

79 Pearl Street (circa 1856-1860)

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



79 Pearl Street

2016

Number 79 Pearl Street is a substantial Mansard ouse with a decidedly vertical orientation. It has a narrow, three bay main façade with a side hall plan. The cornice has brackets and the mansard is straight sided, with paired dormers on the main façade. The front door has a two-pane transom and bracketed door hood. The windows are fully enframed.

Builder: Gilbert Williams
original owner: Gilbert Williams

Architecturally, 79 Pearl Street is a solid, well-crafted example of a Mansard house on a street with predominantly Greek Revival and Italianate single and double houses. Pearl Street was set out circa mid-1840s, in part, as a response to a population boom triggered by European immigration, particularly Irish, to the Boston area during the mid-1840s.

This house was apparently constructed by and for Charlestown carpenter and later coal and lumber dealer, Gilbert Williams. It was built circa 1856-1860, however numerous grantee listings for Williams preclude more precise dating of this house via deeds.

Williams was active as a carpenter in Charlestown from circa late 1840s to the mid-1860s, however he is first listed as a carpenter in 1852. At that time he worked at Allston Street, corner of Medford Street, and lived at 81 Pearl Street. By 1856 he was in partnership with Uriel Adams (Adams and Williams, carpenters, 12 Sullivan Street), and he then lived at 71 Pearl Street. By 1860, Williams is listed at 79 Pearl Street. Gilbert Williams owned, and lived in, this house until at least the early 1890s.

By 1866, he had formed partnerships with Sheldon Williams (brother? Son?) In a coal and wood dealership. Until the 1890s he worked as a wood and coal dealer as well as real estate speculator. However, judging from the late 1860s housing development he owned at 17-19 Brighton Street (see form) he was probably still working as a builder after 1865.

By 1901 79 Pearl St. was owned by A F Williams.

Note: Middlesex deeds seem to indicate that there may have been a circa 1840s predecessor house on this lot, before 79.

Bibliography:

Maps- 1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases: 1875, 1885, 1897, 1901

Charlestown directories 1834-7

Boston directories-post 1875

*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.

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