

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

V-10-70

Boston
North

Town/City: Medford

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

Photograph



Address: 106 Alexander Avenue

Historic Name: Mastascusa-Marcellino House

Uses: Present: single-family residential

Original: single-family residential

Date of Construction: ca 1931

Source: deeds

Style/Form: Craftsman/ foursquare

Architect/Builder: Carter Bros. Realty Trust, builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation: parged, poured concrete

Wall/Trim: vinyl/ vinyl

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Siding, sash, doors, trim, recent decades.

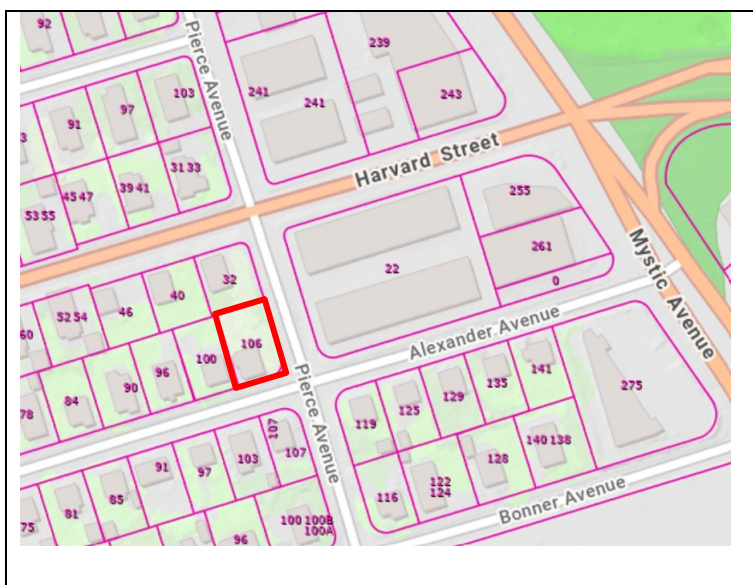
Condition: Fair

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.12 acre

Setting: Dense early 20th century uniform single-family residential subdivision.

Locus Map (*north is up*)



Recorded by: John D. Clemson

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): August 2024

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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 Mastascusa-Marcellino House, built ca 1931, is an example of the foursquare type characterized by cube-like massing enclosing two stories, usually under a hipped, pyramidal roof, as is the case here, and sometimes under a front-facing gable. This type is defined by its interior plan of four equal spaces, hence the name. Plans can vary between four equal spaces defined by entry hall, living, dining and kitchen or direct entry into a full-width living room with a stair and a rear pile divided into dining and kitchen. This example is a true cube of 24 feet square. A stove chimney centered on the left half likely vents the kitchen and heating equipment. The building is expanded by a slightly narrower open porch filling the façade and a single-story bay with a front-facing side entrance that expands the rear pile on the left (west) side.

Original finishes are obscured by a vinyl siding application and an evident rebuild of the porch in common-bond brick with a solid parapet. Window openings also appear to have been altered with a tripart picture window opposite the left-side main entrance and the enclosure of openings in the first story of the right elevation. The open main soffit and slab-like hip of the porch roof suggest an original Craftsman or even Prairie style aesthetic. Evidence of original building fabric that could support a restoration may survive beneath later layers of covering. This house is part of a planned residential subdivision of two-story single-family gable- and hip-block houses that line Alexander Avenue between Willis and Pierce avenues, contributing to an historically significant harmonious streetscape.

