

Rock Point Inn, 1 Broad Street, Lyme Regis Previously known as Bank House

Graham Davies, March 2021



This building, of Georgian origin, from the late 1700s, has had a close association with the wine and spirit trade from the early 19th century, if not earlier. The name 'Rock Point' appeared as late as 1924/25. The St Austell Brewery purchased the Rock Point and adjoining fish and chip shop in 2018. The Rock Point Inn has had a complete restoration and refurbishment and now occupies Nos 1 and 2, Broad Street, Lyme Regis.



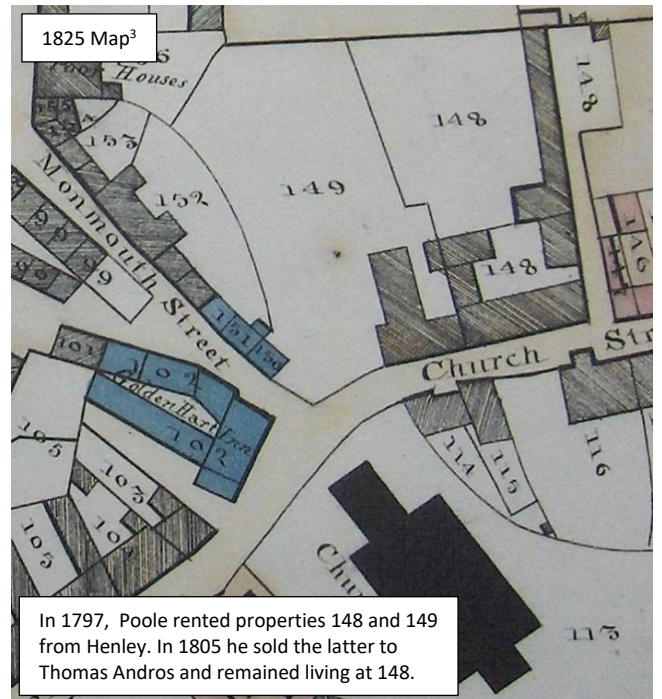
This drawing¹, thought to be early 1800s, shows Bank House's 18th century Georgian credentials. The listing (1952) for this grade II building describes the build date as 1790, about which the author has no specific information. Other houses were being built during this period of investment in the town, such as Belmont (1777), Kersbrook (1791) and Stile House (1797).

¹ The drawing is of unknown origin, date and artist other than HW in the corner. The Museum has a printed copy in its archives.



This drawing² from a surveyor's plan in 1827 shows Bank House with William Poole as owner, from where he ran his business as a wine merchant and corn dealer.

William Poole (1763-1841) lived in Church Street from circa 1783, first renting and then buying the properties from Henry Hoste Henley. He married Catherine Coombs in 1792. From their home, they ran a grocer's shop, ironmongers and lodging house. Apart from dealing in wine and corn, he was also involved in other commercial activities.



It is not known when William Poole first occupied the Bank House. In this context, it might be significant that in 1800⁴ William Poole was referred to as a wine merchant, a term perhaps of higher profile than just selling wine in his grocer's shop in Church Street. Bank House was a large building of three storeys: the wine and corn business only needed an office or two with the use of the building's cellars or bonded storage elsewhere in the town. Trade directory entries for William Poole and his son, George Coombs Poole, born 1796, provide a clearer picture of activities at the Bank House in 1830, the division of roles between William and George and the passing on of the family business from father to son.

Poole, William, ironmonger & grocer, Church Street, 1823-28

Poole, William, lodging-house, Church Street & Summerhill, 1830

Poole, George Coombs, grocer & tea dealer, china, glass & earthenware dealer, wine & spirit merchant, Broad Street, 1830

Poole, George Coombs, lodging-house keeper, Church Street & Summer Hill, 1842-44

William Poole built Summerhill House (1818) as a speculative investment in the town's growing tourist industry. It stood on Charmouth Road just below the site of today's municipal cemetery. John Fowles described the building as an 'unhappy imitation of the fashionable new Weymouth villas; which were meant to stand in rows, not all on their own.' The building was demolished in the late 1980s.

