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***NEWTON LOCAL LANDMARK REPORT***

***Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farm***

***1615 Beacon Street***

**Prepared for:  
Newton Historical  
Commission  
January 2015**

## Staples -Craft-Wiswall Farm

1615 Beacon Street

### 1. *Name of Property*

- a. *Historic Name:* Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farm
- b. *Common Name:* None

### 2. *Location*

- a. *Street Address:* 1615 Beacon Street
- b. *Zip Code:* Newton, MA 02468
- c. *Assessor's #:* 53032-0007

### 3. *Classification*

- a. *Ownership of Property:* Private
- b. *Type of Property:* Residence/Business
- c. *National Register Status:* Eligible

### 4. *Function or Use*

a. *Historic Functions:* Built c.1750 as a farmstead, this house continues to be inhabited as a single family residence. Attached outbuildings constructed over time on the property are no longer in evidence, as the current owner demolished them in preparation for his dentist office, which is attached to the side and rear of the residence.

b. *Current Functions:* This house continues to face Beacon Street on what is now a 31,055 square foot lot at the corner of Beacon Street and Windsor Road. This residential lot is bordered by mixed uses, including business, community center, residential and public use across the street.

### 5. *Zoning*

The Zoning District is Single Residence 2, which requires a minimum 15,000 square foot lot for single family use, and a minimum frontage of 100 feet. Single family dwellings are allowable by right; occupancy by more than one family is only allowed by special permit.

### 6. *Description*

*Neighborhood Description:* The property is located in the Waban Village Center amid commercial, residential, and public properties at a thriving intersection in Waban. This property is listed both individually and as part of historic district on the

National Register of Historic Places. Included as part of the Strong Block District, the commercial buildings located across Windsor Road were built from the 1920s to the 50s in the Flemish Gable Style. The farmhouse under review with this report is not believed to be the first at this location, but represents the architectural evolution of a c.1750 farmhouse that is believed to have replaced an earlier building. Documentary evidence suggests that an earlier house at this site was constructed c.1690 but was no longer extant by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. This house provides the oldest link in Waban to its agricultural beginnings. (See Form NWT.3740 for full ownership history of this property.)

An 1874 insurance map of this parcel shows an area of land bordered by what is now Beacon, Homer and Chestnut Streets as owned first by Deacon John Staples in 1690. Moses Craft appears as owner in 1729; Joseph Craft in 1733; and William Wiswall in 1788. The parcel encompassed most of what was known as Moffatt Hill in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1886 the property was owned by William C. Strong, listed in directories as a nurseryman, florist, and real estate agent. His business was located in Nonantum on the Brighton line. Under his ownership, large portions of land formerly associated with this house was subdivided along Beacon, Homer and Chestnut Streets, and the Boston and Albany RR line extended through this property. At this time, the house had one rear addition and two detached outbuildings.

By 1895, the house displayed its Queen Anne-era window bays and attached outbuilding on the rear of the house. A large freestanding barn remained at the rear of the lot. By this year, the size of the lot was vastly reduced to what appear to be its current dimensions. Windsor Road was also platted by 1895, both sides of which Strong still owned. In an effort to create a thriving new village of Waban (which until then had been farmsteads) , by 1907 William Strong subdivided, and created house lots for, Kinmonth Road, Hereford, Winsted, and Kent Streets.

By 1917, this intersection was becoming more mixed-use. The post office was built on the Strong property adjacent to the RR tracks on the east side, and the vacant lot east of 1615 Beacon Street became the Waban Neighborhood Club. Elbert G. Allen, an engineer and Boston commuter, appears on the 1917 map as owner of 1615 Beacon.

By 1929, the owner of the house was the Parish of the Good Shepherd, with no detached outbuildings in evidence. A commercial block of buildings at the intersection of Beacon, Windsor and Kinmonth was also apparent by this date. What had been paper streets off Kinmonth Road appeared in 1929 as land owned by the Country Club.

### *Architectural Description:*

#### *(1) Materials:*

*Foundation:* Fieldstone

*Walls:* Clapboard                      *Roof:* Gambrel

*Windows:* the largest windows are on the front south side, 4/4. Others are 2/2 and replacement 6/6.

*Ornamentation:* Mix of styles over time

*Vegetation:* Mature deciduous trees and landscaping.

