

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

L-05-29	Boston North		
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Town/City: Medford

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): West Medford

Photograph



Address: 36 Mystic Street

Historic Name: Howes Tenant - Brooks House

Uses: Present: single-family residential

Original: single-family residential

Date of Construction: ca 1875

Source: maps, deeds

Style/Form: Italianate/ end house

Architect/Builder: likely RN Burgess

Exterior Material:

Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/ wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: detached garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Possible addition to right (north) side, wood shingle siding, 20th century.

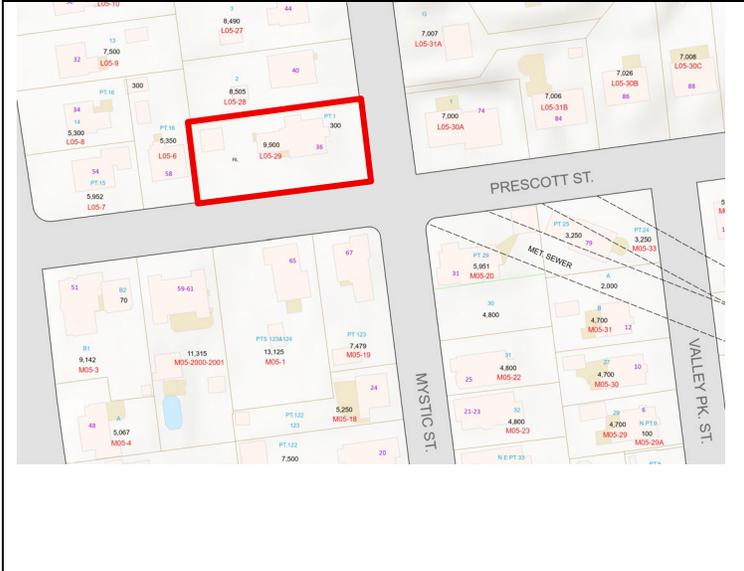
Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.23 acre

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

Locus Map (*north is up*)



Recorded by: John D. Clemson

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): November 2025

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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:

Built ca 1875, the Howes-Brooks House is a two-story end house with distinctive massing that expands its façade to four bays with an off-center entrance. The left three bays with an entrance in the third bay from the left, sheltered by a small open porch, are enclosed by a low-pitched hip; the fourth bay at the right end of the façade is covered by a flat roof, suggesting it is an addition. But the building fabric, including window casings with molded labels, matches the rest of the façade, so the original configuration is ambiguous. However, a comparison of a site plan prepared in 1903 to a current assessor's footprint, both reproduced below, confirms that the right-most bay is an addition. The main body is two piles deep and is expanded on the right side by a full-height bay in the rear pile and a large rear ell in line with the right side. The attic has been enlarged on the right side by a large, flat-roofed dormer that is also obviously an addition. The main body is 30 feet square, the rear-left bay extends 11 feet to the side with a depth of 13 feet, and the ell is 27 feet deep and 16 feet wide.

This otherwise well-preserved house retains a double-leaf door that is likely original. Two-over-two sash survive in their original casings with molded labels. The house is currently covered in wood shingles that likely date to the 20th century. The massing, a two-story cube under a low-pitched hip with projecting eaves, combined with the window labels, suggest Italianate fashions.

The house is sited on a minimal lot facing east at the northwest corner of Mystic and Prescott streets. Landscaping includes open lawn with mature foundation plantings and deciduous trees. A narrow drive against the west bound accessed from Prescott leads to a detached, two-bay, wood-frame garage under a front-facing gable that appears to date to the 20th century.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Howes-Brooks House, built ca 1875, is located in a section of West Medford known as Hastings Heights. This neighborhood was planned and platted for residential subdivision in 1845 for owners E.T. Hastings and Samuel Teel, Jr. The surveyor was prominent landscape architect Alexander Wadsworth (1806-1898). Wadsworth, best known for his contributions to the design of Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, which greatly influenced both rural cemetery and suburban residential design during the mid-19th century, was a native of Hiram, Maine and a son of Charles L. Wadsworth and Ruth (Clemens).¹ Hastings and Teel recorded a subdivision of this large parcel in 1845 but sections were evidently later reconfigured by subsequent owners.²

