35, 37, 39 Union Street (circa 1849)

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

35, 37, 39 Union Street   1980s

Numbers 35, 37, and 39 Union Street are a trio of bow front Greek Revival row houses, constructed of red brick with brownstone trim and a low granite faced basement. Each house has a side hall plan. Each has a corbel table, a low-pitched gable roof, and two dormers. To the rear are long brick/wood ells.

The entrances are shallow and recessed, with three granite steps and simple front doors with solid and multi-pane sidelights. The entranceways are topped by pedimented entabulatures with tabs. The windows have simple brownstone sill and lintels, and 6/6 wood sash. There are tall windows on the first floor of the bow fronts.

35, 37, 39 Union Street   2015

37 Union Street entry detail   1980s

Original owner: Eliab P MacKentire, also Nathan and Samuel Tufts

Numbers 35, 37, and 39 Union Street are relatively rare Charlestown examples of mid-19th century bow front row housing. Although the bow or swell front was used extensively in the townhouses of Boston's South End in the late 1840s-1860s, Charlestown masons preferred the flat front during this period. Numbers 35, 37, and 39 Union strike a distinctly urban note in an area of modest wood frame and brick early 19th century dwellings. Today this trio dominates its immediate area. These houses look as though they may be remnants of a more extensive row, however Middlesex deeds, plans, and newspaper articles indicate that only three bow front row houses were built on the south side of Union Street between Old Rutherford Avenue and Washington Street. For many years a substantial wood frame Federal house stood just to the west of these house.

These houses occupy the site of the old Winthrop Church. This church was described as a "structure beautiful in its simplicity." The Winthrop Society was formed on January 11, 1833-its first meeting was held in the home of Aaron Tufts. Built circa 1835, the Winthrop Society's Union Street land and building cost $14,000. Amos Tufts and Eliab P McIntyre were chosen the first deacons of this church. McIntyre and Tufts family members were the first owners of numbers 35, 37, and 39 Union. The last meeting of the Union Street Church was held March 11, 1849 and the church was subsequently torn down. The Winthrop Society moved to a new church building on Green Street, just below the Dexter mansion.

Evidently 35, 37 and 39 Union Street was completed on September 8, 1849. Eliab P McIntyre purchased all three buildings on September 1, 1849 at a cost of $7500 apiece. By 1850 he had sold numbers 35 and 39 to members of the Tufts family, Nathan A. Tufts, a merchant, at 35 and Samuel Tufts at

number 39 (Samuel was a clerk employed at Lowell, corner Minot Street, Boston).

Number 35 was owned by the Nathan A. Tufts family until the early 1900s-by 1911 it was owned by a John O'Connell.

Number 37 was owned by McIntyre family members until September 11, 1868. At that time an Elizabeth Downie purchased number 37 for $8000. During the late 1890s number 37 passed from Elizabeth Downie's ownership to that of Daniel F and J C O'Connell.

By the early 1870s number 39 was owned by William a Carlisle, a glazier, 25 Sudbury St., Boston. From circa 1875-early 1900s, 39 was part of Patrick O'Riordan's extensive Charlestown real estate holdings. (See form on 59 Warren Street for O'Riordan's biography.)

Bibliography:
Map- 1818- Tufts map of Charlestown
Atlases-1868, 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1911
Charlestown/Boston directories 19th century
Middlesex deeds-551: 551, 551:547
"New Enterprise", January 6, 1883

*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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