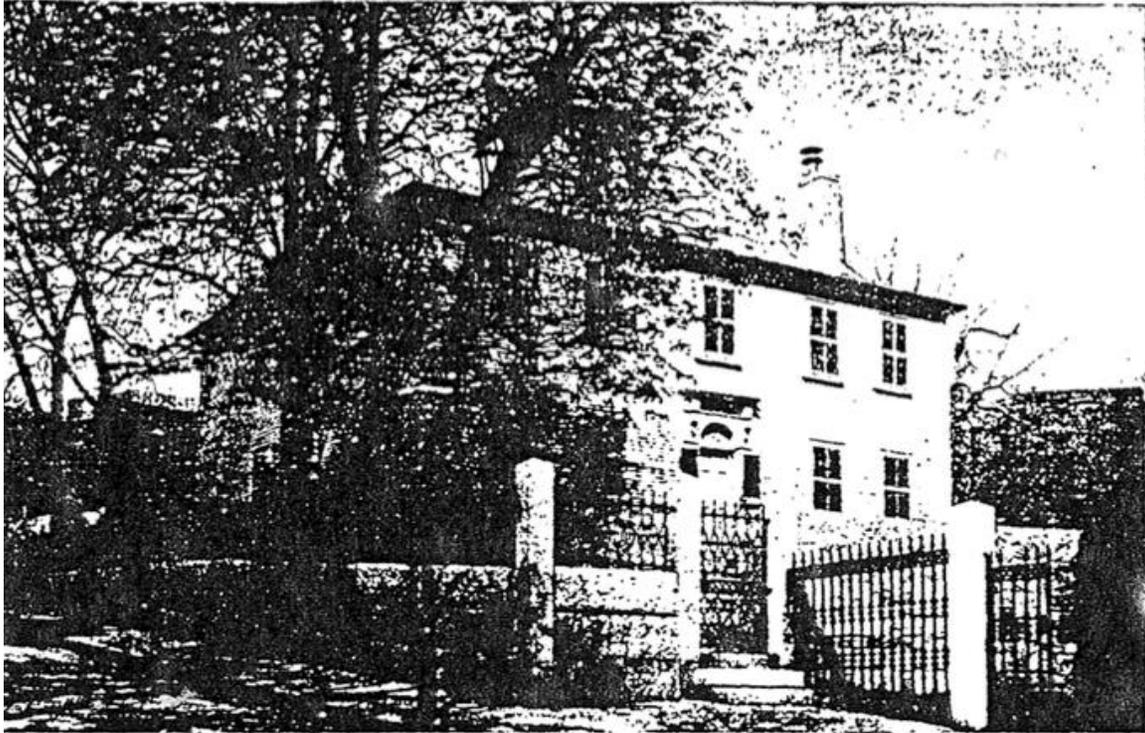


14 Green Street (circa 1791-1800)

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



HON. MATTHEW BRIDGE'S WEDDING GIFT TO HIS SON, NATHAN, 1814
Collection of S.P.N.E.A. ca. early 1900's

Number 14 Green Street is a greatly altered wood frame, two story late Georgian/Federal mansion. It has a boxy five Bay by four bay main block, and a granite block foundation. The main façade has been extended two bays to include double doors and a window on the first floor. Originally clapboard-clad, the house is presently sheathed in wood shingles.

Still intact is the upper third of the main façade's center entrance, including a semicircular fanlight and a Federal "door hood" composed of well-carved console brackets ornamented with colorfully painted Laurel wreaths and rosettes. The

consoles support a well-molded deep cornice, and beneath the cornice is an entablature displaying closely spaced incised lines.

The original hip roof has been reworked as a low window-less lattice pattern, shingle-clad third level, with a hip roof. The building is surmounted by a central square cupola with slender freestanding demi-columns at the corners, which appears to be a pre-1840s addition. Cutler's slide of Old Charlestown, volume 2, includes a view of this house's main façade circa 1870, complete with original two story low hip roof and circa 1840s (?) Cupola.

