

FRONTISPIECE. "COLONEL THOMAS DAWES" attributed to Gilbert Stuart, c. 1806. (Private collection.)

OLD-TIME NEW ENGLAND

*A Quarterly Magazine Devoted to the Ancient Buildings,
Household Furnishings, Domestic Arts, Manners and Customs,
and Minor Antiquities of the New England People*

BULLETIN OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUITIES

Vol. LXVIII, Nos. 1-2

Summer-Fall 1977

Serial Nos. 249-250

Thomas Dawes: Boston's Patriot Architect¹

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One of Boston's most prominent leaders of the Revolution and the Federal Era was Thomas Dawes (1731-1809), eminent patriot architect. Although little recognized today for his significant role in influencing the course of both our political and our architectural history, Dawes was well known in his own time. A "high patriot," Col. Thomas Dawes actively served the public interest in the military; in numerous town offices; and in state governments as representative, senator, councillor, and for a brief period as acting governor. His son, Thomas Dawes, Jr., actually the third by that name, became a Judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts.² Early in his career as a builder, Dawes was considered a "mason" by trade. It is clear, however, that he was capable of architectural draftsmanship by the age of twenty, and was referred to as "architect" in 1790.³

Much of Thomas Dawes's work as a mason-architect was done for town and state governments, as well as other institutions and prominent individuals associated with them. He was highly regarded for his

professional ability in his capacities both as a legislator and a principal agent in the construction of several Boston area landmarks of the period. These two aspects of Dawes's career must be considered together in any study of his life, as a significant portion of his architectural work was undertaken, and much of our knowledge of it gained, as a result of his political activities. The importance of his combined political and architectural achievements is best summarized by the Rev. Joseph Eckley in his eulogy delivered at the Old South Meeting House of which Dawes was Senior Deacon when he died in 1809:

But few persons have been brought into more public view, and for a long course of time sustained a greater variety of offices, than our late respected Brother.

As a native of Boston, he discovered a very earnest attachment to its interest, and

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at an early season of life, bent in his mind, among other things, to the desire of its exterior improvement. From the calling which he pursued, and in which he acted as a principal, he greatly amended the style of architecture; and there is now a considerable number of private, as well as some public edifices in this town and in the vicinity, indebted for their convenience and beauty to his skill: The American Academy of Arts and Sciences was well justified in making him one of its members.⁴

Certainly a man of his eminence deserves recognition, and a study of Dawes's life reveals that his architecture and his politics were closely interrelated. In order to fully understand the nature of his buildings, therefore, we must delve as well into his background and peripheral activities—all of which bear upon the current focus of this discussion, Dawes's domestic buildings.

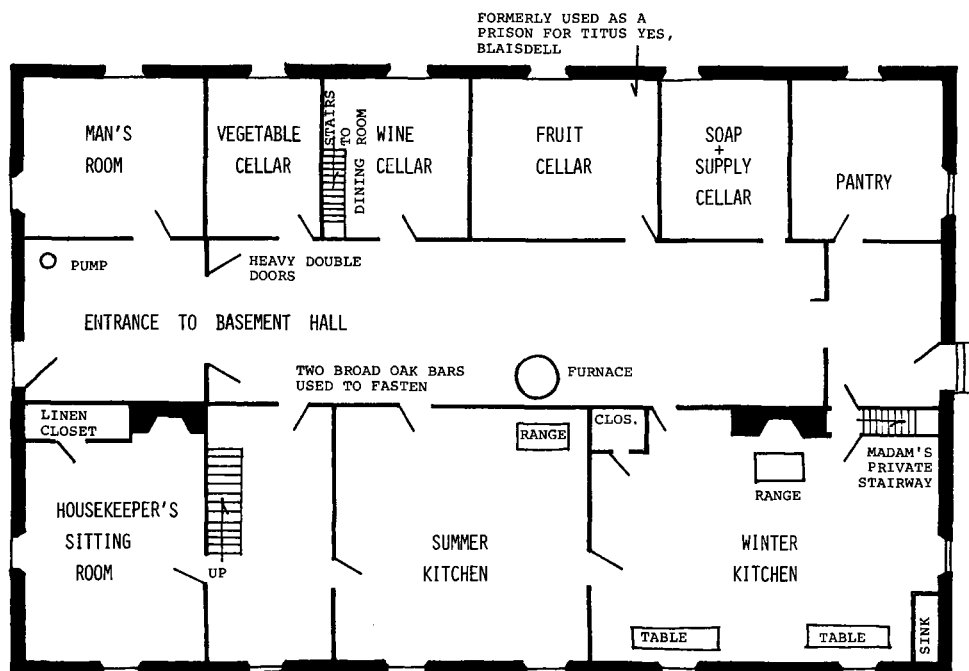
In Thomas Dawes's family, the trade of building was in a sense inherited since he was in the fifth generation of an American clan consisting of masons, painters, and housewrights, all descending from his seventeenth-century immigrant ancestor, mason William Dawes.⁵ As a youth, Dawes (known as Thomas, Junior, until the death of his father) may well have been exposed to architectural design and pattern books belonging to his forebears or contemporary family members. His own well equipped architectural library, a significant portion of which survives at the Boston Athenaeum, contains several important early works. Among these are Andrea Palladio's *First Book of Architecture* (trans. Godfrey Richards, 6th ed.), published in 1700, *The Builder's Dictionary and Architect's Companion* (1734), James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* (1739), William Salmon's *Palladio Londoniensis or The London Art of Building* (1748), and finally, Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (5 vols, 1715-71). Many of these were published before Dawes had reached the age of

majority and may have influenced him from an early age. Dawes probably obtained some of these volumes later in life, particularly Campbell's work. However, by age twenty he had acquired his *Builder's Dictionary*, which found its way into the collection of Charles Bulfinch and is inscribed "Thomas Dawes. Jun., 1751."⁶ We sense from comparison with Dawes's known commissions that he apparently favored his Gibbs *Book of Architecture* and Salmon's *Palladio Londoniensis*, though in his own portrait, painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1806, he is shown holding "Palladio" (Frontispiece).

Certainly Dawes had acquired "a perfectly respectable drafting ability" by the age of twenty-one as suggested by a recently discovered 1751 architectural engraving of the Old State House (rebuilt in 1748) inscribed "T. Dawes, Jun. del."⁷ How Dawes arrived at this level of ability before the age of twenty-one years is uncertain, for aside from the knowledge of his books, we must rely upon somewhat circumstantial evidence regarding his early training—in both building and design. Nevertheless, we know from Dawes's own account that Dawes worked with prominent and influential members of his profession in the fields of both architecture and government from the beginning.

