

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108



Reading

97 Pleasant Street

Name Octagon House

Original dwelling

Present dwelling

Property: ☐ Private individual
Private organization

Public

Original owner Dr. Horace P. Wakefield

LOCATION:

nearest
buildings

Date 1860

Source Middlesex Journal

Style Gothic Revival

Architect unknown

Exterior wall fabric clapboard siding over
board & batten

Outbuildings none

Major alterations (with dates) extension
on south.

Moved no Date

Approx. acreage 12,624 s.f.

Setting Faces north on slight rise.

Recorded by Architectural Preservation
Associates
Organization Reading Historical Comm.

Date November 1980

Date 6/82

UTM: 19/327450/4709860

(Staple additional sheets here)



ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

This Gothic Revival structure is an interesting variation of the Fowler octagonal house ideal, using a series of small octagons grouped around a central cupola. Even the side porch has an octagonal shape. Fowler's objective was a shape conducive to healthful living and reflective of the picturesque period, hence the small balcony to take the air and long, first-floor windows which contribute to circulation and add a picturesque image. The heavy zig-zag trim, brackets with faces carved like gargoyles (of old men), and board-and-batten original siding complete the Gothic imagery. The house is of unusual construction, being made of heavy timbers laid up in crib fashion, much like a log cabin.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community)

Dr. Horace P. Wakefield, the builder of this quirky dwelling, was the son of the man responsible for dividing up the farm land of his old friend John Damon, on which this house stands. Dr. Horace was educated at Amherst College, and taught school in Reading as a young man. He practiced medicine here, was on the school committee, was a town clerk 1862-1864, and was secretary of the Massachusetts Anti Slavery Society.

The octagonal shape represents the nation-wide influence of Dr. Fowler, who proposed this shape as structurally and mathematically elegant and because of increased cross-ventilation, healthier than the conventional box shapes of the day. This would appeal to a man like the scientific, liberal Doctor, who built the only such structure in Reading. A Dr. Wakefield house appears on the 1854 map, but is of a different shape. This house was moved to 48 John Street in 1860 to make way for the octagonal house, which appears on the 1875 map.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1875 map Dr. Horace P. Wakefield
1889 map E. Foster

Wadlin, Concerning the Past, Chapter LXXX
Eaton, Memorial Volume, p. 312

Middlesex Journal, May 12, 1860

James Newton, Old-Time New England, SPNEA, July 1977

20M-2/80

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Reading	Form No: B-61
Property Name: 97 Pleasant St.	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The Octagon house is significant (1) for its connection with Dr. Horace Wakefield; and (2) for its outstanding architectural design. It retains integrity of location, design, setting, and workmanship, and meets criteria B and C of the National Register.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 7 of 9

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic GroupName Reading Multiple Resource Area
State Middlesex County, MASSACHUSETTS

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

61. Nichols, James, House	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
62. Nichols, Richard, House	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
63. Octagon House	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
64. Old Hose House	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
65. Parker, Capt. Nathaniel, Red House	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
66. Parker House (52 Salem St.)	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
67. Parker, Joseph, House	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
68. Parker, Samuel, House	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
69. Parker, Stillman, House	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	
70. Parker House (316 Haven St.)	Entered in the National Register	for Keeper	<u>Shelton Byers</u> 7-19-84
		Attest	

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Octagon House (Reading MRA)

Middlesex County

MASSACHUSETTS

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Entered in the
National Register

Working No. JUN 4 1984
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/5/85
Date Due: 7-5-84 / 7-19-84
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 7-19-84
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- ☐ excellent ☐ deteriorated
☐ good ☐ ruins
☐ fair ☐ unexposed