Period commercial maps depict the block bound by High Street on the north, Auburn on the west, Prescott on the south, and Mystic on the east, including this property, in the ownership of Anna D. Hallowell. Anna Coffin Davis Hallowell was the wife of Richard Price Hallowell (1835-1904), a successful Boston wool merchant; she was a granddaughter of prominent abolitionist and woman's rights advocate Lucretia Mott. The Hallowell family resided in the neighborhood in a large brick house that was located at the southeast corner of High and Auburn. Both were natives of Philadelphia; Anna Hallowell's evident liberal background remained compatible with that of her husband's.

Descended from Quaker stock, he was an earnest and active anti-slavery man, being one of those who went to Harper's Ferry to procure the body of John Brown and remove it to North Elba, N.Y. He took a prominent part in recruiting colored men for the 54th and 55th regiments. He was treasurer of the Colored School at Calhoun, Ala., and to his interest and endeavor much of its success was due. Two letters to the Boston Herald, March 11 and 26, 1903, afterwards printed by him under the titles "Why the Negro was Enfranchised," and "Negro Suffrage

¹ For more on Wadsworth, see Oak Grove Cemetery, MDF.801. See also Charles A. Birnbaum and Julie K. Fix, eds., *Pioneers of American Landscape Design II* (US Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service Cultural Resources Heritage Preservation Services, Historic Landscape Initiative, 1995) p. 153.

² MCSRD Plan 1-B: 54 A-C of 3 (1845).

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Justified," testify to his life-long interest in the colored people. He was a zealous advocate of woman suffrage, frequently appearing before legislative committees in its defence (sic). He believed in it as a right, and opposed property qualifications as a surrender of principle. Mr. Hollowell was the author of two books, "The Quaker Invasion of Massachusetts," and "The Pioneer Quakers," which were a valuable contribution to the early history of Massachusetts.³

In 1874 Anna D Hollowell sold the subject property, roughly as currently configured, to carpenter RN Burgess of Medford, for \$1,220, suggesting it remained in an unimproved condition. Although a builder matching this name could not be readily identified, circumstances suggest he built this house. Restrictions included single-family occupancy, 8' setbacks, and prohibitions against fences over 6' and the construction of detached privies. By 1879 the house had come under the ownership of Alonzo V Lynde of Melrose who, when he sold it to Solomon Howes of Cambridge for \$48.90, was described as "land with buildings thereon," and referenced the former owner as the collector of taxes of Medford; Lynde only owned the property for four days but the deed recording his acquisition has not been located. Circumstances therefore suggest Burgess lost the property through non-payment of taxes. Although the 1898 Medford atlas identified the owner at that time as "RR" or "AR" Howes, by 1903, when the property became registered land, the owner was identified as Sarah W Hollowell, married to Norwood P Hollowell, a son of Anna D and Richard P Hollowell, indicating members of the family had again gained ownership of the property by that time.⁴ There was no record of Solomon Howes or his children residing in Medford at this address during the 1880s-1890s, so the house may have been held in the manner of an investment and rented to unidentified tenants during their period of ownership.⁵

By 1920 the house was occupied and later owned by the household of Lawrence G Brooks, who was married to Susan Morris Hollowell Brooks, a daughter of Norwood Penrose Hollowell and granddaughter of Richard P and Anna D Hollowell, all neighborhood residents. The family included four children born between 1914 and 1923 and a household staff of two, both single women who were natives of Ireland. Lawrence Graham Brooks (1881-1981) was a native of Roxbury educated at Harvard and Harvard Law school, finishing his career as chief justice of Malden District Court beginning in 1948. It has not been ascertained whether he was related to the prominent local family by that name. According to his obituary he participated in civil rights marches in Selma, Alabama with Martin Luther King, Jr. He decided to march because "One, I'm a judge and I hate injustice. Two, I love my country and I hate the image this action in Selma is creating throughout the world..."⁶ As chairman of the board of the American Unitarian Association he presided, with others, over the merger of the Unitarian and Universalist denominations in 1961. Mrs. Brooks (1884-1985) also upheld her family's liberal traditions:

