

**PPS RECORDS FOR  
56 COOKE STREET  
PLAT 13, LOT 246**

**WILLIAM H. AND ADELE S. WOOD HOUSE  
Built 1896-1897**

**DESCRIPTION:**

“A typical Providence Colonial Revival house: 2-1/2 stories high with a broad gambrel roof and a 1-story, semi-circular plan bay at one corner on the side elevation. The 3-bay façade has a center entrance with an Ionic porch.”

--“*Providence: A Citywide Survey of Historic Resources*,” p. 167.<sup>1</sup>

The house has its original slate roof, clapboard walls, and brick foundation. Three gabled dormers can be found on both roof slopes. The building stands on a raised lot with fieldstone retaining wall. The elaborate center entrance on the west façade includes wide multi-light sidelights on either side of the door, and a fanlight above. Most of the windows are 6/1 double hung sash. A 1-story, 1-car garage has been added to the east (rear) side of the house, with a deck on its roof.

The house stands on a 6,400 sq.ft. lot on the east side of Cooke Street and the south side of Manning Street. The lot has 80 feet of frontage on both streets.

**HISTORY:**

William Wood, a real estate agent with offices at 61 Westminster Street, was living at 136 Broadway when he and his wife Adele purchased this lot in May 1896. The house at 56 Cooke Street first appears in both tax records and city directories in 1897. Mr. and Mrs. Wood lived here until his death in 1905; Adele subsequently moved to Newton, Mass., rented the house for a few years, and finally in 1910 sold it to Isaac B. Merriman of Barrington. Merriman owned the property until 1957, and may have constructed the garage at the rear (the footprint of which does not appear on the most recent, 1937, atlas of Providence). Since then the house has changed hands four times; the present owners, Robert and Donna Paolino Urciuoli, bought it in 1997.

**DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT<sup>2</sup>:**

Shortly after Providence was first settled in 1636, Arthur Fenner acquired a large tract of land east of the intersection of today's Hope and Power Streets (later expanded as far north as East

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: In *Providence: A Citywide Survey*, this house is called the “Wood-Ward House” and dated 1896; the book indicates that William H. Wood lived here for two years, followed by Walter Ward in 1898. In fact, city directories confirm that Wood lived here until his death in 1905, and his widow for another couple of years after that; she sold the house to Isaac B. Merriman in 1910, and Merriman owned it until at least 1937. City directories also indicate that Walter Ward lived at 56 Baker Street from 1896-1899, and then at 56 Bainbridge Avenue from 1900 until his death in 1915. No evidence was found to confirm that Walter Ward ever lived at or owned 56 Cooke Street.

<sup>2</sup> Robert O. Jones, *Historic and Architectural Resources of the East Side, Providence* (RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, 1989, p. 4; also “Power Street-Cooke Street Historic District” National Register nomination (1973).

Manning Street). Fenner's holdings included Slate Rock, the site of Roger Williams's original landing spot on the west bank of the Seekonk River (near Power, Gano, and Williams Streets today). Arthur Fenner died in 1703, but his descendants retained the What Cheer Farm (named for the Narragansett greeting to Roger Williams: "What Cheer, Netop"), until the death of Governor James Fenner in 1846. Governor Fenner's heirs recorded one of the first residential plats on the East Side, the What Cheer Estate Plat (1847-1848), bounded by Governor Street on the west, a line between Waterman and Manning Streets on the north, a line east of Wayland Avenue and Beach Avenue on the east, and a line south of Wickenden Street on the south. Among the streets in the new plat were Cooke and Manning Streets.

Cooke Street, located one block east of and parallel to Hope Street and running from Power Street at its southern end to Angell Street at its northern end, developed as a residential enclave mostly during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was a period of great growth in Providence, and residential development spread from the west slope of College Hill eastward toward the Seekonk River. Toward the end of the Civil War, public transportation was introduced in Providence in the form of horse-drawn streetcars, which enabled city residents to live further than walking distance from their workplaces. Streetcars greatly facilitated the development of those areas of the East Side that had previously been sparsely settled due to their relative distance and inaccessibility from the city center. Other improvements, such as electricity, telephone service, and municipal water and sewer systems, all introduced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, further enhanced the attractiveness of the East Side for residential living. The block containing 56 Cooke Street, one block south of a streetcar line on Waterman Street, was fully built out by 1908.

## **DESIGNATIONS**

56 Cooke Street is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building within the Power Street-Cooke Street Historic District; in the district's property inventory, the house is identified as the "Remington-Ward House, c. 1898." (See Directories, below, for reference to "Remington.")

The house is not located within any designated local historic district overlay zone.

