Looking for Archibald
A Detective Story
We bought our house on Cranston Street in 1996.
It has a strange geometry...basically 3 hexagonal columns “pressed together”.
As seen from above the house is 12-sided, with 6-sided rooms and a hexagonal cupola sitting on top like a crown.

Thanks to John Raisz for this drawing
A few years after moving in we decided to remove the asphalt roofing shingles that covered the house.
This exposed the interlocking wooden hexagonal shingles underneath (originally they were painted to resemble stone).
Also, in every window there’s a hexagon...
...and every window is different.
There’s even a six-sided hatch that leads up to the roof.
Back in 1987 our house had been included in the National Register of Historic Places. When we moved in we received a copy of the Boston Landmarks Commission report recommending it. Among other things it said:
“The deed and mortgage records indicate that John and Archibald Scott, in 1871, acquired a lot of land at 17 Cranston street (then 16 Terrace Avenue)...”

(Hopkins, 1874)
“...Archibald Scott (b. 1831, Nova Scotia, Canada) was listed as early as 1860 as an organ factory worker...”
“He may have been responsible for the design of the house, which does display an eccentric attitude toward architectural form...”
...and a vigorous handling of shape and detail...
...that may indicate a building tradition...
...outside that of housing construction.”
It was a most unusual house. I wanted to know why? How hard could it be???

Thanks to John Raisz for this drawing
So I decided on two different strategies. First, I’d research Archibald Scott.
Second, I’d contact previous tenants and see if they had any interesting stories... about Archibald or the house.
I started my research at the **Boston City Archives** in West Roxbury.
In 1871 & 1872 we find Archibald & John Scott paying taxes first for land and then an “unfinished house” on Cedar Hill (another name for Cranston Street /Terrace Avenue).
In 1873 & 1874 it’s the same deal and then...
... in 1874 Archibald & John run out of money! The land and house were sold at public auction.

MORTGAGEE'S SALE.

To JOHN SCOTT and ARCHIBALD SCOTT, the supposed owners of the equity of redemption of the following described estate, and any others interested therein:

By virtue of a power of sale, and by reason of a breach of the conditions contained in a certain mortgage deed given by said John and Archibald Scott to Timothy F. Howe, dated March 23, 1871, and recorded with Suffolk Deeds, Lib. 405, fol. 29 will be sold at public auction, on the premises, on MONDAY, June the eighth, 1874, at 3 o'clock P.M., a lot of land, with the buildings thereon, being a lot numbered sixteen upon Terrance avenue, on Garbett’s plan, dated December 16, 1870, and recorded with Norfolk Deeds as Plan No. 191, said estate being formerly in West Roxbury, but now in Boston; bounded northeasterly by a line through the centre of said Terrace avenue fifty feet and 25-100, southeasterly by lot numbered 17 eighty-five 7-10 feet, southwesterly by land of Gore fifty and 5-10 feet, and northwesterly by lot No. 18 eighty-five 2-10 feet, with a right of way through said Terrace avenue and subject to the restrictions that a strip of land seven and a half feet wide across the entire northeasterly end of said lot is forever to be kept open as a part of said avenue.

WILLIAM LOCK,
Assignee of said Mortgage.
At the **State House Library**, Special Collections, I went through the **Boston Directories**.
I found **A.F. (Archibald Fraser) Scott, organ builder**, listed from 1860-1888, living at a variety of Boston addresses.
Next I went in search of the original deed and mortgage at the **Norfolk Registry** in Dedham (Terrace Avenue was part of West Roxbury until 1874!)
Archibald & John paid Timothy Bowe $1492 for “lot number 16 upon Terrace Avenue”.

Know all men by these presents, that I, Timothy J. Bowe of Boston in the county of Suffolk and commonwealth of Massachusetts in consideration of fourteen hundred ninety-two dollars, do grant, bargain, sell and convey unto the said Archibald Scott and John Scott of West Roxbury in the county of Norfolk, the aforesaid lot of land in said West Roxbury, being lot number sixteen upon Terrace Avenue on Garbett's plan dated Dec. 16, 1870 and recorded with Norfolk deeds as plan no. 191; said lot is bounded northeasterly by line...
After this followed many “dead ends”:

- **Inspectional Services Department**: No Permit
- **Boston Public Library**: No photos, books or articles about Archibald or the house
Ma Historical Society & Historic New England: nada!
At this point I decided to concentrate on the genealogical route even though I knew nothing about genealogical research. I joined the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) on Newbury Street...
...and learned how to use their resources:

- **Ancestry.com**
- **FamilySearch**

*I had no idea I could actually see my father's name written in a census record. But there he was in an orphanage in 1920.*