For our knowledge of Dawes's earliest work in building construction on the Shirley-Eustis House in Roxbury (c. 1746-47), we are indebted to a nineteenth-century writer who recalls that:

The house of Dr. Eustis was an elegant one. It was built by Governor Shirley, as Col. Dawes, The Judge's father, and who was one of Governor Hancock's Councilors told me, 'for', said he, 'I was one of the masons that helped to build it; and you will see if you go into the stone basement story, a hall or entry running through its centre, kitchens and other necessary offices on one side, and the servant's rooms on the other . . . There was an extensive lawn in



BASEMENT 1819-21-1855 THE SHIRLEY-EUSTIS HOUSE
DUDLEY STREET FRONT

FIG. 1. BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN OF THE SHIRLEY-EUSTIS HOUSE BEFORE 1867. Original drawn by Miss A. L. Blaisdell from memory and notes in 1922. (SPNEA Archives: re-drawn from the original by the author.)

front of the house, and the whole establishment made then, as it does now, a most respectable appearance, suitable for a mansion of a governor.⁸

Thomas Dawes's work on this house, with its design attributed to Peter Harrison, the well-known architect of Newport, R.I., undoubtedly made a great impression on the young mason.⁹ Dawes's description of the basement plan of Governor Shirley's house lends credence to the layout of this floor as shown in a sketch by Miss A. L. Blaisdell in the SPNEA Collection (Fig. 1). Her plan details this area at the time of Madam Caroline Eustis (b. 1781, d. 1865), prior to the moving of the house thirty feet from its original location and consequent loss of the basement story in 1867.¹⁰

Changes were also made in the exterior of the house, reportedly at the time of its ownership by Governor Eustis (b. 1753, d. 1825). We may get an accurate picture of the house as it originally appeared, however, by combining our knowledge of the surviving building with that provided by the Reverend Ezra Stiles of Yale, who sketched "Gov. Shirley's seat" in 1763 (Figs. 2 and 3). As shown in the reconstructed elevation based on the Stiles sketch, the house had a monumental facade with its "Front rustic, with Double Doric Pilasters," and a full Doric entablature similar to that on Peter Harrison's Christ Church in Cambridge (1759). With its imposing entrance, heavy quoins and unusual fenestration, the Governor's house would



FIG. 2. "GOV. SHIRLEY'S SEAT AT DORCHESTER" from *Ezra Stiles Itineraries*, Vol. I, page 123. (Beineke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.)

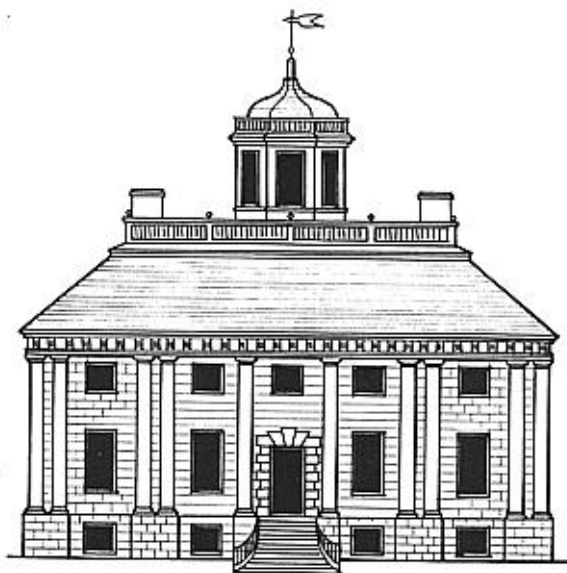


FIG. 3. FRONT ELEVATION OF THE SHIRLEY-EUSTIS HOUSE BEFORE REMODELLING. Based on measured drawings by Bastille-Neiley, Architects, and other surviving evidence. (Drawing by the author.)

greatly influence Dawes. His work with the provincial governor served as an antecedent to a future endeavor. He also worked on the Governor's Province House in 1755 and later collaborated with Gov. Francis Bernard, "a very ingenious architect," on the reconstruction of Harvard Hall after its destruction by fire in 1764.¹¹

One of the most intriguing of Thomas Dawes's early works is undoubtedly his own house, and we are indebted to his military and political activities, his intimate friends, and his arch enemies for our rather limited knowledge of this important structure. The house was built about 1756-60 and incorporated some unusual features, which satisfied Dawes's desire for a noble structure and at the same time served as a forum for the discussion of radical patriot views. Dawes was a member of the Provincial Militia when the budding revolutionary John Adams recorded in February 1763 that Thomas Dawes held secret meetings of "a clique of intriguers" in his new house.

This day learned that the Caucus Club meets at certain times in the Garret of Tom Dawes, the adjutant of the Boston Regiment. He has a large House, and he has a movable partition in his Garret, which he takes down, and the whole Club meets in one Room. There they smoke tobacco 'til you cannot see from one end of the garret to the other. There they drink flip, I suppose, and there they choose a moderator who puts questions to the vote regularly; and selectmen, assessors, collectors, wardens, firewards, and representatives are regularly chosen before they are chosen in the town. Uncle Fairfield, Story, Rud-dock, Adams, Cooper, and a 'rudis indigestague moles' are members. They send committees to wait on the Merchant's Club, to propose and join in the choice of men and measures.¹²

This Caucus Club was the beginning of our modern political institution, the caucus, which seems to have had its origin

in the attic of Dawes's house.¹³

Another contemporary description published about 1766 was written by Samuel Waterhouse, a notorious tory and obvious enemy of Thomas Dawes. The thinly-disguised tract entitled *Proposals for Printing by Subscription the History of Adjutant Trowel* [Thomas Dawes] and *Bluster* [James Otis] corroborates Adams's description and adds further insight into Dawes's peripheral affairs. Waterhouse suggests that his history: "BEGINS WITH ADJUTANT TROWEL'S military character . . . how by a little smattering in practical fortification, his first employment was to build and repair forts and garrisons . . ." He enlarges upon Dawes's early success as a popular leader of resistance against British authority alleging that:

He assembles a number of Malcontents at a large tent, prepared by him for that purpose, to endeavor to obtain votes, in order to carry a favorite point at the next General Court martial, which, partly by stratagem, he effects . . . he builds himself a stately house, superior to the General's with a large hall in the upper story, appropriated to the same use as his large tent.¹⁴

James Otis, the firebrand of the Revolution whose oratory is credited with an important role in inciting the rebellion, apparently owed a significant debt to Dawes. According to Waterhouse, "Bluster, disappointed in his ambition . . . Finding every other method fail, he applies to Trowel—is admitted to his junto, or nocturnal assembly—he is looked upon . . . as a fit person to represent them. He [Otis] becomes the darling of Trowel's Junto and presides at the head of their affairs."¹⁵ Certainly, the importance of Thomas Dawes's "stately house" with its "large hall in the upper story," and its "nocturnal assembly," as the breeding ground of patriot ideology is apparent in light of the

events which led up to the American Revolution.

