

PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Records of

Plat 49
Lot 57

#669 Public Street.....wood, octagon
The Miles B. Lawson House
Built ca. 1855-1856

#683...1869-1877 #487...1893-1894 #669...1895 to date

- 1833 "Plat of Benjamin Allen's Land, situate in Cranston, part of the Col. T. Mawney Estate", surveyed and platted by Benoni Lockwood, October 26, 1832 was recorded on the 2nd of January 1833 in Providence Plat Book 10, page 10 and on Plat Card 263. The same plat is found in Cranston Town Records in Deed Book 13, page 450.
- 1855 On the 21st of March, Theophilus Salisbury of Providence conveyed "one house lot situated in the town of Cranston...designated by the letter 'C' on a plat drawn by Benoni Lockwood, October 26, 1832... and...bounded southerly 50' on Public Street..." to Miles B. Lawson of Cranston for the sum of \$390.00. (Cranston Deed Book 31:265).
- 1855 On the 23rd of June, Miles B. Lawson recorded a Mortgage Deed to Amos C. Barstow and George C. Elliott, both of Providence. The deed included "a lot of land with all the buildings and improvements thereon situate on Public Street in Cranston...on which it measures 50'..." and was for the sum of \$1400.00. The mortgage was discharged by Barstow and Elliott September 11, 1856. (Cranston Deed Book 31:493).
- 1856 In a second Mortgage Deed written on September 11th and recorded on the 16th Miles B. Lawson again signed over his property on Public Street as surity for a loan of \$1400.00. This time the deed specifically mentioned a dwelling house conveying "one certain lot of land with a dwelling house and other buildings and improvements...on the northerly side of Public Street...designated as lot 'C'...bounded southerly on Public Street (formerly Direct Street) 50'...". The mortgagee of this transaction was Reuben Smith. (Cranston Deed Book 34:104 & 106).
- 1860 In a document dated January 18, 1860 and recorded in Cranston Deed Book 39 at page 148, Miles B. Lawson appointed George L. Claflin and Stephen C. Arnold as his trustees to dispose of his property for the benefit of his creditors. On the 6th of July the 50' frontage lot on Public Street, designated as lot 'C', including a dwelling house and other buildings and improvements was sold to Earl P. Mason the highest bidder at a public auction. Mason paid \$600.00 for the property which was still subject to a mortgage for \$1400.00, including interest. (Cranston Deed Book 39:409).
- 1860 On the 31st of July, Earl P. Mason and his wife Ann L. Mason conveyed the property to William A. Mowry of Prov. for the sum of \$600.00. The property was sold subject to the same \$1400.00 mortgage which the grantee assumed. (Cranston Deed Book 38:373).
- 1864 William A. Mowry purchased lot 'D' on the same plat, located just east of the property he had purchased in 1860 from Henry J. Root for \$600.00. (Cranston Deed Book 45:195).

1867 William A. Mowry and his wife Caroline C. Mowry executed a mortgage to Mechanics Savings Bank for the sum of \$3,000.00 pledging the two lots, "D" and "C", a dwelling house and other improvements as surity. (Cranston Deed Book 48:454-456).

**** Since the existing structure on Public Street is located in a section of Providence that was a part of the town of Cranston up until 1887, the Providence City Directories for the early period, 1855 through 1869 are not particularly helpful in identifying the residents of the house. Unfortunately the town of Cranston did not publish its own directories until later. The following information that pertains to either the structure of its owners is given in the Providence City Directories for the years prior to 1869:

1841	Miles B. Lawson, painter, rear 172 Pine
1844	Miles B. Lawson, painter, Conduit
1847-48	Miles B. Lawson, 283 Westminster, house 5 West Clifford
1850	Miles B. Lawson, 14 Eddy, house 5 West Clifford
1853-54	Miles B. Lawson, 14 Eddy, house 256 Friendship
1855-56	Miles B. Lawson, 14 Eddy, house at Elmwood
1857-59	Miles B. Lawson, painter 56 Stewart, house at Cranston
1860	Miles B. Lawson(Lawson & Co. with H.B.Taylor) painter 56 Stewart, house at Cranston
	William A. Mowry, teacher at high school, house 100 Clifford
	Earl P. Mason(Earl P. Mason & Co. with George W. Snow & George L. Claflin) drugs, chemicals & dye stuffs 24 Canal St., house 230 Benefit
1861	Miles B. Lawson, painter 56 Stewart, house at Cranston
	William A. Mowry, teacher at high school
1862	Miles B. Lawson & Co. painters 5 Richmond, house at Elmwood
	William A. Mowry, teacher at high school
1863	William A. Mowry, Capt. 11th Regiment, teacher at high school, house at Elmwood
1864	William A. Mowry, teacher 56 Westminster, house at Elmwood
1866-68	Mowry(William A.) & Goff(Charles B.), English & Classical High School 159 Westminster, house at Elmwood

Although none of these referances can be varified by street numbers, it is suggested that Miles B. Lawson lived in the house on Public St. fron 1855 until at least 1860 when he sold the property to William Mowry(through various other deeds). It is not clear who lived there between 1860 and 1863 when it appears that Mowry moved in, although there is at least some suggestion that it may have infact been Lawson.

