

26, 28 Adams Street (1827-28)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981 (E. W. Gordon, Consultant)*:



28, 26 Adams

2015

Numbers 26 and 28 Adams Street is a double Federal masonry (brick) house with a granite block basement. Number 28's brick sidewall is carried above the gable roof to form linked chimneys. Number 26's linked chimneys were taken down

when a Mansard roof was built in the late 1860s/1870s (?) The building has a brickwork cornice. Number 28 has a single dormer with a pedimented gable roof. Number 26's mansard roof is clad with slate shingles and has two dormers with pedimented gables on the Adams Street slope.

Their tall, paired, arched entrances have late 19th century (?) outer doors-the entrances were originally open and recessed. The windows have a simple granite sills and lintels and 2/1 wood sash. Fenestration on number 26 appears to have been altered-the second-floor windows are taller than those of number 28.

Builder: Shadrach Varney (?) -attributed (deeds)

Original owner: Shadrach Varney/Daniel Sampson-#26,
Samuel Leach-#28

Together with 9, 11, and 13 Union Street, 27 and 29 Washington Street, and 17, 19 Elwood Street, 26 and 28 Adams Street are part of Charlestown's small but choice collection of Federal masonry row houses with distinctive arched entrances. These houses originally faced the grounds of the old George Adams Kettel estate, which had a large hip roofed Federal house which faced Chestnut Street, now the site of number 50 Chestnut Street).

Numbers 26 and 28 Adams Street screen the segment of Adams Street from Chestnut to Mount Vernon Street from the urban blight of the elevated approach to the Mystic Tobin Bridge.

Numbers 26 and 28 Adams Street represent the work of Shadrach Varney (he is variously listed in 1820s and 1830s deeds as "mason", "blacksmith" and "gentlemen"). Varney

played a role in the development of Dexter Row (Mid-1830s) and 7-23 Harvard Street (1835). On 18 August 1825, Varney paid George Brown, Charlestown trader, \$1200 for 26 and 28's lots. [See Middlesex 62:167]. Brown had purchased these lots one year earlier from James K Frothingham (4 August 1824). Varney sold number 26's lot (no buildings) to Daniel Sampson, Charlestown, a caulker, for \$380 on April 16, 1927 (273:45). Varney sold number 28's lot "with all the buildings thereon" to Samuel Leach of Medford, master mariner, for \$3250 on July 1, 1828. Thus, 26 and 28 were erected between April 1827 and July 1828.

Number 26 remained under Sampson family ownership until Hannah Sampson sold it to Elizabeth W Sawyer on May 23, 1856 [741:157]. Sawyer family members owned it until at least the mid-1880s. (Elizabeth Sawyer's husband was Alvin G Sawyer, a cooper). From circa 1890 until at least the early 1910s, it was owned by John Haggerty, "U.S. Navy."

Number 28 Adams was owned by Samuel Leach family members until as late as 1911.

Adams Street was "staked out by Selectmen from Mr. Townsend's corner to Mr. Breeds dam pasture and approved by the town in August 1797." This was the old way from the Training Field, now Winthrop Square, to the "dam pasture" before the laying out of the Salem Turnpike.

Adams Street is said to have been named for the Quincy Massachusetts family of presidents, or possibly for Nathan Adams, who had an estate bordering Adams Street (see 1818 Tufts map).

Bibliography:

Maps 1815, 1852

Atlases-1868, 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1911

Charlestown directories-1834-74

Boston directories-late 19th century

Middlesex Deeds-number 26:273:445, 241:157, 851:51;
number 28-283:22 [Suffolk-number 26-1973:296]

Charlestown Enterprise-August 30, 1919, page 3; July 18, 1903,
page 2

*Digitized and edited, without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, with the addition of current photographs. In the case of houses that have been altered since the survey, these photographs may not entirely correspond to the architectural description. If earlier photographs of suitable quality are available, these have been included.

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