

44-52 Mount Vernon St. (1868-69)

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



52- 44 Mount Vernon Street 2016

Numbers 44-52 Mount Vernon St. are five, three-story redbrick, granite/brownstone trimmed Italianate row houses. Each house

has a three bay main façade, a side all plan, and a granite-faced basement. The buildings have dentilated and console-bracketed cornices, and flat roofs.



46 Mount Vernon Street cornice detail

2016

The entrances are recessed and the front doors have circa late 19th/early 20th century enframements. The windows have 2/2 wood sash and brownstone sills and lintels. The lintels have a distinctive double curve profile. Bracketed door hoods support oriels with wooden panels above and below the windows, and dentilated cornices.

The houses are prominently sited at the northwest corner of Mount Vernon and Adams Streets. They stand as "gateway" to Mount Vernon Street's rich inventory of mid-19th-early 20th century residences.

Builder: Uriel Adams

Original owner: trustees of Jacob Foss estate

Situated at the northwest corner of Mount Vernon and Adams Streets, this group of five Italianate row houses provides a fine introduction to Mount Vernon Street's outstanding collection of mid-19th-early 20th century houses. Mount Vernon Street is

remarkable for its lack of "holes" in a primarily masonry fabric. The street's flat front houses, representing a variety of styles, including Greek Revival, Italianate, Mansard, and Georgian Revival, march down the steep southeastern slope of Breed's Hill in an unbroken expanse of Victorian façades. The bracketed door hoods and oriel windows, and bracketed cornices of numbers 44-52 impart a pleasing, rhythmic repetition of elements to the streetscape. Built circa 1868-69, these houses represent a relatively late addition to Mount Vernon's Street's collection of primarily 1840s and 1850s housing stock.

From the late 18th century until 1846, this group's lots were part of the extensive landholdings of Ebenezer Breed. In March, 1846, Mount Vernon Street was set out through the former Breed's mansion house land along with 34 house lots, bordering either side of the street. This group's land appears as lots numbers 33 and 34 on "plan of building lots, E Breed's mansion house estate, by E Barker and G Leonard Jr", in March 1846. Lots 33 and 34 were among the last developed for housing.

Jacob Foss, a prominent Charlestown distiller, acquired these lots from the Breed estate in 1846. The lots appear to remain vacant on the 1868 Sanborn map. Zenas Howland and Abraham B Shedd, trustees of the Jacob Foss estate, sold these lots for subsequent house construction in July 1, 1869. The houses may represent the work of local builder Uriel Adams. He was active in Charlestown building trades from the early 1850s to early 1910. (For more information on Adams see form on 22, 24 Trenton Street.)

Among those who purchased houses in this group from Jacob Foss' trustees were: Francis William Pray, "boots and shoes, 301 Washington Street, Boston-number 44; Walter Everett, "saddlery hardware", 25 Charlestown Street, Boston-number 46; Uriel Adams, a carpenter,-number 48; Wells Chase, 34 Faneuil Hall market, Boston-50; Charles F Johnson, "leather", 43 High St., Boston-52. Judging by the Howland/Pray and

Holland/Everett deeds, each house was originally sold for just over \$2400.

Francis W Pray was perhaps this group's best-known owner/occupant. He was a prominent Boston boot and shoe dealer, son in law of a well-known Charlestown merchant, founder of the Charlestown Cadets, and was an important figure in Charlestown Democratic politics. (See biographical sketch accompanying this form for more information on Francis W Pray.)**

Later owners of 44-52 included, in #44: Albert T Pray, in 1911; In #46: W Ordway in 1885, Francis Doherty in 1892, and the Robert H Tanssey in 1911; In #48, Uriel Adams heirs, 1911; in #50, Ellen M Leonard, early 1900s, and, in #52, Patrick O'Riordan estate, early 1900s.

**A biographical sketch is not present on the available form.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown/Boston directories-19th century

Middlesex deeds-#44:1061:516, 490:131; #46:1061:521, 490:181; 48:??; #50:1061:529; #52:1061:476

Charlestown Enterprise, 25th Anniversary Number, May 8, 1909

*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.

R Dinsmore