

16, 18, Mount Vernon Street (1846)

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



18, 16 Mount Vernon Street

2015

Numbers 16 and 18 Mount Vernon Street is a substantial, two-story, wood frame double Greek Revival house. It has a granite block basement and is covered with asbestos shingles, originally clapboard. Each of the halves has a three bay main façade and side hall plan. There are fascia boards at the eaves, and the building has a gable roof with return eaves. There are four dormers at the main façade.

The entrances are paired, with Doric pilasters and heavy cornice-headed entablatures. Paneled outer doors have 6/6 wood sash transoms. In general, the windows are fully enframed, with raised outer molding and 2/2 wood sash.

Builder: Caleb Pratt, housewright

Original owner: Caleb Pratt

Although 16 and 18 Mount Vernon Street is currently covered with modern shingle siding, this house retains a high degree of its original siting, form, elements, etc. It is one of only two wood frame houses on a street noted for its unbroken walls of masonry 19th-century single, double, and row houses.

Evidently 16 and 18 Mount Vernon was the first dwelling built in the multi-lot Ebenezer Breed mansion house development after the Breed estate's subdivision in 1846. (The Breed house was located at what is now 36-42 Mount Vernon Street.)

Number 16 and 18 Mount Vernon's lot appears as #27 on a plan of Ebenezer Breed's mansion house estate, drawn by Barker and Leonard, in March 1846. On January 31, 1846 John Breed, heir of Ebenezer, sold 16 and 18's lots to Gustavus V Hall of Somerville, a broker. Shortly thereafter, on March 20,

1846, Hall sold these lots (no buildings), to Caleb Pratt, a Charlestown housewright, for \$2071.85.

Pratt held onto this property, presumably building 16 and 18 in the spring/summer of 1846, until January 15, 1852. The panoramic view of Charlestown, 1848, clearly shows 16 and 18. The house is shown with a rear ell almost as large as the main block.

Caleb Pratt was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1832 to circa 1853. He lived at 28 High Street in 1834, at the corner of 23 Franklin Street until he moved to Chelsea Massachusetts in 1853. He was responsible for a number of modestly scaled Greek Revival dwellings in the area between Elm and Walker streets in Charlestown, including 32-36 Pearl Street, 31, 33, 35 Walker Street, and 32 High Street/23 Franklin Street. Further research may show that he built 122 and 126/128 High Street. Mid-19th century Charlestown housewrights appear to have worked within small sections of Charlestown-16 and 18 Mount Vernon Street was thus somewhat far afield for Caleb Pratt, whose Charlestown work is largely to be found in the Elm-Walker Street section.

In January 1852, Pratt, by that time living in North Chelsea, sold this property to Henry Hill of Charlestown for \$2600. This deed mentions "a brick partition wall" separating the two houses. Further research is needed to determine Hill's occupation. He sold 16 to Lewis Hall (occupation?) of Cambridge on November 6, 1868.

For many years 18 was owned by S Prentice Hill of S Prentice Hill and Company (partner with Jonathan Hatch), grocers, 129 Main Street and 94 Warren Street. S Prentice Hill was living at 18 by at least 1860 and lived there until at least the mid-1880s.

By 1901 this duo's owners included Thomas L Mitchell at 16, and John P Hill, at 18.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown directories-1834-1874

Boston directories-late 19th century

Middlesex D-478:152, 481:188, 581:337, 1041:320

Panoramic View of Charlestown, 1848

*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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