

# HISTORIC SALEM INC

**4 Blaney Street**

Built for

Samuel Ropes 1782, Cooper

Researched by Robert Booth, 1976

Historic Salem Inc,

The Bowditch House

9 North Street, Salem, MA 01970

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SAMUEL ROPES

cooper

1782

4 Blaney St  
Salem, Mass.

*Robert Booth*  
*3 June 1976*



## House & Land at 4 Blaney Street, Salem, Mass.

This house was built by Samuel Ropes, Salem "cooper," in 1782 on the southern half of land that he & Nicholas Lane had bought from Joseph Blaney in May of that year. The 1782 date seems certain, for in 1781 Samuel Ropes (1757-1841) owned a house & warehouse in ward 3, and by 1783 he was living in ward one (see Bentley's Diary, vol. I, p 14). The 1782 property assessment was made in/spring, before Ropes had bought the land, and the 1783 assessment records are incomplete, so the records of 1784/5, in which Samuel Ropes owns a house & shop worth 400 li in ward one, are the first actual reference to this house. By the 1786/7 assessment, Ropes had added a warehouse to the shop & house on the land, so perhaps as early as this Samuel was involved as a merchant in Salem's maritime commerce. At any rate, business was good, and on 30 Jan 1792 Bentley observes "Samuel Ropes forming a kitchen back of his house"--perhaps referring to the back lean-to which gives the house its salt-box appearance (see Bentley's Diary, vol. I, p 365).

Very early this land was part of the holdings of Henry Harwood, who died in 1664; his widow & the selectmen of Salem sold Henry's land in 1669 to Jeremiah Butman (deeds, 3:75), who sold the upper end to John Becket before 1673, & the rest to Philip Cromwell on 11 July 1673 (deeds, 4:18), who in 1680 sold it to Edmund Bridges Sr, a blacksmith, who built a house, shop & wharf thereon, and, for 160 li sold it in 1682 to widow Elizabeth Turner (deeds, 6:49). On 28 Oct 1699, John Turner sold the estate to William Beckett, who immediately conveyed it to Abraham Purchase, also a blacksmith, who settled there, dying ca. 1724. (The preceding information was found in Sidney Perley's Salem in 1700, part #22). The old house & shop were gone by 1767, when Joseph Mascoll (who had married Ruth Purchase, daughter of Abraham) sold part of the land to Joseph Blaney & Benjamin Pickman Jr, who in 1769 sold his half to Blaney, who in 1782 sold a piece of the land to Nicholas Lane & Samuel Ropes, who soon after built this house thereon.

Samuel Ropes, born 8 Mar 1757, was the 6th of the 12 children of Benjamin Ropes, a Salem cooper, & his wife Ruth Hardy. Like his father, Samuel became a cooper, & on 27 May 1780 married Sarah Cheever (died 1842); their first son, Samuel Jr, was born in 1781, & this house was built the next year. The couple went on to raise a family of 8 children here--5 boys & 3 girls--although 3 of the boys died at age 20, two of them at sea (see Bentley's Diary, vol II, p 381). For more information about the Ropes family, see the genealogy in Sidney Perley's History of Salem, Mass., vol I, p 345.

By 1792, Samuel Ropes seems to have secured a Custom House position, for then Bentley calls him a "cooper, cutter, weigher & gauger." (See Bentley's Diary, vol I, p 336). Eventually, Ropes lost his position at the Custom House, but succeeded in establishing



himself as a trader & merchant--a man of standing, & probably the Samuel Ropes who in Salem's election of 1806 was the sole Federalist chosen Selectman (see Bentley, vol II, p 219).

So by 29 Nov 1814, when, after more than 30 years' residence, he sold his "lot of land with the house, barn, & all other buildings standing thereon," Samuel Ropes Esq. was a very successful man--no longer the cooper of 1782, but a substantial political & commercial figure.

Samuel Derby Jr (1785-1828) now moved in with his wife Abigail (Buffum), whom he had married 9 Nov 1808, and their children. Samuel's father, Samuel (1769?-1826) was a Salem shoemaker, and his father, Richard (1736-77), was a brother to the merchant prince Elias Hasket Derby (1739-99). A few months after settling at Blaney Street, Derby bought the house & land "with a store & other buildings thereon" that lay immediately north of his own land--meaning the Nicholas Lane lot at the corner of Derby & Blaney Sts (see deeds, 206:140 & 214:124); thus unifying the 2 original lots of 1782, a situation that would last until 1881.

Samuel Derby, "trader," died 16 Jan 1828 at the age of only 42, leaving to his widow Abigail and children Samuel, Charles, Abigail & Mary "the homestead in Blaney St" (this house & its land), "a house & land in Derby St, & a store & land at the corner of Blaney & Derby Sts."--the inventory of his estate reveals that Mr Derby ran a sort of general store, complete with great quantities of rum! (See his probate, #7595).

The property, occupied by widow Abigail & her unmarried daughter Mary, remained undivided among the heirs until 1863, when by 2 deeds (637:40, 646:227) Mrs Derby & Mary acquired full rights. Then, on 2 Sept 1877, almost 50 years after her husband, widow Abigail (Buffum) Derby died, leaving her share of the property (a "lot of land at the corner of Derby & Blaney Sts, occupied with 2 dwelling houses, a store & a barn"; probate #37369) to her son Charles of Hawaii (Samuel Jr had died in Hawaii), her daughter Mary Derby of Salem, & to the 2 daughters of her deceased daughter Abigail (Derby) Gould. By three deeds, Mary Derby acquired the property (deeds 1009:31, 1022:204 & 205).

Mary Derby did not hold it long, and on 11 Oct 1881--when the house was 99 years old--at last sold the Samuel Ropes house (and its original lot) out of the Derby family.

Robert Booth  
3 June 1976



Deeds relating to House & Land at 4 Blaney St., Salem, Mass.

1 Ap 1767: Joseph & Ruth (Purchase) MASCOLL, he being a Salem shipwright, for 113.6.8 li sell to Joseph BLANEY & Benjamin PICKMAN Jr, Salem gentlemen, as tenants in common (each paying half the price) a piece of Salem land bounded

nw 170' 4" on a town way between the Mascolls' mansion house  
& the premises;  
ne on land of William Becket & on land belonging to the Mascolls,  
or to one of the Mascolls, & others, yet undivided;  
se on the channel of the South River or Harbour;  
sw on Abraham Watson's land. (So. Essex Co. Deeds, 117:262)

8 May 1769: Benjamin PICKMAN Jr Esq., Salem, for 62.13.4 li sells to Joseph BLANEY his half of the premises described above. (Deeds, 131:157)

20 May 1782: Joseph BLANEY, Esq, of Salem, for 273 li in silver sells to Nicholas LANE, Salem sail-maker, & Samuel ROPES, Salem cooper, a piece of land 45.5 poles square in the east parish of Salem, bounded

w. 176' 9" on George Dodge,  
n. 75' 6" on a town way,  
e. 165' 4" on sd Joseph Blaney,  
s. 73' 7" on sd Joseph Blaney;

with the liberty of passing & repassing with carts & other carriages in the way on the eastward of the premises, leading from the town way aforesaid to Blaney's Wharf, said way being 23.5' wide (west to east) & 165' 4" long (north to south) being the whole length of the premises. (Deeds, 139:128)

June 1782: Nicholas LANE, Salem sail-maker, and Samuel ROPES, Salem cooper, have agreed to make division & partition of the land they lately purchased of Joseph Blaney Esq (see above, 139:128) in the following manner: that the sd parcel of land be divided exactly into 2 equal parts for quantity of land, the division line to be drawn east-to-west; & that the land north of sd division line is set off to Nicholas, & the land south of sd line is set off to sd Samuel. (Deeds, 141:185)

7 June 1791: It is mutually agreed between one party (Capt Edward ALLEN & Capt Samuel INGERSOLL, both of Salem) and the other party (Samuel ROPES of Salem) that the division fence between the land of sd Allen & Ingersoll & the land of sd Ropes (being the southern bounds of sd Ropes' land), which fence runs in a straight line with the division fence running between Allen & Ingersoll's land & the land of Richard Palfrey, shall be altered in such a manner as to run at right angles, square with the lane leading to the Wharf of sd Allen & Ingersoll. And it is altered accordingly. (Deeds, 154:109)



29 Nov 1814: Samuel (& w. Sarah) ROPES Esq, Salem, for \$1300 sells to Samuel DERBY Jr, Salem trader, a lot of land with the dwelling house, barn, & all other buildings standing thereon, containing about 23 poles, on Blaney Street, bounded starting on sd Blaney St at the se corner of Nicholas Lane's land, & then

runs sw 73' 6" by sd Nicholas Lane;  
runs se 87' by heirs of Joshua Dodge dec'd;  
runs ne 73' 6" by land late of Samuel Ingersoll dec'd; as the  
fences now stand;  
runs nw 87' on sd Blaney Street. (Deeds, 205:36)

11 Oct 1881: Mary DERBY, Salem singlewoman, for \$1135 sells to George WHEATLAND as trustee for Mary DURGIN, wife of John Durgin, a Salem message, bounded

east 86' on Blaney St  
south 73' on Rowell  
west 86' on formerly Brookhouse  
north 73' on sd Mary Derby & on Sullivan;

with the understanding that sd Wheatland shall pay over the property's net rent & income to sd Mary Durgin during her lifetime, & at her decease sd Wheatland shall convey & pay over the estate to whomever Mary Durgin assigns in her will or, in default of a will, to her heirs.

