

FORM A - AREA

Assessor's Sheets USGS Quad Area Letter Form Numbers in Area

P-09. Q-09

Boston
North

See data
sheet

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

Photograph



101, 93 and 87 Mystic Ave, L-R

Town/City: Medford

Place (*neighborhood or village*): Medford Square South

Name of Area: Hancock-Columbia Block

Present Use: commercial

Construction Dates or Period: 1867 – Late 20th century

Overall Condition: fair

Major Intrusions and Alterations: Ongoing demolition and redevelopment

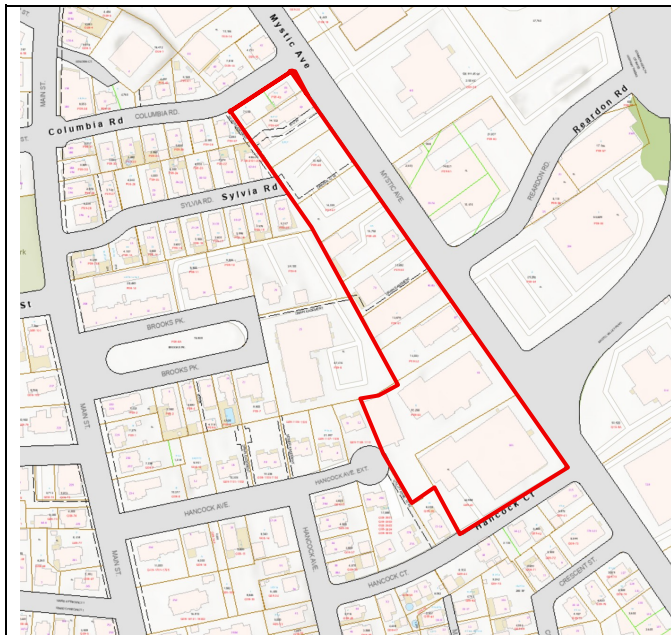
Acreage: approximately 5.13 acres

Recorded by: John D. Clemson

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month/year*): August 2026

Locus Map



see continuation sheet

INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

BLOCK

MEDFORD

HANCOCK-COLUMBIA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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

Historic maps have depicted a block filling the west side of Mystic Avenue between Columbia Road at its north edge and Hancock Court to the south as having a harmonious streetscape of wood-frame houses that has largely disappeared, replaced by commercial uses starting in the early 20th century. Most of this area was part of a planned subdivision dating to 1853 (reproduced below). Two other properties at the south end of the block, which fell outside the original subdivision plan, have been added to this area in order to conform to the current street plan and to include properties that contributed knowledge of the area's initial phase of development.

This area form has been produced to document a group of buildings on the west side of Mystic Avenue at numbers 67-71, 73 and 81 that are slated for demolition. This group includes the last surviving wood-frame dwelling in the area at 71 Mystic, known as the Connors House, built between 1867 and 1875, once one of eleven similar residential buildings that originally lined this stretch of the west side of Mystic Avenue. This early survival will be individually documented as MDF.585 with a 20th century commercial building that occupies the site at 67 Mystic, MDF.584.¹ The rest of the area has undergone commercial and industrial redevelopment starting in ca 1910-1936 and continuing through post-1950, when four commercial buildings were built at 67, 73 and 81 Mystic. Other surviving buildings were cleared more recently (ca 2020) at 45-47 and 49 Mystic for vehicle and construction equipment storage (see MDF.1814 and MDF.1815). In the course of research in preparation for this documentation, it was determined that the area should extend from the intersection of Columbia Road at the north end to Hancock Court to the south, expanding somewhat beyond the original 1853 subdivision. This extension includes three additional commercial or industrial buildings at 87, 93 and 101 Mystic for a total of six.

The earliest surviving building in the area at **71 Mystic, the Connors House of 1867-1875**, is a two-and-a-half-story gabled end house of indeterminate style due to minor alterations including siding, sash and door. It nevertheless characterizes the initial phase of development along this block of the west side of Mystic Avenue during the late-19th century depicted on period maps reproduced below. This property will be documented with a commercial outbuilding at **67 Mystic Ave, A-Tech Used Auto Sales, post-1950**.

