

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

R-09-95

Boston
North

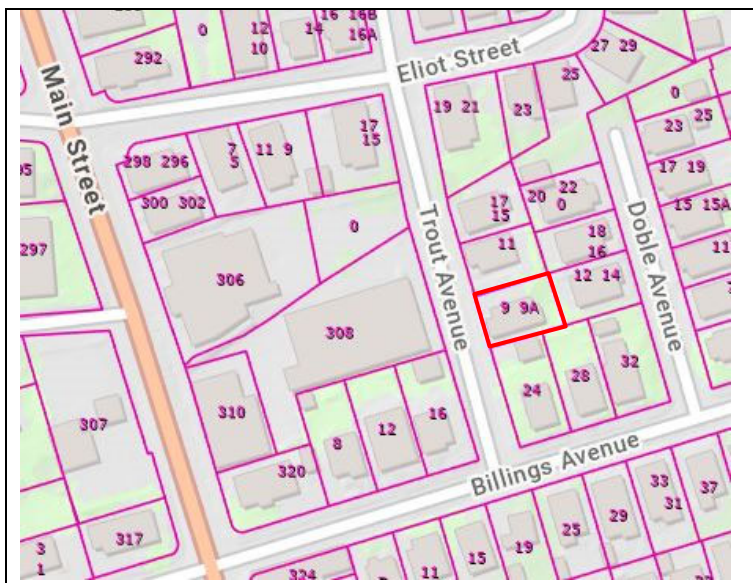
Town/City: Medford

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Brickyards / Mystic Park

Photograph



Locus Map (*north is up*)



Address: 9 Trout Avenue

Historic Name: Cultrera Two-Family

Uses: Present: two-family residential

Original: two-family residential

Date of Construction: ca 1928

Source: deeds

Style/Form: indeterminate/ two-family

Architect/Builder: evidently Anthony Bordonaro

Exterior Material:

Foundation: rusticated concrete block

Wall/Trim: aluminum clapboarding/ aluminum

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: detached garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Porch enclosure, siding, sash, trim and doors, 20th century

Condition: fair

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.08 acre

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

Recorded by: John D. Clemson

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2024

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The Cultrera Two-Family, built ca 1928, is an example of the eponymous type, a form of housing that largely characterizes the early 20th-century built landscape of both the city of Medford and neighboring inner suburbs of Boston. The type is characterized by stacked identical flats accessed by either a single or paired entries; the entry sequence of this example is hidden within an enclosed double-deck front porch that fills the right (south) two-thirds of the facade. Two families generally house "Progressive Era" plans, with ranks of three-to-four rooms filling each half of the building. Here the left side of the building is filled with reception spaces such as a parlor/ living room, indicated by a "piano window" in the forward pile, dining room and kitchen. The opposite plainer side likely houses two bedrooms and bath. The front-right corner of the building evidently houses entry and stair halls indicated by a small, between-story stair light. This late example lacks the projecting canted bays common on earlier and contemporary examples and is covered by a low-pitched hipped roof lit by a single hipped dormer on the front slope, suggesting it is not habitable. Like many similar examples of the type, the rear elevation is also sheltered by stacked porches as is the case here.

Although altered by the enclosure of stacked porches on the front and rear and the application of aluminum siding and sash replacement, original building fabric may survive beneath later coverings that could evidence a restoration. Evidence suggesting a style classification is not visible. Despite layers of change this building contributes to a unified historic streetscape of similarly scaled residential buildings lining the west side of Trout Avenue and the nearby cross streets Billings and Eliot, which represent a planned subdivision that dates to the first two decades of the 20th century.

The Cultrera Two-Family is sited in the center of a minimal residential lot at a modest setback. Landscaping includes open lawn and foundation plantings enclosed by a low chain-link fence. A short asphalt walkway leads to a brick stoop decorated by plinths capped by cast concrete jardinières. A broad asphalt drive on the left side of the house leads to an elaborated two-bay garage constructed of concrete with a brick veneer. This outbuilding nearly touches the left-rear corner of the house. Its flat roof is surrounded by a decorative parapet with a flat pediment centered on its façade that is decorated by a large panel of brick laid up in a basket-weave pattern flanked by cast-stone diamonds. It is tempting to suggest this outbuilding is the work of initial owner/ occupant Antonio Cultrera, who worked as a brick mason before opening a butcher shop on Main Street (see narrative), but records of the city building inspector have not been consulted, which may confirm this.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Like all of this neighborhood, this land was part of the large property known over the colonial era as Ten Hills and Royall Farm. The Royall Farm, then including 520 acres, was sold by the Royall heirs to Boston investors in 1806, who would divide the north part of the farm into multiple parcels, many small and moderate in size, while the south section continued as a Farm. After 1806 Samuel Dexter, one of these investors, owned the large farm: after 1830 it was owned by Nathan Tufts and his descendants: and after 1844 by George E Adams. Late in the 19th century, the owners of the large parcels on both sides of Main Street were Horace E Willis and Thomas Alexander, best known for their association with the Mystic Trotting Park.¹

