

LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION 278 CENTRAL STREET MAP SHEET # 12
 1) CURRENT OWNER John J. Turner OWNER OCCUPIED yes
 2) HISTORIC NAME Mrs. Hildreth's Boarding House/Union House
 3) CURRENT NAME J. J. Turner's Hotel and Pub
 4) PROPERTY TYPE multiple dwelling 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION B3
 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS current STATUS clear
 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF LHPD

HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) CONSTRUCTION DATE 1825
 SOURCE document: Registry of Deeds, Book 5, page 70
 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER unknown
 3) HISTORIC OWNER Levi Carter
 4) ORIGINAL USE: GF residential UF residential
 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY no DATE _____
 SOURCE _____

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Greek Revival
 2) PRESENT USE:
 GF commercial
 UF commercial
 3) NO OF STORIES 4
 4) PROP SQ FT 2345
 5) PLAN rectangular
 6) ROOF mansard
 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM
load-bearing masonry
 8) OUTBUILDINGS
none
 9) MATERIALS:
 FOUNDATION
not visible

VIEW FROM west PHOTO TAKEN May 1979



FACADE front: red brick w/stretcher bond, sides & rear: aluminum

TRIM granite sills/lintels, slate shingles

10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS none

ADDRESS 278 CENTRAL STREET

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC good
- 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES not applicable
- 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: GF intact with evolutionary alterations
UF intact with evolutionary alterations
- 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial
- 5) INTEGRITY OF PROP'S HIST SETTING intact with minor intrusions and/or losses
- 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROP TO HIST SETTING focal point in area

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

See Research Report.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

See Research Report.

ARCHEOLOGICAL COMMENT

A parking area is situated to the side and rear of this structure. Archeological work might prove fruitful in these areas which have been in continual use since the 1820s as a "clothing yard," not to mention possible hotel-related activities.

Research Report
278 Central Street
Mrs. Hildreth's Boarding House, Union House
(now J. J. Turner's Hotel and Pub)
ca. 1825

Although 278 Central Street, a former boarding house and hotel, dates from the early years of Lowell's development, its mid-1820's origins are not immediately evident. The original brick fabric and roof configuration lie hidden beneath extensive alterations.

This free-standing, four-story brick structure is of rectangular plan. A one-story rectangular brick storefront projects from the main facade. On the ground floor is a recessed central entrance. To the left is a storefront containing a jewelry store, while a pub is located to the right.

Above the storefront addition is an open porch with four classicized posts which support a flat roof. These posts roughly resemble Doric columns. Beneath the capitals are peculiar triglyph and guttae motifs. A wooden, grid-like railing runs between the porch posts. Beneath the porch's cornice is an entablature enriched by bead and reel molding.

The second floor facade is six bays wide. Doors open onto the porch near the outer corners of the facade. The windows of the second and third floors feature bands of finely dressed granite sills and lintels (painted red). Above the third floor is a wide entablature in the center of which is a sign which reads "18 J. J. Turner's Pub 24." At either ends of the entablature are classicized drops with guttae motifs. The mansard roof which probably dates from the late 1860s or 1870s has six windows and features scalloped slate shingles. The dormer windows are simply enframed with thin strips of wood.

Evidence of this structure's mid-1820's origins can be found by looking at the sides of the building, even though they are covered with aluminum siding. Here the outline of two chimneys linked by a parapet can be distinguished. The rear and northern walls have symmetrically disposed fenestration, and the southern wall has a few irregularly spaced windows.

Stylistically this structure is a composite of several generations of exterior alterations. The original structure had twin end-wall chimneys linked by parapets, and windows with simple granite sills and lintels indicative of Lowell's late Federal / early Greek Revival style. The porch with its classicized posts and the entablature were probably added in the 1840s to "update" the building. The mansard roof with its scalloped slate shingles is a feature of the Second Empire style of the 1860s and '70s.

278 Central Street faces a small, triangular, brick-paved court which projects into Central Street. Called Pat LaCerde Park, it features three benches and reproduction hitching posts. To the south of the building is a parking lot, and a small, modern bank branch office.

