

Benefit 1783-1792
by John & Benj. Reynolds

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

Commonly referred
to as the Helen
Whitman House

PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Records of

Plat 10
Lot 117

#88 BENEFIT STREET.....Wood

#50 in 1824

#76 in 1847

#88 in 1866

- 1782 Darius Sessions et al, a committee appointed by the Benevolent Congrega-
tional Society, sell to Noah Robinson a certain Lott of land near King s
Church bounded: E by Back Street 44'; S by a Cross Street 104'; W by
Levi Hall 44'; N by Nathaniel Wheaton 99'...Deed Book 19.409
- 1783 Noah Robinson sells the above property to John and Benjamin Reynolds...
DB 21.38
- 1794 Jabez Gorham was born in this house February 18...see mms of Jabez Gorham
recorded by Margaret Gorham Edwards of New Port Richey, Florida
- 1794 For 350 L John Reynolds sells his half to Benjamin..."together with the
one undivided moiety or half part of the DWELLING HOUSE"...DB 23.258
- 1798 CHACE NOTES: Benjamin Reynolds...E on Benefit Street..S on Church Lane.
A house lot 44' x 104'. A Dwelling House thereon 38' x 33'..2 stories..
wood. Value \$1100
- 1803 MORTGAGE: Benjamin Reynolds for \$4811 to Edward and William Reynolds
a certain lot of land together with the Dwelling House and other improve-
ments being the same premises purchased by Ben. and John Reynolds of Noah
Robinson in 1783 and ceded to Benjamin by John in 1794...DB 27.620
- 1822 Edward and William Reynolds sell for \$2300 to Samuel Hamlin pewterer a
certain lot of land bounded: E by Benefit Street 44'; S by a Cross Street
104'; W by Levi Hall 44'; N by Nathaniel Wheaton 99' together with a
Dwelling House...DB 45.299
- 1824 Samuel Hamlin and/or family lived here and until 1867...Prov. Directory
- 1824 POLICY RECORD: Samuel E Hamlin...W side Benefit Street...wood..38' front
x 34' front to rear..2 stories high in front and 3 in rear...occupied
as a Dwelling House by 2 families...PR Vol 2...#2522
- 1824 Mrs Anna Power, widow of Nicholas lived here and until she died in 1858 Dir
...she was the mother of Helen Sarah Whitman. Prov
- 1864 The Hamlin heirs sell to Robert Ives a certain lot of land and buildings
thereon bounded: E by Benefit Street; W by St John's Church; N partly by said
Church and partly by Josiah Crooker; S by Church Street...being the same
conveyed by Edward and William Reynolds to Samuel Hamlin by deed in 1822.
...DB 45.299

See p. 65
Helen Whitman

more...

#88 BENEFIT STREET....continued

1864 Robert Ives sells the above property to Noah Crooker for \$9000...DB 176.129

This property was in the Crooker family until

1929 St John's Church taxed for this property

1930 Property taxed to St Dunstan's

1953 Louis and Samuel Berger joint tenants

1956 Armando Guisti taxed for the property

CHASE INDEX CARDS: " For some time prior to 1824 in this house lived Mrs Nicholas Power and her two daughters until Mrs Power died. From this house Mr Power as well as Mrs Power was buried and at this house the "Poe Drama" was enacted with Mrs Sarah Helen Whitman in 1848-9. Mr Power was absent from Providence from say 1813 to 1837. He died 1844. Mrs Power died 1858. Edgar Allen Poe died 1849." Mrs Whitman died 1878...(Sarah Helen Whitman was the daughter of Mrs Power)

Sarah Whitman lived in the S $\frac{1}{2}$ of this house...her garden was where the chapel now is.. "Old Houses of R I" ..Colonial Dames...R I "ist Soc

M^A Gowdey
April 1965

BENJAMIN AND JOHN REYNOLDS HOUSE

Address: 88 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island.

Flat 10, lot 117; 50 Benefit Street in 1824; 76 Benefit Street in 1847; 88 Benefit Street since 1866).

Present Owner: King's Lee Corporation, Box 1645, Providence, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: Various renters.

