

41-53 Baldwin Street (1870)

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



53- 41 Baldwin Street

2016

Numbers 41-53 Baldwin Street is a row of red brick Italianate houses. These houses have three bay main façades with low granite basements, deep cast-iron (?) bracketed cornices and flat roofs.

They have side hall plans with entrances that were originally recessed but are now covered by various types of doors and two pane transoms. The windows have simple sills and lintels with scalloped lower edges.

Builder: Joseph W Hill/Rufus Littlefield
original owner: Joseph W Hill

This row of houses was built circa 1870 and thus is a relatively late addition to Baldwin Street's collection of primarily late 1840s-1850s townhouses. They lend considerable charm to Baldwin Street with the repetition of Italianate bracketed cornices down the southwest slope of Bunker Hill. Architecturally, they are a straightforward conservative approach to row house architecture. (Note the absence of the then more stylish octagonal bays.)

They are the work of Joseph W Hill, a carpenter, and/or Rufus Littlefield, a mason. Hill was active in Charlestown building trades from circa 1867 to the early 1900s. He is first listed in Charlestown directories in 1868. At that time he was a carpenter, residing at 53 Baldwin Street, (or what is now__ Baldwin Street)**. By 1818, Hill lived at South Eden Street, and in 1901 his home was 9 (49) Baldwin Street**.

Hill sold 45 Baldwin Street's lot to Annette W Littlefield, wife of Rufus Littlefield, for \$4000. Littlefield is listed in Charlestown directories beginning in 1854. At that time he boarded at 24 Decatur Street., no occupation listed. Interestingly, Littlefield

initially worked at a livery stable rather than as a mason. During the mid to late 1850s he worked at 594 Main Street (1856) and 12 Cambridge Street, Charlestown (1858). By 1860 he was a broker and lived at 463 Main Street. He is first listed as a mason in 1868. At that time he lived at 17 Auburn Street. By 1874 he was a mason working at 555 Main Street and lived at 5 Baldwin Street. In 1880 he was a mason working as "head, Tuft's Wharf, Charlestown." He worked as a mason until circa mid-1890s. By 1898 Littlefield had "removed to Brookline".

Number 45 Baldwin Street's land was lot number 24 on "a Plan of Land in Charlestown" belonging to George R Baldwin, made by T and J Doane, Jr, dated June 23, 1850 (plan number 11, folder 53). The Hill/Littlefield deed mentions that the "unfinished building, number 45, is sold just as it now stands" providing solid evidence that 45 and presumably other buildings in this group were completed circa 1870.

By 1875, 41-53's owners included: Samuel C Smith, "paper and paper bags", house #1 (41)**; Eli Ayers, "butter and cheese", 5 new Faneuil Hall Market, cellar, Boston, # 43; Rufus Littlefield, mason, 555 Main Street, "house #4" (45)**; Hubert Daly, "eating house, 555, 554 Main Street," house #6 (49)** Baldwin Street"; Joseph W Hill, "carpenter", 34 Eden St., "house at #9 (49)** Baldwin Street"; Charles Henry Sherbourne "boot maker, 21 Cornhill, Boston #_ (51)**; and William A Greenough, occupation unlisted, "house #13 (53)** Baldwin Street."

**Ed note: House numbers have apparently changed since the houses were built. Discrepancies may be due to errors in the typed form. The original hand written notes are not available.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown directories

Middlesex deeds

*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.

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