

**PPS RECORDS FOR
89 ANGELL STREET
PLAT 12, LOT 155**

**BENJAMIN BLIVEN HOUSE
Built 1849-1850
(Previous address: 37 Angell Street, from 1858 until 1896)**

NOTE

Although Benjamin Bliven built this house, he never owned the property: he had leased the land from Squire and Betsey French in 1848, and a condition of the lease was that he would build a dwelling house within two years. By 1852 Bliven had moved elsewhere on College Hill, but he and later his widow apparently maintained their lease because records indicate that Eliza S. Bliven sublet the house in 1858, about a month before she transferred the lease on the property to Abby W. Watson, wife of Robert W. Watson (owner of the property next door to the east). Meanwhile, the Frenches had sold the property (and transferred the Blivens' lease) in 1854 to a neighbor across Angell Street, Mathew Watson. The Watson family continued to own this property and rent out the house for more than four decades. The first owner-occupants were Grace A. and Eugene H. Greene, who bought the property in 1898.

DESIGNATIONS

89 Angell Street is a contributing building within the College Hill National Historic Landmark District (listed on the National Register of Historic Places); it is identified in the inventory as "Benjamin Bliven House, 1849."

RECORDS *(All Records were found in Providence City Hall unless otherwise noted).*

Assessor's Plat Maps and Chain of Title Cards (Assessor's Office)

The map for Assessor's Plat 12 identifies 89 Angell Street, located on the south side of the street two lots east of Prospect Street, as Lot 155. The narrow rectangular lot has about 40 feet of street frontage and measures 4,663 sq.ft.

Chain of title card for AP 12, Lot 155 – ANGELL STREET:

Abby W. Watson, widow of Robert W. Watson, owned the property as of December 1, 1883.

Abby W. Watson heirs owned the property as of May 1, 1897.

Grace A. Greene, wife of Eugene H. Greene, owned the property as of June 1, 1898.

Mabel G. Hunter, wife of Charles F. Hunter, owned the property as of May 1, 1915.

Marion G. Briggs owned the property as of November 1, 1915.

Marion G. Freeman, wife of Otis M. Freeman, owned the property as of January 2, 1918.

Josiah F. Crooker owned the property as of June 1928.

Josiah F. Crooker and wife Alice A. Crooker owned the property as of June 1931.

Mary C. Nicholson owned the property as of May 1933.

Lawrence Lanpher owned the property as of March 1948.

William J.H. Fischer, Jr. and wife Jane D. Fischer owned the property as of December 1956.

William J.H. Fischer, Jr. owned the property as of January 29, 1975 (refers to Deed Book 1184/Page 1101)

Catherine W. Hill owned the property as of May 30, 1979 (ref. DB 1213/367)

89 Angell St. Realty Co., LLC owned the property as of December 30, 1993 (ref. DB 2880/026)

Lado-Este Realty Corp. owned the property as of May 11, 1998 (ref. DB 3796/060)

According to the Assessor's computerized data base, the building is presently owned by James V. DeRentis and Brett P. Smiley; note that the date given for their purchase, recorded in DB 3796/60, is May 11, 1988.

Maps and Atlases (Archives and Registry of Deeds)

Maps indicate that the house was constructed by 1857.

1840-1852: "Nathan and Rufus Waterman Plat, as altered by agreement of the owners, platted by Rufus Waterman in 1840 from a survey by Samuel B. Cushing 1833, copied June 21, 1852 by Schubarth and Haines," originally recorded in Plat Book 2, Page 4, copied on Plat Card 48. This map shows the layout of Angell Street from North Main Street eastward for several blocks, as well as other nearby streets. Within the block bounded by Angell on the north, Prospect Street on the west, Waterman Street on the south, and Brown Street on the east, Lot 21 (with 40 feet of street frontage) is the future site of this house.

NB: Another plat map titled "Old Rufus Waterman Plat," dated January 21, 1884 and copied on Plat Card 549, shows the same layout of blocks on Angell Street as above. The map contains the following note: "Mr. Rufus Waterman says this Plat is the first and only one showing the original street as the land was first platted – G.A. Williamson, Recorder of Deeds, copied from Plat Book 16, Page 7." The owner name for Lot 21 was D. Bucklin.

