



PROPOSED  
PLAQUE  
LOCATION

CLIFFEN HOUSE  
63

ALL VISITORS  
MUST CHECK IN  
WITH OFFICE  
B  
CAUTION  
Construction

63

Hard Hats and  
Safety Glasses  
Required



# CLAFLIN HOUSE

## 63

Mount Vernon Street

### **SPECS**

Cast Bronze, Alloy 922

Size: 12" x 8"

Thickness: Approx. 5/16"

Border: Single Line- .25" wide

Background: Matte Finish

Text and Border: Polished Finish

Mounting: Four Pcs. #10 x 1.5"

Oval Head Woodscrews painted to match background

### **TEXT SIZES**

"CLAFLIN HOUSE" : 1.125"

"63" : 1.125"

"Mount Vernon Street" : .6875"

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	BOS.14957
<b>Historic Name:</b>	Sawyer, William House
<b>Common Name:</b>	Clafin, Gov. William House
<b>Address:</b>	63 Mount Vernon St
<b>City/Town:</b>	Boston
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	Beacon Hill; South Slope
<b>Local No:</b>	
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	1837
<b>Architect(s):</b>	
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	Greek Revival
<b>Use(s):</b>	Business Office; Lawyer Office; Multiple Family Dwelling House; Single Family Dwelling House
<b>Significance:</b>	Architecture; Commerce; Law; Social History
<b>Area(s):</b>	BOS.BE: Beacon Hill Historic District BOS.BY: Beacon Hill Historic District
<b>Designation(s):</b>	Local Historic District (12/02/1955); Nat'l Historic Landmark (10/15/1966); Nat'l Register District (10/15/1966)
<b>Building Materials(s):</b>	Wall: Brick; Brown Stone; Granite; Stone, Cut Foundation: Granite; Stone, Cut



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
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## BUILDING FORM

BOS. 14957

14957

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION see continuation sheet

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

Built in 1837, number 63 Mount Vernon Street was originally part of a trio of identically-rendered town houses that included numbers 63 and 65 Mount Vernon Street. Number 65 Mount Vernon Street was torn down during the early 1900s to accommodate the present Tudor Revival apartment. Like the other town houses within the streetscape numbered 57-83 Mount Vernon Street, number 63 is set back thirty feet from Mount Vernon Street facing an ample front yard. A slate sidewalk leads to the main entrance. The main facade is characterized by a planar entrance bay and bowed front. Rising five stories from a low granite basement to a flat roof, this building is constructed of red brick with brownstone trim. Access to the double doors is provided by four granite steps flanked by low shoulder blocks of the same material. The double doors are set off by a raised, molded surround. The surround, in turn, is flanked by plain brownstone pilasters. Springing from the pilasters are the brownstone console brackets that support the deep, flat, cornice-headed door hood. At the second story of the entrance bay is a broad arched window that may represent a later alteration. This window is flanked by Doric pilasters and surmounted by a wide pediment.

With the exception of the tall windows of the second story, windows are standard size. The windows of the first and second stories contain 2/2 wood replacement sash, while those of the upper stories exhibit 6/6 wood sash. The windows exhibit a variety of lintel types. At the first story, lintels are tab-accented and pedimented, while those of the second and third stories are early harbingers of the Italianate style. At the second story, lintels are bracketed and support segmental-arched pediments, while those of the third story are tab-accented and cornice-headed. Fourth-story windows are flush with a broad brownstone frieze. The fifth story exhibits four standard size windows and evidently represents a later addition.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE see continuation sheet

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

Number 63 Mount Vernon Street was one of five town houses built on the site of Senator Jonathan Mason's Bulfinch-designed mansion house of the early 1800s. Mason, a graduate of Princeton University, was a prominent lawyer and politician who served in the State Legislature and Governor's Council and was elected to the United States Senate in 1800 and the United States House of Representatives in 1819. Along with Harrison Gray Otis, Mason was the largest shareholder in the Mount Vernon Proprietors' South Slope development. Mason died in 1831 and his wife, Susan Powell Mason, died in 1835. The Mason estate not only encompassed the mansion but the town houses built on the eastern side of a circular driveway numbered 51 to 57 Mount Vernon Street. The Mason mansion was demolished in 1837.

