

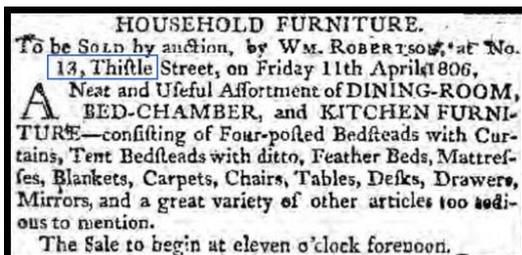
## The History of 39 Thistle Street



Map c1820

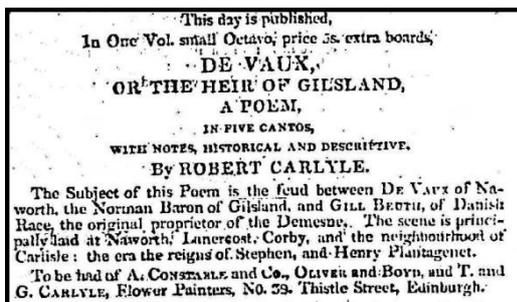
It is thought that this house was built around 1775. Originally it appears to have consisted of five dwellings and a shop on the ground floor. The only on-line way to track people is through the annual Street Directories that were introduced in the city in 1773 – the first street directories anywhere.

However, for the early days of Thistle Street finding the residents of number 37 is problematic. Firstly, many occupants were not listed with any number; simply Thistle Street. Secondly, the numbering was different for West Thistle Street and East Thistle Street; thirdly, most occupants were artisans and the early days of the directories only listed the gentry and professionals such as lawyers and doctors; and fourthly many houses were only occupied for short periods and so the occupants did not appear in the Street Directories even into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



It seems likely that numbers 37 & 39 were called 12/13 West Thistle Street until around 1810. Then once the numbering was standardised, the house was combined as number 39 in directory entries.

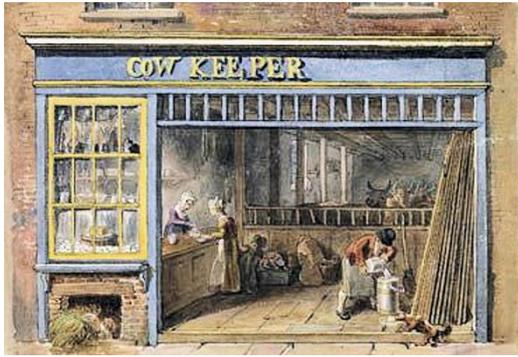
From the 1855 valuation records (see below) it appears that most of the premises were let. This 1806 advert for the sale of one dwelling's furniture indicates that the flat consisted of three rooms.



Through to 1850 a number of the dwellings were operated as furnished lodgings by different residents, and as the 1851 census below shows, many families had one or two lodgers as well.

Among those who lived in the property before 1815 were John Brown, a wright; Alexander Cockburn, a mason; and George Mackay, an upholsterer. From 1815 to 1830 residents included Menzies Henderson, a glazier; T Carlyle, an artificial flower & feather maker (advert); Mrs Craw, a staymaker; and James Symington, a tailor. From 1830 to 1850

residents included John Paton, a shoemaker; Thomas Walker, a tailor; and G. McLean, a chimney sweep.



The shop seems to have been a grocers for much of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although for a short time Alexander Robertson is listed as living at number 39. He was a cowfeeder and may have had the shop for a few years. Cow-feeders were dairymen, supplying fresh milk to Edinburgh residents. (Cow Keeper's Shop in London by George Scharf). The existence of such cowsheds in populated areas was a significant health risk and even by the end of the nineteenth century a

report by the Medico-chirurgical Society of Edinburgh, stated that there were one hundred and fifteen licensed cowsheds, containing around three thousand cows. 'From the time they are bought as milk-giving cows until they are sold again, they are kept closely confined. Not only is this the case in towns, but the same holds in suburban districts. I know of byres on the outskirts of the city containing large numbers of cows, not one of which is ever outside the sheds.'

