

South Street Seaport Museum,  
21-23-25 Fulton Street (George P. Rogers House)  
New York  
New York County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5633

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM,  
21-23-25 FULTON STREET  
(George P. Rogers House)

HABS No. NY-5633

Location: 25, 23, 21. Fulton Street, between Water Street and Front Street, New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: The Government of New York City.  
Lessee: South Street Seaport Museum.

Present Occupants: 25 Fulton Street: Seaport Museum Bookstore.  
23 Fulton Street: Fulton Supply Co., Inc.  
21 Fulton Street: The South Street Seaport Museum.

Present Use: 25 Fulton Street: Bookstore.  
23 Fulton Street: Boating clothes and supply store.  
21 Fulton Street: Gallery.

Significance: George P. Rogers, a wealthy New York businessman, built this group of three Greek Revival commerical buildings on Fulton Street in 1845-46. Recently restored, 21, 23, 25 Fulton Street are now part of the South Street Seaport Museum, a group of galleries, stores and piers standing in close proximity to high rise office buildings in lower Manhattan.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1845-1846. In 1845, the New York City Tax Records state that George P. Rogers was improving "21, 21-1/2, 25, and 27 Fulton Street." The total assessment for all the structures was \$16,000. In 1846, the three buildings were designated 21, 23, 25 Fulton Street, store and lot, assessed for \$11,000, \$11,000, and \$14,000 respectively.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Water Lot #2 was granted to George Petterson in 1750. Water Lot #1 was granted to Cornelius Beekman on the same date. From 1770 Lewis Moore owned the land until 1821, when he sold it to George P. Rogers who built two earlier buildings where 25 and 23 Fulton Street now stand. Originally known as block 96W, lots 17, 16 and 15, the three lots are now included in lot 5. Information for the following chain of title comes from New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>GRANTOR</u>	<u>GRANTEE</u>
April 2, 1821 Liber 150; p. 147	John and Mary C. Rogers and William and Mary Rhinelanders	George Pixton Rogers (205 Water Street)
Nov. 22, 1821 Liber 155; p. 244	Lewis and Eliza Moore	George P. Rogers (203 Water Street)
March 2, 1903 Liber 76; p. 173	Julia Rhinelanders (Trustees of Will)	Rhinelanders Real Estate Co. (Lots 15, 16, 17).
Oct. 6, 1961 Liber 5164; p. 516	Rhinelanders Real Estate Co.	Sarah Kolsby
Oct. 10, 1961 Liber 5165; p. 24	Sarah Kolsby	Two Boroughs Realities, Inc.
Jan. 8, 1962 Liber 5174; p. 363	Two Boroughs Realities, Inc.	Delegate Realty Corp.
July 7, 1969 Liber 145; p. 941	Delegate Realty Corp.	Seaport Holdings, Inc. (Lots 15, 16, 17, now included in lot 5).
June 20, 1973 Liber 282; p. 705	Seaport Holdings, Inc.	City of New York (Lots 1, 5, 8).
June 20, 1973 Liber 282; p. 814	City of New York	South Street Seaport Museum (lease) lots 1, 5, 8.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>GRANTOR</u>	<u>GRANTEE</u>
June 27, 1973 Liber 283; p. 63, 81	City of New York	Chase Manhattan Bank (National Association) Not lotted - All rights Transfer.

