

4, 5, 6 Adams Street (1849)

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



4,5,6 Adams Street 2015

These are a trio of flat front, side hall plan brick and granite trimmed Greek Revival houses. They have three bay main façades and granite faced basements with two small square basement windows per house. There are tie rod ends between floors two and three on numbers four and five. There is a dentillated cornice on number 4, while 5 and 6 have brickwork cornice tables. The buildings are enclosed by a low-pitched gable roof with two flat roofed dormers per building.

The entrances are deeply recessed with six granite steps leading to front doors. Remnants of cast iron foot scrapers are present on 4 and 5's first steps. The entrances are surmounted by pedimented lintels with tabs-number 5's lintel is the most intact. The front doors of 4 and 6 retain original enframements with multi-pane sidelights and four pane transoms. The entry sidewalls are brick and the ceilings wood paneled. Number 5 has replacement Victorian double doors in place of a single door with sidelights and transom.

There are standard size windows at first and third floors with simple sills and lintels (granite?). Tall windows at the second floor have pedimented lintels with tabs. In general the windows have 1/1 or 2/2 replacement sash (originally 6/6).

Builder: William Bragdon

Original owner: William Bragdon

Overlooking Winthrop Square, numbers f4, 5, and 6 Adams Street are key components in Adams Street's handsome "wall" of red brick townhouses. Architecturally, this trio represents substantial well-crafted Greek Revival masonry housing of circa 1849/1850. These houses provide further evidence of the

supremacy of the flat front in mid-19th century Charlestown housing.

This trio evidently represents the work of William Bragdon. Built circa 1849, these houses do not appear on the 1848 panoramic view of Charlestown but do appear on the 1852 McIntyre map. This group's land was purchased by George Washington Warren (? From) Charles G Loring on November 22, 1847 [Middlesex 511: 446]. These houses' lots appear on the Alexander Wadsworth plan dated April 1849 (Middlesex plan 4A-38)-numbers 4,5 and 6 Adams appears as lots two, three, four on the Wadsworth plan-part of a 20 lot tract bordering Winthrop and both sides of Wallace court, as well as Adams Street (including number 7 Adams). This 20-lot tract is contiguous with the large 115-lot tract of the Bunker Hill Memorial Association-lots, which border Monument Square and the Bunker Hill Monument. The B H M A's tract was carved in house lots in 1839, but it was not until 1847 that the first townhouse was built. Most of the houses bordering Monument Square were built in the 1850s/60s. The houses of Warren's 20-lot parcel are contemporaneous with the first Monument Square houses.

George Washington Warren was the president of the Bunker Hill Memorial Association. He was the youngest son of deacon Isaac Warren. He graduated from Harvard at age 18. He served a short time as an instructor in Warren Academy, Woburn-"an institution liberally endowed by his father". He was a lawyer and later judge of the Municipal Court of Charlestown for 25 years, and was president of the Bunker Hill Monument Association from 1847 to 1875. He was mayor of Charlestown from 1847 to 1850, and he represented Charlestown in both branches of the legislature. For many years he lived in the

cupola-crowned mansion at 7 Monument Square. He died at 12 Beacon Street in 1883.

Warren evidentially sold numbers 4,5, and 6 Adams Street to William Bragdon. (See deed for number 5 Adams Street (541:422). Bragdon paid Warren \$2024.25 for number 5's lot. He is described as a "painter"-a term often synonymous with "builder" or "housewright" in mid 19th century New England. William Bragdon was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1842-1852/53. In 1842 he lived at Mt. Pleasant Street. During the 1840s/early 1850s he resided on Alston Street. Bragdon sold number 5's lot "with the buildings thereon" (being lot number three on the Wadsworth plan) to John Curtis, a "trader" on January 16, 1850 for \$6000.00

In 1875, this trio's owners included: Peter Holmes, occupation? -Number 4, John Curtis, "crockery ware," 121 Federal Street, Boston-number 5, and Abigail and Elizabeth Bray-number 6.

By 1885 the owners included: T W Wakefield, occupation? - Number 4, Jay Curtis Ayers-number 5, Darius Crosby, Cook Rymes and Company, machinists, boilermakers, etc.-number 6.

Owners in 1901 included Abram T Collier-number 5, Stephen C Holmes, number 4, and Sarah A Keyes-number 6.

Bordering the northeastern edge of the Training Field/Winthrop Square, Adams Street is part of an old highway, which dates to at least the mid-18th century. This highway included high Street and Elm Street, linking the Training Field with Bunker Hill Street. The 1818 Peter Tufts map indicates that the segment of Adams Street between Common Street and Winthrop Street was part of High Street, with Adams Street beginning at the corner of the Common

Street/Adams Street intersection, continuing as Adams Street to the Salem Turnpike.

According to an article in the *Charlestown enterprise* dated August 30, 1919, page 1, Adams Street was named after "the distinguished Massachusetts family "(meaning the Quincy Massachusetts family of presidents and statesmen). Adams Street was "the old way from the training field to "dam pasture", before the laying out of the Salem Turnpike in 1803.

Located on or near the site of 4-6 Adams was the old Alms House-it stood "at the corner of High and Adams Street"-this almshouse was demolished circa 1824 and a brick Alms House was subsequently built on Elm Street. The Elm Street almshouse was demolished in 1848, moving to Alford Street.

Bibliography:

Maps? -1818, 1852

Panoramic view of Charlestown-1848

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

Charlestown Enterprise, August 30, 1919, page 1

Middlesex Deeds-five Adams-511: 446, 541:422, 551:123, 1061:337

"Monument Sq., Charlestown: Seeking timelessness in a temporal world" by Ellen Jane Katz, 1978 (*M. I. T. Masters of architecture* thesis).

Boston/Charlestown directories-19th century

*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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