

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

D-14-51

Boston  
North

**Town/City:** Medford

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*): Fulton Heights

## Photograph



**Address:** 31 Wilson Street

**Historic Name:** Arthur and Mary Shipley - Alexander J and Mary Margaret Granfield House

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

Original: single-family residential

**Date of Construction:** ca 1925

**Source:** deeds

**Style/Form:** Classical or Craftsman/ bungalow

**Architect/Builder:** unknown

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: cementitious shingle

Roof: asphalt shingle

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** detached garage

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*): Possible mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century residing.

**Condition:** fair

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.27 acre

**Setting:** Dense mix of early to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development.

## Locus Map (*north is up*)



**Recorded by:** John D. Clemson

**Organization:** Medford Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): August 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 Granfield House likely dates to shortly after 1924 when the property was acquired by its initial owner/ occupants. In form it resembles the many other gable-front bungalows that populate the built landscape of Fulton Heights. The origins of the bungalow are not clear but are thought to have emerged from the colonial experiences of northern Europeans during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when native dwellings were adopted by colonizers in Southeast Asia and brought back to the homeland.<sup>1</sup> The type became popular in America nationwide at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is generally associated with the Craftsman style movement, as is the case here. According to the owners, who are a third generation of the original builders, however, this building is a re-used school building that was moved to this site. Its form, a low-pitched gable front with a center entrance in the façade, would be consistent with 19<sup>th</sup>-century one-room-school design. Further research will be required to verify this account. Medford Building Department records are not complete with regard to this building so could not provide evidence of its construction or previous location.

This story-and-a-half building has dimensions of 25 feet wide by 36 feet deep. A gabled open entrance porch shelters the main entrance centered on a three-bay façade. An enclosed rear porch under a low-pitched hip fills the rear elevation. Like many bungalows and end houses the building is framed with an upper-story knee-wall, a typical device employed during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in order to provide upper-story space more economically than a full two-story frame. Knee-wall framing is associated with balloon framing, characterized by studs running from sill to plate with joists tacked to the studs and resting on a ledger board, but older examples can also have timber framing. The regular, symmetrical fenestration pattern on the right elevation suggests this house has a Progressive Era plan characterized by a double, side-by-side rank of rooms; here with reception spaces and kitchen filling the right half with bedrooms and bath filling the left as indicated by an irregular pattern of large and small windows. The tripart picture window to the left-rear may indicate the location of the kitchen. This house, with its habitable second level, evidently houses more bedrooms there.

Although the original appearance may have been altered through the application of later cementitious shingles, the entrance porch gable with open soffits and Tuscan columns, combined with the plain rake boards and casings, suggest Craftsman-style fashions. Sash and door appear to have been replaced during recent decades.

This property occupies three lots that slope gently from right to left and toward the rear. The open lot is landscaped in open lawn, foundation plantings, and abundant trees to the right and rear. The large left side yard is surrounded by a low chain-link fence and a border hedgerow. A narrow asphalt drive skirts the left side of the house leading to a detached, flat-roofed, wood-frame, three-bay garage sited against the rear lot line. The garage appears to have a fourth enclosed bay at its left end and is covered in asphalt shingles designed to mimic brick.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Fulton Heights, the northern upland portion of the city of Medford, has a landscape history driven primarily by its irregular terrain, characterized by hills and gullies with rocky outcroppings, many that remain. The area, like that to the west that became the Middlesex Fells Reservation, was divided into moderate sized parcels owned by and exchanged among members of the community as woodlot and pasture; only a small number of these, including this one, had been developed with dwellings by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although some sections had already been subdivided, it was not until early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that subdivision and development began in earnest. The neighborhood is distinguished from others in the city because of the proportion of small single-family houses and the comparatively small scale of many of the subdivisions that characterize the landscapes of this period.

The history of ownership of this property has been traced to the sale of lots 44 and 45 depicted on plan 258:7 of 1917, known as "Homestead Park" by Medford real estate developer George A McCormack to Arthur and May Shipley. With his

<sup>1</sup> Clay Lancaster, *The American Bungalow, 1880-1930* (Dover, 1985) ch. 1.

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brother John T McCormack, George McCormack (1870-1935) played a major role in the development of Fulton Heights beginning in ca 1910, where between them they undertook about 12 small and large subdivisions. A detailed account of their activities and methods is included with the 2024 Overview of Fulton Heights by Dempsey, Larson and Clemson. Map evidence identifies the previous owner of the Homestead Park Tract as the heirs of merchant Samuel Lapham. Grantee Arthur Shipley (1883-1965) may have been speculating in the neighborhood, but he resided on Wilson Street in 1920, possibly at this location at a time when street numbering remained ambiguous, and worked as a janitor in a bank (the 1920 directory listed him at number 45, which is not depicted on either the 1936 or 1950 Sanborn; the 1920 Federal Census is not street numbered). He was married to May Josephine (Hale, 1885-1969). By 1930 the Shipleys were living in Revere.<sup>2</sup>