The Dexter mansion is situated on a terraced segment of Breeds Hill's southwestern slope. It stands with its narrow end to Green Street. Directly across the street is the 1910 Boys Club, the former location of the old Hunnewell house. The Dexter mansion's main facade overlooks an ample front lawn which slopes down to a tall hedge, which marks a sharp drop-off and high granite/rubble stone retaining wall.



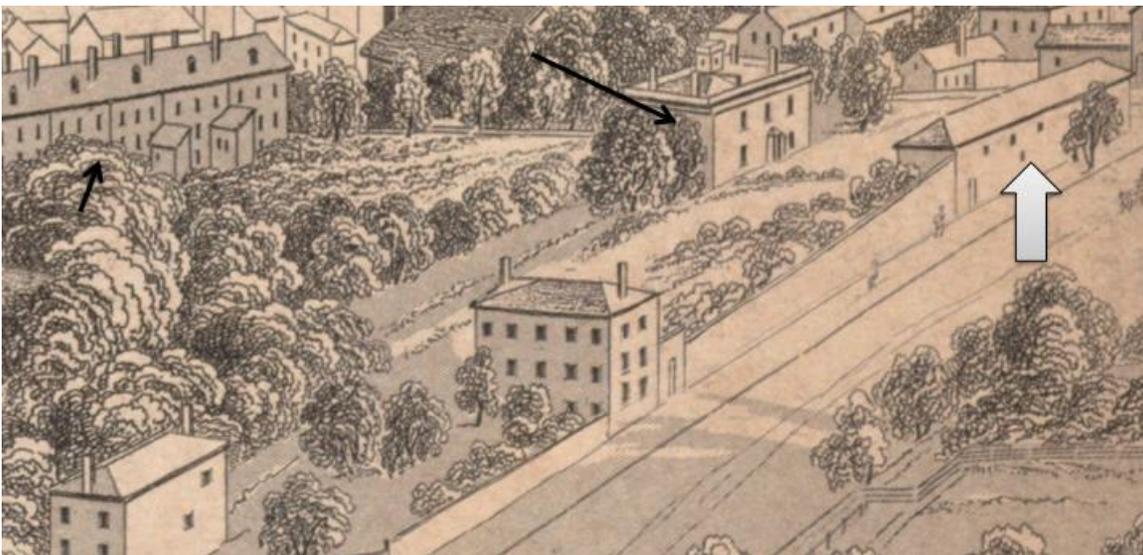
14 Green Street

2015



14 Green Street entry detail

2015



Dexter Estate, Mallory Panoramic View, 1848. Dexter mansion (long black arrow), stables (white arrow), rear of Dexter Row houses (short black arrow).

Original owner: Samuel Dexter

Although this late Georgian/Federal mansion has been drastically altered in terms of form, fenestration, fabric, configuration, etc. it nevertheless manages, with the help of landscape features, to convey a sense of a stately late 18th/early 19th century mansion house estate. This house has historical associations with important 19th century national/local figures. It was built for Samuel Dexter, a member of President John Adams' cabinet. During the mid-19th century, it was owned by leading Boston area rubber product manufacturers Hamilton Davidson and Rhodes Lockwood. During the occupancy of Nathan Bridge (1814-1830), the house's gardens were high on the list of Boston area horticultural wonders. During the late 19th century, 14 Green Street housed the headquarters of the Abraham Lincoln Post #11 G A R, and it presently contains an important neighborhood institution-the Charlestown Community Center.

Number 14 Green Street was built for Samuel Dexter, member of both branches of Congress, Secretary of War and of Treasury under President John Adams. Dexter's son, Franklin Dexter, was a distinguished lawyer. His grandson, F Gordon Dexter, was responsible for the erection of the statue of Col. Prescott on the Bunker Hill Monument grounds. At the time of Samuel Dexter's death, John Adams wrote, "I have lost Mr. Dexter, the ablest friend I had on earth."

