

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

N-06-61	Boston North		
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Town/City: Medford

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Hillside

Photograph



View of left elev. Note high-silled windows indicating a bath.

Address: 23 Winter Street

Historic Name: Barr-Pero Two Family

Uses: Present: single-family residential

Original: single-family residential

Date of Construction: 1926

Source: deeds, directories

Style/Form: altered/ hip block

Architect/Builder: Joshua W Knowles

Exterior Material:

Foundation: rusticated concrete block

Wall/Trim: vinyl/ vinyl

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (*with dates*): siding, trim and sash replacement, recent

Condition: fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.11 acre

Setting: Dense mix of late-19th through early 20th century residential and commercial uses.

Locus Map (*north is up*)



Recorded by: John D. Clemson

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): June 2023

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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 Barr-Pero Two Family, built in 1926, is an example of the two-family type, a form of housing that largely characterizes the early 20th-century built landscape of both the city of Medford and neighboring inner suburbs of Boston. The type is characterized by stacked identical flats accessed by either a single, as is the case here, or paired entries. This example lacks projecting elements such as projecting bays generally observed on contemporary and earlier examples and the low hipped roof, though lit by a shed dormer in front, is not habitable, hence the moniker "low two family."

Two families generally house "Progressive Era" plans, with ranks of three-to-four rooms filling each half of the building, reception spaces on one side separated from a more private zone with bedrooms and bath on the other. The fenestration pattern here, however, suggests living rooms fill the left-front corner behind tri-part windows; high-silled windows behind suggest bedrooms fill the rest of this side. Paired sash opposite suggests the location of dining and kitchen spaces. A public stair, indicated by a between-story stair light and at-grade cellar side entrance, fills the right-front corner. Half-width porches with open balconies above fill the right side (viewed from front) of both the façade and rear elevation, stacked porches being another character-defining feature of the two-family type.

Although this house has undergone alterations that include a vinyl siding application and sash replacement, the original Craftsman-style front door may survive. Despite changes the house remains a legible component of its type and serves as part of a unified, harmonious streetscape of similar buildings lining Winter Street. Original or early building fabric including siding and trim likely survives beneath later coverings and could serve as evidence for a restoration.

Like its neighbors lining Winter Street the building is sited at a shallow setback on its minimal lot. The front garden includes open lawn with specimen and foundation plantings. A short concrete walk connects to a high wood stoop that accesses the entrance porch, and the left side yard is paved in asphalt for parking.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Barr-Pero Two-Family is part of a small subdivision flanking Winter Street undertaken by previous owner John W Rockwell, who initially recorded a plan in 1896. Map evidence suggests, however, that the subdivision remained unimproved until it was built out between 1910 and 1936, evidently after 1925, by subsequent owners. John William Rockwell (1859-1937) a produce dealer, inherited property filling part of the block fronting on Winthrop Street between West and Cotting from his father, George C Rockwell (1832-1890), a native of Nova Scotia who immigrated in 1855 and worked as a commission agent in produce. His mother was Mary J (Booker, born ca. 1838), a native of Roxbury. George Rockwell had assembled the property through several acquisitions between 1866 and 1869 from Amasa Goodwin and Timothy Cotting (re Cotting see MDF.AI and MDF.47).¹ Both generations resided in a house at 162 Winthrop, built prior to 1855, until after 1900. Map evidence strongly suggests this house was moved from the vicinity of 162 Winthrop to 10 Winter Street between 1910 and 1936 (this building survives in a condition of good preservation and will also be individually recorded). Subdivision plans and maps that evidence this narrative are reproduced below.²

In 1925 Rockwell sold 11 lots flanking Winter Street to Sarah R MacFayden. Sarah Rich MacFayden (1881-1958) was the widow of William MacFayden (born ca. 1873), who worked as a surfman for the US Coast Guard in North Truro, where the couple resided before Sarah was living in Somerville as a widow by 1920. Grantor indexes demonstrate that she was actively purchasing lots in the Hillside, Medford Square South and Brickyards/ Mystic Park neighborhoods during the late 19-teens through early 1930s. She was a sister of Somerville builder Joshua W Knowles. Circumstances suggest that Knowles was developing land in South Medford as well and evidently improving them; some he sold to other builders on credit. At the same

¹ MCSRD 982:113 (1866); 1027:362 (1868); 1083:405 (1869); Rockwell gave mortgages to shipwright James O Curtis and neighbors Insley G and Sarah J Jones in 1875-1877, discharged: 1351:46 (1875); 1391:18 (1876); 1447:150 (1877).

