

88-96 Baldwin St. (1849)

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



88- 96 Baldwin Street

2016

Numbers 88-96 Baldwin Street is a straightforward five-unit row of red brick Greek Revival houses. They have low granite basements and three bay main facades. The building has a pleasingly planar expanse of wall surface, and the group is

visually tied together by a narrow raised brick band above the second floor windows, and dental-like brickwork at the cornice. It has a gable roof and there are single dormers on numbers 90-96. Number 88 has a pair of dormers.

The entrances were originally recessed, and now have later outer doors and transoms. Doors and windows have simple granite sills and lintels and the Windows have 2/1 wood sash.

Builder: Jeremiah B Bradford

Original owner: Jeremiah B Bradford

This group of five red brick row houses dates to January-August 1849. It is a key component of Baldwin Street's noteworthy 19th-century red brick Greek Revival streetscape, north of Bunker Hill Street. The row dates to the earliest phase of Baldwin Street development. Baldwin Street existed in an informal state as late as 1837, when it was called Coggins Street. By 1844, and until the late 1860s, a more formally laid out Baldwin Street north of Bunker Hill Street was called Linden** Street. The southern portion of Baldwin Street was set out circa the early 1850s.

Architecturally, 88-96 Baldwin represents a conservative approach to masonry row housing with planar surfaces, and dormer windows reminiscent of those on federal period Structures.

The 1818 map indicates that a William Symmes owned what is now Baldwin Street (north) and adjacent lots. Numbers 88-96's lots were part of the landholdings of Samuel Bigelow and John Cheever, a Charlestown physician who seems to have acted primarily as a mortgage holder. Samuel Bigelow sold these lots to Cheever prior to January 1, 1849 (Middlesex

479:39). Cheever in turn sold them to Jeremiah B Bradford of Charlestown, a mason, for \$2461 on January 1, 1849.

This row of houses is a result of the craftsmanship of Jeremiah B Bradford. He was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1842 until the early 1870s. He is listed in the 1842 Charlestown directory as a mason residing at 25 Austin Street. By 1845 he was living on Chapman Lane; his home addresses in 1848, 1852 and 1856 were 137 Main Street, 223 Main Street, and 18 Walker Street, respectively. He is listed as a mason in 1860 and 1870, living at 391 Main Street and 10 Mount Vernon Street respectively.

The first mention of buildings occurs on a deed dated August 15, 1849 between Jeremiah B Bradford and Joshua Turner (grantee), a carpenter. Turner paid Bradford \$3500 for number 92 Baldwin Street and then sold it to J G Russell, a trader, on October 16, 1849 for \$1700 (851:1). Apparently this was the Aaron H Allen who was a Dock Square furniture dealer and later owner of the brownstone mansion at the corner of Worcester Square and Washington streets in the South End, in 1859. Allen evidently purchased this house as an investment rather than a homestead. He owned the house for 12 years, selling it to Lucy R Severance, wife of Benjamin Severance, a "salesman, at 1+2.Square Boston", for \$3000.

By 1875 this group's owners included Calvin Stewart, occupation unlisted, at number 88; the Samuel Cutter estate owned number 90; Benjamin W Severance continued to own 92; Myles Standish, real estate speculator and builder who was active in the development of Essex Street during the 1840s-50s, owned 94.; and Charles Woodbury, a blacksmith, owned 96.

Owners in 1901 included Sarah T Brown at 88, Cutler heirs, 90, M A Kears, 92, John Shea, 94, and Patricia H Lee, 96.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1835, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown directories 1834-1874

Middlesex deeds-number 92- 479:39, 541:303, 541:372, 541:504, and 921:3825

*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

**Labeled Lincoln Street in the Felton and Parker map, 1848, and the McIntire map, 1852