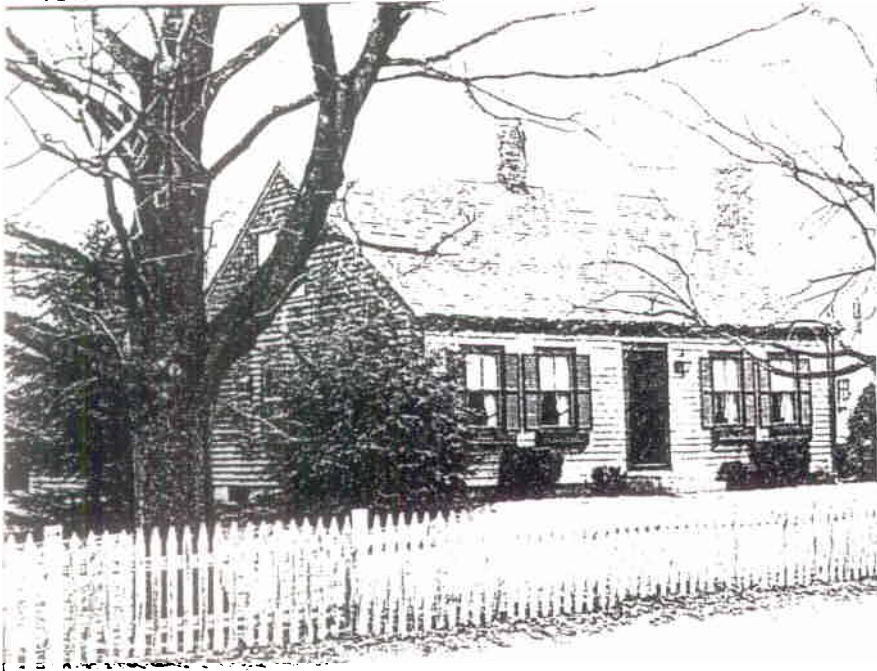


MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION



Rockland

Address 200 Summer Street

Historic Name John Wilkes, Jr. House

Original Residence

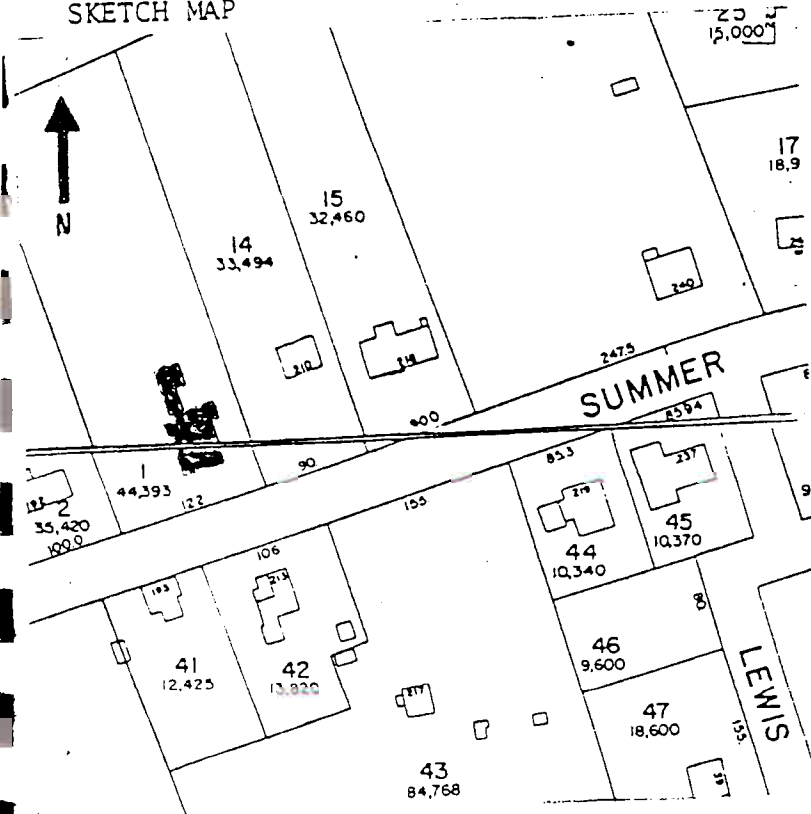
Present Residence

Ownership: Private individual
 Private organization
 Paul and Kathleen Gately

Public

Original owner John Wilkes, Jr.

