

# City of Malden

## Massachusetts

### MALDEN HISTORICAL COMMISSION

February 21, 2024

Mayor Gary Christenson  
President Stephen Winslow and 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 Society Association Bldg.**

Dear Mayor Christenson, President Winslow and City Councilors,

As directed by the Malden Historical Commission, this letter provides an update regarding 15 Ferry Street, namely, the M. Ida Converse Building and Malden Industrial Aid Society/Association Building, one of the remaining three Converse buildings in the City, its construction and mission being part of the unparalleled philanthropy of Malden's first Mayor Elisha Converse, and of great historic significance to our community, as documented in the Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form MAL. 491.

Following its last update to you via letter dated January 23, 2024, the Commission received notice from Building Commissioner Nelson Miller that the new demolition permit application is not subject to Title 4.24, the Demolition & Alteration Delay Ordinance, based on the January 30, 2024 opinion of City Solicitor Alicia McNeil that the demolition permit may be issued.

Accordingly, the Commission held a public hearing on February 15, 2024 for the purpose of receiving public comment regarding the proposed demolition, and not for the purpose of the Commission's review or determination under the Demolition Delay Ordinance. At this public hearing, the Commission received a variety of public comment in support of the preservation of the building. Public comment received during the hearing included verbal testimony from those individuals listed on the attached sign-in sheet, the attached photographs and letter; and the attached email, referenced during the hearing, was received later. Urban Media Arts live-streamed the public hearing and the recording may be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/live/OcE02o1eB0Y?si=ZLa7wTe5mWU9auBa>

The Commission still strongly supports the preservation of this building and its remaining within the area of historic Converse Square, a landmark itself, 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.

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

Sincerely,

Michelle A. Romero

City Planner, Clerk to Malden Historical Commission

Attachments



15 Ferry Street

Malden Day Nursery

RECEIVED BY MALDEN HISTORICAL COMMISSION FROM DORA ST. MARTIN 2/15/24  
SUBMITTED AT PUBLIC HEARING

**NURSERY BUILDING**  
**GIFT OF**  
**MR. AND MRS.**  
**COSTELLO C. CONVERSE**

**1930**

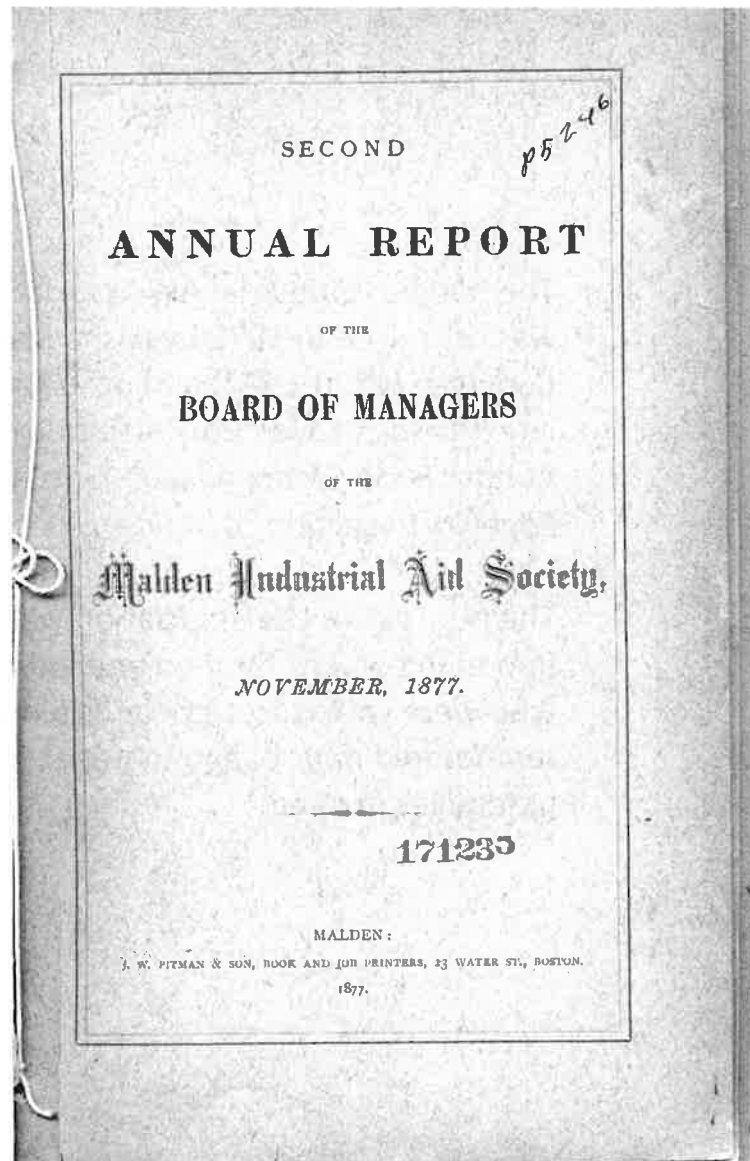
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**LAND NURSERY SITE**

