

BENEDICT ARNOLD HOUSE

WATER STREET, NEW HAVEN

TIMELINE

Prepared by Stephen Darley, North Haven, Connecticut, 2017.

1741, January 14: Benedict Arnold was born in Norwich, Connecticut.

Early 1760's: Benedict Arnold moved to New Haven from Norwich, Connecticut. No specific date is known, except that a 1902 article in a Chicago newspaper says he came to New Haven in 1762 as "a druggist's apprentice." No source is cited.

1767, 29 December: Benedict Arnold married Margaret Mansfield at North Congregational Church in New Haven.

1771: Per Gower, 1894, "Benedict Arnold built this house around 1771 ..." Per Whitefield, 1882, Arnold bought the land from Sheriff Samuel Mansfield, whose daughter Arnold married. Per Chicago newspaper article, "when Arnold married he built the house in Water street." Wadsworth Map of Plan of Town of New Haven with all the buildings in 1748 shows Samuel Mansfield living in a house on Water Street. Mansfield sold the land next to his house to Arnold. Some reports have stated that Arnold also moved his apothecary store from its original location on George Street to his Water Street house.

1775, May: Arnold left home in New Haven to lead the 2nd Governor's Foot Guards to Boston after the battles of Lexington and Concord. Arnold never lived in his New Haven house again except for visits, but his sister raised his three boys there. He visited his New Haven house various times during the Revolution, including when his wife Margaret died in 1775. He was visiting in April 1777 at the time of the British raid on Danbury, CT.

1775, June 19: Mrs. Margaret Arnold, wife of Benedict Arnold, died on this date while living in the house on Water Street. Her death occurred shortly after Arnold left to go to Boston. Arnold's sister Hannah took care of his three sons, Benedict (Ben), Richard and Henry (Harry), after his wife died. Her death date is from various sources including her gravestone. Obituary in June 26, 1775, edition of the Hartford Courant.

1778: Yale and "The City of Elms," by William E. Decrow, 1882. "Arnold returned to New Haven May 8th, 1778, visited his house on Water Street and soon after left New Haven forever." Per the Chicago newspaper quoting from a May 8, 1778 article in the New Haven Post: "Monday last came to town Major General Benedict Arnold. He was met on the road by the Continental and militia officers... On his arrival in town he was saluted by a discharge of thirteen guns." There is no evidence of Arnold visiting New

Haven after that time. This occurred while he was military governor of Philadelphia a position to which he was appointed by George Washington.

1779, April 8: Benedict Arnold married Margaret (Peggy) Shippen in Philadelphia and had bought a house there for them to live in. The house, known as Mount Pleasant, is on a hill overlooking the Schuylkill River and was purchased by Arnold on March 22, 1779.

1779, 2 Nov: Letter from Benedict Arnold to Jacob Thompson instructing him to sale the New Haven house. "I must request you to have the inclosed advertisement inserted in the New Haven papers. I will take one thousand pounds in hard money... I will give one or two years credit with good Security & Interest." Thompson did follow up on Arnold's request as shown in the next entry.

1779, 17 Nov: Connecticut Journal had the following ad: "To be sold very reasonably for cash or credit. A large and elegant house and lot with good stables thereon. Situate in New Haven, near the Harbour, the Property of General Arnold. The lot contains two Acres, has on it a great Variety of choice Fruit trees, and is very pleasantly and conveniently situated for a Merchant. For Particulars enquire at Jacob Thompson, at New Haven..." Obviously no serious buyers took advantage of his offer.

1780, August: Letter from Arnold to his sister in Philadelphia. By this time, Hannah Arnold had moved out of the house in New Haven to Philadelphia. Possibly she had moved out by November of 1779 when Arnold requested Thompson to put his house on the market. Arnold's sons were not old enough to live in the house in New Haven without their Aunt Hannah.

1780, Sept 25: Arnold changed to the British side in September of 1780 and in December of 1780 he led a force of 1600 men on an extended raid in the Colony of Virginia.