~ Martin Asdorian Jr.
• The U.S & Canadian Censuses
• Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics
And I got a lot of help from **NEHGS** staff. I found that according to the **1870 Census** ...
Archibald F. Scott was born around 1831 (1870 minus 39) in Nova Scotia. He was married to Mary and had 3 girls and he was working in an organ factory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Archibald</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>W, Keeping House</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgina</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F, No occupation</td>
<td>Mass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nettie</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>F, W, Attending School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevi</td>
<td></td>
<td>F, W, At Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using Ancestry.com & FamilySearch I found the marriage record of Mary (Crowe) Shaffroth and Archibald F. Scott on June 14th 1860. I found the names of both their parents and that both were born in Halifax.
According to the **1880 Census** A.F. Scott is now...
...married to **Elizabeth** and 3 boys have been added to the family!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Organ Builder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Keep House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horace</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Carpet Factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>At School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>At School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Death records confirm that Mary died in 1872 at 40 years old of tuberculosis. Marriage records confirm that Archibald married Elizabeth Short from England two years later in 1874.
At the **National Archives** in Waltham I found Archibald’s Naturalization papers...
...stating that Archibald (born 2-9-1831) came from Halifax and arrived in Boston in 1847...

United States of America.

To the Honorable the Judges of the Circuit Court of the United States,

begun and held at Boston, within and for the District of Massachusetts.

Respectfully represents Archibald R. Scott
of Boston in said District

an Alien, and a free white person; that he was born in
Halifax, Nova Scotia

on or about

the thirty fourth day of February in the year of our Lord eighteen
hundred and thirty one and is now about thirty five years of
age; that he arrived at Boston in the District of

Massachusetts in the United States of America, on or about the
fifteenth day of October in the year of our Lord eighteen
hundred and fifty seven being then a minor under the age of eighteen years;

that it then was, and still is, his bona fide intention to reside in, and become a citizen of,
the United States of America, and to renounce all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign
Prince, State, Potentate and Sovereignty whatsoever — more especially to Victoria,
Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland,
...and he became a U.S. citizen in 1868.

United States of America.

District of Massachusetts, to wit:

At a Circuit Court of the United States, begun and holden at said Boston, on the fifteenth day of May 1868, to wit, on the A. D. 1868, the said A. F. Scott was admitted to become a citizen of the United States of America; and the Court ordered that record thereof be made accordingly.

Attest,

[Signature of Clerk] Clerk.
Death records show Archibald Fraser Scott dying on April 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1900 in Weston, MA of asthma & dilatation of the heart.
To summarize...

- Archibald came to Boston from Halifax in 1847 when he was 15 years old.
- Thirteen years later in 1860 he married Mary Crowe and over the next few years they had 2 girls (Georgina, the oldest girl was from a previous marriage). In 1860 he also started working at the organ factory.
- In 1868 he became a citizen.
- Three years later (1871) he starts work on our house.
- The next year Mary dies.
- Two years later, in 1874, he marries Elizabeth, runs out of money and gives up our house.
In spite of all these facts, facts, facts, I still didn’t really know anything about Archibald himself. So... I decided to track down his great grandchildren and ask them if they knew anything about him.
I decided to concentrate on the children of Archibald and Elizabeth because the relatives of his first marriage to Mary quickly lost the Scott surname.
So...Archibald and Elizabeth had 2 boys. One ended up in prison (for 20 years!), while the other married Bernice.
They had 2 boys. One was lost at sea during World War II. The other married Gertrude.
When I found Gertrude’s obituary I found Archibald’s Great Granddaughter!

Gertrude Scott, 68, of Sudbury

SUDBURY — Gertrude (Testa) Scott, 68, a resident of St. Patrick’s Manor, died Saturday, Nov. 3, 1990, at Framingham Union Hospital, following a long illness.

She was born Nutley, N.J., on Aug. 5, 1922, the daughter of the late Michael and Angelina (Dispensize) Testa.

She was a longtime resident of Sudbury, moving to Southbridge five years ago, following her husband’s retirement.

She was the wife of the late Charles R. Scott.

She leaves one son, David E. Scott of Winchendon; two daughters, Lindsay A. Scott of Aurora, and Melissa C. Mangini of Oregon, and four sisters, Catherine Laratta and Helen Celfo, both of New Jersey, Josephine DelTufu of Arizona, and Norma Diorio of Alabama; and a brother, Michael Testa of New Jersey.

Visiting hours will be held Tuesday from 7 to 9 p.m. at the William R. Duckett Funeral Home, 656 Boston Post Road (Rte. 20), Sudbury.

A service of remembrance will be conducted at the close of visiting hours.

Donations may be made in her memory to the charity of one’s choice.
I contacted Lindsay Scott, but she didn’t know anything about him!!!, …but...

