

3 Common Street (1828- 3d floor added 1848)

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



3 Common

2015

Number 3 Common Street is a three and one half story masonry Federal schoolhouse (1828). It has an essentially rectangular plan with a projecting central pavilion at the southeast wall. The building is characterized by planar red brick surfaces with a three bay façade facing Common Street, and five bay sidewalls. The Common Street wall has a blind arch rising through floors one and two at center. The windows have simple stone sills and lintels. The

building is crowned by pedimented cross gables with an oculus window.

Built in 1828 as of public grammar school, the old Training Field School is the oldest extant public grammar school in Charlestown and is among the oldest in the city of Boston. (See Jamaica Plain Survey, Eliot School) It is a rare Boston area example of Federal schoolhouse architecture. It was originally located at the corner of the Training Field. Judging by a pre-1848 engraved view of the old Training Field, this school has undergone extensive structural changes while retaining integrity of the original design. The engraved view shows the old training field school as a two rather than three-story building-this two-story schoolhouse is crowned by a gable roof with ocular attic window, which was evidently identical to the roof's current appearance. The main entrance is situated within the blind or recessed arch on what is now the common street façade. It also shows a small weathervane -topped cupola that was located at the main façade's gable. The engraved view shows a small firehouse that was located next to the school when it was located on the common

The old Training Field School stood on the Training Field from 1828 to 18 (?). It was moved by order of the new city government in 1847-the year Charlestown was incorporated as a city. Its removal is symbolic of a community caught up in rapid population growth and urbanization. The Training Field was beginning to be thought of as an ornamental park within the city neighborhood rather than grazing lands within a semi-rural setting. On the eve of the school's removal to its present location at 3 Common Street, the city fathers declared it to be "the needless destroyer of the symmetry of the park and had been placed there by questionable right".

The R. Mallory Panoramic View of Charlestown/Boston (1848) shows the school on its present site. The Mallory view clearly

shows that by 1848 this building had acquired a third-floor. The cupola is also shown. For 140 years this building served as a schoolhouse, first on the Training Field as a public grammar school and later as a private secondary school and was eventually acquired by the Catholic Church for use as St. Mary's school. At the time St. Mary's school building at 49 Warren Street was completed, the Training Field or Common Street School was reported to house six classrooms. This building has been converted for residential use in recent years.

Bibliography:

Maps- 1818,1852

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

Charlestown Enterprise – June 7, 1902, p. 1

A.I.A. Guide to Boston- Susan and Michael Southworth- 1984

Panoramic View from Bunker Hill Monument, 1848

*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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