

## House Stories – 28 Charles Street – The Haunted Charles Street Schoolhouse (1842-44)

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26	22-53		Ca 1842-1844	Greek Revival/Double House	C
<b>28</b>	<b>22-52/B</b>		<b>Ca 1842-1844</b>	<b>Greek Revival Cottage</b>	<b>C</b>
30	22-51		Ca 1845-1865	Greek Revival Italianate	C

### Location

28 CHARLES ST UNIT B

### MBLU

22/ 52/B / /

### Owner

OLSON MICHAEL R

### Assessment

\$906,200

### PID

7427

### Building Count

1

### Current Value

Assessment

Valuation Year	Improvements	Land	Total
2025	\$906,200	\$0	\$906,200

#### Owner of Record

**Owner** OLSON MICHAEL R  
**Co-Owner** JESSICA M J/T  
**Address** 28 CHARLES ST UNIT B  
NEWBURYPORT, MA 01950  
**Sale Price** \$465,000  
**Certificate**  
**Book & Page** 30586/0335

**Sale Date** 08/12/2011  
**Instrument** 00

#### Ownership History

##### Ownership History

Owner	Sale Price	Certificate	Book & Page	Instrument	Sale Date
OLSON MICHAEL R	\$465,000		30586/0335	00	08/12/2011
ROSS DAVID N	\$422,500		27409/0279	00	12/21/2007
ONACKI JOAN N	\$369,900		16754/0483	00	12/18/2000
HABERLIN G WILLIAM	\$174,500		13219/0392	00	10/03/1995

**Year Built:** (1842-44)1900 (Major Remodeling with Western Addition, Basement Added)

**Living Area:**

1,719

## Building Attributes

Field	Description
Style:	Condominium
Model	Res Condo
Stories:	2 Stories
Grade	Average +20
Occupancy	1
Interior Wall1	Drywall/Sheet
Interior Wall	
Interior Floor	Hardwood
Interior Floor2	Carpet
Heat Fuel:	Gas
Heat Type:	Hot Water
AC Type:	Heat Pump
Ttl Bedrms:	2 Bedrooms
Ttl Bathrms:	2 Full
Ttl Half Bths:	0
Xtra Fixtres	
Total Rooms:	4 Rooms
Primary Bldg Use	
Atypical	
Fireplaces	
Num Part Bedrm	
Base Flr Pm	
Pct Low Ceiling	
Unit Locn	
Exterior Wall 1:	Clapboard

Exterior Wall 2:	
Roof Structure	Gable/Hip
Roof Cover	Asph/F GlS/Cmp
Foundation	
Security:	
Cmplx Cnd	
Xtra Field 1:	
Remodel Ext:	
Super	
Grade	

#### Building Sub-Areas (sq ft)Legend

Code	Description	Gross Area	Living Area
BAS	First Floor	916	916
FUS	Upper Story, Finished	666	666
FHS	Half Story, Finished	273	137
FBM	Basement, Finished	346	0
FSP	Porch, Screened	204	0
UBM	Basement, Unfinished	346	0
WDK	Deck, Wood	267	0
		3,018	1,719

#### Extra Features

##### Extra Features

Code	Description	Size	Value	Bldg #
FPL3	FIREPLACE 2 ST	1.00 UNITS	\$3,600	1
FPO	EXTRA FPL OPEN	1.00 UNITS	\$1,200	1

## Land

### Land Use

**Use Code** 1021  
**Description** CONDO

### Valuation History

#### Assessment

Valuation Year	Improvements	Land	Total
2024	\$823,400	\$0	\$823,400
2023	\$761,200	\$0	\$761,200
2022	\$664,000	\$0	\$664,000

#### The History:



The story goes like this....In about 1860, a male student at the Charles Street School in Newburyport, MA had committed some “horrible” (unspecified) act and had been given the appropriate (?) punishment. He was severely beaten, locked in the basement of the building, and was left there the entire day while fellow students were ordered to ignore his cries and moans. When the school day ended he was helped home and died

later that night. The teacher, "well within his rights as a disciplinarian," suffered no repercussions. It was this single event that began the rumors that the school was haunted by this boy but there was no sign of such a thing until the fateful year of 1871.

