

The Elnathan Cushing House, circa 1828

Research compiled by the Norwell Historical Society

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The Cushing and Turner families were among the original settlers of Scituate (the southern section of which is today's Norwell). The Cushing family came from Hingham, England to Hingham, Massachusetts in the mid-1600s. From Hingham, many of the family members moved to (what is today) Norwell in subsequent years. Turner family members were among the original settlers of Scituate—known as the “Men of Kent” because they came from Kent, England to Plymouth, and then on to Scituate.

The house at 67 River Street—known locally as the Elnathan Cushing House—is associated with both the Turner and the Cushing families.

Deed research shows the land on which 67 River Street sits was purchased in 1808 by Elnathan Cushing, Sr. (great-grandson of Daniel Cushing, who originally came from Hingham, England). Elnathan bought the approximately 5 acres of land for \$144.25 upon the death of Elisha Sylvester (a member of the Turner family).

As most settlers in Scituate (today's Norwell) were at that time, Elnathan was most likely a farmer. In the 1828 deed where he gives his “homestead farm” to his son, Elnathan Jr., he refers to the property as such:

*“...about five acres of land more or less,
with a barn and unfinished house standing thereon.”*

The deed then goes on to specify that Elnathan Jr. (who is noted in the deed as being a housewright) should:

*“assist in finishing the said house, reserving to myself the use and improvement
of the one half of the... real estate during my natural life.”*

In other words, father was giving his son the unfinished house at 67 River Street to complete—but he specifies that he is allowed to live in his son's house until his death.

Elnathan Cushing Jr. did, indeed, finish the house. He married Louisa Thurston of Boston in 1827—one year before the abovementioned deed was signed. The couple went on to have ten children in the home.

Although noted as a housewright in the 1828 deed, Elnathan Jr. is described as a shipwright in a later (1843) deed. In that profession, he worked on the whaleship *Lagoda*, built in 1826 at the Wanton Yard (at the end of Wanton Shipyard Lane today). The *Lagoda* was 340 tons and sailed out of New Bedford Harbor.

The Elnathan Cushing family lived in the house at 67 River Street until 1891, when the house, barn, and lands were sold to a Mary Curtis.

The house's distinct Dutch Colonial roofline is a rarity in Massachusetts. It is unclear what made Elnathan, noted as a housewright and clearly a wood-working artisan, choose this style. The Cushing family's roots are clearly English—not Dutch.

Most surviving Dutch Colonials in the Northeast are in the Hudson River Valley, on Long Island, or in New Jersey and were built to mimic the homes of the Netherlands. Perhaps Elnathan traveled to one of those nearby regions and noted the beauty of the roofline—similar in style to the hull of a boat?



We cannot know the “why” of the Elnathan Cushing House, but we are keenly aware of the “who”—a shipbuilder/housewright whose family was among the first settlers in Scituate/Norwell—and the “what”—a prominent landmark home on Norwell’s “Street of Shipbuilders.”