

## The Jeremiah Tillinghast House

Records of

#401 BENEFIT STREETBuilt in 1819...By Levi Pearce forPlat 16  
Lot 345

#213 in 1824

- 1818 Amey Tillinghast, widow of William E Tillinghast, quit claims to Mary and Betsy Chandler and Amey Ann Tillinghast, all her rights to her late husband's Estate of which Joseph Tillinghast jr died Seized and all claims to the Estate of her deceased husband, William E Tillinghast from the Estate of the late Joseph Tillinghast Sr, and the late company of Tillinghast, Gorton and Tillinghast, and to the Estate of Benjamin T and Samuel Chandler and Benjamin E Gorton..DB 42.181
- 1819 Mary and Betsy G Chandler and Amey Ann Tillinghast, sell for \$500 to Levi Pearce, mason, a certain lot of land in the S/ly part of Providence at the corner of Benefit and Transit Street, and is part of the Lot of land left us by our Father William Tillinghast..Bounded: W by Benefit Street 106'; N by William Bucklin and Thomas Peckham 123'; E by Sweet and Rhodes 90'; S by Transit Street 70'..DB 43.259
- 1819 Levi Pearce, mason, sells for \$2500 to Jeremiah Tillinghast, sail-maker, one certain lot of land with a DWELLING HOUSE thereon, being the same lot conveyed to said Levi by the Tillinghast heirs in 1819. Deed Book 43.272

1819 - 1831 Jeremiah Tillinghast lived here...Prov Directory

- 1831 Jeremiah Tillinghast died.
- 1832 ADMINISTRATION; The Jeremiah Tillinghast Estate; The Mansion House and Lot of said Jeremiah Tillinghast situated on Benefit and Transit Streets, occupied by said Jeremiah Tillinghast at his decease and other outbuildings appraised at \$2500.

Out of said Estate so appraised, we have set off to Mary Tillinghast for her her 3rds or dower, all the lower part on the first story of the Mansion House, with the 1-story outbuilding adjoining said House on the E side, the attic story or garret of said House with the privilege of passing to and from said garret by the back stairs...all the land on the N side of said House from Benefit Street, extending c 104' to the E end of House in a line with said House, the privilege of a passage around said House and W cellar as far as the S side beam....Joshua H Langly, William Bucklin,

more...

#101 BENEFIT STREET...continued

Roger Williams Potter, administrators...Deed Book of Administration #A5363 (see Inventory of Personal Effects on separate sheet)

1855 The Supreme Court of the State of Rhode Island rendered a Decree in a Bill of Equity (Deed Book 140.114) wherein Allen Tillinghast et al and Benjamin Greene et al were defendants, ordering a sale at Public Auction of the Estate hereafter mentioned, and appointed Charles F Tillinghast, the Master, to cause the sale thereof to be made:..... The said Charles F Tillinghast, sells for \$5725 to Euclid C Thayer the highest bidder at Public Auction, a certain lot of land with the buildings and improvements thereon, situated at the N/E corner of Benefit and Transit Streets bounded:W by Benefit Street 106'; N by Thomas Peck and William Bucklin 123'; E by Charles Dennis 90'; S by Transit Street 70'... Deed Book 140.115

1855 POLICY RECORD: Euclid C Thayer...corner of Benefit and Transit Streets...Brick..All 2 stories high...30' x 34'. Addition 20' x 14'...1 story high. Another 12' x 14' of wood...1 story high. Occupied for a Dwelling House...PR Vol 56..#24834

1857 - 1874 Euclid C Thayer, Boots, shoes, and factory leather, lived here...Providence Directory

1875 Marcy Gorham, mortgagee of Euclid C Thayer (DB 39.379) sells to William H Grins, the highest bidder at public auction a certain lot of land with a Dwelling House and improvements thereon, situated on the N/E corner of Benefit and Transits Street, being on Flat 16 Lot 345, and being the same conveyed to said Thayer in 1855. Deed Book 245.487

1875 William H Grins sells for \$9000 to George and Eva Fritz that certain lot of land...being the same conveyed to me by Marcy Gorham, mortgagee and attorney of Euclid C Thayer in 1875...Deed Book 251.64

1880 George Fritz sells to Sarah H Cranston, wife of Francis A Cranston that certain lot of land with all buildings and improvements thereon Bounded: W by Transit Street 96'; N by Eliza S Cranston and heirs of Robert Woodward 108'; E by Leonard A Fuller 88'; S by Transit Street 60' being on Flat 16, Lot #345...Deed Book 309.135

1881 - 1890 Francis A Cranston, cashier, lived here..Prov Dir

1885 Mansard Roof was added...Tax Ledger

more...

#401 BENEFIT STREET...continued

1898 Francis A Cranston and Sarah H Cranston, in her right, sell to Robert Muir that certain lot of land with buildings and improvements thereon. Bounded: W by Benefit Street 96'; N by Henry C Cranston and heirs of Robert Woodward 108'; E by Leonard A Fuller 88'; S by Transit Street 60', being the same premises conveyed to the grantor by deed from George Fritz in 1880...Deed Book 414.281

1900 - 1909 Arthur a Fuller, superintendent lived here. P Dir.

1909 Albert W Muir et al, heirs of Robert Muir sell the above property to Dennis O'Neill and Mary O'Neill his wife...Deed Book 502.318

1911 - 1921 Dennis O'Neill, laborer and Dennis C O'Neill physician listed here..Prov Directory.

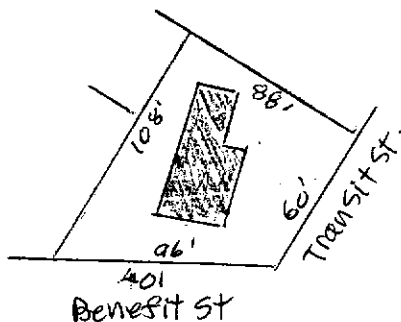
1921 - 1924 Edward J Quarm listed here...Prov. Directory

1931 Agnes O'Neill, single, sells the property to Michael Rufful and wife Margaret by deed, being Plat 16, Lot 345...DB 750.118

1933 - 1963 Thomas Rufful and/or family listed here..Prov Dir

1963 Michael Rufful et al sell to Thomas G Sanders and wife Louise C Sanders that certain lot of land with all improvements thereon, bounded W by Benefit Street 96'; N by M A Murphy and Guiseppa De Pietro 108'; E by Johanna Shea 88'; S by Transit Street 60'.... Deed Book 1120.836

1969 Thomas G Sanders and wife Louise C Sanders sell to George M Gross jr that lot of land with all buildings and improvements thereon, situated on the N/E corner of Benefit and Transit Streets, bounded: W by Benefit Street 96'; N by Lee Kaplan and Katherine De Pietro 108'; E by Sheldon Tolin 88'; S by Transit Street 60'...Deed Book 1153.531



Mary A Gowdey  
researcher  
March 1970

PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

4.

#401 BENEFIT STREET...continued

1831 INVENTORY (personal) of

JEREMIAH TILLINGHAST

Mansion House...401 Benefit Street

S/W Front Room

a Sofa \$15	a pr Card Tables \$10	25.	
an Easy Chair \$5	a Mahogany Dining Table \$4	9.	
a Work Table \$3	8 Fancy Chairs \$5	8.	
2 Looking Glasses \$6	2 Crickets 3/	6.50	
a pr Andirons, Shovel, tongs & fender		6.	
a pr Snuffers & Tray	a pr Glass Lamps )	.	
a pr Plated Candlesticks & a Hearth Brush )		1.	
a Light Stand \$1	a Carpet & Fire Rug \$17	18.	<u>73.50</u>

S/E Front Room

a Mahogany Secretary \$7 & Light Stand & )		19.	
Pembroke Table \$2	a Side Board \$8 )	3.25	
a pr Andirons, Shovel & Tongs \$3	pr Crickets 1/6	1.42	
4 Waiters & a Bread Basket 4/6	4 Pitchers 4/	6.	
30 pcs Glass Ware \$2	8 Green Chairs @ 3/	2.	
a pr Andirons, Shovel & Tongs		4.25	
an old Carpet & Fire Rug \$4	4 Books 1/6	4.12	<u>40.4<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
a Small Trunk 12 cts	a Silver Watch \$4		

S/E Front Room Closet

19 ounces 17wt Silver @ 6/		19.85	
a Lot Crockery & China Ware		8.	
4 Brittania Tea Pots 6	7 Case Knives 30¢	1.30	
2 Stone Pots, a Jug & Lot of Bottles		.25	<u>29.40</u>

Bedroom on the Lower Floor

a Bed, Curtains, Bedstead & Bedding		18.00	
a Bed-quilt \$2	15 Sheets & 18 Pillow Cases \$10	12.	
3 Table Cloths & 2 Towels \$1	a Bed Flounce \$1	2.	
8 Blankets @ 7/6	2 Coverlets & a Comforter \$4	14.	
1 Strip of Carpeting 1/6	2 Pictures 1/6	.50	<u>46.50</u>
			\$383.51 $\frac{1}{2}$

more...

#401 BENEFIT STREET....continuedAmount fraught forward383.51Front Entry

a Mahogany Dining Table \$5    Rocking Chair 4/6  
 an Entry Lamp 6/    a pr Fire Buckets 6/  
 a Stair Carpet & Rods

5.75

2.

4.

11.75Entry Bedroom Upper

2 Beds, Bedstead & Bedding  
 a Wash Stand & 4 Pictures 6/    an old Sofa 12/  
 a pair Small Card Tables

15.

3.

2.

20.Kitchen Bedroom

a Bedstead 2 Beds & Bedding  
 a Trundle Bedstead, Bed & Bedding

12.

2.

