

265- 271 Main Street (1856-1857)

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



265- 271 Main

2015

Numbers 265-271 Main Street is a substantial Italianate/Mansard commercial/residential block with a nine bay main façade and four bay sidewall. The original storefront treatments have been obliterated by modern alterations. A single center entrance on the Salem Street side wall has a cornice headed lintel. Still intact is the corbelled cornice, which conveys a piano keyboard like effect, and straight sided mansard roof with dormers.

The main façade has second floor oriel s at the third, sixth, and ninth bays. The oriel s of numbers 267 and 271 have closely spaced brackets beneath deep molded cornices—that of 265 has been altered with a modern treatment. The second-floor windows are surmounted by deep cornice-headed lintels with scroll brackets. The third-floor windows have arched moldings above the windows, and sills with small blocks at either end. The third floor sidewall windows have cornice headed lintels.



269 Main Street window, and cornice detail

2015

Original owners: William B Long, Solomon G Phipps

Architecturally, 265-271 Main Street is significant as a rare surviving Charlestown example of a mid-19th century commercial/residential block. Other examples include the Hull block (1868) at 356-358 Main, and 435-439 Main Street. Possessing a distinctive large boxy form, its upper floors have been enlivened by deep oriel s and cornice-headed and round arched lintels. It is one of the very few Italianate/Mansard

commercial blocks still extant in Boston. This commercial/residential block reflects the mid-19th century prosperity of Charlestown.

Numbers 265-271 Main Street's land was once part of the extensive real estate holdings of Solomon G Phipps of Charlestown. On May 6, 1856, Solomon G Phipps, a gentleman, Moses B Hall, a trader, and Susan C Hall, wife of Moses B Hall, sold number 265 Main Street's lot to Charlotte M Long. This lot is described in the deed as lot three on a "plan of the land late of Solomon Phipps, Junior, deceased", drawn by J Herbert Shed, 1856. The Phipps/Long deed stipulates that "the buildings that may be erected on this and lots number one and two shall adjoin each other on the main street and be not less than three stories high, the blocks to be uniform and alike in height and in each story thereof and in the style and shape of the roof, the materials of said building shall be brick stone or iron, uniformly alike in style and materials on the outside thereof and the land and buildings are not to be used for any purpose not respectable or that may be deemed a nuisance".

The resulting design for this structure is an unusually sophisticated one for architecturally conservative mid-19th century Charlestown. Its main façade provides both a sense of a single block tied together horizontally by regimental rows of cornice-headed and arched windows and, yet can be read as three separate buildings via the pairs of dormers which are centered over each three bay segment.

Solomon G Phipps *et al* retained ownership of 265-271 Main Street until at least the mid-1870s. Phipps is listed as a dry goods merchant, 292 Main Street, house 199 Main Street, in 1852. By 1858 he is listed as living in this block (then numbered 282 Main Street, number 267 by 1870). Directories

make no mention of a dry goods store here. Solomon Phipps' heirs owned 265 and 269 until at least 1901.

By 1858, William B Long is first listed as living in 265-271 Main Street- at that time numbered 278 Main Street. Long is listed as "lumber, boards 10 Mystic Street" in 1856. By 1858 he was listed as a clerk at Smith and Hopkins lumber dealership, 144 Commercial, Boston and 183 Medford Street, Charlestown. By 1870 he is listed as Customs House, Boston, house 265 Main Street. By 1874 he had a tailor's shop in 265 Main Street and continued to live at 265 Main, apparently above the shop. Long owned 265 Main Street until circa 1880.

Moses B Hall was perhaps this block's best-known occupant- for many years he operated a grocery store at 271 Main Street. He was the son of James and Sarah Sargent Hall, born in Lynn Massachusetts, April 1817. He attended schools in Lynn until 1827 when he came to Charlestown. His father owned a silk dyeing house at the corner of Main and Auburn streets. Moses B Hall worked for his father until age 27 at that time he opened his own grocery store. At age 26 he married Susan C Phipps of Charlestown, the daughter (?) of Solomon G Phipps, co-owner of this block. Hall operated a grocery store in this block from circa 1856-1891. For many years the Hall family resided in the portion of this block numbered 1 Salem Street. By 1895 Hall's widow lived at 79 Bartlett Street. An Arthur S Hall owned this property in 1901.

By 1930 commercial tenants in this building included Neighborhood Kitchen Supplies-265, Abraham Tilken Shoes-269 and Bobby's Dress Shop-271.

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

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

*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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