

7 Church Court (1847)

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



7 Church Court

2015

Number 7 Church Court is an unusually tall L-shaped Greek Revival house with a three-story main block and a two-story side ell (shown as only one story in the 1868 Atlas). It is clapboard clad and has a three bay main façade and side hall plan. It has a granite basement. The corners are accentuated by tall, paneled Doric pilasters. Above the third floor windows is a heavy entablature and pedimented attic containing a pair of cornice headed windows. There are two pedimented dormers at the northeast roof slope.

The entrance is recessed, with a later outer door (since removed). The entrance is enframed by Doric pilasters and pedimented entablature. The windows are fully enframed with pedimented lintels and a 2/2 wood sash. Projecting from the main façade is a two-story oriel with recessed rectangular apron panels. The oriel is late 19th century Queen Anne addition.

Builder: Benjamin Applin-"stair builder"

Original owner: Benjamin Applin

Number 7 Church Court is situated on a narrow passageway leading from Thompson Square to the former site of the Universalist Church, now a parking lot. This house stands adjacent the massive granite gateposts of the old church. It faces a side wall of the high Victorian Gothic Charlestown Five Cent Savings Bank building at 1 Thompson Square.

Architecturally, 7 Church Court is noteworthy as an unusually tall side hall plan Greek revival house. This house, with its distinctive form-with its emphasis on the vertical-may be seen as a possible ancestor of the late 19th century three Decker house. (Note also the three-story Italianate single-family

houses of the 1850s-60s, such as 30, 32 Winthrop Street). This house clearly presents its structural evolution over time, e.g. its two-story late 19th century Queen Anne oriel addition.

For many years, 7 Church Court was the home of Daniel Johnson, a glazier. It was probably built by Benjamin Applin, of Boston, a "stair builder." Further research in Boston directories is needed to determine the time frame of Applin's career. He is listed in the 1846-47 Boston directory as a stair builder and partner in the firm of Applin and Wesson-at that time he lived in the rear of 34 Beverley Street, Boston. He is listed in the 1848 Charlestown directory as a stair builder living at Universalist court (church court's original name). He is not listed in post 1850 Charlestown directories. Applin paid Timothy Thompson, of Charlestown's prominent Thompson family, \$1548 for a lot of land (no buildings) on May 19, 1847 [501:412]. Buildings are mentioned in a deed between Benjamin Applin, grantor and George Farrar, Charlestown "Counselor at Law" on 9 October 1848. Number 7 Church Court was probably built in the late spring/early summer of 1847, with Applin living here for a few months before selling it to Farrar.

Owners during the 1850s/60s included Elihu P Marvin of Medford, Massachusetts and Alden F Raymond of Charlestown, a "real estate speculator. Daniel Johnson, a glazier, Haymarket Square, corner Sudbury lived here from 1865 [921:267, 22 April 1865] until at least the 1880s. Johnson's heirs owned this house until at least 1892. By the early 1900s the house was owned by John Jay and David Higgins.

This house is a product of intensive late 1840s Charlestown house construction-the building boom was precipitated in part

by the coming of thousands of European immigrants (mostly Irish) to the Boston area beginning circa 1845.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Panoramic view from Bunker Hill-1848

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

Charlestown/Boston directories-1840s, 1860s

Middlesex deeds-501: 412, 541:332, 911:582, 921:267

*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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