14.Kitchen

6 Lamps 6/    a pr Andirons 9/    2 pr Sad Irons 3  
 a Lot of Pewter and Tin Ware  
 9 Kitchen Chairs 9/    a Light Stand & Cricket 3/  
 an Old Carpet & a Small Looking Glass  
 a lot of Crockery Ware \$2    2 sm Brass Kettles 6/  
 10 pcs Iron Ware \$2    a Small Table 3/  
 6 Chairs & a Bread Tray \$1    a Cask Lime \$1  
 a Cooking Stove with Pipe \$2    2 Baskets and a Pail 1/6

3.

2.

2.

2.

3.

2.50

2.

2.2518.75Garret

a Bedstead, Bed & Bedding \$4    Bureau \$2  
 2 Chests and one old Case of Drawers  
 a Wash Stand & a Lot of Old Chairs  
 a Cradle \$2    a Mortar & Coffee Mill 1/6  
 a Trundle Bedstead 1/6

6.

1.50

1.

2.25

.2511.

459.1

more...

#401 BENEFIT STREET...continuedAmount Brought Forward459.1(No Room Designated)

an Eight Day Brass Clock	21.
a Mahogany Framed Looking Glass \$4.50 a Waiter 3/	5.
an Easy Chair 9/ a Mahogany Light Stand 3/	2.
a Waiter, Tumbler & Wine Glasses 3/ a Carpet \$8	8.50
an Old Carpet 4/6 a pr Andirons, Shovel & Tongs \$2	2.75
a pr Brass Candlesticks 1/6 a Copper Tea Kettle 4/6	1.
a Lot of Crockery Ware 2 25/100 2 Decanters & Goblet 3/	2.75
a Castor 3/ a Desk \$4 a Cherry Table 6/	5.50
3 Pewter Plates 20¢ a large Cherrytree Stand 6/	1.20
5 large & 5 Sm Silver Spoons wt oz 12.10 wt @ 6/6	12.50
	<u>62.20</u>

(No Room Designated)

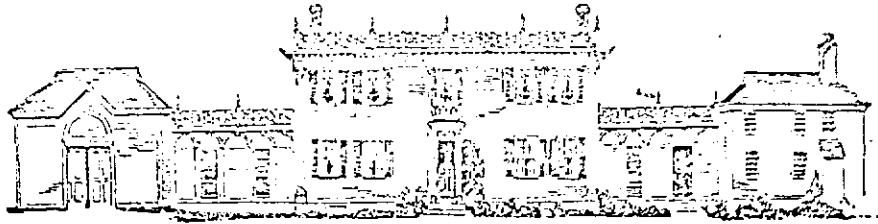
3 Tables \$2 a Maple Light Stand	2.50
6 Flag Bottom Chairs \$2 6 Hair Bottom Chairs @ 4/	6.
a Flag Bottom Arm Chair 6/ a Tinder Box & Porringer 10@	1.10
a Lot of Iron Ware 7/6 a Tin Kitchen 1/6	1.50
a pr Iron Dogs, Shovel, Tongs 40¢ a Rocking Chair 1/6	.65
a Skimmer & Ladle & a Sm Tub & Meal Chest 9/	1.50
4 Old Blankets & a Coverlid \$2 An Old Bed Pillow \$5	7.
An Old Bed, Under Bed & Pillows \$2 a Bedstead 3/	2.50
	<u>22.75</u>
	\$ 543.96

Appraisers:

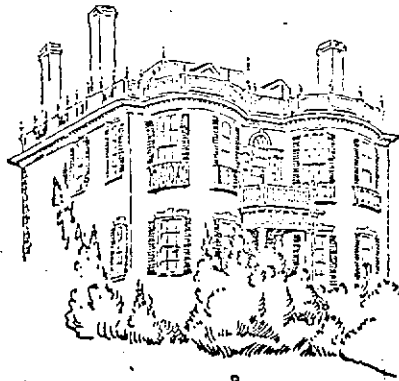
Joshua H Langley  
William Bucklin  
Roger Williams Potter

Jeremiah Tillinghast Estate  
Inventory...#5363 A

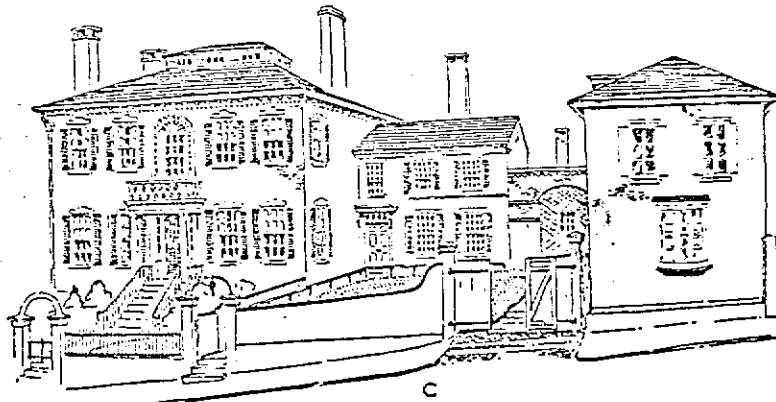
The Federal Style of Architecture in Rhode Island



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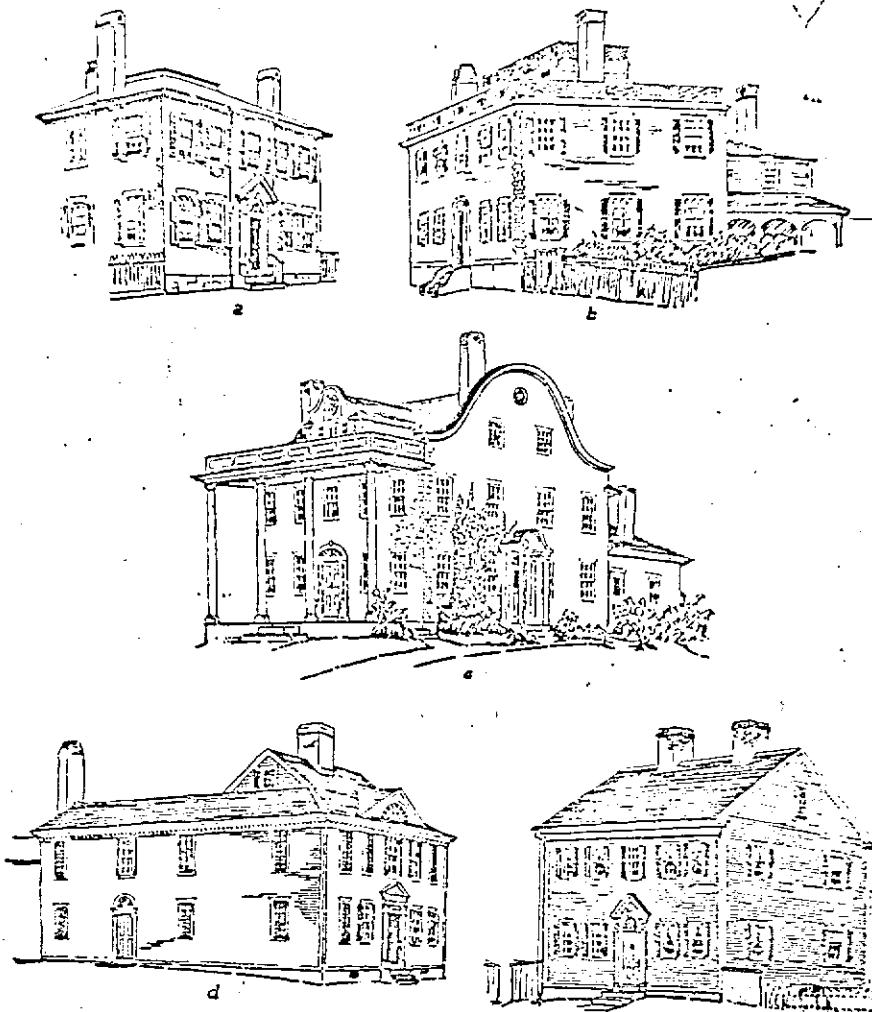


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DRAWING 59. NINETEENTH CENTURY RHODE ISLAND HOUSES.

- a. William De Wolf (Middleton) House, Poppasquash, Bristol, 1808, rear view.
- b. Thomas Lloyd Halsey House, 140 Prospect Street, Providence, c. 1801, bow fronts added c. 1825.
- c. Truman Beckwith House, Benefit and College Streets, Providence, 1826.

From Early Homes of Rhode Island [ 320 ] by Antoinette F. Downing



DRAWING 60. NINETEENTH CENTURY RHODE ISLAND HOUSES.

- a. House on Main Street, Warren, c. 1800, monitor roof.
- b. Bosworth House, 6 Cooke Street, Providence, c. 1820, monitor with double balustrades.
- c. *Hearthside*, Stephen Smith's House, Lincoln, 1810, ogee gable, colossal portico.
- d. Babbitt-Norice House, Hope Street, Bristol, c. 1804, central gable.
- e. Driscoll House, 395 Water Street, Warren.

[321]

From Early Homes of Rhode Island by Antoinette Forrester Downing



## The Jeremiah Tillinghast House

1819

In American art and architecture, the Federal Period dates roughly from the 1790's to 1825, and it characteristically marks a time of "rising nationalism and internal cohesiveness" in America. Generally, the style within the arts at this time is distinguished by a genuine respect for and overall application of the Greek and Roman Antique modes. The reason for this trend, which is especially obvious in the architecture of this period, is found in the permanent connotation which the Antique art had to the Americans at this time. The Americans were genuinely influenced by the fact that the Antiques had survived the ages---the perfect order. Using this logic, young America believed it, too, would be a permanent nation, would survive all trials and tribulations, and would follow the cohesive and ordered artistic style of the Greeks and Romans---thus surviving the ages as well.

It was in this era of great nationalism that the Jeremiah Tillinghast house was built on Benefit Street in the year 1819 by a mason-builder named Levi Pearce.

In its day, the Jeremiah Tillinghast house was one of fine stature and order as it stood high on a hill on the corner of Transit and Benefit Streets, overlooking the blue waters of Providence. In all of its 154 years, the estate of Jeremiah Tillinghast truly has sur-

vived the ages----the Providence waters have not been so fortunate.

