

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received FEB 28 1984
date entered

1. Name

historic Larrabee's Brick Block

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 500-504 Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Melrose N/A vicinity of

state Massachusetts code 025 county Middlesex code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☒ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture	☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☐ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial	☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational	☒ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment	☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ government	☐ scientific
	N/A being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
		☐ no	☐ military	☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Edwin B. and Marie T. Wood

street & number 107 East Emerson Street

city, town Melrose N/A vicinity of state Massachusetts

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Middlesex County Registry of Deeds

street & number 208 Cambridge Street

city, town Cambridge state Massachusetts

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of the Historic Assets
title of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1978 #229 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town 294 Washington Street, Boston state Massachusetts

7. Description

Larrabee's Brick Block, 500-504 Main Street, Melrose, MA

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Larrabee's Brick Block is located on a 6115 square foot lot on the west side of Main Street in Melrose's commercial business district. The structure is free-standing and abuts the sidewalk on its east side, a narrow passageway on the north, a small fenced in yard on the west and a one-story early twentieth century building on the south. Other buildings in the immediate vicinity include the 1876 Bigbee-Barrett Block (the only other historic mansard-roofed structure in the town center), several two and three-story late nineteenth century masonry blocks, and a variety of altered and one-story early mid-twentieth century commercial structures. The town center was designated as a local historic district in 1979.

The building is rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 35 X 63 feet. It stands three stories high with a straight mansard roof clad in slate constituting the third story. The walls are faced with brick laid in stretcher bond. The building sits on a granite sill and has a full basement.

Decorative treatment, which appears on the east (facade) and north elevations, includes a single course of alternating recessed bricks between the first and second stories and, at the cornice, three stepped rows of dentilwork and angled bricks. Scrolled brackets are located beneath the eaves.

East elevation (facade): The ground story of the facade has two iron storefronts and, in the south bay, a recessed entry leading to the upper stories. A plain iron lintel extends the width of the facade. Each storefront has a recessed center entry flanked by plate glass display windows. Although aluminum has replaced the original wooden frames and the apron of the right (north) storefront is now made of brick (ca. 1960), the three iron posts separating the bays remain; the two posts flanking the right (north) storefront, however, are currently encased in black carrera glass.

The second story contains a rectangular window of 2/2 sash set between a granite lintel and sill above the main entrance. A single angular bay window is also located over each storefront and has one-over-one window sash set within molded architraves. The apron of each bay window has wooden panels, and the cornice is supported by brackets ornamented with applied bosses. The mansard roof originally had four dormers evenly spread across the facade. All but the southernmost one, which survives intact, was removed ca. 1910 when the second story bay windows were extended upward into the roof. These later bays closely match those on the second story, except that the wood trim is less ornamental. The remaining dormer has a gabled hood which rests on an elaborately ornamented scrolled frame and contains two-over-two segmentally arched sash.

North elevation: The north elevation, which faces onto a narrow passageway, continues the decorative brickwork of the facade. Toward the rear, the first story contains two segmentally arched windows with granite sills and, between them, is a wide segmentally-arched door opening that is blocked in with tongue and groove boards. Seven segmentally arched windows with brick corbeled hoods, stone sills and two-over-two sash pierce the second story. The mansard roof is punctured by six dormers that are identical to that on the facade.

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Continuation sheet Larrabee's Brick Block Item number 7 Page 1

South elevation: The south elevation, separated from a one-story early twentieth century building by little more than one foot, is finished more simply. Toward the rear of the of the lower two stories are regularly spaces segmentally-arched windows. Four plain dormers light the mansard roof. The facade cornice continues along the east end of the elevation for approximately four feet before reverting to a simpler stepped cornice.

West (rear) elevation: The west elevation has segmentally arched windows on the first and second stories. Two-over-two sash is set within a rectangular frame with a brownstone sill. A three-story partially enclosed wooden porch with simple stick-like balusters was added ca. 1930 and obscures most of the elevation.

