

**254 (built ca 1855), 258 (built ca 1845), 260 (built 1891)
Main Street**

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



254, 258, 260 Main Street

2015

Number 254 Main Street is a substantial commercial and residential Mansard building. It has a five bay by three bay main block, with a rear ell. The bracketed cornice spans the length of the main façade and wraps around one bay's length on the Phipps Street side. The steep-sided Mansard roof's shingles are mostly intact. A cast iron storefront with seven paneled pilasters is still intact. The second floor of the Main

Street facade has an oriel window and a window with a high Victorian Gothic polychromatic lintel. The other windows are much more simply enframed, with simple sill and lintel bars of granite



254 Main Street

2015

Number 258 Main Street is a Greek Revival townhouse with a three bay flat front and a gable roof. There is a granite pier and lintel storefront on the ground floor. A multipanel oriel window spanning floors two and three constructed of metal is a later addition. There is a pair of pedimented dormers at the gable's street-facing slope.



258 Main Street 2015

Number 260 Main Street is an astylistic late 19th century commercial/ residential block, with cast iron piers and lintels on the ground floor and with brick work infill and replacement windows. Aside from the storefront, the windows are of

standard size and have rock faced brownstone sills and lintels. It has a four bay main façade with seven bay sidewalls, with planar surfaces. There is brickwork banding at the cornice and a large painted early 20th century advertisement on the north wall which reads “JJ McCarthy Co.”



Original owner: #260- T A O'Brien

Together with 265-271 and 253-261 Main, across the street, this group forms an architecturally distinctive node of mid--late 19th century commercial/residential buildings dating from circa 1845-1891.

Number 254 Main is a rare surviving mid-19th-century Mansard residential/commercial block, built circa mid-1850s and apparently updated circa late 1860s/70s with the addition of a Mansard roof and high Victorian Gothic second floor window lintel. This building retains its cast-iron pier and lintel storefront.

Wedged in between the relatively massive forms of 254 and 260, 258 is a Greek Revival row house with handsome granite

posts and lintels. A multipanel metal oriel spans floors two and three and there is a pair of pedimented attic dormers.

Number 260 is difficult to categorize stylistically-it is a large brick commercial/residential block with cast iron piers and lintels on the ground floor. Its planar surface has standard size windows with rock-faced brownstone sills and lintels.

This group is difficult to date via deeds as buildings have been located on or near this site since at least the 1770s (see Bunker Hill battle map, MHS). The 1875 Atlas indicates that number 254 was owned by George P Kettell. He had an apothecary shop on the ground floor and lived in the rear ell of this building. (Number 1 Phipps Street). Number 258 was evidently the rectory of the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church. The Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, presently in an altered state (Eben Jordan Building, the Boys Club of Boston), stands on High Street opposite the entrance to Elm Street. (See note for 62 High Street.) Number 260's land was owned by a John H Clapp.

Middlesex deeds (751:357), directories and local histories indicate that that these lots were part of the Phipps family landholdings. Sawyer notes that "the Phipps family is an old one in the town and much of interest might be written about it. The name appears in several instances among the founders and original members of the Harvard church and Joseph Phipps Junior, resident of the south side of Main Street, was one of its first deacons. Evidently number 258 was owned by Nancy Winchester, daughter of Benjamin Phipps. She was the founder of the Winchester Home for Aged Women, which was located on Eden Street. Nancy Winchester bequeathed \$10,000 to this institution. The Winchester home was initially housed in James K Frothingam's wooden house-in 1872-73, "a

picturesque building was erected on adjacent land. It was a two-story building with a high, red brick basement, a so-called French roof, with another good story and a flattened pyramidal roof to accent the center". The architect was S J F Thayer and the whole cost about \$45,000. Nancy Winchester and husband (?) Mark Winchester operated a fancy goods shop and shoemaking concern in the storefront of 258 by at least 1856.

During the mid-1860s George P Kettell acquired 254 from Charles H Phipps for \$4000. (1132:84). Charles Phipps had purchased this property from the George W Phipps for \$700. At that time the property was described as being "a part of the land and a part of the mansion house of Solomon Phipps senior. The circa 1865 substantial leap in price from \$700 to \$4000 suggests a circa 1865 construction date for this building. (Check 1132:84 for date).

Number 260 was built in 1891 and was owned in 1901 by TA O'Brien.

Phipps Street is a very old Street, going back to at least the mid-18th century and was originally known as Phipps Lane. This thoroughfare was evidently set out to link Main Street with the Phipps Street burial ground; it was evidently more formally laid out in October 1839.

Main Street dates back to the 17th century. In 1714 it was called Market Street, and Main Street by 1769. It was altered and straightened from the corner of Water Street nearly to the neck or causeway in 1780. By the 1770s a group of houses constituting "Mill Village" was located near the junction of Main, Mill and Eden streets. The completion of the Middlesex Canal in 1803 spurred further building construction activity in the Mill Street/Main Street area-most notably the Bunker Hill

Tavern (completed 1827) which stood with several stables at the intersection of Canal (later Essex), and Main Street. Boston public works department photographs of an early 18th century Main Street indicate that it was once lined with 1840s-1860s wood frame and masonry commercial blocks representing the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. 1960s urban renewal evidentially was responsible for the demolition of many of these buildings.

Bibliography:

Maps-1775, 1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown directories-1834-1874

Middlesex deeds

Boston's streets, 1910 Boston St., Commissioner

A Century of Town Life, a History of -Massachusetts, 1888-James F Honeywell

Old Charlestown Timothy T Sawyer

*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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