The Federal style, if covered in great depth, will prove to have many detailed characteristics and nuances. Rather than trying to cover all the minute characteristics of this period in architecture, I will dwell primarily upon the Jeremiah Tillinghast house to show its beauty, its mood, its strengths, and how it fits in to this particular American style.

After extensive researching at the Providence Historical Society Library, little more could be revealed about Levi Pearce, other than the fact that he was Jeremiah Tillinghast's mason-builder. I suspect, however, that Levi Pearce must have been strongly influenced by the most significant and well known architect-builder in Rhode Island at that time, John Holden Greene, due to the many similarities in both their styles.

"The outstanding Rhode Island architects of the 19th. century were John Holden Greene who was trained as a carpenter and later apprenticed to Caleb Ormsbee, an architect-builder, and became an architect through the study of books of plans and elevations by authors: Gibbs, Chambers, Adam, Benjamin, and Langley. Although he adhered to Colonial traditions, then on the wane....his designs contained a high degree of artistic merit and originality..."2

"...for the first time in American architectural history, the professional architect played a decisive role in directing and spreading architectural style. There had been few, if any, trained professionals in colonial America. In Rhode Island, Peter Harrison alone may have had professional schooling....By the beginning of the 19th. century, however, several men of professional standing were practicing in the new Republic....Rhode Island's two most gifted builders of this time, John Holden Greene of Providence and Russell Warren of Bristol, had, so far as is known, no professional train-

ing, but their work reflected the most recent tendencies of the day." 3

It is only natural that one would come to the conclusion that Greene had influenced Levi Pearce, as the general exterior design characteristics in the Tillinghast house are very much in Greene's famous style. The house is a brick, squared, two-and-a-half storied dwelling; it had a hipped roof with windowed monitor and double balustrades crowning it in 1819. The house has a main door located to the left of the house front which has an elliptical and colonnetted design on the top and sides. The similarities in Levi Pearce's design are all too coincidental with those of John Holden Greene's to be over looked. The following is an account of Greene's style, which is closely mirrored in the Jeremiah Tillinghast house.

"Greene....Although he built several simple gable-roofed houses, by far his most characteristic house design was that of the square building covered by a hipped roof with a windowed monitor top. This scheme was widely used in Rhode Island in Greene's time, especially in Kingston where almost all 19th century houses are covered with monitor roofs." 4

"Greene handled the form in two ways. For a group of small Providence houses, widely imitated by other builders, he placed the door at the side, instead of in the center of the house front. The roof and monitor both have balustrades, a feature not invariable in these houses; the door follows Greene's favorite elliptical and colonnetted design." 5

A second possible source of Levi Pearce's design of the Tillinghast house may well have been the architectural handbooks, which were beginning to circulate throughout the Republic and which played an important part in spreading the new architectural movement.

"The later works of James and William Pain, like The Practical House Carpenter, reflecting the work of the

Adams, were especially in demand. Four of them had been published by 1804. After 1794, the American architect, Asher Benjamin, began to publish his handbooks, the first of a succession of indigenous publications. Benjamin's first books showed modifications of the Adam style, although later, after 1818, they dealt entirely with the style of the Greek Revival." 6

There are many more similarities in interior design between Levi Pearce's style and John Holden Greene's style, which will be covered further on. But, now that we have some feeling and basic understanding of the builder of the Jeremiah Tillinghast house, let us take a look at the site of the house----Benefit Street in 1819, and see just why this particular site might have been chosen.



As one approaches the Jeremiah Tillinghast house, walking southward on Benefit Street, one experiences the style of a well ordered, restrained, simple and distinguished house of brick. The brick color and composition lend a feeling of warmth to its symmetrical and formal design. It tends to catch one's eye, as it is the only brick edifice of the four buildings on the corner intersection, appearing even taller than it actually is because it was built on a relatively high hill overlooking the surrounding area. It is quite massive in comparison to the clapboard homes, which sit on much lower ground and are built on a much smaller scale.

It was not without a great deal of thought and planning that Levi Pearce built this house for Jeremiah Tillinghast in this particular location. This is unmistakable as one looks at the house in its scheme of carefully designed proportions. The Jeremiah Tillinghast family

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was a wealthy family as can be judged not only by their home, but also by their family history in the shipping trade which had been very lucrative for a number of generations.

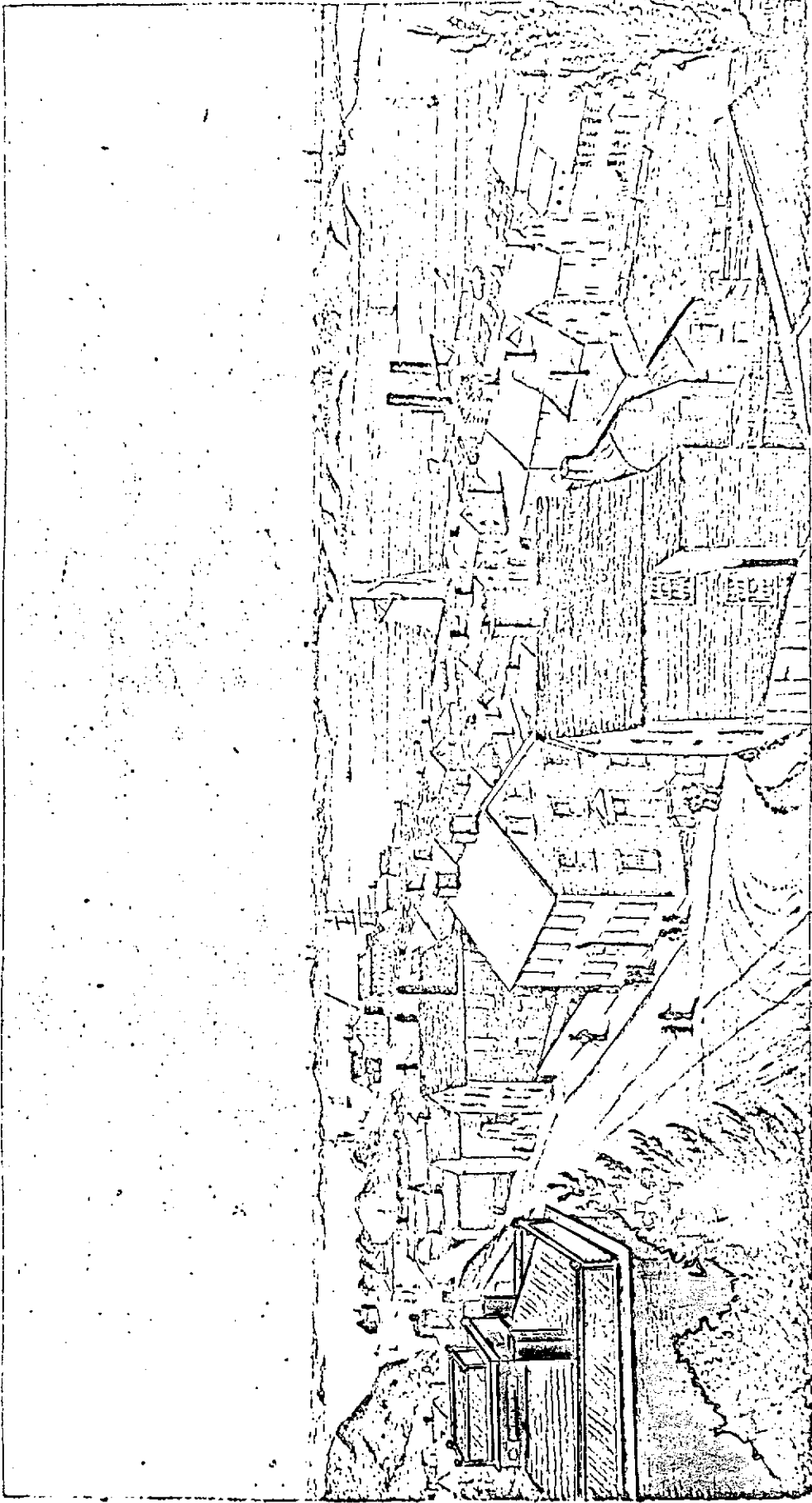
"From about 1680, when Pardon Tillinghast the 'father of Providence shipping,' built the first wharf and warehouse, until 1840, Providence was a shipping port. Active coastwise trading with the colonies was gradually extended to Newfoundland and the West Indies. The famous triangular route developed.... And in 1787 John Brown sent the first Providence ship to the East Indies, thus beginning the glamorous days of the China trade that was to bring great wealth to the merchants.... Meantime the Tillinghasts, Colonel Nicholas Power, the Brown brothers.... were amassing their fortunes." 7

Jeremiah Tillinghast, in particular, was in the business of sail making, so one can understand why this particular house site was especially appealing to him, as it offered a compelling view of the providence waterfront in those days....

"In the course of its mile and a half ramble along the curve of the cliff, Benefit Street has commanded three distinct views, each of which has changed with the changing years. Benefit Street South has looked down upon the sparkling waters of the Great Salt River and the Bay; upon clipperships, square riggers, sloops and brigs and packets coming full sail into port; upon steamboats, barges and tanks; upon tugboats busy with their chores....." 8

Also, in regard to the view, it was only through finding a watercolor depicting "Fox Point and the South part of Benefit Street from corner of Arnold" by Edward <sup>W</sup>Louis Peckham, painted in 1834, that I was able to determine the exact roof style which was used in building the Tillinghast house. In the painting "Jerry" Tillinghast's house is depicted in the lower left corner of the painting and is so identified:

"This is a view from the southwest chamber window of



1834

*Fox Point, and South part of Benefit Street.  
from corner of Amolee*



~~Thomas~~ Edward Peckham's house in 1834. In the foreground, on the left, is Jerry Tillinghast's house, and, opposite it, the 'Davis House', both on the northerly corners of Transit Street...." 9

"...Edward Lewis Peckham, a watercolorist of much charm, lived on the Arnold Street corner of the street and began to paint about 1829.

