

House and Land at 49 Buffum Street

This house was moved here for Thomas Spencer, confectioner, in 1832.

On 17 May 1831 Leverett Saltonstall, Salem's first mayor, for \$20 sold to Joshua Putnam, Salem machinist, a lot of land fronting 78' on Buffum Street and running back 100' (260:293). Although the land transactions in this area at that time were very frequent and often improperly recorded, it seems reasonably certain that this piece of land was the one to which this house was moved in 1832. As for Joshua Putnam, he was actually Thomas Spencer's agent in land transactions; Mr Spencer, an English citizen, was not legally entitled to own land himself, and so Mr Putnam acted in his behalf.

The Salem real estate assessments for the time show that between 1831 and 1832, Thomas Spencer's North Salem holdings increased from one house and one lot to three houses and land--one of these two additional houses being the house now at 49 Buffum Street. These same real estate records indicate that Mr Spencer rented this house out to Mr Pain Morse, a cordwainer (shoemaker).

On 7 Mar 1837 Joshua Putnam released to John William Pepper, Salem confectionist, all of Mr Spencer's North Salem holdings: four lots of land and three houses & land, including " a lot bounded east on the way 78' with a small dwelling house thereon," this last being the lot bought from Leverett Saltonstall by deed 260:293 (297:167). On the same day it was recorded that this conveyance was made in trust for Mr Spencer's benefit; Mr Pepper thus became Mr Spencer's new trustee (297:168).

On 29 Aug 1838, still acting as trustee, Mr Pepper for \$510 released to Nathaniel Gardner Symonds, Salem cordwainer, the dwelling house and land fronting 38' 10" on the new way (Buffum Street), (307:286). One month later, 24 Sept 1838, Messrs Inniss, Lackey, and Ives for \$52.20 granted to Mr Symonds a lot just to the north-west, fronting 29' on Buffum Street (308:267). The boundaries of these lots, combined as one house-lot, have remained the same down to the present day. It is worth noting that the 29' lot had recently been a part of Mr Spencer's holdings, as well.

Nathaniel Gardner Symonds owned this homestead for more than 30 years; at last, on 11 Feb 1870, he sold the premises for \$2000 to Mr Archelaus P Coffrain of Peabody (791:94). Mr Coffrain, evidently a laborer, soon moved to his house in Salem, where he lived for 13 years, dying on 29 Jan 1883. Mr Coffrain,

evidently a bachelor, left as heirs a brother, a niece and a nephew; to them descended the "house and barn with land at 49 Buffum Street" worth \$1350, as well as a personal estate worth \$4595.83 (#59372). His niece, Mrs Theodosia C Homes (wife of William Homes) of Malden bought out the other heirs' rights to the place in 1883 and 1890 (1110:181), (1295:23); she thus became the sole owner of the estate.

On 27 April 1908, Mrs Homes, then of New Hampshire, sold the estate to Agnes J Fitzpatrick of Salem (1917:376); a month later, 19 May 1908, Ms Fitzpatrick conveyed the premises to G. Arthur Bodwell of Salem (1918:359). On 6 Ap 1921 Mr Bodwell conveyed the estate to Fred J Cloutman, who immediately reconveyed the same to Mr Bodwell and his wife Martha W Bodwell (2478:360,361). After fourteen years of ownership, the premises were conveyed by the Bodwells on 5 June 1922 to William N Patten (2517:334).

Mr Patten owned 49 Buffum Street until his death on 8 June 1955; the executor of his will (Naumkeag Trust Company) sold the estate for \$7500 to Richard P Marrs of Salem on 14 Feb 1956. Mr Marrs owned it until 7 Dec 1963, when he granted it to Mr & Mrs Edward J Clarke of Salem (5138:328). The Clarkes sold it 1 May 1970 to Ashley W Rice as trustee for Mrs Clarke (5749:251); next year, 1 Mar 1971, Mr Rice conveyed the premises to Mrs Clarke (5749:252); and on 12 July 1972 Mrs Judith A Clarke sold the place for \$31,000 to Mr & Mrs Edward C Gallas (5885:208).

On 21 Ap 1973 Mr & Mrs Gallas, of Salem, for payment of a \$27,660 mortgage, granted the 49 Buffum Street estate to Mr & Mrs John A McNiff Jr (5969:222).