The remaining five commercial or industrial buildings are variations of utilitarian commercial or industrial architecture of the mid- to late-20th century with rectangular massing under flat roofs. Three of these buildings at 73, 81-83, and 87 have undergone façade remodelings that have brought them to an aesthetic of generic modernism, with smooth clapboard, stucco or brick treatments lit by unadorned single- or multi-light windows arranged in horizontal bands. Two more at 93 and 101 retain their original Modernist designs.

The earliest of these buildings is a two-story rectangular block built in **1923 at 87 Mystic, Supremacy Ink Co**, that was originally built to house a manufacturer of ink and floor wax. This concrete building with dimensions of 40 feet wide by 71 feet deep is expanded by a lower, single-story addition across the back that is 20 feet deep. The roof is a nearly flat gable that is nevertheless visible on the façade. The building is parged and lit by a semi-regular pattern of single and paired, domestically scaled sash with an entrance off-center to the left in the four-bay façade. The building currently houses the WJ McDonough Fence Company.

¹ This building is numbered in MACRIS as contributing to the Middlesex Canal Historic and Archaeological National Register District, recorded in Medford as MDF.AD and MDF.V. Many properties that overlap with the boundaries of this district were assigned MHC numbers but not otherwise documented.

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Between 1936 and 1950 a large plant was built at **101 Mystic** for the **FJ Barnard Company, bookbinders**. This single-story, flat-roofed building resting on a high, unlit concrete basement is otherwise constructed entirely of red common-bond brick. The dimensions are 142 feet wide by 130 feet deep. A 64-foot-wide by 81-foot-deep "accessory building" is sited at the northwest corner and extends 16 feet beyond the north elevation of the main block. The flat façade parapet is massed in three parts, slightly raised in the center. The seven-bay façade is entered at the top of a high stoop at its center sheltered by a concrete porch and is abundantly lit by four-part picture windows arranged in two bays to either side of the entrance. The building has been converted to retail commercial use and houses six businesses with signage arranged above each window opening of the façade.

The remaining three commercial buildings all date to post-1950. **73 Mystic** is a two-story block with dimensions of 45 feet square covered in vinyl clapboards and lit by three bays of paired picture windows with a center entrance. This building is distinctive for its deep setback beyond a paved parking area. It currently houses law offices according to signage. **81-83 Mystic, 1962, Cassaro Bakery**, is single-story over a high basement with dimensions of 48 by 170 feet. The building is entered at the center of the left half of the façade through a window wall; a second window wall fills the façade's other half. This façade, renewed in white stucco, covers the original structural common-bond brick that remains visible in either side elevation. This building, currently vacant, until recently housed a Ducati motorcycle dealership. **93 Mystic, 1956, Dragone Cheese Manufacturing Co** is a single-story commercial block constructed of buff brick above a low concrete basement. An entrance is centered in the right 2/3ds of the façade between horizontal bands of picture windows; the left third is a blank wall. The building has dimensions of 80 by 190 feet with irregular rear extensions. A lack of signage precludes the identification of its current use.

The built environment that defines this area can be best understood by observing the aerial capture included below (continuation sheet 16). Here large buildings are sited almost randomly at, near, or deeply set back from the frontage. Between them are swaths of asphalt parking. The north end of the area is entirely open and in use for vehicular and construction equipment storage behind open or screened chain-link fencing.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Hancock-Columbia Block Area fills most of an early subdivision owned by James Kidder located on the west side of Mystic Avenue between the south bound of 87 Mystic to the south and the vicinity of Columbia Road to the north, where property bounds have since been reconfigured. This northern tip of the subdivision, defined as "lot 9" on the plan, was reconfigured by Walter Bates by 1889 labeled "Batesville" on period maps and lot 9 became occupied by the 18th-century Hall House when it was moved to 41 Mystic from the south end of Governors Avenue in ca 1892-1897 (see MDF.34). The subdivision plan, recorded in 1853, is reproduced below. It included eight regularly proportioned, identical lots of 13,892 square feet with varying frontages of between approximately 80 and 90 feet and depths averaging between 150 and 190 feet in order to compensate for the gently curved rear lot lines that conform to the former path of the Middlesex Canal (MDF.V and Middlesex Canal Historic and Archaeological District, NR, MDF.AD), which was located to the immediate west of the subdivision and whose closing ca 1852 may have made this land available to its development. This area form will include two additional properties to the south of the original subdivision at current numbers 93 and 101 Mystic. This expansion of the area's boundaries has been done in order to capture additional industrial sites and to fill out the block between Hancock and Columbia that define the area's current boundaries. James Kidder (1776-1852), scion of an old Medford family and later a resident of Charlestown, "was a cooper and served as toll-gatherer on the Medford Turnpike from 1804 to 1840." The turnpike, constructed in 1803, followed the path of current-day Mystic Avenue and route 38, continuing northward as the Andover Turnpike (Forest Street). Circumstances suggest Kidder was able to

