

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered
OFFICE COPY
DO NOT REMOVE

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

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street & number 500-504 Main Street N/A not for publication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
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> 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		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

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 spaced 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			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1880 **Builder/Architect** John Eaton

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 1835) 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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Larrabee's Brick Block Item number 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)

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

Acreeage of nominated property 6115 S.F.

Quadrangle name Boston North

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A

1	9	3	30	1	20	47	0	22	2	0
Zone		Easting			Northing					

B

Zone		Easting			Northing					

C

Zone		Easting			Northing					

D

Zone		Easting			Northing					

E

Zone		Easting			Northing					

F

Zone		Easting			Northing					

G

Zone		Easting			Northing					

H

Zone		Easting			Northing					

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
-------	------	--------	------

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. Wesbowski

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

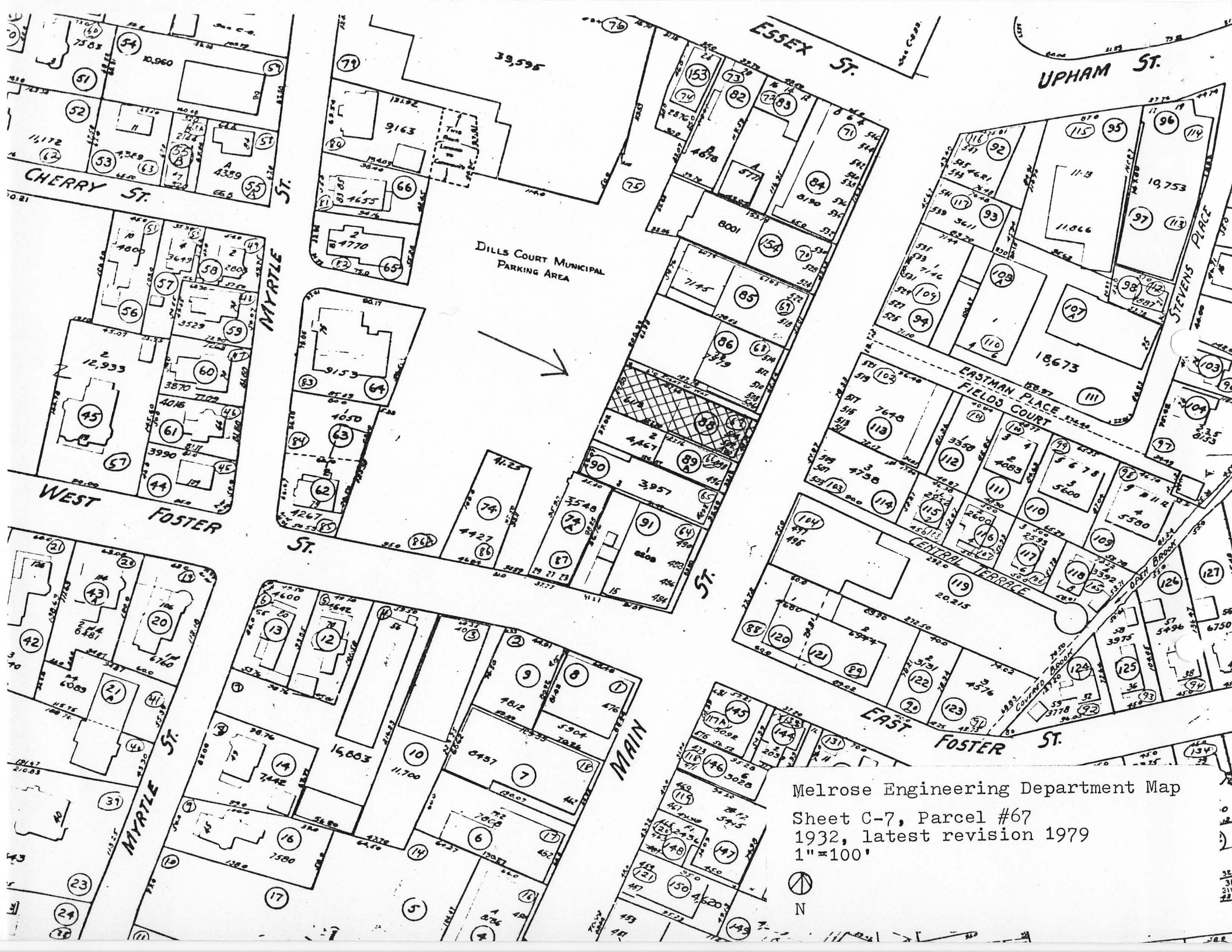
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