She often said she had been inspired by the examples of her parents and the Quaker Traditions of peace and social concern. It was that concern that led her to seek out, help and inspire many individuals in Medford and elsewhere, including a group of well-educated but penniless refugees from Hitler's Germany whom she befriended, housed and helped get a new start in this country... 'she contributed as best she could to those causes dear to her heart, particularly civil rights and world peace. She was a staunch supporter of the nuclear freeze movement in Medford.'⁷

In 1935 Susan Brooks, her husband and her siblings sold the property through an intermediary to Forest O and Emily C Batchelder, owners 1935-1946. The Brooks family moved across the street to 43 Mystic, where they resided for the remainder of their lives. Forest Batchelder, born ca 1900, worked as a conductor on the Boston and Maine Railroad. Subsequent long-term owners since 1953 included two generations of the Stanwood family, who remain the current owners of record.⁸

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps and atlases:

³ Henry C. DeLong, "Richard Price Hollowell," *The Medford Historical Register*, Vol. VII (The Society, Oct. 1904) pp. 95-96.

⁴ MCSR Certificate of Title 706.

⁵ Ancestry.com: 1880-1900 Medford city directories.

⁶ *Boston Daily Globe*, Sep. 27, 1981, p. 91, obituary.

⁷ *ibid*, Oct. 19, 1985, p. 36, obituary, Susan M. (Hollowell) Brooks.

⁸ MCSR Certificates of Title 39209-39212 (1935); 58171 (1946); 64000 (1948); 74192 (1951); 79621 (1953); 248613 (2011); Registered Land Book 1439, Page 58 (2013).

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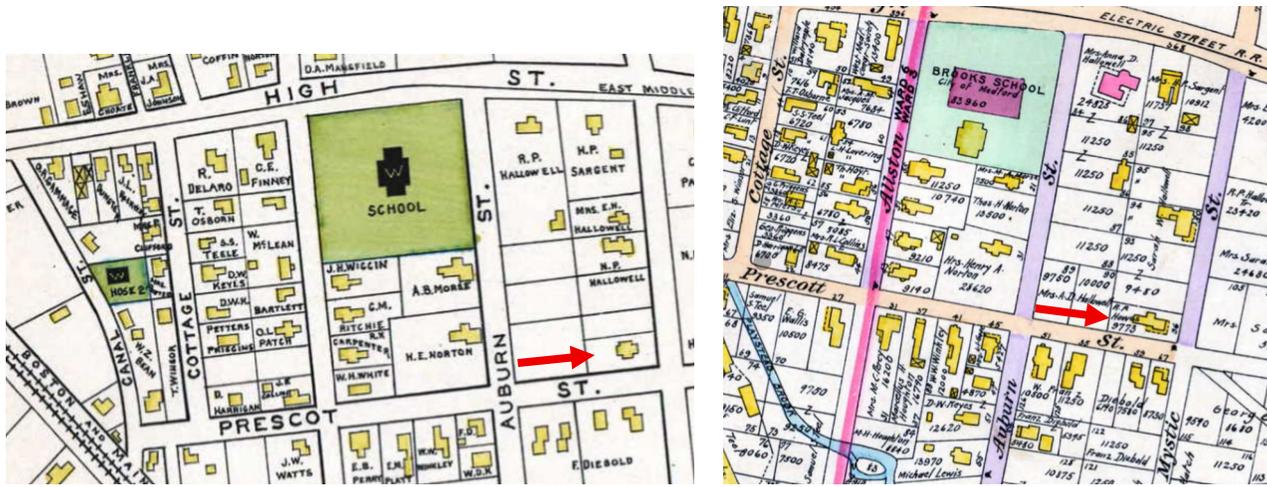
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- 1855 H.F. Walling. "Map of Medford...."
- 1875 F. W. Beers, *County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts.*
- 1880 O. H. Bailey [Bird's Eye View of] Medford.
- 1889 Geo. H. Walker & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts.*
- 1898 Geo. W. Stady & 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