He had two absorbing hobbies. He roamed the state making flower studies....and he had an absorbing love for the waterfront of old Providence. With a meticulous brush and surprising delicacy of color, he has left a record of our waterbound town, as it looked in the early decades of the last century. Among the paintings in his sketchbook and portfolios is a delightful one of the southern end of Benefit Street in the 1820's. Beginning at Arnold Street, the southern tip of the street looks much as it does today, except that one sees expanses of clear water down beyond. It looks to be the street of an old seaport town which, after all, is exactly what that section of the street originally was." 10

And, so we see, the house befits the people, as does the location befit their interests. The house, however, in comparison to the other Benefit Street houses, finds a comfortable mid-point. It is of a grander style than those on the Southern end of the street, but not so elaborate and grand in style as those on the more Northern end. The Tillinghast house still basically sits as comfortably in its location on Benefit Street today.

The exterior elements which made the Tillinghast house unique were the qualities of its original roof and cornice, the treatment of the windows and the doorway, and its composition of brick, granite, brown stone, and wood.

"Brick, trimmed with stone or wood, continued to be the material chosen for important houses, although stone was occasionally used. Wood houses were still the most common, however, and were generally simply treated...." 11

Brick was most likely used in this case, because, historically, the Tillinghast name was one of importance in the community, and, basically, they could afford an expensive house of brick. Aesthetically, brick gave the house the appearance of warmth and durability, the stone and granite added to its feeling of strength as well as accentuating the design of windows and door, and, finally, wood to work out a bit of lighter accent and charm, with carving on its cornice and double bulstrades. But at all levels, the designs were kept simple and in complete control.

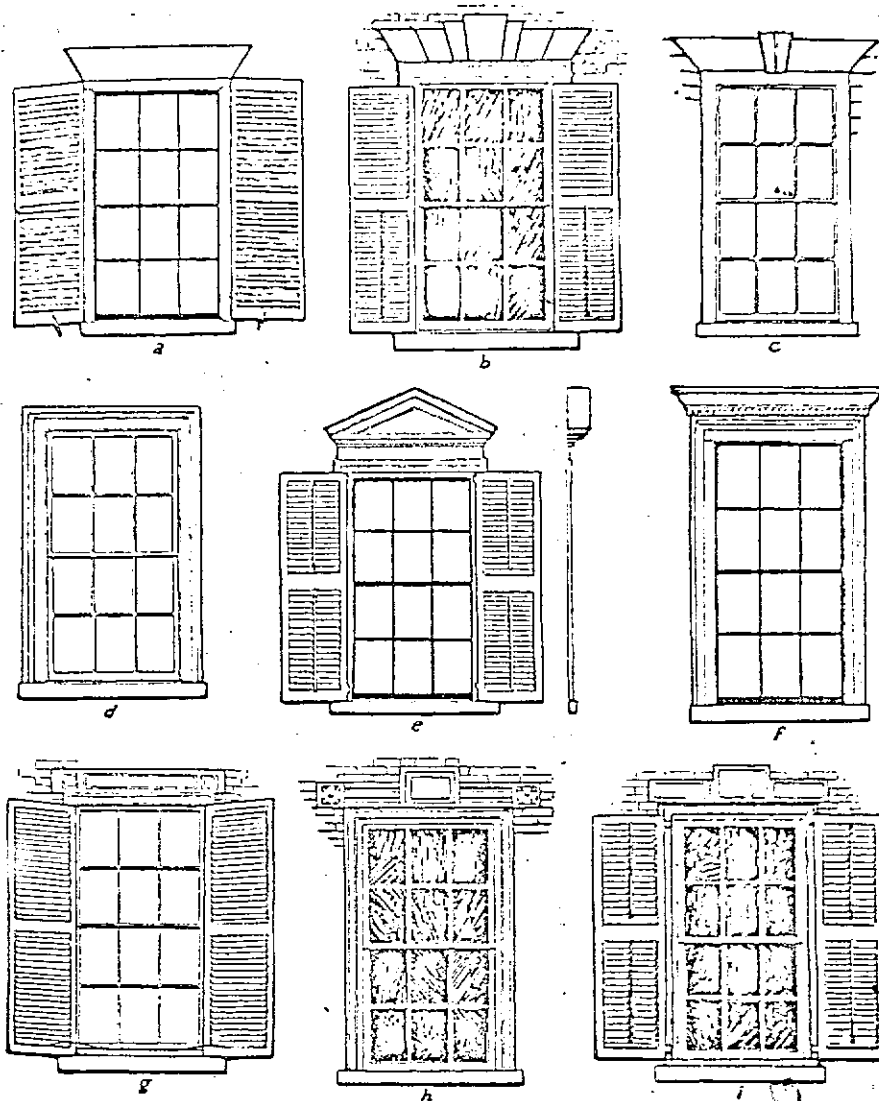
In 1819, I imagine, the house had a much lighter effect at the roofline, as one could look up and see the double bulstrades pointing skyward. In 1885, under the French influence in architecture, a mansard roof replaced the windowed monitor and double bulstrades, which allowed one to utilize the entire third floor as a group of four rooms for servants' quarters. The mansard roof still remains today, giving the house a much heavier roofline than it originally had.

The composition of the house is one of even proportion and clarity; it is orderly and symmetrical. The vertical lines are most compelling, as they definitely draw the eye upward and give the house a feeling of tallness, firmness, and stature. This vertical sweep is accomplished by the lines of the tall, rectangular windows and door. Yet, the vertical lines are nicely balanced and brought into proportion by the capping of each window with a splayed lintel <sup>in this case no</sup> ~~and the placement of~~   
 keystone is used. ~~keystone.~~

The overall window treatment of the Tillinghast house is indicative of the period. The framing and trimming of windows during the Federal



Window Treatments in the Federal Style



DRAWING 62. WINDOWS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY RHODE ISLAND HOUSES.

- a. Splayed lintel.
- b. Rusticated flat arch, Thomas Poynton Ives House, Providence, 1806.
- c. Lintel with keystone.
- d. Mitred mouldings, c. 1825.
- e. Pedimented window, Edward Dexter House, Providence, 1799.
- f. Moulded window cap with dentil course, house on John Street, Providence.
- g. Stone lintel with block design.
- h. Stone lintel with raised central block and carved end blocks.
- i. Stone lintel with raised central block.

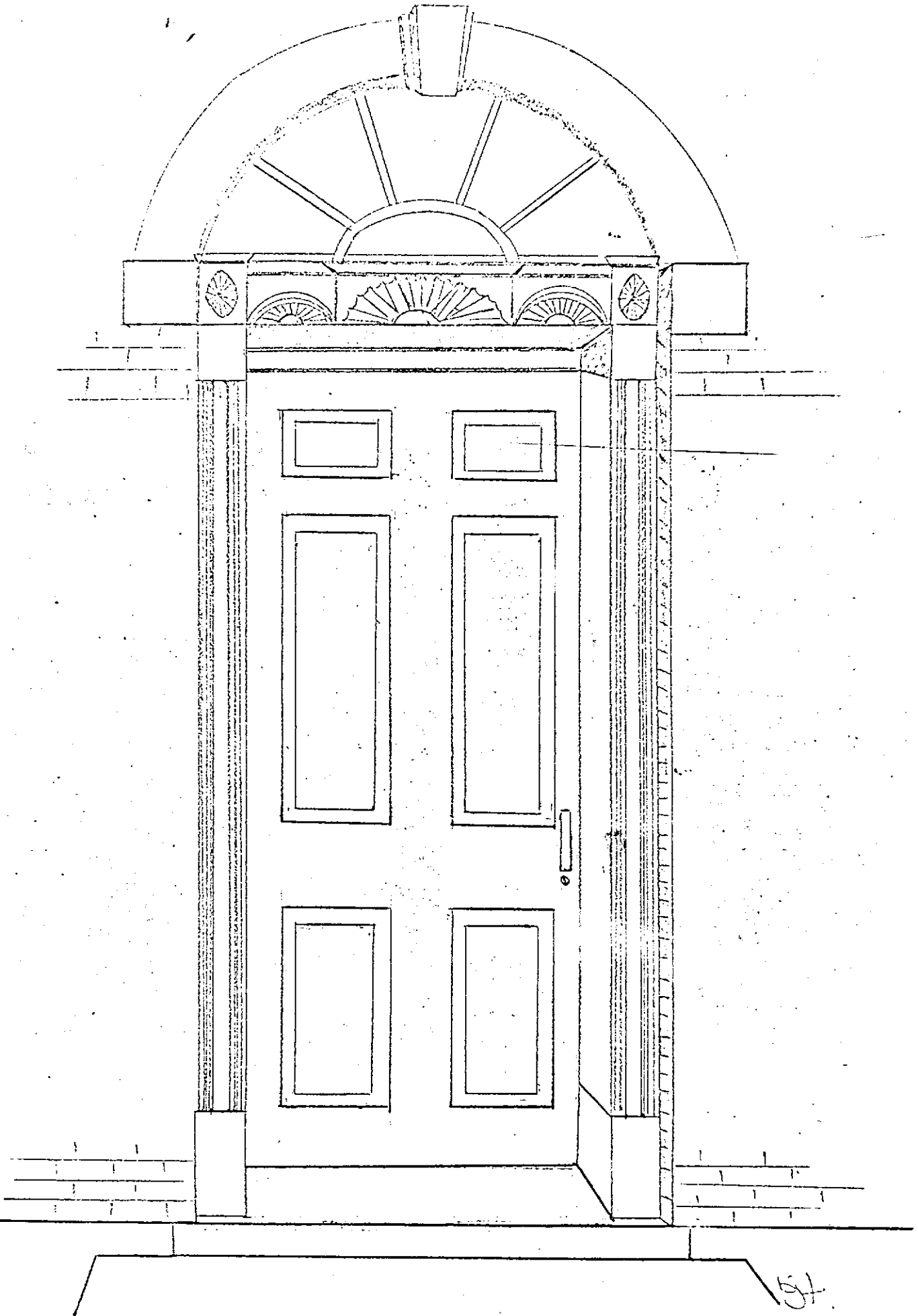
Period showed a use of the lintel and keystone with a fair amount of variety in their actual shape, which varied according to the style of the house decoration. But "classic moulded caps and the stone lintel form, either straight or splayed, and with or without keystone, formed the more usual treatments...." <sup>12</sup> of window decoration during this period.

