

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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| M 13 97 | Boston North | | |
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Town/City: Medford

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Medford Square South

Photograph (view from SE)



Address: 58 Logan Avenue

Historic Name: Henry R. and Alice L. Downes House

Uses: Present: single-family residential

Original: single-family residential

Date of Construction: 1912-1914

Source: deeds, maps, directories

Style/Form: Colonial Revival/ foursquare

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: cinderblock

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (*with dates*): porch enclosure, mid-20th century; vinyl sash, recent decades

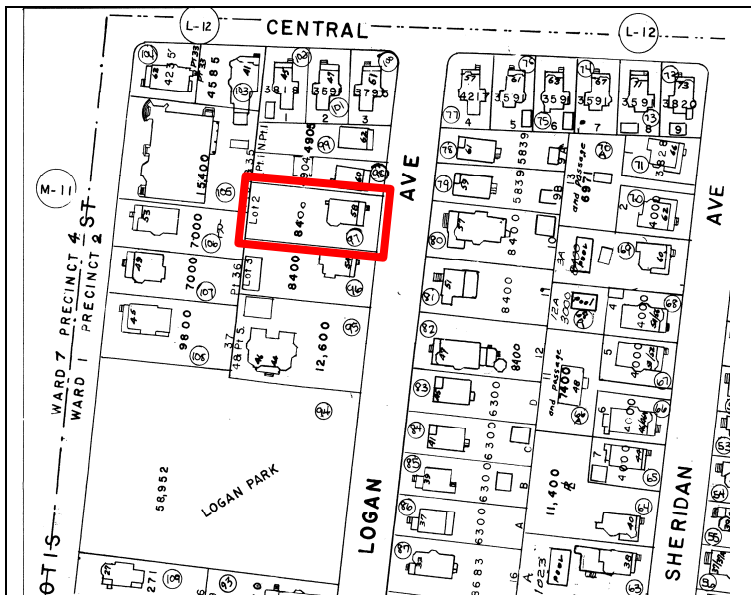
Condition: Fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 8,400 square feet

Setting: Dense residential subdivision with a mix of single- and multi-family buildings that developed slowly between ca. 1890 and 1940.

Locus Map (north is up)



Recorded by: John D. Clemson

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): February 2018

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The Downes House, constructed between 1912 and 1914 for its namesakes Henry R. and Alice L. Downes, is a well-preserved example of a single-family type known as a foursquare that is characteristic of the mix of small single-family and larger two-family houses that were constructed on open land throughout East Medford and the city as a whole during the early 20th century. The foursquare type was popular during the Progressive Era throughout the country and is characterized by a two-story cube, usually with a pyramidal hipped roof but occasionally with gabled variations. These houses generally had side-entry plans, as is the case here, with four equal spaces per floor; three each for sitting, dining and cooking and the fourth for vertical and entry circulation. A variation of this standard plan enters directly into a large reception/living room with vertical circulation as part of that space or elsewhere in the building. An interior inspection might provide a better understanding of which variation is present here, although an at-grade side entry in the forward pile of the right (north) elevation and a between-story window above indicates the location of an interior stair. This example is fairly commodious, with dimensions of 26 feet wide by 32 feet deep (foursquares were not always strictly square). This example is further expanded by canted bays, a common feature; one in the façade over the main entry in the right (north) half of the upper story and the other, a full two stories, in the rear of two piles in the left (south-facing) elevation. Shed-roofed, enclosed porches are located across the right half of the façade and across the rear elevation. Sanborn maps suggest both are post-1950 alterations and that the house originally had a full-width open porch across the façade.