Robert Booth
8 Mar 1977

Note: The obviously "colonial" style of this house makes it virtually certain that it was moved here, and not built, in 1832.

*Obituary of Thomas Spencer, printed in Essex Institute
Historical Collections, vol. 14, pp 271-2.*

THOMAS SPENCER died at Bransby, Lincolnshire, England, Sept. 4, 1876, aged nearly eighty-four. He will be remembered by many as a resident of Salem some forty years since. Mr. Spencer came to Salem from England about the year 1820. He was then in great destitution, but was befriended by his countryman, the late David Merritt of precious memory. The mother of Mr. Spencer, an aged woman, accompanied him in his immigration, and was the first to introduce here the far-famed "Gibraltar" candy. Modest and unpretentious, as he became known he gained a host of attached friends, and his talents and acquirements raised him to a high place in the estimation of those who knew him best.

When George Thompson was in this part of the country and disturbances occurred in consequence of his anti-slavery zeal, his house afforded him a shelter and a home.

Mr. Spencer was one of the original members, and for some time an officer of the Essex County Natural History Society, the predecessor of the Essex Institute, and took an active interest in its prosperity. His lectures and papers were always valuable, and his contributions in botany, optics, and the physical sciences were numerous and interesting. Several of his lectures were repeated before the Salem Lyceum and other lecture courses. A short time previous to his return to England he read a very interesting paper "On the introduced plants of Salem and vicinity" which has since been printed in a volume by Miss E. Peabody entitled "Æsthetic Papers."

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Nearly forty years since some landed property was bequeathed to him at Bransby in Lincolnshire, England, to which he removed, taking a part of his family with him, and leaving a part who were settled in this country. His interest in, and affection for, Salem continued, and any wanderer from here was sure of a hospitable welcome in his English home. He always corresponded with his old friends here, and especially with Mr. Merritt, as long as the latter lived. In a letter to the Institute, written in July, 1872, in forwarding an interesting communication he wrote:—"I beg to acknowledge the receipt of books and papers relating to the antiquities of Salem and its vicinity, together with some that exhibit a pleasant picture of the happy life of the good people of the good old town. Long may they continue to enjoy their happiness. I remember, with affectionate gratitude, their kindness to me and mine when we were poor and strangers among them."

His wife did not long survive; she died on the 13th of the following November. Thus has passed away this aged couple, who have shared the same joys and the same sorrows for more than three score of years, surrounded by some of their children and their grandchildren.

His loss will be keenly felt. His love of nature, his extensive reading, his finely cultivated intellect and his kindness of heart and noble and generous disposition gave him an imperceptible power of attracting people to him, especially the young, and he was not only loved but revered by all. He had outlived almost all his acquaintances of his generation; in his neighborhood he was like the patriarch,—everybody looked up to him and paid him merited respect and homage.

Thomas Spencer, confectioner, appears to have made quite an impression on Salem. He and his mother were shipwrecked while coming from England about 1805; she made candy to support herself and her son, selling her Gibralters and Blackjacks out of a cart which has been preserved at the Essex Institute. When old enough, Thomas took laboring jobs to bring in money, and then took over his mother's candy business, selling out, evidently, to John William Pepper, and then departing for England after coming into an inheritance. Ye Old Pepper Company, so-called, on Derby Street, is a direct descendant of the Spencer-Pepper enterprise. For more information, see Yankee magazine for February 1977, pps 18-22.

