

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

H-9-57

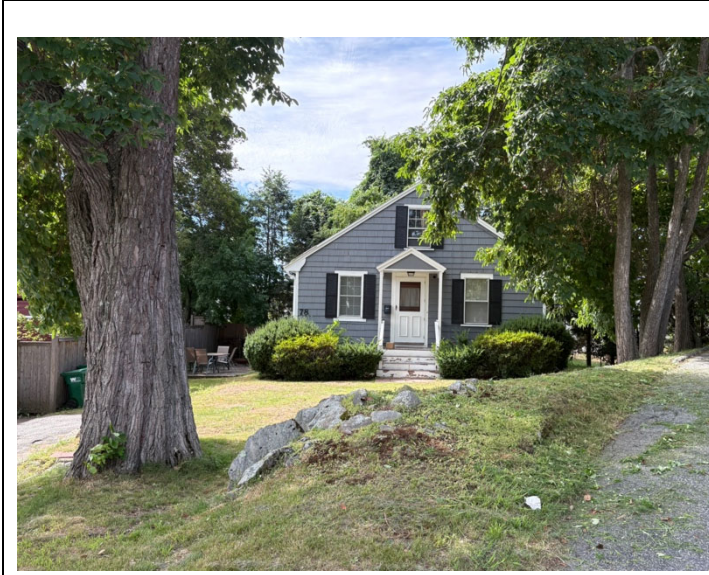
Boston
North

MDF.

Town/City: Medford

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

Photograph



Address: 78 Circuit Road

Historic Name: Carr House

Uses: Present: single-family residential

Original: single-family residential

Date of Construction: 1925

Source: Building permit deeds, maps and atlases

Style/Form: end-gabled bungalow

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: rusticate concrete block

Wall/Trim: wood shingles

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (*with dates*): none

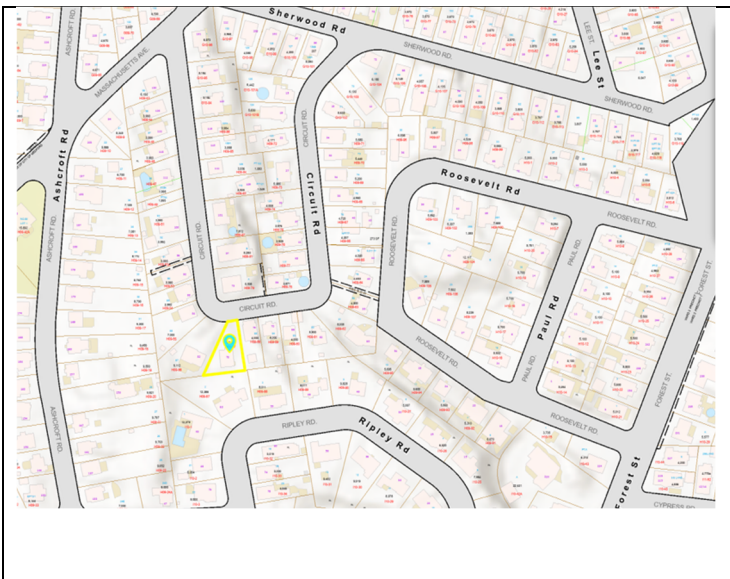
Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 5750 square feet

Setting: densely settled suburban neighborhood of moderate dwellings most early to mid 20th century in date

Locus Map (*north is up*)



Recorded by: Claire W Dempsey

Organization: Medford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): August 2026

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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 Carr House at 78 Circuit Road is a small end-gabled bungalow dating to the 1920s (assessor 1922). Measuring 25' across and 33' deep, the house presents its end gable to the street (north) with an offset center entry there. Flanked by double-hung sash with another above, the entry is sheltered by a gabled porch with wood steps and square posts and balustrade. A rear entry is located to the back of the east-side elevation, with wood steps and a deck with square posts and balustrade. Although it appears that the window sash have been replaced, the simple wood trim and casings appear to be original, complemented by the wood shingle wall cover and rusticated concrete block foundation. The five room description, with two bedrooms and bath, suggest a two-tiered "Progressive-era plan," but the precise arrangement is not clear from the exterior that is visible.

