

House Stories – 17-19 Bromfield Street – The Silas Lunt House

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The Lunt family is well-established in the Newbury's. Henry Lunt was one of the first settlers that arrived here with Rev. Parker and he established himself a large tract of farm land which he managed with his wife Anna. The Lunt family has a Scandinavian background and had originally come from Northern England near York. That fighting spirit from the days of the Vikings obviously had not been diluted by the time of the American Revolution. Men such as Cutting Lunt fought bravely as privateers or even valiantly with the fledgling navy with John Paul Jones as in Henry Lunt. Captain Macijah Lunt

after the harrowing experiences of being a privateer went on to be one of the most prosperous merchants in Newburyport. The Lunt family grew expansively with like reputations and even had strong branches in Portland, Maine and a presence in small communities along the eastern seaboard. Even recently, the dynamic duo of the late Sylvia and Wilhelmina Lunt were aggressively volunteering at the Historical Society of Old Newbury. Their tireless efforts greatly advanced the prosperity of the Cushing Museum. And of course, on a more pedestrian level, who can't miss stopping at Lunt & Kelly's for that much needed tool for our historic homes or pick up some insurance at the Chase & Lunt offices!

Bromfield Street surrounding this house was largely open to farming nearer Joppa Flats. (The area behind the house was once an entire farm) or to the south was an extensive long building called a Rope Walk. It was in this factory that rope was made for the shipbuilding industry and later during the industrial era for the manufacture of twine. Various members of the Lunt family owned several homes along this street also.

Initially the house was owned by Silas Lunt and the houses designation was 15 South Street. He was a ships carpenter and worked in the various shipyards that lined Newburyport's harbor. He was born August 26th, 1775 and died June 2nd, 1867. It was during this time after he had married Sarah Hoague in 1802, that he built the homestead on South Street. His pedigree though was indisputable. He was the son of that great union of families, the Lunts and the Gerrishes. His father was none other than the daring and dashing Revolutionary War Privateer, Cutting Lunt, whose adventures (and misadventures) were the stuff of legend. Mary his mother came from the Gerrish family whose seafaring and merchant efforts were well-established in Newburyport.

Silas continued to live in the home until near his death when it was sold to Paul G. Lunt who was the owner and operator of the adjacent Twine and Rope Factory. He had obtained the facility from the Amos Pettingell Rope Manufacturing Company. Having some success, he moved further up street to 65 Bromfield and sold the property to Charles W. Lunt, (talk about keeping it in the family!) who worked at the factory as a cordmaker. Charles lived there and when the rope factory closed in 1887, he continued as a night watchman at the N.D. Dodge Mill. He then sold the house to E. F. Fuller close to the turn of the century. By 1906, the rope factory was gone and new houses stood surrounding the now comparatively small structure.

As one of the oldest buildings on South Street (later called Bromfield Street in honor of John Bromfield), it was re-assigned as 11 Bromfield Street and then in 1918 when the city re-distributed the street numbers, it became 17 Bromfield Street. Since then, it has seen a steady growth of newer buildings around it. Even though the architecture is clearly Federalist in its core, the newly-created city assigned, as it so often has for other structures that had an uncertain building date; 1850. It's construction is closer to the 1830's according to the National Register of Historic Places: (www.newburyporthistoricdistrict.org)

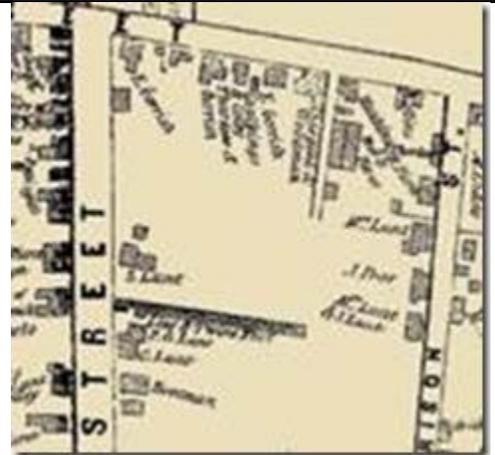
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This important house was originally located in Newbury as the border with Newburyport ran straight down the center of the street. The present border was extended when the city became a city in 1851.

Both buildings around it were constructed in 1880 and the streetscape has been filled in by later late-Victorian styled architecture. When the McIntire map was constructed (above), the Lunt House was clearly marked in its isolated position. In a dimensional map just before the turn of the century, the house is still clearly by itself as well as the rope walk still being in existence. After changing hands many times, it ended up being owned by a Jeffrey D. Stoehr in 1976 and later sold to

Jonathan Woodman the local architect in 1984 for the astounding sum of \$113,000. Now the house, two-family and definitely in the category of affordable housing, if sold in its entirety, is worth approximately \$530,000 but has the potential if upgraded to sell for \$600,000 plus. In 1988, it was converted into the Mae C. Bradshaw Realty Trust.

This house, though small is not only an important contributing structure for the Newburyport Historic District; it also represents one of our ever-shrinking affordable units. The beauty of the district is the juxtaposing of large and small buildings on a streetscape. It is important that such structures be preserved in an effort to make our city livable for all levels of income as well as preserve the legacy of the city's history.



References:

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