And then sd Wheatland mortgaged the premises for \$535 to Mary Derby, who discharged the mortgage on 19 Nov 1883. (Deeds, 1069:160)

6 Aug 1883: John DURGIN of Salem, for \$1 releases to Thomas DURGIN of Salem all his right to the above real estate. (Deeds, 1124:99)

1 Feb 1884: George WHEATLAND, Salem, for \$1, according to the will of Mary Durgin deceased, grants to her son Thomas DURGIN a Salem message, bounded the same as above (11 Oct 1881); it being the estate that Wheatland, as trustee for Mary Durgin, bought from Mary Derby 11 Oct 1881, 1069:160, above. (Deeds, 1124:99)

14 Oct 1889: Thomas DURGIN, Salem, for \$1600 grants to John H CASHMAN, Salem, a Salem message bounded

ne 86' on Blaney St,  
se 73' on Rowell,  
sw 86' on formerly Brookhouse,  
nw 73' on Sullivan & on now or late (n/l) Mary Derby;

being the same premises conveyed to sd Thomas DURGIN by George Wheatland in deed 1124:99, and devised to Thomas in the will of his mother, Mary Durgin. See also the deed from John to Thomas Durgin, 6 Aug 1883; 4:124:99; & the deed from Mary Derby to George Wheatland 11 Oct 1881, 1069:160 (incorrectly referred to as 1124:99 in the deed book). (Deeds, 1261:77)



24 Oct 1910: John J & William F CASHMAN, heirs of their deceased mother, Anastasia CASHMAN of Salem, for \$1 release to their father, John H CASHMAN, all their right to a Salem message on Blaney Street, bounded as on 14 Oct 1889, 1261:77. (Deeds, 2047:148)

24 Oct 1910: John H CASHMAN, widower of Salem, for \$1 releases to his sons John J & Wm F CASHMAN, Salem, the above real estate, subject to a \$1,000 mortgage to Salem Co-operative Bank; and sd grantor reserves to himself all his rights to the above real estate as husband of the late Anastasia Cashman. (Deeds, 2047:149)

10 July 1922: John H CASHMAN, widower, and John J & Wm F CASHMAN, all of Salem, grant to Henry L RUSSELL & Chester B SIM, both of Salem, a Salem message on Blaney Street, bounded

ne 86' on Blaney St,  
se 73' on n/l Rowell,  
sw 86' on n/l Brookhouse,  
nw 73' on n/l of Sullivan & n/l of Mary Derby.

(Deeds, 2522:89)

15 Mar 1941: In 2 deeds, Chester B SIM, Marblehead, and Henry L RUSSELL, Salem, grant to the RUSSELL-SIM TANNING COMPANY, the above real estate, referring to deed 2522:89. (Deeds, 3250:465)

1 Mar 1944: RUSSELL-SIM TANNING COMPANY, Salem, grants to Mary A ARCHUNG of Salem, trustee of Webb Wharf Associates, 5 parcels in Salem with the buildings thereon, parcel #4 being the same referred to in deed 3250:465. (Deeds, 3393:482)

15 Nov 1960: Mary A ARCHUNG, trustee of Webb Wharf Associates, grants to Joseph T, Herbert L, & Mary R MACKEY, the same 5 parcels as described in deed 3393:482. (Deeds, 4722:4)

18 Nov 1964: Joseph T, Herbert L, & Mary R MACKEY, Salem, grant to THOMAS MACKEY & SONS, INC., the same 5 parcels as described in deed 4722:4 above. (Deeds, 5225:335)





23.5'

Joseph Blaney's private way

165' 4"

→ to Blaney's Wharf

Town Way  
(Derby Street)

75' 6"

20 May 1782  
Joseph Blaney Esq  
for ± 273 to  
Nicholas Lane + Samuel Ropes

73' 4"

Joseph Blaney

George Dodge

176' 9"

1782

1 cm = 10'

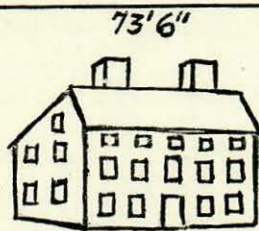


Town Way (Derby St)

Nicholas Lane

Heirs of  
Joshua Dodge

87'



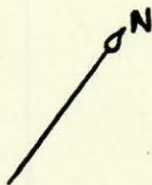
Samuel Ropes Esq  
to  
Samuel Derby Jr.  
for \$1300  
29 Nov 1814  
(205:36)

87'

73' 6"

(squared off by agreement of 1791)

Blaney Street



Lot of  
Samuel Ingersoll,  
deceased

1 cm = 10'

1 cm = 10'



## *History of House and Occupants, Four Blaney Street, Salem*

By Robert A. Booth, Jr., for Historic Salem Inc., May 25, 2006.

According to available evidence, this house was built in 1782 for Samuel Ropes, cooper.

On May 20, 1782, Joseph Blaney Esq. for 273 li sold to Samuel Ropes, cooper, and Nicholas Lane, sailmaker, a parcel of land at the corner of Derby Street and the road that ran down to Blaney's Wharf. The parcel was bounded northerly 75' 6" on a town way (now Derby Street), easterly 165' 4" on land of Blaney (now Blaney Street), southerly 73' 7" on Blaney land, and westerly 176' 9" on land of Dodge (ED 139:128). In June, 1782, the new owners subdivided the property, and Mr. Ropes took the parcel closest to the water (ED 141:185). On it, he built this house, in 1782, facing across the harbor toward the west shore of Marblehead. By 1791, the wharf was owned by Edward Allen and Samuel Ingersoll; and in June Mr. Ropes made an agreement with them as to fencing the boundary line between their property and his. The main house was given a rear addition ("leanto") in the fall of 1791, per Rev. William Bentley, who noted in October that "Samuel Ropes is forming a kitchen back of his house." (per Bentley's diary, volume 1). On his northerly parcel, Mr. Lane built a store at the corner and a house to the west of the store, on Derby Street. The land here had been purchased jointly in 1767 by Joseph Blaney and Benjamin Pickman; and in 1769 Mr. Blaney had bought out Mr. Pickman.

Samuel Ropes (1757-1841) was born in Salem, the son of Benjamin Ropes (1722-1790), and Ruth (Hardy) Ropes (c.1724-1795). He was the sixth of twelve children—Benjamin, Joseph, Samuel (died young), Sarah, Lydia, Samuel, Hardy, Ruth, Hardy, George, Joseph, and Timothy. He grew up on upper Essex Street, near what is now Monroe Street (site of public library). His father worked as a cooper, and was part of a very large extended family. On both sides, his family roots went back to the 1600s in Salem.

Samuel Ropes' boyhood was in the 1760s, a decade in which Salem's foreign commerce—primarily with Spain and with British Caribbean islands—began to falter, as the British enforced their new trade regulations. Salem's main export was salt cod, which was caught far offshore by Salem and Marblehead fishermen and brought back to the



local fishyards, where it was “cured” until it was hard and dry and could be shipped long distances. This was a staple food in Catholic Europe (Spain and Portugal especially) and also in the Caribbean, where it fed the slaves. To Europe went the fish that was “merchantable” (high-grade), and to the Caribbean went the “refuse” (low quality). Either sort, put into a pot of boiling water, would turn into nutritious food. Many of the barrels that Samuel Ropes’ father made were used as containers for salt cod. Lumber, horses, cattle, and foodstuffs were also sent to the Caribbean, whence came molasses, sugar, cotton, and mahogany. From Europe came back finished goods (made in India and England), iron, wine, fruit, feathers, and leather. There was also some trade between Salem and the Chesapeake Bay area, which provided corn, wheat, and tobacco, while South Carolina provided rice. Most Salem merchant vessels were small, under 60 tons.

