

PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

See H. MASON'S ALBUM #1

RECORDS OF #64 ANGELL STREET...WOOD BUILT 1797 E

#64 1896

PLAT 10 Lot 255

#30 in 1847 #28 in 1895 about 1870

1792 MOSES BROWN FOR £99 TO GEORGE BENSON, MERCHANT "A LOT OF LAND LYING EWARD OF THE BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE, BEGINNING 40' E OF LANE TO BE LAID OPEN BETWEEN GRANTOR'S LAND AND LOT OF KNIGHT AND PHOEBE DEXTER. BOUNDED N,E, W, BY MOSES BROWN AND S BY ANGELL'S STREET, BENSON TO HAVE THE FENCE ON THE LOT AND PRIVILEGE OF PASSAGE AT REAR THROUGH GATE...23/302

1797 WILLIAM HOLROYD TO GEORGE BENSON FOR \$500 BEING SAME LOT SOLD TO HOLYROD IN 1792 BY MOSES BRWON BOUNDED: S BY ANGELL STREET 50'; W BY 40' LANE TO BROWN 140'; N BY MOSES BROWN; E BY GEORGE BENSON 140' TOGETHER WITH FENCING STUFF ON SAID LOT WITH RIGHT TO PASS BY GATE ON MOSES LAND AT BACK OF LOT...24/297

*1814

1826 GEORGE BENSON TO SETH WHEATON FOR \$7000 LOT TOGETHER WITH BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS. BOUNDED S BY ANGELL STREET 128'; W BY GANGWAY 140'; N 128'; E 140'. BEING PREMISES CONVEYED TO GRANTOR BY TWO DEEDS FROM MOSES BROWN IN 1792 AND WILLIAM HOLROYD IN 1792, Policy Rec'd - Seth Wheaton

Case 1828 1826 1833 1840 1847 1854

ESTATE DEvised BY WILL BY SETH WHEATON TO DAUGHTER ABBY WATSON ...WILLS 13..p406 AND 23.427 Seth Wheaton died.

52.102 1840 PRV - Matthew Watson 20.83

ROBERT WATSON, MARY ALLEN, PELEG HALL AND SARAH HALL TO W SEABURY SIMMONS PROPERTY ON SW CORNER OF ANGELL AND ANGELL COURT N BY MARSHALL WOODS; E BY RUFUS WATERMAN; S BY ANGELL STREET; W BY ANGELL COURT...246.223

[1875 W. S. Simmons here - P.D. to 1882]

1882 W SEABURY SIMMONS SELLS PROPERTY TO WILLIAM GROSVENOR JR FOR \$30,000 LOT OF LAND ON NE CORNER OF ANGELL STREET AND ANGELL COURT BOUNDED: S BY ANGELL STREET 128'; W ON ANGELL COURT 140'; N BY MARSHALL WOODS AND WIFE 128'; E BY WILLIAM GROSVENOR 140'; BEING SAME AS 246.223....314.351. PROPERTY OCCUPIED BY THE GROSVENOR FAMILY UNTIL 1950.

1950 PROPERTY TAXED TO CAROLINE G CONGDON.

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1814 GEORGE BENSON..1 DWELLING HOUSE...WOOD ..2 STORIES HIGH..43' FRONT 38' BACK. PROJECTION 10'x12'..2 STORIES HIGH. LOT 88' FRONT AND 140' BACK. BARN WOOD..24'x16'. ONE LOT ADJOINING W/LY 40' FRONT AND 140' BACK..PROVIDENCE DIRECT TAX 1814

1826 Policy Record - Seth Wheaton - n.s. Angell - wood 45 ft x 35 ft on . 25th in fr. p.n. with a hip'd roof. Add 10 x 12' - 1 1/2 st hi. occ. for a D.H

1828 Matthew Watson lived here and/or family until 1854 1833 PR V. 10 - 5035 1840 PR V. 20 - #8332 1847 PR V. 31 - #15069 1854 PR 154 - #123635

NUMBER SIXTY-FOUR ANGELL STREET.

In 1792 Moses Brown sold Captain George Denson a lot of land "east of the Baptist Meeting-house" facing Angell Street; and in 1797 William Colroyd sold him an adjoining piece. Denson was a merchant whose trade was chiefly with South America and China. He entered into partnership with Nicholas Brown in 1783, in the firm which later (1791) became Brown, Denson, and Ives. He retired from the firm in 1796, the year he is credited with building his Angell Street house, one of the most important eighteenth century houses in the city. Seth Wheaton, who bought the house in 1826, left it to his daughter, Abby, the wife of Matthew Watson, and the Watsons retained title to the property until 1872. In 1882 William Grosvenor acquired it, and it has been in the Grosvenor-Congdon family since then.