1781, Nov 29: Creditors of Benedict Arnold in Connecticut and various locations had previously petitioned the Probate Court to resolve their claims against Benedict Arnold. The court appointed two Commissioners to examine the matter. This is a summary of their appointment and schedule. The report said that they "shall attend to the Business of our said Appointment at the Dwelling house of Peirpont Edwards Esq; in said New Haven, on the second Monday of January next, at the same Time of Day; and on the third Monday of February next, also at the same Time of Day. Isaac Jones, Michael Todd, Commissioners."

1781, Dec: After the British defeat at Yorktown, Benedict Arnold sailed to England in the same ship as Lord Cornwallis and never returned to America.

1782, 29 March: Pierpont Edwards was appointed as Administrator of the estate of Benedict Arnold in New Haven by the Probate Court in response to the report of the Commissioners recommending such appointment as per the above entry in 1781.

1782, April 11: Connecticut Journal. "To be held at Public Vendue (venue), at the Coffe-House in New Haven, on the 14th Day of April next, at two of the Clock Afternoon; The very elegant seat, lately the Property of Benedict Arnold, but not confiscated, and ordered by the Court of Probate for the District of New Haven, to be sold for the Benefit of said Arnold's creditors,- consisting of about an Acre and a half of Land, on which there is a very Choice collection of the best Fruit-Trees; a large commodious and well planned Dwelling-House, four of the rooms of which are finished; a large Barn, calculated in Part for a Store, and finished in the Best manner, and of necessary Out-houses." The ad was written by Peirpont Edwards on March 30, 1782 and submitted to the paper.

1782: Per Gower. “Was sold to Captain John Prout Sloan in 1782.” Presumably as a result of Peirpont Edward’s effort. Sloan died in 1786. He was Captain of the ship Enterprise in 1775. Apparently his family retained ownership of the house until it was sold to Noah Webster in 1802.

1801, June 14: Benedict Arnold’s death in London.

1802- 1812: House was owned by Noah Webster, our first lexicographer, who purchased it from Captain Sloan’s family. While on Water Street, he was working on his first dictionary which was published in 1806 and on his two volume dictionary published in 1828. Noah and family moved to Amherst, Mass. in 1812.

1812: Per Edward C. Beacher, 9 Dec 1895. “Capt. James Hunt resided in the Benedict Arnold house which he bought in 1812.” (Not James Hunt but his father Captain Frederick Hunt). New Haven Register, 1 June 1894: An article about Mrs. Daniel Goffe Phipps (Elizabeth Hunt) donating a relic of the Arnold House to the New Haven Colony Historical Society. “Later still, in 1812, it was sold to Frederick Hunt, grandfather to Mrs. Phipps. She was born there and her sisters inherited it from her father Capt. James Hunt.”

Captain Frederick Hunt died in New Haven on 25 Nov 1825. His son Capt. James Hunt was born in Brooklyn in 1779 and died in New Haven at the Arnold house in 1838. Both are buried in Grove Street Cemetery.

1824: Per Doolittle’s Map of 1824 of Water Street. Benedict Arnold house is shown as the third house on Water Street starting at Union Street. The map shows a structure to the rear of the house that was still standing which must have been the barn. The Nathaniel Booth house is to the east of the Arnold house on the corner of Olive Street.

1837, March 15: “The house is still standing which was owned and occupied by Arnold, while a resident of this city, a fine old mansion, now occupied by Capt. James Hunt, in Water street.” The Keystone (Harrisburg, PA).

1838: Death of Captain James Hunt. House was passed on to his daughters. It was probably leased out to various occupants after his death as his daughters had married. His daughter Elizabeth, who was married to Daniel Goff Phipps, stayed in New Haven but one of her sisters moved to St Louis and the other to Michigan.

1850: Harriet, wife of James Hunt, was not living on Water Street per census. Two of her daughters were living with her according to the census of 1850.

