

IDENTIFICATION

484-488 Merrimack Street

MAP SHEET # 137,138

- 1) CURRENT OWNER Flago Realty Corp. OWNER OCCUPIED no
- 2) HISTORIC NAME Husson Building
- 3) CURRENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) PROPERTY TYPE commercial, multiple dwelling 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION B-1
- 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS current STATUS clear
- 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF LHPD

HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

- 1) CONSTRUCTION DATE present exterior dates from 1915  
alteration  
 SOURCE building permit (1915). plaque on exterior
- 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) HISTORIC OWNER George Husson (owner at time of exterior rebuilding)
- 4) ORIGINAL USE: GF \_\_\_\_\_ UF \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SOURCE there has been a building on this site since the 1832 map. It is not clear whether parts of the present building date that early.

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

VIEW FROM north PHOTO TAKEN Nov.1992

- 1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Colonial Revival
- 2) PRESENT USE:  
 GF office/grocery  
 UF rooming house
- 3) NO OF STORIES 4
- 4) PROP SQ FT 7,465
- 5) PLAN rectangular
- 6) ROOF flat
- 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM steel frame (1915)
- 8) OUTBUILDINGS none
- 9) MATERIALS:  
 FOUNDATION not visible



FACADE tan glazed brick in decorative patterns; red brick sides

TRIM marble storefront pilasters (2 remaining); cast iron window bays

10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS none

ADDRESS 484 Merrimack Street

### VISUAL ASSESSMENT

- 1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC needs major repairs
- 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES lack of maintenance
- 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: GF major and irreversible changes  
UF intact original fabric
- 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial, residential
- 5) INTEGRITY OF PROPERTY'S HISTORIC SETTING intact with some intrusions and/or losses
- 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROPERTY TO HISTORIC SETTING integral to character

### ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

The present facade of this four-story tan brick commercial/residential building dates from 1915, when the building was extensively remodelled to accommodate a theater. Before that date the building was a frame 3 1/2 story structure.

The ground floor has two storefronts with large display windows, one modernized and one with two intact marble pilasters. In the center bay is a c.1915 oak entrance door with an oval glass center (now boarded) leading to the upper floor apartments. The entablature above level one has been covered by inappropriate plastic panels. The principal feature of the upper floors are the two three-story sheet metal oriel windows, which create a rhythmic streetscape pattern continued at the adjacent #474 Merrimack. These oriels and the oak door are details which give the building its Colonial Revival spirit. The center bay, now partially obscured by an iron fire escape, consists of paired 1/1 windows. The remodelling date, 1915, and the initial "R" (a second initial is missing but presumably was a "T" for Royal Theater) are inscribed in decorative brick and marble inserts above level 2. The building name, "Husson" is inscribed in a decorative panel above the third story. The roofline has no decorative treatment. The building has a very large brick ell extending beyond the center of the block.

### ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

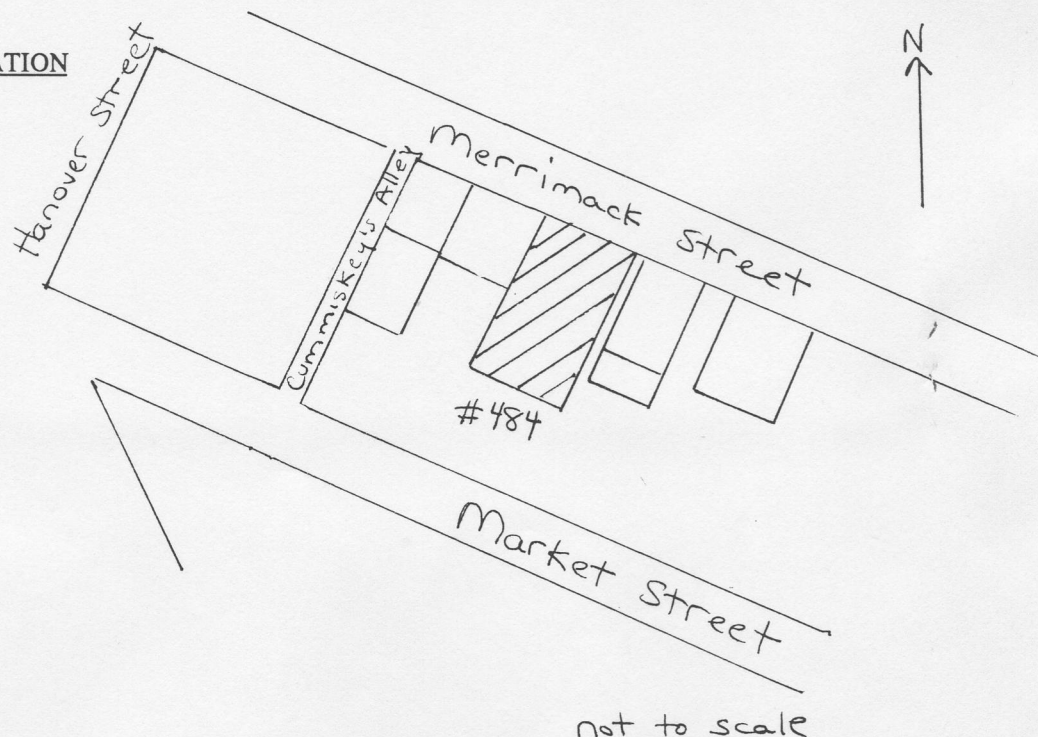
See Research Report

### SOURCES

Maps: 1832, 1850  
Atlases: 1879 to 1977  
Building Department Permits  
#574 and 470 (1915) and  
#375 (1971)

### ARCHEOLOGICAL COMMENT

This building occupies the entire lot, and therefore the archeological potential is low.





Research Report  
484 Merrimack Street  
Present facade: 1915

The appearance of the Husson Building dates to 1915. At that time, owner George Husson took out two permits to make alterations. The first permit, dated August 9, describes alterations as follows: "addition to auditorium of theater, run up walls 14', increasing height of structure along same exterior lines, putting in a gallery to seat 300 persons.... present floor arrangements to be the same except to allow for a balcony or gallery stairway." The permit also says "raise present roof and build walls up to meet it." The cost for this construction was estimated at \$4000. The second permit, dated September 24, 1915, describes alterations as follows: "general alterations - tear down wooden building above theater lobby and build new from ground up on 482 end - new foundation on that end (under theater entrance foundation has been previously reinforced.) new marquise over entrance to theater - Store at 482 - Entrance to ...stores 486 - All new above including exterior wall and interior finish, arrangement and partitions." The permit calls for new brick exterior walls on each side and front. Also, "will be store on first story, entrance to theater lobby (to which there will be only a slight change....), second, third and fourth floors will be two flats on each story with either 3 or 4 rooms....(a total of six tenements.) The permit also mentions the two bay windows to be covered with metal, and also a metal cornice. The latter may refer to a cornice at the roofline (no longer extant) or to the cornices above the metal oriels. The estimated cost for this portion of the renovation was \$5000.

It is clear from these permits that the existing frame 3 1/2 story building was extensively altered and in some cases completely rebuilt to accommodate its new use as the Royal Theater, which opened in 1915. The Royal Theater was probably one of the earliest movie theaters in Lowell. The building was owned by the Husson family at least through 1936, when the name Rose Husson appears on the atlas as owner. The Royal Theater remained at this location until 1971, when a permit was taken out to convert the theater space into a household furniture store.

The earlier building appears on the 1879 and 1882 atlases labeled as the Tremont House. There was a building on this site as far back as the 1832 map, although it may have been an earlier structure. As now, the rear of the Tremont House extended past the middle of the block. There was a large frame livery stable in the center of the block closer to the Market Street side, reached from an alley. On the 1879 atlas the owner was H. Emery; in 1896 it was Emery, Peabody and Richards; in 1906 H. DeMaras.

In addition to its use as a theater, the building had one store and the upper floor residential flats, which in 1917 were called the New Royal Apartments. In 1917 the store was occupied by a fruit seller and in 1945 by a men's clothing store.

## APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO MAKE ALTERATION

LOWELL, MASS.,

191

TO THE INSPECTOR OF BUILDINGS:

The undersigned hereby applies for a permit to make alteration according to the following specifications:—

