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47 Essex Street

Built for
J. Lovett Whipple
Wheelwright
c. 1854

Research and Writing Provided by
Diana Dunlap

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The house lot that we now think of as 47 Essex Street in Salem first starts to emerge in the early nineteenth century, although no deed mentions a house standing on the property until 1872; city directories show that there was a dwelling house at 47 Essex by 1861. On June 9, 1804, Bernard and Lois Green and Mary Diman, singlewoman, all of Malden, sold “part of the estate of the Rev. James Diman, given by will to his daughters Mary and Lois, bounded northerly by the Rev. William Bentley’s meetinghouse, easterly on Hardy Street, southerly on land of said Lois and Mary, westerly on land formerly Thomas Palfrey’s...” to Benjamin Hodges of Salem (Essex Registry of Deed, Book 175, Page 24). The lot is described as running twenty-five feet along Hardy Street and twenty-five feet across to the land of Rev. Bentley’s East (Unitarian) Meetinghouse. It’s unclear how this parcel of land originally came into the possession of the Rev. James Diman; Essex deeds list many variants of the name, of which Diamond is the most common, and several property transactions for 18th century Diamonds appear in the records, though none grant property to James Diman.

The Diman heirs sold the lot to Benjamin Hodges and it passed into the hands of the widow Mary Silsbee and two singlewomen (most likely her sisters), Hannah and Elizabeth Hodges. These were probably the daughters of Benjamin Hodges, though deeds do not confirm this, and they sold the lot to a group of men heavily involved in Salem’s East Meetinghouse: Thomas Downing, William Hunt, William B. Parker, and William Webb, Jr., for \$215 on May 28th, 1846 (Registry of Deeds, Book 368, Pages 123-124). The East Meetinghouse was moving and was busily engaging in property sales at this time, and when the lot was sold again, it was reconfigured to include land from the former meetinghouse lot that had been conveyed to the same group of men just a few weeks earlier. On September 23, 1847, the same four men (with

two of their wives) sold to William H. Lovejoy, Gentleman, ‘a parcel of land...between Hardy and Bentley Streets... at the northwestern corner of land of Ebenezer Slocum, thence running northerly by said Bentley Street as recently widened by the city, to Essex Street...’ and on to Hardy Street. This deed describes the land as “estates conveyed to us by Benjamin Upton and other Committee of the East Society” as well as the Silsbee-Hodges women, so it’s clear that the lot now included some of the East Meetinghouse property that once adjoined it (Registry of Deeds, Book 378, Page 9). William H. Lovejoy paid \$1134 for his new property; given the dramatic difference in the price paid by for the property after less than a year and a half, the lot must have expanded considerably.

Lovejoy and his wife Maria did not keep all of this property long; they sold a portion of “the estate conveyed to me by Thomas Downing and others” to William M. Harrow of Salem, Mariner, on September 23, 1847, for \$700 (Registry of Deeds, Book 403, Page 88). The dimensions described in this deed are very much as they remain in every transaction to follow: 33’10” along northerly Essex Street, 92’ along Bentley Street, 39’6” along the southerly edge of the property, and 91” along the easterly edge. William Harrow might have expected to return to Salem when he purchased this property, but perhaps seafaring or the California Gold Rush changed his plans. When he sold the property on July 24, 1854, he is described as “of the city of Sacramento, State of California” (Registry of Deeds, Book 498, Page 160). The property was purchased by J. Lovett Whipple for \$900.

It seems to be J. Lovett Whipple who finally decided to build a house on this much-handled chunk of land. No building is mentioned when he purchased the house from William Harrow, but when it was next sold in 1872, the property is described as “a certain plot of

land with a dwelling house thereon.” Given the architectural style of the house, a date of 1854-1872 makes perfect sense. Jonathan Lovett Whipple was thirty years old when he purchased the land on which he presumably planned to build his own home. The fourth of seven children of Jonathan and Mary Cloutman Whipple, he was born April 19, 1824, in Salem (unless otherwise noted, birth, marriage, and death dates are derived from the Salem Vital Records). In 1846, the “Naumkeag Directory,” the 19th century forerunner of the city telephone directory, lists J. Lovett Whipple as a turner living, most appropriately, at 33 Turner Street in Salem. This is the same address listed for his sister Mary Elisa, a “tailoress,” and for J. Lovett and his mother in 1851. Two of his brothers, “Stephen Whipple & Brother,” ran a gum copal works at 35 Turner Street, and their house is listed as 12 Hardy Street (their father, Jonathan Whipple, is listed as proprietor in 1846, when Stephen is still described as a carpenter). The 1850 Directory also informs us that J. Lovett Whipple was treasurer of the Second Universalist church and a fireman serving as clerk of Engine No. 4, the “Lafayette.” When J. Lovett Whipple bought the property at 47 Essex, he was investing in a neighborhood that he knew well, positioned very close to his own family. He may have been preparing for his own wedding when he bought the property, as he married Emma N. Dodge in South Danvers (now Peabody) on September 18, 1855, and together they had three children. It seems likely the Whipples built their house around this time.

