590, page 623

GRANTOR: Frank B. Lawson and Ralph Lawson of Salem
GRANTEE: Holly Mulvihill
CONSIDERATION: \$72,000
CONVEYANCE of: the above property

Date Recorded: February 20, 1979

E.S.D.R.D., Book 6937, page 362

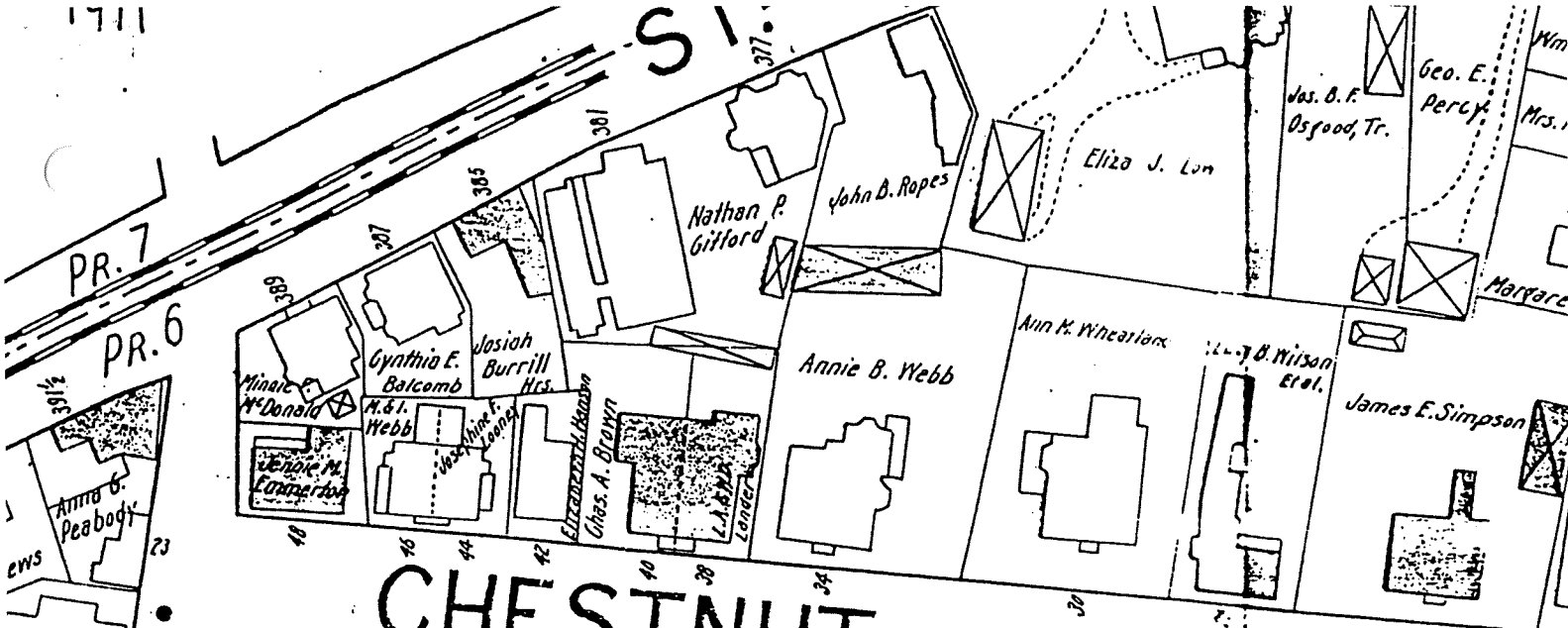
GRANTOR: Holly Mulvihill of Salem
GRANTEE: James C. Ayer of Marblehead
CONSIDERATION: \$160,000
CONVEYANCE of: the above property

