

City of Malden Massachusetts

MALDEN HISTORICAL COMMISSION

October 23, 2025

Mayor Gary Christenson
President Amanda Linehan 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, Council President Linehan and City Councilors,

As directed by the Malden Historical Commission, this letter serves to update and remind you of the unresolved status of the preservation of 15 Ferry Street, namely, the M. Ida Converse Building - Malden Industrial Aid Society/Association Building, one of the remaining three Converse buildings in the City, and of great historic significance to our community, as documented in the attached Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form MAL. 491.

The preservation of this historically significant building created by Mayor Elisha S. Converse's daughter, Mary I. Converse, is extremely important. The distinguished philanthropic legacy of Mayor Elisha S. Converse and his family—whose substantial contributions were instrumental in shaping the City of Malden—is now imperiled by the threat of demolition.

Mayor Elisha S. Converse, his elder brother James W. Converse, his wife Mary D. Converse, his daughter Mary I. Converse and his son-in-law Costello C. Converse, all made significant contributions to and for Malden. The Converse family not only provided thousands of jobs for Maldonians, they created the various economic, social, infrastructural, and cultural objects critically important for the City's successful development: Boston Rubber Shoe Co., First National Bank, Converse Memorial Library, Malden Hospital, Malden Maternity Hospital, Malden Nurses Home, Malden Home for Aged People, YMCA, Malden Industrial Aid Society, Malden Historical Society, Malden Auditorium, old City Hall, Fellsmere Park, Pine Banks Park, and Spot Pond. Unfortunately, many of these properties were destroyed or cease to exist in their initial capacity for different reasons.

Malden cannot afford to lose any more historically important buildings related to the Converse family. Any further loss endangers the City's historical integrity and shows disrespect toward such outstanding benefactors as the Converse family. The destruction of important historical buildings and objects, one after another, literally erases the traces of the City's long and glorious history, converting it from the visual to virtual.

In June 2019, the Commission determined that the building at 15 Ferry Street is a Preferably Preserved Building. The preservation of this historically significant building has not been resolved for several years, and now, due to the imminent demolition threat, requires your immediate attention.

With the issuance of the demolition permit and property owner's pending filing of the application for the special permit required for the proposed new development, time is of the essence, even more than before. Most recently, the Commission received the attached letter dated October 16, 2025, from property owner's attorney, Roberto DiMarco, who indicates that owner "has been placed under time constraints due to the property being left untouched for so long and is moving forward quickly." Mr. DiMarco emphasizes in his letter that the owner "remains open to a resolution to save the building but time has grown short. At this point, it appears saving the building is becoming a harder possibility."

The Commission still strongly supports the preservation of this building, symbolizing the Converse's historical presence in Malden and their philanthropic heritage, and its remaining within the historic Converse Square area. The Commission recommends that this may be accomplished through relocation to the previously identified site at Malden High School; preservation at its current location; or incorporation of the intact building into the design of any future project on the property.

The Commission understands that 15 Ferry Street is part of a development site that includes the property, One Salem Street. One Salem Street is the site of a demolished building which the Commission also determined was Preferably Preserved, and any new development must comply with the architectural design requirements set by the Commission in its January 27, 2020 decision (attached). When the application for the special permit for the new development is filed, the Commission will submit its formal recommendations to the City Council, in accordance with Title 12.12.010.C, Code of the City of Malden.

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 us with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle A. Romero".

Michelle A. Romero
City Planner
Clerk to Malden Historical Commission

Attachments

FOSTER, WALKER & DI MARCO

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

October 16, 2025

VIA EMAIL AND IN HAND

Mr. John Tramondozzi
Chair of Historical Commission
City of Malden
110 Pleasant Street, 2nd Floor
Malden, MA 02148

Ms. Michelle A. Romero
City Planner
City of Malden
110 Pleasant Street, 2nd Floor
Malden, MA 02148

Re: One Salem Street and 15 Ferry Street, Malden, MA

Dear Chair Tramondozzi and Ms. Romero,

First, my apologies for the failure to appear. I was forced to send in this written update due to a personal matter. As you are aware, this firm represents Alpha Business Center, LLC, ("ABC"), the owner of 15 Ferry Street, Malden, Massachusetts ("Property" or "15 Ferry"). I write to the Historical Commission on the above matter.

At the present my client has commenced the process of obtaining a special permit from the City. He has completed updates to the professional reports, specifically the traffic and sewer engineering reports, which he was forced to do due to the passage of time. He has been placed under time constraints due to the property being left untouched for so long and is moving forward quickly. He received an enforcement order and is moving to comply. He has an application with the Building Department partially complete and will finish that in the next two days. Once it is done, he expects to be on the agenda for the City Council to review, and hopefully approve, his proposed construction.

