

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

L-05-4	Boston North		
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Town/City: Medford

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): West Medford

Photograph



Address: 43 Allston Street

Historic Name: William H. White House

Uses: Present: two-family residential

Original: single-family residential

Date of Construction: 1869-1870

Source: deeds, maps

Style/Form: Italianate/ end house

Architect/Builder: evident builder John H. Norton

Exterior Material:

Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: vinyl/ vinyl

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Conversion to two-family occupancy, 1966; vinyl siding application, 1986; fire, recent.

Condition: fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.15 acre

Setting: Dense mix of late-19th through early 20th century residential use.

Locus Map (*north is up*)



Recorded by: John D. Clemson

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): December 2023

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

43 ALLSTON STREET

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Area(s) Form No.

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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 White House, built between 1869 and 1870, is a comfortably scaled, two-and-a-half-story end house with surviving building fabric that suggests the Italianate style. The gabled core of the house, with dimensions of 24 feet wide by 30 feet deep, is expanded by a rectangular oriel resting on a wrapping porch that shelters the entrance and left side, a stacked, canted bay in the rear pile of the right side (south) and a larger gabled, rectangular bay, rear left. A large gabled rear ell, offset to the left in line with the rear-left bay, extends 30 feet rearward with a 22-foot width. A double-deck porch, evidently a later alteration, fills the rear end of the ell. As photographs indicate, the building suffered a recent fire that damaged the rear ell and interior; all windows are currently boarded.

The house underwent an application of vinyl siding during recent decades. However early siding revealed by the removal or destruction of vinyl during the recent fire on the right side shows wood clapboarding. An unboarded window in the left-rear bay suggests some original two-over-two sash may survive; this window and surviving original siding could serve as evidence for appropriate replacement or repair. Other evidence of original finishes may be revealed as damaged vinyl is removed in the course of repair. In addition to the deep cornice with eave returns, evidence of bracketing and other finishes could support a restoration. The porch, evidently original, is supported by turned posts which, although appropriate, appear to be reproductions.

The house is sited on a large corner lot at the northeast corner of Allston and Prescott streets. The open lawn is punctuated by a mature deciduous tree near the corner of Allston and Prescott and is surrounded by a concrete retaining wall capped by a hedgerow of evergreens. A driveway enters off Prescott near the rear bound.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The White House (1869-1870) is located in a section of West Medford known as Hastings Heights. This neighborhood was planned and platted for residential subdivision in 1845 for owners E.T. Hastings and Samuel Teel, Jr. The surveyor was prominent landscape architect Alexander Wadsworth (1806-1898).¹ Wadsworth, best known for his contributions to the design of Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, which greatly influenced both rural cemetery and residential design during the mid-19th century, was a native of Hiram, Maine and a son of Charles L. Wadsworth and Ruth (Clemens). He was married to Mary Elizabeth Hubbard Fairfield in 1836. According to an obituary published in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* he settled in Boston as a young man, where he practiced as a surveyor and landscape architect.² Although little information regarding his attributions is readily available, period census returns, indicating he resided in the 4th ward and by 1880 at 53 Bowdoin Street, suggest a degree of success: in 1850 his assets were valued at \$23,400 and in 1860 at \$33,000, considerable sums for the period. Also according to the obituary he laid out Pemberton Square, a residential row house development on Beacon Hill that does not survive. According to macris he was responsible for improvements made to Hawes Burying Ground/ Union Cemetery in South Boston (Shary Page Berg, Hawes Burying Ground/Union Cemetery, /Boston, BOS.810) and a residential square and park, Linden Square, in Brookline (Greer Hardwicke, Linden Square, Brookline, BKL.912; Linden Park, Brookline, BKL.913). Further research may unearth other important residential subdivisions. According to Russo regarding Mount Auburn Cemetery, which is attributed to Wadsworth and others, its design "initiated the great age of American cemetery-building with its founding in 1831...It inspired great progeny – other cemeteries, the first public parks and the first designed suburbs in the 19th century...Mount Auburn had a profound influence upon 19th-century attitudes about death, burial and commemoration and was widely imitated" (CAM.801/WAT.802). A firm attribution of the first phase of Oak Grove Cemetery in Medford has been established (see a draft of MHC Landscape Form currently in progress). He is also attributed with Harmony Grove Cemetery in Salem and Belvidere Village in Lowell.³

¹ MCSRD Plan 1-B: 54 A-C of 3 (1845).