The topography of the subdivision is even and the subject property occupies a corner lot with Pierce Avenue. The building is sited at a modest setback matching the surrounding streetscape and is landscaped in open lawn with a border hedgerow lining the Alexander and Pierce frontages. The house rests on a high concrete foundation and its high front stoop lands near the frontage. The basement is lit by distinctive glass-block windows that are an evident alteration.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Like all of this neighborhood, this land was part of the large property known as Ten Hills and later owned by members of the Royall family. 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 south section; after 1830 it was owned by Nathan Tufts and his descendants, and after 1844 by George E Adams. After 1865, the large section east of Main Street was the site of the Mystic Trotting Park which operated here late in the 19th century. In 1903, that land was sold to three Boston real estate developers, Francis L Willard, Cyrus C Mayberry, and W P Rice, who would subdivide large parcels on either side of Main Street. The eastern most section between Willis and Mystic avenues was subdivided in 1926 by Mayberry's estate with small residential lots lining Willis and much larger lots closer to Mystic Avenue evidently designed to house large-scale commercial use. In 1928 the subdivision was reconfigured twice: In February the plan was to include a greater number of residential lots at the north, along Goldsmith, Billings, Bowen, and one side of Golden and extending to Mystic, thus reducing the number of large commercial lots there. In April, they added more residential lots near Willis along the other side of Golden, Wright, and Harvard, and reoriented some of the northern parcels back toward Mystic. The lots along these east-west streets were significantly wider than those in the neighborhood's earlier subdivisions, measuring 66 feet across.¹

A history of ownership indicates that the estate of Cyrus C Mayberry, administered by his daughters Georgia N and Edith A Mayberry, sold most of the southern section of the subdivision to the Carter Bros Realty Trust in 1931. Deeds reference a 1932 subdivision recorded by Carter Bros that added lots along Alexander and Pierce avenues. Additional research will be required to locate the plan of this subdivision. Grantor indexes demonstrate that Alexander Avenue was quickly improved with houses and sold to individual buyers, resulting in multiple partial releases of a mortgage given by Carter Bros to the Mayberry

¹ MCSRD Plans 368:7 (1926) and 412: 41 and 48 (1928).

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estate. In June of 1932 Carter Bros sold lot 7, the subject property, to its initial individual owners Elizabeth M and John A Mastacusa.²

Carter Bros was a real estate and development trust organized by Frank Malcolm Carter (1887-1933) of Arlington and his brother John Leslie Carter (1890-1930) of Somerville. Census returns and newspaper accounts suggest they operated primarily as real estate dealers, developers and builders in the Boston area during the 1920s. Accounts indicate they undertook developments located elsewhere in the city consisting of "two acres bordering on the High School Athletic Field on Fulton Street" (see MDF.965) and a three-story brick and timber apartment house on Fountain Street costing \$200,000, which may not have been executed (Sanborn maps do not depict a building of a scale that would justify this cost).³

The initial individual owners of the subject house were Elizabeth and John A Mastascuso. John Mastascuso (1891-1972) was a native of Italy and Elizabeth was a native of Baltimore born to German-native parents. Records indicate Mastascuso worked as a mason either as a laborer or independent contractor. Prior to moving to Medford the family resided in East Boston. In 1934 they lost the property through foreclosure to their creditor Jeremiah P Driscoll.⁴

Between ca 1934 and 1943 the property was owned by Dominick and Louisa M Marcellino. Dominick Marcellino (1898-1977) was a native of Calabria, Italy, emigrating in 1913 through New York aboard the *America*. He worked as a puller over for the women's shoe manufacturer Keith, Keith & McCain, Inc of Rockland. His wife, Mary, married 1923, was a native of Boston and their household included three children born in Massachusetts between 1923 and 1924. Subsequent owners included Salvatore J DiPalma (1943-1961), Mario G and Maria D Padovani (1961-1971) and Salvatore and Ida Atria (1971-1999), who sold to the current owners of record.⁵

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps and atlases:

- 1855 H.F. Walling. "Map of Medford...."
- 1875 F. W. Beers, *County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts*.
- 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).

² MCSRD 5457:409 (1931, mortgage); 5654:171-172 (1932, sale and partial release).

³ *Boston Daily Globe*, Dec. 30, 1924, p. 4A; Jul. 27, 1933, p. 17 (obituary, Frank M. Carter); *Engineering News-Record*, Vol. 94 (Mar. 5, 1925) p. 126; regarding John Leslie Carter: Ancestry.com: vital records, marriage; 1920, 1930 Federal Census placing him at 267 Powder House Boulevard, Somerville; US WWI Draft Registration Card.

