

## Cambridge Street at Sullivan Square, the B F Tweed School (circa 1891)

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



B F Tweed School, Robert Severy photo

1974

The former B F Tweed School, now the Jesuit Center, is a two-story masonry Georgian Revival school building. It is T shaped, with a seven bay main façade and four bay sidewalls in the main block. The basement is of yellow brick with red mortar, and the walls are characterized by planar surfaces, with Flemish bond laid in yellow mortar. A continuous sill course of stone runs beneath the first floor windows. The building has a dentilated cornice and a flat roof.

A flight of stone stairs leads to a recessed, round-arched entrance. Above the main entrance is a handsome Palladian window. The windowsills are of Amherst sandstone and the trimmings and coping of the battlement are of yellow terra cotta. The windows have wedge shaped lintels with keystones and 6/6 wood sash.



Cambridge Street, Sullivan Square

2016

Architect: Edmund M Wheelwright (as city architect)

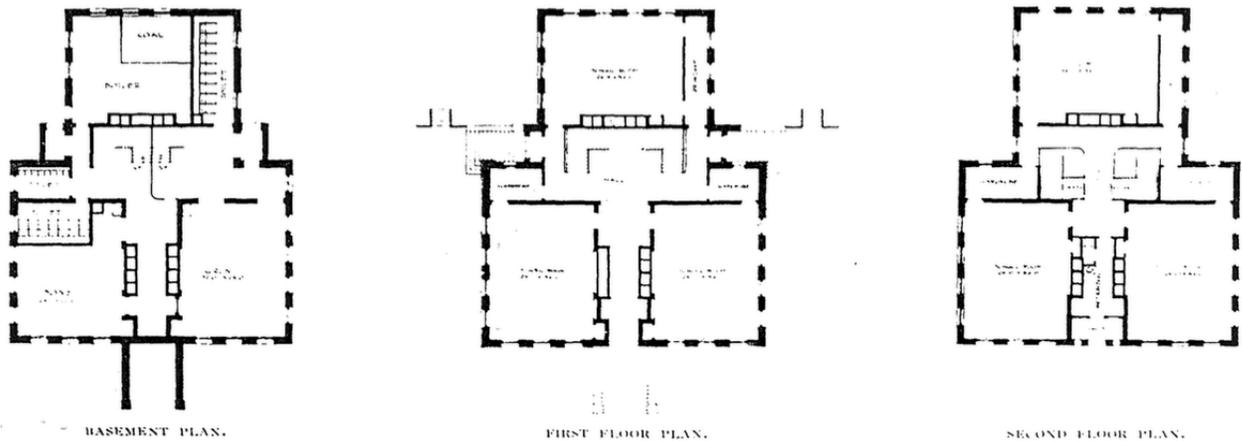
Builder: Stephen Brannan and John McNamara (Damrell, *Half Century*, page 78)

Original owner: City of Boston

Architecturally, the former B F Tweed School is a well-designed example of an early 1890s Georgian Revival masonry primary school building. Its facade is characterized by a pleasing planarity, polychromatic red brick/yellow brick contrasts and crisp elements, e.g. wedge shaped keystone lintels and a Palladian window.

The building is the work of important late 19th century-20th century architect Edmund M Wheelwright, of Wheelwright and Haven. Wheelwright was City of Boston architect from 1891 to 1894. He was a co-partner, along with Parkman Balke Haven, (1858-1943), from 1890 until approximately 1920. They were the architects of a number of notable public buildings in the Boston area, including Horticultural Hall, in 1903; the New England Conservatory of Music, 1903; Massachusetts Historical Society, late 1890s; the Opera House, etc. Wheelwright's eclecticism is evident in such works as the Florentine Renaissance Revival Boston Fire Department Headquarters, (now the Pine Street Inn), in the South End, 1894, and the Flemish Renaissance Revival Harvard Lampoon building on Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, in 1909. Douglas Shand Tucci notes that Wheelwright "was concerned with much more than style. He was an authority on schoolhouse design. His Brighton High School of 1894 was nationally influential, and he designed the robust, reinforced concrete and iron viaduct and train barn of Forest Hills Elevated Station, West Roxbury, in 1909."

The former B F Tweed School was built to house six rooms, three in each of the two stories, and a teacher's room on the second floor. The heating was by "direct radiation". The cost of the school was \$36,004.05, of which \$2507 was for heating and ventilating. The cost per schoolroom was \$6000. The basement had a "boys" and a "girls" room, two bathrooms, a center stair hall and a boiler room and adjacent coal room.



In a 1953 publication entitled "Boston, Look to the Schoolhouses", it was noted that "the B F Tweed School on Cambridge Street, Sullivan Square, houses about 75 children, kindergarten through third grade, most of whom live in the triangular section north of Cambridge Street and west of Main Street." By the early 1950s, three rooms on the second floor had been closed as a safety precaution-"the enclosed center stairway and wood interior construction still constitute hazards." The school was eventually closed because of the dangers of traffic in the area and the above-cited interior conditions.

It is interesting to note that the southern terminus of the old Middlesex Canal was just to the east of the school's lot, and south of this building's site was the old Charlestown mill pond, which was created as early as 1645.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818, 1833, 1839, 1848, 1851

Atlases-1875, 1835, 1892, 1901

Collection of city architect EM Wheelwright's work, at B P L,  
early 1890s

"Boston, Look to the Schoolhouses," April 1953, pages A 4-5

\*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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