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parlay his fiduciary responsibilities to the turnpike owners into a real estate investment opportunity but further research would be required to develop a clearer understanding of his motivations.²

The subdivision was initially developed with small wood-frame domestic buildings. The physical layout of the area can be observed on period maps reproduced below. By 1898 eleven houses had been constructed on lots 2, 3, 4 (two buildings), 6, and 7. This includes two outside the original subdivision at current numbers 93 and 101 Mystic, which share a general history and pattern of development and change with the rest. Several of these lots contained two or more domestic buildings or outbuildings at this time. Selective research on two properties identified their earliest occupants and owners. Number 71 Mystic was evidently built ca 1867-1875 for Irish native, laborer James Connors, born ca 1823, and his wife, Mary, born ca 1820. A house at current 73 Mystic was evidently built between 1881 and 1889 for Irish native and produce peddler John Flemming (demolished during the 20th century).

Between 1898 and ca 1900 street numbers on Mystic Avenue were changed, but a comparison of the 1900 Federal Census and the 1910 Sanborn map established what is generally the current numbering system. Below is a list of heads of households from the 1900 Federal Census, the configurations of their households including adult children, their occupations, and their or their parents' nationality of origin in order to provide a snapshot of the area's demographics at a time when it had reached its peak of residential development at the end of the 19th century. The street numbers match the current pattern.

<u>Street number</u>	<u>head</u>	<u>birthdate</u>	<u>relation</u>	<u>national origin</u>	<u>occupation</u>
49	Margaret Barry	1852	widow	Ireland	real estate agent
	James A Barry	1876	single	Mass (Ireland)	laundry
	Michael E Barry	1880	single	Mass (Ireland)	clothing salesman
67	John E Cullen	1857	married	Mass (Ireland)	fruit peddler
	Mary A	1857	wife	Mass (Ireland)	none
	4 minor children				
71	William H Barry	1874	married	Mass (Ireland)	bar tender
	Mary E	1875	wife	NY (Ireland)	none
	1 minor child				
73 (77)	John Flemming	1842	widower	Ireland	produce peddler
	Margaret	1866	daughter	Mass (Ireland)	none
	Patrick J	1878	son	Mass (Ireland)	motorman
	Edward A	1880	son	Mass (Ireland)	machinist
81-89 (duplex)	Bartlett Weeks	1828	single	Mass (ME, NH)	farm laborer
	Levi W Wilson	1822	boarder	Canada	farm laborer
91 (93)	Mary Corwin	1871	single	Mass (Ireland)	housekeeper
	Ellen G	1874	single	Mass (Ireland)	laundry
	John Malloy	1868	married	Mass (Ireland)	barber
	Elizabeth A	1866	wife	RI (Eng, Ire)	none
105 (101)	James Henry	1827	married	Mass (Mass)	retired
	Julia A	1862	wife	Mass (CT, Mass)	none

² MCSRD Plan 188:47 (1853); Morgan Hewitt Stafford, *A Genealogy of the Kidder Family Comprising the Descendants in the Male Line of Ensign James Kidder, 1626-1676, of Cambridge and Billerica in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (The Tuttle Publishing Co, 1941) pp. 136-137. James Kidder (1776-1852) was the scion of an old Medford family established by his grandfather Deacon Samuel Kidder (1720-1777); his eldest son and namesake (1793-1837) was an accomplished Boston artist and print maker, well known for his renderings of the important Federal-era estate of Thompson Kidder on Forest Street now in the collections of Historic New England (regarding the artist James Kidder see: Kevin J. Avery, *American Drawings and Watercolors in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Vol. I, A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born Before 1835* (Yale University Press, 2002) p.322). Another relative, Francis Henry Kidder (1826-1897) built an ambitious house in the neighboring Hancock Subdivision at 252 Main Street (MDF.BD, see MDF.1538, demolished).

