## Islington Estate Staff Quarters, 236 and 242 Islington Road

## 1. Name of Property

a. Historic Name: Islington Estate Staff Quarters

b. Common Name: None

#### 2. Location

a. Street Address: 236 and 242 Islington Road

b. Zip Code: Auburndale, 02466

c. *Assessor's #:* 41-026-0011 (236 Islington Road)

41-026-0012 (242 Islington Road)

## 3. Classification

a. Ownership of Properties: privateb. Type of Properties: residence

c. National Register Status: MHC determination of NR eligibility with

recommendation that the two properties be nominated together as a small district.

#### 4. Function or Use

- a. *Historic Functions:* The two nearly identical structures were built in the early 1870s as part of the development of Islington, a substantial estate which occupied a significant portion of this small peninsula in northwest Auburndale. The two buildings are believed to have housed the staff of the estate, which originally included a large residence, greenhouses, a boat house, stables, a windmill, and a gatehouse, all in the "High Victorian" style. The estate was the home of Royal M. Pulsifer, a successful businessman and local politician who served as Mayor of Newton from 1880-1881. Pulsifer also gave his name to the nearby cove of the Charles River Pulsifer Cove.
- b. Current Functions: The largest of several estates which occupied this corner of Auburndale in the late nineteenth century, Islington was gradually subdivided into smaller parcels and sold off after Pulsifer's death in 1888. The two staff quarters were sold away from the main estate in 1891 and rented out for a decade before being sold to separate property owners in 1901. For the last century, they have been primarily used as owner occupied, single family residences, although they were also periodically used as rental units. Neither building is currently owner occupied 242 has been rented and 236 has been purchased by a developer.

#### 5. Zoning

The Zoning District is Single Residence 3 which requires a 10,000 square foot lot for single-family use and frontage of 80 feet. A Special Permit is required for any other use on this site.

## 6. Description

a. Neighborhood Description: The Islington Estate Staff Quarters are located in the village of Auburndale at the northwest corner of the City on a somewhat isolated peninsula which is bordered to the west by the Charles River and to the east by Pulsifer's Cove. As with many of Newton's villages, Auburndale began as a sparsely settled farming community. The area gained its present form after the railroad was extended into Auburndale in the mid-nineteenth century, making it a popular suburban home for prominent Boston businessmen.

Before this development, however, the land was part of a much larger tract (possibly 240 acres) known as the Robinson Farm. Although the exact date on which the Robinson family established a farm is unknown, it is believed to have been during the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1740, William Upham purchased this portion of the Robinson farm from family descendants. The farmland would pass through several owners, all farmers, during the next century. The peninsula itself appears to have taken its present form around 1815, when the construction of dams on the Charles River flooded an existing meadow and substantially divided this area from the rest of Auburndale. The "flowed meadow" created by the flooding is shown on early maps of the area, and was later renamed Pulsifer's Cove after Royal Pulsifer, the prominent Newton politician and businessman who owned the Islington Estate, and most of the peninsula, in the late nineteenth century.

Despite its isolation from the rest of the village, the peninsula's development is remarkable similar to that of the rest of Auburndale in the nineteenth century. By the 1870s, the area was primarily encompassed by substantial estates owned by wealthy Boston businessmen attracted to the open space and clean air of the suburbs. While portions of the peninsula were also divided into smaller, individual house lots, most of these were not developed until the twentieth century and many were jointly owned by a single property owner as an extension of a larger estate. The largest of these estates, Islington, at one time encompassed over half of the existing peninsula and included two estate houses as well as a number of secondary buildings and individual house lots.

These substantial estates, though, did not last. Remnants of the estates would survive well into the twentieth century, but the Islington estate itself was subdivided into smaller lots beginning in 1889. At that time, the individual houses were identified only by their location on the private estate road which had

its own separate numbering system. In 1915, the City replaced the former estate road and Malvern Street with the existing Islington Road and the current system of house numbers was put into place. Two of the large estate houses were destroyed or demolished in the 1930s and were replaced by subdivisions. By the early 1940s, the further development of the area was largely complete, giving the area its present appearance of a streetcar suburb of moderately sized single family homes on small landscaped lots. These new houses are not homogenous, covering a wide variety of Revival styles popular during that period, but are similar in size, massing, materials, and setback. However, very few houses, if any, take their cue from the early Victorian and Queen Anne style development of the area. Today only a handful of buildings remain from the estate era of the peninsula. Despite a few examples of modern construction, the area has remained a largely intact example of the early twentieth century development of Newton.

## b. Architectural Description:

## (1) Materials:

Foundation: Cement brick

Walls: Cement brick

Roof: Gambrel roof

Windows: 236 Islington - One over one sash windows, picture

window in rear

242 Islington – Two over two sash windows,

picture window in rear.

*Ornamentation:* 236 Islington Road has decorative trim and

gingerbread style detail in the gable ends and over the dormers. Both houses use darker brick to frame the doors and windows but the effect is more

apparent on 242 Islington.

*Vegetation:* Both sites have been well maintained and landscaped with a mix of mature trees, bushes, foundation plantings and flowers. In front of both houses, there are sections of open lawn surrounded by fairly dense groupings of trees and additional plantings primarily grouped at the side property lines and around the foundations of the houses. In both cases, the landscaping of the front yard is in keeping with the residential character of the neighborhood while the rear yards are less manicured and have a more rural appearance. Both lots have gravel driveways, although 236 Islington includes a semicircular driveway and walk with a short picket fence dividing the front and rear years. Both lots slope down to a small pond which is considered to be part of the Charles River as existing pipes connect the two bodies of water. The area surrounding the pond includes

a small section of bordering vegetated wetlands. The 100-foot buffer zone to these wetland areas and the floodplain associated with the pond include the majority of the backyards of both properties and stretches nearly to the rear façade of the houses. Due to its proximity to the wetlands, development within this buffer zone and floodplain is restricted.

