



# South Medford Survey Plan

## **Medford Historical Commission**

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Cover: Survey of the Middlesex Canal, 1829.

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**Claire W. Dempsey  
for the  
Medford Historical Commission  
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## Introduction

The City of Medford is located six miles north of Boston in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, encompassing approximately eight square miles of land and bound by Somerville to the South, Arlington to the west, Winchester to the north, and Malden to the east. Today, the City is bisected by the Mystic River, running across the south portion of the City generally from the Mystic Lakes on the west to its southeast corner. The section of the City south of the River is generally a wide oval, with smooth sides along the River and more angular edges along the south bound with Somerville. The River was once wide and meandering, flanked by extensive salt marshes and with small islands and dramatic loops along its path to Boston Harbor. The topography of South Medford was, therefore, characterized by low marshland with soil rich in clay deposits along the banks, though many of these wetlands have disappeared since the River was dammed in 1909 and 1966. A series of hills punctuates the otherwise low-lying landscape, including Winter Hill, along Broadway at the southeastern edge of the area, and Walnut or College Hill, site of Tufts University at the northwestern edge, both divided by the Medford-Somerville border. The first bridge over the Mystic River was constructed in 1637 and located where Medford Square's Craddock Bridge remains today. For one hundred and fifty years, this was the only point where travellers moving north could cross this stream, bringing a steady flow of traffic through the town. Over the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, more bridges were added, first to the west at Winthrop Street, Cotting/Auburn Street, and Boston Avenue, and to the east along the path of the Mystic Valley Parkway, connecting these expanding neighborhoods to the larger town.

Like many communities just north of Boston, Medford has been crossed by each of the transportation improvements that have eased travel in the region, and each of these improvements contributed to the increased density of this ring of towns that surrounded the capital. These developments were particularly influential in South Medford. The Middlesex Canal, the Medford Turnpike, and then the Boston and Lowell Railroad each crossed South Medford in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century; the Boston and Maine came into Medford Square from the east a little later. As density increased, a thicker web of streets took hold, and by the turn of the century, regional arteries and scenic parkways added higher-use and more ornamental paths through the town. Today, a major highway axis runs north/south along the eastern edge of South Medford, including Routes 16, 38, and Interstate Route 93, all running across the former marshlands roughly parallel to each other before diverging around Medford Square. The Mystic Valley Parkway, which is also Route 16 in Medford, then runs generally east-west along the banks of the Mystic River at the north edge of the area. Throughout its history, these transportation corridors have affected the way Medford has developed, giving rise to the nodes and corridors of its early settlement pattern and eventually creating the fully built-out landscape that is the distinguishing character of the inner suburbs.

The River and these transportation corridors provided economic opportunities for the community that set the direction for its historical development and created the landscape characteristics of the City today. Although the area was sparsely settled in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Mystic River provided opportunities for employment beyond agriculture and

trade, and several industries had a particular impact. Medford was well-known for brick production from the colonial period well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rum distilling and a variety of other service and manufacturing endeavors were attracted to the transportation corridors associated with the river crossing. Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, shipbuilding on the Mystic attracted yard owners and their employees, accelerating settlement growth to the east and south of Medford Square. Fueled by these opportunities, the town's population reached 5,000 in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by the 1880s had reached 10,000. The greatest expansion, however, came after Medford adopted city government in 1892: over the next two decades the population doubled, and over the next three decades it tripled, reaching an all-time high of over 67,000 in 1945. To accommodate this growth, hundreds if not thousands of residences were constructed in the formerly open landscape surrounding Medford Square and West Medford, and a very large proportion of the City's historic landscape consists of residential neighborhoods created during this extraordinary boom. The City now includes over 22,000 households within a nearly equal number of housing units. The density of the landscape and sheer number of buildings make architectural survey a challenging effort for Medford.

Medford has experienced many of the threats to its historic landscape that can be found throughout the region and the Commonwealth, as noted in the *Survey Plan* and in the regular survey summary reports. There are threats of tear-downs, demolition by neglect, and many buildings are undergoing change as property owners wrestle with increasing energy and maintenance costs. The City is crisscrossed by major regional transportation routes and may soon be home to a Green Line T extension. Its accessibility is beginning to bring gentrification and rising housing costs. While it is difficult to predict the direction of change in an uncertain economy, there is little doubt that the fabric of this place will suffer if better preservation planning cannot be undertaken. Broad and accurate coverage of the City's historic landscape is the foundation for those efforts.

For the purposes of survey planning, a total of ten neighborhoods have been identified in Medford. Six are located to the north of the River and were identified as part of the *City of Medford Community-wide Survey Plan* prepared by Larson Fisher Associates in 2010. Medford Square has long been the core of the City's civic and commercial life. This planning area includes its long civic and commercial corridor along Salem and High streets as well as residential neighborhoods on the hills above. As the City increased in density, it developed secondary settlements, and the first of these, West Medford, grew up around the early railroad station on the Lowell line. This neighborhood is noted for its early African American community, and includes a commercial core as well as rings of residential blocks. Nearby, the Brooks Estates is a distinctive development of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of several in Medford that grew quickly during the boom years of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Three neighborhoods are located to the east of Route 93, the limited-access highway that divided the City after 1959. East Medford is now divided from the Square, although much of its development was as an expansion of it, while its eastern reaches were subdivided late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its northern reaches early in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Wellington is a smaller, more isolated area that also dates primarily to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The northern most portion of the City is divided between the Middlesex Fells Reservation and the large Fulton Heights neighborhood, another area of 20<sup>th</sup> century growth. The *Survey Plan* has guided inventory projects in these neighborhoods including, so far, four phases of MHC-funded projects there. In 2011/12, Neil Larson surveyed the West Medford neighborhood, in 2014/15 John Clemson and associates surveyed Medford Square, and in 2015/16 and 2016/17 Clemson and associates undertook two phases of survey in East Medford.

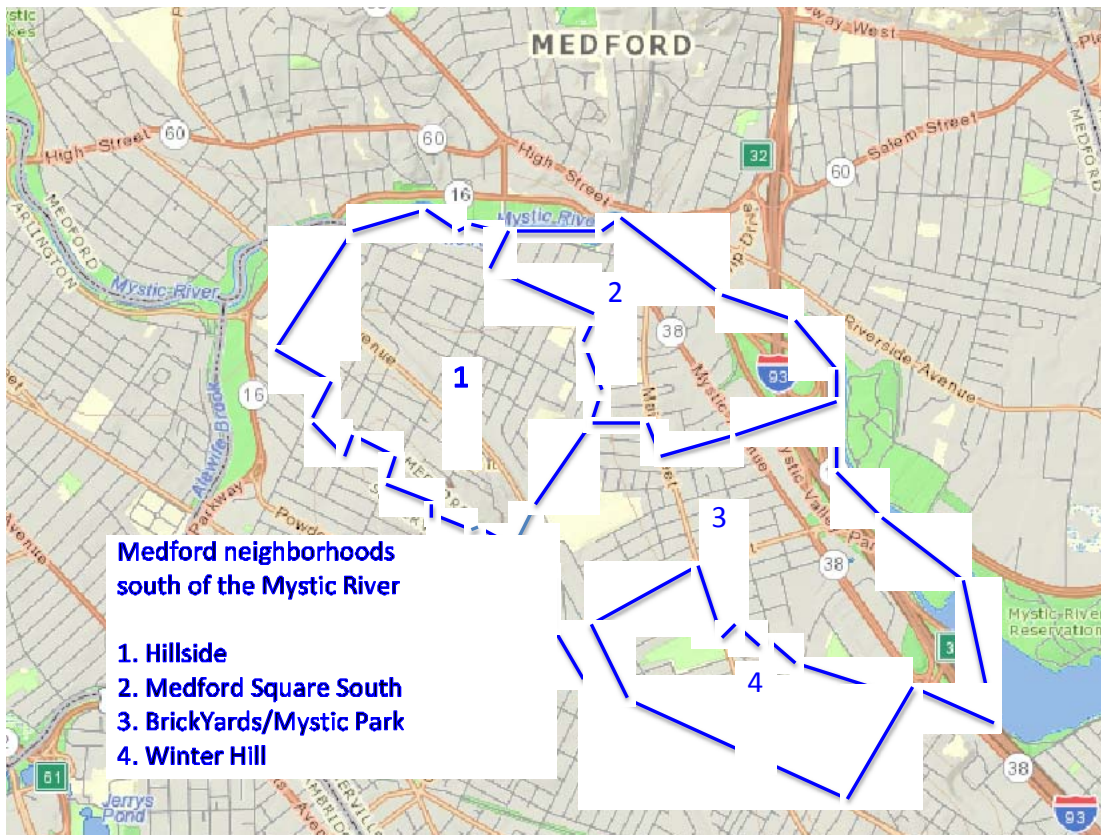


Survey Plan 2010) neighborhoods.

Historically, the path of the River divided Medford's initial grant to the north from lands assigned to Charlestown to the south, and throughout its history, this section of the City has had a distinct history. Linked to the City's center by the long-standing bridge, the area experienced development patterns associated with its lowlands and its early experience of large land holdings, and for much of its history South Medford was an expanse characterized by low-density uses of its marshes, clay pits, and hillsides. After the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, proximity to its larger neighbor Somerville and the accessibility provided by its trolley lines brought more intense and rapid development with an exceptional concentration of multi-family housing in South Medford. An earlier project to plan for surveying this area was prepared by students in Claire Dempsey's Boston University Preservation Planning Colloquium in 2008, and students Dayl Cohen, McKenzie Dickey, Sean Maher, Casey Pecoraro, and Elizabeth Simms undertook research and field work in these neighborhoods. Some of this research was used to prepare a succinct set of recommendations for survey in the Medford Hillside neighborhood, at which time the boundaries of the South Medford neighborhoods were tentatively defined. The Hillside neighborhood is located to the west, centered at the intersection of Boston Avenue and Winthrop Street, with its northern border the River, the western and southern border following the jagged edge of the line between Medford and Somerville, and the eastern boundary beginning at the River at the Winthrop Street Bridge, extending south along Winthrop Street,

east along Summer Street, and south along College Avenue, again to the bound with Somerville. The summary of recommendations for that neighborhood was entitled “Survey Recommendations of the Hillside Neighborhood (2013).” The MHC-funded survey of Hillside was completed by John Clemson and associates in 2013/14.

In 2016/17, the Medford Commission had an opportunity to move forward with survey planning efforts for South Medford and engaged Claire W. Dempsey to build on the work undertaken by her students and on the experience of these inventory projects to make recommendations for future research. Over the course of that work, Dempsey and the Commission determined that the section of the City to the south of the Mystic River would be divided into four neighborhoods: Medford Hillside, as noted above, Medford Square South, Brickyards/Mystic Park, and Winter Hill. The Medford Square South area has the River as its north and east boundary, and the neighborhood extends south to Hancock Street and Stearns Avenue with College Avenue on the west side; a narrow section between South and Summer streets extends to Winthrop Street at the west. The large Brickyards/Mystic Park neighborhood is to the south and east of Medford Square South and Hillside, reaching Harvard Street on the west side, with a tail along Boston Avenue and Bristol Street, and extending beyond Harvard on the east all the way to East Albion Street and the Somerville line. Winter Hill is the southernmost section, below Harvard and East Albion all the way to the boundary with Somerville near Broadway on the southwest and near the path of Henry Street on the southeast.



South Medford survey planning neighborhoods.

This report is presented in six parts. The first section summarizes survey and planning for the larger area to date, and identifies a number of methodological issues associated with large and dense inner-ring suburbs. The second section provides a summary of the entire area's development before 1855. The core of the report is the last three sections, one dedicated to each of the three neighborhoods, moving north to south, first Medford Square South, next Brickyards/Mystic Park, and finally Winter Hill. Each of these sections includes a brief overview of development in the neighborhood in the century since 1855 and a set of recommendations about how to approach survey in these historic landscapes.

## Survey and Planning for South Medford

In the last decade, the Medford Historical Commission has been transformed. For many years, a handful of dedicated but largely quiet volunteers stewarded the City's two local historic districts and shepherded properties through demolition delay. But that left little time and energy for the other duties of a local commission, and efforts at education, identification, evaluation, and protection suffered. With new and energized members, the Commission has recently undertaken a series of initiatives that systematized its procedures, improved its relationships with City departments and boards, and launched a research agenda to document and evaluate its dense and diverse historic landscape. The Commission has achieved Certified Local Government status, significantly increased its annual budget, secured funding for multiple MHC survey & planning grants, and smoothly manages its compliance responsibilities. In addition, the City recently passed the Community Preservation Act, which will vastly increase the funding available for preservation efforts in the Medford. The Commission has emerged as an active and effective group furthering the goals of historic preservation in the City.