(2) *Verbal Description:* The building faces Beacon Street and is set close to the road. The front façade is five bays wide with six evenly spaced sash windows on the second story. Windows appear to have been originally 6/6 but are now false-muntin 6/6 replacements. Elongated 2/4 sash windows on the first story hang beneath a shed-roofed open veranda supported by a colonnade of squared columns with simple brackets. The central entrance is flanked by full sidelights and topped by a cornice with frieze, and what is now a veranda limited to the front façade reportedly at one time spanned all three sides of the house. A rear addition on the house that is visible from the west side was reportedly added c.1768, but recent additions have made this ell hard to discern from the exterior.

Three jerkinhead dormers (e.g. canted peaks) are symmetrically placed along the south-facing gable roof. Windows in each are replacement 1/1 sash windows, but the pilastered flared and beaded trim, a nod to early Tuscan architecture, appears to be original to a c.1860 alteration. This window trim is repeated on the central paired window on the second story of the front façade.

The house is two bays deep on the west side, with a single sash window on the attic level, two sash windows on the second story and elongated sash windows beneath a hipped roof in a central bay on the first story. All windows on the west and east sides are topped by wooden, flat architrave hoods. The east side features two gabled vertical elements, the southernmost more narrow than the northernmost, separated by a windowless vertical panel with trim for a total of three bays. Both window bays have a central single sash window opening in the attic level; the window on the right bay has been removed. The second level features paired, elongated windows on both bays. A three-sided bay window with elongated sash windows and a hipped roof is centered on the left side; there is no bay on the right side, only paired sash windows that are larger than those on the second story.

All three east-side bays are framed with flat fascia boards. Pilastered corner boards with upper-edge beading frame the historic residence. The gabled roof has two interior plain brick chimneys, located on the west and east sides. The articulated roof trim on all four sides of the house has returns.

From the west side of the house, the modern addition extends nearly the length of the parcel with a parking lot abutting it to the west. Built over 20 years ago, the addition was designed to appear modern and to act as a dental clinic with associated office and waiting room space.

The east side of the lot is a manicured lawn obscured behind high fencing and landscaping.

## 7. *History of Property*

*Development History:* See attached Forms B, the most recent one written by Brian Lever

## 8. *Significance of Property*

- a. *Period of Significance* The period of significance for 1615 Beacon Street is 1750-1900. This period encompasses its construction by Moses Craft through the ownership by William Strong as of 1875, and subdivision of the property in 1886. There are no outbuildings on the property. An attached carriage barn was demolished in the 1980s to make way for an office addition on the rear and west sides. This property is known as the Staples Craft Wiswall Farm on the B Form for this property and on the MACRIS list for historic properties in the state.
- b. *Historical Significance* Historically, the structure is important for its contribution as a farmstead to a neighborhood which has seen steady growth since its settlement as an early farming community in the late 1600s. This property has served as an important visual and historical anchor in the Waban community between the well-established residential neighborhood to its north and its business center to the west and south. Its change from an agricultural property to a suburban home illustrates the changing demographic of the area as the Waban community moved into the twentieth century.
- c. *Architectural Significance* The building is architecturally significant as an example of 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture that incorporated significant features of the Federal, Greek Revival and Queen Anne styles, at a minimum. The building has retained its original conglomerated appearance over time and stands in its original location. Though the lot has been reduced in size, there is enough land to provide an appropriate setting to preserve the historic context of the property. A modern addition on the west side holds a dentist office.

d. *Landmark Designation Criteria* The Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farm meets criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 22-93 of Newton's Ordinance T-288. The property is:

- Already individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- A contributing historic resource to a National Register Historic District;
- Associated with the development of Village of Waban and Newton as a whole;
- Historically and architecturally significant for its intact representation of the Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival Styles from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century to the late nineteenth century and as an important reminder of how the neighborhood and city evolved over time;
- Compatible with future preservation and use as it retains its historic setting and context;
- Representative of the original and evolving architectural design, which retains most of its original fabric and features.

## 9. *Recommendations*

a. *Preservation Recommendations* The property has been well maintained with repairs that were appropriate and incorporated compatible materials. The building also retains the style and appearance of its period of historic significance.

b. *Important Features* The defining features of this farmstead are the general size and massing of the structure and its architectural adaptations made over time, excluding the dentist office. The Federal Style underpinnings, followed by Queen Anne, Greek Revival, and even some Tuscan influences for good measure, are architecturally important elements that define the structure and its long-term period of construction. Original materials where found are also structural indicators of the evolution of the house and should be retained and repaired where possible.