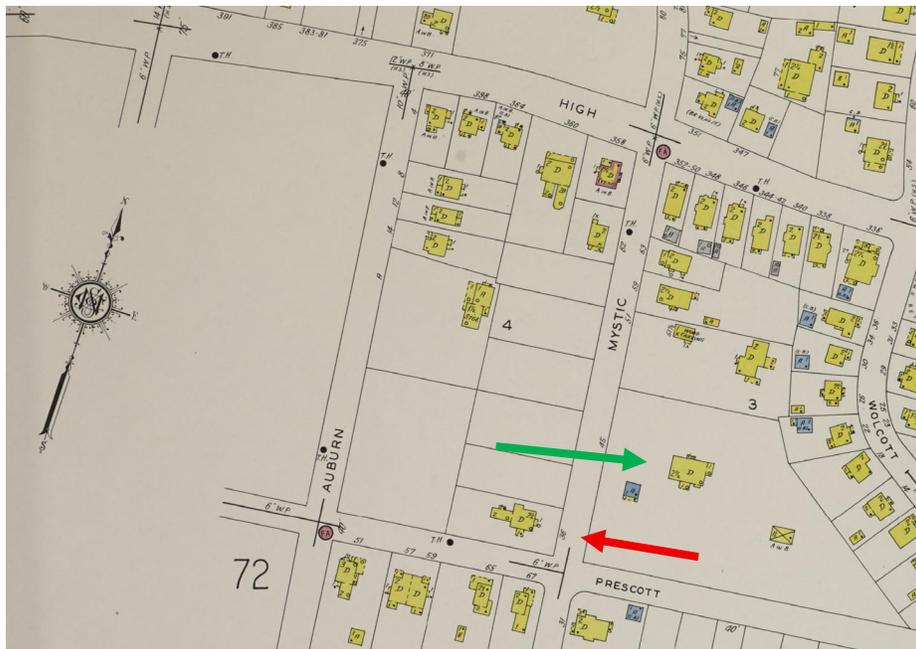
Charles Brooks and James M. Usher, *History of the Town of Medford, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, From its First Settlement in 1630 to 1855; Revised, Enlarged and Brought Down to 1885* (Rand, Avery & Co., 1886)

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



Left: 1889 Walker county atlas showing the initial depiction of the house.

Right: 1898 Stady Medford atlas depicting the house labeled "AR" or "RR Howes."



1936 Sanborn map, plate 81, depicting the house accurately with the right bay and off-center entrance by that time, red arrow. The green arrow depicts a new house built for the Brooks family by that time.

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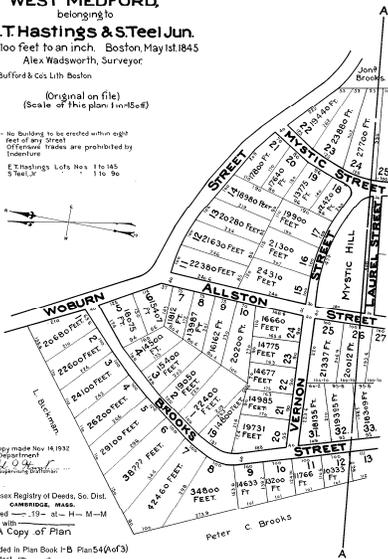
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Plan of House Lots
in
WEST MEDFORD,
belonging to
E.T. Hastings & S. Teel Jun.
Scale 100 feet to an inch. Boston May 1st 1845
Alex Wadsworth, Surveyor
J.H. Bufford & Co's Lith Boston
(Original on file)
(Scale of this plan 1 in = 45 ft)