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Lucy A Peck	1828	sister	Mass (CT, Mass)	none
(illegible)	1876	servant	Ireland	servant

The list reveals several patterns and a few anomalies. A preponderance of the area's residents were natives of Ireland or second generation with occupations in labor or peddling. The younger generation in several households had somewhat elevated or skilled occupations such as salesman, motorman or machinist. The 1898 and 1910 maps reproduced below depict mostly small wood-frame dwellings interspersed with vacant lots, suggesting the development of the neighborhood was slow and halting. One anomaly was a somewhat larger wood-frame dwelling located at current 101 Mystic occupied by a retired New England native, his younger wife, and a live-in servant. A comparison of the occupants listed above to the 1898 Medford atlas suggests there was a mix of owner/ occupants and absentee owners. These absentee owners included Patrick Cronin, Norah Sullivan and Frank E Chandler (regarding Chandler see Clemson, Hillside Overview, 2014, p. 9).

By 1936 the first commercial buildings had appeared: 87 Mystic Avenue had been cleared of an earlier wood-frame house and improved with an industrial building labeled "Ink & Floor Wax Mfg." that survives. Building permits identified the build date as 1923 and the initial owner as Supremacy Ink Co. By 1950 little had changed within this area. Eight wood-frame houses remained at numbers 45 through 81 but that year's Sanborn map suggested industrial or auto-centric uses were intruding on the area. The long-vacant lots between 49 and 67 Mystic with an assessor's number of 0 were by that time in use as an open lot for "used auto sales," and a larger wood-frame house with several outbuildings at 101 Mystic had been cleared and improved with the large concrete book bindery of F.J. Bernard Co.

Since 1950 industrial and vehicle sales buildings or other vehicle storage uses have come to dominate the area. Numbers 45-47 and 49 were demolished in ca 2020 for a storage lot for dumpsters and construction equipment. The large open lot to the south, lot numbers 5 and 6 on the 1853 plan, remain in use as vehicle storage. Number 67 Mystic was replaced by a concrete-block garage selling used vehicles, "A-Tech Used Auto Sales" (a demolition permit dated 1956 for 73 Mystic indicates when the wood-frame house and outbuilding that originally occupied this site was demolished). Number 77 Mystic has been replaced by an office block set well back from the frontage. South of this property four rectangular-block commercial buildings at 81-83, 87, 93 and 101 remain in place or have replaced earlier buildings. Number 81-83, Cassaro Bakery, was built for owner Sal Cassaro to house a commercial bakery in 1962 at an estimated cost of \$45,000. The builder was J Maggiore & Sons, Inc. Number 87 (aka 85-87) was built in 1923 to house the Supremacy Inc Co (the stucco was applied in 1967). By 1980 the building housed Bonanno Linen Service, Inc. Number 93 Mystic, 1956, originally housed the Dragone Cheese Manufacturing Co. The builder was John Tocci & Sons with an estimated cost of \$50,000. Later owners included Environmental Research & Electronics (1973), Carl's Ice Cream Specialties (1987), and Signature Bread (1995).³

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....*

³ City of Medford, records of the Building Department. Permitting for 81-83 Mystic includes permits in 1924 and 1928 for a manufactory, a garage, and a two-family house built by owner and builder Mauro Frachini, so the current 1962 building may reflect unexecuted permits or an interim layer of development at this site.

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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).

DATA SHEET

MHC #	Parcel #	Street #	Street	Name/ Form/ Status	Style	Date
MDF.578 MDF.1814	P-09-43	45-47	Mystic Avenue	Two-Family and garage/ DEMOLISHED	Craftsman	1925-1935
MDF.1815	P-09-44	49	Mystic Avenue	End House/ DEMOLISHED	None	1890-1893
MDF.	P-09-46	0	Mystic Avenue	Unimproved, no number	n/a	
MDF.	P-09-47	0	Mystic Avenue	Unimproved, no number	n/a	
MDF.584 MDF.585	P-09-48	67-71	Mystic Avenue	Connors End House Commercial Block	Modernist	1867-1875 Post-1950
MDF.587	P-09-50	73	Mystic Avenue	Commercial office block	Modernist	1951
MDF.588	P-09-51	81-83	Mystic Avenue	Cassaro Bakery/ Commercial Block	Modernist	1962
MDF.	P-09-52	87	Mystic Avenue	Supremacy Ink Co/ Manufacturing Block	Modernist	1923
MDF.590	P-09-53	93	Mystic Avenue	Dragone Cheese Mnf Co/ Manufacturing Block	Modernist	1956
MDF.591	Q-09-40	101	Mystic Avenue	FJ Bernard Co book bindary/ Manufacturing Block	Modernist	Pre-1950

