

23 Prescott Street (circa 1824)

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



23 Prescott Street

date (?)

Twenty-three Prescott Street is a gambrel roofed Federal (retardataire Georgian) clapboard house, with a five by one bay main block, a brick basement, and a rear ell. Its narrow,

one bay gambrel gable faces the street, and the main façade faces a narrow brick-paved alley/yard. The edges of the main block are defined by narrow corner boards. It is enclosed by a steeply pitched Gambrel roof with two shed-roofed dormers, widely spaced, on the main façade.

A very Federal 1820s entablature with a deep molded cornice, surmounts the entrance. The windows are fully enframed, with raised inner and outer moldings. The main façade's windows have 6/6 wood sash, and the street-facing wall has 2/2-replacement sash.

23 Prescott Street

2015



Builder: Lott Pool, housewright

Original owner: Lott Pool

Built circa 1824, 23 Prescott Street is part of Charlestown's small but choice collection of late 18th century/early 19th century gambrel roofed houses. Charlestown is the only Boston neighborhood with extant examples of pre 1830 gambrel roof housing (with the notable exception of Dorchester's Clapp house, built circa 17__ on Boston Street, Dorchester).

Architecturally, 23 Prescott Street is a retardataire example of a Gambrel roofed five by one bay, center hall plan wood frame house. (The possibility remains that this house was moved from another site but deed work points to a construction date of 1824). The gambrel roof was widely used in the domestic architecture of the northern colonies from 1700 to 1780. The gambrel roof house is an important sub style within the Georgian style, found in about 25% of surviving houses in the northern states. The gambrel shape is an adaptation of the gable form to provide more attic space for storage and sleeping. Number 23 Prescott testifies to the longevity of the gambrel roofed house type in New England, and this house underlines the general conservatism of the Charlestown building trades during the first half of the 19th century.

No buildings are mentioned on this site in a deed of December 23, 1813 (200:527) between Rachel Draher Farie and Daniel and Sarah Waters. Number 23 Prescott Street evidently represents the work of local housewright Lott Pool. He was active in Charlestown building trades circa 1810s-1830s. Pool purchased number 23's lot on 18 March 1824 (232:62). Both the \$620 sale price and the fact that no buildings are mentioned in the Farie/Pool deed indicate that Pool was

buying a vacant lot in 1824. In addition, a construction date of 1824 is supported by stylistic evidence. The entrance enframements of 23 Prescott are more 1820s than late 18th century/early 19th century. It is important to keep in mind that with the exception of a few dwellings at Charlestown Neck, all of Charlestown's buildings were destroyed by the British in the spring of 1775-precluding the survival of any pre-1770 roof structure in Charlestown.

On September 10, 1835. Lott Pool sold the house to Thomas M Cutter, a Charlestown merchant, for \$4400 (345:310). Cutter owned this property for 35 years, selling it to Edward Cooper Jr for \$3000 on May 17, 1870. Hooper is variously listed in Charlestown directories as a "carpenter" and an "engineer" employed by the Fitchburg railroad. Later owners of 23 included Elizabeth Hooper Rice, Harrison D Taylor and Thomas G Gilbride.

Prescott Street was called Middlegate Street prior to circa early 1840s. It was part of town Hill's original organic pattern of streets, streets that were set out as early as the mid-17th century. Prescott Street was named in honor of Col. William Prescott, the distinguished leader of the patriot troops on Bunker Hill.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown the directories 1832-1874

Boston directories-late 19th century

Middlesex deeds-200: 527, 253: fit 62, 345:310, 1101:99

Suffolk deeds-1363: 185, 3360:74, 75

A Field guide to American Houses-Virginia and Lee McAllister

*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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