SKETCH MAP



DESCRIPTION:

Date Circa 1756/1800

Source Campbell, R.R. no. 262

Style Cape Cod/Federal Period

Architect

Exterior wall fabric Shingles

Outbuildings

Major alterations (with dates)

New chimney added on east side.

Moved yes Date C. 1800

Approx. acreage 1

Setting Located on a residential street

on the south end of town. Surrounding

houses mostly modern.

Recorded by Roger G. Reed

Organization Hershenson & Reed Assoc.

Date May 1981

The Research Reporter, No. 262:

Wilkes established a Summer St. dynasty

By MARTHA CAMPBELL

The Oldest House in Rockland,
200 Summer St., ca. 1756.

The 7th oldest house we think is still standing in Rockland was taken apart and moved to its present location where it was set up again about 1800.

But Mr. Octavius Hutchinson, a Wilkes descendant who was born on Summer Street in the early 1850's, wrote that his great-grandfather did this job and rebuilt the house to its exact original specifications, so we can rightly claim it as a bona fide ancient cottage.

The Wilkes story is one of our local epics. The first Thomas arrived in Hingham as a runaway boy, having stowed passage on a ship from England. He came of an upper class family and it was said that he was escaping some trouble in the brutal English school system of the day.

If he had been born about 1707 (or 1703 as some say) and if he came as a teen-ager, it is plain to see that he arrived in Hingham about the 1720's.

When the ship landed in Hingham, the captain (or the mate, in some versions) sold the lad's time, in indenture, to Dr. Ezekiel Hersey to pay for his passage.

On the first day of January 1729, young Thomas who apparently had worked out his contracted time and also amassed some estate under the egis of Dr. Hersey, married Elizabeth Lowe of Hingham, and by the early 1730's, we find him on Pleasant Street in what is now West Hanover.

Thomas (1) and Elizabeth had 9 children, only one of whom was a son. The "1" in parentheses means first generation of the surname in this country. This son was John (2) who was born 4 Jun 1735. All of Thomas's children, except perhaps the first one, were born in Hanover.

The first inkling we have

that the Wilkes family was interested in Abington was when Thomas's land was mentioned as abutting the southern boundary of the southernmost Great Share in the Hatherly Grant in 1754 (Ply. Co. Deeds 44:222).

The instrument whereby he purchased this parcel in what had originated as part of the Cornet Stetson grant was not recorded, or at least cannot be found today.

His property extended from French's river westward to beyond the present Rockland-Abington town line, lying on both sides of present-day Summer street.

The fact that his wife's cousin, Daniel Lane Sr., had recently come to Liberty street may have influenced Thomas Wilkes's decision to move farther westward into Abington. Or perhaps he merely had the opportunity to make a good deal in securing title to this property.

Original Site

When Mr. Wilkes first built his house, it stood on the old "William Ford" road which meandered on a diagonal southwestward from near the corner of Market and Howard, passing the spot where Thomas Stockbridge was to build near what is now 180 Concord, and crossing the French stream where the William Ford house stood, not far from the Richard Estes house which was to be built, and still stands, at 312 Spring St.

Then the road led on across the Hatherly Grant line and on to Mr. Wilkes's farm. There it stopped where his house stood on the northern edge of his land, back behind the big red cottage now numbered 240 Summer St.

Thomas's son, John (2) built the place at 240 sometime before the 1790 census, perhaps in 1787, if that's when Mr. Thomas died, because Cyrus Nash wrote that John raised the frame the day his father died (G-V: 15).

John's new house was located

in front of his father's old place on what was coming to be the more travelled road which we now call Summer St. Summer St. (then called Wilkes Rd.) was accepted as a public way in 1803.

About 1800, when John Jr. (3) had married and wanted a dwelling place for himself, he took a look at his grandfather's old house on the back lot and decided it was still sound and worthy of the move, so he transported it to the new road and set it up where it stands today at 200 Summer St.

Despite Mr. "Tavie" Hutchinson's story which is now in the archives of the Historical Society of Abington, that if one wishes to see the real form of the early cottages in these parts one has only to look at the house now numbered 200, we suspect that young John Jr. modernized a bit and raised the length of his corner posts in order to provide higher ceilings inside the rooms when he was setting this building up again.