## 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, material and color 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 the landmark property.

b. *Specific Standards* Specific design standards have been addressed in the maintenance of the property 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 excellent examples of the eighteenth – to- nineteenth century vernacular and that the structure itself retains its identity as an architecturally significant early farmstead. Thus the following specific design standards refer to potential changes to the existing structure:

#### *Exterior Walls*

- Wood clapboarding should be repaired where found and restored if necessary. The current siding is aluminum, but the sheathing underneath may be of wood or an original material.
- Decorative elements should be preserved and only replaced by like materials and design when absolutely necessary.
- No new openings should be allowed on the front façade or those sides visible from Winchester Street. *Beacon*
- No existing openings should be filled in on the front façade or those sides visible from Beacon Street or Windsor Road.

#### *Windows*

- Surviving historic windows should be retained and repaired if possible. If replacement is absolutely necessary, the replacements should match as closely as possible the original window in materials, style, and design. Replacement windows already installed may be replaced with either an in-kind replacement or more historically appropriate wood windows with exterior muntins.

#### *Entrances/Doors*

- The original front entrance and door design and arrangement should be retained.
- Replacement doors, if absolutely necessary, should be fabricated to match the style and materials of the originals and the construction period of the structure.

#### *Roof*

- No changes should be made to the pitch or style of the roof

*Additions*

- The dental office addition does not contribute to the overall historical significance of the structure and may be removed at any time, in accordance with the approval of, and conditions set by the Newton Historical Commission.

11. *Notification*

The following properties are considered abutters for the purposes of notification. Owners of these properties should receive notice when this property is considered for landmark designation and for any future under the Landmark Ordinance.

<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>S/B/L</u>
1601 Beacon Street	53032-0006
1608 Beacon Street	53028-0011
466 Woodward Street	53026-0015
458 Woodward Street	53026-0016
89-97 Wyman Street	53026-0013
2-12 Windsor Road	53029-0002A
24 Windsor Road	53029-0004