## (2) Verbal Description:

Historical appearance: 236 and 242 Islington Road were originally constructed as identical, small scale and simplified versions of the "High Victorian" style which characterized the rest of the Islington Estate. Built as staff housing and located to one side of the main estate, their design was intended to be in keeping with the more elaborate buildings of the estate, such as the gatehouse still standing at 203 Islington Road, but utilized very little trim detail and less expensive materials to achieve the effect. Both houses are one and one half-story structures built of buff colored, cement brick and utilizing darker, reddish brown bricks to simulate quoins at the corners of the building and trim around the windows and doors of the first floor. The buildings have an L shaped footprint with a rear ell projecting from the rear right corner of the house that shares the same steep sided, gambrel style roof as the main structure. These steep slopes may have been designed to simulate the large, clipped gable roof seen on the gatehouse. At the center of the front façade is a shallow projecting gambrel end element which houses the front door to the building. Over the entrance is one of the building's few decorative features - a simple arched window which is framed by the wood trim of the surrounding gambrel end. This entrance is flanked on either side by very shallow, flat roofed dormers which are also seen on the sides of the projecting rear ell.

While the original form and detailing of the buildings remain clearly visible, there are a few elements of the original building which are not clear. One of these elements is the material used for the original roof. While the gatehouse was built with and has retained its decorative slate roof, neither of the staff houses has retained its original roof. It is unlikely that these simple structures were build with an elaborate slate roofing style to match the gatehouse, but it is entirely possible that they were built with a monochromatic slate roof. However, there is currently no sign of an original slate roof on either building. In the same respect, the type of windows originally installed on the houses is uncertain. It is likely that the same type of windows were used in both houses but while 242 Islington Road has two over two wood sash windows which are potentially original, an early 1980s photo of 236 Islington Road shows that it at one time had six over six sash windows. The size and shape of the window openings on both houses have not been altered, though, and both types of windows could potentially have been used in the 1870s construction. One window, the arched window over the entrance at 242, appears to still be the originally installed window.

Finally, there is some speculation that the buildings may have been built with front porches. Neither house currently has a porch, and there are no known photos

or drawings which date before the 1980s. In a1980s photo, though, 236 Islington has a shallow hip roofed entrance porch supported by square posts and side railings. This porch is also shown on the 1980 Inventory Form completed for 236, while the photo for 242 Islington, also taken in 1980, shows an unadorned entrance accessed by a low platform and steps similar to its current design. A review of the building footprints, as shown on early maps, shows twin entrance porches present in 1886 which appear to be similar in form to 236's porch but these porches do not appear in any maps before or after that date. A last suggestion that there was a porch on at least one of these buildings is shown on a 1949 survey of 236 Islington which shows a porch stretching across the entire front façade. This porch is clearly more than the entrance porch which was in place in 1980, suggesting that the house had at least two different styles of porches over time and that neither style was original to the house. In support of this argument, the brickwork surrounding the entrance to 242 Islington shows no signs of ever having had a roof or columns attached to the building, suggesting that the porches shown on 236 Islington were later additions which were never mimicked at 242.

Current appearance: Remarkably, despite years of separate ownership resulting in differing renovations, the twin styles of the two buildings is still readily apparent and largely intact. Of the two buildings, 242 Islington Road has had the least changes. While the roofing material has been replaced and the style of the original windows is unclear, the front façade of the building appears to be unaltered. The brick is in good condition and the contrast between the light and dark bricks is still very clear. A short platform and steps access the front door which is hidden behind a modern screen door. The only obvious later alteration to the building is a wood sided addition tucked behind the rear left corner of the house which has been added within the last year. While the style and materials of the addition do not match that of the main house, its location behind the main house and screening by existing vegetation limits its impact on the streetscape.

In contrast to the largely unaltered 242, 236 Islington Road has had a number of cosmetic changes over time, although it does not appear to have had any additions or changes made to the original footprint. As discussed earlier, the house had at least one porch on the front façade during the twentieth century. The most recent porch was removed in the 1980s and replaced with a simple platform and steps similar to the existing entrance of 242. The 1980 photo also shows that the brickwork on the house was painted white at that time. This paint has since been removed but the brickwork appears to have been damaged in the process and the contrast between the light and dark brick is no longer obvious. The windows were also replaced after the 1980s photo, and are now mostly one over one sash windows. The most remarkable change to the building in the last twenty years, though, is the addition of trim detail to the gable ends and dormers which is similar to the detailing of the gatehouse. The previously flat roofed dormers have all been capped with tall, rounded arches and painted trim. Small brackets have been installed in the walls under the dormers as well. Gingerbread-style scrollwork has been installed in the gable ends on the front and side facades, and

the trim is painted in highlighting colors. While the connection to its now simpler neighbor at 242 is still obvious, the addition of more elaborate detail to the building clearly sets it apart.

## 7. History of Property

a. Deed History: All deed information for these properties is located at the Middlesex County (South) Registry of Deeds.

Book 63, Page 528 assigns William Upham as the purchaser of a parcel of land from Nathaniel and Hannah Bigelow for £128 in 1740. Hannah was the daughter of William Robinson, and this conveyance is described as constituting approximately one-third of her father William's homestead lands. It is unknown how many generations of Robinsons prior to William had farmed the land. The portion sold to Upham contained 81 acres and was bounded as follows:

- Northerly by the Charles River and partly by a piece of meadowland belonging to William Robinson;
- Easterly partly by the Charles River and partly by land of Jonathan Williams;
- Northerly by a Proprietor's way;
- Southeasterly with the land of Benjamin Child;
- Southwesterly and westerly by the land of John Robinson till it comes to the piece of meadow before mentioned, and then;
- Southwesterly by said meadow and by the land of said John Robinson till it comes to the river first mentioned with a dwelling house and barn thereon.

