

WHOSE PORTRAIT IS THIS?

Old North Church and House Nearby Made Background of a Picture
Of an Unknown Rich Bostonian



CHRIST CHURCH IN 1750

Copied by Mrs Charles K. Bolton from the background of the painting of an unknown Bostonian,
whose portrait is shown in the insert

A recent and hitherto unknown view
of Christ Church, the Old North, asso-
ciated with Paul Revere's lanterns, has
been made available for those in-

terested in such antiquities by Mrs
Charles K. Bolton, wife of the librarian
of Boston Athenaeum, who copied it
with pen and ink from the dingy back-

ground of a 175-year-old oil portrait of
an unidentified early aristocratic resi-
dent of Salem st.

An interesting accessory is an ancient

Puritan mansion, with look-off on its
roof, and characteristic old-time fence
and gate in front, which apparently
then occupied the north corner of North
Bennet st and Salem st. and was an
early home of Jonathan Jackson,
brazier, an ancestor of Oliver Wendell
Holmes.

Walter Kendall Watkins has shown
that the house is probably one built
about 1719 by Nathaniel Henchman, sold
to Jackson in 1732, long occupied later
by his daughter and her husband, Rev
John Webb, minister of the New North
Congregational Church, Hanover st. and
owned from 1772 till 1811 by Francis
Crequi, a prosperous merchant who
came from the West Indies and was a
communicant of Christ Church.

Edward Edes and Edward Powers,
both bakers, were later successively oc-
cupants. The house had probably dis-
appeared by 1809 or soon afterward, for
a map of 1814 shows its site occupied
by a block of houses, which have since
given way to the Industrial Home.

Unknown Merchant Prince

At first thought it seemed a reason-
able supposition that the unknown man
who was the subject of the portrait
might have been a warden or vestry-
man of Christ Church who lived in
the mansion in the foreground. But
the painter of the portrait, John Green-
wood, is said to have worked in Boston
only between about 1745 and 1752. The
character of the portrait fails to cor-
respond with any known occupant of
the house during that period.

The rich raiment of the subject of
the portrait indicates that he was prob-
ably a "merchant prince."

The point of view from which the
scene making the background was taken
was about the middle of the block be-
tween Prince st and Sheafe st, now site
of 154 Salem st, where may have stood
the home of the man in the portrait,
with a North window which commanded
the view of Christ Church and the
mansion in front of it.

The portrait, which is life-size, three-
quarters length, now owned by Mrs
Lawrence Park of Groton, was obtained
a few years ago by her late husband, a
Boston architect, from a family named
Burdett, a member of which rescued it
70 years ago from an obscure nook in
an upper story of the building at the
south corner of Winter st and Washing-
ton st, over the then famous drug store
and soda fountain of the late Orlando
Tompkins, long proprietor of the Bos-
ton Theatre.

Not the slightest clew as to the iden-
tity of the subject of the portrait has
yet been found. His complexion was
ruddy, eyes blue, vest a brownish bro-
cade and coat green.