1850, 28 Dec: Hartford Times. This article cites an article from the New York Sun. “Benedict Arnold’s old residence is still standing on Water Street, New Haven, and in a capital state of preservation. It was originally a substantial frame house—two stories high, with dormer windows—capacious and elegantly finished for the time with a great deal of wainscoting, chimney-piece luxuriance, etc.” I question the use of the work capital if it means excellent.

1853, 25 June: Per Gleason “Pictorial Drawing Room Companion.” “The house, which has been a handsome frame building, is now standing in Water Street, near the shipyard, but is rapidly going to decay.” A sketch of the house is included but no evidence of decline is visible in the sketch. However, it stands to reason that the house would be in decline by that time which was fifteen years after the death of Captain James Hunt.

1860: Harriet, wife of James Hunt, was living with her daughter Elizabeth Phipps on George Street in New Haven according to the 1860 census.

1865: Benham's New Haven Directory. There was no Beckley Lumber Co on Water Street.

1869-1870: Benham's New Haven Directory. Beckley Lumber is listed at 179 Water Street. Lumber dealers were already on Water Street at that time.

1873-1875: Louis Ebel and family lived at 157 Water Street leasing house from the Hunt family. (see entry for 1944).

1879: House leased to Mrs. Nichols. See entry for 1884.

1882: Papers of New Haven Colony Historical society, Vol. 133, 1882. "Ancient Maritime Interests of New Haven." "Arnold's store at one time stood near the corner of George and Church Streets, and subsequently in front of the "Arnold House," in Water Street, where it is now to be seen."

1884, 8 July: New York Times. "Mrs. Nichols, the present lessee, is an intelligent lady, and shows much interest in the history connected with the house." The article says that Nichols leased the house "five years ago." It goes on to describe the house in some detail that highlights some of its design features but also describes the deterioration that has taken place in the house.

1888: New Haven Real Estate Map showing Water Street. Benedict Arnold's house is shown on a large lot also labeled "Hunt Est. [Estate]." The lot measurements that are shown on the map have the lot line on its east side running 82.6 ft and the rear lot line as 197.3 feet. Note: the lot is wider in the rear than it is in the front. The lot is marked in pencil as 157 Water Street.

1890, May 10: Rocky Mountain Sun. "The old house that Benedict Arnold had is still standing in the Fifth Ward on Water Street, near the corner of Olive."

Prior to 1894: Newspaper article from New Haven Museum and Historical society with no date. "On Water Street, close to Union, stands the old Benedict Arnold House, in many respects the most famous in New Haven. It is now in a state of dilapidation and is being used as a woodshed by a neighboring lumber company but the exterior of the house is still intact and its general appearance is exactly the same as in its palmyest days in 1774-1800."

1894, 1 June: New Haven Register. "The last share (ownership?) in the property was transferred a few days ago to the Beckley Lumber Company, and the old house is being rapidly altered to suit the needs of the new owners...it was one of the notable houses of the city, but for years has been used as a tenement house and lumber yard. This was in the same news article cited above in 1812 entry to honor Mrs. Phipps (Elizabeth Hunt) who was donating relic of Arnold house to New Haven Colony Historical Society in 1894.

1899: Price and Lee Directory. The ads for lumber dealers shows that Water Street from Union to Olive Streets was entirely occupied by lumber companies. Beckley Lumber was at 167 Water, J. Gibb Smith Lumber was at 136 Water, which was foot of Olive St. There was also English Lumber Co at 126 Water Street.

1902: "Reduced to almost a shell by curio-hunters, the home of Benedict Arnold here (New Haven) is fast going to ruin...Time and the encroachment of business interests have brought the fine old colonial mansion down to the level now of its less aristocratic neighbors, but traces are still to be seen of the

magnificence of which it once was proud. The house is now part of a lumber yard and the parlors and spacious chambers where Arnold and his bride lived... are now occupied with piles of scantling and the colonial staircases are now changed to lumber elevators. In a short time what is left of the old house will be torn down and the space it occupied turned into a woodyard." Jan 15, 1902. The Inter Ocean, Chicago, Illinois.

