

FORM NO.

79

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

Town DanversAddress 273 Maple St.Historic Name Prince Osborne HouseUse: Present ResidentialOriginal Residential

DESCRIPTION

Date ca. 1700, 1715Source Stylistic AnalysisStyle First PeriodArchitect UnknownExterior Wall Fabric ClapboardsOutbuildings NoneMajor Alterations (with dates) Ell removed,lean-tos added, early 20th c.Condition GoodMoved Yes Date 1915Acreage less than one acreSetting Suburban residential street ofwidely spaced houses of mixed date.Recorded by Anne GradyOrganization Boston UniversityDate February, 1986

30-36A main view

30-36 Summer tie beam, left hand room

30-26 staircase detail, first floor

30-22 staircase, first floor

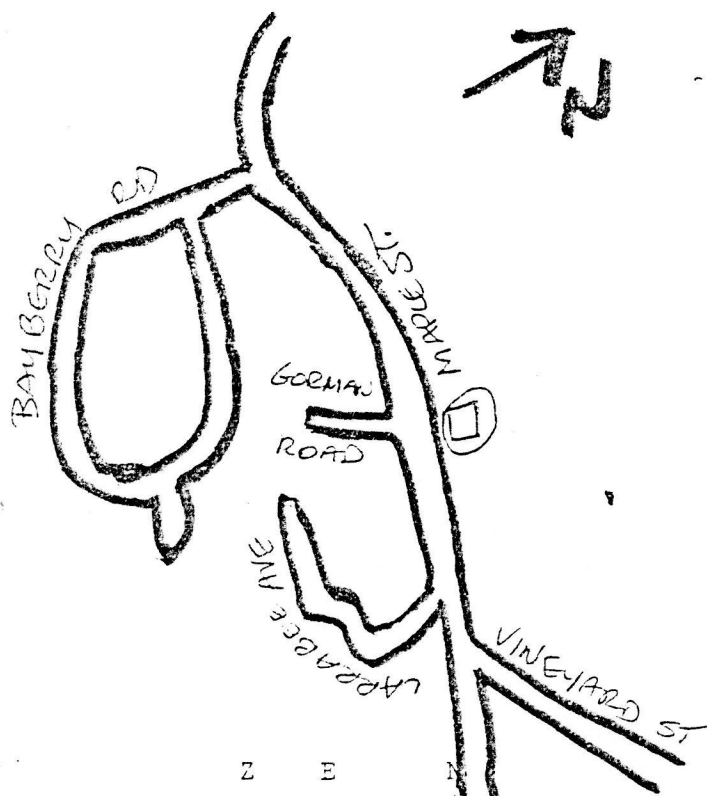
30-21 right-hand room, rear wall

30-23 left hand room

30-32 detail, panelling, rear wall, righthand room

30-30 transverse summer beam and post of front wall

Sketch Map: right hand room

UTM REFERENCE 19 / 339-610 / 4715-120USGS QUADRANGLE SalemSCALE 1.25,000

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: DANVERS	Form No: 79
Property Name: Prince-Osborn House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Prince-Osborne House retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship in its two distinct First Period frames and in the noteworthy transitional finish details present in the later frame. The structure embodies distinctive characteristics of form and construction and therefore meets criterion C. The unusual joining of the frame of a single room with late 17th century chamfering and hewn overhang to the frame of a single cell plan house with finish characteristics of c. 1720 represents an atypical practice. More commonly, the chimney bay of the older structure was retained when buildings were enlarged to a double cell plan. Whether the older left hand rooms are the remains of the original building on the site which lost its chimney bay and received the right hand rooms and chimney bay as an addition, or whether the two frames were joined at a later date is undetermined. The result, however, represents an alternative means of enlarging a First Period structure and a variant of the practise of joining two previously existing frames.

The staircase and the paneling in the right hand room are significant transitional elements dating to c. 1720. The paneling is particularly noteworthy. True paneling, held together by stiles and rails, it goes a step beyond the finish of the Parson Barnard House in the correct rendering of Renaissance-inspired interior panelling in New England. The extreme width of the feathered edges mark the paneling as one of the earliest examples of its type. (See doors in the White-Ellery House of 1711 and fireplace wall paneling of the Paul Revere House for comparable elements). The building also meets criterion D, for the structure is likely to yield more information about the construction and enlargement of First Period buildings if the framing of the left hand rooms and the junction of the two frames is ever available for examination.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Prince-Osborne House is a two and one half story building with steeply pitched roof. The main body of the structure, five bays wide and one room deep, incorporates two distinct First Period frames which together make a symmetrical plan. Atypically, the chimney bay appears to be part of the later, right hand frame. There are additions to the sides and rear: a mid 19th century ell to the right rear, a mid 20th century car shed to the left, a lean-to to the left rear, and a small wing to the right. The whole is enveloped in simple finishes with clapboards on the facade and shingles elsewhere. Fenestration, evenly spaced on the facade, is of simply framed sash windows throughout. The central doorway is unornamented. A small hewn overhang extends across the facade to the left of the doorway, indicating the location of the earlier frame within. The two chimneys which pierce the rear roof slope are 1915 reproductions of earlier chimneys removed before the house was relocated from its earlier site on Summer Street in Danvers. The location of those chimneys represents a reorientation probably in the late 18th century of the fireplaces in the principal rooms from inner wall served by central chimney to rear wall.

