

# **NEWTON LOCAL LANDMARKS PROGRAM**

## **35 WEBSTER STREET**

**The Newton Historical Commission, with the assistance of preservation planner, Gretchen Schuler, prepared this landmark report, completed in June 1997.**

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## **Nathaniel Topliff Allen Homestead - 35 Webster Street**

### 1. *Name of Property*

- a. *Historic Name:* Nathaniel Topliff Allen Homestead
- b. *Common Name:* Allen House

### 2. *Location*

- a. *Street Address:* 35 Webster Street
- b. *Zip Code:* West Newton, 02165
- c. *Assessor's #:* 33-025-0001

### 3. *Classification*

- a. *Ownership of Property:* private non-profit
- b. *Type of Property:* building
- c. *National Register Status:* NR IND, 1978

### 4. *Function or Use*

a. *Historic Functions:* The Nathaniel Topliff Allen Homestead was constructed as a residence and when Nathaniel Topliff Allen (1823-1903) purchased the property in 1854 it was used as a residence and as a school for nearly a century by Allen and his heirs. During Nathaniel Allen's leadership as a school the property also had a dormitory for the boys' school. All three spaces, the family residence, the dormitory, and the school were attached and remain so today.

b. *Current Functions:* Presently the Allen House has seven rental apartments, thus is a multi-family residence by special permit.

### 5. *Zoning*

The property is in a Multi-Family 1 Zoning District which allows single and two-family dwelling as of right and requires a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet (7,000 sf for a lot configured prior to 1953) and minimum frontage of eighty feet (seventy feet for a pre-1953 lot). Presently the property operates under a special permit issued in 1983 allowing seven residential units.

## 6. *Description*

a. *Neighborhood Description:* Located in West Newton, the property is one of the most prominent in West Newton Village in part due to the large corner lot with mature trees and in large part due to the monumental columned facade of the main house. The surrounding properties include late nineteenth century dwellings and early twentieth century commercial and civic buildings along Washington and Waltham Streets. This residential block is only one block from the commercial activity mentioned above.

b. *Architectural Description:* The structure consists of a templar gabled Greek Revival block, a large two-story rear and side ell, and a connected barn which was the school building.

### (1) *Materials:*

*Foundation:* granite block and fieldstone

*Walls:* wood clapboard      *Roof:* Slate

*Windows:* Wood frame 6/6 and 6/6/6

*Ornamentation:* Simplicity of design of Greek Revival Style, Monumental Ionic Columns, corner posts, templar gable ends.

*Vegetation:* Several mature large oak trees, scattered shrubbery, open space of lawn in front and on sides.

### (2) *Verbal Description:*

*Historical appearance:* The property has had few changes so that the historical appearance is intact. The most prominent main block is four bays wide and three deep with a gabled roof. The main facade facing Webster Street has a full length open colonnaded porch with the eave overhang and entablature supported by four tapered fluted monumental Ionic columns, one with its volute missing. The two-story front wall, shielded by the open porch, has flush board siding and four bays, each with shutters, up and down. The first-story windows have triple hung sash with six-over-six-over-six lights and the second-story windows are six-over-six double hung, all set in simple slightly projecting wood frames. The gable ends of the main block each have a full wide band of trim forming the boxed molded cornice and two windows in each peak. The uniting feature of the main block is the wide entablature of molded cornice and three beaded boards and a trim piece making up the frieze. There are two tall interior chimneys centered on the front roof slope.

The east side of the main block is marked by a sidehall entrance that faces the driveway and has a shallow hipped roofed open porch supported by a fluted Ionic column on each outside corner and plain square pilasters. The entrance door and surround is remarkable in detail with a leaded fanlight and leaded half side lights and narrow reeded pilasters framing the side lights. The door is a six-panelled wide door.

Attached to the main block on the west side is a one-story flat roof porch supported by squared pilasters and a cluster of three columns at each corner. The cluster includes a square plain column with flanking rounded Ionic columns. Also a single Ionic column is placed in the center of this porch width. On top of the porch is a low solid paneled balustrade with square corner posts that recently has been rebuilt. Also attached to the west side is a two-story polygonal projecting bay that partially overlaps the joint between the main block and rear ell. Most likely this is a late nineteenth century addition.

Extending from the rear of the house is a tall two-story rear ell and a lower one and one-half / two-story rear ell. The sides of the first rear ell have been built out with flat roofed sections with exterior walls on the same plane as the main block side walls. On each side roof slope of the rear ell is a wide shed roof dormer with two windows in each. On the east side a one and one-half story gable roof side ell extends to connect with the barn. In front of this side ell (which connects with the barn) is a flat roofed late nineteenth century addition with a two-story projecting bay on the east wall. The west side of the rear ell has a recessed entrance which is on an angle within the recess and has an Italianate door with paired roundheaded lights on one angle and a window of the other.

The barn projects slightly in front of the side ell with its gable front facing the street. A dilapidated pergola of the early twentieth century extends parallel to this facade. Windows are casement with six-by-six sash with three up and five down. In the gable peak is a triangular shaped, slightly raised matchstick fan. The barn is six bays deep and displays an irregular fenestration pattern on the east side wall which is on a raised stone foundation. Most windows on the side of the barn are six-over-six double hung sash.

*Current appearance:* Little has changed from the historic appearance of the property with the exception of twentieth century replacement doors at less important entrances, a french door entrance to the side ell near the barn, and an iron circular fire stairs on the west side near the projecting bay. Missing fabric is evident in places such as the lack of a volute on the top of one of the colonnaded porch columns and the solid second-story balustrade on the west side porch which is being replaced as this report is written.

## 7. *History of Property*

a. *Deed History* Book 13205 Page 441 of 1978 shows the Newton Historic Preservation Association sale of the Allen Homestead to the Allen School and House Preservation Corporation. NHPA had purchased from the Estate of Ruby Keefer, Legatees: Trinity Church, Boston; Unitarian Church of West Newton; Radcliffe College; and Smith College. The original deed with property description is in Book 674, Page 288.

b. *Development History* According to map history this property was built after 1848 and before 1854 when Nathaniel T. Allen (1823-1903) purchased the property for his residence and a private school with progressive ideas. However, there is a Plan of Webster Place from 1844 showing the house, side ell, and barn on this lot which then extended north to River Street. This plan indicates that the house was built by 1844 although it does not appear on the 1848 map.

The significance of the place is associated with Allen who had worked with Horace Mann, first Secretary of the State Board of Education, to begin a model school, known as the Normal School. After launching the model school, which was moved to Framingham for additional space, Mann moved to Ohio to be president of Antioch College and convinced Allen to remain in Newton to establish a private school at the Normal School site which was on the corner of Washington and Highland Streets where the Unitarian Church is today. Allen agreed and in 1853, with his two brothers, George and James, opened the West Newton English and Classical School. In 1854 Allen purchased this property which is displayed on the 1855 map as the same configuration with the school wing marked as a barn. Although referred to as the Allen School the private co-educational school formally was Allen Brothers' West Newton English and Classical School. The main school building remained on Washington Street until 1903 at which time it was moved to Waltham Street just north of River Street.

