

31 Oak Street (1840-1841)

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



31 Oak Street

1981

Number 31 Oak Street is a 2½ story Greek Revival clapboard-clad house with a three bay main façade. Fascia and sideboards are intact, and there is a pedimented attic, faced with aluminum siding. It has a gable roof and a dormer on the South roof slope with synthetic siding, at the attic level.

It has a two-story rear ell.

The house has a side hall plan, with the entrance at the front gable end. It has handsome, recessed entrance enframements

with Doric pilasters and a heavy cornice-headed entablature. The front door is flanked by multi-pane sidelights and a transom. The windows are fully enframed, with 6/6 wood sash.



31 Oak Street entry

1981



31 Oak Street

2015

Builder: Isaac Blanchard and/or Thomas Greenleaf

Original owner: Samuel Carr

Architecturally, 31 Oak Street is a classic example of the Greek Revival side hall plan house with a three bay main façade, robust Doric pilasters, cornice-headed entablature, and pedimented attic. Built during the first real "building boom" in the area between Walker and Baldwin Streets (circa 1837-1850) this house dates to circa 1840. During the 1830s and '40s prominent families such as the Meads, Frothinghams, and

above all, the Sullivans were selling off their extensive landholdings in this area. These land sales were in part prompted by the decline of the Middlesex Canal (1840s/50s) and the waves of immigrants coming to Boston during the mid-19th century.

Number 31 Oak Street represents the work of Isaac Blanchard and/or Thomas Greenleaf. Further research is needed on Blanchard's career. Thomas Greenleaf was a native of Newburyport, Massachusetts but spent most of his life in Charlestown. Sawyer states that Greenleaf at one time "had some connection with the Middlesex Canal, which was completed 1803 and had its southern terminus at Charlestown Neck, but afterwards engaged in the lumber trade". As early as 1834 he is listed in the Charlestown directory as a carpenter and surveyor based on Mill Street. By 1842 he was the proprietor of Thomas A Greenleaf and Company (E Ward), wood and lumber, Neck Village-at that time he lived on Oak Street. By 1856 his occupation is listed as "lumber". From 1856 to circa 1885 he lived at 26 Adams Street, Charlestown. In 1860 his occupation is listed as "assessor". In addition Greenleaf was active in the affairs of the town, and later city, of Charlestown, serving as selectman, assessor, and clerk of the Overseers of the Poor.

Number 31 Oak Street was the home of Samuel Carr, a bank officer, from 1840-1865. Carr purchased this corner lot, without buildings, from Isaac Blanchard and Moser Sewall, a Morocco tanner, on January 24, 1840 (See Middlesex deed 389:447), for \$550. Two years later on December 24, 1842, Carr bought what are now 23 and 25 Oak Street's lots from Sewall and Blanchard. They in turn had purchased this lot from Richard Frothingham, a carriage maker, and Thomas Greenleaf,

a carpenter. During the 1850s, Carr's work is listed as "cashier, Shoe and Leather Dealers Bank, Boston.

Carr sold 31's lot to John F Gilman, a stonemason, on September 26, 1865 (see 931: 294) for \$7000. Gilman in turn sold it to Dolphin D Taylor, a mason, on April 30, 1866. Taylor was active in Charlestown building trades from 1845 to early 1890s. As late as 1890 he is listed as "mason, house 31 Oak Street". Taylor was evidently responsible for the construction of 23, 25 Oak Street- the masonry row houses situated on the southern part of 31's house lot. In the early 1900s Michael Bowen, cook at Young's Hotel, Charlestown, owned this house.

Oak Street was set out ca. the late 1830s. Number 31's lot had been part of the Isaac Meade estate, which was carved up into house lots in 1837. (See form on 38 Mead Street for more information on the Mead estate).

Note: Isaac Blanchard was active in Charlestown building trades from 1834-circa late 1860s. In 1834 he is referred to as a "carpenter, house 182 Main Street." By 1860 he is listed at 8 Mount Vernon. By 1866 he was living in Charlestown's elite residential area, 9 Monument Square. He is not listed in the 1870 directory.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851
 Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901
 Charlestown directories-1834-1874
 Middlesex deeds
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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