

Haskell-Cutter Historic District

Public Hearing



Medford Historic District Commission
Monday, August 10, 2020 @ 6:00 PM
Presentation via Zoom

Welcome & Introduction

Thank you for attending our meeting. We look forward to your feedback on this district. We need your support to complete our efforts!

Agenda for this Presentation

- Introduction to Local Historic Districts (LHD's)
- Proposed LHD boundaries
- Why the Haskell Cutter House?
- Review Process
- FAQ
- Questions and Comment Period at end.

Types of Historic Districts

There's a **big** difference in the designations!

Local Historic District

- State designation through MGL Chapter 40C.
- Created by a 2/3 majority of City Council.
- Administered by the Historic District Commission, who reviews proposed exterior alterations.
- Provides clear protection against specific kinds of alteration and demolitions.

National Register of Historic Places

- Administered by the Secretary of the Interior.
- Allows for certain federal tax incentives related to rehabilitation and preservation.
- Provides limited protection.
- **Provides no protection for unnecessary alteration and demolitions by private parties.**

What is a Local Historic District?

- A local bylaw that:
 - Reviews **any exterior building features visible from a public right of way.**
 - Prevents unnecessary demolition.
 - Renovations, alterations or new construction are reviewed.
 - The process is guided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.



LHD's Protect Architectural Resources
Nicholas White House - 35 Grandview Avenue

Medford Historic District Commission

- The City Council approved the creation of the Historic District Commission, together with two districts, in 1985:
 - The Hillside Avenue Historic District
 - The Marm Simonds Historic District
- **Chapter 48, Section III** of the Revised Ordinances of the City of Medford is the local bylaw that gives the HDC review authority.
- Made up of **5 members and 2 alternates**.
Members are: Architects, lawyers, real estate agents and homeowners.



Our Local Historic Districts



Marm Simonds District

West Medford (High/Woburn Streets)

Caleb Brooks House, c. 1765 – 24 Woburn Street



Hillside Avenue District

Medford Square (Hillside/Grandview Avenue)

Hamilton House, c. 1890 – 31 Hillside Avenue

How is a Local District Created?

Step 1: Local Historic District Commission elects to act as a study committee.

- Accepted June 8, 2019

Step 2: Local Historic District Study Committee Activities:

- Conducts additional research on building.
- Suggests boundaries
- Makes recommendations for LHD to HDC.
- Prepares preliminary study report.

Report approved by HDC – October 21, 2019.

Step 3: HDC submits completed report to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for review and approval.

- Received – October 24
- Approved – Nov. 23

Step 4: Public Hearing 

Step 5: Final document is submitted for **2/3 majority vote of approval by City Council**

Step 6: Final bylaw is signed by Mayor. Maps filed with Registry of Deeds to complete process.

Purpose of a Local Historic District

Goals are set by the enabling legislation and State

Purpose:

- Preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant to the history of the Commonwealth and its cities and towns;
- Maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places;
- Encourage new designs compatible with existing buildings in the LHD.

Meaning:

- Saves the character of many areas in Massachusetts.
- Provides assurance that the historic built environment will be there for future generations to enjoy.
- Provides a visual sense of the past.
- Creates a sense of pride in the community.
- Provides educational opportunities for school children and teachers.

Local Historic Districts Benefit to Medford

Too numerous to mention. Here are a few big ones:

- Preserves and enhances the Medford's cultural and historical resources.
- Protects the unique character of the City's built environment.
- Creates strong economic benefits in the City through:
 - Neighborhood stability
 - Encouraging quality property reinvestment
 - Tourist & Educational Appeal for all visitors – pedestrian, bicyclist, diners, shoppers, children, college students
- Allows for Smart Growth and environmental benefits:
 - Promotes reinvestment in the existing building stock in an already densely built-out landscape
 - Reduces material waste and reuses a finite resource

Criteria for LHD Designation

The study committee used the following criteria in determining designation:

- Rarity in Medford
- Good examples of architectural style
- Form and massing intact and readable.
- Respectful changes over time that do not degrade integrity.
- Potential danger of loss to the community.
- Association with important national, state or local events and prominent figures.
- Location of the building.