With the turn of the 20th century, the neighborhood experienced large-scale redevelopment, and the first subdivisions flanked Main Street and the trolley line. Trustees Frederick L Willard, Cyrus C Mayberry, and Wilbur P Rice purchased the entire Mystic Park property, on both sides of Main Street, in 1903. All were prominent Boston real estate developers. The Mystic Subdivision of 1905 was the largest of the three subdivisions they undertook in this neighborhood. The subdivision ran between Main and Willis streets, running from Billings in the north to Willard in the south. The long narrow development included 279 lots, very regularly deployed over about ten blocks. Streets were named for developers and individuals associated with Mystic Park and harness racing, including (n-s) Billings, Bowen, Golden, Wright, Harvard, Alexander, Bonner, Mayberry, Willard, and Rice. Most blocks included four lots at each end facing the important north-south streets, and ten lots between

¹ See Dempsey, *Brickyards Mystic Park Neighborhood* (2023), for this and the next paragraph.

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facing the east-west streets, most still discernable in today's plan and most measuring about 45 by 90 feet. This area was developed with some variation in its housing types, including primarily two-family houses, as well as commercial properties along Main Street.

The Cultrera House was constructed within this large subdivision, and the subject property is described as lot 123 in deeds. In October of 1923 this lot was acquired by Antonio and Rose Cultrera from local developer and building contractor Angelo Bordonaro.² Bordonaro (1891 – 1965) was a fairly successful general building and construction contractor, who with his wife Lucy Gianfrido Bordanaro (1896-1972), was active in both the neighborhood and region in the 1920s and 1930s. A native of the small city of Canicatti, located near the south coast of Sicily, he emigrated in 1913, arriving in New York on August 12. During the late 1920s through the early 1930s the *Boston Globe* reported that Bordonaro was involved in several other developments of the two-family house type on Sutherland Terrace in Arlington, where he built three; another on Harvard Street in Medford, where he built five; and a third on Willis and Goldsmith avenues in Medford, where he built twelve. An advertisement he had published in 1930 provides some very general information on the nature of these properties:

MEDFORD; Brand New; 2-Family, \$8,200; Located on Harvard St. (one of Medford's nicest streets), Medford. This beautiful property has 5-6 rooms, and all of the most modern improvements, including combination ranges, enamel sinks, gas water heaters, steam heat, all brass piping throughout, and separate entrances. See this property and be convinced that this is a real investment. Easy terms. ANGELO BORDONARO.³

The grantor pages in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds includes 17 pages of transactions for Angelo and Lucy between about 1915 and 1950. Further research might provide more details on the extent and character of Bordonaro's building and development activities.

The grantees in 1928 were Antonio Cultrera (1899-1966) and his wife, Rose (born 1901). According to Rose Cultrera's declaration of intention for US citizenship both she and Antonio, who married in Hartford in 1921, were born in Canicattine Bagne, a commune in Sicily. Rose immigrated aboard the SS Argentina in 1920 through New York. The document listed two children born in the US in 1922 and 1932. Antonio worked as a brick layer in 1930 and in 1940 and 1950 was the owner of a retail store and meat market. His World War II draft card identified the location of his shop at 398 Main Street. The 1938 city directory identified the name as the Blue Eagle Meat Market. In 1930 the Cultrera family resided at the subject building and their tenants were the four member family of machinist Samuel and Alice Stevenson, who paid \$40 in rent. In 1940 the Cultereras resided at 13 Trout but their tenants were widow Jean Bell and her son, Alex, a machinist and the four member family of barber Faurence J (?) and Mary DiBella; Mary worked as a stitcher at a rubber company. By 1950 the Cultrera family were again residing at 9 Trout with tenants who were not recorded in that year's census return ("not home"). By this time they were evidently tenants, having sold the property in 1945 (see below).⁴

Between 1945 and 1977 the property was owned and occupied by widow Katherine Marotta and her children, truck driver Alfonse D and shoe worker Mary A. According to Catena Marotta's declaration of intention for US citizenship she was born in 1897 in Pietraperzia Enna, a commune in Sicily, and was the widow of Domenico Marotta, born in 1884 in Aragona Agrigento, also located in Sicily; they married in 1917 in Boston. She entered through the port of Boston in 1915 aboard the SS Cretic.⁵

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps and atlases:

1855 H.F. Walling. "Map of Medford...."

1875 F. W. Beers, *County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts*.

² MCSRD 5289:345.

