

LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION 29 KIRK STREET (see also 21-27 Kirk) MAP SHEET # 7
 1) CURRENT OWNER Franco-American Oblate Fathers OWNER OCCUPIED yes
 2) HISTORIC NAME Kelley & Wetherbee House
 3) CURRENT NAME same
 4) PROPERTY TYPE two-family dwelling 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION B3
 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS exempt STATUS clear
 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF LNHP - City Hall HD - LHPD

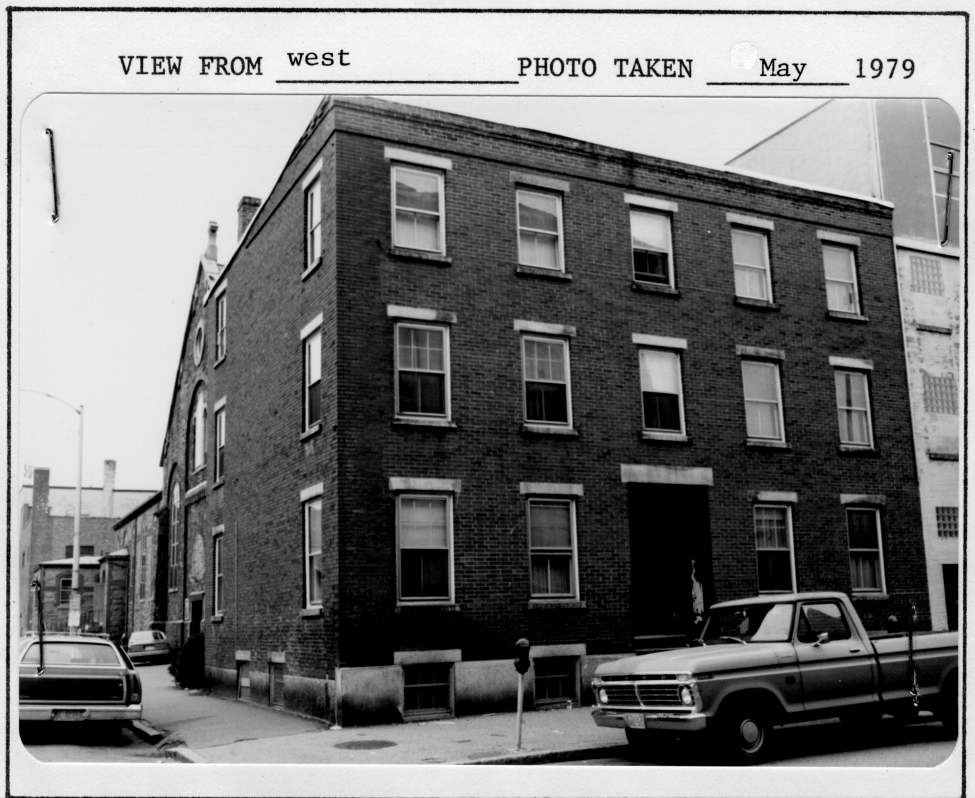
HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) CONSTRUCTION DATE ca. 1846-1847
 SOURCE circumstantial: city maps and directories
 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER unknown
 3) HISTORIC OWNER William Kelley/Asa Wetherbee (1847)
 4) ORIGINAL USE: GF residential UF residential
 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY no DATE n/a
 SOURCE maps

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Greek Revival
 2) PRESENT USE:
 GF residential
 UF residential
 3) NO OF STORIES 3
 4) PROP SQ FT 1957
 5) PLAN rectangular
 6) ROOF shed
 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM
load-bearing masonry
 8) OUTBUILDINGS
none
 9) MATERIALS:
 FOUNDATION
granite

VIEW FROM west PHOTO TAKEN May 1979



FACADE (front: red pressed brick in stretcher bond
(sides and rear: red common brick in common bond (7/1)
 TRIM granite sills and lintels

10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS none

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VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC. good
- 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES n/a
- 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: GF intact original fabric
UF intact with evolutionary alterations
- 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial, institutional
- 5) INTEGRITY OF PROP'S HIST SETTING intact with minor intrusions &/or losses
- 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROP TO HIST SETTING integral to character

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

This disrupted block of three-and-four story pieces has as its base a row of mid-nineteenth century red brick attached houses. The northern part, 29 Kirk, is the key to the whole.

At the corner of Lee Street, the facade of 29 Kirk is a symmetrical, simple rectangle, five-bays long with a central entrance forming a double residential unit. The foundation course is granite, inset with low rectangular base-ment windows with granite lintels. The first floor has four window bays, divided at the center by the wide, recessed entrance way. The second and third stories each have five bays of windows. All lintels and sills are granite. The entablature and cornice are worked in brick. The roof appears flat from the front, but slopes slightly to the rear, cutting through the cornice on the Lee side. The present roof is clearly altered from the original, which appears on the 1876 "Bird's-Eye View" as a flat roof. On Lee, there are two window bays. At the rear is a three-story ell, and an exterior wood stairway.

From 29 Kirk Street, south to Kirk Avenue (now the alley beside Mitchell Block), stand the much altered remnants of a brick residential row, of which #29 is the most intact part. The other units have altered openings -- new doors cut into walls, and entrances and windows bricked-in. Adjoining 29 Kirk Street is a single unit (#27) of three matching bays with a changed entrance and missing cornice. South of that are two stories of a wall with a five-bay symmetrical double unit (#25 and #23), and a three-bay single unit (#21).

As with the three-story remnant, openings are altered or bricked-in. Above the three-and-two story walls, a metal-clad extension rises to four stories. This whole group is used by Jordan Marsh Dept. Store. The rear of this structure is a four-story blank addition in concrete block.

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ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Close examination of the facade on Kirk Street, between Lee Street and Kirk Avenue, suggests much-altered row housing. The documents confirm and clarify this suggestion. Directories and maps date the row houses on this site ca. 1845-1847, immediately following the Proprietors of Locks & Canals auction of surplus lands in 1845. Starting from the Lee Street corner, the original owner-occupied units appear to have belonged to: Asa Wetherbee, carpenter; William Kelley, sash and door maker; Mrs. R. Rose, dressmaker (whose shop was also listed here in 1847); Misses D & P. Maynard, millinery and fancy goods; and Enoch Ward, carpenter. Perhaps Wetherbee, Kelley & Ward were involved in the construction of the row. The evidence of the facade on Kirk Street suggests the row was built in two stages. The row splits evenly into three unit, eight-bay halves, at the point where the height of the brick wall changes. The 1876 "Bird's-Eye View" of Lowell seems to indicate a pitched roof with dormers on the right (south) half of the row. Probably, the left half was built as three stories, flat roofed, while the right was two-and-a-half stories, with an endwall gable roof and dormers. If this was the case, then the whole front wall of the 21-29 Kirk Street row survives, with very little loss.

Changes, at least in ownership, must have started quite early because the 1879 atlas shows six units, instead of the usual five. But, confusion clears on the 1924 atlas where 29 Kirk (a double house) is clearly shown as one property which conforms to the 1879 configuration of two (then numbered 28-25 Kirk Street). By 1924, Bon Marché, predecessor to Jordan Marsh, owned all but 29 Kirk, which remained in residential use.

SOURCES

Lowell city maps and atlases.

Lowell city directories.

ARCHEOLOGICAL COMMENT

The present buildings appear to consist of the first houses built (ca. 1845-7) on this site. Originally, there were small open lots at the rear, between the houses' ells, but rear additions have largely covered these spaces, except for an asphalt-paved area behind #29. The potential is low for recovering significant sub-surface cultural remains from this property.