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____



Octagon House

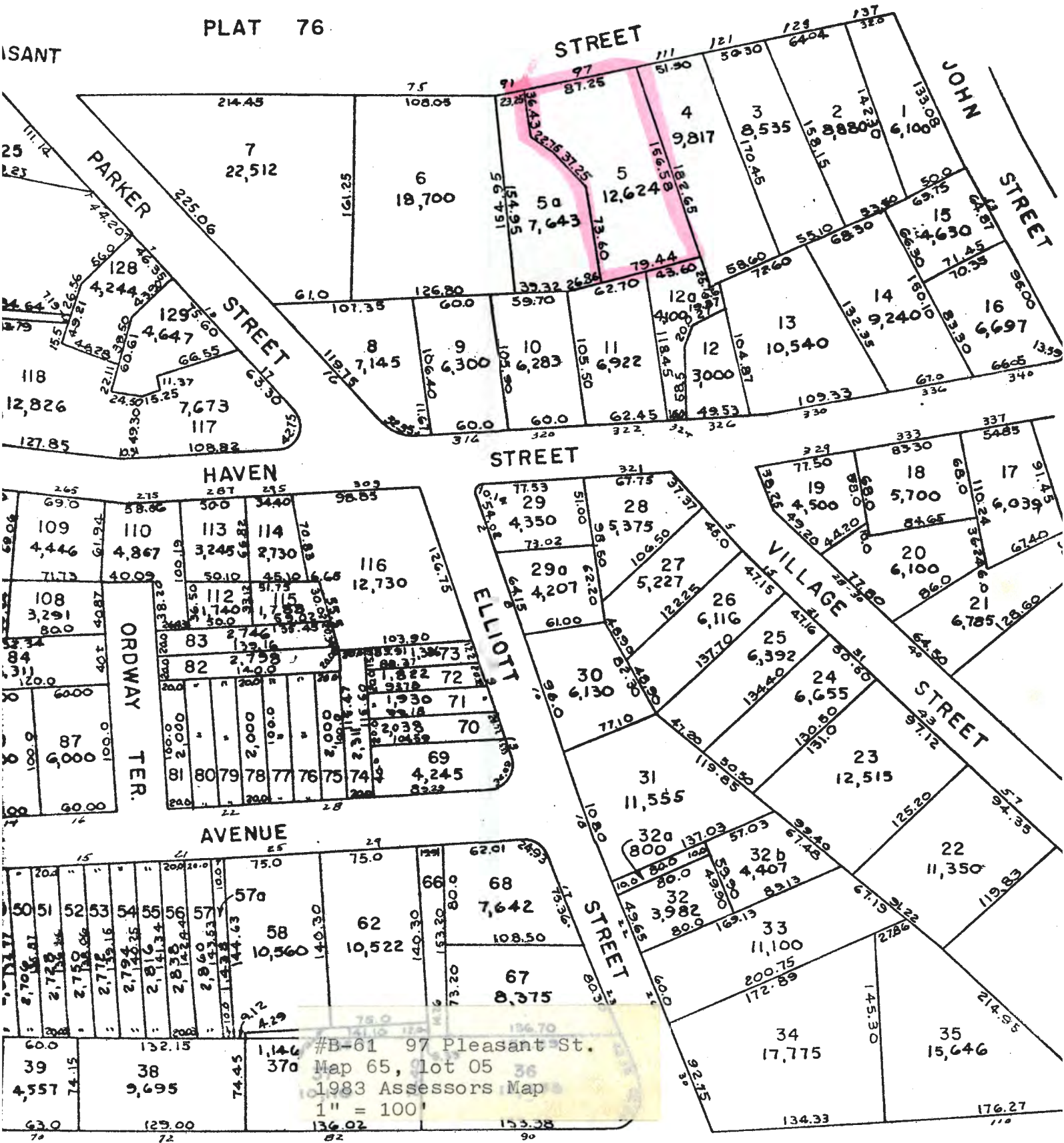
Reading NRT Ma

A-22

97 Pleasant St.

PLAT 76

ISANT



#B-61 97 Pleasant St.
 37a Map 65, lot 05 36
 1983 Assessors Map
 1" = 100'

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000290