

JOHN JENCKES HOUSE

Address: 43 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County
Rhode Island - Plat 9, Lot 174.

An Addendum to
Jenckes House
43 Benefit Street
Providence, Rhode Island
in HABS Catalog (1941)

Present Owner: Kevin Ott, 66 Cooke Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Present Use: The house is presently unoccupied and is being
restored for use as a dwelling.

Brief Statement
of Significance: Built in 1774, this house is one of the few large
gambrel-roofed wooden buildings left in Providence.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1773 Joseph Whipple, yeoman, to John Jenckes, merchant
for £ 270 10s lawful money--"a certain lot of land
of 15 acres neither more or less. Bounded: S by
Charles Keene; E by Ferry Lane (now Hope Street);
W by Benefit Street; N by my other lands." Title
searches in Providence City Hall by the Rhode Island
Title Guarantee. Deed Book 20, page 91, in Providence
City Hall.

c 1774 Joseph Jencks, House, ... John Hutchins Cady, The
Civil and Architectural Development of Providence
1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book
Shop, 1957).

1776 Inhabitants of Providence, State Archives, Rhode
Island:

East Side of River

John Jencks Household: ... White
2 males above 16 years old
7 males under 16 years old
1 female above 16 years old
1 female under 16 years old

Black

3 males above 16 years old
1 male under 16 years old
2 females above 16 years old
1 female under 16 years old

No Indians

- 1790 Will of John Jenckes:--"Further it is my will that in the division of my real estate the Dwelling House where my son Joseph Jenckes now lives together with the lot of land on which the same stands--shall be set off and assigned to my son Joseph Jenckes, his heirs and assigns forever." Title searches in Providence City Hall by the Rhode Island Title Guarantee. Wills Book 7, page 369, in Providence City Hall.
- 1794 Joseph Jenks was in the census of North Providence. He was not in the military census of 1777.
- 1798 Chase, Henry R., Quarers and Geometrists of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1798 Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914); shows: Joseph Jenckes House W on Benefit Street; N and S by own land; E by own land. House lot is 41-1/2' x 60' on which is a house 40' x 30' with addition of one room 15' x 10'. House is 2 stories high--all wood, said premises being all in the right of his wife. Value \$1500. ALSO Joseph Jenckes Lot--Pasture and Garden 7-1/4 acres. Bounded: N on Thomas L. Halsey; E on Ferry Lane; W on Mrs. Jenckes; S on David Barnes--Val. \$590. (Taken from U. S. census)
- 1825 Joseph Jenckes dies intestate, leaving six children.
- 1826 John, Joseph, and Jerethenil Jenckes sold their shares to Mary S. and Hanna B. (Bowers) Jenckes.. Title searches in Providence City Hall by the Rhode Island Title Guarantee.
- 1835 Edwin and Hannah Bowers Jenckes sell for \$3000 the Estate to Ebenezer Kelly "they being the true, sole and lawful owners of the above bargained premises." Title searches in Providence City Hall by the Rhode Island Title Guarantee. Deed Book 66, page 198 in Providence City Hall.
- 1847 Sophia P. Kelly, widow, and John B. Kelly lived here. Title searches in Providence City Hall by the Rhode Island Title Guarantee.

- 1852 Ebenezer Kelly wills his Homestead Estate to Sophia Kelly his wife "during her widowhood." Title Searches in Providence City Hall by the Rhode Island Title Guarantee. Wills Book 16, page 503, in Providence City Hall.
- 1866 Sophia P. Kelly, widow, and John B. Kelly, lived here. Title searches in Providence City Hall by the Rhode Island Title Guarantee.
- 1913 Property owned by Sarah E. Eustache.
- 1914 Gese Levy, wife of Israel, buys the property.
- 1937 Owned by Samuel Kornstein.
- 1958 Sold to "Burnside Incorporated."
- 1958 Burnside Incorporated sells the property to South County Services.

