

## 81, 81 ½ Warren Street (circa 1808-1812)

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



81 Warren Street

2015

Number 81 Warren Street is an attractive three-story Federal wood frame house, with a boxy, five bay by two bay, main block. There is a two-story rear ell. The house retains its clapboards, and the edges of the main block are accented by Doric pilasters. It stands with a narrow two bay end wall facing Warren Street and a southeast-facing main façade. The main block is enclosed by a low hip roof.

Number 81's main façade opens onto a narrow, picturesque, brick paved, well-landscaped passageway/courtyard (Donnell Court) with the Italianate main façade of 81½ as a charming backdrop.

It has a center hall plan. The center entrance features narrow sidelights and attenuated Doric pilasters surmounted by a cornice-headed entablature with modillion blocks.

The windows are simply and fully enframed with raised outer moldings, and have 6/6 wood sash. There are small square windows at the third floor with 3/3 wood sash.

Original owner: Benjamin Fiske and William Stoddard Bridge

Number 81 ½ Warren Street is a circa 1850s or '60s house (moved here or possibly retardataire, late Italianate, circa 1885-1892?) with a five bay main façade. It has a center entrance with a bracketed shed roof door hood and fully enframed cornice-headed windows with 6/1 sash. The main façade has a deep cornice with wooden brackets. The northwest wall is composed of brick.



81 Warren entry detail

2015

The brick northwest wall of numbers 77 and 79 Warren together with the Federal and Italianate main façades of 81 and 81 ½ Warren, respectively, frames one of Charlestown's more picturesque passageways/courtyards. Architecturally, 81 Warren ranks among the more attractive, well detailed examples of wood frame Federal style housing in Charlestown. Particularly noteworthy is the way it's Doric pilasters accent the edges of its boxy, unmistakably Federal three-story main block. Also memorable are its chastely rendered entrance



Donnell Court, 81 and 81 1/2 Warren

2015

enframements with narrow sidelights, attenuated Doric pilasters and well-crafted cornice headed entablature. To the rear, it's main façade providing a charming backdrop for the passageway/courtyard, is 81 ½, a circa 1850s or 60s wood frame house with a main façade enlivened by a bracketed shed roof door hood over the center entrance, cornice-headed lintels on all three floors and a deep-bracketed cornice.

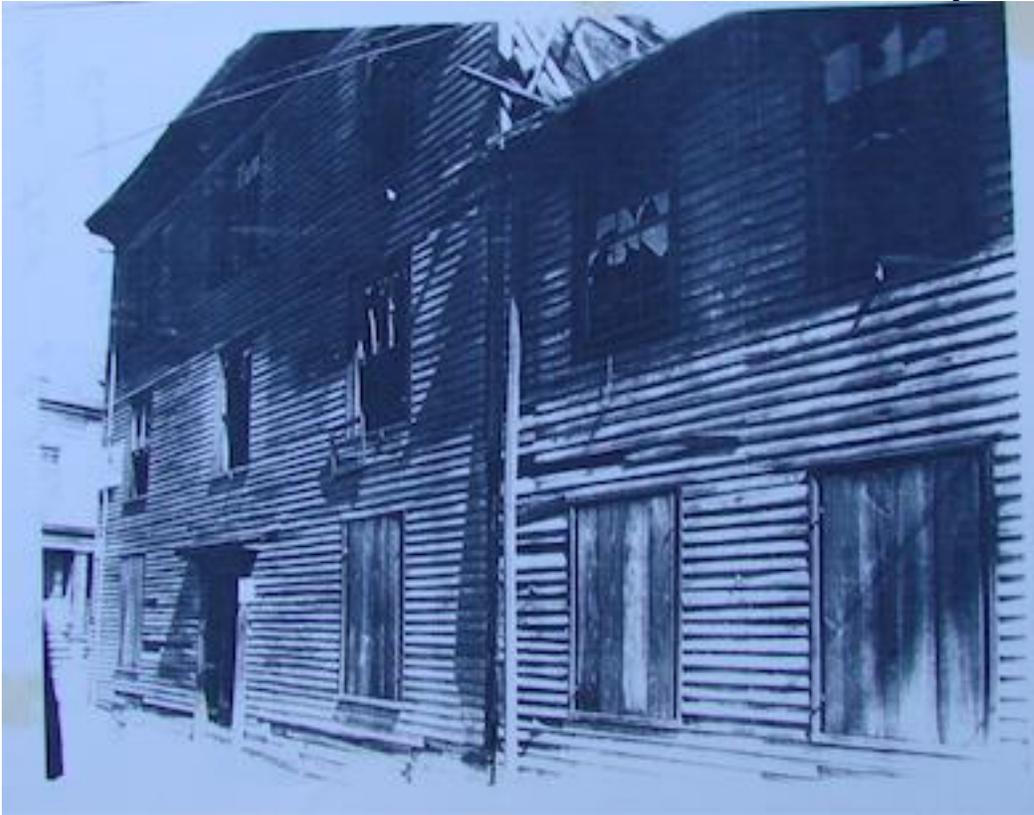
Number 81 is part of a cluster of early 19th century wood frame houses within the Town Hill historic district grouped around or near the Pleasant Street/Warren Street intersection, including numbers 77, 79, 80, 83/85, 86/88 Warren, and 23 Pleasant Street.