The first owner of number 63 was William Sawyer, a Boston merchant whose first Beacon Hill residence was the Stephen Higginson house at 87 Mount Vernon Street, which he purchased in 1816. By 1855, William Mason, Jonathan Mason's son and estate executor, owned this house. Perhaps the most distinguished resident was Massachusetts Governor and Boston University co-founder William Claflin, who owned number 63 by 1870.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES see continuation sheet

- Maps/Atlases: 1814, 1852, 1873, 1883, 1890, 1902, 1912, 1922.
- Boston Directories: 1825 to 1940.
- Chamberlain, Allen. *Beacon Hill, Its Ancient Pastures and Early Mansions* 1924.
- Kydd, Sally Ann. *Boston University (College History: Massachusetts)*, 2002.
- Krieger, Alex and Cobb, David. *Mapping Boston*, 1999.
- Macklothian, Robert. *The Genealogy of the Claflin Family*, (date?).
- McIntyre, A. McVoy. *Beacon Hill, a Walking Tour*, 1975.
- Moore, Barbara W. and Weesner, Gail. *Beacon Hill, A Living Portrait* 1992.

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.  
If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.



**INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**  
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town: Beacon Hill/ South Slope  
Property Address: 63 Mount Vernon Street

BOS. 14957

Area (s):

Form No:  
14957

**Historical Narrative**

William Claflin (1818-1905) was born in Milford, MA, the son of Sarah Adams Claflin and Lee Claflin. William's father, Lee, was born into a family of successful Boston merchants who lost their money after the American Revolution. The death of Lee Claflin's father forced Lee to support his family at an early age. He served as an apprentice tanner and set himself up in a business in which he became one of the leaders of the industry.

William Claflin interrupted his education at Brown University to provide assistance to his family's shoe manufacturing company. During the late 1830s, he opened his own boot and shoe manufacturing firm in St. Louis, Missouri, where he married Nancy Harding in 1840. The marriage was short-lived due to Nancy's death in 1842, and Claflin's return to Boston by c.1843 was undoubtedly linked to his grief over his wife's premature passing. Back in Boston, Claflin became a partner in his father's business and by the late 1840s had become active in state politics. He was a founder of the Free Soil Party, serving in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1849-1853. In 1859, Mr. Claflin was elected to the Massachusetts Senate, where he became Senate President in 1861. After serving as Lieutenant Governor for Alexander Hamilton Bullock, Claflin mounted a successful campaign for the Governor's office in 1868. As Governor, Claflin promoted women's suffrage and extending them greater rights under the law. Claflin's enlightened view on women's rights was undoubtedly nurtured by his second wife, the noted author Mary Bucklin Davenport Claflin (1825-1896).

Born in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, Mary B.D. Claflin was an accomplished author as well as a prominent Boston hostess who socialized with the leading intellectuals of Boston and New England in her Mount Vernon Street and Newtonville residences. She wrote "Brompton Sketches," "Personal Recollections of John G. Whittier," "Real Happenings," and "Under the Old Elms."

Returning to the the story of William Claflin, it should be noted that he served as the Commonwealth's governor from 1868 to 1873. In 1869 he signed the petition presented by his father Lee Claflin, Jacob Sleeper, and Isaac Rich to create Boston University, which was then affiliated with the Methodist faith. Around 1870, the Claflins purchased land for Claflin University, the historically black Methodist University in South Carolina. According to Sally Ann Kydd, "Boston University experienced amazing growth in the 1870s. By 1874, it consisted of seven schools and colleges in buildings that were either leased or purchased on Beacon Hill, in downtown Boston, and in the South End." Claflin was also a founding trustee of Wellesley College. In 1876, he became president of the Massachusetts Club, the first Republican club founded in Boston. Claflin served as president of this institution until 1902. During the 1870s, number 63 Mount Vernon Street became the most important social venue in the city, where figures from the realms of politics, higher education, religion, literature, and commerce intersected in the parlors of the Claflins' Mount Vernon Street town house. Guests included Brooklyn Congregational clergyman Henry Ward Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Rev. James Freeman Clarke, Charles Sumner, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Chief Justice Chase, John G. Whittier, President Rutherford B. Hayes and his wife Lucy W. Hayes, and many others.

In addition to his involvement with politics, education, Methodism, women's rights, and the advancement of African Americans, William Claflin remained an active partner in his family's shoe and leather business. Called William Claflin & Company in 1870, his firm was known as Claflin Coburn & Company by 1890. Variouslly listed on Pearl and Summer Streets during the 1870s and 1880s, it was located at 73 High Street by 1890. The Claflin Building, still extant at 20 Beacon Street, was built in 1884, not as a commercial building for the family's shoe and leather dealership, but as Boston University's School of Education.

After Claflin's death in 1905, number 63 Mount Vernon Street was owned by Henry N. Sweet, trustee of the Claflin estate. The trust retained control of this property until at least the early 1920s. By 1930, this building contained the offices of Dorothy McKissick, notary, and lawyers James Sullivan and Guy W. Currier. By 1940, Mrs. Marie G. Currier, widow, is listed at this address.