

7, 8 Adams Street (circa 1850)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981 (E. W. Gordon, Consultant)*



7, 8 Adams Street ca. 1981



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2015

Numbers 7 and 8 Adams Street are mansion scale double Greek Revival/Italianate row houses. They are constructed of red brick and rise four stories from a granite basement to a brick work cornice "board" with deep-bracketed cornice (cast iron?) and a flat roof. The edges of the buildings are accented by brickwork quoins.

They have side hall plans with deeply recessed entrances, and paired, recessed, below grade basement entrances at center of their façades. Short flights of granite steps lead to double doors. Entrance enframements strike a Greek Revival note with Doric pilasters and heavy cornice-headed entablatures composed of brownstone. Number 7 has replacement inner entrance enframements and considerable alterations to fenestration, with a modern picture window on the first floor and second floor center window, replacing the original oriel. Note: as late as 1970, 7 Adams retained its second floor cast iron railing and oriel.

In general, the windows have cornice-headed lintels with tabs. Number eight has a narrow second floor oriel at its second floor center flanked by ornamental rococo revival railings.

Original owner: James H. Hunnewell

Numbers 7 and 8 Adams Street are key components of the "wall" of red brick masonry mid 19th century townhouses bordering the northeastern side of Winthrop Square. Built circa 1850, 7 and 8 Adams represent mansion scale high style Italianate row houses. Their granite faced basements and classical entrance enframements strike retardataire Greek Revival notes on otherwise stylish (for the early 1850s) Italianate row houses.

Numbers 7 and 8's land appears as lot number one on a plan of lots of G.W. Warren drawn by Alexander Wadsworth, April 1849. George Washington Warren sold Lot number 1 to James Hunnewell, a Charlestown merchant, on February 1, 1850 for \$1998.75-the Warren/Hunnewell deed does not mention buildings. Evidentially numbers 7 and 8 were owned by the Hunnewell family as an investment property during the 1850s and 1860s. (further research is needed to determine who rented these buildings from the Hunnewell family). During the early 1870s James F Hunnewell sold these houses to John P Barnard, a stable keeper, number 7, and George H Braman, "dry goods"-number 8.

During the 1860s Barnard is listed as a stable keeper living at 2 Mount Vernon Avenue. His stables were located at 37, 39 and 41 Warren Street. By 1866 he lived at 228 Bunker Hill Street. Evidently Barnard was successful at his trade as the 1875 Boston directories indicate that he owned stables at 243 Willow, 46 Charles, 28 Myrtle, 32 Joy, Brimmer near Beacon Street, and 39 Warren Street. His ownership of 7 Adams Street was a reflection of Barnard's success as a stable keeper.

George H Braman operated a dry goods business at 110 Chauncy Street, Boston during the 1870s. In 1885 Barnard and Braman are still listed as number 7 and 8's owners. By 1892, number 7 was owned by Margaret McCarthy and number 8 was owned by Annette R. Robbins. Ownership of these houses remained unchanged until at least the early 1910s.

Note: James F Hunnewell, number 7 and 8's pre-1870s owner was engaged in the shipping business with his father James H Hunnewell. In addition he was a distinguished historian-best known for his history of *Charlestown-A Century of Town Life*, published in 1888. The Hunnewell homestead was located on

part of the block bounded by Main, Green, High and Wood streets. Adams Street dates to circa early 19th century- appearing on the 1818 Peter Tufts map of Charlestown. It was named Adams Street "after the distinguished Massachusetts family"-this was the old way from the training field to "dam pasture", before the laying out of the Salem Turnpike, which began at City Square.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Panoramic view of Charlestown-1848

Atlases-1868, 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1911

Charlestown directories-1850s-70s

Boston directories-post 1875

Charlestown Enterprise-August 30, 1999 "deserved honor given the name" page 3

Middlesex deeds- number 7-1251:191, 192,number 8-1101:117, 561:48, 511:444, 446

*Digitized and edited, without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, with the addition of current photographs. In the case of houses that have been altered since the survey, these photographs may not entirely correspond to the architectural description. If earlier photographs of suitable quality are available, these have been included.

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