Interior: The interior of the building has been little altered since it was constructed. The first story commercial space has paneled tin ceilings, embossed tin walls and maple flooring. The upper floors, which are in residential use, have tongue and groove wainscot, two wood fireplaces with carved overmantles, compound molded door and window surrounds on the second floor and flat board trim on the third, paneled doors and maple floors. The stair rail is mahogany and supported by turned balusters.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800–1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☐ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates	1880	Builder/Architect	John Eaton
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Larrabee's Brick Block possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship. It is representative of the small mansard-roofed blocks built in commercial districts following the Civil War, and is architecturally significant in this community as one of only two unaltered nineteenth century commercial structures in downtown Melrose. Historical associations are with the building's first owner, a prominent local citizen, and with the development of Melrose's commercial center in the second half of the nineteenth century. The building thus meets criteria A, B, and C, of the National Register.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, Melrose (part of the neighboring town of Malden until 1850) was a sparsely settled agricultural community whose economic base was supplemented by scattered shoe making shops. In 1845, the advent of the Boston & Maine railroad to the community opened the area up to residential suburban development which took full advantage of the town's craggy picturesque landscape. The population grew rapidly, increasing almost tenfold in the next twenty-five years. To support the expanding neighborhoods, a small commercial center emerged along Main Street, consisting of approximately a dozen frame structures, many of which combined shops and living quarters. In 1870, a major fire leveled the west side of Main Street between Essex and Foster Streets. Lyceum Hall, which stood on the site of the nominated property, was the only salvagable building. Rebuilt as Unity Hall, it was a two-story frame structure containing a spacious hall. It was soon apparent, however, that the building was an anomaly as the rest of the block was rebuilt in brick or in larger, more fashionable frame structures, many with mansard roofs.

In 1880 Unity Hall was purchased by John Larrabee. The Melrose Journal reports that the hall was to be "reconstructed." Further articles and an examination of the building suggest nothing of the earlier hall remains and that the entire present building dates from 1880. The Journal describes Larrabee's Brick Block as a "very handsome building" with two iron storefronts and tenements above. The completed building was cited as "a handsome improvement," "one of the best things ever done for Melrose both as regards good looks and utility." It was designed by Boston architect, John Eaton, about whom nothing is known at the present time. Among the building's first tenants when it opened early in 1881 were C.G. Harris whose dry goods shop was on the ground floor and dentist Aaron Hill; both men also resided in the building.¹

John Larrabee (1850-1929), the building's original owner, was a native of Melrose who, in 1867, bought the town's oldest drugstore in which he had been a clerk. For the next forty-six years he managed the business and following his retirement it was continued by his partner. When the drugstore finally closed in 1970, it was one of the city's oldest businesses, having been in operation 103 years. During Larrabee's ownership, it was located in the adjacent building to the north of the nominated property. It was a three-story frame mansard-roofed structure built by Larrabee in 1870. (Though still standing, the top floors have been removed and the ground floor extensively remodeled). Larrabee was active in civic affairs, serving as town clerk for twenty-one years, state representative between 1886 and 1887, Melrose's first city treasurer and mayor from 1901-02. He sat on the board of several local banks and served on the State Board of Registration in Pharmacy for thirteen years. This commercial building best represents Larrabee's active involvement

1. Melrose Journal, 6/26/1880, 8/28/1880, 2/5/1881

9. Major Bibliographical References

Goss, Elbridge Henry, The History of Melrose. Published by the City of Melrose, 1902.
Cutter, W.R., Historic Homes and Places and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs relating to Families of Middlesex County, New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1908, Vol. IV

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 6115 S.F.

Quadrangle name Boston North

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A 19 330 120 47 022 120
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property includes the building and 6115 SF lot known as Parcel 67 as shown on attached Melrose Engineering Department map (Sheet C-7, 1932/rev. 1979).