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Plan of a Lot of Land
belonging to the Heirs of
James Kidder,
situated in the town of
MEDFORD, MS.
Surveyed
Oct. 26 1853.
by Fred^x J Williams.
Scale 40 ft = 1 inch

(Original on file.)
(Scale of this plan: 1 inch = 80 feet.)

Saml. Thompson

MEDFORD TURNPIKE

Goldsmith.

No. 1. 13,892 Sq. Ft.

No. 2. 13,892 Sq. Ft.

No. 3. 13,892 Sq. Ft.

No. 4. 13,892 Sq. Ft.

No. 5. 13,892 Sq. Ft.

No. 6. 13,892 Sq. Ft.

No. 7. 13,892 Sq. Ft.

No. 8. 13,892 Sq. Ft.

No. 9. 17,490 Sq. Ft.

July 17, 71 5 20 P.
188 47
Albert Kreithelm



Continuation sheet 6

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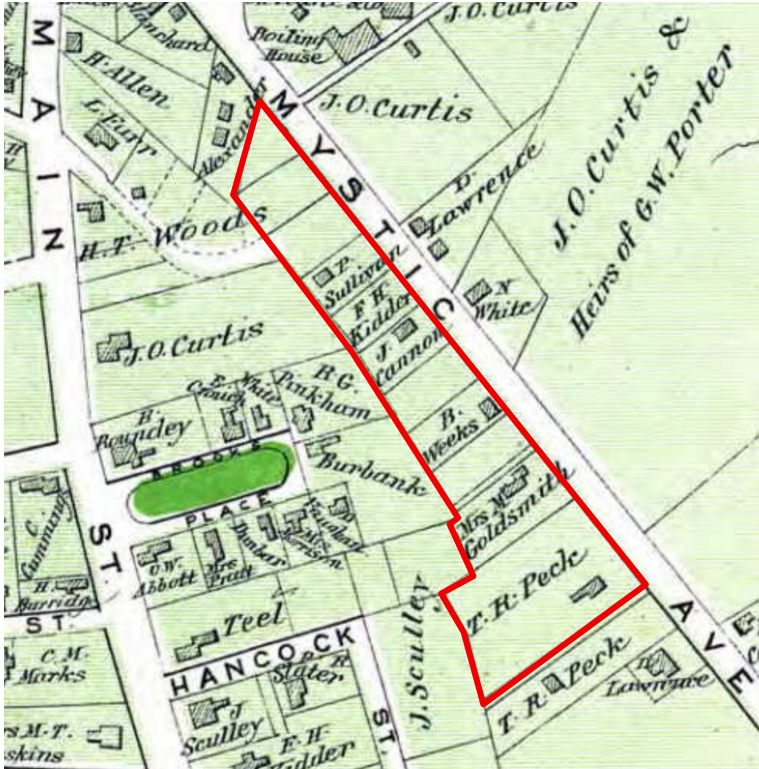
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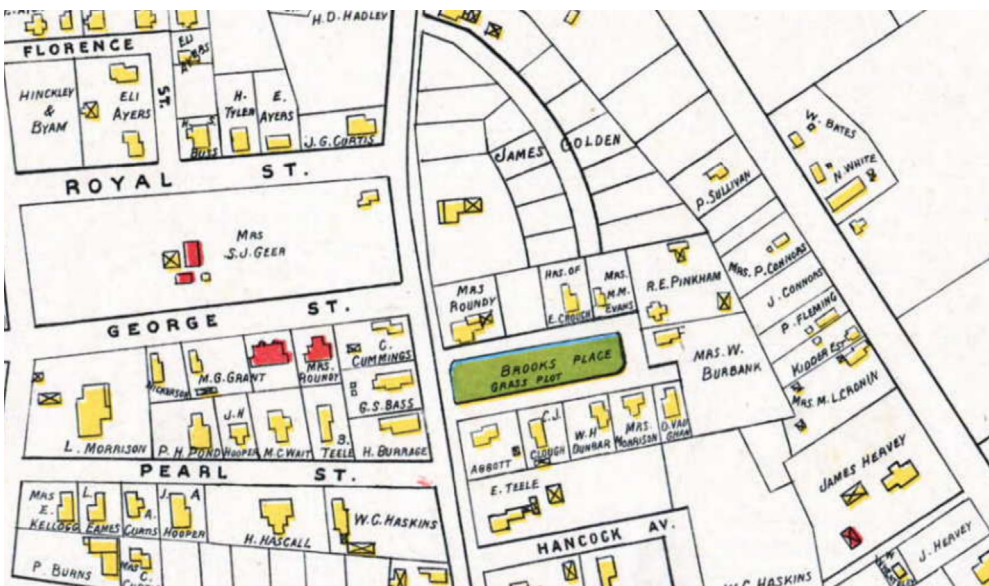
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1875 Beers county atlas depicting the area with five dwellings.



