

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

M-06-66	Boston North		
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**Town/City:** Medford

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

## Photograph



**Address:** 85 Marshall Street

**Historic Name:** Edward W and Ella L Amory Wall House

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

Original: single-family residential

**Date of Construction:** 1886-1889

**Source:** deeds, maps

**Style/Form:** Italianate/ end house

**Architect/Builder:** unknown

## Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: vinyl/ vinyl panning or wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** none

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

## Locus Map (*north is up*)



**Condition:** fair

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.11 acre

**Setting:** Dense mix of late-19<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential and commercial uses.

**Recorded by:** John D. Clemson

**Organization:** Medford Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): January 2026

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MEDFORD

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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 Wall House, evidently built shortly after 1886 by 1889, is a two-story, gabled end house, a common building form of this period found throughout Hillside and the city of Medford, as well as the region. End houses are characterized by a re-orientation of the roof ridge from parallel to perpendicular to the frontage, which took place generally with the emergence of the Greek Revival style during the 1830s and 1840s, through a trend toward temple fronts. However, the form was often employed in houses of later styles, including Second Empire, Italianate, as is the case here, and Queen Anne. In addition to the potential for fashionable expression, end houses, with their narrower footprints, lent themselves to higher densities in real estate development that emerged with increasing suburbanization throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This example is three bays wide and two piles deep, with dimensions of 23 by 26 feet. The building is expanded by a 14-foot-wide by 16-foot-deep two-story ell, a common attribute of end houses, centered on the rear elevation. The full open porch is original according to period map depictions but appears to have been rebuilt during recent decades with plain posts and no deck. The main side entrance in the left of three bays, combined with the regular three-bay fenestration pattern, suggests a side-hall plan with reception rooms filling the right side and a kitchen in the ell. This is supported by the presence of a stove chimney centered on the right roof slope between piles. An expanse of blank wall beyond the entrance in the left elevation suggests the location of the main stair, and the off-set entry bay fenestration pattern in both stories of the facade supports the presence of a side hall there. Although covered in vinyl clapboards, the house retains character-defining eave returns and boxed cornice at the side eaves. Early or original building fabric likely survives beneath the recent coverings. Original two-over-two sash appear to survive behind triple-track storms.

The house is sited at a moderate setback from its Marshall Street frontage but is deeper than many of its neighbors, which this building pre-dates by decades. A front garden planted in open lawn is surrounded by a low chain-link fence, and a narrow drive filling the right-side yard terminates at a high, solid-wood fence that screens a wood deck off the right side of the ell.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The ownership history of the Wall property connects it to important patterns in land-ownership in the larger neighborhood dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although additional research is necessary to confirm the details of its long history, this section of Hillside west of Lyman Ave is associated with Abigail Adams (1744-1818), wife of US President John Adams, as well as her father and her descendants, long-term owners of large parcels of land in this area. 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>1</sup>

In 1886 Hannah W Adams, the widow of Isaac Adams, sold a parcel on the north side of Marshall Street (at the time Shaw) at its corner with North Street (at the time West) described as lot 5 on plan 7:54, C of 3, 1856, reproduced below, to Edward W Wall. Wall (born Aug 1843) was a native of Canada, immigrating in 1864, and worked as a blacksmith. Directory listings and census returns between 1890 and 1910 placed him and his family, wife Ella (Amory, born Oct 1854) with daughter

<sup>1</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. Additional details regarding this history can be found with the Felt-Young House, 78 Cotting Street, MDF.789.

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Maud A (born Apr 1885) and son Russell Edward (born Apr 1890) at this location. Circumstances suggest the subject house was built for the Wall family shortly after they acquired the land in 1886. They owned and occupied the property until 1947. After Ella Wall's death between 1930 and 1940 it was occupied by Russell Wall, his wife, Margaret Alice (Lord, born ca 1890) and daughter, Beverly (born ca 1918). Russell Wall worked as a shoe salesman with the firm of Thayer McNeil Co, 47 Temple Street, Boston between the late 19-teens and 1940s.<sup>2</sup>

While the property was owned by Edward Wall, map evidence suggests that by 1898 he had improved lot five by constructing four additional buildings on the site, all dwellings, at 79, 81, 87 Marshall and 26 North. All four are similar end houses, suggesting a common builder. The 1910 Sanborn map depicts three of these buildings in separate ownership, and the fourth, at 26 North, in common with 87 Marshall. Further research will be required to determine how the Wall family disposed of these properties.