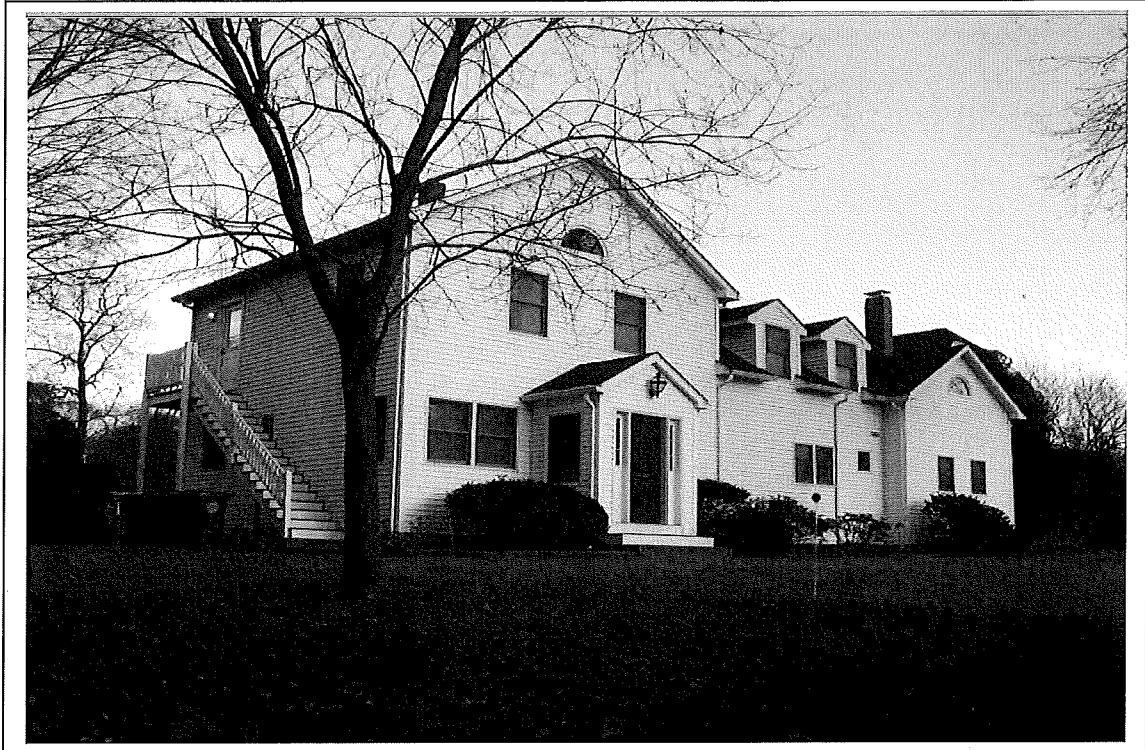
## **Historic Photographs and Maps**



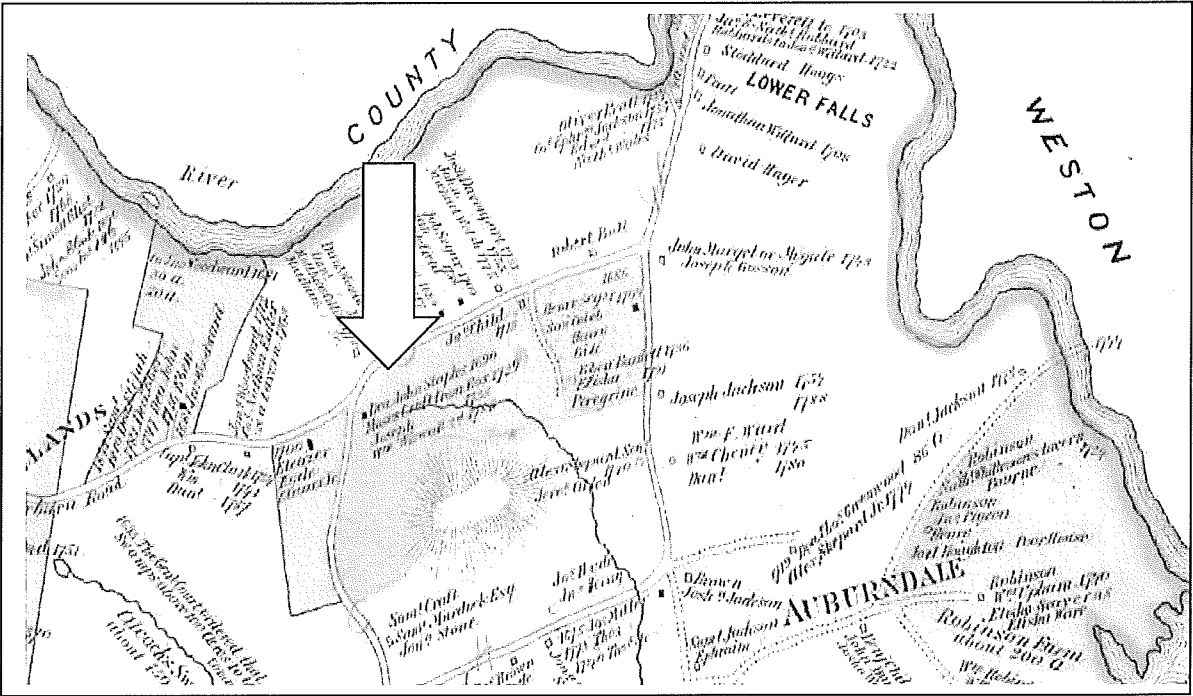
1615 Beacon Street, front façade, view from south to northeast



