

# 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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**Town/City:** Medford

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*): Hillside

## Photograph (view from S)



**Address:** 77 Cotting Street

**Historic Name:** Patrick H. Byron Tenant House

**Uses:** Present: single-family residential

Original: single-family residential

**Date of Construction:** 1875-1889

**Source:** maps, deeds

**Style/Form:** Italianate/ end house

**Architect/Builder:** possibly Patrick H. Byron

### Exterior Material:

Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: vinyl clapboard/ vinyl

Roof: asphalt shingle

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** none

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*): Rear ell, Vinyl siding application, recent decades.

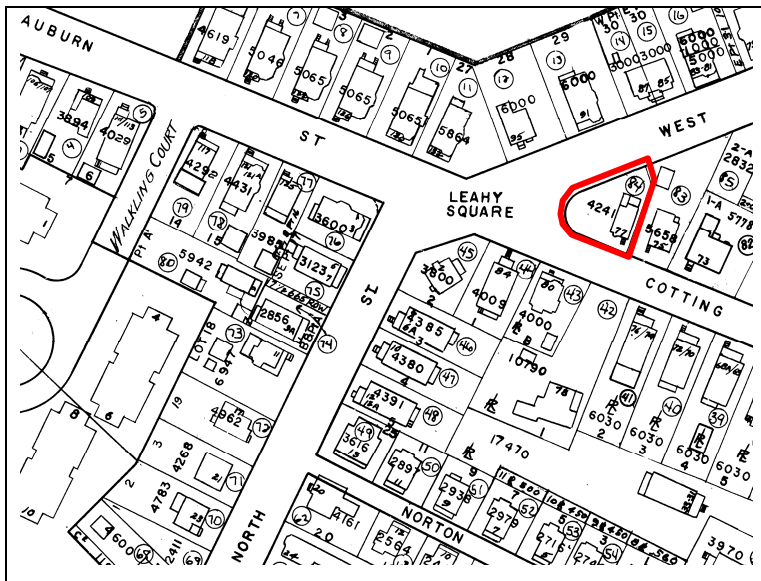
**Condition:** Poor

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

**Acreage:** 4,241 square feet

**Setting:** Densely developed late-19<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential neighborhood with a mix of single- and multi-family housing.

## Locus Map (north is up)



**Recorded by:** John D. Clemson

**Organization:** Medford Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): June 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 Byron Tenant House, constructed between 1875 and 1889, is a story-and-a-half end house with characteristics that suggest it was originally Italianate in style, a type common to Medford's built landscape dating to the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The house has "knee wall" framing, whereby the rafters rest on a plate a half story above the second floor. This was a framing device common to the period that was an economic way of increasing second-story space without the expense of framing a full second story. This typical example is two bays wide and two piles deep with dimensions of 22 feet wide by 27 feet deep. A 12-foot-deep shed-roofed ell extends the full width of the building from the rear. 19<sup>th</sup> century map footprints suggest the ell, originally open on the left (west) side, is an original feature. The location of the main entry at the right (east) end of the façade and the fenestration pattern, which includes a single-story canted bay in the left half of the façade and a small stair light placed between stories in the forward pile of the right elevation beyond the entrance, suggests a side-hall plan. Parlor and dining room with chambers above likely fill the left two-thirds of the building behind the canted bay and the kitchen is likely located beyond the stair hall in the rear ell. A stove chimney placed in the center of the left slope of the roof indicates the division of parlor and dining room.

With the exception of original two-over-two wood sash, the house has entirely lost original exterior building fabric in the course of a vinyl siding application during recent decades. Evidence beneath the siding may indicate bracketing that may have supported the overhanging cornice, rake boards and eave returns that survive. The house is sited at a minimal setback against the east lot line. Its triangular lot extends to the intersection of West and Cotting streets known as Leahy Square and is enclosed in a high, wood stockade fence. The house has a moderately high foundation and is accessed by a wood stoop of recent vintage. The lot is generally overgrown with bushes and trees. There appears to be no driveway.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The history of the area of the Hillside neighborhood west of Winthrop Street and south of the Mystic River has been researched back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and recounted in detail in MHC Inventory Form MDF.781, 78 Cotting Street, prior to 1852, authored by Claire Dempsey. This large approximately 85 acre tract was owned for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by descendants of Captain William Smith (1667-1730) a merchant of Charlestown, including his son Rev. William Smith of Weymouth (1706-1783) and granddaughters Abigail (1744-1818), who married John Adams (1735-1826) later president of the United States and Elizabeth (1750-1815), who married Rev. John Shaw of Haverhill. The property passed in shares to further descendants, including the children of Thomas Boylston Adams (1772-1832), a younger brother of U.S. president John Quincy Adams, and the children of Elizabeth Smith Shaw, including her son, William, and daughter Abigail Adams Shaw, who married Joseph Barlow Felt (1789-1869).<sup>1</sup> Felt was a prominent early historian whose titles included *Annals of Salem* (1845-1849), *History of Ipswich, Essex and Hamilton* (1833), among others.<sup>2</sup> There is no record of the Felts living in Medford, having resided in Salem and Boston his whole life, but he eventually held the property in his own right after 1824 and 1826 and owned it when the Boston and Maine Railroad purchased land in this area in 1832.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See NEHGS database of Middlesex County Probate Records to 1870, William Smith, Charlestown 1731, 20780; also MHS Collections, Smith Carter Collection and Smith-Townsend Collection, biographical information; <http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=ADMS-04-05-02-0137>; accessed 10 July 2014; Virgil McClure Harris, *Ancient, Curious and Famous Wills* (S. Paul & Co., 1912) p. 327; this Internet Archive source provides a summary and partial transcription of the will of John Quincy Adams and notes this bequest and describes the transfer from TBA to JQA in this way. The historical record suggests the foreclosure may have been an act of kindness meant to protect the family's assets as Thomas Adams suffered from alcoholism and had accrued large gambling debts. See web site of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Adams Family Resources, Adams Biographical Sketches, Thomas Boylston Adams; <http://www.masshist.org/2012/adams/biographies>. For a full account of Thomas B. Adams' travails, see: Paul C. Nagel, *The Adams Women, Abigail and Louisa Adams, Their Sisters and Daughters* (Harvard University Press, 1999), Ch. 11, "Sisters-in Law," pp. 198-213

