

# City of Malden Massachusetts

MALDEN HISTORICAL COMMISSION

January 23, 2024

Mayor Gary Christenson  
President Stephen Winslow, Councilor-at-Large  
Members of the Malden City Council  
Malden City Hall  
215 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA 02148

**RE: 15 Ferry Street - M. Ida Converse Building/Malden Industrial Aid Association Building**

Dear Mayor Christenson, President Winslow and City Councilors,

As directed by the Malden Historical Commission, this letter serves to update you on the status of 15 Ferry Street, the M. Ida Converse Building and Malden Industrial Aid Association Building. As you know, this building is one of the remaining three Converse buildings in the City, and its historic significance to our community is well documented in the attached Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form MAL. 491.

The Commission requests your assistance to identify a site to relocate the building within the historic Converse Square area, as an alternative to demolition, and appreciates your prompt attention to this urgent request.

You may recall having previously responded favorably to the Commission's prior request for assistance to stop the demolition of this building, when the City Council voted unanimously on May 24, 2022, with approval by the Mayor on May 25, 2022, to approve the relocation of the building to the Malden High School site, to the area at the corner of Salem Street and Holden Street, and the City agreed to accept the building as public property, as ordered by attached City Council Paper 258/2022.

Following that action, the property owner moved forward with the relocation plan, which included withdrawal of the original demolition permit application, entering a Memorandum of Understanding with the City, and application for Community Preservation Act funds to assist with relocation costs. After the Community Preservation Committee denied the application, the owner applied for a new permit to demolish the building.

The new demolition permit application is currently under review by the Building Commissioner. In the interim, because time is of the essence, the Commission has moved forward to consider the matter pursuant to Title 4.24, Code of the City of Malden, the Demolition & Alteration Delay Ordinance, and on January 18, 2024, made the attached Determination that the building is a historically Significant Building, for the reasons stated. The Commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing on February 15, 2024, for the purpose of determining whether the building is a Preferably Preserved Building and its demolition should be delayed to explore alternatives.

The Commission strongly supports that this building remains in the Converse Square area and recommends that this may be accomplished through relocation; preservation at its current location; or incorporation of the intact building into the design of any future project on the property. In accordance with Title 12.12.010, Code of the City of Malden, the Commission intends to make this recommendation to the Planning Board, pursuant to any special permit petition for the property.

The Commission thanks you in advance for your support and assistance to save this historic building. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michelle A. Romero  
City Planner, Clerk to the Malden Historical Commission

Attachments

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	MAL.491
<b>Historic Name:</b>	Malden Industrial Aid Association Building
<b>Address:</b>	15 Ferry St
<b>City/Town:</b>	Malden
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	Malden Square;
<b>Local No:</b>	
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	1906
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	Colonial Revival;
<b>Architect(s):</b>	Conner, George P.;
<b>Use(s):</b>	Abandoned or Vacant; Lawyer Office; Nursery; Other Institutional;
<b>Significance:</b>	Architecture; Community Planning; Education; Social History;
<b>Area(s):</b>	
<b>Designation(s):</b>	
<b>Building Materials:</b>	Roof: Slate; Wall: Brick; Copper; Limestone; Stone, Cut; Wood; Wood Clapboard; Wrought Iron; Foundation: Limestone; Stone, Cut;
<b>Demolished</b>	No



The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has converted this paper record to digital format as part of ongoing projects to scan records of the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts. Efforts are ongoing and not all inventory or National Register records related to this resource may be available in digital format at this time.

The MACRIS database and scanned files are highly dynamic; new information is added daily and both database records and related scanned files may be updated as new information is incorporated into MHC files. Users should note that there may be a considerable lag time between the receipt of new or updated records by MHC and the appearance of related information in MACRIS. Users should also note that not all source materials for the MACRIS database are made available as scanned images. Users may consult the records, files and maps available in MHC's public research area at its offices at the State Archives Building, 220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, open M-F, 9-5.

