

Charles Q. Clapp House (School of Fine  
and Applied Art; Portland Art School)  
97 Spring Street  
Portland  
Cumberland County  
Maine

HABS No. ME-62

HABS  
ME,  
3-PORT,  
19-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
ME,  
3-PORT,  
19-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CHARLES Q. CLAPP HOUSE  
(SCHOOL OF FINE AND APPLIED ART;  
PORTLAND ART SCHOOL)

HABS No. ME-62

Location: #97 Spring Street, Portland, Cumberland County, Maine. (NE side of Spring St, 2nd lot east of High Street.)

Present Owner: Portland Society of Art, 111 High Street

Present Occupants and Use: School of Fine and Applied Art. Office and studio.

Significance: Exceptional and unusual expression of the Greek Revival style, possibly designed by amateur architect, Charles Q. Clapp.

Physical History and

Chain of Ownership: Used as a dwelling until 1914, when it was converted to art studios. The house was sold in 1833 by Asa Clapp to his son Charles Clapp. In 1837 it passed to the Bank of Portland which sold it in 1840 to William Oxnard. In 1863 Oxnard sold it to Jane T. Stevens, by whose heirs it was sold in 1897 to Charles C. Bickford. In 1913 it passed to his wife Isabella and in 1914 she sold it to the Portland Society of Art.

Museum Records from County Records bk 135p 187  
" 155,460  
" 169 402  
" 657 15  
" 936 21  
" 922 2

Date of Erection: 1833.

Architect: Unknown. The house was built in 1833 while Asa Clapp still owned the land, but as Charles Clapp and his wife immediately bought it and moved in, it is thought that Charles directed the building. Charles Clapp "was a man who took much interest in architecture, and had a correct taste." In 1833 he was leader of a movement to redo the "Market House" to a "City Hall" but overspent, causing controversy and ill-feeling. (William Gould, "Old Houses and their Builders" p 114.)

Alterations: No original plans, or builders are known. After 1914, John Calvin Stevens directed the alterations to an art school. Drawings in the Maine Historical Society from the Stevens office show the house as it was in 1914 with proposed changes.

From these drawings, observed changes include: fireplaces throughout the building closed up; partitions in the back of the 1st and 2nd floors removed to make large studios, also a portion of 2nd floor ceiling removed, and large windows inserted in back walls of both floors; 1st floor front room divided by a partition parallel to front of house; and in center hall of house, the wall between 1st and 2nd floors boarded up, balcony around it removed and sky light above 2nd floor closed. At sometime there was a barn on the rear whose eaves terminated in carved animal heads, 3 of which are now in the Maine Historical Society. (Museum Records)

Historical Events: During the fire of 1866 the building was used as as a storage place for the funds from the local banks. (Museum Records)

Sources of Information

and Published Views: Photographs in bulletins ca. 1914 in the Museum files. Cumberland County Records and miscellaneous documents in files of Portland Art Museum. John Pancoast, Director Portland Art Museum. Portland City Guide, Writers Project of Work's Project Administration, Forest City Printing Company, Portland, Maine 1940. p 237, mention and brief description. William Goold "Old Houses and their Builders" in William Goold Scrapbook, p114 Maine Historical Society.

Prepared by: Martha Kingsbury Summer 1965

PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

A. General Statement:

1. This structure is an excellent example of town houses built for successful merchants of 19th C. Portland. Although the building has been extensively modified, fine Greek revival details remain.
2. General Condition of the Fabric: Fair.

B. Technical Description of the Exterior:

1. This is a large three-story masonry building; ground, first and second floors; north side of Spring Street and east of the McGiellan-Sweat Mansion. Rectangular in plan, with a gable roof, symmetrical rows of Ionic columns define two porches. Exterior brick walls in running bond are painted light brown, wood trim is off-white. Overall dimensions are 34'5" x 72'8".
2. Foundations: Foundation walls begin at grade in rubble stone masonry with large ashlar granite blocks forming a base course, brick to an ashlar belt course. First floor fireplace foundations are half-vaults; brick bearing walls, pipe columns.
3. Wall Construction: Brick masonry, running bond, painted, brick and/or wood pilasters at all corners.
4. Stoops and porches: Two porches, Spring Street (Southeast) Elevation; one is an entrance, the other leads to a large window. Two runs of granite stairs extend from street to porch levels, one to each porch. Porches have ceramic tile floors, geometrical pattern.
5. Chimneys: Three brick chimneys painted grey except for brick cornices and caps.
6. Doorways and doors:
  - a. Front doorway, first floor. Paneled wood door with two rosettes, in a simple wood frame with pattern transom light.
  - b. Doorway to ground floor unimportant.
7. Windows:
  - a. Decorative window, second floor Spring Street

Elevation has side lights with elaborately carved surrounds.

- b. Variety of DH windows, 9/9, 6/3, 6/6. Most have shutter pintles in wood frames. The rear elevation, extensively remodeled, has large areas of fixed sash. First floor windows are floor to ceiling.

8. Roof: Gable roof, composition roofing.

C. Technical Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Ground Floor or basement; partial basement. Entrance from ground level southwest elevation, through stairhall into old kitchen used as studio, from which opens a storage space with brick vault ceiling, cellar and second vaulted space. (Vaulted spaces occur under porches).
- b. First Floor; Entrance into stair hall from southeast porch and from ground floor into foyer and to office, studio, and storage spaces.
- c. Second Floor; Stairhall opens into circular foyer, leading to studios and bath. A closet off of the stair hall houses stairs and ladder to attic or third floor.

2. Stairways:

- a. Principal stairway between ground and second floors is circular, extensively modified. Significant fragments include fragile balusters, rails, and paneled newel. String decoration.
- b. Stair to attic unimportant.

3. Flooring: Cement finish on ground floor. First floor rooms have strip flooring in rectangular and geometrical patterns, dark and light woods.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster walls. Plaster medallion in ceiling of office, first floor. Circular oculus (closed) in foyer, first floor. Plaster and/or wood cornices, some modern car-siding ceiling. Paneled soffit in ceiling of foyer. Second floor studio (Spring Street) has glass doors (2) opening through ceiling into attic space.

5. Interior Doorways and doors: Eight panel doors, molded surrounds with shell-and-foliage insert at head of large openings, and small square target decoration at corners. Doorways and doors, second floor Foyer, curved with walls.
  6. Trim: Interior shutters, four per opening, paneled, form surround when folded against wall surface.
  7. Hardware: None of importance, except for wrought iron gates and fence.
  8. Lighting: Modern electric
  9. Heating: Fireplaces in major rooms, closed or with iron fronts, marble surrounds, mantels and hearths. Simple wood mantel and surround, fireplace studios, second floor. The kitchen fireplace, ground floor, has several ovens with iron doors. Modern steam heat.
- D. Site: The structure is situated on a sloping site, faces southeast on Spring Street. A granite and iron fence at front sidewalk lines, with driveway and side yard at southwest side.

Prepared by:

F. Blair Reeves, A.I.A.  
H.A.B.S. Maine Coast 1965

Edited for HABS by: Druscilla J. Null  
Summer, 1983