

Cyrus Ellis House
31 John Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-232

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
132-

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-232

CYRUS ELLIS HOUSE

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Address: 31 John Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.
Plat 16, Lot 285.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Duncan H. Mauran

Present Use: Dwelling.

Brief Statement
of Significance: This is an example of a two-story frame house with
one brick end wall, built about 1800.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1796 John and Jesse Sabin sell to Richard Harding for \$280 a certain lot of land bounded: N on John Street 40'; E on John and Jesse Sabin (this is before Thayer Street was cut through: S on Christopher Arnold,
- 1797 Richard Harding sells to Cyrus Ellis this same property.
- 1798 U.S. Tax List: R. Harding lot N on John Street 40'; E on John Sabin 125'. Value \$200.
- 1810 Cyrus Ellis sells to Joshua Mauran property bounded: N on John Street; E on Thayer Street; S on Christopher Arnold; W on Joseph Baker....with DWELLING HOUSE and improvements.
- 1824 Fire Record #2548 issued to Joshua Mauran at Thayer and John Streets; Dwelling house, wood with one brick end 36' x 30'...2 stories high with addition 1-1/2 stories 14' x 20'. Joshua Mauran lived here until 1834 when he moved to Power Street.
- 1847 This property was taxed to Robert Aldrich, merchant, who lived here until 1853. Then in
- 1854 it changed ownership, the new owner being Thomas Rhodes, cashier, who resided here for six years.

- 1864 Thomas Rhodes sold the property to Godfrey Work, who sold it to John P. Knowles in
- 1869 The property was described as follows: "a certain lot of land with buildings on the south side of John Street and the west side of Thayer Street. Bounded E by Thayer Street 90'; S by Holmes 62'; W on Green land 90'; N on John Street 65'." John P. Knowles was a Judge in the Superior Court. This was his residence and remained in his family until his widow sold it in
- 1887 Mary H. Knowles, widow of John P. Knowles, to Elizabeth M Johnson, wife of George A. Johnson, blacksmith. The Johnsons lived here until 1898.
- 1898 Elizabeth M. Johnson, widow of George A. Johnson sold this property to Isabella H. Hunter, wife of David...being the same conveyed to her by Mary H. Knowles.
- 1928 Isabella H. Hunter and David Hunter sold the property to Victor Swartz and he in turn in the same year sold it to the John Thayer Company.
- 1929 John Thayer Company sold this property to Katharine George, wife of Robert, bounded: E by Thayer Street 90'; S by Holmes 62'; W on Green land 90'; N on John Street...."it being the same land conveyed to said grantor from Victor Schwartz in 1928." The Georges lived here until 1958.
- 1958 Katharine and Robert George sell the above property to Duncan H. Mauran.

2. Date of erection: Between 1798 and 1810.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
May 1962

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This house, built about 1800, is a two-story, gable-roof frame house with one brick

end wall.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Rectangular main block, 36' (five-bay north front) x 30', two stories; lower two-story rear wing at southeast. Lot slopes down to northeast corner giving partially elevated basement.
2. Foundations: Brick basement walls on stone **foundation**.
3. Wall construction: Clapboards with corner boards. Brick wall on west end of main block.
4. Stoops, etc.: Brownstone ashlar entrance stoop with double flights of stairs; wrought iron railing, a more elaborate example of a typical Providence railing of this period.
5. Chimneys: Three brick chimneys in rear and end walls of main block.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance in center bay of north front. Roman Doric frontis**piece** with flat pilasters, and pediment. Six-panel door with side lights, semicircular top light, and louvered shutters.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Six over six light double hung windows. Ornamental splayed wood lintels on first floor, molded heads of second floor windows under eaves continuous with cornice bed mold. Adjustable louvered shutters.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, asphalt shingles.
 - b. Eaves, cornice: Boxed eaves with simple molded cornice; cornice returned slightly at gable ends.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central-hall plan. Double connected parlors on the west, large parlor (originally a dining room possibly) on east, present dining room behind parlor in rear wing, modern kitchen and pantry in wing behind

dining room. Bedrooms on second floor, two front ones intact, rear rooms partly altered for baths.

2. Stairways: Main stair in entrance hall, L-shape with short leg and winders at the top, open string, open well, sawn scroll step end ornaments, railing with turned newels and balusters apparently later (Greek Revival forms). Enclosed U-shape rear stair.
3. Flooring: Wide board floors through most of the house.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, painted or papered. Wainscoting marked in panels with moldings. Unusual rounded corners in southwest parlor.
5. Doors and doorways: Double sliding doors between west parlors, six-panel doors, raised panels. Simple molded doorways on second floor, four-panel doors.
6. Trim: Various kinds of trim apparently from various periods, on first floor in ceiling cornices, wainscoting, panels under the windows, and mantels. Most second floor trim and mantels in front rooms appear to be original.
7. Lighting: Electric.
8. Heating: Central with radiators.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: House faces north on southwest corner of John and Thayer Streets. House at sidewalk line on north and east, garden on south and west.
2. Enclosures: Open wood fences.
3. Landscaping: Informal garden southeast of house.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
May 1962