<sup>2</sup> "The Death of Dr. J. B. Felt," *Boston Daily Advertiser*. September 10, 1869; Tamara Gaydos, "Biographical Sketch, Joseph B. Felt (1789-1869), Papers, 1710-1868, MSS 462," Collections of the Peabody Essex Museum, PEM web site.

<sup>3</sup> See Middlesex Country registry of Deeds, 716:122.

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In 1856 Joseph B. Felt conveyed a 15,700 square foot parcel of land that matches Lot E on a plan for Daniel Ayer reproduced below for consideration of \$344.44.<sup>4</sup> The grantee was Ephraim Bailey of Medford. Bailey (1792-1876) was a cooper and resided at 368 Salem Street throughout the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see MDF.1262, Ephraim Bailey House, pre 1855). He was married to Christiana (Gould, 1796-1867).<sup>5</sup> There is no record of his residence at the subject property. In 1872 Bailey sold 8,453 square feet of land bound by Cotting and West streets to Patrick H. Byron for consideration of \$464.91.<sup>6</sup> Patrick Henry Byron (1836-1925) was a native of Ireland who immigrated in 1860. Between 1870 and 1880 he worked as a farm laborer and farm foreman at "Brooks Farm" on Grove Street. During this period he resided on Grove Street in a house with his family, including wife Mary (born ca. 1831), also a native of Ireland, five children born between 1859 and 1874, and 14 boarders including 10 farm laborers and 3 servants. His immediate neighbors were retired former lawyer Francis Brooks (born ca. 1826) and "farmer" Peter C. Brooks (Peter Chardon Brooks III, 1831-1920). His residence and employment were evidently associated with the Brooks Estate (see MDF.81). By 1900, however, Byron resided at 7 Boston Avenue with the occupation of contractor and by 1910 at 43 Sharon Street with the occupation of real estate agent. Map evidence indicates that by 1875 75 Cotting Street had been constructed and by 1889 77 as well, suggesting Byron may have been the builder of both houses, which originally resembled each other in terms of massing, plan and articulation. There is no record of Byron occupying either house, however, suggesting he acted as a landlord. It has not been possible to identify any early tenants of the subject property.<sup>7</sup>

In 1919 the subject house and a 4,241 square foot lot, its current configuration, was sold by Byron to Annie M. Gillis, the wife of John S. Gillis.<sup>8</sup> Gillis (born ca. 1876) was a native of Nova Scotia, Canada who immigrated in 1888 and became a naturalized citizen in 1895. His trade was house carpenter. Annie Gillis was a native of Canada as well, immigrating in 1886 and naturalized in 1895. The property remained in the ownership of their heirs, children Harold S. Gillis of Lexington, Mildred L. (Gillis) Murray of Reading, Gilbert T. Gillis and Anna M. Gillis until it was sold by Mildred Murray in 1969 to subsequent owners. Between 1970 and 1987 it was owned by Samuel V. and Rita J. Haley.<sup>9</sup>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Ancestry.com: see footnotes

## Maps and atlases:

- 1855 H.F. Walling. "Map of Medford...."
- 1875 F. W. Beers, *County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts*.
- 1880 O. H. Bailey [Bird's Eye View of] Medford.
- 1889 Geo. H. Walker & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*.
- 1898 Geo. W. Stady & Co., *Atlas of the City of Medford...*
- 1900 Geo. W. Stady & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Volume 1*.
- 1892, 1897, 1903, 1910, 1936, 1936-1950 Sanborn Insurance Atlases.

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

<sup>4</sup> MCSRD 744:189, 1856. This deed references a plan surveyed by W.A. Mason dated May 16, 1856.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Apthorp Gould, *The Ancestry and Posterity of Zaccheus Gould of Topsfield, A Condensed Abstract of the Family Records* (Essex Institute, 1872) p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> MCSRD 1207:279, 1872.

<sup>7</sup> 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910 Federal Census; 1884 voter registration records; 1925 Somerville city directory: "died Feb. 16, 1925;" Judith S. Graham, ed., *"Out Here at the Front" The World War I Letters of Nora Saltonstall* (Northeastern University Press, 2004) p. 251.

<sup>8</sup> MCSRD 4286:348, 1919.

<sup>9</sup> MCSRD 4286:348, 1919; 7716:15, 1951; 8207:367, 1954; 11769:70, 1969; 11934:344, 1970; 18394:359, 1987; 1920, 1940 Federal Census; 1924 Medford city directory.

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View from SW showing left elevation.



View from N showing rear elevation and ell.