

117 Old Rutherford Ave. (circa 1809)

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



117 Old Rutherford

1968

Number 117 Old Rutherford Avenue is a wood frame, two-story, five bay by two bay Federal house. It is of modest scale and stands with its narrow end wall gable to the street. The wood shingle-clad main façade has a hip roof and overlooks a relatively ample yard. A two-story ell (Added after 1911) projects from the southeast corner of the main block, obscuring one bay of the five bay main façade.

It has a center entrance with mid-19th century enframement, e.g. paneled pilasters and Italianate bracketed door hood. The windows are fully enframed with raised outer moldings and have 6/1 and 6/6 wood sash.



117 Old Rutherford

2015

Original owner: Robert Sisson

Although altered in terms of sheathing (wood shingles have replaced original clapboards and placement of the ell on the main façade rather than at the rear of the main block, this house retains its boxy five by two bay Federal form and elements, i.e. window enframements, some sash, and the hip roof. It also retains the integrity of siting following a typically Federal formula of boxy main block with narrow two bay façade facing the street, and the five bay center entrance main façade facing a garden (oriented toward the south). Number 117 Rutherford is a key component in the node of early 19th century houses (brick and wood) bordering Rutherford Avenue and Union Street. (See also 30, 31 Union Street.)

This house has historical associations with Charlestown's important early 19th century Morocco leather dressing trade. Robert Sisson, a Charlestown Morocco-leather dresser, owned and occupied this house from its completion circa 1809 until 1852. Sisson had purchased its lot from Jonathan Gilmore, a Charlestown trader, on January 28, 1809 for \$300. Presumably this house was built in the spring/summer of 1809. By 1852 Sisson was living in Lowell Massachusetts-still employed as a leather dresser. On May 11, 1852 Sisson sold this house to John B. MacAlvin of Lowell, a gentleman, for \$600.

Later owners of this property included John Wilson of Boston (1850s, 60s). Fannie Davis, a widow, and Thomas Jones, a Charlestown teamster (also listed as "in Navy Yard"). Jones paid Davis \$2000 for this property on September 19, 1868. Jones owned the house until circa 1880. By 1885 Jeremiah F Dineen (occupation?) Owned the property and a Jeremiah Dineen, Sexton, St. Mary's Church boarded here. (St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, built in 1828 was located on Rutherford Avenue between Union and Austin streets-this congregation relocated to Warren/Soley/Winthrop streets in 1889). The house was owned by Dineen family members until at least 1911.

Evidently the early 19th century residential development in the area bounded by Bow (Devens), Main, Austin and Lynde streets was linked in part with the establishment of the Charlestown Navy Yard (1800) and the construction of the Charlestown prison at nearby Prison Point (1804), site of the present day Bunker Hill Community College.

Bibliography:

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

Middlesex deeds-180: 445; 591:121; 841:242; 1041:136

*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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