Liberty was given to several people allowing for the "passing and repassing by gates and barns" for the purpose of transporting teams of oxen and driving cattle.

<u>Book 75 Page 135</u> records William Upham as the grantor of a parcel of land to Elisha Seaverns for £333, six shillings and 8 pence. The transaction with Elisha Seaverns took place on April 19, 1773, and included approximately 80 acres with a dwelling house on land described as follows:

- Northwardly partly by Charles River and partly by the land of Jonathan Williams;
- Notheastwardly by a proprietor's way;
- Southeastwardly by a town way;
- Southwestwardly and westwardly by the land of John Pigeon till it comes to the meadow first mentioned, and then;
- Southwestwardly by said meadow and by the land of said John Pigeon till it comes to the River aforesaid.

At this point, John Pigeon is singled out as the sole individual given right of passage through the Seaverns' Farm for purposes of moving livestock. Pigeon eventually sold this right back to Elisha Seaverns, as noted in Book 123, Page 182. In 1773, this farm was situated just north of another farm run for some time by the City and believed to be Newton's poor house. The description of the

conveyance from Upham to Seaverns corresponds with the known whereabouts of Seaverns' Auburndale farm.

Book 214, Page 130 notes that in 1815, Elisha Seaverns received a payment of \$1,671.00 from the Boston Manufacturing Co. Apparently, the Boston Manufacturing Co. had set up a factory along the Charles River, downstream from the Seaverns' farm. Their operations required the construction of a dam, leading to the creation of a "flowed meadow," covering a certain portion of Seaverns' lands. This payment was made as reimbursement for the crops lost due to flooding. Although not confirmed, the flowed meadow that was created may partially be related to those noted on a Plan of Land drawn in 1873 by E. Woodward, and today known as Pulsifer's Cove.

By 1847, Seaverns had died, and his daughter Patience was made executrix of his estate. His land was apportioned out, in fifths, to Patience and four grandchildren, all sharing the last name Ware. In the same year, Elisha Ware purchased the Seaverns Farm from these descendants. It is not clear how Elisha Ware was related to the Seaverns' descendants, but he was not one of the five granted land through the distribution of Seaverns' estate.

On April 20, 1847 a sequence of deed record Elisha Ware's purchase of the Seaverns Farm. Each of these transactions is recorded as having taken place on the same day, and each describes the farm as consisting of "approximately 65 acres with buildings thereon," and bound as follows:

- Southerly by a farm owned by the Town of Newton
- Westerly and Northerly by the Charles River
- Easterly by land of Martin Collier William Ware

Elisha Ware purchased the property from Seaverns' heirs in the following transactions:

<u>Book 504, Page 421</u> records William Ware, grandson to Elisha Seaverns, conveyance of his right to one-fifth of the farm to Elisha Ware for the price of \$500.

<u>Book 504, Page 422</u> notes that Patience Ware, a widow and the daughter of Elisha Seaverns, sold her share in her father's estate to Elisha Ware in consideration of \$2,000.

<u>Book 504, Page 422</u> lists Henry and Elizabeth Smith, married, as granting their portion of the estate to Elisha Ware for \$500. Elizabeth Smith was Seaverns' granddaughter.

<u>Book 504, Page 423</u> records Elisha Ware purchasing another portion of the estate, this time from Orlando Ware, another grandson. The price was again \$500.

<u>Book 504, Page 425</u> finally shows Charles and Caroline Merriam, another of Seaverns' granddaughters, as the grantors of the remaining one-fifth interest to Elisha Ware for the same sum of \$500.

Book 1174, Page 266 lists Caroline Ware, along with family members Walter, Mary and Martha Ware, as grantors of a parcel of land comprising 26 acres along the Charles River in Auburndale, and described as "the westerly part of the homestead of the grantors." This is clearly a portion of the Seaverns Farm purchased by Elisha Ware in 1847. It is unclear, however, how this land came into the hands of Caroline Ware et al., and their relationship to Elisha Ware is not outlined in the deed. Research of probate records for Elisha Ware may reveal the connection. Nevertheless, on May 15, 1871, Ezra D. Winslow purchased fee interest in the land for an amount of \$8,531.87. He attained this by paying \$1000 down, and giving a mortgage to the Ware's for the remaining \$7,531.87, recorded in <u>Book 1174</u>, <u>Page 264</u>. The deed makes no mention of any buildings situated on the land, apart from a boathouse noted as a boundary descriptor. It is stated that an E. Woodward drew a Plan of the parcel on June 17, 1871. This Plan, or a subsequent version thereof, was recorded with the Middlesex Registry of Deeds on July 1, 1873, in Plan Book 22, Plan 1. The recorded plan details seven discrete lots of varying sizes, four with buildings thereon, situated along Malvern and Islington Streets. In addition, two estate lots were drawn. Together, these structures comprised the estate known as Islington.

Book 1293, Page 624 identifies Ezra Winslow as the grantor of a mortgage to Nathan Blanchard for the property listed as Lot 3 (242 Islington Road). The mortgage, recorded January 27, 1874, is in the amount of \$2,500. Winslow granted a second mortgage with identical terms to Blanchard for Lot 4 (236 Islington Road), recorded in Book 1293, Page 626 on January 29, 1874.