A key component in this recent work was the *Survey Plan* of 2010, which provided an overview of preservation activities in Medford. On the eve of this resurgence, Medford had but little survey and most of this dated to its initial effort in the 1970s. Fewer than 150 individual buildings had been recorded and though there were eleven area forms prepared, few of these reported on more than a handful of properties. While City-initiated survey came to a halt, Medford, like most inner ring communities, benefitted from regional survey efforts covering critical infrastructure, the Water Supply System of Metropolitan Boston (1990), the Metropolitan Park System (2003-2007), and the Middlesex Canal Historic and Archaeological District (2009). This increased the coverage of City resources on MACRIS, but in some ways created the illusion of more survey than had actually been completed and for a time there was some confusion about the actual numbers. At the time of the *Survey Plan* Larson noted between 472 and 688 buildings, 45 structures, 6 objects, one cemetery, and 28 areas in MACRIS. Like survey, National Register designation efforts in Medford date primarily to the 1970s and 80s. The two districts, Hillside Avenue and Old Ship Street, were listed in the National Register in 1975, and 24 other properties have been listed individually, most at about the same time. Medford is a city of over 55,000, with as many as 15,000 buildings, and a significant portion of these are over fifty years of age. Few would doubt that this modest coverage and this long hiatus in survey work was a cause for concern.

The *Survey Plan* identified a number of general priorities for survey in Medford, and for the most part inventory projects have followed those guidelines. In each case, high priority has been given to the public buildings and workplaces that bring people together from across the community. Similarly, the older and rarer resources, those that appear on the 1855 and 1875 maps of Medford, have been privileged in the selection process. Because of Medford's demolition delay parameters, which until recently covered only buildings constructed before 1900, Medford survey products have included a master list of properties in each neighborhood constructed by that date. Not included in the survey plan recommendations, but included in most phases of survey research has been an expansion of the *Survey Plan's* neighborhood

overviews, to include more detailed discussion of each neighborhood's development patterns and its historic landscape. This survey goal has been met in various ways over the phases of survey, including thematic and subdivision essays for West Medford, land use summaries for Hillside and the eastern section of East Medford, and an expansion of the survey plan overview for Medford Square. The smaller budget of the second phase of Survey in East Medford precluded the addition of such a project. The survey team noted that such a product would be useful to the Commission and to the community, and at a later date, perhaps when the 20<sup>th</sup> century sections of the neighborhood have been completed, an expanded East Medford overview should be prepared. It is the case that the other neighborhoods, when their survey is more comprehensive, would benefit from an expanded neighborhood overview.

The general recommendation that has not been achieved is the database of historic resources in the City.

### **Approaches to Survey**

In the intervening years of survey, the resulting research has done much to improve the Commission's understanding of Medford's history and its built environment. It has also increased familiarity with the survey process itself and the way Medford's particular historic landscape is treated within the MHC's standard methodology. At a basic level, the Commission is aware that it will simply take a long time to provide even general and selective coverage for the City. One project a year for ten years would be required just to touch each neighborhood just once, and it is already clear that much remains to be done in each neighborhood after one standard MHC survey grant.<sup>1</sup> Survey planning for Medford thus needs to be particularly attentive to this issue of numbers, and each phase of survey has had to further refine the priorities established in the Survey Plan and embrace the practicalities of matching the recommendations to each budget. Each survey project adopted a slightly different approach to the selection process for their respective neighborhood, suitable to the resources of the area and its planning issues. Most of these focused on some portions of the neighborhood, usually defined geographically, and systematically postponed work on sections that were developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and thus not subject to demolition delay. But large areas of 19<sup>th</sup> century development also remain. In West Medford, the survey focused on the commercial center and the Smith estate subdivision, but the residential sections north of High Street and east of the commercial core are awaiting a second round of survey. In Hillside, the village and a handful of small commercial nodes were covered, as well as well-preserved examples of mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century residences, but there is much more that would benefit from research. Similarly, in Medford Square, the southern corridor was surveyed in layered B and area forms, but work was postponed on most of the northern residential blocks. This situation was writ large for the East Medford neighborhood when it became clear that the number of high-priority resources was exceptionally large, and the neighborhood was surveyed over two years.

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<sup>1</sup> Medford is not alone in facing the challenge of large numbers of historic resources. The author chaired a session on this issue of resource numbers at the Massachusetts Preservation Conference in 2013 ("Too Much of a Good Things?"), and presented an overview of the scale of the problem. Three practitioners described a variety of approaches, including Cambridge's long-standing survey effort at inclusivity (Susan Maycock), an experimental block level survey in Philadelphia (Collete Kinane), and the extraordinary tenement database (Zachary Violette).

As Medford's survey reports have noted, the City's historic landscape can be a challenge to the selection and prioritization process usually employed in survey projects. Two factors are of particular importance in this regard. First is the particular development pattern observed in many Medford neighborhoods, where initial subdivision of larger properties, especially in the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, was followed by incremental development over several decades. This created neighborhoods that are often quite complex, in their physical character and in the unfolding of their land use history. The resulting variety of their components, in form and ornament as well as date and even function, can be a challenge to research, describe, evaluate, and understand. They also provide a contrast to neighborhoods that filled out more quickly and uniformly, creating the more "cohesive" appearance that has been embraced and valued by preservationists. These various streetscapes are regularly overlooked. The second issue results from the choices homeowners have made to maintain their properties, especially in recent decades. In some neighborhoods of the City most of the buildings have experienced the application of vinyl siding that is common in the working class neighborhoods of the Boston area, and in most Medford neighborhoods wooden windows have frequently been replaced with vinyl. Although 'materials' is only one of the seven aspects of integrity employed in the National Register program and commonly used to assess the degree of change in a building, it often contributes special weight in survey and National Register projects. In Medford, recent survey efforts have tried to demonstrate that many of these buildings remain legible components within their contexts, and retain many of the other elements of integrity, including location, setting, design, workmanship, feeling, and association, that make them worthy of research and recognition. It may be too expensive to cover all of these properties in a building-by-building approach of intensive research, but a more inclusive and economical extensive approach to resources could help to correct the imbalance that would otherwise result.<sup>2</sup>

After two phases of survey work, concern over the pace and level of survey that was possible within the standard survey budget suggested that research going forward should consider methods that would result in greater coverage for Medford neighborhoods. During the Medford Square survey, the Commission and the survey team adopted a somewhat different approach, employing large area forms to cover more resources. Although budgeting for these forms can be challenging, it is often the case that efficiencies can be achieved by employing area forms, if the resources are closely related or if selective research protocols can streamline the process. But this work can be difficult to complete and for readers to comprehend for large areas with numerous properties, in part because of the format of these forms, which distributed information about individual resources in multiple locations. In an effort to improve area form utility and at the same time increase the rate of coverage in future survey efforts, the survey team for East Medford developed an experimental format for area forms that relied on an expanded data sheet. Using a chart format and including a photograph and basic data about each building in the area, the hope was that this form could lighten the explanatory burden placed on area form text when the area is large and the resources numerous. The team found the process to be generally helpful and hope that MHC will encourage further experimentation with area form adaptations in other survey projects, in Medford and other communities with dense and numerous resources. A survey method like this one, that increases the use of more

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<sup>2</sup> These issues are noted especially in the Survey Summary Report for East Medford Phase Two (2017); the first experiment with the area form format is described there as well. There would also appear to be some conflation of integrity and condition in the MHC survey method, where for example, buildings with synthetic siding are to be designated as in 'fair' condition. Some clarification on this point would be useful.

efficient area forms, would be an appropriate response to the character of Medford's cultural resources as well as to their number.<sup>3</sup>

A pair of recent improvements in Medford's planning tools have also served to shift some priorities for survey. One of these has been the gradual increase in the Commission's budget, which allows the Commission to contract research for individual threatened properties and to undertake smaller-scaled projects apart from MHC funded efforts. This relieves some the pressure on survey projects to attempt to predict which properties or areas will be most likely to be threatened in the coming years, and allows for work in neighborhoods before and after they are the focus of a larger survey effort. An even greater change came with the recasting of the demolition delay ordinance, to effect properties over 75 years in age and to extend the delay itself. This will expand consideration from buildings constructed prior to 1900 to buildings constructed before 1942, a date that will move forward every year. This new protection for buildings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will mean the Commission can no longer regularly postpone survey of historic resources of the more recent past.

The Commission and its contracted surveyors will want to continue to develop efficient tools to record the large expanses of development of both 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century resources to be found in Medford. Working with the MHC, research protocols can be tailored to the specific area under consideration, always with an eye to efficiencies and economies. This will improve the pace of survey in terms of the speed with which sections of the City will be covered, an important consideration as the pace of demolition and change increases in the City. This sort of information and analysis will also ease the duties of the Commission by providing contextual and comparative information on individual properties, as this broad view compliments the more intensive research associated with MHC B forms, contracted as needed for threatened properties. Going forward, this shifting of survey effort toward the use of more area forms would allow the Commission to improve its coverage of City resources and to move toward a more inclusive and more equitable consideration of Medford's historic landscape.

### **Existing Survey in South Medford**

South Medford includes surviving examples of historic resources from each period of its development, save the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Exceptional as well as more common examples can be found of the building forms and styles that were popular in eastern Massachusetts towns and cities over the last three centuries. As Medford grew, with industrial prosperity and improved transportation networks, neighborhoods of the wealthy and the rising Victorian middle class grew up around Medford Square, on this side of the River first overlooking the River and later extending down Main Street. Middle-class housing was added in the subdivisions nearby, and housing for the working classes was built near the manufacturing nodes and corridors. The building booms of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century produced large numbers of housing units as well as many small commercial nodes scattered across south Medford. Block upon block of single-family and two-family housing, and some three-deckers, all constructed during this hectic period, can be found in these areas. Standard

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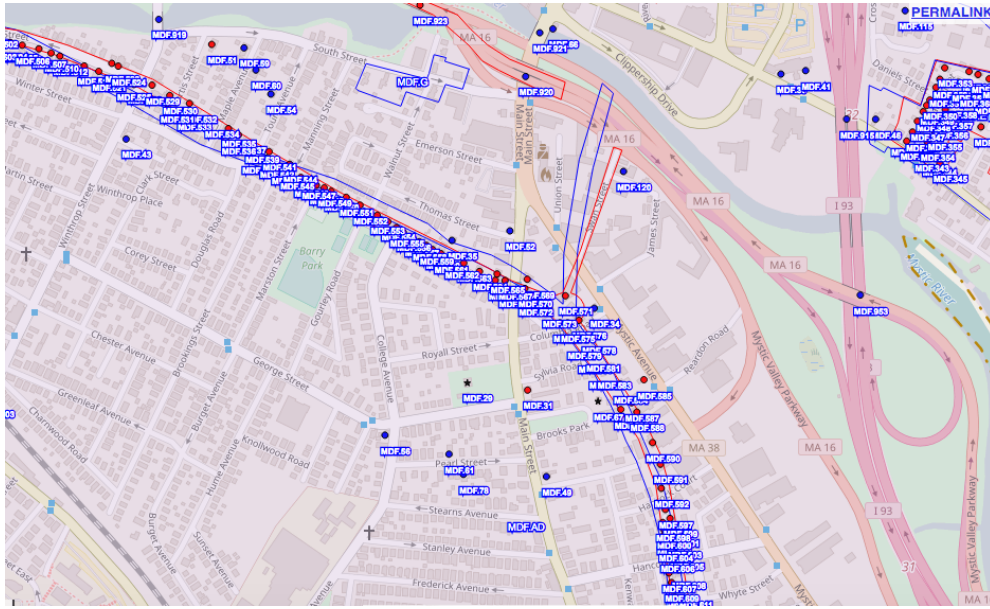
<sup>3</sup> For a consideration of another community that, although smaller in geographic size and population, faces similar challenges of resource density and numbers, see the author's *Winchester Survey Plan* (2017), where the evolution of survey method is described in greater detail.

survey methodology worked well to cover the exceptional and well-preserved components of this landscape, while some of its critical infrastructure has been highlighted in regional recording and evaluating efforts. But large portions of the broader landscape remain unexamined.

