

PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

RECORDS OF

PLAT 12
LOT 412

#37 CHARLES FIELD STREET...WOOD

1808 WILL WAIT SMITH..."TO MY DAUGHTER MARTHA BROWN HOWELL, THE OCCUPATION OF AND ALL MY REAL ESTATE RENTS, PROFITS, ETC...ISAAC BROWN AND MARTHA HOWELL, EXECUTORS...WILL

1826 MARTHA HOWELL AND ISAAC BOWEN, EX U/W OF WAIT SMITH SELLS FOR \$400 TO ROBERT PURKIS, MARINER, A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND BOUNDED: S BY CHARLES FIELD STREET 50'; W BY SOLOMON TOWNSEND AND GIDEON HATCH 100'; N BY WAIT SMITH...DB 51.352

1854 PROPERTY IS TAXED TO ROBERT PURKIS HEIRS.

1825 POLICY RECORD, VOL 4..#3047. ROBERT PURKIS FOR \$1800. HOUSE ON N SIDE OF CHARLES FIELD STREET...WOOD. 33' IN FRONT AND 30' FRONT TO REAR. 2 STORIES HIGH FRONT AND REAR WITH AN OUT-KITCHEN ADJOINING 12' x 16'..OCCUPIED AS A DWELLING HOUSE.

1923 ALFRED WILSON, TRUSTEE GIVES QUIT CLAIM DEED TO SAREPTA PURKIS AND ELIZABETH F P JOHNSON TO THE ABOVE PROPERTY.

1927 ~~4~~ MELVIN C JOHNSON AND WIFE ELIZABETH F P JOHNSON SELL TO HUGH BLACK JR A CERTAIN TRACT OF LAND WITH ALL BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS BOUNDED S BY CHARLES FIELD STREET 59.08' (THE W BOUNDARY OF LOT CONVEYED BEING 201.35' E OF THE CORNER OF BROWN AND CHARLES FIELD STREER); W BY HELEN ALLEN, MOSTLY, AND BROWN UNIVERSITY 98.33'; N AND E BY ALICE VAUGHN..BEING THE SAME ESTATE FORMERLY BELONGING TO ROBERT PURKIS...DB 705.304

1930 PROPERTY TAXED TO JOHN R FRAZIER

1948 PROPERTY TAXED TO JOHN R FRAZIER AND WIFE MARY.

PROVIDENCE DIRECTORY

1826 PURKIS, ROBERT, MARINER

* Johnson is grandson of Purkis

See "Personalities" Book #11

BOORUM & PEASE "NOISEAR" ®

BOORUM & PEASE "NOISEAR" ®

ROBERT PURKIS HOUSEAddress:

37 Charles Field Street, Providence, Providence
County, Rhode Island. Plat 12, Lot 412.

Present Owner
and Occupant:

Mr. and Mrs. John R. Frazier

Present Use:

Dwelling.

Brief Statement
of Significance:

This is a typical example of a medium-sized wood house, with very few alterations, built about 1823.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATIONA. Physical History1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1808 Will Wait Smith... "To my daughter Martha Brown Howell, the occupation of and all my real estate rents, profits, etc... Isaac Brown and Martha Howell, executors... Will
- 1825 ...Mas. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Company at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island, Vol. 4... policy #2047. Robert Purkis for \$1800. House on N side of Charles Field Street... wood. 33' in front and 30' front to rear. 2 stories high front and rear with an out-kitchen adjoining 12' x 16'..occupied as a dwelling house.
- 1826 Martha Howell and Isaac Bowen, ex u/w of Wait Smith sells for \$499 to Robert Purkis, mariner, a certain tract of land bounded: S by Charles Field Street 50'; W by Solomon Townsend and Gideon Hatch 100'; N by Wait Smith... Deed Book 51, page 352, in Providence City Hall.
- 1826 Purkis, Robert, mariner, Providence Directory.
- 1854 Property is taxed to Robert Purkis heirs.

Brown and Charles Field Street); W by Helen Allen, mostly, and Brown University 96.33'; N and E by Alice Vaughn...being the same estate formerly belonging to Robert Parkia...Deed Book 705, page 34, in Providence City Hall.

