

55 Main Street, Deacon Larkin House (circa 1795)

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



55 Main Street

date (?), before 1981

The John Larkin house, at 55 Main Street, is a substantial late Georgian/Federal house with a boxy rectangular five bay by five bay main block. Clad with clapboards, its corners are accented by quoins. The house is enclosed by a deck-on-hip roof.

It has a center entrance on the Main Street façade and the front door is flanked by simple pilasters and surmounted by a four-pane transom and a pediment. The windows have capped and

pegged frames, 6/6 wood sash, and there are small square windows at the third level.



55 Main Street

2015

Original owner: John Larkin

The house is prominently sited at the corner of Main and Winthrop Streets. It serves as a centerpiece to a curving streetscape bordered by the John Hurd house to the left and a block of the new neo-Georgian/ Federal Charlestown Crescent residences (patterned after Charles Bullfinch's Tontine Crescent, destroyed in the great fire in Boston). Still intact are modillion blocks at the cornice. Together with the John Hurd

house next door, also late Georgian/Federal, the Larkin house provides a glimpse of the late 18th Century Main Street Charlestown.

The Larkin house is architecturally significant as a rare Boston area late Georgian/Federal house of considerable style and substance. It is part of the town Hill area's truly remarkable collection of late Georgian/Federal style structures. A National Register of Historic Places nomination form dated 1962 indicates that the present ground-floor treatments are fairly recent in origin. Stating that "although the openings are boarded shut, and the clapboard structure is covered with asbestos siding, much of the original character is still obvious..... The street floor has been completely altered for commercial use". The earlier ground floor commercial space treatments were brought back to 18th century appearance in the 1980's. (In regard to the entrance, the treatment was evidently conjectural.)

This house has significant historical associations with John Larkin, best remembered as the man who lent Paul Revere a horse for his midnight ride. It was Larkin's horse that carried Revere out to Lexington and Concord to warn the Committee of Safety of the approaching British troops. Larkin's original house stood in nearby City Square. Along with the rest of Charlestown, it was destroyed during the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Originally this house's lot was much larger than it is now, stretching all the way back from Main Street to Warren Street. The house remained in the Larkin family until the early 1830s (Middlesex deed 325:260, 14 August 1833).

Later owners included Edward Soley, Richard Robins, Peter Gasner of New York, and Susan Robins, a "widow". From 1870 until at least the 1910s the house was part of the Isidore J Klous and Luis Klous real estate holdings. Evidently it was the Klous family who transformed the Larkin's first floor into commercial space. The 1874 Charlestown directory lists the Klous family as having a clothing store in this building. Lewis Klous had started a clothing store in Charlestown at the corner of Main and Henley Streets; by the early 1870s the Klous enterprise was located in the Larkin house, and by 1889 it was located at 139 Main Street. It was noted in the *Charlestown Enterprise*, December 14, 1889, page 5 that "Lewis Klous has gained a wide reputation for garments that for style, fit, workmanship and price are second to none in the city of Boston." During the early 1900s the Larkin house was owned by Bertha Klous.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown directories-1834-1874

Boston directories-late 19th century

Middlesex deeds-325: 260, 1138:52

N. R. H. P. Inventory-Nomination form-Town Hill H. D.

Charlestown Enterprise, December 14, 1889, page 5

A. I. A. Guide to Boston, Susan and Michael Southworth

*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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