



12 Phoenix Street

While hotels and motels attract the majority of business from visitors to Bridgewater today, the hotel business in Bridgewater was once in the hands of many inn owners. There were several located in the Pleasant Street are, including one at 12 Phoenix Street.

Located on the A. F. Church Map of 1883 in the spot this building once stood is a home ascribed to R. Newcombe. He sold the building to Mary E. Stoddart (likely a misspelling of Maria) on August 2nd, 1888 for \$1500.00, quite a high price, likely indicating a full-blown house was in existence on the site. By 1906, a town insurance map shows a home on that spot, roughly of the same shape and dimensions as the one which existed for most of the 20th century.

In December, 1912, a Maria Stoddart (likely the Mary E. Stoddart who bought the home from Rufus Newcombe in 1888) died, transferring possession to a Benjamin Whitman. On February 21st, 1921, it was deeded to a Charles Cook for \$650.00, likely a nominal fee, as he was the nephew of Maria Stoddart. On May 26th, 1922 he sold it to Lester Cook, under whose ownership it was called *Chester House*. This latter Cook sold it on April 23rd, 1946, and it was owned, successively, Dennis and Violet Hirtle. Then, J. Stephen Rafuse, known as "Stevie" and his wife Hilda Rafuse operated a restaurant on

the premises and likely some sort of accommodations as well. It was used as a rooming house after Ruby Salterio bought it from Hilda Rafuse on from November 15th, 1962, and most likely continued to operate as such after it was sold again in September 1973. Malcom Crouse finally acquired it, by way of James O'Hagan and his wife, and then Edward Crouse, on June 30th, 1980. By 1985, the property was owned by a Bernard Levy.

The house itself, while not extravagantly detailed like other houses, showed reasonably intriguing architectural features for a house of its age. In usual Folk Victorian form, its principal entrance was through a small porch on a side-gabled ell to the left of the main façade, as was usual. Above the entrance, there was a thin, peaked gabled dormer, protruding slightly below the eaves, typical of the vernacular local style. There was also a pair of similar dormers protruding from the left side eaves on the front-gabled portion. In the back on the right, behind the two dormers, was another gabled projection, set farther back than the entrance wing. The photocopy-quality photos available from the early 1980s do not show much detail, as stairs already cover most of that gabled side, though an attic window with lovely label hood moulding is visible. As well, the right-side porch likely once had fine turned posts and balusters, and would not originally have been covered in a balcony or staircase. The defining feature of the house was its magnificent Italianate two-storey bay windows on the main façade. The three-sided structure has panelled moulding – here noticeably painted in contrasting colours to add detail – as well as huge sash windows. The prominent moulded cornice on top of each window is supported by ornamental brackets at each turn in the surface, defining the tops of the bay windows. The entire structure is topped with a very Italianate flat roof.

Unfortunately, what became the Hillside Inn (note the sign on the building) burned in 1984. The fire was fully engaged inside the house, and the building was subsequently demolished.