

Samuel Staples House
52 Benefit Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-145

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
48-

PHOTOGRAPH
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

SAMUEL STAPLES HOUSE

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
48-

Address: 52 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.
Plat 3, Lot 226, later lot 463. This
lot was 38 Benefit Street before 1847.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Mrs. William G. Allen

Present Use: Dwelling

Brief Statement
of Significance: This is a typical small frame house of the 1790's.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Original and Subsequent Owners:

1795 Joseph Whipple, gentleman, sells to Samuel Staples, housewright, for \$250 lawful silver money, one certain lot of land bounded: S by Burr and Gorham 80'; E by Benefit Street 40'; W by S Staples 40'; N by Joseph Whipple 80'. - Deed Book 24, page 127 in Providence City Hall.

1798 Samuel Staples, self-occupied. E on Benefit Street S by Jabez Gorham. House 32' x 28'...2 stories high in front and 3 stories high in rear...Lots (2) 72' x 80'. . Taxed for \$900. - Chace Notes: 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 Providence, Rhode Island in 1798, Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914).

1799 Joseph Whipple sells more land to Samuel Staples adjoining the above on the North bounded: E by Benefit Street 32'; N by grantor 72'; W by John Whipple 30'; S by Staples lot 79', for \$231. - Deed Book 26, page 193, in Providence City Hall.

1807 FIRE RECORD: Samuel Staples, self-occupied. Wood - 2 stories high in front W side of street, cellar kitchen is occasionally made use of for carpenter work. Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Company at the office of the Providence Washington Insurance Company, Providence, R. I., Vol. 1, policy #231.

- 1814 FIRE RECORD: Samuel Staples...self occupied. Wood 32' x 28' 2 stories high in front...3 stories in rear...Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Company at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R. I., Vol. 5, policy #1399.
- 1814 PROVIDENCE DIRECT TAX:...Samuel Staples...1 lot 72' in front and 79 1/2' back with TWO wooden dwelling houses. One 32' front and 28' back...2 stories high in front and three in back... (#52 Benefit) the other 16' on the front and...back. (#50 Benefit). - Mss. tax descriptions in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, for the 1814 Providence direct tax on the federal government.
- 1849 William Staples died...his sons William R. Staples and Samuel Staples, Jr. being the only heirs.
- 1849 William R. Staples gives quit claim to Samuel Staples Jr..."A certain lot of land bounded E on Benefit Street; S on land of Jabez Gorham; W partly on J Gorham and partly on Joel Metcalf; N on land of Earle D Pearce with the TWO (#52 and #50) DWELLING HOUSES. - Deed Book 117, page 326 in Providence City Hall.
- 1850 WILLS: Samuel Staples, Jr. devises all his property both real and personal and the income of it to his natural children, Mary R and Isabella F Staples. - Wills Book 16, page 260 in Providence City Hall.
Mary R Staples m Emery H. Peckham who died in 1880...no issue. She died in 1903, and devised all her real estate to her nephew George B. Calder 2nd..on condition that he pay certain expenses and legacies.
Isabel Staples m William H. Calder. She died in 1897 intestate, leaving her husband and only child, George B. Calder, 2nd. William Calder died in 1900's. - Title searches in Providence City Hall by the Rhode Island Title Guarantee.
- 1922 George B. Calder mortgaged this property to Nathan W. Remmer and Barney Goldberg. - Deed Book 629, page 35 in Providence City Hall.
- 1945 The property changed hands several times and was taxed to Axel Johnson in this year.
- 1950 This part of the property was sold by Axel E. Johnson to William G. Allen and became #463 on Plat 3..."That certain lot of land with all buildings on the W/ly side of Benefit Street beginning 39.39' N/ly from the N/ly line of Star Street said point being the S/E

corner of the lot conveyed, thence N on Benefit Street 42'. Bound N by grantor 80'; W by Santos 37.65'; and S by Gorham. - Deed Book 972, page 30 in Providence City Hall.

- B. Date of Erection: Between 1795 and 1798
- C. Builder: The house was built by the original owner, Samuel Staples, who was a housewright. Staples also built a somewhat smaller house next door at 50 Benefit Street. [see booklet prepared by the Providence Preservation Society for the Third Street Festival, May 11, 1962, pp. 14-16].

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 typical wooden house of the 1790's with a center chimney type plan and original interior detail.
- 2. Condition: Good

B. Technical Description of Exterior

- 1. Over-all dimensions: 32' (five bays) x 28', rectangular house. Two stories plus attic. Cellar is above grade at the rear.
- 2. Foundations: Random fieldstone, brick at the rear where cellar is above ground, granite ashlar at the front.
- 3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame, exposed on the interior with beaded edges. Plank walls, covered with modern asbestos shingles.
- 4. Stoops: Granite entrance stoop, two steps high.
- 5. Chimneys: Brick center chimney.
- 6. Openings:
 - a. Doors: Doors not original. Frontispiece with fluted pilasters with plain blocks from capitals, and pediment with pendent dentils and fret bed mold.

- b. Windows: Six-over-six light double-hung windows, probably later, some lower sash replaced with single panes.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, asphalt shingle covering.
- b. Eaves, cornice: Boxed eave, molded cornice. Second floor window heads continuous with bed mold.

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Center-chimney type, five-room plan. Similar arrangement on second floor.
- 2. Stairways: Winding, U-shaped stair in front entrance hall, molded handrail, turned balusters.
- 3. Flooring: Wide board floors, painted.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish. Plaster, painted.
- 5. Doors: Panel doors - original ones apparently raised six panel doors; molded mitered door trim.
- 6. Trim: Reeded cornice and chair rail in two front parlors.
- 7. Hardware: Not original. Porcelain door knobs.
- 8. Lighting: Electric.
- 9. Heating: Modern gas space heater in north parlor. Heater in stove in kitchen; fireplaces blocked off, but original mantels in place.

D. Site

- 1. Orientation: Faces east on the sidewalk on a residential street.
- 2. Enclosures: Wire fence around back yard.
- 3. Walks: Concrete front walk. Brick walk on south side to side door.
- 4. Landscaping: Informal garden in rear (west) side.