² *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Feb. 16, 1898, p. 2.

³ Charles A. Birnbaum and Julie K. Fix, eds., *Pioneers of American Landscape Design II* (US Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service Cultural Resources Heritage Preservation Services, Historic Landscape Initiative, 1995) p. 153.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

43 ALLSTON STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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In June of 1869 Richard P Hallowell, merchant of Medford, sold a lot at the northeast corner of Allston and Prescott, with 75 feet of frontage on Allston and a depth of 120 feet, to John H Norton, house carpenter of Medford. The description did not reference the 1845 Wadsworth plan and was the evident outcome of a reconfiguration of the lots near the corner of Allston and Prescott. Consideration was \$2,250 but buildings were not included in the description. Boston merchant and banker Richard Price Hallowell (1835-1904) and his wife Anna (Davis) Hallowell (born 1838) were prominent Quaker abolitionists and active supporters of both African American and women's suffrage; Anna Davis was a granddaughter of Lucretia Mott. They moved from Philadelphia to Medford in 1859 and resided at the southeast corner of High and Auburn streets (not extant). They acquired multiple lots in the Hastings subdivision during the 1860s.⁴ John Henry Norton (1827-1904) was a native of China, Maine. His marriage to Martha R (Huffmaster) took place in Medford, where he was living by 1852. Records suggest he was successful and active in the Hastings subdivision as a housewright, where he resided at 91 Allston Avenue by 1855. The 1855 Massachusetts State Census listed a household of eight that included two young children, two evident employees (both of whom worked as housewrights) and two other boarders or servants. A detailed snapshot of his operation is provided by the 1880 Federal Census non-population schedule for manufactures, which recorded three employees who worked 10 hour days summer and 9 hour days winter for a \$1.25 daily wage. Wage and material costs for the year totaled \$850 to produce buildings valued at \$2,000. According to his obituary John H Norton was "...one of West Medford's best-known residents...His career was marked by a large number of serious accidents, from which he recovered many times, to the amazement of his physicians. At various times almost every prominent bone in his body had been broken by falls from buildings and other accidents."⁵ In October of 1870 Norton sold a completed house with the property ("buildings thereon") for \$3,500 to short-term owners Oliver and Addie Buzzell.⁶

In November of 1873 the property was acquired from short-term intervening owner George F Hartwell of Framingham by William H White. Little could be ascertained regarding White; he was listed in the local directories of 1890 and 1895 with the occupation of teacher working in Boston and residing on Allston Street. White conveyed the property to his wife Hester AR White in 1890 and his son, Winthrop W White (born 1875) sold it to subsequent owner Estelle Z Beekman, the wife of Willie S Beekman, in 1897. Between 1897 and 1906 the house was owned and occupied by the Beekmans; William S Beekman, with the occupation of "chemist," was the operator of a drug store at 19 Commercial Street, Boston. The Beekman family, including two daughters, relocated to Cincinnati, Ohio after selling the property. City of Medford building records indicate the Beekmans hired local builder Lewis H Lovering (see Medford Women's Club, 17 Governors Avenue, MDF.1103) to build a 1½ story "storehouse" costing \$600 with dimensions of 20x24' 20 feet from the main house. It is possible that this building survives at 36 Prescott Street, but a chain of ownership linking it to the Beekmans could not be completed.⁷