4. Original plans and construction: Shortly after George P. Rogers built the three Greek Revival commercial buildings on Fulton Street, E. Jones published a lithograph in 1849 entitled New York Pictorial Business Directory of Fulton Street East of Broadway. Rogers' buildings appear in the directory: they are three five-story structures standing as a unified group with three bay windows apiece. Each had a storefront made up of the typical Greek Revival arrangement of granite piers supporting a granite lintel. Window lintels and sills appear to be rather thick, indicating that they were made of granite also.
5. Alterations and additions: The first alteration for which there are documents available took place in 23 Fulton Street in 1895 (#1247) while the building was occupied by a ship chandlery. For \$1,025.00, architect and builder George Roche fireproofed the hatchways, built over part of the skylight, and installed a hand elevator in the shaft.  
In 1908, while 21 and 23 Fulton Street served as a cigar factory leased by F.A. Cauchois and Co., the builders, Hugh Getty, Inc. did some alterations (#538) for \$1,000.00. Plans of the cellar, the five floors and the attic indicate that the two buildings were connected by new openings on all floors. New staircases were installed from the cellar to the first story and from the first story to the second. On the fifth floor a new fireproof floor appears.  
John F. Rowley, architect, altered 25 Fulton Street in 1915 (#1422) for \$1,500.00. The main goal was to make the second floor into office space by removing old partitions and installing new ones. Other alterations included a new stairway and the substitution of sliding doors for brick work in the blind openings between 25 and 23 Fulton Street.  
In 1921, while 21-25 Fulton Street was occupied by Private Estate Coffee Co., architect Louis R. Uffner of the firm Meisner and Uffner applied to the Buildings Department to do some alterations for an estimated cost of \$2,000.00 (#1239). On the Fulton Street side, the storefront of stone columns and lintels were to be removed and replaced by steel girders to carry the brick wall from above. On the Water Street side, a new opening in the brick wall was to be made and a steel girder set above it to receive the load.

This new opening most probably refers to the present second story double windows. The windows and door openings bricked up at that time, remain in the same state today.

The New York Pictorial Business Directory of Fulton Street East of Broadway (1849) indicates thick window lintels, most probably of granite. Although no record exists, at some point 21-25 Fulton Street must have been refaced with machine-pressed brick, using concealed metal lintel strips. (Rosebrock "South Street Seaport Historic District" p. 38).

In 1975 a grant from the Astor Foundation to the South Street Seaport Museum made restoration of 21-25 Fulton Street possible. Under the supervision of Henry Ludder, architect, and George T. Maros, contractor, the brick facades were cleaned, repaired or recreated. For all the ground floors, new storefronts, including windows and doors, were constructed and installed. All the buildings in this block are included in an alteration application filed by Beyer, Blinder, Belle, Architects, in 1974 (#1734).

- B. Historical Context: George P. Rogers bought the land on which 21, 23, and 25 Fulton Street stand in 1821. In 1845-46, he replaced two earlier buildings he had built with the present unified group of three Greek Revival structures. Rogers, son of John Rogers, an eminent and respected merchant of his day, was himself a wealthy landholder. More interesting is his connection with the Tontine Coffee House Lottery. In June 1789, a group of prominent merchants decided to build the Tontine Coffee House to serve as a social and business center for the merchantile community. To finance the project, the Tontine Association offered 203 shares from 1792-1795 at \$200 a share. Each subscriber was required to select a nominee during whose lifetime the shareholder was to receive his equal proportion of the net income of the establishment. Upon the death of his nominee, the subscriber's interest ceased and became merged with the shareholders that still had surviving nominees. When there were only seven nominees living, the building on the site belonging to the Tontine Association reverted back to the shareholders.

When he was a young child in 1792, George Rogers was chosen as a nominee, probably by his father who owned a share. In 1862, Scoville wrote that George P. Rogers had a good chance to be one of the seven to whom the Tontine property would fall; he was one of 35 nominees still living that year. Since, according to the rules, the seven shareholders received the Tontine property, George must have been nominated by his father and therefore was his heir as well as his nominee. George Rogers was not among the seven survivors announced on November 18, 1870.

Occupants of 21-25 Fulton Street were similar in their mercantile nature to the entire Seaport area. For example, in 1851, Edward Crolis, hardware, was in 25 Fulton Street; Alfred Beardsly and J.F. Law, willoware dealers, were in 23 Fulton Street; and Crystal Lake Ice Co., ice dealers, and A.H. Brown and Co., dealers in "Japanned cloth," were in 205 Water Street.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Built in 1845-46 by George P. Rogers as a group of Greek Revival commercial buildings.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 52'-10" x 71'-3"; nine-bay facade; rectangular shape; five stories.
2. Walls: Brick with trabeated granite (post and lintel construction) shopfront. Sextant sign mounted at corner of #25.
3. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing walls spanned with heavy timber joists.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: A raised 4' wide granite and wrought iron landing surrounds the structure on south and west facades.  
#21- Granite bulkhead stairs lead to basement.  
#25- Recessed corner entrance with granite step. Entrance recessed from corner post.
5. Chimneys:  
#21- Three chimneys, east wall.  
#23- Two chimneys, east and north walls.  
#25- One chimney, east wall.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: #21- Two pairs of double leaf glazed doors and 16-pane fixed window (restorations). #23- Fixed windows with bottom coffer panel (side bays). Center bay-single leaf door with light. #25- Fixed display windows with double leaf glazed doors and sidelights.