Other sources give us some further information regarding both the nature of the secret club and the appearance of Dawes's own house. For a few further clues, we must again turn to political satire, this time to issues of the *Massachusetts Magazine* of 1789 through 1791. From it, we learn that Dawes's Club, which possibly evolved into that known as the "Long Room Club," still flourished even after the Revolution. In 1789 we have a well disguised "Description of a Club," with "Great Tom" as its leader. This tract records that members met every Monday evening in each other's houses for the alleged purpose of selecting Representatives, Senators, and other officials. In reaction to this rather unsympathetic description, a reply was published, apparently written by one of the Club's members. The writer (possibly Dawes) asserts that "we have one trader among us, and a few mechanics," and that "we sometimes propose methods and lay plans for making repairs in roads, bridges, or buildings, or for assisting one another in some particular undertaking . . ." ¹⁶ Much of Dawes's work in the fields of architecture and construction undoubtedly came as a result of these meetings.

In 1791, an anonymous writer takes his readers on a tour of the home of "Col. Charles Admirabilis." The writer asserts that "I believe every person who is much acquainted with what passes in this part of the world has at least heard of Colonel Charles Admirabilis." ¹⁷ From the veiled description that follows, one can infer that this was very likely Colonel Thomas Dawes, who had completed a monumental portico at the Old State House in 1789 in honor of George Washington's visit to Boston; this was in collaboration with his apparent protégé, Charles Bulfinch, who designed the adjoining triumphal arch for the occasion. ¹⁸

In the "Humorous Description of a Visit to Col. Charles Admirabilis" the visitor records that:

. . . his library room was called the "Attic Retirement" . . . ; though he did not specifically point out any elegant traits of architecture in his mansion, there was, nevertheless, not a room in it, on which he did not confer some fascinating title. His parlour went by the name of 'Prospect Hall,' his dining room, which lay back of the hall, the 'Festive Bower' After dinner I was admitted into the 'Attic Retirement,' in which I was not long detained by an examination of the books and curiosities which belonged to that apartment ¹⁹



FIG. 4. DESK AND BOOKCASE OWNED BY COLONEL THOMAS DAWES. Boston, 1765-85. Mahogany; H. 93 in., W. 40 in., D. 21½ in. (B.69.139: Photograph courtesy of the Bayou Bend Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.)



FIG. 5. "THOMAS DAWES" by Joseph Badger, c. 1763. (Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; on loan from the heirs of Ellen Minot Fuller.)

Some of the furnishings of this interesting home have survived to this day. These include Thomas Dawes's own desk and bookcase, an outstanding piece of Massachusetts Chippendale furniture which Dawes prized so highly that he wrote his name upon the interior of every drawer in order to foil any potential thieves (Fig. 4).

Another delightful work is the portrait of Judge Thomas Dawes, Jr. as a child, painted by Joseph Badger c. 1763 (Fig. 5).

Other documentary evidence gives further insight into the probable exterior appearance of Dawes's house. It stood south of Fort Hill on Purchase Street at the head of Dawes's wharf between Atkinson

and Summer Streets on property acquired in 1756 from John Hood (Fig. 6).²⁰ According to the 1798 *Direct Tax* records, the house was a "wood, brick, and rough cast dwelling . . . 1490 square feet; 2 stories, 29 windows, value, \$5,000."²¹ This house was described by Dawes in his will of 1807, in which he left it to his wife Hannah, as being the "Mansion House in Purchase Street in said Boston which we have lived in for more than fifty years with its lot of land that I bought of John Hood."²²

From our knowledge of his other work, Dawes clearly favored a Palladian, central pedimented entrance pavilion with flanking wings, utilized as early as 1762 on Hollis Hall at Harvard, later in 1770 on his drawing of proposed stores for Old South Meeting House property, and again in 1784 on the Massachusetts Bank. It thus seems likely that Dawes might use a prototype

from his favorite Gibbs *Book of Architecture* as a model for his house. The most akin to his known works are Gibbs's Plates 65 and 66, showing two similar two-story houses "for a gentleman" (Fig. 7). The pedimented entrance pavilion of Plate 66 with its oculus window and dual stairway is a feature utilized by Dawes in his other designs. Its quoins lend themselves to the medium of roughcast, a material with which he was familiar, as an article written by Dawes in the *Boston Magazine* of 1784 makes clear. In this article, entitled "On Making Mortar," Dawes gives "some account of the mortar made use of for covering the outside of houses (commonly known by the name of 'rough cast') . . . , noting that, "this mortar . . . may be jointed and drawn, so as to imitate stonework."²³ In addition, the approximate size of the houses, number of windows, and plan of

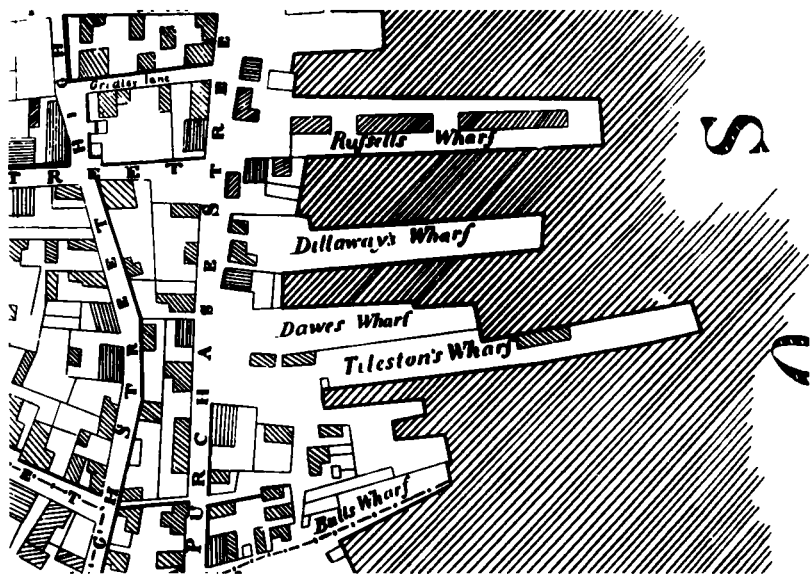


FIG. 6. DETAIL OF FORT HILL VICINITY SHOWING DAWES WHARF. From J. G. Hales, "Map of Boston in the State of Massachusetts" (Boston, 1814: SPNEA Archives).

