

170 Bunker Hill Street (circa 1848-1855)

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



170 Bunker Hill Street

2015

Number 170 Bunker Hill Street is a two story wood frame Greek Revival house with a side hall plan. It has a three bay main façade, a two bay sidewall, and a low brick basement. There is an extensive five bay by two bay rear ell. Both the main block and ell have recently been re-sided with clapboards. The edges are accented by narrow corner boards and there is a fascia board beneath the eaves. The building has a gable roof and there is a single hip roof dormer at the center of the main façade. The dormer appears to be a later addition.

The front door is flanked by Doric pilasters with modified entablature, perhaps originally cornice-headed, now reduced to a horizontal board. The windows are simply and fully enframed and have 6/6 wood sash.

Builder: David Preston, "House Carpenter", and/or Thomas Fowles, "ship carpenter"

Original owner: Thomas Fowles (?), David Preston (?)

Prominently sited at the corner of Bunker Hill Street and Trenton Street, 170 Bunker Hill Street is a solid, straightforward example of mid-19th century side hall plan single-family housing. Constructed of wood, this house appears to have been extensively rebuilt and has new clapboard sheathing.

This house does not appear on the 1848 "panoramic view from Bunker Hill". It evidently is the work of "house carpenter" David Preston and/or Thomas Fowles. Further research is needed on Thomas Fowles, a ship's carpenter presumably working at the Charlestown Navy Yard. David Preston purchased this lot from Thomas Hammett, Charlestown, "Spar maker" on April 28, 1847. David Preston was active in Charlestown building trades from circa

mid-1840s to about 1870. In 1848 he resided at 18 Green Street. By 1856 he was working at 39 Lexington Street and lived at 2 Madison Avenue. By 1860 he lived at 7 Concord Street. He is last listed in Charlestown in 1868. At that time he lived at 7 Concord Street.

Buildings that are first mentioned on this lot in a deed dated 16 August 1855, when Preston sold the "land with the buildings thereon" to Thomas Fowles, for \$3000. Fowles in turn sold the house to Mary Ann Page for \$3500 on February 4, 1859. On July 31, 1867 William R Page (occupation?) sold 170 Bunker Hill Street to Emily S Bryant, wife of John Bryant, for \$4000. John Bryant is listed in the 1870s Charlestown directory as "hats, etc., 150 Washington Street, house 170 Bunker Hill Street." He was evidently not related to the John Bryant family at 27 Wood Street in the late 19th century. Bryant owned 170 Bunker Hill Street until at least 1892. By the early 1900s his wife Emily S Bryant is listed as this property's owner.

The northeast side of Breeds Hill and Bunker Hill were upland pasture land until as late as the early 1840s. By the 1840s this area was starting to be developed with primarily wood frame dwellings. House construction was spurred by an expanding Boston area population as the result of immigration from Ireland, Scotland, etc. there was also immigration of Yankee farmers coming down from Vermont and New Hampshire. Evidently the Bunker Hill Monument, complete in 1842, attracted much attention to Breeds Hill and vicinity. Trenton Street is shown on the Mallory Panoramic view of Boston as a dirt road with no housing. Other streets in the area were more finished.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818

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

Middlesex deeds- 501:11, 374; 721:8, 781:570, 801:53 1001:374

Mallory- Panoramic view from Bunker Hill Monument, 1848

*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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