

LIV Historic



**The
Melville Madison Bigelow
Residence**
from 1873-1883

343-343 1/2 Broadway
Cambridge, Massachusetts

A History of the Life of M. M. Bigelow by Angelika O'Conner

Architectural features and home details written by
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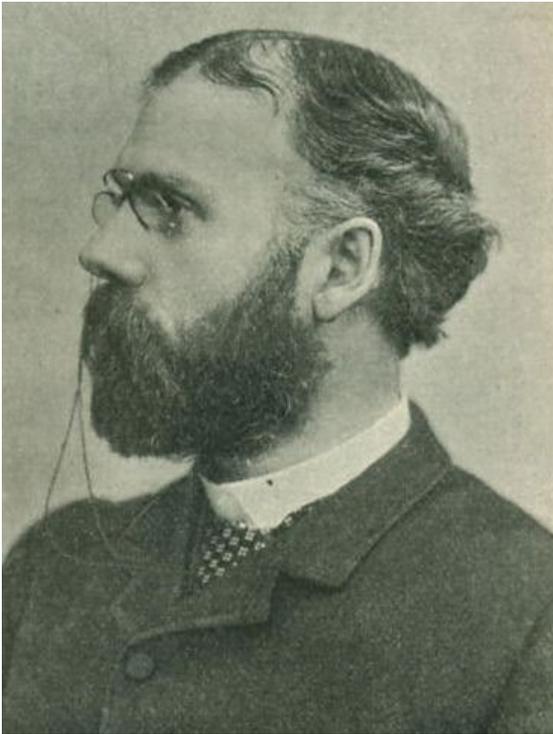
Melville Madison Bigelow

1846-1921

343 & 343 ½ Broadway, Cambridge, Massachusetts
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(Swasey, 1889)

Melville Madison Bigelow

(1846-1921)

343 Broadway Residence from 1873-1883

“As respects to his personal appearance, Dean Bigelow wore his hair rather long, and usually tangled and tousled. In the earlier years, a black beard covered his face . . . He had a gentle voice, an air of abstraction, and not very luminous eyes. Apparently he did not possess a great deal of personal magnetism. He was of nervous temperament. He frequently sat while he lectured. . . .”

- Strangers to Us All Lawyers and Poetry (Law Lit, n.d.)

A History of the Life of M. M. Bigelow

Melville Madison Bigelow (Aug 2, 1846-May 4, 1921) was a brilliant legal scholar who pioneered the research of medieval law, the history of Common Law. His research in this field would give him international renown, especially in England. His treatises for the practicing lawyers and courts, as well as textbooks for law students, engendered a growth in the study of the history of law and its applications. David M. Rabban, who recently wrote a book concerning the legal scholars who contributed to the history of law, writes that Bigelow was, “arguably the late nineteenth-century American legal scholar who made the greatest contribution to original scholarship in legal history” (Rabban, 2010 v. 91, p. 10). The 1872 BU Law School which he helped found, not only benefited from his scholarship, but also from his many years of teaching there as faculty member. Amazon sells a 13-page memoir of Bigelow titled *Melville Madison Bigelow*, a public domain book published by William Van Kellen in 1922 and coined it as ‘social significant’. Bigelow’s works continue to be relevant today as the web takes on their life with free online readings, as well as online books for sale.

Melville Madison Bigelow was born to the itinerant Methodist Rev. Enos Bigelow and his wife Daphne Florence Madison in Eaton Rapids Michigan, August 2, 1846. As a young man of 23, with his Arts degree (1866) and Law degree (1868) from the University of Michigan in tow, he came to Boston in 1869 to help with the

