

**204-206 Pleasant Street
Arlington, Massachusetts 02146
A Brief History by David W. Young (Owner)**

The property located at 204-206 Pleasant Street was, until about 30 years ago, part of a larger parcel of land (approximately 3 acres) that included the homes now located at 208 and 210 Pleasant Street, as well as my home. In 1977, the property was divided into two, and the two parcels were put on the market separately. That is when I purchased the 204-206 property.

At the time of my purchase, 208 Pleasant was the only house on the 2-acre parcel of land. The parcel was subdivided about 20 years ago to create a separate building lot, where 210 Pleasant was constructed.

Originally, the house at 208 Pleasant was a large Victorian mansion, owned by the C.O. Gage family. When it was purchased some 50 or 60 years ago (I don't know who owned it at that time), it had a serious termite problem. Rather than repair the damage, the new owner razed the entire structure, and built the large ranch house that you see on the other side of the common driveway. (He should have hired a better architect!)

The C.O. Gage family built the Victorian Mansion sometime in the early 1800s, probably around 1825. At that time, they also built a carriage house for their horse-drawn buggies and a colonial house for their servants. The house you are being shown is the combination of the carriage house and the colonial. When you are touring the small apartment unit (where I live), take a few minutes to look at the map on the far wall of the office. It was made in 1889 and shows the then-existing property. The small unit on the left of the land parcel is the carriage house and colonial.

The C.O. Gages were part of a larger Gage family, the most prominent of whom were the Addison Gages. You will see their "estate" about a half mile down Pleasant Street toward Arlington Center. The Addison Gages were "ice farmers," and you will see their facilities scattered around Spy Pond. In those days, there was no refrigeration, and A.G. Gage & Co. used teams of men (perhaps some women, but I doubt it!) and horses to cut large blocks of ice from the pond during winter, and store it in their ice houses for shipment throughout the area (and abroad, I am told, but I somehow doubt that). Presumably, if you cut very large blocks, and built relatively well insulated storage facilities, the ice would last throughout most of the summer. Ice was sold retail in blocks of about 1 cubic foot.

Since the business name was A.G. Gage & Co., I would imagine that some members of the C.O. Gage family also were involved in what no doubt was considered to be "the family business." Given the expanse of the Gage family properties, the title "estate" for one, and the existence of servants' quarters, one can rather easily surmise that ice farming was a very profitable business.

When I purchased the house in 1977, it had a quite different configuration than what you see now. The main differences (and changes) are the following:

- The only set of stairs in the main house was the small set (with the green carpet) to the left of the large study (last room on the pond side).
- The cellar below the study, that now contains the "game room," was dingy with rotting mortar in the walls.
- The cellar that you enter through a door to the left of the main entrance was similarly dingy, and had a dirt floor. The concrete wall (in the small room with the punching bag) was a wooden wall, abutting the neighbor's property with three feet of soil extending up its other side! (The large concrete wall to your left as you face it was needed to provide adequate structural support.)
- Returning to the main entrance, the portion of the house containing the stairs leading to the master bedroom did not exist until about 12 years ago. Instead, the exterior wall of the large study near the pond extended all the way up and abutted the wall of the living room. Both sets of doors in the living room were windows at that time.
- About 10 feet behind what is now the main entrance (i.e., on the extended wall) was a small, "back door," leading to a mud room. At that time, the main entrance to the colonial was the door with the small peaked roof, to the left of the large study. (When the renovations were done to extend the wall ten feet out to make room for a second stairway, we discovered that the mudroom at one time had consisted of two horse stalls!)

- The then-mudroom now contains the “under the sea” bathroom. To its right (where there is now a hallway, cedar closet, and laundry room) was a kitchen. The library (with the wood burning stove) was the dining room. The study was the living room. All of these changes were part of the renovation that took place about 10 or 12 years ago.
- In addition to the above changes, the renovation that extended the wall outward to create the main entrance and stairway also included (a) building the guest bedroom you see to the right of the main entrance, (b) raising a low ceiling in the master bedroom and creating a new roof line, (c) adding some extra square feet in the master bedroom (above the entry hall), (d) creating the walk in closet off the bedroom), and (e) installing the tub room. (The original bathroom had a window where there is now a door between the tub room and the rest of the bathroom.)
- Going back to the first floor entrance, the short staircase to the left leading to the living room (with the small study on the right) did not exist. The small study had a window where a door is now located, which was on its exterior wall. The colonial house ended there, although there was a “hidden door” in the small study, allowing emergency access to the living room of the carriage house. (At that time, the current dining room was a bedroom, with a wall and door between it and the living room.)

(The building inspector allowed this configuration because the hidden door connected the colonial to the carriage house, thereby allowing the house to remain technically “two family.” One “family” was the entire colonial and the first floor of the carriage house. The other “family” was the second floor of the carriage house, accessible mainly via the exterior stairs.)