This building appears on the 1832 Lowell map as a small square structure to the north of the old Washington House Tavern. A deed dating from 1825 indicates that a Thomas Hurd leased the present structure from Levi Carter, owner of the Washington House (to the immediate south) [1]. Hurd operated a textile mill on the Concord River, directly east of this site. The 1825 deed refers to a "...house on said premises lately erected by the said Carter...." In 1825 Lowell was part of Chelmsford and Central Street is described in the deed as "...the road leading from Bradley's Ferry to Boston." In the lease Hurd agreed to pay Carter \$100 a year. Conditions of the lease included a clause in which Carter said he "...would not keep any Bowling Alley on any part of said premises during the said term and shall and will not keep or suffer to be kept any swine so as the same shall annoy the said Hurd or others with their noise or stench."

The ownership of the property between 1826 and 1832 is a tangled web of sales or leasing agreements between Thomas Hurd, an Abigail Hildreth and one Zenas Doane (listed in the 1830s as a keeper of livery stables) [2]. A deed dated July 4, 1827 reveals that Zenas Doane leased to Abigail Hildreth the southern portion of the house. Doane retained the northern portion of the house and declared that "the stairway stands on my land and it is to accommodate the whole house" [3]. Doane is listed as residing at Mrs. Hildreth's boarding house until 1835.

From 1832 until 1835 this structure is listed in the directories as Mrs. (Betsy P.) Hildreth's building or boarding house. On January 27, 1837 Betsy P. Hildreth sold this

structure to Mary Hildreth. The deed allowed Betsy P. Hildreth to continue to reside in the house stipulating that she reserved

...for myself my heirs and assigns the front and middle bed chamber, together with a privilege in the cellar kitchen to wash and bake and a privilege in the wood shed and clothing yard and a privilege to pass and repass to and from each of the above mentioned premises.

Betsy P. Hildreth also agreed to pay "one quarter part of the land rent and taxes" [4].

On August 22, 1849, William Calvert, acting as administrator of his late wife Martha Hildreth Calvert's estate, sold the property to William Gardiner and Thomas H. Perkins of Boston. The August 22, 1849 deed referred to the property as "...a certain brick building or dwelling house called Union House, situated in Lowell on the easterly side of Central Street between Green Street and the tavern called the Washington House" [5]. A description of the property is further described in that deed as including "...the lot of land under and around said Union House." Although the 1832 map shows this property and the Washington House to be two separate structures, both the 1841 and 1850 maps show the two establishments to be attached together, which is probably inaccurate.

Although the name "Union House" appears in the 1849 deed, no reference is made in the Lowell directories to this public house until 1851. The last directory listing for the Union House is 1855. The name Gardiner appears on this property on the 1850 map.

By 1906 two narrow rectangular additions appear along the rear wall of the structure. The short ends of the additions faced north and south and the easternmost addition was half the size of the first addition. This configuration reappears on the 1924 atlas.

On the 1896 and 1906 atlases the names "Farragut Hotel, A. C. Wheelock" appear on this site. In directories from 1887 until 1926 this structure was known as the Farragut Hotel. By 1924 this property is labeled Merrill on the atlas and is called the New Farragut Hotel. The New Farragut Hotel became LaFeriére's Furnished Rooms and the Farragut Cafe in 1961. J. J. Turner's Hotel and Pub has occupied this building since 1971.

This extensively altered brick structure dating from 1824 or 1825 is the earliest intact hotel in Lowell and is a

survivor from the initial phase of Lowell's development. Although the thread of its history is lost from 1855 until 1887, it presumably functioned as a lodging house or hotel during those years. This structure has apparently been continuously utilized as a boarding or public house since at least 1832 (Mrs. Hildreth's boarding house). During the mid-nineteenth century this structure competed with the nearby Washington House and City Hotel for the traveller's dollar. As the Farragut Hotel in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth, this establishment benefitted from the commercial traffic drawn to the Towers Corner area by a number of business and recreational attractions including the Boston and Maine Depot, the Lowell Opera House, LaScala Theatre, and others.

Footnotes

- 1) Northern Registry of Deeds, 5:70.
- 2) Ibid., 6:364,430; 5:70.
- 3) Ibid., 6:430.
- 4) Ibid., 9:194-5.
- 5) Ibid., 68:122.

Other Sources

1832, 1841, 1845, 1850 maps.

Lowell atlases.

Lowell city directories.

