

3-15 Bolton Place (1861-1862)

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

Numbers 3-15 and 4-8 Bolton Place are two identical rows of wood frame Greek Revival/Italianate houses on opposite sides of a cul-de-sac. They have been altered in terms of fabric. The basic Italianate form with Greek Revival elements, for example entrance enframements, pilasters, and entablatures, are intact. Each house has a brick basement and three bay main facade with a side all plan. They have simply enframed windows with 1/1, and 2/2 wood sash. There are continuous fascia boards and a deep cornices.



3- 15 Bolton Place

2015



4-6 Bolton Place

2015

Builder: David B Weston and Rufus Mason

Original owner: Weston and Mason/Richard Sullivan, Jr

Although the fabric of Bolton place's wood frame row houses has been considerably altered, and numbers 10-16 are no longer extant, Bolton Place still manages to convey a distinctive mid-19th century character via scale, forms and elements of its houses. Architecturally, these houses are of interest as examples of a type of modest Italianate speculative housing, with Greek Revival elements, which was built along Charlestown streets and cul-de-sacs during the late 1850s-

early 1860s. These houses represent the work of prolific Charlestown "painters and glaziers," and builders, David B Weston and Rufus Mason.

Plans for Bolton Street and adjacent lots were drawn up by Thomas Doane and John Doane (see 7, 9 Pearl Street) in January and May 1861. Evidently the ownership of these lots passed back and forth between Richard Sullivan, Jr and Westin/Mason in 1861-1862, with buildings definitely mentioned on these lots in a deed dated June 2, 1862 (Middlesex 871:132). Apparently Sullivan owned some of these lots as late as 1868 (see Middlesex 1021:512).

In any event, David B Weston and Rufus Mason clearly built these houses. Weston and Mason worked separately as "painters" in Charlestown beginning circa 1842, formed a partnership as "painters and glaziers", and builders, circa 1850. They dissolved their business circa 1863 so that Weston could do good work as Visitor to the Overseers of the Poor in Boston. Mason worked in partnership with his son George B Mason, as builders, until the early 1870s. Weston and Mason are well represented within the survey area with examples of work at 19-35 Russell, an Italianate wood frame row, 1857; 2 and 4 Mason Court, double Italianate/Greek Revival houses with entrance enframements similar to Bolton Place houses; and the Italianate wood frame row at 7-15 Wall Street, as well as numerous generally modest dwellings.

The Sullivan/Westin and Mason July 1, 1861 deed (851:501) carried the following restriction "no buildings erected or to be erected up on the premises shall within 10 years of the date be occupied by Irish or colored persons or tenants."



It is difficult to determine the identities of Bolton Place's early inhabitants. Apparently Sullivan, Weston, and Mason rented the houses until circa late 1860s. William Ramsdell of 11 Bolton Place purchased this property on April 28, 1868 from Richard Sullivan of Boston for \$750. In 1875 Bolton Place owners included: Miss Charity E Willey-3, a George A Hensley-5, Abbey C Tenners-7 and 9, William D Ramsdell, "turnkey, State Prison"-11, and Harriet Smith, an employee of the State Prison-13 (currently number 15).

Owners of 4-16 Bolton Place in 1875 included A M Eastman, instructor, state prison-4, Cynthia Davis, widow, owned 6 as an investment property (she lived at 17 Baldwin Street. Stephen Fleck, a clerk, owned number 8.

The owners of 8-16 in 18__ included Mary a Walker, Fred Hayden, E R Robinson, and John F Simonds, a book binder, 21 Cornhill, Boston.

Owners in 1901 included E E Murch at 3, Joseph F Sullivan, propertyman, Boston Theater-5, F S Mason, real estate and insurance, owned but did not occupy, 7, H D Johnson -9, William Ramsdell's heirs owned 11 and L W Mumler owned 13.

Owners of 4-16 Bolton Pl. in 1901 included H D Johnson- 4, heirs of Annie Fleck, 6, Mary Tuxbury, 8, Benjamin N Towle-10, Fred A hayden-12, D L Towle-14 and Darius R Stockwell, a watchmaker, at 16.

Maps dating from the first half of the 19th century indicate that Bolton Place represents the mid section of a thoroughfare called Bolton Street, which was to have incorporated what is now Franklin Street and continue all the way through to Russell Street. Bolton Street existed only on paper, appearing on the 1818 map as part of a system of streets between Elm and Walker streets, developed largely by Oliver Holden and Richard Sullivan senior during the 1800s. The lots adjoining Bolton Place remained as part of Richard Sullivan Sr and Richard Sullivan Jr's real estate empire until the early 1860s.

Bolton place and adjacent lots had been part of Richard Sullivan Sr and Richard Sullivan Jr's extensive landholdings. The Sullivans became involved with Charlestown real estate speculation because of Richard Sr's father's involvement with the Middlesex Canal. James Sullivan was governor of Massachusetts in 1807 and president of the Middlesex Canal. This canal linked the Merrimack River area with Charlestown/Boston. It was completed in 1803.

Richard Sullivan Sr bought several large tracts of land in Sullivan Street area circa 1805, from all Oliver Holden. Richard Sr owned considerable landholdings at Charlestown Neck and operated a tavern at what is now Sullivan Street by 1818. Richard Sullivan Jr sold off his father's land holdings during the 1840s-70s. Richard Jr was a Boston-based commercial merchant and lived on Mount Vernon Street, Beacon Hill.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Middlesex Dean's 851:501, 1021:512

The Old Middlesex Canal, MS Clark, 1974

*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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