1930 Property taxed to John E. Frazier

1945 Property taxed to John E. Frazier and wife Mary.

2. Date of erection: c. 1823 for Captain Robert Parkia, according to notes prepared by Louise Brown for an un-completed publication of the Colonial House based on records in possession of the owners of the house.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: Except for the front doorway, the house appears to have had very few alterations. The present front doorway was added in 1937 replacing one that was damaged in a storm. It was designed by Mrs. Frazier, present owner, and Margaret Collins, and carved by William Sanger.
4. Other views: For a photograph of the entire house, see HABS records for the Salomon Townsend House, 35 Charles Field Street, Providence, HABS No. RI-221.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Cowley
for the Providence Preservation Society
January 1968

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a typical example of a medium-sized wood house, built about 1823, with very few alterations or additions except for the front doorway.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Main block, 33' (five bays) wide in front x 30' deep, two stories, facing south; one-and-a-half-story kitchen wing to north, 12' x 16'.
2. Foundations: Random ashlar on front. Stucco on sides.
3. Wall construction: Clapboards, 4-1/4" average exposure, beaded corner boards.

4. **Stoops:** Small brownstone entrance stoop parallel to house with double flights of steps, four steps one side, five other side; simple iron railing typical of this period in Providence.

5. **Chimneys:** Two inside brick chimneys in main block, one in rear wing.

6. **Openings:**

a. **Doors:** Present entrance door with wide, elliptical, lowered fan and side lights added in 1937, eight-panel wood door.

b. **Windows and shutters:** Six over six light double hung windows with lowered shutters, simple wood shutters.

7. **Roof:**

a. **Shape, covering:** Gable, asphalt shingles.

b. **cornice:** Moulded cornice, returned slightly at gable ends.

C. **Technical Description of Interior**

1. **Floor plans:** Central hall plan. Central hall 6' wide, first floor ceilings 7-1/2' high. Four rooms of equal size in main block, kitchen in rear wing. Central hall divided with front and rear stairs. Second floor arrangement similar to first with four bedrooms in main block and bathroom over kitchen.

2. **Stairways:** Main stair, straight run with 90° turn at top, open string, moulded handrail, three slender rectangular balusters per step, turned newel, turn step and scroll ornaments. Rear stairs nearly identical but without step and ornament.

3. **Flooring:** Original wide board floors except in dining room (northwest room on first floor) which has later strip floor.

4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Plaster, papered or painted.

5. **Doors and doorways:** Six-panel doors, raised-panel doors, double moulded mitered architraves.

6. **Trim:** Moulded chair rail through mesh of first floor. Corner posts of heavy timber frames with beaded edges exposed on interior.

7. Hardware: - Various kinds of hardware including iron
latches, break bolts, porcelain knobs, butt hinges.

8. Lighting: Electric

9. Heating: Central heat plus fireplaces in all rooms; five
on each floor. One-story wood mantels, with pilasters
or colonettes in more important front rooms.

10. Site: - See notes on plan.

1. General setting and orientation: Narrow, level lot,
house on sidewalk at front, parking area at west side,
yard in rear.

2. Enclosures: Brick walls (on adjoining property) north
and east sides, wood fence on west.

3. Walks, driveways: Asphalt sidewalk in front; gravel
drive.

4. Landscaping: Natural rear yard.

Prepared by Samuel H. Gandy, Architect
National Park Service
January 1948

Notes on plan showing details of construction and materials to be used in the building.