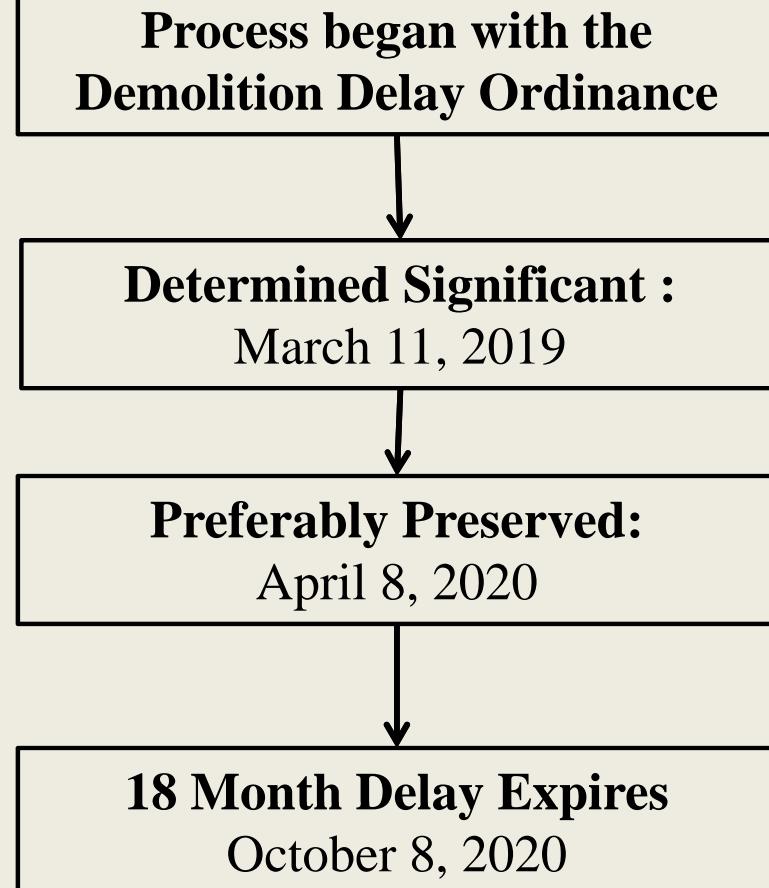
Future Local Historic District

Paul Curtis House, c. 1839 – 114 South Street

Proposed Haskell-Cutter District



A Single Resource Historic District
Haskell-Cutter House, c. 1804 – 16 Foster Court



Proposed District Boundaries



Proposed District Bounds

Lot P-13/76 – 16 Foster Court. One Property.

Study Committee recommended a single house historic district:

- Lot has been virtually unchanged since 1804. There has been no loss in size or shape.
- Rare that changes do not occur, especially in nearly 220 years!
- LHD preserves both house and lot.
- Neighborhood has lost some integrity so Study Committee will pass on a larger district.
- Building recommended for the National Register, which is a signal for importance.

Why the Haskell-Cutter House?