As stated many times previously, he remains open to a resolution to save the building but time has grown short. At this point, it appears saving the building is becoming a harder possibility. He understands that you have brought this issue to the City Council and will likely be present at the hearing. He wants it to be clear that he has given the City sufficient time to bring him a proposal but none have been forthcoming. As stated, he will have an informal public meeting to discuss the project with the residents and invites you to attend. He will schedule that once the final submission to the Building Department is complete.

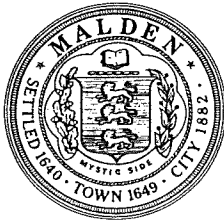
I will be present at your next meeting. My apologies again.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 781-322-3700 or rdimarco@fwd-law.com.

Very truly yours,
Foster, Walker, & Di Marco, P.C.



Roberto L. Di Marco, Esq.



City of Malden

Massachusetts

MALDEN HISTORICAL COMMISSION

PERMITS, INSPECTIONS & PLANNING SERVICES
110 Pleasant Street, 2nd Floor
Malden, Massachusetts 02148
(781) 397-7000 ext. 2030

January 27, 2020

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

**Re: Building Determined to be Preferably Preserved/Demolition Permit Delayed
Demolition and Alteration Delay Ordinance
One Salem Street (PID # 075 272 209)/Demolition Permit Application #CMID-029311-2019**

Dear Mr. Miller:

This serves to notify you that the Historical Commission has amended its most recent previous decision regarding the above-referenced property, of which you were notified via correspondence dated January 16, 2020.

Specifically, the Commission amends the conditions to which it agrees to allow the demolition of the existing building at One Salem Street to proceed prior to the expiration of the 12-month delay period. The Commission now agrees to the demolition, subject to the following conditions and owner/applicant's compliance with the following requirements:

- 1) The Historical Commission shall review and approve the architectural design (excluding height) and façade of any new building at One Salem Street.
- 2) Any new building shall replicate the exterior of the existing building at One Salem Street.
- 3) The project at One Salem Street shall not include 15 Ferry Street (Parcel ID # 075 272 211/Demolition Permit Application #CMID-029312-2019) and the Notice of Intent/Application is amended in writing by and in accordance with correspondence dated January 27, 2020 from Roberto L. DiMarco, attorney for Alpha Business Center, LLC, owner, and plan referenced therein and attached thereto, "1st Floor Plan (A-101) Salem Street Mixed Use, 1 Salem Street Malden, MA," dated January 17, 2020, prepared by Khalsa Design, Somerville, MA.

As you know from previous correspondence, following its Determination on June 5, 2019 that the building at One Salem Street is a Preferably Preserved Building, and in accordance with Section III (11) of the Ordinance, on December 4, 2019 the Commission made the following findings:

- a) There is no reasonable likelihood that either owner or some other person or group is willing to purchase, preserve, rehabilitate or restore the building at One Salem Street;
- b) The intent and purpose of the Ordinance is served even with the issuance of the demolition permit; and
- c) There are grave public safety issues with the existing building that require immediate attention, as described in your correspondence dated October 31, 2019 and November 21, 2019, which contain orders that have not been complied with.

Finally, please note that, in conjunction with this decision, the Commission and owner have agreed to extend the delay period for the issuance of the demolition permit for 15 Ferry Street (Parcel ID # 075 272 211/Demolition Permit Application #CMID-029312-2019) for an additional six (6) months, and therefore, until December 5, 2020, as described in my other correspondence to you dated January 27, 2020.

Please contact me with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michelle A. Romero
City Planner, Liaison to Historical Commission

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

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

Data available via the MACRIS web interface, and associated scanned files are for information purposes only. THE ACT OF CHECKING THIS DATABASE AND ASSOCIATED SCANNED FILES DOES NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS. IF YOU ARE REPRESENTING A DEVELOPER AND/OR A PROPOSED PROJECT THAT WILL REQUIRE A PERMIT, LICENSE OR FUNDING FROM ANY STATE OR FEDERAL AGENCY YOU MUST SUBMIT A PROJECT NOTIFICATION FORM TO MHC FOR MHC'S REVIEW AND COMMENT. You can obtain a copy of a PNF through the MHC web site (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc) under the subject heading "MHC Forms."

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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