² MCSRD 4919:325 (1925); Ancestry.com: vital records, birth, marriage and death; 1880, 1900, 1910 Federal Census.

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time he may have employed his sister as a shell buyer, a common practice at the time designed to protect assets from potential creditors. Alternatively Sarah McFayden, who had an active career in bookkeeping in real estate, may have been speculating on her own account. Six transactions involving this property between 1926 and 1933 suggest one sale, layered mortgages and conveyances and its eventual foreclosure. Records of the city Building Department demonstrate that a building permit was issued in May of 1926 that identified the owner and builder as Joshua W. Knowles for a "2 family house." Knowles (1887-1938), a native of Truro, where his father, Walter, was a carpenter and grandfather, Joshua, was a grocer, resided at 78 North Street in Somerville and later in Arlington, where he was active as a carpenter, builder and later real estate agent.³

The property was acquired by its initial individual owners and occupants Ethel F Pero and Mabel C Barr in 1926, who assumed an outstanding first mortgage of \$8,000 held by the Medford Hillside Co-Op Bank and gave a second mortgage of \$1,590 to Joshua W Knowles at 7%, a high rate, but within two years the property, again under the ownership of MacFayden, was mortgaged again. However during 1928-1930 the house remained occupied by Barr and her husband Harry H Barr, a restaurant manager, and Pero and her husband James N Pero, a truck driver. The 1930 census return indicates the Barrs were renters paying \$45; by this time the Pero family was not listed at this address. Other tenants during the 1930s included insurance worker Francis J Scully and his wife, Margaret J, and retirees Michael J and Marie J Hoar.⁴

Between 1941 and 1973 the property was owned by Alexander and later Mary L Lucey, who sold to the current owner of record.⁵

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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.

Ancestry.com: see footnotes

Charles Brooks and James M. Usher, *History of the Town of Medford, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, From its First Settlement in 1630 to 1855; Revised, Enlarged and Brought Down to 1885* (Rand, Avery & Co., 1886)

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

³ Ancestry.com: vital records, marriage; 1920 Federal Census. Middlesex County grantor indexes, 1896-1950, reproduced courtesy of the Familysearch website (M25-M26, pp. 300-339) list 40 pages of transactions by MacFayden or her estate (listed under "McFayden"), including deeds, mortgages, discharges, foreclosures and conveyances between her and her brother Joshua W Knowles. MCSRD 4990:531 (Jul. 9, 1926, mortgage to Hillside Co-Op Bank); 4993:578 (Jul. 16, 1926, deed to Pero and Barr); 5217:235 (1928, conveyance to Knowles and mortgage to Highland Trust); 5641:451 (1932, MacFayden Estate to Knowles); 5756:318-320 (1933, foreclosure and affidavit of sale, Highland Trust Co.). Regarding MacFayden see MDF.2086, 43-45 Alexander Ave; regarding Knowles: Ancestry.com: vital records, birth, marriage, death; US WWI Draft Registration cards; Mason membership card; *Boston Daily Globe*, Apr. 25, 1938, p. 13, obituary; as a director of the Highland Trust Company, Somerville, Knowles, with the other directors, were charged with mismanagement in the bank's failure: *Boston Herald*, Jul. 10, 1935, p. 1, "State Commissioner Sues 13 Directors of Highland Trust Co. for \$1,250,000."

⁴ MCSRD 4990:531 (Jul. 9, 1926); 4993:578 (Jul. 16, 1926); Ancestry.com: 1924-1938 Medford city directories, inclusive; 1930 Federal Census.

