

37 and 39 Washington Street (circa 1838-1840)

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



39, 37 Washington Street

2015

Numbers 37 and 39 Washington Street is a substantial two story Greek Revival wood frame clapboard double house with a six bay by two bay main block. It has a granite block foundation. The edges are crisply defined by narrow base and corner boards. The building is enclosed by a broad gable roof

with return eaves, and single gable-roofed dormers at the main façades. The 1868 Sanborn Atlas shows this house as having paired, one story wings.

The main façade features paired and recessed side entrances with short flights of wooden stairs leading to well-designed and crafted wood paneling with raised moldings. Outer entrance enframements consist of boldly rendered Doric pilasters with heavy paired and pedimented entablatures. In general the windows are fully enframed exhibiting raised outer moldings, and have 6/6 wood sash.

Builder: Jown W. Mulliken, George S. Adams
Original owner: James Adams?

Architecturally, numbers 37 and 39 Washington Street is significant as a substantial, well-crafted example of circa late 1830s double wood frame Greek Revival houses. Along with numbers 107, 109 Warren Street and 46, 48 Chestnut Street, numbers 37 and 39 Washington rank among the better-preserved examples of this housing type. Particularly noteworthy are its boldly rendered classical entrance enframements consisting of Doric pilasters and heavy pedimented entablatures. Also noteworthy is the way its generously proportioned volume is crisply defined by attenuated base and corner boards.

This house is situated on part of the land on which the Archibald McNeil house, built at some point before 1800, evidently stood near the center of the block bounded by Washington Street, Union Street, Rutherford Avenue, and Devens Street. Capt. Archibald McNeil had come from Boston to live at Lynde's Point during the mid-1790s. The 1818 Peter Tufts map shows the McNeill ropewalks, which were located

just to the south of Washington Street along Lynde Street. Capt. Archibald McNeil subdivided a 20 acre tract at Lynde's point (later Prison Point) into house lots-this tract embraced parts of Washington Street, Old Rutherford Avenue, Union Street etc.

McNeil's house was later owned by Col. Samuel Jacques, from 1814 until the early 1830s. Jacques was engaged in the West India goods business. He was also inspector general of hops and was apparently involved in its exportation-at one time an important business in Charlestown. The inspection of hops took place on Jacques' wharf, which was located on the Charles River bay between Mason and Arrow (the section of Washington Street from Harvard Street to Devens) streets. Col. Samuel Jacques lived on Washington Street until 1832 or 1833-at that time he moved to the Ten Hills Farm in what is now Somerville.

Evidently intensive housing development followed the departure of Col. Jacques, with wood frame and masonry houses being erected along Washington Street. Numbers 37 and 39 Washington was built circa 1838-1840 by John W Mullican and George S Adams, "mechanics". Mullican and Adams were probably responsible for the row of 12 houses (now reduced to seven) at 74-86 Washington in 1839. Mullican was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1820s?-Early 1850s. George S Adams was described in a *Charlestown Enterprise* article of November 20, 1920 as "one of the principal masons and builders who thoroughly understood his business which was quite extensive at one time. Mr. Adams acquired a fortune and moved to Belmont Massachusetts."

Number 37 and 39's first owner was James Adams, Charlestown, a "merchant". He paid Mulliken and George Adams \$2225.30 for this house's lot (50 feet on Washington

Street.) Middlesex deeds indicate that by July 1840 James Adams was living in number 37 and Chester Adams, a "gentleman" was living in 39. James Adams sold 37 to William S Park, an "architect" for \$3800 on May 1, 1856. By circa 1850 William Arnold, a dry goods dealer, was living in number 39. From 1865 to the early 1900s number 37 (and eventually number 39) was owned by Luther Pollard, a real estate agent. By 1911, Brian Kelly owned 37 and William A Laughlin owned 39.

Bibliography:

Maps- 1818, 1852

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

Charlestown/Boston directories-19th century

Middlesex deeds-#37-372:185, 371:131, 741:48, 931:106

T T Sawyer-*Old Charlestown*, pages 56-62

*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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