This particular schoolhouse was situated very close to the port on the Atlantic. It was intended for the poorer children of the town and even in 1871 was in need of some repairs. The Charles Street School had become a dumping ground of the unwanted, needy kids of that day, and it tended to be overcrowded. Discipline was very strict in those days and may have been what triggered these ghostly happenings 11 years later. Spectral events began

occurring in the schoolhouse that were basically the stuff of Hollywood special effects.

There were ghostly apparitions of a boy, solid objects floated through the air and hovered above onlookers' heads. There were loud knocking sounds and objects flying about the room. Teacher and children became increasingly alarmed and parents demanded an investigation. There were those who suspected that some of the activities were hoaxes, but many occurrences were seen by multiple witnesses and with no explanation at the time – the floating apparitions, heavy iron stove tops hovering in the air and the banging in desks and on the walls...in several different directions and locations at the same time!

When the parents were told of these events by their children, they began to talk, and in turn the reports of the Charles Street ghost made it into the local newspaper, then into the Boston Media and soon enough, people across the country were reading about the young phantom of Newburyport, Massachusetts.

For a brief time, Newburyport's name was heard in excited conversations across the nation. In 1873 Loring Publishers of Boston wrote a detailed 24-page booklet detailing the happenings that unfolded at the Charles Street School, complete with line drawings, testimony, and local flavor, further spreading the belief that the events were indeed real. (You can access the digital copy of this pamphlet compliments of Harvard University at the end of this post!)

Famous celebrities like Oliver Wendell Holmes came to try to debunk the story. Spiritualists who were an emerging movement at the time came to the school to perform seances to exorcise the "spirit." The town established a committee to investigate and possibly disprove the events. Their findings claimed that it was a hoax but most in the city felt the committee's report was rigged from the start and no one took the findings seriously. They believed the ghost was real!

"At a meeting of the school committee held Monday evening, February 24, 1873, the condition of the Charles Street primary school was taken into consideration and a sub-committee, previously appointed, reported in detail the facts that had been discovered after careful investigation. They recommended that a vacation of three or four weeks be allowed Miss Perkins, the teacher, and a substitute be employed to take her place. This report, signed by Samuel J. Spalding, pastor of the Whitefield Congregational church and society, and George D. Johnson, rector of St. Paul's church, gave a brief summary of the facts established by the investigation, and closed with the following statement :

After deducting the baseless and purely sensational stories put afloat and the exaggerations which the excited imaginations of credulous persons have made, and sights and sounds that can be accounted for by the most simple principles of natural philosophy, and by the tricks of mischievous boys (quite as natural), there is hardly enough left out of which to make a small ghost. The recommendations of the sub-committee were subsequently adopted. Miss Perkins was granted a vacation of several weeks for rest and recreation, after the severe mental strain that had seriously impaired her health and strength, and the Charles street school was placed in charge of Nathan A. Moulton. The ordinary routine of school work was resumed, the mysterious sights and sounds ceased, and all traces of ghostly visitors disappeared."

A few years later the school building was sold by order of the committee on public property. It was repaired and remodeled, and according to local authorities of the time...the school is, "now a comfortable and convenient dwelling house." Just as they suddenly appeared, the apparition and supernatural activities ceased in 1873 just as quickly and no one has reported anything in the building since. Over the years, the homeowners reported no spectral activities after that.

## **Reference:**

Expose of Newburyport Eccentricities, Witches & Witchcraft: the murdered boy, and apparition of the Charles-Street School-house, by H.P. Davis, 1873

The Haunted Schoolhouse at Newburyport, by A.K. Loring, Loring Publisher (Corner of Bromfield & Washington Streets), Boston, 1873

Tripping on Legends, by Christopher Balzano, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010,  
<https://trippingonlegends.com/2010/07/25/the-haunted-schoolhouse/>