

**PPS RECORDS FOR
154 CONGDON STREET
PLAT 9, LOT 505**

**R. LAWRENCE AND NANCY GUILD HOUSE
Built 1896**

DESCRIPTION:

154 Congdon Street is a 2 story wood frame single family house with hip roof, clapboards on the first floor and decorative shingles on the second, standing on a raised brick basement. The front roof slope has a single dormer window. Bay windows adorn the east and north elevations; a front porch covers about 2/3 of the east elevation. Most of the house's windows are 2/1 wood double hung sash with true divided lights.

The house stands on an undersized (2,998 square foot lot) on the west side of Congdon Street between Halsey Street on the north and Jenckes Street on the south. (The block is also bounded by Pratt Street on the west.) The lot measures approximately 50 feet wide on Congdon Street, and approximately 60 feet deep.

HISTORY:

In January 1896, 32-year-old R. Lawrence Guild, a single man, was living in his parents' house at 34 Pratt Street, and also doing business there as a wholesale dealer in graham flour. (Reuben A. and Jane C. Guild had bought 34 Pratt Street back in 1856, on a lot lying about 100 feet south of Halsey Street and extending the full width of the block to Congdon Street. The youngest of their three children was Reuben Lawrence, who went by his middle name.) At the beginning of 1896, Lawrence bought part of the family homestead, a 50-by-60-foot parcel on Congdon Street directly behind (east of) his parents' house; in March, he took out a building permit, and in December he married Nancy Darling. Very likely the house was completed by the end of that year, since the address of 154 Congdon Street first appears in city directories and tax records in 1897. Lawrence and Nancy Guild lived in this house until the late 1930s, during which time they built several other houses in the vicinity of this one, apparently as rental properties. After her husband's death, Nancy Guild continued to reside in this house until end of World War II. Since 1946 the house has changed hands 8 times, most recently in 1999 to the current owner, R. Peter Tache.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT:¹

The College Hill neighborhood is part of the original settlement area of Providence, established in 1636. The first residents laid out their settlement in a linear plan on the east side of the Moshassuck and Providence Rivers, with house lots fronting on the rivers and stretching eastward up and over a steep hill to what is now Hope Street. The town was confined to the riverbanks at the foot of the hill until after 1769, when Benefit Street was laid out on the western slope of the hill to relieve some of the congestion below. The following year, Rhode Island

¹ Sources: Providence: A Citywide Survey of Historic Resources, by Edward F. Sanderson and William MacKenzie Woodward (Providence: RI Historical Preservation Commission, 1986); Streets of the City, by Florence Parker Simister, transcripts of radio programs broadcast on WEAN 1954-1955 (Vol. 3), in the collection of the RI Historical Society.

College (now Brown University) built its first structure on top of that hill and gave the neighborhood its name. The neighborhood continued to develop over the next 150 years, reaching its present density in the early 20th century.

Many of the streets on College Hill are named for the people who owned the land on which the rights-of-way were later built. In the late 18th century, Thomas Halsey owned a 26-acre parcel between Benefit Street and Hope Street; Halsey Street now runs through that parcel. Joseph Jencks owned a 7-acre plot just to the south of Halsey's land, and Jenckes Street now marks the boundary between the two properties. Jonathan Congdon lived on Angell Street a bit uphill from Benefit Street; Congdon Street was initially only a couple of hundred feet long, laid out next to his house, but through the 19th century was eventually extended several blocks northward.

After his death, Thomas Halsey's property on College Hill was platted for residential development in 1840, and again in 1850, by which time Congdon Street had been extended at least as far north as Halsey Street. Development of Halsey's plat was nearly complete by the time 154 Congdon Street was built in 1896.

DESIGNATIONS

154 Congdon Street is located within the boundaries of the College Hill National Historic Landmark District (although the house is not mentioned in the district inventory). The house is also included within the College Hill local historic district zone, designated by the City of Providence.

RECORDS (*All Records were found in Providence City Hall unless otherwise noted*).

Maps and Atlases (Archives, Registry of Deeds)

1798: "A Map of Owners of Lots in Providence," compiled by Henry B. Chace in 1912: Plate III shows Congdon Street just east of J. Congdon's property on Angell Street: Congdon Street runs perhaps 200 feet to the north of Angell toward Meeting Street. Plate IV shows Thomas Lloyd Halsey's 26 acre lot between Benefit Street on the west and Ferry Lane (now Hope Street) on the east; just south of Halsey's land is Joseph Jencks's 7-acre lot. Both of these lots lie north of Star Lane (now Star Street), indicating that the Jenckes Street right-of-way was once the boundary line between the two lots. Therefore, Halsey's property is where 154 Congdon Street would eventually be built.

