Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System
Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	MDF.1217
Historic Name:	Conway, Matthew J. and Ellen House
Address:	141 Grant Ave
City/Town:	Medford
Village/Neighborhood:	East Medford;
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	R 1894
Architectural Style(s):	Queen Anne;
Use(s):	Multiple Family Dwelling House; Single Family Dwelling House;
Significance:	Architecture;
Area(s):	
Designation(s):	
Building Materials:	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Wall: Wood; Wood Shingle; Foundation: Concrete Unspecified;
Demolished	No



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM B – BUILDING

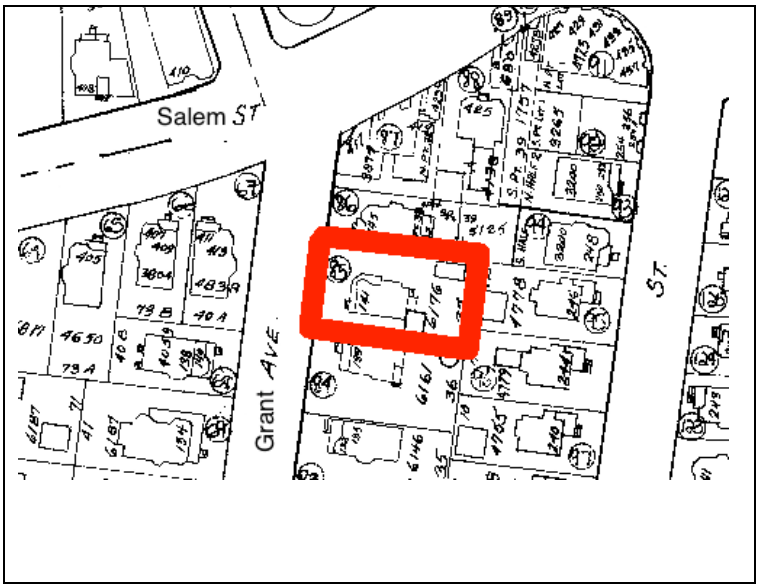
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
K – 13 – 85	Boston North		MDF.1217

Photograph



Locus Map (*North is Up*)



Recorded by: Jennifer B. Doherty
Organization: Medford Historical Commission
Date (*month / year*): March, 2016

Town/City: Medford

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

Address: 141 Grant Avenue

Historic Name: Matthew J. Conway House

Uses: Present: Two-family Residential

Original: Single-family Residential

Date of Construction: 1889-1898

Source: Maps

Style/Form: Queen Anne/End House

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Parged concrete

Wall/Trim: Wood shingle/wood

Roof: Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Late 20th century garage at rear

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Windows replaced, recent decades

Condition: Fair

Moved: **no** ☒ **yes** ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.14 acres

Setting: In a densely-settled urban residential neighborhood, just off East Medford's main commercial area. Most of the houses in the area are of a similar age, turn of the 20th century, and are single- and two-family buildings on small lots of less than a quarter of an acre.

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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.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Matthew J. Conway House is a Queen Anne end house with a full-height polygonal turret on the left front corner. Constructed as a single-family building in the 1890s, the house has since been split into two apartments. The two-and-a-half story gable-front building is three bays wide and two-and-a-half piles deep. A full-height cross-gable projection covers the second pile of the left elevation. A small two-story ell centered on the building is visible in aerial photographs, while a single-story flat-roofed ell extends from the first ell to the right, and is visible at the side of the house. The house sits on a parged concrete foundation, is covered in wood shingles, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows on the building have been replaced during recent decades, and are vinyl one-over-one sash.

The character-defining feature of the house is a polygonal corner turret that rises a full three stories and is capped by a steeply pitched conical roof. It is one of the remaining Queen Anne style details on the house, along with a full front porch and eave returns. The single-story shed-roofed porch shelters the front of the house and wraps around the turret to terminate on the left side of the building. The porch roof is supported by turned posts with scroll brackets at the top, while the balustrade has simple square posts. These are likely an original feature. There are several similar examples to be found in East Medford, including 119 Dudley Street (MDF.1208).

