

House Stories – Albert Currier House – 15-17 Kent Street



As is the case in so much of Newburyport, if you live here; you may pass a non-descript house and never realize what important personage abided in that structure. Here in this case, the exact date of the building of this house is not known except revealed by a central chimney, is timber-framed and was probably built during the dates 1750 to 1800. The architecture is more first-period in construction and is hidden by a 1970's era front porch and additions put on during the 19th and 20th century. Because the origin is uncertain, the appraiser records do a common date assignment reflecting when the city's records began when Newburyport ceased to be a town in 1850.

Probably because it was in the family, the famous Newburyport builder, Albert Currier resided here. The building is located way too close to the Caldwell Distillery and the hustle and bustle of Merrimac Street.

Not trained as an architect but as a general contractor; nevertheless, he has left an important impression on all of us.

He was the builder of City Hall!

You look at this humble home and you ask yourself, "This is where the man who built the massive Globe Steam Mills and the Tannery lived? This is the man who built City Hall and the Immaculate Conception Church and the Central Congregational Church? Who built some lovely brick row houses on Munroe Street for the Mill workers? His brick handiwork in fact is spread all over Newburyport.



The man who was Mayor during a turbulent time just before the Civil War? Who, when the North Church (Central Congregational Church) burned down by the hand of an arsonist, rebuilt the church in just nine months?

His handiwork is felt even today as City Hall does its government business and his mills have been turned into commercial and residential housing. <http://ppreservationist.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/21kentstreet.jpg>

But as his fame as a mason and contractor grew (He was no architect as Greg Colling constantly points out) he ended up becoming quite an extensive landlord – in fact, he bought up the row houses on Monroe he had built and re-rented them out.

He also went on to serve on Beacon Hill as a state representative. To reflect his prominent stature and prosperity, he moved into the Boott Mansion just up the street at 21 Kent Street.

Next time tooling up Kent Street right past Caldwell Corners and on the left, you can gaze on a great man's humble beginnings.

-P. Preservationist
www.ppreservationist.com

References:

J. J. Currier, History of Newburyport 1764-1905, Vol. I and II, reprint, Newburyport, 1977.

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Newburyport Historic District, www.newburyporthistoricdistrict.org, Historic Survey of the National Register of Historic Places, 1984.

"Movin on up", P. Preservationist Blog, March 27th, 2011

Mayors of Newburyport,