

## 27, 29 Cross Street (circa early 1830s)

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



27, 29 Cross Street

1980s



27, 29 Cross Street

2016

Numbers 27, 29 Cross Street is a two-story late Federal wood frame vernacular double house. There are five bays on the first floor and six bays on the second floor of the main façade, with a center hall plan. The house has a high rubble-stone basement and wood shingles.

There are curious entrance treatments. The front door is flanked by solid sidelights and surmounted by a semicircular fanlight, possibly 20th-century. Above the fanlight is an Italianate bracketed door hood. It is difficult to say what the original entrance treatments looked like. The windows are

fully enframed with 2/1 and 1/1 wood sash. The second floor windows are flush with the cornice, and the building has a steeply pitched gable roof.

Original owner: William Austin (?)

Numbers 27 and 29 Cross Street is an intriguing late Federal house which evidently dates to approximately the circa early 1830s residential development of Cross Street. Cross Street lies just to the northwest of the Bunker Hill Monument Association lands, which were developed with both substantial, and moderately scaled, housing beginning circa the late 1840s.

Architecturally, this house is something of an enigma. It may be traced back in Middlesex deeds to 1854; further deed work and the study of Austin family probate records may help to pinpoint its date of construction. It appears to be a circa early 1830s Federal wood frame vernacular house. Curious features include its high rubble-stone basement; the rather visually uneasy marriage of rubble-stone basement and main block suggests that the house was moved to this site. Also of interest are the entrance treatments, with a semicircular fanlight and an Italianate bracketed door hood above it. Evidently the entrance treatments have been altered on several occasions. The fenestration also strikes a curious note, with five bays on the first floor and six bays on the second floor of the main façade, as opposed to the more typical five over five bays. In addition the windows appear to be smaller than standard-size early to mid 19th century windows, and the windows of the second floor are flush with the cornice.

During the first half of the 19th century, or possibly earlier, this house's lot was part of the estate of William Austin. William Austin was born in Lunenburg, Massachusetts March 2, 1778

and died in Charlestown June 27, 1841. (The Austin family of Charlestown is descended from Richard Austin who became a freeman of the town in 1651.) William Austin was a graduate of Harvard College, in 1798, a representative of Charlestown in the House of Representatives, a member of the Suffolk Bar, and in 1799 was appointed schoolmaster and chaplain of the Navy (see William Austin biographical information). William Austin's estate, including 27, 29 Cross Street's lot, was partitioned in 1854.

This house's owners during the 1850s and 60s included James Damon Of Ipswich, Massachusetts (see form on 5-21 Cross Street), George a Whiting and Daniel E Chase of Somerville. Chase owned this house until circa 1880. From the early 1880s-early 1900s Cushing Otis of Oliver Prime and Cushing Otis Real Estate owned this property. By 1911 the house (both halves) was owned by Mary P Good\_\_\_\_\_.

#### Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Boston directories-late 19th century

Middlesex deeds-911: 526, 991:175, 1031:462

For further research see Probate (Middlesex County) # 22:35

\*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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