Date Recorded: May 25, 1982

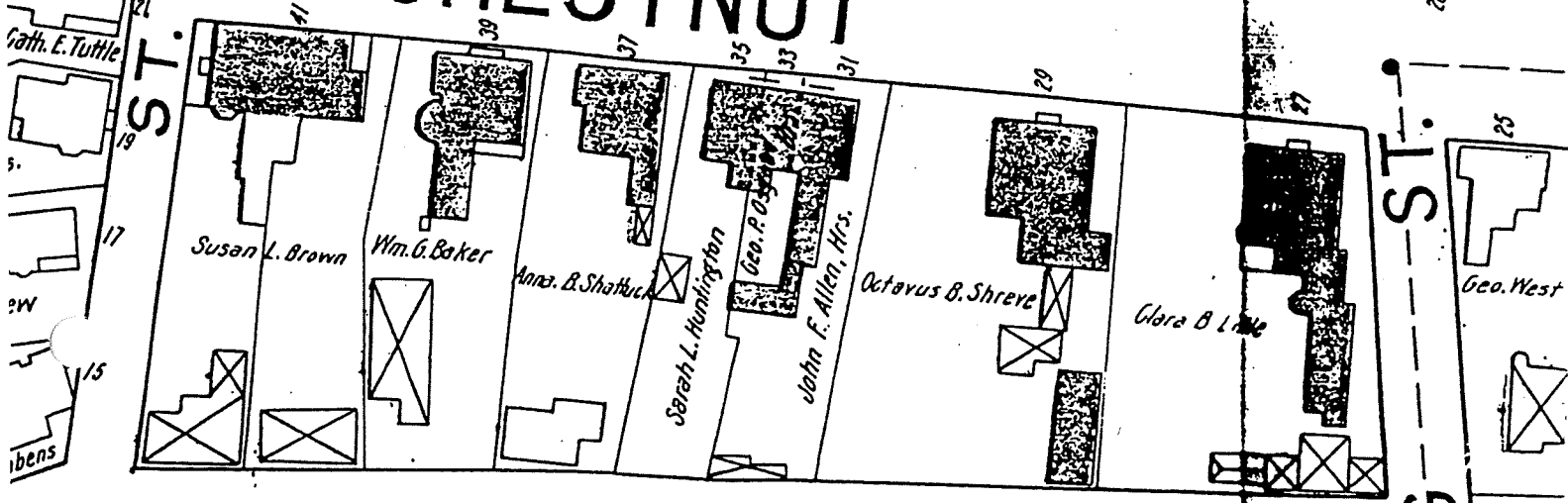
E.S.D.R.D., Book 13782, page 3

GRANTOR: James C. Ayer
GRANTEE: Andrew C. Greer and Nan E. Greer
CONSIDERATION: \$282,900
CONVEYANCE of: the above property

