

## 57, 59 Sullivan Street (1845-1846)

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



57, 59 Sullivan Street

1980s

Numbers 57, 59 Sullivan Street is a two-story wood frame double Greek Revival house. Each half has a three bay main facade and a side hall plan, with paired entrances, and there are paneled corner boards. There are wide end wall gables and there is a two-story ell at the rear. The gable roof's Sullivan Street slope has one double dormer for each half. (These may be a late 19th century addition.)



57, 59 Sullivan Street

2016

The entrances have paneled Doric pilasters and a heavy entablature. The windows are simply enframed and have 1/1 wood sash.

Builder: Horatio Williams and or John B Caldwell

Original owner: John B Caldwell

Architecturally, 57 and 59 Sullivan Street is a substantial wood frame double Greek Revival house, prominently sited at the southeast corner of Sullivan and Bartlett Streets. Particularly noteworthy are the handsome classical vernacular enframements of its paired entrances. In addition, this house possesses a substantial volume, with wide end wall gable profiles. The house is best viewed from Bunker Hill Street's

high ground, looking southwestward down Sullivan Street. As seen from this vantage point, this house really dominates its area of circa early to mid 19th century dwellings.

Numbers 57 and 59 Sullivan Street was built circa 1845-46, and is the work of Horatio Williams and/or John B Caldwell. Williams was a carpenter, active in Charlestown building trades from 1840s to the 1890s. He may be related to the carpenter/coal and wood dealers, Gilbert and Sheldon Williams, who were also active during the mid--late 19th century.

Numbers 57-59's lot had been part of the extensive land holdings of Richard Sullivan Sr and Richard Sullivan Jr. Richard Sullivan Sr was the fourth son of Massachusetts governor, (in 1807), James Sullivan. It was evidently through James Sullivan's work as president of the Middlesex Canal Company that Richard Sr was introduced to Charlestown land speculation. He purchased land bordering what is now Sullivan Street, circa 1805, from Oliver Holden. Sullivan Street was subsequently laid out as Greaves, or Graves, Street but its name was later changed to Sullivan Street. In addition Richard Sr owned extensive land holdings at Charlestown Neck. He operated a large tavern at what is now Sullivan Square and was co-partner of the Middlesex Canal Company-related Boston and Concord Boat Company. From circa 1840s to the 1870s, Richard Sullivan Jr, a Boston commercial merchant, in association with Francis Cunningham of Milton, began to liquidate his father's real estate holdings. Building activity along Sullivan Street seems to have begun in earnest by 1830.

Sullivan Jr and Cunningham sold 57-59's lots to Horatio Williams, the builder, on February 8, 1845. Williams paid \$3277 for lots one and two on Alexander Wadsworth's plan of

January 6, 1842 (455:504). Williams, in turn, sold these lots to John B Caldwell, a painter and glazier, on July 7, 1845 (466:88). Caldwell paid Williams \$1500 for this property.

The first mention of a building on these lots occurs in a deed dated January 19, 1847 (541:50). At that time Timothy B Caldwell, a Charlestown trader, paid John B Caldwell \$2200 for 57 Sullivan Street. Presumably, this property was the work of Horatio Williams and/or John B Caldwell. Williams is credited with the brick mansard House at 19 Parker Street, multifamily brick mansard apartments at 21-23 Parker Street, and 23 Caldwell Street, a late 1890s Italianate wood frame house.

John B Caldwell was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1820 until his death. During the mid-1840s he lived in the three-story brick and clapboard-clad 57 Bartlett Street. Caldwell is listed in 1840s directories as a painter and glazier, but seems also to have worked as a builder. He died circa 1847-48 (and possibly earlier than 1820), leaving considerable real estate holdings.

Timothy Caldwell sold 57 to Oliver B Pierce, a trader, on November 28, 1854, for \$2150 (681:510). Pierce owned 57 until at least the mid-1880s. By the early 1900s, an Ella L Husmer owned 57 Sullivan; 59 Sullivan passed from Caldwell to John Burrell, a yeoman, at some point between 1847 and 1854. On July 1, 1854, Burrell sold 59 to Thomas D Strand, a blacksmith, for \$2500 (701:72). This deed stipulates that "the said Burrell reserves a right to drain from the adjoining house on Bartlett Street, and also that three windows shall remain unobstructed in the westerly end of said Burrell's house adjoining involved described premises" Thomas D Strand owned this house until at least the mid-1870s. He was a horseshoe trader at Chelsea, Corner of Gray Street,

Charlestown, 1860s and 70s. By the mid-1880s an O B Pierce owned 57 and S S Strand owned 59. By the early 1900s an Ella L Hosmer (?Husmer) owned both houses.

Bibliography:

Maps 1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1895, 1892, 1901

Charlestown directories-1834-74

Middlesex deeds

\*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