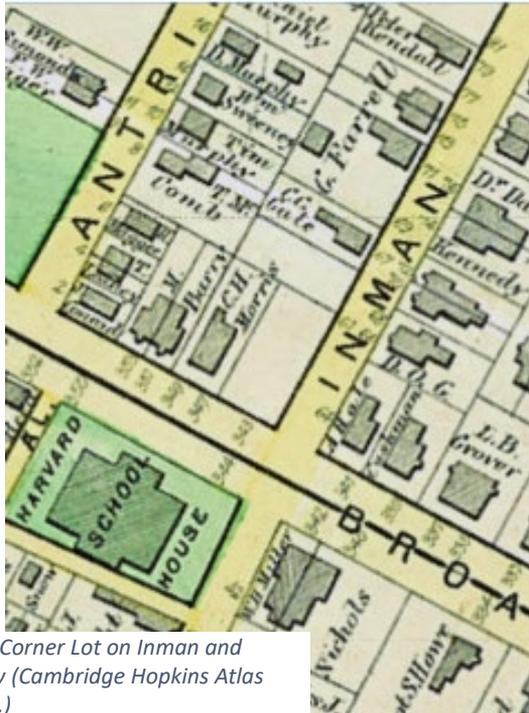
publication and proof of H. Clay Kings Tennessee Digest (Kellen, 1922, p. 5). During this year he met and married his first wife Elizabeth Bragg. In 1870 he moved to Cambridge with his wife, in pursuit of his career and to devote his life's passion to legal scholarship. In 1872, at the young age of 24 he had already published *A Treatise On the Law of Estoppel: And its Applications in Practice* (700+pgs). The same year he commenced his career as professor at BU Law School, the school he helped found. "This was fortunate for him, as it assured him a modest livelihood while he pursued his studies and entered upon his career as a legal author." (Kellen, 1922, p. 6). Bigelow would continue to be a resident of Cambridge until his death in 1921, a period of 52 years (1870-1921).

343 & 343 ½ Broadway Street – Property of Melville Madison Bigelow since 1872

The Cambridge directory has Mr. Bigelow living on 11 Amory St. in 1872/73 as lawyer/publisher. In 1872 he bought land on the corner of Broadway and Inman on which he had built for himself the property addressed 343 & 343 ½ Broadway Street. Near completion at the end of 1873, he went on to live in the house until 1883, a period of ten years. The house itself was built in the Victorian style common at the time, an unassuming duplex with moderate decorum.

That he chose to have a property built at 343 & 343 ½ Broadway was surely a decision of 'location' that would

best suit his needs. Having lived at 11 Amory Street (1872-1873), which was one block West of Broadway Street, near the corner of Broadway and Avery and being familiar with the location, it must have been apparent to him that it was located in the middle of the two destinations he needed to access most, Harvard University (Where he received a Ph.D in Philosophy as well as a Masters of Arts Degree in 1879) in one direction and the other, to Boston, to the Social Law Library on Court Street in Boston, as well as his law office, 14 Court Street.



1- Prime Corner Lot on Inman and Broadway (Cambridge Hopkins Atlas 1873, n.d.)

Imagining the Daily Life of Bigelow Circa 1875

One can imagine Mr. Bigelow as a young 30 year old professional walking to Massachusetts Avenue taking the Red Line. It was the same route, which was at that time above ground by horse drawn trolley. It would have transported him over the West Boston Bridge, now called the Longfellow Bridge, stopping at Court Square, now Government Center, to walk over the Suffolk Court House that housed the Social Law Library and his law office (1875-1881) on the first floor of the Court House at 14 Court House. From Pemberton Square the trolley would have taken a turn onto Tremont Street to let him off at Bromfield St., across from the Granary Burial Ground on the way to Park Street in Boston, to walk to the recently opened BU Law School at 36 Bromfield Street, where he was part founder and faculty of the university located there.

At the Law Library he came to know the prominent distinguished scholars in his field, foremost among these were Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and James Brooks Adams, who became his lifelong friends. Brooks Adams in his tribute to Bigelow at an honorary dinner held for Bigelow in 1913 (Harriman, Melville M. Bigelow, 1921, p. 159) initiated his speech by recollecting that in those early days Bigelow was often seen with Holmes retiring to a recessed part of the library to study law. They were in attendance later in 1920 at a dinner given by the Bigelow Association of Masters of Law. Also at this event were his life-long friends from his early years studying at Harvard, James Baar Ames and James Bradley

Thayer, both Harvard deans and legal scholars, along with another 150 dignitaries including three justices of the Supreme Court and the Attorney General (Harriman, Melville M. Bigelow, 1921, p. 6).

Visualizing a daily routine at the beginning of his residency at Broadway: Perhaps after long hours of legal research at the Social Law Library in Boston and spending some time in his law office, as well as dealing with faculty responsibilities at the new BU Law School, or perhaps coming back from Harvard to work on his theses, he arrived back home toward the evening to his private life in Cambridge at 343 Broadway Street. Here he greets his wife Elizabeth and their three children, Charlotte Gray and Ada Hawthorn who are now ages 4 and 5 and his 2 year old son Leslie. It was a house built large enough to accommodate his growing family. This house was in a part of Cambridge that was being developed quickly at the time with similar residential structures. A grammar school across the street called Harvard School was built in 1871 to serve the growing need of this residential community.