The panes of glass in the windows of the Tillinghast house form a six-over-six pattern of large, rectangular panes. In the Federal Period the size in windows and window panes increased considerably. <sup>13</sup> On the second story, the window heads are directly under the cornice, which is another characteristic of the early Federal style, later on the window heads are not found directly under the cornice but are set <sup>14</sup> two feet lower for the higher ceilinged rooms on the second floor.

The door is perhaps the most interesting detail of the exterior design as the house stands today. I speculate that Levi Pearce drew from a number of popular schemes in designing the entryway. He used a recessed doorway instead of building an entrance porch. He placed a fan window over the door which is framed by a wide, carved stone which follows the same arch as the fan window. Over the door a frieze is carved in a triple fan design, then slender <sup>columns</sup> colonets with carved reeding run down the sides of the door. All of the carving is very delicate and could easily be overlooked from a distance, however, it adds an artistic and much needed detail to an otherwise very conservative and angular house. Each of the components of the design work together to form a very ordered, Roman arched entry.

During the Federal period, the well known architects were using

MAIN DOORWAY OF THE JEREMIAH TILLINGHAST HOUSE  
1819



57

the fan design often. Greene frequently used it to decorate the  
frieze of his doors and give some delicacy to his brick buildings. 15

This style saw repeated use in brick buildings which were being built  
in Providence during these years.

One reaches the front door from the street level by a set of steep  
granite steps, which meet a landing, then rise up again by three more  
steps. Over the doorway arch is a ~~Gibbs surround~~ <sup>keystone</sup>, a narrow, raised  
band used to connect the verticals along the face of an arch. 16  
All  
of these details fit perfectly into the Federal style, as seen in the  
following excerpts:

"As always, the entry was the focal point of the design  
and several new types evolved. It was at this time that  
the doorway with a pediment pierced by a fanlight reached  
its popularity. An occasional example had appeared before  
the Revolution, but the type belongs in general to the  
early Republican period..."17

"In the 19th century versions, the fanlights were filled  
with leaded glass, in the variety of delightful patterns..."18

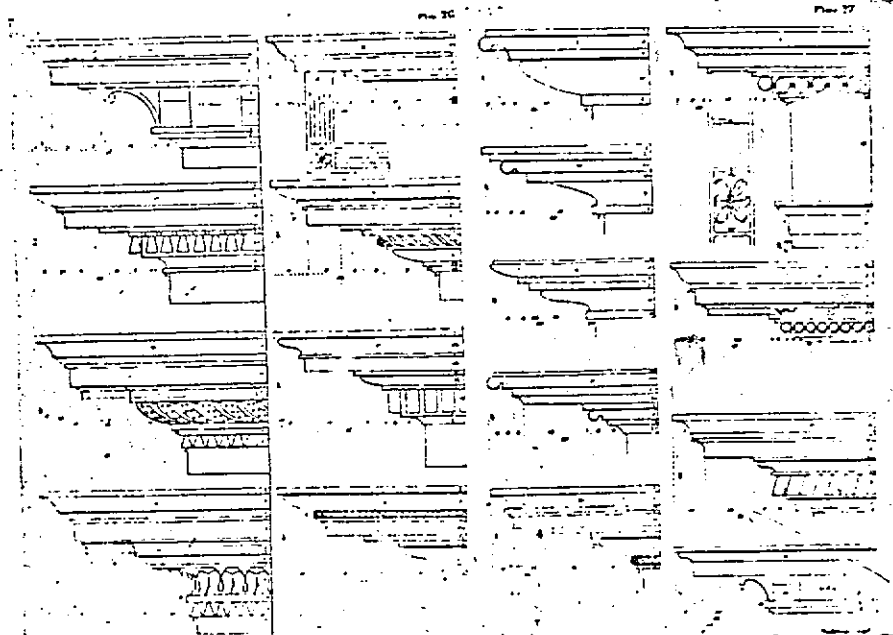
"...the proportions of the order tended to become more  
slender and the frieze sections were flat and ornamented  
with some decorative motive...."19

"The door with side lights and an elliptical fanlight became  
especially popular in these years. Doorways thus treated  
were framed in several ways: sometimes by slender Gothic  
colonnettes....Occasionally a door of this form was recessed  
in lieu of an entrance porch...."20

On the door framing there also appear square, wooden pieces set  
in at the corners which have some decorative carving. This, too, was  
indicative of the architecture of the day, as Greene "avoided mitring  
the corners of doors and windows by inserting a carved square section  
at the corners. Asher Benjamin illustrates this way of framing doors  
and windows in several of his books. The treatment is heavier and

less graceful than the mitred enframements." This is the only treatment of framing with the block forms on the Tillinghast house, other than the window caps. The main reason for architects using this method was convenience.

The cornice of the Tillinghast house shows a small amount of added decoration in the exterior detail work. The horizontal line of the cornice adds an important line to the balance of the house, however, it is a very simple cornice design with its greatest detail-work occurring in the dentils. I have included a diagram of the traditional cornice designs printed in one of Asher Benjamin's books to show the reference the builders of the Federal Period may have used.



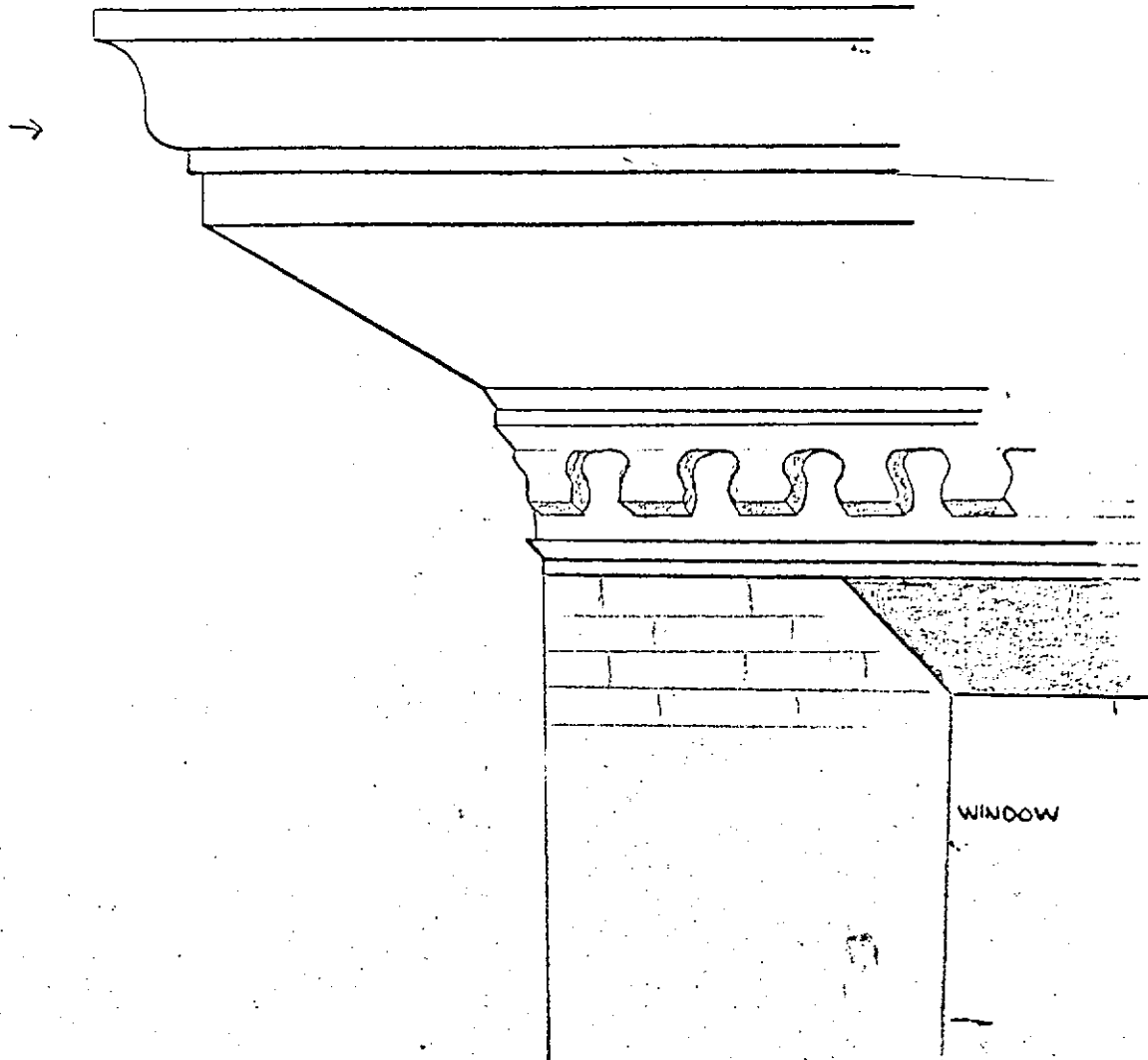
DRAWING 61. CORNICE DESIGNS FROM ASHER BENJAMIN'S "AMERICAN BUILDER'S COMPANION," PUBLISHED IN BOSTON IN 1816.