The tidal South River ran along Derby Street and all the way to the present Post Office; and in this secure deep-water inner harbor were most of the wharves and warehouses, although some wharves were built along the North River too. The Browne family, whose houses stood on Essex Street between Liberty and Washington, dominated Salem’s society, and the Brownes were leading merchants, followed by Benjamin Pickman (1708-1773), Samuel Gardner, Timothy Orne, and, by the 1750s, Richard Derby (1712-1783). Salem’s colonial commerce was active but the imperial authorities limited the Salem merchants to trade with designated British possessions. By smuggling and trading with un-approved partners, the Salem merchants made good profits.

In 1760, after Canada and the Ohio Valley were taken from the French, the English decided to pay for the costs of war and of sustaining a bureaucracy in America by squeezing tax revenues out of the colonials’ trade. Although they had been under royal governors for two generations, the New Englanders had been self-governing by town meetings at the local level and, at the provincial level, through an elected legislature. They regarded themselves as a free people, and not as dependents of a far-away mother country. Merchants and mariners had always traded with the Spanish and Dutch in Europe and the various islands of the Caribbean, regardless of their national affiliations; and they deeply resented the British crack-down on this trade, accompanied by privateering against American vessels by both the French and the British.



In 1761, a group of Salem and Boston merchants sued to prevent the use of search warrants (“writs of assistance”) by the Customs officials who were trying to inspect their vessels and warehouses. Later in the decade, Salemites were roused against the Stamp Act, and applied tar and feathers to a couple of men who disagreed. In Boston, mobs attacked the royal officials’ houses and beat up their flunkies. The British authorities were surprised at this resistance to their policies, and feared an insurrection. In 1768, they sent over a small army to occupy Boston. Now the Americans were forced to see themselves as misbehaving colonials, and to realize that they were not free. They did not like this picture, and the result was bitter public opposition and more street violence in Boston. The Boston Massacre took place in March, 1770; in short order, all of Massachusetts turned openly against the British, and the clouds of war gathered on the horizon. Samuel Ropes was a boy of thirteen at this time, just entering into his indenture as an apprentice cooper, probably working for his father, Deacon Benjamin Ropes, a leader of Rev. Dudley Leavitt’s “New Light” Church. Before the Revolution, Samuel’s older sisters were all well-married: Sarah (1752-1796) to Jerathmeel Peirce, who would become a privateer-owner and a great merchant; and Lydia (1754-1835) to 1774 Capt. Ichabod Nichols (1749-1839) a shipmaster and later a merchant of Salem and Portsmouth. His older brother, Benjamin Ropes Jr., married Margaret Symonds and would serve as a lieutenant in the rebel army, in which he died as a young man.

Pre-revolutionary Salem had more than its share of Tories; but the Sons of Liberty were in the majority. Wealthy scions of families like the Curwens, Pickmans, and Brownes, stayed loyal to the King, as did many others who had married into the merchant families. In 1774, military rule was imposed from England as Gen. Thomas Gage became governor of Massachusetts and the port of Boston was shut down in punishment for the Tea Party of December, 1773. On June 2, 1774, Salem became the new capital of Massachusetts, as a reward for its supposed loyalty. Governor Gage and his officials relocated to the North Shore, and the Customs operation was conducted from Marblehead, while Salem became the major seaport of New England, handling virtually all of the commercial business that Boston had done. Hundreds of new people moved to Salem, and the legislature met in Salem’s Court House. In short order that legislature, led by John Hancock, voted its independence from the authority of Parliament, and set itself up as the governing body of a free state. Gage tried to shut it down, but it was too late: he had lost control of Massachusetts to the rebel assembly gathered in Salem. The town still



had a powerful and outspoken group of loyalists, led by Peter Frye, a prominent merchant and magistrate whose wife was a Pickman. One night in October, Judge Frye learned just how far the rebels were willing to go: his fine house on Essex Street was burned down and his family barely escaped with their lives as half a block of houses and stores and a church all went up in smoke. Next day, the rebel assembly met again and voted to move their proceedings to Concord. Gage and his officials moved to Boston, and many of the loyalists followed. Outside of Boston, all of Massachusetts was under the control of the rebels.

By January, 1775, loyalists had been purged from the Salem militia regiment, and Col. William Browne was replaced by Col. Timothy Pickering, who was writing a book on military drill. Samuel Ropes was then seventeen; Pickering was a first cousin of Ropes' mother, Ruth Hardy Ropes. One Sunday in February, 1775, the Revolutionary War almost began in Salem. When everyone was in church, Col. Leslie's redcoats marched overland from Marblehead and arrived in downtown Salem, hoping to seize cannon and munitions in North Salem. They came to a sudden halt at the North Bridge—the Salem men, alerted by a Marblehead rider, had pulled up the draw of the bridge. Rev. Thomas Barnard Jr., of the North Church, engaged Col. Leslie in discussion; and Capt. John Felt, warned Leslie that blood would flow if he did not turn back. Negotiations followed, and agreement was reached: the draw went down, Leslie's men advanced a short distance into North Salem, faced about, and marched back through Salem's South Fields and Marblehead, whose own regiment, led by Col. Jeremiah Lee, could have slaughtered them. Instead, the Marbleheaders fell in behind them, marching in mockery of Leslie's Retreat as the British made their way back to the beach and boarded their whaleboats to return to the transport vessel.

With the battle at Lexington & Concord, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1775, the die was cast. Of course no one knew how the war would end, and there was little to indicate that the colonials could actually defeat the King's army and navy, but virtually every able-bodied Salem man and boy gave himself over to the cause. Salem's regiment participated in the siege of Boston, as George Washington took command of the army in Cambridge. The British left Boston in March, 1776, never to return. Washington's army was pushed southward from Long Island in a series of defeats, during which Salem's Col. Timothy Pickering became one of the General's most trusted officers, and Quartermaster General of the army. Washington's first victory was the Battle of



Trenton, on Christmas Day, 1776, made possible by the Marblehead regiment of Gen. John Glover. Eventually most of the Salem men came home and sailed in privateers for the duration of the war. There is no record of military service by Samuel Ropes, so it is likely that he sailed as a privateer, and perhaps was successful. It should be noted that there was another Samuel Ropes in town at that time, the son of a Loyalist judge.

In 1780, Samuel Ropes (1757-1841) married Sarah Cheever, and in 1782 he built this house, facing down the wharf, then known as Blaney's Wharf. Eventually the wharf was extended well out into the harbor, probably by Ingersoll & Allen, and was known by 1820 as Orne's Wharf, one of the largest in Salem, running out about 900'. By 1850, somewhat reduced in size, it was known as Webb's Wharf.

**Samuel Ropes (1757-1841), born 8 March 1757, s/o Benjamin Ropes & Ruth Hardy, died 5 Dec. 1841. He m. 27 May 1780 Sarah Cheever (1758-1842), d/o Ezekiel Cheever, died 11 Oct. 1842.**

**Known issue, surname Ropes:**

- 1. Samuel, 1781, died at sea 1800, supercargo of *Henry*.**
- 2. Benjamin, 1783, died 1801 by accident on board *Belisarius*.**
- 3. William, 1784, m. 1811 Martha Reed, of Boston and Russia, merchant.**
- 4. Sally, 1786**
- 5. Hardy, 1788, m. 1824 Mary Ladd; of Boston, merchant.**
- 6. Ruth Hardy, 1791-1837, m. Henry Prince.**
- 7. Louisa, 18793-1842, m. 1821 Rev. Samuel Green, Boston.**
- 8. Joseph, 1796-1816.**

In 1784, Samuel Ropes' house and shop in ward one were valued at 400 li, and his stock & faculty at 100 li (per valuations, 1784-5). His future business partner, John Page, of ward four (Federal Street), had a house worth 600 li and stock & faculty valued at 300 li. As may be seen, many of those who had gained during the Revolution through privateering did not have much money by the end of the war. Their future fortunes would depend on the prosperity of Salem's overseas commerce, their connections to men who did have money, and their own entrepreneurial abilities. Samuel Ropes was well connected in Salem, through his merchant brothers-in-law. His younger brothers were not in a position to assist his coopering business, but all three brothers-in-law were merchants with extensive shipping interests who stood in need of barrels as containers for their cargos as well as barrel-



making materials that they might export to the wine islands and Europe.