Although it has not been possible to establish a history of ownership between ca 1906 and 1965, directory listings and census returns indicate the house was owned and occupied by the family of William L and Floria L Smith during much of this period. William Smith (born ca 1870) had a varied career as a real estate broker (1910), advertising firm agent (1920) and securities salesman (1930). The Smith's household included two children, William, Jr (born ca 1908) and Amy (born ca 1909), and mother-in-law Georgiana Smith (born ca 1848). The Smiths owned the house in 1930, when it was valued at \$10,000, but by 1940 were renting it for \$60, by which time William Smith had retired and the household included four lodgers, a married couple and two single adults.⁸

Recent owners included Amy Elizabeth Stewart, trustee of the American Investment Trust (prior to 1965; by this time the property had acquired its current configuration with 75 feet of frontage and an 87 foot depth), Morris and Bertha Lechtenberg (1965-1966), Richard and Silene Nazzaro (1966-1978), Generoso and Ines Amodeo (1978-1980) and Anni Maloney (1980-2000), who sold to the current owners of record. Medford Building Department records indicate that the house was remodeled and converted to two-family occupancy by Morris Lechtenberg in 1966.⁹

⁴ MCSRD 1099:9 (1869); the grantor, See *Medford Past and Present, 275th Anniversary of Medford, Massachusetts* (Medford Mercury, June, 1905) p. 48 and Henry C. DeLong, "Richard Price Hallowell," *The Medford Historical Register, Vol. VII* (The Society, Oct. 1904) pp. 95-96.

⁵ Ancestry.com: vital records, marriage; 1855, 1865 Massachusetts State Census; 1860-1900 Federal Census, inclusive; 1880 Federal Census non-population schedule: manufactures; *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 6, 1904, p. 4 (obituary).

⁶ MCSRD 1134:253 (1870).

⁷ MCSRD 1287:527 (1873); 1965:343-344 (1890); 2580:109-110 (1897); 3239:494 (1906); Ancestry.com: vital records, marriage; 1900 Federal Census; 1895 Medford and Boston directories.

⁸ Ancestry.com: 1924-1938 Medford city directories, inclusive; 1910-1940 Federal Census, inclusive.

⁹ MCSRD 11134:291 (1966); 1486:242 (1978); 1373:217 (1979); 14129:134 (1980); 26514:292 (1996); 31711:488 (2000); 80483:318 (2022). An increase in market value between 1979 and 1980 from \$41,500 to \$68,000 suggest major improvements took place at this time.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

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Area(s) Form No.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

