

## 85 Elm Street (1892)

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



85 Elm Street

1981

Number 85 Elm Street is a well-preserved, three-decker Queen Anne house. It has a three bay main façade with clapboards, a side hall plan, and a low brick basement. It has a recessed entrance with well-crafted entrance moldings. The main façade is dominated by an octagonal two-story oriel, and an unusual projecting parapet. Both the oriel and the parapet are supported by large curved and paneled brackets. The parapet features plinths at each corner, which support elongated copper finials.



85 Elm Street

2016



85 Elm Street oriel bracket detail

2016



Parapet bracket, plinth, and finial detail

**Builder:** Donovan and Brock  
**Architect:** Charles A Halstrom  
**Original owner:** Ellen Jennings

Built in 1892, 85 Elm Street is a rare example of a three-decker house within the survey area. It represents a late addition to Elm Street's collection of primarily mid-19th-century single-

family houses; it is flanked by Greek revival side hall plan houses with pedimented attics. Particularly noteworthy is its unusual design. Its main façade has an octagonal oriel window, which rises two levels to a parapet with distinctive elongated finials at its corners. Well-carved paneled brackets support both oriel and parapet.

Number 85 Elm Street represents the work of Charlestown architect Charles A Halstrom, and is one of the very few architect-designed houses in the survey area. Charles A Halstrom was active in Charlestown/Boston architectural practice from circa late 1880s to circa early 1900s. He is first listed in the 1886 Boston directory at 58 Monument Street, Charlestown. By 1895 he was working at 7 Exchange Place and lived at 104 Main Street. He is not listed in the 1905 Boston Directory. Houses built by Halstrom in Charlestown include 461 Main Street (1886), 49 Lawrence Street (1891) and 67, 69, 71 Baldwin St. (see form), built in 1898.

The builders of this house were Patrick J Donovan and Edward Brock of Donovan and Brock. This firm was active in Charlestown building trades in the circa 1880s-early 1900s. Patrick J Donovan was a local late 19th century political figure as well as a builder. He served as the head of the city Board of Aldermen. He was born in Charlestown in 1842, and began his business career as a clerk in a provision store, becoming a contractor and mason. For eight years he was a member of the Charlestown Fire Department and was a member of the Charlestown Veterans Firemen's Association. He was the builder of the three-story, three family building at 282 Bunker Hill Street (1897), and a brick engine house built for the Charlestown Gas Company at Hamblen Street, near Dorrance Street. This house's first owner was an Ellen Jennings.

Bibliography:

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Boston directories-1880s, 1890s

Boston Public Library card file-architects/builders

Boston Buildings Department information

Patrick Donovan obituary, BPL vertical file September 18, 1912

\*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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