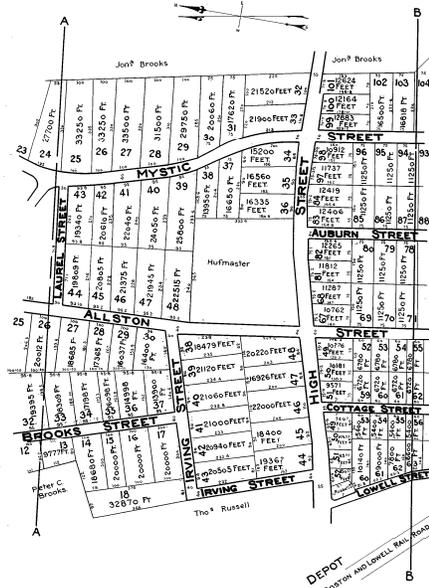
NOTE: No Building to be erected within eight feet of any Street
Different Trades are prohibited by Indenture
E Hastings Lots Nos 1 to 96
S Teel's



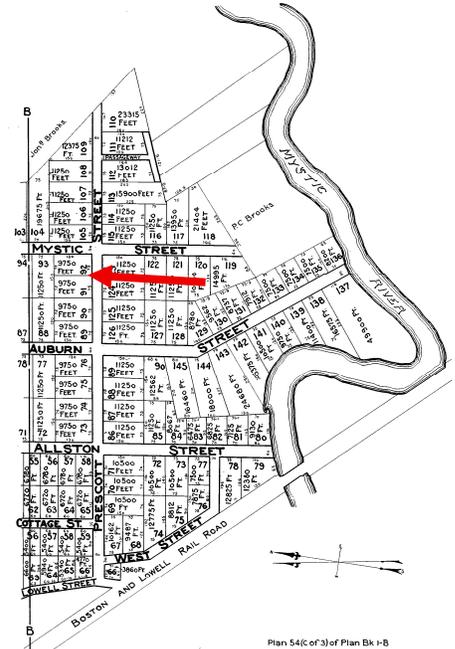
This copy made Nov 14 1892
by Plan Department
Middlesex Registry of Deeds, So. Dist.
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
Received 19- at 11- M-M
with
A Copy of Plan
Recorded in Plan Book I-B Plan 544 (of 3)
Attest
Thomas Doughton Register
June 16, 1845



Plan 54(A) of 3 of Plan Bk. I-B



Plan 54(B) of 3 of Plan Bk. I-B



Plan 54(C) of 3 of Plan Bk. I-B

MCSR Plan 1B:54 A-C of 3, the Hastings-Teel Subdivision of 1845. Lots 91 and 92 were re-oriented to face Mystic Street by Anna D Hallowell by 1875, red arrow. Note that north is left.

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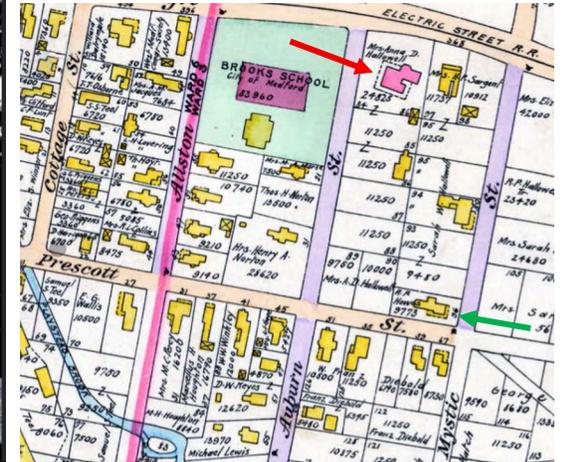
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Two empty rectangular boxes for area and form number.