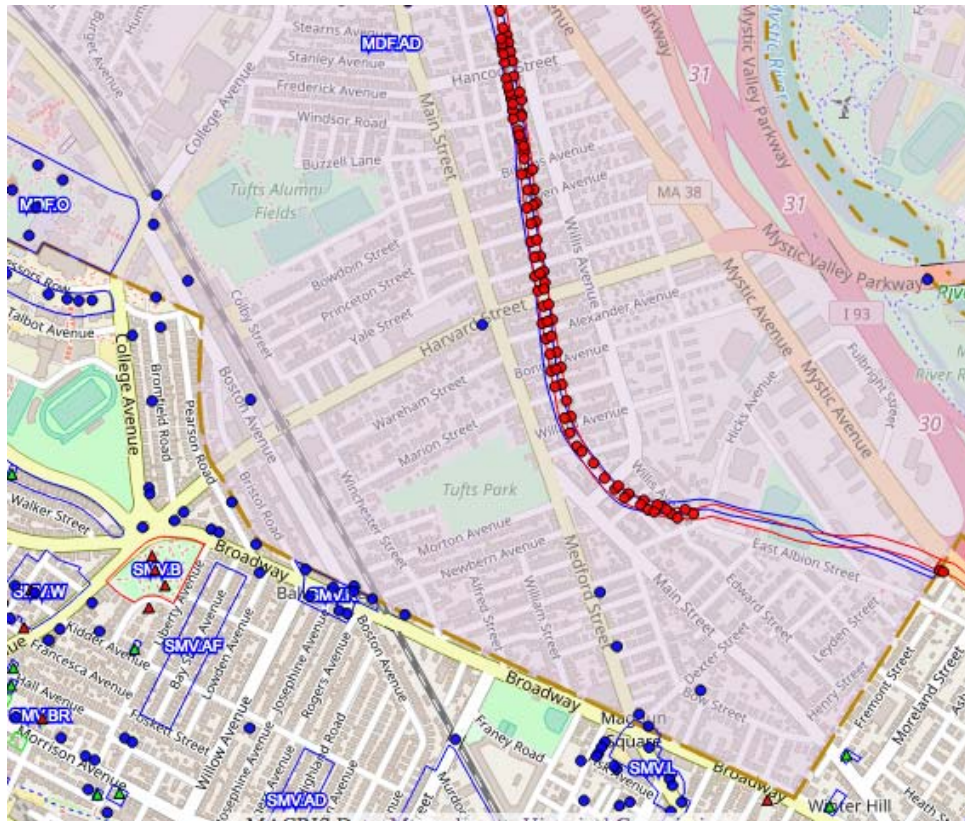
As the illustrations from MACRIS Maps make clear, properties related to the path of the Middlesex Canal dominate consideration of survey and designation coverage in these neighborhoods. The long path of the canal is indicated by the blue lines marking its path according to its initial survey (MDF.V) and a second set of red lines marking the NR district (MDF.C and D). Both the survey and the designation projects were expansive multi-municipality projects to describe an exceptionally long district that includes both archaeological resources and visible standing structures and buildings. When these areas were mapped, contributing and noncontributing standing resources were included, and in places where the path does not follow an existing roadway, this meant mapping a large number of later buildings constructed over the canal's path. Far more properties were so indicated in Medford (363 buildings, 22 sites, and 2 structures of a total of 1027 in nine communities) than in any other community; the vast majority of these are non-contributing. This concentration of listings suggests that many properties have been surveyed in the neighborhood, but in fact little information was gathered about them, presumably since they were non-contributing. While this is all understandable after careful consideration, it makes using MACRIS Maps to understand existing survey in Medford somewhat challenging.

Looking past the canal path, it is clear that survey in South Medford has been modest, indeed modest enough that survey completed for all of these neighborhoods can be considered together. Only one area was surveyed in the 1970s, at the east end of South Street, Area G South Street, including seven properties including 23, 30, 31, 36, 42, 48, and 54. Individual resources surveyed here include:

- Tufts house, 64 Bow Street, double- or L-house, ca. 1800 (MDF.42).
- Richard Pinkham House, 24 Brooks Park, ca. 1850, 'octagon,' NR 2007 (MDF.67).
- Isaac Royal House, 15 George Street, 1645 (?!), Georgian double house, Landmark 1966 (MDF.29).
- Stetson-Redman House, 12 Maple Avenue, ca. 1840, end house (MDF.60).
- W. Cushing Cottage, 145 Main Street, ca. 1840, GR small end house with portico (MDF.52).
- Elbridge Teel House, 234 Main Street, ca. 1850, GR end house (MDF.49).
- James Scully House, 244 Main Street, Second Empire end house, 1868-1870, recorded and demolished.
- Francis H. Kidder House, 252 Main Street, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival complex, 1853-55.
- Boynton Block, 379 Main Street, brick mansard block, 1873 (MDF.74).
- Medford Street Fire Station, 52 Medford Street, brick block with hose tower, 1895 (MDF.98).
- John S. Maxwell Double House, 78-80 Medford Street, brick mansard duplex, 1870 (MDF.77).



MACRIS Maps Screen Capture showing existing survey in Medford Square South above, and in Brickyards/Mystic Park and Winter Hill below



Benjamin Hall House, 41 Mystic Avenue, 1752, gambrel double house, moved from High Street (MDF.34).

Haskell-Spaulling House, 24 Pearl Street, ca. 1871, mansard double house (MDF.78).

Ebenezer Waterman House, 27 Pearl Street, ca. 1855, Italianate double house (MDF.61).

Jotham Stetson House, 102 South Street, ca. 1840, altered ell house (MDF.59).

Paul Curtis House, 114 South Street, 1839, NR IND, GR end house with colossal portico (MDF.51), B form recently redone.

Edward Oakes House, 5 Sylvia Road, 1729, gambrel saltbox, moved from 460 Riverside in 1977, NR IND 1980 (MDF.31).

Water and Sewer Department building, Swan Street, ca. 1875, two-story, flat roof, brick (MDF.120; demolished)

Cotting-Bigelow House, 34-36 Thomas Street, ca. 1760, gambrel double house moved for the Bigelow Block (MDF.35).

John B. King (Gardner B. Gates) House, 21 Touro Avenue, ca 1839, GR cottage, lhd in progress (MDF.54), B form recently redone.

Individual properties surveyed as part of other survey efforts in 1980s and 90s include:

Capitol Bank, Magoun Square, ca. 1936, Colonial Revival brick corner (MDF.172; Somerville survey).

College Avenue Bridge, College Avenue, 1895 (MDF.901; historic bridge survey, recommended not eligible).

Individual properties surveyed as part of the Green Line Extension ENF 2010, all determined NR eligible:

Commons/Curtis Hall (Tufts), 474 Boston Avenue, Romanesque Revival brick block, 1893 (MDF.693).

Bray Memorial Laboratory (Tufts), 504 Boston Avenue, brick factory, 1946 (MDF.694).

Warner & Childs Division Factory, 574 Boston Avenue, reinforced concrete loft, 1991-20 (MDF.695).

Somerville Automobile Company, 662-64 Boston Avenue, frame gabled blocks, 1906 (MDF.696).

In addition, threatened properties have recently been surveyed in South Medford:

Union Chapel/Sons of Italy, 44 Alfred Street, frame gabled block, 1925.

Bruce-DiSimone House, 71 Dexter Street, end house, 18575-1889.

Medford Municipal Garage, 21 James Street, Art Deco, 1935-36 (demolished).

Blanchard-Bates Tenant House, 19 Mystic Avenue, altered end house, 1855-75.

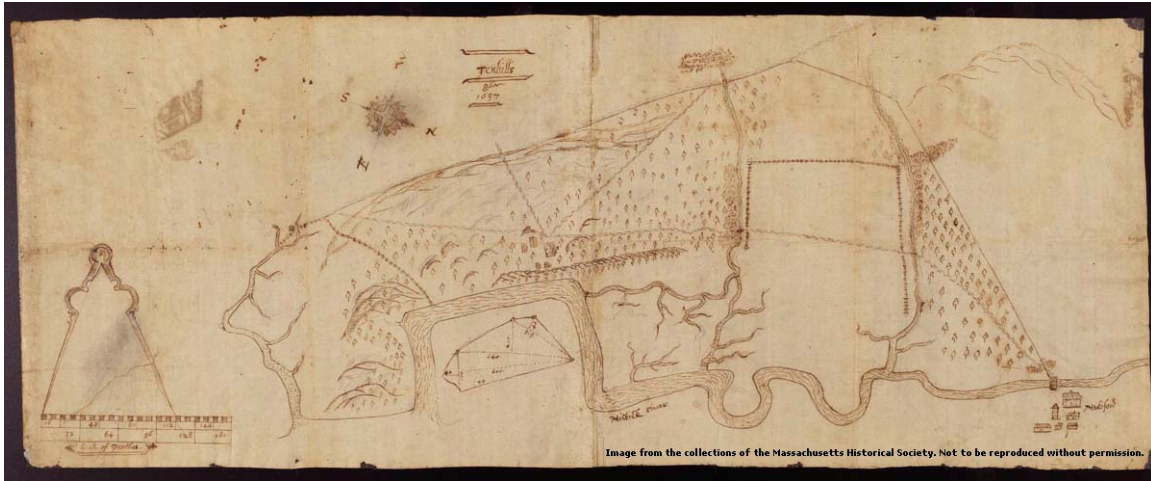
Michael Barry House, 49 Mystic Avenue, end house with multiple additions including commercial front, 1890-93.

Webber House, 65 Summer Street, Second Empire end house, 1868-70.

Charles and Jennie R. Curtis House, 18 Walnut Street, Queen Anne hip block,  
1889-98.

More extensive and numerous resources remain to be recorded in South Medford, the common buildings which were constructed in large numbers and which were for the most part bypassed during earlier efforts. The descriptions and recommendations that follow provide a context for further work and specify a method that emphasizes larger areas rather than individual properties, to provide for comprehensive, economical, and timely coverage of the City's resources.

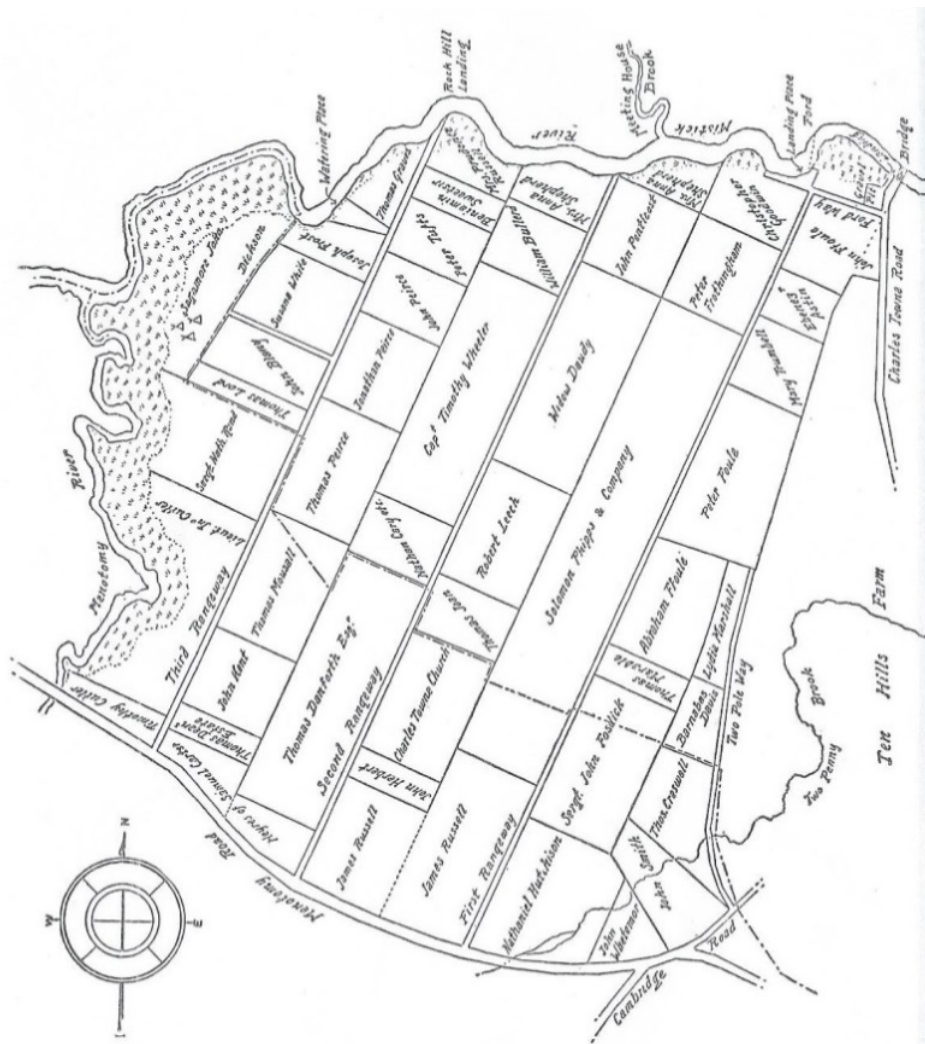
## Historical Development of South Medford through 1855



John Winthrop's Ten Hills Farm occupied much of what became South Medford. The cluster of buildings north of the bridge over the Mystic is at the lower right corner of the map. North is generally to the lower right corner. MHS.

