

# **Preliminary Study Report**

## ***Haskell-Cutter House (Rebecca Sprague House) Proposed Single House Historic District***



Prepared Jointly By:



**City of Medford Historic District Commission &  
City of Medford Historical Commission**  
Office of Community Development  
Room 308  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, MA 02155

July 17, 2019

**Summary Sheet:**

**Local Historic District for the Haskell-Cutter House (MDF.112), 16 Foster Court, Medford, MA**

July 17, 2019

**Study Committee:**

Christopher Bader, Chair  
Charlotte Scuderi, Vice Chair  
Frederick Soule, Secretary  
Nino Susi  
Nicholas A. Roose

**Advisory Committee: Medford Historical Commission**

Jennifer Keenan, Chair  
Ryan D. Hayward, Vice Chair  
Doug Carr, Secretary  
Abigail Salerno  
Benjamin Johnson  
Edward Weist  
Peter Miller

Submittal to the Massachusetts Historical Commission: October 18, 2019

Expected Date of Public Hearing: January 13, 2020

Expected Date of City Council Meeting: January 28, 2020

Total Number of Properties Included in the Proposed Local Historic District: One (1)

The Study Committee recommends the creation of a single-building local historic district, administered by the existing Historic District Commission, to protect this important historic property.

## **Preliminary Report:**

### **Local Historic District for the Haskell-Cutter House (MDF.112), 16 Foster Court, Medford, MA**

#### **Introduction:**

In Massachusetts since 1955 and in Medford since 1985, Local Historic Districts (LHDs) have been used to protect valued historic resources. As noted in Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40 C, LHDs have three major purposes:

- to preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the Commonwealth and its cities and towns;
- to maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places;
- and to encourage new designs compatible with existing buildings in the district.

Local Historic District Commissions oversee these districts, and their chief concerns are to avoid demolition of significant buildings and to review proposed changes to those buildings and landscapes. LHDs do not halt change or development, but instead seek to maintain community character by proactively managing change over time.

Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws is the framework under which cities and towns establish districts within their communities, outlining the process for identifying districts and gaining approval for their designation. Over 120 cities and towns have embraced this planning tool, thereby protecting thousands of the Commonwealth's most valued properties. In Medford, Chapter 48, Article III of the Municipal Ordinances established two local historic districts in 1985: the Hillside Avenue Local Historic District and the Marm Simonds Local Historic District (<http://www.medfordhdc.org/>). Among the strongest forms of protection offered to the historic environment, the LHD ordinance functions with other planning tools in Medford, including the ordinance establishing the Medford Historical Commission in 1974 (Revised Ordinances 1974, c. 21, § 1) and the Demolition Delay Ordinance in 1992 (Revised Ordinances, c. 48, art. IV).

#### **Methodology:**

Medford's Historic District Commission and Historical Commission have been particularly active in the last decade, launching an effort that has reinvigorated existing programs and added new ones to the City's preservation planning efforts. Functioning as a single board since 1985, an increased workload suggested that two commissions and more members could work more effectively. Since 2010, the Historical Commission and Historic District Commission have pursued their particular goals with increasing budgets and more professional membership. In 2011, the City earned designation as a Certified Local Government, a testament to these improvements and earning the City more autonomy in planning and improved access to state and federal funding opportunities. The Historical Commission has received eight years of funding from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to underwrite the preparation of a Survey Plan for the City and to undertake systematic research and evaluation of the City's historic resources.

The Survey Plan provided an important list of recommendations for the identification and evaluation of critical properties and areas in the City, suggesting planning priorities that would emphasize both the individual buildings that survive from the City's earliest history as well as aggregations of resources associated with larger-scale development of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In subsequent years, five of the City's eight identified preservation planning neighborhoods, West Medford, Hillside, two rounds in Medford Square, two rounds in

East Medford and Wellington, have been surveyed with future work planned for South Medford and Fulton Heights. Research in these neighborhoods has provided a master list of properties constructed before 1900 which the Commission views as priority buildings under the demolition-delay review, as well as inventory forms that present intensive research on hundreds of buildings and places, increasing their profile in the City.

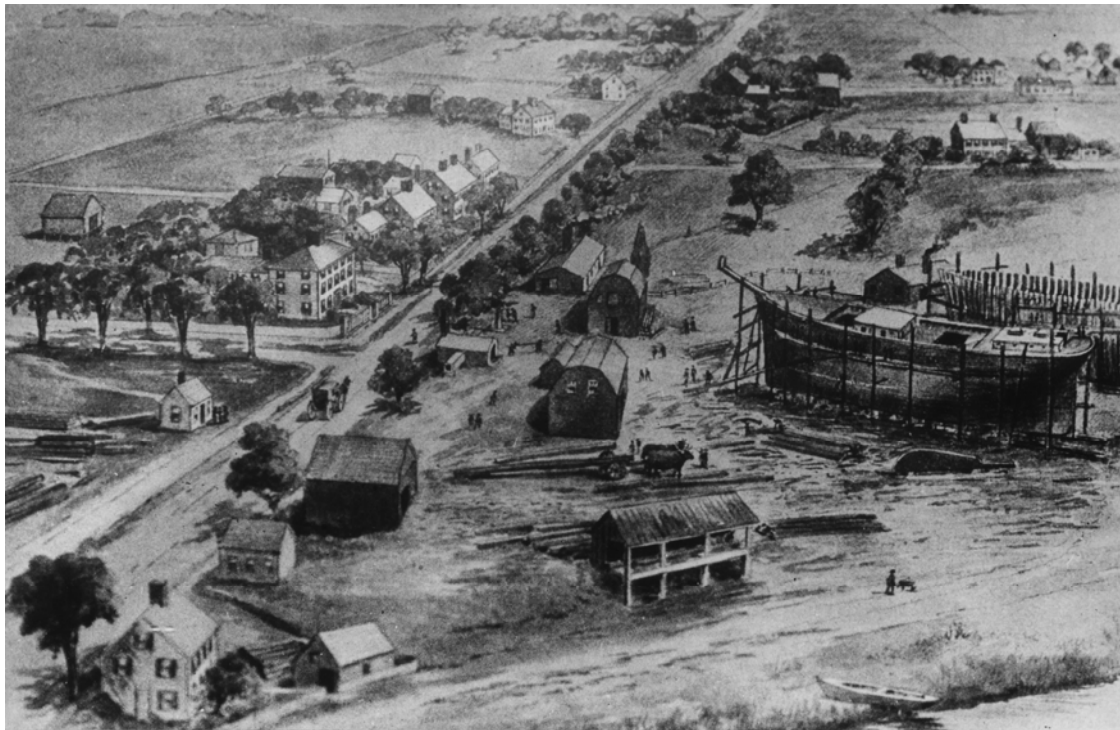
One of the greatest concerns for both Medford commissions has been the recent losses and alterations to the City's historic environment. In spite of the demo-delay ordinance, there has been a significant rise in tear-downs of existing properties in Medford. The Historical Commission has reviewed over fifty cases for demolition since 2011 and in all but four of those cases, the building was demolished after the delay period expired. Over the same period, the erosion of the historic landscape has been the result of these losses and the addition of disruptive new elements into the streetscapes of the City. In the view of the many residents interested in maintaining and improving the quality of life in the City, the City's zoning ordinance is antiquated and in need of review, and the willingness of the Zoning Board of Appeals to grant liberal variances has had a negative impact on historic resources and neighborhood character. Therefore, the revitalized District Commission began planning to expand the protection offered to the City's significant sites in the two existing LHDs by adding a series of single-building districts across the City. Further, Historical Commission's demolition delay was increased from six to eighteen months. On August 12, 2014, the City Council passed a motion for the Historic District Commission to forward to the City Council a list of properties that should be eligible for Single House Historic Districts and begin the process of establishing such districts.

With these broad patterns as a frame of reference, the process for a 16 Foster Court LHD began with the Medford Historical Commission. The organization became concerned when the applied for the demolition of the property on February 11, 2019. The Commission hired architectural historian John Clemson to prepare an MHC form B on which to base their review for the demolition delay. Clemson's efforts were aided by a title search completed by the Commission's vice chair, Ryan D. Hayward. The completed document offered significant insight into the buildings initial construction, occupants and subsequent changes into the twentieth century. With public support, the building was found Significant on March 11 and preferably preserved on April 8. The back to back findings invoked an eighteen month demolition delay, which will expire on October 8, 2020. Since that time, the Historical Commission has requested the homeowner make continuing and bonafide efforts to explore options for re-use that would include maintaining the existing structure. To date, no efforts have been made.

The Historic District Commission's efforts to designate 16 Foster Court as a single-building LHD came at the request of the Historical Commission. The owner's have expressed that they are not interested in entertaining any options that explore keeping the existing building. As a result, the Historical Commission voted to proceed with a request that a single-building district be created to protect the building from demolition. With support of the Commission, and its preservation advocates and consultants, the Historic District Commission voted to move forward and serve as the study committee, pursuant to Mass. Gen. L. c. 40C, § 3. This report was drafted jointly by the Historic District Commission and the Historical Commission. Both boards are dedicated to seeing this process through to completion while we have the confidence and support of our community.

Local historic districts are more commonly composed of clusters of related historic resources and can extend to hundreds of properties in some cases. However, single properties have also been so-designated, and the Commissions concurred that this was a tool suitable to the circumstances of this property and its historic neighborhood. The surroundings of 16 Foster Court have

experienced several phases of development and change over their long history, creating a dense and complex landscape spanning three centuries. Located off Riverside Avenue, this area was primarily open marsh and farmland for its first two centuries of English and American settlement. As the town entered the nineteenth century, the shipbuilding industry took root along the shores of the Mystic River. Extending east from Medford Square, a number of ship yards were established along the tidal waterway. Thatcher Magoun was the first, building his business at the foot of Park Street. Foster Court was laid out as early as 1803 and is identified in period deeds as the way to the brickyards, brick wharf and ultimately the shipyard of Sprague and James. Isaac Sprague and Galen James both worked for Magoun before establishing their partnership in 1816. The ships constructed were clipper ships, which were fast merchant vessels developed for international trade. They continued until 1849, launching 63 ships over their thirty-three year careers. Building these vessels required skilled laborers. The location drew the attention of many craftsmen who, like the yard owners, hailed from the South Shore of Massachusetts. They erected new dwellings to house themselves and their families. The earliest were constructed during the Federal Era and scattered along the principal thoroughfares: Riverside Avenue, known as Ship Street, Park and Cross Streets. The Haskell-Cutter House, constructed between 1804 and 1813, falls into this initial wave of development. Most of the extant buildings date to the community's golden age of shipbuilding, occurring between 1820 and 1850. The houses represent a range of styles, such as Greek Revival, Italianate and Gothic Revival, in a fall array of forms, such as double houses, capes, center and side entrance plans. As a whole, this area represents the largest and densest concentration of early buildings anywhere within the City of Medford.

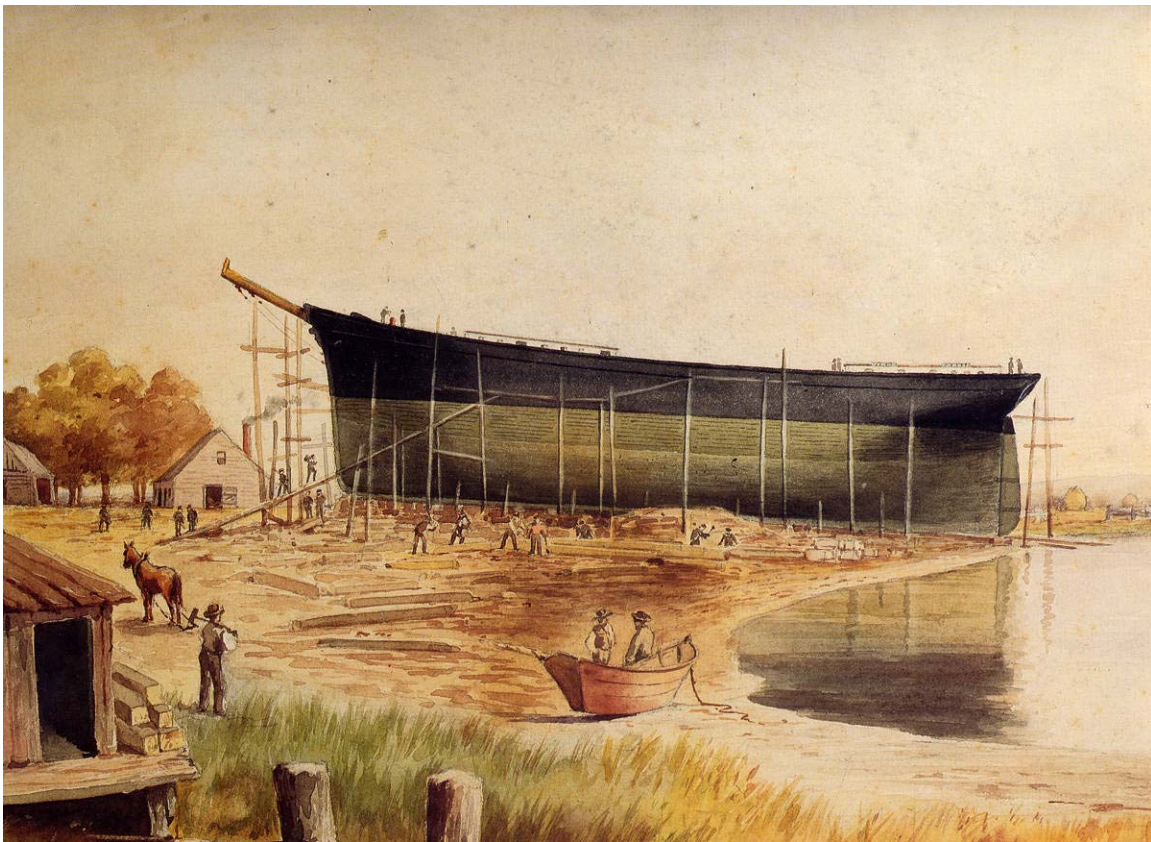


**A pencil drawing of Old Ship Street by Frederick Wooley. View looking east from Medford Square. Thatcher Magoun's shipyard is in the foreground and Foster Court is shown toward the top, right. Courtesy of the Medford Public Library**