The Nathaniel Topliff Allen Homestead served as the residence for Allen, his wife and three daughters, as a dormitory for the boys attending the West Newton English and Classical School and as school rooms for additional classes, including the first kindergarten in 1863 and a gymnasium with bowling alley in the converted barn part of the property. Allen was an innovative and creative leader in the educational world. The school had a co-educational student body from many countries including a number of students of color. Allen believed that the total program was important including physical education, caring for pets, and every day chores to promote responsibility.

Following Allen's death in 1903, the English and Classical School moved to Waltham Street and Allen's daughters continued a school at this property, the family homestead. It was known as The Misses Allen School and Nathaniel Topliff Allen's daughter Lucy Ellis Allen was the principal. By 1915 the school

was known as The Allen School for Girls and continued at this site until 1943. Ruby Keefer was a teacher here from 1919 until the school closed in 1943 and inherited the property. Her estate distributed the property to Trinity Church, Boston; Unitarian Church of West Newton; Radcliffe College; and Smith College. After much negotiation the property which was in disrepair was sold to Newton Historic Preservation Association in 1978.

## 8. *Significance of Property*

a. *Period of Significance* The period of significance for this property extends from its construction date in ca. 1844 to 1943 when the school closed. The most significant date is 1854 when Allen purchased this property for his residence and some school activities.

b. *Historical Significance* The history of the Nathaniel Topliff Allen Homestead and the Allen School is significant for the property's association with local education as well as national educational theory. Also Allen was known as a leader in the anti-slavery movement.

c. *Architectural Significance* The Nathaniel Topliff Allen Homestead is significant for its representation of the Greek Revival Style in West Newton. The bold interpretation indicates the importance of the property in the community and it is one of the best remaining examples.

d. *Landmark Designation Criteria* The Nathaniel Topliff Allen Homestead meets criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 22-93 of Newton's Ordinance T-288. The property is:

- individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- importantly associated with the development of West Newton as a village within the City of Newton;
- historically and architecturally significant for its representation of the Greek Revival Style in a full blown fashion and representative of the adaptation of a residence to serve multiple purposes;
- at a location and setting which continues to be used and could be preserved;
- representative of the original design retaining most of its original fabric.

## 9. *Recommendations*

a. *Preservation Recommendations* The property was restored in the early 1980s and has had little maintenance since. At that time the project was undertaken with the assistance of a federal and state grant programs a preservation restriction was applied to the property for a period of fifteen years. That protection has expired.

b. *Important Features* Of greatest importance are the scale and massing of the building, the monumental columns, and the architectural detail of the trim of the main block.

## 10. *Standards for Design Review*

a. *General Standards* All projects affecting the property should be evaluated by considering the effect that proposed changes would have on the general design, arrangement, texture, and material of the features involved and the relationship of such features to the surrounding area. In the case of additions, the appropriateness of size, shape and location of the additions is of critical concern. The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation should provide a baseline for review of changes to a landmark property.

b. *Specific Standards* The context and setting on the lot of this building is critical to its overall design and integrity. Thus the Commission should consider setback and dimensional requirements that may be more restrictive than the zoning code for the south and west sides of the original block.

Specific design standards have been addressed in the late nineteenth century additions with regard to height, proportion of windows and doors, scale and architectural detail. The same principles should be applied in developing a design for changes and in reviewing proposed changes, such that the key features retain their prominence and continue to stand out as examples of fine craftsmanship. Thus the following specific design standards refer to the main block and the attached barn/school.

### *Exterior Walls*

- No new openings should be allowed on the original part of the main block nor in the main facade of the barn.
- No existing openings should be filled so that the original opening is not recognizable. Thus a change in an existing opening must be done in such a fashion as to still read as an opening.
- Wood siding should be retained and replaced in kind.

### *Windows*

- All windows of the main block particularly the triple hung sash should be preserved or replaced with wood sash having the same frame, mullion and light configuration and dimensions as existing.
- Original window design and arrangement of openings should be retained.
- Deteriorated and missing window elements and architectural features should be replaced with material and elements which match the original in material, texture, size, shape, profile, configuration and detail of installation.

### *Entrances/Doors*

- The original entrance design and arrangement of door openings should be retained.
- When replacement is necessary, it should be based on physical and documentary evidence or on appropriateness of style with the period of architecture.
- The leaded side lights flanking the main entrance and the fanlights should be retained where possible.

### *Roof*

- Roof elements and shape should be preserved. The use of architectural asphalt roof shingles could be considered to replace slate although preservation of the slate particularly on the main block would be the first choice.
- The additions of dormers on the main block particularly would be inappropriate. All replacement flashing and gutters should be copper or match the original materials.



### *Additions*

- Additions have been made to the rear to retain the prominence of the main Greek Revival block. This should be the guiding principle of any future additions.
- Additions have been designed so that they are differentiated from the original building. New additions should follow the same principle.
- New additions should not be located near the main or front facade, nor extending from the sides of the original block.

