

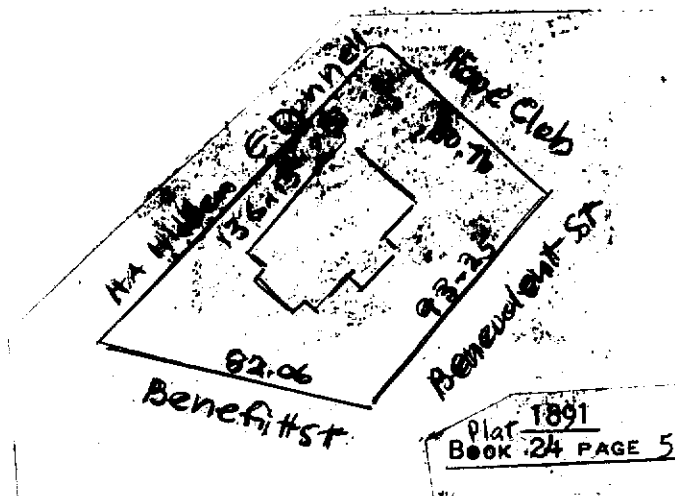
PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Records of

#2 BENEVOLENT STREET...Brick

Plat 12
Lot 330

- 1801 Thomas Remington and Sarah his wife, who when sole was known and called by the name of Sarah Crofford, and is one of the heirs-at-law of Joseph Crawford, sell for \$322.67 to Joseph B Cooke, mariner, a certain tract of land bounded: W by Benefit Street; S by Benevolent Street 43'; E by the grantors; N partly by Archibald Young and partly by the heirs of Joseph Brown, containing 16 square rods and is part of the land drawn in the division of the real estate of Joseph Crofford...DB 27.260 *see Map Lot #1*
- 1803 Thomas Remington quit claims to Joseph B Cooke a 9' strip of land on Benevolent Street to compensate him for the widening of Benefit Street. DB 27.497
- 1832 Edward Pearce was living in this location, *and/or family until* ...Prov Dir *-NOT THIS HLD*
- 1839 Joseph B Cooke sells for \$4250 to Richmond Bullock a certain lot of land with all buildings thereon standing, including all the land conveyed to me by Thomas Remington and Sarah his wife in 2 several deeds.. 1801 and 1803, except so much as was taken to widen Benefit Street to 50'..bounded W by Benefit Street; S by Benevolent Street; E by Sally B Comstock; N by John Pitman and Simon Dean...DB 1839
- 1840 WILL: Richmond Bullock:..I give and bequeath to my daughter Harriet Bullock, wife of Edward Pearce my house and lot on Benefit and Benevolent Streets, called the Cooke Estate"...Wills 16.142 *NOT THIS Bldg Anita*
- 1853 Edward Pearce built his Mansion House designed by Thomas Tefft..Glass The property was owned by the Pearce family until....
- 1901 William B Pearce (unmarried) sells to Arthur H Watson that lot of land with all buildings and improvements thereon bounded: W by Benefit Street 89.92; N by Henry Hidden and Elizabeth Dunnell 136.13'; E by Hope Club 80.76'; S by Benevolent Street 93.25'; being Lot #10 set off to grantor by equity in 1891...Plat Book #24 page 5.
- 1914 The property was taxed to Harriet S W Lewis (nee Watson) and to the following persons in the year designated:
- 1932 Harriet S W Lewis widow of John B
- 1959 Hope Club
- 1960 Property demolished by the Hope Club for a parking area.



"EARLY VICTORIAN DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE ON COLLEGE HILL"

by

Anita F. Glass

Edward Pearce House
2 Benevolent Street

According to historical records and his own notebooks, Tefft's next house on College Hill was at 2 Benevolent Street. It was built for Edward Pearce in 1853 and, until it was razed in 1959 for a parking lot, stood majestically on the Hill. Tefft's sketch and the completed structure are identical in design. (Figures 25 and 26). The Pearce mansion is a simple, compact box-like shape similar to the Tully Bowen house, but much less pure in its classic simplicity. Its basic shape is complicated by projections, such as the side bays and the broken line of the roof. Tefft's desire to give importance to the entrance by projecting the central section of the facade under a pointed gable is clumsy.

