

16 Harvard Street (1814)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981 (E. W. Gordon, Consultant)*, with addendum from the Massachusetts Historical Survey**



16 Harvard Street

2015

Number 16 Harvard Street is a high style, three story Federal mansion constructed of Flemish bond brick. with a five bay by two bay main block with a granite-faced basement, and a center hall plan. To the rear are an original three-story ell, and a later (mid-19th century) two story ell. There is a well-crafted, detailed cornice with egg and dart, bead and reel courses and modillion blocks, and a low hip roof.

Particularly noteworthy is its Ionic columned entrance porch with a heavy entablature and deep cornice. The stair rails are intact, and three granite steps with granite gateposts at the sides lead to the front door. A paneled front door (original?) is flanked by multi-pane sidelights with the lower one-quarter of solid wood. Above the front door is an elegant elliptical fanlight. Still visible on the fanlight's frame is a pattern of five incised lines interspersed between stars.

The windows have simple brownstone sills and wedge shaped lintels and 6/6 wood sash. The window at the second floor center with a keystone lintel may be a replacement; judging by surrounding brickwork it may have been Palladian, originally. The brownstone trimmings are badly weathered. The house is undergoing extensive restoration (2015).



16 Harvard St. cornice detail

2015



16 Harvard St. entry

2015



16 Harvard fan light detail

2015

A narrow front yard is bordered by granite blocks and an ornamental cast iron fence.

Architecturally, number 16 Harvard is significant as Charlestown's most stylish and substantial masonry Federal house, providing an elegant and memorable introduction to Harvard Street's important collection of early-mid-19th-century residences. No.16 Harvard Street is of major architectural and historical significance at the national, regional, and state as well as local levels. Evidently this house represents the work of an architect and may be attributed to Charles Bulfinch or Asher Benjamin. The handsome Ionic

columned entrance porch represents at approximately 1830s or 40s addition.

This house is of great historical significance because of its association with men whose importance transcends the purely local level. Its best-known owner/occupant was Edward Everett. He lived at 16 Harvard from 1832 to 1836. During his long and distinguished career he was a representative to the US Congress (1825-1835), governor of Massachusetts (1836-1840, minister to England from 1841-1845, president of Harvard College (1846-1849), Secretary of State from November 1852 to March 1853, and US Senator in 1853/1854. In 1860 he was the candidate of the conservative party for Vice President of the United States.

The house was built in 1814, by well-to-do Charlestown merchant and ship owner, Matthew Bridge. He served in the state legislature and in the state Senate. He lived in a large wood frame house on or near the site of the present Harvard Place, and died shortly after this house's completion in 1814.

Later owners included Bridge's son-in-law, Seth Knowles, one of the original members of the Bunker Hill Memorial Association. During Knowles occupancy Lafayette was entertained in this house (June 17, 1825). William Carlton, founder of Carlton College in Northfield Minnesota, a manufacturer of lamps and gas fixtures, lived at number 16 from 1837 to 1863.

The next occupant was Ezra Trull of Trull Brothers, Distillers (1863-1872). From 1872-1887 it was the residence of Francis Childs, a member of the Board of Aldermen (1862-63), State

Senator (1863-64), and member of the Governor's counsel (1877-78).

Bibliography:

Maps- 1818, 1852

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

For further information on this house's ownership see *Charlestown Enterprise* articles dated April 26, 1890, June 7, 1890, and September 20, 1890.

A Century of Town Life-JF Hunnewell

*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

From:

*****Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey***

Recorded June,2005

Pauline Chase-Harrell, Boston Affiliates Inc.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Edward Everett House is a stately brick Federal style residence that rises three stories above a raised granite foundation and is five bays in width. Standing near the base of Harvard

Street's southern slope, this freestanding house anchors the Town Hill Historic District on its south end amid brick, c.1835 row houses. A shallow hipped roof covers the main house with two apparently original corbelled brick chimneys located at each end wall, with the right-side chimney exhibiting three clay chimney pots. A third chimney rises from the west end of an original rear brick ell extending from the west side of the main house on the north side. Windows on every level of the east, south and west facades are evenly ranked in the characteristic Federal Style. What is now a Greek Revival entrance portico was added c.1830; perhaps in 1833, when Peter Chardon Brooks purchased the house from the Everetts.

Between 1830 and 1875, but more likely c.1870, a two-story, gable-roofed brick kitchen addition joined the west wall of the rear ell. From the north wall of this kitchen addition, a one-story, flat-roofed room with an angled north wall and east side entrance opens onto the north alleyway between this house and its row house neighbor to the north. A modern metal fire escape balcony beneath the two third-story windows on the right side of the front facade wraps around the building to a north-side metal stairway. Ivy obscures much of the front foundation and first story, and a portion of the second story on the left side of the front facade.

