

380 Bunker Hill Street, the Charlestown Armory (circa 1901-1911)

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



380 Bunker Hill Street

1981



380 Bunker Hill Street

2016

The Charlestown Armory is a large masonry building with yellow cast stone trim. It has an 18 bay main façade, with a wide band course between floors one and two. A center entrance has a round arch with rusticated brickwork and a prominent keystone. There is a tripartite window over the main entrance with stone enframements. Stylistically speaking this building is vaguely Georgian Revival.

Architect: Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul

Original owner: Charlestown militia

The Charlestown Armory is a large two-story masonry building, which may be loosely categorized within the Georgian Revival style. It was built at some point between 1901 and 1911. Further research is needed to identify the architect and builder. Boston buildings department materials did not yield information pertaining to the original owner, architect, builder, cost, etc.

The 1875 Atlas indicates that this building lot was occupied from north to south by two outbuildings on the Amos Stone house, the cracker bakery of C B Goodrich, a structure belonging to a Joseph Scarlett and a house labeled Learned. By 1885 this lot was occupied by the four contiguous structures of Charles B Goodrich's cracker bakery, a T shaped church and stable and a U shaped structure belonging to an H W Lewis. By 1901 the T-shaped church was owned by Jasper W Stone et al, trustees, while the former US baking company buildings passed to Charles R Ross. To the south of the Ross lot was the house lot of the heirs of Joseph Scarlett. The present Armory building was built between 1901 and 1911.

*Digitized and edited, without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, with the 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.

R Dinsmore

From: Massachusetts Cultural Resource System Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE by: | Roysin Bennett Younkin- Architectural Historian, Boston Landmarks Commission

(Refer to criteria cited above in statement of significance. If more information is needed, use space to describe what is needed to finish eligibility opinion)

The Charlestown Armory, also known as the Charlestown Battalion Armory, was constructed in 1907 from designs of the prominent local architectural firm of Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul for the Charlestown militia. At the time of its construction, it was celebrated as "nearer the ideal armory...than any structure in the state." The imposing structure reflects the architectural tradition of American armories presenting a massive, fortress-like facade to Bunker Hill Street. For its associations with Charlestown's military history and with the architectural firm of Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul, and for its architectural integrity as a distinguished example of a local armory, the Charlestown Battalion Armory meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places with significance at the local level.

Charlestown's military history dates back to the late eighteenth century, but it wasn't until the first decade of the twentieth century

that Charlestown was furnished with an armory. Councilman Joseph Donovan was lauded for securing passage of the order that authorized the armory's construction. The armory was designed to house three existing Charlestown militia companies with room to accommodate a fourth: the Charlestown Cadets (Company A of the fifth regiment, est. 1858), the Charlestown City Guard (Company H the fifth regiment, est. 1850), and the Charlestown Artillery (Company A of the eighth regiment, est. 1775).

The prominent local architectural firm of Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul provided plans for the new armory. Other significant commissions obtained by the firm extended throughout Massachusetts and New England and include additions to the Massachusetts State House (1895 and 1913), the County Court House in Worcester, MA, Town Hall in Nahant, MA, and Connecticut School for the Blind in Hartford, CT. Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul designed the hulking Armory of red brick with yellow cast stone trim. Located on the crest of a large hill, the two story, eighteen bay wide building conforms to the fortress aesthetic that defines local armories, appearing commanding and impenetrable. Among its interior appointments were a drill shed, recreation rooms, rifle range, as well as headquarters for each company. The architectural integrity of the armory has remained intact over the course of the last century. While the building has suffered from minimal maintenance, it has retained its form, massing, original window sash and masonry detailing.

In more recent history, the Boston Public Library has used the Charlestown armory for book storage. The Boston Redevelopment Authority issued an RFP in June of 2005 seeking redevelopment of the building into 35-60 units of housing.