1889 Walker county atlas depicting six dwellings. Note the ongoing rearrangement of parcels at the north end of the subdivision.

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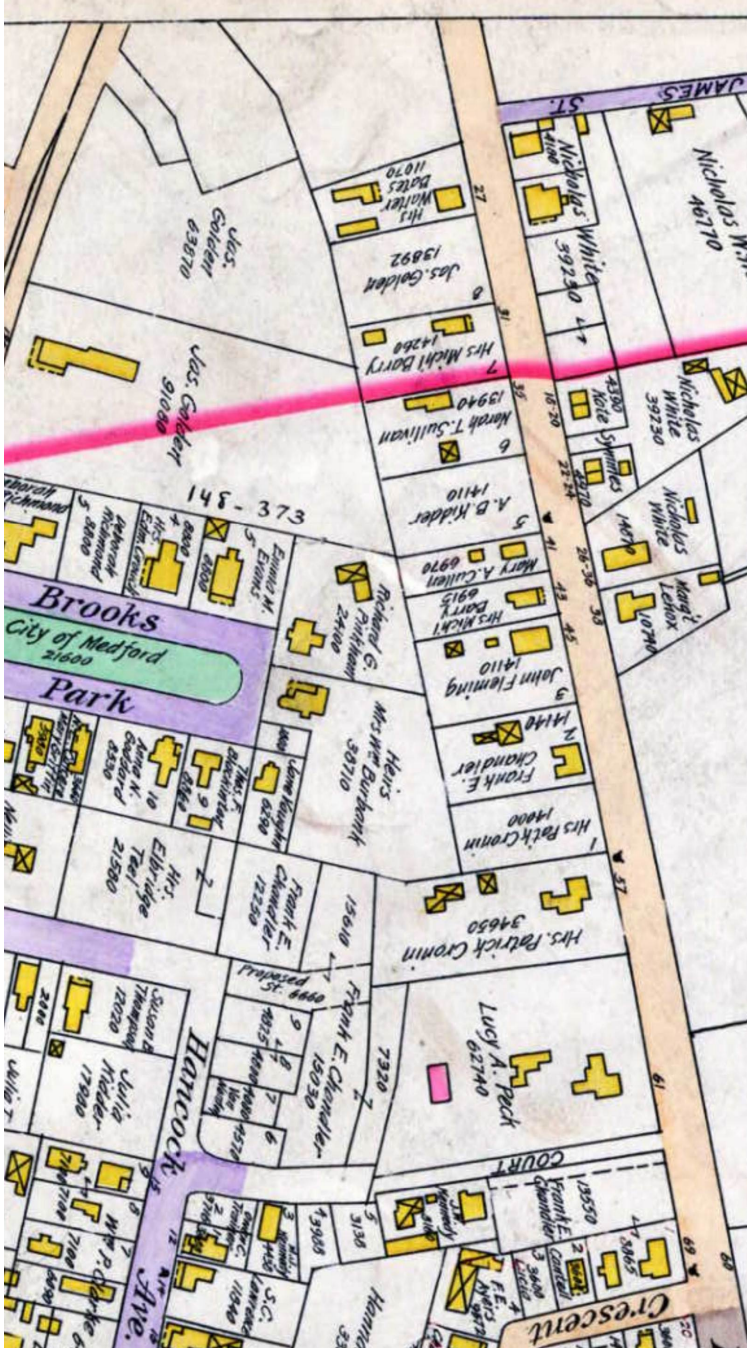
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1898 Stadly Medford atlas. Note the lot numbers 1-8; lot 9 has been reconfigured. The area includes the properties with street numbers 57 (owned by Hrs. Patrick Cronin) and 64 (Lucy A Peck). There are eight properties with nine dwelling depicted by this time.

