

William L. Brown House
23 John Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-225

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
125-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

WILLIAM L. BROWN HOUSE

Address: 23 John Street, Providence, Providence County
Rhode Island.

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RI,
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125-

Plat 16, lot 288.

Present owner
and Occupant: Professor Henry Barrett Huntington

Present Use: Dwelling.

Brief Statement
of Significance: This is a typical example of a two-story frame
house, built at the end of the 18th century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1795 John and Jesse Sabin sell for \$345 to William L Brown a certain lot of land in the S/ly part of Providence Bounded: N by John Street 60'; E by Asia Washburn 125'; N by heirs of Christopher Arnold 60'; W by Young Seamans 125'. - Deed Book 24, page 90, in Providence City Hall.

1798 United States Tax List - William S. Brown House - North on John Street, West on Young Seamons (#21) 38' x 30' with addition at back 10' x 8', 2 stories wood, house 20'x 12' one story wood. - Notes at the Rhode Island Historical Society gathered by Henry R. Chace in preparation of his book, Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providencce, Rhode Island in 1798. Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914).

1803 Charles W Tillinghast, administrator u/w William L Brown, dec. sells for \$315 to William S. Brown, mariner, a certain lot of land with the DWELLING HOUSE and other buildings, said lot being the same purchased by William L Brown in 1795. - Deed Book 27, page 524, in Providence City Hall.

1806 William Sanford Brown, mariner sells for \$4000 to Zebediah Lothrop, merchant, a certain lot of land with a Mansion House, barn and wood house thereon standing, bounded: N by John Street 60'; E by Joseph Baker 125'; N by Josiah Baker 60'; W by Young Seamans 125'. - Deed Book 31, page 146, in Providence City Hall.

1806 Fire Record: Zebediah Lothrop: S side of street... wood...2 stories high..3 chimneys. Not far from water. - Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Co. at the offices of the Providence Washington Insurance Company, Providence, R. I. Vol. 1.

1813 Fire Insurance Record, Zebediah Lothrop, self-occupied, wood, 28' x 30' front to back, 2 stories high front and rear with addition adjoining used as washroom 10' x 8'. - Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Company at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R. I. Vol. 4, policy #1357.

1814 Mss. tax descriptions in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R. I. for the 1814 Providence direct tax to the federal government: Zebediah Lothrop: S side of John Street 60' front and 120' back..wooden house 38'x30', an old barn and wood house...all valued at \$1700..also 1 lot N side of John St. 50x20'.

1820 Fire Insurance Record: John St. - Sarah Lothrop, widow of Zebediah, self-occupied plus another family, wood, 38' in front, 30' front to rear, 2 stories high, addition in rear 50' long 15' wide, used as kitchen, wood house, cheese house and barn. - Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Company at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R. I., Vol. 6, policy #1973.

The Lothrop family lived here until 1908

1909 Preston H Gardner, commissioner, sells at public auction for \$2750 to Lena Michelovitz wife of Isaac the above homestead Estate of the late Henry W Lothrop..she being the highest bidder. - Deed Book 506, page 24, in Providence City Hall.

1909 Isaac Michelovitz and wife Lena sell to Theodore Francis Green the above property. - Deed Book 506, page 25, in Providence City Hall.

1909 Theodore Francis Green sells and quit claims to Henry Barrett Huntington that lot of land with Dwelling House bounded: N by John Street 60'; E by Roome Lane 127'; N by Isaac Peck and Horace Johnson 60'; W by Henry Paige 127'...being the homestead of the late Henry W Lothrop. - Deed Book 503, page 247, in Providence City Hall.

2. Date of erection: between 1795 and 1798.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
May 1962.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a two-story frame house built at the end of the 18th century with typical plan and details. It has been remodeled somewhat, and the present doorway is Greek Revival.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Main block 38' (five-bay north front) x 30', two stories; with a two-story kitchen wing to the rear, originally 8' x 10', enlarged to 50' x 15' before 1820.

2. Foundations: Stone, stuccoed.

3. Wall construction: Frame, clapboards, corner boards with beaded edges.

4. Chimneys: Inside brick chimneys.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Later Greek Revival doorway; door has two vertical panels, semicircular top light; Doric frontispiece, fluted pilasters, triangular pediment with horizontal cornice broken by top light over door.

b. Windows and shutters: Six over six light double hung windows; decorative, wooden, splayed lintels over lower windows; heads of upper windows continuous with bed mold of cornice adjustable louvered shutters.

6. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, shingle covered.

b. Cornice, eaves: Simple molded cornices; boxed eaves.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central-hall plan.

2. Stairways: Main stair in central hall, L-shape with landing and short leg at the top, open string; flat, sawn, scroll ornament on step ends; two rectangular balusters per step; turned newels, slender molded handrail.

3. Flooring: Wide board floors.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, papered or painted.
5. Doors and Doorways: Raised panel doors, principal doors have eight panels. Principal doorways have double molded architraves or plinth blocks at the bottoms and crossetted at the tops; others have simple doorways with molded, mitered trim.
6. Trim: Molded chair rail in central hall and some rooms. Principal rooms have more elaborate chair rail with ornamented band; paneled wainscot with delicate moldings; elaborate cornices; cased, paneled corner posts with rope molding on corners; paneled interior shutters.
7. Hardware: Case locks with brass knobs; butt hinges on principal doors; H-L hinges on others.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Central, plus fireplaces. Dining room fireplace has later brick opening with molded, crossetted surround; high paneled entablature with fluted side panels; mantel shelf with reeded fascia, fret bed mold.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: House faces north on a narrow residential lot, house set on sidewalk line.
2. Enclosures: Wood fences.
3. Landscaping: Informal gardens in rear.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing
for the Providence Preservation Society
and Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
May 1962.