

FOR THE AGENDA PLEASE REFER TO IT
AS:

THE PROPOSED THADDEUS FROST HOUSE
HISTORIC DISTRICT (291 BRIGHTON ST.)

THANKS!

SPENCER

FORM B – BUILDING

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

Photograph



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

45-87

Boston
North

BT

BLM.157

Town/City: Belmont

Place: *(neighborhood or village):*

Address: 291 Brighton Street

Historic Name: Thaddeus Frost House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1827

Source: Betts, p. 255

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: granite, concrete

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
garage (1946)

Major Alterations *(with dates):*

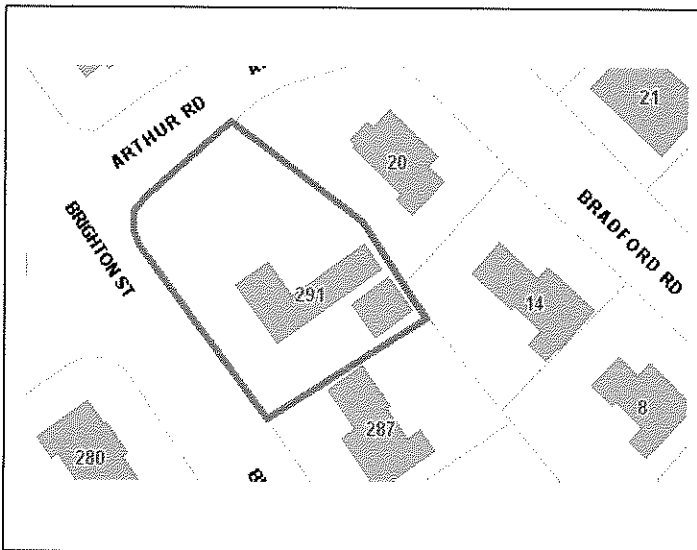
Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 12,486 SF

Setting: former farmland now surrounded by post World War II houses

Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date *(month / year):* July 2014

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

291 BRIGHTON STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

Located at the southeast corner of Brighton Street and Arthur Road, 271 Brighton Street is a 2 ½-story, 5 x 2 bay, side-gabled dwelling. The center entrance displays a modest Federal-style entry. The molded surround features a semi-elliptical arch spanning above the front door which is flanked by partial sidelights with small cornerblocks. The house is outlined by simple cornerboards and the eaves display shallow returns on the gable ends. The windows contain double-hung wooden sash in a six-over-six configuration, with molded surrounds and flanked by wooden shutters. Only the east chimney remains on the main block.

Extending behind the east part of the main house block is a two-story ell. There is a secondary entrance toward the rear of the east elevation. It is capped by a ca. 1870 door hood. According to research published by local historian Mrs. Frank French in 1973, the rear ell includes a fireplace with original crane and Dutch oven. A hardwood ice chest, dating from the mid 19th century, and originally used to store produce to be sent to market was located in the kitchen at that time.

The house occupies a level lot with a 20th century picket fence extending along the Brighton Street and Arthur Road frontage. A paved driveway extends along the southeast side of the house, terminating at a two-car, side-gabled garage constructed in 1946.

The Thaddeus Frost House is significant as one of the few surviving examples of Federal-style residential construction in Belmont.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

This house is of interest for its associations with the locally-important Frost family as well as its associations with the market gardening industry active in the Winnbrook section of Belmont from the late 19th century through World War II. The Frost family were early settlers who owned property in what is now Belmont back to the early 1700s. Thaddeus C. Frost (1796-1884) was born in Watertown, the son of Amos Frost and Lydia Bemis. He was also the nephew of Capt. Stephen Frost and the grandson of Capt. Ephraim Frost, both of whom were Revolutionary War heroes. Thaddeus was born in Cambridge and at the age of 11 became a member of the West Cambridge Musical Society.

Thaddeus Frost married Abigail Locke in 1827 and this house was built at that time. He was a farmer. The couple had six daughters and two sons. By the time of the 1880 Census Thaddeus was an 84-year old widower, living here with his son George, daughter Margaret, a nurse and several farm laborers. When Thaddeus Frost died in 1884 ownership of his sixteen acre parcel passed to his son, George A. Frost. After George Frost died in 1890, Varnum Frost purchased the property for \$3,500 at auction.

Cornelius and Isabella Bresnan bought the property in 1899 and continued the farming tradition. In 1910 the Census indicates that the couple was living here with their five children between the ages of 13 and 25, a sister-in-law, and three hired farm laborers. "Boston Market Celery" was cultivated on the site. Mrs. Bresnan died in 1931, followed by Mr. Bresnan in 1941.

Charles Trenholm, a local real estate man (Belmont Hill Trust) purchased the property in 1943. In 1944 Trenholm sold the house and 12,486 SF of land to Richard and Jessie Rablin (Book 6768, Page 405). Richard Rablin worked as a statistician. In 1945 and 1946 the Rablins filed a building permit for the construction of a two car garage to be built by Sam Alcock.

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The remainder of the original Thaddeus Frost farm was subdivided in 1946; Arthur Road was cut through in 1947. The Rablins owned the house at 291 Brighton Street until 1965 when it was purchased by Athena McInnis (Book 10872, Page 170).