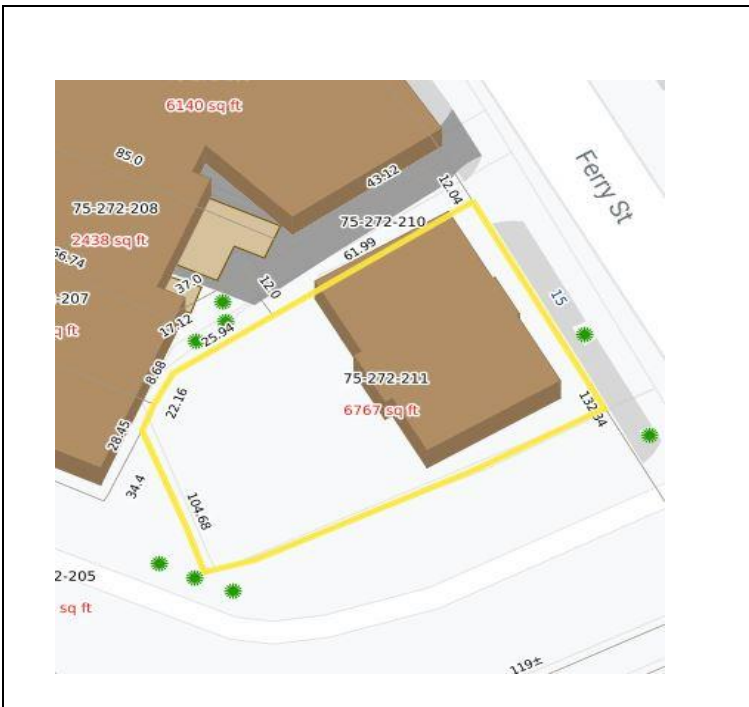
FORM B – BUILDING

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

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Frank F. Russell, consultant
Organization: Malden Historical Commission
Date (month / year): May, 2019

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

75-272-211

MAL.491

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.

RECEIVED
AUG 06 2019

MASS. HIST. COMM.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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,

Continuation sheet 1

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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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; MSRD Book 19838, Page 340). In 1989, the Association sold the properties to The Bank for Savings (formerly the Malden Savings Bank) (MSRD 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. (MSRD 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. (MSRD 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 MSRD 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. (MSRD 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. (MSRD 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 (retrieved on June 3, 2019).

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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



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

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MALDEN

15 Ferry Street

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

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MALDEN

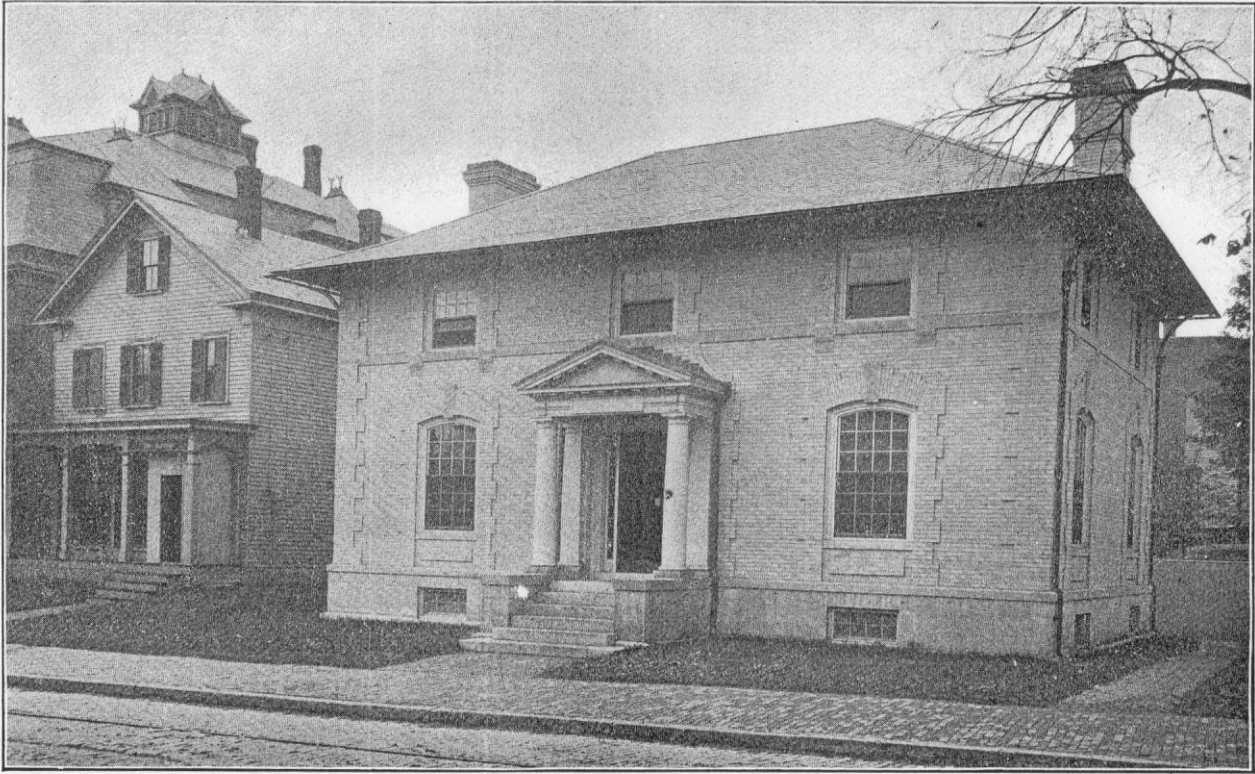
15 Ferry Street

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)