³ *Boston Daily Globe*, May 11, 1930, p. A39. For a more extensive biography of Bordonaro and his activities in Medford see Colonial Apartments Area Form MDF.BA, to which reference is made regarding sources.

⁴ Ancestry.com: Massachusetts US State and Federal Naturalization Records, Declaration of Intention; 1930-1950 Federal Census, inclusive; WWII Draft Registration Card.

⁵ MCSRD 6903:15 (1945); 9026:299-300 (1957, Katherine Marotta to Alfonso and Mary A Marotta); 13354:662 (1977); 17557:561 (1986); Ancestry.com: 1950 Federal Census; Massachusetts US State and Federal Naturalization Records, Declaration of Intention.

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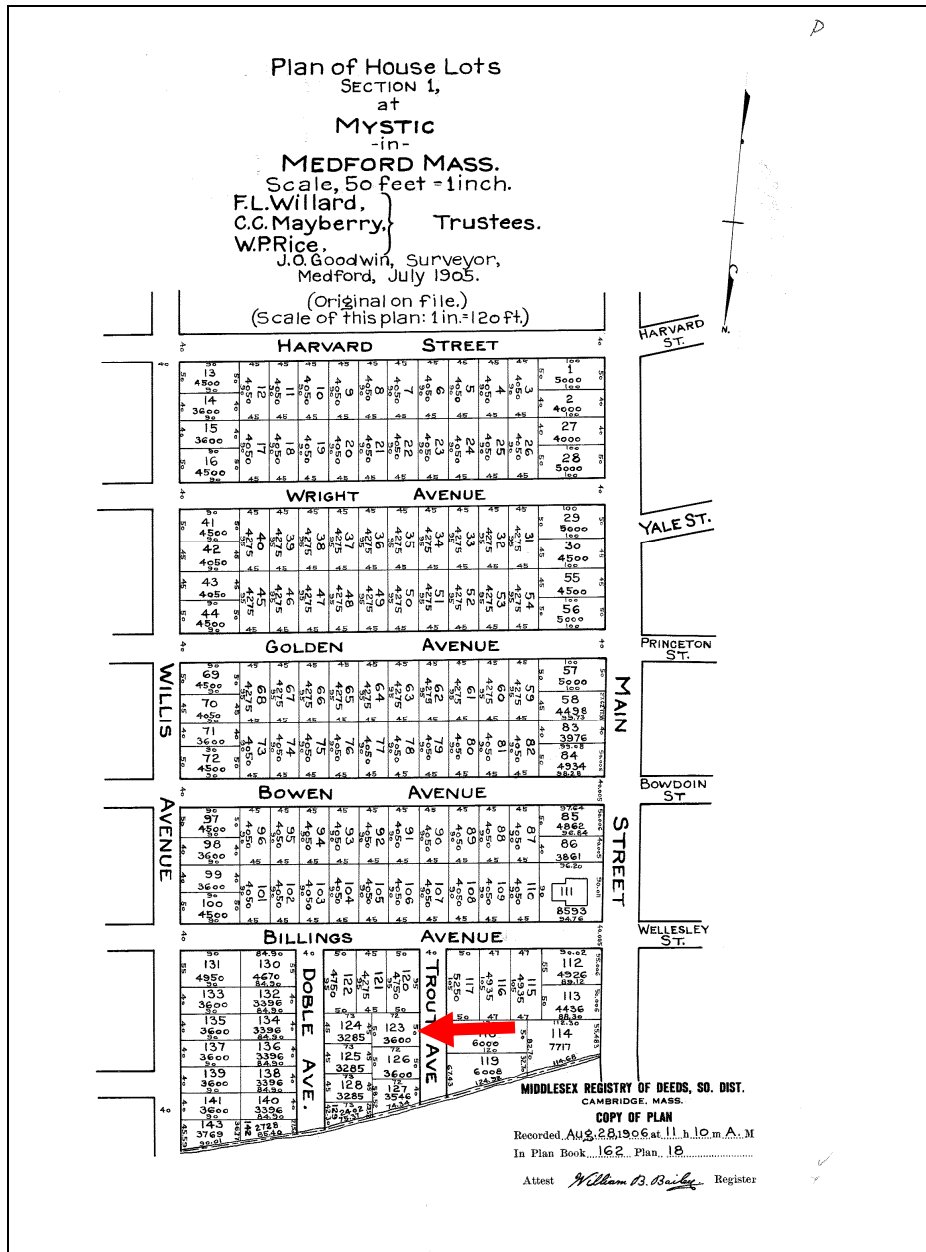
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- 1880 O. H. Bailey [Bird's Eye View of] Medford.
1889 Geo. H. Walker & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*.
1898 Geo. W. Stadly & Co., *Atlas of the City of Medford....*
1900 Geo. W. Stadly & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Volume 1*.
1892, 1897, 1903, 1910, 1936, 1936-1950 Sanborn Insurance Atlases.

