

18-24 Cordis Street (1869-70)

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



18- 24 Cordis Street

1981

Numbers 18-24 Cordis Street is a row of four substantial red brick and brownstone trimmed Italianate houses. Each main façade has three bays and flat front with a rusticated brownstone basement, and two basement windows. Still intact are the vermiculated keystones of 18 and 24's basement windows. Each house has it a side hall plan.



18- 24 Cordis Street

2015

Particularly noteworthy are the tall recessed entrances with brownstone stairs leading to double doors. The entrances have segmental keystone arches, which in turn are surmounted by wooden pedimented door hoods supported by ornamental

brackets, with guttae. Entrances of 18 and 20 are covered by later outer doors with transoms. There are second floor wooden multipaneled oriels and (?) wood cornice with widely spaced brackets. Floors one and two have windows with sills and sill tabs and cornice-headed hood lintels. Simple sill and lintel bars appear at the third floor. In general windows have 1/1 wood sash.



22 Cordis entry detail

2015



24 Cordis vermiculated Keystone detail 2015

Architect: James H Rand- Middlesex deed 1142:72

Original owner: James H Rand

Cordis Street was laid out circa 1799 over the pasture of Capt. Joseph Cordis (see form 121-123 Main Street). Between circa early 1800s-1840s the street was built up with detached wood frame and brick Federal and Greek Revival dwellings. Over time the ample gardens of these houses were divided up into house lots and sold for the construction of additional houses. Built circa 1869-70, 18-24 Cordis represents a late addition to Cordis Street's rich inventory of 19th century houses.

Architecturally, 18-24 Cordis is a substantial, well detailed Italianate row. Its houses rank among a relatively small number of Charlestown houses whose design may be attributed to an architect, rather than being exclusively within the realm of carpenter, mason, stair builder etc. Situated on the steep incline of Cordis Street's north side this polychromatic redbrick brownstone trimmed row house lends considerable interest to the streetscape via rhythmic repetition of bracketed, pedimented door hoods, oriel windows and bracketed cornices.

These houses were built circa 1869-70. The 1868 Charlestown atlas indicates that a wood frame house was located on the site of what is now number 22 Cordis Street. Judging by the configuration and orientation of the main block to the street, this predecessor house was of the Federal style, circa early 1800s (three story main block, two story rear ells and a one story rear ell-the narrow end of the main block faced Cordis Street.) At any rate, Charles R Morris, Teamster, paid James H. Rand, architect, \$16,000 for 22's land "with the buildings on the premises being the third from Warren Street in a block of brick houses recently built by the grantor"-this deed is dated

December 22, 1870 (Middlesex deeds 1142:72). Rand had acquired this property from Lucretia Abbott August 7, 1869.

Numbers 18-24 Cordis undoubtedly represent the work of Charlestown architect James H. Rand. He is listed as an architect in Charlestown directories from 1860 until the mid-1870s. From circa 1875-late 1880s he was a resident of Boston. He does not appear in the 1890 Boston directory. In 1860 he lived at 31 Monument Square. By 1866 he lived at 22 Union Street; by 1872 he was living at 18 Cordis Street, with an office at 18 Exchange St., Boston. He is listed in early 1880s Boston directories at 77 Warren Street, Charlestown. James H Rand designed the Bunker Hill and Winthrop (later Frothingham) schools, Charlestown. (See form on 65 Baldwin Street). In addition he designed two early 1880s apartment buildings-"the Garfield" and "the Rand" on Rutland Street (adjacent to new Orange Line tracks) in Boston's South end. B.P.L. files note that he may have been a partner of the Boston architectural firm of Weston and Rand. Further research is needed on James H Rand's architectural career-it would appear that he was also a real estate speculator-he developed an 18 lot tract on Soley Street and Monument Avenue during the late 1860s (see Middlesex plan book 15 plan 29).

Owners of this group in 1875 included: number 18-Leonard Richardson, number 20-M.A. Skitton (occupation?), Number 22 Charles R Morse, a teamster, central wharf; number 24, John A Harris (occupation?).

By 1885 number 18-24's owners included: 18-Joseph T Reed of Josiah T Reed and Company, Kid Glove Cleaners and Dyer's number 20-Solomon Parsons, secretary, 9 Tremont Temple Boston, number 22..... (end of available notes)

Bibliography:

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

Boston business directories-1870s-90s

Middlesex Deeds-1142: 72 Middlesex plan-book 15, plan 29
(Soley/Monument Avenue Rand- development)

A.I. A. guide to Boston-Susan and Michael Southworth

*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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