As the second half of the century progressed, shipbuilding declined but development sharply increased. The Sprague and James Yard was the last boatbuilding site to operate, having been purchased by Joshua T. Foster. 1873 saw the conclusion of clipper ship production with the



launching of the Pilgrim. Foster directed the construction of 42 vessels, a respectable number. In total, 568 ships were made seaworthy along the Mystic. The end of an era was memorialized in the change of street name from Ship Street to Riverside Avenue. Concurrently, Foster Court assumed its present name in honor of the shipyard's owner. Despite the loss in industry, development increased as Medford became a suburban commuter community. First the railroad and later streetcars drove the development of large tracts of uninhabited land. The last half of the nineteenth century saw a full range of Victorian era dwellings built on lots fronting new arteries and gridded side streets. Those lots which remained vacant into the twentieth century were promptly purchased and built on. The as-built landscape also hosts small pockets of commercial development, focused at major intersections and occasionally among residential dwellings. The last development occurred fairly recently, when the Medford Housing Authority constructed the housing development in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on a lot spanning Foster Court to Riverside Avenue. The 1980's saw the removal of two significant landmarks for apartment building construction. The Isaac Sprague House (MDF.11) was dismantled and relocated to Dedham where it is now a private residence. The Joshua T. Foster house was demolished. Both were replaced with nondescript brick masonry buildings inconsistent with their surroundings. A similar, five to eight unit, building is being contemplated by the owner for this site. The remaining historic resources near this cluster, although historic in their own right, do not represent a clear or well preserved set. This can make it difficult to discern the landscape and its development. Because of this familiar pattern in the City, both the survey method and planning guidelines have suggested that these now-isolated resources from Medford's colonial and early national past are best considered one at a time or in small groups.



**Watercolor by Fred Wooley – The Launch of the Pilgrim in 1873 at Foster's Yard on Foster Court. This clipper ship was the last large sea vessel constructed along the Mystic River.**

The Commissions therefore determined that a single-building local historic district was an appropriate preservation tool for this important property. This tool is frequently associated with the City of Somerville, Medford's near neighbor, which shares a similarly dense and layered landscape. Somerville pioneered the use of this targeted preservation strategy, and has designated both large districts and more than 100 single-building districts. See <http://archive.somervillema.gov/sites/default/files/Local%20Historic%20Districts%20-%20Master%20List%202017.pdf> for a complete list of all Somerville's LHDs. Medford's Commissions have been considering the application of this tool in the City, and the demolition delay at 16 Foster Court suggested it will be an appropriate and timely tool to be designated as a single property Local Historic District.

#### Significance:

The Haskell-Cutter House is an exceptionally rare example of an early residential dwelling within the City of Medford. Constructed in the early nineteenth century, the building is one of only three known and documented Federal era Cape Cod buildings remaining in the built landscape. It maintains integrity through a number of character defining features. Its occupants were among the hundreds of tradesman whose handiwork built internationally famous clipper ships. As this important industry came to a close, ownership changed to reflect the growing diversity of the greater neighborhood. The residents, and the dwelling, adapted to meet the needs of their evolving municipality. From then to now, the building has been a contributing resource to the character of East Medford. Despite being isolated from other contemporary buildings, it remains a well preserved example of its style and typology. As a result, the building was recommended for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at the local and state levels. It is not just important to Medford but also the Commonwealth and National patterns of American History.

The development history of the East Medford neighborhood is engrained in the lot of this building. The land where the subject building now resides was once part of the extensive holdings of the Tufts Family. Malden resident Peter Tufts Sr. (1617-1700) acquired much of the neighborhood during the mid seventeenth century. His son, Captain Peter Tufts Jr. (1648-1721), is among the first of his children to reside here. A prominent citizen during his time, the junior Tufts was a civic leader, holding a number of Town offices. He erected a fashionable brick residence which still stands in 1683 (MDF.27). Located just east of Foster Court on a small rise overlooking the adjacent expanse, the house has always been a monument to the early community. A lone thoroughfare passed directly in front of the building. This was a local highway linking the farms of the Wellington neighborhood beyond to Medford Square. To the south, marshy lowlands led to the banks of the Mystic River. In all other directions, the terrain was level plain utilized as pasture, field, orchard and woodlot. Houses were sparse and those constructed in the eighteenth century are no longer extant. The bulk of buildings constructed was towards the turn into the nineteenth century and concentrated near the community's commercial core in Medford Square. These early Federal era residential dwellings were constructed on Ship Street facing the Mystic River. There was a large span of vacant land until reaching the intersection of Riverside Avenue and Foster Court. Richard Hall (1737-1827), and his siblings, came into possession of several parcels here by the end of the eighteenth century. He is described by Architectural Historian John Clemson as *"a member of a well-known local family of elite landowners and industrialists."* Indeed, the Hall Family played an undeniable role in the development of Medford from their settlement in the late seventeenth century through the nineteenth century. Among their first activity in East Medford was the development of former Tufts holdings for house lots. In October of 1804, Richard Hall sold for \$140 a 3 ½ acre parcel bounded by the road leading to Wyman

Bradbury's Farm (then named Ship Street and now Riverside Avenue) and the lane to the Brick Landing Place (now Foster Court). The purchasers were Joseph Wheelwright ( - 1827) and Simeon Holt Jr. (1771-1804). Scant biographical information exists about these two individuals. Simeon Holt Jr. was born in Andover the son of Simeon Holt Sr. (1747-1828) and Sarah Reid (1747-1828). He had several siblings, one of which held the property for a time. He married Elizabeth Hancock of Boston in 1793 but her parents could not be located. Joseph Wheelwright's origins are likewise unknown. He married Sally Holt in 1793, hinting at the possibility he was related to Simeon by marriage. By the time they undertook this speculative development, the pair were living in Medford and both had established families – all recorded in Medford Vital Records. Deeds recorded at the same time show they were not just involved with the subject parcel but many in the vicinity. Interesting to note, the Peter Tufts House was among their holdings having acquired it from Richard Hall.

The early construction date of the Haskell-Cutter House puts it within a small pool of historic resources. A date can be established based on deeds recorded, their evolving descriptions and with the first known owner-occupant. A few days after the purchase from Richard Hall, Simeon Holt acquires total interest of the 3 ½ acre parcel from Joseph Wheelwright for \$180. The next deed is recorded on April 17, 1804 for a half acre of land to Jonathan Holt. Paying \$110, Jonathan was a sibling, yeoman and located in Medford. He married Betsey Teel in 1803 and the pair would later have twin children. The parcel is described simply as "*one lot of land*" and continues with the bounds for the half acre lot. The parcel was improved over five months. On September 17, Holt sells "*one lot of land with a dwelling house thereon*" including the same half acre to Timothy Symmes, a trader. Located in Medford Square on the south side of the Mystic River, it is unlikely that Symmes ever intended to occupy the building. Three days later, he sells the property to Jeremiah Haskell (ca. 1770-1830) for \$650. The legal description remains the same throughout these transactions. Limited information was located regarding the life of Haskell. He ultimately defaulted on a \$350 mortgage on the property held by Symmes. As a result, the property was sold in 1813 but with the stipulation that Haskell could retake possession by settling his debt. No evidence in the chain of title suggests that he was successful. This limits the date of construction from 1804 through 1813 with evidence leaning earlier than later. Only two other buildings of similar form and age are documented on the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS): the John Wade House on High Street in West Medford, ca. 1790 (MDF.5) and the Hatch-Sawyer House on Riverside Avenue in East Medford, ca. 1800 (MDF.9). Extensive documentation has been carried out in the earliest sections of these and other neighborhoods. A few later examples of this form exist, such as the Noah Johnson House (MDF.779) or the John Henry and Louisa Eames House (MDF.1342) but they are characteristically different due to changes and improvements in architectural technology, style and setting.

Surviving historic fabric provides evidence for the early date of construction. A preliminary visit was made to the building on February 26, 2019 by Historical Commission vice-chair Ryan D. Hayward with and at the request of John Clemson. The walkthrough confirmed the presence of many character defining elements consistent with a building dating to the early nineteenth century. These include, but are not limited to, the floor plan and room arrangement, stair and hearth locations, heavy timber framing, original openings, an original door slab and its hardware. Later alterations are historic in their own right. The building was converted into a side by side duplex resulting in another layer of changes and architectural technology. Another set of changes came about with the addition of dormers and indoor plumbing. Final alterations mostly covered historic features and thus encapsulating evidence. All the layers work in unison for a solid understanding of the overall structure. As a result, the Medford Historical Commission noted twice that the building contains an acceptable degree of integrity. The Haskell-Cutter House has the potential to



yield important information about early dwellings in Medford. This information has been captured for a number of buildings but most are later. Given its size and level of completeness, this building lends itself to be a prime candidate for retention for the benefit of others related to the broad patterns of history which this building has an association with.

The Haskell-Cutter House is a tangible link to the shipbuilding industry that once extended along the banks of the Mystic River. The development, refinement and construction of clipper ships, carrying cargoes of bricks, rum and raw materials for tea, china, and other trade items, made Medford world famous. Thatcher Magoun was the first and most prolific of the master builders. Beginning in 1803, his yard turned out an impressive 84 ships built by the hands of many craftsmen. Woodworkers and blacksmiths aided the efforts of shipwrights, caulkers, joiners and carpenters that fitted out the vessels and made them seaworthy. Constructed just one year after the shipyard, it is easy to speculate that the building was rented by Jeremiah Haskell to one of these tradesmen. The first known owner-occupant was involved with the industry. Lincoln Damon (1789-1878) was a shipwright. The property was a commodious dwelling standing in contrast to the dense shipbuilding communities on the South Shore. Magoun, from Scituate, and Damon, from Marshfield, would have been familiar with these locations. The expanse of open land in East Medford afforded both a chance to live, work and grow. A new yard opened in 1817 under the direction of Isaac Sprague and Galen James. Both worked for Magoun before venturing out on their own. Their yard, positioned on the Labor-in-Vain on the Mystic River and at the end of Foster Court, was the longest to operate. Both men are remembered for their fair wages, set business hours and elimination of the rum ration. Sprague's mother-in-law Rebecca Cutter (1765-1852) purchased the property in 1819. She was widowed and evidence suggests she operated a boarding house on site. The property was converted to a duplex and census confirms another family living with her. Lucius M. Fletcher, the head of household, was a carpenter. Her heirs briefly held the property as a rental before selling to Joshua T. Foster (1810-1895). Foster operated the last of the Medford shipyards, buying out the business from Sprague and James. He held the parcel until 1886, thirteen years after the last of the clipper ships was launched. The contribution of the shipbuilding industry to the economic development of Medford and the Commonwealth are reflected in the built landscape. The shipyards provided new jobs that attracted the attention of seasoned and apprentice craftsmen. They settled nearby, building new houses along recently opened public ways. Those which remain with us today represent the largest collection of early dwellings anywhere in the City of Medford. Beyond this, the shipbuilding landscape is part of the rich nineteenth century heritage of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Medford's wooden merchant vessels dominated international trade for more than a half century. Now obsolete and with few examples remaining, it is important to remember the shipbuilding industry and the neighborhoods with which it is closely associated.

No less important, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century inhabitants of this building exemplify the growing diversity within the East Medford community. Members of the Frost Family acquired the parcel and continued to rent it from 1886 through 1913. During the twenty-six year span, this neighborhood experienced a rapid building boom as a result of the introduction of rapid transit lines to the area. As early as 1847, East Medford had a rail link to Boston via the Medford Branch Railroad. Horse drawn and later electric trolley lines opened in the late nineteenth century, providing a quick and affordable mode of transit for working class individuals. The large landholdings of the Magoun and Hall heirs sold parcels in linear fashion between Park and Spring Street. Houses are characteristically different than the earlier wave and are largely one and two units. The need for additional housing was met by taking on boarders or renting whole houses. The Frost family lived on nearby Washington Street in the heart of this new development. They rented the property out to boarders. They were one of many in the area that did this. Subsequent owners illustrate the full range of diversity that appeared during the twentieth century.

From 1926 to 1952, the property was held by generations of the Rahicki and Poleatewich families. From 1952 to recently, it had been owned by the Lyons and Filander families. These long term occupants spanned nearly a century. Comparing this house to the many researched during the two phases of survey work completed in East Medford, it shares a history closely linked to the buildings around it.