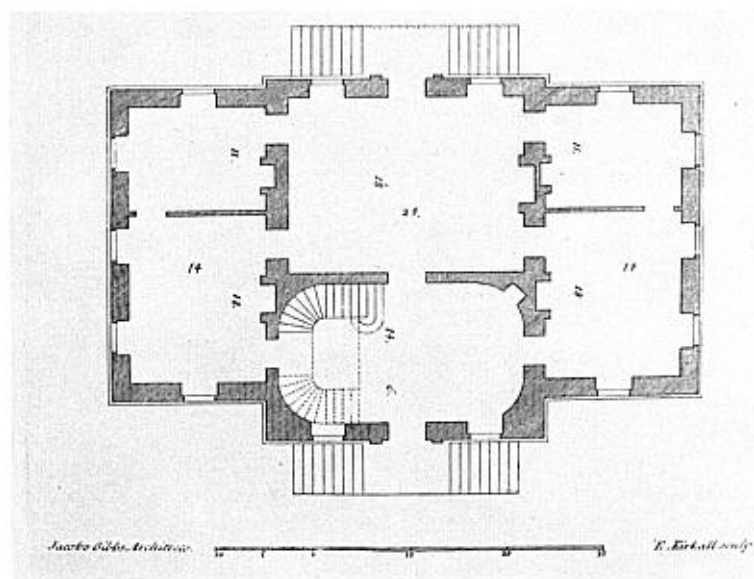
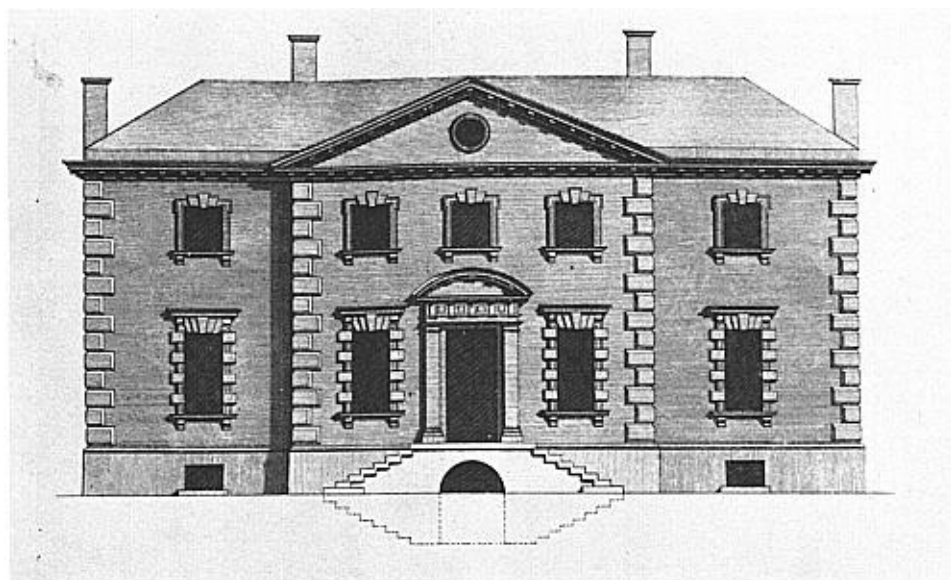


FIG. 7. "HOUSE FOR A GENTLEMAN," Plate 65; plan, Plate 66. From James Gibbs, *Book of Architecture* (London, 1739: SPNEA Archives).



FIG. 8. VASSALL-LONGFELLOW HOUSE, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Built in 1759 for Major John Vassall. (SPNEA Archives.)

Plate 66 with its "Hall . . . with Dining Room Beyond," all dovetail with the previously gathered evidence. Colonel Dawes's house may have rivalled in scale and elegance one of the more famous surviving Palladian dwellings of the period, Major John Vassall's house in Cambridge, built in 1759 (Fig. 8).

Of Dawes's other domestic work up to the end of the Revolution, we have only fragmentary knowledge. Bills presented to Thomas March's estate in the 1750s and 60s suggest he did work for March, also a mason, who lived nearby on Atkinson Street. These bills were "for work and stuff done at the late Mr. Thomas March House in Atkinson Street" from 1752-63 including "repairing sd. March House," as well as "for work done at the house where Mr. Nathaniel Glover lives and for 20 cart load of dirt laid on the Wharff."²⁴ Among the papers of Henry Knox at the Massachu-

setts Historical Society are some additional bills and receipts relating to Dawes's domestic work of the same period; some, such as that at the Province House, were charged to the provincial government.

The Knox papers include documents indicating the stature of Dawes's clients. Among correspondence are several masons' bills from Thomas Dawes to the "Honorable Thomas Flucker, Esq.," Secretary of the Province under Governor Hutchinson. These bills were for sundry work "done for Admiral Montague's house" in 1771-72. The work consisted of "Repairing the Battlements: pointing top of the house" using "Brookline Bricks." In Dawes's articles for *Boston Magazine* in 1784, "On Making Bricks" and "On Making Mortar," he mentions a building erected in 1764 that was "esteemed as good brick work as any in the metropolis" and that "the bricks for this building were taken

out of a kiln made in Brookline . . . ,” thus indicating a probable preference for this source. In addition to “whitewashing” and other work on the cellar and fireplaces, a charge was made for “putting a window over the front door.” Additional work of a similar nature is recorded in a “Memo of Work & Stuff done at His Excellency Admiral Graves House by Thomas Dawes,” dated July 1774. This work included repairs to chimnies, the kitchen, oven, and hearth using “Dutch tiles,” plaster, paint, and paper.²⁵ Reportedly, Admiral Thomas Graves of the fleet “took up his residence at the southeast corner of Pearl and High Streets.”²⁶

Dawes was active in work for the Provincial Government and in military construction at this time. During the 1750s he worked on the Province Hospital at Rainsford Island, Castle William, The Court House (Old State House), and the Light House. In 1767 John Rowe records that “I was called upon by Capt. Dawes to view the land by the Fortification.”²⁷ By the time the Revolution began, Dawes had attained the rank of major and was in command of the Boston Grenadiers Company which was described in 1872 as “composed of mechanics and professional men, selected with regard to their height and martial bearing, no member being under five feet-ten inches, and many six feet in height.” Reportedly “Dawes was an officer of activity and address, and had exerted himself to bring the militia to a high standard of excellence.” Lieutenants who served under Dawes and were of later significance were Henry Knox and his intimate friend Joseph Pierce, Dawes’s son-in-law. Col. Knox was credited, along with General Putnam, for laying out “Putnam’s impregnable fortress” in 1775 on Cobble Hill, Charlestown.²⁸ Later, this was to become the site of Joseph Barrell’s mansion designed by Bulfinch, and again re-

modelled as McLean Hospital by him in 1817-18.²⁹ Dawes’s major undertaking during the war was the new U.S. armory at Springfield, begun in 1777 at the order of the Continental Congress.³⁰