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COPY OF THE PETITION OFROBERT PURKISOF THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

TO THE HONORABLE THE SENATE, AND THE HONORABLE THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATION, NOW ASSEMBLED AT THE CITY OF WASHINGTON IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS. ROBERT PURKIS OF THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE, IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND MARINER, A SEA FARING MAN, AND NOW IN THE 58TH YEAR OF HIS AGE, CLAIMS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES, SOME ADEQUATE REMUNERATION, PAYMENT FOR HIS PRIVATIONS AND SUFFERING DURING A SERIOUS CONTEST, WHICH TOOK PLACE ON BOARD OF THE SLOOP "LITTLE SARAH" A LICENCED VESSEL OF THE UNITED STATES. THEN SAILING FROM THE WEST PART OF CONNECTICUT, BOUND TO RHODE ISLAND. THAT THE SAID SLOOP "LITTLE SARAH", WAS CAPTURED BY A BRITISH TENDER BETWEEN STONINGTON AND POINT JUDITH, THAT THE SAID ROBERT PURKIS SEA MAN ON BOARD THE SLOOP "LITTLE SARAH". THE CAPTURE TOOK PLACE ON OR ABOUT THE 17TH OF NOVEMBER - 1814 -. THE SAID CRUISER OR TENDER AFTER THE CAPTURE OF THE SLOOP "LITTLE SARAH" TOOK FROM HER THE CAPTAIN BENJAMIN RHODES ALSO OF SAID PROVIDENCE AND TWO SEAMEN, LEAVING ONLY MYSELF, THE SAID ROBERT PURKIS ON BOARD.

THE SAID CRUISER OR TENDER PUT ON BOARD THE "LITTLE SARAH" FOUR MEN AND ORDERED THE "LITTLE SARAH" FOR NOVA SCOTIA. THEY TOOK POSSESSION OF THE "LITTLE SARAH" AT ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING OF SAID 17TH OF NOVEMBER, 1814. THE SAID FOUR MEN AFTER RECEIVING SOME PROVISIONS, ETC. WAS DIRECTED TO CARRY THE PRIZE TO NOVA SCOTIA. DURING THE TIME AFTER TAKING POSSESSION ABOUT THREE HOURS AFTER THREE OF THE MEN BEING BELOW, IN ORDER AS IT WAS BY ME SUPPOSED TO SECURE THE DEAD LIGHTS, AND WHILE BELOW YOUR PETITIONER, THE SAID ROBERT PURKIS TOOK ADVANTAGE AND SECURED IN PART THE COMPANION WAY, AND THREATENED THEM IF THEY ATTEMPTED TO COME ON DECK TO BLOW OUT THEIR BRAINS. DURING THIS

CONVERSATION THE MAN AT THE HELM TOOK ONE OF THE SLOOP'S SWAPS AND STRUCK ME OVER THE HEAD AND HALLOWED OUT THAT THEY WERE RISEN UPON. AFTER STRIKING AT ME HIS WEAPON BEING SO HEAVY, BEFORE HE COULD RAISE IT AGAIN HE SPRUNG AT ME, WE CLINCHED TOGETHER AND BOTH FELL INTO THE SCUPPERS. WHILE THUS SERIOUSLY ENGAGED HE KEPT SINGING OR HALLOWING OUT FOR HELP TO THOSE BELOW AND I ALSO DECLARING THAT IF THEY ATTEMPTED TO COME ON DECK IT WOULD BE INSTANT DEATH, TELLING THEM THAT I WOULD BLOW THEIR BRAINS OUT. WHEN AT THE SAME TIME THE ONLY WEAPON I HAD WAS A HAMMER. IT BEING IN THE NIGHT, WHICH HAMMER I PRESENTED TO THE HELM, WHICH HE THOUGHT WAS A PISTOL. AFTER I SAW HE WOULD NOT SURRENDER, I STRUCK THE CLAW OF THE HAMMER TWO OR THREE TIMES IN HIS HEAD. HE THEN SAID HE MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP, AS TO LAY THERE AND BE KILLED. THEN I ORDERED HIM AFT TO TAKE THE HELM WHILE I SECURED THE COMPANIONWAY, BUT HE SAID HE COULD NOT ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOSS OF BLOOD. I TOLD HE MUST OR I WOULD BLOW OUT HIS BRAINS AND TOOK THE HAMMER IN SUCH A WAY AS TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE IT WAS A PISTOL. HE THEN COMPLIED AND TOOK THE HELM. IN ABOUT FIVE MINUTES HE FELL ON DECK, THEN I TIED HIS ARMS AND TOLD HIM THAT IF HE OFFERED TO MOVE IT WOULD BE THE DEATH OF HIM. THEN AS SOON AS I HAD GOT THE SAILS IN SOME TRIM AS WELL AS I COULD, THE MEN BELOW BEGAN TO MAKE A NOISE AND TO HALLOW TO HIM ON DECK, AND TO ASK QUESTIONS. I WENT TO HIM ON DECK AND PRESENTED THE HAMMER TO HIS BREST, AND SAID THAT IF HE ANSWERED THEM I WOULD INSTANTLY KILL HIM. I THEN TOLD THEM BELOW THAT IF THEY CONTINUED TO MAKE ANY MORE NOISE OR ALARM, I SHOULD KILL HIM ON DECK. I NOW HAD CHARGE OF THE VESSEL. AFTER THEY BELOW BEGGED ME NOT TO KILL HIM, I THEN TOOK CHARGE OF THE SLOOP AS WELL AS I COULD AND STANDING IN TO THE LAND WITH THE INTENTION OF RUNNING THE VESSEL ASHORE TO GET CLEAR MYSELF. THE WIND HAULING TO THE NORTHWARD, I MADE GAY HEAD LIGHT. I WAS THEN ENCOURAGED IN THINKING THAT I MIGHT FETCH RHODE ISLAND. IT WAS NOW DAYLIGHT, AND I WAS HALF WAY BETWEEN RHODE ISLAND AND POINT JUDITH LIGHT. SEEING NOTHING IN THE OFFING SUSPICIOUS AND SEVERAL VESSELS COMING OUT OF NEWPORT I THOUGHT I WOULD TRY TO BEAT UP AND GET SOME ASSISTANCE FROM THESE