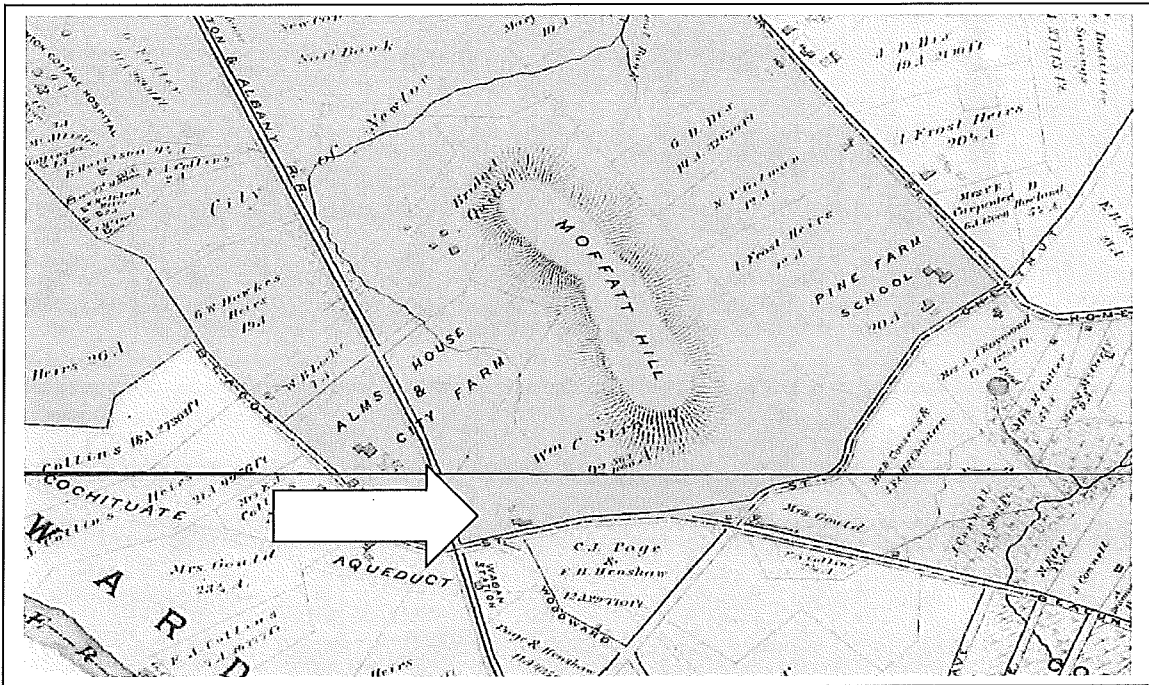
1615 Beacon Street, front façade, view from east looking west



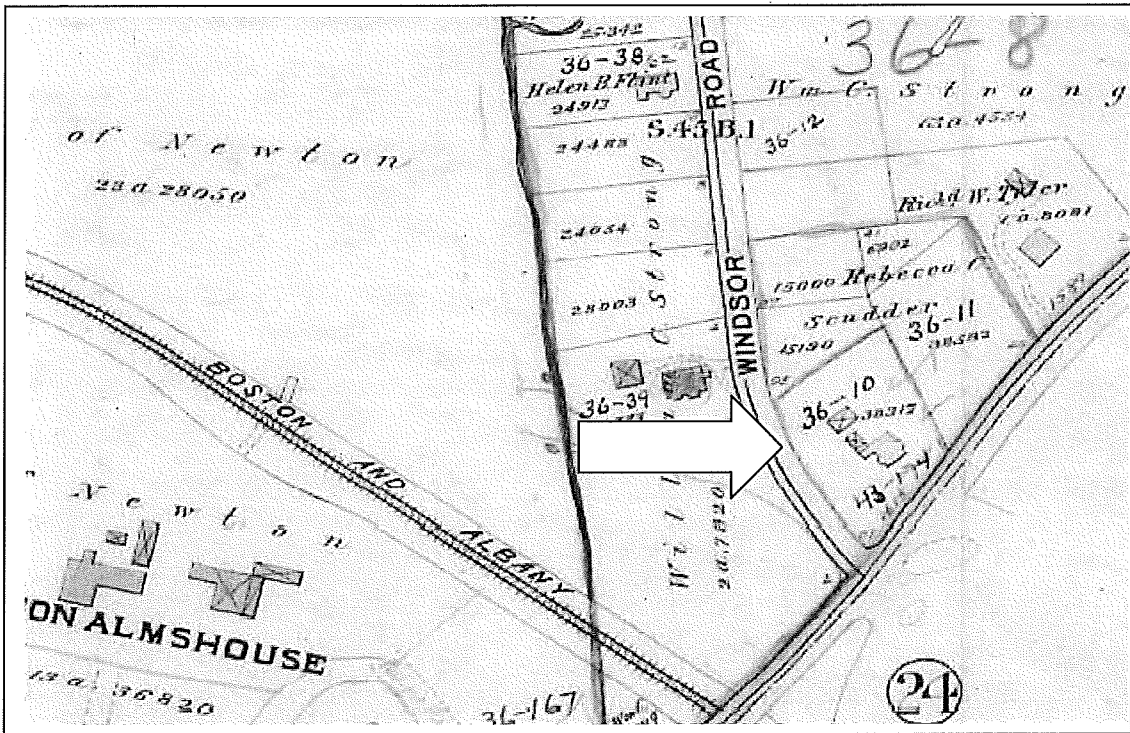
1615 Beacon Street, west façade, view from northwest looking southeast



