

27 Wood Street (1837-1841)

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



27 Wood St.

Ca. 1981?

Number 27 Wood Street is an L shaped, wood frame, wood shingle-clad Greek Revival house. The main block stands with its narrow three bay end wall gable to Wood Street, and with a long, four bay sidewall on High Street. It has a granite block and brick infill basement. To the side of the house is a 2 1/2-story ell, and abutting the gable end of this ell is a small one-story ell. Originally, another ell stood with its gable end to Wood Street, creating a U shaped rather than L shaped plan. The High Street sidewall culminates in a raised and well-molded wooden cornice. There is a pair of pedimented

dormers on the High Street side, and the ell has a pedimented dormer facing Wood Street. The house's various ells seem to have been built at the same time as the main block.



27 Wood Street

2015

The house has a side hall plan. The front door is flanked by narrow sidelights and a three pane transom for with a (later?) two-pane transom above. The front door sidelights and

transom are flanked by paneled Doric pilasters, and an entablature is presently covered by a shingle-clad shed-like hood. The windows are fully enframed with delicate raised outer moldings, with little "blocks" at the corners. In general the windows have 2/1 wood sash.

Builder: Begun in 1837 by Joshua Goodridge, completed in 1841 by Abijah Woodbridge, Jonas Barrett and Nathaniel Ayer
Original owner: Abijah Goodridge, Jonas Barrett, and Nathan Ayer

Number 27 Wood Street is of interest primarily for its form and siting. Prominently sited at the corner of High and Wood Streets, its main block and side wells cascade down the steep slope of Breed's Hill. The entrance and window enframements with their slender proportions, delicate raised moldings, and blocked corners set this house apart from other less well-crafted houses of the same vintage.

Middlesex deeds indicate that this house's construction, for reasons unexplained, was a protracted operation. In an agreement dated March 9, 1837 between Abijah Goodridge, Jonas Barrett and Nathaniel Ayer, all of Charlestown, the three parties agreed to finish the construction of a house built by Joshua Goodridge on land that had never been formally conveyed to him by Barrett (it's not clear where exactly Ayers fits in). It was noted in their agreement that "whereas Joshua Goodridge of said Charlestown lately built and partly furnished a house on land of said Barrett on the corner of Wood and High Streets, Charlestown, but never received a conveyance of said land and whereas said house was attached at the suits of sundry creditors of said Joshua as his personal property and on the 23rd day of March was sold at auction." Evidently Abijah Goodridge, Jonas Barrett and Nathaniel Ayers were the highest

bidders, agreeing to own the house as equal owners and all agreed to complete the partially built dwelling house.

Evidently 27 Wood Street was completed by October 30, 1841. At that time Abijah Goodridge sold it to John L Taggard of Charlestown, a merchant, for \$3200. Taggard, in turn, sold it to Thaddeus Richardson of Charlestown, a trader, for \$1300 on July 24, 1851. Richardson did not own this house for very long, selling it to Asa Story, of Charlestown, a ship carpenter, on May 21, 1853. Story sold it to Smith C Cox, master mariner, of Pittston, Maine for \$1000. Cox sold 27 to John Bryant on July 28, 1865 for \$4500. The Cox/Bryant deed mentions "the center of the brick wall which separates this house on the land hereby conveyed from the adjoining house late of Jonas Barrett."

John Bryant was, by far, this house's most locally prominent inhabitant. For many years Mr. Bryant was Charlestown's leading undertaker-it was noted in the 1893 special edition of the *Charlestown Enterprise* "since 1852 he has ushered no less than 6938 persons into the city of the dead". He was the son of John and Rebecca (Jacobs) Bryant, born in Hanover Massachusetts in 1816. He came to Charlestown in 1820 and started a wheelwright shop; evidently he worked at both the wheelwright and undertaking trades for many years. Mr. Bryant, being the Sexton of the first Baptist Church, was appointed an undertaker in 1852. In later years his three sons, T Weston, John E and Charles F Bryant successfully managed his business. His business was located at 15 Austin Street, in Charlestown, and 170 School Street, in Somerville. (See page 22, special edition, *Charlestown Enterprise*, June 17, 1893 "Charlestown citizens past and present". Prior to 1865 Bryant lived at 170 Bunker Hill Street (see form). Bryant was listed at 27 Wood Street from 1865 until at least the early 1890s. By

1901 an F W Bryant Junior is listed as the owner of this property.

JOHN BRYANT, JR.,
 Wheelwright and Carriage Maker,
 15 AUSTIN ST., CHARLESTOWN.
 ALSO, CARRIAGE & ORNAMENTAL PAINTING.
 CARRIAGES BUILT TO ORDER,
 And Repairing of all kinds attended to promptly, on reasonable terms.

JOHN BRYANT, JR.,
SEXTON AND FUNERAL UNDERTAKER,
 15 AUSTIN ST., CHARLESTOWN.
 COFFINS AND GRAVE CLOTHES,
 OF ALL SIZES AND QUALITIES, FURNISHED AT REASONABLE
 PRICES.

1856 Charlestown Directory

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Atlases-1868, 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

(More Charlestown directory information needed on occupations of Abidjan Goodridge et al)

Middlesex deeds 390:550, 571:306, 611:92, 671:69, 681:281, 931:66

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architectural description. If earlier photographs of suitable quality are available, these have been included.

R. Dinsmore