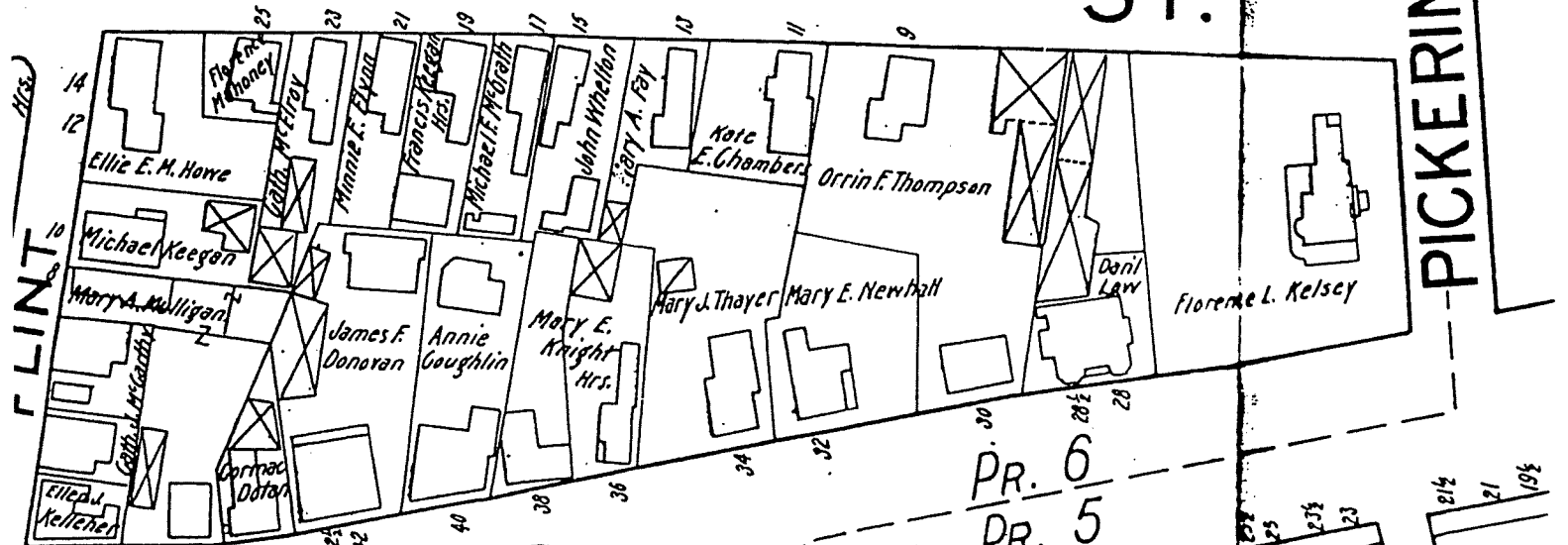
Date Recorded: September 30, 1996



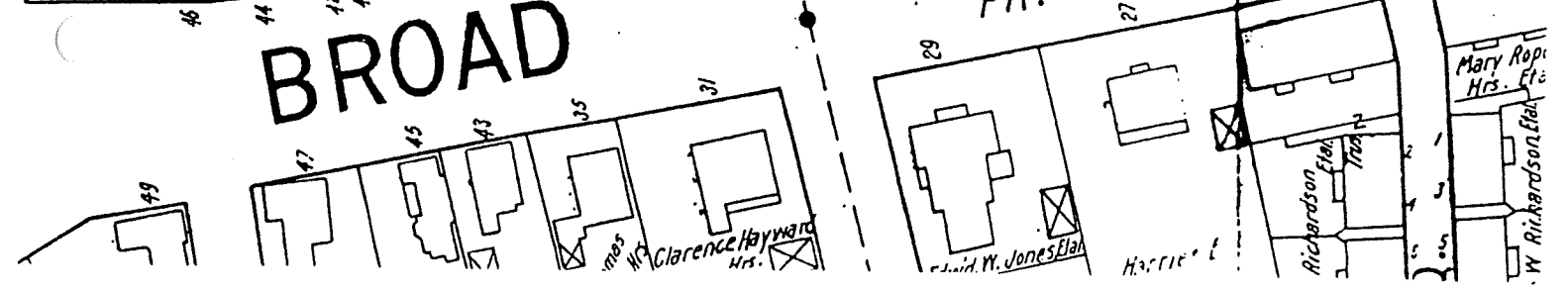
CHESTNUT



ST.



BROAD





FLINT

ST

WARREN

CHESTNUT

CKERING

ST

HAMILTON

STATE OF JOHN PIC

MILTON S.T.

Henry Gardner
Charles Hoffman
HOUSES
GREEN

Wm. P. Hindicoll
Heirs of Benj. Creamer
Wm. C. Hindicoll
Wm. C. Hindicoll

Wm. C. Hindicoll
Heirs of Wm. P. Hindicoll
Heirs of Wm. P. Hindicoll
Heirs of Wm. P. Hindicoll

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Heirs of Wm. P. Hindicoll
Heirs of Wm. P. Hindicoll

1874

CHESTNUT

PICKERING

Benj. M. Shreve
Jos. S. Cabot

Jos. S. Cabot
Benj. M. Shreve
Benj. M. Shreve

Benj. M. Shreve
Benj. M. Shreve
Benj. M. Shreve
Benj. M. Shreve

Benj. M. Shreve
Benj. M. Shreve
Benj. M. Shreve
Benj. M. Shreve

WARREN

S.T.

Pickering & Shreve
Albert Newton

O. P. Thompson
Richard Goldthwait

Chamberlain
Mrs. Harriet
Mrs. Harriet
Mrs. Harriet

Stiffon & Stanford
H. T. Reed
H. T. Reed
H. T. Reed

S.T.

BROAD

S. A. P.

Heirs of
Heirs of
Heirs of

FLINT

S.T.