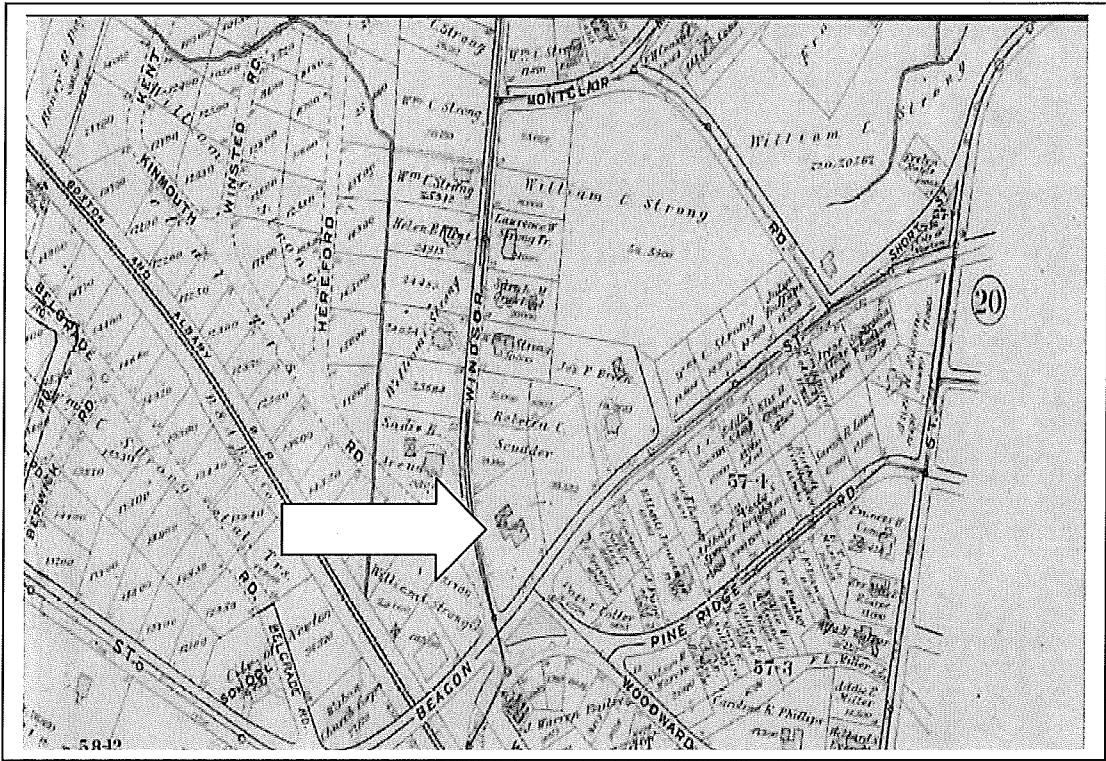
1874 Atlas



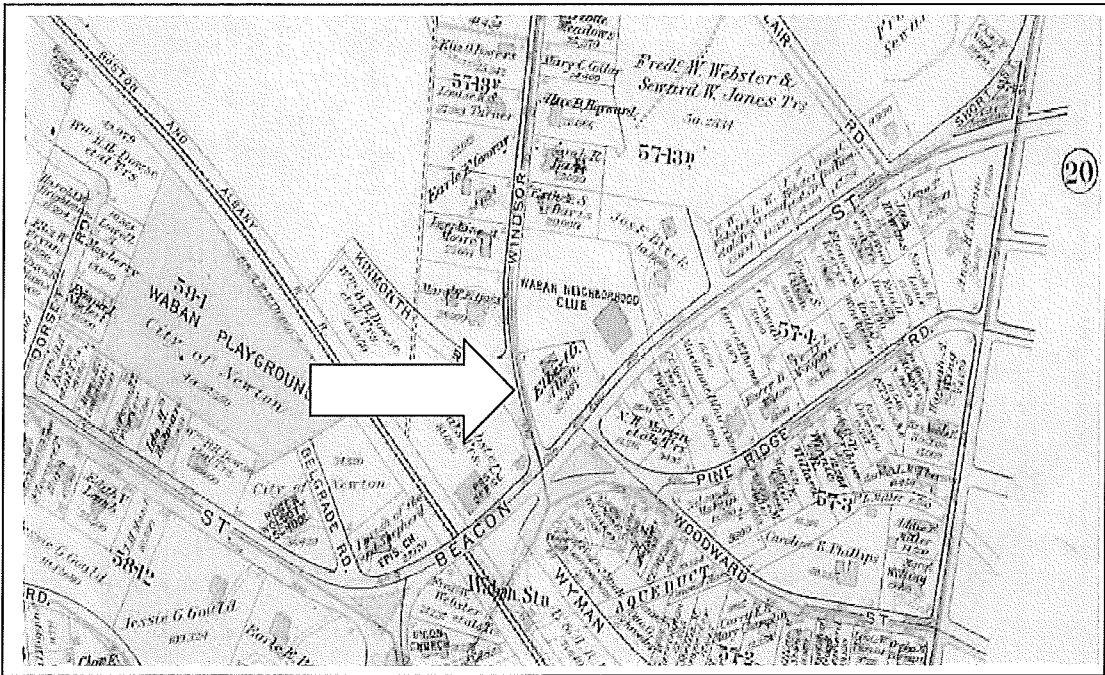
1886 Atlas



1895 Atlas



1907 Atlas



1917 Atlas



# FORM B – BUILDING

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

53032 0007 Newton NWT.DV /NWT.Y NWT.3740

Designations: NRIND NRMRA (1986)

Town/City: Newton

Place: Waban

Address: 1615 Beacon Street

Historic Name: Staples - Craft - Wiswall Farm

Uses: Present: Multi-family residence  
Original: Residence

Date of Construction: Circa 1750

Source: Jackson, History of Newton, Historic maps

Style/Form: Georgian / Federal / Greek Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:  
Foundation: Fieldstone / Concrete  
Wall/Trim: Aluminum Siding

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None

Major Alterations: Rear ell added, 1768.  
Circa 1858 rear addition added.  
1986 rear carriage house addition demolished and replaced with new residential unit.

Condition: Fair

Moved: no  yes  Date:

Acreage: 31,055 square feet

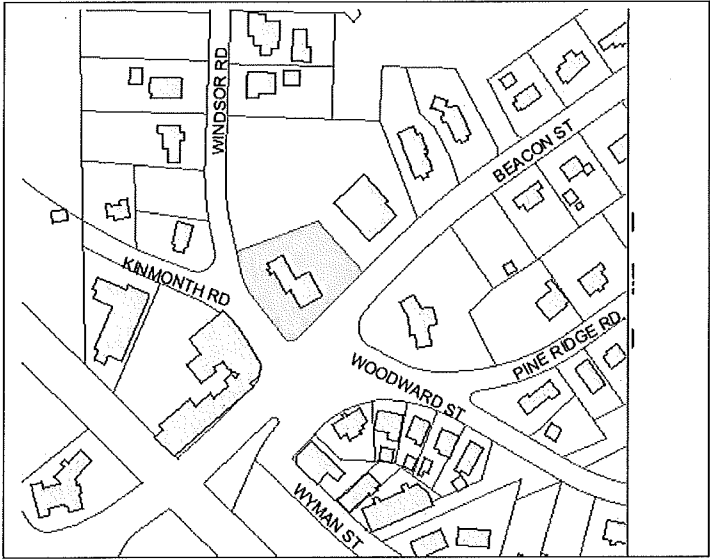
Setting: Located at a major intersection in the village center of Waban located next to commercial block and adjacent to residences.

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

## Photograph



## Locus Map



Recorded by: Brian Lever  
Organization: City of Newton  
Date: 12/2010

RECEIVED  
JLY 05 2011  
MASS. HIST. COMM.

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

NEWTON

1615 BEACON STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)

Form No.

NWT.DV / NWT.Y

NWT.3740

 Listed in the National Register of Historic Places.**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