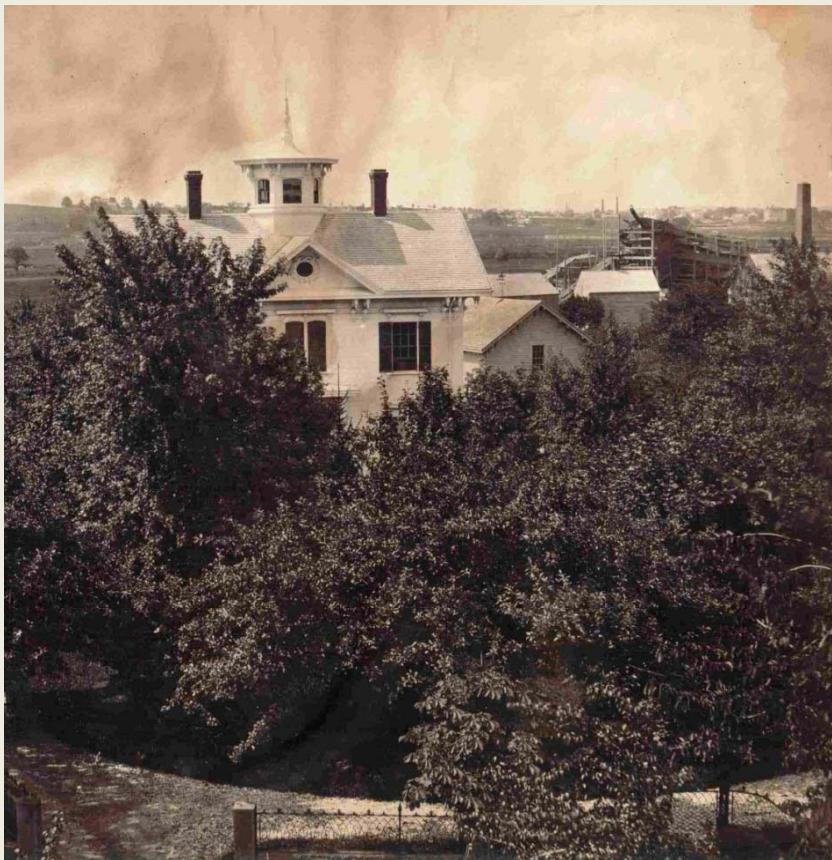
Building is a rare example of an early residential dwelling in Medford

- Constructed c. 1804 and accounted for by 1814.
- One of only three known and documented Federal-era Cape Cod buildings remaining.
- Maintains original central hearth.
- Converted into a duplex by 1850. Early features are covered by later finishes.
- Maintains good integrity given age.
- Inhabitants and owners tied to shipbuilding industry.



Architecturally and Socially Significant
Haskell-Cutter House, c. 1804 – 16 Foster Court

Foster Court: A Witness to History



J. T. Foster House and Shipyard

View looking north with Pilgrim in background.

The building is a tangible link to the past, a witness to our colorful history.

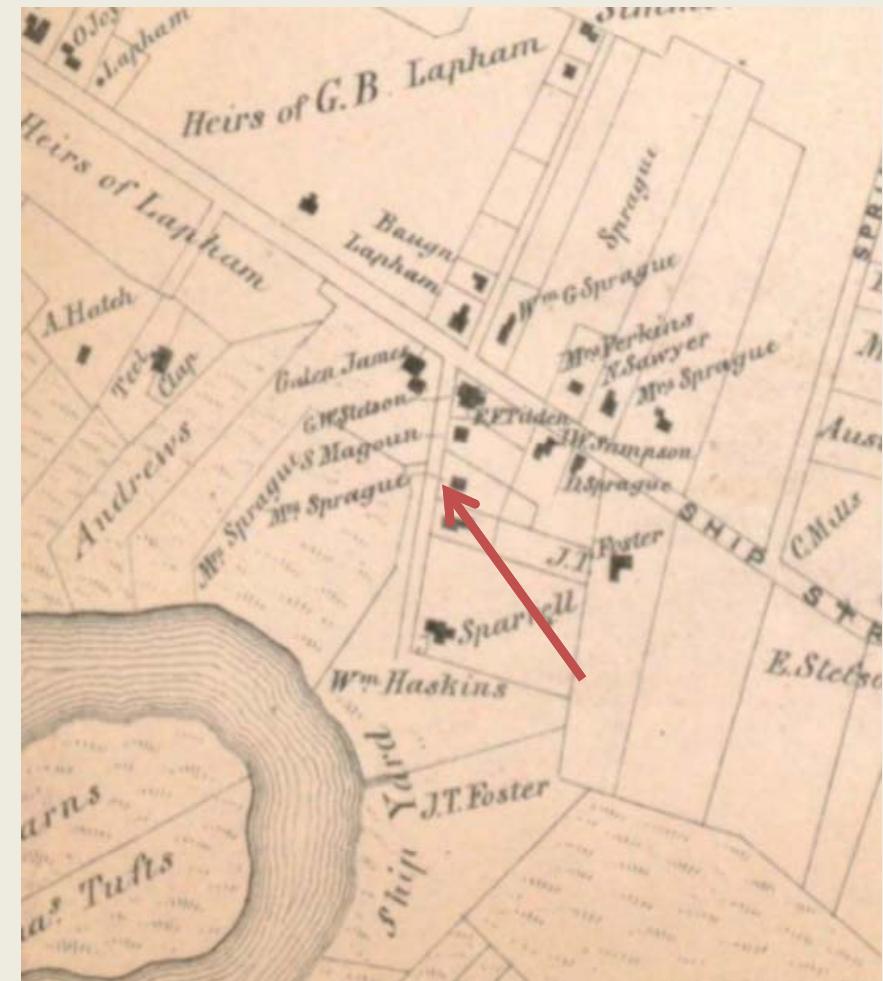
- Sited on Foster Court, the gateway to the Sprague and James shipyard.
- Saw the coming and going of hundreds of workers. Yard was the end of the public right of way.
- Observed the end of shipbuilding when the Pilgrim was launched in 1873.
- Hosted a wealth of occupants who relate to the broad patterns of the neighborhoods development.