⁴ MCSRD 5654:173 (1932); 5846:173-174 (1934, possession and affidavit of sale); Ancestry.com: 1930, 1950 Federal Census; US WWII Draft Registration Card.

⁵ MCSRD 6704:277 (1943); 9790:319 (1961); 12127:636 (1971); 30488:119 (1999); 54713:505 (2010); 61031:133 (2013); 61119:524 (2013); Ancestry.com: vital records, death; 1940, 1950 Federal Census; US WWII Draft Registration Card; Mass US State and Federal Naturalization Records.

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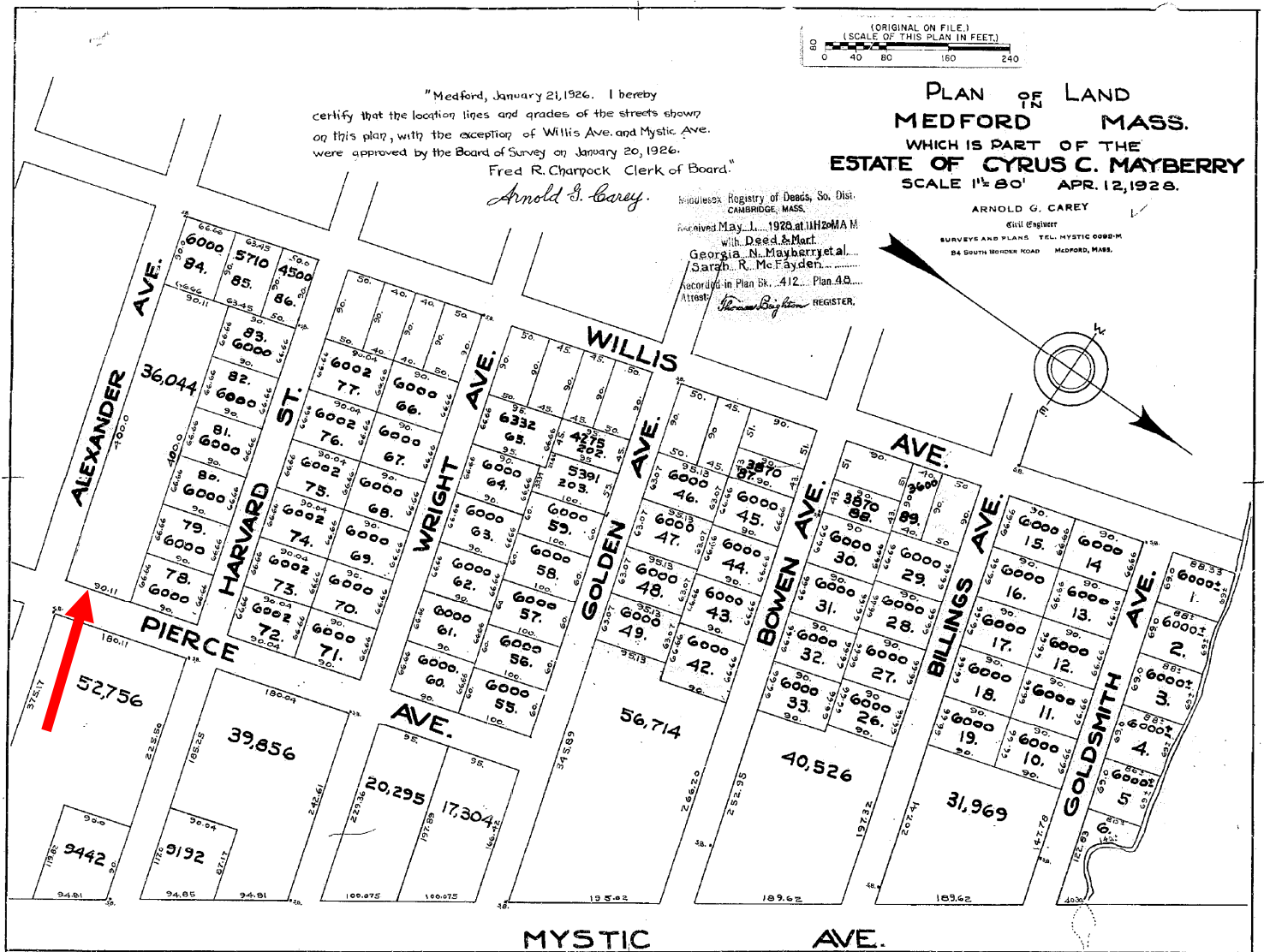
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MCSR Plan 412:48 (1928) depicting the second subdivision of the Mayberry Estate with residential lots. This plan would be amended by a plan recorded by Carter Bros Realty Trust in 1932 at 5642:END. Further research will be required to acquire this plan. The general location of the subject property is indicated by a red arrow. Note that north is to the right and down.