From Early Homes of Rhode Island

by Antoinette Forrester Downing

p. 328

CORNICE DESIGN OF THE JEREMIAH TILLINGHAST HOUSE  
1819

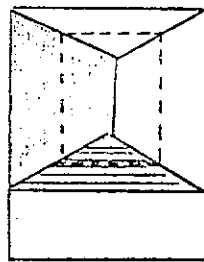


\* Cyma recta - is a double-curved moulding,  
concave above and convex below,  
also called an 'ogee moulding'

The cornice in the Tillinghast house is not represented in exact design in any of those pictured, but has characteristics of a few of them with, what I speculate to be, a rather original dentil design, which curves outward in a convex curve,, a popular pattern of the day.

"The vocabulary of running decorative motives was enormously increased. Motives of a classical derivation were used in a new way and with new refinement. Lentils and Greek keys of simplified form often replaced the bolder modillions in the cornice, while frequently delicate honeysuckle or vine patterns adorned the frieze sections of elaborate mantels. Adam garlands, bow knots, fan patterns, and swags appeared in cornices, both exterior and interior, and on the entablatures of doors and mantels. Reeding replaced the classical fluting of pre-Revolutionary days. It was no longer confined to pilasters and columns, but appeared as a running pattern in stair, chair rail and cornice decoration, both alone and in combination with other motives." 22

These exterior changes were a part of the times. The original roof of the Tillinghast house was a low hipped roof. Instead of having vertical ends, a hipped roof has sloped ends, <sup>23</sup> as shown in this diagram:



The hipped roof of the Tillinghast house was finished with a flat deck on which was built a windowed monitor (dotted line in diagram), with balustrades surrounding it, as well as the main roof-line --- better known as hipped roof with windowed monitor and double balustrades. The balustrades sat above the cornice and concealed the hipped roof quite effectively, giving the house an even greater vertical dimension when

viewed from the street. No doubt Jeremiah Tillinghast had a commanding view of the Providence seaport from his windowed monitor---which, I might add, was probably not an accidental addition to his house.

"A low hipped roof, hidden by balustrades and finished with a flat deck, crowned most of the houses of these years. The perfect symmetry of this roof treatment suited exactly the still classical spirit of early Republic building. The hipped roof continued in favor until past 1830, when the Greek Revival style which turned the end of the house to the street, and reestablished the gable roof. In the second decade of the 19th century, the hipped roof, as used in R.I., was frequently modified by the 'monitor', often treated with balustrades at the eaves and above the monitor cornice," 24

The designs of the balusters showed a variety of workmanship:

"In Providence, John Holden Greene, liked a heavy turned type of baluster carved with a complicated rosette form, and he also used an alternating open and closed pierced-square design several times...." 25

It is this design of the open and closed pierced-square design which I speculate Levi Pearce used on the Tillinghast house, my only proof being the watercolor impression of the house by E.L. Peckham which was mentioned earlier. Also, according to the painting, the roof held four chimneys.

And, so, we have seen the characteristic decoration and builder's scheme on the exterior with regard to windows and trim, doorway, cornice, and roof---all bound together by an obvious amount of restraint, order, and purpose which was the genuine feeling of the times.

Let us now look at the interior to see if the same order and expression follow throughout.

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The entry of the Jeremiah Tillinghast house is on the left front, has a western exposure, and finds the main hall bathed in golden sunlight

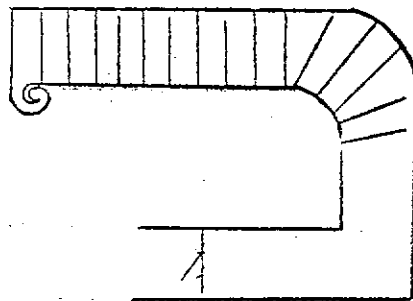


as the sun  
 in late afternoon, filtering through the fan window over the door. Upon entering, one's eye follows the graceful line of a cherry wood banister which gently curves at the top of the stairs. The stairway is situated at the front part of the hall. The house does not have a large central hall as did the much larger houses, but, instead has a curved wall which prevents the hall from extending to the back of the house. The unusual curve of the back wall and the curve of the stairway give a very soft and welcoming feeling to the hall entry.

This particular hallway scheme was one of convention in the Federal Period, and the backwall in this particular position allowed for a larger room to be built at the back of the stairs, as well as allowing for concealment of the back stairway.

"Sometimes the stairs were set in the front part of the hall, while a wall separated the back or service hall from the remainder of the house....Greene sometimes placed the stairs in the front part of the hall, and used the remaining space behind them to increase the size of the back room....in his simpler houses he frequently used a plan with the front entrance and hallway at one side instead of in the center. This scheme was repeated many times from about 1818 to 1835." 26

The cherry wood handrail is slender and ramped, which rises at a fairly steep angle until it meets the winder which makes a quarter turn and meets a landing that also repeats the quarter turn, as seen in this diagram:



The walls are simply plastered. There is no shadow rail, no wainscoting, and no decoration on the riser ends. The balusters are squared, without any ornamentation, and sit four to a step. The only detail work is in the curl of the carved handrail as it meets with the newel which is carved into a simple twist design and rests on the bottom stair which, again, repeats the curl design.

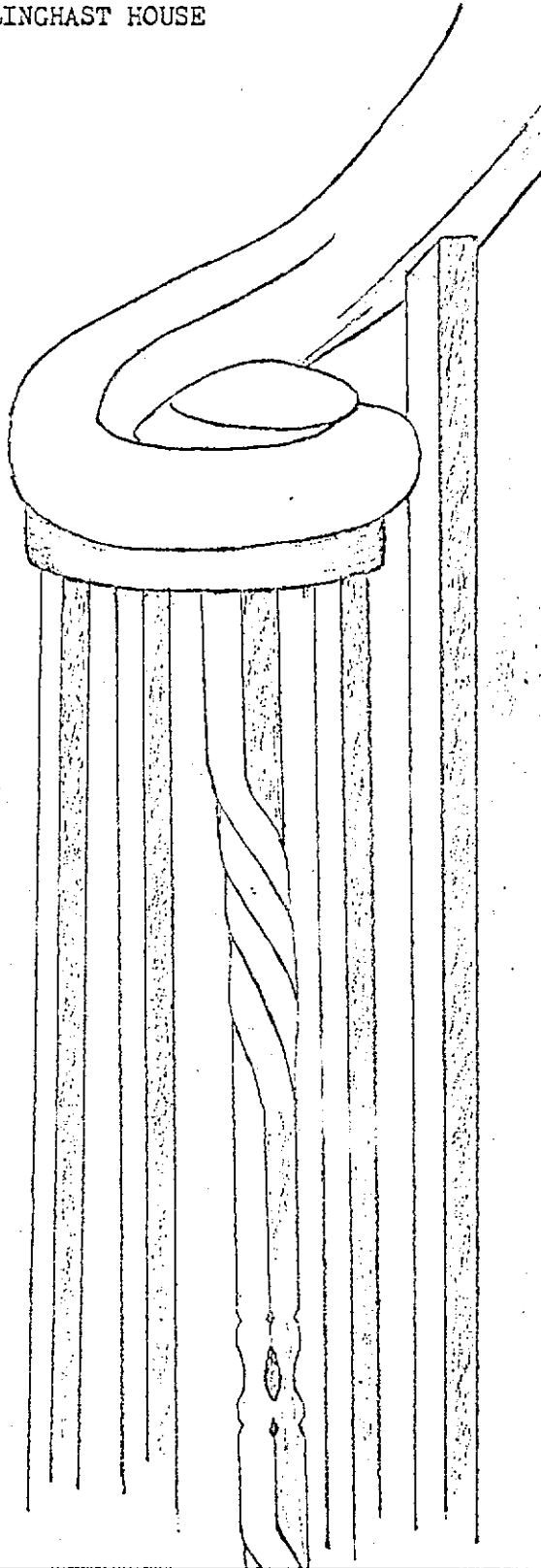
During the Federal Period spiral and circular stairways were found in many houses, and could vary in form from a more elaborate to a very simple style. The detail of all of the stairways of this period was most noted for the refinement of design.