State to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: DANVERS	Form No: 79
Property Name: Prince-Osborn House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

MAJOR FIRST PERIOD FEATURES

First Period framing of different character in the left and right portions of the house is visible in all four front rooms and lobby. The presence of rising brace mortises in the left chimney girt and post is the chief reason to believe that the chimney bay was part of the right hand entity, perhaps at one time a single cell structure (rebuilding in the attic and cellar has obliterated evidence of the house's growth typically found in those locations).

In the left hand room, believed to be the earlier side, the longitudinal summer beam is 12 inches wide and has 1 1/2 inch flat chamfers and triangular curved stops. The chimney post is finished with a flat chamfer and taper stop. Joist spacing is relatively narrow, in the 17-18" range. In the left hand chamber, the summer tie beam has 1 3/4" to 2" flat chamfers (stops, if present, are buried in plaster).

The lobby retains a finely crafted staircase of transitional style. Closely spaced turned balusters are set between a molded closed stringer. The newel post is also turned.

In the right hand room, the only exposed original framing member is the front post supporting the transverse summer beam. The post, a simplified version of the molded post head, has a broad bevel at the lower edge of the head and inch wide flat chamfers on the upright corners. The summer beam, replaced in 1944, was given inch wide flat chamfers replicating those on the original beam. The room retains fine transitional super-raised field paneling on the rear wall, very likely relocated from an original position on the inner wall. Four panels, in which the central field projects above the surrounding bolelection, and feather edges are more than two inches wide, are currently mounted horizontally over the rear fireplace. A two panel door with the same super-raised panels is at the right of the fireplace (similar paneling to the left of the fireplace was created in 1944). Pilasters of 18th century construction flank the fireplace. (See significance section for further comment on the paneling and its relocation).

In the right hand chamber, there is a summer tie beam with flat chamfers and a jowled post supporting it. Roof framing was mostly destroyed in a mid-20th century fire, but remnants reveal that an original purlin roof was altered in the 19th century. Common rafters nailed together at the ridge were substituted for the purlins.

LATER SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

In the late 18th century, after the relocation of the fireplaces to the rear wall, three of the four front rooms were given early Federal Period finishes: a simple mantelpiece and boxed beams with crown moldings in the left hand room, and vertical board beaded sheathing in the fireplace walls in the chambers.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: DANVERS	Form No: 79
Property Name: Prince-Osborn House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The previous site of the house was part of the farm owned in the late 17th century by Robert Prince who left it to his two sons in trust to his wife Sarah. Sarah, who eventually married her indentured servant, Alexander Osborne, was accused as a witch and died in prison in 1692. Prince's estate was disputed between Prince and Osborne heirs until 1720. Eldest son James Prince received a partial settlement in 1696 which included a house, however. It is difficult to pinpoint the construction date from available physical evidence, but it is likely that the left hand rooms, if original to the site, were constructed by c. 1690. The settling of the estate in 1720 may have paved the way for the enlargement of the house and its embellishment with distinctive transitional finishes. The house was restored in 1944 with the help of architect Phillip Horton Smith. At that time, this paneling was found lining a back hallway. The paneling was moved to its present location on the basis of the discovery of a cut out for the transverse summer beam which exactly fit. (In addition, one of the priests from St. John's Normal School, which owned the building prior to its move, confirmed that the paneling had been before 1915 on the rear wall of the right hand room). The same paneling used in a vertical position with the two panel door may have been part of the finish of the presumed original fireplace wall abutting the chimney bay and may have been re-used on the rear wall when the chimneys were relocated in the late 18th century. Although there is no way to confirm the original location of the paneling, or even that it was built for the Prince Osborne House, the paneling does match the staircase stylistically in its date and even in the general character of the molding profiles. The original fireplace was almost certainly on the inner wall. Also, the paneling is known to have been in the house before the restoration of 1944. This early and significant element and its history of re-use add to our knowledge of 18th century architectural decoration in the study area.

REFERENCES

- Perley, Sidney. History of Salem. Salem, MA., 1926, v.2. pp. 31-34.
 Bayer, Paul. Salem Possessed. Cambridge, Harvard University Press. 1974, pp. 193-94.
 Upham, Charles W. Salem Witchcraft. New York, Unger Publishing Company, 1969, reprint v.2, pp.17-26.
The Salem Witchcraft Papers. New York, DaCapo, 1977 v.2, pp. 609-613.



main view



Summer tie beam, left-hand room



staircase detail, first floor



staircase, first floor



right-hand room, rear wall

left-hand room



detail, paneling, rear wall, right-hand room



transverse summer beam and post of front wall, right-hand room

DANVERS, TIA
273 Maple Street
Tap 34-021
SCALE: 1"=100'