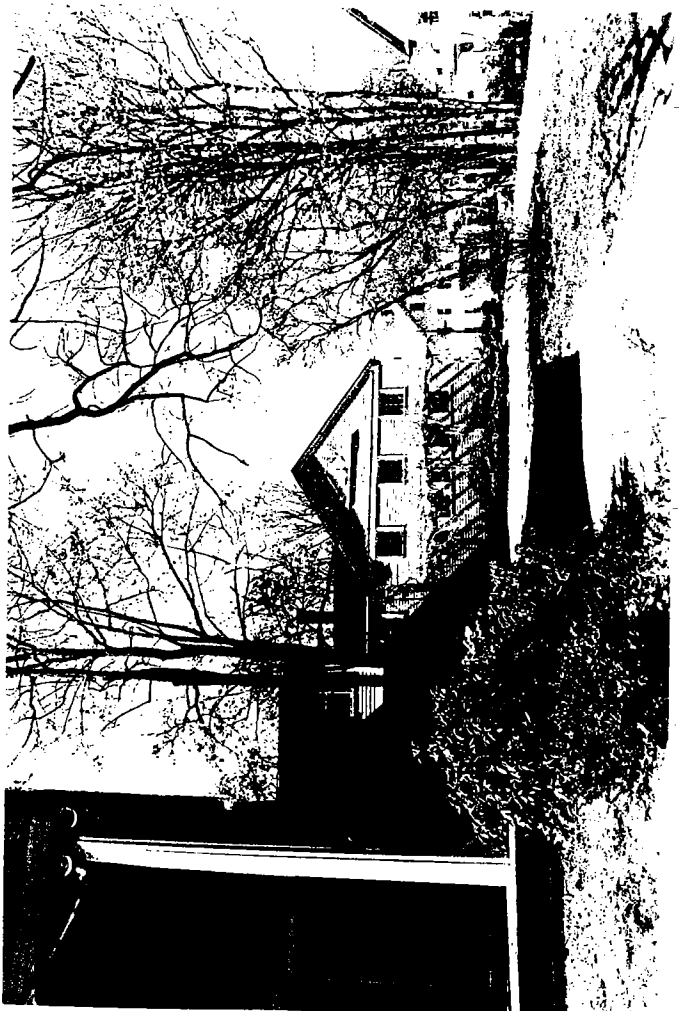
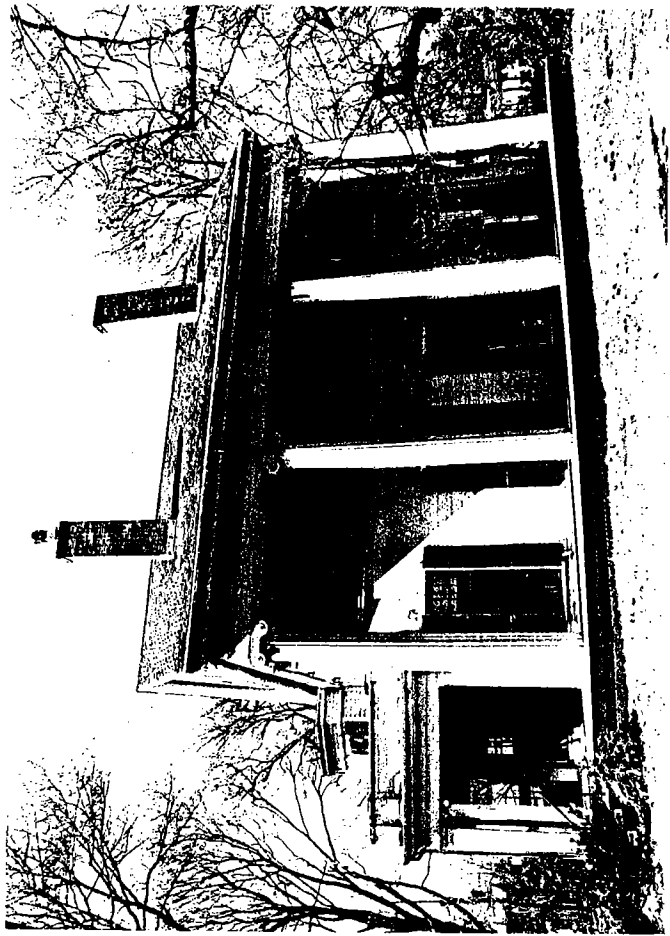
### *Accessibility*

- If accessibility is considered it should be planned for entrance into the rear or side ell where there is minimal grade change at the entrances and where the historic fabric has been altered slightly.

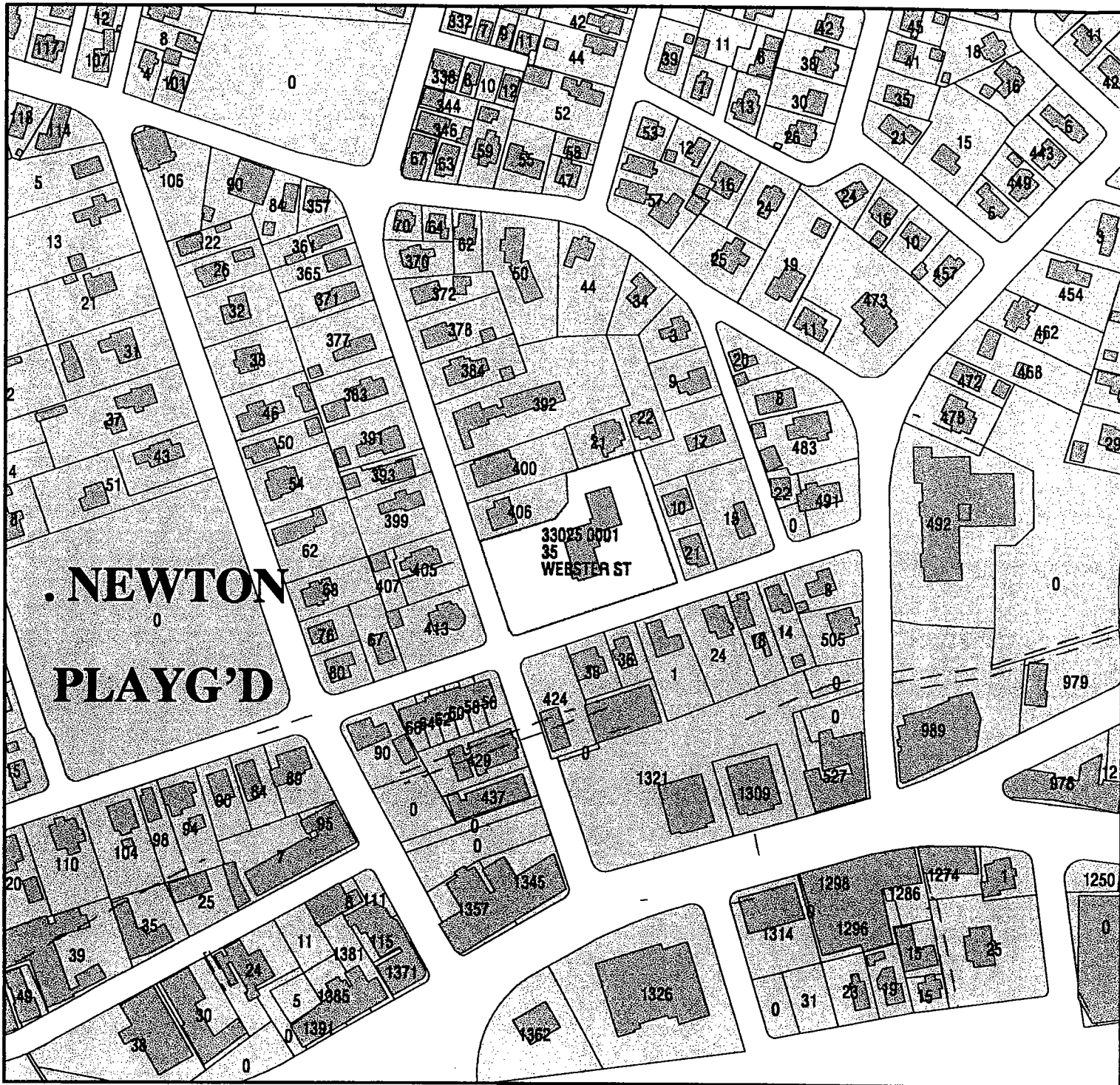
## 11. *Notification*

<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>S/B/L</u>
400 Cherry St.	33/025/0002A
405 Cherry St.	33/024/0022
406 Cherry St.	33/025/0002
413 Cherry St.	33/024/0024
428-434 Cherry St.	33/011/0002
10-12 Columbus Place	33/025/0019
21-23 Columbus Place	33/025/0021
30 Webster St.	33/011/0005
36 Webster St.	33/011/0004
38-40 Webster St.	33/011/0003





Sbl-Id	Address	Draft Map, Not a Legal Document S-date	Sale-price	Map-Id	Zone	LU	Sq-ft
33025 0001	35 WEBSTER ST	0	0	028SE	MR1	111	53423



## Assessor's Base Map

Map Produced on: July 10, 1997

Property boundaries from Newton Assessor's property maps  
 Zoning or land use information from Assessor's CAMA database  
 Map projection & coordinate system: Massachusetts State Plane - NAD83

CITY OF  
**NEWTON**  
 MASSACHUSETTS  
 ASSESSING DEPARTMENT  
 1000 COMMONWEALTH AVE.  
 NEWTON CENTRE, MA 02159

Scale: 1" = 235 ft.