The building has the potential to teach us more, if preserved.

Foster Court: Early Development

The street ALSO has a rich history.

- Laid out as a small lane, from Riverside Avenue to Mystic River wharf.
- Land originally part of the Peter Tufts farm. Became possession of Hall Family.
- Richard Hall sold 3 acre parcel to Joseph Wheelwright and Simeon Holt Jr. They subdivided the parcel into house lots.
- Early occupants are notable for their association with shipbuilding.



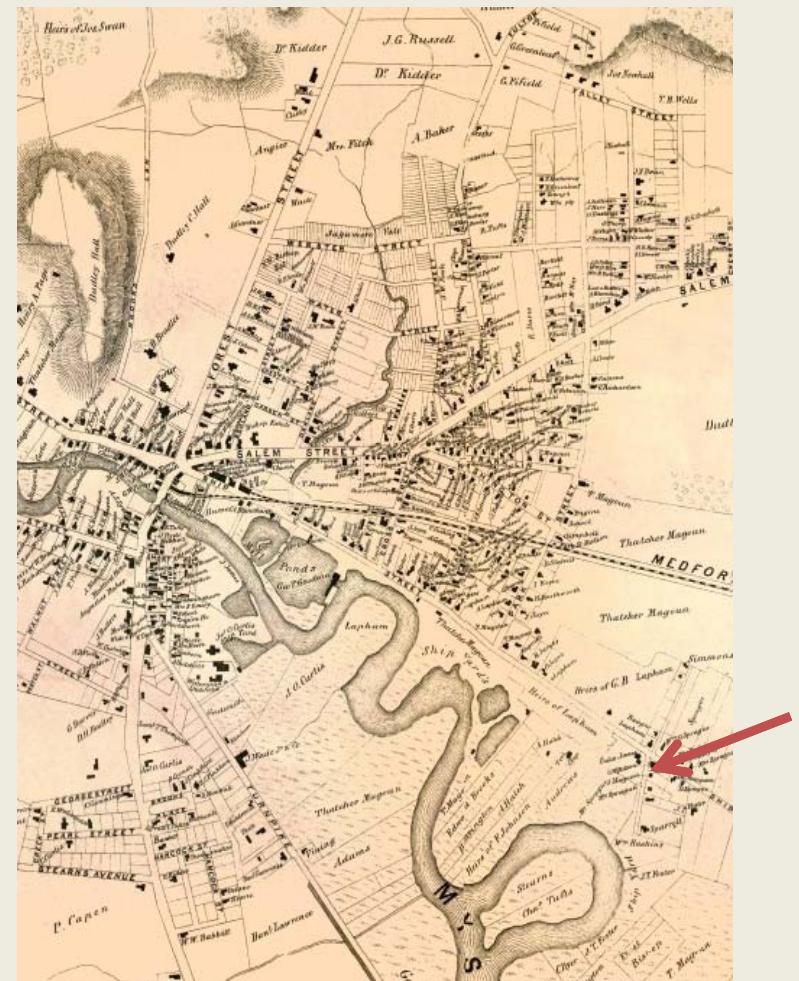
Foster Court in 1855

The earliest map showing buildings and owners.