Description of the house from the same newspaper:

"Originally the Benedict Arnold house was a handsome structure. It was a square, narrow clap boarded building with a great curved doorway and a cupola surmounting the four-sloped roof. Sandstone underpinning shows to the height of five feet or more around the house, and over each window are carved birds and other designs. An immense hall divides the interior, and to each corner was a large square room. Two enormous chimneys are still standing, and each ___ to the house an open fireplace... The corner beams that supported the framework are all of hand-hewn English Oak, and the rough slabs may still be seen. The laths were hand split and shaved, and many of them have sharpened points. All of the nails are hand wrought, and wooden pegs are used in many places.

In the process of partly demolishing the interior some of the original partitions are left, and under the many layers of wall paper may be seen the original highly ornamented wall paper which Arnold and his bride choose in 1771. That on the parlor walls was sky blue, and in the bed chambers yellow, with curious old figures on it... the kitchen has a large fireplace and an immense bake oven, extending six feet back into the chimney."

1904, March 6: Headline: "A Few Days Will See the End of Mansion Erected in New Haven When Later Traitor Was a Successful Apothecary and Head of Militia Company." Newspaper article found in the New Haven Museum and Historical Society but no identification of newspaper. "Benedict Arnold's house, where he lived before the Revolutionary war, when he was one of New Haven's most prominent merchants, is being torn down... The Elm City Lumber Company has crowded it from cellar to roof with lumber that was too valuable to be left outdoors. Shutterless and utterly dilapidated, its ultimate fate was evident. A high board fence has cut off all view of the house except from a distance. Today the frame of the old house alone is standing, and within a week nothing save an old brick tunnel that ended in the cellar of the house and connected it to a wharf in Water Street will remind one of the place where Capt B. Arnold, apothecary and merchant lived... Water Street was then one of the aristocratic sections of the city. It has since changed with the flight of time and now is mainly a place of lumber yards, sawmills, wharfs and coal storage." Note: Some accounts claim the demolition took place in 1900 but this article confirms the true date.

1905, July 11. *Legendary Locals of New Haven*. Note by Helen Mondell referring to a photograph of Benedict Arnold's house, "The Arnold House was raged 3 years ago." That would be 1902 so not accurate.

1911: Real Estate Map. Shows a vacant lot on Water Street labeled "Formerly the site of the Benedict Arnold House." No address is shown. Owner is Elm City Lumber Co. Next to it on the west is Lamson Lumber Co. The lot size is 139.6 feet in the front property line and the west property line is 229.8 feet. The lot is wider in the rear property line than the front. It is approx. 85 feet from the intersection of Olive and Water Streets.

1944, 19 Nov: *New Haven Register* obituary. "Dr. M. Danhauser, Who as Marie Ebel, was Born in the Benedict Arnold House." She was born in 1873. *New Haven Museum and Historical Society* papers on the Arnold house.

1952: New Haven Register article announcing that Lampson Lumber Co is 50 years old. “The Benedict Arnold House on Water Street was demolished in 1900 (wrong date) to make way for a storage warehouse of the Lampson Lumber Company, which was incorporated in 1902...In its last years, the structure was used to store lumber by W.A. Beckley Company, predecessor of the Lampson firm.” The date of incorporation supports the 1904 demolition date. The accompanying article states that two employees of the Beckley firm, including Louis A. Lampson, incorporated Lampson Lumber with two Bradley brothers.

2017: Info from New Haven Assessor’s Tax Cards for Water Street.

- 167 Water Street (Corner of Union and Olive. Owned by New Haven Board of Education. Home of High School in the Community.
- 159 Water Street. Vacant land. Land Size: 75 x 65.
- 155 Water Street. Owned by United Illuminating Co. Was used as substation but it is in the process of being demolished. Land size: 148 x 170. This would be roughly the location of the lot where the Benedict Arnold house was located (see 1911 entry).
- 145 Water Street (near Olive). Owned by United Illuminating Co. Building is still there but looks vacant. Land Size: 84 x 60.