EDWARD PEARCE HOUSE

Address: 2 Benevolent Street, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island

Flat 12, Lot 330

Present Use: Demolished 1960 by the Hope Club which is located on the adjoining property on Benevolent Street, and uses this lot for parking now.

Brief Statement of Significance: This house, built in 1853, was an example of the work of the Providence architect, Thomas Tefft. It was a large, simple, compact, three-story, brick building with brownstone trim, typical of Tefft's work.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The house was originally owned by and built for Edward Pearce (A. Glass, Early. . . pp. 50-51) who had lived at this address since 1832 (Providence Directory). It remained in the Pearce family until 1901.

1901 William B Pearce (unmarried) sells to Arthur H Watson that lot of land with all buildings and improvements bounded: W by Benefit Street 89.92 N by Henry Hidden and Elizabeth Dannel 136.13'; E by Hope Club 68.76'; S by Benevolent Street 93.25' being lot #10 set off to grantor by equity. . . Plat Book #24, page 3, in Providence City Hall.

The property was taxed to the following persons in the year designated:

1914 Harriet S W Lewis wf John B
 1932 Harriet S W Lewis wid John B
 1959 Hope Club

2. Date of erection: 1853 (A. Glass, . . .)

3. Architect: Thomas A. Tefft

4. Original plans: Tefft's original drawings for this and other buildings are in the John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

5. Sources of information:

Anita F. Glass, Early Historic Domestic Architecture on College Hill (unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Art, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1960), pp. 20-21.

Barbara Winters, "The Architecture of Thomas Tefft," Bulletin of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, vol. XXVII, no. 2 (1940), pp. 37-45 and "Thomas Tefft, Progressive Rhode Islander," Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society Vol. XXXIV (April 1911), pp. 41-42.

B. Supplemental Material: The following is transcribed from Anita Glass, Early Historic Domestic Architecture on College Hill (unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Art, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1960), pp. 20-21:

"... Tefft's sketch and the completed structure are identical in design. The Pearce mansion is a simple, compact box-like shape similar to the Fully Seven House, but much less pure in its classic simplicity. Its basic shape is complicated by projections, such as the side bays and the broken line of the roof. Tefft's desire to give importance to the entrance by projecting the central section of the facade under a pointed gable is clumsy. In the Fully Seven house this was accomplished by the simple stately design of the doorway and emphasized by the pediment on the window above it. The interest in texture which Tefft expressed with such vigor of imagination and delicacy in the Union Depot is not so successful here. The hard surface and narrow joints give a flat feeling to the brick wall. It is true that the brownstone trim casts bold shadows over the flat surface and gives it interest, but there is a crudity and coarseness in the quoins and brackets. The doorway with all its surrounding elements is especially disturbing. Its basic design derives from Batty Langley's eighteenth century English pattern books, but the fussy classical motifs on the brackets are not part of the integrated whole and seem an afterthought. The importance of the entrance is minimized by the brownstone quoins which confuse the effect. On the other hand, the windows seem to give stability to the front. Symmetrically placed and simply articulated, they clarify the basic shape. The house sits well against its site, its aristocratic position enhanced by the low brownstone wall and iron fence of geometrical design. The posts at the gate are similar to many of Tefft's tombstone sketches.

"The interior of the house is based on the academic plan of the eighteenth century. Taft had definite ideas on interior layout and, in a lecture given in Providence in 1833, laid down a few rules for architects: 'In the arrangement of a plan, the living room should command the approach to the house, the morning or afternoon sunlight and the principal view and by no means should the parlor in the rear least and thereby the pleasantest portion of the house; that is a common error and should be avoided. Plenty of light is another essential feature of comfort, but it is an absurdity to build so many windows as to leave that a portion of them are to be forever kept shut, thus increasing expense in a building and coldness in winter.' Taft follows these rules in the interior of 2 Bevan Street. The house rooms are regularly disposed and the south hall, the living rooms are sunny and bright and the two large windows, symmetrically placed, let in plenty of air and sunshine. Spacious and comfortable it may be, but it is not very interesting. There is a monotony in the size and proportions of the rooms. The moldings and interior details are unimaginative and the fireplace, all by Taft, though in simple classic good taste, are dull. We must remember, however, that Taft was only in his late twenties when he designed this house and his experience with interior detail was limited."

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and
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AND
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National Park Service
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