

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

H-07-24	Boston North		
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Town/City: Medford

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Lawrence Estates

Photograph (view from SW)



Address: 137 Damon Road

Historic Name: Joseph W. and Joanne C. Crockwell House

Uses: Present: single-family residential

Original: single-family residential

Date of Construction: 1933

Source: deeds, maps

Style/Form: Tudor and Colonial Revival/ gable front

Architect/Builder: likely Emil Joseph DeMontigny

Exterior Material:

Foundation:

Wall/Trim:

Roof:

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

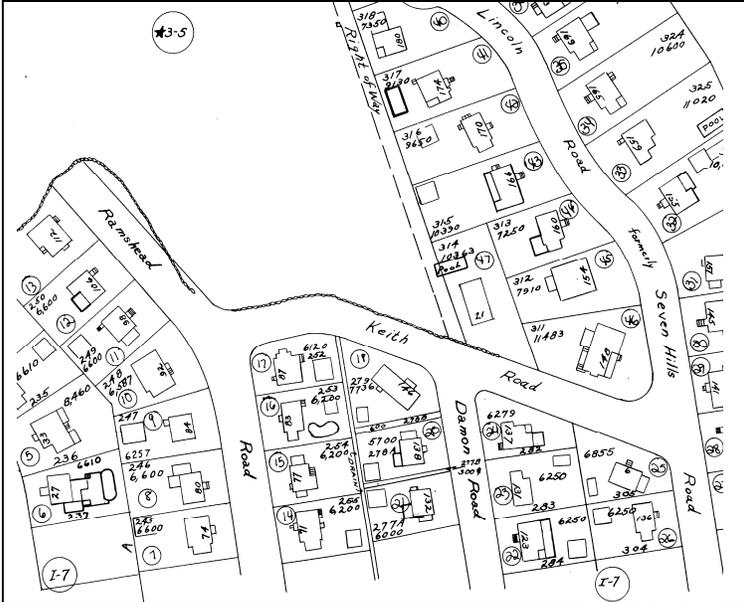
Condition:

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage:

Setting:

Locus Map (north is up)



Recorded by: John D. Clemson

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): May 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 Damon House was constructed shortly before its purchase by its initial owner/occupants, Joseph W. and Joanne C. Crockwell, from Lawrence Estates subdivision developers, the Willard Walsh Realty Co. through its representatives, various members of the De Montigny family. Lawrence Estates is a large subdivision of single-family houses that stretches roughly between the south side of Traincroft Road to the south, the east side of Lincoln road to the east, the Middlesex Fells to the north and Winthrop Street to the west. Available subdivision plans identify roughly 400 lots arranged in a generally irregular grid pattern. Sections of the east-west roads bend slightly to the south along the western edge of the subdivision in order to maximize the number of lots within the irregular parcel. The subdivision was entirely developed with remarkably similar two-story houses in terms of footprint and massing and developed generally as planned. However there is also a great diversity within each block among several forms and styles popular during the inter-war period of the 1920s-1930s, including center entrance Colonials, Dutch Colonials and several varieties of Tudor forms. The houses are also finished in a variety of high-quality materials including wood clapboard or shingle, stucco, brick and river stone. Many examples combine two or more finishes to provide a rich variety of form and texture throughout this large subdivision.

The Crockwell House displays an eclectic mix of Tutor and Colonial Revival elements, both popular styles at the time of its construction. Although such a blending of late-medieval and neoclassical themes may seem contradictory, such houses were both popular and widespread throughout the region during this period, and were freely mixed with more historically pure buildings that included darkly painted stucco, brick and fachwerk on Tudor examples and symmetrical, classical massing combined with white-painted wood on Colonial Revival examples. The Crockwell House is massed in a steeply pitched gable on the façade that kicks out asymmetrically to the left (north) side elevation in order to shelter an extension of the living room. At the second level what read visually as full-width shed dormers on each side are in fact an illusion produced by a steep gable applied to the façade. This device softens, enlivens and lowers what would otherwise be a plain gabled box. The applied gable is left off the rear elevation. The entry is also asymmetrically located in the right of two bays on the façade; the rest of the façade on the first level, to the left, is filled by a triple-sash window that evidently lights a living room that runs laterally across the full width of the building to the left. The entry is enhanced by a shallow gabled entry porch with a pitch that matches the main gable but with a trabeated door surround composed of a classical entablature supported by smooth pilasters. The gable of the porch is decorated by distinctive scalloped verge boards, a treatment that would be expected on a Gothic Revival house of the previous century. Elsewhere the house is finished in a more conventional Colonial Revival vocabulary, including shingles and molded rake boards and casings. The rear of this otherwise square building is extended at the first level across its full width by a shed-roofed kitchen extension on the south half and an enclosed porch with a balcony above on the north half. The rear elevation terminates at the top in a clipped gable. Another feature of the house that was relatively new at the time is a basement-level built-in garage accessed by a ramp that runs off Keith Road to the north; the ramp is retained by river stone walls to either side. Although this arrangement is not unusual to this period, the subject house appears to be one of the few on surrounding blocks that could take advantage of its acutely angled side frontage on a corner lot that cut in toward the rear; many other surrounding houses have at-grade, detached garages.

