

12, 14 Putnam Street (circa 1799-1814)

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



14 Putnam Street

2016



12 Putnam Street

2016

Numbers 12, 14 Putnam Street is a double Federal house, constructed of brick with modern wood shingles over the façade of number 14 and aluminum siding over the main façade of 12. Each house has a three bay main façade and side

hall plan. The basement is of brick, covered with stucco. A curious feature is a street level opening where the two halves are joined, leading to a covered passage. The building culminates in fascia, molded cornice, and a gable roof. An original pedimented dormer is still extant on number 12. A later double dormer is on 14's main façade roof slope. Number 14's windowless sidewall has star shaped tie rods. To the rear is a two-story brick ell.

Number 12's entrance is recessed and open with wooden stairs leading to the front door, flanked by narrow multi-pane sidelights with fluted trim. Number 14's inner entrance treatments are hidden behind later outer door entrance enframements.

Builder: Daniel Leeman, Barnabas Barker (?)

Original owner: Daniel Leeman

Numbers 12 and 14's main façades follow the crooked path of Putnam Street. The form and scale of Putnam Street's residences, together with this crooked path, convey a sense of Charlestown's late 18th century/early 19th century semi rural village character. In a sense, Putnam, Elwood (formerly Mechanic), and Common Streets represent the "last gasp" of Charlestown's late 18th/early 19th century waterfront residential (actually mixed-use) area. Sadly, most of Charlestown's waterfront area has been obliterated by fire, urban renewal, and highway construction etc.

Architecturally, numbers 12 and 14 Putnam Street is significant, despite alterations to fabric, as a rare example of early 19 century circa 1799- 1814-double federal masonry vernacular housing. Along with the much later 8 and 10 Putnam Street, this house possesses a covered passage, which

runs from one end of the house to the other. Evidently its purpose was to get those occupants of the house who were located to the rear, access to the street.

Numbers 12 and 14 may represent the work of either Barnabas Barker and or Daniel Leeman (?) Lemman (?) –(various spellings), housewrights. Number 12 and 14 Putnam may be may be traced back to the deeds to two parcels sold by Barnabas Barker and Aaron Putnam to Daniel Leeman on November 13, 1798 and January 5, 1799, respectively. The Barker/Leeman deed mentions that Leeman had a workshop on an adjoining lot. The Putnam/Leeman deed describes Putnam Street as 20 feet wide. Leeman paid Barker “110 pounds lawful money” for what appears to be the larger of the two parcels, with mention of a 44-foot boundary along Putnam Street, which appears in later deeds. The deed also describes the parcel in question, with no buildings, as being "for a house lot. "

Daniel Leeman owned 12 and 14 until 25 June 1814. At that time he sold this property to Peter Sawyer, a “chase maker” for \$400. Peter Sawyer, described as a “wheelwright” in Middlesex deed 229:349 (re-check deed for date) sold of these houses to Francis Wyman, a "gentleman" for \$702. They remained under Wyman family ownership until Francis Wyman, a "merchant", sold to George S Pendergast of Charlestown, a "baker", on December 7, 1848, for \$3537. Numbers 12 and 14 Putnam Street remained under Pendergast family ownership until as late as 1924, when Emma M Young became this double house’s owner.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1911

Middlesex deeds-130:275, 131:130, 207:361, 229:349,
521:338, 531:301
Suffolk deed-4640:438

*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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