Apparently Thomas Dawes was adept at working for his royalist clients while simultaneously supporting the growing cause of the patriots in secret. During the tense period before the war, when he counted the two Admirals of the unwelcome British Fleet among his clients, he was listed among the patriot diners at the “Liberty Tree” in Dorchester in 1769. By the time of the British occupation, “he took so conspicuous a part in the early scenes of the Revolution as to draw upon himself the anger of the Royalists; and his house in Purchase Street was sacked by the British Troops before they left Boston.”³¹

Dawes’s achievements as an architect-builder prior to the Revolution culminated in his design and construction of Brattle Street Church in 1772. His known work thereafter seems to center around alterations to public and commercial buildings such as the Old State House, the Old South Meeting House, and the Massachusetts Bank of 1784. Despite a preoccupation with his political and business interests, Dawes’s name still may be linked as mason, architect or agent to certain other building projects, often along with that of Charles Bulfinch. He was certainly involved with a number of other public edifices and monuments as well as some domestic buildings, probably including a house for his own son, Judge Thomas Dawes, Jr.

There is ample evidence that Thomas Dawes continued his involvement in architecture and building construction even after 1789 when Charles Bulfinch rose to prominence as Boston’s leading architect. The earliest of Bulfinch’s houses suggests the influence of Thomas Dawes, with the

Gibbsian projecting central entrance pavilion with its pediment and old fashioned roof balustrade surrounding a "widow's walk." These features appear on Bulfinch's elevations of the John Joy house (1791) and the Joseph Coolidge, Sr., house built 1791-2 (Fig. 9). Although no evidence has yet been found to connect Dawes's name to these projects, he is mentioned thereafter in relation to several of Bulfinch's other projects.³²

The relationship between the two men may not have remained entirely amicable, as attested by a newspaper advertisement in April, 1792, placed at the time of Dawes's running for a senate seat. The mention of the soon-to-be-built Tontine Crescent, a speculative venture denied incorporation by the Massachusetts General

Court which eventually led to Bulfinch's financial ruin, is perhaps significant:

At this time when you are particularly interested by the New Valuation which is to be taken, let me call on you to exert yourselves against the designs of a certain class of Speculators, who, feeling themselves disappointed by the Tontine's not being incorporated, are endeavoring to make an alteration in the SENATORS of the County, and to urge you to take no list where the name of the Hon. THOMAS DAWES, Esq. is inserted. Be assured, he is a gentleman of known honor, integrity, and influence;—that he has on all occasions proved himself the friend and edifier of the town, and, that from his knowledge, not only of the property of this, but of ALL the towns in the Commonwealth, his election is of the highest importance to us at this time.

Nestor Nonside³³

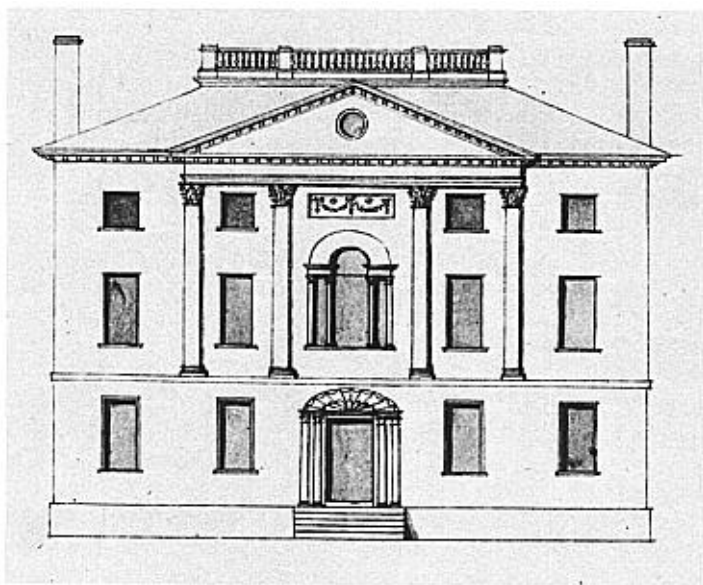


FIG. 9. ELEVATION OF THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH COOLIDGE, SR., Cambridge (Corner of Bowdoin) Street, Boston. From an original drawing by Charles Bulfinch, 1792. (Photograph courtesy of The New York Public Library; Prints Division; I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection; Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.)

These political activities provide interesting connections among Dawes, Bulfinch, and a client. Joseph Barrell's first house was in the area between the Common and old Fort Hill, and the pasture and garden of his property became the site of the Tontine Crescent in 1793-4. Barrell, "thinking himself unreasonably taxed by the town fathers . . . bought another estate in Charlestown [now Somerville], and there gratified his love of show by building a finer house and laying out larger gardens and pleasure grounds."³⁴ The drawings for this new house survive in Bulfinch's collection. While in Barrell's employment from 1782 to 1785 Charles Bulfinch recorded that "My time passed very idly and I was at leisure to cultivate a taste for Architecture, which was encouraged by attending to Mr. Barrell's improvement of his estate and on our dwelling house and the houses of some friends, all of which had become exceedingly dilapidated during the war."³⁵ Barrell was also undoubtedly an acquaintance as well as a neighbor of Dawes, since not only were they together on a town committee in 1777 and another of the Musical Society in 1786, but Joseph Barrell was also a depositor at the Massachusetts Bank, of which Dawes was a director.³⁶ One may surmise that Bulfinch met Dawes while in Barrell's employment, although the extent of their mutual involvement in the construction of the Barrell Mansion remains unknown.

Dawes's name is mentioned in reference to another house ascribed to Bulfinch, the General Henry Knox Mansion, "Montpelier," in Thomaston, Maine. According to Bulfinch's biographer, Harold Kirker, "although no documentation has yet been found linking Bulfinch with Montpelier, it is probable that he furnished the plans referred to in Knox's letter of April 25, 1793." Montpelier is described as "a scaled down version of the Barrell Mansion" with much of the work prefabricated

in Boston. Documentation does exist, however, to prove that it was for his military comrade, Gen. Knox, that "Thomas Dawes, Bulfinch's earlier collaborator, was consulted on the construction of a stone basement" for Montpelier.³⁷ As communicated by Knox's agent, Henry Jackson, to him in a letter in the spring of 1794:

My object is to build the house plain & solid, I have therefore consulted Col. Dawes & some other principle masons on the subject of the basement story who all agree that it must be of the common stone of that country laid in mortar even with the ground, on that course of hammered Braintree Stone a foot thick all round the house, and then five feet of brickwork two bricks thick

I expect Capt. Robinson to return any hour, who will take down with him all the hewn Braintree stone for the basement story, which are now ready for him on Tileston's Wharf³⁸

Tileston's Wharf was opposite Thomas Dawes's house on Purchase Street, and voluminous correspondence between Knox and Dawes's son-in-law Joseph Pierce, who lived a short way up the street, may further reveal his involvement in this project.