27

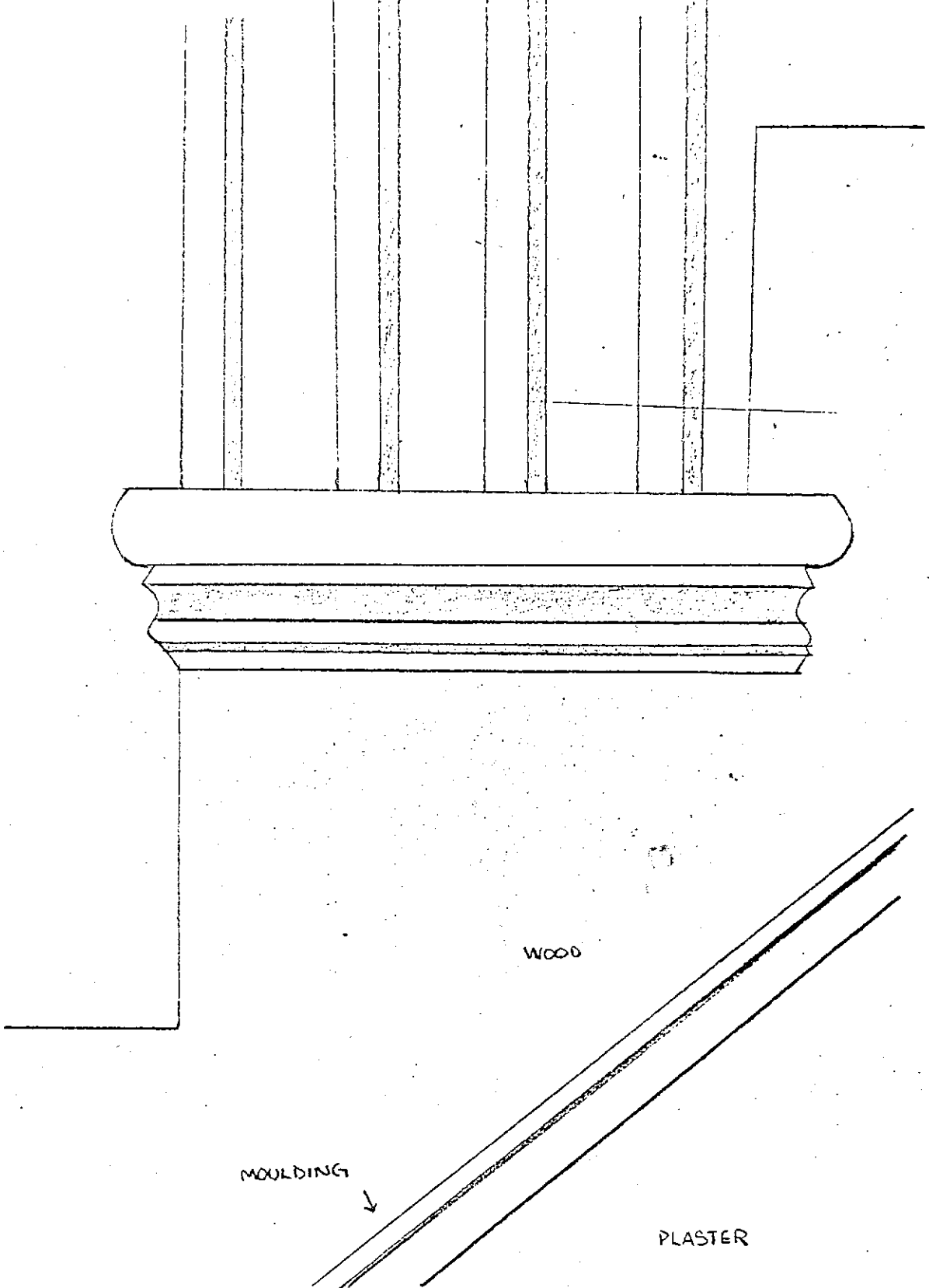
"The rails are slender and ramped; the newels are usually attenuated Doric columns; and the balusters are simple sticks of oval, square, or diamond section, three or four to a step. The shadow rail repeats the curve of the stair rail, but the wainscoting of an earlier day has given way to panels with narrow raised mouldings, or to a plain plastered wall. The riser ends are most often decorated with narrow curved strips shaped like wiry brackets." 28

The basic interior plan, with the hallway at one side, was a break from the earlier tradition, and the newer arrangement had the "advantage of throwing the main rooms more closely together." 29 In the Tillinghast house the rooms on the first floor flow together quite simply and in an orderly fashion, as one walks from the hall into the front living room then into the formal dining room. Both main rooms still have the original fireplaces which are of black marble and located on the outer southern walls. Other than the usual window and baseboard mouldings, these rooms are free of ornament. The kitchen is in an ell at the back or east side of the house, and, in the original scheme there was one large back room and possibly a small back hall with rear stairwell behind the front staircase on the north side. This particular room

DETAIL OF MAIN STAIRWAY : HANDRAIL, NEWAL, AND BALUSTERS IN THE  
JEREMIAH TILLINGHAST HOUSE



DETAIL OF RISER ENDS, MOULDING, AND BALUSTERS OF MAIN STAIRWAY



arrangement is free from disorder, a purely conservative scheme, and basically has the same feeling for order that the exterior design had. All parts are in balance, and if there is a bit of fanfare in design, it is most controlled, simple, and in good taste, such as the marble mantel-pieces and the cherry wood staircase.

The four fireplaces that now remain in the house have mantel pieces of marble showing again the trend for simple lines and quality. On the first floor both mantel pieces are of black marble, are rectangular in shape and extend less than half way up the ten foot walls. They are free of any adornment other than a simple, rounded, black marble moulding on either side. The severity of the overall line is broken by a very subtle Baroque curve on the top piece of the mantel, as seen in the diagram which follows. There is an explanation for this particular use of the curve:

"...there was also the shift from heavier to lighter proportions, and the growing preference, encouraged by the Adam style under French influence, for curved forms to break the severity of rectangular shapes." 30

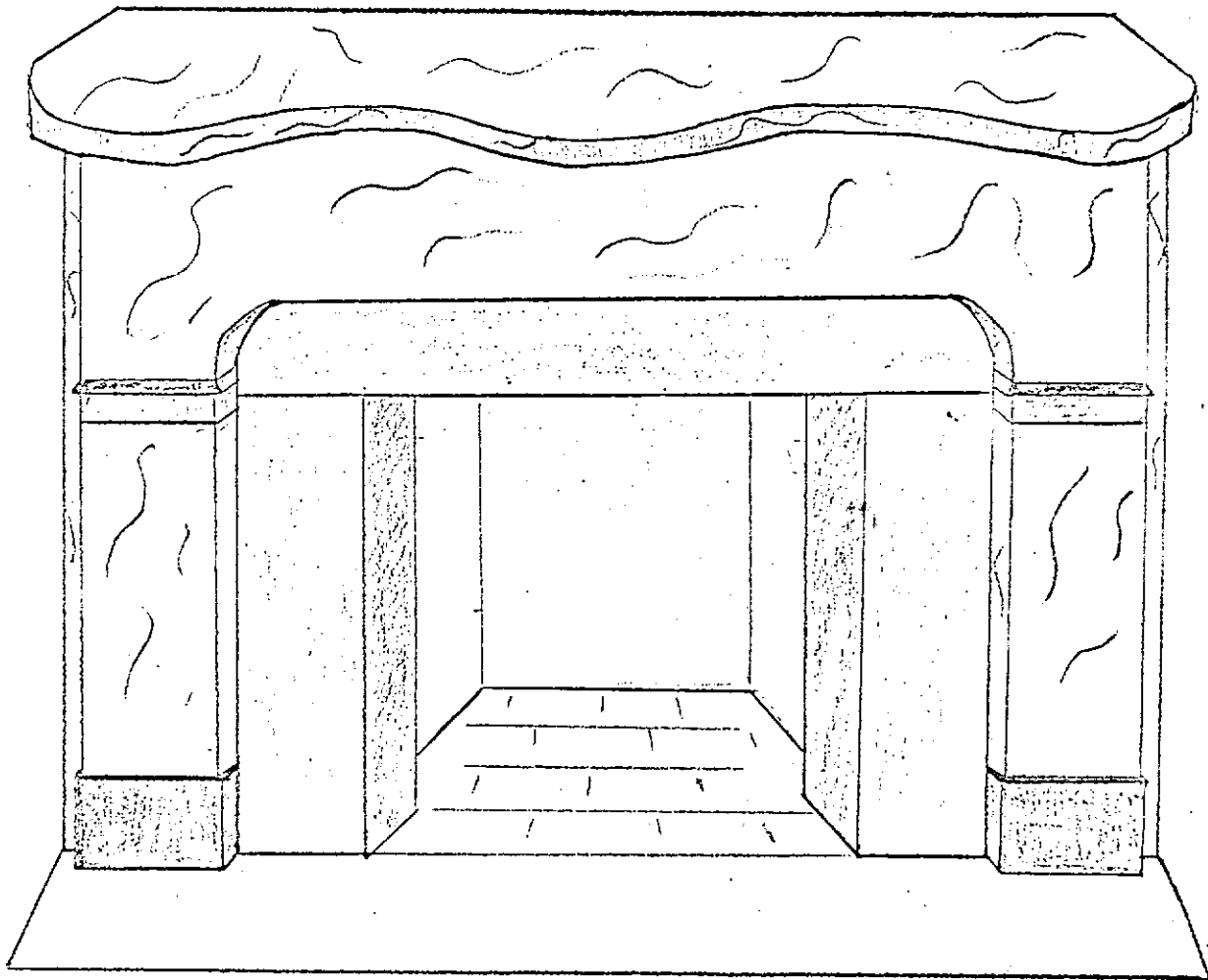
During this period, one story mantels were frequently being built of carved wood with some Adam detail, but the general tendency was more to reduce the amount of paneled work in the mantelpieces of the day. I found, however, that John Holden Greene and Russell Warren were using simply designed marble mantel pieces in a number of their buildings. 31

The two fireplaces which remain on the second floor, which was most likely the floor which housed the four bedrooms (or possibly three bedrooms and a sitting room), have mantel pieces of a smokey-white marble. They, too, are located on the south walls, but have an altogether different design. They still carry on the simple and dignified lines, but