William Poole took out a second mortgage in the 1830s to pay off his heavy borrowings from Bridport bankers, the Gundrys. He died in 1841 and is buried with his wife in the parish churchyard⁵. In 1842, the trustees and his son George had to let the mortgagee, Philip Ridsen, have Summerhill. The Poole family left Lyme Regis soon after. They are remembered today through the name of 'Pooles Court' in Church Street.

² Drayton survey of sea walls 1827, Lyme Regis Museum

³ Lyme Regis parish map 1825 (Anon), Lyme Regis Museum

⁴ Inquest on the death of Elizabeth Hoskins/Haskins at Lyme Regis, August 20, 1800 (Dorset History Centre)

⁵ Monumental Inscriptions of the Parish Church of Lyme Regis 2001, Somerset and Dorset Family History Society



Dunstons 1844 print of the Square just before the Great Fire of that year

Theophilus Bartlett Goddard owned Bank House during the 1840s (1841-54). During that period, or part thereof, he was a wine merchant, dealer in timber and corn, borough treasurer, agent for the Norwich Union fire & life assurance and an agent in the sale of property.

He was born at Hooke in 1809 and baptised at Lyme Regis in 1811, the first son of Daniel Goddard. In 1849 he married Jane Swain whose father, William Swain, was a successful coal and timber merchant and ship owner living at Bridport Harbour. Goddard became Mayor of Lyme Regis in 1853 and left the town to live in Cheltenham the following year.

BANK HOUSE TAVERN
LYME, DORSET.

AN UNRESERVED
AUCTION,
WILL BE HELD, BY

MR. R. C. WALKER,

On **FRIDAY, the 6th, JUNE, NEXT,**
For the Sale of the **Good & Useful**
HOUSEHOLD
FURNITURE,
Stock in Trade,
Oil Paintings, Proof Engravings, Antique China,
3 Pull Beer Engine & Pipes, 1 Pull Brass Ditto,
PLATED GOODS,
Horses, Fly, Phaetons, Harness &c.
THE PROPERTY OF MR THOMAS SWAIN, DECLINING THE INN KEEPING BUSINESS.

COMPRISING Four post Field and French BEDSTEADS, and Furnituro, excellent spring Hair BED, for Invalids, Feather Beds Bolsters & Pillows, Blankets & Counterpanes, Straw and Pluck Mattresses, Mahogany Spring Dressing Glasses, Chest of Drawers, night Commode, Wash-room Chair, Dressing Tables, Window Curtains, Roofers & Blinds, Mahogany Dining Card and other Tables, Mahogany SIDE BOARDS, excellent CHIMNEY GLASSES, Mahogany STAND with Urnpans and Shelves, SOFA with Maroon Covering, Easy CHAIR, Cane bottom and other CHAIRS, Cut Glass and FINE DECANTERS, Cut GLASSES, TUMBLERS & WINES, Wine COOLER, Tea Urn, Egg Stand, Set of CASTORS, Plated Tea POTS, Coffee Pots, Sugar BASKETS, Cream Jug &c, Oil PAINTINGS, Proof ENGRAVINGS, Coal Scuttle, Fender & Fire Irons, 6 Spirit Jars with Tops, Pewter Quarts & Pints, Spirit Measures, Copper Gallon & half and Stands, 2 Pipe Stands, Tobacco Box, American Clock, Table & Passage Lamps, Door & Passage Mats, Large Oak Chest Head, 2 Double and Single Sets of HARNESS, BIDDLES, and SADDLES, empty Casks and Bottles, and a great Variety of other articles.

ALSO, a QUANTITY OF CIGARS.

May be viewed the day preceding the SALE, which will commence precisely at 2 o'CLOCK, (NO AUCTION DUTY).
Lyme, May 26th, 1845.

From Landroy's, General Printing Office, Butter Market, Lyme.

The author has discovered two references for the Bank House Hotel (Tavern) and its innkeeper, Thomas Swan.