Users of this digital material acknowledge that they have read and understood the MACRIS Information and Disclaimer (<http://mhc-macris.net/macrisdisclaimer.htm>)

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

This file was accessed on: Thursday, May 19, 2022 at 2:02 PM

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

75-272-211

MAL.491

## Photograph



**Town/City:** Malden

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*): Malden Centre/Converse Square

**Address:** 15 Ferry Street f/k/a 17 Ferry Street

**Historic Name:** M. Ida Converse Building

**Uses:** Present: Vacant

Original: Other Institutional

**Date of Construction:** 1906

**Source:** *Malden Evening News*

**Style/Form:** Colonial Revival

**Architect/Builder:**

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: limestone

Wall/Trim: brick/limestone

Roof: slate

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** none

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*): 1974: original colonial columns supporting portico replaced with existing wrought iron supports.

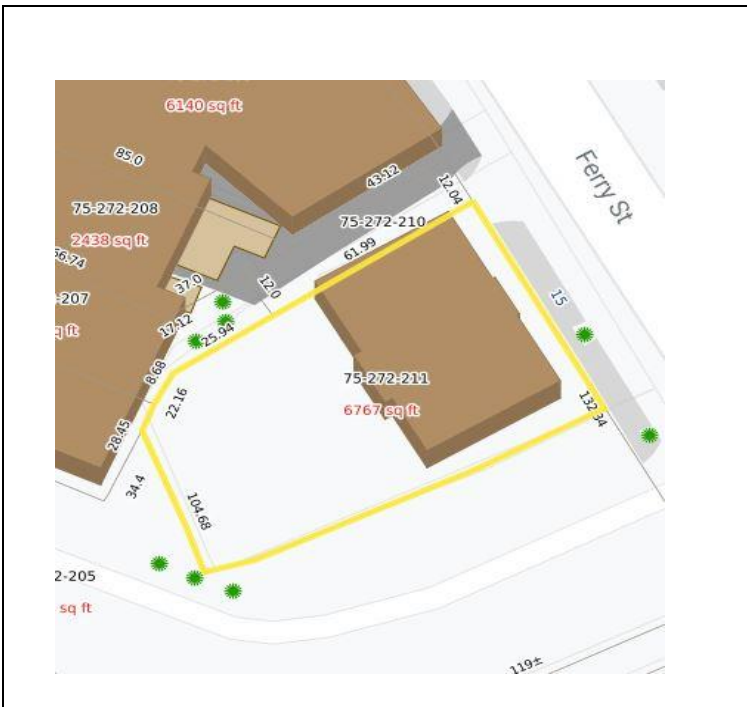
**Condition:** fine

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.155 acres (6,767 sq. ft.)

**Setting:** Located on Ferry Street near the intersection of Salem, Main, and Ferry Streets (Converse Square) (MAL. A) in an area of predominately institutional buildings. A parking lot abuts the structure to the south, the Sargent Block (MAL. 68) abuts the structure to the north. Malden High School is across Ferry Street.

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Frank F. Russell, consultant

**Organization:** Malden Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): May, 2019

**RECEIVED**  
**AUG 06 2019**

MASS. HIST. COMM.

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MAL.491

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.*

This Colonial Revival structure was built for the Malden Industrial Aid Association by Mary Ida Converse in 1906. The structure is three bays wide and two bays deep. It is two stories with a basement. The foundation is of limestone blocks. The exterior is buff brick. There is a hip roof of slate. There are two buff brick chimneys at the northerly and southerly exterior ends of the building capped with copper coping. The building is oriented towards the east, fronting on Ferry Street. A stoop of five granite steps lead to an entrance portico surmounted by a gabled pediment. The pediment was originally supported by two colonial columns. In 1974 the original columns were replaced with the present wrought iron supports. There is an original heavy oak entrance door with sidelights and a transom light above. To the left and right of the entrance on the first floor front elevation are 12 over 12 double hung windows. There is an ornamental rectangular brickwork beneath each window as well as a limestone sill. The windows are surmounted by a segmental brick arch which is capped by a limestone keystone. The second floor of the front elevation has three 8 over 8 double hung windows. A belt course of limestone runs along the façade and continues along each face of the building, which coursing visually separates the first floor from the second.

