

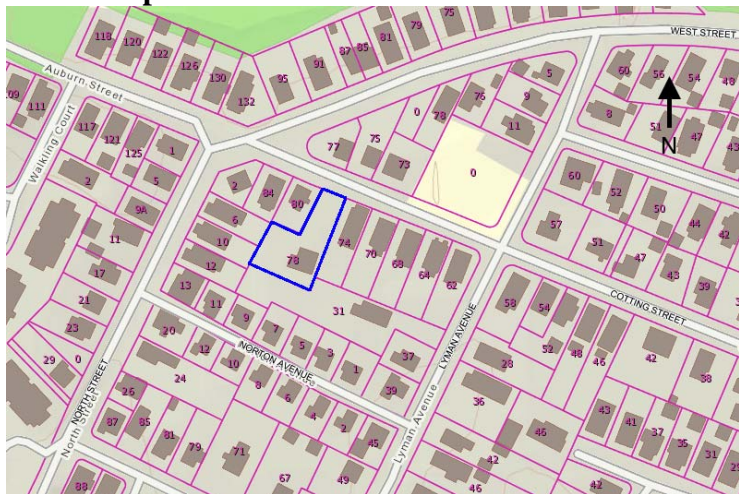
# FORM B – BUILDING

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

## Photograph



## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Claire Dempsey and John Clemson

**Organization:** Medford Historical Commission

**Date** (month / year): August 2014

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

M-06-42

Boston  
North

MDF.789

**Town/City:** Medford

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*):  
Hillside

**Address:** 78 Cotting Street

**Historic Name:** Felt-Young House

**Uses:** Present: single family residential

Original: single family residential

**Date of Construction:** probably by 1852

**Source:** historic maps

**Style/Form:** Greek Revival cottage

**Architect/Builder:**

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: field stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** none

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):

Recessed porch enclosed, after 1950.

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 10,790 sq. ft.

**Setting:** densely developed single- and two-family residential neighborhood arranged in a grid street pattern on an even topography.

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

78 COTTING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MDF.789

☒ 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 features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

The Felt–Young House is among the earliest buildings in the Hillside neighborhood, and its position on the interior of a block bound by North Street, Norton Avenue, and Lyman Avenue testifies to its construction prior to the development of this end of Cotting Street. The two-story gabled block is deeply set back from the street and faces east, against the grain of the subdivision that surrounds it; its north end gable elevation is all that is visible from Cotting. The house is a center-entry, double-pile cottage, with high posts that create a second floor of living space and distinguish its period of construction in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century; two chimneys exit the ridge. The house has a recessed porch in the northeast corner of its façade, shielding the entry and now enclosed, and a small shed-roofed addition across most of the rear. The porch retains its flush-board siding and corner-block casings. The upper story is expanded by three small gabled dormers on its front and one larger gabled dormer in the center of its rear roof slope. Each elevation is regularly fenestrated: Two windows flank each side of the center entry, one pair screened by the porch and its paired openings. The side elevations provide a window for each room in the double pile plan of each story. The plan includes a center stair hall flanked by a larger parlor on the west side and a dining room on the east. The rear pile includes a large kitchen the west side and behind the hall and a smaller room in the northwest corner. Chambers are located in the upper story and the high gable above provides unfinished storage; an ample cellar provides additional storage below. The interior also retains period trim. The house was recently renovated and is covered with new clapboards and a period-appropriate color scheme.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

The Felt-Young House is among the earliest houses in the Hillside neighborhood and is associated with important patterns in land-ownership in the larger neighborhood. Although additional research is necessary to confirm the details of its long history, the property is associated with Abigail Adams (1744-1818), as well as her father and her descendants, long-term owners of large parcels of land in this area. It is not yet known exactly when this house was constructed or by whom, but its building fabric suggests it may be illustrated on the Sydney map of 1852, labeled L. Angier, and on the Walling map of 1855, labeled Joseph B. Felt, both of whom had connections to the Adams family. This may be the oldest surviving building with that association. See also the Land Use History of Hillside.

