

5-23 Cross Street (circa 1863)

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



5-23 Cross Street

2015

Numbers 5-23 Cross Street is a row of ten two story, red brick houses with Greek Revival, Mansard, and Italianate elements. They have extremely narrow two bay flat front main façades,

and double basement windows. The main facades have bell-cast Mansard roofs and cornices with closely spaced wood scroll brackets. Each house has one pedimented double dormer.

Their paired, recessed entrances are surmounted by pedimented Greek Revival brownstone lintels. Most retain their original double doors with small square panels at the bottom and full rounded glass panes above. The windows have simple brownstone sills and lintels and a variety of sash configurations.

Builder: Amos Brown

Original owner: James Damon and Amos Brown

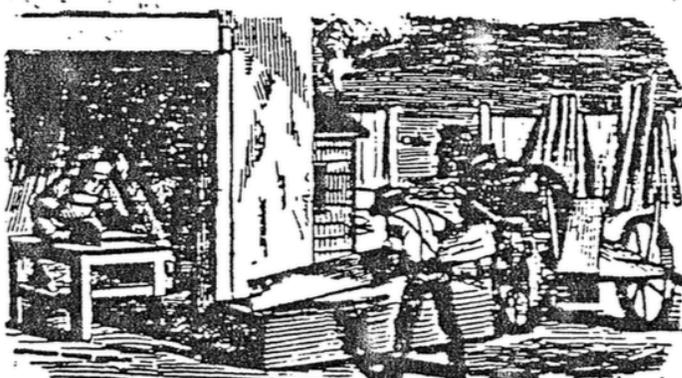
Cross Street's streetscape provides visual evidence of Charlestown's mid 19th century transition from a town of wood frame dwellings to a densely built up city with many new masonry buildings. Numbers 5-23 Cross Street, built in 1863, strike a distinctly urban note in comparison to the more suburban 1830s and 40s detached wood frame structures opposite on Cross Street's northwest side.

Architecturally, they represent a relatively modest example of mid-19th century Mansard masonry housing, compared to the more substantial and stylish Mansard houses of Harvard Street and Harvard place, built in the late 1850s and early 1860s. This row's contribution to its streetscape is considerable, with its facades' pleasing planarity and rhythmic repetition of closely spaced brackets and pedimented double dormers.

Middlesex Registry deeds point to a construction date of circa 1863 (see 891:366, October 1, 1863 and T and J Doane Plan, September 1863). This group appears to have been originally

owned by James Damon of Ipswich, Massachusetts, and Amos Brown, a Charlestown carpenter. Presumably Brown had a hand in the construction of 5-23 Cross Street. Amos Brown was active as a carpenter and builder in Charlestown building trades from circa 1848 until the 1880s. He first appears in the 1848 Charlestown directory listed as a carpenter, on 2nd Street. During the 1850s he is listed as a carpenter at 46 and 50 Lawrence Street, with his residence on Washington Street (see form on 40 Washington Street). Brown's work and home addresses remained unchanged into the early 1880s. He is credited with the Italianate masonry rows at 4-10 Mystic Street (1854), 84 and 86 Baldwin Street (1850-55), and 46-60 Baldwin Street (1850-1855).

AMOS BROWN,
Carpenter and Builder,



1870 DIRECTORY

And Manufacturer of
BRACKETS AND MOULDING,
OF VARIOUS STYLES. ALSO,
WOOD-TURNING, JIG AND CIRCULAR SAWING,
 No. 55 LAWRENCE STREET, CHARLESTOWN.

Judging from 17 Cross Street's deeds, Damon and Brown did not sell off these houses immediately after their completion in

1863. Charles B Edgerly, for example paid James Damon \$4400 for 17 Cross Street on March 3, 1865. Owners of 5-23 Cross Street in 1875 included: #5-Thomas Taff, wines etc., 157 Blackstone Street, Boston; #7- Ed S Coyle (Howard S Coyle, Steward); #9-George J Pierce, a "type founder, 52 Washington St., Boston"; #11-John Jennis (occupation?); #13-J Q A Bolster, Bolster and Ferguson Teamsters, Fitchburg railroad; #15- E J Latham, a "teamster"; #17-William Raymond (occupation?); #19-John F Drew, Drew, Jackson and Company, 425 Medford Street; #21-Sarah E Misser; #23- Leander Willey, produce, 19 Merchants Row, Boston.

Cross Street was set out circa____. It evidently runs over the borderline of Robbins (North) and Swift (South) parcels shown on the 1818 Peter Tufts map of Charlestown, showing Charlestown and parts of Cambridge .

Bibliography:

Maps-1818

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

Charlestown Business Directories-1860s-early 70

Boston Directories-1870s

Middlesex deeds-17 Cross Street: 891:366, 921:144, 1021:172

*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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