Left: Hallowell House at the southeast corner of High and Auburn streets with the 1898 Stadly city atlas indicating its former location, red arrow. The subject house is indicated by a green arrow. https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/13712078/person/247059539/media/c946e9a6-8908-4e3a-a5c6-4a62d59ce2be?queryId=92c11203-27dc-4671-a68d-17ed4c59432a&searchContextTreId=&searchContextPersonId=&_phsrc=cCP256&_phstart=successSource



Left: Lawrence Graham Brooks; right: Susan Morris Hallowell Brooks. Ancestry.com: Crowley Family History.

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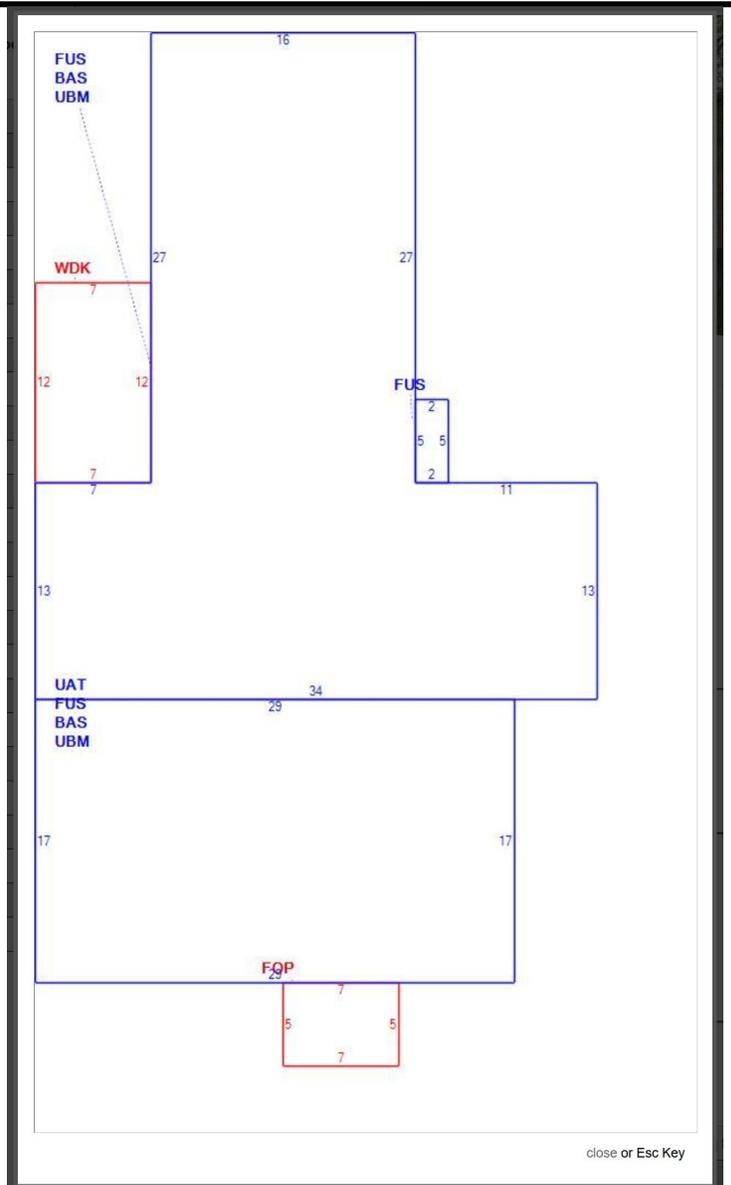
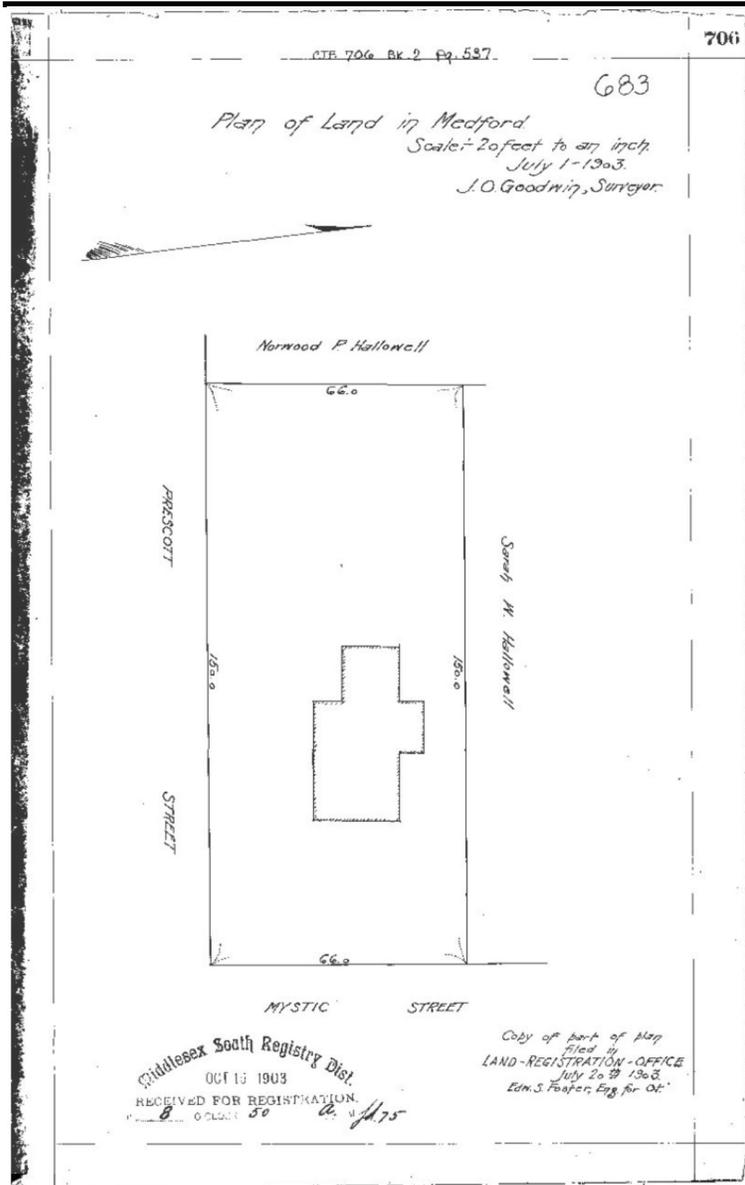
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Left: 1903 site plan, MCSRD Registered Plan 706; right: current assessor's building footprint. A careful comparison of the plan on the left, with the right-front elevation in line with the rear ell, confirms that the right-front re-entrant angle is a later in-fill addition.