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathryn Kubie, Preservation Planner with
Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, Preservation Consultant

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission

date November, 1983

street & number 294 Washington Street

telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston

state Massachusetts

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Patricia L. Westbrook

title State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission

date 2/22/84

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

for *Delores Byers*
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet Larrabee's Brick Block Item number 0 8 89 Page 1

in the life and affairs of the community.

A key building in downtown Melrose, Larrabee's Brick Block remains today in its original use, containing small businesses on the ground floor and apartment units above.

Continuation 9. Major Bibliographical References

Kemp, Edwin C., Melrose, MA 1900-1950, published by 50th anniversary committee, 1950.
Melrose Journal, December 1870-January 1881
Melrose City Directories, 1870-1930
Photograph collection, Melrose Public Library
1875 Atlas of Middlesex County (Beers)
1889 Atlas of Middlesex County (G. Walker)



Melrose Engineering Department Map
Sheet C-7, Parcel #67
1932, latest revision 1979
1"=100'



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Larrabee's Brick Block
Middlesex County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. FEB 28 1984
Fed. Reg. Date: 3/5/85
Date Due: 3/29/85 - 4/3/84
Action: ACCEPT 3/29/84
Entered in the RETURN
National Register REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

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

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: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet

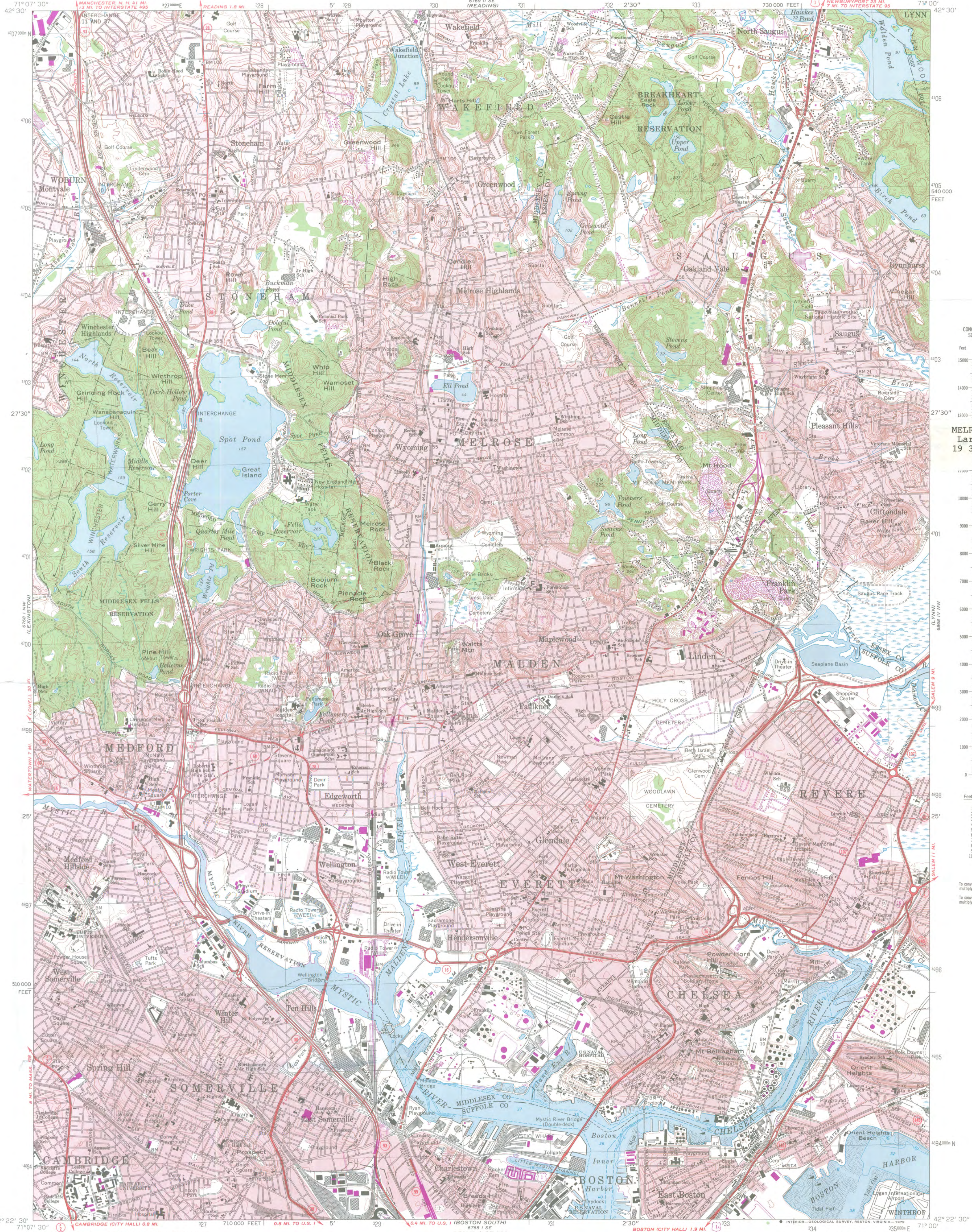


Larrabee's Brick Block
500-04 Main St., Melrose, MA

Photograph by Elizabeth Durfee Hengen
December 1982

Negative filed at 45 Cabot St.,
Winchester, MA 01890

View looking southwest



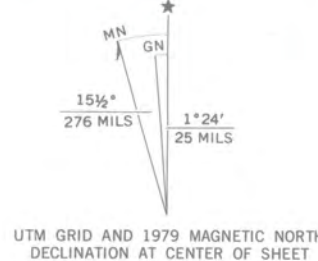
CONVERSION
Scales
Feet
Meters
15000
14000
13000
12000
11000
10000
9000
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
500
0

MELROSE, MA
Larrabee's Brick Block
19 330120 4702220

CONVERSION
Scales
Feet
Meters
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
3048
6096
9144