Architectural Historian John Clemson powerfully concludes the significance of this building with a statement of eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. The building has been determined by Clemson to be individually eligible under criteria A and C. In his own words, the building “*retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association*” that “*serves as a document of the area’s early economic and social development.*” The Historical Commission also had Clemson prepare an MHC Form A to understand the Foster Court context and explore a larger district. Although not strong, the building serves as a contributing resource to a future district that is larger and would include buildings from the later shipbuilding periods. This district, however, has lost some integrity and is best focused on the singular property located at 16 Foster Court.

#### Justification of the Boundaries:

The current boundaries of the property have been associated with the property since its division in the early nineteenth century. The parcel has remained largely unchanged since 1804. We propose to use the existing property lines as the district boundary.

#### Options and Recommendations for the Bylaw:

The existing bylaw, adopted by the Medford City Council, will be modified to incorporate the Haskell-Cutter Historic District. We have included both the existing and proposed bylaws in attachment 1 and 2.

#### Property Index for the Proposed District:

Haskell-Cutter House (Rebecca Sprague House) – MDF.112, Assessors lot: P-13-76, Federal Cape with Italianate Overlay, ca. 1804-1813.

Attachments:

1. Existing Historic District Bylaw
2. Proposed Historic District Bylaw
3. MHC Form B for 16 Foster Court
4. MHC Form A for Foster Court Area
5. Current photographs of 16 Foster Court
6. Current photographs of Foster Court Area
7. Map of the Haskell Cutter House Historic District
8. Letters of Support for the District Creation



# City of Medford

## HISTORICAL COMMISSION HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – Room 308  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

### **Existing Historic District Bylaw adopted 10-15-1985 Revised Ordinances of the City of Medford**

Chapter 48 – Historic Preservation:

Article III – Historic District Commission:

Sec. 48-51. - Establishment.

(a) Under the authority of M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 3, there is hereby established a Hillside Avenue Historic District and the Marm Simonds Historic District, bounded as respectively shown on the map entitled "Hillside Avenue Historic District" and "Marm Simonds Historic District" which are on file in the city clerk's office and made a part of this article by reference.

(b) Under the authority of M.G.L.A. c. 40C, §§ 4 and 14, c. [40](#), § 8D and M.G.L.A. c. [43](#), § 5, there is hereby established a historic district commission, as a commission of the city.  
(Ord. No. 489, § 1, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-52. - Function.

(a) It shall be the function of the historic district commission to administer the Hillside Avenue Historic District and Marm Simonds Historic District consistent with general laws, and any additional historic districts established in accordance with law.

(b) It shall be the function of the historic district commission to preserve, promote and develop historical or archaeological assets of the city in accordance with law.

(Ord. No. 489, § 2, 10-15-1985)

State Law reference— Establishment of historical districts, M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 2.

Sec. 48-53. - Number of commissioners; appointing authority; term.

(a) The historic district commission shall consist of five members and two alternates appointed by the mayor for terms of three years.

(b) If additional historic districts are established by the city council, provision is hereby made for an increase in membership on the historic district commission to include residents of the additional districts. The maximum number of historic district commission members added in this manner shall be two commissioners and one alternate. Additional commissioners and alternates shall be appointed by the mayor in the same manner as the original appointments to the historic district commission.

(c) In case of absence, inability to act or unwillingness to act because of self-interest on the part of a member of the historic district commission, his place shall be taken by an alternate member designated by the chairman.

(Ord. No. 489, § 3, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-54. - Duties and responsibilities.

It shall be the duty and responsibility of the historic district commission to:

- (1) Issue certificates of appropriateness, certificates of nonapplicability and certificates of hardship with respect to construction or alteration of buildings and structures within the historic district when such construction or alteration affects exterior architectural features. Such certificates shall be issued as prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 6.
  - (2) Consider factors as prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 7, in passing upon matters before it.
  - (3) Issue such certificates, make such recommendations, keep such records and have such powers, functions and duties as are prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 10, except that officers and employees necessary for the proper administration of the historic district commission shall be appointed and removed by the mayor in accordance with M.G.L.A. c. 43, § 105. All gifts shall be subject to approval of the mayor and city council.
  - (4) Call and conduct meetings and to hold such public hearings as are prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 11.
  - (5) Conduct researches for places of historic value; to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes; to advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which it deems necessary for its work; and to make such recommendations as are described in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 8D.
  - (6) Propose from time to time to the mayor as it deems appropriate, the establishment in accordance with the provisions of this article and M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 3, of additional historic districts and changes in historic districts.
  - (7) Cooperate with and advise the planning board, the office of community development and other city agencies in matters involving historic sites and buildings.
  - (8) Advise owners of historic buildings in the city on problems of preservation.
  - (9) Perform such other duties as may be prescribed under state law.
- (Ord. No. 489, § 4, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-55. - Exclusions from review.

The authority of the historic district commission shall not extend to a review of the following:

- (1) Temporary structures or signs; subject, however, to such conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the historic district commission may reasonably specify.
- (2) Terraces, walks, driveways, sidewalks and similar structures, or any one or more of them, provided that any such structure is substantially at grade level.
- (3) Storm doors and windows, screens, window air conditioners, lighting fixtures, antennae and similar appurtenances, or any one or more of them.
- (4) The color of paint.
- (5) The color of materials used on roofs.
- (6) Signs of not more than one square foot in area in connection with use of a residence for a customary home occupation or for professional purposes, provided only one such sign is displayed in connection with each residence and, if illuminated, is illuminated only indirectly; and one sign in connection with the nonresidential use of each building or structure which is not more than 12 square feet in area, consisting of letters painted on wood without a symbol or trademark and, if illuminated, is illuminated only indirectly; or either of them.
- (7) Reconstruction of a building, structure or exterior architectural feature which has been damaged or destroyed by fire, storm or other disaster, provided that the exterior design is substantially similar to the original.

(Ord. No. 489, § 5, 10-15-1985)



Sec. 48-56. - Rules and regulations.

The historic district commission, under the authority of M.G.L.A. c. 40C, shall keep a permanent record of its resolutions, transactions and determinations and of the vote of each member participating therein, and may adopt and amend such rules and regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of M.G.L.A. c. 40C and prescribe such forms as it shall deem desirable and necessary for the regulation of its affairs and the conduct of its business.

(Ord. No. 489, § 6, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-57. - Maintenance and repair.

Nothing in this article shall be construed to prevent the ordinary maintenance and repair of buildings, structures or grounds within the district, nor prevent actions by duly authorized public officers as described in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 9.

(Ord. No. 489, § 7, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-58. - Appeals.

Any applicant aggrieved by a determination of the historic district commission may file a written request with the historic district commission for review by a person or persons of competence and experience in such matters designated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council as prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 12 and may further appeal such determination to the county superior court as prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 12A.

(Ord. No. 489, § 8, 10-15-1985)



# City of Medford

## HISTORICAL COMMISSION HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – Room 308  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

### **Proposed Haskell-Cutter House Historic District Amendment**

**For Review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission  
and Adoption by Medford City Council**

**Note: any proposed changes to this bylaw are highlighted in yellow.**

Chapter 48 – Historic Preservation:

Article III – Historic District Commission:

Sec. 48-51. - Establishment.

(a) Under the authority of M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 3, there is hereby established a **Haskell-Cutter House Historic District**, Hillside Avenue Historic District and the Marm Simonds Historic District, bounded as respectively shown on the map entitled "**Haskell-Cutter House Historic District**," "Hillside Avenue Historic District" and "Marm Simonds Historic District" which are on file in the city clerk's office, **Middlesex County Registry of Deeds**, and made a part of this article by reference.

(b) Under the authority of M.G.L.A. c. 40C, §§ 4 and 14, c. 40, § 8D and M.G.L.A. c. 43, § 5, there is hereby established a historic district commission, as a commission of the city.

(Ord. No. 489, § 1, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-52. - Function.

(a) It shall be the function of the historic district commission to administer the **Haskell-Cutter House Historic District**, Hillside Avenue Historic District and Marm Simonds Historic District consistent with general laws, and any additional historic districts established in accordance with law.

(b) It shall be the function of the historic district commission to preserve, promote and develop historical or archaeological assets of the city in accordance with law.

(Ord. No. 489, § 2, 10-15-1985)

State Law reference— Establishment of historical districts, M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 2.

Sec. 48-53. - Number of commissioners; appointing authority; term.

(a) The historic district commission shall consist of five members and two alternates appointed by the mayor for terms of three years.

(b) If additional historic districts are established by the city council, provision is hereby made for an increase in membership on the historic district commission to include residents of the additional districts. The maximum number of historic district commission members added in this manner shall be two

commissioners and one alternate. Additional commissioners and alternates shall be appointed by the mayor in the same manner as the original appointments to the historic district commission.

(c) In case of absence, inability to act or unwillingness to act because of self-interest on the part of a member of the historic district commission, his place shall be taken by an alternate member designated by the chairman.

(Ord. No. 489, § 3, 10-15-1985)

#### Sec. 48-54. - Duties and responsibilities.

It shall be the duty and responsibility of the historic district commission to:

(1) Issue certificates of appropriateness, certificates of nonapplicability and certificates of hardship with respect to construction or alteration of buildings and structures within the historic district when such construction or alteration affects exterior architectural features. Such certificates shall be issued as prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 6.

(2) Consider factors as prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 7, in passing upon matters before it.

(3) Issue such certificates, make such recommendations, keep such records and have such powers, functions and duties as are prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 10, except that officers and employees necessary for the proper administration of the historic district commission shall be appointed and removed by the mayor in accordance with M.G.L.A. c. 43, § 105. All gifts shall be subject to approval of the mayor and city council.

(4) Call and conduct meetings and to hold such public hearings as are prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 11.

(5) Conduct researches for places of historic value; to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes; to advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which it deems necessary for its work; and to make such recommendations as are described in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 8D.

(6) Propose from time to time to the mayor as it deems appropriate, the establishment in accordance with the provisions of this article and M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 3, of additional historic districts and changes in historic districts.

(7) Cooperate with and advise the planning board, the office of community development and other city agencies in matters involving historic sites and buildings.

(8) Advise owners of historic buildings in the city on problems of preservation.

(9) Perform such other duties as may be prescribed under state law.

(Ord. No. 489, § 4, 10-15-1985)

#### Sec. 48-55. - Exclusions from review.

The authority of the historic district commission shall not extend to a review of the following:

(1) Temporary structures or signs; subject, however, to such conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the historic district commission may reasonably specify.

(2) Terraces, walks, driveways, sidewalks and similar structures, or any one or more of them, provided that any such structure is substantially at grade level.

(3) Storm doors and windows, screens, window air conditioners, lighting fixtures, antennae and similar appurtenances, or any one or more of them.

(4) The color of paint.

(5) The color of materials used on roofs.

(6) Signs of not more than one square foot in area in connection with use of a residence for a customary home occupation or for professional purposes, provided only one such sign is displayed in connection with each residence and, if illuminated, is illuminated only indirectly; and one sign in connection with the nonresidential use of each building or structure which is not more than 12 square feet in area, consisting of letters painted on wood without a symbol or trademark and, if illuminated, is illuminated only indirectly; or either of them.

(7) Reconstruction of a building, structure or exterior architectural feature which has been damaged or destroyed by fire, storm or other disaster, provided that the exterior design is substantially similar to the original.

(Ord. No. 489, § 5, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-56. - Rules and regulations.

The historic district commission, under the authority of M.G.L.A. c. 40C, shall keep a permanent record of its resolutions, transactions and determinations and of the vote of each member participating therein, and may adopt and amend such rules and regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of M.G.L.A. c. 40C and prescribe such forms as it shall deem desirable and necessary for the regulation of its affairs and the conduct of its business.

(Ord. No. 489, § 6, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-57. - Maintenance and repair.

Nothing in this article shall be construed to prevent the ordinary maintenance and repair of buildings, structures or grounds within the district, nor prevent actions by duly authorized public officers as described in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 9.

(Ord. No. 489, § 7, 10-15-1985)

Sec. 48-58. - Appeals.

Any applicant aggrieved by a determination of the historic district commission may file a written request with the historic district commission for review by a person or persons of competence and experience in such matters designated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council as prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 12 and may further appeal such determination to the county superior court as prescribed in M.G.L.A. c. 40C, § 12A.

(Ord. No. 489, § 8, 10-15-1985)

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

## Photograph (view from W)



## Locus Map (north is up)



**Recorded by:** John D. Clemson with Ryan Hayward  
**Organization:** Medford Historical Commission  
**Date (month / year):** February 2019

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

P 13 76

Boston  
North

MDF.112

**Town/City:** Medford

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

**Address:** 16 Foster Court

**Historic Name:** Haskell - Cutter House (Rebecca Sprague House)

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

Original: single-family residential

**Date of Construction:** 1804-1813

**Source:** maps

**Style/Form:** Federal/ cape with Italianate overlay

**Architect/Builder:** unknown

### Exterior Material:

Foundation: parged; fieldstone and brick

Wall/Trim: cementation shingle/aluminum panning  
and wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** none

**Major Alterations (with dates):** Dormers, late-19<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> century; door hood, 19<sup>th</sup> century; siding, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; sash, recent.

**Condition:** fair

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.31 acre

**Setting:** 19<sup>th</sup> century residential neighborhood on the edge of a 20<sup>th</sup> century Medford Housing Authority development.