Book 1293, Page 628 begins the sale of nearly all of the parcels from Ezra Winslow to Royal M. Pulsifer. Pulsifer purchased six of the seven lots as laid out in the 1873 land plan. According to the deed, he did not purchase Lot 6, which contained the original gatehouse that remains at 203 Islington Road, at this time. Pulsifer purchased Lot 1, with a building thereon, for \$6,500. Page 629 lists the purchase of Lots 2, 5 and 7 for \$5,000, with no structures specified as being present. Finally, Page 630 shows Lots 3 and 4 (242 and 236 Islington Road) being purchased together for \$7,000. These transactions all occurred on January 29, 1874. The reason Winslow would grant a mortgage for two house lots to Nathan Blanchard on the same day he received payment for those lots from Royal Pulsifer is not known.

Book 2064, Page 290 begins a confusing era in the history of 242 and 236 Islington. As stated, in 1874 Ezra Winslow granted mortgages for Lots 3 and 4 to Nathan Blanchard. Blanchard died sometime between 1874 and 1891, whereby Mary Bridge became the Executrix of his estate. It is recorded in Book 2064, Page 290 that on September 3, 1891, Mary Bridge granted the mortgages on Lots 3 and 4, each in the amount of \$2,500.00, to Stephen Thompson, who received "the said mortgage deeds, the real estate thereby conveyed, and the notes and claims thereby secured."

At this point, the deed history of 242 (Lot 3) and 236 (Lot 4) Islington Road diverts, and it becomes necessary to trace each property separately.

## 242 Islington Road

Book 2065, Page 520, includes a statement by the Winslow Estate dated September 21, 1891 that Stephen Thompson made an "open, peaceable and unopposed entry" to the house on Lot 3 for the purpose of declaring foreclosure for a mortgage unpaid. The terms of the mortgage stipulated that should the grantor fail to make payments, the property was to be sold at public auction. Although the deed identifies Thompson as the holder of the mortgage, the party responsible for making the mortgage payments is unclear. As the Winslow Estate attested to the statement, it would appear that the Winslow Estate was the party responsible for defaulting on the mortgage. This would imply, however, that despite selling Islington to Royal Pulsifer, Ezra Winslow retained an outstanding debt on the property that his heirs were unable or unwilling to pay by September 1891.

Book 2069, Page 571 notes that on September 28,1891, Stephen Thompson, acting as the grantor, sold the title to 242 Islington Road (Lot 3) back to Mary Bridge at public auction for \$2,500. It appears that Bridge granted the mortgage for Lot 3 to Thompson, enabling him to be the foreclosing agent, and her to become the rightful owner through public auction. The lot purchased by Bridge is described as follows:

- Northerly by Islington Road, formerly known as Malvern Street, 95.50 feet
- Easterly by Lot 4 on Said Plan, 217 feet
- Southerly by land now or late of Hall, 95.50 feet
- Westerly by Lots 1 and 2 on said plan, 215.50 feet

<u>Book 2155, Page 412</u> records that just over one year later, on November 4, 1892, Mary Bridge conveyed the property purchased by her at public auction to Frank A. Carnes for \$1.00, and other considerations. In addition, Carnes granted Bridge a mortgage in the amount of \$2,300, recorded in <u>Book 2155, Page 414</u>. At some point prior to 1897, Mary Bridge dies, appointing Thompson as the Trustee of the Blanchard Estate through her will.

<u>Book 2585, Page 541</u> shows Frank Carnes purchasing 242 Islington from Stephen Thompson on August 9, 1897. Presumably, Carnes defaulted on the mortgage originally granted to Mary Bridge and subsequently held by Thompson after her death. The land with a house upon it was sold at public auction for the amount of \$2,400.00. Carnes gave Thompson a \$2,100.00 mortgage to secure the property.

<u>Book 2957, Page 458</u> lists Frank A. Carnes as the seller of Lot 3 to William R. Reed on April 14, 1902 for the consideration of \$1.00. At this point, the land is described by the same boundaries present upon Mary Bridge's acquisition of the property at public auction.

<u>Book 2974, Page 554</u> shows that just over two months later, on June 23, 1902, William Reed conveys the land to Donald M. Stewart, again in consideration of \$1.00. Stewart owns the property for over thirteen years.

The remaining transactions for 242 Islington Road are fairly straightforward, documenting what would be considered a normal level of activity for a suburban property.

Book 4000, Page 362 lists Mary E. Coleman as purchasing the land from Stewart for \$1.00, in addition to other considerations, on September 25, 1915. Mary holds fee interest in 242 Islington Road with her husband Jeremiah for close to 35 years. A plan of land recorded in Book 7473, Page 438 and dated August 30, 1949 shows the Colemans as owners of an additional parcel of land directly south of 242 Islington.

Book 7118, Page 227 records the sale to Robert W. Brewer on April 9,1947. Brewer took out a mortgage of \$8,500.00 to purchase the property. As part of the sale, Jeremiah Coleman gave up his right of tenancy in the house as Mary's husband.

<u>Book 7922, Page 598</u> records Robert Brewer conveying the property to Raymond D. Brewer on June 23, 1952 in consideration for less than \$100.00. Robert's wife, Jane, gave up all rights of dower in this transaction.

<u>Book 9123, Page 598</u> lists Arline Berry as the Administratrix of Raymond D. Brewer's estate. It is unclear whether Raymond was the son or brother of Robert Brewer, but on April 2, 1958, Arline Berry, acting as trustee, sold 242 Islington Road to Chester and Audrey Smith for \$12,500.00. The Smith's secured a mortgage of \$11,600.00 for purchase of the property.

Book 10869, Page 172 shows the sale of the property on July 1, 1965 to James and Bridget Bellingham. James and Bridget were unmarried and their family connection is not made clear. They held the house as joint tenants, taking a \$16,000 mortgage in order to secure the property.

<u>Book 11568, Page 56</u> notes that just over three years later, on September 6, 1968, James and Bridget Bellingham convey the land to Allan and Martha Campbell, married, in consideration of an undisclosed sum.