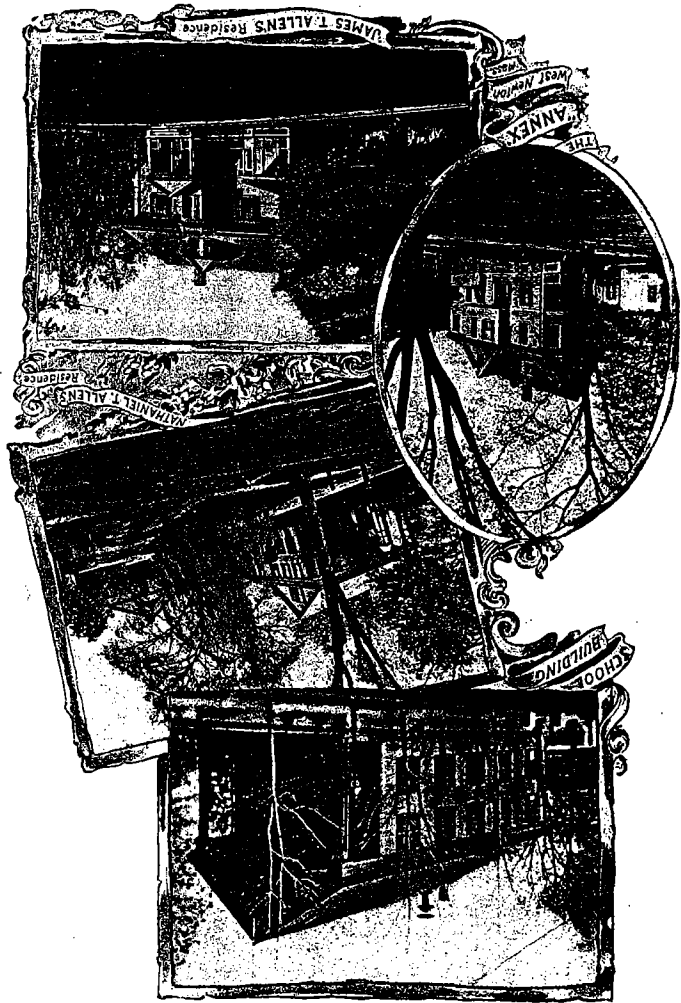
Parcels labeled with Lot Number

***HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS***

ALLEN BROTHERS'  
West Newton  
English & Classical School

*Established 1855*  
*Incorporated 1855*

BOSTON  
Geo. H. Ellis, Printer, 272 Congress Street  
1899



WEBSTER PLACE,  
in

**NEWTON.**

belonging to

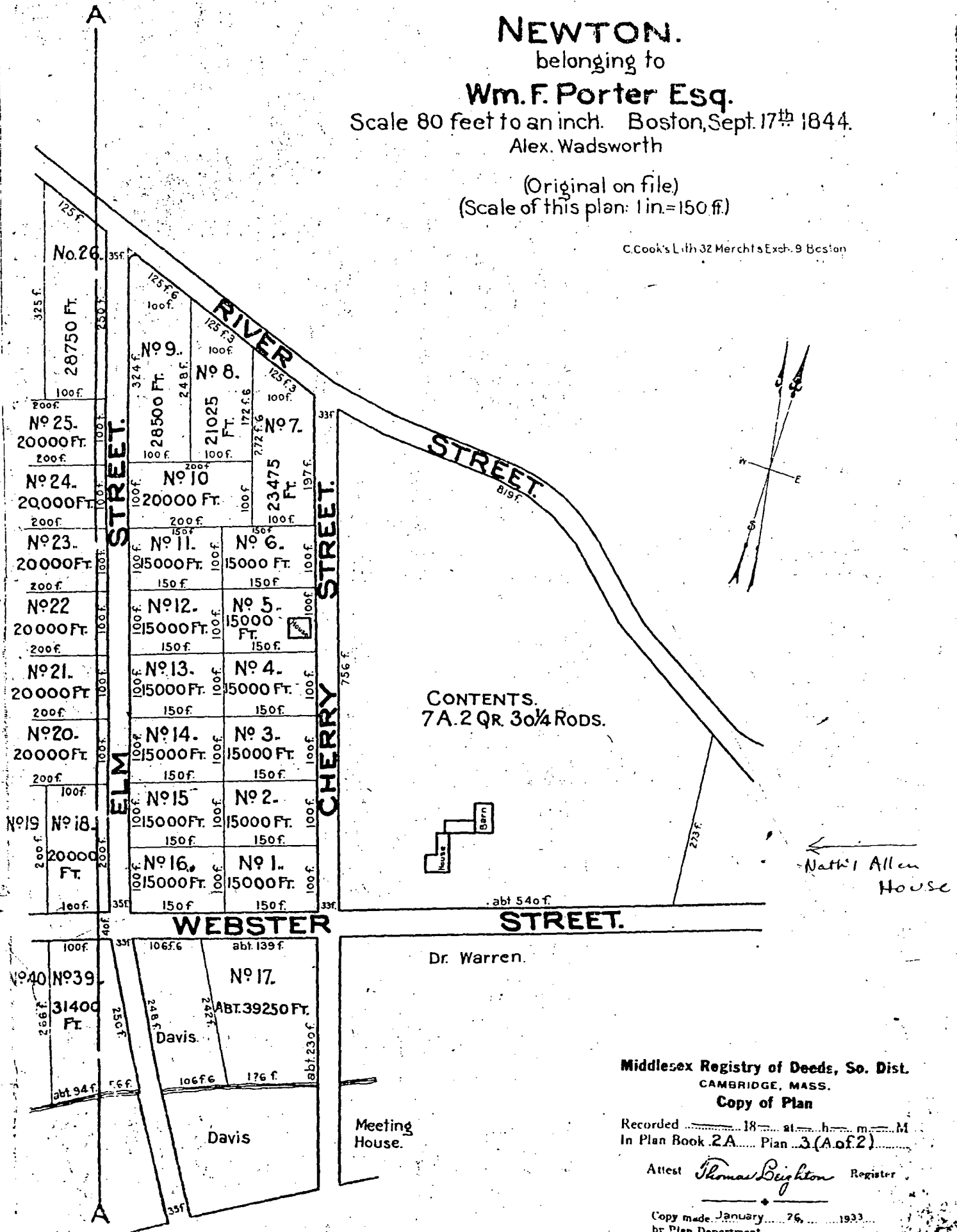
**Wm. F. Porter Esq.**

Scale 80 feet to an inch. Boston, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> 1844.