1869 William A. Mowry and his wife Caroline E. Mowry conveyed "two lots with the buildings and improvements thereon situate on Public Street... and are a portion of lots 'C' and 'D' on the Benjamin Allen Plat... beginning at a point on said Public Street designated...as the division line of lots B & C thence running northwesterly on said division line 150.62', thence northeasterly 100'...thence southeasterly on the division line between lots 'D' & 'E' on said plat 138.26' to Public Street,

thence southwesterly on said Public Street 100' to the place of beginning." to Willard F. Inman. This deed conveyed a portion of the property that Mowry had received in the two deeds from Mason and Root, and was subject to the mortgage to Mechanics Savings Bank. (Providence Deed Book 186:399).

- 1873 The records of the Providence Water Board indicate that services commenced at #669 Public Street on the 6th of June, 1873.
- 1875 The G.M.Hopkins City Atlas of Providence, vol. II, plate P, shows the octagon house on Public Street but gives no other information.
- 1878 During March of 1871 Willard F. Inman had executed a mortgage to the Economical Mutual Life Insurance Company of Rhode Island to cover a negotiable promissory note for \$5500.00 (Prov. Mortgage Book 49:459). In June of 1873 Economical Mutual Life assigned the mortgage to Republic Life Insurance Company, located in Chicago (Prov. Mortgage Book 54:541) who intern reassigned it to National Life Insurance Company of the United States in July of 1874 (Prov. Mortgage Book 87:503). When Inman defaulted the property was sold at public auction to the highest bidder, George B. Harris, for the sum of \$7100.00. The property included a lot with 100' frontage on Public Street as well as a dwelling house. (Prov. Deed Book 299:515).
- **** The first entry in a Providence City Directory that is positively identified as the structure that is now #669 Public is found in 1869. For the years between 1869 and 1877 the street address was #283 Public Street. Throughout the period the resident was Willard F. Inman. Inman was variously employed as a salesman, a partner in Inman & Potter dry goods and grocers, and as a contractor. Although George Harris owned the house from 1878 until 1880 he did not live there, residing instead at #13 Marshall for the entire period.
- 1880 George B. Harris and his mortgagee, National Life Insurance Company, conveyed the property, a dwelling house on a 100' frontage lot, to Benjamin A. Holbrook of Providence for the sum of \$2,000.00. (Prov. Deed Book 311:135). During 1879 Benjamin Allen Holbrook had granted a power of attorney over all his property to Charles H. Smith. (Prov. Deed Book 301:230). It is apparently through this power of attorney document that the property eventually becomes part of Charles Smith's estate.
- 1884 Benjamin Allen Holbrook died in Prov. on the 10th of February at age 75. He was survived by his wife Mary T. Holbrook, who was his sole beneficiary. Charles H. Smith served as executor of the estate. As Benjamin A. Holbrook apparently had no surviving children, the only connection between he and Smith was a distant one, Smith having married Clara D. Holbrook August 12, 1875. Although there are no vital records to establish the relationship it is suggested that Clara was Holbrook's niece. (Prov. Probate Case # A-14145).
- 1882 The G.M.Hopkins City Atlas of Providence, plate 16, had shown the octagon house but not given any street number. The owner was identified as Charles H. Smith, which is consistent with the power of attorney.

1908 The L.J.Richards Street Map of the City of Providence shows two houses and a garage located on the property and numbered 669 and 665-667 Public Street. The C.H.Smith Estate is given as the owner. (plate 17).

**** For the years between 1880 and 1935 the Providence City Directory gives the following information that relates to the property:

1879-81		Benjamin A. Holbrook, real estate 98 Weybosset, house 601 North Main
1893	#487	no listing
	#487(R)	Elisha H. Collins, driver
1894	#487	James A. McCarthy, coachman Benjamin F. Wing, boards George A. Wing, teamster
	#487(R)	Elisha H. Colloins, driver
1895-97	#669	James A. McCarthy, coachman George A. Wing, teamster
1898	#669	Otto L. Barton, driver Charles A. Cutler, clerk, boards William Dexter, boards Adelbert F. Wing, teamster, boards George A. Wing, teamster
1899-01	#669	Otto L. Barton, driver Adelbert F. Wing, teamster, boards George A. Wing, teamster, boards
1903-05	#669	George Cresser, silversmith Otto L. Barton, painter
1907	#669	Edward W. Cook, machinist Otto L. Barton, painter
1909	#669	Joseph E. Barney, jeweler Otto L. Barton, painter
1911-15	#669	William A. Riedle, ice man Thomas J. Gamble, collarmaker
1917	#669	Hanna Lindgren, widow Thomas J. Gamble, collarmaker
1919-20	#669	Hanna Lindgren, widow Mrs Martha E. Eccleston
1921-22	#669	Mrs Clara Lawson Mrs Martha E. Eccleston
1923-30	#660	Mrs Clara Lawson Frank H. Allen, ice dealer
1931-32	#669	-no listing
1933-34	#669	Frank H. Allen, ice dealer Mrs Clara M. Lawson
1935	#669	West Side Ice Co. Frank H. Allen, ice dealer Mrs Mary E. Read