<u>Book 12796, Page 347</u> identifies yet another transaction. On May 15, 1975, the Campbell's sell the house and land to John H. and Heather Raaf for \$44,500.00.

<u>Book 13217, Page 40</u> records the sale of the property two years later. On June 21, 1977, in consideration of \$48,500.00, John Raaf conveys the land to Donald R., Jr. and Judith Helm.

<u>Book 14713, Page 5</u> lists the transfer of the property from the Helm's to the Gerbrandt Family for \$115,000.00 on August 30, 1982. Bernhardt J., married to Geraldine F, and Lauren K, married to Grace M, all become joint tenants of the property.

<u>Book 15018</u>, <u>Page 61</u> notes that by May 18, 1983, title had transferred to Lauren and Grace Bernhardt, for consideration of less than \$100.

Book 20557, Page 558 shows yet another transfer of title. On April 19, 1990, Grace is recorded as the sole deed holder to 242 Islington. It is on this title that a series of takings by the City of Newton are described. On March 1, 1937 a drain was installed, followed soon after by the layout of Islington Road, which replaced Malvern Terrace. In December of 1959, the City laid sewer lines.

<u>Book 21048, Page 457</u> records the sale of the property on March 15, 1991. Grace Gerbrandt conveyed the land to Suenn Ho and Chi Ping Ho Lu for the amount of \$262,000.00

<u>Book 28690, Page 505</u> shows that seven years later, on May 18, 1998, title transfers solely to Chi Ping Ho Lu in consideration of \$1.00

<u>Book 32703</u>, <u>Page 453</u> indicates the final title transfer for 242 Islington Road on November 21, 2000. For the amount of \$74,655.00, Dien Ho received a quitclaim deed for the parcel. While Dien Ho's relationship to Chi Ping Ho Lu is unclear, in this document, Chi Ping Ho did reserve a legal life estate in the property. On this deed, the parcel is described as being Lot 3 on the Plan of Land belonging to Ezra D. Winslow, dated January 1, 1873, and recorded in the Book of <u>Plans 22</u> <u>Plan 1</u> at the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds. The boundaries are described as follows:

- Northerly by Islington Road, formerly known as Malvern Street, 95.50 feet
- Easterly by Lot 4 on Said Plan, 217 feet
- Southerly by land now or late of Hall, 95.50 feet
- Westerly by Lots 1 and 2 on said plan, 215.50 feet

The parcel is approximately 20,598 square feet, and "subject to the benefit of easements, restrictions, reservations and rights of way of record so long as the same are in force and applicable."

#### 236 Islington Road

On the same day that Mary Bridge purchased 242 Islington Road at public auction from Stephen Thompson, she also purchased 236 Islington Road. The mortgagee (possibly the Winslow Estate) had apparently defaulted on the mortgages for both Lot 3 and Lot 4 concurrently. In the same manner as was done for Lot 3, Thompson made an "open, peaceable and unopposed entry" to announce foreclosure of the property constituting Lot 4.

Book 2069, Page 574 records Mary Bridge paying \$2,500 for 236 Islington to Stephen Thompson, thus making her the outright owner of the title, rather than holder of the mortgage on the property.

<u>Book 2237, Page 448</u> lists Bridge as the grantor of 236 Islington Road to Freeman W. Hood, in consideration of \$1. This transaction occurred on November 27, 1893. On the same day, <u>Book 2238, Page 194</u> shows that Hood gave Bridge a mortgage in the amount of \$2,300 in order to purchase the land.

<u>Book 2583, Page 337</u> reveals that by July 24, 1897, Freeman Hood had defaulted on his mortgage payments. The mortgage was now in the hands of Stephen Thompson. Bridge died sometime prior to this, and her will, dated November 23, 1893, stipulated that Thompson be the Trustee for the Blanchard Estate, a responsibility originally charged to Bridge. As the new Trustee, Thompson was placed in the position of making a third "open, peaceable and unopposed entry" to a property for purposes of foreclosure.

<u>Book 2583, Page 338</u> follows by recording the sale of 236 Islington Road to Alfred S. Hall for \$1,800.00 at public auction. It appears that this transaction was conducted with no encumbrances, thus ending Thompson's connection with both 242 and 236 Islington Road.

<u>Book 2713, Page 55</u> shows that not even two years later, on January 18, 1899, Hall sells the property to Alice F. Young, the wife of E. Elbert Young. Hall's wife Delia gave up all rights of dower and homestead as part of the agreement. Alice Young purchased 236 Islington for \$1,500.00.

<u>Book 3329</u>, <u>Page 559</u> states that Alice Young, on October 10, 1907 and now a widow, conveyed the property to Lizzie E. MacLean, wife of J. Arthur MacLean, in consideration of \$1.

<u>Book 4083, Page 71</u> lists that nearly nine years later, on September 12, 1916, Amanda Hughes, wife of Melver H. Hughes, purchased 236 Islington from Lizzie MacLean for \$1 and other valuable considerations. Hughes took a \$2,000 mortgage from the Waltham Co-operative Bank to secure the transaction.

<u>Book 4380, Page 310</u> records Edith Austin Bullock as the buyer of the property on August 17, 1920. Bullock paid Hughes \$1, while assuming responsibility for the mortgage with the Waltham Co-operative Bank taken by Hughes. Bullock also took an additional mortgage from Hughes for \$3,250.

Book 4380, Page 312 uncovers Edith Bullock to be simply a middle person for a third party, as she immediately conveyed the land to Benjamin J. Gossom. In so doing, Gossom assumed all liability for the outstanding mortgages.