The north and south elevations each have two basement windows. The first floor has two 12 over 12 double hung windows. The limestone coursing runs above these. Directly above the first floor windows are two 8 over 8 windows. All of the windows are original. On the west or rear façade is a wood clapboard framed entryway and a bulkhead to the left of the entrance. The first floor elevation again has two 12 over 12 windows. Above the rear entryway is an arched 12 over 12 window. A photograph of the exterior was published in the *Malden Evening News* on October 11, 1906 also in the 1906 Annual Report of the Industrial Aid Association.

The interior finish on the first floor is of quartered oak with hardwood floors, which are now covered with carpet. There are fireplaces and mantles in each of the three first floor rooms. The first floor as designed contains a small entrance vestibule, a large oak paneled assembly room, a reception room, an office, and a hall. An oak staircase leads to the second floor. The second floor was designed with three rooms, a kitchen storeroom, and supply room. The woodwork on the second floor was painted with white enamel. The original interior woodwork remains today. A covered passageway originally connected the building at 15 Ferry Street with the day nursery at 21 Ferry Street.

The structure takes its rightful place among the many structures built in Malden through the philanthropy of the Converse family. It is one of only three structures which survive from the Converse family. The other surviving structures are the Converse Memorial Building of the Malden Public Library (MAL. 49) and The Malden Home for Aged Persons. The Converse family had also donated land for The Malden Hospital and contributed towards the erection of the first hospital building, the original Malden YMCA on Pleasant Street, and the Malden Auditorium.

## 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.*

The Malden Industrial Aid Association was organized in 1875 by Elisha Slade Converse (1820-1904) and others after a large fire destroyed Converse's Boston Rubber Shoe Company factory in the Edgeworth section of Malden. The purpose of the association was to find employment for men and women who were willing to work and to provide temporary financial and material relief to families in need.

The Industrial Aid Society began operating a day nursery for children of working mothers in 1894. The program was originally located in a house secured by the Association on Waverly Street. Staff consisted of a female matron and an admitting physician. In June, 1894, Elisha Slade Converse and Roswell R. Robinson were added to the day nursery committee of the Industrial Aid Association and were to seek a permanent site for a childrens home and a day nursery. In July, 1895, Elisha Converse purchased the former Goodwin estate on Ferry Street. Converse's original plan was to attempt to acquire all of the land contained in the triangle between Ferry, Main, and Irving Street and present it to the city for municipal purposes. He was only able to acquire three parcels on which, ultimately the Industrial Aid building and day nursery were located. In November,

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

**MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

MAL.491

1895, Converse donated the land and the building to the Industrial Aid Association for use as a day nursery. The building was furnished by Elisha and Mary Diana Converse (1825-1903) and their daughter, Mary Ida Converse, also known as Mrs. Costello C. Converse (1853-1940). In 1882, Mary Ida had married Costello Coolidge Converse (1848-1931) who was her first cousin, Costello being the son of Elisha's brother, James Wheaton Converse. Mary Ida and Costello Converse resided with Elisha Slade and Mary Diana Converse at the Converse home at 2 Main Street in Malden and also at the Converse's townhouse at 348 Beacon Street in Boston's Back Bay. After the death of her mother, Mary Diana, the Converse home at 2 Main Street was left to Mary Ida who, by agreement, was responsible for the taxes, insurance, and the upkeep and maintenance of the property. That home was largely destroyed by a fire in 1931.

The day nursery was available to children from ages 1 through 6. In addition to a matron, a physician checked in on the health of the children daily. A kindergarten teacher would arrive at about 9am and spend the morning with the pupils. Nutritious lunch was provided to the children and clothing was available for children in need of new garments. In 1896, large contributions towards the day nursery were received from Elisha Converse, Costello Converse, and William Buckminster. Upon the death of Mary Diana Converse \$3,000 was left by her to the Industrial Aid Association. After Converse erected the Malden Auditorium, the very first production on the Auditorium's opening night was a benefit for the Industrial Aid Society's day nursery. Upon his death in 1904 Converse left, among other bequests, \$25,000 to the Industrial Aid Association in trust, two-thirds to be used for the benefit of the day nursery and the remaining third to be used by the Industrial Aid Association for general purposes.

