

1-7 Cordis Street (circa 1856-1857)

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



1-7 Cordis Street

2016

Numbers 1-7 Cordis Street is a group of four, three-story red brick Italianate town houses, with granite, brownstone and cast-iron trim. The main façades are characterized by flat fronts, three bays, and side hall plans. They have granite-faced basements, with basement stairs leading down into numbers 5

and 7. The building has a flat roof with a deep-bracketed, paneled cornice.

There is a fifth residence to the rear of 1 Cordis Street, numbered 91 Warren Street. The Warren Street façade features a two-story copper multipaneled oriel (1890s) at floors two and three. Number 91 Warren's entrance is located at the center of the Warren Street façade.

The Cordis Street entrances are deeply recessed, with paired entrances at 1 and 3. Each house has a projecting scroll-bracketed door hood (evidentially wood). There are cast iron lintels with delicate detailing on floors one and two, with simple brownstone sills. The third floors have wedge shaped brownstone lintels; the windows have a 1/1 wood sash.



5 Cordis Street lintel detail

2016

Builder: John B Wilson, Charles Wilson

Original owner: John B Wilson, Charles Wilson

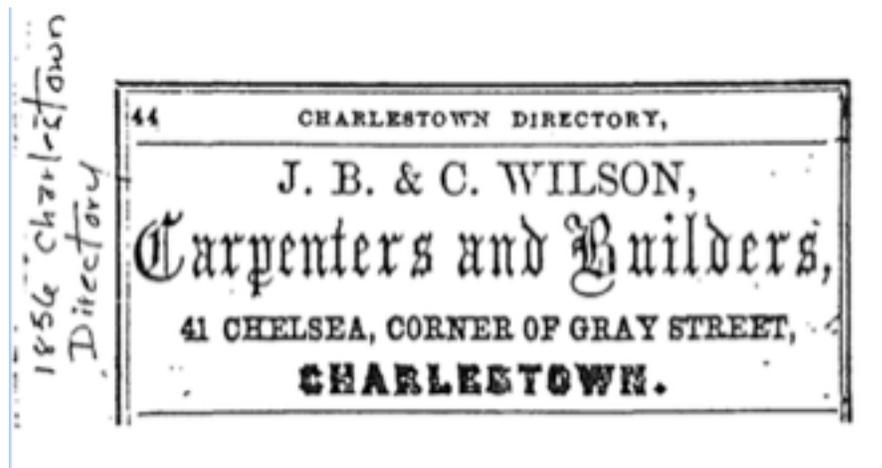


91 Warren Street

Anchoring the southwest corner of Warren and Cordis streets, 1-7 Cordis provides a fine introduction to Cordis Street's rich inventory of early-mid-19th-century residences. Built circa 1856-57, this group's flat fronts testify to the conservatism of Charlestown's mid-19th century Masons. During the mid-1850s the bow and swell front was being widely used in Boston's fashionable South End-in Boston the bow front had been used almost continuously since its introduction by Bulfinch during the late 1790s/early 1800s. Except in Monument Square and Harvard Street, the bow front was little employed in Charlestown house construction. The planarity of this group's main façade is relieved by deep-bracketed door hoods, cast iron window lintels and a bracketed cornice. The window lintels with their delicate floral and egg and dart motifs strike an elegant note. Cast iron lintels are a relatively rare Boston area phenomenon, appearing on a very few South End row houses of the 1850s. Cast iron window lintels appear with considerably more frequency on Charlestown row houses, including 1, 3 Auburn Street, 276-280 Bunker Hill Street and 28-34 Chestnut Street.

Built circa 1856-57, this group represents the work of John B Wilson and Charles Wilson. John B Wilson and enjoyed a long and highly successful career in the Charlestown building trades, being active from the early 1830s to the early 1900s. He worked in partnership with his brother Charles until Charles' death in 1860. John B Wilson was born in Charlestown July 17, 1817. He began to learn the trade of carpenter and builder at the age of 16. For a few years he worked as a journeyman before entering into partnership with his brother, Charles Wilson. For many years John D Wilson's place of business was 43 Chelsea Street. In 1845 John B and Charles Wilson built the predecessor school to the present Bunker Hill School at Baldwin and Bunker Hill streets. In 1842 the brothers Wilson

were boarding at 6 Putnam Street. By the early 1850s John B lived on Winthrop Street, while Charles continued to reside on Putnam Street. From the late 1850s-early 1900s John B Wilson lived on Monument Avenue (see form on 47, 49 Monument Ave.). Mr. Wilson was member of the Charlestown Common Council and Board of Aldermen, serving two years in each branch and was a member of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association.



John B Wilson and Charles Wilson bought 1-7 Cordis Street's lot from William Abbott on August 21, 1856 [Middlesex 741:518]. Mention of a brick dwelling house (in reference to 5 Cordis) is made in a deed between the Wilsons and Thomas M Stockman May 23, 1857 [761:280].

Owners of this group in 1875 included Mary C Smith-number 1, Andrew G Holmes, partner in F M Holmes company, furniture manufacturing 119-125 Medford St. and 188 Hanover St., Boston-number 3, William B Bradford-iron foundry (Somerville)-number 5, and Thomas Southworth, ship carpenter, navy yard-number 7.

By 1911, owners included Thomas and Ellen Joyce-number 1, Teresa Doherty number 3, Mary Langmaid-number 5 and Patrick C Kelly-number 7.

Cordis Street was set out as early as 1799 over the pasture of Capt. George Joseph Cordis. Timothy T Sawyer noted that "the street has always been a pleasant one for residents and on it have been the homes of the former citizens of Charlestown who were active in its business and prominent in its affairs."

Bibliography:

Maps- 1818, 1852

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

Middlesex deeds-5 Cordis: 981:177, 851:16, 831:333, 741:518
(also 224:342, 299:186, 348(?): 218)

Charlestown/Boston Directories, -19th century

50th anniversary of the dedication of the Bunker Hill

Monument by *The Bunker Hill Times* (1843-1893)

*Digitized and edited, without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, and with 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.

R. Dinsmore