A narrow, wooden beaded cornice with an embossed egg and dart pattern on ogee molding trims the roofline, with the exception of a short span, which has been repaired with unpainted crown molding. Modern metal modillion vents line the overhang of the roof. Small windows on the third story are replacement 1/1 wooden sash with false 6/6 muntins, framed by flat-arched, flush, painted brownstone lintels and slightly projecting brownstone sills. True divided light 6/6 wooden sash windows on the first and second stories are also framed with flush, painted brownstone, flat-arch lintels and slightly projecting sills. Windows in the center front bay of the house have decorative flush keystone lintels. The

central second story window is surrounded by brick patching indicating where a Victorian oriel was removed in the 1920s.

Three granite steps ascend to the Federal-style, paneled door set shallowly within a brick entranceway over a granite sill, beneath an elliptical arched fanlight with a webbed tracery pattern. Flanked by three-quarter sidelights, this door and window assemblage is set within a delicately detailed, articulated wooden framework of decorative paneling, woodcut bows, beading, and an embossed star and hatch-mark motif. Wooden pilasters with flat, Doric capitals frame this entranceway beneath a flat-roof portico supported by two fluted, Ionic columns. A modern overhead lantern illuminates the entranceway. A single raised bead bisects the plain wooden fascia beneath the overhang of the portico. Low cast iron railings between the entrance columns match the cast iron newels and fencing along the front of the property, which are mounted onto raised granite curbs. Three pyramidal-topped granite posts, one on the northeast end of the property and two at the southeast end, support these fences.

The south facade of the main house is three stories in height over a raised granite foundation and is two bays wide. Evenly ranked windows on the first and second stories are true divided light 6/6 wooden sash, while the third story windows are 1/1 wooden sash replacements with false muntins. Flat-arched, flush brownstone lintels cap each window, and all have slightly projecting brownstone sills. Two three-pane, symmetrically placed basement windows mounted in the granite foundation beneath flat-arch brownstone lintels overlook an untended garden behind an edging of stone pavers, and a narrow, granite slab pathway which parallels the rear fence and leads to the rear, west yard. Two of the three pyramidal granite markers on the east front side of the house mark the entrance to this granite path. Another granite marker of roughhewn pink stone, perhaps a property marker, stands near the southeast corner of the house behind one of the pyramidal markers.

The rear west facade of the main house is three stories in height and three bays in width, with evenly ranked windows on every level. A single side entrance consisting of a modern nine-light over wood panel door in the left bay exits to the rear yard over rudimentary wooden steps. Windows on the third story are replacement 1/1 wooden sash with false muntins, as are all the windows on this facade with the exception of one true divided light 6/6 wooden sash window on the first story in the right bay. A modern wooden bulkhead is centered between the middle and right bays. Flush, painted brownstone lintels cap each window, and all have slightly projecting brownstone sills. A flared, brick stringer lintel caps the side entrance. Ivy is growing over most of this rear facade. A tall wooden fence lines the periphery of the yard, enclosing an overgrown yard and a mature deciduous tree in the southwest corner.

The south wall of the rear ell also rises three stories over a raised granite foundation and is two bays in width, with three stories of evenly ranked replacement 1/1 wooden sash windows with false muntins, flush brownstone flat-arch lintels, and brownstone sills. A fire escape balcony extends from the second story window in the left bay to metal stairs descending to the rear yard. What was once a brick patio is now barely visible beneath uncut grass and weeds. Two three-pane basement windows beneath flat-arch, brownstone lintels are symmetrically mounted in the granite foundation and are mostly obscured by ivy.

Behind this ell to the west is a two-story addition with a gabled roof trimmed with three raised brick bands and dentils on the north and south sides. A window on the rear, third story of the ell, the lintel of which is still partially visible over the addition, appears to have been bricked over in preparation for the two-story addition. A centrally placed brick corbelled chimney extends from the west side of the addition roof. Single gabled dormers sheathed in asphalt shingle and siding, with flat wooden pediments and a single 1/1

replacement wooden sash window with false muntins in each, symmetrically pierce both slopes of the roof.

Three bays on the south facade of this addition overlook the rear yard, with the right two bays containing evenly ranked windows beneath flat, flush, straight lintels, not flared, and projecting sills. Windows on the second story are true divided light 6/6 wooden sash, while those on the first story are replacement 1/1 wooden sash with false muntins. A metal fire escape beneath the central dormer leads to a stairway and balcony across the south wall of the ell. Lintels over two of the second story windows have been replaced with brick infill. The left bay is unevenly stacked, with a larger, true divided light 6/6 wooden sash window on the second story mounted slightly off center over a single, modern-door side entrance set beneath a brownstone lintel, all of which are set slightly lower than the two windows to its right. This modern door matches the rear door on the west facade of the main house. Poured concrete steps lead from this side entrance to the rear yard.