In 1924 the subject property, lots 44 and 45, were acquired by Alexander J and Mary V (aka B) Granfield. In 1929 the Granfields acquired lot 46 from Edward L Roberts. The Granfields were both natives of Ireland. Alexander Granfield (1883-1965) was born in County Kerry, immigrated through Boston in 1914, and became a naturalized citizen in 1923. In 1920 he worked as a laborer, meat, presumably a meat packer; in 1930 as a clerk in a meat store; and in 1940 as a WPA laborer (Works Project Administration). He was married to May Beatrice Torpey (1889-1974). In 1920 through 1950 the Granfield household included eight children born between ca 1918 and ca 1930. By 1950 the household included granddaughter Josephine Granfield, a daughter of eldest son John Granfield, a baker, by that time a widower. At this time Alexander Granfield held no occupation but second son Joseph (born ca 1920) worked as a clerk at the State House, daughter Mary (born ca 1923) worked as a secretary for a bonding company, son William (born ca 1924) worked as a salesman for a rubber company, and son Patrick (born ca 1926) worked as a post office clerk.<sup>3</sup>

The property remains in the ownership of descendants of Alexander Granfield. It has been related to the Medford Historical Commission that this house "was a schoolhouse that was once located in Roslindale and moved to Medford by members of [the] family." Additional research may verify this account. Medford Building Department records were consulted but the file is incomplete. A close comparison of the 1936 and 1950 Sanborn maps, reproduced below, show a slightly different location and footprint that was subsequently enlarged. This suggests an earlier building was removed or moved and enlarged.

**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).

<sup>2</sup> MCSRD 4538:169 (1922); Ancestry.com: vital records, marriage, death; 1920, 1930 Federal Census.

<sup>3</sup> MCSRD 4752:72 (1924); 5326:547 (1929); 9524:581 (1959); 14559:551 (1982); 20130:212 (1989); 31586:259 (2000); 47463:109 (2006); Ancestry.com: 1920-1950 Federal Census, inclusive; US WWII Draft Registration Cards; US Naturalization Records.