- b. Windows and shutters: Second-fourth floors- Generally 6/6 sash with granite sills. Fifth floor- Generally 3/6 sash with granite sills. Fifth floor- Generally 3/6 sash with granite sills; size of windows is graduated per floor. Rear windows have iron shutters.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: #21 and #23- Sloped roof pitched toward rear wall. #25- Slight pitch toward east wall; asphalt roll roofing.
- b. Cornice: Brick cornice.
- c. Skylights: Skylight located over hoist in southwest corner of #23. Skylight over rear roof of #21.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. 21 Fulton Street:

First floor- Exhibit space with stairwell at northeast corner  
Second floor- Offices  
Third floor- Open loft  
Fourth floor- Open loft  
Fifth floor- Open loft with skylight

b. 23 Fulton Street:

First floor- Retail  
Second floor- Retail storage  
Third floor- Inaccessible  
Fourth floor- Open loft  
Fifth floor- Open loft with hoist

c. 25 Fulton Street:

First floor- Bookstore; stair in rear  
Second floor- Storage  
Third floor- Open loft  
Fourth floor- Open loft  
Fifth floor- Open loft with hoist in northwest corner

2. Stairways:

#21- First and second floor stairs in northeast corner; stairs from third to fifth floors are along west wall.

- #23- Stairs located along west wall.
- #25- Stairs located along north wall.

3. Flooring: Wood.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

Walls- Exposed brick and modern coverings.

Ceilings- Combination pressed tin, exposed joists, ceiling board,  
and modern replacements.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Sliding fireproof doors mounted on  
doorways interconnecting #21, #23 and #25. They are modern.

b. Windows: (Not recorded).

6. Hardware: Brass thumbatch hardware on entrance doors of #25.

7. Mechanical equipment:

a. Moving fixtures: Hoists in #23 and #25.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: 21-23-25 Fulton Street is now  
part of the South Street Seaport Museum, a group of galleries,  
stores, and piers standing in close proximity to high-rise office  
buildings in lower Manhattan.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

"Brooklyn Bridge (1849)," photograph by J.S. Johnston, neg, #51230,  
New York Historical Society.

"Earliest Photograph of Schermerhorn Row," 1863-68, shows part of 21  
Fulton Street. South Street Seaport Museum.

"Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges - East River,"  
photograph, Select New York, Albertype Illustrations, A. Wittermann,  
Brooklyn, New York City, ca. 1900, Library of Congress. Photo shows  
21-25 Fulton Street.



E. Jones, lithograph from The New York Pictorial Business Directory of Fulton Street East of Broadway, 1849, New York Historical Society, neg. #48473. Shows 21-23-25 Fulton Street.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Department of Buildings, Municipal Building, and Val Wenzel Files, South Street Seaport Museum: Alteration application #1247 (1895); #538 (1908); #1422 (1915); #1239 (1921) 25 Fulton Street.

Property records. Surrogate's Court, New York City.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York, 1857-1976, New York Historical Society.

New York City Directories, New York City. (Place of repository not indicated).

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission: Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy, "Inventory of Structures in the Brooklyn Bridge S.E. Urban Renewal Area," New York 1968.

Landmarks Preservation Commission: Rosebrock, Ellen, "South Street Seaport Historic District," 1974.

South Street Seaport Museum files: Astor Fund Envelope.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Rosebrock, Ellen. Walking Around South Street, New York: South Street Seaport Museum, 1974 pp. 20-21.

Scoville, Joseph A., alias Barrett, W. The Old Merchants of New York, New York: Carleton, pub., 1862, Vol I: pp. 323-324; Vol III: p. 224.

Stokes, I.N. Phelps. The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909. New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1927, Vol V: Sept. 10, 1789; June 7, 1794; April 9, 1792; Nov. 18, 1870; Vol VI: p. 629.

Valentine, D.T. Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York for 1852. New York: McSpedon and Baher, Printers, pp. 458-459. [Frederick De Peyster article on the Tontine Coffee House].

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects- Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.