

79-81 Green Street (circa 1845)

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



79 and 81 Green Street

1980s

Numbers 79-81 Green Street is a one-story double Greek Revival cottage. It has a high brick basement and a boxy, rectangular form with (originally) six bays by three bays. Number 81's former three bay main façade is now reduced to an entrance bay and a large center picture window, and it is sheathed in aluminum siding. Number 79 is still clad with clapboards, in poor condition and needing paint, and its windows are boarded up. However, it retains its heavy Doric

corner board and fascia and sideboards. The building is enclosed by a gable roof and a broad pedimented attic, with two attic windows per side. Each half has a gable-roofed dormer on the Green Street façade. Tall chimneys rise from the center of each segment's roof ridge.



79, 81 Green Street 2015

The halves have side hall plans and paired entrances, which were probably originally open and recessed, and a single granite slab step at each entrance. There are later outer doors and transoms. The entrance enframements include Doric

pilasters, and 79's cornice headed entablature is still intact. This is missing, and has been replaced by a metal pointed arch on the much-altered number 81.

Builder: Frederick a Fiske (?)

Original owner: Frederick a Fiske

Numbers of 79-81 Green Street is architecturally significant as a relatively rare Charlestown example of a Greek Revival wood frame vernacular double cottage. Most wood frame Greek Revival double houses of this vintage were two stories tall, featuring broad, distinctive end-wall gable profiles. (With one known example in Charlestown of a three-story Greek Revival double house, see form on 77-79 Warren Street.) Number 79-81 Green Street's high brick basement is of particular interest. Most Greek Revival houses, whether single or double, have granite faced basements rather than brick. This house was evidently not moved from another location and hoisted on to a new brick basement, since the Mallory panoramic view of Charlestown/Boston dated 1848 clearly shows this house at its present location and orientation to Green and Hancock Streets. Number 79 is the more intact of the two units, exemplifying "preservation by neglect." What is of interest here is the succinct way in which this house's edges are defined by Doric corner, fascia, and sideboards, as well as narrower baseboards. Also memorable is 79's heavy Doric pilaster and cornice-headed entablature entrance enframements.

Numbers 79-81's lot was part of the much larger tract of Breeds Hill upland pasture, belonging to Joseph Hurd in the early 19th century. This tract is roughly bounded by Trenton, Bunker Hill, Elm, and Bartlett Streets. Of these streets, only Elm Street appears on the 1818 Tufts map. By the 1840s William Hurd was selling off house lots carved from Joseph Hurd's

tract. Among the buyers was Frederick A Fiske, variously listed as a "sash maker" and a "Carpenter". Numbers 79-81 Green Street probably is the work of Fiske. He was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1840-1860. In 1842 he is listed as a sash maker living Green Street, where he lived until circa 1850. By 1856 he was living at 17 Mead Street and by 1860, at 32 Lawrence Street. Fiske is not listed in the 1866 Charlestown directory.

Middlesex deeds suggest that 79/81 was built circa 1845. Fisk was definitely buying up parcels along Hancock Street, but Green Street is not listed as a boundary. The segment of Green Street between Bartlett and Bunker Hill streets, along with 79-81 Green Street, was definitely in existence by 1848 (see panoramic view). Further deed work is necessary to pinpoint this house's date of construction more closely.

During the early 1850s Boston traders appeared to have purchased 79-81 from Fiske. On May 10, 1869 Joseph W York, a machinist in the Charlestown Navy Yard, purchased 79 from Isaiah D Richards for \$2550. By 1870 a Mrs. Elizabeth York owned number 81. Yorks and Campbells owned 79-81 until at least the early 1900s.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown/Boston directories

Middlesex deeds-460:392, 393 (???) 591:230, 1061:147

Mallory Panoramic View, Charlestown/Boston, 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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