12192
15240
18288
21336
24384
27432
30480

To convert feet to meters
multiply by 0.3048
To convert meters to feet
multiply by 3.2808

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1971
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Chart 248 (1971)
This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information supplied
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map



SCALE 1:25 000
1 0000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 KILOMETER
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET-DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 9.5 FEET



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route

BOSTON NORTH, MASS.
N4222.5—W7100/7.5
1971
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6768 1 NE—SERIES V814

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1977 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

CJ/GF

18 Fairview Avenue
Melrose, Massachusetts 02176
January 20, 1984

Valerie Talmage, Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, MA

RECEIVED

JAN 25 1984

MASS HIST COMM.

Re: 500-504 Main Street, Melrose
Larrabee's Brick Block

Dear Ms. Talmage:

At a recent meeting of the Melrose Historic District Commission, I was very pleased to hear that Larrabee's Brick Block has been proposed for nomination to National Register of Historic Places. This building is very important to the Historic District of downtown Melrose. The structure with its nineteenth century character greatly enhances the commercial area.

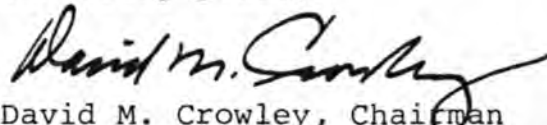
The Melrose Historic District Commission has recognized the unity and diversity of the historic heart of Melrose, along Main Street, and we are aware of the benefits to be gained by protecting this important structure, which helps to give this city focus and identity.

The importance of the owners of buildings such as Larrabee's Brick Block being interested in the historical aspects of their property must be recognized and encouraged. The owners of this block have shown such interest not only in their treatment of the building itself but also in hiring a consultant to prepare the nomination to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

I urge that the State Review Board look favorably on the nomination.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,



David M. Crowley, Chairman
Melrose Historic District Commission

DMC:dmd