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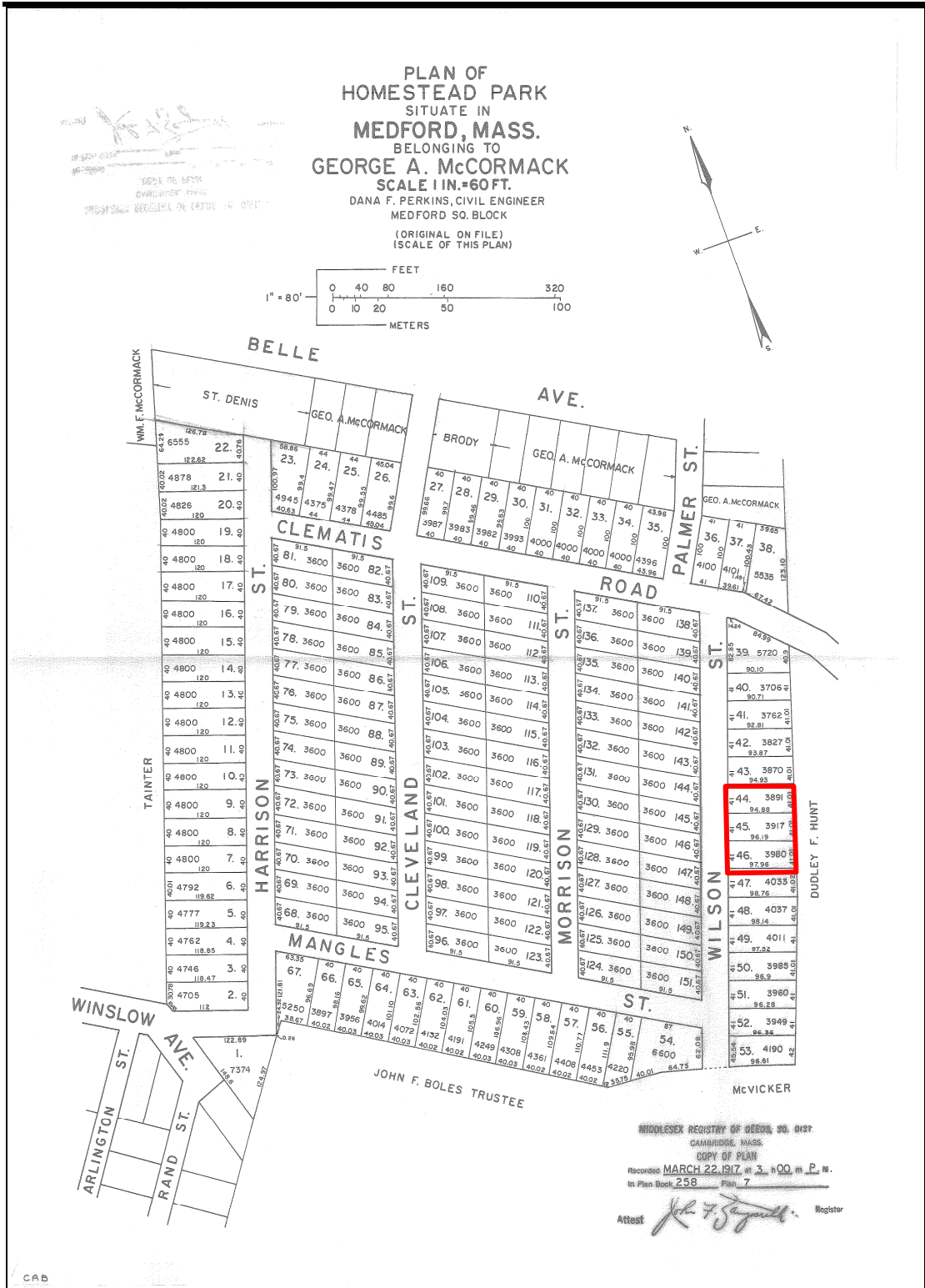
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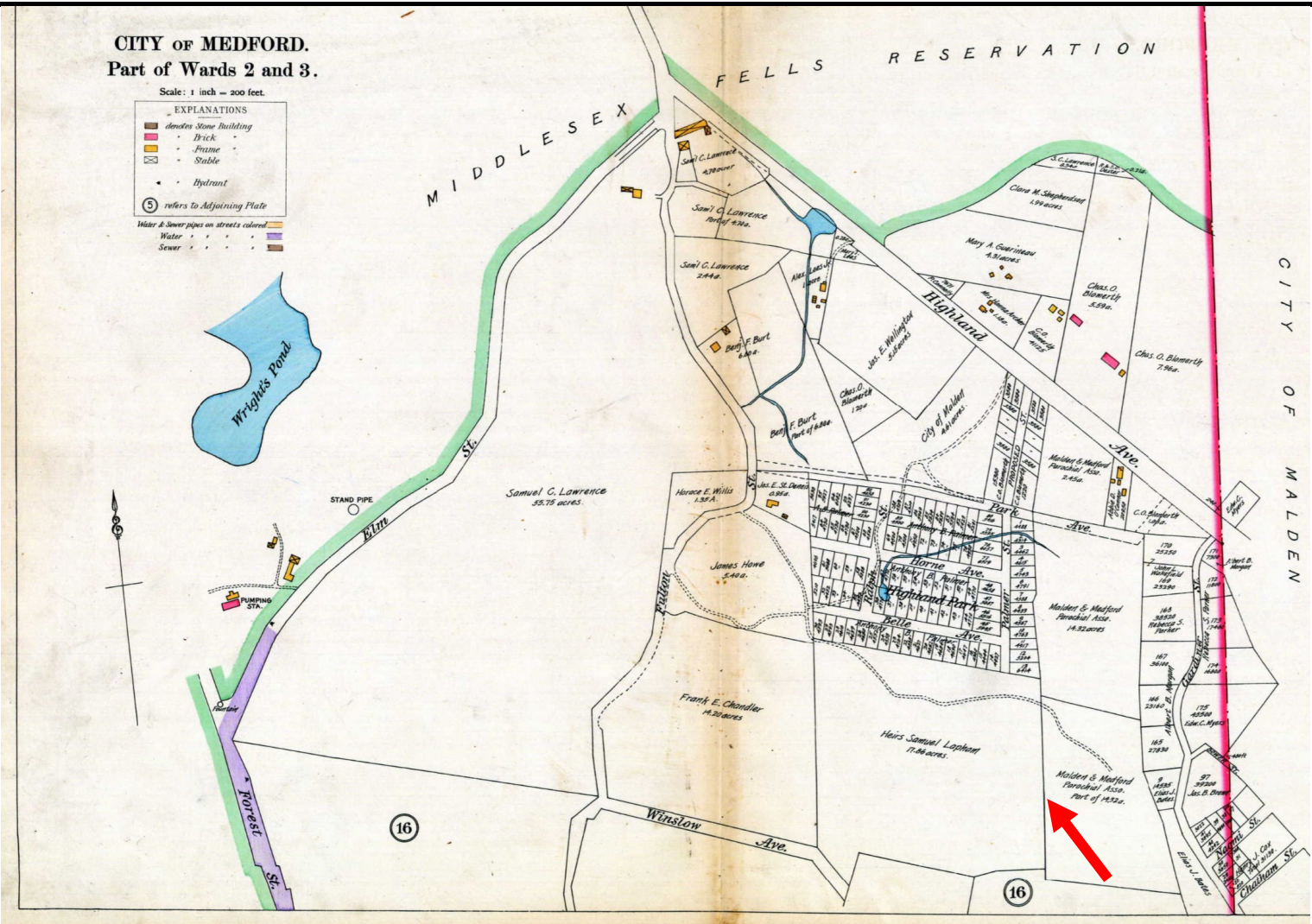
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MCSR Plan 258:7 (1917) depicting the Homestead Park subdivision. The subject property is outlined in red. North is up.





1898 Medford atlas depicting the Homestead Park tract in the ownership of “Heirs Samuel Lapham,” red arrow.



1936, left, and 1950 Sanborn, right, showing the evolution and possible move/ replacement of the building (red arrow).



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View from NW.



Detached garage.