Samuel Dexter sold his Green Street estate (then encompassing at least 11 lots), to Mr. G Alexander in 1800. (Further research is needed on Alexander -the many late 18th century/19th-century grantee listings for Alexander at the Middlesex County register of deeds indicates that at the very least he was a real estate speculator with considerable holdings). In 1814, Alexander sold 14 Green Street to Matthew Bridge, a Charlestown merchant who also had considerable real estate

holdings on Harvard Street, including the Edward Everett house. Bridge died before he could move into this house, and from 1814 to 1830 the house was owned by Matthew Bridge's son Nathan Bridge.

The Bridge occupancy of 14 Green Street evidently represents a "golden age" in this house's history. Mr. Bridge was a well-known merchant and horticulturalist who enjoyed hosting elegant parties. He was a partner in Nathan Bridge and Company (along with a John D Bates) at Central Wharf, Boston. His daughter Susan married the internationally renowned chemist, mineralogist, and geologist Dr. Charles T Jackson. Nathan Bridge's garden "was known to all lovers of horticulture throughout the state." His greenhouse, which was located in the upper part of the garden, contained "a fine display of espalier fruit trees (apricot, nectarine and peach) on the brick walls on High Street, and in frames arranged in various shapes." From the side door of 14 Green Street was a view of a circle of fir trees, in the center of which was a tulip tree. Beyond the circle was a fruit garden of standard trees, including peach, dwarf apple, cherry and pear." Nathan Bridge's stable was on the corner of High and Green Streets. The area between the stable and the house was paved with cobblestones. (See *Charlestown Enterprise* and *Charlestown News*, May 12, 1888, page 1, "The Dexter Estate" for further information on bridge's Gardens.)

In the fall of 1831, 14 Green Street was sold to Hamilton Davidson, who was the highest bidder at public auction. At that time Davidson was engaged in the grain business at Charlestown Neck. In later years he became a leading manufacturer of medical and stationary rubber products (see form on Davidson Rubber Company, Brighton Street). Between the 1830s and early 1850s the Dexter estate was reduced to its

present size by the sale of lots along High Street, (including those of the double brick Lawrence and Sawyer residences), Green Street, (for the Winthrop Church), and Dexter Row. Mr. Davidson's son-in-law and business partner, Rhodes Lockwood, owned this house from 1850 until at least the mid-1880s.

The old Dexter estate was purchased by the Abraham Lincoln post #11 G A R of at some point between 1885-1892. This organization was composed of men "who dared death and disease on many southern battlefields and whose object is not only the promotion of friendship between the loyal veterans of the rebellion, by sympathy and substantial aid in behalf of those who were left widowed or fatherless by the relentless monster of war". Adopting the motto, "fraternity, charity, loyalty," the Abraham Lincoln G A R #11 was organized on April 23, 1867 in Mechanics Hall, Elm Street, by Major Austen S Cushman of post 1, New Bedford. Prior to this organization's purchase of the Dexter mansion it was housed in a variety of buildings including Seminary Hall (1867) at Union and Lawrence Streets (no longer extant); Lincoln Hall, 7 City Square (1867-69); Warren Trust for Savings building; Monument Hall Building (circa late 1870s-1880s) and 1, 2 Warren Street (1886). The building presently houses the Charlestown Community Center.

Bibliography:

Maps- 1818, 1852

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

TT Sawyer, *Old Charlestown*, page 418

Cutler-slides of old Charlestown, volume 2 CHA 105-02, CHA 140-131 (?)

SPNEA-photo file, Robert Severy photographs, may 1975

Charlestown Enterprise- "boys in blue", November 24, 1885, p.?

Charlestown Enterprise and Charlestown News, May 12, 1888,
p.1 "the Dexter estate"

*Digitized, and edited without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, and with 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.

R. Dinsmore

Interior photographs



Interior doorframe



Library

J T Hunnewell bookplate