Location, Location, Location...

The Haskell-Cutter House is part of the broader East Medford “ship building” landscape.

- Early buildings (pre-1855) are associated with the shipbuilding industry.
- Occupants include:
 - Lincoln Damon, shipyard worker;
 - Rebecca Cutter (Isaac Sprague's Mother-in-law). Husband was a rum distiller;
 - Rebecca Sprague (ran a boarding house for yard workers).
- Connections with several important shipbuilders:
 - Built one year after Thatcher Magoun established his yard on Riverside Avenue.
 - Linked with Isaac Sprague and Galen James (business partners).
 - Joshua T. Foster, the last shipbuilder.



Medford in 1855

Map showing extent of neighborhood.

The Neighbors

Building stands out among a grouping of Greek Revival structures constructed in the 1820s and 1830s. These include:

- **Galen James House** – 281 Riverside Avenue
- **Isaac Hall Duplex** – 287-289 Riverside Avenue
- **The Isaac Sprague House** – 314 Riverside Avenue. Moved in 1984.
- **Joshua T. Foster House** – 305 Riverside Avenue (demolished)
- **E. K. Hamlin Duplex** – 5 Foster Court
- **Hughes Duplex** – 9-11 Foster Court
- **Seth Magoun House** – 10 Foster Court

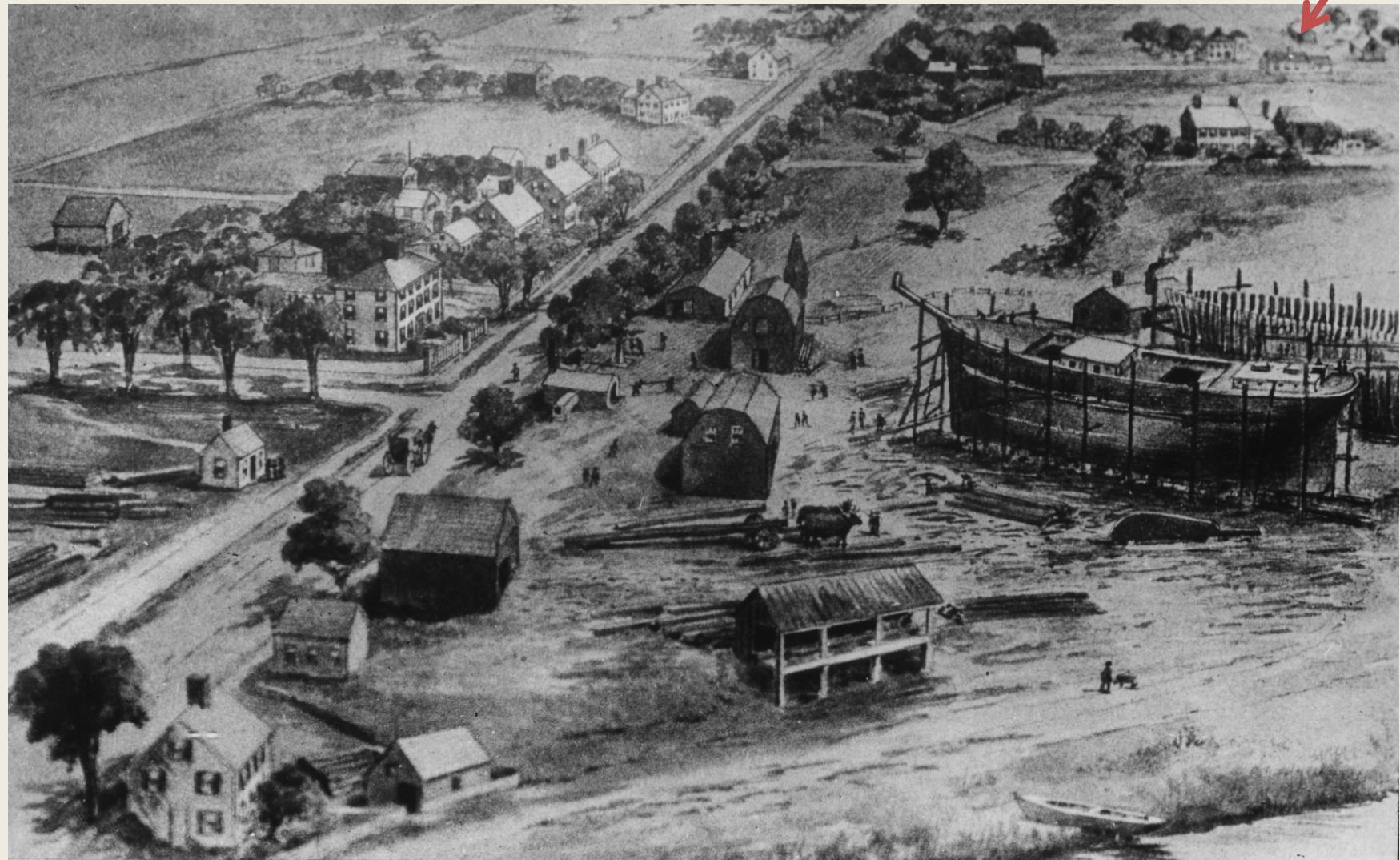


Isaac Sprague House in Dedham



Joshua T. Foster House

The Shipyards of Medford



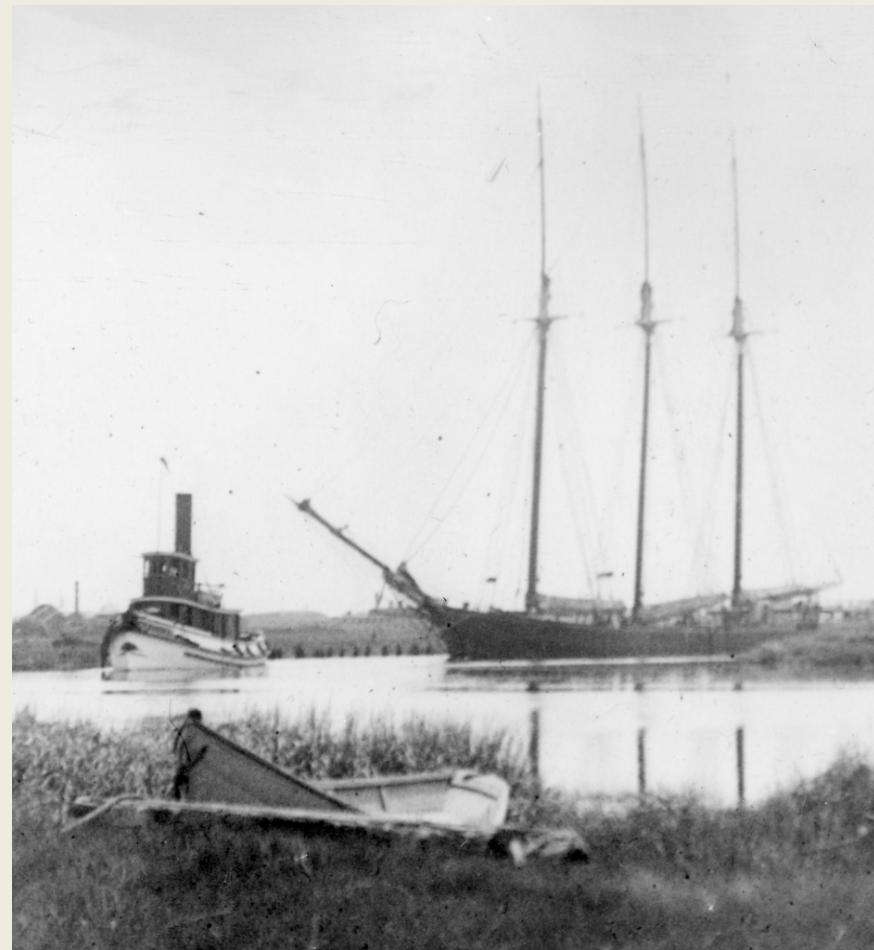
Thatcher Magoun Shipyards and Riverside Avenue

Watercolor by Fred C. Wooley c. 1910

The Shipyards of Medford

Medford shipyards produced some of the world's finest sailing vessels.