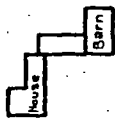
Alex. Wadsworth

(Original on file)  
(Scale of this plan: 1 in. = 150 ft.)

C. Cook's Lith 32 Merchants Exch. 9 Boston



CONTENTS.  
7 A. 2 QR. 30 1/4 RODS.



Nathl Allen House

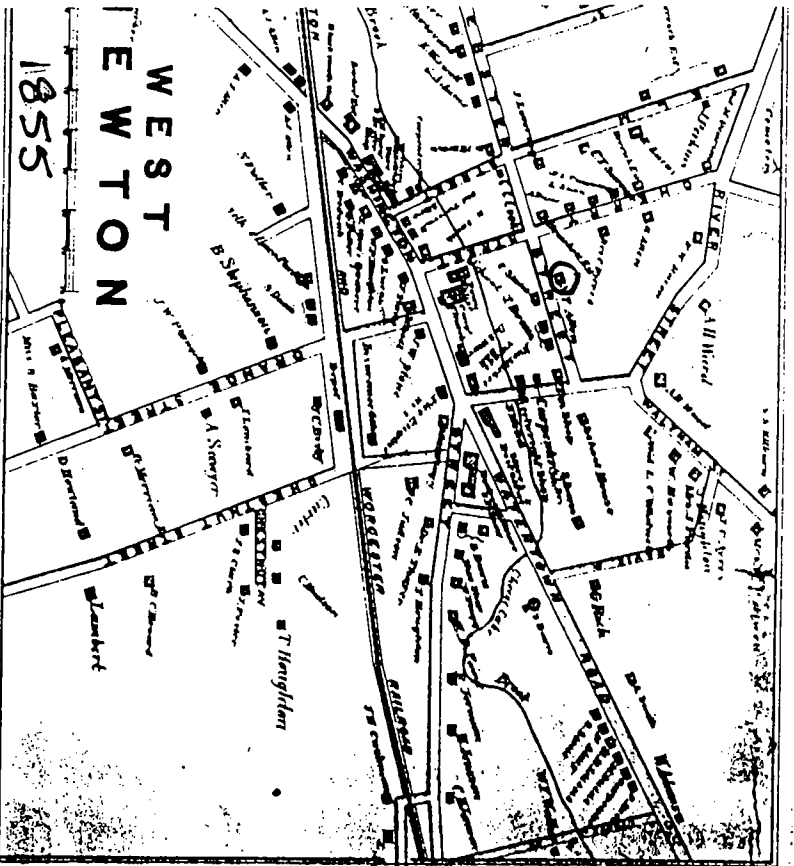
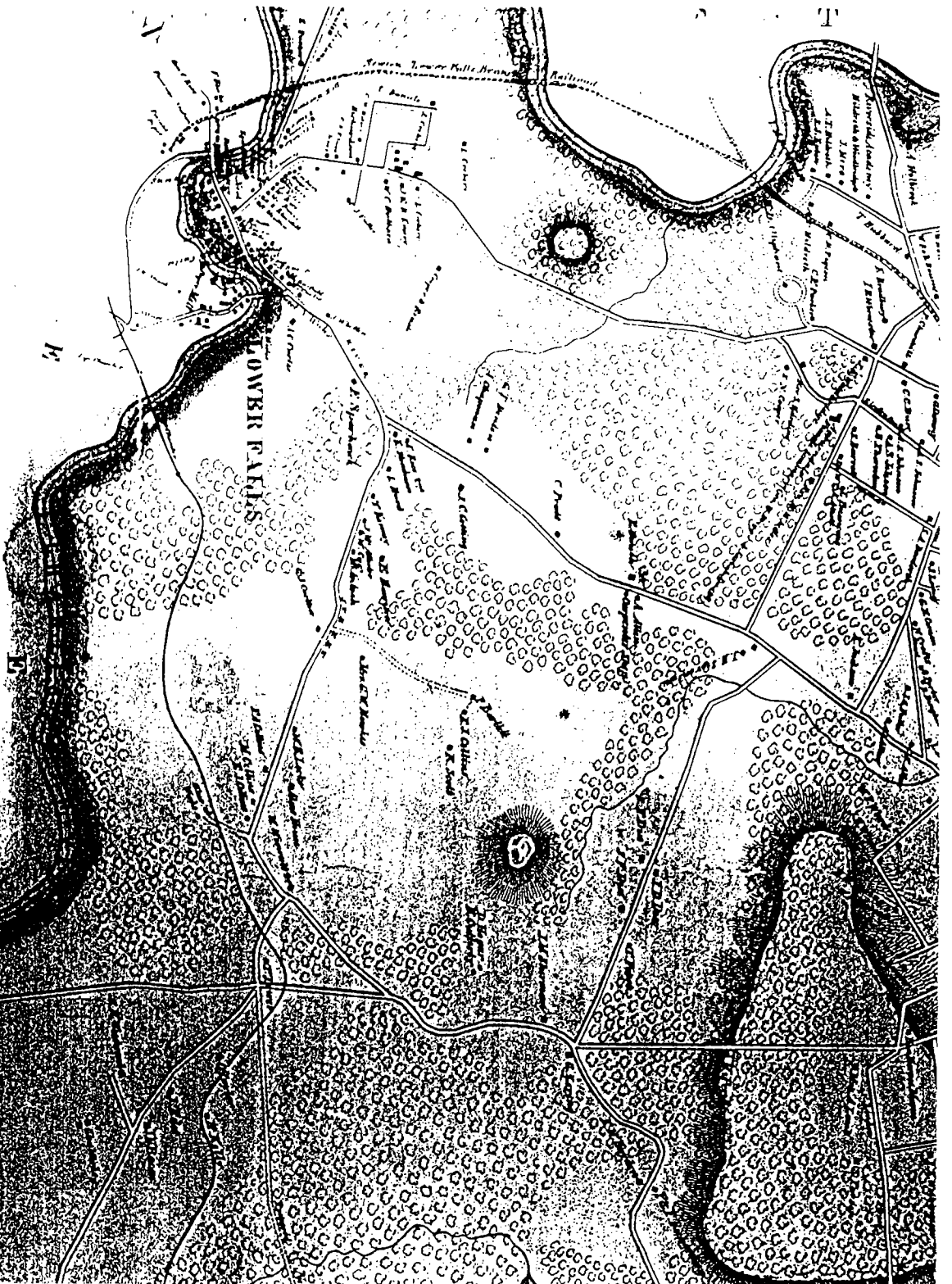
Middlesex Registry of Deeds, So. Dist.  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Copy of Plan

Recorded 18... at... h... m... M  
In Plan Book 2A... Plan 3 (A of 2)