1857: "Map of Providence, R.I." by H.F. Walling, shows the house on the south side of Angell Street two lots east of Prospect Street. Lot size, street address number, and owner name are not indicated. The house has a narrow, L-shaped footprint, with the short leg of the "L" parallel to Angell Street and the longer leg extended southward toward Waterman Street. (*Archives*)

1875: “City Atlas of Providence,” Vol. 1, Wards 1, 2, and 3, by G.M. Hopkins, Plate N, shows the house standing on a 4,663 sq.ft. lot (2 lots east of Prospect Street) owned by M. Watson, with the address 37 Angell St. The map refers to the Waterman Plat in this area, and the house lot is numbered 21. (*Archives*)

1882, 1895: “Atlas of the City of Providence, R.I. and Environs,” by G.M. Hopkins Co. (1882), Plate 2, and “Atlas of the City of Providence” by Everts & Richards (1895), Plate 36, both show the address of this house as 37 Angell Street, and no change to the building’s footprint or the lot size. Owner names are not indicated on either map. (*Archives*)

1908: “Atlas of the City of Providence” by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 7, shows the address of the house had changed to 89 Angell Street. No change in the building’s footprint or lot size. The owner was Grace A. Greene. Note that the East Side railroad tunnel is shown running underneath the house. (*Archives*)

1937: “Plat Book of Providence, R.I.” by G.M. Hopkins, Plate 19, shows a change in the building’s footprint, which is now a squat “T” shape with a projection roughly in the middle of the east side elevation. The lot size remained 4,663 sq.ft. The owner is M.C. Nicholson. The map refers to the Nathan and Rufus Waterman Heirs Plat map on cards 549 and 48. (*Archives*)

Tax Records

Prior to 1854, Providence tax records only identified the name of the taxpayer and the amount of tax paid – not the location of the taxable property, nor whether it was real estate or personal property. In 1854 the City of Providence Tax Assessor began using a system of plats and lots to identify individual parcels of real estate. Tax records from the latter half of the 19th century are indexed by plat number, and recorded in a series of ledgers labeled “A” through “E.”

These records indicate that the house at 89 Angell St. was standing as of August 1, 1854.

Tax Ledger A4/Page 96: Plat 12, Lot 155, 4,640 sq.ft., was owned by Eliza S. Bliven, widow. The land was valued at \$4,640 and buildings were valued at \$2,500. (Note: while Mrs. Bliven did not actually own either the land or the building, she was responsible for paying taxes on the house; see Deeds, below.) (*Archives*)

Deeds (Archives)

Deeds indicate that Benjamin Bliven leased a lot of land in 1848, and was required to build a dwelling house as a condition of that lease. His widow, Eliza, sublet the house in

1858 and transferred that lease as well as her own to the owners of the land in that same year.

Deed Book 113/Page 126: An Indenture of Lease dated February 22, 1848, between Squire and Betsey T. French of Pawtucket (then in Bristol County, Mass.) and Benjamin J. Bliven of Providence, for a "farm lot" of land on the south side of Angell Street, being Lot 21 in the Plat of the Waterman Lands, for a term of 99 years, at a rent of \$48 per year for the first 10 years. The lease contained the following provisos: (a) that Bliven would erect a dwelling house on said lot within two years from April 1, 1848, and would pay all rents and taxes thereon (any buildings on the lot were to be security for the payment of rents and taxes); and (b) at the end of 99 years, the Frenches or their heirs would purchase the dwelling house or houses and other buildings that may at that time be standing upon said lot.

DB 137/187: Transfer of Lease. On June 2, 1854, Squire and Betsey T. French of Pawtucket (still in Mass.), as lessors named in the lease recorded in DB 113/126, sold their interest in that lease to Mathew Watson of Providence. By deed of the same date the Frenches also sold to Mathew Watson the lot named in that lease, for \$3,000.