<u>Book 4728, Page 508</u> notes Benjamin Gossom as the seller of 236 Islington on May 13, 1924. Alice S. Wilson, wife of J. Arthur Wilson, purchased the property

with all its warranty covenants for an undisclosed amount. By this time, the boundaries of the land are described as follows:

- Northerly by Malvern Street, so-called now Islington Road, 90.5 feet;
- Easterly by Lot #5 on Plan of E. Woodward [Plan Book 22, Plan 1], 228.5 feet;
- Southerly by land now or late of Hall 93.5 feet;
- Westerly by Lot #3 on said plan 217 feet.

<u>Book 7473, Page 438</u> reveals that the Wilson's owned at 236 Islington Road for over 25 years. They finally sold the land on August 29, 1949 to Clarke T. and Mary F. Gray, who took a mortgage of \$8,000 to purchase the property.

<u>Book 9436, Page 100</u> shows that the Grays stayed for ten years, before selling to A. William and Rose M. Kunkel on July 29, 1959. The increasing property values of Newton are evident from this transaction, as the Kunkels took a \$13,000 mortgage from the Newton Co-operative Bank to secure the property.

Book 15306, Page 244 lists Rose Kunkel as the conveyor of 236 Islington to husband and wife David Colpak and Amy Goldstein for \$132,000 on 8 November 1983. To purchase the land, David and Amy took a \$130,000 mortgage from Edwin and Greta Colpak, payable in three years at 12% interest.

<u>Book 25329</u>, <u>Page 48</u> transfers the property to David Colpak following a divorce. The deed records both Amy Goldstein and David as the grantors, with David paying \$1 to acquire sole ownership of the property. Two and a half years later, <u>Book 27809</u>, <u>Page 7</u> notes that Colpak obtained a \$100,000 mortgage on the house.

Over the next seven years, a series of transactions occurs involving David Colpak and Roberta Oakley. During this time, fee interest transfers back and forth between Colpak as the sole owner, and Colpak and Oakley as joint tenants.

Book 41733, Page 397 finally records that on January 5, 2004, ownership settles in the hands of Roberta Oakley.

<u>Book 41733, Page 398</u> shows that on that same day, Roberta Oakley gives title to Ernest D. Rogers, who purchases 236 Islington Road for \$649,500.

<u>Book 42073, Page 376</u> marks the last transaction for the property. Ernest Rogers is listed as conveying the land to Rogers & Co., Inc. This transfer presumably qualifies the house as a business holding of Rogers, rather than as his personal property. At this time, the land with buildings thereon is bounded as follows:

- Northerly by Islington Road, formerly Malvern Street, as shown on a plan entitled Plan of Land in Newton, MA, dated 30 August 1949 and recorded with the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds Book 7473, Page 438, by two lines equaling 90.5 feet;
- Easterly by land formerly of Hemenway 236.5 feet;
- Southerly by lands of White and Coleman 93.5 feet;

- Westerly by land of Brewer 216.06 feet The parcel described totals 20,645 square feet.

b. Development History: The two houses in consideration originally served as dwelling places for support staff of the country estate known as Islington which stood on a peninsula bounded to the west by the Charles River and to the east by what is today known as Pulsifer's Cove. Originally part of the Robinson Farm of Auburndale, the land continued to be used as farmland under a succession of owners ending with the Ware family, who owned the land from 1847 through 1871. At that time, Caroline Ware sold the land to Ezra Winslow, an Auburndale resident who is listed in City Directories first as a US Navy Chaplain and later as a journalist. Winslow would later briefly take up residence at one of the smaller houses just outside of the estate on Malvern Street (now Malvern Terrace).

As the only building mentioned in the deed conveying the land from Caroline Ware to Winslow is a boathouse, it is presumed that construction of the estate houses and the majority of their supporting structures took place in the two years following Winslow's acquisition of the land. In 1873, a "Plan of Land situated in Auburndale belonging to E.D. Winslow" was completed by a surveyor, E. Woodward, and recorded with the Registry of Deeds. This plan shows the completed Islington estate including a mansion house, stables, greenhouses, and a boathouse, as well as a second, slightly smaller estate to the south, and four small supporting buildings on separate lots – the gatehouse, the two staff houses, and the Malvern Terrace house that Winslow would later inhabit. As such, Ezra Winslow would receive credit as Islington's developer.

Two atlases existed in Newton in 1874 and each show a different owner for the newly established Islington Estate. In the first one, Winslow is still listed as the owner of the estate and many of it's surrounding smaller lots. In the second, the properties belong to Royal M. Pulsifer, who purchased the main estate and six of the seven surrounding lots, including the staff houses, in January 1874. Royal Pulsifer would eventually lend his name to the cove to the east of his estate and was it's first and best-known resident. Co-editor of the Boston Herald and an astute businessman, Pulsifer also served as Newton's Mayor from 1880-1881 and was active in Newton politics throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition to the properties purchased from Winslow in 1874, early maps of the area show that Pulsifer purchased other surrounding lots shortly after taking up residence at Islington. These properties include the gatehouse at the entrance to the property, and the estate to the west of Islington (Lot A on the 1873 Woodward Plan) which was originally owned by an A.I. Benyon and later shown as the property of a Clara S. Pulsifer.

Royal Pulsifer lived in the northern mansion house of the Islington estate with his wife, Clara L. Pulsifer, and sons George and Louis, from 1874 until his death in October 1888. During this time, the Pulsifer's were the only residents of the estate aside from Winslow, who moved away from Newton in 1877. Following Pulsifer's death in 1888, however, the large estate began to be dissolved. In the

1889 City Directory, the staff quarters are listed as rented to Roger Griffin, a chemist, and Fred Whitey, a publisher, and portions of the main estate are also shown as rented to George Simpson and Cornelius Mahoney, a carpenter and laborer, respectively, who worked for the estate. No house numbers were in place on the estate at the time, though, so it is not possible to tell who was living where. The estate's numbering system would not begin to appear in City Directories until 1901, with the current street addresses following in 1915.

