

17-21 Auburn Street (1861)

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



21, 19, 17 Auburn Street

2016

Numbers 17-21 Auburn Street is a trio of brick, flat front, Italianate row houses. They have low granite basements, three bay main façades, and side hall plans with recessed entrances. Sills and lintels are of simple brownstone, and there are wooden bracketed cornices above the third-floor windows, with a flat roof.

Builder: Charles W Wellington

Original owner: Charles W Wellington

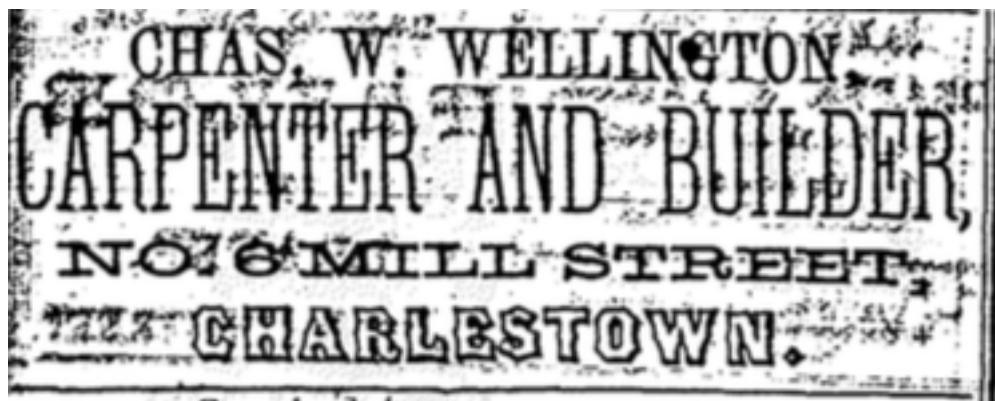
Architecturally, 17, 19, and 21 Auburn Street represent fairly standard examples of the type of Italianate row housing being built throughout Charlestown during the 1860s, and stand in marked contrast to the type of row housing being built elsewhere in the Boston area at that time, such as the bow front row houses of Boston's South end.

Charles W Wellington purchased 17-21 Auburn's lot on the same day that he acquired 5-15 Auburn- October 23, 1860. Wellington paid Seth Barker et al of Hanover Massachusetts \$2316 for 17-21's house lots (see Middlesex 841:292). Wellington apparently built this group during the spring and summer of 1861.

The first mention of buildings on this property occurs on a deed dated October 1, 1861 (see 861:225) At that time Eliphat Griffin, a Boston trader, sold 21's "land with the brick dwelling house" to Isaac Augustus Stevens for \$2800. Stevens in turn sold 21 to George D Gardner of Boston for \$3500 on November 28, 1866 (981:397). Gardner owned this house until at least the mid-1870s. In 1875 this group's owners included: Daniel Roden, liquors, 281 Causeway Street, Boston- 17, James F Anderson, insurance agent-19, and George C Gardner, 129

Washington Street, Boston-21. In 1875 all of these houses were owner-occupied.

Charles W Wellington, this group's builder, was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1845-1875. In 1845 he is listed as a carpenter (no address). During the 1850s and early 1860s he lived at 2 Irving Place and worked as a carpenter. By 1868 he had moved to Cambridge, but retained a Charlestown business listing at 6 Mills Street. By 1874 his work address was 151 Medford Street and he continued to live in Cambridge. Wellington may have been responsible for just the stairs and flooring of these houses. His directory listings of "builder" as well as "carpenter" suggests that he may have been involved in masonry construction as well. Other residences associated with Wellington as builder include: 1-3 Auburn, 5-15 Auburn (groups of red brick Italianate row houses), 46-50 Baldwin Street and 397-399 Main Street.



Auburn Street appears to have existed as a cul-de-sac as early as 1818. Initially called Hall Street, its name was changed to Auburn Street circa 1860. Hall's dye house was formerly located at the corner of Auburn and Main streets, in the 1830s.

Bibliography:
Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901
Charlestown directories-1831-1874.
Middlesex Deeds- 841:292, 861:255

*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.

R Dinsmore