

Built 1847
By Isaac Cady

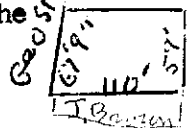
PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Records of

Plat 12
Lot 328

#277 - 279 BENEFIT STREET...Wood

1797 George Hopkins Burrough sells for \$200 to Rufus Peck a lot of land bounded: N by George Street 67' 9"; E by Seth Davis and Malachi Greene; S by grantor 59'; W by heirs of Joseph Brown 110' (gore of land here?); and is the same lot Mary Young (the grantor's Mother) was obligated by Bond since assigned to the grantee and was this day exchanged for the grantor's land....Deed Book...24.403



1798 CHASE NOTES: Rufus Peck...N on George Street; E on John Pitman... building 32' x 18'...1 story wood; a store 32' x 12'..2 stories..wood; a barn 22' x 10'...2 stories high wood...the last 2 buildings both raised but not covered in October of this year..(and at back part of #279 - 281 Benefit Street)

1807 MORTGAGE: Rufus Peck, trader, to Obadiah Brown a certain lot of land with a Dwelling House...and is the same I purchased of George H Burroughs in 1797...DB 32.9 + 20' more on Benefits

Several Mortgages followed.

1845 WILL: Eliza Ward, devisee of Joseph Brown, leaves all the rest and residue of her estate to Moses B Ives in trust for her neice, Eliza B Rogers, wife of Joseph...Wills 15.200

1846 Henry B Rogers and Moses B Ives, trustees of the Estate of Eliza Rogers sell for \$2,000 to Isaac H Cady and Prudence B Updike a part of a triangular piece of land. (see map). To Isaac H Cady as his, so much of the triangular piece of land N and to said Prudence B Updike, so much as lies South of the division line described in the deed of Partition in in 1846 (DB 97.327)...DB 102.290

No Ins

1846 Walter W Updike and Prudence B Updike ~~W/Cady~~ Quit Claim to Isaac H Cady the North 1/2 part of the above property...DB 102.141

for 2,000

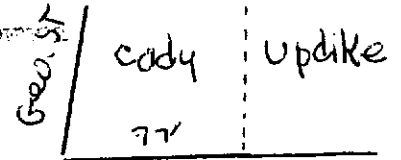
→ 1847 Isaac H Cady sells for \$4250 to Henry Lippitt a certain parcel of land bounded: W by Benefit Street 77'; N by George Street; E by gangway and John Pitman; S by Patience W M Bush, formerly grantee together with gangway privileges and is the same lot conveyed to me by quit claim deed from W W Updike and Prudence B Updike in 1846..DB 106.175

1851 Henry Lippitt sells for \$4750 to Harriet Pearce, wife of Edward, the above property...DB 122.248 ...Property was in the Pearce family until...

1921 AdLine L Kenyon owned property

1923 Saverion N Pennine and wife owned property and is still owned by the Pennine family

1965 - --- Olevson
Isaac Pitman
in
Ann Updike - 1806



Benefit St.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MUSIC CLUBS

MRS. CLIFTON J. MUIR, PRESIDENT • CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA



July 8, 1968

Office of Past President
National Federation of Music Clubs
MRS. ADA HOLDING MILLER
375 Lloyd Avenue
Providence 6, Rhode Island

279 Benefit St
answered by AFD
Aug 22, 1968

Dear Mrs. Downing:

Herewith is a bad copy of the description of the old house at 279 Benefit St. Dr. Miller had lived in several houses either on Benefit or George Sts ever since he left the R.I. Hospital to assist Dr. John Keefe. In other words to begin his career as a working doctor on his own.

He drove the ambulance while an Intern at the R.I. Hospital and this was a horse and buggy affair, sometimes with two horses and the wagon, like an old ice cream wagon with canvas top and lantern hung at the front. He knew every street in the city and many stories about each one. Since I was practically new in Providence, he took great pains to take me around while he made his house calls, often 30 a day and kept me informed of the history of the streets.