- Mystic was a deep tidal river, allowed for the construction of large vessels.
- The serpentine course maximized frontage and allowed several yards to take root, most along Riverside Avenue between Park and Spring Streets.
- 568 ships were built in this town.
- Most builders came from the South Shore communities, such as Pembroke.
- By 1855, Medford employed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Commonwealth's shipbuilders.
- **Virtually all traces of this industry have disappeared.**



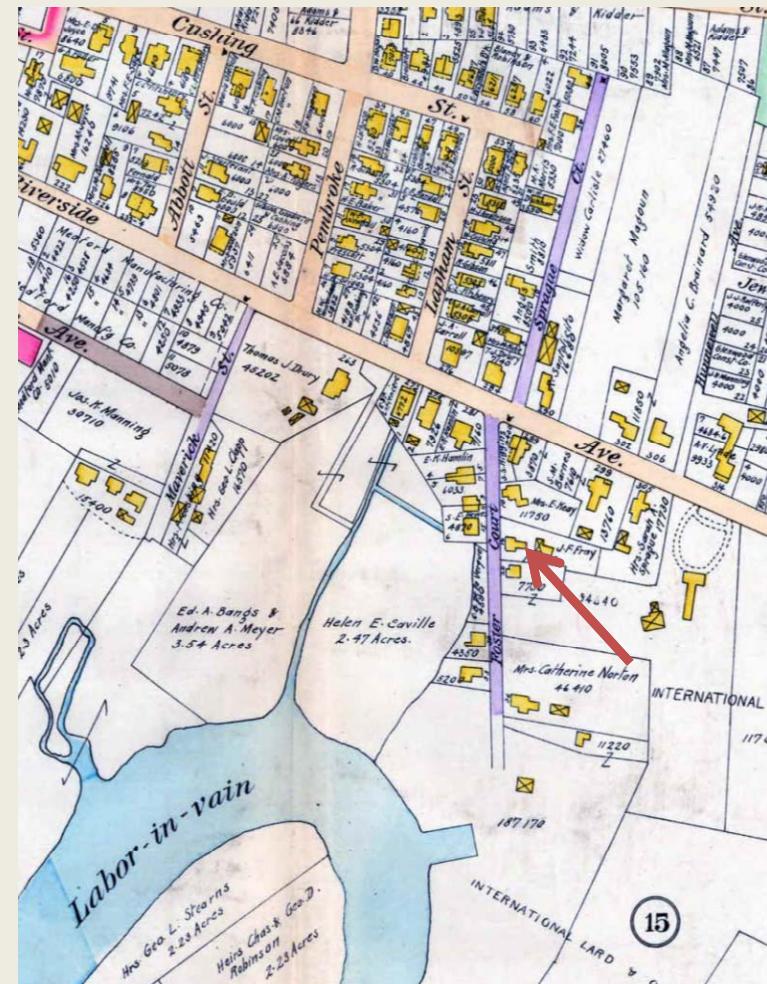
Assistance at Labor in Vain

A tugboat helps a schooner on the Mystic River, c. 1890.

Haskell-Cutter House in the 20th Century

The twentieth century history bolsters significance:

- Used as rental housing by the Frost Family. Almost half the houses in East Medford has boarders or were rental housing.
- Owned by members of the Rahicki and Poleatewich families for 30 years (1926-1952). Both were immigrants and reflect the changing diversity of our community.
- Owned by members of the Lyons and Filander families from 1952 to recently. Many local residents remember both inhabitants.
- Closely linked to the broad patterns of Medford's recent history.



Neighborhood Development by 1897

Map showing Foster Court and surrounds.

Making Exterior Changes – What Now?



You want make **exterior** changes visible from a public right of way, here is how to do it:

- Submit an application to the Historic District Commission for review.
- Process takes less than 30 days with a maximum of 60 days.

What is Reviewed by the LHDC?

