

132 High Street/23 Franklin Street (1834)

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



132 High Street, 23 Franklin Street

1980s?

Numbers 132 High Street/23 Franklin Street is a Greek Revival clapboard-clad double house. The building's edges are accented by narrow corner boards. It has a side hall plan segment at its gable end wall (132 High Street) and a center entrance on its abutting sidewall segment (23 Franklin Street). There is a pedimented dormer at the center of the Franklin Street façade. The two bay High Street end wall gable has a recessed entrance with a granite step and classical enframements with pilasters and entablature. To the left of this entrance is a small and narrow two-story gable roofed ell.



132 High St.



132 High Street, 23 Franklin Street 2015

The two bays of the Franklin Street façade which are closest to High Street are part of 132 High Street. The remaining four

bays are part of 23 Franklin Street, which has entrance enframing identical to 132. The windows are simply enframed and have 6/6 wood sash.

Original owner: Caleb Pratt

Numbers 132 High Street/23 Franklin Street represents an interesting variation on the more usual six bay main façade, paired entrance double house theme. Here, it's two segments are composed of a side hall plan, end wall gable main façade segment which abuts an off center passage plan house with a four bay main façade. The curious little two-story gable roofed ell to the left of 132's entrance is apparently original to circa 1834. This house retains its clapboards and elements, most notably, interesting, primitive looking entrance enframements consisting of simple pilasters and entablature. It is a very early Greek revival building within its immediate area.

This double house is the work of Charlestown housewright Caleb Pratt. He was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1830-circa 1853. He lived at 28 High Street in 1834. Evidently he lived in the 23 Franklin segment from 1834 until he moved to Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1853. He was responsible for a number of primarily moderately scaled dwellings in the area between Elm Street and Walker Street, including 32-36 Pearl Street, and 31, 33, Walker Street. Further research may indicate that Pratt also built 120 and 126-128 High Street.

The lot on which 132 High-23 Franklin was built had been part of the estate of Major Timothy Walker during the early 19th century. Pratt purchased this lot for \$300 on July 28, 1834 (324:226) and sold it in 1854 to Albert M and James M Stimpson for \$2500. The Stimpsons were "traders" (611:380).

Maj. Walker was a merchant and one of the wealthiest men in early 19th century Charlestown. He was the first president of the Bunker Hill Bank (1825) and the first president of the Warren Institute for Savings. He was elected to the state legislature in 1815, 1818, and to the state Senate in 1825. His home was apparently located in the vicinity of Walker Street's intersection with Main Street. Walker's house was described by Timothy T Sawyer as an oblong square building of good size, three stories high, fronting on a grass plot and garden. Walker's estate continued across Main Street to Walker's wharf. For some years Walker conducted a large slaughter, packing and shipping business from this wharf. He also owned a great deal of land in Charlestown-he was in a league with Oliver Holden of Pearl Street and Richard Sullivan, Senior of Boston (owner of lots adjoining Sullivan Street).

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851 new line asked listeners-
Atlases-1875, 1922

Middlesex Dean's
Charlestown and directories

*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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