The end of the Pulsifer's tenancy on the now smaller estate followed shortly after Royal's death. By 1891, the remaining family members had sold the main estate to Louis Ober, owner of what would later become the existing Locke Ober restaurant in Boston, and had moved to Boston themselves. The Obers would continue to own the main estate until 1910, but both the staff quarters and the gatehouse were sold to separate parties in 1891. In September 1891, Mary Bridge purchased both staff houses at public auction. Over the next few years, the ownership of the two buildings would shift back and forth through a number of foreclosures and sales at public auction. During this time, none of the owners appear to have lived at either site. Instead, they were used as rental properties with a series of families and individuals in residents who occasionally had boarders as well. By 1897, both houses, and most of the peninsula, appear to have been vacant.

Just as the development of the large estates along the railroad routes effectively signaled the beginning of the end of agricultural development in Auburndale, the end of the estates also came at a point in time when the City's development focus was shifting away from public transportation and railroads to automobile accessed suburban developments. Less than fifty years after Islington's initial development, the area once again underwent a dramatic change – this time into a typical early twentieth century subdivision. At the heart of this development are the two staff housing of the Islington Estate. While small and simple compared with many of the other buildings of the estate, the two houses were now comparable in size and setting with the houses which began to spring up around them in the first half of the twentieth century. As a result, they survived a century of reuse while the majority of the other estate buildings were demolished or destroyed.

In 1901, the mutual ownership of the two buildings had reached its end and the properties were sold to separate parties. Their development, though, is remarkably similar. Because both properties were still considered to be on the estate, and therefore not on a City street, they were listed as being on Islington, numbers 86 (now 236 Islington Road) and 92 (now 242 Islington Road) until the road was formally established in 1915. 236 Islington was the first to be sold and lived in by its owners, Alice and Elbert Young, a civil engineer, who purchased the property in 1901. The Youngs remained in residence until 1907, when, following Elbert's death, Alice sold the property to Lizzie and J. Arthur MacLean, who worked for the Museum of Fine Arts. The MacLeans lived on Islington until 1915 when the family moved to Cleveland, and had at least one

boarder during this time, Herbert Hopkins. In 1916, the house was sold to Amanda and Melver Hughes, who was a local salesman. The Hughes family remained at 236 for only three years, however, and in 1920 the property again traded hands and became the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Gossom, who lived in the house for only two years before renting the property to Jacob and Anna Brissom in 1923. By 1924, the property was again sold, this time to Alice and Arthur Wilson, who owned the Wilson Grocery Store on Centre Street.

The Wilson's tenure at 236 Islington began a period of long-term ownership for the property which coincides with the area's development into a twentieth century suburban residential neighborhood. The longest owners in residence to date, the Wilson family remained at 236 until 1949, when they sold the property to Clarke Gray, a medical researcher, and his wife Mary, who would live on Islington for ten years. In 1959, the property was briefly rented again before being sold to A. William Kunkel, director of the Newton Free Library, and his wife, Rose. Rose continued to live at 236 Islington as a retired widow following A. William's death in the early 1970s. In 1983, she sold the property to David Colpak and Amy Goldstein. The last owners and residents of the property to date, they are responsible for the addition of the trim details to the dormers and gable ends, as well as for the removal of the front porch. David Colpak continued to live at 236 Islington until January 2004, when the property was sold to a developer, Ernest Rogers.

The history of 242 Islington Road follows a similar pattern of events. In 1902, the property was sold to its first owner and resident, Donald M Stewart, an electrician. The Stewarts, including a second Donald Stewart who boarded with the family, lived here until 1907 when Donald M. moved to the Philippines. The second Donald, who is believed to be a son or family member, continued to live at 242 until 1915, when the property was sold to Mary and Jeremiah Coleman. Although the Colemans would own the property for nearly 35 years, they do not appear to have ever lived there. Jeremiah Coleman first appears in the area in 1893, when he lived on the main Islington estate as the coachman for Mr. and Mrs. Ober. The Colemans lived on the estate until 1907, when they moved to the house west of the staff quarters at 102 Islington.

After purchasing 242, the Colemans continued to live down the street and rented the property to a series of individuals, and one particularly large family, until 1947, when they sold the property to Robert Brewer. Robert Brewer also does not appear to have ever lived at the property, and in 1952, conveyed it to Raymond Brewer, an electrician for Raytheon, and his wife Elizabeth. Raymond and Elizabeth had been in residence here since 1948, suggesting that Robert might have purchased the property in cooperation with them. Following Raymond's death in 1958, the property was sold to Chester Smith, a policeman for the Metropolitan District Commission, and his wife Audrey. The Smiths were also short-term owners, selling the property to James and Bridget Bellingham in 1965. In 1968, the property was again sold, this time to Allan and Martha Campbell, who lived in the house until 1975, when it was sold to John and

Heather Raaf. The Raafs lived in the house for only a few years, though, selling it to Donald and Judith Helm in 1977.

The house was once again briefly rented in 1982, then sold to four members of the Gerbrandt family who lived in the house jointly before turning it over to two of the family members, Lauren and Grace Gerbrandt, in 1983. By 1990, Grace was the sole owner of the property and in 1991, she sold it to Suenn Ho and Chi Ping Ho Lu. In 2000, the property passed to their son, Dien Ho, who continues to own the house which is now rented for most of the year.