In 1783 Samuel's sister Ruth (1761-1850) would marry John Leach (1741-1805), a privateer commander, shipmaster, and later a merchant. Samuel's younger brothers were Hardy, who became a New Hampshire farmer; Capt. George (1765-1807), a shipmaster who would marry Seeth Millett (1769-1823) in 1789, and would be lost at sea in 1807; Joseph (1770-1795) lost at sea schooner *Active*; and Capt. Timothy (1773-1848) who married Sarah Holmes and would become a cooper and shipmaster (EIHC 7:196-9).

Samuel's father, Deacon Benjamin Ropes, died in 1790, leaving house & land worth \$1683 and a modest personal estate. His widow Ruth survived him until 1795 (EIHC 7:150-153).

Through the memoir of a nephew, Benjamin Ropes, we get a glimpse of Samuel's life and work (see EIHC, "Benjamin Ropes' Autobiography"), as follows. Samuel Ropes' brother, Lt. Benjamin Ropes, an officer in the Revolutionary army who died of camp fever in 1778, left three small children and his wife, Margaret (Symonds) Ropes, who, in 1788, apprenticed her son Benjamin, sixteen, to his uncle Samuel Ropes, of Blaney Street, "to learn the cooper's trade"—making barrels and casks and buckets. Ben would serve Samuel for two years while she provided for Ben's "board and clothing." After learning the trade, Ben was to teach it to his younger brother James, who stayed at home to help their mother. Benjamin served out his time under uncle Samuel, who thereafter employed him as a journeyman cooper. One day in January, 1790, Benjamin went to the wharf to pack a hogshead of fish (a hogshead was a very large barrel); "being short-handed, (Ben) exerted himself beyond (his) strength by which (he) sprained his breast," which caused him to cough up blood every morning into the month of June, with continual night-sweats and great weakness. To save his health, young Benjamin shipped out on a fishing voyage, and returned, much stronger, in September, to find that his brother James had lost a hand due when a gun exploded. Again, Ben "applied to my uncle Samuel Ropes for employment." Samuel had no jobs open, and said he was barely able to make ends meet, but referred Benjamin to another uncle, the rich merchant Jerathmeel Peirce, who turned down Ben's request for a \$30 loan to get started as a cooper at the North Bridge. This surprised uncle Samuel, who then advised Ben to seek a loan from the lumber merchant Miles Ward,



who cheerfully complied, and launched Benjamin on a successful career.

In some places, the post-war loss of the former colonial connections and trade routes was devastating, for Americans were prohibited from trading with most British possessions; but in Salem, the merchants and mariners were ready to push their ships and cargos into all parts of the known world. They did so with astonishing success. By virtue of competing fiercely, pioneering new routes, and opening and dominating new markets, Salem won a high place in the world. Hasket Derby, William Gray, Eben Beckford, and Joseph Peabody were the town's commercial leaders. In 1784, Derby began trade with Russia; and in 1784 and 1785 he dispatched trading vessels to Africa and China, respectively. Voyages to India soon followed, and to the Spice Islands and Pepper Islands (Java, Sumatra, Malaya, etc.). All of this commerce was a boon to the coopers, including Samuel Ropes, who amassed a good deal of money.

By the 1790s, the new foreign-trade markets—and the coffee trade, which would be opened in 1798 with Mocha, Arabia—brought great riches to the Salem merchants, and raised the level of wealth throughout the town: new ships were bought and built, more crews were formed with more shipmasters, new shops and stores opened, new partnerships were formed, and new people moved to town. In 1792 Salem's first bank, the Essex Bank, was founded, although it "existed in experiment a long time before it was incorporated," per Rev. William Bentley. From a population of 7921 in 1790, the town would grow by 1500 persons in a decade. At the same time, thanks to the economic policies of Alexander Hamilton, Salem vessels were able to transport foreign cargoes tax-free and essentially to serve as the neutral carrying fleet for both Britain and France, which were at war with each other.

Samuel Ropes secured a position as a weigher & gauger in the Custom House, evidently, for in 1792 William Bentley, minister of the East Church, refers to him as "cooper, cutter, weigher & gauger" (Bentley's diary, I:336). In 1793 Samuel Ropes went into business as a ship-chandler, with a partner, Col. John Page (1751-1838) of 112-114 Federal Street. As Page & Ropes, Ship Chandlers, they operated a large brick store that supplied provisions and supplies to vessels bound on long voyages (per EIHC I:55). They carried everything from groceries to cordage, quadrants, charts, tar, brandy, gin, lime stone, sugar, and rum. Their store was leased from Hasket Derby evidently,



and was located at the head of Union Wharf, on Derby Street opposite Union Street; and in 1800 for \$4000 they purchased the store and land from the Derby heirs (ED 167:176). At the same time, it is likely that Mr. Ropes carried on his cooper's business, with a supervisor hired to oversee the journeymen and apprentices. Page & Ropes did an excellent business along the booming waterfront, and in 1798 the firm contributed \$100 toward construction of a privately financed Salem frigate, the *Essex*, for defense against marauding French ships (EIHC 75:6).

In the late 1790s, there was agitation in Congress to go to war with France, which was at war with England. After President Adams' negotiators were rebuffed by the French leaders in 1797, a quasi-war with France began in summer, 1798, much to the horror of Salem's George Crowninshield family (father and five shipmaster sons), which had an extensive trade with the French, and whose ships and cargos in French ports were susceptible to seizure. The quasi-war brought about a political split within the Salem population. Those who favored war with France (and detente with England) aligned themselves with the national Federalist party, led by Hamilton and Salem's Timothy Pickering (the U.S. Secretary of State). These included most of the merchants, led locally by the Derby family. Those who favored peace with France were the Anti-Federalists, led by Jefferson and his Democratic-Republican party; they were led locally by the Crowninshields. For the first few years of this rivalry, the Federalists prevailed; but after the death of Hasket "King" Derby in 1799 his family's power weakened. Samuel Ropes was a staunch and active Federalist, and would serve as a selectman of the town.

In 1800, Adams negotiated peace with France and fired Pickering as Secretary of State. Salem's Federalists merchants erupted in anger, expressed through their newspaper, the *Salem Gazette*. At the same time, British vessels began to harass American shipping. Salem owners bought more cannon and shot, and kept pushing their trade to the farthest ports of the rich East, while also maintaining trade with the Caribbean and Europe. Salem cargos were exceedingly valuable, and Salem was a major center for distribution of merchandise throughout New England: "the streets about the wharves were alive with teams loaded with goods for all parts of the country. It was a busy scene with the coming and going of vehicles, some from long distances, for railroads were then unknown and all transportation must be carried on in wagons and drays. In the taverns could be seen teamsters from all quarters sitting around the open fire in the chilly



evenings, discussing the news of the day or making merry over potations of New England rum, which Salem manufactured in abundance.” (from Hurd’s *History of Essex County*, 1888, p. 65).

The Crowninshields, led by brother Jacob, were especially successful, as their holdings rose from three vessels in 1800 to several in 1803. Their bailiwick, this Derby Street district, seemed almost to be itself imported from some foreign country: in the stores, parrots chattered and monkeys cavorted, and from the warehouses wafted the exotic aromas of Sumatran spices and Arabian coffee beans and Caribbean molasses. From the wharves were carted all manner of strange fruits, and crates of patterned china in red and blue, and piles of gorgeous silks and figured cloths, English leather goods, and hundreds of barrels of miscellaneous objects drawn from all of the ports and workshops of the world. The greatest of the Salem merchants at this time was William “Billy” Gray, who owned 36 large vessels—15 ships, 7 barks, 13 brigs, 1 schooner—by 1808. Salem was then still a town, and a small one by our standards, with a total population of about 9,500 in 1800. Its politics were fierce, and polarized everything. The two factions attended separate churches, held separate parades, and supported separate schools, military companies, and newspapers. Salem’s merchants resided mainly on two streets: Washington (which ended in a wharf on the Inner Harbor, and, above Essex, had the Town House in the middle) and Essex (particularly between what are now Hawthorne Boulevard and North Street). The East Parish (Derby Street area) was for the seafaring families, shipmasters, sailors, and fishermen. In the 1790s, Federal Street, known as New Street, had more empty lots than fine houses. Chestnut Street did not exist: its site was a meadow. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century advanced, Salem’s commercial prosperity would sweep almost all of the great downtown houses away (the brick Joshua Ward house, built 1784, is a notable exception).