This house sits on land that was part of Charlestown's Stinted Pasture in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, whose lots lines exerted influence in this area until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Formerly held in common, the land was subdivided in 1685 into long lots, whose length determined their relative size. The lots were divided by numbered rangeways, the third now surviving generally as North Street and the second as Winthrop Street. As reconstructed for 1685, the lots associated with the early history of this property, along either side of North Street, included land marked Sagamore John, Dickenson, and the watering place at the riverside, and corresponded to lots owned by Thomas Lord, John Blaney, Susanna White, Joseph Frost, and Thomas Graves on the west side of the third rangeway, and owned by Thomas, Jonathan, and John Peirce, Peter Tufts, Benjamin Sweetser, and Mrs. Prudence Russell on the east side.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coolidge, "Walnut Tree Hill."

## INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

78 COTTING STREET

## MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MDF.789

Deed and probate research on the property is underway, and a general outline is emerging: For much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the property was likely owned by William Smith, father and son. The elder, Captain Smith (1667-1730), a Charlestown merchant, owned land described in his probate as his farm, bounded on the north by the Medford River, on the east by James Tufts, Minott, and Russell, south by land of Joseph Russell, and on the west by Dixon (?) and Butterfield; the 86-acre property included a house and barn. The property was inherited by his son Rev. William Smith of Weymouth, MA, (1706-1783).<sup>2</sup> In his will, written and probated in 1783, Smith designated his property in Medford and Malden to his daughters Abigail (1744-1818), who married John Adams (1735-1826), later president of the United States, and Elizabeth (1750-1815), who married first Rev. John Shaw of Haverhill, MA and second Rev. Stephen Peabody of Atkinson, NH. Probate inventories and divisions describe this property as 86 acres of land with buildings and tools.<sup>3</sup>

One half share of the property was held by Abigail and John Adams, and reference to their Medford farm can be found in the family letters of the 1780s available online from the Massachusetts Historical Society. The Adams owned the property when some was taken for the path of the Middlesex Canal. Abigail and her relations held the property well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the details of its transfer and subdivision are not yet known. Her son John Quincy Adams (1767-1848, U.S. president) acquired at least a portion of the land, described as a farm in Medford, through foreclosure on his younger brother, Thomas Boylston Adams (1772-1832); the former had "taken legal possession for breach of condition of said mortgage." J. Q. Adams bequeathed the tract to his brother's children upon his own death in 1848, including the four surviving children, Elizabeth C. Adams, Isaac H. Adams, John Quincy Adams, and Joseph H. Adams.<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth's share went to her son William Shaw and daughter Abigail Adams Shaw, who married Joseph Barlow Felt. Felt (1789-1869) was a prominent early historian whose titles included *Annals of Salem* (1845-1849), *History of Ipswich, Essex and Hamilton* (1833), among others.<sup>5</sup> There is no record of the Felts living in Medford, having resided in Salem and Boston his whole life, but he eventually held the property in his own right after 1824 and 1826 and owned it when the Boston and Maine Railroad purchased land in this area in 1832.<sup>6</sup>

On the 1852 Sydney map of Medford, two property owners are indicated in this vicinity, one labeled Adams, on the north side of the canal, and the other labeled L. Angier, on the south. Angier was likely Luther (1799-1881), who married Lydia C. Farley in Medford in 1836. He was a coal broker in 1855, but by then had moved to Forest Street where he seems to have lived until his death. Luther's brother, John Angier (1789-1863), married Abigail Smith Adams (1806-1845), the daughter of Thomas Boylston Adams and granddaughter of Abigail Smith Adams. This Angier is believed to have been the John B. Angier who commissioned Davis and Downing to build his house on High Street in Medford and who was known for his Medford boarding school in the 1820s and 30s.<sup>7</sup> It is not yet clear whether Angier owned or occupied this house. By 1855 four large parcels were under the ownership of "J.Q. Adams Estate" and "J.B. Felt." Three buildings are illustrated on this map, one on the JQA land, which has either been demolished or moved, and two on the JBF land, including perhaps this building to the north and a smaller building on North Street; the latter may be one of the end houses that survive there (see 24 North Street).