When Medford was first settled in 1630, it included only the land from the Mystic River north to the Middlesex Fells, a grant to Matthew Craddock and first occupied by his tenants and employees. The area was considered a private plantation, referred to as a “peculiar,” and for several decades in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the area was known locally as Mistick. South of the River, another private holding took up the east side of South Medford, the large estate owned by Governor John Winthrop known as Ten Hills Farm and said to include over 600 acres along the Mystic River. Much of that farm was later held by Isaac Royal and his son Isaac during the eighteenth century. The area to the west of this farm was initially part of the extensive holdings of Charlestown, where settlement focused on the neck of land that projected into Boston harbor to the south. With other inland holdings, which would become Somerville in 1842, these sections “beyond the neck” were part of that town’s Stinted Pasture, an area of commonly held land where individuals had assigned rights for pasturing livestock. Several roads or “rangeways” were established through the pasture, one of which eventually became the north/south portion of South Street—now renamed Winthrop Street—in Medford. Known to some as Sodom, the area south of the Mystic River was annexed to the town of Medford in 1754 when it included nearly 700 acres of land.

In spite of its early founding, fewer than a dozen families inhabited the Medford area in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and the population exhibited little growth until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Residents met informally, acting in a sense as if it were a town, until that status was formally recognized in 1684. In spite of the commonly held image of colonial villages, most towns had a dispersed settlement of farmsteads scattered across the landscape with small nodes only where commerce or industry provided additional employment to agriculture, and Medford followed this pattern. Such clustering as there was during the early settlement of the town was along the



Reconstruction of Charlestown's Stinted Pasture.

The Ten Hills Farm is identified as lying to the east of the pasture.

Richard B. Coolidge, "Walnut Tree Hill," *The Medford Historical Register* (Vol. XXXIX, June, 1936) p. 24.

north bank of the Mystic River, and High Street became the center of a developing settlement in the later part of the seventeenth century when the town built its first meetinghouse between 1692 and 1696. The town's population numbered 230 in 1702, 665 in 1736, and 741 in 1763. By the outbreak of the American Revolution, there were 967 residents in about 147 families occupying just over 100 dwellings, but only a few of these occupied South Medford. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of the land in South Medford was in the hands of a few large landowners, only a few of whom even added buildings to their property if later maps are any indication. The gradual division of these large properties is the story of much of South Medford, and a closer examination of that process would no doubt be informative.

But Medford soon became distinctive for the diversity of its economy, as its river and its clay banks allowed entrepreneurial citizens to provide more various employments than most colonial Massachusetts towns. The brick industry was an important economic force in the evolution of Medford, as large natural deposits of clay located both north and south of the

Mystic River made brick manufacturing Medford's chief business. Medford was also known for its rum distilleries, an enterprise closely associated with the notorious triangular trade. Shipbuilding dates to the seventeenth century in Medford, and the business began in earnest in 1803 when Thatcher Magoun established the first shipyard in Medford on Ship Street (now Riverside Avenue) on the east side of Medford Square. Ten yards in town made Medford and Medford-built ships famous for almost a century, and by 1850 there were about 350 men working in the Medford yards, accounting for one fourth of the shipbuilders employed in Massachusetts. The region's prosperity during this period, when trade and manufacturing flourished, contributed to an atmosphere of productivity and expansion. Medford's population grew from 1,020 in 1790 to 1,755 in 1830, and its settlements became denser and larger in size. Some of that story at least can be seen in Peter Tufts drawing of "Royal Ville," which illustrates sections of the former Royall estate and what appears to be a mix of existing lots and proposed parcels for sale, an area that extends from the bridge south to Winter Brook. To the south, most of the area remained in large open lots.

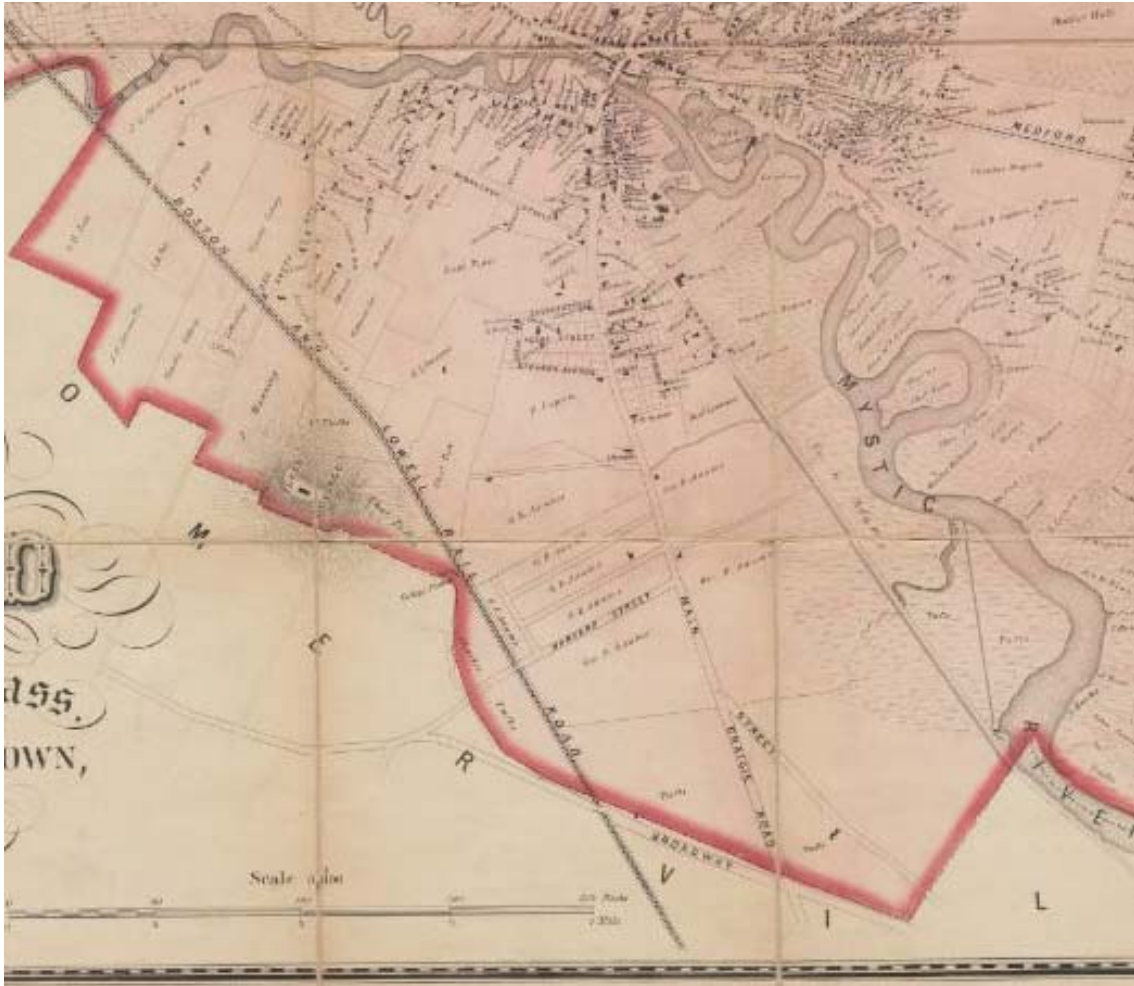
Royal Ville. Peter Tufts' drawing of the Medford Square South neighborhood in 1808. In addition to the concentration of buildings at the bridge and the radial roads, the sketch illustrates the subdivision of large holding and the path of the Middlesex Canal and the Medford Branch Canal with double lines and dark squares for the bridges.

An important change in South Medford in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was the introduction of new modes of transportation. This began with the construction of the Middlesex Canal, chartered in 1793 and opened in 1803, which for fifty years connected Charlestown and Lowell, linking Boston Harbor with the Merrimack River. The Canal entered Medford just west of the river's narrowing in Somerville (then still Charlestown), then wound north and west through South Medford first to the east of Main Street, then turned west along the alignment of Summer Street (once known as Middlesex Street), and employing a 135-foot long aqueduct to cross the River at the site of the present Boston Avenue Bridge; the Medford Branch Canal extended north of that turn west to join the river east of the bridge. Once completed, the Middlesex Canal became a busy thoroughfare as produce, coal, salt, slates, potash, raw cotton, stone, and wood were carried on the cheapest and, for a time, the most popular method of transit in Massachusetts. Soon, however, its imitations became clear: New England severe winters, loss of revenue during major repairs, and an inability to adhere to strict timetables. The canal struggled along, but revenues continued to decrease as competition from newly emerging railroads developed. At about the same time came the construction of the Medford Turnpike (1803), following the path of the present Mystic Avenue and the southern portion of Route 38 to the bridge, and the Andover Turnpike (1805) extending from the bridge to the north along the present Forest Street and Fellsway West. While these roads provided better routes and surfaces, their tolls were unpopular and they were not profitable for their owners and were eventually taken over by the town.

Massachusetts first major railroad was the next to cross South Medford. Investors in the Boston and Lowell Railroad received a charter in 1830, with the right to build and operate a railroad between Lowell and Boston and a thirty-year monopoly. In 1835 the route was open to the public, the original route running parallel to the Canal through the western portion of South Medford. The initial stop was called "Medford Gates" and it gave rise to development in West Medford and eventually, the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The quantity of freight traffic on the Boston and Lowell Railroad was large, as expected, with Lowell's textile companies bringing in raw materials and sending out finished goods. The level of passenger traffic, however, was not anticipated. Many people wanted to go not only from Lowell to Boston but to places in between, and passenger rail proved nearly as profitable as freight. Later stops were added just at the edge of South Medford and Somerville for Tufts College and at South Street (now Winthrop) in the neighborhood that would be known as Hillside. In 1845 a second line came to serve Medford, when a branch was constructed to connect the Boston and Maine line to Medford Square.

The establishment of the railroads in Medford beginning in the second quarter of the nineteenth century marked a transition point for the town, especially when combined with the economic changes to employment that came with the rise of the middle class during the same period. Proprietors of small manufactories, retail stores, as well as the growing number of lawyers, doctors, and clerks made up a distinct and growing new class in communities like Medford, a transportation hub at the intersection of railroads, turnpikes, and the river. With more disposable income and refined taste to go with it, these families contributed to the changing landscape of the town as they constructed houses and encouraged the founding of genteel institutions in the town. Medford Square grew significantly in size and importance as stores and professional offices, new churches, schools, and meeting halls were constructed there for this growing portion of the population. Large land holdings and farmland around the

Square were more rapidly subdivided into house lots, and Medford Square became more densely built and larger in extent, especially to the east and south. On the south side of the Mystic River, civic, commercial and industrial development spilled south from Medford Square and, as can be seen on the Walling map of 1855, some real estate speculators began to experiment with a new vision for this part of the town. This distinctive development also coincided with the related establishment of Tufts University, in 1852 on Walnut Hill (now College Hill).



Detail of Walling's Map of Medford, 1855, showing South Medford.

This map again shows Medford Square spilling south over the Mystic River, and the new subdivisions flanking Main Street, but the majority of the area was still held in large parcels.

Walling's map of 1855 captures the area during this period of change, and evidence of residential development is clearly visible in the neighborhood. In addition to added development along the north-south routes, South (Winthrop), Main, and Mystic, the expansion of the area closest to the bridge can be seen along the arc of South Street extending to the west. Like Medford Square to the north, the adjacent section south of the Mystic developed a different character to the east of the bridge than to the west. To the east, the development took the industrial character of shipbuilding and support services on the river banks, sharing that

quality with the area described in the area form for Medford Square East. Building was quite dense and businesses were located there. By contrast, the area to the west shared a more elite character with the area on the hills on the north bank of the river, with larger houses of the rising merchant and shipbuilding community. Building on the south bank and overlooking the water, members of the expanding elite built ample houses in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century along South Street. The Jewish merchant-philanthropist Abraham Touro chose this for his rural retreat a Neoclassical design featuring bowed bays, while ship-builder Paul Curtis constructed an ambitious Grecian design with a colossal Ionic portico.