The plan of the house is suggested by the entry location, fenestration pattern and massing. It appears to enclose three spaces per floor with the addition of the rear-left enclosed porch, which may be a year-round space known during the period as a "sun parlor" or "radio room."¹ The side entry indicates a dedicated entry space or hall, although it may enter directly into a large living room. The location of the stair is not clear from the exterior fenestration pattern.

The house is sited on a minimal corner lot of similar size to its neighbors, although the path of Keith Street creates an almost triangular lot which nevertheless provides rear vehicular access. The modest setback is consistent with the harmonious surrounding streetscape as well as that found throughout the entire subdivision. Like its neighbors the lot is open and planted

¹ For numerous depictions of these spaces see: Harris, McHenry & Baker Co., *101 Classic Homes of the Twenties* (Dover, 1990) and J.D. Loizeaux, *Classic Houses of the Twenties* (Dover, 1992).

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with grass, trees, and border and foundation plantings. A small garden shed is located at the apex of the lot at its rear terminus. This building appears to date to the pre-war period of the house.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Lawrence Estate subdivision is named for the former owner of the property, General Samuel Crocker Lawrence (1832-1911) a prominent local industrialist and citizen.² Its early history is related in detail with MDF.37, The Albree-Hall-Lawrence House, 353 Lawrence Road, late 18th century, through research undertaken by Jennifer B. Doherty and Claire Dempsey. During its ownership by the Lawrence family during much of the 19th century this large parcel was kept in agricultural use and served as an estate farm, providing produce, fruit, milk, cheese and eggs for the Lawrence household, which was located closer to High Street. After its ownership by the Albree, Hall, Brooks and Lawrence families between the late 18th century and 1924, it was subdivided and developed in its present form after Lawrence's death in 1911 and the death of his wife in 1924 into a number of small house lots known as the Lawrence Estates. The Lawrence Estates Trust was overseen by Willard Welsh and Ellis L. Gates, with Welsh's realty company (209 Washington Street, Boston) serving as selling agents for what they described as "The Most Beautiful and Convenient Location in the Suburbs of Boston." Their promotional brochure notes that Lawrence had been unwilling to sell during his lifetime and made the place "one of the show places of greater Boston." It continued: "the landscape architects who have planned and supervised the present high grade development have conserved all its attractions," but the name of the firm was not specified. The plan restricted construction to "single-family houses of approved plan and construction."³

The property was acquired by its initial owners and occupants, Joseph W. and Joanne C. Crockwell, in 1933 from intervening owners Annie E. De Montigny, trustee of the De Montigny Trust, who owned the property at the time. The beneficiaries named in the trust, Louise, Arthur and William, were her minor children. The trust's 1933 declaration describe its powers to "...hold, manage and improve all real estate and personal property...lease...sell or convey...mortgage the whole or part thereof...to lay out and grant or dedicate any part thereof for roads, streets and squares or open places, to provide drains, sewers or other conveniences...to erect buildings thereon..." Although no restrictions or covenants were included in any instruments located through this research, the published brochure, as stated above, specified that any improvements would conform to the "approved plan."⁴ The grantor, Annie E. (Annie Edith Driscoll DeMontigney, ca. 1893-1980), was the wife of Emil Joseph DeMontigney (born ca. 1893), a house carpenter and contractor. A native of Milford, NH, where he worked as a youth for his father, Henry, also a house carpenter and a native of Canada, circumstances suggest, though few records of his activities could be readily located, that he was active as a builder in Medford. The family resided at 97 North Street in 1920 and at 99 Traincroft Road in 1930 in a house valued at \$15,000 with a live-in maid, suggesting a degree of success. Despite declaring bankruptcy in 1930, their involvement in the Crockwell sale suggests they had somewhat recovered by that time. At the same time Crockwell acquired the property he gave a mortgage to the West Somerville Co-Operative Bank for \$3,600. Although the term and interest were not specified, the mortgage was to be paid off in \$36-per-month increments, a not unusual arrangement during this period. If larger sections of Lawrence Estates are documented in the future such information describing how purchases were financed may yield interesting cumulative information about real estate financing during the pre-war period in general.⁵

Joseph W. Crockwell (1895-1982) was a native of Medford and a son of Thomas Crockwell, a native of County Galway, Ireland and a carpenter by trade, and Catherine May (Quinlan), a native of Medway. He worked as a probation officer for Suffolk County at 507 Courthouse Square in Boston during the 1940s. The household included his wife, Joanna C. (born ca. 1896) and daughter, Jeanne (born ca. 1930).⁶ The Crockwells remained at the property until selling to subsequent owners in 1979.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps and atlases:

² George F. Moore, "Samuel Crocker Lawrence, Patriot, Philanthropist and Freemason," *New Age Magazine*, Vol. 15 (Supreme Council, 33; Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, 1911) pp. 401-403; MDF.AN; MDF.AO.

³ Lawrence Estate, promotional brochure, n.d., unpaginated, collection of Dempsey.

