

Seth Adams House
26 Benevolent Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-168

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
68-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-168

SETH ADAMS HOUSE

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Address: 26 Benevolent Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.
Plat 12, Lot 344.

Present Owner: Brown University

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: The house is being renovated for use as a
dwelling.

Brief Statement
of Significance: Built in 1823, this is an example of a two-and-
a-half-story, five-bay, frame house.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1822 Zachariah Allen sells to Seth Adams for \$625 "a certain lot of land on the S/Ely corner of Benevolent and Brown Streets. Being S/ly on Benevolent; W/ly on land of Sylvanus and Samuel Tingley; N/ly on land of William Goddard; E/ly on Brown Street." - Deed Book 46, page 222, in Providence City Hall.
- 1824 Seth Adams, Jr., commission merchant, lived here. - Providence Directory.
- 1831 Seth Adams sells to Stephen Arnold (son of Caleb) for \$4000 "a certain lot of land with dwelling house, being the same lot (except for part conveyed to the City of Providence for public streets) that was conveyed to me by deed from Z. Allen in 1822". - Deed Book 61, page 202, in Providence City Hall.
- 1831 Property taxed to, and in the Arnold family until
- 1926 Taxed to Mary Henshaw
- 1950 Taxed to Rebekah G. and Joseph G. Henshaw
- 1961 To Brown University

2. Date of erection: 1823.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The house has apparently undergone various alterations especially on the interior as noted in the description.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
December 1961

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a two-and-a-half-story, five-bay, frame house built in 1823, which, though altered in various ways, preserves features characteristic of the period.
2. Condition of fabric: Under complete repair and renovation.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Faces south. Main block about 36' x 33', two-and-a-half stories, five bays wide. Wing on west side about 15' x 15', two stories, apparently later. Rear wing, about 15' x 22', two stories high.
2. Foundations: Granite ashlar, coursed along sidewalks at the south front and east side.
3. Wall construction: Frame with clapboards; clapboards exposed average 3-1/2" at the bottom becoming wider toward the top.
4. Porches, stoops, etc.: Main entrance stoop, six steps high, granite ashlar. 3-1/2' wide with opposed double flights of steps parallel to the front of the house. Simple iron rail. Enclosed entry at north rear door of main block. Granite step at door in rear wing.
5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys in outside walls of main block. One brick chimney in rear wing.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance: six-panel door, sunk panels, side lights; pilastered frontispiece,

reeded pilasters, deeply projecting cornice on bracket-like forms atop the pilasters, dense grouping of many small moldings, beaded bed course. Six-panel rear doors in simple frames.

- b. Windows and shutters: Six over six light double hung windows, simple molded frames. No shutters but shutter hardware in place, shutters recently removed.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roofs on main block and rear wing, shingles. Flat roof on later west wing.
- b. Cornice: Molded cornice with large drilled ovolo bed mold on front and rear of main block; cornice molding returned slightly at gable ends; molded raking cornice. Simple molded cornice on rear wing. Deeply projecting bracketed cornice on later west wing.
- c. Dormers: Two gabled, pedimented dormers on south front side

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Central hall, four-room plan, center hall divided with front and rear stairs. Kitchen in rear wing, entirely rebuilt. One room in later west wing. Bedrooms on second floor, similar arrangement, altered to allow several later bathrooms. Four bedrooms on third floor of main block with 6'2" headroom.
- 2. Stairways: Open well main stair to second floor only, straight run, open string, sawn scroll ornament on step ends; molded handrail; round, tapered newels; three slender rectangular balusters per step. U-shaped rear stair to second floor, continues straight to third floor.
- 3. Flooring: Wide board flooring.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Modern plaster.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Paneled doors, mostly flat, sunk panels. Simple molded architraves most places. Entrance hall and two east parlors have deep, undercut moldings and bull's-eye corner blocks that are probably later alterations.
- 6. Trim: Molded chair rail in some rooms, paneled aprons under windows in the two east parlors. Complex molded

ceiling cornices on first and second floors.

7. Hardware: Brass knobs and case locks on front and rear doors; later porcelain knobs on most interior doors.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Modern central heating. Fireplaces with one-story wood mantels; Fireplaces in two east parlors with paired corner colonettes, plain entablatures with center panels, deep mantel shelves with complex moldings and beaded bed molds. Kitchen fireplace in rear wing bricked up.

D. Site

1. General setting: House adjacent to brick sidewalks on south front and east sides. Small yard around west and north sides.
2. Enclosures: Solid board fence around yard.
3. Landscaping: Informal garden.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
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