



12 Arlington Street
Boston MA
85 Louder Street
Dedham, MA

Ursuline Before



Ursuline After



The Ritz Carlton,
Boston Commons
15 Arlington Street
for its elegant Coffee
Shop after school



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The Place We Remember Fondly 12 Arlington Street—The John Bates House



11 Commonwealth

Today: Sadly, in September of 1993, One Commonwealth Corporation bought 12 Arlington Street from Sears, Roebuck and Company, remodeling the historical property into nine apartments, even adding an underground garage. Two years later, it was converted into nine condominiums and given a new address of “One Commonwealth”. Hopefully those who live there now can appreciate the past value of this wonderful property and in particular the Ursuline sisters and their young women—many of us. (Class of 1961)

History: Adorned with magnificent woodwork and elaborately carved plaster ceilings, 12 Arlington Street was built in 1860. The building's architecture is attributed to Arthur Gilman. Originally residing at 81 Mount Vernon Street, within 2 years the home was occupied by John D. Bates (who may have had it built) and his wife, Mary Boardman Bates. Although, Mr. Bates, a merchant, died in Europe in October of 1863, Mary and their son John Bates, Jr., continued to live at the magnificent structure until 1865.

This important historical property changed owners many times. Nathan Matthews and his wife, Albertine Bunker Matthews owned the home from about 1870 until 1877. Mr. Matthews was a real estate investor and president of the Winnisimmet Company, developing parts of Chelsea. Also, he was the president (1860–1870) of the Boston Water Power Company, developing much of Back Bay.

Moving from 45 Beacon Street, Joshua Montgomery Sears, a real estate investor and heir to the Sears estate, after inheriting a \$7,000,000 fortune purchased the property for \$110,000. It was a bridegroom's gift for the woman he married in September of that year, Sarah Carlisle Choate. Born in Cambridge, MA., Sarah Choate Sears (1858–1935) was a respected American art collector, art patron, cultural entrepreneur, visual artist (watercolorist) and photographer.



Also owning the summer home Wolf Pen Farm in Southborough, the couple acquired 11 Commonwealth Avenue. 11 Commonwealth Avenue was built in 1861 as the home of Samuel Gray Ward and wife Anna Hazard Barker Ward (friends of Ralph Waldo Emerson). Combining the houses, they removed the entrance to 11 Commonwealth Avenue and remodeled the entire second story, turning it into a music room. After her husband's death in June of 1905, Sarah Sears continued to live at 12 Arlington with her son, J. Montgomery “Monty” Sears, Jr., and her daughter, Helen. The son died in a car wreck in August of 1908. Helen Sears married James D. Cameron Bradley in July of 1913. Upon marrying, the couple lived elsewhere until 1920 when they moved to 12 Arlington to live with Sarah Sears until her death in 1935. Helen Bradley's husband died around 1929; Helen continued to reside at 12 Arlington until 1937.

Purchased in late 1937 by Edward Wyner, owner of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel (nearly next door at 15 Arlington) Mr. Wyner filed a permit (denied) to build a 17-story apartment building on the site. Luckily, the property was saved from demolition. By 1943 (wartime) 12 Arlington Street was owned by the Army and Navy Service Committee, making it into an officers' club with dining, lodging, and recreational facilities.

Then the big history began as we know it; around 1946 it was owned by the Catholic Church for or by Ursuline Academy, which converted it into a day school and convent. In those days, Richard James Cushing (1895–1970) a Kennedy friend and Roman Catholic priest who served as Archbishop of Boston (1944–1970) and made Cardinal in 1958, had a smooth way of encouraging legacies of real estate to be left to the Arch Diocese of Boston. Perhaps of his doing, Ursuline Academy and convent was owned by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston until 1959, at which time the Academy closed; the convent remained. Legend has it, Cardinal Cushing also helped the diocese inherit 65-85 Louder Street, Dedham.

Sadly, the Diocese converted 12 Arlington from a convent into professional offices in 1966. Purchased by Harbridge House, Inc., a management consulting firm, Harbridge House (a wholly owned subsidiary of Sears World Trade, Inc., by 1989) merged the two buildings that made up 12 Arlington with 11 Arlington. In 1989 ownership transferred to Sears, Roebuck and Co. The property started with the Bates family then the Sears family, technically ending with the Sears company. ~ *Dr. Constance Y. Fitzpatrick*

References: 1. Mary Melvin Petronella, Edward W. Gordon. *Victorian Boston today: twelve walking tours* (2004, Northeastern).
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4. *Riches, Class, and Power: The United States Before the Civil War*. (1990) Edward Pessen, Transaction Publishers.
5. Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Harvard University.