Present Use: Apartment House.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is a characteristic frame house of the late eighteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1783 For 305 Spanish milled dollars Noah Robinson sells this land to John and Benjamin Reynolds...Deed Book 21, page 38, in Providence City Hall.
- 1794 For 350 £ John Reynolds sells property to Benjamin Reynolds, together with one undivided half part of dwelling house...Deed Book 23, page 358, in Providence City Hall.
- 1798 Henry R. Chase, Survey and Accounts of the Lots, Houses and Sites in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1798 Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914): Benjamin Reynolds. E on Benefit Street. S on Church Lane. A House lot 44' x 104'. A dwelling house thereon 38' x 33'. 2 stories wood. Value \$1100.
- 1803 Property deeded to William and Edward Reynolds by Benjamin Reynolds...Deed Book 27, page 620, in Providence City Hall.
- 1822 Property sold for \$2300 by Edward and William Reynolds to Samuel Hamlin, pewterer and Britannia Ware, "adjoining King's Church, being the S/E corner and running N/ly on a lot of land belonging

to heirs of Levi Hall, dec'd then running E/ly on lot belonging to heirs of Nathaniel Wheaton until it reaches Benefit Street, then S/ly on Benefit Street to a cross street, then W/ly on said cross street to first mentioned corner together with dwelling house."...Deed Book 45, page 249, in Providence City Hall; being the same purchased by John and Benjamin Reynolds of Noah Robinson and recorded in Deed Book 21, page 38, in Providence City Hall.

- 1824 Samuel Hamlin lived here until 1857...Providence Directory.
- 1864 Property taxed to Robert H. Ives.
- 1864 For \$9000 Robert Ives sells property to Josiah Crooker...Deed Book 176, page 129, in Providence City Hall.
- 1866 Mrs. E. Hamlin, H. A. Newhall, and Martha Thurber lived here...Providence Directory.
- 1867 Hamlin heirs sell to Robert H. Ives...Deed Book 179, page 54, in Providence City Hall.
- 1920 George Crooker sells property to St. John's Church.
- 1929 Property taxed to St. John's Church.
- 1930 Property taxed to St. Dunstan's School.
- 1956 Property taxed to Armando Guisti.

2. Date of erection: Between 1783-1794.

3. Notes on alterations and additions: This was originally a central hall type house with two interior chimneys and five rooms. A rounded bay was added on the rear about 1875. In 1960 it was converted into five apartments--two on the first floor, two on the second, and one in the ground level basement at the rear. Mantels have been removed, and the middle rear room has been divided into two bathrooms per floor. The stair hall is intact.

B. Historical Events Connected with Structure: This house is commonly referred to as the Sarah Helen Whitman house. Mrs. Whitman, a poetess who was once wooed by Edgar Allen Poe, had a well-known rose garden in the rear of the house.

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

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Characteristic, well-built, medium income house, with especially interesting stairway.
2. Condition of fabric: Good; reconditioned in 1960.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 38' x 33', 5 bays; two stories in front, three stories in rear.
2. Foundations: Very large rough granite slabs (four) across front, brick across sides and back.
3. Wall construction: Wood, vertical planks, clapboarded, some original feathered and lapped clapboards.
4. Porches, stoops: Narrow later porch at south side entry, two cement steps to rear door in basement level, two wooden steps to door on north side.
5. Chimneys: Two interior brick.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance, center of east front; Ionic frontispiece with pediment, modillion cornice, pulvinated frieze; lighted, panel door apparently later.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Double hung windows, single light sash not original, simple frames with molded caps and sills; no shutters or shutter hardware. Second floor window caps projected out and continuous with bed mold.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Boxed eaves, molded cornice.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Originally a central hall, five room plan. House has been converted into five apartments.
2. Stairways: Three run main stairway in front hall. Straight rail, molded. Open riser ends with cut out trim, turned balusters, rather slender newel post, heavy turned baluster treatment, small cap drops.
3. Flooring: New pine over the old boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered.
5. Doorways and doors: Door frames original; doors have been replaced.
6. Trim: Very good dentil cornice in front rooms and hall. Corner posts, boxed. No chair rail except in hall. Hall - reeded chair rail, dentil cornice; reeded shadow rail up stairs; reeded shadow posts. Four panel closet door under stairs, paneled stair soffit.
7. Hardware: All hardware replaced in 1959.
8. Lighting: Electric, new.
9. Heating: Central, with baseboard radiators.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: House faces east; set on sidewalk edge.
2. Enclosures: New dry stone wall at rear; new garden rear and north side.
3. Walks, driveways: No drive; new curved walks of asphalt; sidewalk north side is cement, front is herringbone laid brick.

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