DB 152/21-22: On March 20, 1858, Eliza S. Bliven sold to Abby W. Watson, wife of Robert W. Watson of Providence, for \$3,500, all buildings and improvements standing on a certain lot of land on the south side of Angell Street, leased by the late Benjamin Bliven by lease of Squire French and wife dated February 22, 1848 (DB 113/126), which lease had been transferred by the Frenches to Mathew Watson by deed dated June 2, 1854 (DB 137/187), and is Lot 21 on the Plat of Waterman Lands, recorded on Page 4 of "the plat book." Said premises were conveyed subject to lease of same given by Eliza S. Bliven to Nathan B. Hall dated February 15, 1858 for a term of three years.

DB 152/23-24: Transfer of Lease. On March 20, 1858, Eliza S. Bliven transferred a lease on the house and lot numbered 37 Angell Street to Abby W. Watson, wife of Robert W. Watson. The lease referred to was Bliven's lease dated February 15, 1858, subletting the house to Nathan B. Hall.

Directories (Archives)

The house first appears in city directories in 1850, although without a street address; the address 37 Angell Street first appears in 1858, and was changed to 89 Angell in 1896.

Providence City Directories were published beginning in 1850. For the first 4 decades, these volumes contained a street directory (listing all existing streets), and a residents' directory organized alphabetically by last name. Residents' professions and business addresses (if any) were noted before home addresses. From 1892-1894 city directories also included a section listing residential buildings by street address, which was later

separately published as a House Directory (1895-1935). The notation "(h)" indicates a head of household; "(b)" indicates a boarder.

- 1850 Bliven, Benjamin, musician, 123 and 127 South Main Street, [home at] Angell Street.
Watson, Mathew, manufacturer, rear Roger Williams Bank, 23 Market Square, [home at] 28 Angell Street.
Watson, Robert W., manufacturer, rear Roger Williams Bank, 23 Market Square, [home at] 28 Angell Street.
- 1852-1853* Bliven, Benjamin, musician, 123 and 127 South Main Street, [home at] 125 Angell Street.
Watson, Mathew, manufacturer, rear Roger Williams Bank, 23 Market Square, [home at] 28 Angell Street.
Watson, Robert W., manufacturer, rear Roger Williams Bank, 23 Market Square, [home at] 43 Angell Street.
- 1853-1854 Bliven, Benjamin, musician, 123 and 127 South Main Street, no home address listed.
Watson, Mathew (same as above).
Watson, Robert W. (same as above).
- 1854-1855 No Benjamin (or Eliza) Bliven listed.
Watson, Mathew (same as above).
Watson, Robert W. (same as above).
- 1856 Bliven, Benjamin J., engraver and musician, 42 Broad Street, (h) corner of John and Thayer Streets.
Bliven, Eliza S., widow of Benjamin J., (h) 22 Thayer Street.
Watson, Mathew, manufacturer of cotton goods (same addresses as above).
Watson, Robert W., agent Windham Manufacturing Co. (same addresses as above).
- 1857 Bliven, Eliza S., widow of Benjamin J., 22 Thayer Street.
Watson, Robert W., agent Windham Manufacturing Co. (same addresses as above).
- 1858 Hall, Nathan B. (N.H. Bradford Co.) seeds and wooden ware, 31 Canal Street, (h) 37 Angell Street.
- 1858-1883 Watson, Robert W., (h) 43 Angell Street.
- 1892 37 Angell Street – Wall, A.T., gold plate etc.
- 1893 37 Angell Street – Dyer, Oliver, Rev. and Wall, A.T., gold plate etc. (h)

1894 37 Angell Street – Wall, A.T., gold plate etc. (h)

Providence House Directories were published separately from the City Directory, 1895-1937 (published biannually from 1901) and list all residential buildings by street address. This directory is typically a year behind the city directory.

1895 37 Angell Street – Wall, A.T., gold plate etc. (h)

1896 89 Angell Street – Wall, A.T., gold plate etc. (h) [address changed]

*NB: Archives does not possess a directory for 1851. Also, Bliven's address of 125 Angell is not likely an early address for this house, given that Robert W. Watson (whom deeds indicate owned the property next door to this house) lived at 43 Angell.

Research compiled by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh

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