**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MEDFORD

16 FOSTER COURT

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MDF.112

☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.***ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

The Haskell – Cutter House was likely constructed between 1804 and 1813, when it was initially evidenced in a deed description. The house is of a form common to both the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and to its popular revival during the 20<sup>th</sup>, commonly known as the cape, or Cape Cod cottage. Capes are generally massed in a single story with a moderately pitched side-gable roof. They generally enclose, usually in a nearly square footprint, between three- and five-bay widths (here five) and two-piles depths. The dimensions of this example are 28 feet wide by 30 feet deep (capes are generally wider than deep, making this a distinctive example). The upper story of the house is lit by two symmetrically arranged shed-roofed dormers that may have been added between the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A broad, 20-foot-wide ell, 14 feet deep, is centered on the rear elevation. Beyond the ell is a shallow, 8-foot-deep enclosed porch or addition with a shed roof. The upper story of the ell is lit by shed dormers on either side, here somewhat broader than those on the façade, with paired windows. Period maps suggest the ell may have been added between 1855 and 1875, although a more thorough inspection of the foundation masonry may indicate it was part of the original build. Chimney stacks are located in the center of the forward slope of the main roof and at the end of the ell. Based on appearance the main stack may have been rebuilt and possibly reduced during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; it lacks the heft of a two- or three-flue chimney that would be expected here in a house of this vintage. This, combined with the fenestration pattern of five bays on the façade and two lit piles on either side elevation suggests a plan of four rooms in the front of the building accessed by a shallow lobby entry.

A preliminary interior inspection that took place February 26, 2019 presented evidence of both the original plan and early alterations that converted the building into a side-by-side duplex. The center entry indeed opens into a shallow lobby with flanking side doors that access each half of the building. Just beyond the lobby is an enclosed cellar stair with alterations that suggest the space above was originally occupied by a three-run or winding stair to the second level, since removed. Beyond the stairwell is a chimney bay beneath the flue centered on the front slope of the roof described above. Each half of the main body of the building is occupied by front and rear rooms; the fire boxes, which heated the front rooms in each side of the house, have been enclosed within the wall and are not visible. Evidence of large beams and supporting corner posts, now cased, are present in each front parlor and in the dividing walls separating them from the rear rooms. Finishes in the first level generally appear to date to the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and finishes in the front chambers around the dormer interiors to the 19<sup>th</sup>. Earlier finishes may survive under later layers. The rear ell is split down the middle and occupied by narrow kitchens in either half. At the interior corner of each kitchen is an open straight-run stair that runs frontward, accessing two chambers in each half of the building; a larger chamber in the main body and a narrower one in each half of the ell. Full bathrooms are located within the shed-roofed extension at the end of the ell off the kitchens. The cellar is constructed of large fieldstones with several courses of brick above grade just below the sill (the masonry between the main body and ell appear to be consistent, but clear variations under the shed extension suggest it was added later). Large rough-hewn members and sills supported by hand-hewn posts support the floor framing.

Although the building has been altered during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the low-studded house survives as a legible document of its early provenance and of the early development of an area that played a key role in the industrial history of Medford connected to brick making and ship building. Considerable original building fabric likely survives beneath later finishes. The house also retains an elaborate and distinctive door hood with Eastlake overtones that must have been added during the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has acquired significance in its own right. Siding, trim, sash and door, based on appearance, date to the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The house is sited on a deep, narrow lot at a moderate setback. The lot, as well as the surrounding block, has an even topography. The open lot is landscaped with grass; two mature deciduous trees line the frontage, and the side and rear lot lines have low chain-link fencing. A long, narrow asphalt drive fills the side yard on the south side of the house. A small garden shed dating to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is located directly behind the house.

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

16 FOSTER COURT

## MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MDF.112

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Various deeds dating to ca. 1804 to properties located in the general vicinity of the corner of Riverside Avenue (the road leading to Wyman Bradbury's farm/ Ship Street) and Foster Court (the road leading towards the brick landing place) link earlier ownership of the area to Richard Hall (1737-1827), who sold a 3 ½ acre parcel in October of 1803.<sup>1</sup> Hall was married to Lucy Hall (1746-1826), and was a member of a well-known local family of elite landowners and industrialists. Richard Hall was a son of Andrew Hall (1698-1750) and Abigail Walker Hall (ca. 1702-1785) and a Brother of Benjamin Hall (1731-1817, see MDF.34). The Hall family had resided in Medford since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was successful for most of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in land speculation, mercantile trade and industry. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century they were most prominently involved in the distilling business in Medford Square. Their rum distillery was sold to members of the Lawrence family in c. 1831. Three generations of the family resided in a row of large Georgian houses that lined the north side of High Street near the square during this period (see MDF.AN).

Ongoing research has traced, with a high degree of certainty, the ownership of the Haskell - Cutter House to Lincoln Damon of Medford, shipwright, who acquired the property in 1813 through foreclosure from creditor Timothy Symmes of Medford, trader and yeoman. Consideration was \$387. Symmes held a mortgage from former owner Jeremiah Haskell of Medford, yeoman. The property was described as "...half an acre with a dwelling house thereon" measuring roughly almost 12 by 7 rods and 12 feet, or 196 feet deep with 115 feet of frontage on "...the road leading to 'the brick landing place' so called..." These measurements are slightly larger but generally conform to current descriptions. This deed included the stipulation that the property was subject to a mortgage to Symmes from Haskell and that "...said mortgage [was] subject to the right of said Haskell by law to redeem the said land and dwelling house by paying the said mortgage money with interest[,] costs of court aforesaid and improvements on said premises at any time between the day of the date hereof and the second day of September next."<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence in the chain of title that Haskell succeeded in redeeming his debt.<sup>3</sup>

Little regarding the life of Jeremiah Haskell (ca. 1770-1830) beyond his occupation of farmer could be ascertained. The identities of grantors of land in the area suggest Haskell was the initial owner and occupant of the subject house between ca. 1804 and 1813. A profile of an evident grandson recounts Haskell's role in the War of 1812: that he "...stood guard at the Sate Arsenal at Charlestown...when the Massachusetts Militia was called out to suppress a threatened invasion..."<sup>4</sup> The following owner, Lincoln Damon of Medford (1789-1878), was a shipwright.<sup>5</sup> This was a common occupation in Medford during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when approximately 570 vessels were built in the area. Like many other shipwrights and shipyard workers during this period Damon was a native of the south shore, from the town of Marshfield, to which he returned after selling the property in 1819. Damon's acquisition of property in this location, the future shipyards of Sprague & James and Joshua T. Foster, made sense given Damon's occupation and potentially extends these activities at the site into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1819 Lincoln and Betsey W. Damon sold the subject property to Rebecca Cutter (1765-1852), the widow of William Cutter of Medford (1759-1800). According to one source, William Cutter "was foreman of a distillery in Medford, and then kept the toll-house on Cambridge Bridge."<sup>6</sup> Other records establish that he served as a private during the Revolution "...under the command of Col. Michael Jackson for three years. His widow applied for a pension 1838 and it was allowed for two years actual service as private Massachusetts line."<sup>7</sup> In her will she left "...the rest and residue of my estate both real and personal to my son William Cutter and my daughter Rebecca Sprague wife of Isaac Sprague..." and appointed Isaac Sprague her executor.<sup>8</sup> Her daughter and son-in-law, a prominent ship builder under the firm Sprague & James, resided nearby at 314 Riverside Avenue

<sup>1</sup> MCSRD 154:140, Oct. 18, 1803: Hall to Wheelwright and Holt; 156:145, Jan. 12, 1804: Wheelwright and Holt to Haskell; 156:252, Aug. 15, 1804: Holt to Symmes; 160:342, Dec. 20, 1804: Symmes to Haskell (a previous uncited but dated instrument, Sep. 17, 1804, referenced in this deed links the ownership of the subject property back to Symmes). The descriptions of these lots do not precisely match the subject property but demonstrate some activities of its owners, abutters and previous owners in the neighborhood.

<sup>2</sup> MCSRD 204:62, Apr. 24, 1813.

<sup>3</sup> MCSRD 204:62 (1813).

<sup>4</sup> George W. Nason, *History and Complete Roster of the Massachusetts Regiments* (Smith & McCance, 1910) p. 163; Haskell's vital dates come from the manuscript register of deaths in Medford, 1830.

<sup>5</sup> Ancestry: deaths registered in the Town of Marshfield, 1878.

<sup>6</sup> William Richard Cutter, revised, and Dr. Benjamin Cutter, compiler, *A History of the Cutter Family of New England* (David Clapp & Son, 1871) p. 261.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Hall Johnston, compiler, *Lineage Book, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Vol. 38* (DAR, 1901) p. 43; vital records for both William and Rebecca Cutter: Ancestry: births and deaths registered in Medford and Boston.

<sup>8</sup> Probate records, NEHGS.

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MEDFORD

16 FOSTER COURT

**MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MDF.112

(MDF.11, not extant). Sprague & James shipyard was also located nearby at the south end of Foster Court (the 1855 map clearly depicts a large wharf and dock structure on the Mystic River at the southern tip of Foster Court large enough to accommodate ship-sized vessels).<sup>9</sup> The 1850 Federal Census appears to place Rebecca Cutter at the subject house (she was not part of the household of Isaac and Rebecca Sprague at the time). The household included the large family of Lucius M. Fletcher (born ca. 1805), a carpenter, including his wife, Margaret L. (born ca. 1811), six children born between 1836 and 1850 and a single woman and native of Ireland, Ellen McManus (born ca. 1834), possibly a servant. Circumstances suggest Rebecca Cutter may have been conducting a boarding house for employees of her son-in-law, or that, consistent with interior physical evidence in the description above, the house had been converted to dedicated two-family use and that Fletcher was Cutter's tenant.

In 1866 the heirs of Rebecca Cutter, including her daughter, Rebecca Sprague (1791-1872), by now a widow, conveyed the property, now with 86 feet of frontage and approximately 200 feet deep on average, to her son-in-law and Medford shipbuilder Joshua T. Foster (Foster married Ellen Gowen Sprague Foster, 1817-1896, in 1836). Consideration was \$500.<sup>10</sup> Foster (1810-1895) was a prominent, well-documented shipbuilder who was active in the industry through Foster & Taylor and later J.T. Foster. Several articles by Gleason and Whoolley published in the *Historical Register* extensively recount his activities and the products of his yard. He is credited with the last ship launched in Medford in 1873 and his yard was located on the site of his father-in-law's former yard, Sprague & James, at the south end of Foster Court.<sup>11</sup> Foster's household was located nearby in a large Italianate house fronting the south side of Riverside Avenue (not extant); as an indication of his success, in 1870 his estate was valued at \$60,000 worth of real estate and personal property.

In 1886 Foster sold the property, described as a 13,546 square foot lot, which nearly matches the current square footage of 13,540, to Henrietta P. Frost, the wife of John Frost.<sup>12</sup> Frost (born ca. 1820) was a policeman in Chelsea before moving to Medford by 1870, where he worked in a carpenter shop. By 1880 he was again employed as a policeman. He married Henrietta D'Luce (born ca. 1832) in 1854, for him a second marriage. There is no record of the Frost family residing on Foster Court; in 1880 they lived on Washington Street in Medford, suggesting the property served as an investment. In 1913 an heir, Sarah F. Frost, sold the property to subsequent owners. Between 1913 and 1926 it was held briefly by several short-term owners, but between 1926 and 1952 it was owned by several generations of the Rahicki and Poleatewich families. Since 1952 it has been owned by members of the Lyons and Fiander families, who are evidently related.<sup>13</sup>

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Ancestry.com: see footnotes

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- 1880 O. H. Bailey [Bird's Eye View of] Medford.
- 1889 Geo. H. Walker & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*.
- 1898 Geo. W. Stadly & Co., *Atlas of the City of Medford...*
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Charles Brooks and James M. Usher, *History of the Town of Medford, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, From its First Settlement in 1630 to 1855; Revised, Enlarged and Brought Down to 1885* (Rand, Avery & Co., 1886)

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

*Medford Historical Register* (MHS, 1898-1940).

<sup>9</sup> Herzan and Pfeiffer, MDF.11, offers a detailed history of Sprague & James. They further reference Frederick C. Whoolley, "Old Ship Street," *Medford Historical Register*, Vol. 4 (MHS) pp. 87-100.

<sup>10</sup> MCSRD 986:299, Sep. 4, 1866.

<sup>11</sup> *Medford Historical Register*: Hall Gleason, "Old Ships and Ship-Building Days," Vols. 26 (Dec. 1923), 32 and 37 (Sep. 1934); Whoolley.

<sup>12</sup> MCSRD 1790:128, Dec. 23, 1886, see also correction deed 2069:546.

<sup>13</sup> MCSRD 3790:272, May 22, 1913; 4504:575, Apr. 1, 1922; 4867:319, Apr. 1, 1925; 4990:561, Jun. 26, 1926; 7101:282, Jan. 25, 1947; 8023:62, May 30, 1952; 14941:236, Mar. 23, 1983; 15015:327, Apr. 28, 1983; 57096:557, Jun. 23, 2011.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

16 FOSTER COURT

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)    Form No.

	MDF.112
--	---------



View from S showing south-facing side elevation.    Garden shed far right.



View from N showing north-facing side elevation



INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

16 FOSTER COURT

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	MDF.112
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Door hood detail.



Entry lobby from north parlor. Original three-run or winding stair would have been located to the left.



INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

16 FOSTER COURT

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)    Form No.

	MDF.112
--	---------



South kitchen stair.



Cellar: hand-hewn joists and sill.

