

FORM A - AREA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 Washington Street Boston MA 02108

Form numbers in this area

410-456
904

Area letter

WS



Lowell

of area (if any) Washington Square

1 date or period 1831-70's



indicating properties within it.
ry forms have been completed.
and indicate north. (Attach a

Recorded by Elizabeth Durfee Hengen

Organization DPD Architectural Survey

Date 5/81

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Describe physical setting, general character, and architecturally significant structures).

In 1831 John and Thomas Nesmith, brothers who became prominent Lowell citizens, purchased from Judge Edward Livermore for \$25,000 150 acres of land just north of Belvidere Village, then part of Tewksbury. This area, formerly known as the Gedney estate, was part of a 17th century 3,000 acre grant to the widow of Governor Winthrop.

The Nesmiths hired Alexander Wadsworth of Boston to lay out streets and houselots, including a trapezoidal park called Washington Square. Wadsworth was at the time also occupied preparing plans of Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, the first picturesquely designed cemetery in the nation. By contrast, the Washington Square area is highly formal with perpendicular streets lined with trees and a double row of trees surrounding the park. Nesmith (cont.)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Explain development of area, what caused it, and how it affected community; be specific).

The Washington Square area is Lowell's earliest fashionable residential neighborhood and one of the first two major subdivisions within present day Lowell. The other, Centralville, lay across the Merrimack River in Dracut. Although Centralville was intended to attract workers from the mills in Lowell, Washington Square drew the city's most prosperous merchants, industrialists and businessmen. Most of the residents were also actively involved as directors or trustees in the city's financial and business institutions.

The Washington Square developers, John and Thomas Nesmith, were prominent and wealthy residents who engaged in a variety of industrial, business and real estate ventures. John Nesmith's handsome mansion at 229 Andover Street still stands, although his brothers across the street was recently demolished.

The area was quickly settled by superintendents and treasurers of Lowell's textile mills. George Motley, superintendent of the Appleton Corporation and later treasurer, erected 95 Nesmith Street, next door to the home of Aaron Mansur, a successful merchant. At 14 Park Street was the home of Charles Hovey who

(cont.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Subdivision plans filed at Northern Middlesex Registry
Park Commissioner reports
Contributions, Vol. 4:352-58
City atlases and directories

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

Lowell

Form No:

WS

Property Name: Washington Square

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

Street was laid out as a 60' boulevard with 10' sidewalks. Two plans were executed. The earlier (1831) shows Oak Street extending east beyond Nesmith to join with Park Street which projected beyond Andover. The 1832 plan, which was adopted, was never fully executed. Elm Street, which was to run between Andover and Oak, was never laid out, and Willow Street was not extended north of Andover. Washington Street was later renamed Park.

Lots began to sell in the mid-1830's. The earliest deeds required owners to plant trees along the streets, at 20' intervals, for "shade and ornamental purposes". The area immediately surrounding the park was not developed for another decade. The stylish houses that were erected were the city's first buildings to be built in the Italianate and Greek Revival/Regency styles (14 Park, 136 Chestnut, 73, 87 and 95 Nesmith). John Nesmith erected his own house just outside the planned subdivision on a rise overlooking the area. The 1841-43 Greek Revival/Regency residence remains one of Lowell's finest buildings (229 Andover).

Like the houses of the 1840-50's, later ones were forerunners of contemporary fashions; although the Italianate style continued to be the most popular, a few Second Empire and Queen Anne houses were built or altered during that period (4 Park, 15 Nesmith).

For a time the park was used as a cow pasture. Edwin Sheppard later leased it for a garden during which time it acquired the name of "Park Garden". Sheppard also built a saloon within the park, which he maintained until expiration of his lease in 1860. That same year the Nesmith brothers sold the spot to the city at 5¢ per square foot. The city added the granite curbing still visible today.