In 1947 a residual lot with 46 feet of frontage and the Wall House at 85 Marshall was acquired by Robert M and Bernadette A Weir from Russell E Wall. Robert Weir (born ca 1915) worked as a newspaper copywriter. In 1950 his household included his wife, Bernadette, daughter, Beverly (born ca 1943) and four lodgers, single male John Welland, a production clerk at a rubber manufacturing company and the family of city truck driver Charles Oram, his wife, Gwendolyn, and daughter, June. Beverly Weir Meagher Harrington, with her husbands William Meagher and John A Harrington, remain the owners of record.<sup>3</sup>

## 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. Stady & Co., *Atlas of the City of Medford....*

1900 Geo. W. Stady & 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 1760:401 (1886; this deed references 744:104, 1856, Joseph B Felt to Isaac Adams); Ancestry.com: vital records, marriage; 1880-1940 Federal Census, inclusive; 1890, 1895, 1912 Medford city directories; WWI and WWII Draft Registration cards.

<sup>3</sup> MCSRD 7138:269 (1947); 10650:21 (1964); 14168:263 (1980); 24754:363 (1994); 83012:531 (2024); Ancestry.com: 1950 Federal Census.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

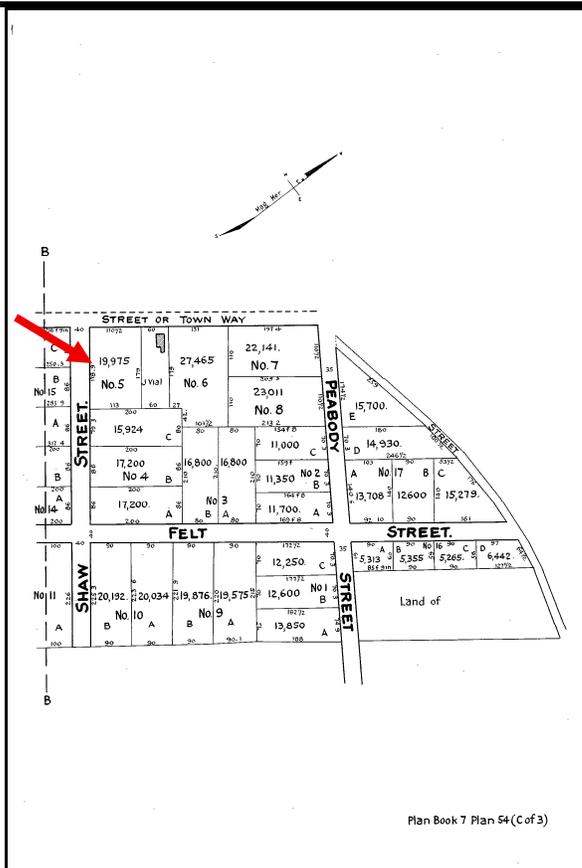
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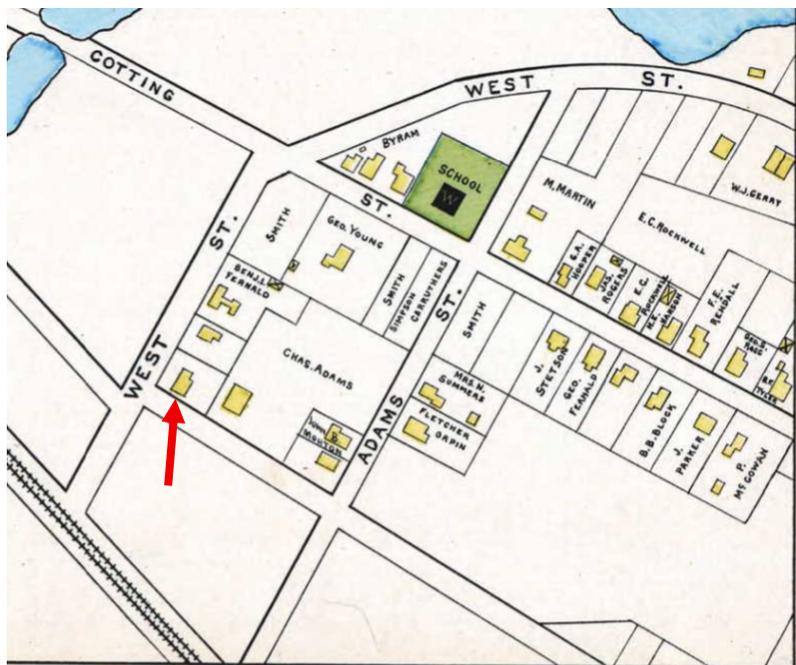
Area(s) Form No.

Empty rectangular boxes for area and form number.