Like many revival houses of the foursquare type of this period, elaboration is subdued and rational, but this one retains references to the Colonial Revival style. These include the wood shingle siding, back-band casings, a tripart window in the left half of the façade, and a gabled dormer with paired windows centered on the forward slope. A second shed dormer in the left slope suggests livable space in the third level under the hip. Alternatively the plain, boxed soffit under a deep eave gives the house a horizontal emphasis that could be considered a reference to the contemporaneous Prairie style. The house is sited at a moderate setback on a minimal suburban lot planted with grass and foundation plantings. The lack of fencing and border plantings maintains an open, park-like setting on this stretch of Logan Avenue. There are no outbuildings but early 20th-century Sanborn maps suggest there was a detached garage located behind the house and to the north between ca. 1936 and 1950. Despite the moderate loss of building fabric, including wood sash and porch, the house generally retains a presence within and contributes to a cohesive streetscape of similarly massed and articulated buildings housing both single and multiple families, and is worthy of preservation and renovation.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Downes House was constructed on a lot within a planned subdivision surrounding the north end of Logan Avenue undertaken by a group of investors in 1892.¹ The principals of this undertaking included Ephraim Adams (1828-1911), a prominent Boston book binder and book shop owner (Ephraim Adams & Co. and Archway bookstore). He resided in Medford until ca. 1890 at what is now 29 Summer Street, after which he moved to Arlington.² Other trustees were Josiah R. Teele (1846-1924), a prominent local carriage manufacturer and real estate developer, and William P. Martin (born Jul. 1856) a lawyer who resided at 6 Garfield Avenue in East Medford (see MDF.956).³

¹ See deed of trust MCSRD 2101:531, Dec. 1, 1892 and A Plan of House Lots in Medford Belonging to Ephraim Adams et als, Trustees, by J.O. Goodwin, Surveyor, dated March 1892: 2317:530 also referenced Plan Book 75, Plan No. 25; further research will be required to obtain this plan (not available on-line).

² *Boston Daily Globe*, Oct. 28, 1911, p. 2, obituary with portrait; Apr. 17, 1935, p. 24, "Two Brothers Die Within 24 Hours, Frank G. and Thurber C. Adams of Arlington" (contains additional information about the Adams' book business); Ancestry: 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910 Federal Census.

³ Regarding Teele see: MDF.1123 and Clemson, *A History of the Development of the Glenwood Section of East Medford*, p. 16, completed as part of the 2016 survey of East Medford.

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In 1894 Adams sold a single lot, identified as No. 2 on the plan, to Henry R. Downes.⁴ The deed included restrictions such as the prohibition, for 20 years, of the erection of any building for a stable, other than for private use, "use...which shall be obnoxious or offensive to a neighborhood of private residences," that buildings should maintain a 15-foot setback from Logan Avenue, and the use of land for a gravel pit or quarry. Downes (1857 – late 1930s) was a native of Illinois but his parents, William F. (born ca. 1829), a brick mason, and Anna (born ca. 1830) were Massachusetts natives who returned to Boston by 1870. His trade was nickel plater and by 1920 he owned his own shop. Records indicate that Downes did not improve the property through the construction of the subject house until between 1912 and 1914. This is confirmed both by directory listings, which initially list the family at Logan Avenue in 1914 and Sanborn maps, which initially depict the house in 1936. Until between 1912 and 1914 Downes, with his wife, Alice L. (born ca. 1856) resided at 12 Myrtle Street (1900) and 67 Sheridan Avenue (1910-1912). The retention of an unimproved lot by an owner-occupant for 20 years is highly unusual for this period of the city's history, when intense land speculation and population boom drove rapid development. There were two children: Frederick C. (born Sep. 1883) and Mabel L. (born Feb. 1894). Details regarding Downes' business could not be ascertained but other evidence indicates he was successful enough to afford a summer residence in Ipswich in 1932 (at Third Lane). In 1940 Alice L. Downes, at the time a widow, conveyed the property to herself and her daughter. At the same time her daughter and son-in-law, George H. Watson (born ca. 1892), a plater and therefore probably a business associate of his father-in-law's, gave a mortgage to the Medford Co-Operative Bank for \$3,000 for a term of 16 years.⁵ Mabel (Downes) Watson owned the property until 1968, when she sold it to John J. and Marlene R. Crawford.⁶

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Ancestry.com: see footnotes.

Maps and atlases:

1898 Geo. W. Stady & Co., *Atlas of the City of Medford...*1900 Geo. W. Stady & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Volume 1.*

1910, 1936, 1936-1950 Sanborn Insurance Atlases.

Middlesex County South Registry of Deeds, in notes as MCSRD book:page.

Boston Daily Globe: see footnotes.⁴ MCSRD 2317:530.⁵ MCSRD 6408:493.⁶ MCSRD 11546:348; Ancestry: 1870, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930 Federal Census; 1912, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1938 Medford City Directories; 1932 Ipswich Town Directory.

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View from E showing N-facing elevation.