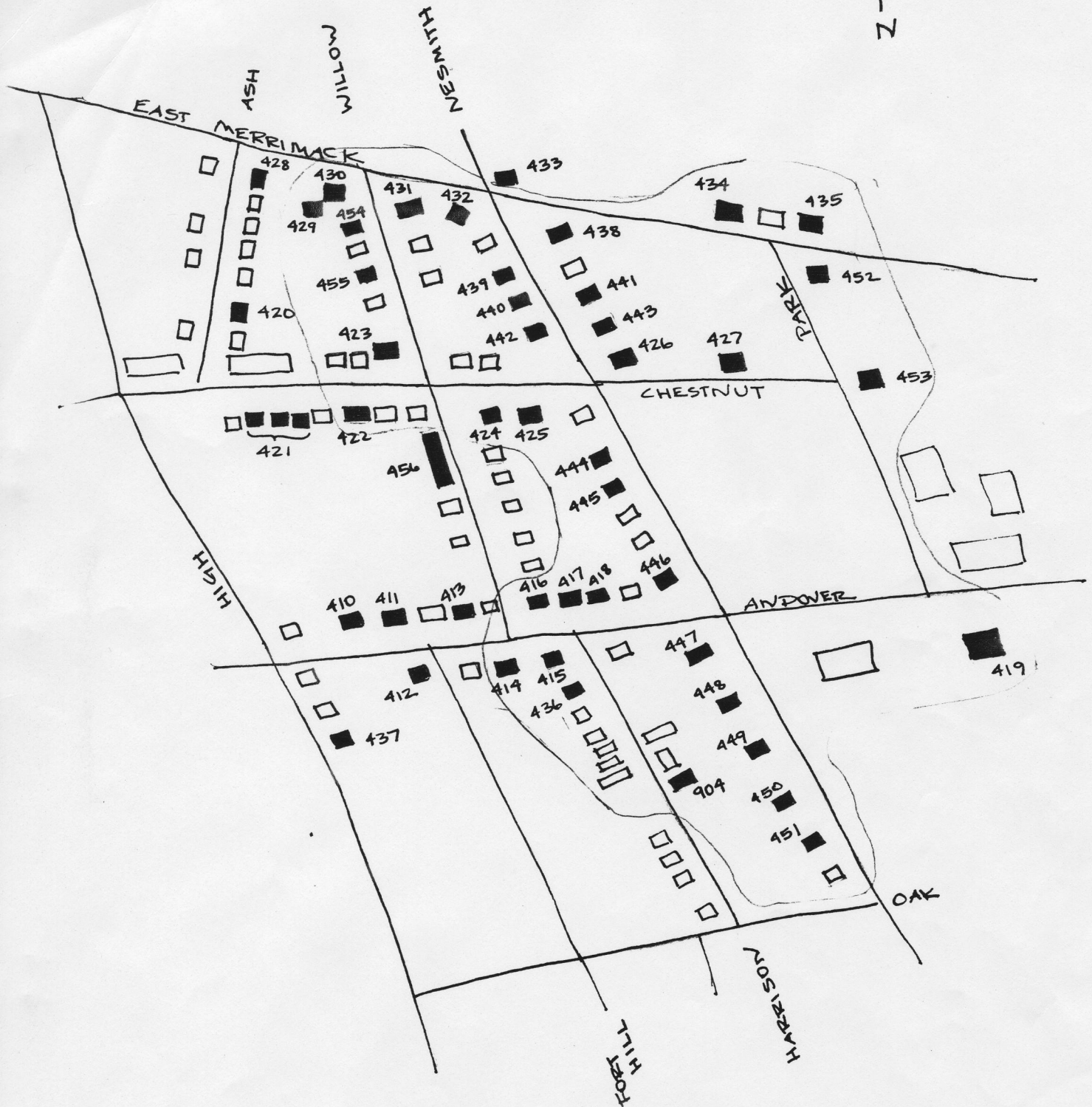
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

managed a prosperous apothecary business.

Owners of at least two manufacturies also settled in the area. C.P. Talbot, who founded the Talbot Woollen Mills in North Billerica, built 142 Chestnut Street. 28 Nesmith was erected by John Holt who began a flannel manufactory on Davidson Street that later became New England Bunting. One of the city's most prominent builders, Levi Sprague, owned 115 Nesmith. Sprague constructed the first buildings of the Lawrence Corporation.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

WASHINGTON SQUARE
AREA WS



— NATIONAL REGISTER
BOUNDARY

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

Lowell

Form No:

WS

Property Name: Washington Square

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Buildings inventoried in Washington Square area:

* 140-42	Andover Street		
* 148-50	Andover		
* 151	"	"	
* 160	"	"	
* 163-65	"	"	
* 171-3	"	"	
* 172-74	"	"	
* 176	"	"	
* 182	"	"	
* 229	"	"	
26	Ash Street		
65-73	Chestnut Street		
* 81-83	"	"	
* 90	"	"	
* 105	"	"	
* 111	"	"	
* 136	"	"	
* 142	"	"	
277-83	East Merrimack Street		
* 297	"	"	"
* 303-05	"	"	"
* 327-29	"	"	"
* 341-45	"	"	"
* 356	"	"	"
* 408	"	"	"
* 5-7	Harrison Street		*420 East Merrimack Street
*	Harrison Street (barns)		
282	High Street		
* 9-11	Nesmith Street		
* 12	"	"	
* 15	"	"	
* 19	"	"	
* 24	"	"	
* 25	"	"	
* 28	"	"	
* 49	"	"	
* 53	"	"	
* 73	"	"	
* 87	"	"	
* 95	"	"	
* 105	"	"	
* 115	"	"	
* 123	"	"	
* 4	Park Street		
* 14	"	"	
* 9	Willow Street		
* 17	"	"	
43-53	"	"	
<u>Staple to Inventory form at bottom</u>			

*falls within bounds of
eligible National
Register district