It's funny, I can't help but relate this to my own life. I've told you that I built my own house and load of other structures, furniture, metalwork, mechanics... I've been working with my hands since I was very young. Something that strikes me - in junior high school I happened to be the first and only girl in 1968 allowed to take a mechanical drawing class. I have always since enjoyed an aspect of mechanical drawing called geometric construction, using drawing tools to solve geometric problems and draw geometric shapes. I taught that unit right up until retirement as an Industrial Arts Technology teacher. During high school and a few years after, I worked for a civil engineering firm plotting and drawing various land plans. I remember in high school art class, designing and making a tent like structure of folded paper that was either hexagonal or octagonal in shape. I then made a full size structure in cardboard and it was photographed and appeared in Sudbury's newspaper. I have that somewhere. The first home I owned, I built a modified octagon deck around my octagon hot tub. Later I added a larger octagon patio type deck. It's kind of weird to see the shape of this amazing house and know I have always been fascinated with shape, structure, design.... It's a rather emotion provoking feeling.

(She also remembered her Uncle Walter’s notched gun)
Before pursuing other great-grandchildren I took a few “detours”. First, ...to the Organ Factory where Archibald worked. The Hook & Hastings Organ Factory was originally located in Boston at Roxbury Crossing.
In the late 1880’s Hastings decided to relocate the factory to the farm fields across from his boyhood home in **Weston, MA**. (which explains why Archibald was buried in Weston!) Hastings built a huge factory next to the railroad line...
...and built “cottages” for his employees (they paid less renting a cottage than a 3-room flat in Boston). Archibald lived in one of these on White Street.
The Organ Factory community was very “enlightened”. There was a club that sponsored debates, concerts, plays & dances. The community Center had a library and game room.
I researched all this at the **Weston Library & Weston Historical Society**. They told me that Archibald’s gravestone was at the **Linwood Cemetery** in Weston. Lindsay's mother & father, grandmother & grandfather & great-uncle were buried with him.
I even found his obit in a local paper.

Achibald Frazer Scott died quite suddenly last Friday while sitting in his chair. He was born in Halifax, N. S., and was 67 years, 2 months, 8 days old. His remains were buried Monday.
The other detour I took led me to **Halifax, Nova Scotia** where I bonded with some local genealogists at the **Nova Scotia Archives**.
Mostly, I was searching for John Scott, Archibald’s brother (or maybe his cousin?). What I found was Archibald’s baptism records which showed that Archibald was actually born February 9, 1832.
It was at this point that I noticed some things just didn’t add up.

As you can see from this genealogical chart, Archibald had one brother named Donald. Archibald did have a cousin, John Scott, 19 years old in 1871, but according to the records he was living with his parents in Nova Scotia. Where’s John Scott???
Recently I had reread the original mortgage (dated 1870) and it stated that both Archibald & John were “unmarried”. But Archibald, when he signed this, had been married to Mary for 10 years and had 3 girls.
Also, I noticed on the 1874 tax records there was an “a” next to Archibald & John’s names. This meant they were aliens, but we know that Archibald became a naturalized citizen in 1868.
And then one of my neighbors told me about an article (posted on the JP Historical Society website) written in the Boston Daily Globe in 1908.
About 40 years ago two brothers from Scotland began the erection of a dwelling, which they intended should be used for their bachelor apartments.
To summarize...

• John Scott is nowhere to be found
• According to the mortgage Archibald is single, but in fact he’s married with 3 kids
• The tax records say he’s an alien, but he became a citizen 3 years earlier.
• An article in the Globe claims 2 brothers from Scotland built the house!
My friends at the Nova Scotia Archives suggested that maybe I had the wrong Archibald Scott.
My first instinct was to reject this outright.

I mean...in 1908 the reporter from the newspaper probably interviewed a few neighbors, who probably never actually met Archibald & John (it was 34 years since they’d worked on the house).
Archibald & John both had the last name Scott. People could have heard: “the Scott’s are working on the house” and assume that they were from Scotland. Or maybe Archibald told the neighbors he was Scottish because his mother was.
Archibald Fraser Scott was 39 when he started work on the house. His wife was home with the kids. People might have assumed he was a bachelor...

Maybe he said that he was a bachelor in the mortgage because he worried that Bowe would never sell him the land if he knew he was married with 3 kids???

maybe, maybe, maybe...
So I decided to revisit the City Directories...

I discovered what I (and the Boston Landmark’s Commission ) missed: Namely that in 1871 an organ builder named Archibald Fraser Scott was living at 9 Avon St. in Roxbury AND the same year a carpenter, Archibald Scott was living at 1366 Tremont Street...