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

### **Maps and Atlases (in Archives unless otherwise noted)**

**1798:** "A Map of Owners of Lots in Providence," compiled by Henry B. Chace in 1912: Plate IV shows Angell Street, Hope Street (then called "Highway at the Head of the Lots" or "Ferry Road"), and Governor Street (then called "Road to Gov. Fenner's House"), as well as an outline of the alignment of George Street (which had not yet been constructed in 1798). Using these streets as a guide, the future site of 56 Cooke Street was part of a 13-acre lot owned by the Heirs of Joseph Brown. This lot was bounded by Hope Street on the west, by land owned by Rufus Waterman on the north, by Governor Street on the east, and by George Street on the south.

**1846:** "Plot of Land in the East Part of Providence Belonging to Mrs. E.B. Rogers, surveyed and plotted June 18, 1846 by Atwater and Schubarth, recorded February 10, 1847" (Plat Book 3, Page 56, copied on plat card 89). This maps shows a plat bounded by Hope Street on the west, Angell Street on the north, Governor Street on the east, and George Street on the south; "Cook" Street runs north-south from Angell to George, and east-west cross streets include

Waterman and Manning Streets. The future site of 56 Cooke Street lay within a lot at the southeast corner of Cooke and Manning Streets measuring 137 feet 10 inches on Cooke Street and 150 feet on Manning Street (later subdivided into three smaller lots). None of the lots in this plat are numbered. (*Registry of Deeds*)

**1857:** "Map of Providence," by H.F. Walling, Page C5 shows the block bounded by Cooke, Manning, Governor, and George Streets. A large vacant lot (size is not indicated) at the corner of Cooke and Manning Streets is owned by E.B. Rogers, who owns most of the vacant lots in the block. At this time only one house stands in this block, at the corner of Cooke and George Streets.

**1875:** "Atlas of the City of Providence," by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 1 (Ward 2), Plate L shows the block bounded by Cooke, Manning, Governor, and George Streets. A 12,004 sq.ft. lot at the corner of Cooke and Manning Streets is owned by Lewis Dexter. Dexter also owns the 12,119 sq.ft. lot immediately south of the corner lot; the two together are numbered "19" on this map. In addition, Lewis Dexter also owns three other large vacant lots on Manning Street. The sole building in this block remains the house at the corner of Cooke and George Streets.

[Note: the original 1846 Mrs. E.B. Rogers plat map does not show any lot numbers, so it is not clear where the number 19 comes from. The plat may have been revised sometime between 1846-1875, but no revision was found under the name Rogers, and no references to any other plats were found in the records. ]

**1882:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 2, shows the block bounded by Cooke, Manning, Governor, and George Streets. The large vacant lot (size is not indicated) at the corner of Cooke and Manning Street is numbered "19" and appears to be two lots combined together; both are owned by Mary Dexter. Water lines have been installed on Cooke Street, and sewer lines have partially been installed on Governor and George Streets, but the house at the corner of Cooke and George Streets remains the only building in this block.

**1895:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by Everts & Richards, Plate 7 (pages 36-37), shows the block bounded by Cooke, Manning, Governor, and George Streets. The vacant lot at the corner of Cooke and Manning Streets is now L-shaped and contains 17,710 sq.ft.; the owner's name is not indicated. (The former Lot 19 has been subdivided into two lots, one of 6,413 sq.ft. and the other 17,710 sq.ft., both still vacant at this time.) Five houses have been constructed elsewhere in the block. The Waterman Street trolley line is shown, one block to the north of this block. Water and sewer services remain available to only the southern and eastern ends of the block.

**1902:** Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 13 shows the block bounded by Cooke, Manning, Governor, and George Streets. The lot at the corner of Cooke and Manning is #246 and measures 80 by 80 feet (6,400 sq.ft.). No building footprints or owners names are indicated on this map.

**1908:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 7 shows 56 Cooke Street standing on a 6,400 sq.ft. lot owned by Adele R. Wood. The entire block bounded by Cooke, Manning, Governor and George Streets is built out by this time. Water service is indicated on Cooke and Manning Streets, but sewers only on Governor and George Streets. The Waterman Street trolley line runs one block north of this property.

**1918:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows 56 Cooke Street standing on a 6,400 sq.ft. lot owned by B. Merriman. Sewer lines have been installed on Manning Street but not yet on Cooke Street. The map refers to the "Mrs. E.B. Rogers Plat."

**1926:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows 56 Cooke Street standing on a 6,400 sq.ft. lot owned by I. Merriman. The map refers to the "Mrs. E.B. Rogers Plat" on plat card 89.

**1937:** "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 19 shows 56 Cooke Street standing on a 6,400 sq.ft. lot owned by I.B. Merriman. The map refers to the "Mrs. E.B. Rogers Plat" on plat card 89.

### **Deeds (Registry of Deeds)**

**Deed Book 402, Page 394:** On May 9, 1896, Lucian Sharpe and Louisa D. Sharpe his wife, and Sarah D. Kimball, all of Providence, sold to William H. Wood and Adele S. Wood his wife, both of Providence, for \$100, a lot of land at the southeast corner of Cooke and Manning Streets, measuring 80 feet on each side and containing 6,400 sq.ft. of land. The deed does not mention any buildings on this lot.