- 2. Date of erection: c 1774
- 3. Notes on alterations and additions: The house is being restored, and the Greek Revival porch shown on the HABS photograph (1958) has been removed.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Cowley
for the Providence Preservation Society
July 1961

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural character: This is a large, gambrel roofed, wooden building. It was built about 1774, a time when the fine new houses in the area were being made of brick, and were more apt to have a hip roof.
- 2. Condition of fabric: Under restoration.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

- 1. Overall dimensions: The house is L-shaped, with a two-and-a-half story, five-bay, main block, and a two story rear wing or ell.
- 2. Foundations: Random fieldstone.

3. Wall construction: Timber frame with plank walls covered with clapboards with 3"-3-1/2" exposure, beaded boards.
4. Chimneys: One large center brick chimney, recently re-capped. Chimney in the ell recently removed.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Frontispiece added during present restoration, copied from HABS drawings of "Shakespeare's Head" (Carter House), 21 Meeting Street, Providence, in HABS Catalog (1941): Doric pilasters, pulvinated frieze, pediment, door not original, five top lights.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Double hung windows with block frames with heavy molded heads. The present twelve light sash are replacements.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Main block, gambrel roof; ell, gable roof; asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice and eaves: Beaded eave with molded cornice. Second story window heads are continuous with cornice.
 - c. Dormers: Three gable-roofed dormers with pedimented ends on west front side.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Center chimney, five-room type plan, plus ell. One wall has been removed joining two of the three rooms of the original five-room plan. Second floor plan originally five rooms, now baths in southeast and northeast small rooms. Ell a plain large room open on three sides.
2. Stairways: U-shaped front stair, against center chimney; open string, decorated step ends, molded handrail, main newel twisted, square balusters set diagonally, paneled below outside string with flush and beveled paneling, four-panel door under stair.
3. Flooring: Downstairs - mostly original wide boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Original plaster on split lath now replaced with plaster on metal lath.

5. Doorways and doors: Original molded frames; six panel, flush, bevel doors.
6. Trim: Front rooms and hall have molded cornices, window head forms a stepped out portion of the cornice. Molded aprons below the window sills. No chair rails. Molded cornice in back room. Main rooms on second floor have molded trim. Overmantel cupboard in southwest room from a house dating c 1760.
7. Hardware: Many large H-L hinges remain.
8. Lighting: Not installed at the time of inspection.
9. Heating: Central and six fireplaces. Original mantels have bolection moldings around fireplaces, narrow and wide panels above, and frame into the room cornice. The house contains several eighteenth century mantels from demolished houses.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces west on a northeast corner lot. The house is set back on rising ground with two flights of stone steps to the house, five steps in one flight, four in the other.
2. Present fieldstone retaining wall replaces cement wall.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing
for the Providence Preservation Society
July 1961



NUMBER FORTY-THREE BENEFIT STREET
THE JOSEPH JENCKES HOUSE (1774-1790 ?)
OWNERS: Mr. and Mrs. Joseph K. Ott
OCCUPIED BY: Owners
FLOWERS ARRANGED BY:

In 1773 Joseph Whipple, listed in the deed as a yeoman, sold fifteen acres of land lying between Benefit Street and Ferry Lane (now Hope Street) to John Jenckes, an important Providence merchant, and it is known that the two-story gambrel-roofed house with its great central chimney on the northeast corner of Jenckes and Benefit Streets was standing in 1791. In 1790, on Jenckes' death, his son Joseph drew this portion of the family property. There is no definite mention of the house before this date, but it belongs to an older architectural style. It is one of the few gambrel-roofed houses left in Providence, since most of the remaining Providence houses were built after such roof lines were out of fashion.