It was around 1850 that Duncan McCallum took over the shop and traded as a 'spirit merchant'. The 1851 census and 1855 valuation returns provide a snapshot of the residents and owners of each dwelling at that time

Duncan and his wife were in their late thirties. They probably had recently married as they had a baby son, David. They had one female servant (19) living in the house. Their flat was owned by the trustees of Alexander Forbes, who had been a builder. Two other dwellings belonged to the same owner. One was let to John Henderson (45), a railway porter. He lived there with wife Marion (35) and four sons, aged seven down. They had two male lodgers in their twenties; an assistant mason and another railway porter. The other was let to Thomas Cameron (39), a cabinet maker. He lived there with his and seven children. Although one was just twelve-years-old he is listed as a message boy. The other three daughters and three sons, all under 12, were still at school. In spite of this being a family of nine, they also had three lodgers. All were males in their mid-twenties; a cabinetmaker's assistant, presumably working for Thomas, and two sadler's assistants.

The *Philosophical Institution* of Edinburgh owned one dwelling and it was let to William Rennie (44), a blacksmith. Living with him was his wife and three sons. One aged thirteen was working as a stationer's assistant while the other two, aged 11 & 8, were still at school.

One dwelling was co-owned by the famous veterinary doctor, William Dick and his assistant, William Worthington. It was rented by Janet Russell (49), the widow of Matthew Russell and she advertised furnished lodgings. She had two teenage sons, one working as a sales person and the other as a cabinetmaker's apprentice. Her two lodgers, again men in their early 20s, were a clerk and a draper's assistant.

One resident owned her dwelling. She was Margaret Webb (66), widow of Charles Webb. She had bought the property in 1835. Living with her was her unmarried daughter (40) and her son (29) who worked as a tailor's assistant. She had one lodger, a pianoforte teacher in his seventies.

M'Callum & Dalgleish, esqs. W.S. 40 India street  
 — Alex. esq. advocate, 140 Princes street  
 — Alexander, cowfeeder, 117 Grassmarket  
 — D. & J. spirit merchants, 93 Nicolson street  
 — Edward, wholesale and retail woollen draper, 169  
 High street  
 — George, senr. esq. 42 India street  
 — George, esq. W.S. 42 India street  
 — James, esq. W.S. 12 Dublin st.—ho. 4 Scotland st.

In the 1828 Street Directory, the brothers Duncan and John McCallum first appear as spirit merchants. Neither married and the business passed to one brother's nephew, Duncan McCallum Stewart. Whether Duncan of Thistle Street was related to these other McCallums is not known.

In 1865 Duncan was convicted of keeping open after 'lawful hours' and cautioned, but kept his licence.

In 1883 it was reported that 'Health Committee notices are ordered to be served upon owners of three house at 39 Thistle Street, calling upon them to remove nuisance and introduce a supply of water into the houses.'

By around 1900 a John McCallum was running the licenced premises.

In 1930 part was advertised for sale, including the pub.

**The property at 37A and 39 Thistle Street, Edinburgh, consisting of (1) shop, occupied as licensed premises; (2) house, first flat; (3) house, attic flat, rent, £105. 18s.; feu, £1, 17s.; sold for the upset price of £600.**

M'Callum, D. & J., wholesale whisky merchants, 7, 9, 11, and 13 Gibb's entry and Haddon's court, 112 Nicolson street; Telegraph, 'Liqueur'; Telephone, 741 Central; Bonded Stores, No. 8 Customs, John's place, Leith; Telephone, 287 Leith  
 M'Callum, John, & Son, aerated water manufacturers, 28 and 30 West Crosscauseway; Telephone, 624

In 1944 Donald McCallum, Aerated Water Manufacturer, 32 Grange Road was listed as owning the licence. Here the 1911 street directory listing that firm, and also that of D & J McCallum, now whisky merchants.

