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

1. Name

historic Larrabee's Brick Block

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 500-504 Main Street

city, town Melrose

state Massachusetts code 025 county Middlesex
code 017

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>occupied</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>building(s)</td>
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<td>unoccupied</td>
<td>commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>work in progress</td>
<td>educational</td>
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<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>in process</td>
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Accessible: yes: restricted

Present Use: X museum

4. Owner of Property

name Edwin B. and Marie T. Wood

street & number 107 East Emerson Street

city, town Melrose

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inventory of the Historic Assets</th>
<th>has this property been determined eligible?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>date</td>
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<tr>
<td>depository for survey records</td>
<td>Massachusetts Historical Commission</td>
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city, town 294 Washington Street, Boston

state Massachusetts
7. Description

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 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 carrara 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.
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 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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
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<td>commerce</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900-</td>
<td>communications</td>
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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 craftsmanship. 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 salvageable 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.

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 in Melrose. The building is a fine example of an early suburban commercial structure, reflecting the characteristics and architectural style of its period.

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

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.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 6115 S.F.

Quadrangle name: Boston North

UTM References

Zone Easting Northing
A 119 330 120 47 01 21 10
B 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
<th>code</th>
<th>county</th>
<th>code</th>
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</table>

11. Form Prepared By

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: [Signature]
title: State Historic Preservation Officer
organization: Massachusetts Historical Commission
date: 2/22/87

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: [Signature]
date

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