A large portion of the property owned by Adams and Felt had apparently been sold by 1856 when a plan was prepared for David Ayers. Two versions of this plan are known and the representations of this property on them is not the same; the one

<sup>2</sup> See NEHGS database of Middlesex County Probate Records to 1870, William Smith, Charlestown 1731, 20780; also MHS Collections, Smith Carter Collection and Smith-Townsend Collection, biographical information.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=ADMS-04-05-02-0137>; accessed 10 July 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Virgil McClure Harris, *Ancient, Curious and Famous Wills* (S. Paul & Co., 1912) p. 327; this Internet Archive source provides a summary and partial transcription of the will of John Quincy Adams and notes this bequest and describes the transfer from TBA to JQA in this way. The historical record suggests the foreclosure may have been an act of kindness meant to protect the family's assets as Thomas Adams suffered from alcoholism and had accrued large gambling debts. See web site of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Adams Family Resources, Adams Biographical Sketches, Thomas Boylston Adams; <http://www.masshist.org/2012/adams/biographies>. For a full account of Thomas B. Adams' travails, see: Paul C. Nagel, *The Adams Women, Abigail and Louisa Adams, Their Sisters and Daughters* (Harvard University Press, 1999), Ch. 11, "Sisters-in Law," pp. 198-213.

<sup>5</sup> "The Death of Dr. J. B. Felt," *Boston Daily Advertiser*. September 10, 1869; Tamara Gaydos, "Biographical Sketch, Joseph B. Felt (1789-1869), Papers, 1710-1868, MSS 462," Collections of the Peabody Essex Museum, PEM web site.

<sup>6</sup> See Middlesex Country registry of Deeds, 716:122.

<sup>7</sup> See Vital Records of Durham, NH, Medford, MA, MA State Census 1855, all NEHGS; MHC B form for 129 High Street, Mdf.55; and Brooks/Usher, *History of Medford*, p. 300.

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MEDFORD

78 COTTING STREET

**MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MDF.789

included below shows a building on the lot associated with this property, the version copied into the records of the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds (Plan Book 7, Plan 54) does not. Felt participated in many sales in the 1850s, including the sale of lot 8, 2 a and b, and part of lot 3a "with all the buildings standing thereon" to Freeman R. Jones in 1856. By 1862, Jones had defaulted on his mortgage from the Merrimac Mutual Loan Fund Association; the property was purchased at auction by John F. Monahan, who sold lot 8 to George Young of Roxbury.<sup>8</sup> George Young (1811 – Sep. 8, 1889), according to directory listings and federal census records, resided there until his death. Originally engaged in farming in 1868, by 1874 he had changed occupations to currier or leather worker.

Between 1890 and 1905 the property and others in the area were owned by Fletcher Orpin (1845-1921), a native of Aylesford, Nova Scotia, and a Boston manufacturer of desks and other office furniture with his brother, Arthur, also a Medford resident. They operated under the name Orpin Brothers at 99 Richmond Street in Boston between 1874 and 1910<sup>9</sup>. Orpin's son Robert G. Orpin became a lawyer. Between 1905 and 1924 the house was occupied by various members of the Coyne family, who moved across the street from No. 75 between 1902 and 1905. Luke Coyne and his son, Joseph L. Coyne, were horse shoers (their term), or farriers, who operated their own business at 47 Swan Street between 1905 and 1912 and in Thomas Court after 1914. According to advertisements they were "practical horseshoers [with] particular attention given to interfering, overreaching and tender footed horses."<sup>10</sup> They shared the premises with second son Frank, a clerk, daughter Grace E. Coyne, a school teacher, and daughter Mary, who did not have an occupation.