Lots in  
**MEDFORD**  
 surveyed for  
**Daniel Ayer.** Formerly owned by Joseph B. Felt.  
 W. A. Mason & Co. Engineers & Surveyors  
 Cambridgeport. May 16 1856

MCSR Plan 7:54, C of 3, 1856, depicting part of the Felt holdings. Lot 5 is indicated by a red arrow. Note the orientation.



1889 Walker county atlas showing the initial depiction of the house indicated by a red arrow. North is up.

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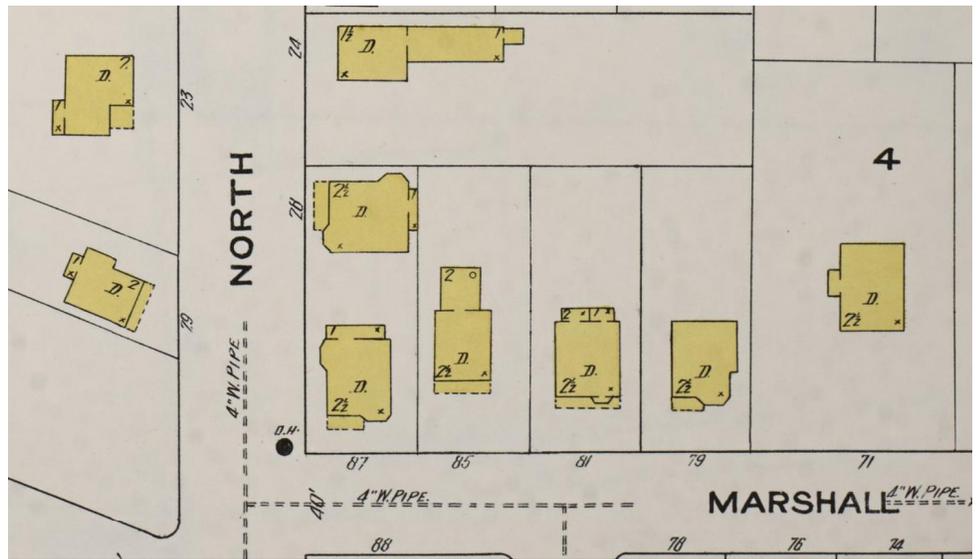
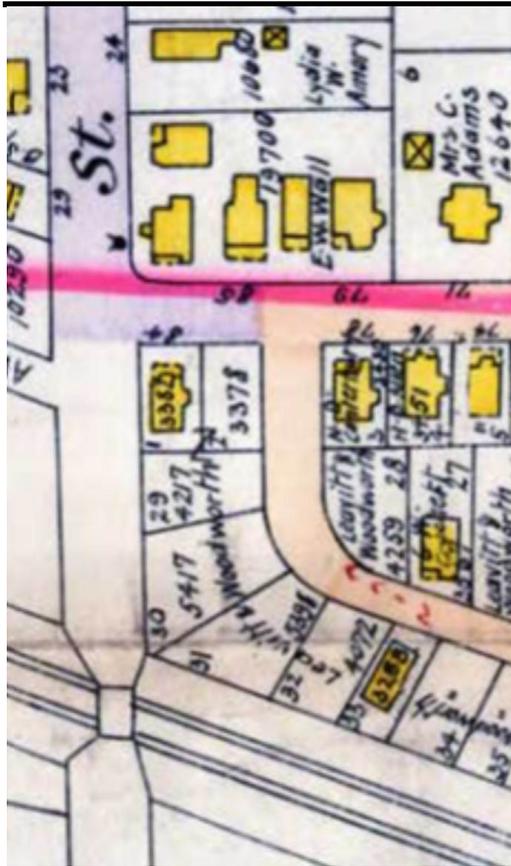
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Left: 1898 Stadly Medford atlas depicting four additional buildings on lot 5 built for and labeled "EW Wall." Right: 1910 Sanborn map depicting the same configuration.

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*[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 Wall House at 85 Marshall Street, 1886-1889, is significant both for its architecture and its association with the surrounding blocks owned by descendants of the Smith, Shaw, and Felt families, and, most prominently, with the second and sixth Presidents of the United States, John and John Quincy Adams, through marriage. Although the large farm associated with this property 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 planning and development of the surrounding land. Further research and documentation in this part of Hillside would be required to establish boundaries for a potential district. An adjacent subdivision undertaken by Leavitt, Woodworth & Sweatt, documented with 58 Marshall and other properties in the neighborhood, has also been recommended as a potential NR district. The general area, despite minor alterations common to Medford and other inner-suburbs, retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Areas of significance could include architecture, community planning and development, and social history.