Joseph Jenckes was living in the house when the United States Direct Tax List was taken in 1798, ~~and when~~ ^{The} house was then described as "self-occupied, 40 by 30 feet, with an addition of one room 15 by 10 feet, two stories high, all wood" and was taxed for \$1500. In 1835, the property was acquired by Ebenezer Kelley, in whose family it remained until 1913, after which time it changed hands several times. It was in a very dilapidated condition in 1959, ~~when Burnside Corporation owned it.~~ ^{Corporation.} Mr. and Mrs. Ott bought it from Burnside ~~in 1959~~; They have since restored the exterior to its eighteenth-century appearance, replacing the front door with one that follows the outline of the original doorway, discovered during work on the house. On the interior, the original stairway, which has especially good detail, has been repaired, and the remaining old mantels and trim have all been retained. The restoration also brought to light the huge kitchen fireplace with its fine beehive oven, which had been

NUMBER FORTY-THREE BENEVIT STREET

(2)

filled in and contained at least two smaller fireplaces. This fireplace, with the oven set in the back wall ^{to} typical of kitchen fireplaces dating before 1750, ^{I+} is the outstanding feature of the back living-room. The crane is not original, but it is old, fits onto the original hooks, and is the right size for the opening. Moldings taken from the cornice moldings found in the house and copied on a somewhat larger scale were adapted for the mantel trim.

Some of the mantels for the six fireplaces had been removed and these have been replaced by mantels belonging to the architectural period of the house. Two, the one in the south parlor and another upstairs, came from the Daggett House in Pawtucket, and that in the north parlor came from the Sylvanus Martin house, formerly on North Main Street in Providence.

A door which opens to the cellar came from the George Corlies house at 201 South Main Street. Its original rose cedar graining is at present protected by a thin coat of beige paint. The doors in the front rooms hang on their original hinges. All the hardware on the first floor came from Ball and Ball Company of Whitford, Pennsylvania.

Joseph Jenckes' house was reputed to have the best water in town, and three or four cylindrical brick-lined eighteenth or early nineteenth-century cisterns have been located on the grounds.

#31
1824
33
1847
#31
1844

PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

RECORDS OF

#43 BENEFIT STREET --WOOD
BUILT 1774

Plat - 9
Lot - 174
#31 in 1847

- 1773 Joseph Whipple, yeoman, to John Jenckes, merchant for \$270 10s lawful money--"a certain lot of land of 15 acres neither more nor less. Bounded: S by Charles Keene; E by Ferry Lane (now Hope Street); W by Benefit Street; N by my other lands." DB 20.91
- 1790 WILL of John Jenckes:--"further it is my will that in the division of my real estate the Dwelling House where my son Joseph Jenckes now lives together with the lot of land on which the same stands--shall be set off and assigned to my son Joseph Jenckes, his heirs and assigns forever." W-71367
- 1798 Chace Notes show: Joseph Jenckes House, self occupied. W on Benefit Street; N, S, E, by own land. House lot is 41 1/2' X 60' on which is a house 40' x 30' with addition of one room 15' x 10'. House is 2 stories high -- all wood, said premises being all in the right of his wife. Value \$1500. ALSO Joseph Jenckes Lot -- Pasture and Garden 7 1/4 acres. Bounded: N on Thomas L. Halsey; E on Ferry Lane; W on Mrs. Jenckes; S on David Barnes--Val. \$590. (U.S. census of 1798).
- TAX
1814 Prov. Direct tax to pay for WAR of 1812. Joseph Jencks - "the lot contains 7 1/4 acres and is bounded - N by T.L. Halsey, E by the third street back, S by Mrs. Barnes, and W by Benefit St. This includes the land improved by Chatham Smith, a man of color. occupied by Mr. Obidiah Penniman. Providence Direct Tax. of 1814. a man of color.
- 1818 Joseph Jenckes dies intestate leaving six children.
- 1835 Edwin and Hannah Bowers Jenckes sell for \$3000 the Estate to Ebenezer Kelly "they being the true, sole and lawful owners of the above bargained premises." D.B. 66.198
- 1852 Ebenezer Kelly wills his Homestead Estate to Sophia Kelly his wife "during her widowhood." Remained in Kelly family until W 16.503
- 1822 John Jencks Oc. to Thos Burges 1/6 interest - occ by George Gilbert - DB 45.173
- 1913 Taxed to Sarah E. Eustache, and to the following persons in the year designated.
- 1914 Gose Levy, wife of Israel.
- 1937 Samuel Kornstein.
- 1958 "Burnside Incorporated"
- 1958 South County Services

See... #1
H. Mason's
ALBUM