Sadly, it appears their happiness did not last long: J. Lovett Whipple died in Salem in May 1860, aged only 36. The cause of death is listed as consumption (tuberculosis), an epidemic disease in 19th century America; Whipple’s younger brother George Augustus died of it in 1841, almost twenty years earlier. Probate records describe J. Lovett Whipple as a wheelwright (a trade certainly encompassing his previously listed trade as a turner), though his death record describes

him as working in his brother's trade, gum copal. Gum copal is a tropical resin that was used as a wood varnish, so there may in fact be a link between the trades. His estate was valued at \$3,757.77, and his widow paid off debts to both his sister Mary and several different creditors, ranging from two local doctors (perhaps those who attended J. Lovett Whipple's final illness) to the *Salem Register* subscription to taxes and insurance. A few items were sold, including a "daguerretype machine" sold at a profit of \$2.

The "Naumkeag Directory" shows that the houses around 47 Essex were occupied by a mixed array of sea captains, mariners, and skilled tradespeople during the 1860s. "Mrs. J. Lovett Whipple" is listed at 47 Essex Street in 1861, demonstrating that there was indeed a house on the property by 1861. Emma Dodge Whipple's brothers-in-law, Albert and Stephen Whipple, were still running their gum copal works at 35 Turner Street, but Albert's house is listed as 45 Essex Street. Perhaps it was a comfort to Emma Whipple to remain next door to her husband's brother while raising three young children. Even if so, she decided to remarry, probably in about five years after J Lovett Whipple's death.: Emma N. Whipple of MAssachusetts married Moses W. George of Plymouth, New Hampshire, on December 18, 1865 (Moses W. George is later referenced alongside one of the Whipple sons in a deed for 47 Essex Street). "Mrs. J. Lovett Whipple" is still listed in residence at 47 Essex Street in the Naumkeag Directory for 1866; perhaps the couple decided to live in Emma Whipple's own home, or perhaps the late December wedding simply wasn't reflected in the city directory.

On October 4, 1872, J. Lovett Whipple's widow, now Emma N. George, sold the house on behalf of her three children, Lovett D., Frank M., and Emma E. Whipple, all three of whom were still legally minors (Registry of Deeds, Book 866, Page 70). The former Mrs. Whipple, now