Attest *Thomas Bighton* Register

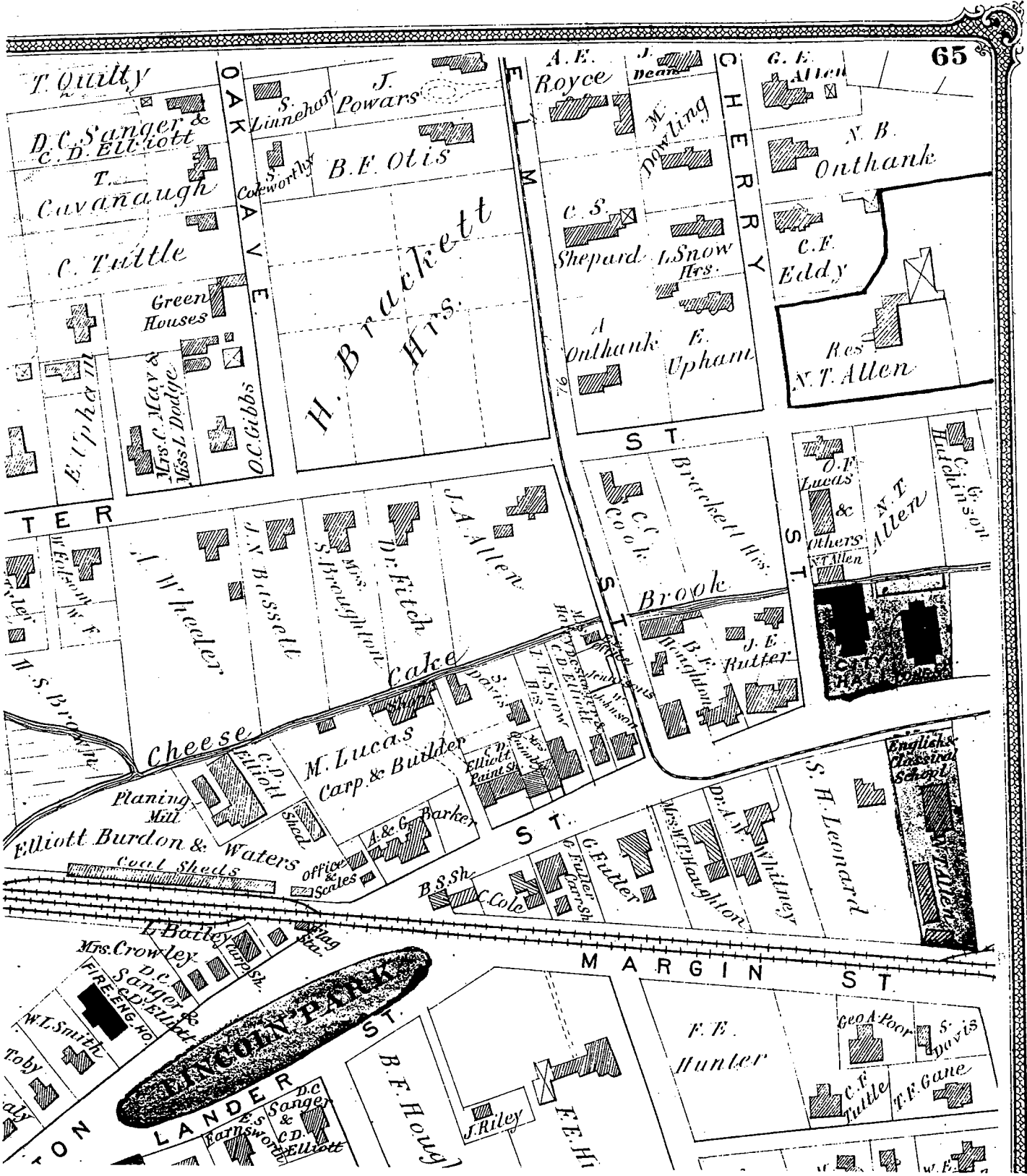
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by Plan Department.



11

W.A.D.