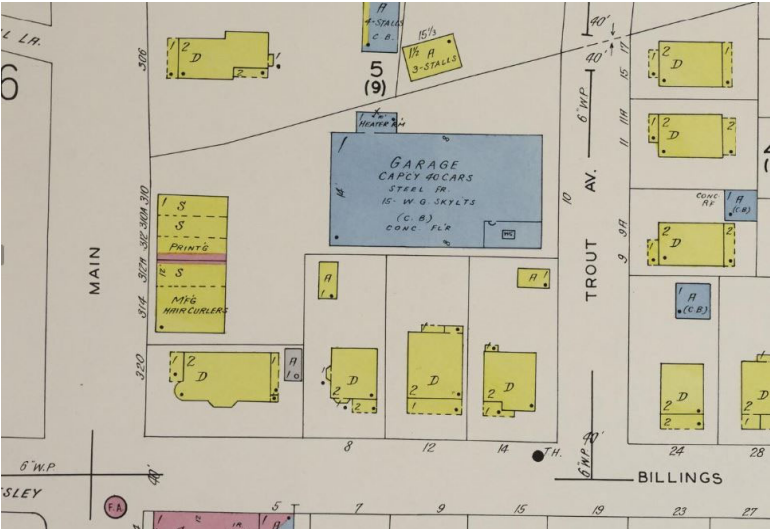
Ancestry.com: see footnotes

Charles Brooks and James M. Usher, *History of the Town of Medford, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, From its First Settlement in 1630 to 1855; Revised, Enlarged and Brought Down to 1885* (Rand, Avery & Co., 1886)

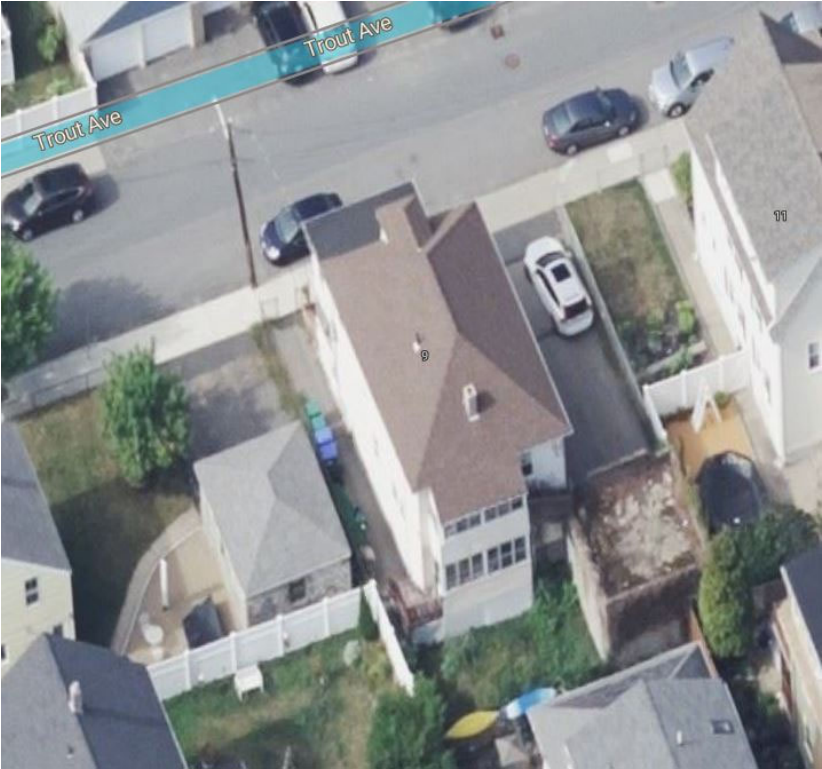
Middlesex County South Registry of Deeds, in notes as MCSRD book:page (date).



MCSRD Plan 162:18 (1905) depicting the Willard/ Mayberry/ Rice subdivision and the subject property indicated by a red arrow. Note that north is down.



1936 Sanborn map detail showing the initial depiction of the subject property, left, and a portrait of builder Angelo Bordonaro, right (Ancestry.com, Massachusetts US State and Federal Naturalization Records, Declaration of Intention).



Bing aerial image facing west showing the rear elevation and stacked rear porches.