**GIVEN BY**

**ELISHA S. CONVERSE**

**1895**



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 children's home and a day nursery.



The factory of the Boston Rubber Shoe Company suffered a catastrophic fire on November 29, 1875, as seen in this view from the company's yard.

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.

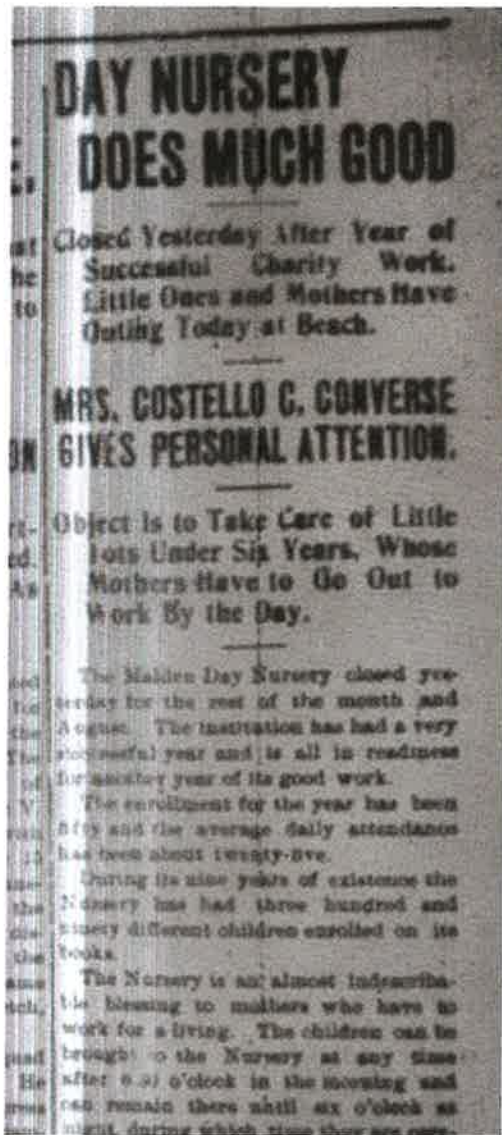
The purpose of the association was to find employment for men and women who were willing to work and to provide temporary financial and material relief to families in need.











In November 1895, Elisha S. Converse donated the land and the building to the Industrial Aid Association for use as a day nursery.