The house is located on a pie-shaped lot near the southwest corner of the U-shaped Circuit Road. The terrain slopes down here, with stone retaining walls marking the height transitions. Likely because of stone outcroppings at the front (north) portion of the lot, the dwelling is positioned near its rear (south) lot line, with large trees in the lawn and mature foundation plantings on the facade. There is a short asphalt drive at the east edge of the parcel, with an adjacent asphalt path and paver steps to the former location of the remainder of the path to the entry. There is a small patio at the rear.



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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Carr House is located in the northeast corner of the Medford Square neighborhood, within the large Forest Park subdivision, positioned west of Forest Street, Fellsway West, and Roosevelt Circle and south of the Middlesex Fells Reservation. This section of the town was sparsely settled well into the 19th century, with houses positioned along Forest Street after it was constructed as the Andover Turnpike after 1805. The large lots in this vicinity had been labelled J Bishop Estate in 1855, but by 1875, the large L-shaped parcel was part of the multiple holdings owned by Elizur Wright, part of which would become the Middlesex Fells Reservation. Wright (1804-1885) was raised in Ohio and educated at Yale, an active abolitionist and actuary; here he is best known for his role in establishing the Fells. His residence was located further north, within the Fells bounds, but his holdings included large interior parcels between Forest and Governor's Avenue and the Dutton Estate subdivision. His children then took up residence here: son Joseph S Wright (1832-1888) and his wife Mary C G Wright at 194 Forest Street (MDF.1100); son Walter C Wright (1846-1917) on a large "pork chop" parcel that had been numbered 204 Forest: and Ida R Wright (1847-1937) and her husband Samuel Bell Tay on the large L-shaped parcel, that had been 288 Forest. The Tays sold part of their property to the Metropolitan Park Commission in 1895 and 96 and sold the remainder of their land, including the subject property, in 1912.¹

The large L-shaped Tay parcel was purchased by George McCormack who, with his brother John, was a key developer in the nearby Fulton Heights neighborhood. They purchased large portions of that neighborhood and subdivided it in about a dozen sections in the 1910s and 20s, and this property appears to have been another part of that surge of activity. The McCormack brothers were sons of John J McCormack (1831-1906) and his wife Julia Dwyer McCormack (1830-1900), immigrants from Ireland who eventually made their home in Malden's Edgeworth neighborhood. John J and his sons changed occupations over their lives, several beginning in leather trades or as grocers and florists, two eventually turning to real estate development. It appears that, after their father, it was George A (1870-1935) who first turned to real estate, reporting that occupation in the 1900 census, a pursuit John T joined by 1911. After his marriage at age 41 George moved to a house identified as both 288 Forest and 27 Westwood Road in Medford (demolished). Although John was the elder, George seems to have been the senior in the firm, bolding his name in the directory and taking ads there; the firm was regularly referred to as the G A McCormack Land Company.²

Forest Park was laid out in 1912 below South Border Road and included 186 lots. Two parallel roads, Westland and Sherwood, ran east-west across the north, longer stem, the former terminating in a loop created by Lee Street. A diagonal Massachusetts Avenue crossed the west section, and the lower stem included the U-shaped Circuit Road. Most lots measured 40' across by 85 to 110' in depth. In Fulton Heights, George McCormack aimed to extend the opportunity for home ownership to the working class, advertising a scheme for selling his land that featured an installment or contract purchase plan of \$1 down and \$1 a week; as yet it is not clear that they applied this scheme in this subdivision. Over half of the subdivision had been built out by 1936 and infill dates to the postwar era. At that time, the construction of Route 93 brought a reorganization of the east end of the subdivision.

After being held briefly by East Boston laborer Clarence Batten Balter (1924/25), the parcel was purchased in 1925 by Alice Rose Collins Carr (ca 1882-1929) whose family holds the property today. Born in Boston to Edward and Ann (Claire) Collins, she married James Patrick Carr (1883-1956) in 1906. Born in Canton to Francis J and Bridget (Berkeley) Carr, he worked as a molder in a foundry at the time. They lived in Boston in 1910 and with his family in Charlestown in 1920; he worked as a policeman and later a laborer in a sugar refinery. They moved to Medford by 1924, Alice applied for a permit for a single family house in 1925, and by 1926 at 74 Circuit Road, believed to be the earlier street number for the subject property. After Alice's death he married Anna Murray (1895-1983). Carr was a long-term employee of Medford's water department, serving as laborer and foreman; his brother was John C Carr, who served as mayor of Medford and Democratic party state chairman. Known as 'Dutch,' James Carr was welterweight amateur champion of New Engand and served as trainer at Medford High School and Malden Catholic High School. After Anne's death the property went to Barbara J Smith who sold it to Austin L Smith Jr and Susan K Smith. Barbara is likely the niece Mrs Austin Smith (Barbara Scanlon) of Arlington noted in Anna's obituary.³

