

2 Henley Street (by 1821)

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



2 Henley Street

1987

Number 2 Henley Street is a modestly scaled, two story wood frame vernacular late Federal dwelling. It is presently swathed in asbestos siding, originally clapboard, and has a brick

basement. The rear wall is composed of brick. The house has an interesting form-essentially rectangular, however its five bay main façade has an angled one bay corner segment. Its narrow two bay end wall gable faces Harvard Square. The building is enclosed by a gable roof with short return eaves and there are gable-roofed dormers on the main façade's roof slope.



2 Henley Street

2015

It has a center hall plan with an entrance enframed by simple vertical and horizontal boards-"pilasters," and entablature surmounted by a later bracketed Italianate door hood. Projecting from the angled segment of the main façade's second-floor is an Italianate oriel with a deep cornice. In general, the windows have 6/6 sash.

Original owner: John Edmands (?)

Together with 25, 27, and 29 Harvard Square, 2 Henley Street forms a cluster of charming, modestly scaled late 18th century/early 19th century houses ringing the eastern side of Harvard Square, exhibiting a surprising variety of facing materials (brick, stone, clapboard, etc.). A high degree of Town Hill's distinctive "ancient" character is derived from these diminutive dwellings.

Architecturally, 2 Henley possesses a rather curious form with an angled one bay segment on its main façade, at the Henley/Harvard Square corner. This angled effect is accentuated by the second-floor oriel which seems overly large for the small size of this building. Also of interest is the extremely narrow end wall gable and brick rear wall.

This property's date of construction is difficult to determine via deeds. In 1821, it was sold back and forth between John Edmands of Charlestown, a "hairdresser" and Thomas Foster of Cambridge, a physician. More deed work is needed to pinpoint when and from whom John Edmands acquired 2 Henley.

The house was owned by the Foster family until 20 June 1840. At that time the executors of John Foster's estate sold the

house at public auction to a John Gregory (occupation?). The house remained under Gregory family ownership until February 1, 1868. At that time the house was sold to George B and Lizzie Morse for \$2050.

By the early 1870s this dwelling was owned by Orison Little. By far the house's best-known owner/occupant, Little was something of a Civil War hero and later rose through the ranks of the Charlestown/Boston Police Department to the position of lieutenant. Little was born in Sutton, New Hampshire on March 6, 1836. He settled in Charlestown in 1854, for a time engaged in the express business. In 1861 he enlisted in the Second Massachusetts Battery, better known as Nims Battery. He fought in the Battle of Vicksburg, Baton Rouge, Irish Bend, Vermillion Bayou and Donaldsonville. He was also at the siege of Port Hudson. He was wounded in the hand at the Battle of Red River while serving in Bank's Campaign.

Little received an honorable discharge from the Union Army in 1864 and joined the Charlestown Police Department in the same year. He rose through the ranks of the Charlestown/Boston police departments serving as Captain, Sergeant, and eventually as Lieutenant beginning in 1878. Over time he served in Charlestown Police Stations numbers 9, 5, and 2, eventually returning to "his first love", station number 9. In addition he was a member of numerous local organizations including Abraham Lincoln Post II, G A R, and the Bunker Hill Lodge, I.O.O.F.

Little's heirs owned number 2 until at least 1911.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown/Boston directories-19th century
Middlesex deeds-241: 74, 394:344, 1021:230, 1192:314
"Charlestown citizens past and present", special edition.
Charlestown Enterprise, June 1893

*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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