The property was occupied through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Swedish pipefitter Sture S. Pierson and his descendants. Pierson (b. 1887) was a native of Bjee, Sweden, immigrated in 1892, and became a naturalized citizen in 1918. Before moving to Medford he worked in a shoe factory in Medway, a center of shoe manufacturing, and after moving into the subject house between 1924 and 1930 he became a steamfitter for the railways. Although the family's later history indicates they eventually became owners of the property, in 1930 they were still renting for \$35 per month. He was married to Sarah Legg, and they had (at least) one daughter, Betsy, who married Jack DiVincentis and held the property at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> Members of this family sold the property to the present owner in 2005.<sup>12</sup>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Coolidge, Richard B., "Walnut Tree Hill," *The Medford Historical Register*, XXXIX (1936), pp. 20-37  
Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 [database on-line] Ancestry.com and New England Historic Genealogical Society.  
United States Federal Census: 1880, 1930.  
Massachusetts Census: 1855, 1865.  
Massachusetts Historical Society, Adams Family website pages.  
Malden City Directories, Medford section: 1868, 1874, 1886  
Medford City Directories: 1897, 1900, 1902, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1912, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1920, 1924.  
Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Registered Land 1310:12; 1302:41; 1273:199; 1091:91, 92  
  
1852 Map of Boston and vicinity, F.G. Sidney and R.P. Smith (pub. J.B. Shields), detail of Middlesex Canal (WikiCommons).  
1855 Map of Medford by H.F. Walling  
1889 Atlas of Medford by George H. Walker Co., Boston  
1898 Atlas of Medford by George A. Stadley Co., Boston  
1900 Atlas of Medford by George A. Stadley Co., Boston  
Medford Assessor's Maps: 2005

<sup>8</sup> See Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, 742:3, 892:445, 893: 338

<sup>9</sup> *Boston Daily Globe*, Jul. 30, 1921, p.12.

<sup>10</sup> 1907 Medford City Directory, p. 356.

<sup>11</sup> Middlesex County Land Court record, 1091: 92.

<sup>12</sup> Middlesex County Land Court record 1310:12.



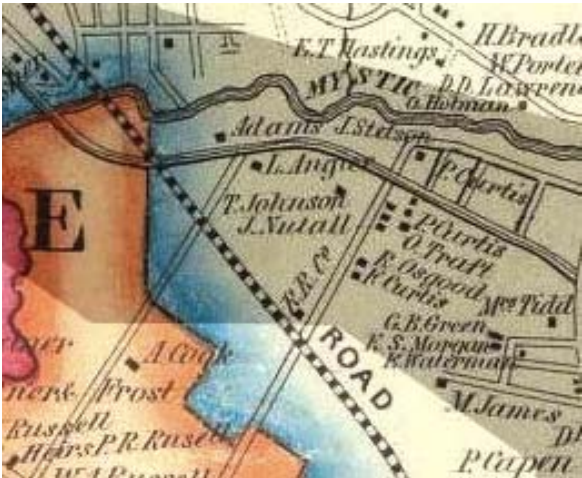
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	MDF.789
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Birdseye View of property from Bing Maps (July 2014), showing house in center of lot surrounded by later houses. Cotting Street is on the right, continuing as Auburn, intersecting with North Street (l.) and West Street (r.).



Sidney Map of Middlesex County, 1852, detail of this section of Hillside.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