Bigelow's Decade of Achievements at 343 Broadway Street

The ten years lived out at Broadway Street were his most productive years. They were the years of burning the midnight oil, the years in which he completed his most famous works. In 1873 he published a List of Overruled Cases by Courts of America, England and Ireland. It would culminate in his publications of *Placita Anglo-*

Normannica: Law Cases from William I to Richard I 1066-1069 published in 1879 and *History in Procedures from England from the Norman Conquest The Norman Period 1166-1204* published in 1880. These last two works put him on the map as a pioneer in the study of medieval law history and become known as the first legal historian in America. On the basis of these two books and his continued life's dedication to the history of legal scholarship he became recognized and celebrated abroad, especially in England that had lagged behind in research of this depth. There he was even more appreciated as the "legal luminary" that he was (Kellen, 1922, p. 2).

During this decade of time Bigelow would also contribute significantly to his vocation as a Law Professor. The publication for students, *Elements of Law of Torts* in 1878 and its consequent textbook, *Law of Torts*, was used as a legal textbook both here in America as well as in England. "His books were used not only in Great Britain and the United States, but in Egypt, South Africa, Australia in England, China and Japan." (Kellen, 1922, p. 10). *Leading Cases in the Law of Torts* (1875) gave rise to his textbook for students *Law of Torts*, published in 1878, along with his treatise on the Law of Fraud the same year, followed by *Elements of the Law of Equity* in 1879, *Law of Bills, Notes and Cheques* in 1880.

Personally tragedy was unfortunately also a part of Bigelow's life at 343 Broadway. His two young girls, Charlotte Gray and Ada Hawthorne, died here in early childhood – Charlotte Gray 5 yrs old in Nov 1876 and shortly thereafter, her sister Ada Hawthorn 6 yrs. old in

Dec. 1876 (Bigelow Society, n.d.). Death is always untimely, as Daphne Madison, his mother, had already died in 1878. Lastly, his wife of eleven years, Elizabeth Chamberlain, died at 343 Broadway in 1881 at the age of 39 leaving him as a single parent to care for his 7 year old son Leslie born in 1874.

Bigelow remarried in 1883 to Cornelia Frothingham Reed, establishing an end to the decade of life at 343 Broadway. Perhaps as closure of this era in time and in reverence of it, he published his book of *poems Rhymes of a Barrister* in 1884, expressing to the world the poetic reflective side of his nature, the nuanced feelings of a poet.

The End of an Era/Establishing New Residences in Cambridge

In the following years Bigelow moved into several residences in Cambridge, bringing to mind the itinerant moving of his life with his Michigan Methodist parents. But Cambridge is small and moving from one place to another in Cambridge is a commitment to be in Cambridge as Cantabrigian. He continued to publish, lecture and embellish his work of the Broadway house decade, which also lead to much exchange and social intercourse among his peers. Noteworthy is his personal correspondent with Frederick William Maitland that began 1885 and continued through his life.

Tragedy, once again entered Bigelow's life. His son Leslie, a second year law student, died unexpectedly of

pneumonia at age 24, March 30, 1898. A few months prior to his death, Leslie had joined his father in England, their third trip there together. Bigelow would refer to this as “his great bereavement” (Letter, March 20, 1898). Bigelow remarried for the third time later that year to Alice Bradford Woodman, Nov. 10, 1898. He rented a house on 13 Berkeley Street and waited for his residence at 200 Brattle Street to be built. The 300-year English Tudor country house was built on a part of the estate of James Russell Lowell called *Elmswood*. Russell’s house built in 1767 adjoined him in the rear (June 30, 1902).

Bigelow’s Death

The 200 Brattle house as Bigelow’s last Cantabrigian residence where he lived as Dean of BU until 1911 and in retirement until his death May 4, 1921. Bigelow died in 200 Brattle Street and was buried in Mt. Auburn cemetery with a large honorary entourage. They include: Pres. Lemuel H. Herlin, Dean Homer Albers, Sec. James N. Carter, Instructor Harrison Barrett, Ex-Gov. John L. Bates, all of the University, and Brooks Adams, John Merrill Boyd, A. L. Squire and Judge DeCoursey of the Supreme Court. (Professor Melville Madison Bigelow, 1921, p. 3)

The 343 & 343 ½ Broadway Address Marks
Bigelow's Greatest Achievement as a
Cantabrigian Law Scholar. It Marks his Sacrifice
to Society

Bigelow never sold his property on 343 & 343 ½ Broadway, even though he had no heirs. Alice Bigelow kept it until 1947. It contained the strong memories of his early years as Cantabrigian, not his established prominent years at 200 Brattle Street. The scholarly work he produced during the time he lived at 343 Broadway carried the backbone of his achievement. It was the work which he would continue to embellish on during his lifetime and that which would give him international acclaim. He was an extreme academic who accomplished much in his field and goes down not only in the annals of legal history but his work lives a contemporary cyber driven life. Not only are his major works free online, his many books online for sale acknowledge his significance.

