

5, 7 Hathon Square (circa 1845-1850)

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



5, 7 Hathon Square

2015

Numbers 5-7 Hathan Square is a three-story red brick Greek Revival double house situated on a platform-like rise on the southwest slope of Breeds Hill. It has a granite-faced basement, granite and brownstone trimming, and a six bay main facade, with three bay sidewalls. The main facade of number five appears to have been re-pointed with a passage of stretcher bond replacement brick. The sidewalls have the ratio of five rows of stretcher bond bricks to every single row of header bricks. There is a "stepped out" brickwork cornice (not quite corbelling), and a gable roof. The halves each have side hall plans with paired entrances.

Short flights of granite steps lead to recessed entrances with sidelights and four pane transoms. The entry walls have well-crafted wood paneling. Above the entrances are substantial brownstone lintels. There are tall 6/6 Windows on the first floor with wooden sills and brownstone lintels. (In the fall of 1986 there is evidence of extensive weathering damage to the brownstone trim.) The upper floor windows have wooden sills and brownstone lintels with 2/2 wood sash.

Original owner: the heirs of Thomas W Hooper

Tucked away behind the commercial/residential Aaron Hook Block at 207 – 217 Main Street (circa 1885) is an enclave of mid-late 19th century red brick and wood frame houses bordering an L-shaped cul-de-sac known as Hathon Square. Originally known as Main Street Court, Hathon Square was set out circa 1845-50 over the rear portion of the Thomas W Hooper estate.

The Greek Revival double house at 5-7 Hathon Square evidently dates to 1845-50. It is first mentioned in a Middlesex deed dated July 1851. At that time Thomas Hooper, a

gentleman, sold "the land with the brick house" to Samuel T Hooper, Charlestown merchant. Number 5 Hathon Square has significant historical Association with the prosperous mid-19th century West India goods merchant Leonard B Hathon.

Number 7 has significant historical Association with Norman Y Brintnall, Boston dry goods dealer, wine merchant, politician and a stable owner. In addition the late Georgian Edes house, the birthplace of artist and inventor of the telegraph Samuel F B Morse (1791-1872) once bordered the southeastern side of Hathon Square, facing Main Street.

Number 5 Hathon Square was owned by Hooper family members until 1870. At that time, Leonard B Hathon purchased it from the Hoopers for \$8000. The property was described as being in the rear of the "mansion house" of the late Thomas Hooper. The 1868 Sanborn Insurance Atlas shows the Thomas Hooper house as a large brick structure, presumably Federal, with a long L-shaped wood frame ell abutting the main block's rear wall. The Hooper/Hathon deed of December 15, 1870 mentions "the garden of the late Thomas W Hooper" as one of the boundaries of 5 Hathon Square. The old Hooper mansion was demolished circa 1854 or 1855 to make way for the masonry commercial/residential Aaron Hook Block.

Leonard B Hathon was a prosperous mid-19th-century Charlestown West India goods dealer, director of the Charlestown Gas Company and "heavy taxpayer on real estate" (in Charlestown). Hathon was born in Sanbornton, New Hampshire, in 1830. He came to Charlestown in 1850, securing employment with Clarke and Barker, West India merchants. At age 26, Hathon established a West India goods store of his own at the corner of School and Main streets (see form on 231 Main Street). In 1864, he moved his store into the ground floor of the

old Edes house (Samuel F B Morse birthplace). He retired from mercantile pursuits in 1874. In 1875 he returned to Sanbornton, New Hampshire to establish and "extensive farm," but spent winters in the Edes house in Charlestown.

The Edes house was a substantial circa 1780 late Georgian house, which had been one of the first houses erected after the devastation wrought by the British in 1775-76. More importantly this substantial three-story hip roofed house was the birthplace of Samuel F B Morse, painter and inventor of the telegraph. The land on which the Morse birthplace stood had been in the Wood family since 1676. Thomas Edes had married a daughter of David Wood (see form on 2 Wood Street). L B Hathon purchased the old Edes house in 1864, utilizing its first floor for his well-known dry goods business. The Edes house stood until circa __(?).

L B Hathon owned 5 Hathon Square until circa 1890. From the late 1890s until at least 1911, it was owned by Otis I Hathon, a grocer at 245 Main Street.

Number 7 Hathon Square was sold by the Hooper family in 1860 to H D Austin of Charlestown. Austin owned extensive Charlestown real estate holdings. By 1865, Austin had moved to South Reading Massachusetts and number 7 was sold for \$5650 to Norman Y Brintnall. The Austin/Brintnall deed mentions "the lot of land on Main Street court with the brick house thereon."

Evidently Brintnall was even more successful than Hathon, judging by the numerous business interests listed in his biographical sketch in the *Charlestown Enterprise* special June 17, 1893 edition entitled "Charlestown Citizens Past and Present." Brintnall was a Boston dry goods merchant, real

estate speculator, wine merchant, boarding stable owner and local politician. Born in Grafton, Windham Co., in December 1834, he was the son of Ralph and Elsie Farr Brintnall. From 1850-1853 he was employed in a country store in Templeton Massachusetts. In 1855 Mr. Brintnall came to Boston and entered the firm of S W Ripley and Company, dealers in dry and furnishing goods. He opened the dry goods firm of Norris and Brintnall in 1857 at 30 Hanover Street, Boston. From 1859-62, Brintnall was a partner in a fancy goods store at 326 Washington Street, Boston. In addition he was a member of M Davis and Company, wine merchants, from 1860-1870. In 1870 he was employed by B C Clark & Company. In 1874 he opened his own store at 21, 22 India Street. In addition to his dry goods and wine businesses he had "one of the best boarding stable businesses in Boston," constructed on Chapman Street, Charlestown. In addition Mr. Brintnall was a member of the Boston City Council in 1878-1879. For three years he was the member for ward five. He was a member of the National Lancers, Chamber of Commerce, Knights of Pythias, Red Men, Tariff Reform league, and the Young Men's Democratic Club.

The wood frame Queen Anne/late Italianate multifamily houses bordering the northwestern and southwestern sides of the square date to circa late 1880s, as well. These structures need further research. They stand today with their form, materials (clapboards) and elements mostly intact and contribute to the 19th century charm of Hathon Square.



Hathon Square, southwestern side 2016

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Atlases- 1868, 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1811

Boston/Charlestown directories-19th century
Middlesex deeds-number 7-571:202, 811:318, 831:99,
931:297. Number 5-1141:55
Charlestown enterprise, special edition June 1893,
"Charlestown citizens past and present"-biographical sketches
of Hathon and Brintnall

*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.

R. Dinsmore