It will be noticed that there is considerably more space between the windows and the eave on the facade of this cottage than is seen on the Samuel Greene house or, indeed, on other cottages we will see being built later.

However, we include this place in our line-up of old houses originally built and still standing in Rockland.

Other Wilkes Houses

There are other interesting Wilkes houses in this immediate neighborhood. The little cottage across the street at 193 has always been known as the "Old Maids' House." There were quite a number of unmarried ladies in this family. Of the 8 daughters of Thomas Wilkes, only 3 married, and one of them (Elizabeth) not until 1805 when she was 57, at which time she became the 2nd wife of David

Hersey of Market St. Mr. Hersey was 59.

Three of Mr. Thomas Wilkes's daughters died young. Of the others, Ann died of smallpox in 1789 at the age of 56, while Sarah lived unmarried until 1820 when she died at the age of 75.

The "Old Maids' House," however, was built by John Jr. (3) primarily for his unmarried sisters. There were 4 of them.

We have always felt that proximity was a great aid to romance. There were just too few young men living in the vicinity of this newly opened territory to court and marry the many Wilkes girls. The ones who did marry mostly found husbands from the south part of the town toward what is now Whitman.

The federal census of 1800 shows John (3) Wilkes's family (in addition to his wife and children) to include his 3 older unmarried sisters as well as his two unmarried aunts (one of whom was Elizabeth who had not yet become the 2nd Mrs. David Hersey) plus his younger sister Sarah who was to be the 5th "Old Maid" in the house after Aunt Elizabeth married and moved out.

John Jr. built the little cottage at 193 shortly thereafter in order to relieve the crowded conditions under his own roof, saying that it represented his sisters' share of their father's estate.

If we can list the "Old Maids," they were: Aunt Sarah (2) who died in 1820, aged 75; Caroline (3), died 1836, aged 72; Mary (3) died 1830, aged 64; Elizabeth (3), died 1854, aged 86; and Sarah, whose date of death we do not have at hand. A 6th "Old Maid" also occupied these premises when the niece Matilda (4), daughter of John Jr., lived in this house, dying in 1859 at the age of 53.

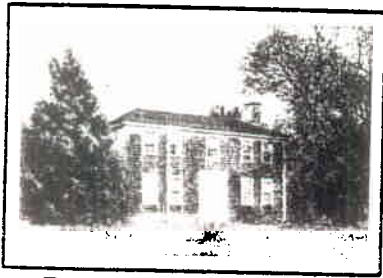
The house at 270 Summer was the home of Preston Wilkes, who never married. The Hoss house at 37 Summer (a chicken ranch until recently) was built by Joseph Wilkes Jr. before he moved to the Centre. His father, Joseph Sr., lived across the street.

The present Briggs house at 213 Summer was the home of Henry and Rebecca Wilkes Hutchinson, parents of Octavius. The house which sits back to the east of this place was their shoe factory. Or vice versa.

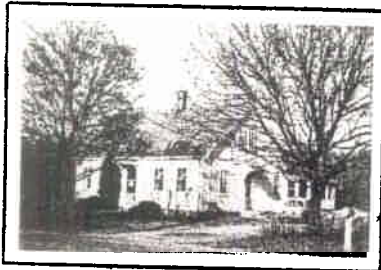
Thomas (1) Wilkes established a dynasty, indeed, when he settled on Summer St., but it was a family which "daughtered out." There are now no local Wilkes descendants bearing the surname except Misses Greta and Ruth Wilkes of Abington Centre, and a number of descendants on the distaff side, notably Mrs. Alice Wilkes Frame who is Abington correspondent for the Brockton Enterprise, and Mrs. Frances Pratt of Walnut St., whose grandmother was a Wilkes.

ROCKLAND

First Census — — —



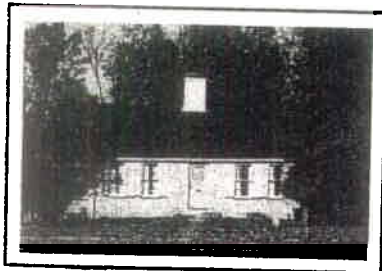
David Ellis, ca. 1775
696 Summer



Thomas Wilkes, 1762
200 Summer



Samuel Reed, 1788
80 Market



Samuel Green, 1745
94 Market



Capt. Thos. Reed, 1778
144 Market

The first census of the United States, taken in 1790, was reprinted by the government in 1907 by popular demand. The part of the town of Old Abington which comprises present-day Rockland is listed below for the benefit of today's history buffs.