⁵ MCSRD 6464:39 (1941, this deed could not be located and the reference may be a typographical error); 9009:500 (1957, references the 1941 grantor, Wellesley lawyer Garrett S Hoag, who likely represented the previous owner, unknown, but possibly the creditors of Sarah R MacFayden); 12476:149 (1973).

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FIGURES



1855 Walling map of Medford depicting the Rockwell House, indicated by a red arrow. North is up.

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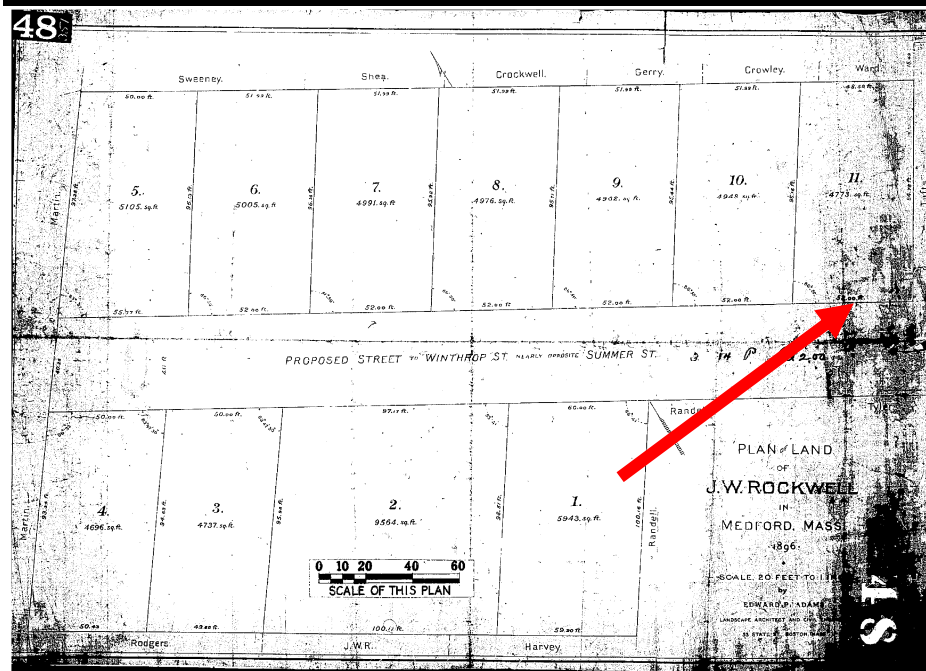
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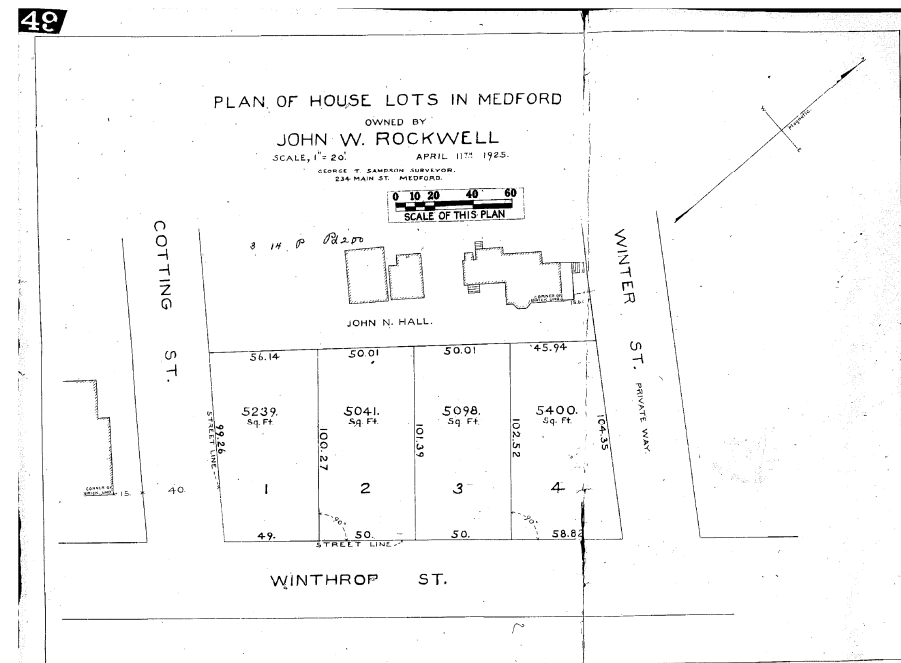
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MCSR Plan 351:48 (1896), "Plan of Land of J.W. Rockwell... 1896" depicting the Winter Street, identified as "proposed street Winthrop Street." The subject property, lot 11, is indicated by a red arrow. North is up.



