

11-21 Park Street (circa late 1830s)

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



17, 13, 11 Park Street

2016

Numbers 11-17 Park Street is a group of four flat front Greek Revival row houses constructed of red brick with brownstone trimmings. Number 11 Park Street has been demolished since this survey was done. Number 17 has a three bay main façade, while 13 and 15 are unusually narrow, sharing a four bay main façade, each with two bays. They have three stories and low granite faced basements. Number 13 has a partially below

street grade basement entrance (an entrance to a covered passageway only?). All four houses have side hall plans. They have brick work cornices and gable roofs, and each house's main façade has a gable roof dormer.

The entrances are recessed. (Number 11, no longer extant, retained its original well-crafted entryway wood paneling.) In general the entrances and windows have simple brownstone lintels and sills and mostly 1/1 wood sash.



19 Park Street

2016

Numbers 19 and 21 Park Street were evidentially originally identical Greek Revival wood houses. At some point circa 1850s or 60s a third-floor was added to number 19; it has a flat roof and a bracketed cornice in the Italianate manner.

Its entrance enframement consists of Doric pilasters and cornice headed, bracketed entablature.

Number 21 retains its original appearance with the exception of synthetic siding. It has a gable roof and a pair of gable roofed dormer windows. Number 21's entry retains Doric pilasters and pedimented entablature..



21 Park Street

2016

Original owner: John L Hunnewell? Ebenezer Breed?

This group of circa late 1830s masonry and wood frame houses is a remnant of Charlestown's once densely settled City Square/waterfront area. Over time, fire, neglect and urban renewal, highway construction etc. have resulted in an area of mostly vacant lots to the rear of these buildings. Numbers 11-21 Park Street were survivors of the "burnt district" 's extensive late 1830s rebuilding program. Number 11 was subsequently demolished in the 1970s-80s era of urban renewal.

Architecturally, numbers 11-17 Park Street are straightforward, exceedingly plain examples of late 1830s masonry Greek Revival housing. Apparently number 19 was once identical to the gable roofed Greek Revival number 21, but at some point circa 1850s or 1860s it acquired a flat roofed third-floor with an Italianate bracketed cornice. Both houses are constructed of wood.

This group occupies lots 2-6 on "plan of the lots in the burnt district in Charlestown to be sold at auction October 25, 1836". This plan was drawn by Alexander Wadsworth, a surveyor. He is credited with the plans for Pemberton Square, in Boston, and Mount Auburn Cemetery's winding system of roads.

This group's construction followed, by two or three years, Charlestown's third major fire. Early on the morning of August 28, 1835, this fire destroyed a large portion of the downtown area. Beginning in property on City Square, the fire swept to Joiner Street before being brought under control. Fire departments from 16 surrounding communities answered the call for putting out the "extensive conflagration." The fire

meant "a very combustible and dangerous neighborhood must now give room to more substantial and commodious buildings on an improved plan."

Immediately after the fire, a committee was formed to evaluate laying out new streets and significantly, "widening, altering or discontinuing old streets". Park Street, then called Warren Street, was widened along with Main, Joiner and Chamber Streets. Ebenezer Breed, a Charlestown merchant, was appointed "trustee for special purposes", to oversee the disposal of lots in the burnt district.

For further information on Park Street and vicinity's post 1835 fire rebuilding/redevelopment see Final Report, Phase II Archaeological Site Examination, Central Artery, North Area. (Institute in Conservation Archaeology, Harvard University, 1983, pages 39-42, 101-104)

Further research is needed to unravel the deed chronology of this group. In 1875 a John L Hunnewell owned numbers 11 through 19. From circa 1880-1899, they were owned by George C Nichols and others, as a group. During the early 1900s, number 11 was owned by a Bridget McIlenny. Number 13 was owned by John Foley, and it numbers 15 and 17 were owned by Mary J Leen.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown/Boston directories-late 19th century

Suffolk deeds-2641: 135, 25 35:193-number 13

Final report: phase 2 archaeological site examination of the project area for the Central Artery North area, Charlestown,

Massachusetts-1983-Institute for conservation archaeology-
Peabody Museum, Harvard University

*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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