

22 Chestnut Street (circa 1868-1874)

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



22 Chestnut Street

ca 1980

Number 22 Chestnut Street is a bow front, Mansard style townhouse, of red brick with brownstone trimming. It has a distinctive four bay Adams Street façade, following the curved

path of Adams Street. The main façade on Chestnut Street has three bays, a low brick basement with a granite base and belt course, and a side hall plan. The building has a much-altered (in terms of fabric and windows) Mansard roof. The cornice has closely spaced scroll brackets above a band course.

The main entrance has circa late 19th century-altered multipanel double doors with a large multipane transom. The entrance is surmounted by a bracketed door hood. The first floor windows of the main and side façades have brownstone sills, and lintels with tabs and slightly raised midsections. An intact oriel projects from the Adams Street façade at the second floor center.



22 Chestnut Street

2015



22 Chestnut, entry detail

2015

Original owner: James Armstrong

The sidewall of 22 Chestnut Street, on Adams Street, is a key component of the "wall" of flat front masonry mid-19th century townhouses lining Adams Street from Winthrop to Chestnut Street. It is a relatively rare example of bow front Charlestown housing. The house has significant historical associations with Commodore James Armstrong of the United States Navy. Armstrong, described by T T Sawyer as possessing

an "official dignity", evidently owned both 13 Adams (see form) and 22 Chestnut Street's lots for many years but lived elsewhere on Adams Street. The houses were evidently built after his death in the late 1860s.

Armstrong purchased these lots from Lot Merriam Jr of Charlestown, a "housewright", on December 28, 1838. Lot Merriam Jr had purchased the lots from Martha Lawrence, "widow", circa mid-1830s. The Lawrence/Merriam deed mentions that "a small dwelling house" stood on this land. Lawrence's property had been carved from "the mansion house estate of Nathan Adams". The Lawrence/Merriam deed mentions "the lane or street leading to the mansion house." This lane represents the nucleus of Chestnut Street. The Mallory panoramic view of Charlestown/Boston clearly indicates that in 1848 the only houses standing on Adams Street across from the old Training Field were numbers 9 through 12. Number 13 Adams and 22 Chestnut Street's land is shown as vacant, not even showing the small house mentioned in the 1838 deed. The James Armstrong estate is listed as owning numbers 13 Adams and 22 Chestnut in 1875. (These houses do not appear on the 1868 Sanborn insurance Atlas but do appear on the 1875 Beers Atlas of Charlestown.

By 1885, and into the 1890s, Harriet W Bartleman, owned number 22 Chestnut.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Atlases-1868, 1874, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1911

TT Sawyer-old Charlestown, page 469

Middlesex Deeds-338:104, 377:428

Suffolk Deeds-1483:247

*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.

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