

16 Tremont Street (1848)

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



16 Tremont Street

2016

Number 16 Tremont Street is a redbrick, granite trimmed two-story Greek Revival house. The main façade has three bays with a side hall plan, and a low granite-faced basement. There is a full basement to the rear, below the grade of Tremont Street. The building has a gable roof with two pedimented, gable roofed dormers with wood shingle-clad sides. A pair of tall chimneys projects from either side of the Nearon Row gable peak.

The entrance is recessed, with late 19th century (?) outer doors, topped by a three-pane transom. The inner front door has multi-pane sidelights and a four-pane transom. In general, the windows have simple sills and lintels with 6/6 wood sash, and there is a heavy rectangular lintel over the entrance. There is a pair of attic windows on the Nearon Row end wall.

Builder: George Whitehead

Original owner: George Whitehead

Number 16 Tremont St. is prominently sited at the corner of Tremont Street and Nearon Row. It is at the top of a steep incline, which sweeps down from Tremont Street northward to Bunker Hill Street. This incline is part of the northeast slope of Breeds Hill. Number 16 is part of Tremont Street's small but interesting collection of late 1840s/early 1850s brick and wood frame Greek Revival houses, between Prospect Street and Monument Square. Built circa 1849, 16 Tremont exemplifies the type of Greek Revival masonry housing found on upper Baldwin Street and elsewhere in Charlestown, which is essentially conservative and places a great deal of stock in distinctive form, crisp lines, and planar surfaces. By the mid-1850s, this type of housing was being superseded in Charlestown by brick residences in more plastic Italianate style

with oriel windows, bracketed, and deep-bracketed cornices etc.

Number 16 Tremont Street's land was part of the Ebenezer Breed estate during the early 19th century. By 1845, this land is shown as lots 28, 29 on a "plan of house lots in Charlestown owned by Charles Tufts" dated June 1845. Tufts' three-lot development lay just to the northeast of the Bunker Hill Monument Association's 115-lot parcel, which was set out in 1839 (a less formalized plan by Solomon Willard dates to 1834). The completion of the Bunker Hill Monument on July 1, 1842 attracted considerable attention to Charlestown. House construction on Tufts' house lots began circa 1848, concurrent with the earliest Monument Square house building. House construction around Monument Square was delayed until 1847 due to extensive grading of the site required for several lots. Grading had begun in 1838 to level the hill and correct the sharp drop-off to the north. This sharp drop-off was apparently never corrected in the Charles Tufts development, as evidenced by the steep slope at the north side of Tremont Street.

George Whitehead, a mason, purchased 16 Tremont Street's land from Charles Tufts Jr on September 21, 1847. The Panoramic View of 1848 clearly shows 16 Tremont Street, but this house is not mentioned in a deed between George Whitehead, grantor and Thomas Mellen, grantee dated November 11, 1848. At that time Mellen, a Charlestown trader, paid Whitehead \$850 for this property. Apparently Whitehead was this house's builder. (The only George Whitehead listed in the 1840s Charlestown directories is a "malster" by that name at Neck village.)

Mellon, in turn, conveyed 16 Tremont to his daughter Elizabeth Ellen Sawyer, wife of Jefferson Sawyer, an engineer. The house remained under Sawyer family ownership until at least 1911.

Note: Nearen Row is referred to in Middlesex deeds as Madison Avenue.

** ed note-Could this be “maltster”? A maltster is a person who produces malt from barley, which is used in the production of beer.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Panoramic View of Bunker Hill-1848

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

Charlestown/Boston directories-19th century

Middlesex deeds-531:257, 1023:525

Middlesex plan-2B, 63

National Register Form-Monument Square HP

*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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