Evidence of small subdivisions is found farther to the south, where on either side of Main Street, small groups of houses on comparatively small lots were planned, in marked contrast to the large holdings that still characterized most of South Medford. Brooks Place was subdivided in 1844, with thirteen houses around the small park that remains, by David Kimball, a Boston dry-goods merchant, whose first and second wife were both from Medford. Hancock Street followed in 1847, a U-shaped arrangement of 27 lots, arranged to include a service drive. Both subdivisions backed up on the Canal, and a handful of ample houses were built here in the next decades. Across the street, three streets were laid out and a grid of lots arrayed along them, on the south side of George, both sides of Pearl, the north side of Stearns, the west side of Main, and the west side of a short street named Green which would eventually become part of the long College Avenue. Only a small number of owners held the remainder of the neighborhood – Ruth Tidd was established at the Royal House, radical abolitionist George L. Stearns lived to the south off Stearns Avenue, near P. Capen, who will require additional research. The largest property owner was George E. Adams, who apparently inherited the family's farmstead that extended on both sides of Main and operated a Boston milk route. Charles Tufts, best known as benefactor of the Universalist institution of higher learning that took his name, owned land around the campus on the west side of the area. Other members of the Tufts family owned the land along the south boundary, and it appears that they and Charles were members of the Charlestown/Somerville branch of the family, descendants of Nathan Tufts and his sons Daniel, Amos, and Nathan.<sup>4</sup>

Over the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the several sections of South Medford each experienced distinct land use patterns and increased in density at a different pace. They thus became more different from one another, as each developed its own employment patterns, its own housing varieties, its own gathering places, becoming more like separate neighborhoods in their own right. As will be described in greater detail below, Medford Square South, in the orbit of the civic and commercial center, emerged first, followed by the subdivision of parcels on the slopes of Winter Hill on the Somerville border, and finally, between them, the Brickyards and Mystic Park were built over quite quickly in the 1910s and 20s. The three chapters that follow will briefly describe each of these and make recommendations about survey there.

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<sup>4</sup> Nathan (d. 1771) was a descendant of the immigrant Peter, through his son John and grandson Peter; his son Daniel (1753-1839) was father of Charles. See more on these Tufts below. Edward C. Booth, "The Tufts Family in Somerville," *Historic Leaves*, Vol. 1, April 1902-03, Perseus; Ancestry.com: Boucher and Hollytree family trees.

## Medford Square South in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century



This detail of Bailey's bird's eye view shows the Medford Square South neighborhood, showing the main roadways and the gradual filling of early subdivisions.

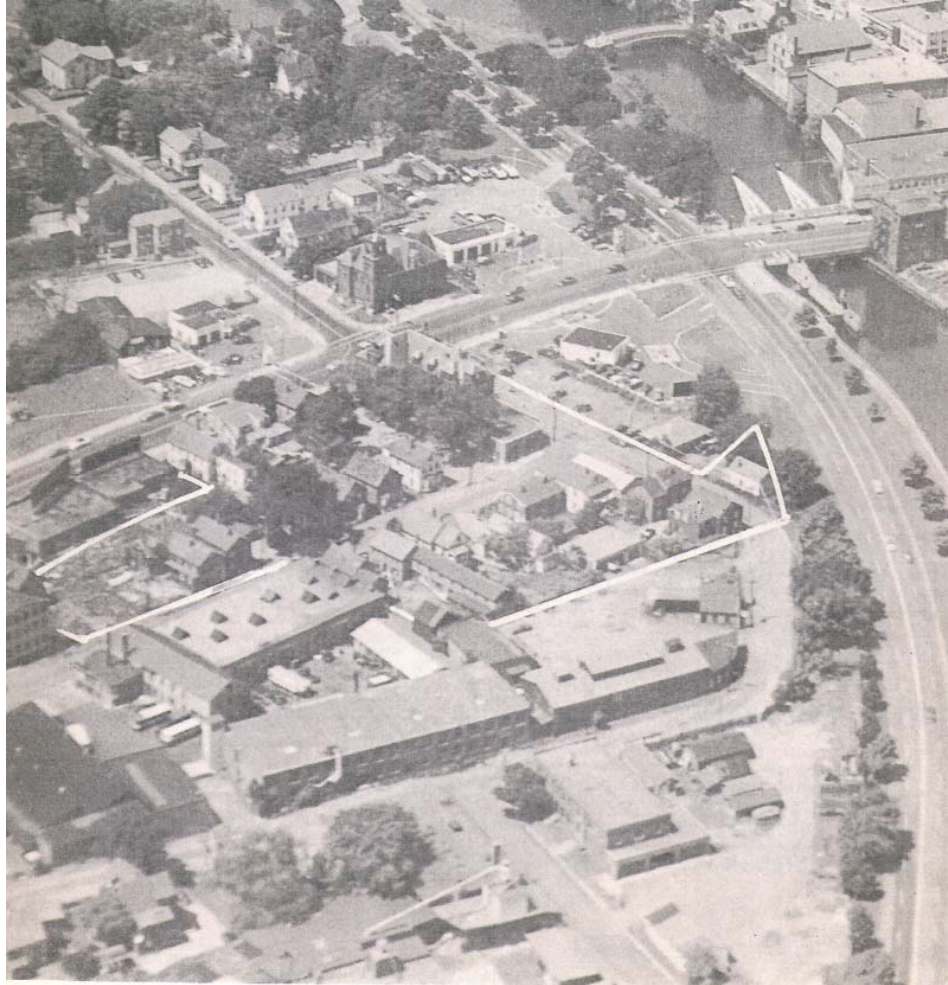
Over the next century, Medford Square South experienced many of the patterns of development seen across the River, which was becoming an ever-larger central place for the community. Expansion here mirrored the growth in Medford Square, with civic, industrial, and commercial zones immediately near the bridge and the river to east and a ring of looser residential development surrounding this core to the west and the south. The river's edge along north north and east sides of the neighborhood were at first open meadow but gradually became the site of industrial development that clustered along both its banks. By 1875, the Beers atlas identified Medford Square as extending as far south as Stearns Avenue to the west of Main Street and Hancock Street to the east; these general boundaries mark the extent of the planning area as well. As much as any of the City's neighborhoods, this one has experienced the impact of transportation improvements, crossed by the Middlesex Canal, the Medford Turnpike, streetcar lines, the Mystic Valley Parkway, and Route 93, most crossing north-south across the area but merging at the bridge and often turning there to the west. The cumulative effect of its evolving land use is a distinct core of public buildings and industry in the northeast corner of the

neighborhood and grids of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century housing, proportionally mostly single-family in form, across its remaining acreage.

In 1889 the area was still primarily residential, with the long-standing tavern, the Medford House, still in operation. As more public buildings grew up along High and Salem Street, growth expanded to the south as well, with the construction here of the Fire Station at the corner of Main and South Street near the Medford House, and followed by the Police Station, Water and Highway Department buildings on the west side of Main. A particularly dense area developed east of Main along Union and Swan streets that ran parallel to it, which remained a mix of residential and other uses until redevelopment in the 1950s. Industrial development focused to the east, as it had on the other side of the river, including Teel & Co Carriage Factory, which would expand over the turn of the century, James S. Bean's coal wharves, planing mills, oiling works, and J.O. Curtis still owned land here. Just to the south, at the intersection of Main and Mystic known as Moore's then as Cavanaugh Square, Walter Bates (1832-94) developed Batesville, a concrete paver plant and a cluster of houses. Commercial development located here as well, and streetcars coursed along Main to and from Somerville to the south, with horse sheds built on the west of Main below Emerson. By 1910, the area included Medford Ice, Wellman Machine, and Walker & Viles wagons manufactory. By 1950, most places, and there were more, were auto-related, and the Medford House became Carroll's Diner. This area was more intensively developed than the rest of South Medford and included more various activities than the wider expanses to the south through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, it has been rebuilt over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so that evidence of its earlier configuration has for the most part been lost. Medford's first urban renewal project was launched in a small section of Medford Square South, and new police and fire buildings were built in 1963.

Over the rest of the nineteenth century, much of the residential development in Medford Square South was concentrated in the areas laid out by 1855, as the subdivisions were filled out and some larger holdings were subdivided. The owners of South Street property gradually subdivided their large and deep lots that often to extend to Middlesex Street (now Summer), the path of the Canal. Gradually houses were added on small lots along new streets between South and Summer, most at this time small and moderately-scaled end houses. Similarly, on the east side of Main, Brooks Park was gradually filled in, as were the blocks of George, Pearl, and Stearns, while the Hancock subdivision lagged behind, with consolidated larger lots and retaining a number of open lots, one eventually developed with a school. New development occurred to the north of the Royal house during the 1880s, when Florence and Royal were developed, followed by this section of College Avenue in the 1890s. Ample single-family houses were constructed on these streets, over a comparatively narrow period that provides a contrast to the more incremental development of the nearby subdivisions. Twentieth-century infill included both individual buildings or clusters of two, three, or four houses, but somewhat larger groupings were added also in the still open area between Summer and South streets. At its east end, Dewey Circle was reorganization as Metcalf Street and, across Walnut, Thomas was extended and built out, and Hancock was also filled in. In each of these areas, clusters of two-families predominated. The final development of the Royal house block took place in the interwar years, with a group of very uniform gambrel-roofed houses, oriented with their ends to the street on George Street and more various colonial forms on the north and west side. A handful of apartment blocks were added in this period as well, including a distinctive garden-apartment-like grouping off Main Street. One section of Medford Square

South, just east of Main Street and known as the Union-Swan project, would subject to study and eventual demolition and rebuilding through the City's first urban renewal effort in 1955. Post-war infill can be found, often employing the small side-entry garrison colonial form, including an attached group on Hancock.



Detail of the Union Swan area and its vicinity from "Report No. 1, Urban Renewal, Medford MA, 1955.

### **Survey Recommendations for Medford Square South:**

The Medford Commission has proposed that its next phase of survey will be Medford Square South. As a critical component of the large expanse that is Medford Square, which extends beyond its eponymous neighborhood across Route 93 into East Medford as well as south across the River, Medford Square South is the logical next step for research. Although the area is comparatively small, it is densely occupied and has experienced a complex layering of development, especially in the area closest to the bridge. This overall development and real estate investment has, in turn, put pressure on the area's older building stock, and tear-downs and intense infilling have been frequent in this neighborhood and have concerned its residents.

The Medford Historic Commission needs the Medford Square South survey in order to get ahead of the developers and ensure that key resources are assessed and acknowledged.

The lists below include the high priority properties and areas, but it is not yet certain whether all of this work can be completed during one \$30,000 survey project. Finalizing the numbers within each area, identifying additional properties to be covered by B forms, and refining the research protocol for each area will affect the budget for the work. Areas are listed first, followed by individual properties recommended for intensive research, which will be expanded after the preparation of the 1900 list and more intensive fieldwork.

Medford Square South: This civic, commercial, and industrial area extends south of the River and bridge along Main and Mystic streets, to Emerson Street on the west side of Main and including Union, Swan, and James on the east side of Mystic. This very dense area has undergone much change as it shifted functions over time. Some recent survey has been undertaken here, but the dense area is under consideration as part of planning for Medford Square so additional research would be timely. Their definition of the south section of the Square includes both sides of Main from the bridge as far as Summer, Columbia, and James, and they estimate 53 parcels in the area. This includes residences and so some decisions will need to be made about incorporating the entire area for survey or reducing it by function. The area includes a significant amount of recent infill, but it will be important to track the story of its earlier role. It includes two properties to be covered by a B form, Police and Fire Headquarters, 100-120 Main Street, and the Hall house, 41 Mystic Avenue, see below.

South/Summer streets area: This large and diverse area includes critical early buildings associated with Medford's shipbuilders of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that initial development was followed by incremental growth in each of the subsequent decades. Development was first concentrated on the south side of South Street, overlooking the river, on Winthrop Street at the west side of the area, and associated with the Middlesex Canal that ran near the path of Summer Street. The large area thus extends the full length of both South and Summer between Winthrop and Main but avoids the central area at the east end that was developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; today it includes as many as 100 parcels, excluding Summer Street (see below). Some B forms have been identified (below) for 36, 48, and 54 South Street and 12 Maple; because of its age and complexity, additional exceptional properties will likely be identified for coverage by B forms.

Florence Avenue/ west side of Royal Street/ College Avenue from George to Summer (except section on Royal block noted below): A well-preserved group of turn-of-the-century single-family houses, many large and ambitious, and among the most cohesive neighborhoods in the City. Includes nine properties on Florence, seven on Royal, 19 on College Avenue, maybe one on Main (some infill included), for a total of about 35 properties. Also includes B forms for 36 College Avenue, 17 Florence Avenue, 37 Royal Street.

Royal house block: This early 20<sup>th</sup> century grouping constitutes a very coherent development surrounding a national landmark. Surveying this area now would allow for an experiment, on a small scale, of how to efficiently survey the vast numbers of City's 20<sup>th</sup> century resources. Includes about five on George, three on College, and ten on Royall, for a total of 18 houses.

George /Pearl /Stearns/ College: One of the early subdivisions in the neighborhood, and including several well-preserved buildings, seven will be covered in B forms, including 211 Main Street, 16-18 and 24 George Street, and 12, 24, 27, 38, and 42 Pearl. The total number of buildings includes two surveyed in the Hillside neighborhood on College Avenue, 11 on George, 6 on College Avenue, 22 on Pearl, 13 on Stearns, and 6 on Main, for a total of 58 properties.