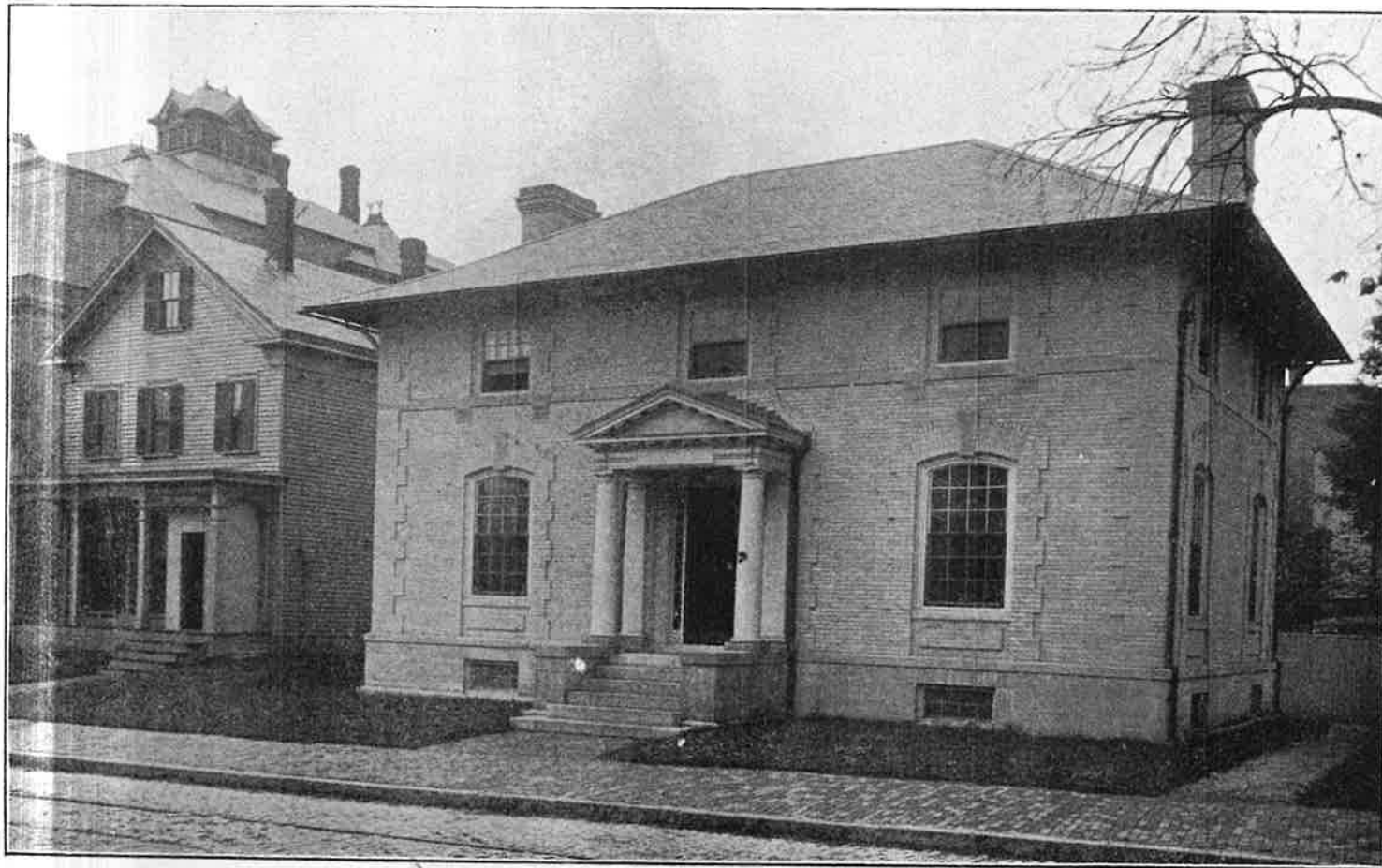
The building was furnished by Elisha and Mary Diana Converse (1825-1903) and their daughter, Mary Ida Converse, also known as Mrs. Costello C. Converse (1853-1940). In 1882, Mary Ida had married Costello Coolidge Converse (1848-1931) who was her first cousin, Costello being the son of Elisha's brother, James Wheaton Converse.





MALDEN DAY NURSERY, 21 FERRY STREET.

