

## 68 Baldwin Street, Bunker Hill School (1866)

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



Bunker Hill School, 68 Baldwin Street

2016

The Bunker Hill school is a large brick and granite trimmed Second Empire school building. It has a seven bay main façade, including a three bay center pavilion with the entrance. The floors are divided horizontally by granite sill courses. The Mansard roof was reconstructed in 1986.

The main entrance is set within a granite arch and surmounted by an arched tripartite transom. Arched window lintels are composed of stretcher bricks with granite keystones. A plaque under the center third floor window reads "Bunker Hill School 1866".

Architect: James H Rand

Builder: John B Wilson, "Master builder", J T and William W Bray, foundation construction

Original owner: City of Charlestown

Architecturally, the Bunker Hill School is a substantial, well-designed example of a Second Empire schoolhouse, with polychromatic red brick/gray granite surface treatments, formal center pavilion, etc.

A schoolhouse has been located on or near this prominent site on the edge of Bunker Hill's northwestern slope since at least 1802. (see also 1818 map). Prior to 1800 there was only one schoolhouse in Charlestown, below the Canal Bridge, for the accommodation of schoolchildren between seven and 14 years of age, and that was near the site of the Harvard School. The school erected at what is now the corner of Bunker Hill Street and Baldwin Street, in 1802, served 347 schoolchildren in the area bounded by Charlestown Neck and Winter Hill, in Somerville. The 1802 wood schoolhouse measured 35 by 25 ft. In 1845, a new brick schoolhouse built just to the northwest of the present school ("the school at the Neck"), was named "the

Bunker Hill School" and was dedicated on December 1, 1845. An old photograph in the collection of the Boston Athenaeum actually shows a gable roofed brick structure, two stories, with five bay main and three bay side façades, with dentilated brickwork at the corners and an oculus attic window. This school building was taken down in\_\_\_\_. It is shown as a T-shaped building on the 1875 Atlas.

The present Bunker Hill School was built in 1866/1867 to relieve the crowded conditions of Charlestown schools. It was noted in a School Committee report of October 1865 that the old Bunker Hill School "contains a larger proportion of the poor and neglected children than any other in the city". At that time it was noted that "in an anticipation of early action to be taken for the erection of a large school building, the city Council has authorized the purchase of the lot of land on which this building stands, being an area of 12,000 feet, at a cost of \$6067". The expense of construction, exclusive of furnishings, amounted to \$65,862.79. James H Rand of Charlestown was hired as the architect, John B Wilson was the master builder, and J E and William W Bray laid "these solid foundations".

Charlestown/Boston architect James H Rand was active from 1860 to the mid-1880s. In 1860 he lived at 31 Monument Square; by 1866 he lived at 22 Union Street. By 1872 he had an office at 18 Exchange Street, in Boston, with a house at 18 Cordis Street in Charlestown. He is listed in early 1880s Boston directories at 77 Warren Street in Charlestown; he is not listed in the 1890 Boston directory.

Information on James H Rand in the BPL architects files is sketchy. He was the architect of the Winthrop (later, Frothingham) School, and in addition he was evidently responsible for several houses in the survey area including 3, 4,

5, and 6 Salem Street Avenue. He was also the architect of two early 1880s apartment buildings on Rutland Street in the South End, known as "the Garfield" and "the Rand". BPL files note that he may have been a partner in the firm of Weston and Rand.

The annual report of the school committee in January 1867 described the new school as substantial, beautiful and very commodious. It was noted that it was nearing completion and was "designed to accommodate 800 scholars". It was described as "an ornament to the city". In a very real sense this building is symbolic of Charlestown on the eve of its annexation to Boston, in 1874.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Charlestown directories-1860s-70s

Boston directories-post 1874

Annual report of the school committee-1865, 1866, 1867, 1868

\*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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