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

16 FOSTER COURT

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MDF.112

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

## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

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

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

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

Statement of Significance by John D. Clemson

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The Haskell - Cutter House (Rebecca Sprague House) at 16 Foster Court, constructed between 1804 and 1813, would be eligible for individual listing under criterion A for its association with the ship building industry in Medford that was important to the economic development of the region through the port of Boston during the first three quarters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The shipyards of Sprague & James, Foster & Taylor, and J.T. Foster operated in the immediate area during the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the subject house was later owned by members of the Cutter, Sprague and Foster families, who intermarried. The history and output of each of these shipyards is well documented; the last ship to be built in Medford was undertaken by J.T. Foster in 1873. The Haskell – Cutter House would also meet criterion C as an early example of the cape form that, despite alterations, retains significant building fabric and evidence that can serve as a document of the area's early economic and social development. The building is among the earliest surviving examples of its form in the city of Medford and retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The Haskell – Cutter House would also contribute to a district comprised of surviving period buildings elsewhere at the north end of Foster Court and on the surrounding blocks lining both sides of Riverside Avenue. A large section of Riverside Avenue was recorded in MDF.F, and a smaller area to the west incorporating sections of Pleasant and Park streets and Riverside Avenue was listed on the National Register 4/14/1975 as MDF.E (Old Ship Street Historic District). The subject property is just outside MDF.F. Therefore it would be eligible within an amended MDF.E or a listing of MDF.F that could be expanded to include sections of Foster Court. The south end of Foster Court, the former locations of the shipyards, has been profoundly altered through extensive land reclamation, landfill, and the alteration of the course of the Mystic River, so lacks integrity. This extensive area is currently the location of city-owned properties that date to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through recent decades that include housing and schools, parts of which may be eligible under a separate context.

# FORM A - AREA

Assessor's Sheets USGS Quad Area Letter Form Numbers in Area

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

P - 13, Q - 13

Boston  
North

MDF.112  
MDF.141  
MDF.142  
MDF.1391

## Photograph



L to R: 9-11 and 5 Foster Court

**Town/City:** Medford

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

**Name of Area:** Foster Court

**Present Use:** Residential

**Construction Dates or Period:** Early 19<sup>th</sup> century – 1981

**Overall Condition:** Good

**Major Intrusions and Alterations:** Limited late 20<sup>th</sup> century construction

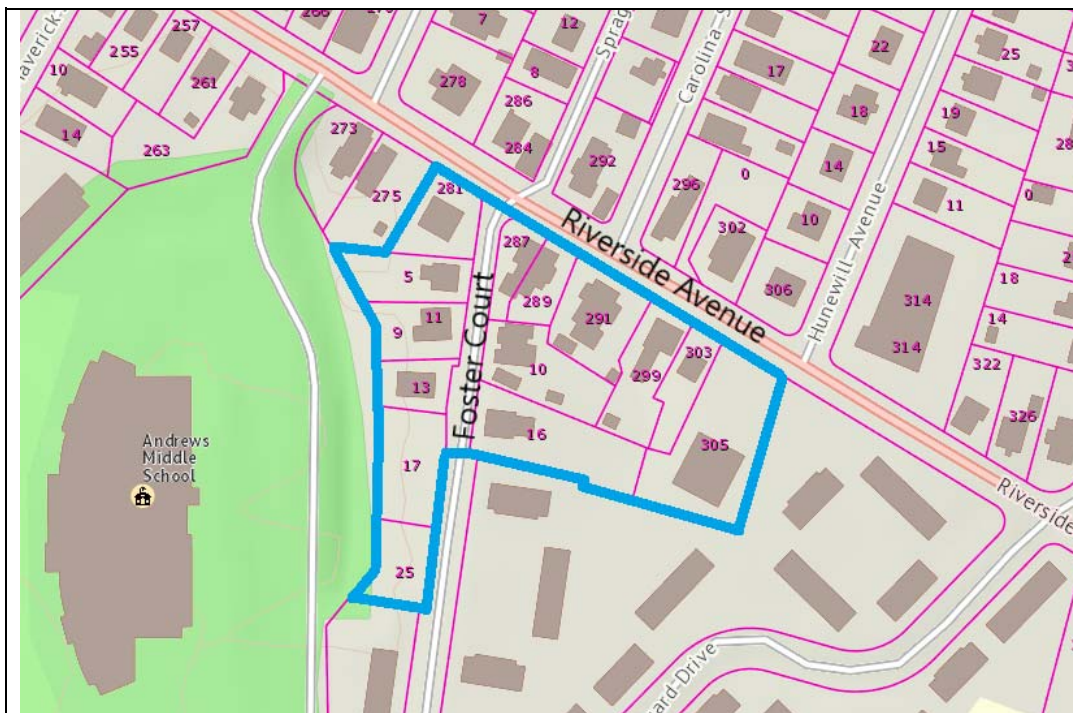
**Acreage:** 2.5 acres

**Recorded by:** Jennifer B. Doherty

**Organization:** Medford Historical Commission

**Date** (*month/year*): April, 2019

## Locus Map (North is Up)



☐ see continuation sheet

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

FOSTER COURT

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MDF.112, 141,  
142, 1391

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.  
*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

*Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

*Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.*

The Foster Court area presents as a relatively intact residential development with houses primarily dating to the early through late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The area includes several properties on Riverside Avenue and the houses immediately on Foster Court. These residential buildings are multi-family with two or three units. There is limited 20<sup>th</sup> century infill in the area, which retains a fair degree of integrity. Despite alterations the area remains a legible physical record of Medford's early to mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century shipbuilding industry, when approximately 570 ocean-going and coastal vessels were built here prior to ca. 1870. Although the housing is historically related to shipyards that existed at the end of Foster Court to the south, this land was not included in the area as there are no extant shipyard-related resources. These former shipyards were redeveloped in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century into a housing complex.

One of the earliest houses in the Foster Court area is the **Galen James House, 281 Riverside Avenue (MDF.141)**, believed to have been constructed in 1820. Interior investigation would be needed to confirm the date of construction. The two-story, double-pile, side-gable house is typical of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings. It features a center chimney plan with a five-bay main façade, close clipped eaves with no overhang at the gable ends, and second-story windows that sit tight under the eaves on the façade. A one-story enclosed porch with a hipped roof covers the first floor of the main façade. Two gabled dormers are located on the front slope of the roof. The house sits on a parged concrete foundation, is covered in stucco siding (except for the porch, which is covered in vinyl siding), and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows are 1/1 vinyl late 20<sup>th</sup> century sash, and are framed by inoperable vinyl shutters. The application of the stucco siding may have removed historic trim or finish, although some could survive underneath.

Two other early buildings – the **Haskell-Cutter House, 16 Foster Court (MDF.112)** and the **Judah W. and Deborah Sampson House, 299 Riverside Avenue (MDF.1391)** – were recently documented. The Haskell-Cutter House, a one-story Cape with a five-bay façade, is believed to have been constructed between 1804 and 1813. The Sampson House, a Greek Revival and Gothic Revival one-and-a-half story end house, dates to before 1850. The two buildings are examples of smaller housing that may have been used to quarter workers or less-wealthy shipbuilders, as compared to the larger houses of more prominent shipbuilders such as the James House.

As an area close to a major source of employment, multi-family houses constructed for shipyard workers predominate in the Foster Court area. One of the earliest multi-family houses in the area is the large duplex at **287-289 Riverside Avenue, the Isaac Hall House (MDF.142)**. Previous research identified a construction date of 1842, which is consistent with the duplex's appearance. This side-by-side duplex is notably large – the main block measures 42' by 28' – and likely features two side-hall plan units mirrored next to each other, based on the six-bay façade. It is two stories tall and two piles deep, capped by a wide side-gable roof. Ells extend from the rear of the building, providing kitchen space and additional living space. The ells, predominantly two stories, are complex, with a number of different projections and additions. A one-story open porch with a hipped roof covers the two main entry doors centered on the house. The house sits on a cut granite foundation, is covered in vinyl siding, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows are late 20<sup>th</sup> century vinyl 1/1 sash. Although the application of vinyl siding has likely covered or removed some historic trim, the house still features a wide fascia and full cornice returns at the gable ends, typical of the Greek Revival style popular when the house was constructed.



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The original plan of the **S. Magoun House, 10 Foster Court (MDF.XXX)**, constructed before 1855, is difficult to discern after numerous alterations. It may have been a duplex, or it may have been a five-bay, center chimney house with an ell extending to the south. The two-story, double-pile house has a side-gable roof. The north half of the façade features a traditional five-bay layout, although the south half features a door at the extreme south bay, with a three-part casement window above, and no other windows to help indicate floorplan. A two-story ell is visible extending from the south side of the rear of the house, while a one-story ell is visible on the north side of the rear elevation. The house sits on a parged concrete foundation, is covered in vinyl siding, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows are primarily 1/1 late 20<sup>th</sup> century vinyl sash. The two entry doors are covered by two one-story, hipped-roof open porches supported by wrought iron columns, and reached by concrete stairs featuring wrought iron railings. The application of siding has covered or removed all historic trim from the building. A small one-car, concrete block garage with a hipped roof is sited to the south of the house.

Another side-by-side duplex is located at **9-11 Foster Court, the Hughes Duplex (MDF.XXX)**. Slightly later in date than the Hall Duplex, the Hughes Duplex was constructed between 1855 and 1875. The Hughes Duplex is also smaller, featuring a three-bay façade with two centered entry doors. The two-story house is double-pile, and retains a stove chimney projecting from the ridgeline of each unit. The house sits on a parged concrete foundation, is covered in vinyl siding, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows are late 20<sup>th</sup> century vinyl 1/1 sash. The application of siding has covered or removed all historic trim. The two entry doors are covered by a hipped-roof hood with simple diagonal braces.

Constructed between 1855 and 1875, the **E. K. Hamlin Duplex, 5 Foster Court (MDF.XXX)** has a back-to-back plan. With one unit on each eave side of the two-story, end gable house, the entry doors are separated, providing residents some privacy. Each eave elevation features a centered entry door between a window on either side, with three windows above. The entry on the north elevation is protected by a one-story open porch that extends to the façade of the house. A one-story hipped-roof ell is visible at the rear of the building. The house features a parged concrete foundation, is covered in vinyl siding, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows are 1/1 late 20<sup>th</sup> century vinyl sash. The application of siding has covered or removed all historic finish or trim from the building.

A later example of multi-family housing is the two-family house at **13 Foster Court (MDF.XXX)**. Likely constructed ca. 1925, the house is typical of two-family houses constructed in Medford at that time. Rather than the side-by-side or back-to-back duplexes seen elsewhere in the Foster Court area, this two-family house features stacked flats. The rectangular two-story house has an end gable roof with an applied gambrel detail on the façade. Two-families with this gambrel treatment were constructed in large numbers in the Wellington area to the east and elsewhere in Medford during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The façade features two entry doors to the south, with spaces that appear to be enclosed porches to the north and across the entire second story. The house sits on a concrete foundation, is covered in vinyl siding, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows are 1/1 late 20<sup>th</sup> century vinyl sash with applied muntins giving the appearance of 6/1 sash. Any historic trim has been obscured by the application of the siding. The entry doors are reached by a set of concrete steps with a wrought iron railing, which continues around the small porch area. A door between stories on the south elevation is reached by a set of wood stairs.

More recent construction has been limited in the Foster Court area. Aside from the multi-family house at 13 Foster Court, the area includes three 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings on Riverside Avenue. The earliest is a modified multi-family house at **291 Riverside Avenue (MDF.XXX)**. The main block of the house is a two-story bungalow form, two bays wide and approximately three piles deep. The house is extended by a two-story wing covering the middle and rear piles of the east elevation, and a similar wing covering only the middle pile of the west elevation. All sections of the house feature hipped roofs, with the main gable on the façade clipped. A double-height porch covers the façade and wraps around to the west elevation. The porch is supported by Tuscan columns and features a white wrought iron railing on both levels. The house sits on a parged concrete foundation, is covered in wood shingle siding, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows are primarily 1/1 vinyl late 20<sup>th</sup> century sash, and are framed on the façade by inoperable shutters.

To the east, beyond the Sampson House at 299 Riverside Avenue, is the **William and Helen G. Asaro House, 303 Riverside Avenue (MDF.XXX)**, a garrison Colonial house that the Medford assessor dates to 1963. The house is a two-

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story, double-pile, side-gable house, where the second story overhangs the first story on the façade in the traditional garrison form. The façade is two bays, with the main entry door in the east bay, reached by a set of brick stairs, and a large three-part picture window to the west. A secondary entrance is located on the east elevation, reached by a set of concrete stairs. The house sits on a poured concrete foundation, is covered in vinyl siding, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows are 1/1 vinyl sash.

Constructed in 1981, the **Riverside Condominiums, 305 Riverside Avenue (MDF.XXX)** is the most recent building in the Foster Court area. This three-story condominium apartment building has a raised basement, providing four habitable stories, with 16 total apartments. The building is almost square, with a flat roof, and is constructed of brick veneer walls with a tar and gravel roof. The façade has no ornamentation, just four bays of sliding metal windows on each floor, with the street address in large numbers between the first and second bays. Metal balconies are visible at each level on the side elevations. There are entrances to the building on either side elevation, but they are difficult to see from the public way. The building is set well back from the street, breaking the traditional placement of buildings in the area, which sit close to the street. A large asphalt parking area fills the space between the building and the street, and the lot is framed by a vinyl stockade fence.