In June, 1905, Mary Ida Converse offered to erect a building on the Industrial Aid Society's lot to the north of the day nursery and donate the building to the Industrial Aid Society. Her offer was accepted. The building was constructed by George Conner of Medford.

On October 10, 1906, over 100 people attended the meeting of the Malden Industrial Aid Association which was held in the recently completed structure. After the meeting concluded, the donor's husband, Costello C. Converse turned over the building to the Association, which was accepted by Erskine F. Bickford, the Association's president. Remarks were also made by Rev. James F. Albion, former pastor of the Unitarian Universalist Church and Alfred E. Cox of the Governor's Council. Refreshments were served and visitors were invited to tour the building. The building served as the offices of the Industrial Aid Association and also of the Associated Charities of Malden. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the Industrial Aid Association leased space in the structure to the Tri-City Mental Health and Retardation Association. The day nursery was located in an adjacent building at 21 Ferry Street. Frequently Mary Ida Converse would entertain the children of the day nursery at the Converse home at 2 Main Street, Malden.

By 1930, the Industrial Aid Association was in need of a new building to house its day nursery. Mary Ida Converse donated \$100,000 to erect a new day nursery structure at 21 Ferry Street. That building was designed by Mowll & Rand, architects of Boston. It was also of buff brick on the exterior, designed to complement the 1906 building.

In 1987, the Industrial Aid Association filed a petition in the Middlesex Probate and Family Court seeking permission to sell the real estate and the buildings at 15-21 Ferry Street, which petition was granted by the court in October, 1988. (Middlesex Probate docket no 87P0188; MSRDR Book 19838, Page 340). In 1989, the Association sold the properties to The Bank for Savings (formerly the Malden Savings Bank) (MSRDR Book 19833, Page 336). After the sale of the property to the Bank for Savings, the property was purchased in 1992 by local attorney Christopher Fallon and others through a real estate trust, Ferry Street Realty Trust. (MSRDR Book 22530, Page 142). Beginning in the 1990s the structure was used for law offices by Fallon as well as a district office for constituents as he was Malden's state representative at the time. Fallon restored the interior of the structure, including repairing and putting the three fireplaces in working order. In 1998, the Malden Redevelopment Authority (MRA) acquired that portion of the former Association property at 21 Ferry Street on which was located the 1930 day nursery building. (MSRDR Book 28750, Page 524). This parcel is identified as lot 2 on a plan entitled "Plan of Land in Malden, MA" dated March 24, 1998 by Toomey-Munson & Associates, which plan is recorded at MSRDR as Plan no. 509 of 1998. The land was acquired along with other parcels on Main Street to enable the MRA to build a municipal parking lot. The 1930 day nursery building was demolished. Fallon retained ownership of the parcel and the 1906 Association building at 15 Ferry Street. The MRA retains an easement on the land at 15 Ferry Street to keep and maintain certain improvements. (MSRDR Book 70451, Page 244). Fallon operated his law offices there until 2018 when the Trust sold the land and building to Alpha Business Center, LLC. (MSRDR Book 71857, Page 490).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

*Elisha E. Converse v. Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Co.*, 315 Mass. 544 (1944).

"Elisha Slade Converse" in *Register of the Malden Historical Society*, vol. 2, pp.5 (Lynn, Mass: Frank S. Whitten, 1912).

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	MAL.491
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*Malden City Press*: October 7, 1893; January 13, 1894.

*Malden Evening News*: July 26, 1895; November 1, 1895; February 12, 1896; November 13, 1902; June 10, 1904; March 11, 1905; June 21, 1905; October 7, 1905; July 1, 1905; August 16, 1906; October 11, 1906; November 21, 1906; June 4, 1930; August 29, 1930.

*Malden Mail*: April 17, 1900; October 11, 1906.

*Malden Mirror*: October 7, 1893; June 9, 1894; October 13, 1906; June 26, 1909; January 1, 1910.

Permit cards on file in the Malden Office of Permits, Inspectional Services, and Planning.