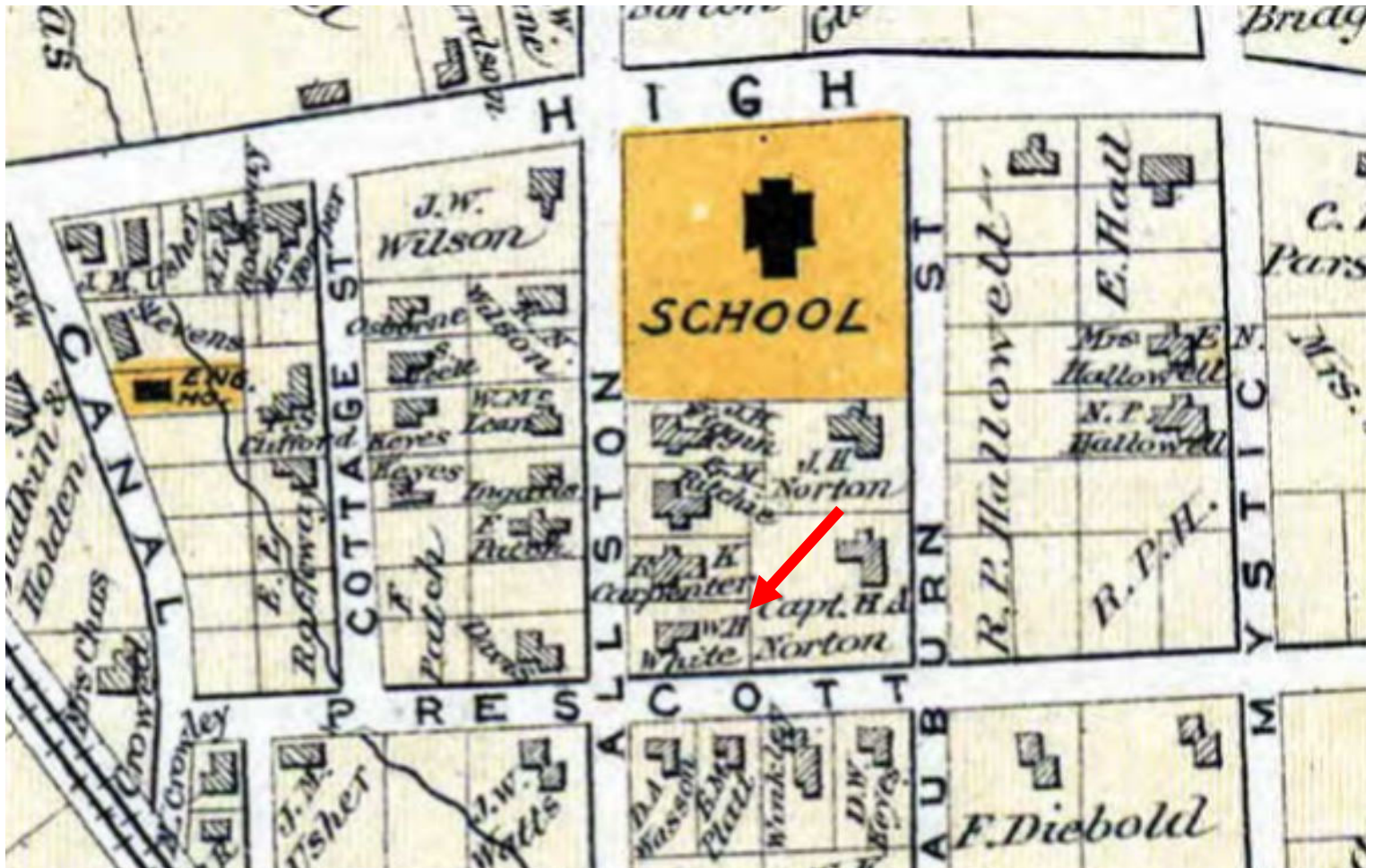
Maps and atlases:

- 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).



1875 Beers county atlas showing the initial depiction of the subject house in the ownership of W.H. White indicated by a red arrow. North is up.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