**Deed Book 404, Page 239:** Also on May 9, 1896, Gertrude Selwyn Kimball, as the designated guardian of Henry C. Kimball [husband of Sarah D. Kimball] of Providence, sold to William H. Wood and Adele S. Wood, for \$342.04, a 5/8 interest in a lot of land at the southeast corner of Cooke and Manning Streets, measuring 80 feet on each side and containing 6,400 sq.ft. of land. The deed does not mention any buildings on this lot.

**Deed Book 513, Page 343:** On September 16, 1910, Adele S. Wood, widow of William H. Wood, of Newton Mass., sold to Isaac B. Merriman of Barrington, RI, for \$100, a lot of land with buildings and improvements thereon at the southeast corner of Cooke and Manning Streets, measuring 80 feet on each side and containing 6,400 sq.ft. of land. The deed refers to Mrs. Wood's previous acquisition of an interest in this property in DB 402/394 and DB 404/239, as well as to her inheritance of her husband's interest in this property through his will (Will Book 89, Page 59).

### **Intent to Build Records (Archives)**

No record of a building permit for 56 Cooke Street was found.

### **Tax Records (Archives)**

*Tax records are available from 1827 to the present. Prior to 1854, tax records were published in a book listing the property owner alphabetically by name, the total assessment for any real and personal property (without specifying where real estate was located), and the total tax due. Beginning in 1854, the city kept ledgers (organized by property owner name) indicating the plat and lot number of any real estate and the assessed value and taxes therefor.*

**1895:** William H. Wood of 136 Broadway was not recorded as owning any real estate; he was assessed for personal property only. (No one named Henry or Sarah Kimball, or Lucien or Louisa Sharpe, is recorded as the owner of Plat 13, Lot 246.)

**1896:** William H. Wood and Adele S. Wood of 56 Cooke Street owned Plat 13, Lot 246, which was assessed at \$6,080 for real estate.

**1897:** William H. Wood and Adele S. Wood of 56 Cooke Street owned Plat 13, Lot 246, which was assessed at \$18,080 for real estate. This \$12,000 increase in one year indicates that the house had been constructed since the previous assessment.

### **Directories (Archives)**

*Providence City Directories contain a street directory (noting all existing streets) as well as a residents' directory organized alphabetically by last name; city directories also included a house directory listing residential buildings by street address from 1892-1894.*

**1895, 1896:** William H. Wood, real estate agent with offices at 61 Westminster Street, lived at 136 Broadway.

**1897-1906:** William H. Wood, real estate agent, lived at 56 Cooke Street.

**1906:** William H. Wood died May 8, 1905.

**1907-1908:** Adele S. Wood, widow of William H., lived at 56 Cooke Street.

*Providence House Directories were published separately from the city directory, 1895-1937 (published biannually from 1901). These directories list all residential buildings by street address, and also contain a street directory. This directory is sometimes a year behind the city directory.*

**1897:** first listing for 56 Cooke Street, residence of William H. Wood, real estate agent.

**1898:** 56 Cooke Street was the residence of Jane Remington, widow (boarding); Miss Florence Wood (boarding); Mr. and Mrs. William H. Wood (homeowners); and William R. Wood, student (boarding).

**1899-1905/1906:** 56 Cooke Street continued to be the residence of Jane Remington, Florence Wood, and Mr. and Mrs. William H. Wood. By 1905 only Mr. and Mrs. Wood were still living here.

**1907/1908:** 56 Cooke Street was the residence of Mrs. William H. Wood.

**1909/1910:** 56 Cooke Street was the residence of E.G. Buckland, lawyer.

### **Assessor's Chain of Title Cards (Assessor's Office)**

Plat 17, Lot 246: Cooke and Manning Streets

William H. Wood and wife Adele R. Wood owned the property as of June 1, 1896.

Adele R. Wood of Newton (Mass.) owned the property as of July 2, 1906.

Isaac B. Merriam of Barrington (RI) owned the property as of November 1, 1910.

William H. Garrahan and wife Angela, as joint tenants, owned the property as of December 1957.

Angela Garrahan (DRec) owned the property as of December 7, 1968.

Kenneth A. Raymond and wife Jane G. Raymond, as joint tenants, owned the property as of May 8, 1969. (Refers to Deed Book 1152/Page 615.)

Kenneth A. Raymond and wife Jane G. Raymond, as tenants of the entirety, owned the property as of October 30, 1970. (Refers to DB 1159/621.)

Nicholas D. Iannuccilli and wife Leah C. Iannuccilli, as tenants of the entirety, owned the property as of September 7, 1984. (Refers to DB 1271/11.)

Leah C. Iannuccilli owned the property as of April 14, 1994. (Refers to DB 2935/289.)

Robert A. Urciuoli owned the property as of April 15, 1997. (Refers to DB 3533/9.)

*Research compiled by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh  
June 2003*