Records and plans on file at Middlesex South District Registry of Deeds.

*Report and Manual of the Malden Industrial Aid Society* (Malden, Mass.: 1906)

Water and sewer connection cards on file with Malden city engineer.

Wiggin, Joseph, "Malden's Debt to Elisha Converse", in *Fifty-First Annual Report of the Malden Public Library* (Malden, Mass.: 1928) p. 29.

[www.backbayhouses.org/348-beacon](http://www.backbayhouses.org/348-beacon) (retrieved on June 3, 2019).

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	MAL.491
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Rear (west) elevation photographed 6/2/2019.



Left (south) elevation photographed 6/2/2019.

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	MAL.491
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Right (north) elevation photographed 6/2/2019.



**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MALDEN

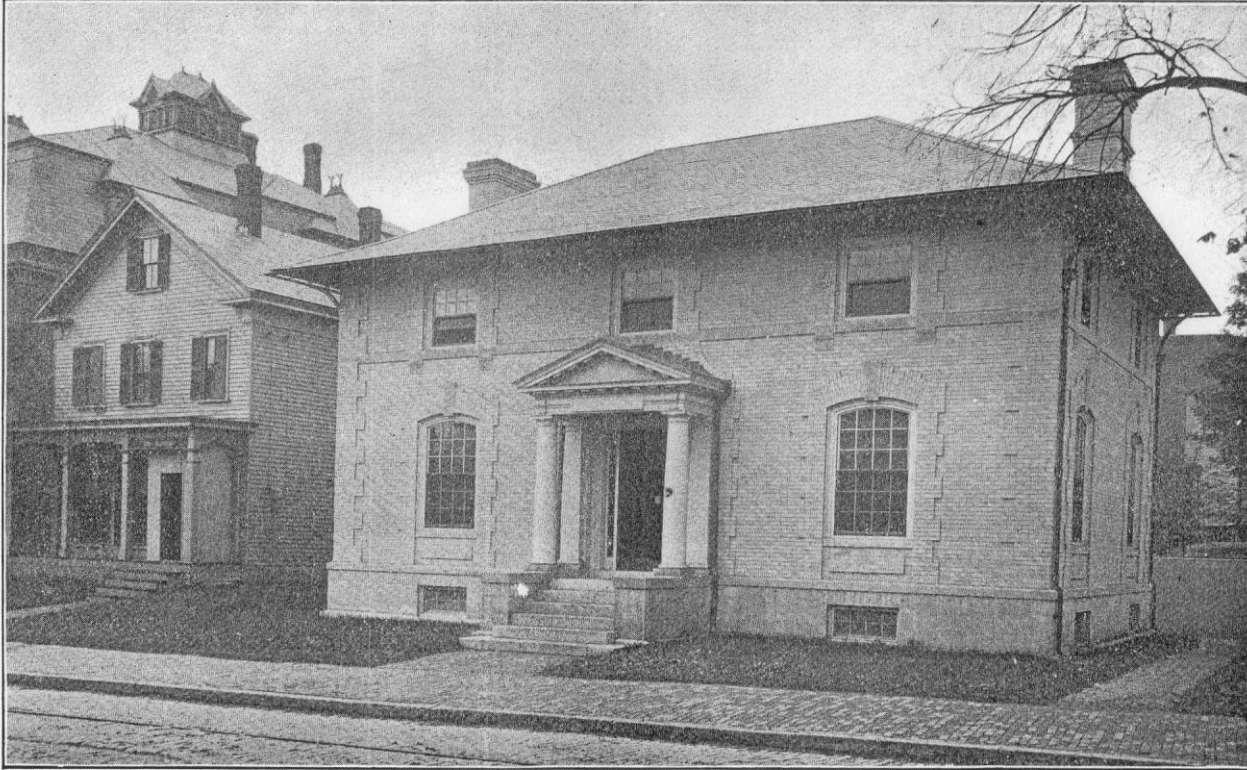
15 Ferry Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	MAL.491
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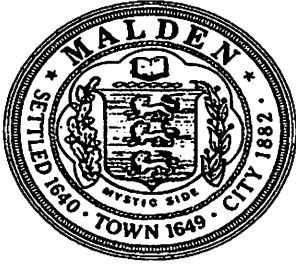
**THE M. IDA CONVERSE BUILDING.**



DAY NURSERY.