The Ropes family prospered in these years, but suffered double tragedy, when the two oldest boys, Benjamin and Samuel, died in 1800 and in 1801, one at Curacao on a voyage of the *Henry* which he was supercargo, aged nineteen, and one at Union Wharf, second mate of the *Belisarius*, crushed to death by a falling spar, aged eighteen. The two Ropes brothers were young men of great ability and promise, and their deaths fell as terrible blows on their family and friends. Two of their three younger brothers would grow up to become prominent merchants in Boston.



The Common was covered with hillocks, small ponds and swamps, utility buildings, and the alms-house. In 1802, Col. Elias Hasket Derby (Jr.) began a subscription drive to landscape the common and transform it into a beautiful promenade and parade ground, to be known as Washington Square. Samuel Ropes gave \$5 to level the Common (EIHC 4:139), along with many others; and the project was soon completed.

The town's merchants were among the wealthiest in the country, and, in Samuel McIntire, they had a local architect who could help them realize their desires for large and beautiful homes in the latest style. While a few of the many new houses went up in the old Essex-Washington Street axis, most were erected on or near Washington Square or in the Federalist "west end" (Chestnut, Federal, and upper Essex Streets). The architectural style (called "Federal" today) had been developed by the Adam brothers in England and featured fanlight doorways, palladian windows, elongated pilasters and columns, and large windows.

A new bank, the Salem Bank, was formed in 1803, and there were two insurance companies and several societies and associations. The fierce politics and commercial rivalries continued. The ferment of the times is captured in the diary of Rev. William Bentley, bachelor minister of Salem's East Church and editor of the *Register* newspaper. His diary is full of references to the civic and commercial doings of the town, and to the lives and behaviors of all classes of society. He had high hopes for the future of a republican America, with well-educated citizens. He observed and fostered the transition in Salem, and wrote in his diary (2 Dec. 1806), "While Salem was under the greatest aristocracy in New England, few men thought, and the few directed the many. Now the aristocracy is gone and the many govern. It is plain it must require considerable time to give common knowledge to the people." On Union Street, not far from Bentley's church, on the fourth of July, 1804, was born a boy who would grow up to eclipse all sons of Salem in the eyes of the world: Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose father would die of fever while on a voyage to the Caribbean in 1808. This kind of untimely death was all too typical of Salem's young seafarers, who fell prey to malaria and other diseases of the Caribbean and Pacific tropics.

Salem was by no means the Federalist town that some have portrayed it to be: the political balance was about even between the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans; and in 1806, Samuel Ropes was the



sole Federalist chosen town selectman. In that year, the heirs of E.H. Derby extended their wharf far out into the harbor, tripling its previous length. This they did to create more space for warehouses and ship-berths in the deeper water, at just about the time that the Crowninshields had built their great India Wharf at the foot of now-Webb Street. The other important wharves were Forrester's (now Central, just west of Derby Wharf), White's (off White Street), Orne's (near White's), and Union Wharf, where Page & Ropes had its store. Farther to the west, a number of smaller wharves extended into the South River (filled in during the late 1800s), all the way to the foot of Washington Street. Each had a warehouse or two, and shops for artisans (coopers, blockmakers, joiners, etc.). The waterfront between Union Street and Washington Street also had lumber yards and several ship chandleries and distilleries, with a Market House at the foot of Central Street, below the Custom House. The wharves and streets were crowded with shoppers, gawkers, hawkers, sailors, artisans ("mechanics"), storekeepers, and teamsters; and just across the way, on Stage Point along the south bank of the South River, wooden barks and brigs and ships were being built in the shipyards.

Salem's boom came to an end with a crash in January, 1808, when Jefferson and the Congress imposed an embargo on all shipping in hopes of forestalling war with Britain. The Embargo, which was widely opposed in New England, proved futile and nearly ruinous in Salem, where commerce ceased. In October, the Federalists of Essex County held an anti-Embargo convention at Topsfield, at which Samuel Ropes was one of the delegates (p.275, J.D. Phillips, *Salem & The Indies*). As a hotbed of Democratic-Republicanism, Salem's East Parish and its seafarers, led by the Crowninshields, loyally supported the Embargo until it was lifted in spring, 1809. Shunned by the other Salem merchants for his support of the Embargo, the eminent Billy Gray took his large fleet of ships—fully one-third of Salem's tonnage—and moved to Boston, whose commerce was thereby much augmented. Gray's removal eliminated a huge amount of Salem wealth, shipping, import-export cargos, and local employment. Gray soon switched from the Federalist party, and was elected Lt. Governor under Gov. Elbridge Gerry, a native of Marblehead.

At this time, Samuel Ropes and his wife decided to move out of the east Parish, where they had resided since 1782. On 1 Aug. 1809 for \$2900 Samuel Ropes, merchant, bought from Jacob Lord, carpenter, the westerly part of the large new house, with barn, at 134 bridge Street, on the southerly corner of Northey Street (ED 187:228). Into



this house Samuel Ropes and his family soon moved; and there he would live for many years more, until his death in 1841.

After the lifting of the Embargo, Salem resumed its seafaring commerce for three years, still subject to British predators; and in June, 1812, war was declared against Britain. Although the merchants had tried to prevent the war, when it came, Salem swiftly fitted out 40 privateers manned by Marblehead and Salem crews, who also served on U.S. Navy vessels, including the frigate *Constitution*. Many more local vessels could have been sent against the British, but some of the Federalist merchants held them back. In addition, Salem fielded companies of infantry and artillery. Salem and Marblehead privateers were largely successful in making prizes of British supply vessels. While many of the town's men were wounded in engagements, and some were killed, the possible riches of privateering kept the men returning to sea as often as possible. The first prizes were captured by a 30-ton converted fishing schooner, the *Fame*, and by a 14-ton luxury yacht fitted with one gun, the *Jefferson*. Of all Salem privateers, the Crowninshields' 350-ton ship *America* was most successful: she captured 30-plus prizes worth more than \$1,100,000.

Salem erected forts and batteries on its Neck, to discourage the British warships that cruised these waters. On land, the war went poorly for the United States, as the British captured Washington, DC, and burned the Capitol and the White House. Along the western frontier, U.S. forces were successful against the weak English forces; and, as predicted by many, the western expansionists had their day. At sea, as time wore on, Salem vessels were captured, and its men imprisoned or killed. After almost three years, the war was bleeding the town dry. Hundreds of Salem men and boys were in British prison-ships and at Dartmoor Prison in England. At the Hartford Convention in 1814, New England Federalist delegates met to consider what they could do to bring the war to a close and to restore the region's commerce. Sen. Timothy Pickering of Salem led the extreme Federalists in proposing a series of demands which, if not met by the federal government, could lead to New England's seceding from the United States; but the Pickering faction was countered by Harrison G. Otis of Boston and the moderate Federalists, who prevailed in sending a moderate message to Congress.

At last, in February, 1815, peace was restored.



Toward the end of the war, in November, 1814, for \$1300 Samuel Ropes Esq. sold the house here on Blaney Street to Samuel Derby, Jr. (ED 205:36).

Samuel Derby Jr. (1785-1828) was a ship chandler, also known as a trader or grocer. Born 2 Oct. 1785, he was the eldest of ten children of Samuel Derby (1764-1826) & Bethiah Watts (1767-1851) of Salem. His father, who began his career as an artisan, became a ship chandler, and prospered until the Embargo, which badly damaged his finances. In the War of 1812, Samuel Derby Sr., although fifty years old, was captain of marines on the privateer *Montgomery*, and fought well in many battles at sea. Presumably Samuel Derby Jr. was raised up as a clerk in his father's chandlery and also served during the War of 1812 on board privateers. Samuel Derby Sr. must have been friends with the sail-maker Nicholas Lane (co-purchaser in 1782 with Samuel Ropes), for he named his last child Nicholas Lane Derby.

Samuel Derby Jr., 23, married Abigail Buffum, sixteen, in November, 1808. She was the daughter of Joshua Buffum of Salem, and had been born while the family resided in Connecticut, in 1792. A few years after Samuel & Abigail's marriage, her mother, Mrs. Mary Buffum, a widow, married, second, Nicholas Lane, the sail-maker who lived nearby on Derby Street. Mr. Lane died in May, 1815, and Mary survived as his widow.