Thomas Dawes is mentioned in relation to other Bulfinch-associated projects, some of which include the new State House in Boston (1795-7), the Almshouse on Leverett Street (1799-1801), Stoughton Hall at Harvard (1804), and Faneuil Hall (1806). Thus, it is not surprising to find some familiar features in Dawes's brick house erected for his son Judge Thomas Dawes at the head of his wharf on the southeast side of Purchase Street after the fire of 1794 (Fig 10). The house apparently did not exist prior to the fire of 1794 as documented by Jeremy Belknap's sketch plan of the area which shows all of the Dawes-owned houses along Purchase

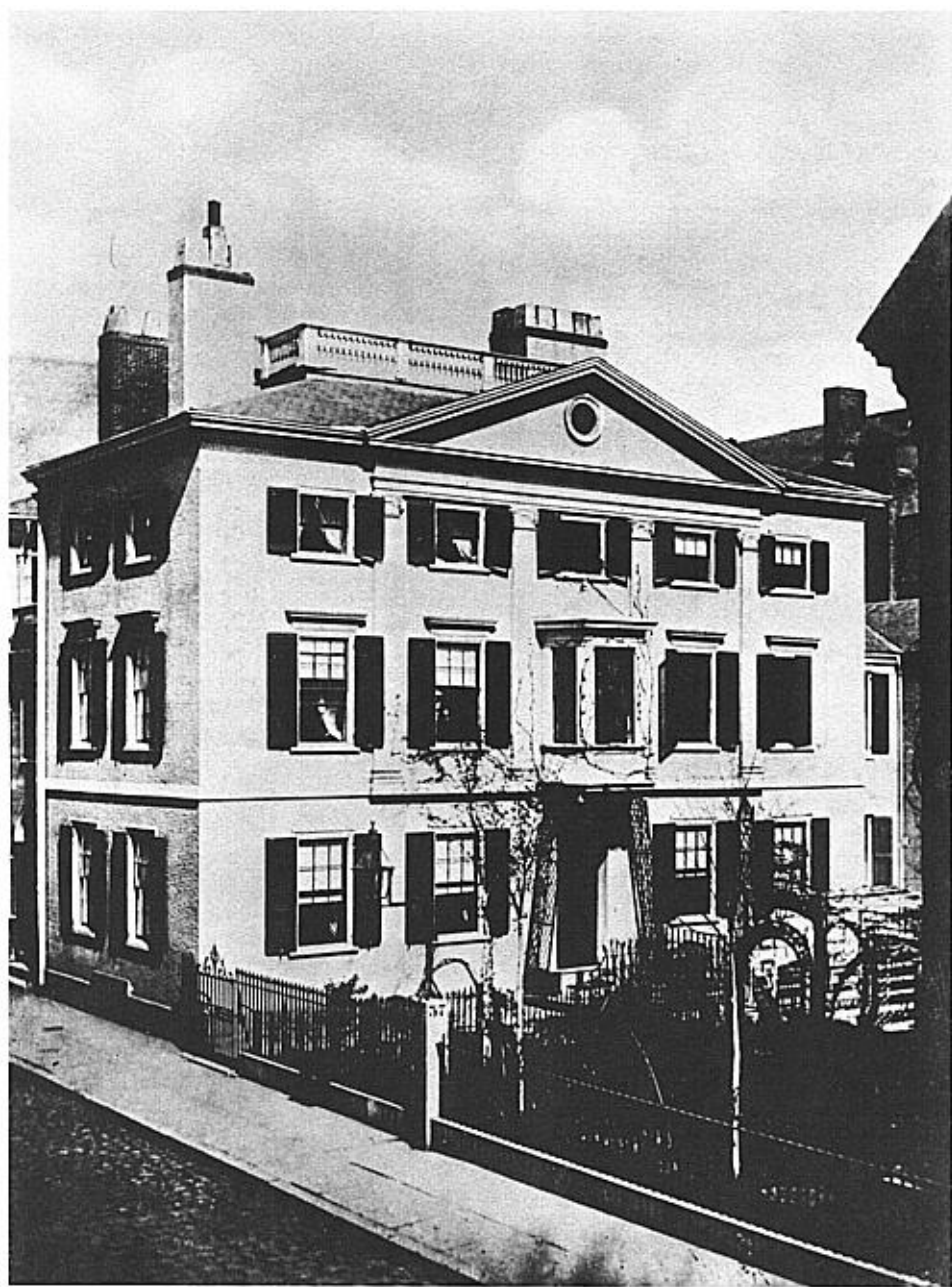


FIG. 10. HOUSE OF JUDGE THOMAS DAWES, JR., Purchase Street, Boston, c. 1795. Photograph taken before the fire of 1872. (SPNEA Archives.)

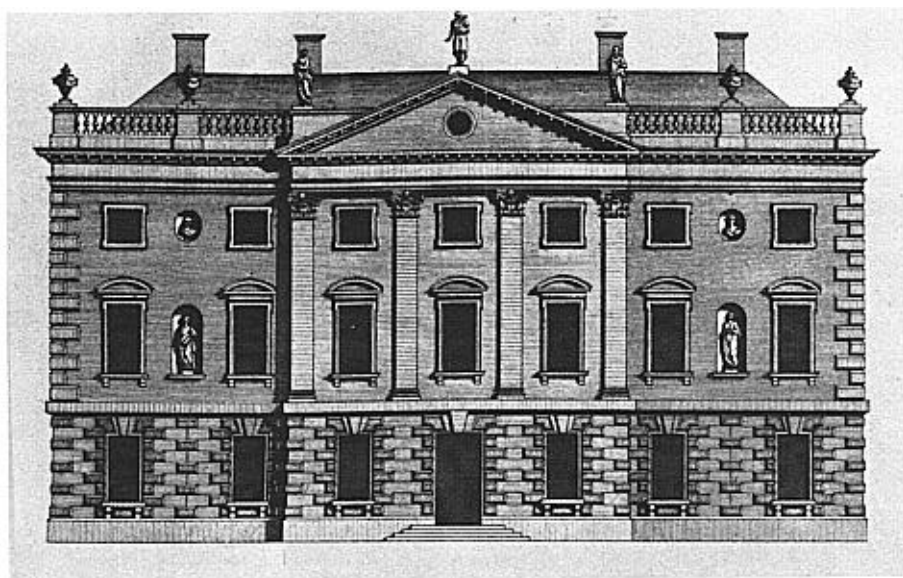


FIG. 11. "DESIGN MADE FOR A PERSON OF QUALITY," Plate 54. From James Gibbs, *Book of Architecture* (London, 1739: SPNEA Archives.)

