

Walnut Street

While Walnut Street's origin seems obvious, it is an interesting departure from other street names on the Hill that are generally associated with prominent places or people. Walnut Street connects Washington Avenue to the Eastern Promenade, bisecting North Street. The lower half of the street from Washington to North Street was laid out in 1851. It was extended from North Street to the Eastern Promenade in 1866.

Architectural Character of the Street

The north side of Walnut Street from North Street to the Prom was once predominated by a reservoir, but is now largely parking and green space for the Island View Apartments (2002) and the Promenade East Condominiums (1975). On the south side of the street, the MacArthur Gardens apartment buildings (1947), like those on the north side, are an anomaly to the neighborhood's historic development pattern with buildings set back from the street in a green space and perimeter parking at the sidewalk on Montreal Street. The remainder of the street has small scale dwellings in the Second Empire, Queen Anne and vernacular styles. The roofs are front gable or mansard. The one-and-a-half and two-story dwellings are set close to the street, with small green spaces between the foundations and the sidewalk. While most of the foundations are high, they are constructed of various materials: brick, stone, and block. The dwellings have side entrances, except for No. 46 Walnut Street which has a front entrance. Lot sizes vary, with some dwellings having a large side yard. Parking is either in narrow driveways to the side of a dwelling or in the side yards.

Because of the steep topography between North Street and Washington Avenue, Walnut Street has some stone retaining walls at or near the sidewalk on the upper portion of the street. Dwellings are eclectic in style, size, and age and rest on lots both large and small. Dwelling heights range from one-and-a-half to three stories. Most of the historic dwellings are vernacular in style with some Italianate details. Roofs are generally gable-ends-to-the-street, except for No. 94 Walnut Street, where the long side of the gable roof faces the street. There is one two-story hip roof dwelling on the street as well. Many of the larger scale buildings take up a larger percentage of their lots than the neighboring smaller scale buildings. Both the smaller scale dwellings and the larger buildings are two or three bays wide. The dwellings are generally set at or near the sidewalk, except for No. 89 Walnut Street. The homes have front entrances on the street with high stoops or front porches. The dwellings between Sheridan Street and Washington Avenue, tend to be on larger or double lots and parking, where provided, is generally accommodated to the side of a dwelling in the side yard. Smaller dwellings with off street parking have narrow drives to the side of the house.

Address: 54 Walnut Street

Approximate/Documented Date of Building: 1880

Surveyed: 8/17/2018

Historic Name:

Contributing or Noncontributing: Contributing



Introduction

54 Walnut Street is a good example of wooden frame Second Empire home built on Munjoy Hill in the late nineteenth century. Although it has received some alterations, the asymmetrical, one-and-a-half story, single-family home with mansard roof boasts many of its original details. Distinguishing features include a sloped roof between the curbs, shed dormer windows, a bay window with wooden arch details, and a projected main entry vestibule.

Current Architectural Description

The dwelling is one by three bays including one-story rear ell, and has replacement 1/1 vinyl sash windows. The façade's bay window boasts a curved hood (mirroring the dwelling's roof) and four 1/1 windows with wooden arched detailing, which are remnants of the original arched lights. The main entrance sits in the dwelling's one-story vestibule, which extends to the rear ell. The dwelling's eaves have vinyl casings.

The roof is asphalt and its shed dormers also feature replacement 1/1 vinyl sash windows. The upper slope is hipped and has one chimney at the interior ridge.

Additions and Alterations Since 1924

Common alterations to 54 Walnut Street since 1924 include windows, wooden clapboard siding and loss of wooden paneling and arched lights in the façade's bay window. The dwelling's shed dormers also once boasted arched entablatures, and an arched window pair over the façade. Despite these losses the dwelling retains several defining features that contribute to the neighborhood's historic character.