

39 Mead Street (1845-1847, altered 1860s-70s)

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



39 Mead Street

1981



39 Mead Street entry

1981



39 Mead Street

2015

Number 39 Mead Street is a Greek Revival/Mansard wood frame house. It has a three bay main façade with fascia and sideboards, and a side hall plan. There are paired brackets at the cornice, a hip-on-mansard roof, and three recessed dormers on the Mead Street main façade, and four on the sidewall roof.

Two granite steps lead to a front door flanked by narrow sidelights and a two-pane transom. Entrance enframements include an exceptional shouldered and pedimented entablature

with well-carved rosette ornamentation. The windows are fully enframed, with pedimented lintels and 2/2 wood sash.

Builder: Thomas Greenleaf-attributed (Deeds source)

Original owner: Almarin Trowbridge

Number 39 Mead Street is a relatively substantial Greek Revival house which was built circa 1845-1847, and altered by the addition of a hip-on-mansard roof circa 1860s or 70s. It was probably built with a pedimented attic. It has one of the finest and most unusually ornate Greek Revival entrance enframements in Charlestown. Indeed this type of Greek Revival entrance treatment (shouldered and pedimented entrance enframements with rosettes) is a rarely seen in the Boston area.

Prior to the mid-1840s, 39's lot was part of the estate of Isaac Mead, a leading Charlestown Morocco manufacturer. The Mead estate was nationally known for its exotic gardens, particularly the portion of the estate known as "the vineyard" which was located on the site of 35-45 Eden Street and 58-72 Russell Street. (see form on 38 Mead St.) Number 39 Mead dates to the initial phase of the Mead estate's residential development, post 1837.

Middlesex deeds do not provide clues into the identity of 39 Mead Street's builder, conceivably Thomas Greenleaf.

Greenleaf was the housewright responsible for 38 Mead (see form on 38 Mead Street). For many years 39 was the home of Almarin Trowbridge, a Boston bank officer. He bought this lot on July 12, 1845 from a J Barker, administrator of the estate of Isaac Mead. Mead's real estate was sold at auction to pay \$8617.09 worth of debts. Number 39 Mead's lot is number one on a plan of Isaac Mead's land dated June 13, 1845. By 1860

Trowbridge is listed as a bookkeeper at the Union Bank in Boston. In 1875 he is listed as a cashier at the National Union Bank, 40 State St., Boston. Trowbridge owned 39 Mead until at least the late 1880s.

By 1901 T Frank Seavey owned this house and the six-family apartment building next door at 35-37 Mead Street, built circa 1895. In 1901 Seavey was a teamster at 35 N. Market, Boston, and resided at 27 Polk Street.

Mead Street does not appear on the 1818 map. The Mead estate ran from Main Street all the way back to Bunker Hill Street. Mead Street is shown as a cul-de-sac off Main Street on the 1839 map. By the 1840s it was cut through to Russell Street.

Bibliography:

Maps- 1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases- 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown Directories-1834-74

Boston Directories- post 1874

Middlesex deeds- 465; 413

Old Charlestown, T 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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