Reorganize Research on Hancock Area into the new area form format: Research undertaken in association with the demolition delay and recording of 244 and 252 Main Street included examination of most of the buildings in this early subdivision. The new format makes for a more user-friendly document, which would be advantageous to the Commission, and would create a document consistent with others planned for this neighborhood. Brooks Park was platted with the Hancock area to its south and while they might be surveyed together considering them independently might make for more manageable research and product. Individual properties will be selected for coverage in B forms, including 4/6/8/10/12 and 9 Brooks Park; 15, 41, and 50-52 Hancock Avenue, and a small area for the garden apartments (4 buildings) at 260 Main Street.

Colonial Apartments, 260 Main, garden apartments, four buildings.

Preliminary List of individual properties to be covered by individual forms (about 30):

Apartment block, 2/4/6/8/10/12 Brooks Park (and 208 Main Street)  
House, 9 Brooks Park, Greek end house  
House, 36 College Avenue, Queen Anne end house.  
House, 17 Florence Avenue, cross-gabled Queen Anne.  
Duplex, 16-18 George Street, brick Queen Anne duplex.  
House, 24 George Street, Italianate small mansard parlor-by-pass house.  
House, 15 Hancock Avenue, small Greek end house  
House, 41 Hancock Avenue, end gabled block  
House, 50-52 Hancock Avenue, end gabled block  
Stetson-Redman House, 12 Maple Avenue, end house (MDF.60).  
Police and Fire Department Headquarters, 100 and 120 Main Street, 1963.  
W. Cushing Cottage, 145 Main Street, Greek small end house (MDF.52).  
House, 211 Main Street, two-story Modern house.  
Royal House Park, Main Street.  
House, 222-224 Main Street, end house  
Elbridge Teel House, 234 Main Street, GR end house (MDF.49).  
Benjamin Hall House, 41 Mystic Avenue, 1752, gambrel double house, moved from High Street (MDF.34).  
Apartment block, 12 Pearl Street  
Haskell-Spaulling House, 24 Pearl Street, mansard double house (MDF.78).  
Ebenezer Waterman House, 27 Pearl Street, Italianate double house (MDF.61).  
House, 38 Pearl Street, Greek Revival end house.

House, 42 Pearl Street, Italianate end house.  
House, 37 Royal Street, Italianate hip-roofed end house.  
Bradbury House 36 South Street, Fed/Greek double house with wing (1803)  
Wright House, 48 South Street, Greek Revival double house (ca. 1835)  
Goodrich House, 54 South Street, Greek Revival double house (ca. 1835).  
Jotham Stetson House, 102 South Street, ca. 1840, altered ell house (MDF.59).  
House, 8-10 Thomas Street, Federal/Greek ell house.  
Cotting-Bigelow House, 34-36 Thomas Street, ca. 1760, gambrel double house  
moved for the Bigelow Block (MDF.35).  
Hall House, 23 Walnut Street, Italianate double house.

Further survey recommendations:

The Commission might consider surveying Summer Street as a separate area, in part to provide photography and basic data about properties already listed in MACRIS as part of the Canal NR district. This could provide more specific information on these properties and bring attention to properties with other areas of significance. There are approximately 40 properties on the north side of the street and 30 on the south side, for a total of about 70.

Emerson Street: Turn of the century single-family houses and duplexes, may include adjacent properties on Walnut Street, about 15 properties.

Mystic Avenue/Rt. 38/Turnpike Corridor: This commercial fringe zone extends through all three of these neighborhoods and might best be considered together.

Main Street Corridor: Many two-families are located between isolated early houses and commercial blocks.

Golden Court: large apartment block.

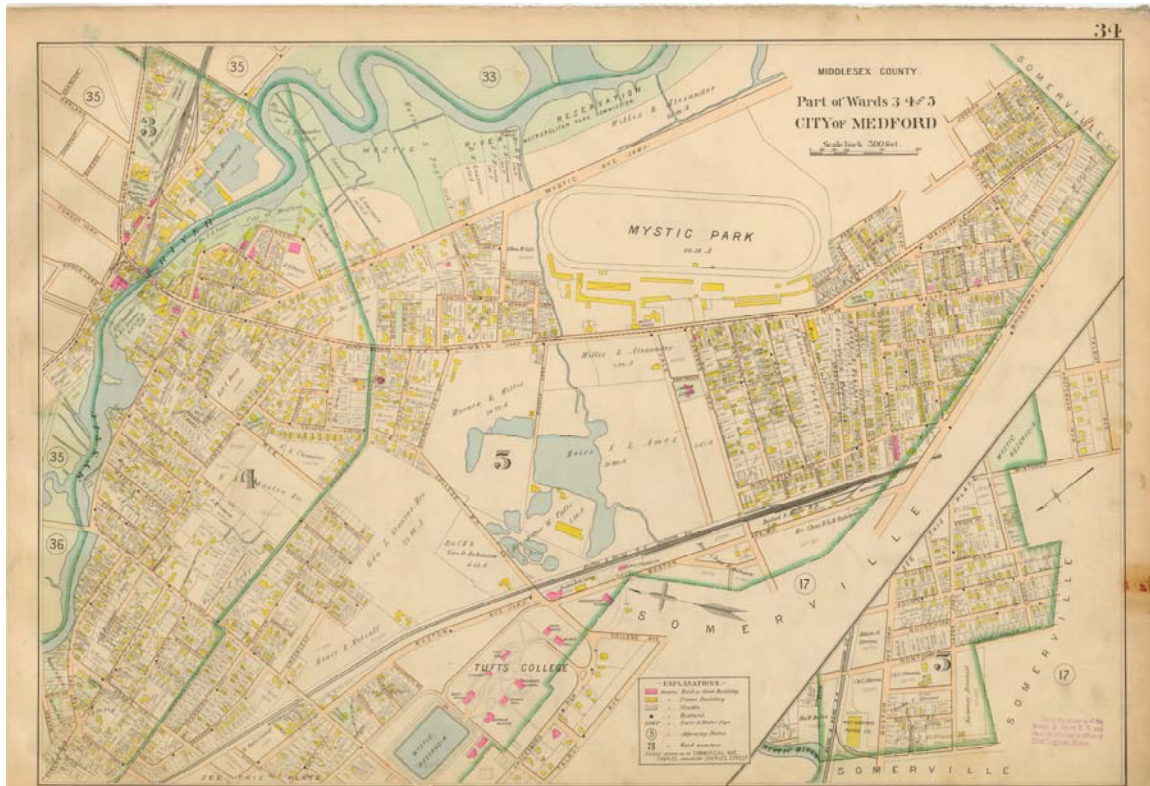
Columbia Road: Mostly small turn-of-the-century single-family houses.

Sylvia Road: Mostly two-families but may include house next to Oakes and across the street from it, on Main.

Malvern Terrace/Crescent Street/Hancock Street: Small turn-of-the-century single-family houses.

Metcalf Street and adjacent lots on Thomas Street, all two-families.

## The Brick Yards and Mystic Park



Stadly Atlas of 1900 showing large sections of South Medford not yet developed with housing. Still occupied by Mystic Park and the brickyards.

One of the most distinctive aspects of South Medford's history has been how long its large central section remained open and dedicated to low intensity uses. The central section of South Medford appears to have been open and agricultural through the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but thereafter its new uses included an important site of brick manufacture to the west of Main Street and race courses to the east. These uses meant that these fringe areas would be withheld from real estate development until the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when they would experience rapid transformation with the construction of hundreds of buildings, most two-families, in the decades of the 1910s and 20s.

As George Adams had owned significant parts of this property in 1855, by 1875 large expanses of the area were owned by Benjamin S. Wright (1819-1892) and Horace E. Willis (1836-1914), two kinsmen best known for their association with the Mystic Park race course. Wright was the senior of the two, and his *Boston Globe* obituary described an exciting and varied life, including travel west during the Gold Rush, brick manufacture in Minneapolis, and stock farming in Maine and Michigan. He began his career in an "oyster saloon" and maintained an interest in oyster restaurants and their wholesale trade throughout his life, in Boston at several establishments and at Medford's Mystic House. Wright purchased the Adams estate in

1866 and established Mystic Park, pursuing his long interest in trotting horses and making it the fastest in the country; he lived for a time near Spot Pond with his sister and her family. He was “generous to a fault,” and was described as “the most famous horseman of his time.” Wright’s partner in this, Horace Willis, was married to his niece, Francella Billings (1844-1919), the daughter of Francis and Emma Wright Billings, and he too was involved in the oyster trade and Mystic Park. His involvement locally was of longer standing, and he oversaw it at the height of the Park’s fame in racing circles from 1887 to 1897. A fond tribute in the *Globe* noted his close link to the “golden age of racing in New England.” He loved the sport of harness racing, bred and raised fast horses, but did not race them. “His efforts always were for clean sport, and there is no exaggeration in the statement that to him more than to any other one person was due the fact that New England for a long period of years was the banner racing ground of America.” Willis was a long-time resident at 251 Main Street, a house at the corner of Stearns that was demolished between 1910 and 1936. When the Park closed, *The American Horse Breeder* mourned its passing and praised Willis’s role in “building up” interest in trotting, but noted that “this arena of many turf triumphs must fall before the invasion of the fast and widely extending urban population.” A second short-lived course, Combination Park, was located to the south of Mystic Park, also between Mystic Avenue and East Albion Street, that combined horse and bicycle racing, built in 1896 and operating sporadically into the 1910s.<sup>5</sup>

Across Main Street from the park, large lots below Stearns as far as Harvard were open brickyards. Brick manufacture on a smaller scale had been pursued in many sections of the town in the colonial period, including portions of South Medford, on the Royall estate and between today’s Summer and George streets. Nathan Adams opened yards in 1810 situated on both sides of Main Street which eventually became one large yard with Main Street as its eastern border and College Avenue as its western border. It was later owned by a Mr. Buzzell, who gave his name to Buzzells Lane, which runs through the center of the former brickyard. By the 1860s the introduction of steam created economies of scale that made the operation of large yards more profitable and the brick manufacturing industry in Medford changed with the times. A large area, from Stearns in the north to Harvard to the south, included two yards, the northern one operated after 1876 by Thrasher & Company. The yard closed in the late 19th or early 20<sup>th</sup> century and some of the land is now Tufts Alumni Fields while the rest became Stanley, Frederick and Windsor streets. Immediately south and adjacent to this yard, the Massachusetts Brick Company was started in 1865 and operated a large enterprise. They manufactured by a new process of using dry clay, but the bricks were not durable and the company went out of business by 1889. Still farther south on today’s Medford Street near the fork of Medford Street and Main Street was another yard, owned by Levi Prosser and a Mr. Littlefield, and after 1878 by Thomas Casey; Tufts Park is now at this location.

These wide-open spaces were rapidly transformed to accommodate the explosive growth in City in these early 20<sup>th</sup> century decades, putting a high real-estate value on brickyards and race courses. This was the period when the streetcar or trolley suburbs around Boston first experienced a new scale of residential construction and new multi-family house forms were common in working-class enclaves like this one. This expansion was accomplished primarily with

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<sup>5</sup> *Boston Globe*: “Benjamin S. Wright Dead,” 6 January 1892; Willis Death Notice, 30 January 1914; “Willis Mourned by the Horsemen,” Frank G. Trott, 2 February 1914; ; “The Passing of Mystic Park,” *The American Horse Breeder*, 5 January 1904 at Harness Racing Standardbred Community; <http://www.mi-harness.net/publct/mysticpark.html>