The house is a square two story wooden building of conservative Georgian design with classic modillion and dentil cornice, a hip roof and double parapet rails. The windows have moulded key blocks, and the central entry is distinguished by a fine Roman Doric portico with a segmental (curved) pediment.

In 1950 when Mr. and Mrs. Congdon acquired the house, they restored the interiors, which had been Victorianized, to their eighteenth century central hall four-room plan, and stripped the paneling to the natural wood finish. The stair hall runs through the house, and the staircase, set at the back in two runs, has slender turned balusters and decorated riser ends. The reeding, rope molding etc. of the cornices, and the "eared" treatment of the door and window frames and mantel panels are characteristic of the woodwork of the later eighteenth century. The mantel wall of the library is paneled, and the mantel piece in this room is original, but those in other rooms are of dark marble, and are Greek Revival in style. The house, with its lavish use of detail, is an excellent example of the late Georgian or early Republican style.

This house is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Ives Goddard Jr.

SIXTY-FOUR ANGELL STREET

Owner; Mr. G. Maurice Congdon

Occupied by owner

Flower Arrangements:

In 1792 Moses Brown sold Captain George Benson a lot of land "east of the Baptist Meeting House" facing Angell Street, and in 1797 William Holroyd sold him an adjoining piece. Benson was a merchant whose trade was chiefly with South America and China. He entered into partnership with Nicholas Brown in 1783, in the firm which later (1791) became Brown, Benson, and Ives. He retired from the firm in 1796, the year he is credited with building one of the most important eighteenth century houses in the city. Seth Wheaton, who bought the house in 1826, left it to his daughter, Abby, the wife of Matthew Watson, and the Watsons retained title to the property until 1872. In 1882 William Grosvenor acquired it, and it has been in the Grosvenor-Congdon family since then.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-172

GEORGE BENSON HOUSE

Address: 64 Angell Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.
Flat 10, Lot 255

Present Owner: Robert H. I. Goddard, Jr., 25 Cushing Street,
Providence 6, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Leeson, Jr.

Present Use: Dwelling.

**Brief Statement
of Significance:** This house was built for Captain George Benson,
a prominent Providence merchant at the end of the
eighteenth century. Built in 1797, this house is
characteristic of the conservative, but elegant,
Providence houses of this period both in its
general form and its extensive detail.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and Subsequent owners:

1792 Moses Brown for \$99 to George Benson, merchant
"a lot of land lying Beard of the Baptist
Meeting House, beginning 40' E of Lane to be laid
open between Brewer's land and lot of Knight and
Phoebe Dexter. Bounded N, E, W, by Moses Brown
and S by Angell's Street, Benson to have the fence
on the lot and privilege of passage at rear through
gate. . . . Deed Book 23, page 302, in Providence
City Hall.

1797 William Halroyd to George Benson for \$500 being
same lot sold to Halroyd in 1792 by Moses Brown
bounded: S by Angell Street 50'; W by 40' Lane
to Brown 140'; N by Moses Brown; E by George
Benson 140' together with fencing stuff on said
lot with right to pass by gate on Moses land at
back of lot. . . . Deed Book 24, page 297, in
Providence City Hall.

1798 George Benson living at this location, Henry R.
Chase, Deeds and Documents of the City of Providence
and Map of the Town of Providence, Rhode Island

is 1796 located on Map of the Highways of that
State (Providence, 1914).

- 1814 George Benson...1 dwelling house...wood...2 stories high...43' front 38' back. Projection 10' X 12'.. 2 stories high. Lot 88' front and 140' back. Barn Wood..24' x 16'. One lot adjoining W/ly 40' front and 140' back. . Mrs. tax descriptions in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, for the 1814 Providence direct tax to the federal government.
- 1826 George Benson to Seth Wheaton for \$9000 lot together with buildings and improvements. Bounded S by Angell Street 128'; W by gateway 140'; N 128'; E 140'. Being premises conveyed to grantor by two deeds from Moses Brown in 1792 and William Halsey in 1797, Deed Book 52, page 102, in Providence City Hall.
- 1839 Estate devised by will by Seth Wheaton to daughter Abby Watson...Wills Book 13, page 406 and Deed Book 23, page 437, both in Providence City Hall.
- 1874 Robert Watson, Mary Allen, Peleg Hall and Sarah Hall to W Sashbury Simons property on SW corner of Angell and Angell Court N by Marshall Woods; E by Rufus Watson; S by Angell Street; W by Angell Court. . Deed Book 246, page 223 in Providence City Hall.
- 1882 W Sashbury Simons sells property to William Grosvenor, Jr. for \$30,000 lot of land on N.E. corner of Angell Street and Angell Court bounded: S by Angell Street 128'; W on Angell Court 140'; N by Marshall Woods and wife 128'; E by William Grosvenor 140'; being same as Deed Book 246, Page 223. . Deed Book 114, page 351, in Providence City Hall. Property occupied by the Grosvenor Family until 1950.
- 1950 Property taxed to Caroline G. Congdon.
2. Date of erection: 1797.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: Some of the interior details were altered in the nineteenth century. In 1950 when Mr. and Mrs. Congdon acquired the house, they altered some of the interiors, and stripped most of the paneling to the natural wood finish. The mantel-piece in the library (southwest room, first floor) is original, but those in the other rooms are of dark marble, and are Greek Revival in style.