¹ Claire W Dempsey et al, DRAFT Forest Street Essay, 2020. MCSRD 2341:381 (1895), 2457:466 (896), 3707:345 (1912).

² Claire W Dempsey et al, Fulton Heights neighborhood, 2024. McCormick funded the 1912 purchase of the Tay parcel with a series of mortgages: from J Henry Miley of Somerville (and later of Medford and Winchester), \$20,000 at 5% for one year, discharged in 1913; again with Miley for \$11,500 at the same terms, discharged in 1925; with Edward D Conant of Newton for \$1000 at 6% for three years, discharged in 1927 and 28.

³ Ancestry.com: Find-a-grave; MA Birth and Marriage Records, US Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950; US Directories; WWI and II Draft Registrations. *Boston Globe* Alice Carr, 20 May 1929; James P Carr, Former Trainer of Medford Athletes, 17 March 1956; Anna Carr, 2 Feb 1983. MCRD 16108:581 (1985); 6363:29 (1940) 5731:254, 255 (1933); 4858:530 (1925). 4752:407 (1924).

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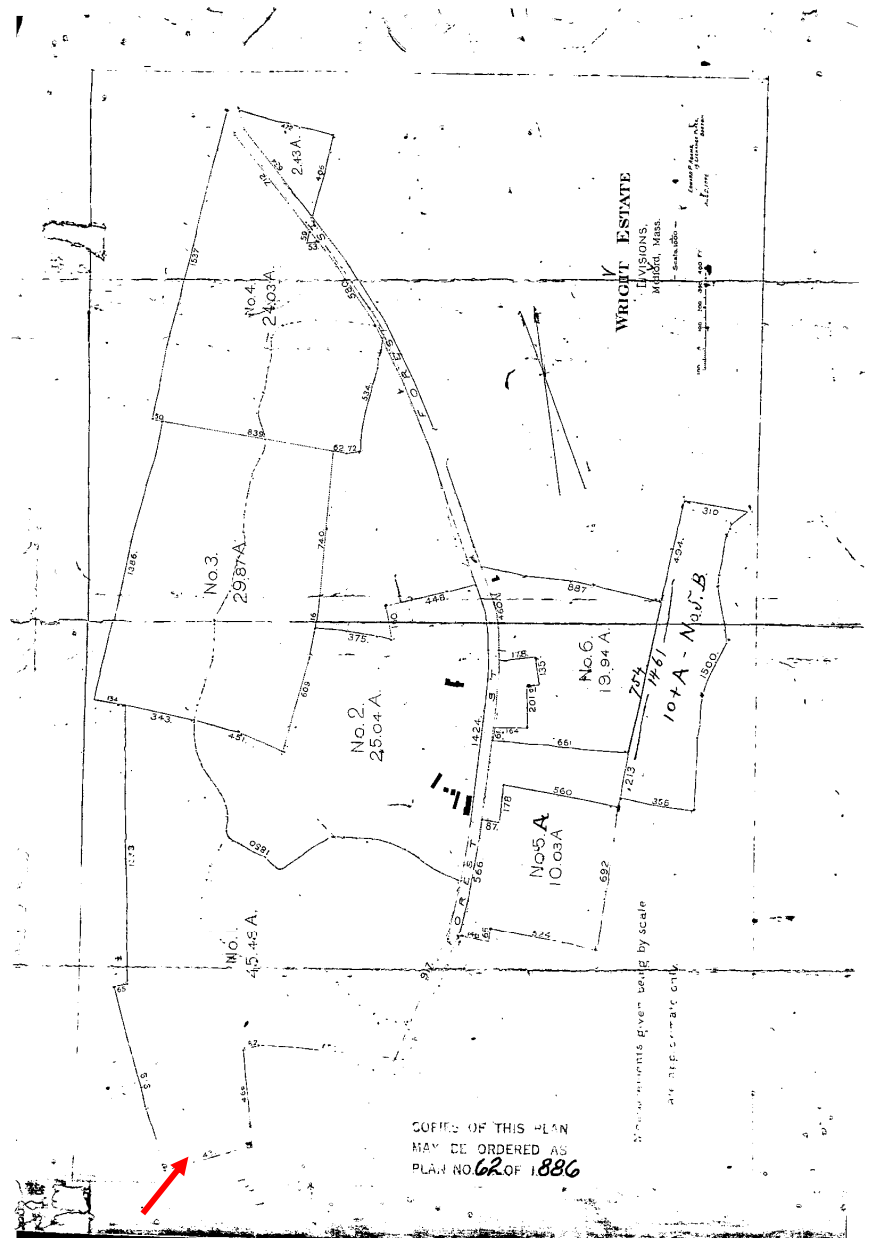
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Left: Detail of 1875 atlas, showing Wright's extensive holdings on both sides of Forest Street.