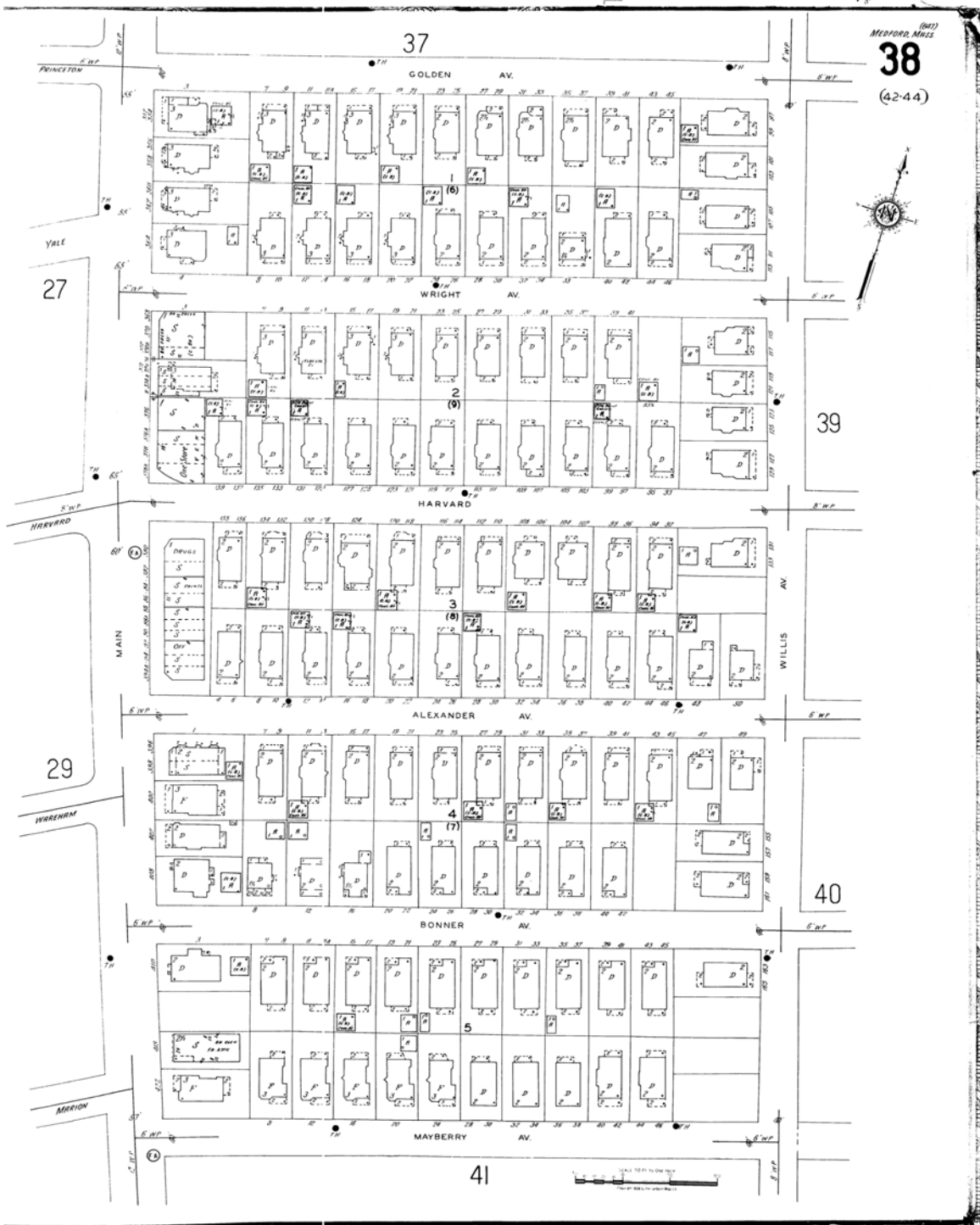
the construction of two-family and three-decker houses enclosing stacked flats, though small clusters of single-family houses can be identified as well. These developments were designed with straightforward and regular grids of blocks and lots, with uniform lot size within each of the subdivisions but some variations among them. Commercial and institutional development to serve the growing neighborhood focused along Main Street, including St John's Method Episcopal Church on Main between Frederick and Windsor (demolished), the Lincoln School on Yale Street, and a shopping node grew up on Main between Yale and Harvard.

The first subdivisions flanked Main Street and the trolley line, including the eastern section of the brickyard area that came to be known as College Acres, and the west part of the area that included Mystic Park. Both sections were undertaken by trustees F.L. Willard, C.C. Mayberry, and W.P. Rice, and additional research on these investors will be important to future planning and survey efforts. The cadastral plan for each was similar, including four or five lots at each end facing the important north-south streets, and eight to ten lots between facing the east-west streets, most still discernable in today's plan and most measuring about 45 by 90 feet. The section from Dartmouth east to Main was subdivided first in 1904/05 into 86 lots on east-west streets including, north to south, Wellesley, Bowdoin, Princeton, Yale and Harvard. Across Main Street, the first Mystic Park subdivision was significantly larger in size, running from Billings in the north to Willard in the south, from Main Street at the west to Willis Street in the east. The long narrow development included 279 lots, very regularly deployed over about ten blocks. Streets were named for developers and individuals associated with Mystic Park and harness racing, including Billings, Bowen, Golden, Wright, Harvard, Alexander, Bonner, Willard, and Rice. The same team owned the land to the east of this subdivision, where the names continue though the area is smaller, only extending to Bonner, and the lots are larger in size. This area was developed with more various housing types than its neighbor, including both single and two-family houses. Another early subdivision was the small area located to the west of the railroad corridor on Boston Avenue, Bristol Road and parts of Pearson Road, land that had apparently been held by members of the Robinson family, including the heirs of Charles Robinson and Sumner Robinson, trustee, with a house facing Harvard between Bristol and Boston. The subdivision extended into Somerville as far as College Avenue and Powder House Square, where some two-families had been built by 1910.<sup>6</sup>

The rest of the land to the west of Main Street was developed slightly later, but as with the areas described above, most of these had been built out by 1936. At the north end, there was an apparent subdivision running south from the south side of Stearns and including the parallel streets of Frederick, Windsor, and Buzzell, and running from College Avenue east to Main Street. No development was indicated on the 1910 Sanborn, but it had been nearly completely built out by 1936 with a mix of single- and two-family houses on the block of Stearns to Stanley, while blocks below, Stanley through Frederick and Windsor to Buzzell were dominated by two-families; short streets were also laid between Windsor and Buzzell. The remainder of College Acres was developed as well, from Colby east to Main, Wellesley south to Harvard. Very little was built between Buzzell and Wellesley or on the north side of Yale and on Princeton, Bowdoin, and Dartmouth. Some sections were not developed with housing, but rather by Tufts University after 1950 and are now Alumni Fields.

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<sup>6</sup> MCRDP: 124:35 and 203:3 (1912).



Sample section showing plan for Mystic Park redevelopment, the southern part of the western section, almost entirely built out by 1936, the date of this Sanborn atlas plate.

The development of the Combination Park, located at the far southeast corner of South Medford, was postponed, and was held by trustees after 1927 who leased it to Somerville to serve as a dump. Later it was developed, like the lower part of Mystic Avenue, with warehousing to serve the trucking concerns that developed here in the postwar period, an important new economic engine in the City. Public housing was constricted between Willis on the west, Bonner on the north, and with angled southeast bound along the back sides of Mystic and Hicks also in the postwar period. Two intersecting roads crossed the area, Exchange and Willard, but the area was developed more as a large super block with 28 two-story housing units, some for four and some for six housing units.

### **Survey Recommendations for Brickyards/ Mystic Park**

The lists below include the high priority properties, mostly organized into areas, as this neighborhood includes large stretches of post 1900 dwellings with only small numbers of public buildings and work places. It is not yet certain whether all of this work can be completed during one \$30,000 survey project. Finalizing the numbers within each area, identifying additional properties to be covered by B forms, and refining the research protocol for each area will each effect the budget for the work. For this neighborhood it may also be appropriate to select some individual residences for survey, exceptionally well-preserved properties and/or examples that illustrate the variation of house types that are found in this neighborhood. Areas are listed first, followed by individual properties recommended for intensive research, which may be expanded after more intensive fieldwork following the general survey recommendations.

Stearns/ Frederick/ Windsor/ Buzzell, from College Avenue to Main Street, about 200 buildings. The area is large enough that it may be subdivided based on the characteristics described above; some Main Street properties may be surveyed as part of the Main Street corridor noted below.

College Acres east, from Dartmouth east to Main Street, Buzzell south to Harvard, about 90 buildings.

College Acres west: Colby through Radcliff to Dartmouth, Wellesley to Harvard, including the perpendicular streets below Yale (Berwick, Bradford, and Benton), an exceptional cluster, about 160 buildings.

Mystic Park west: Billings in the north to Willard in the south, Willis Street west to Main Street, about 300 buildings.

Mystic Park east: Billings in the north to Bonnor in the south, back side of Willis east to back side of Mystic, about 110 buildings.

Harvard-Main commercial node: north of this intersection to Wareham/Wright, south to Wareham/Alexander, including 158-163 Harvard and 363-399 and 368-394 Main, about 15 buildings.

Willis Public Housing: between Willis on the west, Bonner on the north, and with angled southeast bound along the back sides of Mystic and Hicks, about 30 buildings.

St. Clement's Roman Catholic Church area: along Boston Avenue (167 and 595-599) at Warner Street (30-36 and 71), including church, convent, rectory, and two schools, five buildings.

Preliminary List of individual properties to be covered by individual forms:

Lincoln Junior High School, 119 Yale Street

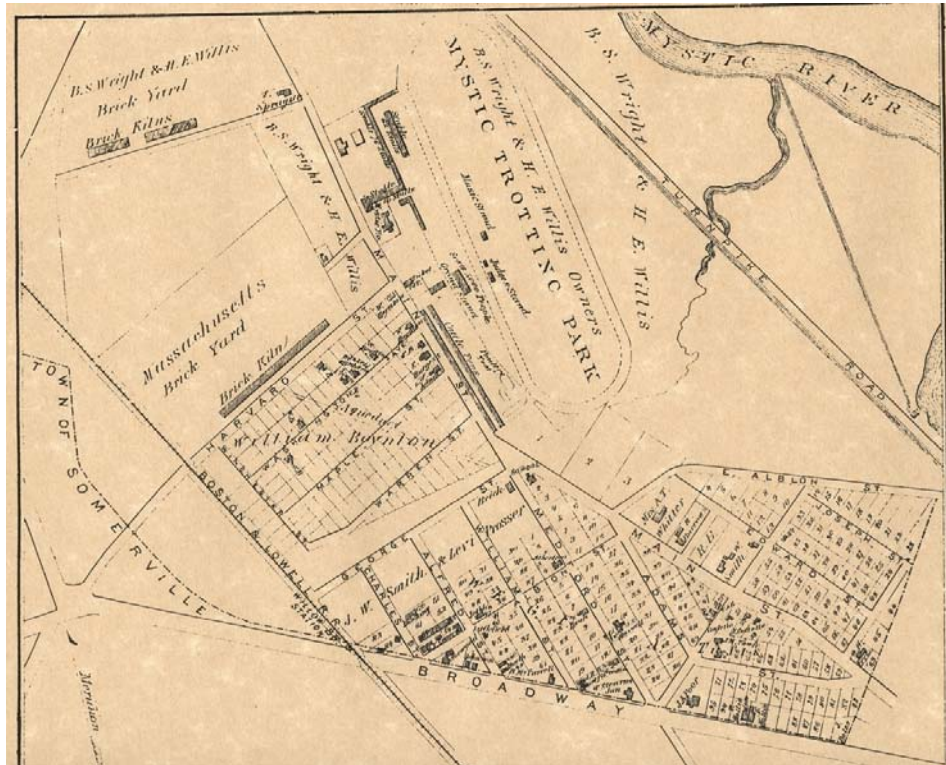
Further Survey Recommendations:

Railroad corridor, between Boston and Winchester, is an industrial zone, and part of this was surveyed as part of the Green Line extension ENF, but a wider area might be reconsidered.

To the west of Boston Avenue, there is a large triangle that is a single subdivision straddling Medford and Somerville and extending to Broadway and College Avenue. The sections on the west side of Boston and along St. Clement's/ Bristol, and parts of Pearson are in Medford, about 60 buildings. This might be surveyed in cooperation with Somerville.

As noted for the Medford Square neighborhood, the Commission might also consider surveying properties already listed in MACRIS as part of the Middlesex Canal NR district. This could provide more specific information on these properties and bring attention to properties with other areas of significance. Similarly, the corridors of Main Street and Mystic Avenue might be surveyed together. In this neighborhood, that area is wider and extends into deep blocks, including the warehouses and including Fulbright to the east, and Rear Mystic and Hicks to the west.

## The Rise of Winter Hill



Beers Atlas of 1875, detail of plate showing the lower section of South Medford.

The development of the southern-most section of Medford makes an important contrast to this long-open central section. It appears that its proximity to Somerville and Broadway brought developers into the area, and by 1875, there had been four large subdivisions laid out which would set its contrasting character as its development continued over the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its major roads had long been in place, Main Street running generally north-south, but veering east in this area, and Broadway in Somerville running along the bound between the towns, general east-west in this vicinity. These bounds set the division of the developers' holdings. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of these divisions were reorganized, with more intervening cross streets and smaller lots. The development thereafter was a mix of single- and two-family houses in a very dense configuration made all the more distinctive by the topography that rises to the south, isolating portions of the neighborhood from their surroundings.

The northern most of these plats was held by William Boynton (1820-1901) and was located to the south of Harvard Street between the railroad right-of-way and Main Street. The original plan, at least as the map displays it, included Winchester Street parallel to the railroad, and a set of three perpendicular roads between Winchester and Main, creating three long blocks and one triangular lot at the south where planning was constrained by the parcel bound.