1900 Charles Henry Smith died in Providence on the 4th of September at age 56. His will left all his property, both real and personal, in trust to the City of Providence. Smith's only child, Charles H., Jr. had predeceased his father, but the date is not known. The estate was to benefit the Parks Department, to be used to purchase plant materials

and to construct a public green house. Under the conditions of the will, if the city refused these conditions the trust would revert to an alternate beneficiary, Harvard College, and provide scholarships for Providence children.(Prov. Probate Case #6130).

1947 The City of Providence, under the will of Charles H. Smith, conveyed 15 lots of land in the city to the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Included in the transfer was the property on the north side of Public Street and the structure at #669. (Prov. Deed Book 919:313-320). This deed was recorded May 22nd.

1947 In a deed recorded on the 23rd of October, The President and Fellows of Harvard College conveyed the property on Public Street to Charles H. LeLacheure of Providence. The transfer was the result of a decree by the state Superior Court, October 15,1947, entitled "President and Fellows of Harvard College vs. John H. Nolan, Attorney General of the State of R.I., Equity Case No.19471...". (Prov. Deed Book 927:179).

1947 In a deed recorded on the 13th of November, Charles H. LeLacheure of Providence conveyed the property to Frank H. Allen and his wife Betty A. Allen, both of Providence, as joint tenants. The lot conveyed fronted 53.6' on Public Street and contained 7946 sq.feet. (Prov. Deed Book 928:280).

1971 In a deed executed October 1,1969 but not recorded until February 1971, Betty A. Allen, widow of Frank H. Allen, conveyed the property to William E. Fox of Warwick. (Prov. Deed Book 1160:896).

1972 William E. Fox, of Warwick, conveyed the property to Mary J. Angeloni and Claire A. Campbell, both of Providence, as joint tenants. The instrument was a quit claim deed. (Prov. Deed Book 1169:1144).

1978 Claire A. Campbell, a widow of Providence, conveyed the property to Mary E. Gomes of Providence. (Prov. Deed Book 1210:222).

**** For the years between 1938 and 1977 the Providence City Directory indicates the following residents of #669 Public Street:

- 1938-39 Frank H. Allen
Mrs. Esther Silver
- 1940-53 Frank H. Allen
Louis Cutler
- 1954-55 Frank H. Allen
George M. Booth
- 1956-58 Frank H. Allen
Maurice D. Watts
- 1959-60 Mrs. Betty A. Allen
Maurice D. Watts
- 1961-68 Mrs. Betty A. Allen
Mrs. Mary E. Read
- 1969 Mrs. Betty A. Allen also...#665, 667, 668 & 670
William Counahan vacant
- 1970 Mrs. Betty A. Allen also...#665, 667, 668 & 670
George Fox vacant
- 1971 #665, 667, 668, 669 & 670...vacant

1972	no return
1973	Donald Carvalho
1974	Sanchez
1976-77	Frank H. Ward

The dating and attribution of the existing structure at #669 Public Street is based on the following information which has been detailed above:

March 1855	Deed to Miles B. Lawson
June 1855	Mortgage recorded by Miles B. Lawson
Sept. 1856	Mortgage recorded by Miles B. Lawson

The Providence Directories for the years 1855 through 1861 indicating that Miles B. Lawson lived "at Cranston" or "at Elmwood" appear to refer to the house on Public Street, but that is speculation. Although the first Directory listing for the structure is 1869 this is in no way indicative of the age of the structure. It instead reflects the transfer of that part of Elmwood from Cranston to Providence. Once the area is part of the city proper the directories are an accurate reflection of the residents. The 1857 Walling Map of Providence does not include this area of Public Street and is of no help in dating this structure.

The octagon house was introduced by Orson S. Fowler during the 1850's. Fowler's book on the subject, The Octagon House: A Home For All, was published in 1853, and was reprinted by Dover Publications, Inc. in 1973.

Prepared by,
Ann C. Street
April, 1983

PLAT of BENJAMIN ALLEN's LAND SITUATE IN CRANSTON,

Part of the Col. T. Mawney Estate, surveyed and platted by Benoni Lockwood, October 26, 1832, recorded January 2, 1833 in Providence Plat Book 10, page 10, and Card 263 as well as in Cranston Deed Book 13, page 450.