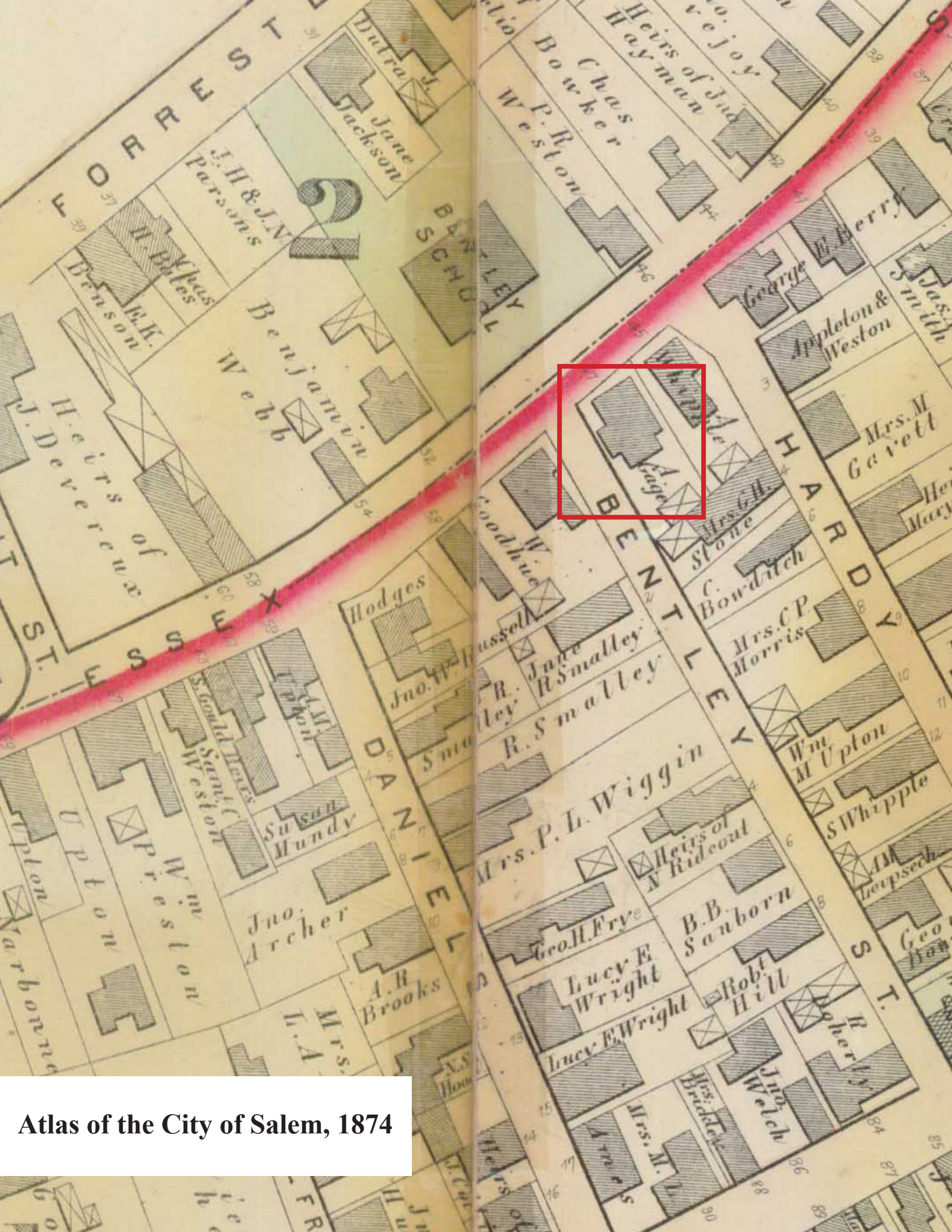
guardian of her three children, relinquished her own right of dower to the property and auctioned it to the highest bidder. It sold to Mrs. Caroline M. Gage, wife of Andrew F. Gage of Salem, “in her own right without interference or control of her husband’ for \$5700. The house and plot of land passed from one woman to another. One may have sold it of necessity in order to support her children’s future, while another purchased it for her own pleasure or support. According to the 1870 U.S. Census, Caroline M. Gage was born in Maine and lived in Ward 1 in Salem (which included 47 Essex), keeping house for her husband Andrew, the superintendent of a paint factory, and their teenage children Flora and George. She would have been about 47 years old when she bought the house in 1872, though her reasons and resources for the purchase are unknown.

The property remained in the hands of Caroline Gage and her heirs until 1906, when Mrs. Gage’s heirs sold it to Patrick Joseph Kelley (Registry of Deeds Book 1851, Pages 13-15). Alice R. Meek of Salem, Arthur B. and Carrie Spaulding of Peabody, and Mary Gage of Duluth, Minnesota (all single) sold “part of the real estate devised to us by Caroline M. Gage” in October 1906. This marked the transfer of 47 Essex Street not only from one family to another, but from Anglo-Americans to Irish Americans, from one well-established ethnic group to more recent immigrants. The house was eventually inherited by Patrick Kelley’s daughter, Ruth M. Harrison, who retained possession until 1952.

Ruth Harrison sold the house and lot to husband and wife Theodore F. and Amelia F. Buchynski of Hamilton, who bought, sold, and mortgaged several properties in both Hamilton and Salem in the 1950s (Registry of Deeds Book 3941, Page 472). The eastern end of Essex and

Derby Streets was a Slavic immigrant neighborhood in the first half of the 20th century; perhaps the Buchynskis had family connections to the neighborhood.

In 1958, Amelia Buchynski sold the house to Vienna C. Tarchini (Registry of Deeds Book 4439, Page 412). When Tarchini sold the house in turn to Henry Hilder in 1985, she reserved the right to “occupy, use, and enjoy said premises for her lifetime” (Registry of Deeds Book 7965, Page 102). Eight years later, Hilder sold the house to Peter A. Sholds and Mary Frances Sholds.



Atlas of the City of Salem, 1874