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1910 Sanborn, plates 34 and 41, depicting the area with 8 dwellings.

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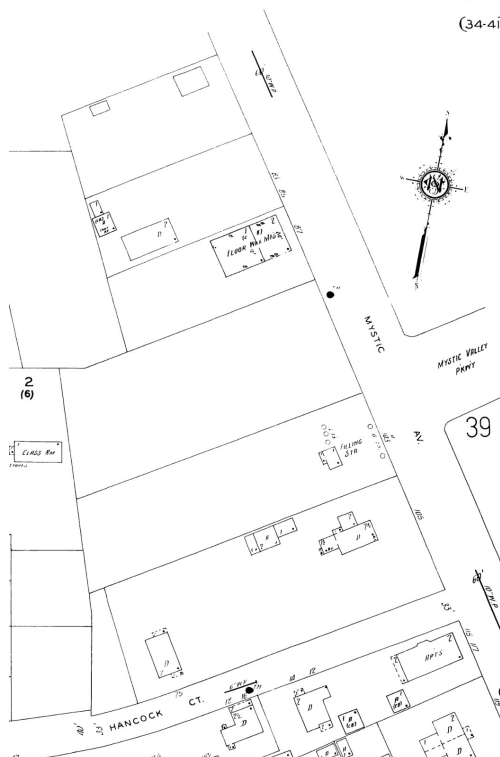
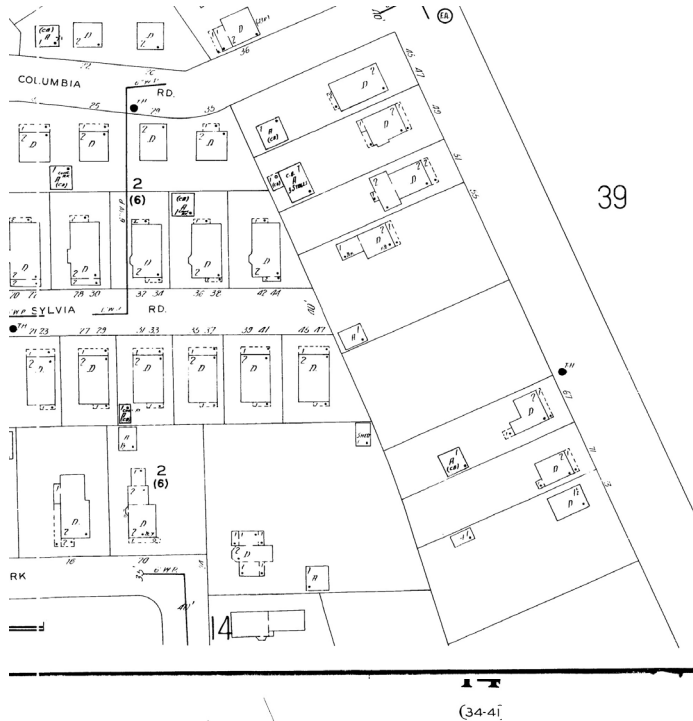
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1936 Sanborn, plates 13 and 14, depicting 8 dwellings, a "floor wax mfg." at number 87 and a "filling sta.," since demolished, at 103 (93).

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1950 Sanborn, plates 13 and 14, depicting the pace of commercial and industrial uses moving south to north. Seven of eight wood frame dwellings depicted here have been demolished; only 71 Mystic survives.

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45-49 Mystic Avenue. The Benjamin Hall House, 41 Mystic Avenue, MDF.34, is in the background near the right edge of the image.