VESSELS COMING OUT OF NEWPORT, BUT THEY APPEARED ONLY SHY AND FEARFUL THAT I WAS AN ENEMY AND USING MEANS TO DECOY AND CAPTURE THEM AND THEY ALL WENT BACK AGAIN. THEN AFTER MAKING SEVERAL TACKS, I MADE OUT TO FETCH FORT ADAMS WHERE THE GUARD BOATS BROUGHT ME TO AND ORDERED ME TO HEAVE TO, THAT THEY COULD SEND A BOAT ON BOARD, AND SOON AN OFFICER AND FIVE OR SIX MEN CAME ON BOARD THE "LITTLE SARAH" IN ORDER TO SEE WHAT THE MATTER WAS, AND FINDING ME ALL COVERED WITH BLOOD THEY SAW THAT SHE WAS A RECAPTURED VESSEL UNDER MY CONTROL. THEY THEN HAILED THE GUARD BOAT AND PROCLAIMED WHAT SHE WAS. THEN A LIEUTENANT AND FOUR MEN CAME ON BOARD AND BROUGHT HER TO AN ANCHOR ALONG SIDE THE GUARD BOAT. THEY THEN TOOK ME ON BOARD THE GUARD BOAT IN ORDER TO DRESS MY WOUNDS AS I HAD MANY. MY FINGERS OF ONE HAND BEING NEARLY GNAWED OFF AT THE ENDS, BY THE TEETH OF THE MAN ON BECK WITH WHOM I HAD HAD THE SEVERE STRUGGLE ALREADY MENTIONED, WHILE SEIZED HIM BY THE THROAT TO COMPEL HIM TO SURRENDER. WHEN THE LIEUTENANT CAME ON BOARD WITH HIS MEN AND BROUGHT THE VESSEL TO ANCHOR, THEY THEN BROKE OPEN THE COMPANIONWAY AND TOLD ME TO GO BELOW, WHICH I ACCORDINGLY DID AND THERE FOUND THE THREE MEN WHICH I HAD PREVIOUSLY SECURED. I THEN TOLD THEM I HAD GOT THEM INTO A GOOD SNUG HARBOR. THEIR REPLY WAS THAT I COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT BEING WELL ARMED. I THEN TOOK THE HAMMER AND TOLD THEM WHILE POINTING IT AT THEM, THIS WAS MY ONLY ARMS.

