

52 and 54 Harvard Street (circa 1835-1841)

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



52, 54 Harvard

2015

Numbers 52 and 54 Harvard is a pair of Greek Revival wood frame clapboard houses, each with a three bay side hall plan façade. The edges of both houses are accented by simple baseboards, corner boards, and fascia boards. The buildings have a broad gable roof and each has one small gable roofed dormer.

Paired, recessed entrances with short flights of stone steps lead to replacement front doors flanked by narrow solid and multi-pane sidelights. The entrances are framed by simple vertical and rectangular boards. The windows are fully and simply enframed; 54 has 1/1 and 56 has 6/6 wood sash.

Number 54 has a triangular garden enclosed by an attractive picket fence.

Builder: unknown

Original owner: Thomas Wyman

Built circa late 1830s-early 1840s, this Greek Revival double house is a key component in the "wall" of primarily masonry structures which stretches from 54 Harvard Street to the Edward Everett house at number 16 Harvard Street.

Architecturally, 52 and 54 Harvard Street is a straightforward example of a solid clapboard-clad Greek Revival double house.

Middlesex deeds and Charlestown directories indicate that this house was built for Thomas B Wyman during the late 1830s or early 1840s. On 25 April, 1838, Mercy Wyman, wife of Thomas B Wyman purchased 52 and 54 Harvard from Polly Goodwin for \$1500. The Goodwin/Wyman deed indicates that buildings were already located on these lots-judging by this house's form and surface treatments, however, it is doubtful that numbers 52 and 54 could have been built earlier than circa 1835.

Charlestown directories indicate that in 1834, Thomas B Wyman, a laborer, lived on Arrow Street (now Washington Street). Hunnewell indicates that Wyman lived to the north of 52, 54 in a dwelling that no longer is extant. It was described as an old low three storied wooden house, capped by a cornice with modillions and arranged for two families. In the upper half lived Thomas B Wyman, the genealogist. Northward is a

small garden and southward are two, two storied houses covering a former garden belonging to the house” (52, 54 being one of the two houses). By 1842, Thomas B Wyman and Thomas B Wyman Junior, West India goods dealers (shop at 123 Main) lived next door to what is now 52, 54 Harvard. The 1875 Atlas indicates that a Mary Wyman owned this property.

By 1885 this property's owner is listed as M. E. Downing. By 1911 number 52 was owned by W. J. Rogers and 54 was owned by Elizabeth E Poole.

Harvard Street, in the earliest town days, was known as Town Hill Street- the hill between what is now Harvard Street, City Square and Main Street. It was first called Burial Hill in colonial times and then Windmill Hill, afterwards Town Hill and in 1875 became known as Harvard Hill. Town Hill Street was changed to Harvard Street on November 7, 1836. All three Harvard's-the street, place, and square were named after Rev. John Harvard, founder of Harvard College, early Charlestown settler and pastor of First Church on Town Hill.

Bibliography:

Maps- 1818, 1852

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

Charles town directories-1834-1874

Middlesex Deeds-372: 484

Charlestown enterprise-August 30, 1919 "Deserved honor given the name"

Hunnewell: *A Century of Town Life*

*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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