Street.³⁹ The house (visualized without its oriel window, undoubtedly a later addition) is clearly reminiscent of Bulfinch's Joseph Coolidge, Sr., house of 1792, with other features similar to its contemporary, the house of Joseph Coolidge, Jr. (1795), also by Bulfinch.⁴⁰ However, Dawes's new house much resembles a plate in his own book, Gibbs *Book of Architecture*, Plate 54, "Plan and Front of a Design Made for a person of Quality" (Fig. 11). Certainly, Thomas Dawes was capable of producing this house himself, and one is led to wonder the extent of Dawes's influence on Bulfinch and vice versa.

Judge Thomas Dawes, Jr., like his father, had his portrait painted in 1806 by Gilbert Stuart. His house was described in the 1798 *Direct Tax* as "Thomas Dawes, Sen'r., owner; Thomas Dawes, Jr., occupier; brick dwelling: East on Dock . . . ,

house 897 square feet; 3 stories, 31 windows"; and, like his father's house, "Value \$5,000."⁴¹ In 1815, this property is referred to as "Dawes wharf and Buildings thereon including the Brick House occupied by Samuel May . . ."⁴² The house is shown on several nineteenth-century plans—on one, at the time of Judge Dawes's death in 1825, indicated as the "Brick House belonging to the Hon. Thomas Dawes."⁴³ The best representation of the wharf and its buildings is dated 1833, shortly before the property was disposed of by the family. This plan shows the "Brick House," "C.[ounting] Room," and "Stable," all located at the head of "Dawes Wharf" (Fig 12).

A final reference to the second Dawes house survives in later Dawes family papers which descended through the Eliot family. These refer to a photograph of the

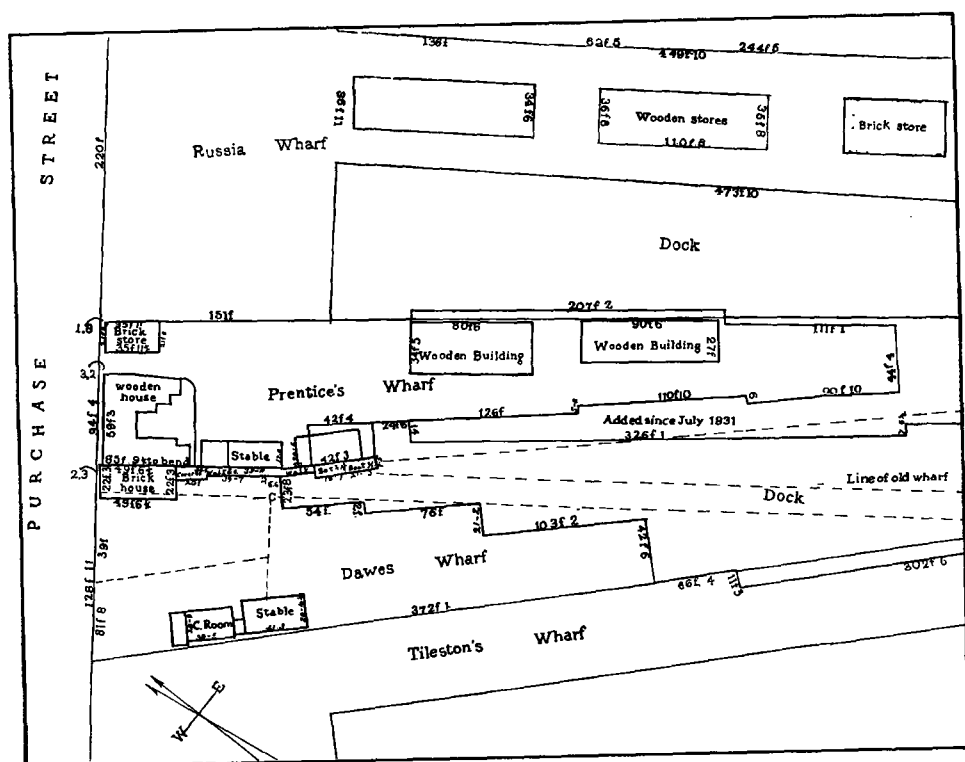


FIG. 12. DETAIL SHOWING DAWES WHARF, BRICK HOUSE, COUNTING ROOM, AND STABLE. From a copy of Plan No. 5, Plan Book No. 2, Suffolk Registry of Deeds. (1884 copy of the original drawn in 1833 by Alexander Wadsworth, surveyor.)

"Purchase Street House of Samuel and Mary May, burned in the fire of 1872."⁴⁴ Thus ends the story of a truly outstanding house, the result of the work of Boston's colorful patriot-architect, Thomas Dawes. The appearance of this house recalls Dawes's epitaph which was inscribed on

his monument in King's Chapel Burying ground:

"Of his taste for the Grecian Simplicity in Architecture, there are many Monuments which he raised when that Art was new to us."⁴⁵

NOTES

¹ This article is an introduction to the life and work of Thomas Dawes. Further research is being undertaken on Dawes's domestic, commercial, and public buildings as well as his monuments. It is hoped enough material will be assembled for a complete biography.

² Henry W. Holland, *William Dawes and His Ride with Paul Revere* (Boston: John Wilson and Son, private printing, 1878), pp. 23, 60. This book includes the Dawes family genealogy.

³ Bill to the "Province of Mass. Bay . . . for Repairs Done at the Court House in Boston," dated 4 April 1775; *Massachusetts Archives*, vol. 248, *Accounts 1751-5*, p. 161; *Massachusetts Magazine*, vol. II, no. 6 (June, 1790), p. 324. "Thomas Dawes, Esq. . . . the architect of Hollis Hall."

⁴ Rev. Joseph Eckley, "Obituary: Sketch of the Late Hon. Thomas Dawes, Esq.," dated 1809, Boston Athenaeum Library, Tracts B438, B1213.

⁵ Abbott Lowell Cummings, "A Recently Discovered Engraving of the Old State House in Boston," in *Boston Prints and Printmakers 1670-1775*, Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973), pp. 174-184. This article includes a summary of Thomas Dawes's life, work, and ancestry.

⁶ *The Builder's Dictionary, or Gentleman and Architect's Companion*, vol. II (London, 1734), owned by Charles Bulfinch and inscribed "Thomas Dawes, Jun. 1751," was presented to the Boston Society of Architects and is now at the U.S. Library of Congress. The remainder of his twelve volume library is in the Boston Athenaeum, having been given at the time of Dawes's death in January, 1809.

⁷ Cummings, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

⁸ Gen. W. H. Sumner, "Reminiscences," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. XIII, no. 1 (January, 1859), p. 103.