1. On 22nd July 1844, Major-General Sir Robert Sale, and Lady Sale, of *First Afghan War* fame, arrived at Swan's Bank House Hotel, having landed at Lyme Regis from a Cowes pilot-boat, the *True Briton* being wind-bound in the Channel. Congratulations were offered by inhabitants of Lyme and its neighbourhood, and the church bells rang 'to welcome the gallant veteran and his truly courageous lady to their native land'. Sir Robert and Lady Sale left for London the next morning.

2. In 1845, Thomas Swan decided to 'decline the inn keeping business' and hold an auction on June 6th, details of which are shown on the poster.



Image of a bunch of grapes

An early photograph of the mid-1850s⁶

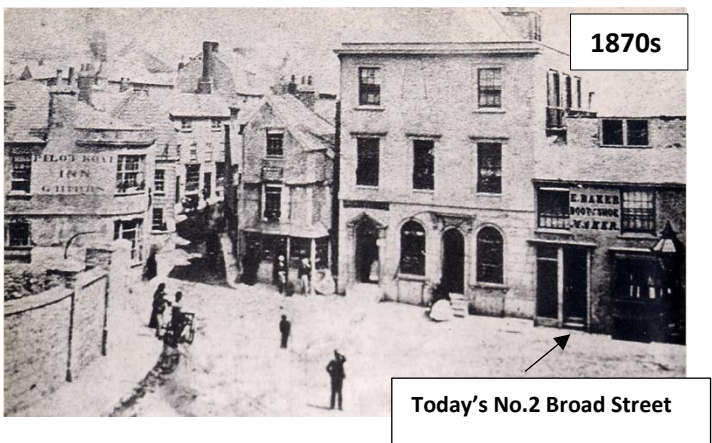
Theophilus Goddard might well have still owned the Bank House at the time of the above photograph. It confirms that the building was being used for more than one purpose. The left hand door gave access to the upper floors and Samuel Paul's china glass warehouse. One can only make out the image of a bunch of grapes on the sign board over the central door, enough surely to link that entrance to the ground floor, or part thereof, with the wine trade.



T B Goddard was the last owner of Bank House to live on the premises for the next 130 years. Future owners of Bank House and the wine business were based away from the town. George Westlake Mitchell had taken over a wine and spirit business at Castle Hill, Axminster, following the death in 1848 of Thomas Whitty Hallet, its former proprietor. He dissolved his partnership with Francis Mitchell in 1853 and towards the end of the 1850s had established outlets at Lyme Regis (Bank House) and Seaton.

Not surprisingly, the 1861 census records no-one living at Bank House (Paul's warehouse) or the Wine Vaults (Mitchell, wine merchant). The firm subsequently traded as Mitchell, Turner & Co and then as James Turner & Co from the 1870s into the early 1880s.

In the 1870s photograph, attention is drawn to the building which occupies today's No.2 Broad Street⁷. The author believes it was built sometime between 1820s and 1844 and that it was probably owned by the previously mentioned wine merchants who leased it out: Grapes Inn (1861), Edward Baker, boot & shoe maker (1871), Robert Gush, fisherman (1881) and Samuel Searle, greengrocer (1891).



Today's No.2 Broad Street

⁶ Research by the author

⁷ Buildings were not given street numbers in Lyme Regis until 1900

Circa 1900



In the latter half of the 1880s, Richard Southwood took over the wine and spirit business at Castle Hill, Axminster, which included the outlets at Lyme Regis and Seaton and the purchase of Nos.1 & 2 Broad Street at Lyme. He expanded the business to include further branches at Exeter, Teignmouth, and Dawlish; lived at Castle Mount in Axminster, and owned the business until his death in 1924.

The wine and spirit 'Vaults' store, on the ground floor of Bank House, was managed by William Down who lived on Marine Parade where his wife offered visitor accommodation. Tenants occupied the remainder of Nos. 1 & 2, including John Speed Turner, printer, journalist and publisher of the *Lyme Regis Mirror*, who lived at Bank House, from the early 1890s, for over 20 years. By 1917, William Down had moved to Bank House where his wife rented 'apartments', comprising 5 bedrooms and 2 sitting rooms.