0 Mystic Avenue

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67 Mystic Avenue



71 Mystic Avenue

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77 Mystic Avenue



81 Mystic Avenue

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87 Mystic Avenue



93 Mystic Avenue

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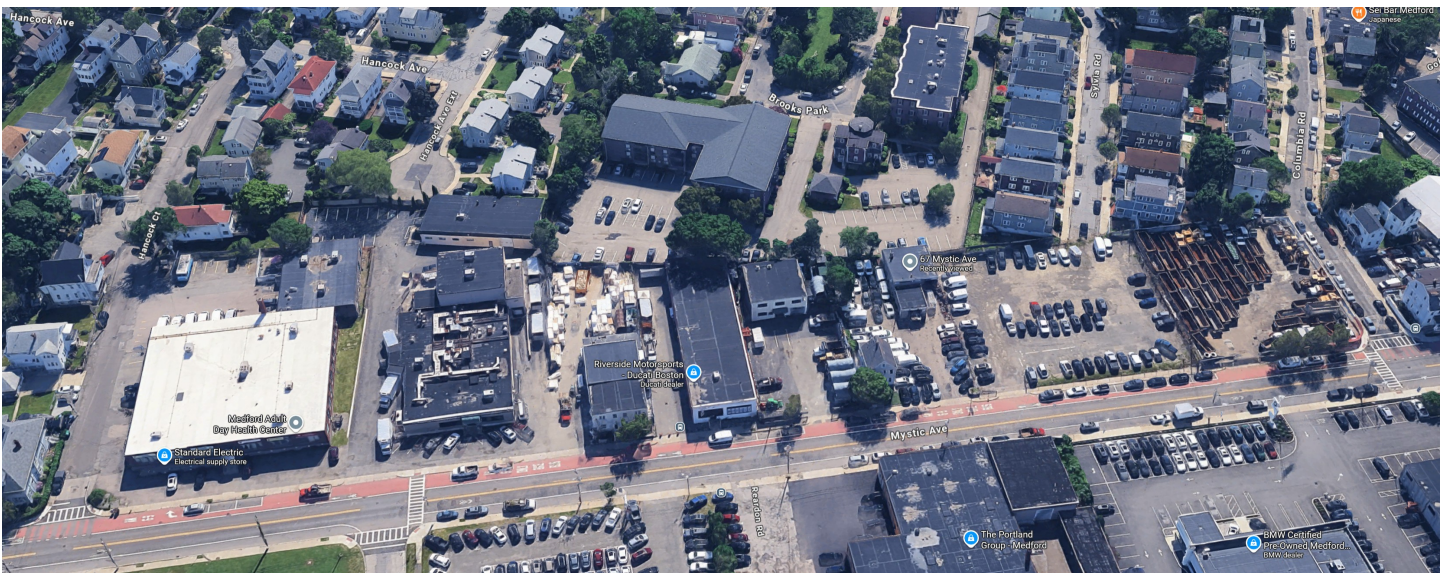
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101 Mystic Avenue



Aerial view captured from Google facing west showing the current pattern of development on the west side of Mystic Avenue between Columbia Road to the north (right) and Hancock Court to the south (left).

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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 Hancock-Columbia Block Area is a well-preserved industrial built landscape dating generally to the middle of the 20th century. Originally part of a residential subdivision recorded in 1853, the block was initially developed with wood frame dwellings occupied by local industrial laborers and workers, many of Irish heritage. Beginning in the early 20th century but peaking in the middle of the century, the area was redeveloped with industrial uses, including an ink manufactory, a book bindery, a cheese manufactory, and a bakery. Other more recent uses include vehicular repair and sales and construction equipment storage. The mid-20th-century industrial development in this and surrounding blocks on Mystic Avenue was a major local employer contributing to local and regional industrial economic activity of its period. Although currently in a condition of rapid change and redevelopment, this block and its surrounding streetscape lining Mystic Avenue retains many well-preserved examples of mid-20th-century industrial architecture, retaining integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Areas of significance would include architecture, historic non-aboriginal archeology related to the Middlesex Canal site, commerce, community planning and development, European ethnic heritage, industry, social history and transportation related to both the canal and Middlesex Turnpike (Mystic Avenue). This block would contribute to an NR district listing a Mystic Avenue industrial corridor, the boundaries of which would require additional research and documentation.

This neighborhood borders the Middlesex Canal Historic and Archaeological National Register District (MDF.V and MDF.AD in Medford), and several resources undergoing initial documentation through this area form contribute to this district.