BLACK MARBLE MANTEL PIECE ON FIRST

FLOOR OF

TILLINGHAST HOUSE

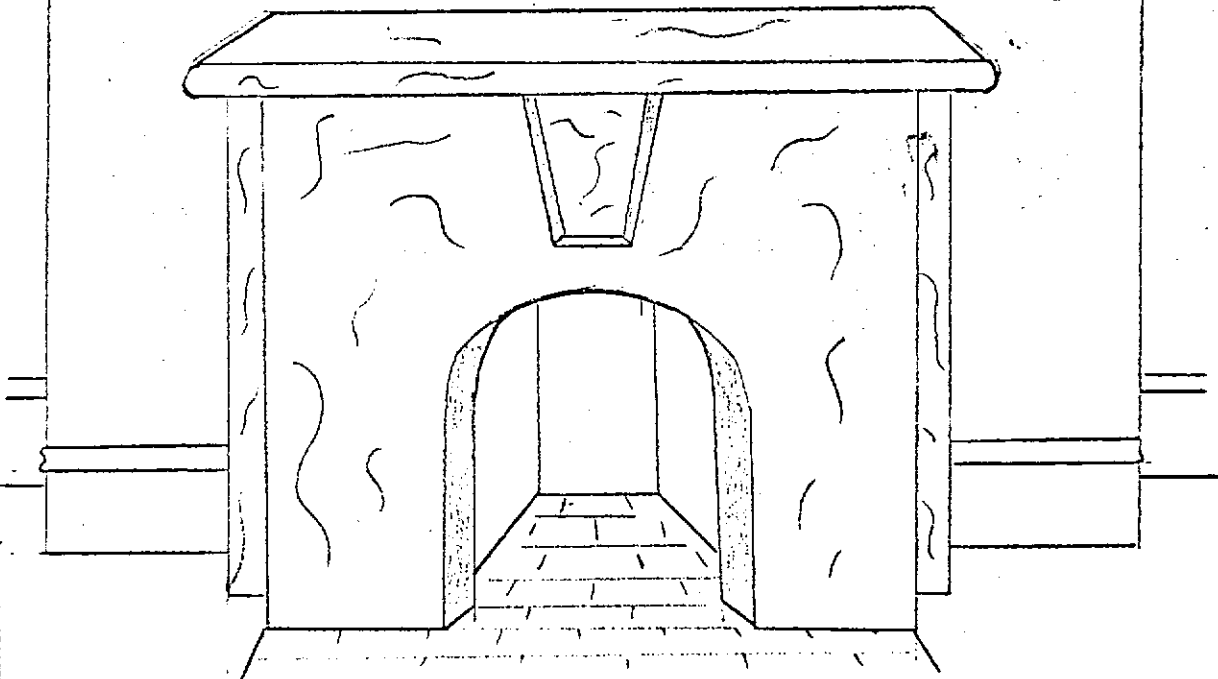


are smaller than the mantel pieces on the first floor. The top pieces of marble are straight and rectangular in design and have rounded corners and edges. The curve in these mantels occurs in the openings, which nicely form a Roman arch with a ~~Gibbs surround~~<sup>Keystone</sup>, added only for decorative purposes, over the center of the arch. The ~~Gibbs surround~~<sup>Keystone</sup> is very similar to the one seen over the arch above the fan window on the front door. The pattern of the narrow raised band follows the same linear design.

The fact that smokey-white marble was used for the mantels is interesting because there had been a marble quarry in Smithfield, R.I.

MANTEL PIECE ON SECOND FLOOR OF TILLINGHAST HOUSE

WHITE AND GRAY MARBLE



which was known for this particular color of marble.

"Marble mantel facings had been in fashion at least as early as John Brown's House, built in 1786. Sometimes marble was imported from abroad, but a marble quarry had been in operation in Smithfield since the latter part of the 18th century. This marble, a mottled gray and white, was used at first for mantel facings, and later for the mantels themselves, in many buildings in the vicinity of Smithfield and Providence." 32

The rest of the interior, again, falls into the simple and orderly pattern of design. The original floor boards are twelve to fifteen inches in width and run the length of the large rooms. The walls were most likely of plaster, which by this time was in almost universal use. There are chair rails in the dining room, which, I speculate, may have been in the house when it was built, following a design similar to the cyma recta moulding, <sup>(but in the cyma recta reverse profile)</sup> 33 that is on the cornice. The mouldings were used to break up the severity of the walls, as plain plaster walls were becoming more popular which resulted in a great interest in wall paper and wall hangings. 34

The mouldings around the doorways and windows are slender and delicate in line, and are mitred at the corners. The doors are six paneled with recessed panels, which also were a trend. There are no room cornices in the Tillinghast house, however, there may have been, as they were popular at this time.

"The trend of interior decoration toward delicacy is reflected in the changes in paneling and mouldings;...a form which was entirely flat except for some raised and applied mouldings;...mouldings became more slender and delicate in profile....the paneling of the doors was changed. Panels sunk below the surface of the stiles and rails...." 35

In the Tillinghast house there is a feeling for the properness in the chosen designs which goes along with its order and subtleness.



The design is never overdone or ornate. It was meant to survive the ages, and it has. The house design exhibits the local developments in the conservative house plan of the time, and will probably continue to live on as a document of our American heritage for many more years to come.

## Footnotes

- 1 George M. Cohen, A History of American Art, (New-York, 1971), pp.314-315.
- 2 John Hutchins Cady, "Rhode Island Architects," Standing File of the Providence Historical Society Library, (March 28, 1951).
- 3 Antoinette F. Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island, (Richmond, Virginia, 1937), pp.315-317.
- 4 Ibid., p.430.
- 5 Ibid..
- 6 Ibid., pp315
- 7 Margaret B. Stillwell, The Pageant of Benefit Street, (Providence, Rhode Island, 1945), pp.131-132.
- 8 Ibid., p.141.
- 9 Archives of Providence Historical Society Library, "Edward Lewis Peckham, Watercolors", Providence, Rhode Island.
- 10 Stillwell, p.63.
- 11 Downing, p.327.
- 12 Ibid., p.332.
- 13 Ibid..
- 14 Ibid., p.333.
- 16 John Fleming, The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture, (Maryland, 1972), p.119. 524
- 15 Ibid., p.342.
- 17 Downing, p.336.
- 18 Ibid..
- 19 Ibid., p.339.
- 20 Ibid..
- 21 Ibid., p.365.

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SUPPLEMENT

The following newspaper article was found on micro-film file at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library, 121 Hope Street, Providence, Rhode Island. Aside from the information in the deed books, it is the only personal information presently available on the man, Jeremiah Tillinghast. Unfortunately, it is his obituary notice.

Manufacturers' and Farmers' Journal and Providence and Pawtucket Adviser

September 5, 1831

DIED

In this town yesterday morning, Mr. Jeremiah Tillinghast, in the 50th year of his age, from a wound received in a fall. Mr. Tillinghast was standing upon a temporary staging, erected for the purpose of white washing an entry on in the second story, which gave way, and precipitated him to the bottom of the stairs of the first story: he fell upon his head and shoulders, and so injured his spine, as to cause his death, after two days of severe suffering.

Funeral this afternoon at 3 o'clock, from his late residence, in Benefit Street.

SUPPLEMENT

The following is a chronological list of the owners of the Jeremiah Tillinghast House, which begins in 1818 when the land was purchased for the site of the house.

The information was obtained from records at the Providence Preservation Society, 24 Meeting Street, Providence, Rhode Island, specifically in the compiled records of Benefit Street, Odd #319-#433 by Mary A. Gowdey, researcher.

- 1818 Amey Tillinghast, widow of William E. Tillinghast, quit claims to Mary and Betsy Chandler and Amey Ann Tillinghast, all her rights to her late husband's estate of which Joseph Tillinghast Jr. died. Seized and all claims to the estate of the late Joseph Tillinghast, Sr. and the late company of Tillinghast, Gorton, and Tillinghast, and to the estate of Benjamin T. and Samuel Chandler and Benjamin E. Gorton....DB 42.181
- 1819 Mary and Betsy G. Chandler and Amey Ann Tillinghast, sell for \$500 to Levi Pearce, mason, a certain lot of land in the southerly part of Providence at the corner of Benefit Street and Transit Street, and is part of the lot of land left us by our father, William Tillinghast....Bounded west by Benefit St. 106'; North by William Bucklin and Thomas Peckham 123'; East by Sweet and Rhodes 90'; South by Transit Street 70'.....DB 43.259
- 1819 Levi Pearce, mason, sells for \$2500 to Jeremiah Tillinghast, sailmaker, one certain lot of land with Dwelling House thereon, being the same lot conveyed to said Levi Pearce by the Tillinghast heirs in 1819....DB 43.272
- 1855 The Supreme Court of the State of Rhode Island rendered a Decree in a Bill of Equity (DB 140.114) wherein Allen Tillinghast et al and Benjamin Green et al were defendants, ordering a sale at public Auction of the Estate hereafter mentioned, and

- 1855 appointed Charles F. Tillinghast, the Master, to cause the sale thereof to be made. The said Charles F. Tillinghast, sells for \$5725 to Euclid C. Thayer, the highest bidder at Public Auction, a certain lot of land with the buildings and improvements thereon, situated at the North-East corner of Benefit and Transit Streets, bounded west by Benefit Street 106'; North by Thomas Peckham and William Bucklin 123'; East by Charles Dennis 90'; South by Transit Street 70'....DB 140.115
- 1855 - Policy Record - Euclid C. Thayer, corner of Benefit and Transit Streets...Brick...All 2 stories high...30' x 34'...Addition 20' x 14' one story high. Another 12' x 14' of wood one story high. Occupied for a Dwelling House.....PR Vol. 56 #24834
- 1875 Marcy Gorham, mortgagee of Euclid C. Thayer (DB 39.379) sells to William H. Crins, the highest bidder at Public Auction a certain lot of land with a dwelling and improvements thereon.
- 1875 William H. Crins sells for \$9000 to George and Eva Fritz.
- 1880 George Fritz sells to Sarah H. Cranston, wife of Francis A. Cranston.
- 1885 Mansard Roof was added....Tax Ledger
- 1898 Francis A. Cranston and Sarah H. Cranston, in her right, sell to Robert Muir that certain lot of land with buildings and improvements thereon.
- 1901 Albert W. Muir et al, heirs of Robert Muir, sell the above property to Dennis O'Neill and Mary O'Neill, his wife.
- 1911 - 1921 - Dennis O'Neill, laborer and Dennis C. O'Neill, physician, listed here.... Providence Directory
- 1921 - 1924 - Edward J. Quarm listed here.... Providence Directory
- 1931 Angus O'Neill, single, sells the property to Michael Rufful and wife, Margaret, by deed being Plat 16, Lot 35....DB 750.118

- 1963 Michael Ruffel et al sell to Thomas G. Saunders and wife, Louise C. Saunders.
- 1969 Thomas G. Saunders and wife, Louise C. Saunders, sell to George M. Gross, Jr. that lot of land with all buildings and improvements thereon, situated on the North-East corner of Benefit and Transit Streets, bounded west by Benefit Street 96'; North by Lee Kaplan and Kathern DePietro 108'; East by Sheldon Tolin 88', by Transit Street 60'.....DB 1153.531
- 1971 George M. Gross sells the above property to Linton Avery Fluck III and wife, Benita S. Fluck, that lot of land with all buildings and improvements thereon.
-