Samuel and Abigail Derby had three children before purchasing this house, Joshua (1809, died 1810), Lucy Ann (1811), and Mary (1814). They would have five more surviving children after 1814: Eliza C. (1817, died an infant), Eliza C. (1819, died 1828), Abigail (1821), Samuel (1823), and Charles (1826). Soon after Mr. Lane's death, Mr. Derby, described as a grocer, had an opportunity to buy the adjoining property formerly of Nicholas Lane, and did so, for \$765.30 from the Salem Bank, subject to a mortgage for \$364 to John Osgood, which he would pay off in 1817 (ED 206:140, 214:124). This gave him ownership of the store at the corner and the house to the west of it on derby Street, and the land belonging.

Post-war, the Salem merchants rebuilt their fleets and resumed their worldwide trade, slowly at first, and then to great effect. Many new partnerships were formed. The pre-war partisan politics of the town were not resumed post-war, as the middle-class "mechanics" (artisans) became more powerful and brought about civic harmony, largely through the Salem Charitable Mechanic Association (founded 1817).



In July, 1817, the Derbys had a terrible accident, as their new baby, Eliza, then three months old, was accidentally given laudanum, a poison, from which she died right away.

Rev. William Bentley, keen observer and active citizen during Salem's time of greatest prosperity and fiercest political divisions, died in 1819, the year in which a new U.S. Custom House was built on the site of the George Crowninshield mansion, at the head of Derby Wharf. Into the 1820s foreign trade continued prosperous; and new markets were opened with Madagascar (1820), which supplied tallow and ivory, and Zanzibar (1825), whence came coffee, ivory, and gum copal, used to make varnish. This opened a huge and lucrative trade in which Salem dominated, and its vessels thus gained access to all of the east African ports.

In 1820 (per census), Samuel Derby Jr. and family resided here (p. 42) and he prospered in his business. He evidently conducted his ship chandlery from the store at the corner of Derby and Blaney Streets; and he had another house, formerly Lane's, leased out to tenants on Derby Street west of the store. His chandlery eventually became a grocery store, as fewer vessels needed outfitting for long voyages to the Orient.

**Samuel Derby Jr (1785-1828), s/o Samuel Derby & Bethiah Watts, died 18 Jan. 1828. He m. 9 Nov. 1808 Abigail Buffum (1792-1877), d/o Joshua & Mary Buffum, died 2 Sept. 1877. Known issue:**

1. Joshua, 1809-1810.
2. Lucy Ann, 1811, d. 12 May 1830.
3. Mary, 17 June 1815, artist, d. 19 Jan. 1900.
4. Eliza C., 1817, d. 12 July 1817, by accident.
5. Eliza C., 1819, d. 13 Feb. 1828.
6. Abigail, 1821, m. 1847 Albert A. Gould.
7. Samuel, 1823, settled in Hawaii.
8. Charles, 1826, m. Emeline \_\_\_\_\_; settled in Hawaii.

Salem's general maritime foreign commerce fell off sharply in the late 1820s. Imports in Salem ships were supplanted by the goods that were now being produced in great quantities in America. The interior of the country was being opened for settlement, and some Salemites moved away. To the north, the falls of the Merrimack River powered large new textile mills (Lowell was founded in 1823), which created great wealth for their investors; and in general it seemed that the tide



of opportunity was ebbing away from Salem. To stem the flow of talent from the town and to harness its potential water power for manufacturing, Salem's merchants and capitalists tried to harness Salem's tidal power for manufacturing, but the effort failed, after which several leading citizens moved to Boston, the hub of investment in the new economy.

On Jan. 18, 1828, Samuel Derby died, aged just 42 years. He left his wife Abigail, 35, and six young children, one of them still a toddler. Less than a month later, his daughter Eliza died at the age of eight. It was a double tragedy, and a disaster for the family. Fortunately, Samuel left a solvent estate. The probate papers (appended) show the stock in his store at the time (worth \$796.32) as well as the household furniture. He owned one share in the Essex marine Railway Corporation (worth \$75), which was a company that hauled vessels out of the water for repairs; and he held many notes on loans that he had made to friends and relatives. The administrator of his estate was his wife's brother, Samuel Buffum. Before long, the probate court set off to the widow, Mrs. Abigail Buffum Derby, one-third of the real estate, for her lifetime use. The "widow's dower" (copy of court decree appended), awarded in August, 1829, consisted of most of the homestead (valued at \$1600) here, including all of the house-lot and all of the rooms other than the three northern lower rooms, which were reserved to the benefit of her children. Mrs. Derby continued to reside here with her children.

In April, 1830, occurred a horrifying crime that brought disgrace to Salem. Old Capt. Joseph White, a rich merchant, now retired, resided in a mansion on Essex Street. His wealth was legendary in Salem, not least among the denizens of the nearby Salem Jail, where plots had long been hatched to break in and steal the Captain's putative treasure chest. One night, intruders did break in; and they stabbed him to death in his sleep. All of Salem buzzed with rumors; but within a few months it was discovered that the murderer was a Crowninshield (he killed himself) who had been hired by his friends, Capt. White's own relatives, Capt. Joe Knapp and his brother Frank (they would be executed). The murder, and related lurid events, tarnished Salem further, and more families quit the now-notorious town. One month after the White murder, Lucy Ann Derby, nineteen, died here at her mother's house.

In 1830 (per census), Abigail Derby lived here with two boys, a young man, a girl, two young women, and an older woman, probably her



mother, Mrs. Mary Lane, widow. The house may have had as tenant Adam Nesmith, a distiller, or Eben Hooper. In 1831 (pr valuations, p.8), Abigail Derby owned two houses and a store (worth \$2500, valued at \$1500), and she lived here with her family, while two blind men, Joseph Black and Joseph Millett, evidently resided in the tenant house on Derby Street, as did William Measly.

Salem had not prepared for the industrial age, and had few natural advantages. The North River served not to power factories but mainly to flush the waste from the 25 tanneries that had set up along its banks. As the decade wore on, and the new railroads and canals, all running and flowing to Boston from points north, west, and south, diverted both capital and trade away from the coast. Salem's remaining merchants took their equity out of local wharves and warehouses and ships and put it into the stock of manufacturing and transportation companies. Some merchants did not make the transition, and were ruined. Old-line areas of work, like rope-making, sail-making, and ship chandleries, gradually declined and disappeared. Salem slumped badly, but, despite all, the voters decided to charter their town as a city in 1836—the third city to be formed in the state, behind Boston and Lowell. City Hall was built 1837-8 and the city seal was adopted with an already-anachronistic Latin motto of “to the farthest port of the rich East”—a far cry from “Go West, young man!” The Panic of 1837, a brief, sharp, nationwide economic depression, caused even more Salem families to head west in search of fortune and a better future.

Throughout the 1830s, the leaders of Salem scrambled to re-invent an economy for their fellow citizens, many of whom were mariners without much sea-faring to do. Ingenuity, ambition, and hard work would have to carry the day. One inspiration was the Salem Laboratory, Salem's first science-based manufacturing enterprise, founded in 1813 to produce chemicals. At the plant built in 1818 in North Salem on the North River, the production of alum and blue vitriol was a specialty; and it proved a very successful business. Salem's whale-fishery led to the manufacturing of high-quality candles at Stage Point, along with machine oils. The candles proved very popular. Lead-manufacturing began in the 1820s, and grew large after 1830, when Wyman's gristmills on the Forest River, at the head of Salem Harbor, were retooled for making high-quality white lead and sheet lead. These enterprises were a start toward taking Salem in a new direction. In 1838 the Eastern Rail Road, headquartered in Salem, began operating between Boston and Salem, which gave the local people a direct route to the region's largest market. The new railroad



tracks ran right over the middle of the Mill Pond; the tunnel under Washington Street was built in 1839; and the line was extended to Newburyport in 1840.

In Salem first directory, published in 1837, Mrs. Abigail Derby is listed at 4 Blaney Street, as is William Measly, laborer. Joseph M. Black, laborer, is listed at 49 Derby Street.

In 1844, #4 Blaney Street was occupied by Mrs. Abigail Derby, her son Samuel Derby, 20, who probably worked as a sailor, and by Peter Carraway, a laborer. The tenant house on Derby Street was occupied by Joseph Black, George Ramsdell, 30, and Thomas Loyd, 20 (per 1844 street book). In the 1846 Directory, Mrs. Abigail Derby is listed here at 4 Blaney. In 1847 her daughter Abigail married Mr. Gould and moved to South Danvers; she would have two daughters before her early death. In 1848 (per street book), the house was occupied by Charles Derby, 21, Henry Robinson, 39, an Englishman working as a mariner, and (technically) by Samuel Derby, who, it was noted, had been absent for three years. Mrs. Derby was not mentioned. In 1849, she resided here with her son, Charles, and daughter, Mary, an artist, and with mariner Henry Robinson, all at “the foot of Blaney Street.”