Scolley, see Scully
Scotland Robert F. grocer, 1025 Tremont. h. 1023 do.
Scott Alexander, butcher, h. 205 Dorchester ave.
Scott Archibald, carpenter, house 1366 Tremont
Scott Augustus E. counsellor, 7 Court square, room 17, house at Lexington
Scott A. F. organ builder, house 9 Avon pl. wd. 15
Scott Charlotte, widow, rear 49 Beverly
Scott Daniel, laborer, house 342 North
...AND at that same address lived a John Scott who was also a carpenter! (whoops)
It looked like the **Boston Landmark Commission’s Report was wrong**.

Two Archibald Scott’s lived in Boston, one an organ builder and the other a carpenter living (for at least one year) with his brother(?) John.
Still...not a complete loss:

• I got a cram course in genealogy.
• It was fun to discover Gertrude’s obit and talk with Lindsay.
• I got a trip to Halifax
• And after my return... I got several emails a day from John & Scott (ironic because I was looking for a John Scott!) from the Nova Scotia Archives with suggestions and leads.
And I can understand why the Boston Landmark Commission thought an organ builder might have designed and built house.
In fact, when I was in Halifax I saw the shape of the Citadel, a fort on top of a hill in the middle of downtown, and I thought I saw the shape of our house.
Another perk from my research... a book called **Buildings of Massachusetts** with a picture of our house on the back cover!
Also there were the families I found who lived in our house before us. I found them using the Boston List of Residents (on the BPL Website).
These families provided me with a photo of our house from 1950 (before the house had the enclosed porch...
...and another around 1960 after the enclosed porch was added)...
...and even an action-shot capturing a robbery taking place in our backyard.
I also found a rear view shot of the house showing the triple-decker that burned down in 1975.
The fire was the work of an arsonist and our house was spared only because firemen doused our home with water.

Suspicious fire damages
2 Jamaica Plain houses

Fire caused $20,000 damage to two vacant three-story houses in Jamaica Plain last night. Fire officials said the fire is believed to have been started by vandals.

Capt. John Collins of the Boston Fire Department said the fire apparently started on the rear stairway of 15 Cranston St. It quickly spread through the building and across an alley to a house at 15A Cranston St.

The houses, both boarded up, were situated on the top of a hill, and the fire could be seen for many miles. Low water pressure hampered firefighting operations.

According to Collins, the houses were badly damaged but not destroyed. He said the first house was a wooden building and the second was brick.

Collins said the three-alarm fire was being investigated by the arson squad.

Courtesy of: Remember Jamaica Plain
These families told me stories...

- About a general store, a few doors down, that sold eggs and bread and butter, because getting up the hill was so hard in the winter.

- About a prankster ghost in a Fedora who opened doors that were left closed and unmade beds.

- About how living on our street was like living in a small village with scores of children and a few old women sitting on chairs in the street ever vigilant.
Epilogue

So...I’ve spent the last few months trying to track down the carpenters, Archibald & John Scott, but I’ve had absolutely no luck.
• They’re not in the **U.S. or Canadian Census**
• They’re not in the **Immigration records** or **Passenger records**
• In fact...except for the City Directories & Tax Records from 1871-1874 ...**they don’t exist**
And that’s where the story would end, except... I recently came across a old advertisement for the organ factory while it was still in Boston...
...and I noticed it was located on **1131 Tremont Street**. Archibald Scott (the carpenter) and John Scott lived at **1366 Tremont Street** in 1871, just down the block!
And the next year, 1872, Archibald Scott (the carpenter moved to 3 Drew Place, literally around the corner from the factory!!! Why???
In fact both Archibald Fraser Scott (organ builder) and Archibald Scott (carpenter) live within a few blocks of the organ factory and each other.
The carpenter could have lived anywhere (in a city of over 250,000 people), but he lives next to the organ factory. That strikes me as really odd.

This black dot is our house.

Inside this black dot is the organ factory, the carpenter & the organ builder.

Special thanks to the Norman Leventhal Map Center for this 1870 Map of Boston
Also, in all the years the organ builder is listed the carpenter only shows up twice in the City Directories.
• Is it a coincidence that the carpenter lived next to the organ factory and within a few blocks of Archibald Fraser Scott???
• Is it possible they’re the same person?
One scenario is that for two years Archibald Fraser Scott rented one address for his family and the other as a workshop, near the Organ Factory so he could use some of the equipment in off hours to make the hexagonal shingles, strange shaped windows, etc.

He registers his home under his formal name (A.F.Scott) and his “business” under his more informal name Archibald Scott.

He starts a partnership with a Scotsmen named John Scott (no relation) who helps him build his dream house. John remembers Fingal’s Cave, off the coast of Scotland, close to where he grew up...
...with it’s hexagonal columns of basalt.
(similar to the “Giant’s Causeway” in Ireland)
And he says to the organ maker/carpenter: “Why not build a house shaped like 3 hexagons “pressed together”...?”
Of course this is just speculation. The question is...should I be finding other members of Archibald Fraser Scott’s family...or should I be on the next flight to Scotland???
I could use some help.