## 8. Significance of Property

- a. *Period of Significance*: The period of significance for the Islington Estate Staff Quarters is 1871 through 1891. The period encompasses their design and construction as part of the development of the estate by Ezra Winslow and their use as staff quarters for Royal Pulsifer's Islington Estate. The period of significance ends with their sale away from the main estate in 1891.
- b. *Historical Significance:* Historically, these buildings are significant as two of only three surviving structures of the Islington Estate which originally encompassed most of the peninsula. They are characteristic of secondary estate buildings of the late nineteenth century, of which there are few surviving examples within the City. They are also two of the last remaining examples of nineteenth century development in this area.
- c. Architectural Significance: Architecturally, the Islington Estate Staff Quarters are significant as nearly identical examples of the "High Victorian" style which were designed in a simplified form to be in keeping with the secondary status of the buildings on the estate. This architectural style is rare in Newton, as is the use of cement brick for the exterior facades. The buildings have retained their original lot configuration, defining architectural style and features with few significant alterations over time.
- d. *Landmark Designation Criteria*: The Islington Estate Staff Quarters meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 22-93 of Newton's Ordinance T-288. The properties are:
  - Eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places with the Massachusetts Historical Commission's recommendation that the two properties be nominated together as a small district.
  - Architecturally significant as examples of the "High Victorian" style of architecture which is rarely found in Newton and as examples of secondary estate structures.

- Associated with the development of the Islington peninsula and with the development of Auburndale from a rural agricultural community to an affluent streetcar suburb.
- Historically significant for their association with Islington, a substantial
  estate which originally dominated the peninsula, and with the estate's
  owner, Royal Pulsifer, the co-owner of the Boston Herald who had
  significant position in the community as a prominent businessman and
  politician.
- Historic location and setting has been retained and is compatible with future preservation and use.
- Representative of the original design retaining their original siting, fabric and features.

#### 9. Recommendations

- a. *Preservation Recommendations:* The properties have been well maintained with repairs and alterations which are appropriate to the building and which were completed with compatible materials. Additions to the building have been added to the rear façade in such a way that they do not substantially impact the streetscape. The buildings have retained the style and appearance of their period of historic significance.
- b. *Important Features:* The Islington Estate staff houses were designed as simple support structures and their most important features are their size, scale, massing and relationship to one another as nearly identical structures. The buildings are defined by the features which they share the same decorative brickwork, original L shaped footprint, steeply pitched gambrel roof, and shallow dormers.

## 10. Standards for Design Review

- a. *General Standards* All projects affecting the properties 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 the review of changes to the landmark properties.
- b. *Specific Standards* Specific design standards have been addressed in the current maintenance of the property with regard to additions, height, proportion of windows and doors, scale and architectural detail. The same principles should be applied in developing designs for changes and in reviewing proposed changes,

such that the key features retain their prominence and that the structures themselves retain their identity as excellent examples of late nineteenth century, High Victorian style secondary structures. Thus the following specific design standards refer to potential changes to the existing structures:

## Exterior Walls

- Brick walls should be retained and repointed if necessary using a mortar which duplicates the original mortar in strength, composition, color and texture.
- Cleaning of the existing masonry, when necessary, should be done
  using the gentlest methods possible so as to avoid permanently
  damaging or eroding the surface of the brick. The use of
  sandblasting, high-pressure water, or strong chemical solvents is not
  recommended.
- No new openings should be allowed on the front or side façade or those sides visible from Islington Road.
- No existing openings should be filled in on the front or side façade or those sides visible from Islington Road.

#### Windows

- Surviving historic windows should be retained and repaired where possible.
- If replacement is absolutely necessary, the replacements should match as closely as possible the original window in materials, size, style, and design.

#### Entrances/Doors

- The original front entrance design, style, size and arrangement should be retained.
- Replacement doors or front entrance features should be fabricated to match the style and materials of the originals.

Roof

- The steep pitched gambrel roof of the house is original to the structure and is integral to the design of the building. Every effort should be made to see that this feature is retained.
- If repair or replacement of the existing asphalt shingle roofing is necessary, it should be carried out using similar materials. If evidence is discovered of an original slate roof on the structure, the owner is encouraged but not required to replace the existing roof material with slate shingles.

#### **Additions**

- New additions, when necessary, should be designed to be compatible with the historic character of the buildings in terms of size, scale design, materials, color, and texture.
- New additions should be designed so that the changes minimally impact the streetscape and such that the key features retain their prominence.
- New mechanical systems should be installed inside of the building envelope whenever possible. If installation outside of the building envelope is absolutely required, new systems should be located at the rear of the building in a location which is not visible from the public way. Examples of these systems include, but are not limited to, air conditioning units, electrical meters, gas meters, etc.

#### 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.

ADDRESS	<u>S/B/L</u>
122 Islington Road	40/026/0001
184 Islington Road	41/026/0005
227 Islington Road	41/027/0032
228 Islington Road	41/027/0010
235 Islington Road	41/027/0033
243 Islington Road	41/027/0034
251 Islington Road	41/027/0035
252 Islington Road	41/026/0014
0 Islington Road	41/026/0013
14 Malvern Terrace	41/026/0015
22 Malvern Terrace	41/026/0016

# NEWTON LOCAL LANDMARK REPORT

Islington Estate Staff Quarters

236 and 242 Islington Road, Auburndale

Prepared for: Newton Historical Commission August 2004 DATE: September 9, 2004

**TO:** Planning and Development Board

FROM: Lara Kritzer, Preservation Planner

**SUBJECT: Proposed Historic Landmark Designation Review** 

Enclosed for your review is the local landmark report completed for the Newton Historical Commission as part of their landmark review process for 236 and 242 Islington Road, the Islington Estate Staff Quarters. The Newton Historical Commission has scheduled a public hearing on this item for their September 23, 2004 meeting and is requesting the Planning and Development Boards consideration and recommendation of this proposed landmark at your next meeting on September 13, 2004.

Thank you for your consideration of this document. If there is any additional information which I can provide on these properties or the landmarking process in general, please let me know.