

70, 72 Winthrop Street (circa late 1860s)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981*



70 and 72 Winthrop Street

2015

Numbers 70 and 72 Winthrop Street are stylish two story Italianate/Mansard townhouses constructed of red brick with brownstone trimmings. Number 70 is set back from number 72; the buildings are tied together visually by brownstone belt courses between the first and second floors (a large segment of brownstone belt course is missing from number 72.. Both houses have brick basements with a stone belt course. Both

have side hall plans, each with a flat entrance bay and an octagonal bay. The buildings culminate in wooden cornices with closely spaced brackets and have hip-on-mansard roofs with slate shingles, mostly intact (more so on number 72 than number 70).



70 Winthrop entry detail 2015

Flights of granite steps lead to Victorian double doors with semicircular transoms set within arched and recessed entryways. Brownstone-trimmed entrance arches spring from Doric capitals, with segments of brick wall below, suggesting pilasters. The brownstone door hood on 72 is missing.

The first floor windows have sill courses and hood lintels, with raised ornamental moldings at the centers of the octagonal bays. The second floor windows also exhibit hood lintels of brownstone, and sills with tabs.

Original owners: Charles F Newell (?), Francis Hall (?)

Built ca. late 1860s, 70 and 72 Winthrop represent substantial, stylish examples of post-Civil War Charlestown luxury housing, prominently sited at the corner of Monument court and Winthrop Street Near Monument Square. Number 70 is “stepped back” from 72 Winthrop. This attractive duo serves as gateway to the architectural treasures of the Training Field/Winthrop Square area to the southeast, and the mansion-bordered Monument Square area to the north/northeast. Numbers 70 and 72 Winthrop are more closely linked in spirit to the stylish houses of Monument Square than the plainer and earlier residences of the Training Field/Winthrop Square and vicinity. They provide evidence that Charlestown housing was not always rendered along conservative lines- "up to date" (for the 1860s) octagonal bays are combined with stylish brownstone trimmings and hip-on-mansard roofs.

During the mid-19th century, their lots were evidently part of the Bartholomew Raymond estate. The not always reliable McIntyre map of 1852 seems to indicate a single long building following the curve of Winthrop Street on this site. (This site is

not included in the 1848 Mallory "Panoramic View from the Bunker Hill Monument.")

Evidently Charles F Newell purchased both lots "with the buildings thereon" on May 9, 1867 for \$6000. Apparently Newell tore down the old buildings on this parcel and erected the present houses, and was the original owner of 72. Number 70 was completed a short time after 72; it was sold to Francis Hall of Cambridge in 1868 (re-check this date-see Middlesex deeds 1031:12). Hall paid \$14,000 for 72. The Newell/Hall deed carried the restriction that "no building or part of the building shall be built or maintained on that portion of said premises forming a triangle and lying between said street and a line drawn parallel with the front of the north westerly wall of the house on the premises. In addition, Newell also had "the right to have the covings, finish, and trimmings of said adjacent house overhang and project over the granted premises and to keep and maintain the same in their present positions or at any higher-level, also the right to light, prospect and air forever to and from the window in the south westerly side of his said adjacent house which overlooks the front part of the granted premises: to wit said triangular piece of land". During the 1870s and 1880s Francis Hall owned both houses.

Perhaps the duo's best-known owner was George N. Swallow. During the late 19th/early 20th century he was a leading grocer and politician. Born on Washington Street, Charlestown, January 2, 1854, his father was Amaziah N. Swallow. During the early 1870s he entered the very prosperous grocery business of his father (see form on 33 Cordis Street), which was located at 12 and 13 City Square. He later became the senior partner of A.N. Swallow and Company. He was prominent in politics, being a Republican, and was elected to the state legislature in 1889, 1890, and 1891 from Ward 5, one of the Democratic

strongholds of the district. In 1893 he was elected to the State Senate from Charlestown. George N. Swallow owned 70 and 72 Winthrop from 1891 until at least 1911.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

Panoramic View-Mallory

Middlesex deeds-681: 225, 821:553, 991:517

Middlesex plan-1031: 13 (May 11, 1868)

Suffolk deeds-1891: 137

Charlestown Enterprise-special edition June 1893 "Charlestown citizens past and present"

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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