

by ROGER BOWEN



Betsey Baker Was a Bonnet Maker

ERNEST J. BAKER OF WESTWOOD, Massachusetts, 87 years old and critically ill, had not lost his powerful voice and he used it when the April 1966 issue of *YANKEE* arrived and his nurse read him the story "Straw Bonnets for Easter." [Mr. Baker has since passed away. Ed.] His was a righteous indignation, for it said in the story that Mrs. John Whipple of Providence, Rhode Island, laid claim to the

distinction of making the first straw bonnet in America, with nary a mention of Mrs. Betsey Baker, his own grandmother. Not only did Mrs. Baker make the first straw bonnet anybody ever made in this country, in 1798 when she was a girl of 12, but years later she made a replica which is still in existence. That bonnet, made especially for the Norfolk Agricultural Society's Exposition of 1859, is a

The very first straw bonnet in America was made by Betsey Baker, then of Providence, R.I., in 1798. At left, Betsey Baker's great-great-granddaughter models a replica (made by Betsey Baker in 1859) of the first bonnet—in the 1680 Westwood, Mass., house in which have lived five generations of Bakers. Betsey Baker lived here for 60 years.

Build by Simeon Thayer

1773-1782

#46 in 1824
#46 in 1844
#66 in 1847
#

PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Plat 10
Lot 121

Records of

1773-1782

#74-#76 BENEFIT STREET...Wood..Brick Ends

1755 John Whipple sells for 1200 L in Bills of Publick Credit to Jonathan Whipple yeoman...the third parcel ~~3~~ a House Lott in the Compact part of Providence Town on the W side of Back or Benefit Street a little Nward of the Church of England..bounded:E by the New Street 40'; W by grantor 40'; N by grantor 80'...Deed Book 15.46

1773 Jonathan Whipple sells for 50 good-Spanish milled dollars to Simeon Thayer, perukemaker, a certain lot of land bounded: E by Benefit Str S by Joseph Whipple 80'; W by Burial Ground 40'; N by Joseph Whipple 80'..being the same grantor purchased of Captain John Whipple in 1755...DB 20.143

house built 1773 no 1-782

1782 Simeon Thayer sells for 1100 good Spanish Milled dollars to Michael and Joel Metcalf, curriers, a certain lot of land bounded: E by Benefit Street 40'; S and N 80' by J Whipple; W by Church Burying ground 40' and is all that lot of land said Thayer bought of Jonathan Whipple in 1773, together with a DWELLING HOUSE and other buildings..DB 20.630

* 1798
1802 Joel Metcalf sells for \$500 ^{to Michael Metcalf} his interest in the above property..DB 28.369

1803 Michael Metcalf, builder, sells for \$1100 to Jonathan Adams and Zebediah Lothrop a lot of land with a DWELLING HOUSE and other buildings thereon being the same Michael Metcalf bought of Joel Metcalf in 1802..DB 29.41

1803 Jonathan Adams and Zebediah Lothrop sell for \$1000 to Ebenezer Knight Dexter a certain lot of Land with a Dwelling House being the same grantors bought of Michael Metcalf in 1803...DB 29.52

1818 E K Dexter sells for \$2600 to Samuel Brown a certain lot of land with a Dwelling House near the Epispcal Church bounded W by the Church Burying Ground 80'; E by Benefit Street 80'; 80' deep being the land the grantor bought of J Adams, Z. Lothrop and Thomas L Halsey..DB 41.22
~~and is part of Cook's lot which fell to Joseph Cook's wife from her father, Amos Allen.~~

1818 FIRE RECORD...Samuel Brown..W side of Benefit Street..Dwelling H^use self occupied...wood..36' in front 28' front to rear..2 stories high in front and 3 in rear...FR Vol 5..1755

1824 Samuel Brown, Naval Officer of the Port, and Samuel E Brown, painter lived here...Prov Directory - ~~and/or family int: 1647~~

MTG
1842 Samuel Brown sells the homestead ~~to~~ Edward Beverly..DB 84.143

* 1788
1798

chace Index Cards: Joel Metcalf

E on Benefit St
N on T.L. Halsey
W on Church Yard
S on Amos Allen

1 lot on Benefit
40' x 80' - on it
old D.H. 33' x 27'
2st - wood

more...

PROV DENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

2.

#74-76 BENEFIT STREET....continued

1857 Susan Grew lived here - Prov. Dir.

Several mortgages followed

- 1858 Mortgage foreclosed, property sold at public auction to the highest bidder, Lewis Lewisson for \$15,150..several mortgages followed.
- 1866 Henry Matthewson sells the property to Josiah Crooker. Grantot left a "common law wife" Sarah. He sued for Dower and got it established...DB 173.307
- 1884 Sarah D Matthewson Quit Claims to Josiah Crooker, the same "premises conveyed in his lifetime by my late husband"...DB 323.40
- 1917 George H and Foster Crooker, sole heirs of Josiah W Crooker sell the property to Roger Laudati...DB 567.170
- 1917 Property taxed to Joseph A Latham and Peter Laudati
- 1919 Property sold to Samuel H and Bessie Berger and was in the Berger family until
- 1961 Property owned by the Diocese of Rhode Island

Mary A Gowdey
August 1964