LAFAYETTE

WASHINGTON

COURT STREET
MILBOND

ESSEX

SUMMER

BROAD STREET CEMETERY

RAIL ROAD

STREET

PICKERING STREET

CHESTNUT

GREENWOOD

BROAD STREET

MALDEN

POLAR STREET

STREET

STREET

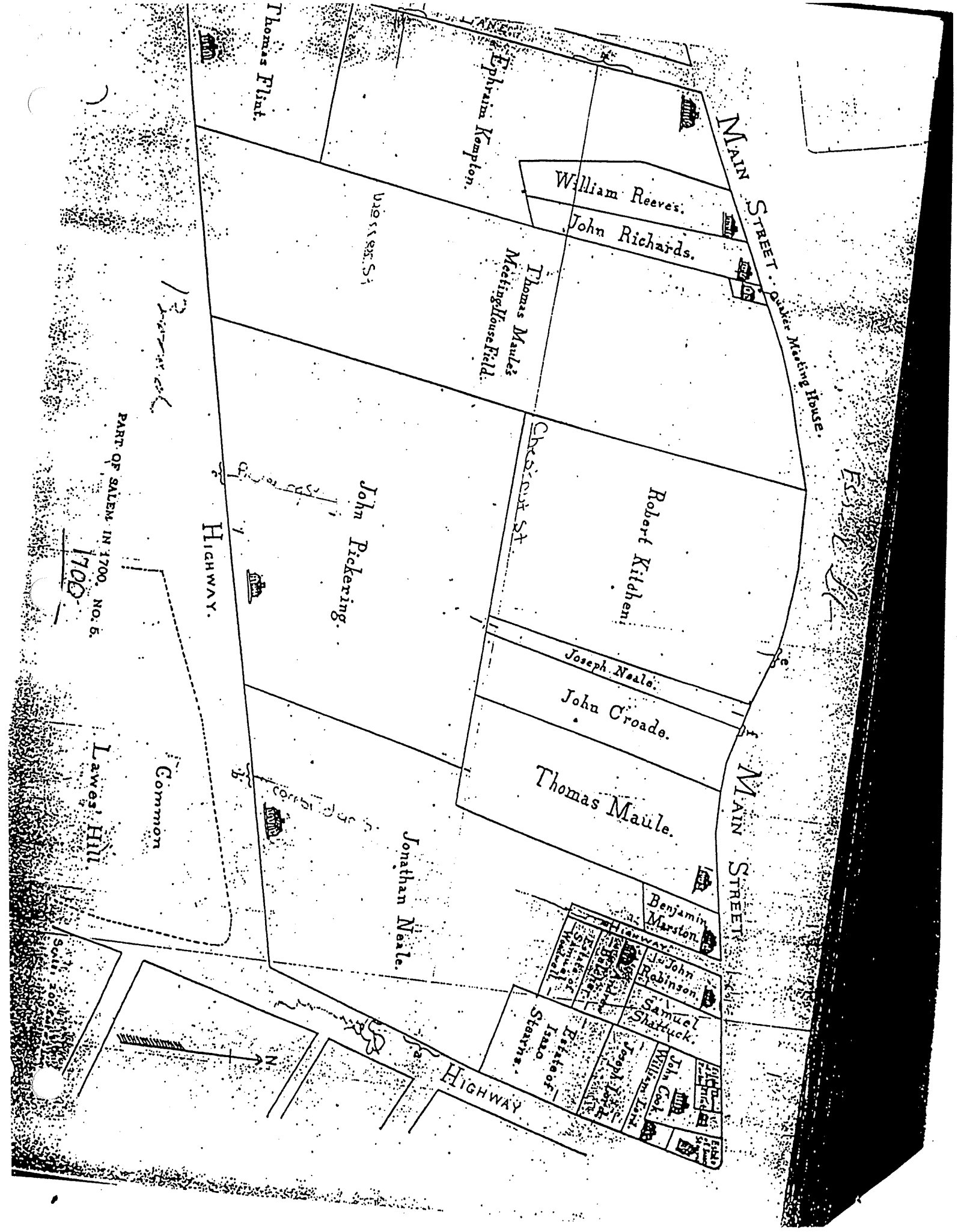
STREET

STREET

STREET

LEACH

STREET



Thomas Flint

Ephraim Kempton

William Reeves

John Richards

Thomas Maule's Meeting House Field

Uroster St

MAIN STREET

Public Meeting House

13

PART OF SALEM IN 1700. NO. 6.

1700

Highway

John Pickering

Christ Church St

Robert Kitcheni

Joseph Neale

John Croade

Thomas Maule

MAIN STREET

Jonathan Neale

Benjamin Marston

John Robinson

Samuel Shattuck

Isaac Stann

Estlin

Joseph

William

John

Isaac

Samuel

Joseph

LAWES HILL

Common

Highway

N

ESSEX ST