

23 Union Street (1857)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981*:



23 Union Street

2015

Number 23 Union Street is a three-story red brick granite/brownstone trimmed Italianate townhouse, with an emphasis on verticality. It has a three bay main façade, and a side hall plan. The sidewalls are devoid of windows but exhibit star shaped tie rod ends. The granite faced basement has two large openings, both boarded over, that on the left serving as a below-grade access to the basement. The building has a flat roof with a cornice composed of recessed rectangular brickwork panels and modillion blocks (cast iron?).

A tall recessed entrance is surmounted by deep door hood supported by bold curving brackets (wood?) Access to the front door is gained via a steep flight of granite steps. A curious feature is an outer transom, which is solid and multi-paneled and apparently never contained glass. The transom is “boxed”, suggesting a crawl space located behind the transom. The front door is flanked by single pane sidelights. Beneath the door hood is a segmental entrance arch with keystone and panels. The door hood supports a second floor oriel. The window lintels of floors one and two are cornice-headed, all with 2/2 wood sash.

Builder: Jeremiah B. Bradford

Original owner: Jeremiah B. Bradford/Hiram P. Remick

Number 23 Union Street is set apart from its more modestly scaled wood frame early 19th century neighboring houses by virtue of its imposing three-story height, masonry materials, and stylish Italianate treatments. In addition it stands out within its streetscape by virtue of it's siting. The house is flanked by a narrow alleyway and a sizable vacant lot (once the site of a contiguous, with number 23, four story masonry house with two-story brick end wall and wood rear ell, numbered 25 Union Street).

Built circa 1857, this house represents the work of Jeremiah B Bradford. He was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1840-early 1870s. He is listed in the 1842 Charlestown directory as a mason residing at 25 Austin Street. By 1845, he was living on Chapman Lane. His home addresses in 1848, 1852, and 1856 were 137 Main, 223 Main, and 18 Walker Street, respectively. He is listed as a mason in 1860 and 1870, living at 391 Main and 10 Mount Vernon, respectively. Bradford is credited with the masonry Greek Revival row at 88-96 Baldwin (1849).

Jeremiah B. Bradford purchased number 23's lot from Edwin F Adams, executor of Sarah V. Waldo's estate on April 18, 1857, for \$2057.00. Sarah V. Waldo had owned the gambrel half of the house next door (21 Union). No. 23 union was built on what was probably the Waldo garden. It was evidently built during the spring-early fall, 1857. Buildings are first mentioned on this property in a deed dated November 17, 1857-at that time number 23 was sold by Bradford to Hiram P Remick, a Charlestown physician, for the then considerable sum of \$9000.00.

Evidently 23 Union Street was not owner occupied (or at least by an owner of long-standing) until Albert G Prince bought it on 8 October 1869 (owners between 1858 and 1869 included Levi Wilkins of Boston, Frederick R. Bostwick of Newton and Isaac a Hatch of Newton). Albert G Prince lived at 23 Union from 1869 until at least the early 1900s. Mid-late 19th century directories do not list an occupation for Mr. Prince.

Bibliography:

Map- 1852

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

Middlesex deeds: 761:151, 771:478, 791:575, 931:558,
1071:581.

Charlestown and directories-1834-74

Boston directories 1875-1900

*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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