

Joanna Barnes House  
49 Benefit Street  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-144

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
47-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## JOANNA BARNES HOUSE

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RI,  
4-PROV,  
47-

Address: 49 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County,  
Rhode Island.

Plat 10, Lot 136. In 1847 this property was  
33 Benefit Street. Since 1866 it has been  
49 Benefit Street.

Present Owner: Burnside Corporation, 12 Westminster Street,  
Providence 3, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: The house is being rehabilitated for residential  
use.

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This is a medium large frame house, built before 1814,  
typical of Providence in this period, but with some  
unusual details.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1773 Joseph Whipple sells land to John Jenckes £270  
10s lawful money--"a certain lot of land of 15  
acres neither more or less. Bounded: S by  
Charles Keens; E by Ferry Lane (now Hope Street);  
W by Benefit Street; N by my other lands."---  
Deed Book 20, page 91, in Providence City Hall.
- 1790 John Jencks wills Whipple lot to 7 heirs--David  
Leonard Barnes and wife Joanna draw this lot  
known as the Barnes lot--South side of Jencks  
Street.---Wills Book 7, page 367, in Providence  
City Hall.
- 1798 David L. Barnes, "situated in the Northerly part  
of the town of Providence; E on Benefit Street;  
N on Joseph Jenckes; S on heirs of Charles Keene--  
6 acres, val. \$1100"--no dwelling--Prov. Direct  
tax 1798 - List B. ("This schedule of real estate  
of Providence was undoubtedly made by officials  
appointed by the U. S. Government in connection  
with Direct Tax of Oct. 1, 1798.")

- 1814 Mrs. David L. Barnee...1 dwelling house on the east side of Benefit Street 40' x 38'..wood..2 stories high. One barn 20' x 28'..one woodhouse 16' x 14'. The lot contains about 3/4 acres.---Mss. tax descriptions in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, for the 1814 Providence direct tax to the federal government.
- 1826 "House of Joanna Barnes not quite finished." "Joanna Barnes, widow of David L. Barnes for \$4,000 on a house situated on the E side of Benefit St. in the town of Providence. Said house is built of wood 42' in front x 40' from front to rear with an addition of 18-1/2' x 41' all 2 stories high in front & rear & occupied as a dwelling house & part of the addition as a woodroom. N.B.--The chambers in the addition are not finished tho the floors are laid & the windows cased." Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Co. at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island, #3135 dated 1/10/1826.
- 1866 Edwin J. Nightingale, trustee (replacing Henry A. Rogers, deceased) of Estate of Anna E. Nightingale, wife of Horatio B. Nightingale under trust deed of her then name Anna E. Pratt (daughter of Joanna Barnes) to Henry A. Rogers (Deed Book 120, page 433, in Providence City Hall) & deed from said Henry A. Rogers to me (Deed Book 172, page 366, in Providence City Hall) sell for \$25,000 to Sarah J. S. Durfee, wife of Thomas, a certain lot of land--being lots 1 (with dwelling house), 2, & 3 on plot called "Estate of the late Mrs. Joanna Barnes" platted in 1836 by Benoni Lockwood as shown in Book of Plots #1 Page 30.

This property was taxed to the following persons in the years designated:

- 1866 Sarah J. S. Durfee, wid. Thomas  
1906 Fanny B. Bevy wf Max & Rose Shasset wf Morris  
1912 Fanny B. Bevy wf Max  
1921 Leon Coken & wf Bertha  
1923 Julius Lebovitz & wf May  
1930 Rose Greene  
1936 Maude C. Gross  
1944 Mary M. Frazer  
1956 Wm. O. Moore and wf Febronia  
1958 Burnside Corp.

2. Date of erection: This is apparently the house described in the 1814 tax list as "40'x38'...wood...2 stories..." and, therefore, was built between 1798 and 1814. The note that the house is unfinished in the 1826 Fire Record apparently refers only to the rear wing.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Medium large house, typical of the period, but with some details unusual to Providence (rusticated siding, Greek Fret cornice, elaborate interior cornices, heavy window detail).
2. Condition of fabric: Structurally sound but in poor condition. Many modern features recently removed prior to rehabilitation.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Main block facing west. About 39' (5 bays) wide by 36' deep, two-and-a-half stories high. Small rear wing about 10' deep x 18' wide.
2. Foundations: Front and part of sides: Dressed granite ashlar; other parts: Broken field stone laid random.
3. Wall construction: Rusticated wood siding, simulating stones 18" wide x 6" high on front and sides. Shingled back and rear wing. Heavy timber frame visible at the inside corners of the house; otherwise the structure was not observed, probably stud wall.
4. Porches, stoops: Front entrance porch with Doric columns at the front corners and flat Doric pilasters; entablature similar to roof cornice. Five steps dressed granite; with 12" paving stones laid diagonal. Railing with lattice on both sides.
5. Chimneys: Two inside chimneys.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doors: Plain molded door trim and six panel door, neither apparently original.
  - b. Windows: Double hung wood windows, 6 over 6 light with 10" x 14" panes in apparently original sash. Molded trim with entablature on front with mitered corners. Second floor window trim set below roof cornice and does not interrupt it.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape and covering: Gable roof framed without ridge pole. Roll roofing covering.
  - b. Cornice: Horizontal and raking cornice with cyma recta crown mold and Greek Fret bed mold.
  - c. Dormers: None.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central hall plan, two rooms deep, with secondary stairway in small rear ell. Five rooms on the second floor. Several small rooms and a brick smoke chamber on third floor.
2. Stairways: Open well, L-shaped, open string stair. Stairway wainscoting and step ends, original. Stairway balustrade, rails, newels, and stair from second to third floor are apparently later nineteenth century.
3. Flooring: Later narrow hardwood flooring laid over original floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster. Southwest parlor with apparently later paneling in ceiling.
5. Doorways and doors: Mainly original with molded, mitered trim and six panel doors with molded, slightly raised panels.
6. Trim: Wooden cornice in most rooms - much original trim remains. Stucco cornice on first floor apparently later in two rooms. Hall has flush board wainscoting, chair rail, and reeded cornice.
7. Hardware: Mortise locks; some knobs with evidence of silver plating. Butt hinges.
8. Lighting: Electric
9. Heating: Two fireplaces with wood mantels and square hearth tiles in second floor rear, are possibly original; other mantels are apparently mid-nineteenth century.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house is situated at the southeast corner of an intersection, in a residential area, set back from the street, on a lot up five steps at the front.
2. Enclosures: Retaining wall at the front and part of the side, about 3-1/2" high, plastered over. Lower part stone, upper part concrete block.

3. Walks: Brown sandstone steps. Original, large stone entrance walk; brick walks around house at the street.
4. Landscaping: Entrance walk flanked with two large horse chestnut trees.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
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