

42 Sullivan Street (Probably 1805-20; by circa 1850s)

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



42 Sullivan Street

1980s

Number 42 Sullivan Street is a small, square, two-story wood frame Federal house. It has a two bay Street-facing side, and its entrance on the southwest wall. It retains its clapboards and has corner boards and a low hip roof. The windows are simply enframed and have 12/12 wood sash.



42 Sullivan Street

2016

Original owner: Thaddeus Harrington

Architecturally, this house appears to be a wood frame Federal vernacular house of the early 1800s. Its proportions, smaller square windows on the second floor and low hip roof suggest construction date circa early 1800s. (Low hip roofs were also used in domestic architecture in the 1850s and 60s.)

Early 1870 Middlesex County deeds indicate that this house was part of the estate of Mary S Harrington and Thaddeus Harrington, a clerk at the Fresh Pond Railroad. In 1856 his house is listed as 119 Bartlett Street. Charlestown directories indicate that he was living in this house by the late 1850s. Grantee listings for Thaddeus Harrington during the 1850s did not yield information on when and from whom he acquired this property. Probate records might reveal that Harrington inherited this property. In any event, this house was owned by the heirs of Thaddeus Harrington until June 1887. At that time Michael and Martha Scanlon paid H Harrington \$2750 for 42 Sullivan Street (Suffolk 1777:357). Martha J Scanlon is listed as the house's owner in 1901.

During the late 18th century, what is now Sullivan Street and adjacent lots was owned by Oliver Holden, a well-to-do merchant, housewright, and real estate speculator, whose mansion occupied the site of what is now the Oliver Holden School on Pearl Street. Holden sold a large parcel of land encompassing Sullivan Street and adjacent lots to Richard Sullivan, Sr in approximately 1805. Richard Sullivan, Sr was the son of James Sullivan, governor of Massachusetts in 1807, and was president of the Middlesex Canal Company. The Middlesex Canal linked Boston and Charlestown with the Merrimack River Valley. It was the Sullivan family's Association with the canal that introduced them to Charlestown real estate speculation. In addition to the Sullivan Street area, Richard Sullivan, Sr owned large parcels of Charlestown Neck, including a large tavern at what is now Sullivan Square.

Sullivan Street was laid out circa 1805, originally called Greaves, or Graves Street. The Street was intensively developed during the 1830s and 1840s. Number 42 Sullivan may be the oldest house on this. Street; it may be the wing of a

more substantial Federal house. Although the possibility remains that this house was built for the Harringtons in the mid-1850s, stylistic evidence points toward a date of circa 1805-1820.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown directories 1834-1874

Middlesex deed-1222: 40

Suffolk deed-1777: 357

The Old Middlesex Canal, Mary Stetson Clarke, 1974, pp. 17-19

*Digitized and edited, without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, with the 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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