

39 School Street (circa 1892-1900)



39 School Street

2015

Number 39 School Street is a large multifamily wood frame late Italianate building with a three bay School Street façade and eight bays on Summer Street. The building's corners are accented by narrow corner boards. There is a lively dentilated and bracketed cornice, and a flat roof.

The school Street façade has a multi panel oriel supported by a scroll-bracketed Door hood. An off-center side entrance on Summer Street has entrance treatments similar to those on school Street. The windows are fully enframed and cornice-headed with 2/1 wood sash.

Builder: James B Maynard (deeds)

The present multifamily structure at 39 School Street replaced an early 19th century house at some point during the 1890s. Architecturally, it is an interesting retardataire example of late Italianate Charlestown housing. The use of cornice headed windows and deep paired bracketed cornice at so late a date is indicative of the conservative character of Charlestown domestic architecture during the 19th century.

Number 39 School Street is the work of James B Maynard. He was active in Charlestown building trades from 1842 to the mid-1890s. He was the son of Jason G and Mercy (Copp) Maynard. He was born April 25, 1825, in Worcester, Massachusetts, and in 1832 his parents removed to Boston. He attended the Elliott school in Boston and later worked on a farm in Woburn. By circa 1839 he had returned to Boston and found employment in a tailor shop by Col. Stone (?). During the early 1840s he worked as a carpenter at his father's shop on Haverhill Street, Boston. He settled in Charlestown in 1842 and took (over ?) the carpenter's shop of Edward Pratt on Green Street and remained there until circa 1844. He removed his shop to Sullivan and Bartlett Streets in circa 1844-1847, and then purchased a shop at 80 School Street. For 43 years he lived in "a very pleasant house at the corner of Summer and School Streets.

Number 39's deed chain indicates that Maynard's wife, Mary J Sisson, acquired this property as early as 1829. Prior to Mary's ownership, Charles Sisson, a painter, owned 39's predecessor house. Going back farther, this predecessor house was built circa 1823 by Jehiel Smith, a house-wright. Smith had purchased this land from Oliver Holden, the major landowner in this area during the late 18th-early 20th century. In any event, Maynard apparently built 39 as an investment property.

In "Charlestown citizens Past and Present", Maynard is referred to as "a very progressive builder, and has erected some handsome as well as substantial buildings which have added to the district very much". (Progressive in Maynard's case must mean he wasn't erecting Federal style houses in 1890.-39 School Street is very *conservative* for the last decade of the 19th century.) Maynard was a member of the Bunker Hill Lodge, I.O.O.F. and Somerville Encampment I.O.O.F. He was also connected with the Knights of Honor and Equitable Aid Union. He married Mary Jeffords Sisson of Charlestown October 10, 1859.

School Street dates to the late 18th century-early 20th century. On the 1818 Peter Tufts map of Charlestown, School Street is shown to have had four names: Schoolhouse Lane, between Main and Summer streets; Alfred Street, between Summer and Bartlett Streets; and Middle Street, between Bartlett and Bunker Hill Streets. The name School Street evidently refers to a schoolhouse that was located opposite the intersection of Main and School Streets.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Middlesex, Suffolk County deeds

"Souvenir of Charlestown and Bunker Hill Monument", 50th anniversary of the dedication of Bunker Hill Monument by the Bunker Hill Times, Charlestown, 1843-93