

## 90-92 Main Street, The Austin Block, (1822)

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



90-92 Main Street

before 1985

Numbers 90- 92 Main Street is a three-story, irregular plan Federal style building faced entirely with split stone quarried on the outer Brewster Island in Boston Harbor. It is three stories high and is five bays wide on Main Street, two bays facing Devens Street. The walls are of polychromatic light and medium browns and blue-grey rubble stone, with planar

surfaces. The building has a hip roof except where it abuts a party wall on Main Street. An ell, four bays deep by one across is at the back facing Harvard Street.

The window sills and lintels and alternating quoins are of granite.



90, 92 Main

2015





90-92 Main, side, ell

2015



Main Street façade, 1890

Builder: General Nathaniel Austin

Original owner: General Nathaniel Austin, Middlesex County Sheriff and Brig. Gen. of the Massachusetts Militia. In addition, he represented the town in the legislature as a member of the House of Representatives in 1822, 1831 and 1838 and, and of the County of Middlesex as Sen. in 1832 and 1835.

The Austin Block is located in the heart of Charlestown's Town Hill district, and is one of only two houses in Charlestown faced with split stone. (The other stands at 27 Harvard Square). A storefront opening at the corner of Main and Devens Streets was made sometime after 1890, with the corner supported by an iron lintel and corner post. These were removed when the building underwent extensive restoration in 1979-1984.

Numbers 90- 92 Main St. was built in 1822 by and for General Nathaniel Austin, Middlesex County Sheriff and Major General of the Massachusetts Militia. In addition, he represented the town in the legislature as a member of the House of Representatives in 1812, 1831 and 1838, the County of Middlesex as Senator in 1832 and 1835, and he was a member of the Governor's Counsel in 1836. Number 92 main was built of split stone quarried at the Austin-owned Outer Brewster Island in Boston harbor. Originally it housed commercial space as well as residential quarters. It was here that the first successful Charlestown newspaper, the *Bunker Hill Aurora and Farmers and Mechanics Journal* was published from 1827-1871.

For more information on the Austin family see Timothy Thompson Sawyer, *Old Charlestown*, chapter XXXVI "The Name of Austin", pages 216-to 22, and pages 223-227.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Mallory Panoramic View-1848

*A I A guide to Boston*-Susan and Michael Southworth

*Old Charlestown*, T.T. Sawyer

\*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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