1840: "Map of Halsey Street and Adjacent Land Owned by the Late Thomas L. Halsey," by M.B. Lockwood, surveyed 1840, copied June 9, 1852 by Schubarth & Haines. (Recorded in Plat Book 2, Page 5, copied on Card 50.) This map shows the block bounded by Halsey, Pratt, Jenckes and Prospect Streets (Congdon Street has not yet been cut through), with a few numbered house lots laid out on Halsey and Pratt Streets.

1850: "Plat #2 of the Halsey Estate," by Cushing & Farnum, recorded June 13, 1850 (Plat Book 2, Page 22, copied on Card 65). This map shows the block bounded by Congdon, Halsey, Pratt and Jenckes Streets, divided into 5 lots. A lot on the west side of Congdon Street, measuring 192.6 feet long by 50 feet wide, is numbered #299; the north property line of this lot is 100 feet south of Halsey Street, and will later become the north property line of 154 Congdon Street.

1875: "Atlas of the City of Providence," by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 1, Plate E, shows the block bounded by Congdon, Halsey, Pratt and Jenckes Streets. The second lot south of Halsey

Street, stretching the full width of the block, is numbered 15; a wood frame house stands on the west end of the lot, fronting on Pratt Street, and a wood frame outbuilding stands on the east end, fronting on Congdon Street. The lot measures 7,515 sq. ft. and is owned by Jane C. Guild. Most of this block has been built out already.

1882: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 3, shows the same configuration of house lots in this block as on the 1875 atlas. The second lot south of Halsey Street still stretches the full width of the block and is still owned by Jane C. Guild; however, the outbuilding on the Congdon St. end of the lot has disappeared.

1895: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by Everts & Richards, Plate 29, shows the same layout as on the previous atlases. Her name does not appear on this map, but Jane Guild's house has the street address of 34 Pratt Street. Two outbuildings are now shown behind it, fronting on Congdon Street. The lot still measures 7,515 sq. ft.

1902: Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 9, shows Lot 505 on the west side of Congdon Street, 100 feet south of Halsey Street. The lot measures 50.15 feet on Congdon Street and 60 feet deep, for a total of 3,009 sq. ft. (No buildings are shown on these maps.)

1908: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 6, shows a wood-frame house at 154 Congdon Street standing on a 3,009 sq. ft. lot owned by R.L. Guild. There is a long narrow outbuilding north of the house, just next to the property line. R.L. Guild also owns the following 5 properties directly adjacent to his own home: to the north, houses at 156 Congdon Street and 47 Halsey Street (these occupy a former single vacant lot at the corner of Congdon and Halsey); to the southwest, 36 Pratt Street (next door to his mother); to the east across Congdon Street, a vacant lot; and east of that vacant lot, a house at 142 Prospect Street.

1918: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 22 shows 154 Congdon Street standing on a 3,009 sq. ft. lot; the outbuilding is gone. R.L. Guild still owns this house, as well as 156 Congdon and 47 Halsey Street. "G. & O. Guild" now own 153 Congdon, 36 Pratt, and (142-)144 Prospect. (G. and O. Guild are very likely other family members.) This map references the Thomas L. Halsey Land plat and the Halsey Estate Plat #2.

1926: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 22, shows 154 Congdon Street on a 3,009 sq. ft. lot, with no outbuildings. "R. & L. Guild" (possibly a typo) own 154 and 156 Congdon and 47 Halsey; "G. & O. Guild" owns 34 Pratt; and "R. & N. Guild" own 153 Congdon and 142-144 Prospect. (R. and N. Guild may be R. Lawrence and Nancy, or other family members.)

1937: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 22, shows 154 Congdon Street on a 3,009 sq. ft. lot, with a small wood-frame outbuilding in the southwest corner of the lot. The five properties on Congdon, Pratt and Prospect Streets are all credited to "R.L. Guild et ux."

Intent to Build Records (Archives)

Permit #10985, dated March 9, 1896, issued to "Rubin L. Guild" to build a house on Congdon Street in Lot 299 of the Halsey Estate Plat #2. Guild's address is given as Pratt Street, matching the address for both Reuben A. Guild and for R. Lawrence Guild in the 1896 city directory, but tax records confirm that "Rubin L. Guild" is actually R. Lawrence Guild. (See below.)

[Note: another permit, #16922, was issued on April 24, 1905 to R.L. Guild of 154 Congdon Street to build a house on the west side of Congdon near the corner of Halsey Street. This permit would be for the house at 156 Congdon Street.]