Over time this home has gone through various changes and includes multiple architectural styles. The present building consists of main block supported by a fieldstone foundation that is two and one half stories and five bays wide by two bays deep with a jerkin side gabled asphalt shingle roof with three dormers on the front roof. Off the rear of the main block are two additions: an 18<sup>th</sup> century two story, two by two bay ell and a late 19<sup>th</sup> century addition filling in the void between the ell and the main block that is two and one half stories high and two by two bays. Located off of the rear of the rear ell is a 1986 wing that replaced an older 19<sup>th</sup> century connected carriage house / barn. The façade consists of vinyl siding, pilasters at the corners and in between the main block and rear addition, and boxed cornice with returns with fascia board below. There are a variety of windows including double hung vinyl 6/6 and 1/1 replacement windows, bays windows, 2/2 wood double hung windows, floor to ceiling triple track windows on the front façade with entablature, coupled windows above the front entrance, as well as fanlights on the 1986 addition. Most of the windows have been replaced with the exception of those at the first floor on the front façade. An attic window has been filled in on the east façade of the rear addition. The front façade has a porch with square posts with brackets and a shed roof as well as a center entrance with sidelights and a glass and wood panel door. Two brick interior chimneys are located on the roof at the end of the main block and building has two skylights on the roof of the rear addition as well as one gabled and one hipped dormer. The 1986 rear addition supported by a concrete foundation is two and one half stories eight by four bays with a cross gabled asphalt roof with one brick interior chimney, two gabled dormers, and one shed dormer. This addition as a rear second story entrance and a first floor entrance on the west façade with sidelights and a glass and wood panel door.

