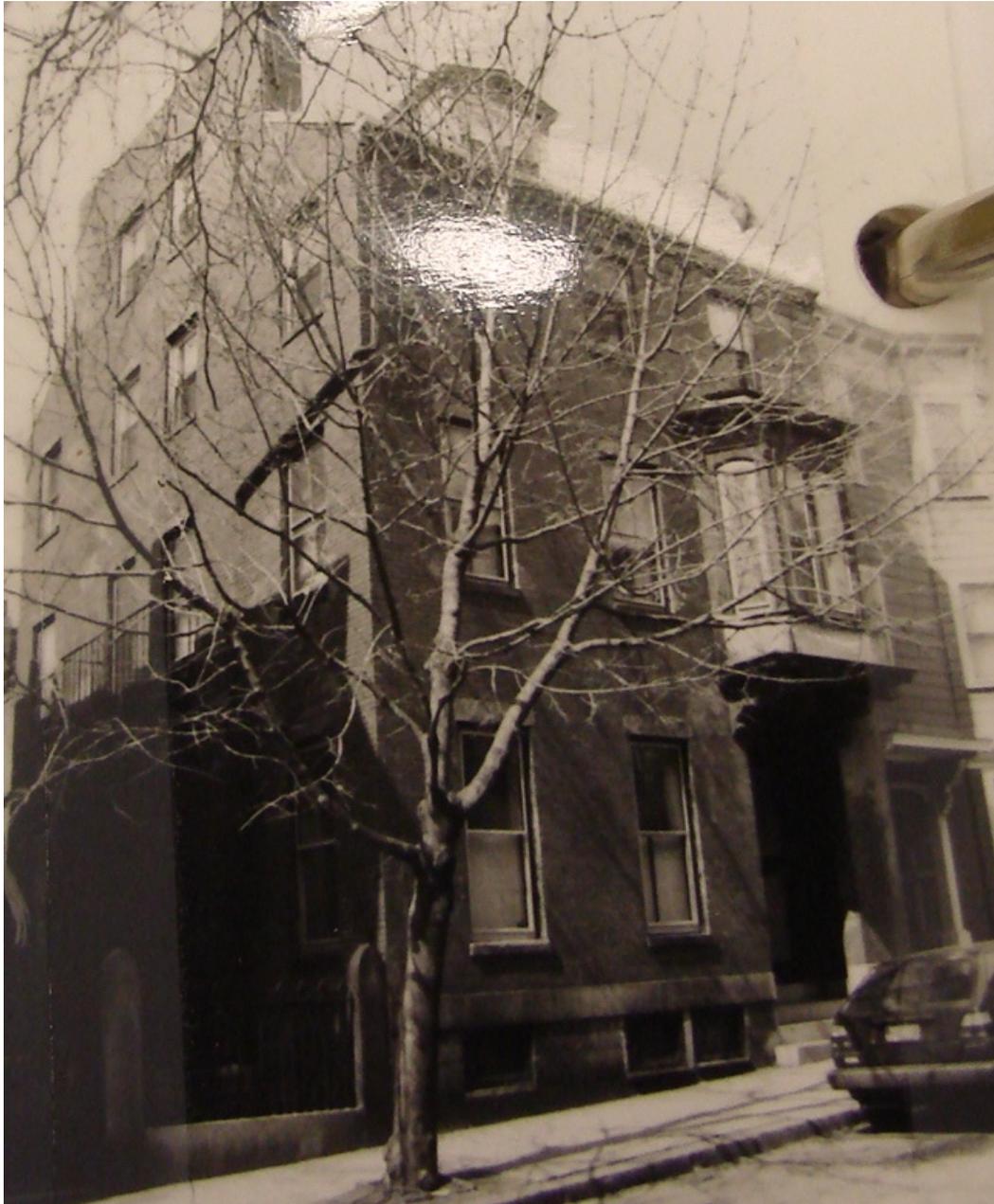


## 12 Cordis Street (circa 1848-1852)

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



12 Cordis Street

1981



12 Cordis Street

2016

Number 12 Cordis Street is a substantial, three-story brick Greek Revival townhouse. It has a three bay by four bay main block with a flat front, a side hall plan. The foundation is of granite. The cornice is of dentilated brickwork and the main

block is crowned by a gable roof with distinctive linked chimneys. There are pedimented double dormers at the main façade. To the rear is a two-story brick ell with a dentilated cornice.

Granite steps within a recessed entry lead to a multi-paneled Victorian front door. A deep-bracketed door hood with a dentilated and bracketed oriel surmounts the entrance. The front door is flanked by single pane sidelights and surmounted by a simple (outer) transom.



12 Cordis Street entry, oriel 2016

The oriel windows have segmental arches; apron panels of the oriel are now covered with makeshift plywood panels. Elsewhere the windows have simple brownstone sills and lintels and 1/1 wood sash.

Original owner: John Doane (?)

Architecturally, 12 Cordis is significant as a well-executed substantial Greek Revival masonry house. Built circa 1848-51, its salient features include a handsome, well-crafted multi-paneled front door, bracketed door hood and oriel window (striking an Italianate note) and above all a distinctive linked chimney profile. In general, the house is characterized by planar masonry surfaces and simple brownstone sills and lintels.

Number 12 Cordis has significant historical associations with Charles Thompson, a prominent mid-19th century citizen of Charlestown, well known throughout the state through his business dealings as an iron merchant and within the state Democratic Party. In addition, the popular Charlestown physician Dr. Henry Arvin Houghton lived at 12 Cordis from 1876-1895.

Further research is needed in Middlesex Deeds to pinpoint this house's date of construction. Mallory's Panoramic View from Bunker Hill (1848) indicates that number 12 was not as yet built, while the 1852 McIntyre map shows that this house was extant by that time. Evidently it was built for John Doane, engineer, and originally encompassed much of the Cordis/Warren Street corner.

Charles Thompson and his wife, Nancy Thompson bought this house from Doane on April 28, 1857. In addition to being an iron merchant Charles Thompson was "the first Democratic candidate for mayor after the city government was established (1857), and at one time the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor. He served as a member of the Governor's Council and as a state senator." During the Thompson years (1857-1885) the house was known for its large attractive garden. Wolcott Cutler noted that "in his day the large garden

was famous for a buckthorn hedge all along the iron fence on two sides. The third side was enclosed by a brick wall covered with Chinese wisteria and other climbing plants."



12 Cordis Street, detail, granite/iron fence 1981

From 1875-95 this house was the residence of Henry Arvin Houghton, M.D. He was born December 25, 1826 in Lyndon, Vermont. He attended a course of lectures at an allopathic college in Woodstock, Vermont, finishing his coursework in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1852. During the 1850s and 1860s he practiced medicine in Lyndon, Vermont and Kerseville, New York. Dr. Houghton came to Charlestown in December 1876. He was a member of the Charlestown Club (See form on 44 High St.) and the 999th artillery Association. By the early 20th century this house was part of the extensive real estate holdings of A. V. Lincoln (see form on 16 Cordis Street).

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Panoramic View from Bunker Hill Monument by RP Mallory-  
1848

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

Middlesex Deeds-761:170, Suffolk deeds-2214:239

Charlestown Enterprise-special edition 1893 "Charlestown  
Citizens Past and Present

\*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