The Conway House sits on a flat, open lot, with no trees or plantings. Immediately to the north of the house is the commercial area of Salem Street and Haines Square, while a residential neighborhood is located to the south. In the left rear corner of the lot is a single-story flat-roof cinderblock garage with two bays. Its construction is typical of the second half of the 20th century. The outbuilding has a more industrial appearance than many of the earlier garages in the neighborhood, often from the 1920s and 1930s. The area to the left of the house is paved, to provide a driveway back to the garage.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Previous to the construction of the Matthew J. Conway House and its surrounding subdivision the land had been part of a large undeveloped parcel that had belonged to members of the Hall family during much of the 19th century. The Hall family had resided in Medford since the 17th century and were successful local industrialists and property owners for most of the 18th and 19th centuries. By 1855 the East Medford tract was in the ownership of Dudley Hall (1788–1868) and after his death two of his sons, Dudley Cotton Hall (1818–1899) and Horace D. Hall (1831–1904) all of whom where prominent Boston merchants in the importation and sale of tea. In 1891 the firm of Dudley Hall & Co. went into bankruptcy. Subsequent to this event residential development continued under subsequent owners. The Conway House was part of a section of land that was subdivided in 1892 under the administration of Ephraim Adams. This parcel was bound by Central Avenue to the south, Sheridan Avenue to the west, Salem Street to the north, and Spring Street to the east. The Conway House was constructed on Lot 37 of a plan of this parcel that was filed with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds. It was the first house just beyond the commercial corridor of Salem Street on the east side of Grant Avenue.

The house appears on an 1898 map of Medford, with “A. P. Bateman” listed as the owner. No figure with this identity could be located in Medford directories from the period, suggesting absentee ownership. By 1918, Matthew J. Conway had purchased the property and moved in with his family; they were listed as living at 30 Sheridan Avenue in the 1910 census, so they did not move far. The 1920 census lists Conway (b. 1871), his wife Ellen (b. 1871), and their children Margaret (b. 1895), Henry W. (b. 1897), Mary (b. 1899), Helen (b. 1901), Catherine (b. 1903), and John (b. 1906). By 1930 three of the children had

moved out, leaving only the Conways and their adult children Margaret, Helen, and John. Matthew Conway worked for the Boston Elevated Railway for 52 years before retiring in 1945; directories and census records indicate that he was an electrician and later a foreman for the company. Boston Elevated Railway operated the streetcar network in Medford whose routes included Main and Salem streets and Fellsway West (for additional details see Haines Square, MDF.AS). Margaret worked as a clerk for the railroad and for an auditor's office; Henry was a machinist in the navy yard; Mary was a nurse in a hospital; Helen was a hairdresser; and John was an auto mechanic. Mrs. Conway died between the 1930 and 1940 census.

By 1940 only Matthew Conway and his single, adult daughter Margaret were living in the house. The census from that year shows the family had split the house into two units. The second unit was occupied by the Schwolow family: Albert (1895-1969, a native of Connecticut), electrical equipment salesman with Arrow, Hart and Hegreman Electric Co. of 157 Federal Street, Boston, wife Anna (b. 1905), and daughter Ann (b. 1931).

Matthew J. Conway died August 21, 1948. He was traveling to Baltimore to visit daughter Sister Mary Peter Fourier with two of his other daughters, Mrs. Margaret Leahy and Mrs. Mary Sheedy, and granddaughter Mary Sheedy, when his car overheated on the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut. He was struck by another vehicle as he was returning from a search for water.

After Conway's death, his daughter Helen continued to live in the house. A Boston city directory from 1960 lists Helen as a clerk with Conrad & Chandler, living in the Conway House. Helen died October 31, 1974, and a large group of heirs sold the property to her niece, Mary Sheedy, the following year. A few months later, Ms. Sheedy sold the property to new owners and out of the Conway family. The house has passed through a series of owners since 1975.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 [database on-line] Ancestry.com.

1889 Geo. H. Walker & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts.*
1898 Geo. W. Stadly & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts.*
1900 Geo. W. Stadly & Co., *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Volume 1*.