In June 1924, Messrs Carr and Quick Ltd of Queen Street, Exeter bought the wine and spirit business of the late Richard Southwood with its branches at Axminster, Lyme Regis, Seaton and Teignmouth.

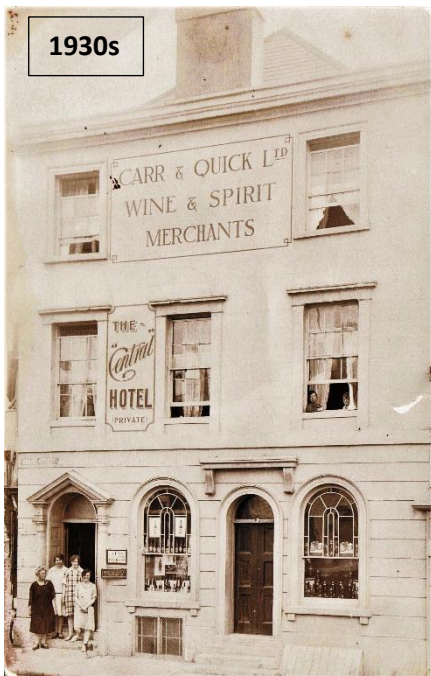
By 1925, Mr & Mrs R W Baker, already in business at the Clarence Hotel and Cosy Café, had leased from Carr and Quick the upper floors of Bank House as a private hotel which they named the *Rock Point*. Reginald W Baker was mayor of Lyme Regis, 1928-31.

The *Rock Point* did not last long: Mrs Northcott took over the lease in 1928 and changed the name to the *Central Hotel*.

Thought to be 1926



1930s



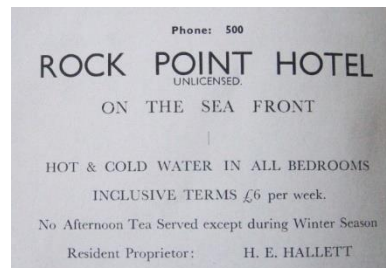
Mrs Ada Northcott was proprietor of the Central Hotel from 1928 to 1948, with a gap during WWII when the premises were requisitioned by the armed forces.

The ground floor of Bank House continued to house the 'vaults' during this period, becoming known as the *Vaults Bar and Lounge*.

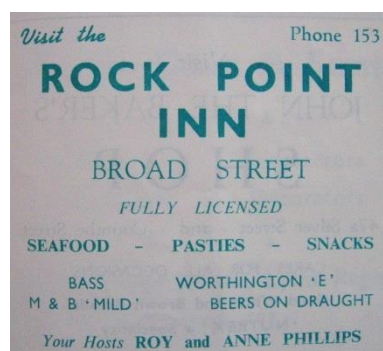


1963

Further changes took place. The *Rock Point* name re-appeared in 1949. Carr and Quick sold their business and buildings in Lyme to brewers, Bass Charrington, in the 1950s. Gail Caddy purchased the Rock Point in 1984, and owned it for the next 34 years.



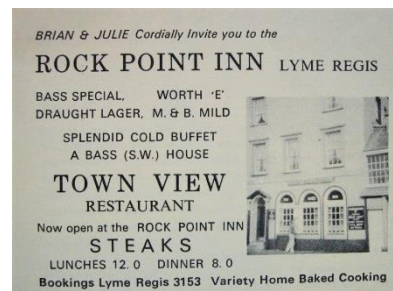
Hallett
1949-55



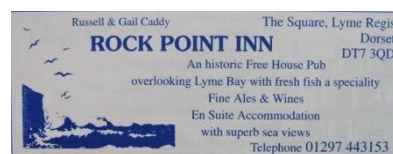
Phillips
1960-70



2006



Hayball
1974-80



Caddy
1984-2018

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