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North-facing side elevation.



South-facing side elevation showing rear ell and garage.

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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 Howes Tenant - Brooks House, 36 Mystic Street, ca 1875, would contribute to a potential National Register district that would conform to the boundaries of an 1845 subdivision plan of Hastings Heights (MCSR Plan 1B:54 A-C of 3). This large subdivision was designed by prominent landscape architect Alexander Wadsworth. Wadsworth contributed to the design of Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge (CAM.801/WAT.802), a seminal and highly influential example of the form that also influenced suburban residential and landscape design nationally. This property is also one of the few surviving resources associated with the surrounding block's original owners, prominent abolitionists and women's suffrage advocates Anna Coffin Davis Hallowell and her husband Richard Price Hallowell. The surrounding block, redeveloped with single-family houses during the inter-war period of the 1920s-1930s, retains significance under that context. Despite minor alterations this building, among the earliest surviving in the larger Hastings subdivision, would contribute to a district that generally retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Areas of significance include architecture, community planning and development, landscape architecture and social history. This potential district abuts another area recommended for NR listing: West Medford Commercial Area MDF.AE. An adjacent section of West Medford south of Boston Avenue, which has been well documented using individual inventory forms, has also been recommended for listing as "...a potential historic district comprising the southern section of the Smith Estate Subdivision...that is significant for its representation of an early railroad suburb where a sizeable number of African American families formed a distinguishable community at the turn of the 20th century. The precise boundary and period of significance for this historic district have yet to be determined" (Larson, MDF.700, 40 Fairfield Street).