

47 Harvard Street, Harvard Grammar School (circa 1847-48)

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



47 Harvard

2015

The former Harvard Grammar School is a handsome, substantial institutional Greek Revival structure. It is a large boxy three-story building constructed of red brick with hammered granite trim at the entrance enframements, belt course, sills, and lintels. The windows have 6/6/ wood sash. It

has a hip roof, and at the center an octagonal weathervane-topped cupola with arched windows, a result of restoration and conversion to residential use in 1985/86. Along with the Winthrop school on Bunker Hill Street, the school is a relatively rare Boston area example of ca. late 1840s Greek revival schoolhouse construction.

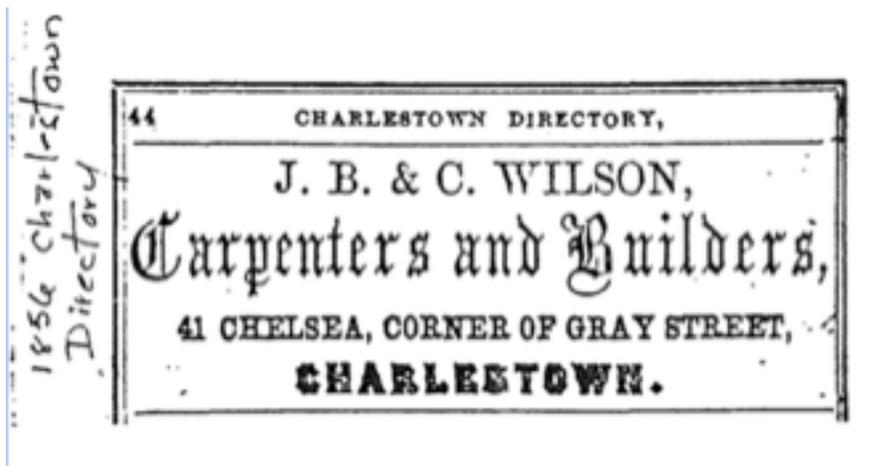
Builder: attributed to J.B. and Charles Wilson
Original owner” City of Charlestown

This building provides a physical link with Charlestown shortly after its’ incorporation as a city in 1847. It is symbolic of the building boom of the mid-1840s-’50s, precipitated in part by the wave of immigrants coming to Boston from Europe, which attracted hundreds of families with school age children to Charlestown.

An article in the Charlestown enterprise dated April 20, 1918 suggests that an earlier school dating to circa 1801-1802 may have been in the first two floors of the present building. The reporter notes that the present building was "rebuilt in 1847-1848 to make it a three-story affair". In 1871 the high Victorian Gothic/Second Empire school located on Devens Street was completed. The school at 47 Harvard Street henceforth was used exclusively for the primary grades. No. 47 Harvard contained public school classes until 19?.

Prolific (primarily residential) mid-19th-century builders John B. Wilson and Charles Wilson may have been responsible for this school’s 1847/48 construction. They built the Winthrop school at about the same time as the school on Town Hill. For further information on the Wilson brothers see form 47, 49 Monument Avenue.

The building is listed in the Town Hill NR district.



Bibliography:

Maps-...

Charlestown Enterprise, April 20, 1918, page 2 "Bears the name of fair Harvard"

Charlestown Enterprise-February 16, 1918, page 2

*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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