EXPLANATION

- Column 1 — Free white males of 16 years and upward, including heads of families.
 Column 2 — Free white males under 16 years.
 Column 3 — Free white females, including heads of families.
 Column 4 — Other free persons.

	1	2	3	4
Ellis, Clark	1	1	3	
Jenkins, Isaiah	2	4	6	
Ellis, Anna		1	2	
Carol, Joseph	1		3	
Stetson, Peleg	2		3	
Stetson, Ephraim	1	3	4	
Stetson, Oliver	1	2	1	
Stetson, Laban	1	1	6	
Stetson, Peleg, Jr.	1	1	5	
Parkman, Daniel	1	2	3	
Hersey, David	1	1	6	
Jenkins, David	2		2	
Wilks, John	3	2	8	
Burrell, Thomas	3		6	
Burrell, Benoni	1	2	2	
Bicknall, Daniel	1	2	8	
Bicknall, Jane			2	
Lane, Charles	1	1	1	
Thaxter, Benjamin	1	2	2	
Shaw, Solomon, Jr.	3	3	3	
Wellet, Thomas	3	1	3	
Reed, Samuel	1	1	2	
Townsend, Ezekiel	3		3	
Bennit, Hannah			2	
Reed, Daniel	2	4	2	
Totman, John	1	1	1	
Townsend, Benjn.	1	4	3	
Pratt, Robert	3	1	2	
Gardner, Benjn., Jur.	1	1	2	
Thomson, Joseph	1		4	
Smith, Jacob, Esqr.	3	2	7	
Thayer, Asa	1	2	3	
Lovell, Caleb	1		4	
Brown, Joseph	1		2	
Burrill, Isaac	1	3	4	

	1	2	3	4
Beals, Benjn.	2	2	6	
Holbrooks, Wm.	2	3	3	
Lovell, Obediah	1	1	2	
Shaw, Abraham	1	2	4	
Burrill, Benjn.	1	2	4	
Hunt, Thomas	2	4	4	
Vining, Benjn.	2	1	3	
White, Jeremiah	2	1	1	
White, John	1	2	3	
Paine, Zebulon	2	2	3	
Paine, Zebulon, Jur.	1	1	2	
Beals, Caleb	1	4	2	
Curtis, Joshua	2	1	1	
Shaw, Ebenezer	2		2	
Clark, Benjn.	1		5	
Chard, Caleb	2		2	
Smith, Nehemiah	2		6	
Pool, Sarah	1	3	3	
Shaw, Joseph	2	3	4	
Gannett, Caleb	1		1	
Lane, Daniel	2	1	2	
Lane, Daniel, Jur.	1	6	2	
Shaw, Nathl.	1	1	2	
Cushing, Zatu	1		1	
Beal, Daniel	1	1	4	
Beal, Noah, Jur.	1	3	3	
Whitten, Jotham	1		6	
Beal, Job	1		3	
Beal, Noah, Jur.	2		1	
Whitten, Eleazer	2	2	2	
Whitten, Thomas	1	1	1	
Vining, Ebed	1	2	2	
Vining, Elisha	1		2	
Vining, Elisha, Jur.	1		2	
Hobart, Elijah	2		2	
Chubbock, David	1	4	1	
Dunbar, Simeon	1	3	1	
Dunbar, Stephen	1		2	
Chubbock, James	1	4	4	
Farrow, Thomas	1	1	2	
Farrow, Leah			1	
Levit, Israel	1		1	
Dammon, Joseph	1	1	2	



Thomas Hunt, Sr., ca. 1770
930 Union



John Pool, ca. 1770
441 Liberty



Daniel Lane, Jr., ca. 1775
306 Liberty



Noah Beal, Jr., ca. 1780
437 E. Water



Joseph Damon, 1753
484 Pond

Some of the town's old houses thought to have been standing by 1790, are shown on these two pages, with approximate dates and names of original residents to the best of our knowledge.