**THE M. IDA CONVERSE BUILDING.**



**DAY NURSERY.**

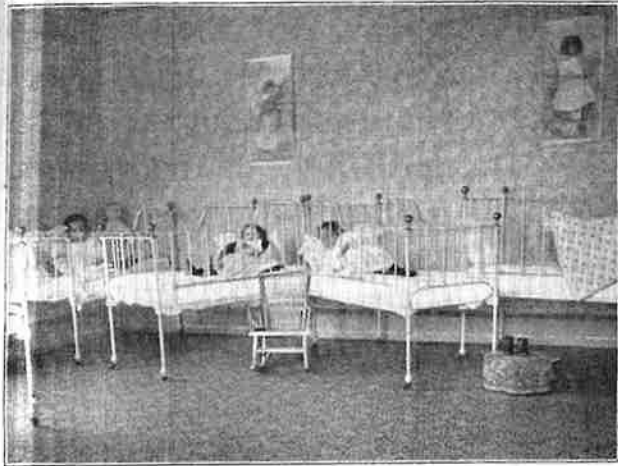
**Offices of the Associated Charities and Visiting Nurse.**



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 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.



INFANTS' BEDROOM.



THANKSGIVING DINNER.

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 9 am 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.



WAITING FOR YOUR COMING AT THE DAY NURSERY.



THANKSGIVING DINNER.





Jonathan Bekemeier

617-216-4576 jbek@mac.com 67 Ashland St. Malden, MA 02148

February 15, 2024

Malden Historical Commission Members

CC:City Planner, Michelle A. Romero

CC:City Clerk, Carol Ann Desidrio

CC: Mayor Gary Christenson

Historical Commission Members,

I am writing to you today to express my **firm** stance against granting the owner of 15 Ferry St. a demolition permit.

I am not exactly clear as to how we've gotten to this place since it has been talked about for 3 years or so. I was under the impression that the city was working with the owner in finding a spot to relocate the historic Converse building. In fact, this may still be the case. Regardless, there is no reason to grant a demolition permit, ever, for this building.

If you do grant a demolition permit, you are in fact saying to the citizens of Malden that this building is not historic and not worthy of being saved.

What is wrong with this historic building that deems it worthy of demolition? Absolutely nothing. It just happens to be in the way of this owner's plans.

As a city, we CANNOT keep knocking down historic structures only to have pieces of them as historical markers throughout the city reminding people what once was. That is not historic preservation!

The square where 15 Ferry is located is called Converse Square and this owner wants to rid the Converse building from it. I am appalled.

The city and the building's owner need to figure out how and where to move this building. It needs to be saved! Demolishing it will only erase more of Malden's important history!

Please do NOT grant a demolition permit for 15 Ferry St.

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan Bekemeier

**From:** [Linda Thorsen](#)  
**To:** [Michelle A. Romero](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Tonight's Historical Commission Meeting  
**Date:** Thursday, February 15, 2024 10:39:12 PM

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Michelle,

Thank you for your card and the opportunity to submit Mrs. Russell's letter for the record. I realize that ideally I would have provided this in the meeting, but I did not have time to print it out before hand and then technology intervened.

As you can see, she is writing in support of saving the building. I hope you can include these in tonight's comments, and I will also send it on to the Council.

Best,

Linda Thorsen  
24 Chetnut St  
President, Malden Historical Society

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "dlrussell2@verizon.net" <dlrussell2@verizon.net>  
**Subject:** **Tonight's Historical Commission Meeting**  
**Date:** February 15, 2024 at 4:00:48 PM EST  
**To:** "linda@lindathorsen.com" <linda@lindathorsen.com>

Hi Linda,

I am not able to attend the Commission's meeting tonight but if you are planning to attend please add my voice in objection to the demolition of 15 Ferry St.

My earlier information was that the building was to be saved and moved and a location for same had been determined. Earlier research and public in-put concluded this was the determination based on significant historical benefit. I object to an after the fact change to instead demolish the building. If we want the next generation to appreciate and support our city their knowledge and connection to our history is a significant motivator to do so. This building is another link to our past and the historical Converse family.

Additionally, from a purely esthetic point of view, Malden Square doesn't need another high-rise building as the first viewed entrance from north, east and south. A welcoming low profile view invites visitors to come and do business in a friendly, family oriented community.

Feel free to make a copy of my opinion and take it along for submission at tonight's meeting.