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Historic Structure Report
on
the RUM SHOP

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Prepared by
Superintendent
Salem Maritime National Historic Site
Salem, Massachusetts

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CHAPTER I

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Prepared by Superintendent H. I. Lessen

NAME AND NUMBER OF BUILDING

Emma Shop, Building No. 6.

APPROVED USE OF STRUCTURE

This structure is currently used to house a concession operation. Architecturally speaking, it coincides with the great period of Salem's foreign trade and thus externally furnishes authentic atmosphere to the Site.

In the future, the building will be furnished and interpreted as typical waterfront commercial establishment

PROVISION FOR OPERATING THE STRUCTURE

Under the present concession permit, the operator is bound to "provide all necessary repairs and improvements as may be assigned hereunder....". He also furnishes all utilities including heat.

The building when restored will be operated with regularly appropriated funds.

PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF COST OF INTENDED IMPROVEMENT

Extend existing heating system to the Run Shop, and install one radiator and two cabinet unit heaters; a circular, thermostatic radiant heat control and transformer relay and necessary wiring to operate same. Estimated cost - \$1,200.

The main purpose of this installation is to remove a potential fire hazard which is inherent with the presence of the heating unit in this structure.

RECOMMENDATION FOR RESEARCH

No research activity should be devoted to this structure in the present or immediate future. The Park Story and two structures, the Custon and Derby Houses, merit higher priority on any research schedule.

When the more significant elements of the research program are completed, an effort should be made to determine the exact origin of the structure, its historical associations and usages.

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL DATA

Prepared by Superintendent H. I. Lessem

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

The Rum Shop has received less research attention than any other structure on this Site. There are several reasons for this neglect. No important historical event or personality is associated with the building. Its past usages have been prosaic and unexciting. Lastly, practically no documentation or written evidence has been uncovered to illuminate its passage through the decades.

In 1937, this building together with the brick Derby House was donated to the National Park Service by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. At that time, the structure was located in front of the western portion of the Derby House alongside the boundary line which separated the Hawkes and the Derby House. As part of the development program of the Site, the building was moved in May, 1938, to a specially prepared foundation on the corner of Palfrey Court and Derby Street. This relocation was based on the opinion that the building had originally occupied this corner site. It is interesting to note that the contractor employed for this operation informed Park officials that he had moved the same building from the same intersection some 25 years earlier.

The chief purpose of this brief survey is, then, to determine whether the Rum Shop now rests on its original Site. A major obstacle in arriving at a conclusion is the fact that the structure on the corner of Derby Street and Palfrey Court always belonged to the owners

of the Derby House. In the various deeds conveying the property, the phrasing mentions a brick structure or residence and surrounding structures. Thus, it is somewhat ironic to observe that, although a complete chain of title to the property has been compiled, the origins of the Rum Shop are still a mystery.

However, certain pertinent information can be extracted from the early Salem directories and atlases. A street map of 1874 shows a structure roughly the size of the Rum Shop on the intersection of Palfrey Court and Derby Street. It carries the street number of 104. The street map of 1883 is most valuable in this respect. The structure on this corner scales out closely to the present dimensions of the Rum Shop. In addition, the symbols on the map indicate that it is a two-story, wooden structure with either a shingle or slate roof (the symbol for roof is very indistinct), and used as a dwelling and saloon. Unfortunately, there is no data on the fenestration of the building. This feature was reserved for the larger more important buildings like the Custom and the Derby House.

The maps including the 1911 edition show no structures in front of the Derby House on the site occupied by the Rum Shop in 1937 when it was turned over to the National Park Service.

The earliest local directory, published in 1837, lists a grocery store operated on 104 Derby Street by a Charles Dexter. From succeeding directories, it is possible to establish a complete account of the occupants and usages on the building.

In 1911, Joseph Kohn purchased the Derby House and other structures on the grounds, and sometime between 1912 and 1920 he moved the building westward from the corner and erected a newer structure in its place. This relocation probably occurred around 1912 if we recall the contractor's remark. In addition in April of that year, George F. Dow, the well-known antiquarian, observed that the Derby House was practically hidden by "two wooden contraptions in front of it."

A study of the available photographic material substantiates the opinions expressed above regarding the original location of the Rum Shop.

Joseph Kohn still resides in Salem. However, he declined to go into details on the removal of the Rum Shop due to a faulty memory. His son, a small boy in 1912, stated that he remembered the relocation of the building to make room for the construction of a new grocery store which his father operated until 1936.

Conclusions.

1. It can be assumed that the building known today as the Rum Shop was located on its present site at least as early as 1837.
2. Several potential sources of information should be studied when they are more accessible to the researcher. These are the Salem assessment and tax records, and the papers of various local insurance companies. Unfortunately, this material has not been catalogued by the Essex Institute where it now reposes in storage.