

## *Two Daniels Street*

**According to available evidence, this house was built in 1906 for Mrs. Elizabeth Stevenson as the home of her son-in-law, Charles F. Brown, grocer, and his family.**

Around 1895 Charles Franklin Brown, 20, came to Salem from his home town of Charlestown and went to work in the large grocery store of Cobb, Bates, and Yerxa, at 176 Essex Street. He would eventually become a buyer for the store.

In 1898 or soon he married Alice Stevenson of Salem, whose family owned houses and a variety store (62 Essex) in this neighborhood. Her mother was Elizabeth Stevenson, widow of David Stevenson, who resided at 60 Essex Street. Mrs. Stevenson had purchased the house at 59 Essex Street in 1881(ED 1164:220), and its lot included the land that would later become the lot for this #2 Daniels Street. At that time (1881) a carriage house stood on the site of the present house.

By 1904, the C.F. Browns (with son Chester, four) resided at 58 Essex Street (at that time, Mr. Brown was known as C. Frank Brown and was listed as grocery clerk). The same was true in 1905 (see Salem Directory listings). In 1906, C. Frank Brown and family were listed at Two Daniels Street (see Salem Directory), as they would be for years to come. The Salem Real Estate Assessments show Charles F. Brown first paying taxes on Two Daniels Street in 1907 (Ward One, precinct Two). From this, it is possible to say that the house was built in 1906 for the C.F. Brown family and that it stood on the land of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Elizabeth Stevenson, who evidently paid for the construction of the house, while Mr. Brown paid the taxes on it.

In 1907 a daughter, Dorothy, was born to the Browns. At about that time, Mr. Brown was promoted from clerk to buyer at the grocery business where he had been working for 12 years (see advertisement from 1905 Salem Directory, appended).

In 1910 (per census, 2 Daniels St., house 66, ward one) the residents here were Charles Brown, 35, buyer, grocery, married 12 years, Alice 35, son Chester, ten, daughter Dorothy, three. At that time the house at 59 Essex Street was a three-

family tenement. Four and Six Daniels Street were occupied by Canadian carpenters and their families.

Salem was vibrant in 1910. Retail stores—like the grocery where Mr. Brown worked--prospered, and machinists, carpenters, millwrights, and other specialists all thrived. In the late 1800s, French-Canadian families began coming to town to work in Salem's mills and factories, and more houses and tenements filled in what had been open areas of the city. They were followed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by large numbers of Polish and Ukrainian families, who settled primarily in the Derby Street neighborhood. By the eve of World War One, Salem was a bustling, polyglot city that supported large department stores and large factories of every description. Its politics were lively, and its economy was strong.

In 1914, Mrs. Elizabeth Stevenson died. That was the year of the Great Salem Fire. On June 25, 1914, in the morning, in Blubber Hollow (Boston Street opposite Federal), a fire started in one of Salem's tanneries, as happened from time to time. This fire soon raced out of control, for the west wind was high and the season had been dry. The next building caught fire, and the next, and out of Blubber Hollow the fire advanced easterly, a monstrous front of flame and smoke, wiping out the houses of Boston and Essex Streets and upper Broad Street and sweeping through Hathorne, Winthrop, Endicott, and other residential streets, then attacking South Salem and destroying the homes on and near Lafayette Street before raging through the tenement district. Despite the combined efforts of heroic fire crews from many towns and cities, the fire could not be turned: it smashed into the large factory buildings of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company (Congress Street), which exploded in an inferno; and it rolled down Lafayette Street and across the water to Derby Street, where the fire was finally halted, just beyond Union Street, after a 13-hour rampage. The conflagration had consumed 250 acres, 1600 houses, and 41 factories, leaving three dead and thousands homeless. Some had insurance, some did not; all received much support and generous donations from all over the country and the world. It was one of the greatest urban disasters in the history of the United States, and the people of Salem would take years to recover from it. Eventually, they did, and many of the former houses and businesses were rebuilt; and several urban-renewal projects (including Hawthorne Boulevard, which involved removing old houses and widening old streets) were put into effect.

With the Fire and the death of Mrs. Stevenson, the Browns decided to move. In 1914 this house and the house at 59 Essex Street were sold together to Wojciech & Mary Piekos (ED 2260:492). The Browns moved to One Buffum Street in North Salem. There they would live together for seven years, until the death of Mr.

Brown on 9 May 1921, aged just 45 years. The Salem *Evening News* ran the following obituary: "Charles Franklin Brown died at home, One Buffum Street, yesterday after a long illness, in his 46<sup>th</sup> year. Born in Charlestown, he was the son of Charles W. Brown & Lucy F. Mitchell. For 25 years he was employed by Cobb, Bates, Yerxa. He was a member of Starr King Lodge, AF & AM, the Now and Then Association, and the Washington Associates. He leaves his widow Alice P. (Stevenson) Brown, son Chester, daughter Dorothy, mother & father."

In 1914, this house was listed as vacant, but in 1915 it was a two-family, occupied by two widows, Mrs. Hannah Goucher and Mrs James H. (Margaret F. J.) Redmond. In 1917 Mrs. Goucher resided here. (see Salem Directory listings).

In 1920 (per census, 2 Daniels St., house 51, ward one) the house was occupied by the extended Freeman family: Thomas J. Freeman, 57, was a janitor at a cotton mill (no doubt at the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Mills, off Congress Street) and had come to the U.S. in 1887 from his native Ireland. He resided here with his wife Bridget, 55, born Ireland, their three daughters (born in Mass.) Frances, 28, a housekeeper, Mary, 25, a dressmaker, and Elizabeth, 23, a payroll clerk at shoe factory; Mrs. Freeman's brother, Luke Durkin, 49, a brass polisher in a foundry; and little boarders Darce Deanio, 7, and Margaret Quinlan, 7. By the 1920s, Salem was once again a thriving city; and its tercentenary in 1926 was a time of great celebration.

The property here was subdivided in 1950, and since that time this house and its lot, fronting 34.40' on Daniels Street, have been a separate homestead.

Salem boomed right through to the 1960s, but the arrival of suburban shopping malls and the relocation of manufacturing businesses took their toll, as they have with many other cities. More than most, Salem has navigated its way forward into the present with success, trading on its share of fame arising from the commercialization of the witchcraft delusion, but also from its great history as an unrivalled seaport and as the home of Hawthorne and McIntire. Most of all, it remains a city where the homes of the old-time merchants, mariners, and mill-operatives are all honored as a large part of what makes Salem different from any other place.

--Robert Booth for Historic Salem Inc., 16 May 2001; initial research by Sean P. Maher, reported on 15 July 2000.