Number 81 Warren was apparently built circa 1808-1812. Its lot had been part of Andrew Kettel's estate. Kettel was a tanner by trade. On 20 January 1808 Benjamin Fiske and William Stoddard Bridge, both traders, of Chelmsford, paid kettle \$600 for 81's lot. At that time Warren Street was referred to as Back Street. On February 15, 1812 William Stoddard Bridge, Charlestown, sold his share of 81 to Benjamin Fiske (ref. "one undivided half of the house thereon") for \$1000. Fiske lived here until 1824. On July 10 of that year he sold it to John Vannevar, a "Boston bricklayer", for \$2500. One year later, Alexander Vannevar, a "Boston Cooper", sold 81 to Jonathan Bridge Junior (presumably related to William Stoddard Bridge).

At some point in the mid-19th century 81 became part of the extensive real estate holdings of Solomon Phipps. He sold it to Pauline and Augustus L Dole of Malden on 11 May 1868 for \$1500. The 1868 Sanborn Insurance Atlas shows this house composed of a long rectangular main block with a brick rear (northwest) wall and a rear ell composed of a two-story

segment and of one story segment, no longer extant. (Number 81 ½ is not shown on this lot.) In any event, the Doles of Malden sold 81 to Dennis Shea, a seaman, on September 23, 1841. Shea owned it until as late as the early 1900s. Shea's heirs owned this house in 1911.

Number 81 ½ was either moved to the rear portion of 81's lot circa 1885-82 or built here, although its Italianate massing and elements suggest a much earlier (circa 1850s or 60s) construction date. The 1880s and 90s was a time of considerable construction activity in Charlestown. Number 81 ½ could have been moved from any one of half a dozen sites around Charlestown. (A photograph provided by current 81 resident Ken Stone, of 21 Pleasant Street, since demolished, which occupied the present garden space between 81 ½ and Pleasant Street suggests that 81½ was probably built on site since this house would have blocked access to its lot.)



21 Pleasant Street

ca 1960-

Information from current (2015) resident Ken Stone:

Number 81½ was built in the yard of 81 in approximately 1878. Dennis Shea and his heirs owned both houses until 1960.

Donnell Court is named for Sam Donnell, who renovated 23 Pleasant Street (or 81B Warren), as well as 81 and 81 ½ Warren in the 1960s, having purchased the three in deteriorated condition for \$1450. He also purchased an empty lot (21 Pleasant) providing open garden space for all three houses. In 1978 he sold them to separate buyers after restoration.

For further information about houses restored by Sam Donnell, see forms for 23 Pleasant Street and 2,4 Salem Street.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1852

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

Charlestown/Boston directories-19th century

Middlesex deeds-176: 62, 198:54, 255:129, 127; 259:372, 1031:8, 1179:527

\*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.

R. Dinsmore

Interior Views



81 Warren Staircase



Front door

2015



81 Warren kitchen fireplace and oven in 1820s addition



81 Warren interior shutter and wainscot