Offices of the Associated Charities and Visiting Nurse.

Historical Photograph (1906) from frontispiece of *Report and Manual of the Malden Industrial Aid Society* (Malden, Mass.: 1906)



**Malden, Massachusetts**

**Date: May 25, 2022**

**His Honor the Mayor has approved Paper #258 of 2022**

**Below is a true attest copy of same:**

Ordered: That the City Council approve the relocation of the building at 15 Ferry Street to Malden High School at 77 Salem Street to the area at the corner of Salem Street and Holden Street and accept the building as public property.

**Paper #258 of 2022, of which the above is a true copy**

**Ordered, by the City Council, by ten (10) yea and zero (0) nay votes, the City Council consisting of eleven members at their May 24, 2022 meeting.**

**Approved, May 25, 2022 by His Honor, Mayor Gary J. Christenson**

**Attest:**

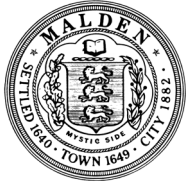
**City Clerk**

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**Council President Craig Spadafora**

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**Mayor Gary J. Christenson**



City of Malden  
Massachusetts

MALDEN HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
215 Pleasant Street, Room 330  
Malden, Massachusetts 02148  
(781) 397-7000 ext. 2044

January 18, 2024

Nelson Miller, Building Commissioner  
City of Malden  
215 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA 02148

**RE: 15 Ferry Street (PID # 075 272 211)**  
**Demolition Permit Application (CMID-062907-2023)**  
**Determination of Significance, Demolition & Alteration Delay Ordinance, MCC Title 4.24**

Dear Mr. Miller:

In accordance with Title 4.24.100 of the Code of the City of Malden (MCC), the Demolition and Alteration Delay Ordinance (the Ordinance), the Malden Historical Commission (the Commission) hereby notifies you of its determination that the subject of the above-referenced application, namely, the building at the above-referenced property, is a Significant Building.

In further accordance with Title 4.24.100 of the Ordinance, no demolition permit for the Building may be issued at this time; and the Commission will hold a public hearing on February 15, 2024 for the purpose of determining whether the Building is Preferably Preserved and notify you of its determination.

The Commission made this Determination of Significance at a meeting on January 18, 2024, based on the following criteria contained in Title 4.24.080 of the Ordinance:

1. The Building is the M. Ida Converse Building and is architecturally important because of its Colonial Revival style and was built in 1906 by George Conner of Medford; the Building is historically important because built through the philanthropy of Elisha S. Converse, first Mayor of Malden and built by his daughter Mary Ida Converse; and the Building is one of only three surviving Converse buildings in the City;
2. The Building is the Malden Industrial Aid Association Building and importantly associated with Elisha S. Converse, the first Mayor of Malden, whose daughter, Mary Ida Converse built the Building for the Malden Industrial Aid Association, organized by Converse in 1875 to provide employment and relief to families after fire destroyed the Converse Boston Rubber Shoe Company factory in Edgeworth; the Building is associated with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic and social history of the City; and its significance is documented in Inventory Building Form MAL.491, on file with the Massachusetts Historical Commission; and
3. The Building is one whose loss would have a significant negative impact on the historical and architectural integrity and urban design character of the neighborhood, which is Converse Square. Converse Square, the ancient crossroads at the center of the City, has community significance to the City's architectural, institutional and commercial history, as documented in Inventory Area Form MAL. A, on file with the Massachusetts Historical Commission; and the area is home to various landmark historic buildings, including National Register properties, such as the Converse Memorial Library, Davenport Estate, Malden High School, Waite Block and Odd Fellows Building.

As part of its Determination decision, the Commission requests that the Applicant continue to work with the Commission and City officials to preserve this important historic building and recommends that the building be kept intact, in its current location, and incorporated into the design of any future project on the property.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michelle A. Romero  
City Planner, Clerk to the Commission

CC: Applicant