

267-281 Medford Street, 50 Terminal Street (circa 1912-1918)

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



267-281 Medford Street

2016

This terminal complex includes three massive rectangular brick warehouses- a six-story masonry warehouse at 267-281 Medford Street, and nine-story masonry warehouses at 50 Terminal Street. The side façades of all three structures are treated as a range of vertical, recessed brickwork strips containing windows with header brick lintels and stone sills. There are elevator shafts with openings at slightly lower levels than the regular windows.

Owner: Terminal Storage Company (?)

The Wiggins Terminal Complex was built in, approximately, the period between 1912 and 1918. It was built to serve the Boston area as a lumber terminal and storage facility on land adjacent to the Mystic River. Architecturally, its three massive masonry storehouse structures are an impressive group of utilitarian structures dating from the 1910s.

During the late 19th and early 20th century this site was called Williams Wharf. The 1875 Atlas indicates two contiguous stables belonging to Gilbert Williams. By 1892, the Medford Street area now occupied by the present building was lined with four buildings. To the rear was a large L-shaped "wood and coal" shed with the railroad tracks of the Boston and Lowell Freight Railroad. In 1892 all the buildings on this site were constructed of wood. By 1901 three wooden buildings were located along Medford Street and the larger buildings at the center had been greatly reduced in size. According to the 1910 *A Record of the Streets, Alleys, Places, etc.*, Terminal Street was set out circa 1907. By 1912 three buildings are shown bordering Terminal Wharf with contiguous sheds to the rear. The 1912 map shows the present buildings one and two constructed of brick with stone front segments which are no longer extant, formerly facing the freight tracks. During the 1910s and 1920s these buildings were used to store wool.

Numbers 267-281 Medford Street dates to 1918. This building was originally used for "storage". The original owner is listed as "Railway Supply and Manufacturing Company, 267 Medford Street, Charlestown". This building appears on the 1922 Atlas as unlabeled, with two stone and brick structures to the rear indicated as wool warehouses. Ora L Stone indicates that the "Terminal Wharf Company and Wiggins Terminal are part of an extensive development along the Mystic River that dates to

the 1910s/1920s". He states that "the Terminal Wharf Company and the Wiggins Terminal were developed at an initial cost of \$2 million". It was developed as "a modern lumber terminal on land along the Mystic River between Dewey Beach and the plant of the Revere Sugar Refinery. This complex encompassed five steamship births, 5 acres of macadamized streets, the installation of giant tower cranes and the laying of several miles of railroad tracks. The development resulted in a more economical distribution of lumber products coming from the west coast and from Finland, to the Boston Seaport". Melville D Liming noted in *Boston Today* that by the early 1930s Charlestown encompassed "23 wharves, including those of the US Navy Yard... On the Mystic River, also in Charlestown area, are 28 wharves, ten of which are used largely for coal and six for lumber. Here is located the largest lumber terminal on the Atlantic seaboard and one of the most modern of coal handling plants".

Bibliography:

Atlases- 1875, 1885, 1901, 1912, 1922

_____, *Fifty Years of Boston, a Memorial history*, 1932

*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.

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