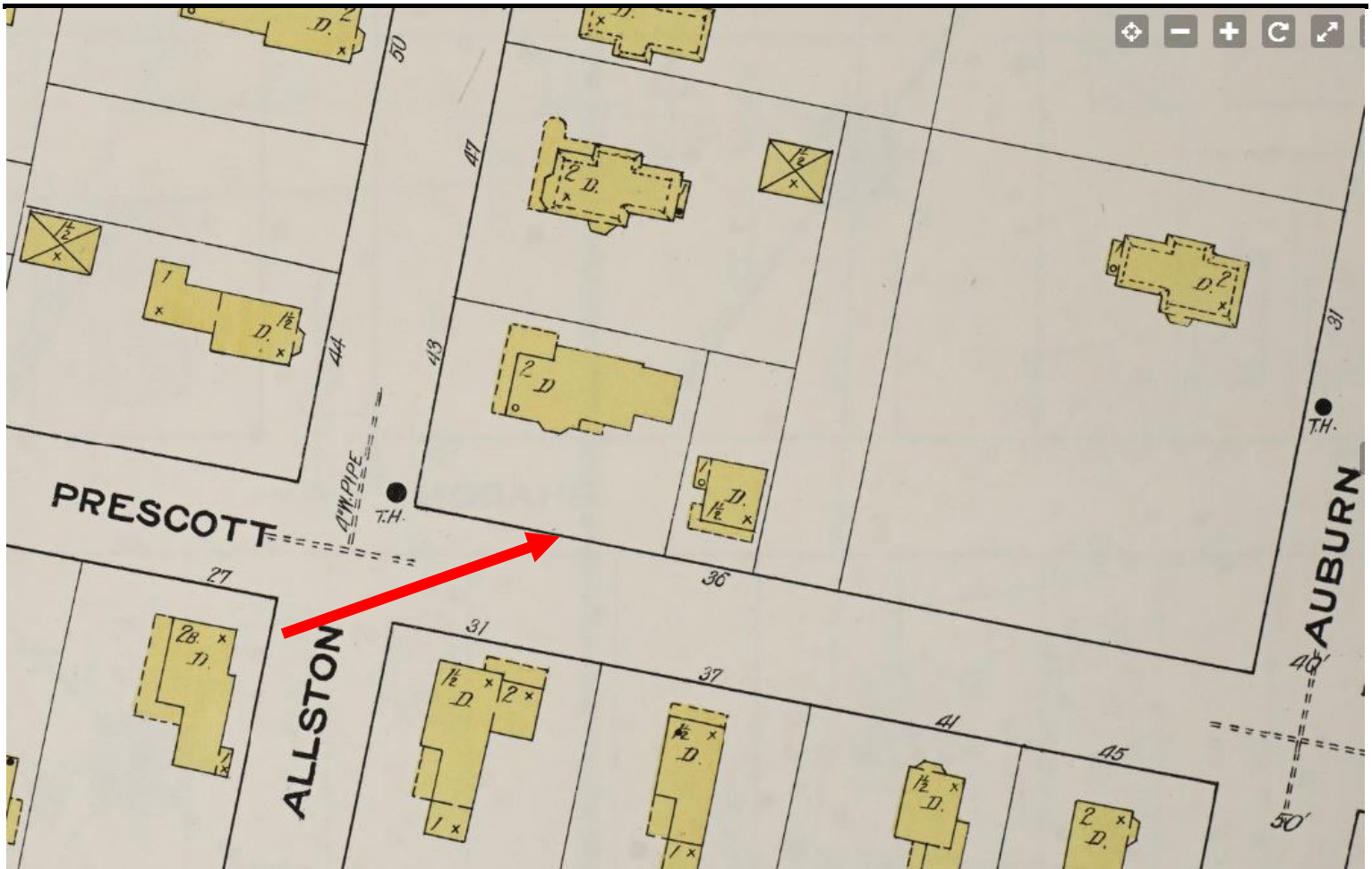
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Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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1910 Sanborn map depicting the main house, the property's evident subdivision, and the conversion of the Lewis H Lovering-constructed "storehouse" to a dwelling by that time. Indicated by a red arrow, north is up.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

43 ALLSTON STREET

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Area(s) Form No.

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[If appropriate, cut and paste the text below into an inventory form's last continuation sheet.]

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Criteria Considerations: **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G**

Statement of Significance by John D. Clemson
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The White House, 43 Allston Street, 1869-1870, would contribute to a potential National Register district that would conform to the boundaries of an 1845 subdivision plan of Hastings Heights (MCSR Plan 1B:54 A-C of 3). This large subdivision was designed by prominent landscape architect Alexander Wadsworth. Wadsworth contributed to the design of Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge (CAM.801/WAT.802), a seminal and highly influential example of the form that also influenced suburban residential and landscape design nationally. Despite alterations this building, among the earliest surviving in the subdivision, would contribute to a district that generally retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Areas of significance include architecture, community planning and development, landscape architecture and social history. This potential district abuts another area recommended for NR listing: West Medford Commercial Area MDF.AE. An adjacent section of West Medford south of Boston Avenue, which has been well documented using individual inventory forms, has also been recommended for listing as "...a potential historic district comprising the southern section of the Smith Estate Subdivision...that is significant for its representation of an early railroad suburb where a sizeable number of African American families formed a distinguishable community at the turn of the 20th century. The precise boundary and period of significance for this historic district have yet to be determined" (Larson, MDF.700, 40 Fairfield Street).