

**PPS RECORDS FOR
91 HOPE STREET**

Previously known as: 162 Hope (1854-1868)

PLAT 17, LOT 153

**WILLIAM APLIN HOUSE
c. 1826**

DESCRIPTION

The house stands on a 2,508 sq. ft. lot on the west side of Hope Street, between John and Arnold Streets. The lot has about 49.33 feet of frontage and measures 50 feet deep.

A 2-1/2 story Federal house, clapboard, 3 bay façade with off-center elliptical fan doorway, quoins, and hipped roof with monitor.

HISTORY

In 1826, William Aplin purchased Lot #1 on Tockwotton Hill from Williams Thayer, Jr. Thayer's land—bounded by Hope, John, gangway (Dove) and Arnold Streets—was platted into four lots. Lot #1 was situated at the corner of Hope and John Streets. City directories from 1836 list Aplin as having lived at the corner of Hope and John Streets. (Earlier directories list him as having lived on John Street.) From the documents researched, it is not possible to identify the exact date of construction, but Historian John Hutchins Cady (1881-1967) asserted that 91 Hope Street was built before 1830, and the period style supports that. It is likely that this is the house that Aplin occupied.

William Aplin had several occupations. He was a justice of the peace, a “temperance” grocer, and the secretary of the Anti Slavery Society in Providence.

By 1854, the lot was subdivided and the heirs to the William Aplin Estate—William and Charles Aplin— sold 162 Hope Street (91 Hope) to Frances Dorrance, wife of James Dorrance, a merchant. The houses on the street were renumbered in 1868.

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT¹

The Fox Point neighborhood was part of the original settlement of Providence in 1636. Maps of Providence in 1650 show Hope Street, then called “The Highway at the Head of the House Lots,” as the eastern boundary of the settlement. (The land east of Hope Street was set aside for agricultural purposes.) As the 18th century progressed, Providence became a seaport, trading with other American colonies, with the West

¹ Sanderson, Edward F. and William McKenzie Woodward. Providence: A Citywide Survey of Historic Resources (Providence: RI Historical Preservation Commission, 1986), pp. 16-18 and 43.

Indies, and with Europe. Wharves and other shipping-related facilities began to evolve on the Fox Point waterfront and a residential neighborhood of streets and house lots began to take shape adjacent to that waterfront. Power, Williams, and Brook Street were all laid out by the end of the 18th century. A 1798 map of Providence identifies Hope Street as “The Ferry Road to India Bridge,” as its southern terminus was a bridge that crossed the Seekonk River to what is now East Providence. By 1803, that road came to be called Hope Street.

After the Revolutionary War, American merchants were permitted to engage in trade with China and India: markets that had previously been monopolized by the British. Harbor development at Fox and India Points intensified to accommodate ships sailing to and from the Far East, and the surrounding neighborhood likewise became more densely inhabited. In the early 19th century Fox Point was Providence’s transportation hub, with both shipping and, later, railroad facilities for conveying raw materials, finished products, trade goods, mail, foodstuffs and other items, and people. Easy access to transportation networks attracted manufacturers to Fox Point as well, and the waterfront remained industrialized well into the 20th century. Many Fox Point residents in the early to middle years of the 19th century were immigrants, particularly the Irish, who came to work on the railroads and in the factories.

DESIGNATIONS

91 Hope Street is a contributing building to the College Hill Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In the inventory, the house is listed as “House, c. 1825.” The house is not located within the College Hill Historic District Overlay Zone, designated by the City of Providence zoning ordinance.

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

Maps and Atlases (All in Archives unless otherwise noted)

1798: “A Map of Owners of Lots in Providence,” compiled by Henry B. Chace in 1912: Plate II shows the area from India Bridge to George Street divided by the Ferry Road at the head of lots to Powers Lane (now Hope Street); the Road to Ferry Road (now Williams Street) on the north and North Street or Lane to Fenner Farm (now Wickenden Street) on the south. The future site of 91 Hope Street lies within a lot of land called Two Rope Walks measuring 780 feet x 15 feet owned by John Pitman and William Holroyd, bounded on the north by Rebecca Williams’ Rope Walk lot, and on the east by heirs of Joseph Brown and Nicholas Powers’ Rope Walk lot measuring 700 feet by 12 feet.