- The large gourmet kitchen was much smaller, and what is now the pantry was a bathroom. At that time, the downstairs of the carriage house included a living room and a dining room (as the counter dividing the kitchen and living room did not exist), two bedrooms (the other is the one off the kitchen), the kitchen and a bathroom. That was one rental unit (although theoretically a part of the colonial!). A second rental unit was the space above it, configured in almost identical fashion.
- Turning to my unit, the living room (with the skylight) originally was connected to what is now the TV room. The thick wall (very thoroughly soundproofed) was built so we could incorporate that room into the main house (my bedroom was actually a second walk-in closet). The doorway between the living room and TV room can be fitted with two doors (in the cellar), with insulation between them to maintain the soundproofing. That would allow the space where I now live to be a small rental unit, au pair suite, or in-law apartment.
- The loft in this unit, containing a bedroom, with a desk, TV, and small sink (plus a small sleeping room, that was dubbed “The Caverns” by my then-10-year-old son), did not exist. The space was accessible only via some pull down stairs, and had open 2x6 beams on the “floor.” You needed to be careful to step on the beams as you traversed the space; otherwise, you could put your foot through the ceiling.
- The Caverns -- ready for this -- housed pigeons. There were perhaps a dozen or more roosts, and several small openings leading to the outside. One can only guess why. Perhaps they were carrier pigeons to allow the Gages to communicate easily (?) with each other. But, then, one must ask why it was so hard to get to the space. Maybe the Gages just liked pigeons!
- A lot of exterior changes also have taken place. When I purchased the property, the front lawn sloped down gradually to abut the house. During a rainstorm, a small stream came down the lawn directly to the house wall, with associated cellar flooding. I built the two stone walls in the front yard (both mortar-less), in part to stem the torrents, but also for aesthetic reasons. I also built the terrace and the small stone wall behind the exterior stairs. Beneath one of the bluestones is the well head. The irrigation system uses well water.
- The hemlock trees along the property line were planted the year I moved in. The driveway, which originally ran straight down across the lawn, ending just in front of the original main entrance, was eliminated and replaced with lawn. The curved driveway was created as part of that project.

I hope you like the place. There are many more changes that have taken place over the 30 years that I have lived here, but those are the most significant ones. If you decide to buy the house, and want to know more, I’ll be happy to give you more details. There are some wonderful stories of harrowing adventures along the way!

Unfortunately, a lot of the house’s history has been “lost to the ages,” as they say. If only the walls (well, those that remain) could talk!

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO 204-206 PLEASANT STREET

Year Improvement	Year Improvement
1977 Termite eradication Repair sill, dry wall work, gutters Plant hemlocks Installed bluestone terrace in back	1998 Replaced water line from street and Installed filter Built secretarial suite in basement under office Remortared walls in cellar under office Installed heaters for crawl space Installed drain and dry well at end of driveway
1980 Renovations to rental unit Installed new roof on colonial portion Installed wood-burning stove and chimney liner	1999 Installed invisible fence Built Zen Room Renovated living room in rental unit Remortared walls in cellar under kitchen and installed shelving Installed two new heating zones, bringing total to seven in main house
1984 Installed shelves in dressing room Renovate upstairs guest bathroom	
1986 Installed new ceilings in kids' rooms	2000 Renovated loft in rental unit; replaced sky lights, installed dormer and sink New roof on carriage house and carport Trimmed fruit trees and maple by living room terrace Trimmed hemlocks, cut back undergrowth, and sprayed for disease
1990 Renovated master bathroom	
1991 Replaced sewer line Installed main entrance, renovated living room and dining room Renovated master bedroom and hall, and Installed tub room Installed new kitchen with Subzero refrigerator, Viking range, AE dishwasher Installed study Renovated TV room Renovated library Renovated guest room Installed downstairs bathroom (Mermaid room) Installed cedar closet and laundry room Installed stereo speakers for walls/ceilings Removed asbestos from main entry Poured concrete on floor of cellar under living room and dining room Expanded from one to five heat zones	2001 Re-planted front garden. Built stone wall along edge of front terrace Repainted driveway Planted rhododendra along east border of property Extended stone wall along shoreline of pond, completing stone wall frontage
1993 Added bookshelf to study Landscaped rear yard and installed sprinkler system Purchased washer and dryer Opened up loft in rental unit and installed skylights	2002 Removed step in front of carport, creating smooth driveway entrance to both side Installed new fencing along western property line and planted border garden Completed additional repairs to driveway Replumbed water so that artesian well water is used for hot water in both units Installed four electrical outlets in garden bordering front terrace Repainted bricks along foundation Installed new dishwasher in 206
1994 Installed well Landscaped front yard and planted fruit trees	2003 Installed fireplace in 204 Widened bottom of driveway and sealcoated it Sanded and polyurathane most of the floors in 204 Painted interior of 204
1995 Painted house Installed sprinkler system in front yard Built stone wall in front yard	2004 Rebuilt stone wall around red maple next to terrace Regouted and waterproofed basement in 206 (under living room)
1996 Built stone wall along driveway Installed lights in front hallway Installed shelving in cellar under dining room and painted floor Installed retaining wall in cellar under computer room and built storage cabinets Replaced retaining wall in cellar under computer room Poured concrete floor in cellar under computer room	2005 Added kitchen lighting for DY Replaced siding on rental unit Replaced roof on rental unit Installed new hot water heaters Replaced pocket door in 206 tub room with swinging door
1997 Installed dining room lights Built stone wall along pond Landscaping for "Florida" garden Installed drain and basketball court in front driveway	2006 Built stone wall around beech tree, and regraded lawn Rebuilt stone wall along left side of property
	2007 Installed railroad ties on back side of house, and painted back side Repaired and repainted basement in 206 Repainted bathroom in 204 Repainted exterior stairway and landing Scraped and painted walls and ceiling of small stairway in 206 Scraped and painted front of 206 and carport