AFTER BEING ON THE GUARD BOAT TO DRESS MY WOUNDS AND TO RECEIVE SOME REFRESHMENTS, THEY BROUGHT THESE FOUR MEN TO PUT ON BOARD THE GUARD BOAT WITH THEIR BAGGAGE. THE LIEUTENANT TOLD ME I MIGHT TAKE SUCH PORTIONS OF THE BAGGAGE AS I NEEDED. I TOLD HIM I ONLY WANTED WHAT BELONGED TO THE VESSEL, NOT ANY OF THE BAGGAGE OF THE CAPTURED MEN. IN THEIR BAGGAGE WAS THEIR COMMISSION AND THE SLOOP'S LICENCE, WHICH THEY HAD TAKEN FROM ME. I THEN TOOK THE SLOOP "LITTLE SARAH'S" LICENCE AND THE LIEUTENANT TOOK THE TENDER'S COMMISSION AS HE SAID, TO GIVE IT TO COMMODORE CREIGHTON. THEY THEN PUT ME ON BOARD MY VESSEL THE "LITTLE SARAH" WITH AN OFFICER AND FOUR MEN. WE SOON CAME ALONG SIDE THE WHARF AT NEWPORT, R.I., THEN WENT BELOW AND FOUND A LOADED HORSE PISTOL, FOURTEEN BALL CARTRIDGES AND A CUTLASS ALL LAYING ON THE TABLE,

PETITION

BEING THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE CAPTURED MEN, BY THEM BROUGHT ON BOARD AND THE SAME LEFT BY THEM ON BOARD. THE CAPTURED MEN WERE THEN CHARGE OF, BY THE COMMODORE GREIGHTON AND SENT TO THE RECEIVING PRISON SHIP AT PROVIDENCE, AND THERE SOON AFTER WERE EXCHANGED AS PRISONERS OF WAR, AND THE PETITIONER WOULD ALSO REPRESENT THAT HIS CIRCUMSTANCES IN A PECUNIARY POINT OF VIEW IS SUCH THAT HE IS COMPELED TO ASK AND TO OBTAIN JUSTIOE.

THIS MAY BE IN PART BE THE REASON OF HIS NOT EARLIER TAKEN AND PRESENTED HIS CLAIM, BUT HE CANNOT BE DEPRIVED OF HIS JUST RIGHT THROUGH INATTENTION AND NEGLECT, WHEN DURING THE PORTION OF THE SINCE HIS AFFAIRS WERE PROSPEROUS AND HIS SITUATION IN LIFE OF A MORE PLEASING AND SATISFACTORY CHARACTER.

HE NOW NEEDS THE SMALL PITANCE WHICH OF RIGHT BELONGS TO HIM, AND PLACES CONFIDENCE IN CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES AND AS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVERY PRAY, AND CLAIMS THE ALLOWANCE FOR CAPTURED MEN, BEING FOUR IN NUMBER, ALLOWED BY LAW AND ALSO SUCH OTHER COMPENSATION AS THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE AND HONOUR AND JUSTICE HEREUNTO APPERTAIN.

ROBERT PURKIS

WE THE SUBSCRIBERS FROM OUR PERSONAL RECOLLECTION OF THE FACTS SET FORTH IN THE ANNEXED PETITION CHEERFULLY SUBSCRIBE OUR NAMES TO THE SAME AND RECOMMEND THE SAID PETITION TO THE FAVORABLE RECEPTION OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

RICHMOND BULLOCK
 CHARLES HOLDEN
 JOSHUA MAMAN (MAURAN?)
 WILLIAM RICHMOND, 2ND
 WALKER HUMPHREY
 SAMUEL B. MUMFORD
 ROYAL FARNUM
 HENRY GARDNER
 CHARLES SHELDON

H.P. FRANKLIN
 SEBEN DEXTER
 SULLIVAN DON (DORR?)
 MOSES RICHARDSON
 RICHARD E. EDDY
 THOMAS C. HOPPIN
 BENJAMIN HOPPIN
 CARLO MAMAN (MAURAN)
 CHARLES MOWERY