

**374, 376; also 372, 378, 380 Main Street (ca. 1835)**

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

Numbers 372, 374, 378, and 380 Main Street are four wood frame Greek Revival houses with three bay, side hall plans. All have been altered in terms of facing materials.

Numbers 374- 376 is a double house with a six bay main façade. The basement is faced with granite blocks. Replacement stairs lead to paired entrances with neocolonial replacement enframements. Number 374 retains its original inner vestibule sidelights and three-pane transom. The building is a "brick-end" double house, with seven stretcher brick rows to one header brick row, and the end wall gables culminate in linked chimneys. The chimneys have been truncated on the South Gable.



374, 376 Main Street

2015

Numbers 372, 378, and 380 Main Street are three bay side hall plan Greek Revival houses, all of which have been altered in terms of facing materials.



372 Main Street

2015



378 Main Street

2015



380 Main Street

2015

Builder: Thomas Greenleaf?

Original owner: Middlesex Canal Company?

Built circa 1835, the double house at 374- 376 Main Street is part of a rare Surviving Main Street group of four detached Greek revival wood frame houses. It is one of the very few "brick ender" double houses in the survey area. Possessing a distinctive boxy rectangular form with six bay main façade and paired entrances, this house's brick end wall culminates in a pair of linked chimneys. The house's historical significance lies in its associations with the Middlesex Canal employees Richard Frothingham and Thomas Greenleaf. The house is a rare Boston area Middlesex Canal-related structure.

In addition, the four houses in this group have historical association with Charlestown/Boston's mid-19th century building trades, including Henry T Burr, a lumber dealer,

Thomas Greenleaf, a lock tender/carpenter, William B Frost, a carpenter, and Charles C Woodbury, a carpenter and later, trader, at numbers 372, 376, 378 and 380, respectively.

Numbers 374 and 376 occupied part of a 2-5 acre parcel of land purchased by the Middlesex Canal Company in 1803, an area that included Mill St., Canal Street and Main Street. The 27-mile Middlesex Canal linked Boston with the Merrimack Valley. The canal's southern terminus was the Charlestown Mill Pond. Numbers 374 and 376 Main appear on "a plan of Middlesex Canal property in Charlestown" dated August 1844, labeled Frothingham and Greenleaf- along with a rectangular "shop" to the northeast, at the site of 380. To the south of 374/376 was the Bunker Hill Tavern, a large stable, and three sheds (1827). In addition the lock tender's house was located in the center of the triangle bordered by Canal and Mill Streets, and the Mill Pond.

Evidently Richard Frothingham lived at 374 in 1844. He was born in 1812 and was educated in Charlestown schools and at age 18 was a clerk with a merchant on Long wharf. In 1833 he worked for John Doggett and Company, the well-known dealers in carpets and furniture at Corn Hill. In April 1834 he entered the office of the Middlesex Canal Company where he remained a clerk, agent, and later treasurer until about 1860 when the affairs of the company were terminated. He was an editor and columnist for the *Boston Post* during the 1840s and 50s. He was a representative in the state legislature for five years and in 1853 was a member of the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention, and was mayor of the city for three years from 1851 to 1853. Frothingham died on January 29, 1880.

The 1844 plan shows 376 Main St. as labeled "Greenleaf". Evidently this was Thomas Greenleaf, a lock tender and a carpenter. He was the lock tender at lock number three, Malden Road Lock, Charlestown Neck. This was the starting point for towing horses during the early years of the canal. Greenleaf was responsible for a number of houses in the Eden-Baldwin Street section of Charlestown, including 38 and 39 Mead Street. The other houses in this group date to ca. 1845 and were built during the initial phase of the Main, Essex and Mill Street area's development.

For many years Henry T Berger lived at 372 Main Street, beginning circa 1842. He was a lumber dealer and is listed here as late as 1891. During the mid-1870s Charles H Bigelow owned 374 and 376. He was the superintendent of the Mystic Waterworks. In 1866 he is listed as a carpenter. William N Frost, a carpenter, lived at 378 during the 1850s. C Woodbury, a carpenter, is listed as this house's owner in 1875.

#### Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1889, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown directories

*The old Middlesex Canal*, Mary Stetson Charles

*The Middlesex Canal*, Louis M Lawrence, Hayden Library, M IT, 1942

\*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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