The **Valeriani House, 17 Foster Court (MDF.XXX)**, constructed between 1910 and 1936, and the **Foster Tenant House, 25 Foster Court (MDF.XXX)**, constructed between 1855 and 1875, were demolished between 2014 and 2016, but the now-vacant lots are included in this area form for the houses' associations with the development of Foster Court. It is theorized that the Foster Tenant House was originally sited on the east side of Foster Court and moved to its subsequent location in 1917. The building may have been constructed by Joshua T. Foster to house workers in his shipyard; historic maps show several houses owned by Foster on the east side of Foster Court, in addition to his own house at 305 Riverside Avenue (not extant). The Valeriani House was also moved from its original location. It was relocated to Foster Court in 1959 from 138B Riverside Avenue, an area that was cleared for the construction of Interstate 93.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this relates to the historical development of the community.*

### *Shipbuilding in Medford*

The area around Foster Court and Riverside Avenue has historically been associated with the shipbuilding industry, one of the major economic drivers of Medford through much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although it is believed that some sailing vessels were constructed in Medford on the Mystic River as early as the 1620s or 1630s, the shipbuilding industry here did not begin in earnest until Thatcher Magoun (1775-1856) established his shipyard to the west of Foster Court, on Riverside Avenue at the base of Park Street, in 1802 (no longer extant).<sup>1</sup> Deeds and local histories suggest that brickmaking occurred on the stretch of river near Foster Court in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that the street was originally known as a way to reach the brickyards.

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, ten shipyards operated along a mile-long stretch of the Mystic River in this area. The industry gave its name to the main road that ran along the river, Ship Street, today known as Riverside Avenue. The area was a good location for the enterprise, as the curves in the river provided plenty of frontage. The river was sheltered from the ocean, but also with enough draft at flood tide that ships could be floated and brought in and out. The broad, flat banks of the river bank in this location also fostered ship construction and launchings. Medford vessels were used to transport goods produced locally, such as rum and molasses, but were also involved in the China and trans-Atlantic trade and had a national reputation for quality.<sup>2</sup> Prominent shipbuilders such as Magoun often made their money not through building

<sup>1</sup> A small building, extant, located at 163 Riverside Avenue, was recorded in 2014. This building is believed to have been associated with the Magoun Shipyard and is pending submission to MHC.

<sup>2</sup> See Knobloch, pp. 39-40.



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ships, but through retaining partial ownership and engaging in trade on their own account. Through the early and middle years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Medford produced almost 570 ships; the last ship, the *Pilgrim*, was launched from the shipyard of J.T. Foster at the end of Foster Court in 1873. Around the same time, with the demise of the shipbuilding industry due to the adoption of railroads for transportation, Medford Town Meeting voted to change the name of Ship Street to Riverside Avenue ca. 1872.

While historic maps often identify shipyards by their owner's name, few buildings are shown near the shipyards. Knoblock notes that shipyards often did not need buildings to undertake their work; "...wooden ships could be built wherever there was a suitable site for launching the vessel on a river or ocean inlet."<sup>3</sup> The 1900 atlas does show a man-made dock cut into the land south of Foster Court. This would have been used by the successive shipyards in the area during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to construct ships, and later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century served as a sheltered location for loading and unloading goods from ships.

## *Galen James (1790-1879)*

One of the most prominent shipbuilders in Medford was Galen James (1790-1879), who constructed the Galen James House, 281 Riverside Avenue (MDF.141) in 1820. A native of Scituate, James came to Medford in the early 1810s and first worked for Thatcher Magoun.<sup>4</sup> In 1816 he formed the firm of Sprague & James with Isaac Sprague, also a Scituate native. Their shipyard was located at the end of Foster Court, in an area of the Mystic River known as "Labor in Vain" for its sharp oxbow that challenged ship captain's navigation skills, as compared to staying on the river's main, straight course to the southwest.<sup>5</sup> They were the third shipbuilding firm in Medford, and launched 63 ships before they retired in 1849. James constructed the James House shortly after his first marriage in 1817. An early 20<sup>th</sup> century reminiscence of Riverside Avenue described James' estate, with the large house, a carriage house and barn, an apple orchard, and the marshes behind the house stretching south towards the river.<sup>6</sup> Isaac Sprague's house stood nearby at 314 Riverside Avenue (MDF.11), and was constructed between 1804 and 1813; the house is no longer extant.

## *Joshua T. Foster (1810-1895)*

After the retirement of Galen James and Isaac Sprague, their firm and their shipyards were taken over by Joshua T. Foster and John Taylor; Foster eventually became sole owner of the shipyard (Foster was a son-in-law of Isaac Sprague, having married Sprague's daughter Ellen Gowen Sprague Foster, 1817-1896, in 1836). Gleason states that between Sprague & James, Foster & Taylor, and Foster individually, 133 ships were constructed at the Foster Court shipyard, almost a quarter of all ships constructed in Medford during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> Foster was a native of Scituate, arriving in Medford in 1826.<sup>8</sup> His partnership with John Taylor began in 1852, and he continued to operate as sole owner of the firm until 1873. Shortly before Foster and Taylor's partnership the 1850 census schedule of products of industry listed Foster producing 2,700 tons of ships with a value of \$146,000, and Taylor producing 2,931 tons of ships with a value of \$175,860.<sup>9</sup>

Foster was active in Medford public affairs, serving in the militia, as a selectman, and as an assessor. He was also a state representative from Medford in 1883-1884. Foster constructed a large house (no longer extant) at the site of the Riverside Condominiums, 305 Riverside Avenue (MDF.XXX). The Italianate style two-story house with a side-gable roof was set

<sup>3</sup> Knoblock, *The American Clipper Ship, 1845-1920*, pg. 39-40

<sup>4</sup> Wild, "Galen James," pg. 73-91

<sup>5</sup> According to "Historical Guide-Book of Medford," *Medford Historical Register*, Vol. 37 (The Society, Sep., 1934), a cut was made at the southern neck of the oxbow in 1761 in order to facilitate and shorten river navigation.

<sup>6</sup> Woolley, "Old Ship Street," pg. 2

<sup>7</sup> Gleason, *Old Ships*, pg. 53

<sup>8</sup> Ancestry.com: Massachusetts [Medford], Death Records, 1841-1915. *Vital Records of Scituate*, pg. 156. Woolley, "Old Ship Street," pg. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ancestry.com: US Federal Census of Product of Industry for 1850.

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well back from the street and featured a number of trees in the front yard (see historic image, below). The 1875 valuation of property in Medford listed Foster with a total of \$19,775 in real estate.<sup>10</sup> This included his own house and stable, valued at \$6,500, and six other houses with a total value of \$4,900. He also had several parcels of land with descriptions that suggest a location near the Foster Court shipyards, such as "(ship yard)," "on a court," and "marsh." His landholdings amounted to almost 13 acres. This pattern of land ownership by a prominent shipbuilder links the area to the earliest development of brick making and ship building beginning in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It is difficult to say who the residents of many Foster Court buildings were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historic maps provide some names, but as many property owner names are repeated, it is clear the houses were used as rental properties. Census records do not provide street names or addresses, but a review of neighbors listed near known residents such as Galen James and Joshua T. Foster provides a general overview of the neighborhood.<sup>11</sup> In 1850, many residents were Massachusetts natives. Men held jobs such as carpenter, joiner, and caulker, likely all related to shipbuilding industry. The same was true in 1860, although several other occupations were listed nearby, perhaps an indication of the decline in shipbuilding. The 1870 census listed a carpenter, "works in navy yard," and ship sawyer on Joshua T. Foster's census page, but other occupations included a lawyer, bank clerk, and print office worker. By 1880 the neighborhood had decidedly moved away from shipbuilding residents, with several store clerks, print workers, house carpenters, and general laborers.

## *Foster Court in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

With the demise of the shipbuilding industry, the shipyards began to attract new industries that needed space and easy access to water. In 1894, much of the marshland around Foster Court, totaling 60 acres, was acquired by the International Lard and Oil Refining Company.<sup>12</sup> The firm, founded by Cornelius B. de la Vergne, had developed a unique way to make lard oil available as a lubricant that did not conduct electricity. The company also produced tinware, and pasteboard and wooden boxes. The 1900 atlas shows a dock at the south end of Foster Court, used to hold ships during construction and likely used by the International lard and Oil Refining Company, as well as early industries such as brickmaking, to load and unload goods from ships. Although any factory buildings associated with the company are not shown, the 1900 atlas marks the company as the owner of a number of tracts in the Foster Court area, including the Foster House.

An article in the *Boston Globe* from 1922 shows that Medford's history of distilling industries continued even through Prohibition.<sup>13</sup> In October of that year, a raid was made on the Foster House, and one of the largest stills in the state was found. Two men were arrested; one was the father-in-law of the other, and they were living in the Foster House with their families. The article noted that the site had been raided a few months before and smaller stills destroyed at that time, indicating that the distillery had been in operation at the location for some time. The site was likely ideal for the industry, as many articles note that the Foster House was set well back from the street. The house was also large, and had easy access to the river for sending out product.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Town of Medford valuation for 1875

<sup>11</sup> Ancestry.com: US Federal Census of Population for 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880.

<sup>12</sup> "New Medford Industry," *Boston Globe*, June 24, 1894.

<sup>13</sup> "Huge Distillery is Seized in Medford," *Boston Globe*, October 14, 1922.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.: "The house is set back from the road 100 feet, among the trees. The stills were found on the second floor. The walls were cut away in many places, presumably in order to get the huge stills and condensers in. Prohibition officers expect it will take a machinist, a plumber and a carpenter to get the evidence out. The 600-gallon still is in a room by itself, nearly filling the available space. Both of the rooms devoted to distilling are a maze of pipes and tubes and coils. The big still had been heated by steam, piped from the cellar, where a special heater was installed for the purpose of supplying the big coils. The mash from the still was syphoned through a large rubber hose from the attic, where it was stored in a huge galvanized iron super-hogshead...The establishment is lighted by glaring gas jets. A narrow stairway, with winds up to the garret, where the mash was stored in dozens of huge barrels, the walls were cut away in many places...Paraphernalia of the trade lay all about; corks, corkscrews, five 100-pound bags of sugar, a few bags of hops, funnels, old coils, extra pipe fittings, a fire extinguisher, empty mineral water bottles and some full ones – full of "shine." A bottle of dark brown coloring – to make whisky out of the colorless distillate – was on the shelf."

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Census records in the 20<sup>th</sup> century provide street names and addresses, allowing for more information on the residents of the Foster Court area.<sup>15</sup> The majority were native-born, although a few immigrants from Poland, Italy, and Russia are listed. The area housed primarily families, and no boardinghouses were listed. Residents were employed in primarily blue collar occupations, with laborer one of the primary occupations. Other frequent jobs included service occupations such as electrician or plumber; household servants, chauffeurs, and stable keepers; and bookkeepers.

As noted above, 20<sup>th</sup> century construction in the Foster Court area has been limited. Two multi-family houses were added in the 1920s, one replacing an earlier structure on Foster Court and another constructed on an historically vacant lot on Riverside Avenue. The Asaro House was constructed in 1963, after the property was subdivided the previous year and purchased by William and Helen G. Asaro.<sup>16</sup> With the demolition of the Joshua T. Foster House, the lot was available for new construction. A plan from 1981 marks the Riverside Condominiums at the site as a "new apartment building"; the condominium master deed was recorded at the same time as the plan.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> MCSRD Plan Book 1962, Plan 443, April 20, 1962; MCSRD Book 10079, Page 584, July 18, 1962

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MHC ID	Assessor's #	Street Address	Historic Name	Date	Style / Form
	P-13-4	5 Foster Ct.	E. K. Hamlin Duplex	1855-1875	No style / Duplex
	P-13-3001 P-13-3002	9-11 Foster Ct.	Hughes Duplex	1855-1875	No style / Duplex
	P-13-75	10 Foster Ct.	S. Magoun House	Before 1855	No style
	P-13-2	13 Foster Ct.		Ca. 1925	Colonial Revival / Two-family
MDF.112	P-13-76	16 Foster Ct.	Haskell-Cutter House	1804-1813	Federal/Italianate / Cape
	P-13-1	17 Foster Ct.	Valeriani House*	1910-1936	Dutch Colonial
	Q-13-1	25 Foster Ct.	Foster Tenant House*	1855-1875	No style
MDF.141	P-13-5	281 Riverside Ave.	Galen James House	1820	No style / Center chimney
MDF.142	P-13-74A P-13-74	287-289 Riverside Ave.	Isaac Hall Duplex	1842	Greek Revival / Duplex
	P-13-73	291 Riverside Ave.		Ca. 1930	Colonial Revival/Craftsman / Two-family
MDF.1391	P-13-72	299 Riverside Ave.	Judah W. and Deborah Sampson House	Before 1850	Greek Revival/Gothic Revival / End House
	P-13-71	303 Riverside Ave.	William and Helen G. Asaro House	1963	Postwar Traditional / Garrison Colonial
	P-13-7000 to P-13-7015	305 Riverside Ave.	Riverside Condominiums	1981	No style / Apartment Building