4. Sources of information: Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 305, 345.
The Georgian Period, Vol. III, p. 130.
Norman Morrison Loomis, "Providence," White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs, Vol. IV, No. 3, pp. 5, 10.
- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Captain George Benson was a merchant whose trade was chiefly with South America and China. He entered into partnership with Nicholas Brown in 1783, in the firm which later (1791) became Brown, Benson and Ives. He retired from the firm in 1796.

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

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a square, two-story house, built in 1797 in a conservative Georgian design typical of Providence of this period. Characteristic features include the hip roof with modillion cornice and balustrade, the molded bay blocks on the window lintels, the Doric entrance portico, the central hall with its elegant stairway, the reeding and rope molding of the ceiling cornice, the crocketed door and window frames, and the elaborate fireplace paneling in the library.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Large five bay main block, 43' x 38', two-and-a-half stories high, facing south with additional sixth bay on first floor only on west side. Later rear wing on northeast.
2. Foundations: Cut stone.
3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame with corner posts visible on interior, clapboards, corner boards.
4. Porches: One-story main entrance porch 10' x 12', with Doric columns at the front corners, Doric entablature and cornice, segmental roof ending in a segmental gable.

5. Chimneys: Two interior brick chimneys.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance six-panel door with top lights. East side entrance - six-panel door, Doric frontispiece. Rear door on north side.
- b. Windows and shutters: Six over six light double hung windows. Molded frames with ornamental wood lintels with molded key blocks, louvered shutters.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hip roof with low monitor, sheet metal covering.
- b. Cornice: Modillion cornice with demarcated bed mold. Eave rail with turned balusters and square paneled posts surmounted by urns. Chinese lattice rail around monitor.
- c. Dormers: Two connected dormers on front and rear, gabled and pedimented with modillion cornice.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Four-room central hall plan, additional sixth bay on the west makes the two east rooms on the first floor, small square rooms and the two west rooms much longer. Kitchen wing to northeast rear. Bedrooms on second floor in similar arrangement. Alterations mainly in northeast part of main block connecting to later northeast wing. Small bedrooms on third floor with unusual corner dormer windows.
2. Stairways: Main stair at rear of central hall, to second floor, U-shape, open well, open string, double scroll cut stop ends, molded ramped handrail, round balusters with short turned section at the bottom, three balusters per step, turned newels, ramped shadow rail with paneled waistcot. Winding rear stair continues to third floor.
3. Flooring: Later strip wood flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: Original six-panel doors. Molded, crosscut architraves on big plinth blocks.

6. Trim: Large ceiling cornices throughout. First floor southwest room and central hall cornices have rope mold, bead and reel, and reeded fascia. Molded chair rail and paneled wainscot. Round-headed window at stair landing with fluted pilasters. Early scenic wallpaper in southwest room. Paneled inside shutters.
7. Hardware: Brass knobs, butt hinges, HL hinges on second floor. Brass case lock on front door.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Central plus fireplaces. Southeast room (library), two-story wood mantel with engaged Doric columns and flat fluted pilasters, crosscut fireplace surround and overmantel panel. Marble Greek Revival mantels in southwest and southeast rooms. One-story wood mantel in northeast room. Two-story, paneled wood mantels in west rooms on second floor.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Large lot, northwest corner of Prospect and Angell Streets, bounded by DeFoe Place on west, sloping down from east to west. House at approximately in center of lot.
2. Enclosures: Open wood fence with square corner posts with cornices and urns on east and south sides. Stake fence on west and north sides. Stone retaining walls on south side.
3. Outbuildings: Garage at northwest corner of lot.
4. Walks and driveways: Brick walks to main entrance from south, asphalt drives from east.
5. Landscaping: Informal with large trees, lawn, shrubs, and flowers.

Prepared by Oswald R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
December 1961