The Merrimans were his patients when he did general practice so I am sure that everything he told me about 279 is accurate. I knew all the Doctors and their families intimately and can tell you many tales about the houses on Benefit St. Dr. Miller's family were from Maine and every cemetery around Lewiston, Leeds and Greene is full of Days. Dr. Frank Day was Godfather to our oldest daughter Elizabeth and left each girl a valuable piece of furniture one being a Goddard Townsend desk which my daughter now has in Iowa.

I really should just talk into a mike and tape some of these things for as you see I am no typist.

I have the story of Pill Row lined up and shall try and get this off to you soon. Some things I cannot write about such as we all knew when the Walkers were getting dinner for they ate tons of cabbage which smelled up the whole row and how Mrs. Higgins made the lovely orange red drapes from the old original ones found in the attic for her house which was originally that of Marsden Perry.

Perhaps you can find someone to make a good copy of the article enclosed and I apologize for it. What a gorgeous job you have done and how marvellous to restore dear old Benefit St. There is no other with your knowledge I know.

Cordially Yours

Ada Holding Miller

1968

House at 279 Benefit St, Cor of George.

Doctor Miller called it The Henry Pearce House. It had been moved from its original site at some time in the early 1880's I believe and the front of the house had to be placed on the side of that ^{part} on Benefit St to fit the lot. It had been empty for some time before Dr. Miller rented it from Henry Cooke Co. Dr. Miller lived in this house from 1909 - 1918. I came as a bride in 1920

Downstairs was a large hall and winding staircase with a niche half way up where we had one of our wedding gifts stationed, a plaster statue of David after chopping off Goliath's head, a gory affair but very much the style in 1910. All rooms were high posted. There were two double parlors with folding doors. The back parlor was used as an office for some time and the front parlor, a Music Room. All windows had small panes of glass and white folding shutters of white. Between the two front windows on Benefit St, was a marble stand and on this was a huge mirror from floor to ceiling. This was framed in walnut and gold. The floors were gorgeous and with patterned designs in mahagony, walnut and maple. Each piece had been set in by hand and each measured over a foot in depth.

~~In this room (kitchen), there was also a large mirror to the ceiling over the coal burning fireplace framed in walnut. In the back parlor, there was a wood burning~~
replaced and around this a set of Spode tiles. While there, a small fire broke out in the furnace rooms somewhere so the firemen began to chop up everything in sight and broke some of the tiles so that they had to be removed. Later on we had a beautiful table made of the remaining tiles and with wrought iron base. There is an exact replica, old of course, of this same tile pattern in the old house at the corner of Power and Benefit St, across from John Brown's house. The room is at the right of the front hall.

All downstairs rooms were covered with very beautiful embossed wallpapers. The dining room was huge it seemed to me and off this were innumerable cupboards hallways and a Butler's pantry with all copper sinks etc. The old kitchen still had its ancient coal stove which did nothing but smoke so we had a gas stove put in. Electric lights were put in the house by Dr. Miller himself and there were still many gas lights to be used.

On the second floor there were five bedrooms, one with a fireplace. Down a short flight of stairs, there was a bathroom made from one old bedroom. The lavatory was separate and off the back hall. On the third floor there were four more bedrooms. Since we had a Cook a Nursemaid and an Office Boy, plus any visiting relatives, the rooms were always occupied.

On the ground floor, and beyond the furnace rooms, there was a suite of rooms opening on Benefit St and here Dr. Lewis Porter had his office for some time. There were two furnaces. We burned 27 tons of coal and still froze!

Out of the Master Bedroom, someone had built a large cupboard, lined with Cedar, really a room and one could lay out long gowns full length in the drawers. You can see this from the back yard. In the latter Dr. Miller built the small garage to house his Model T. Ford.