In the face of major economic changes, some members of Salem’s waning merchant class pursued sea-borne businesses into the 1840s; but it was an ebb tide, with unfavorable winds. Boston, transformed into a modern mega-port with efficient railroad and highway distribution to all markets, had subsumed virtually all foreign trade other than Salem’s commerce with Zanzibar. The sleepy waterfront at Derby Wharf, with an occasional arrival from Africa and regular visits from schooners carrying wood from Nova Scotia, is depicted in 1850 by Hawthorne in his cranky “introductory section” to **The Scarlet Letter**, which he began while working in the Custom House.

Although Hawthorne had no interest in describing it, Salem’s transformation did occur in the 1840s, as more industrial methods and machines were introduced, and many new companies in new lines of business arose. The Gothic symbol of Salem’s new industrial economy was the large twin-towered granite train station—the “stone depot”—smoking and growling with idling locomotives. It stood on filled-in land at the foot of Washington Street, where the merchants’ wharves had been; and from it the trains carried many valuable products as well as passengers. The tanning and curing of leather was very important in Salem by the mid-1800s. On and near Boston Street, along the upper



North River, there were 41 tanneries in 1844, and 85 in 1850, employing 550 hands. The leather business would continue to grow in importance throughout the 1800s. In 1846 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company completed the construction at Stage Point of the largest factory building in the United States, 60' wide by 400' long. It was an immediate success, and hundreds of people found employment there, many of them living in tenements built nearby. It too benefited from the Zanzibar and Africa trade, as it produced light cotton cloth for use in the tropics. Also in the 1840s, a new method was introduced to make possible high-volume industrial shoe production. In Lynn, the factory system was perfected, and that city became the nation's leading shoe producer. Salem had shoe factories too, and attracted shoe workers from outlying towns and the countryside. Even the population began to transform, as hundreds of Irish families, fleeing the Famine in Ireland, settled in Salem and gave the industrialists a big pool of cheap labor. In 1849, the Gold Rush was on, and many men from Salem took a chance at getting rich out west. Some found a little gold and came home, others died on the way out or back, and some never returned. Charles Derby was one who tried his luck and eventually returned.

In 1851, Stephen C. Phillips succeeded in building a railroad line from Salem to Lowell, which meant that the coal that was landed at Phillips Wharf (formerly the Crowninshields' great India Wharf) could be run cheaply out to Lowell to help fuel the boilers of the mills, whose output of textiles could be freighted easily to Salem for shipment by water. This innovation, although not long-lived, was a much-needed boost to Salem's economy as a port and transportation center. Salem's growth continued through the 1850s, as business and industries expanded, the population swelled, new churches (e.g. Immaculate Conception, 1857) were started, new working-class neighborhoods were developed (especially in North Salem and South Salem, off Boston Street, and along the Mill Pond behind the Broad Street graveyard), and new schools, factories, and stores were built. A second, larger, factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was added in 1859, at Stage Point, where a new Methodist Church went up, and many neat homes, boarding-houses, and stores were erected along the streets between Lafayette and Congress. The tanning business continued to boom, as better and larger tanneries were built along Boston Street and Mason Street; and subsidiary industries sprang up as well, most notably the J.M. Anderson glue-works on the Turnpike (Highland Avenue).



In 1854, Mrs. Derby and the artist Mary Derby lived here, while son Charles was listed as having gone to California, no doubt for the Gold Rush. Henry Robinson, mariner, was still residing here with the Derby women (per 1855 directory), but shortly after he moved away. Charles returned about 1852 and married Emeline; and they had a boy, Charles A., in 1853, and another son in 1855, by which time they resided on or near Allen Street, and Charles was working as a restorateur (1855 census, house, 48, ward one). Here at #4 Blaney, Mrs. Abigail Derby, 63, and daughter Mary, 41, resided in one unit, while in the other resided Henry Robinson, 46, a mariner, born in England, his wife Eliza, 44, born in Maine, and their daughters Eliza G., five, and Mary A, one year (house 106, ward one, 1855 census).

As it re-established itself as an economic powerhouse, Salem took a strong interest in national politics. It was primarily Republican, and strongly anti-slavery, with its share of outspoken abolitionists, led by Charles Remond, a passionate speaker who came from one of the city's notable black families. At its Lyceum (on Church Street) and in other venues, plays and shows were put on, but cultural lectures and political speeches were given too.

By 1860, with the election of Abraham Lincoln, it was clear that the Southern states would secede from the union; and Salem, which had done so much to win the independence of the nation, was ready to go to war to force others to remain a part of it.

The Civil War began in April, 1861, and went on for four years, during which hundreds of Salem men served in the army and navy, and many were killed or died of disease or abusive treatment while imprisoned. Hundreds more suffered wounds, or broken health. The people of Salem contributed greatly to efforts to alleviate the suffering of the soldiers, sailors, and their families; and there was great celebration when the war finally ended in the spring of 1865, just as President Lincoln was assassinated. The four years of bloodshed and warfare were over; the slaves were free; a million men were dead; the union was preserved and the South was under martial rule. Salem, with many wounded soldiers and grieving families, welcomed the coming of peace.

Through the 1860s, Salem pursued manufacturing, especially of leather and shoes and textiles. The managers and capitalists tended to build their new, grand houses along Lafayette Street (these houses may still be seen, south of Roslyn Street; many are in the French



Second Empire style, with mansard roofs). A third factory building for the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company was built in 1865.

In 1862, Samuel Derby sold his 7/36 interest in the overall property here to his mother Abigail Derby; and in 1863 Abigail Derby Gould for \$450 sold her interest to her sister Mary Derby (ED 637:40, 646:227). Charles Derby (he is listed here in the 1864 directory) and family eventually joined his brother Samuel, who had settled in paradise—the Sandwich Islands, which he had no doubt visited on a cruise, which are now called Hawaii.

In 1870 Salem received its last cargo from Zanzibar, thus ending a once-important trade. By then, a new Salem & New York freight steamboat line was in operation. Seven years later, with the arrival of a vessel from Cayenne, Salem's foreign trade came to an end. After that, "the merchandise warehouses on the wharves no longer contained silks from India, tea from China, pepper from Sumatra, coffee from Arabia, spices from Batavia, gum-copal from Zanzibar, hides from Africa, and the various other products of far-away countries. The boys have ceased to watch on the Neck for the incoming vessels, hoping to earn a reward by being the first to announce to the expectant merchant the safe return of his looked-for vessel. The foreign commerce of Salem, once her pride and glory, has spread its white wings and sailed away forever" (George Batchelor in *History of Essex County*, II: 65).

In 1870 (per census, house 127), this was the home of Mrs. Abigail Derby, 78, with \$2500 in real estate, and her daughter Mary, 55, who had \$1,000 in personal estate; and it was also the home of John Smith, 37, a cigar maker, wife Abba T., 36, and son James H. Smith, 3.

Salem was now so densely built-up that a general conflagration was always a possibility, as in Boston, when, on Nov. 9, 1872, the financial and manufacturing district of the city burned up. Salem continued to prosper in the 1870s, carried forward by the leather-making business. In 1874 the city was visited by a tornado and shaken by a minor earthquake. In the following year, the large Pennsylvania Pier (site of the present coal-fired harborside electrical generating plant) was completed to begin receiving large shipments of coal. Beyond it, at Juniper Point, a new owner began subdividing the old Allen farmlands into a new development called Salem Willows and Juniper Point. In the U.S. centennial year, 1876, A.G. Bell of Salem announced that he had discovered a way to transmit voices over telegraph wires.



In this decade, French-Canadian families began coming to work in Salem's mills and factories, and more houses and tenements were built. The better-off workers bought portions of older houses or built small homes for their families in the outlying sections of the city; and by 1879 the Naumkeag Steam Cotton mills would employ 1200 people and produce annually nearly 15 million yards of cloth. Shoe-manufacturing businesses expanded in the 1870s, and 40 shoe factories were employing 600-plus operatives. Tanning, in both Salem and Peabody, remained a very important industry, and employed hundreds of breadwinners. On Boston Street in 1879, the Arnold tannery caught fire and burned down.