There were about 140 lots laid out, most oriented to the long streets. Eleven already had houses, seven still held by Boynton. Washington and Maple streets were in the vicinity of today's Wareham and Marion, and Tufts Park occupies much of the lower section that was Warren.<sup>7</sup> Boynton had lived nearby in Winchester since 1859 and was a well-known real estate developer, in Boston as well as in the northern suburbs. Born in Framingham, he trained as a carpenter and later was in the lumber trade in East Cambridge. His real estate speculation began in the North and West Ends, and his later "negotiations" included the South End, Back Bay (including the site of the Boston Art Museum), Dorchester, and Roxbury. In Winchester, he was identified as "a power to beautify and expand the town" and credited with seeing "the future of the west side," and was associated with the development of Wedgemere there.<sup>8</sup> The land was later owned by Aiden Besse and by 1900, the upper two-thirds of the area had been about half built out, and the major owner of the undeveloped lots was John or Jno. C. Haynes; the lower section was held by Thomas Casey and Mary Ann Casey. By 1936, the awkward holding would become part of Tufts Park.

To the south of Boynton's holdings, J.W. Smith and Levi Prosser held land that had not been subdivided by 1875, though it appeared to be crossed by roads that were extensions of the pattern established to the south. It appears from the evidence of the Walker Atlas of 1889, however, that this land remained in use as a brickyard, and would not be divided for house lots until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prosser was involved in brickmaking in this vicinity with the firm Prosser & Littlefield at that time, while Thomas Casey, who worked with William H Casey, held the land to the north and the kiln at the south.<sup>9</sup> By 1900 the area had been subdivided and was held by Blaney & Robinson, with the angled division still visible and the lots on both sides of the bound were angled to accommodate it. This too would become part of Tufts Park.

The sections closest to Somerville had been subdivided in three separate plats, although these plans were recast over time. The section had been held by members of the Tufts family in 1855, and the main intersection of the area, where Main Street veers to the east and Medford Street extends more directly south, has been known as Tufts Square at least since 1900. The Tufts School (demolished) was located there as well, and the land was donated to the town by George Tufts in 1862. The area was subdivided apparently in the 1850s and 60s by William Tufts et al, likely William, Edward, George F., and Alfred Tufts. Two of these are sons of Joseph Frothingham Tufts, while William and Edward were Joseph's brothers. The brothers had inherited the land from their uncle Nathan Tufts, a wealthy Charlestown gentleman who owned significant acreage in the area.<sup>10</sup> In 1875, the section south of Main Street was labeled "W. E. [,] G. F. & A. Tufts," and the configuration of lots and streets of the three plats is clearly displayed there. The westernmost plat was a triangular area southwest of Medford Street, included three streets parallel to Medford Street, Charles (now lower Winchester), Alfred, and William, and was bisected by Albion Street. Eighty-five lots were located there and just under 20 had been

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<sup>7</sup> See MDF.74, Boynton Block (1873), 379 Main Street, which asserts that Boynton bought the property in 1869, planned it in 1869 and 75, and failed in 1875.

<sup>8</sup> *Boston Globe* 27 May 1901, "Handled Many Estates..." (first quotation); *Winchester Star*, June 1901, "William Boynton" (third quote) and "Tribute to a Good Man" (second quote).

<sup>9</sup> [\*Proceedings of the Celebration of the Two Hundred and Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Settlement of Medford, Massachusetts\*](#), June, 1905.

<sup>10</sup> Edward C. Booth, "The Tufts Family in Somerville," *Historic Leaves*, Vol. 1, April 1902-03, Perseus; Ancestry.com: Boucher and Hollytree family trees); Middlesex County Probate for Joseph Frothingham Tufts and Nathan Tufts.

developed, mostly along or near Broadway.<sup>11</sup> Between Medford and Main another plat included about 90 lots arrayed on the angled Adams Street that would become today's Bow Street; Main would be its string and Dexter its arrow. This area had been divided by Wm. Tufts and others in 1854.<sup>12</sup> Northeast of Main another triangle included land east of Main as far as East Albion Street, bisected by Edward, and cut across by Dexter and Henry. This area was divided into 69 lots and had been divided by William Tufts and others in 1861.<sup>13</sup> The lots seem to have been about 70 by 150 feet and averaged about 10,000 square feet, a moderate size for this era. Only a modest number of buildings were in place by 1875, most on older roadways Broadway and Main, and very little more had been added by 1889 except in the northern area which by then has its current street names and configuration after its reorganization by George Tufts in 1880.<sup>14</sup>

The pace of development picked up in 1890s and 1900s, especially on the hill, perhaps in part because of the street railway down Medford and Main. And perhaps this opportunity led the Tufts and/or later owners to subdivide the land as George had in 1880 and to increase the number of lots and presumably profits. That section of the area was bounded south of East Albion to Edward Street between Dexter and the Somerville bound, and included two new cross streets, Sanger and Leyden, and many of the lots were reoriented to face those streets rather than the older ones. The lots that had measured about 70 by 150 feet were reduced to about 50 by 100 feet, and 29 lots became 56. To the north, another area that had been three large lots on the east side of Main just below Mystic Park, was redeveloped as 87 lots in 1895 by C.C. Ellis, S.S. Higgins, and E.H. Coddington, along an extension of what would be Willis and other streets, some they named for themselves. Nearby, just behind the division of Main and Medford and the site of the Tufts School (demolished), William P. Fowler created 17 lots in 1892 and the corner of Main and Bow was reorganized as six lots in 1903.<sup>15</sup> Although all of the new plot plans have not yet been identified for the rest of the large subdivisions here, a similar pattern of adding more cross streets and creating smaller lots is evident in the present plan.

With that intensity of development came commercial nodes and public buildings to serve the growing community. Broadway in Somerville was perhaps the largest focus, especially at Magoun Square where Medford and Dexter streets join it, although only some of that development was principally in Medford. The Main/Harvard node was at the north end of the neighborhood and the railroad corridor at the east, the last attracting industrial development. Another cluster grew up at Tufts Square where Medford and Main forked, with a school, Tufts Park, as well as shops. Smaller nodes developed at Dexter and Main and at Bow and Main. Several small churches were built here as well, Union Chapels on Marion and Alfred and South Medford Baptist on Dexter, and a fire station on Medford. This neighborhood was essentially built out by 1936.

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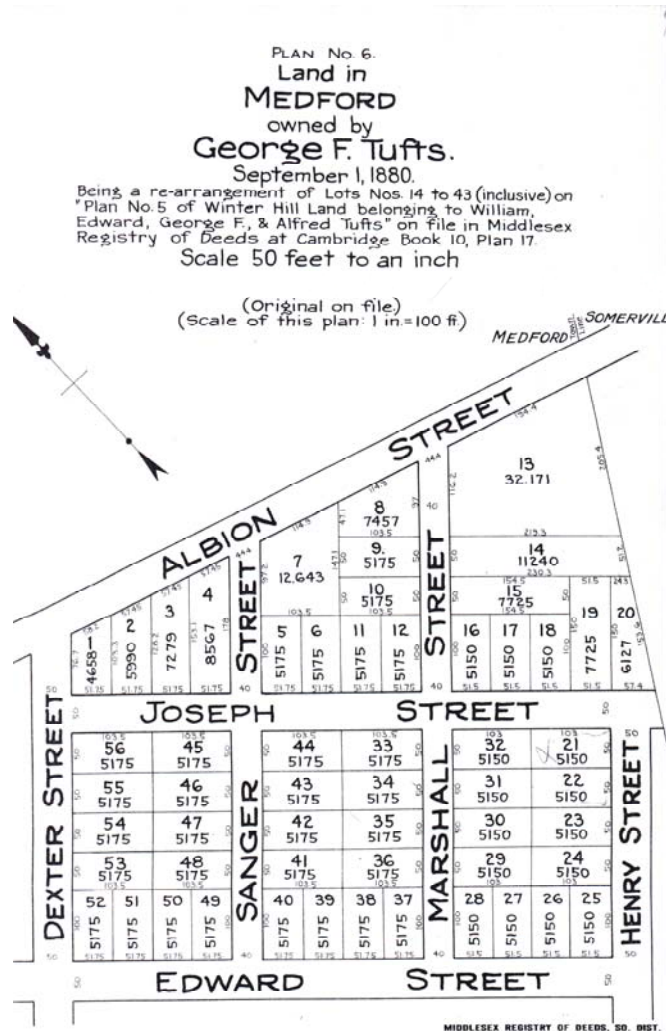
<sup>11</sup> Clemson B form for 87 Harvard Street includes the reference to the Tufts plan (Middlesex County Registry of Deeds Plans, 7:19, undated) including that parcel; this document has not been retrieved.

<sup>12</sup> MCRDP 8A: 9 covers the central of the three areas and was called plan 3, surveyed by A. Tufts.

<sup>13</sup> MCRDP 10: 17 covers the eastern of the three areas and was called plan 5, surveyed by Alfred Tufts. Research by Clemson and Hayward on 71 Dexter notes that this property had been owned by Nathan Tufts and was known as Dexter Farm.

<sup>14</sup> MCRDP 35:20.

<sup>15</sup> MCRDP 76:21; 91:23, and 145:38.



The reorganization of one of the Tufts plats is illustrated here, the eastern section of the eastern plat, on the border of Somerville.

### Survey Recommendations for Winter Hill

The lists below include a preliminary identification of priority properties, mostly organized into areas, as this neighborhood includes a significant proportion of post 1900 dwellings. Further research into the subdivision history of the neighborhood will be required to create manageable survey units. In addition, because of the exceptional density of the area and the variety of its historic buildings, in both age and function, this area will require additional research in order to systematically identify early buildings and select other resources for intensive research, through the preparation of the pre 1900 list and closer field examination. As in other neighborhoods, finalizing the numbers within each area, identifying additional properties to be covered by B forms, and refining the research protocol for each area will each affect the budget for the work. Areas are listed first, followed by individual properties recommended for intensive research, which may be expanded after more intensive fieldwork, following the general survey recommendations.

Boynton area runs south from Harvard through Wareham and Marion, from Winchester east to the commercial area at Main. About 120 properties.

Morton/ Newbern/Granville from railroad or Winchester east to Main Street. About 100 properties. Boundary between this and one of the Tufts subdivisions will require further research.

Codding/Ellis/Liberty subdivided in 1895 into 87 lots; some may be surveyed as part of Tufts Square.

Tufts Square: 454-466 Main Street.

Tufts west: Broadway/ Medford triangle is very large, and we do not have information on the reorganization of this area, so smaller subdivisions have not yet been identified; it includes about 120 properties. The front lots along Broadway are crossed by the Somerville line and might be surveyed separately.

Tufts center: Medford/ Broadway/ Main triangle is very large, and we have only identified two of the smaller subdivisions. It includes about 180 properties. The front lots along Broadway are crossed by the Somerville line and might be surveyed separately.

Tufts east: Main/ East Albion/ Somerville boundary triangle is also a very large area and we have identified one subarea in the southeast corner. It includes about 150 properties.

Sherborn Court: four-story brick apartment blocks arranged as a court at 463, 465, 465a, 467, 471, 473, 473a, 475 Broadway and perhaps 11 Strathmore Road.

Preliminary List of individual properties to be covered by individual forms:

Tufts Park, Main Street

Curtis Tufts School, 437 Main Street

Tufts house, 64 Bow Street, double- or L-house, ca. 1800 (MDF.42).

Medford Street Fire Station, 52 Medford Street, brick block with hose tower, 1895 (MDF.98).

John S. Maxwell Double House, 78-80 Medford Street, brick mansard duplex, 1870 (MDF.77).

Boynton Block, 379 Main Street, brick mansard block, 1873 (MDF.74).

Union Chapel, Marion Street, nave plan with tower.

South Medford Baptist Church, 62 Dexter Street, nave plan.

A number of other buildings drew attention and might be surveyed individually, though that decision should be postponed until the smaller survey areas have been identified. These include the older end gabled block at 2-4 Sanger, the end house at 552 Main Street, or the small end houses like those at 16 Wheeler or 17-29 Edward. Like most Medford neighborhoods there are a number of two-story mansard end houses here, including 9, 15, and 17 Henry Street. 19 and 21 Dexter, and 415 and 425 Main

Street. Picturesque houses are located here as well, including the Gothic cottage at 573 Main and the several Queen Anne houses, including 18 Henry. In addition to numerous two-families, this neighborhood seems to have more three-deckers than in other neighborhoods, including clusters on Wareham, Sanger, Henry, and Broadway, while larger frame apartments blocks are found here as well, including examples at 5-7 and 6-10 Edward Street. Also unusual are the row houses found in this neighborhood, including examples at 1-9 Bellevue Terrace and 1-6 Sunnyside Terrace off Medford, 192-196 Curtis Place off Harvard, 72-84 Albion at Alfred, and the brick row at 72-88 Newbern off Winchester.

Further survey recommendations:

As noted for the Medford Square neighborhood, the Commission might also consider surveying properties already listed in MACRIS as part of the Middlesex Canal NR district. This could provide more specific information on these properties and bring attention to properties with other areas of significance. Similarly, the Main Street corridor might be surveyed together and the industrial area along railroad and Boston Avenue.

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