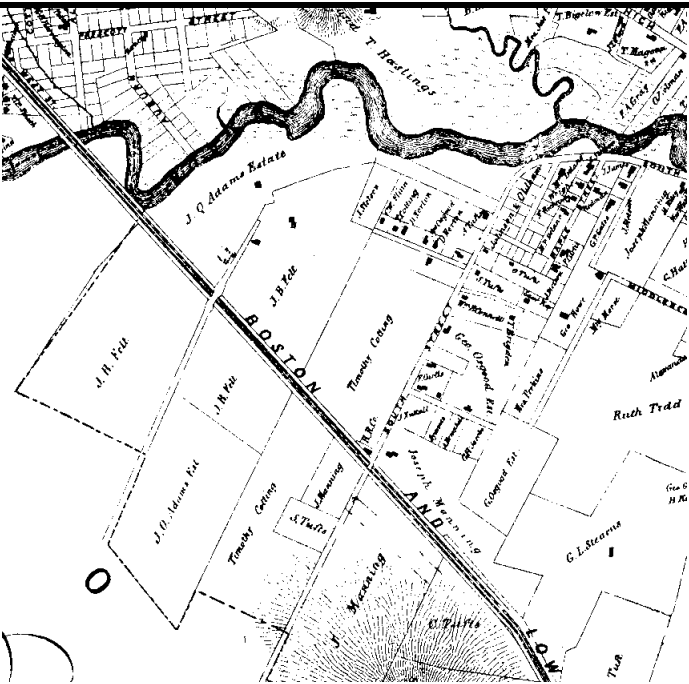
MEDFORD

78 COTTING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	MDF.789
--	---------



Detail of Walling Map of Medford, 1855, showing lots owned by the J.Q. Adams Estate and J. B. Felt and three houses.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

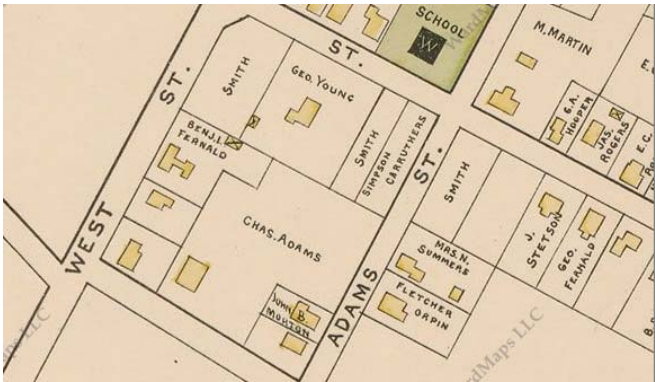
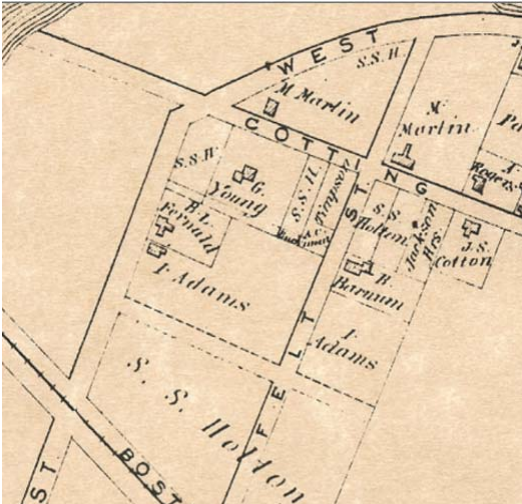
MEDFORD

78 COTTING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	MDF.789
--	---------



Detail of Beers Atlas of 1875 (on the left) and Walker Atlas of 1889 (on the right) showing the area with this property labeled G. Young. Note that Lyman Avenue is here shown as Felt Street and then Adams Street.



Detail of Stadley Atlas of 1900, property labeled F. Orpin; note change in orientation.



## INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

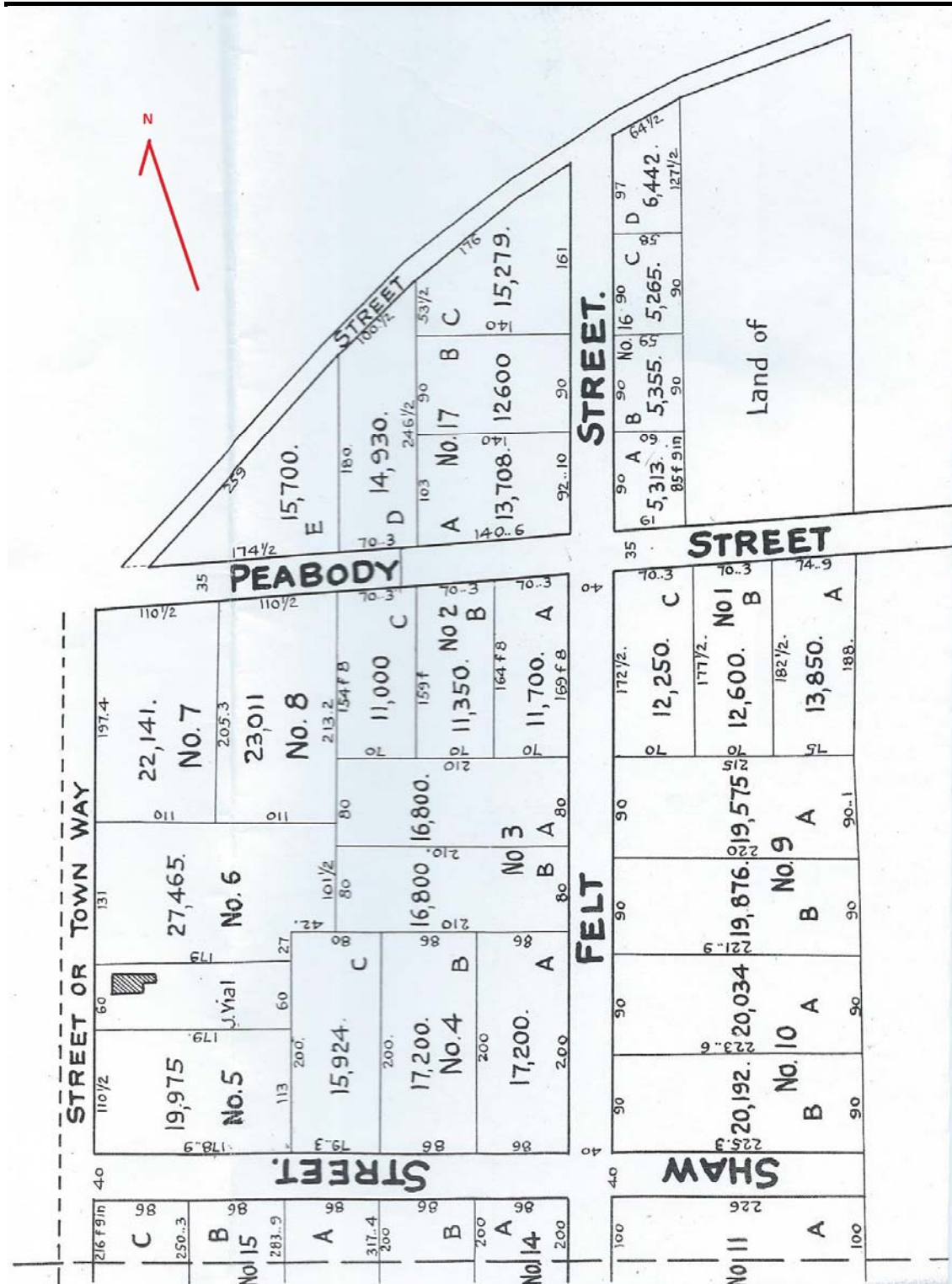
78 COTTING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MDF.789



Detail of "Lots in Medford Surveyed for Daniel Ayer. Formerly owned by Joseph B. Felt...May 16, 1856"

Copy of the plan dated Sep. 29, 1939, Plan Book 7, Plan 54 (C of 3). The subject property is located approximately

"Peabody Street" is currently Cotting Street; "Felt Street" is currently Lyman Avenue; "Street or Town Way" is currently