Originally constructed as a Georgian style home this building occupied the same lot as an earlier home constructed circa 1688. Parts of that earlier home may have been reused in this building. Several local historians have attempted to reconstruct the various changes to the building. The first rear addition or ell was described as new in 1768 and Francis Jackson's notes used to create his 1854 history of Newton states that the earlier home had been demolished. This suggests that the current building was built prior to 1768 and that the previous building was not incorporated into it. Starting in Georgian style the building was altered to reflect the changing trends in architecture. The building was updated in Federal style, Greek Revival, and Gothic Revival style. Historic photographs show that at one time the building had 2/2 windows throughout much of the first and second floor. These changes appear to correspond with changes of ownership of the property.

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:**

Moses Craft (1702-1768) had built a new house on this property (the present building) for himself and his wife Esther Woodward (daughter of Daniel) whom he married in 1729. The date of construction of this building is difficult to definitively determine. In 1688 Deacon John Staples (1658-1740) arrived in Newton and took control of this property consisting of 93 acres and built a house for himself. Staples a weaver by trade was also the first public school teacher in town and held a number of positions including Town Clerk, Constable, and Selectman. In 1714 he was involved in the survey of the town to determine its center for the purposes of locating the new meeting house. This survey still exists and is the oldest known map of Newton. Staples married Mary Craft (d. 1763) in 1690. They had no children, but raised some of Mary's relatives including Moses Craft who later inherited the property.

Jackson states that Craft lived with Staples and bequeathed him the property in 1740 with the condition that he could take ownership after death of Staples' wife Mary. Francis Jackson in his manuscript material also stated that the Staples house which predated the present building was torn down. Moses Craft later sold use of a new rear ell to his son Joseph in 1768 along with 20 acres, suggesting a mid 18<sup>th</sup> century construction date for the building.

Like his foster father, Moses was a weaver by trade and active in the town including serving on a number of committees as well as selectman and other posts. He was referred to as Lt. Craft suggesting a position in the militia as well. Moses and Esther had

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

NEWTON

1615 BEACON STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)

Form No.

NWT.DV / NWT.Y

NWT.3740

eight children, the youngest of whom Joseph was sold the use of the new rear ell in 1768. Joseph bought and inherited sections of the farm and the house from his father. Joseph had two wives Elizabeth Davis and Sarah Fuller with which he had a total of

fifteen children. Joseph was a farmer, a soldier during the Revolution, and like his father he was active in town serving as a selectman, but unfortunately unsuccessful in life and died intestate at 85 in 1821. William Wiswall II a farmer purchased the property in 1822 consisting of the house and 76 acres. Wiswall and his wife Ruth are believed to be responsible to the Greek Revival updates to the home including the triple track windows, pilasters, and the front porch. David Kinmonth a Boston merchant purchased the home in 1858 and is believed to have added the Gothic Revival details including the jerkin ends of the roofline, the coupled windows on the front façade and the second rear addition. The property changed hands twice until owned by William Strong and his wife Mary in 1875. Strong was a prominent man in the development of Waban as a village center and built a commercial block there known as Strong's Block (MHC# NWT.3741) at 1649 Beacon Street. Strong was also President of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and used the property as a nursery. The property was broken up under Strong's ownership into house lots. Ownership changed hands several times until it was bought by the Church of the Good Shepard located just up Beacon Street. The church used the property as a rectory before it again became a private residence in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is now is use as a multifamily dwelling.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES:**

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Jackson Homestead property file: Moses Craft will, Francis Jackson Manuscript

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**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

NEWTON

1615 BEACON STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)	Form No.
NWT.DV / NWT.Y	NWT.3740

**ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS:**

View from Windsor Road



View from adjacent property