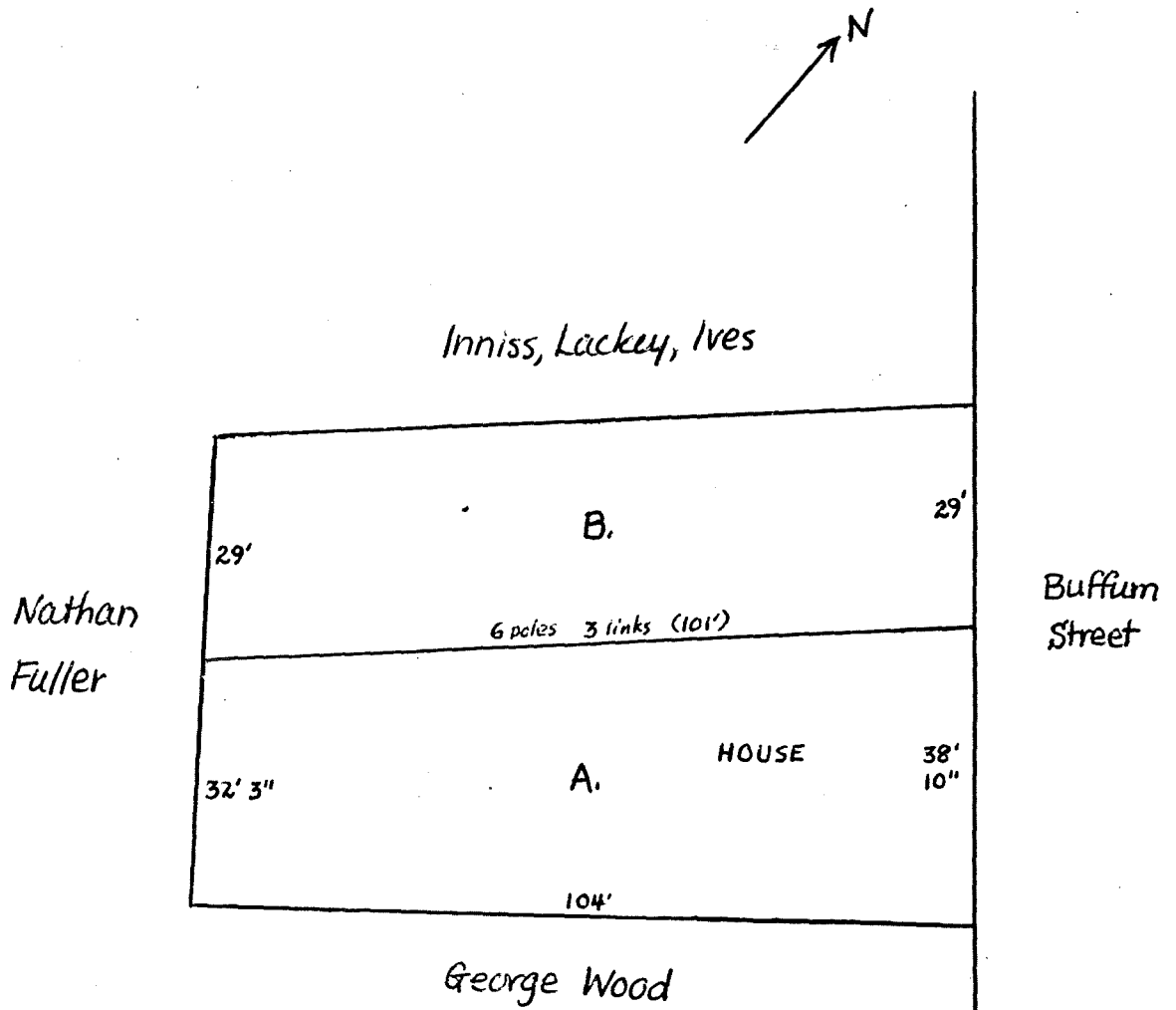
Francis Peabody, prime mover behind the Salem Lyceum, remembered Thomas Spencer in this manner:

"Thomas Spencer, an English emigrant, in the humblest condition, a tallow chandler by trade, and for some time without any means but what were supplied by industrious toil, as a day laborer, after a while became known as a philosophic lover of nature, and a refined and beautiful writer. His lectures, on the forest trees of this neighborhood, and on the phenomena of light and the laws of vision, were performances of exquisite finish. Although his condition was lowly and obscure, having been born with a pure and gifted genius, and, through all disadvantages, cultivated his mind from childhood, he here soon found friends, and a public that appreciated him. He is still living, his venerable age illuminated by mental and moral accomplishments, an opulent and extensive landholder in one of the richest agricultural counties of England. His history is, indeed, invested with a truly romantic interest. Messages of love, received from time to time, show that he remembers, with affectionate and grateful feelings, the friendship and sympathy he here enjoyed."

From Essex Institute Historical Collections, vol. 9, p. 33 (part two), 1869.

Another memoir of Thomas Spencer is appended herein.

Rough Plan of House lot, 49 Buffum Street



A. 29 Aug 1838: JW Pepper to NG Symonds (307:286)

B. 24 Sept 1838: Inniss, Lackey, Ives to NG Symonds (308:267)

1 cm = 10'

JL Booth