Deeds (Registry of Deeds)

Deed Book 401, Page 329: On January 30, 1896, Jane C. Guild sold to R. Lawrence Guild, for \$10, a lot on the west side of Congdon Street "with all buildings and improvements thereon" [recall that the 1895 atlas showed 2 outbuildings on the Congdon St. end of Jane Guild's property]. The lot measured 50 feet wide on Congdon Street and 60 feet deep. The deed describes the eastern 50 feet of this depth as "the northerly portion of Lot 299 on Plat #2 of the Halsey Estate" (referring to Plat Book 2, page 22), "being the same land conveyed to Reuben A. Guild by James Tillinghast Trustee and others on May 14, 1864 (DB 164, Page 154). The remaining 10 feet in depth are described as the eastern portion of Lot #15 on the Map of Halsey Street and Adjacent Lands (referring to Plat Book 2, Page 5), which measured 50 feet wide on Pratt Street and 100 feet deep, "being the same conveyed to Reuben A. Guild by George Capron on July 14, 1856" (DB 144, Page 291). The deed says that both estates totaled 7,500 square feet and had together previously been sold by Reuben Guild to Leander C. Belcher on July 26, 1865 (DB 171, Page 431), but then conveyed back to Jane C. Guild the next day, on July 27, 1865 (DB 170, Page 112) .

DB 407, Page 53: On August 31, 1896, R. Lawrence Guild, being unmarried, sold to Jane C. Guild and Reuben A. Guild for \$10 a lot with all buildings and improvements bounded east by Congdon Street 50.15 feet, west by Pratt Street 50.15 feet, and measuring 150.15 feet deep, "meaning to convey the same lot conveyed to R. Lawrence Guild from Jane C. Guild as described in DB 401, Page 329." [Note that this piece of property is more than twice as big as the 50-by-60-foot lot described in DB401/329, and actually would include Reuben and Nancy Guild's entire house lot. Perhaps one of the deeds is in error as to the measurement of the lot?]

DB 408, Page 124: On August 31, 1896, Reuben A. Guild and Jane C. Guild his wife sold to Reuben Lawrence Guild for \$10 a lot of land with buildings and improvements, bounded east by Congdon Street 50.15 feet, and measuring 60 feet on the north, 50.15 feet on the west, and 60 feet on the south. The reference to buildings may indeed refer to 154 Congdon Street, since a building permit had been taken out six months earlier.

Directories (Archives)

City Directory, 1896: R. Lawrence Guild, graham flour, is listed at 34 Pratt Street (both business and residence address); R.L. Guild at 34 Pratt Street is also listed under wholesale dealers of flour and grain. Reuben A. Guild is listed as living at 34 Pratt Street.

City Directory, 1897: R. Lawrence Guild, graham flour, is listed at 154 Congdon Street (both business and residence address). Reuben A. Guild, librarian emeritus of "B.U." (Boston University?) is listed as living at 34 Pratt Street.

House Directory, 1896: no address of 154 Congdon Street was found.

House Directory, 1897: 154 Congdon Street was the residence of Lawrence Guild, whose occupation is listed as "graham flour."

[Note: due to publication schedules, directories are often a year behind real time. Since the building permit for 154 Congdon was issued in March 1896, it seems likely that the house was completed that year, even though it did not show up in city directories until 1897.

Tax Records (Archives)

1896: No Plat 9, Lot 505 was found belonging to either Jane C. Guild or R. Lawrence Guild, so the lot had apparently not been created before the assessments were done for that year. Jane C. Guild wife of Reuben A. Guild of 34 Pratt Street is listed as the owner of Plat 9, Lot 187 [34 Pratt Street], with a total value of \$5,380.

1897: Plat 9, Lot 505 belonging to R. Lawrence Guild of 154 Congdon Street was valued at \$2,960. From this it seems clear that the original Lot 187 was subdivided, and the new lot 505 created.

Assessor's Field Cards (Assessor's Office)

Field Card for AP 9, Lot 505: Congdon Street

Owned by R. Lawrence Guild as of June 14, 1913

Owned by R. Lawrence Guild and wife Nancy J. Guild as of January 1936.

Owned by Nancy J. Guild, widow of R. Lawrence Guild, as of June 16, 1941.

Owned by Reginald E. Payton and wife Helen G. Payton as of May 1946.

Owned by Allen C. Cook and wife Annie Cook as of December 1956.

Owned by Richard P. Thomas and wife Jean H. Thomas as of Sept. 7, 1972 (ref. Deed Book 1169, page 1071)

Owned by Richard P. Thomas as of August 16, 1973 (ref. DB 1176, page 997).

Owned by Marie S. Thomas as of August 9, 1984 (ref. DB 1268, page 1129).

Owned by Sharon Lefebvre and R. Craig Lefebvre as of February 11, 1991 (ref. DB 2360, page 204).

Owned by Peter Tache and Kerry Clarkin-Tache as of March 12, 1997 (ref. DB 3511, page 010).

Owned by R. Peter Tache as of May 28, 1999 (ref. DB 4095, page 245).

Indices of Births, Marriages and Deaths (Archives)

Reuben L. Guild and Nancy J. Darling married December 17, 1896.

Reuben L. Guild, son of Reuben A. and Jane C., aged 77 years, died May 15, 1941. Thus, he was born in 1864, although apparently not in Providence his name does not appear in any birth index. (Reuben A. and Jane C. Guild had two children born in Providence: Olive, born 1854, and Samuel, born 1858.)