

## 291-295 Bunker Hill Street (circa 1865-66)

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

Numbers 291-295 Bunker Hill Street are three red brick Mansard row houses with low brick and granite trimmed basements, a simple brickwork course at the cornice, and a hip-on-Mansard roof with tall chimneys. There are two-story rear ells.

They have side hall plans and recessed entrances. Oriels project from the second-floor center bays. The windows have brownstone sills and lintels, which have incised rosettes, and 2/2 wood sash.



295-291 Bunker Hill Street

2015

Builder: Hugh Kelly  
Original owner: Hugh Kelly



295 Bunker Hill Street window lintel detail, 2015



293 Bunker Hill Street entry lintel detail, 2015

This row, along with the adjacent Greek Revival trio at 285-289 Bunker Hill Street and the Greek Revival/Italianate row houses across the street, forms an unspoiled mid-19th century streetscape. Numbers 291-295 Bunker Hill Street was built ca 1865. Architecturally they are a relatively rare Charlestown example (at least northwest of Elm Street), of a masonry Mansard row. These houses and the Greek Revival Houses next door provide an instructive lesson in the evolution of the Charlestown row house from the 1840s to the 1860s. By the 1860s facades were being enlivened with incised lintel decoration and projecting second-floor oriels, but the flat front rather than the bow or octagonal front is carried over from

Greek revival Charlestown row house architecture. The hip-on-Mansard roof strikes a more progressive note as does the use of granite banding (and brownstone ?) at basement level rather than a totally granite facing.



295-285 Bunker Hill Street row

2015

While 291-295 Bunker Hill St. was built circa 1865, buildings had been located on this site since the mid-1840s. The 1818 map indicates that these lots were part of W Newall's tract of upland pasture. Houses were built on these lots circa 1845-1846. Apparently these lots represent lot number 229 on "Plan of Lots on Bunker Hill" drawn by B F Perham, August 1837 (Book of Plans #1).

J C Drinkwater owned the first buildings erected on these lots. His occupation is listed as victualler. On September 11, 1865, Drinkwater sold the property to Hugh Kelly, a contractor (see deeds for 84:285, 501:360, 921:170). Judging by the style of the current 291-295, these houses were built circa 1865-66, replacing the earlier Drinkwater buildings.

Hugh Kelly was active in Charlestown building trades from 1852 circa the early 1880s. He first appears in Charlestown directories in 1852 as a laborer at 19 Cook Street. By 1858 he was employed as a "contractor" at 26 Cook Street. By the late 1860s he lived at 312 Bunker Hill Street. He is listed at 295 Bunker Hill Street in 1880. Hugh Kelly owned this group until at least 1875.

By 1885 an Elizabeth Taplin owned 295, the Warren Institute for savings owned 293, and Elizabeth P Lyman owned 291.

Bunker Hill Street is an old thoroughfare that dates back to at least the mid-18th century. According to Hunnewell, Bunker Hill Street was opened in 1783. During the mid-1850s it was built up with substantial masonry row houses.

#### Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown Directories-1850s-1870s

Middlesex deeds

\*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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