

## 23 Pleasant Street (by 1808)

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



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Twenty-three Pleasant Street is a center hall plan late Georgian wood frame house with a gambrel roof, with its narrow gambrel end to the street. Narrow corner boards accent the house's edges. It has a five bay main façade, which faces southwest and overlooks an ample yard. Projecting from the center of the main façade's roof slope is a trio of dormer windows with shed roofs. A clear view of the yard and main façade's first floor from Pleasant Street is obscured by a tall chain-link and wooden fence. Access to number 23's yard is gained via Donnell Court's entrance on Warren Street. (See notes for 81, 81 ½ Warren Street)

The center entrance's enframements appear to have been altered-simple pilasters are still intact but the entablature seems to have been modified. In general the windows are fully enframed with raised outer and inner moldings-still intact is

6/9 wood sash. Fenestration configuration on the street-facing wall is somewhat unusual with a single window in the center of the first floor wall and two widely spaced windows on the second floor-usually only one window appears at each level.

Original owner; Kettel family(?)

Architecturally, this house is part of Charlestown's small but choice collection of late Georgian gambrel roof houses. The gambrel roof was widely used in domestic architecture of the northern colonies from 1700-1780. The gambrel-roofed house is an important sub-style within the Georgian style. This roof configuration is found in about 25% of surviving houses in the northern states. The gambrel shape is an adaptation of the gable form, which provides more attic space for storage and sleeping. Number 23 Pleasant testifies to the longevity of the gambrel roofed house type in New England and more specifically in Charlestown. Evidently it was employed in Charlestown house construction until as late as the mid-1820s (see form on 23 Prescott St.). Its use in early 19th century Charlestown building underlines the conservatism of local housewrights during the first half of the 19th century.

Number 23 Pleasant dates to at least 1808-on March 21 of that year Andrew Keith of Charlestown sold this house and land to Joseph Noyes of Boston, a merchant, for \$1600. During the early 19th century the Kettel family owned several tracts of land on the northeast side of Warren Street. Further examination of the many Middlesex grantee- grantor listings for Andrew Kettel may pinpoint this house's date of construction. In any event, Noyes sold number 23 to Benjamin Fiske of Charlestown on August 22, 1817 for \$1000. Two years later (9 September in 1819) Fiske sold this property to William

Hawes and Samuel Rich of Charlestown for \$1000. Evidently Fiske continued to live in the vicinity of number 23 as the Fiske/Hawes deed stipulates that " Fisk and his heirs have the right to the full and perfect use of the well in front of the house hereby conveyed with the privilege of passing through the backyard to the dwelling house over the land of the said Hawes and Rich." In addition, Hawes and Rich were forbidden to erect a stable in front of the house.

This house remained under Rich (and Hawes?) Ownership until 24 May 1847. At that time Samuel Andrews, guardian of Samuel Rich's minor children, sold number 23 to Aaron Wylie, a mariner, (referred to in the mid-19th century Charlestown directory as a "fisherman"). Wiley was the highest bidder on this property at a public auction. Andrew Wylie lived here from 1847 until circa 1870. By 1874 Lydia Wiley, a nurse, is listed as living here. Aaron Wylie's heirs owned this house until at least 1892. Later owners included Charles D. Suwin (sp. ?Sawin) (1901) and John Kyle (1911).

Pleasant Street was set out circa late 1790s. It appears on the 1818 Peter Tufts map of Charlestown labeled South Pleasant Street (in anticipation of a Pleasant Street extended over Breeds Hill (?). Number 23 is one of the first, if not the first house built on this street.

#### Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown directories-1834-1874

Middlesex deeds-179: 19, 219:454, 228:464, 511:144

*A Field Guide to American Houses*-Virginia and Lee McAlister

\*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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