

Solomon Townsend House
35 Charles Field Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-221

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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

SOLOMON TOWNSEND HOUSE

Address: 35 Charles Field Street, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island. - Plat 12, Lot 413.

Present Owner and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Frederick B. Read.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is an example of a medium-sized house built in the late 1820's.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1823 Martha Howell and Isaac Brown, executors u/w of Wait Smith deceased, sell for \$400 to Gideon Hatch a certain lot of land bounded: S by Charles Field Street 50'; E by Wait Smith 92'; N by Solomon Townsend 50'; W by Moses Eddy 92'; Deed Book 45, page 350, in Providence City Hall.
- 1826 Gideon Hatch sells for \$475 to James Riley a certain lot of land, "being the same conveyed to me in 1823 by M Howell and Isaac Brown...Deed Book 52, page 364, in Providence City Hall.
- 1827 James Riley sells for \$600 to Solomon Townsend a certain lot of land bounded: S by Charles Field Street 50'; E by Robert Purkis 92'; N by Solomon Townsend 50'; W by heirs of Moses Eddy...Deed Book 53, page 187, in Providence City Hall.
- 1858 WILL...Solomon Townsend: "I give and devise to my wife Amelia S Townsend..also the house at #35 Charles Field Street, Providence, the lot on which it stands and all buildings and improvements thereon. After the decease of my wife, I give and devise the house at #35 Charles Field Street to my daughter Amelia Sanford Porter...Wills Book 18, page 374, in Providence City Hall.
- 1871 Charles and Amelia Porter, his wife, et al sell the above property to George Dow, being the same conveyed to James Riley to Solomon Townsend by

deed (Deed Book 53, page 187) and devised by Will of said S Townsend to Amelia S Porter...Deed Book 196, page 258, in Providence City Hall.

- 1878 George S Dow, sells at public auction the above property for \$11,700 to Albert G. Durfee, the highest bidder...Deed Book 297, page 349, in Providence City Hall.
- 1882 Albert G Durfee sells for \$11,700 to James C Goff a certain lot of land with all buildings and improvements being the same conveyed to George S Dow by Chas Potter and wife et al, and the same purchased by me at auction in 1878. Bounded: S by Charles Field Street 50'; E by Robert Purkis 92'; N by S Townsend 50'; W by heirs of Moses Eddy...Deed Book 316, page 215, in Providence City Hall.
- 1902 Property was taxed to George W Hall Est.
- 1908 Property taxed to Helen S Allen
- 1941 Property taxed to Constance W Read

2. Date of erection: 1827-1830 (see Supplemental Information below on property valuations and records of occupancy)

B. Supplemental Material: The following material regarding the history of the house is in the possession of the present owners, and kept in the house:

1. A letter from William G. Roelker of the Rhode Island Historical Society to Mrs. Frederick B. Read, June 23, 1947: in discussing the date of the house, the letter lists the following property valuations for this address: 1828 - \$3,700; 1829 - \$5,000; 1830 - \$9000; 1831 - \$10,500.
2. An unidentified typescript continues the property valuations for the house as follows: 1832 - \$14,500; 1833-1834 - \$15,000; 1835-1836 - \$17,700; 1837-1840 - \$18,000; 1841 - \$17,000; 1841 - \$15,400; 1843-1845 - \$20,000; 1846-1847 - \$20,700; 1848-1852 - \$24,500.
3. The following information is from papers of Philip Allen, a former owner of the house: Charles Field Street was laid out in 1806. According to Providence Directories: Rev. Edward Hall, minister of the First Congregational Church, lived at this address at least by 1838 and resided here until 1865; before him, William H. Townsend, son of the owner of the property Solomon Townsend, lived at this address from 1830 to 1835. An article on William H. Townsend appeared

in the Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, vol. XXXI, no. 3 (July, 1938), pp. 65-67. The barn is probably contemporary with the house. A drawing and a letter dated October 2, 1925 from George Frederick Hall, Architect, to Philip Allen concern paneling to be added to an unidentified chamber in the house, probably one of the two front bedrooms.

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

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a medium-sized, frame house, built 1827-1830, with typical detail and trim for the period in a late Federal Style, not yet showing Greek Revival influence.
2. Condition: Good

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Rectangular main block, about 40' (five bays) x 36', two-and-a-half stories, facing south, plus small one-story rear wing.
2. Foundations: Stone, random ashlar on sides and rear, regular coursed ashlar in front.
3. Wall construction: Clapboards, three-and-a-half inch exposure at bottom becoming slightly wider toward the top, wood corner quoins. Exterior walls about 8" thick, owner says filled with brick.
4. Stoops: Granite entrance stoop with double flight of steps, four steps one side, five other side, original wrought iron rail slightly more elaborate than similar rails in Providence.
5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys in outside walls.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: Eight panel entrance door, flat panels, Ionic frontispiece with four fluted columns and entablature enframing door and side lights. Rear door from rear wing.

- b. Windows and shutters: Six over six light double hung windows, double molded architraves on window frames. 10" x 15" glass. No shutters.
7. Roof:
- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, shingled
 - b. Cornice: Deeply projecting molded cornice, elaborate bed mold with beading and pendants.
 - c. Dormers: Wide shed-roofed dormers on front and rear, with small horizontal windows treated like typical Providence monitors on contemporary hip roofs, with lattice work balustrade.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: Central hall. Four-room plan with kitchen extending into rear wing. Somewhat modified with modern lavatory at rear of central hall, bathrooms added on second floor reducing the size of the two rear bedrooms. Central hall 7'-6" wide, first floor ceilings 10'-6" high.
2. Flooring: Wide floor boards.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster
4. Doors and doorways: Six-panel doors, flat sunk panels. Various types of deeply molded pilaster trim with either bull's eye or carved corner blocks. Double doorway between parlors on east side of house.
5. Trim: Large, deeply molded, ceiling cornices. Window trim matches doors. Underwindow panels match doors.
6. Hardware: Butt hinges, brass knobs on mortise locks.
7. Lighting: Electric
8. Heating: Modern central heat. Four fireplaces on each floor - cooking fireplace in kitchen. Three black-marble mantels on first floor, two with simple Ionic pilasters, wood mantels in bedrooms on second floor with high paneled entablatures, deeply projecting shelves with complex moldings, some with colonettes.

D. Site

1. General setting: Small lot in residential and university area, house on sidewalk line at south front, driveway on west, adjoining property on east, small service yard in north rear.
2. Enclosures: High brick walls of adjoining University property or wood fences.
3. Outbuildings: Early barn at rear of property, remodeled as a garage.
4. Walks, driveways: Flagstone sidewalk in front, asphalt driveway.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
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