Right: Wright Estate Divisions, MCSRD plan 62 of 1886. Part of lot 1 was sold to the Metropolitan Parks Commission and part to McCormick. Red arrows show approximate location of the subject property.

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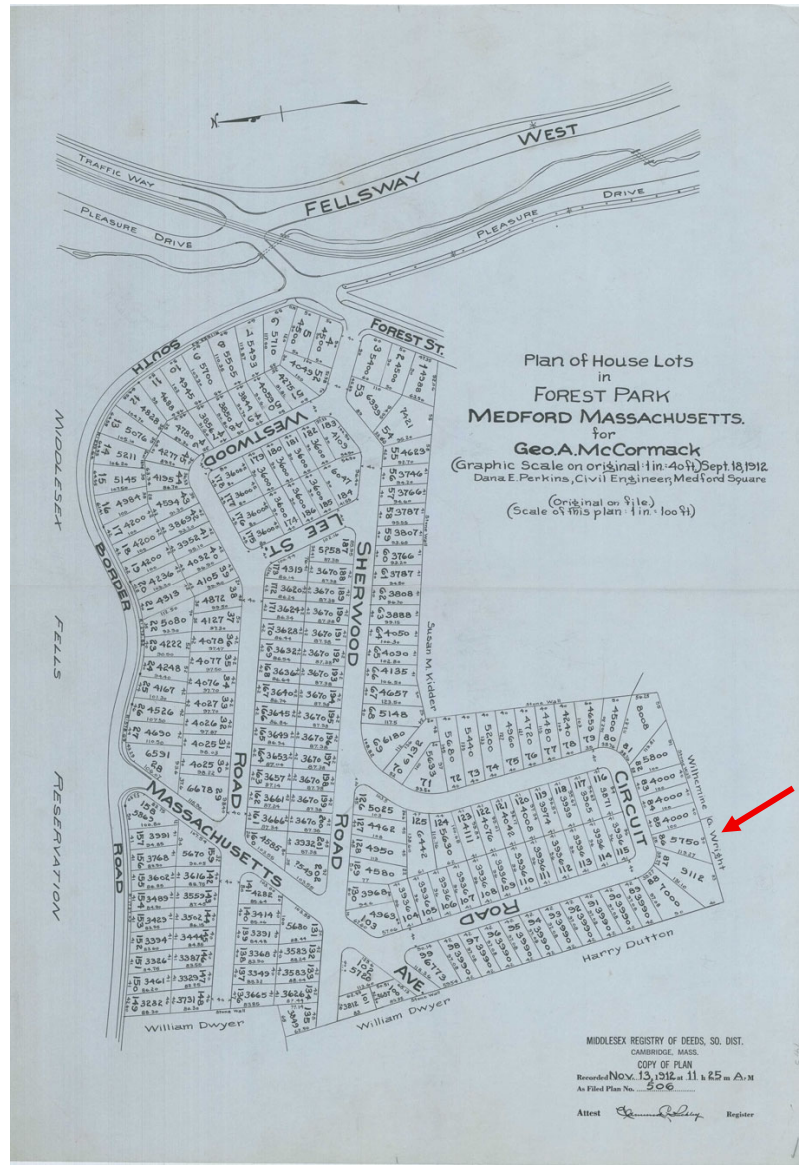
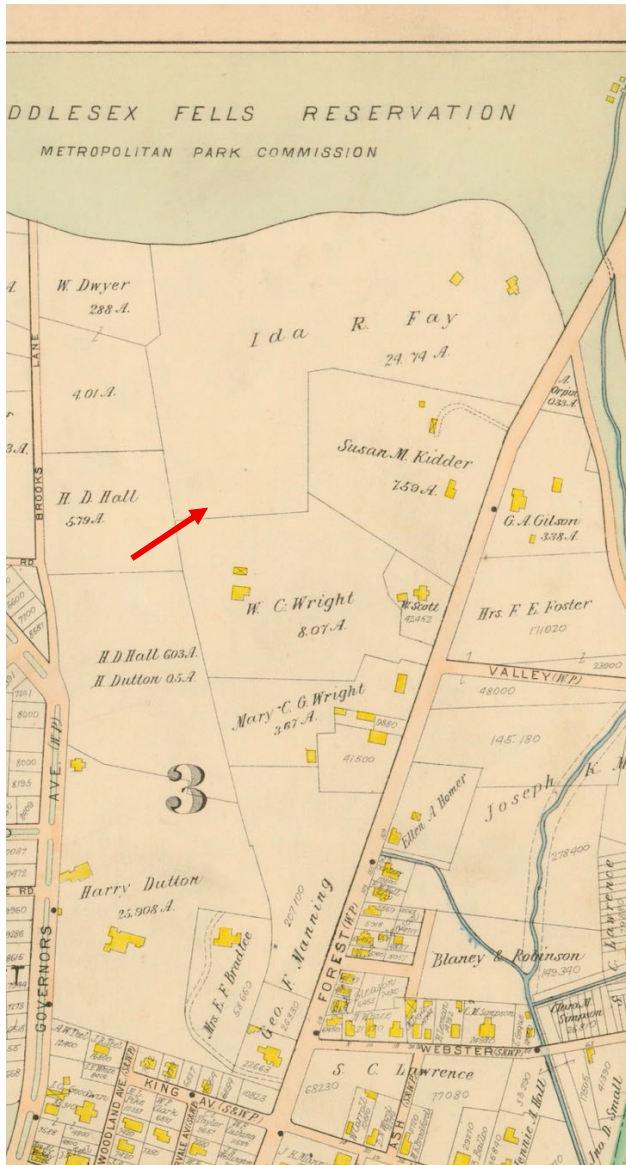
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Left: Detail of 1900 atlas, plate 35, showing Wright heirs' properties after the family's sale of land for the Fells.
 Right: Plan of house lots in Forest Park . . . for Geo A McCormack, MCSRD Plan 506 of 1912. Note north is left.
 Red arrows show the approximate location of the subject property.

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Sanborn Atlas 1936, detail of plate 86 detail.

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).

Medford Building Inspector Records, 78 Circuit Road.

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

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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 Claire W. Dempsey
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Carr House at 78 Circuit Road is located within the Forest Park Subdivision at the north end of Medford's Medford Square neighborhood. This upland portion of the city has a landscape history driven primarily by its irregular terrain, characterized by hills and gullies with rocky outcroppings, and shares characteristics with the Fulton Heights neighborhood to the north. As a result, intensive settlement here was postponed, and it was not until early in the 20th century that development began in earnest. Initially designed in 1912, Forest Park was one of the residential subdivisions of George McCormick, the area's most important developer, who sought to provide home ownership to the working man. This house is a well-preserved bungalow was constructed in 1925, one of the small house types popular in this north part of Medford. Further research would be necessary to characterize the Park's pace of development, its residents, and its housing types and forms.

This property would likely contribute to a potential National Register District that could encompass Forest Park. Although properties in the subdivision have undergone the kinds of alterations common to the city, such as porch enclosures or removals and siding and sash replacement, many resources retain substantial integrity of location, design, materials, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. The area meets criteria A and C and the local level, and areas of significance include architecture, community planning and development, and social history.