We often entertained 200 or more people in the two front rooms and many famous musicians came to perform, rehearse or to stay with us while in town. The different Music Clubs met here also and groups of eminent doctors.

In fact the house should be called "The House of the **Three M's**"-Music and **Medicine!**

Our two oldest daughters were born in this house for of course, no respectable woman would have a child born in some hospital!

Elizabeth Eunice Miller- Richards, Born March 27, 1912
Now Mrs. Jonathan B. Richards, Red Oak, Iowa. (He is a Lawyer)

Kathleen Louise Miller- Barry, Born September 20, 1914.

Mrs. Alexander Barry, Davis, California.
Asst Dean of Medical School Univ. of California.

We hated to leave Benefit St for here we had at hand Memorial Hall, Talma Theatre Athenaeum, Infantry Hall, Handicraft Club and Art Club all within easy walking distance. There was no yard in which children could play safely and by 1918 the motor trucks began to use Benefit St as a main artery. Such a constant noise and piles of dirt and soot as they stirred up, just no place for young children.

Ada Holding Miller

PILL ROW

Few people now living will remember either the name or location of that section of old Benefit Street, known to the medical profession and laity alike as Pill Row. Although sixty years ago, or more, there were a few scattered physicians' offices North and South of College Hill, Pill Row really began at the Corner of College Hill and Benefit Street and was confined to that area for many years. Next to the Providence Athenaeum the row of brick houses joined together still stands. Directly opposite on Benefit Street, next to the old Courthouse was the exact duplicate of the houses on the East side of the street. In them and usually on the first floors were the offices of many prominent doctors of that era. Their families lived on the upper floors generally.

No matter what "ailed you" immediate help and cures were instantly available. The age of Specialists had not yet arrived to any extent and all doctors were equipped to do minor surgery internal medicine orthopedics or what have you. Serious operations were performed as a last resort at one of the two small private hospitals. The doctors were delighted to make calls at any time, day or night, Sundays included and no "Wednesdays off!"

On the West side of Pill Row were the offices of Drs. Henry Rolfe Brown, Walker (and in that same spot formerly the office of Dr. Gustave "adlike) Louis Chapman, Lewis Kalloch, Darrell Harvey, Frank Peckham and just across Hopkins Hill those of Drs Matteson and McLaw.

Next to the Athenaeum were the offices of Drs. Keefe, Miller, Danforth Hussey, Bigelow and Yes, believe it or not Ham and Bacon. A bit later across George Street the offices of Albert Miller, Lewis Porter and Dr. Shipman.

The problems of transportation did not seem somehow to be as serious as those of today. Patients who were ambulatory walked up or down College Hill to the offices or took the Cable cars, stopping at Benefit Street, a feat which required agility, courage and something of daring for the cars were held at a precarious angle, almost suspended in mid air it seemed. Aided at times by the Conductor, one gave a flying leap and hoped for the best.

Sixty years ago here were many hitching posts along Benefit Street. In a very old house which sadly enough had to be razed to make way for a new building of The Rhode Island School of Design, was the office of Dr. Frank Day. Hitched to his post one would see his mare, Ipecacuana, and waiting to take the doctor on his daily rounds would be his driver Christopher Columbus Spicer.

With the building of the new Courthouse, the doctors moved en masse over the hills to Waterman street where like birds of a feather they still flock together and with good reason.

2. Pill Row

The early medical profession had no laboratory technicians, no X-Rays, no Anti Biotics nor was the word "Virus" ever heard of. Therefore to call in one of the older men in consultation was a daily event. Names of some of these distinguished and knowledgeable men come to mind- Collins, Mitchell, George Porter, E.B. Smith, Noyes, DeWolf, Pitts, Wing Kingman and many others of equal ability. Diagnoses were made by the sense of touch, a good listening ear, a thorough knowledge of anatomy, long experience and above all, an enormous respect for the patient as an individual.

A monument should be erected to the memory of those Pioneer Doctors of Pill Row.