MCSR Plan 351:49 (1925) depicting the relocation of the Rockwell House to 10 Winter Street so that the Winthrop (formerly South) Street frontage could be subdivided and developed with four two family houses.

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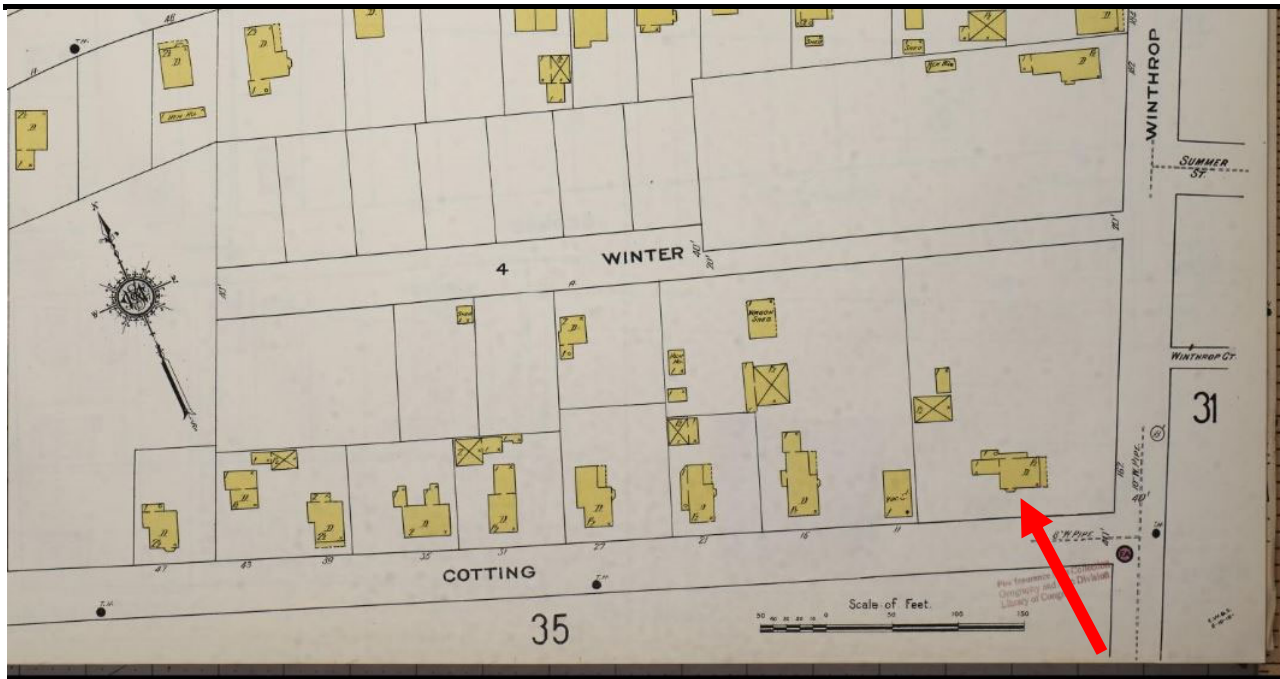
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1910 Sanborn map showing Winter street prior to any improvement. The former location of the Rockwell House is indicated by a red arrow.



1936 Sanborn map showing the completion of Winter Street through to Lyman Avenue (far left) and its buildout with similar two-family houses. The subject property is identified by a red arrow. A green arrow indicates the moved location of the Rockwell House.

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PHOTOGRAPH (by Claire Dempsey 6/23)



View from SE showing larger paired windows, stair light and cellar door.