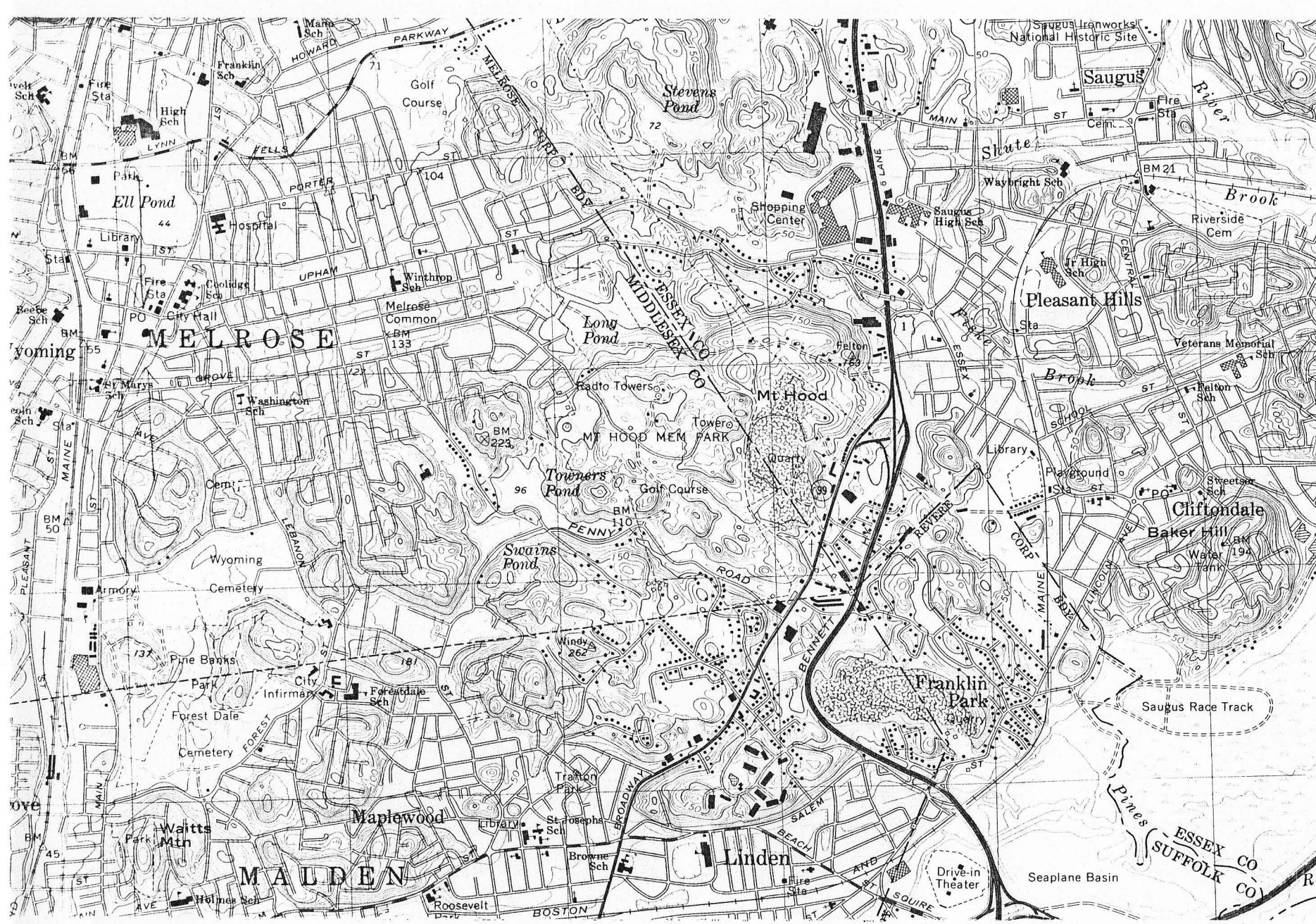
date

Chief of Registration



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





CONVERSION SCALES

Feet Meters

15000 4500

14000 4000

13000 4000

11000

10000 3000

9000 2500

8000

7000

6000

5000 1500

4000

4703

27'30"

4701

MN A1 6989

(Lynn)

9 MI

MELROSE,
Larrabee
19 33012



Larrabee's Brick Block, 500-04 Main Street. View looking southwest. (Photograph: Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, December 1982)