⁴ MCSRD 5729:234, Jul. 1, 1933; 5748:335-336, Sep. 19, 1933 (includes declaration of trust); 6002:36 (discharge); 13786:531, Sep. 11, 1979; Ancestry: Medford vital records; 1930, 1940 Federal Census; 1924, 1926, 1928, 1930, 1938 Medford city directories.

⁵ 1920, 1930 Federal Census; vital records (marriage); *Boston Daily Globe*, May 21, 1930, p. 3.

⁶ 1930, 1940 Federal Census; Medford vital records (births); World War II Draft Registration Card.

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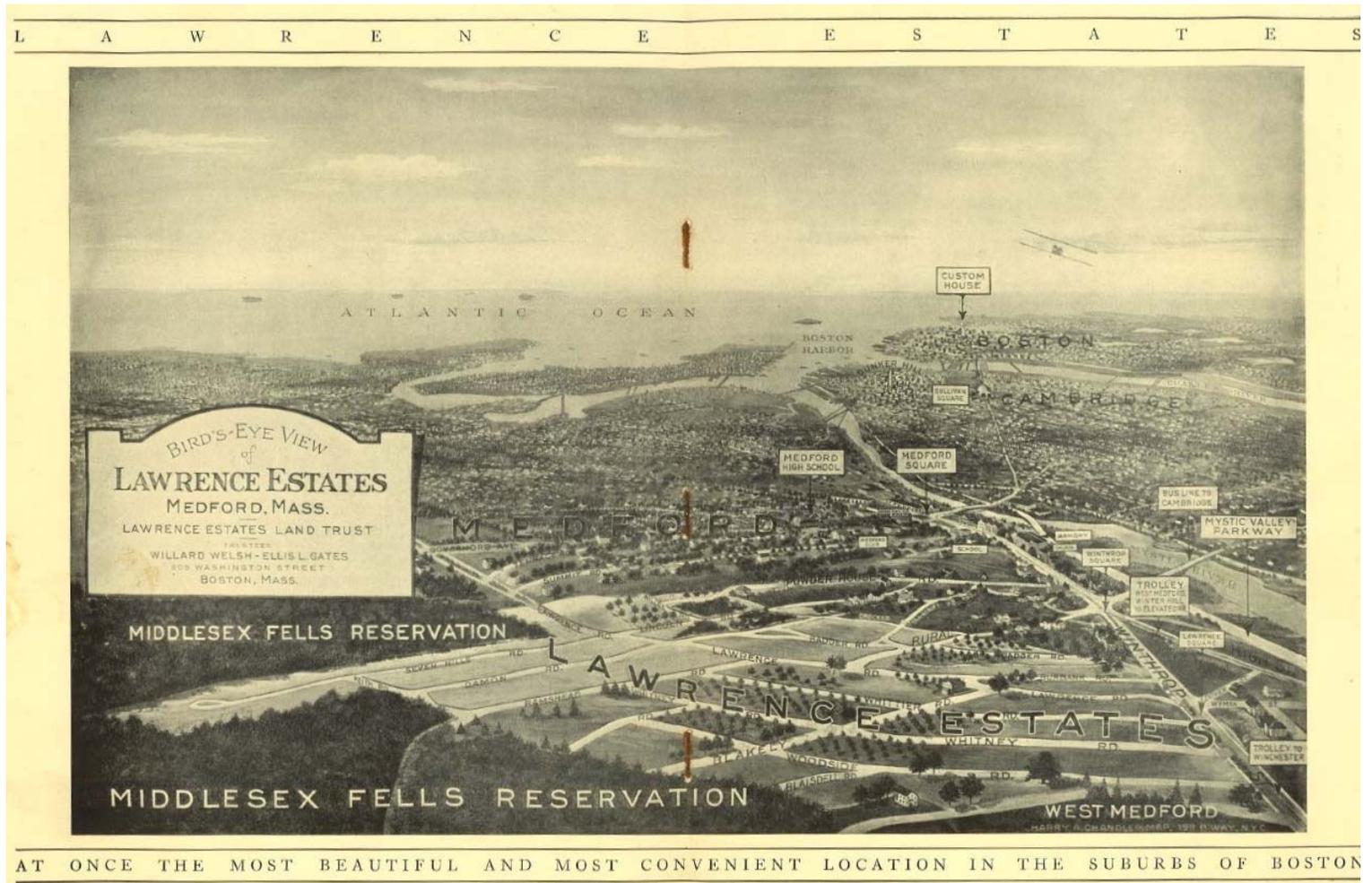
1892, 1897, 1903, 1910, 1936, 1936-1950 Sanborn Insurance Atlases.

Ancestry.com: see footnotes

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

MDF.37

Lawrence Estate, promotional brochure, n.d., unpaginated, collection of Dempsey.



Lawrence Estate, promotional brochure, n.d., unpaginated, collection of Dempsey.

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View from N showing left (north facing) elevation. Living room extension (right); sun parlor (left).



View from NE showing rear extension, driveway ramp, basement-level garage, and garden shed (left).