\* Demolished

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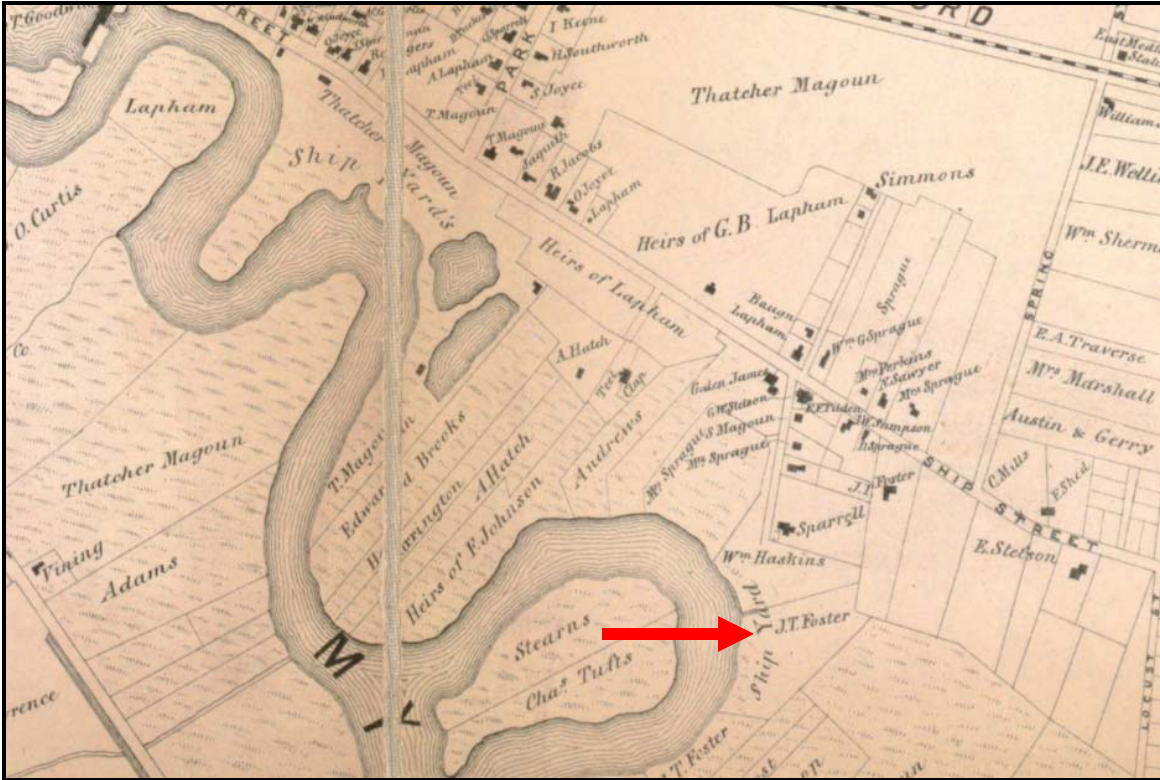
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1855 Walling map of Medford. The shipyards of Joshua T. Foster, indicated by a red arrow, and William Haskins at the end of Foster Court are marked on this detail of the 1855 map of Medford. Further west up river and along Riverside Avenue was the shipyard of Thatcher Magoun, where shipbuilding in Medford began in 1802.



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

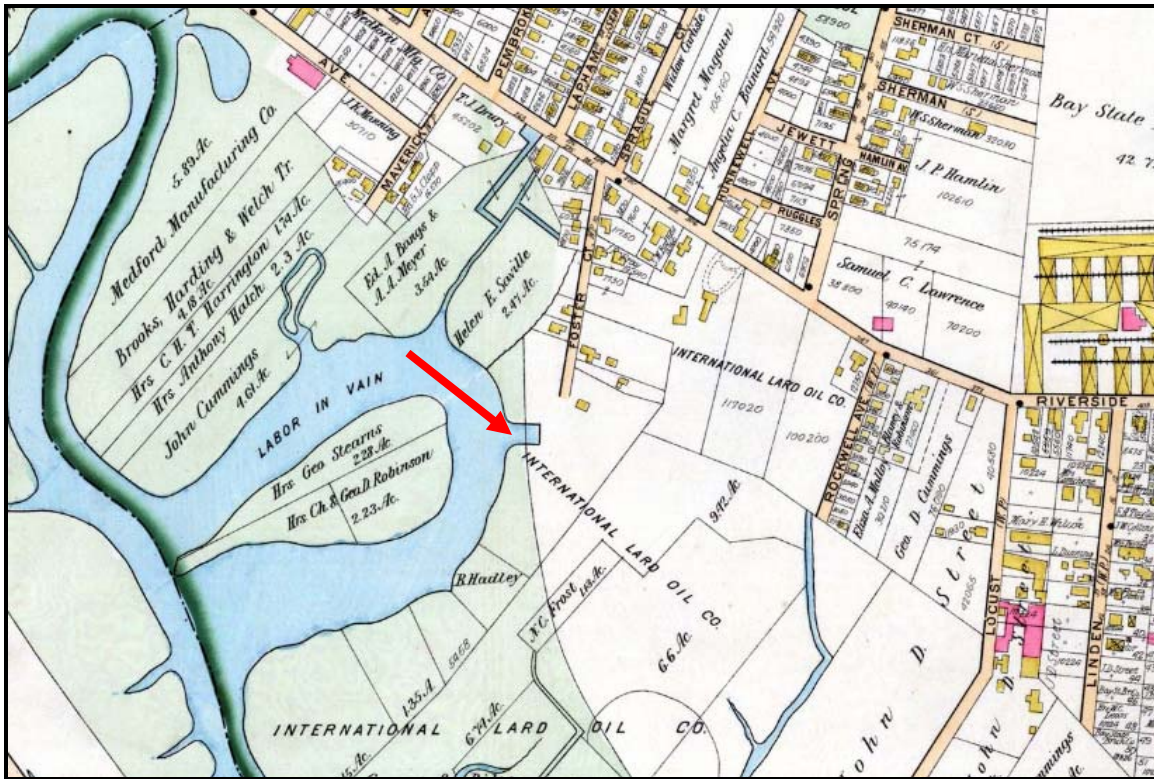
FOSTER COURT

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area Letter Form Nos.

MDF.112, 141,  
142, 1391



1900 Stadly county atlas. The last ship was launched from a Medford shipyard in 1873. After that, various manufacturing operations took over the former shipyards, taking advantage of their easy access to water. On this detail of a 1900 atlas, the Medford Manufacturing Co. is pictured to the west, at the former Magoun shipyard, while International Lard Oil Co. controlled most of the land around Foster Court, including the former Foster shipyard. Note the man-made dock at the end of Foster Court, indicated by a red arrow, which would have been used to hold ships during construction or when loading materials such as bricks from the nearby brickyards.

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

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One of the earliest houses in the Foster Court area is the Galen James House, 281 Riverside Avenue (MDF.141), façade and west elevation shown here. Foster Court is to the left.



The Isaac Hall Duplex, 287-289 Riverside Avenue (MDF.142) stands on the opposite corner of Foster Court from the James House. It is believed to have been constructed in 1842.



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

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	MDF.112, 141, 142, 1391
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Foster Court includes several examples of multi-family housing, such as the E. K. Hamlin Duplex, 5 Foster Court (MDF.XXX), above (façade and north elevation, with porch), and the Hughes Duplex, 9-11 Foster Court (MDF.XXX), below (façade and south elevation).



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Due to alterations, the original plan of the S. Magoun House, 10 Foster Court (MDF.XXX) is difficult to discern. Façade and south elevation shown.



This two-family house at 13 Foster Court (MDF.XXX) is an example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century multi-family housing form common in Medford. Façade and south elevation shown.



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This ca. 1930 multi-family house at 291 Riverside Avenue (MDF.XXX) was constructed on a lot that was historically vacant. Façade and west elevation shown.



The Judah W. and Deborah Sampson House, 299 Riverside Avenue (MDF.1391) is one of the earliest houses in the area. The William and Hannah G. Asaro House, 303 Riverside Avenue (MDF.XXX), 1963, is one of the most recent.

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

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Captain Foster's Home located on Riverside Avenue, 1914. Site of present Riverside Avenue Projects, across from Sprague House.

The Joshua T. Foster House stood on the site of the Riverside Condominiums, 305 Riverside Avenue (MDF.XXX). It is unclear when the house was demolished; the condominiums were opened in 1981. From the collection of the Medford Public Library.




# Haskell-Cutter House Historic District

## City of Medford Historic District Commission

Office of Community Development  
Room 308, Medford City Hall  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, MA 02155

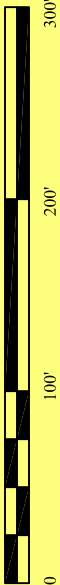
Map Created: July 10, 2019

### Legend:

-  Proposed boundary of the Haskell-Cutter House (16 Foster Court) Historic District

### Graphic Scale:

Scale 1" = 100'







**Figure 1 - 16 Foster Court  $\frac{3}{4}$  front view looking northeast from the street and towards Riverside Avenue (beyond, not shown).**



**Figure 2 - 16 Foster Court  $\frac{3}{4}$  rear view looking toward the northwest showing ell and first story addition.**





**Figure 3 - 16 Foster Court rear elevation showing symmetrical massing of building. The single unit dwelling was converted into two residences during the mid nineteenth century.**



**Figure 4 - 16 Foster Court showing extent of the rear yard. The building has had the same lot size since the early nineteenth century.**





**Figure 1 - Foster Court looking north toward Riverside Avenue. Note the array of mid nineteenth century buildings in the foreground and earlier structures in the distance.**



**Figure 2 - Foster Court looking south toward Laprise Village owned by the Medford Housing Authority. An abutter to 16 Foster Court, the development occupies the entire southern half of the street.**





**Figure 3 - Foster Court looking south from Riverside Avenue showing early development along the streetscape bordered by later housing in the background.**



**Figure 4 - Foster Court looking south opposite the view above and showing early residential development fronting Riverside Avenue.**





**Figure 5 – 305 Riverside Avenue, site of the Foster House. The current multi-family building replaced the nineteenth century structure in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.**



**Figure 6 - View opposite above showing 314 Riverside Avenue, site of the Issac Sprague House. The current building replaced the nineteenth century building in the late 20th century.**





# City of Medford

## HISTORICAL COMMISSION HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – Room 308  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

### Via Electronic Mail

March 12, 2019

Adam L. Hurtubise, City Clerk  
Medford City Hall, Room 103  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

### Re: 16 Foster Court (MDF.112), Determination of Significance

Dear Sir,

The Medford Historical Commission (the “Commission”) has received an application concerning the proposed demolition of the dwelling house located at 16 Foster Court, Medford, MA. The application was filed at the Commission’s regular meeting on Monday, February 11, 2019. Pursuant to Section 48-78(d) of the Revised Ordinances of the City of Medford, a public meeting was held on Monday, March 11, 2019, in Room 201 of Medford City Hall to determine if the aforementioned property was to be found to be *significant* under Medford’s Demolition Delay Ordinance.

As set forth in Section 48-78, a *significant* building is any structure, or a portion thereof, which is not within a local historic district subject to regulation under the provisions of MGLA c. 40C, but which:

1. Has been listed in or is the subject of a pending application for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; or
2. Has been listed in the Massachusetts Register of Historic Places; or
3. Was built within 75 years or older and which is determined by the commission to be a significant building as provided by subsection 48-78(d) either because:
  - a. It is importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the city or the commonwealth; or
  - b. It is historically or architecturally important in terms of period, style, method of building construction, or association with an important architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings.

**At its February 11 meeting, the Commission made the determination that 16 Foster Court is a significant building under Section 48-78 of the Demolition Delay ordinance.** The Commission’s determination (passed by a 5-0 vote), was based on the documentation and research contained in the attached Massachusetts Historical Commission (“MHC”) form B prepared by John Clemson, the Commission’s consultant in architectural history. The Commission also reviewed associated MHC area forms and an expanded neighborhood narrative for the area of East Medford in which the premises is located. The facts supporting the findings are as follows:

1. 16 Foster Court is a rare surviving example of a domestic dwelling from the early nineteenth century. Its construction date between 1804 and 1813 puts this property in a small grouping of similar structures. Neil Larson, an architectural historian who worked with the Commission, indicated in his *City of Medford Community Wide Survey Plan* that resources such as 16 Foster Court are uncommon and diminishing. As a result, the Commission views efforts to preserve such resources to be a high priority.
2. 16 Foster Court retains an acceptable degree of integrity. Character defining elements from the time it was first built include its Cape Cod form, use of a typical floor plan clustered around a central hearth, and the presence of material elements such as heavy timber framing, board walls, fireboxes, and some original window and door locations. While the structure (like all buildings) has changed over time, evidence of its earliest features still remains. Its renovation over time does not obscure 16 Foster Court's original design and style and later modifications, including the division of the building into two units, the addition of dormers, the application of an Eastlake hood on the front door and the addition of composite siding, are now considered historic as well. Removal of select features during a restoration of 16 Foster Court may reveal evidence of the development of the building, demonstrating the structure is worthy of retention.
3. 16 Foster Court preserves links to the working landscape of 19<sup>th</sup> Century East Medford. It is located in a residential enclaves closely associated with the industrial activity on the banks of the Mystic River in the well documented Old Ship Street local (MDF.E), National Register (MDF.F) and Washington Square (MDF.A) areas. From 1803 to 1871, East Medford's productive shipyards turned out 568 world renowned clipper ships that set the standard for wooden sailing vessels. Each was handcrafted by scores of workers who lived in the dense community extending eastward from Medford Square in which 16 Foster Court remains standing. It was constructed concurrently with the earliest activity in the area, and several of its owners can be linked to this prosperous time of Medford shipbuilding.
4. 16 Foster Court's social history directly correlates with the broad patterns of the development of East Medford Following the establishment of the first shipyard by Thatcher Magoun, developers purchased and divided what had been farmland to house shipyard craftsmen. Holt and Wheelwright purchased a three-acre parcel from the Hall Family, of rum distilling fame, to be divided into multiple house lots, on one of which 16 Foster Court was erected by a speculative developer. The structure was later owned by Lincoln Damon, a shipwright from the south shore. A later owner was Joshua T. Foster, whose yard launched the last clipper ship.
5. 16 Foster Court has strong associations with the locally prominent Cutter and Sprague families. Rebecca Cutter, the widow of William Cutter, a Revolutionary War veteran and distillery house foreman for the Halls. purchased the building to be used as her residence. Mrs. Carter occupied half the building and rented the other half to tenants, possibly family. Upon her death, 16 Foster Court came into possession of the Widow Cutter's namesake daughter, Rebecca Cutter, who was married to the prominent shipbuilder Isaac Sprague (who, in partnership with Galen James, was the third master craftsman to establish a yard on the Mystic River) and lived nearby at 314 Riverside Avenue (MDF.11) in a fashionable Greek Revival home.
6. 16 Foster Court's association with the Medford shipbuilding industry places this building within state and national historical currents. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Massachusetts entered a golden age of sailing ship production. Its Atlantic ports were among the busiest in the world, served by fast merchant ships. Medford became one of several prestigious locations for the creation of these storied vessels. 16 Foster Court remains a tangible link to Medford's shipbuilding days.

