

Martha Smith House
35 Benefit Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-143

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
46-

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

MARTHA SMITH HOUSE

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Address: 35 Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.
Plat 9, lot 172.

Present Owner: Burnside, Inc.

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Albert T. Bennet

Present Use: The present occupants, former owners, are moving
from the house which is to be renovated by the
present owner.

Brief Statement
of Significance: This is a medium sized, two-story frame house,
probably built in the mid-nineteenth century
with interesting detail. John Hutchins Cady
considers this house similar to the early
Newport resort architecture of this period.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1849 Thomas L. Halsey sells for \$2,000. to Martha A. Smith wf of Francis, a certain lot of land on E side of Benefit Street, bounded W by Benefit St., N. by lots #2 and 6, E by lot #11. Deed Book 115, page 126 in Providence City Hall.
- 1872 Martha G. Smith sells for \$10,000. to John Metcalf a certain lot of land, Bounded--being lot #1 on "Map of Halsey Street" etc by M. B. Lockwood 1840 Being same lot conveyed to the grantor by deed from T. L. Halsey in 1849. Deed Book 238, Page 77, in Providence City Hall.
- 1891 John Metcalf in 1877 executed to James D. Page mortgage of \$10,000 made by said Metcalf. James D. Page died & Albert W. Page was assigned in his (James') place. And where as Albert W. Page died, Alfred Metcalf was appointed administrator. The property was sold at auction to Mary M. Metcalf, the highest bidder for \$7,500. Deed Book 366, page 148 in Providence City Hall.
- 1897 Mary M. Metcalf, Estate

1906 Thomas J. Meredith & wife Mary M.
Guy Metcalf trustee u/w Mary M. Metcalf sells for \$4,500 to Thomas J. and Mary M. Meredith a certain lot of land with D. H. being the same lot of land conveyed to Mary M. and Alfred Metcalf administrator of Estate of Albert W. Page by deed in 1891. Deed Book 477, page 297, in Providence City Hall.

Property taxed to following:

1939 Mary M. Meredith Widow of Thomas J.
1940 Mary M. Meredith Widow of Thomas J.
1943 Mary M. Meredith Widow of Thomas J. Estate
1943 Walter P. Meredith and Hope M. Skerry
1944 Walter P. Meredith Est. and Hope M. Skerry
1944 Hope M. Skerry
1955 Albert T. Bennet and wife Ida R. Jr.
1960 Burnside Inc.

2. Date of erection: Since this property appreciated in value from \$2,000 in 1849 to \$10,000 in 1872 during the time Martha Smith owned it, the house was apparently built during this interval, probably c. 1850.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
August, 1961.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a medium sized, two-story frame house, probably built in the mid-nineteenth century, with interesting exterior and interior detail.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: This house is L-shaped, rectangular main block 3 bays wide (about 30'), rear kitchen wing.

2. Foundations: Cut granite above grade, fieldstone below grade. Brick cellar partitions.
3. Wall construction: Frame, clapboards.
4. Porches, stoops: Front entrance has small hood with heavy sawn ornament and corner drops characteristic of the period, and four granite steps.
5. Chimneys: One inside chimney in main block on north side, one in rear wing.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Central front door with leaded fan, door with lattice work glazing, wood muntins.
 - b. Windows: Paired narrow windows with cut trim simulating Gothic window label, wood bracket form supports sills.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape: Mansard.
 - b. Cornice: Flattened bracket cornice.
 - c. Dormers: One central dormer each side with paired segmental headed windows.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central hall plan, four rooms on first floor plus kitchen in wing. Second floor similar. Three rooms on third floor.
2. Stairways: Straight run with 90° turn at the top with winders; open well, open string with scroll decorated step ends. Molded rail with turned balusters and newel; back stair in wing.
3. Flooring: Wide board floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: Four panel doors with flat panels. Pilaster trim with mitered corners; on the first floor, the architraves are interrupted below the heads by horizontal sections of molding.
6. Trim: Paneled walls below the windows; plaster cornices on first floor.

7. Hardware: Original on third floor - simple iron. Glass knobs on second floor and on first floor that look original. Brass front door knob.
8. Lighting: Electric - gas chandeliers (unconverted) on first floor.
9. Heating: Two marble mantels: one black in dining room and a gray one above in a bedroom. Iron kitchen stove patented 1859.

D. Site

1. Orientation: House faces west.
2. Enclosures: Rear closed by picket fence, asphalt yard; later shed buildings poor; rough granite retaining wall across front.
3. Walks, driveways: Granite steps, flagstone walk to central entry; asphalt drive at south side of house; brick laid herringbone pattern for sidewalk.
4. Landscaping: Wall hedge and house planting, grass.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
and Antoinette F. Downing
for the Providence Preservation Society
August, 1961.