⁹ The circumstantial evidence suggesting an attribution of the Shirley-Eustis House to Peter Harrison is discussed in *Shirley-Eustis House, Roxbury, Massachusetts*, a report prepared for the Shirley-Eustis House Association by Bastille-Neiley, Architects and Consultants, (Boston, July, 1977), see Appendix C, pp. 6-8.

¹⁰ Miss A. L. Blaisdell, "Plans of the Shirley-Eustis House," letter to William Sumner Apple-

ton dated 6 March 1922, SPNEA Collections, Photo file, Massachusetts, Roxbury, Shirley-Eustis House.

¹¹ "The Province House Acct: 1755," Mss. 4 April 1755, in *Massachusetts Archives*, vol. 248, *Accounts 1751-5*, p. 162; Thomas Hutchinson, *History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*, vol. III (London: 1828), p. 105 quoted in *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, vol. 14, *Transactions 1911-13* (Boston: Published by the Society, 1913), pp. 2, 14, 16.

¹² John Adams, *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Belknap Press, 1961), vol. I, p. 238.

¹³ The origin of the term "caucus" is identified as being the mid-eighteenth century Boston club in an article by Mr. Pickering, "The Present State of the English Language," *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. III, part 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1815), p. 462. Pickering cites Gordon's *History of the American Revolution* (1788) as the earliest published reference to the origin of the caucus.

¹⁴ Samuel P. Waterhouse, *Proposals for Printing by Subscription the History of Adjutant Trowel and Bluster*, (Boston, c. 1766), Boston Athenaeum Library, Tract B659, p. 121. The characters are identified in eighteenth-century script.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Description of a Club," *Massachusetts Magazine*, vol. I, no. 4 (April, 1789), p. 129; Reply from "Ruricola," *Massachusetts Magazine*, vol. I, no. 5 (May, 1789), pp. 260-61. The authors of these articles used both pseudonyms and fictitious locations to put distance between themselves and their subjects, thus making positive identification of the characters virtually impossible.

¹⁷ "Humorous Visit to the Home of Col. Charles Admirabilis," *Massachusetts Magazine*, vol. III, No. 4 (May, 1791), p. 280. See also p. 211 for an article on the "Ugly Club," and note 16.

¹⁸ Harold Kirker, *The Architecture of Charles Bulfinch* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 23-24.

¹⁹ "Humorous Visit," *op. cit.*

²⁰ John Hood to Thomas Dawes, Jun., 12 April 1756, Suffolk County Deeds, Lib. 88, fol. 181.

- ²¹ *A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, Containing the Statistics of the United States' Direct Tax of 1798*, Document 92 (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, City Printers, 1890), p. 366.
- ²² Will of Thomas Dawes dated 21 May 1807, Suffolk County Probate, Lib. 107, fol. 645.
- ²³ Thomas Dawes, "On Making Mortar," *Boston Magazine*, vol. I (1784), pp. 432-33. The copy given to the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1791 by James Freeman has been annotated by the donor to identify the author, "Z", as "Col. Dawes."
- ²⁴ Account of Joseph Jackson, Executor to the Estate of Thomas March 1752-63, Mss., Boston Public Library Rare Books.
- ²⁵ Thomas Dawes, "Account with Thomas Flucker" and "Account with Admiral Graves," papers of Henry Knox, Boston Public Library Microtext, reel 54, p. 27 (original manuscripts in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society). Thomas Dawes, "On Making Bricks" and "On Making Mortar," *Boston Magazine*, vol. I (1784), pp. 219, 292, 339-40, 432-33 (published serially).
- ²⁶ Samuel Adams Drake, *Old Landmarks and Historic Personages of Boston*, (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1875), p. 272.
- ²⁷ *Massachusetts Archives*, vol. 248, Mss. Accounts 1751-5, pp. 65, 161, 162, 166; John Rowe, *Letters and Diary of John Rowe, Boston Merchant, 1759-1762, 1764-1779*, ed. Anne Rowe Cunningham (Boston: W. B. Clarke Co., 1903), p. 127.
- ²⁸ Samuel Adams Drake, *Historic Mansions and Highways Around Boston* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1899), pp. 172-73.
- ²⁹ Kirker, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-10. McLean Hospital was relocated in Belmont, Mass. in 1896.
- ³⁰ *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, ser. 7, vol. 4, *William Heath Papers* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1904), p. 134.
- ³¹ Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.
- ³² Kirker, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-40, 41-42. For Dawes's relationship with Bulfinch see Index under Thomas Dawes.
- ³³ *Boston Gazette*, 2 April 1792.
- ³⁴ Anna Eliot Ticknor, *Samuel Eliot* (Cambridge, Mass.: University Press, 1869), p. 15.
- ³⁵ Charles Bulfinch, Autobiography quoted in Ellen Susan Bulfinch, *Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch, Architect* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1896), pp. 41-42.
- ³⁶ *A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, Containing the Boston Town Records, 1770 through 1777*, Document 91 (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, City Printers, 1887), p. 275; Henry Wilder Foote, *Annals of Kings Chapel*, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1896), vol. II, p. 400; *The First National Bank of Boston, 1784-1934* (Boston: privately printed, 1934), pp. 8-9, 22.
- ³⁷ Kirker, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-99.
- ³⁸ Henry Jackson to General Henry Knox, Mss. letter, 22 April 1794, Knox Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society Collection.
- ³⁹ Jeremy Belknap, "Plan of the fire in Boston on 30 July 1794," in Carl Seaburg, *Boston Observed* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 128-9. Original in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collection.
- ⁴⁰ Kirker, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-44, 115-17. A recently identified drawing shows Joseph Coolidge, Sr., house and grounds prior to its demolition in 1845. This view suggests that the building was built somewhat differently than shown in Bulfinch's drawing. Pencil drawing before 1845, incorrectly labelled "Old House on Purchase Street," given by Dr. Algernon Coolidge in 1922 to the Massachusetts Historical Society.
- ⁴¹ *Record Commissioners*, Document 92, *op. cit.*, p. 366. Thomas Dawes refers in his will of 1807 to the "Brick House now in my son's occupation with the land, watercourses, and Flatts . . . being all my land on the southeasterly side of Purchase Street," Will of Thomas Dawes, *op. cit.*
- ⁴² Deed to Judge Thomas Dawes from his son Thomas dated 26 August 1815, Suffolk County Deeds, Lib. 269, fol. 17.
- ⁴³ Suffolk County Deeds, Lib. 298, fol. 115.
- ⁴⁴ Massachusetts Historical Society, Photographic file, Boston Houses, Purchase Street.
- ⁴⁵ Thomas Bridgman, *Memorials of the Dead in Boston* (Boston: Benjamin B. Mussey & Co., 1853), pp. 124-5.