*Supplemental material concerning Melville Madison
Bigelow's life in Cambridge available upon request.*

Architectural Detailing of 343 & 343 ½ Broadway

Some of the remarkable interior detailing of the mid-19th century home located at 343 & 343 ½ Broadway, though adjusted as the decades dictated use, are a bit of a time capsule with features from 1872 to the present.

Originally built as side-by-side single family Victorian residences with a simple concaved Mansard roof, the property has been used as a multi-family home throughout the years. Sitting on a brick foundation, placed on field stone below grade, the front double door entries are wide and graceful.



2- 343 & 343 1/2 Broadway (Cambridge Historical Commission, 1965)

Standing from the street, you can almost see exactly how it looked when it was built. The exterior is much like it was during its first decade of construction, imagine long



Figure 1- Chamfered posts, brackets

clapboards instead of the current cedar shingle siding. The home still hosts the classic single story covered double entry for both units. Representing the

quintessential Victorian entry porch, you find chamfered posts with thick scrolled and cutwork brackets. The first floor windows still have their top panels with pediments, cut-outs and applied scroll details and the four dormers across the front Mansard roof stabilize the classic Victorian symmetry. Many of the eaves brackets are intact or saved by the owner. There are two sets of remarkable tapered three story bay windows that reach to the top floors adding interest to the plaster walls (pictured on the front cover).

Walking inside either of the home's vestibules, you are greeted by the original staircase (fig. 2) with the intact electrified newel posts, ballasters and stair treads. The graceful curved mopboards tie-in pieces remain as they

Figure 2- Original Newel Post with Light



taper into the original 10" trim and 6" casings - all waiting to be restored.



Figure 3- Original crown and plaster medallions

The formal entry parlor retains the dramatic crown molding details and picture rails. The highlight of the rooms is the original plaster medallions. Both homes also have the original pocket doors.



Figure 4- Pocket doors



Figure 5- Original marble fireplace surround

Both sides have updated electrical and roof work has been maintained. Both units have updated forced hot air systems, one unit with an oil fired furnace and one with natural gas.

The basement, though in need of some mending, both have walk-out doors to the rear of the lot and lowering the basement floor to accommodate finishing, might be considered.

The demising wall consists of brick and one unit has exposed it for decorative purposes.



Figure 6- Corner of Inman Street and Broadway, Cambridge, MA

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16B26.111 Melville Mattison 8 BIGELOW, son of William Enos 7 (Job Gardner 6 , Jabez 5 , Jabez 4 , Gershom 3, Joshua2, John1) and Daphne (MATTISON) BIGELOW, was born 02 August 1845/6 at Eaton Rapids, Eaton co., MI. His first of three marriages was to Elizabeth Chamberlain Bragg on 16 September 1869. She was born in Boston, MA on 20 March 1842 and died 01 March 1881 at Cambridge, Middlesex co., MA; leaving three children. His second marriage was on 22 May 1883 to Cornelia Frothingham Read who was born in Cambridge on 22 March 1850 and died in 1892. His third marriage, according to one record, was on 10 November 1898 to Alice Bradford Woburn. Melville was a graduate of University of MI in class of 1866, moved to Cambridge in 1870, received a PhD from Harvard 1879 and was a lawyer and author of legal studies. He died 04 May 1921 at Cambridge. Dean of Boston University School of Law.

Children of Melville and Elizabeth (Bragg) Bigelow:

16B26.1111 Ada Hawthorne, b 19 June 1870 Memphis, TN; d 11 Dec 1876;

16B26.1112 Charlotte Gray, b 10 Sep 1871 Cambridge, MA; d 22 Nov 1876;

16B26.1113 Leslie Melville, b 04 Nov 1873 Cambridge, MA; d 24 Mar 1896; A law student, he died unmarried. He died of pneumonia

Sources:

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