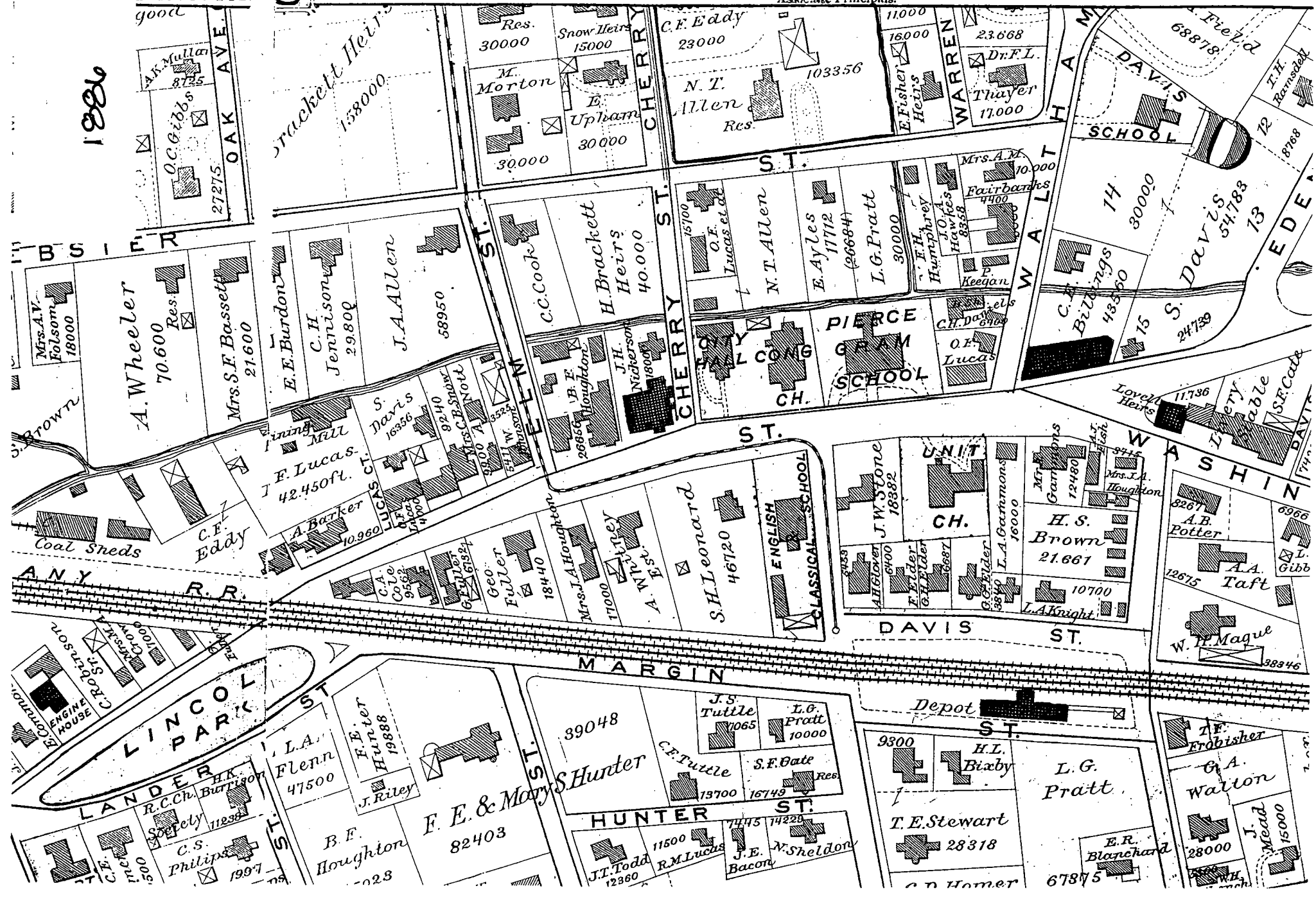




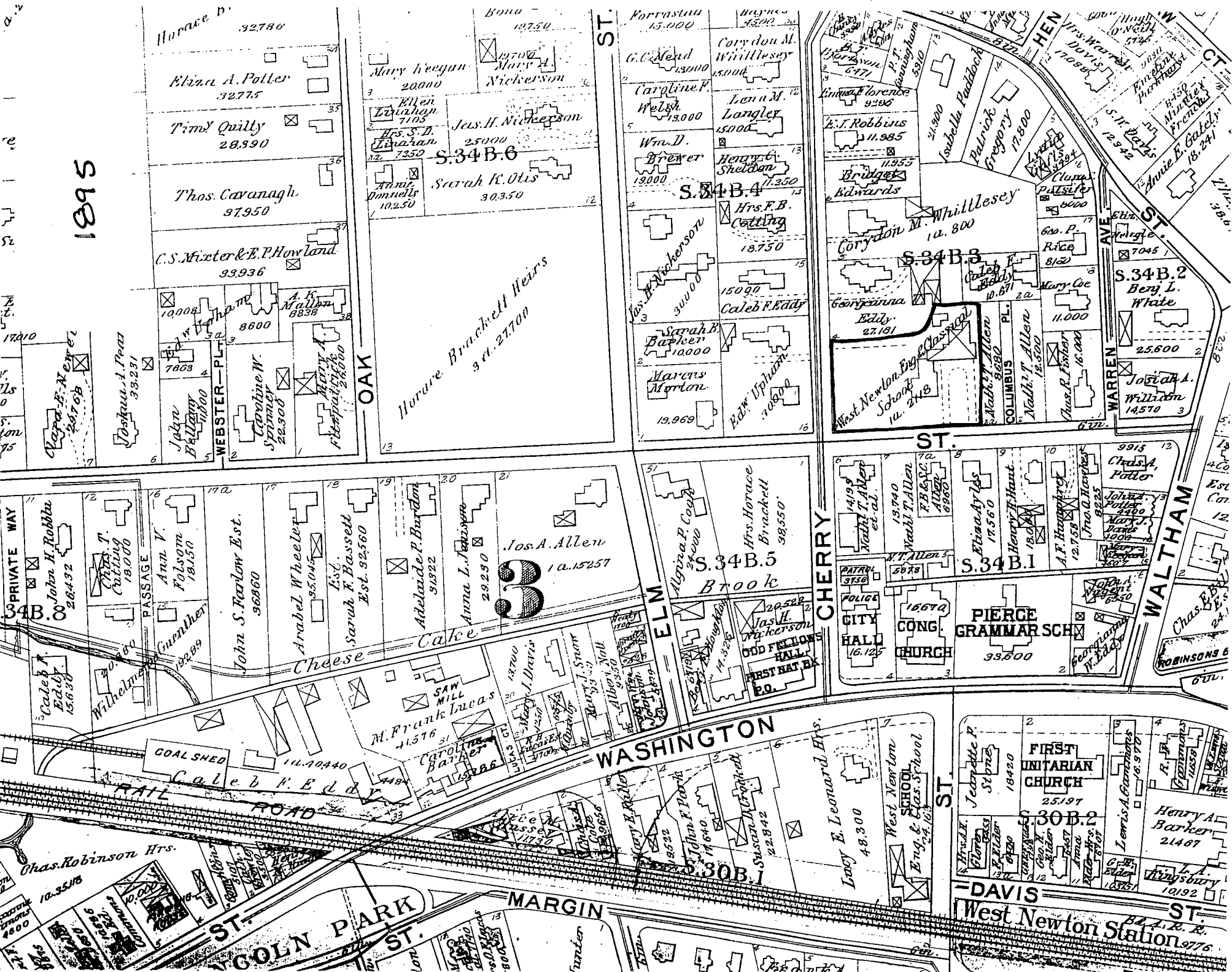
ALLEN BROTHERS,  
West Newton English and Classical School,  
(Incorporated 1855.)  
NATHANIEL T. ALLEN, Principal.  
JAMES T. ALLEN and GEORGE E. ALLEN,  
Associate Principals.

SECTION

for ADJACENT MAP



1895



Horace B. 32780  
Eliza A. Potter 32775  
Timothy Quilly 28,990  
Thos. Cavanagh 37,950  
C.S. Mixer & E.P. Howland 33,936  
A.K. Mallon 8838  
John Bellamy 10,000  
Caroline W. Spinner 22,500  
Mary A. Flanagan 26,000  
Cape E. N. Newell 25,768  
Joshua L. Peaz 33,231  
John Bellamy 10,000  
Caroline W. Spinner 22,500  
Mary A. Flanagan 26,000

Mary Keegan 20,000  
Mrs. S. D. Luzzan 7350  
Sarah K. Otis 30,350  
Jens. H. Nickerson 25,000  
Sarah K. Otis 30,350  
Horace Brackett Heirs 30,27700  
Ellen Linnahan 7103  
Mrs. S. D. Luzzan 7350  
Annie Dinnelly 10,250  
Jens. H. Nickerson 25,000  
Sarah K. Otis 30,350  
Mary Keegan 20,000  
Mrs. S. D. Luzzan 7350  
Annie Dinnelly 10,250  
Jens. H. Nickerson 25,000  
Sarah K. Otis 30,350

Fortastau 15,000  
G.C. Mead 13,000  
Caroline F. Welsh 13,000  
Wm. D. Brewer 19,000  
Sarah B. Barker 10,000  
Marion Morton 19,969  
Corydon M. Whittlesey 15,000  
Len M. Langley 15,000  
Henry C. Sheldon 11,350  
Mrs. F.B. Cutting 18,750  
Caleb F. Eddy 15,000  
Eddy Upham 10,800  
Sarah B. Barker 10,000  
Marion Morton 19,969  
Caleb F. Eddy 15,000  
Eddy Upham 10,800

