

6-12 Cedar Street (circa 1863-64)

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



6- 12 Cedar

2015

Numbers 6-12 Cedar Street are four, two-story Italianate/Mansard red brick row houses with brownstone trimming. They have flat fronts, three bay main façades with high granite faced basements, and side hall plans. A broad brick two bay end wall is evident on the west side. There is a straight-sided mansard roof with paired, pedimented dormers.

Their paired, deeply recessed entrances, which retain cast iron foot scrapers at numbers 10 and 12, have multi-paneled, recessed entrance walls. The original double front doors are intact on all except number 12. The first-floor windows have simple sills and sill tabs, lintels with tabs and 2/2 wood sash. There are centered, second-floor oriel windows, which are wide, paneled, and have a tall narrow windows and bracketed cornices. These cornices are echoed in the roof's deep-bracketed cornice. The brackets are intact on all except number eight.

Builder: Amos Brown, Carpenter-attributed
Original owner: Amos Brown/James Damon

Built in 1863-64, 6-12 Cedar Street is a key component in the "wall" of redbrick brownstone-trimmed Italianate-Italianate/mansard houses bordering Cedar Street's north side. This wall is characterized by a rhythmic progression of oriel windows, bracketed cornices, pedimented dormers, and the undulating bow fronts of 18-22 Cedar St., further to the east.

Architecturally 6-12 Cedar St. is an attractive well crafted group of Italianate row houses. Granite faced basements are a holdover from 1830s and '40s Greek Revival row houses, while second floor oriels, bracketed cornices and Mansard roofs strike a more "progressive", "up to date" note.

These houses are a product of a mid-19th century Charlestown building boom that began during the late 1830s, intensified due to immigration, the coming of railroads and expanding local industries during the 1840s and 50s and continued without abatement during the Civil War. Cedar Street was set out circa 18__. It evidently follows the north-South dividing line of two large tracts of land labeled Swift (north), Union Savings Bank (south) shown on the 1818 Peter Tufts map of Charlestown. A Middlesex plan (plan book 11, plan__) dated September 1863 shows 6-12's tract as four vacant lots owned by Amos Brown. He was a local carpenter. Further research is needed to pinpoint the transactions between Brown and Damon and possibly others, which clearly indicate when buildings first appeared on these lots. Damon was selling off 6 and 12's land with the buildings thereon in 1867 and 1866, respectively. A Reuben B. Sherburn of Lynn paid Damon \$6000 for number six on May 8, 1867 (991:553) and Charles F. Newall paid Damon \$5000 for number 12 on May 21, 1866 (971:38).

Amos Brown was apparently responsible for the construction of this row. (See form on for, 6, 8, 10 Mystic Street for more information on Amos Brown, carpenter and builder. Further research is needed on James Damon-he was active in Charlestown real estate speculation circa 1840s-60s.

Owners of this row in 1875 included: #6-R. B. Sherburne (occupation?); #8-James Damon; #10-James W kidney, Turner, kidney and Company, pavers and contractors, 16 Travelers Building, and 12-Jackson Flanders, truck man, 93 Central (first listed here in 1870, prior to that date at 30 Winthrop (1868) and 4 Wallace court (1866). Numbers 6, 8, and 10's pre- 1875 owners purchased these houses as investment properties. Kidney lived in the Italianate mansard mansion at 52 Sullivan Street (see form).

James W kidney was born at Irisberg, Vermont in 1832. He came to Boston penniless at age 16 and for seven years served as an apprentice in the paving trades. During the last years of his life he was a partner in the company of kidney and Libby- this firm employed a large number of men-sometimes as many as 150 workers. This firm's work took them to all parts of new England-more locally kidney and Libby had contracts with the Boston city government and the horse car railways.

By 1892 the owners of this group included: #6-R B Sherburne, #8-Alfred White of White and Landry, Hairdressers, 125 Causeway, Boston, #10-M W Simons (occupation"?), and #12-Edward O'Donnell, mystic waterworks.

By 1911 this group's owners included #6-T A Holden, #8-Eugenia white, #10-B J Murphy, #12-Ed O'Donnell.

Bibliography:

Maps- Tufts Map 1818

Atlases- 18168, 1875, 1885, 1892, 1901, 1911

Charlestown/Boston directories

Middlesex deeds- 971:38, 1011:334, 991:558

*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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