Based on the information available to it, the Commission has found 16 Foster Court to be historically significant under Section 48-78(d) under criteria a and b set forth in the definition of "Significant building" in Section 48-77 of the Demolition Delay Ordinance, as it has important associations with more than one historic persons and events of the City of Medford, and the broad architectural and social history of the City and Commonwealth. It is architecturally important in terms of period and style both by itself and in the context of buildings in the area of East Medford in which it was erected, as well as in terms of the method of building construction by itself. These factors, viewed in combination, provide ample support for a finding of significance.

In accordance with Section 48-78(e) of the Revised Ordinances of the City of Medford **the Medford Historical Commission will hold a public meeting on Monday, April 8, 2019, at 7 p.m. in Room 201 of Medford City Hall** to hear public comments and to determine if demolition of the 16 Foster Court will be detrimental to the historical, cultural, or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Medford. Within 21 days from the close of the meeting of April 8, the Commission will issue a formal written determination as to whether 16 Foster Court should be "preferably preserved" and thus the demolition delay provided for in Section 48-78(h) of the Revised Ordinances.

Any questions regarding this determination and the hearing to be conducted April 8 may be directed to the Chair of the Historical Commission at [HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov](mailto:HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer M Keenan" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jennifer M. Keenan  
Chair of the Medford Historical Commission

Copy to: Applicant of Record  
Attorney of Record  
Building Commissioner, Building Department



# City of Medford

HISTORICAL COMMISSION &  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – Room 308  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

April 22, 2019

## Sent via Electronic Mail

Adam Hurtubise, City Clerk  
Medford City Hall, Room 103  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, MA 02155

## Re: 16 Foster Court, Determination of Preferably Preserved

Dear Sir:

In accordance with Regulations set forth in Section 48-78(e) of the Revised Ordinances of the City of Medford, the Medford Historical Commission (MHC) held a public hearing on Monday, April 8, 2019 in Room 201 at Medford City Hall, to determine if the demolition of the “significant building” of the property located at 16 Foster Court, Medford, would be detrimental to the historical, cultural, or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Medford.

Based on the MHC’s research, the comments made at the hearing, and the extent to which the building retains its original fabric, **the MHC found, on a vote of 6-0, that 16 Foster Court is a “preferably-preserved significant building,”** according to the Revised Ordinances. This letter serves as notice in accordance with Sections 48-78(f) and 48-78(h) that no demolition permit for that building may be issued for up to eighteen months from the date of that hearing.

Reasoning for such determination is as follows:

1. 16 Foster Court is a rare surviving example of a domestic dwelling from the early nineteenth century. Its construction date between 1804 and 1813 puts this property in a small grouping of similar structures. Neil Larson, an architectural historian who worked with the Commission, indicated in his *City of Medford Community Wide Survey Plan* that resources such as 16 Foster Court are uncommon and diminishing. As a result, the Commission views efforts to preserve such resources to be a high priority.
2. 16 Foster Court retains an acceptable degree of integrity. Character defining elements from the time it was first built include its Cape Cod form, use of a typical floor plan clustered around a central hearth, and the presence of material elements such as heavy timber framing, board walls, fireboxes, and some original window and door locations. While the structure (like all buildings) has changed over time, evidence of its earliest features still remains. Its renovation over time does not obscure 16 Foster Court’s original design and style and later modifications, including the division of the building into two units, the addition of dormers, the application of an Eastlake hood on the front door and the addition of composite siding, are now considered historic as well. Removal of select features during a restoration of 16 Foster Court may reveal evidence of the development of the building, demonstrating the structure is worthy of retention.
3. 16 Foster Court preserves links to the working landscape of 19<sup>th</sup> Century East Medford. It is located in a residential enclaves closely associated with the industrial activity on the banks of the Mystic River in the well documented Old Ship Street local (MDF.E), National Register (MDF.F) and Washington Square



# City of Medford

HISTORICAL COMMISSION &  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – Room 308  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

(MDF.A) areas. From 1803 to 1871, East Medford's productive shipyards turned out 568 world renowned clipper ships that set the standard for wooden sailing vessels. Each was handcrafted by scores of workers who lived in the dense community extending eastward from Medford Square in which 16 Foster Court remains standing. It was constructed concurrently with the earliest activity in the area, and several of its owners can be linked to this prosperous time of Medford shipbuilding.

4. 16 Foster Court's social history directly correlates with the broad patterns of the development of East Medford Following the establishment of the first shipyard by Thatcher Magoun, developers purchased and divided what had been farmland to house shipyard craftsmen. Holt and Wheelwright purchased a three-acre parcel from the Hall Family, of rum distilling fame, to be divided into multiple house lots, on one of which 16 Foster Court was erected by a speculative developer. The structure was later owned by Lincoln Damon, a shipwright from the south shore. A later owner was Joshua T. Foster, whose yard launched the last clipper ship.
5. 16 Foster Court has strong associations with the locally prominent Cutter and Sprague families. Rebecca Cutter, the widow of William Cutter, a Revolutionary War veteran and distillery house foreman for the Halls. purchased the building to be used as her residence. Mrs. Carter occupied half the building and rented the other half to tenants, possibly family. Upon her death, 16 Foster Court came into possession of the Widow Cutter's namesake daughter, Rebecca Cutter, who was married to the prominent shipbuilder Isaac Sprague (who, in partnership with Galen James, was the third master craftsman to establish a yard on the Mystic River) and lived nearby at 314 Riverside Avenue (MDF.11) in a fashionable Greek Revival home.
6. 16 Foster Court's association with the Medford shipbuilding industry places this building within state and national historical currents. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Massachusetts entered a golden age of sailing ship production. Its Atlantic ports were among the busiest in the world, served by fast merchant ships. Medford became one of several prestigious locations for the creation of these storied vessels. 16 Foster Court remains a tangible link to Medford's shipbuilding days.
7. Lastly, there is strong support from the local community which has advocated for the retention of this rare resource. The neighbors have noted the building is an important reminder of our shipbuilding heritage. The early date makes it a resource that stands apart from the others in the neighborhood. It is worthy for retention to maintain the residential nature of this neighborhood.

During this demolition delay period, the Medford Historical Commission retains the right to lift the demolition delay in accordance with Section 48-78(i). Our board has expressed willingness to work with both the applicant, residents, City of Medford and other interested parties to ensure the continued preservation of such structure.

If you, or any of the parties copied on this letter, have any questions in regard to this determination, please do not hesitate to contact me at once at [HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov](mailto:HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov).

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Keenan  
Chair, Medford Historical Commission

Copy to:           Applicant of Record (via email)  
                      Building Commissioner, Building Department (via email)

July 30, 2019

Mr. Christopher Bader, Chair  
Historic District Commission, City of Medford  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

RE: Including 16 Foster Court in a Local Historic District

Dear Mr. Bader:

After our review of the Inventory Form B-Building prepared for the Massachusetts Historical Commission, dated February 2019, for the residence at 16 Foster Court in Medford, Massachusetts, Wolf Architects encourages the Commission to include this property in a Local Historic District. This recommendation is based on my training and experience in the field, including a Master of Architectural History degree, employment early in my career with the National Register of Historic Places, and more than forty years of architectural research, historic structures reports, and preservation work involving the historic architecture of Massachusetts.

The following points document 16 Foster Court's historical significance and justify including it in a district:

- It appears to be eligible to be individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C (although we're not sure whether MHC has made a determination of eligibility at this time).
- It has strong associations with the shipbuilding industry that once thrived in Medford. (Criterion A)
- It is among the earliest surviving examples in Medford of small vernacular domestic dwellings of the "Cape" type from the early-nineteenth century, most of which have been lost over the centuries. (Criterion C)
- It is well over 75 years old, having been built more than 200 years ago.
- It provides a tangible link to the early settlement and development of East Medford.
- It has strong associations with prominent families who lived in the area.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Wolf Architects, Inc.

  
Gary Wolf, FAIA  
Principal

**WOLF**  
**ARCHITECTS**  
**INC.**

98 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET, SUITE 304  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02114  
TELEPHONE 617 742 7557  
FAX 617 742 7656

[WWW.WOLFARCHITECTS.COM](http://WWW.WOLFARCHITECTS.COM)



July 18, 2019

To: The Medford Historic District Commission

I support creating a Historic District for the Haskell-Cutter House at 16 Foster Court. This modest house built in the very early 19<sup>th</sup> century is among the fewer than 500 houses in Medford built before 1850. The house is one of the earliest cape style houses in Medford and, in the words of well respected architectural historian John Clemson, the house is “an early example of the cape form that, despite alterations, retains significant building fabric.”<sup>1</sup>

Beyond its architectural importance and its age, the house has important connections to Medford's ship building industry. The house was owned by a number of families of significance in Medford's ship building and distillery industries, including the Spragues, the Cutters, and Joshua T. Foster. Located near the ship yards, it was likely the home of craftsman involved in the historically important ship building industry. John Clemson states that it “can serve as a document of the area’s early economic and social development.”<sup>2</sup>

Medford has been short-sighted in protecting our historic assets. As a result we were not ready for the current boom in housing. We are losing our historic homes at an ever increasing rate, thus losing the distinctive character of our neighborhoods. People will comment that this is happening across the Commonwealth, but that is not a reason we should allow this destruction to continue in Medford.

Medford's two Historic Districts were created in the 1980s and have successfully preserved some of our oldest homes. It is past time for new Historic Districts to be formed. Even though Historic Districts encompassing multiple buildings are preferable, single-house historic districts can preserve our oldest and most distinctive homes more quickly and at less cost. These single-house districts can then be the cornerstone of larger historic districts in the future.

Sincerely,  
Sharon Guzik  
10 Manning Street

---

<sup>1</sup> Clemson, John D., with Ryan Hayward. “MDF.112 – Haskell-Cutter House (Rebecca Sprague House),” Massachusetts Historical Commission Building Inventory Form. For the Medford Historical Commission, February, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Dear Historical Commission,

I am writing in support of preserving 16 Foster Court and either adding it to the existing Old Ship Street Historic District or creating a new single-home district for it. The building at 16 Foster Court has strong ties to Medford's early shipbuilding history and stands as an increasingly lonely reminder of that past in the heavily modified area south of Riverside Ave. It must be protected.

I served on the Medford Historical Commission from 2011-2016, and in 2015, we considered the significance of nearby properties at 17 and 25 Foster Court, so I have some familiarity with the immediate vicinity. I have also read the draft of the MHC Form B prepared by John Clemson and Ryan Hayward in Feb. 2019.

The building at 16 Foster Court reminds me a lot of 163 Riverside Ave, another pre-1855 Cape connected to Medford's shipyards. In each case, an unassuming Cape that looks like it's from the 1950s is actually more than 100 years older, upending popular notions of the Cape style's age and distribution. While that alone in my opinion makes 16 Foster Court special, its extreme age and strong connection to Medford's preeminent shipbuilders are truly remarkable.

Without rehashing the narrative from the Form B, I will point out instead that so much of the early history of the land between Riverside Ave and the Mystic has been obliterated by the landfill, straightening of the river, and construction of the schools and athletic fields and housing developments, that finding a house like 16 Foster Court in the midst of that is like receiving an Indian head penny in change at CVS.

Like 163 Riverside, 16 Foster Court is remarkable in that it is not just the house of a shipyard owner, but is more connected with the actual work of shipbuilding itself. (163 Riverside was possibly originally a shop building of some sort for Thatcher Magoun's shipyard; see attached draft Form B.) With 16 Foster Court serving as the home for a worker in the shipyard, it represents the day-to-day life of the working class, those who actually built the ships that made Medford famous. That history, not written in the books or preserved in the brick manor houses of the elite, needs to be preserved to serve as a reminder of the daily life for regular folks in that era.

For all these reasons, please consider adding 16 Foster Court to the Old Ship Street district or creating a new district for 16 Foster Court itself.

Thank you,  
James Kossuth  
88 Winthrop Street  
Medford