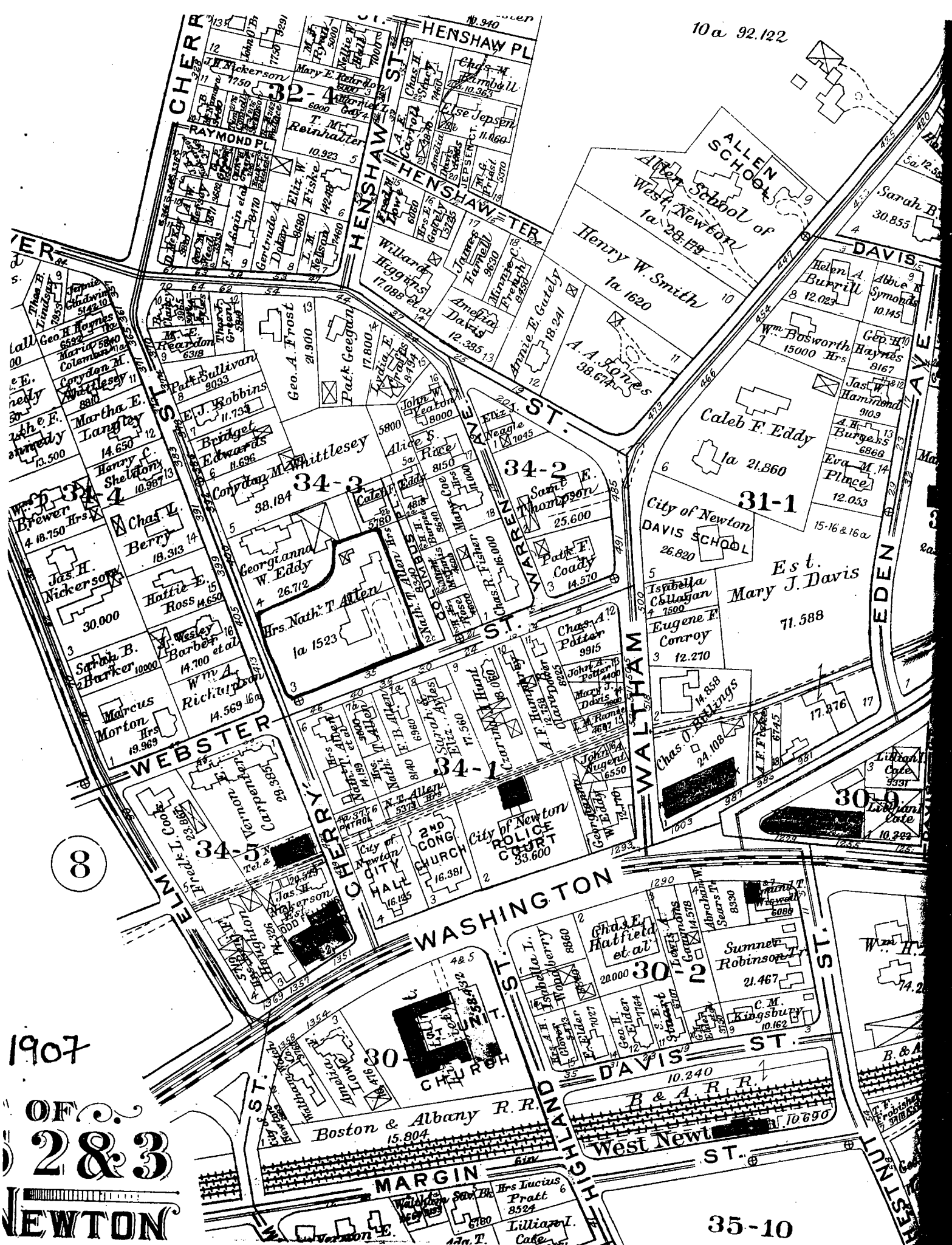
Limona Lawrence 9,200  
E.J. Robbins 11,985  
Edwards 11,955  
Corydon M. Whittlesey 14,800  
Georgeanna Eddy 27,101  
West Newton Eng. School 14,218  
Mrs. J. Allen 9,280  
Nath. T. Allen 12,500  
Josiah A. White 25,600  
Benj. L. White 25,600  
Mary Lee 11,000  
Josiah A. White 25,600  
Benj. L. White 25,600  
Mary Lee 11,000  
Josiah A. White 25,600  
Benj. L. White 25,600

John H. Robbitt 28,432  
Chas. T. Cutting 19,000  
Ann V. Folsom 18,150  
John S. Farlow Est. 36,860  
Arabel Wheeler 35,045  
Sarah F. Bassett Est. 32,560  
Adelaide P. Burdum 31,922  
Anna L. Nickerson 29,290  
Jos. A. Allen 14,15257  
Caleb Eddy 15,638  
Wilhelmina 19,289  
John S. Farlow Est. 36,860  
Arabel Wheeler 35,045  
Sarah F. Bassett Est. 32,560  
Adelaide P. Burdum 31,922  
Anna L. Nickerson 29,290  
Jos. A. Allen 14,15257  
Caleb Eddy 15,638  
Wilhelmina 19,289  
John S. Farlow Est. 36,860  
Arabel Wheeler 35,045  
Sarah F. Bassett Est. 32,560  
Adelaide P. Burdum 31,922  
Anna L. Nickerson 29,290  
Jos. A. Allen 14,15257

Alvina P. Cook 24,000  
Mrs. Horace Brickett 38,550  
Nath. T. Allen et al. 14,199  
Nath. T. Allen 19,940  
F.B. C. Allen 11,000  
Ethiopyles 17,560  
Henry H. Hunt 18,000  
A.F. Huntington 12,755  
M. Allen 5 5878  
Nath. T. Allen 19,940  
F.B. C. Allen 11,000  
Ethiopyles 17,560  
Henry H. Hunt 18,000  
A.F. Huntington 12,755  
M. Allen 5 5878  
Nath. T. Allen 19,940  
F.B. C. Allen 11,000  
Ethiopyles 17,560  
Henry H. Hunt 18,000  
A.F. Huntington 12,755  
M. Allen 5 5878

Chas. A. Potter 9,915  
John F. Potter 4,260  
Mary J. Potter 1,000  
Geo. H. Potter 1,000  
Nath. T. Allen 19,940  
F.B. C. Allen 11,000  
Ethiopyles 17,560  
Henry H. Hunt 18,000  
A.F. Huntington 12,755  
M. Allen 5 5878  
Nath. T. Allen 19,940  
F.B. C. Allen 11,000  
Ethiopyles 17,560  
Henry H. Hunt 18,000  
A.F. Huntington 12,755  
M. Allen 5 5878  
Chas. A. Potter 9,915  
John F. Potter 4,260  
Mary J. Potter 1,000  
Geo. H. Potter 1,000  
Nath. T. Allen 19,940  
F.B. C. Allen 11,000  
Ethiopyles 17,560  
Henry H. Hunt 18,000  
A.F. Huntington 12,755  
M. Allen 5 5878  
Nath. T. Allen 19,940  
F.B. C. Allen 11,000  
Ethiopyles 17,560  
Henry H. Hunt 18,000  
A.F. Huntington 12,755  
M. Allen 5 5878

10a 92.122



1907  
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 2 & 3  
 NEWTON

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