

THIRD STREET - #8, THE DORSEY HOUSE

Part of Original Ambrose Backer Property
(See Introduction to Summary of Kensey Johns House #2)
Present Owner - Mrs. Margaret Janvier Holcomb, Mrs.
Sophie Janvier Pyle, et al

The first sale of the part of the Ambrose Backer property that was the original site of the present #8, was in 1718, when Edward Cole, a cooper (son-in-law of Ambrose Backer) and his wife, Esther, conveyed to Jonathan Savage a 30' lot between the 30' lot of Samuel Silsbee to the north, and Cole's home property (the Kensey Johns site) to the south, and extending 169' from the Green to Beaver Street, for 20 pounds silver money.

Cole's heirs had this piece of the property back, so the "sale" may have been a mortgage, and the site continued as part of the 140' x 170' corner plot. Richard Griffith Jr., yeoman, who before 1767 was in possession of the whole 140 feet from Delaware Street to the Samuel Silsbee lot (site of #10 and #12), inherited the property. His grandmother, the records indicate, was Ann, the daughter of Edward Cole.

The site of #8 continued as a part of the 140' x 170' corner property when conveyed by Griffith to John Thompson for 45 pounds, in 1769; by Thompson to William McKennan, and by William McKennan to Kensey Johns Sr. for 350 pounds, in 1788,

The following year Kensey Johns sold to Joseph Boggs a piece of ground which included the site of #8, having on it a small brick house and extending back from Third Street only a part of the 169' depth. In 1792, Kensey Johns bought back the house and lot on the site of #8, together with the adjoining lot to the north, site

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of #10 and #12. In 1794 he sold to Nicholas Van Dyke the younger, the small brick house on a larger lot, $42\frac{1}{2}'$ along Third Street, beginning $22'$ from the office of his house and extending about $135'$ deep toward Fourth Street, for 250 pounds.

In 1797, Nicholas Van Dyke sold the site of #8, with the brick house, to Jeremiah Bowman for 600 pounds. The lot began on Third Street at a point $22'$ from the office of Kensey John's house, ran $26'$ north along that street, extended back $55'$ along the north wall of the house and in a line from it toward Fourth Street and there widened $9'$ (at the end of the $9'$ alley) to a back width of $35'$. On the side next to Kensey Johns it extended back in a straight line a depth of 120 feet. The following year Jeremiah Bowman sold the property to Ann Miller, widow, for the same amount he paid for it, 600 pounds.

Nicholas Van Dyke's sale price, 600 pounds, for the brick house and less than half the ground that Van Dyke bought from Johns for 250 pounds, must mean that Nicholas Van Dyke enlarged the brick house or built a new front incorporating the earlier small brick house. The deed to Jeremiah Bowman locates the north wall of the house as bordering the alley, where it still is. Zimmerman, a master carpenter of that day, probably built the house for Van Dyke.

Two years after she bought #8 from Jeremiah Bowman for 600 pounds, Ann Miller bought from Christopher Zimmerman the lot to the north of the $9'$ alley on the north side of the house. This

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garden lot 18'-6" along Third Street, ran back with an offset to Fourth Street, giving to Ann Miller possession of the alley and an outlet on the back street.

Ann Silsbee Miller was the daughter of Nathaniel Silsbee, bricklayer, and granddaughter of Samuel Silsbee I, carpenter. She married Andrew Miller who owned property north of New Castle. Ann Silsbee inherited from her father a share in his home property on Fourth Street adjoining the Dr. John Finney property (Amstel House). At the time Ann Miller bought #8 Third Street, she was living in Philadelphia. In 1807, Ann Miller and her son Joseph Miller sold the house and lot, #8 Third Street and the garden lot now #10, to Mrs. Ann Dorsey, widow, for \$2,133.35. The descriptions of the property and sizes of the lots are the same in this deed as in the sale by Nicholas Van Dyke to Jeremiah Bowman, and of the garden lot in the sale by Christopher Zimmerman to Ann Miller.

Louisa Dorsey, daughter of Mrs. Ann Dorsey, married George Read III, April 19, 1810. She Inherited the house. Her daughter Ann Dorsey Read married Capt. I. S. K. Reeves. Their daughter Anne Dorsey Reeves married John H. Rodney. Mrs. Rodney inherited the house and it now belongs to her granddaughters: Mrs. Margaret Janvier Holcomb, Mrs. Sophie Janvier Pyle and their cousins.