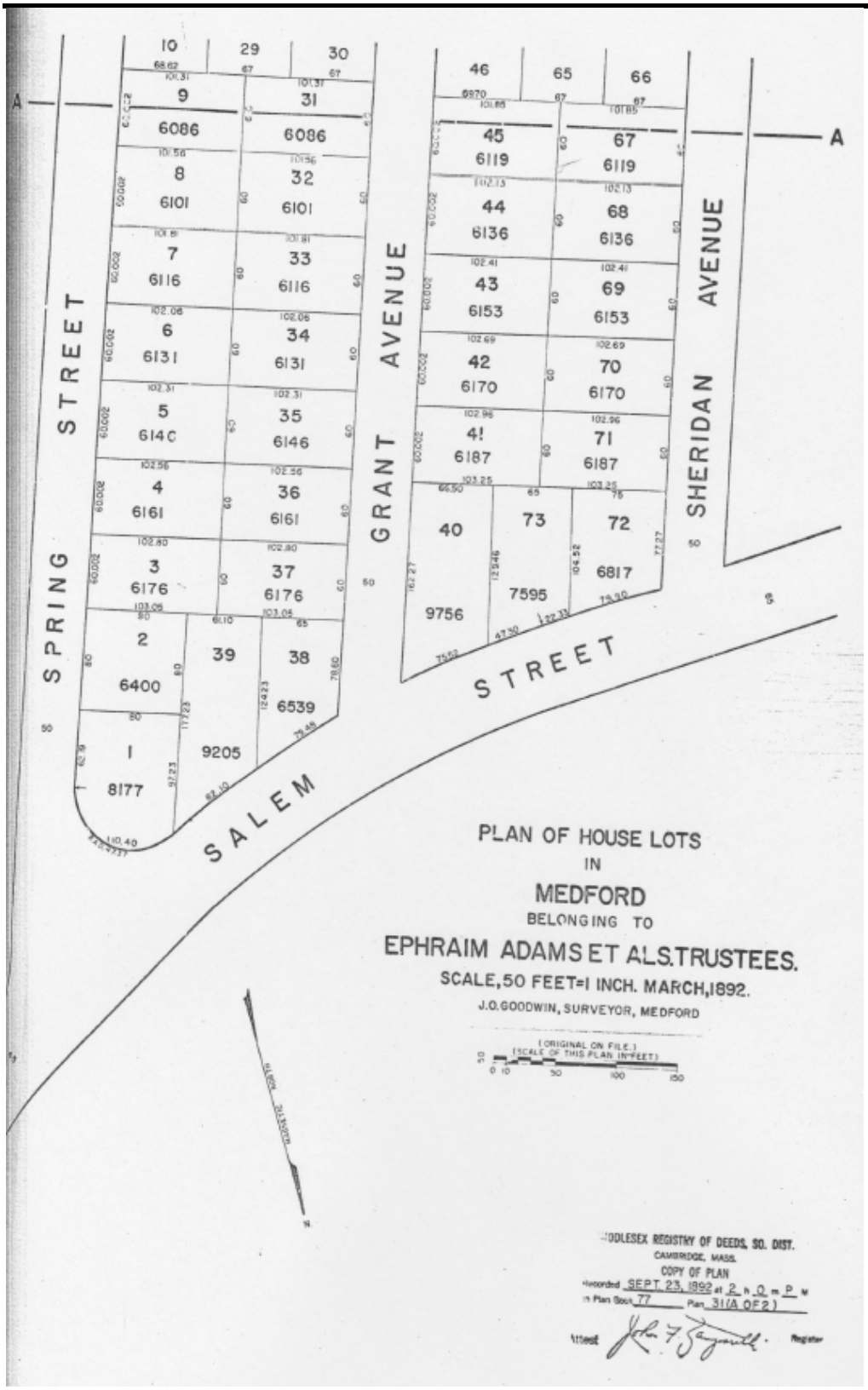
Medford City Directories: 1918, 1924, 1930, 1938
United States Federal Census: 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940

Middlesex County Registry of Deeds Plan Book 77, Plan 31, Lot 37.

"5 Dead, 17 Hurt in New England Motor Accidents," *Daily Boston Globe*, pg. C1. August 22, 1948.



The main façade and left (north) elevation of the Conway House



Middlesex County Registry of Deeds Plan Book 77, Plan 31, Lot 37. NOTE: North is down.