1826: “Plat of Williams Thayer’s for Land on Tockwotton,” surveyed and platted May 15, 1826 by Benoni Lockwood, and recorded in Plat Book 51 at Page 245, and copied on Plat Card 406. The map shows that the future site of 91 Hope Street lies within Lot #1 of 4 lots bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, a “gangway”

on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. The lot was situated at the corner of Hope and John Streets. (*Registry of Deeds*)

1857: "Map of Providence," by H.F. Walling, Page C#5(17) shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. There are two houses drawn on the lot; one situated at the corner of John and Hope Streets, and one situated at the site of 91 Hope Street with a similar shape. No house numbers or property owners are identified. The block is developed. The area between Williams and Governor Streets are developed. East of Governor Street remains undeveloped.

1875: "Atlas of the City of Providence," by G.M. Hopkins Co., Vol. 1 (Ward 1), Plate T shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. There are two frame houses on the lot identified as Lot #1; one situated at the corner of John and Hope Streets (2,492 sq. ft. owned by Wm. Aplin contains a business;) and one situated at the site of 91 Hope Street (2,508 sq. ft. owned by J. R. Dorrance.) No house numbers are identified. The block and area developed. There is a horse car line on Hope Street and a fire plug (water hydrant) across the street at the corner of Hope and Arnold Streets. Reference to the Rope Walk Plat.

1882: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 1, shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. The block is divided into 8 lots. There are two frame houses on the lot identified as Lot #1; one situated at the corner of John and Hope Streets; and one situated at the site of 91 Hope Street with a similar shape. No house numbers or owners are identified. The block and area developed.

1895: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by Everts & Richards, Plate 7 shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. There is a frame house on a 2,508 sq. ft. lot identified as #91 Hope Street. No owner is identified. The block and area developed. This map shows that there is water and sewer on the street. There is a streetcar on Brook, Wickenden, and Governor Streets.

1902: Assessors Plat Maps, Plat 17 shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. Lot #153, the second lot south of John Street, contains 2,508 sq. ft. The lot measures 49.33 on Hope Street by 50 feet deep and 51 feet on the eastern boundary. No buildings are shown on this map.

1908: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by L.J. Richards Co., Plate 8 shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. There is a frame house on a 2,508 sq. ft. lot identified as #91 Hope Street, owned by M. B. Babcock. The block and area developed. There is water, but no sewer on this section of street. There is a streetcar on Brook, Wickenden, and Governor Streets.

1918: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 18 shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. There is a frame house on a 2,508 sq. ft. lot identified as #91 Hope Street, owned by M. A. Sullivan. The block and area developed. There is water, but no sewer on this section of street. There is a streetcar on Brook, Wickenden, and Governor Streets. Reference to B. Lockwood Survey and Wm. Thayer Jr. Plat.

1926: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 18 shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. There is a frame house on a 2,508 sq. ft. lot identified as #91 Hope Street, owned by M. Sullivan. The block and area developed. There is water, but no sewer on this section of street. There is a streetcar on Brook, Wickenden, and Governor Streets. Reference to B. Lockwood Survey and Wm. Thayer Jr. Plat.

1937: "Atlas of the City of Providence" by G.M. Hopkins Co., Plate 18 shows the block bounded by Hope Street on the west, John Street on the north, Dove Street on the east, and Arnold Street on the south. There is a frame house on a 2,508 sq. ft. lot identified as #91 Hope Street, owned by M. A. Sullivan. The block and area developed. There is a streetcar on Wickenden Street. Reference to Wm. Thayer Jr. Plat and Rope Walk Lots.