Mrs. Abigail Derby died on Sept. 2, 1877, at the age of 85, having lived here for more than sixty years, and having survived her husband by 49 years. Her survivors were her son Charles of Hawaii (son Samuel had already died there), her daughter Mary of Salem, and the two daughters of her deceased daughter Mrs. Abigail Gould. Her daughter Mary served as administratrix of the Samuel Derby estate, which had never been divided, and which included two houses, a store, and barn, all worth \$2300, of which Mrs. Derby's own interest was worth \$1405, being 11/18 of the homestead (#37369). In 1878 and 1879 Miss Mary Derby bought out the interests of her brother Charles Derby and heirs of her sister Mrs. Gould in their mother's property (ED 1022:204-5). This evidently left Mary Derby the sole owner of the premises; and on 11 October 1881 she sold the homestead for \$1135 to Mary Durgin, wife of John Durgin, by Mrs. Durgin's trustee, George Wheatland, Esq. (ED 1069:160). The premises fronted 86' on Blaney Street, and 73' each on its north and its south boundaries.

Mrs. Durgin, the new owner, died by early 1884; and on 1 February 1884 the homestead was conveyed, according to her will, to Thomas Durgin, her son (ED 1124:99). In October, 1889, for \$1600, Thomas Durgin sold the premises to John H. Cashman of Salem (ED 1261:77). Mr. Cashman evidently built a new house to the west of #4, and the new house was numbered 4 rear. After his death, his widow, Anastasia Cashman, owned the property (see 1897 atlas), which would remain in Cashman ownership until 1922.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Salem kept building infrastructure; and new businesses arose, and established businesses expanded. Retail stores prospered; horse-drawn trolleys ran every which-way; and machinists,



carpenters, millwrights, and other specialists all thrived. In 1880, Salem's manufactured goods were valued at about \$8.4 million, of which leather accounted for nearly half. In the summer of 1886, the Knights of Labor brought a strike against the manufacturers for a ten-hour day and other concessions; but the manufacturers imported labor from Maine and Canada, and kept going. The strikers held out, and there was violence in the streets, and even rioting; but the owners prevailed, and many of the defeated workers lost their jobs and suffered, with their families, through a bitter winter.

In 1886, Miss Mary Derby for \$850 sold off more of her property, to John Nash (ED 1172:298), who thus acquired the corner lot and old store, which had been leased by Albert P. Goodhue. She had moved to 103 Essex Street, where she lived out the rest of her life, and died in her 84<sup>th</sup> year in January, 1900.

By the mid-1880s, Salem's cotton-cloth mills at the Point employed 1400 people who produced about 19 million yards annually, worth about \$1.5 million. The city's large shoe factories stood downtown behind the stone depot and on Dodge and Lafayette Streets. A jute bagging company prospered with plants on Skerry Street and English Street; its products were sent south to be used in cotton-baling. Salem factories also produced lead, paint, and oil. At the Eastern Railroad yard on Bridge Street, cars were repaired and even built new. In 1887 the streets were first lit with electricity, replacing gas-light. The gas works, which had stood on Northey Street since 1850, was moved to a larger site on Bridge Street in 1888, opposite the Beverly Shore.

More factories and more people required more space for buildings, more roads, and more storage areas. This space was created by filling in rivers, harbors, and ponds. The once-broad North River was filled from both shores, and became a canal along Bridge Street above the North Bridge. The large and beautiful Mill Pond, which occupied the whole area between the present Jefferson Avenue, Canal Street, and Loring Avenue, finally vanished beneath streets, storage areas, junk-yards, rail-yards, and parking lots. The South River, too, with its epicenter at Central Street (that's why there was a Custom House built there in 1805) disappeared under the pavement of Riley Plaza and New Derby Street, and some of its old wharves were joined together with much in-fill and turned into coal-yards and lumber-yards. Only a canal was left, running in from Derby and Central Wharves to Lafayette Street.



In 1890 this house was occupied by the families of John Shallow and of James Wade, a laborer and teamster who would soon move to Derby Street. The Shallows, John and Mary, were born in Ireland and had moved to Canada as a young couple. Six sons and five daughters were born to them (not all names are known to me); and in the 1870s they moved to the United States. They probably moved into this house in the 1880s, and would reside here for at least three decades, as tenants of the Cashmans. John Shallow would die here in 1899, aged about seventy.

**John Shallow (1830?-1899) born in Ireland, died 16 Feb. 1899. He m. Mary \_\_\_\_\_ (1832-1916), died 4 Dec. 1916. Known issue, all born in Canada (three others, names unknown):**

1. **John, currier 1890**
2. **Patrick J., currier 1890**
3. **Mary J., 1857, came U.S. 1876, weaver**
4. **William A., 1860, currier 1890**
5. **Bridget, 1864, m. William H. Veno.**
6. **Catherine F., 1865**
7. **Annie, 1868**
8. **Thomas E., 1871, currier 1890**

In 1900 or shortly before, William H. Veno appears as head of a second household residing here. He was born in Washington in 1864, of parents born in France. He married Bridget Shallow. In 1898 he went to work for the Salem Water Department, where he came to be an expert in water supply. He belonged to various clubs and societies, and was a volunteer fireman and a well-liked "conscientious and faithful" man and citizen (info from his 1908 obituary). He and Bridget had five children.

**William H. Veno (1864-1908), born Washington; he died 13 April 1908. He m. c. 1888 Bridget (Shallow) (b. 1864, Canada, d/o John & Mary Shallow; came U.S. 1875). Known issue (three others died young), surname Veno:**

1. **Mary F., 1889**
2. **John, 1890**
3. **Florence, 1897**
4. **Anna, 1900**
5. **Henry, 1905**

In 1901, among the many Shallows living here, Miss Mary J. worked as a weaver, Patrick J. was listed as "U.S. Volunteer", and Thomas E.



was a clerk at V. Dooley's grocery, 122 Derby Street, while William A. was a currier in the leather trade.

In the early spring of 1908, after responding to a fire alarm, William Veno, 44, took ill; and he died a month later in April, leaving his wife Bridget and five children, the youngest, Henry, only three.

Salem kept growing. The Canadians 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. People from the surrounding towns, and Marblehead in particular, came to Salem to do their shopping; and its handsome government buildings, as befit the county seat, were busy with conveyances of land, lawsuits, and probate proceedings. The city's politics were lively, and its economy was strong.

On June 25, 1914, in the morning, in Blubber Hollow (Boston Street opposite Federal), a fire started in one of Salem's fire-prone wooden tanneries. This fire soon consumed the building and 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 roared easterly, a monstrous front of flame and smoke, wiping out the houses of Boston Street, Essex Street, and upper Broad Street, and then sweeping through Hathorne, Winthrop, Endicott, and other residential streets. Men and machines could not stop it: the enormous fire crossed over into South Salem and destroyed the neighborhoods west of Lafayette Street, then devoured the mansions of Lafayette Street itself, and raged onward into the tenement district. Despite the combined efforts of heroic fire crews from many towns and cities, the fire overwhelmed everything in its path: it smashed into the large factory buildings of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company (Congress Street), which exploded in an inferno—well viewed from Blaney Street—and it rolled down Lafayette Street and across the water to Derby Street. There, just beyond Union Street, after a 13-hour rampage, the monster died, having consumed 250 acres, 1600 houses, and 41 factories, and leaving three dead and thousands homeless. Some people 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.

The Shallows and Venos continued to reside here. Mrs. Mary Shallow died in 1916, in her eighties. In 1922 the Cashmans sold the premises to Messrs. Sim and Russell, owners of the Russell-Sim Tanning Company (ED 2522:89); and they would own it until 1944.

By the 1920s, Salem was once again a thriving city; and its tercentenary in 1926 was a time of great celebration. The Depression hit in 1929, and continued through the 1930s. Salem, the county seat and regional retail center, gradually rebounded, and prospered after World War II through the 1950s and into the 1960s. General Electric, Sylvania, Parker Brothers, Pequot Mills (formerly Naumkeag Steam Cotton Co.), Almy's department store, various other large-scale retailers, and Beverly's United Shoe Machinery Company were all major local employers. Then 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 notoriety arising from the witch trials, but also from its history as a great seaport and as the home of Bowditch, McIntire, Bentley, Story, and Hawthorne. Most of all, it remains a city where the homes of the old-time merchants, mariners, coopers, chandlers, and mill-operatives are all honored as a large part of what makes Salem different from any other place.