The following are the most common items:

Reviewed for Appropriateness:

- Windows
- Doors
- Roofline work, including dormers and re-shingling
- Additions
- Extensive changes to siding including material change
- Solar panels
- Brick masonry including chimneys
- New construction

Not Reviewed:

- Landscaping or walkways
- Driveways (at grade)
- Ordinary maintenance or in-kind repairs (no changes in materials)
- Storm windows and doors
- Paint color
- Color of roofing materials
- Window air conditioners
- Items not visible from the public right of way.

What is Approved by the LHDC?

The following are the most common items:

Generally Approved:

- Wooden or Clad Windows
- Wooden or Fiberglass Doors
- Asphalt Shingle Roofs/Skylights
- Wooden Trim and Mouldings
- Wooden Shingles or Clapboards
- Wooden Fencing
- Solar Panels when not on Principal Façade
- Azek at/touching grade in lieu of wood.

Seldom approved:

- Azek or Composite Trim/Mouldings
- Vinyl or Composite Siding
- Composite or PVC Fencing
- Steel or Masonite Doors
- Vinyl Windows
- Replacement of decorative elements with plain and lacking detail
- Exposed Pressure Treated Lumber
- Complete demolition or the partial removal of elements without any type of replacement

Commonly Asked Questions



Colorful Buildings in the Ipswich LDH

No two historic districts are exactly alike.

Q: Does this mean I can not paint my house any color that I want?

A: No; the HDC does not review paint colors of any kind. The color of roofing material is also exempt.

Q: If my house is included in the district, does that mean I need to make it look more historic?

A: No, you can maintain the current look of your house as long as you would like. The LHD only reviews proposed changes to exterior architectural features. Routine maintenance of your house is exempt from review.

Commonly Asked Questions



Siding Replacement

In-kind material replacement on an older home.

Q: Can the HDC require me to make costly repairs to my home that I can't afford? What will happen then?

A: We understand maintaining an older home can be costly. In all cases, the Commission will work with the owner to identify appropriate materials and alternatives when originals might be cost prohibitive. In those cases, a certificate of hardship will be issued, which first requires a denial of the certificate of appropriateness. The HDC encourages the use of CPA Funding for preservation projects that maintain existing features.

Commonly Asked Questions



A Cambridge Greek Revival Restoration

Vinyl siding was removed to restore this façade.

Q: Is it going to cost me more to make alterations to my property?

A: It shouldn't. LHD's are not adopted to impose a hardship. Nor do Commissions insist that buildings be "restored" or become a museum. The purpose of the district is to keep as much of the fabric as is feasible and when alteration is necessary, the underlying historic character of a building not be lost in the process.

Q: Will this make my taxes go up?

A: Property taxes are tied to real estate values. Properties in a LHD are taxed no differently than non-designated buildings.

Why Support the Historic District?



Demolition is Detrimental for Everyone

The loss of this house impacts Medford as a whole.

Q: Medford looks fine the way it is – why have new districts?

A: This building, and others like it, are facing demolition. Time is running out and this is the only opportunity to save it.

In addition, as development pressure increases, citizens will have less influence on changes in their community. LHD's provide some stability and help maintain the vibrancy, culture and character.

Last, historic buildings provide more jobs, better integration with the streetscape, and push for more creativity to find suitable designs for older housing stock.

Partners in Preservation

This is a partnership and we ask for your help and support. There is a way for the past to remain and for the community to change.

- Preservation has been a part of our local history for the last 125 years!
- The Historical Commission has been leading efforts since 1975, that's forty-five years.
- Two districts have been in place since 1985, thirty-five years.
- Together, we can work together to help strengthen our community. The local historic district and saving this house is a step in the right direction.



58 Logan Avenue Bound for the Landfill

Don't let our architectural heritage end up in the dump.

Next Steps

- Public Comments will be collected and summarized.
 - We appreciate your attendance and welcome any comments for or against the proposal.
- Meet with City Council to review results:
 - The HDC will request the board vote to approve the new district.
 - This meeting will be open to the public for you to voice your support.
- If approved by 2/3 majority:
 - Mayor will sign ordinance.
 - Will file map with Registry of Deeds



City Council Approval is Required

2/3 of the City Council must vote to approve the local historic district.

Next Steps

Questions and Comments?