1956: "Map of Old Providence showing Historic Buildings standing in 1956" drawn for Providence Preservation Society by the Providence Redevelopment Agency in April 1956, buildings charted by J. H. C. (John Hutchins Cady) 91 Hope Street is identified as one of the surviving buildings erected up to 1830. (*Providence Preservation Society*)

Deeds (Registry of Deeds)

DB 136/97: On June 26, 1826, Williams Thayer, Jr. sold to William Aplin of Providence, Esquire for \$100 a certain lot of land situated in the southerly part of Providence on Tockwotton, "being lot No. 1 on a Plat of my land on Tockwotton, made by Benoni Lockwood on May 15, 1826 and recorded in Book 51, Page 245. [Note: This deed was not recorded until March 17, 1854.]

DB 136/111: On March 17, 1854, William Aplin and Charles Aplin of Providence, for \$2,750 grant to Frances E. Dorrance of Providence, wife of James R. Dorrance, one lot of land with a dwelling house and other buildings and improvements thereon. "It being a portion of the land conveyed to our late father William Aplin by deed from Williams Thayer, Jr. by W. R. Staples, his attorney, bearing date June 17, 1826.

Intent to Build Records (Archives)

None found.

Tax Records (Archives)

Tax records are available from 1827 to the present. Prior to 1854, tax records were published in a book listing the property owner alphabetically by name, the total assessment for any real and personal property (without specifying where real estate was located), and the total tax due. Beginning in 1854, the city kept ledgers (organized by property owner name) indicating the plat and lot number of any real estate and the assessed value and taxes therefor.

- 1826-1852: Wm. Aplin was assessed for property owned. He was also assessed separately for the "Sweet & Rhodes shop on land of Williams Thayer.
- 1854-1856: Wm. Aplin Estate was assessed for property owned.
- Aug 1, 1854: James R. Dorrance owned Plat 17/Lot 153, 2,508 sq. ft. He was assessed \$750 for land and \$1,800 for building.

Directories (Archives)

Providence City Directories contain a street directory, noting all existing streets, and a residents' directory organized alphabetically by last name; these also included a house directory, listing residential buildings by street address, from 1892-1894 and again since 1937.

Providence House Directories were published separately from the city directory, 1895-1937 (published biannually from 1901). These directories list all residential buildings by street address, indicating the names of all residents and often their occupations as well. No distinction is made between owners and tenants. House directories also contain a street directory. This directory is sometimes a year behind the city directory.

- 1826: no listing for Aplin.
- 1828-1830: William Aplin, justice of the peace, with a business a 3 S. Main Street, lived on John Street.
- 1832: William Aplin, temperance grocery at 105 S. Main Street, lived at 11 John Street.
- 1836-1838: William Aplin, reading room at 6 S. Main Street, lived at the corner of Hope and John.
- 1841-1842: William Aplin, Secretary of the Anti Slavery Society at 14-1/2 Westminster Street, lived at the corner of Hope and John.

- 1844: William Aplin and William Aplin, Jr. lived at the corner of Hope and John.
- 1847-1854: William Aplin and Charles Aplin, jewelers at 73 John Street.
William Aplin, grocer, lived at 158 Hope Street.
- 1854-1855: James R. Dorrance, clerk at 10 South Water, lived at 162 Hope.
- 1856-1867: James R. Dorrance (Dorrance & Morgan) lived at 162 Hope.
- 1868-1871: James R. Dorrance lived 91 Hope.

Assessor's Chain of Title (Assessor's Office)

Alexander P. Niger owned the property as of July 1, 1893.
Alexander P. Niger Est. owned the property as of July 1, 1898.
Malvina V. Babcock owned the property as of December 1, 1899.
Mary A. Sullivan, wife of Dennis, owned the property as of November 2, 1914.
Mary T. Sullivan, wife of Dennis, owned the property as of February 1942.
Mary t. Sullivan Estate owned the property as of December 1961.
Francisco M. Scotti and Nino D. B. Scotti, TC, owned the property as of May 15, 1984.
Ref. DB 1261/698.
Luigi A. Bianco and Peter W. Armitage, TC, owned the property as of May 17, 1999.
Ref. corrective DB 4085/209.
Susan Hagan owned the property as of June 15, 1999. Ref. DB 4109/263.
Ari S. Heckman owned the property as of December 21, 2006.

*Research compiled by Judith A. Barlow
February 2008*