

One seminary Street (1845)

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



1 Seminary Street

2015

One Seminary Street is a substantial, two-story wood frame Greek Revival house with a side hall plan and four bay main façade. It has a granite block basement and a broad pedimented attic and gable roof. The main façade is sheathed with flush boards. The house's edges are accented by wide corner pilasters, and there are wide fascia and sideboards. The west wall is composed of brick (as shown on the 1868 atlas).

The entrance is deeply recessed with heavy Doric pilasters and cornice-headed entablature. Four steps lead to a replacement (modern) door flanked by multi-pane sidelights and surmounted by a multi-pane transom. The entry walls have three panels per side.

The windows of the main façade are fully enframed with paneled vertical boards, low pedimented lintels, and 2/2 wood sash. Window corners are blocked.

Original owner: Albert J Bellows

Tucked away on a narrow side street, off Austin and Lawrence streets, 1 Seminary Street is one of Charlestown's "hidden" architectural treasures. In comparison with most 1830s- 40s Charlestown wood frame side hall plan single-family houses, 1 Seminary is unusually substantial in terms of scale and proportions of elements. Rather than the more standard three bay main façade, this house has a wide four bay main facade. It's outer entrance enframing (Doric pilasters, cornice-headed entablature), and its corner pilasters and fascia/sideboards, are unusually robust. This house's pedimented gable serves to underline its unusually wide main façade. In addition, flush boarding, used to cover the main façade is rarely seen in Charlestown. One Seminary ranks

among the finest examples of wood framed Greek revival/domestic architecture in Charlestown.

This house was built for Albert Jay Bellows, a Charlestown physician. He purchased the house's lot in January 10, 1845 from Lucy J Walker for \$1050 [See Middlesex deed for 53:305]. [Lucy J Walker had purchased this lot from Abraham Thompson in May 1841.]The Walker/Bellows deed mentions "a certain lot or parcel of land [sold] for the purpose of erecting thereon a dwelling house.... it is agreed by the purchaser that the land is conveyed for the erection of a dwelling house and for no other purpose". Presumably this house was built for Dr. Bellows in the spring/summer of 1845.

One Seminary's later owners included John Williams (1850-57, occupation?), David C Perrin, a merchant (1857-1866), David C Perrin to Robert and Fanny Pierce (1866-1873), and Nathan J Gould (1873-circa early 1880s). Gould worked as a watchman in the nearby state prison at Prison Point (site of present Bunker Hill Community College). From circa mid-1880s-early 1900s Michael McEleney, "railroad police" lived here. In 1911 its owners were J and M Horrigan.

Seminary Street dates to circa__. It does not appear on the 1818 Peter Tufts map. Its name refers to a Seminary structure that was located at the northeast corner of Lawrence and Union streets. The old seminary was transformed into a YMCA facility during the early 1900s, and is no longer extant. One Seminary looks toward Lawrence Street and once had a view of the South wall of the first Baptist church (circa early 1800s.) This house, in terms of community development, represents a relatively late addition to an area with numerous early 19th century dwellings.

Bibliography:

Maps-1818-Tufts

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

Charlestown/Boston directories

Middlesex deeds

*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