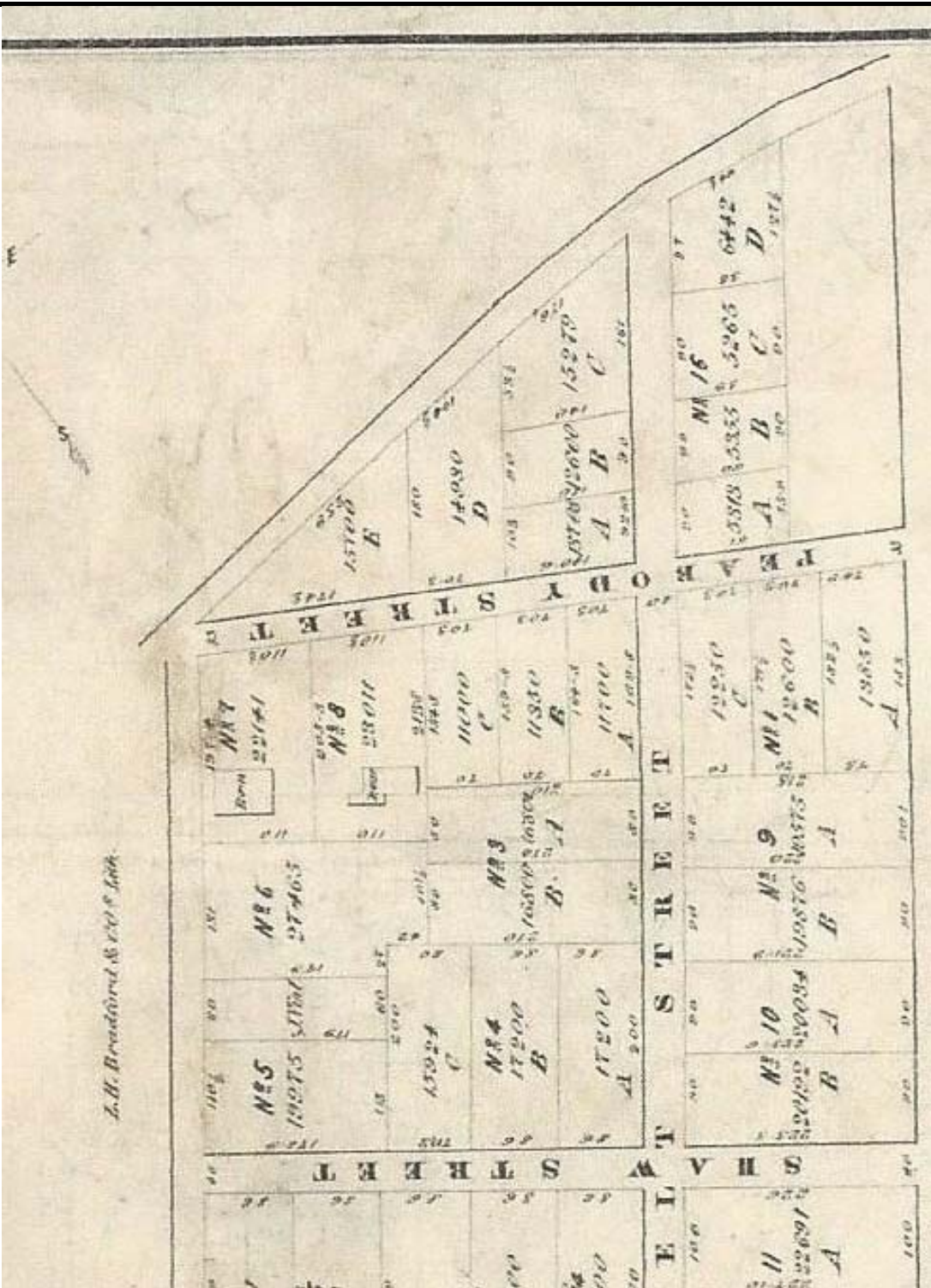
North Street: "Shaw Street" is currently Marshall Street.



MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)Form No.

MDF.789



Detail of “Lots in Medford Surveyed for Daniel Ayer. Formerly owned by Joseph B. Felt...May 16, 1856”  
This is an original of the MCRD copy published in 1856 depicting what is possibly the subject house on lot #8.

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MEDFORD

78 COTTING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)    Form No.

	MDF.789
--	---------



North (right) elevation

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MEDFORD

78 COTTING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MDF.789

*[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 Felt-Young House is among the earliest buildings constructed in Hillside during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a fairly well-preserved representative example of a type of Greek Revival cottage/farmhouse that originally had an agrarian setting. It retains integrity of workmanship, design, materials, association, and location. The house is significant both for its architecture and its association with descendants of the Smith, Shaw, and Felt families, and, most prominently, the second and sixth Presidents of the United States, John and John Quincy Adams, through marriage. Although the large farm associated with this building was never occupied by its owners, the Adams and Felt families retained ownership through the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and potentially had a hand in the subsequent residential development of the surrounding land. The house is also associated, through ownership, with the locally prominent Angier family. Although it retains only a small fraction of its original setting, the house retains a high degree of architectural integrity.