

## **120, 122 Elm Street (circa 1840-1842)**

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

Built circa 1848-42, 120-122 Elm Street was one of the oldest dwellings on the northeast slope of Bunker Hill. Architecturally it represented a substantial late Federal/Greek Revival double house with an unusually extensive brick/stone north wall, which extended to the level of the second floor. These two center passage houses, which stood back to back, had entrances on the sidewalls and a broad end wall gable facing the street. This house was one of the first buildings oriented toward Medford Street. (Medford was set out circa mid 1830s.)

Evidently this house stood in isolation until circa late 1840-early 1850s. Until the late 1840s much of Bunker Hill's northeastern slope was pastureland. Deacon Larkin's pasture encompassed Elm Street and its adjacent house lots. (See 1818 map). Numbers 120-122 Elm had historical associations with at least four important mid-19th century Charlestown builders: Moses Worthen (see forms on 29 and 54 Elm Street, both of which date to circa 1837), Caleb Pratt (probably this house's builder, more often associated with house construction in the Sullivan Street area), James Hurd, a carpenter, and Colburn Barrell, a ships carpenter.

On July 7, 1840 (595:96) Caleb Pratt, a housewright, sold 120-122's lot to Henry Warren, a Charlestown cordwainer, for \$790. Pratt had purchased this lot from Moses Worthen. Warren sold this house, or at least 122, on April 27, 1847 (501:296) to Susan Barrell, wife of Colburn Barrell, ship's carpenter, for \$1000. (Colburn Barrell was evidently responsible for the carpentry of 58 and 60 Elm Street -see

form, circa 1846). Susan Barrell owned 122 until at least circa 1885.

Charlestown directories indicate that James Hurd, carpenter/real estate agent, was listed as living at the corner of Elm and Medford streets as early as 1842. (During the 1840s his occupation was "carpenter;" by 1852 he was a real estate agent, still living on Elm Street.) Hurd lived at 120 until the mid-1870s.

Number 120-122's early 1840s construction was the harbinger of a building boom in Charlestown, triggered largely by the great immigration wave of primarily Irish immigrants that came to Boston during the mid-1840s. Some 130,000 immigrants settled in Boston and vicinity from 1845-1855.



120-122 Elm Street in 2016

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown directories-1834-74

Middlesex deeds

\*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.

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