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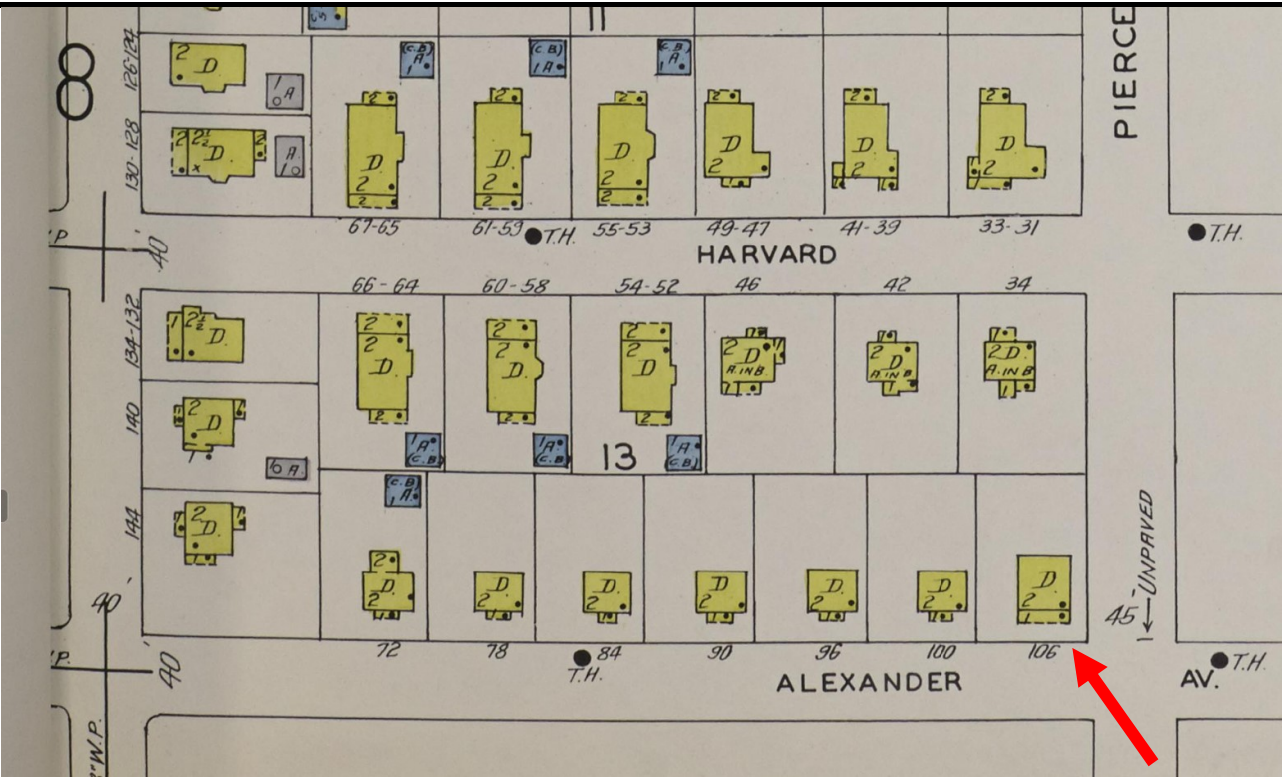
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1936 Sanborn depicting the Carter Bros subdivision filling the north side of Alexander Ave. North is upper right.



View from SE.



View from E.



View from NE.