

49, 51 High Street (1838-39, with late 1860s-70s mansard)

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



49 (r), 51 (l) High Street

2015

Numbers 49 and 51 High Street was, originally, a two story, red brick double Greek Revival house built ca. 1838-9, enclosed by a gable roof with linked chimneys at the end wall gables. It was updated in the late 1860s or early 1870s with a third story under a well crafted brickwork corbelled cornice and a Mansard roof. There are three pedimented dormers for each house's Mansard roof slope, with slanted firewalls at the ends and the center. Each has a three bay, flat front main façade, a low granite-faced basement, and a side hall plan.

A short flight of granite steps leads to paired, deeply recessed entrances with well-crafted wood paneling on the entry walls. The windows have brownstone (?) painted sills and lintels.

Original owner: 49-Ruth Payson; 51-?

Architecturally, 49, 51 High St. is significant as a double masonry house that represents a successful marriage of a Greek Revival main block with circa 1860s-70s corbelled brickwork cornice and Mansard roof. It was originally built circa 1838-39, and the R Mallory Panoramic View from the Bunker Hill Monument of 1848 shows 49, 51 High Street as a double house with linked chimneys at the end wall gables. As such, 49, 51 High Street is one of the earliest examples of the masonry double house in Charlestown. It would not be until the late 1840s that masonry residential construction, be it single, double or multiunit would become commonplace.

Numbers 49 and 51 High is a key component in the "wall" of primarily brick mid-19th-century residences bordering the northeast side of High Street, between Green and Cross Streets.

On June 3, 1839 Ruth Payson of Boston, widow, sold 49's lot "with a brick dwelling house, newly erected there on" for

\$3150 to Frederick Robinson of Charlestown. Robinson is listed in the 1842 Charlestown directory as living at "High near Green Street" but his occupation is not listed. (Note: number 49's lot was part of a rectangular lot labeled "Robbins" on the 1818 Tufts map of Charlestown). Frederick Robinson, Esq., sold this house (number 49), to Catharine a Gerry, a "widow", on July 21, 1842 for \$3400. On November 29, 1844. William Gerry of Charlestown, a "trader," sold 49 to Samuel Gerry of Charlestown a "portrait painter," for \$3260. On April 20, 1850 Samuel L Gerry, "painter of portraits" sold 49 High Street to Albert Smith of Charlestown, a "gentleman" for \$3700. (Further research is needed on Samuel Gerry "painter of portraits" at MFA library/American paintings department or BPL fine arts room-third-floor-files).

From 1865 until?, 49 was owned by Florimund A Downing (occupation?). From circa 1875 until at least 1911, 51 was owned by Francis Raymond (occupation?) and his heirs, C F and H M Raymond.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1911

Charlestown directories-19th century

Middlesex deeds-382:183, 418:134, 454:98, 551:323, 921:468

R Mallory-panoramic view from Bunker Hill Monument-1848

*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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