1. What is the material of the building to be altered? *wood & brick* Number of stories? .....
2. Location of building? *488 Merrimack St.* Nearest cross street? .....
3. What is the owner's name? *George Hunon* Residence? *25 Adams St.*
4. What is the Architect's name? .....
5. What is the Builder's name? *- day work*
6. What is the nature of alteration? *addition to auditorium of theater - run up walls. 1*  
It's purpose? *increasing height of structure along same exterior lines*  
*cutting in a gallery to seat 300 persons. with two exits for*  
*seats - present floor arrangement to be the same except to allow for*
7. If repairs or interior changes, to what part of present building? *a balcony or gallery stairway -*  
*exterior in fire exit on opposite side into passageway*
8. If an addition—What will be material? *brick* Size? *48' x 100'*  
Stories in height? *walls run 16' high will be 80' - present wall 16' and cutting 16' in* Feet in height? .....
- Kind of roof? *roof*  
Distance from side or rear line of lot? .....
- If within three feet will walls be brick nogged? *flat - two & a half*
- How heated? .....
- Chimneys? .....
- Plastered or flue-lined? .....
- Material of foundation? .....
- Fire stop? .....
9. Will there be any additional families? .....
- How many? .....
- Number of families at present? .....
10. If stores in building now, how many? .....
- If addition for store purposes, how many? .....
11. How additions join present building? .....
12. If any brick walls, state where placed? .....
13. If alteration consists of interior changes or repairs caused by decay, damage by fire, etc., state in brief, reason and the scope of work?  
*Raise present roof and build walls up to meet it.*
- Remarks.....
14. If any changes are to be made to plumbing state just what changes are.....
- Number of new fixtures? .....
15. Gas piping inspection? .....
- Notify office when building is ready for inspection? .....
16. Estimated cost? *\$4000*

I further agree that the proposed work will be done in strict compliance with the description set forth in plans and specifications of which this application is a part. I also declare that I have answered all the above questions truthfully to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Plans submitted *yes*

Show by diagram the location of building with relation to lines of adjoining lots, with additions.

Signed

*George Hunon*

Owner

By



## APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO MAKE ALTERATION

LOWELL, MASS., *Sept 24*

191

TO THE INSPECTOR OF BUILDINGS:

The undersigned hereby applies for a permit to make alteration according to the following specifications:—

1. What is the material of the building to be altered? *wood & brick* Number of stories? *3 1/2*
2. Location of building? *482-486-488 Merrimack* Nearest cross street? .....
3. What is the owner's name? *George Hunn* Residence? *25 Adams St.*
4. What is the Architect's name? .....
5. What is the Builder's name? *day work*
6. What is the nature of alteration? *general alteration - tear down wooden bldg at end*  
It's purpose? *theatre lobby and build new from ground up on 482*  
*end - new foundation on that end. (under theatre entrance)*  
*has been previously reinforced. New winging over entrance to theatre*
7. If repairs or interior changes, to what part of present building? *Store at 482 - Entrance to upper stores 486 - all new work including exterior on*  
*and interior finish, arrangements & partitions*
8. If an addition—What will be material? ..... Size? .....

Stories in height? ..... Feet in height? ..... Kind of roof? .....

Distance from side or rear line of lot? ..... If within three feet will walls be brick nogged? .....

How heated? ..... Chimneys? ..... Plastered or flue lined? .....

Material of foundation? ..... Fire stop? .....

9. Will there be any additional families? *yes - 6 in all now - 6 in addition* How many? ..... Number of families at present? .....

10. If stores in building now, how many? ..... If addition for store purposes, how many? .....

11. How additions join present building? *ground up on one end from second story up on other*

12. If any brick walls, state where placed? *exterior walls on each side & front - the side dining*  
*by brick nogging and plastering in special (with all fire stopping required)*

13. If alteration consists of interior changes or repairs caused by decay, damage by fire, etc., state in brief, reason and the scope of work  
*will be store on first story. Entrance to theatre lobby (to which there will be a slight change)*  
*second third & fourth floors will be two flats (mainly - a col on two to take I have done)*  
*which will carry 16' - 12' - 12' brick wall*

Remarks on each story - *either 3 or 4 rooms - Exterior walls will be 16' - 16" -*  
*body of solid formation - side wall in theatre lobby side, this wall*  
*is now 8" of brick with heavy joists on each end - a steel beam will be*  
*placed at second story level to take heavier brick wall as mentioned above.*

14. If any changes are to be made to plumbing state just what changes are

*Light area to be carried on steel beams with brick ceiling walls*  
*metal sashes & frames - and glass - heavy masonry to support interior 2 1/2'*  
Number of new fixtures? *to be carried with metal - metal cornice - all new*  
*plaster*

15. Gas piping inspection? *yes* Notify office when building is ready for inspection? *plaster*

16. Estimated cost? *\$3000*

I further agree that the proposed work will be done in strict compliance with the description set forth in plans and specifications of which this application is a part. I also declare that I have answered all the above questions truthfully to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Plans submitted *yes*

Signed

*George Hunn*

Owner

Show by diagram the location of building with relation to lines of adjoining lots, with additions.

By