

5 Putnam St. (circa 1806)

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



5 Putnam Street

2005

Five Putnam Street is a late Georgian/Federal detached wood frame single-family house. It rises three stories from a granite block basement to a low hip roof. It has a highly symmetrical five bay main façade with a center entrance, and a two bay

sidewall. The edges of the main block are accented by narrow corner boards. The building has a simple wooden cornice and low hip roof. Two substantial brick chimneys project from the rear roof slope. A one story ell is located to the rear.

Three granite steps lead to the front door, covered by a louvered outer door and flanked by fluted pilasters. It is surmounted by a narrow rectangular transom with bull's-eye glass, and a distinctive, deep late Georgian segmental arch. In general, the windows are fully enframed with shouldered corners and contain 12/12 wood sash. There are small square windows at the third-floor. The northwest sidewall is devoid of windows.

Original owner: Isaac and Ruth Larkin

Much of Putnam Street's early 19th century charm is dependent on the presence of number 5. Situated on the northeast side of Putnam Street's crooked path, this house faces a four unit row of brick and granite trimmed Greek Revival houses. Just to the southeast of this house, at the foot of Putnam Street the 20th century asserts itself rather jarringly with an elevated concrete and metal mystic River (Tobin) Bridge exit ramp.

Architecturally, 5 Putnam is significant as a well preserved example of early 19th century late Georgian/Federal style single-family housing. It combines a distinctive Federal form plan, fenestration (e.g. small square third-floor windows) and low hip roof with late Georgian siting (long five day main façade facing the street), entrance enframing e.g. deep segmental arch above the entrance, and window treatments, e.g. 12/12 wood sash with "shouldered" enframements. Number five Putnam appears to be in excellent condition.



5 Putnam detail

2015

Middlesex deeds indicate that this house was built circa 1806 for Isaac Larkin, a tallow chandler. Number 5 Putnam's lot was part of a much larger parcel owned by Joseph Johnson, also a tallow chandler. The lot Johnson sold to Larkin in 1806 stretched some 100 feet along Putnam Street. (The lot's Putnam Street border was reduced to 46'8" by the mid-1820s.) Johnson sold this large parcel to Larkin "with the buildings thereon"-nevertheless 5 Putnam was probably not one of these buildings. Further research may show that Larkin was related to Johnson by marriage as the purchase price was for "love and

affection as well as one dollar". This house was owned by Larkin until his death circa mid-1820s.

During 1927-early 1928 this property was sold back and forth between Larkin's estate administrator, Abel Adams of Boston and Elias Phinney Esq. An Adams/Phinney deed dated December 6, 1827 refers to this property as "being the late mansion house said deceased" (Larkin). Abel Adams owned this house from 1828 until April 2, 1866. At that time he sold it to John Farrell of Charlestown for \$2500. The Adams/Farrell deed refers to a Middlesex plan by S P Fuller dated September 27, 1827. By the 1860s Adams was resident of West Roxbury. Number 5 Putnam was owned by Farrell family members until at least the early 1890s.

This house appears on the 1901, 1911, and 1922 Charlestown atlases labeled Patrick Reardon.

Putnam Street was set out circa 1790s, running from Henley Street to the Salem Turnpike (opened in 18 __, and the Training Field (Winthrop Square). Putnam Street was officially accepted as a street on May 6, 1822. It was named in honor of Israel Putnam, a major figure in the fight for American independence at the battle of Bunker Hill June 17, 1775. Putnam met William Prescott's detachment at midnight on Charlestown Neck, was instrumental in the conference that decided to fortify Breed's Hill, and fought during the actual battle and attempted to secure reinforcements and supplies for Prescott from Cambridge.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Atlases-1868, 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1911, 1922

Charles town directories

Middlesex deeds-941: 310, 279:217, 278:345, 166:168

Suffolk deeds-1400:129

Red Dawn at Lexington, Lewis Birnbaum

*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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