

27, 29 Washington Street (circa 1830)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981*:



27, 29 Washington Street

2015

Numbers 27 and 29 Washington Street is a pair of two story red brick, flat front Federal townhouses. They have low granite

faced basements and each house has a three bay main façade and a side hall plan. There is a narrow "stepped out" brickwork cornice and the buildings are enclosed by a gable roof. Number 29's end wall adjacent to 31 is extended through the roofline as linked chimneys. There are two flat roofed dormers at the main façade of number 29, and one gable roof dormer at 27.

The entrances are arched and recessed with multi panel entry walls. The arches are accented by header bricks. The front doors are flanked by sidelights, three quarters glass, and one forth are solid at the bottom. Each front door is surmounted by an elliptical fanlight. The windows have a simple stone sills and lintels and 6/6 wood sash.

Builder: George S. Adams?

Original owner: Joseph Souther, #27, Joseph Tufts, #29

Numbers 27 and 29 Washington Street are part of a small but choice collection of Federal row houses in Charlestown characterized by planar main façades, granite block basements and above all deeply recessed entrances with well-crafted paneling at the entry walls and fanlights over the front doors. They may have been part of a trio of identical houses which included 25 Washington-now transformed by addition of a third floor.

Middlesex deeds point to a construction date of 1830.

Evidently these houses' lots were carved from the estate of Henry Jacques, a West India goods dealer. Jacques in turn had purchased the old Archibald McNeil mansion (formerly at Washington Street and Washington Place) in 1814. Capt. McNeil owned a large amount of land at Lynde's (later Prison) Point as well as ropewalks along the shores of the Charles River basin. The residential development of Washington Street

began about 1803. According to T T Sawyer, "Washington Street very soon became one of the pleasantest residences in town, and its desirability for this purpose was maintained for more than half a century, at least."

Number 27 Washington Street (and presumably number 29) was extant by 18 October 1833- at that time, Joseph Souther of Charlestown, a Morocco dresser, sold 27 to David Elwell of Charlestown, a mariner, for \$3400. (Souther had purchased this house's lot from Benjamin Thompson, a Boston merchant, for \$530). Elwell sold 27 to Mary Louisa Forster of Charlestown, a spinster, for \$5000. (Restrictions in the Elwell/Forster deed dated back to the Thompson/Souther deed of 3 May 1830, stipulating that Joseph Souther "shall not erect any other building on said land than a dwelling house not less than two stories in height and suitable outhouses for the same, said Thompson reserving the right to maintain a fence passageway parallel with said Souther's northerly line.")

In any event, the Mary Louisa Forster who purchased 27 from Elwell in 1847 later married George F Cutter. He was paymaster of the US Navy Department-for a long time he was head of the Bureau of provisions and clothing. The Cutters eventually moved to Chestnut Street. They sold number 27 to Edward Laurence and Charles R Lawrence of Boston in 1864. (Is this the furniture manufacturer and politician by the name of Edward Lawrence who lived at 112 Main in 1838 and 44 High Street from 1850-1885?). By the late 1850s a Rese M Sullivan owned 27 Washington.

Number 29 Washington's lot seems to have been part of the extensive landholdings of Benjamin Thompson. Number 29's original owner was probably George S Adams, a mason. During the first half of the 19th century in Charlestown he "was one of

the principal masons and builders who thoroughly understood his business which was quite extensive at one time". According to T T Sawyer, "Mr. Adams accumulated a fortune and moved to Belmont Massachusetts. Benjamin Cutter of Woburn, physician, is another candidate for original owner-further and closer deed research is needed to unravel this house's ownership during the 1830s and 1840s. (See Middlesex deed 459:555). In any event George S Adams sold number 29 Washington to John W Corey on April 13, 1866 for \$5100. Corey was a grocer, his shop at 5 Moulton Street during the 1860s and 1870s. In 1860 and 1866 he is listed as a partner of John W Corey and Henry P Goodwin, Groceries. Corey owned number 29 until at latest circa 1905. By 1911, D S Walker and others owned number 29 Washington Street.

Bibliography:

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

T T Sawyer-*Old Charlestown*

Charlestown Enterprise-November 20, 1920 page 3

*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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