The north facade of the main house and ell rises three stories over a raised granite block foundation and is five irregular bays in width. All windows on this facade, which now face the blank end wall of the row house next door, have flat-arched, brownstone lintels and slightly projecting brownstone sills. The first two bays are evenly ranked, with smaller, 1/1 replacement windows on the third story and true divided light windows on all but the left bay, second-story window, on the first and second stories. Windows in the third bay are unevenly stacked, with one small, replacement 1/1 wooden sash window aligned between the second and third stories in the third bay, and a larger, 1/1 replacement window aligned between the first and second stories. Continuing west, the remainder of the north wall is brick and windowless, with the exception of a small, replacement window in the lower right corner of the first story. Granite blocks with concrete seams form the foundation of the ell on this north side.

A flat-roofed, one-story addition on the north side of the gabled kitchen addition has two bays facing east, with a single, modern wood-paneled door and flanking 6/6 wooden sash window overlooking the north alley. To the left of this two-bay facade, the kitchen addition projects slightly to form an additional bay, which contains a 6/6 wooden sash window on the second story which also faces east. The north wall of this bay is angled to the northwest and overlooks the adjoining neighbors' yard behind a tall wooden fence.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The house known as the Edward Everett House after its most famous resident, was built by Matthew Bridge (1750-1814). Bridge, a prosperous merchant, moved to Charlestown from Lexington in 1785 and became a driving force behind Charlestown's post-revolutionary war reconstruction. He amassed and improved large tracts of land, most notably in the vicinity of Town Hill, Green Street and by the Town Dock. He was also elected to both houses of the State Legislature (Representative, 1803 and 1808, and Senator, 1809 and 1812). At the time of his death, Bridge was actively engaged in the construction of a Federal style brick house for his youngest daughter Sally and her husband Seth Knowles on Town Hill Street, later renamed Harvard Street.

Bridge bequeathed to "the children of my daughter Sally Knowles: the new brick house and land, at the bottom of my garden." Sally Knowles and her husband and two daughters occupied the new house in the Spring of 1815. Seth Knowles, a civic minded merchant followed in his father-in-law's footsteps, representing Charlestown in both the State House (1816, 1822-23) and Senate (1824-25). He played a prominent role in the drive to create the Bunker Hill Monument, and on the morning of the Monument's cornerstone dedication (June 17, 1825) the Knowles family hosted

a special reception at their house. Following Sally's untimely death in 1825, Knowles married Sarah Payson and remained at this address until 1830, when the family relocated to Boston proper and leased the Charlestown house to Edward Everett.

The son of a pastor of modest means, Edward Everett (1794-1865) nevertheless obtained an outstanding education. A graduate of Boston Latin, Exeter Academy and Harvard College, he was awarded the first Ph.D. conferred on an American by the University of Gottingen in Germany in 1817. He returned to Harvard in 1819 as the college's first professor of Greek Language and Literature; and at the same time edited the newly launched *North American Review* (1819-23). In 1822 he married Charlotte, daughter of wealthy Boston merchant Peter Chardon Brooks.

In 1825, Everett was elected to represent the Middlesex district in the U.S. Congress, where he served for ten years, beginning an illustrious career that earned him the sobriquet of "Ever-at-it." He served as Governor of the Commonwealth (1836 - 1840), Minister to the Court of St. James (1841-45); President of Harvard University (1846-49); Secretary of state in Fillmore's cabinet (1852-53); U.S. Senator (1853-54); and the vice-presidential nominee from the Constitutional Union Party (1860). He was also one of the celebrated orators of the age.

In June of 1830, Congressman Everett's family moved into the Knowles House, conveniently located near his local congressional office in the Bunker Hill Bank and Charlestown Square. The Everetts became active in Charlestown affairs. Charlotte raised funds for the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument while Everett became a favorite guest lecturer at the Lyceum.

Following Knowles' death in 1833, Peter Chardon Brooks purchased the house, which had been leased, for Charlotte. While living on Town Hill Street, Everett won two of four consecutive elections to the governorship, which he held from 1836 to 1840. In

1837, his family relocated to Boston where Everett completed his final two gubernatorial terms.

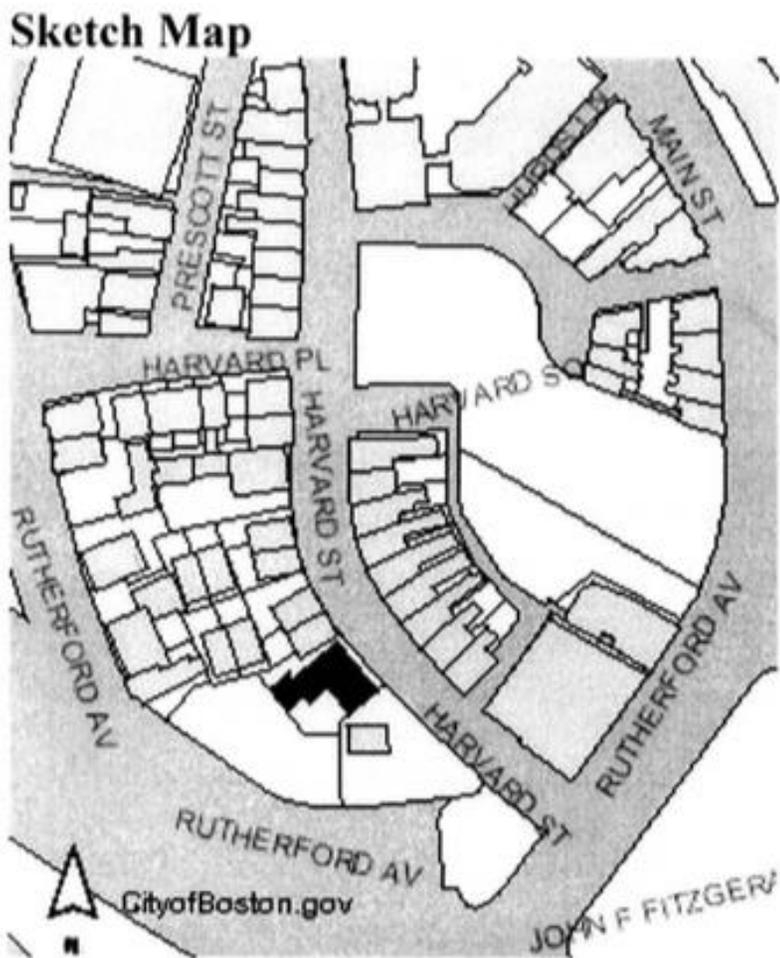
After Everett's tenure, the brick house passed to three prominent 19th century businessmen. In June of 1837, Peter Chardon Brooks sold the Town Hill house and grounds to William Carleton, one of the nation's largest manufacturers of lamps and gas fixtures, and benefactor of the Minnesota college that bears his name. He lived here for a quarter of a century, later moving to a new townhouse he built on Monument Square. Ezra Trull, proprietor of Trull Brothers, Distillers purchased the house from Carleton in 1863 and lived at this address until his death in 1870. Trull's heirs sold the property to Frances Childs, a Charlestown native and proprietor of a retail carpet establishment, who lived here from 1870 to his death in 1887. While living at 16 Harvard Street, Childs, a former state senator, served on the Governor's Council.

Purchased in 1887 by James J. Costello, a Charlestown realtor, the property was operated as a social hall known as the "Hawthorne Club" at the turn of the century. This club function continued into the 1910s when the Young Men's Christian Association leased the property. Conveniently situated near City Square and within a quarter mile of the Charlestown Naval Yard, the house became a popular destination for local servicemen during World War I.

In 1920 Austin T. White, proprietor of Richards & Company, Inc., a metal dealer, purchased the dilapidated property. In the first of recurring efforts to restore the Edward Everett House, White hired architect Ralph W. Gray to convert the house into offices. In addition to reconstructing the roof and installing new interior floors, Gray removed a Victorian oriel above the center entry, an alteration that created a visible masonry patch. White "fell on hard times" and sold the Everett House before achieving his preservation goals.

Leased for office space and later as a lodging house, the property

changed hands five times between 1923 and '28. Owners during this period include: Thomas Giblin, and East Boston realtor; Mary O'Brien Mulvey; James McKay; Theodora McDonald; and Julia Lehan. Mrs. Lehan's tenure was distinguished by her relentless solicitation of William Sumner Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, to add this property to his collection of historic house museums. Despite a decade of haggling, Lehan and Appleton never reached a mutually acceptable acquisition price.





Street facade



Rear façade



Side of Rear Ell

Photographs from the Historic American Buildings Survey
Arthur C. Haskell, Photographer May 22, 1936:





MASS-347(G)



SOUTHWEST WALL, EAST ROOM, 1st. FL



STAIR HALL, 2nd. FLOOR



MASS, 13. CHAR. 6-4 HABS

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