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible **only** in a historic district
☐ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Statement of Significance by Lisa Mausolf
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Thaddeus Frost House is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C on the local level. Under Criterion A, the house is significant for its associations with the locally prominent Frost family as well as its associations with the market gardening active in the Winnbrook section of Belmont from the third quarter of the 19th century through World War II. Under Criterion C, the house is significant as one of the few surviving examples of Federal-style residential construction in Belmont.

Thaddeus Frost House

Local Historic District

291 Brighton Street, Belmont MA



291 BRIGHTON ST., BELMONT, MA, 2017
BUILT C.1805

What is a Local Historic District (LHD)?

- A tool to help protect buildings and properties that are historically and architecturally significant.
- Does not freeze house or property in time, provides tools to manage change over time.
- A LHD provides more protection than the demo-delay bylaw which only delays demolition. An LHD provides a design review process when any exterior changes are proposed that are visible from a public way and can also prevent demolition.
- Does not affect changes to abutter's property.

Creating a Local Historic District (LHD)



- Local Historic Districts are allowed through MA General Laws, Chapter 40C.
- Single buildings may become a local historic district through Chapter 40C, Section 3: "The buildings, structures or sites to be included in the proposed historic district may consist of one or more parcels of land, or one or more buildings or structures on one or more parcels or lots of land."
- Steps to create a local historic district (LHD)
 - ✓ Nomination of a historic resource
 - ✓ Local Historic District Study Committee formed (LHDSC)
 - ✓ LHDSC conducted research and public outreach
 - ✓ LHDSC prepared Preliminary Study Report
 - ✓ Preliminary Study Report submitted to Mass Historical Commission (MHC)
 - ✓ MHC recommended creation of LHD in letter dated 12/18/17
 - ✓ Public hearing held
 - ❑ Meet with appropriate town committees and boards to discuss amendment of bylaw
 - ❑ Town Meeting vote (2/3 majority)
 - ❑ Attorney General review
 - ❑ If approved by Attorney General, LHD may be created

Local Historic Districts in Belmont



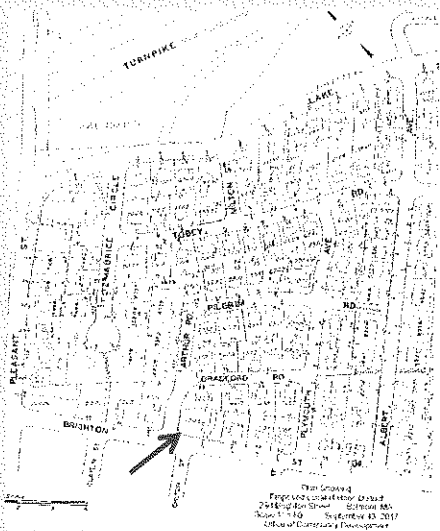
- Belmont currently has 3 local historic districts: Pleasant Street, Common Street, and the Richardson Farm.



- The Thaddeus Frost Local Historic District will be Belmont's first single building local historic district. Other comparable towns have successfully utilized single building local historic districts; for example, Wellesley currently has four.



Thaddeus Frost House Local Historic District 291 Brighton Street, Belmont MA



2017 Map, Belmont Office of Community Development



291 Brighton Street, Belmont, MA. 2017

Thaddeus Frost House Local Historic District 291 Brighton Street, Belmont MA

Architectural Significance

- The c.1805 Thaddeus Frost house is one of the few remaining examples of Federal-period architecture in Belmont that survives virtually unchanged. Features include:
 - five bay, 2 1/2 story, 2 story ell
 - clapboard structure
 - foundation of field stone covered by brick
 - modest sidelight entry with simple corner boards and lintels
- The house retains many original interior elements, although the interior is not covered in a LHD.

Historical Significance

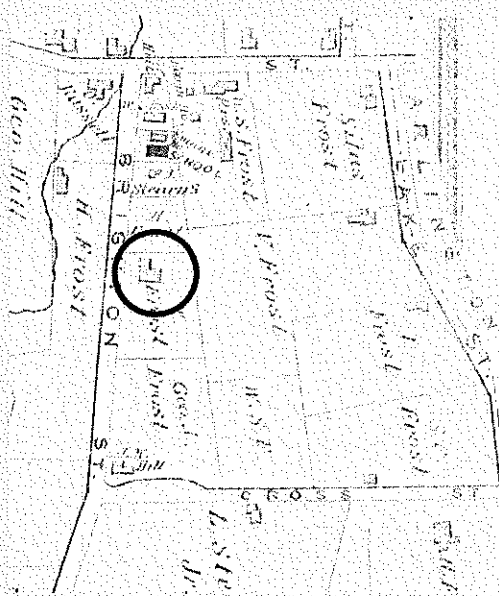
- Owned by three members of the Frost family, who were prominent citizens of Watertown, Arlington and Belmont.
- One of the last surviving homes that was originally part of a sixteen acre farm. This house and farm was once part of Belmont's flourishing market garden industry.
- One of the last farms to be subdivided for residential development in Belmont.

Thaddeus Frost House Local Historic District 291 Brighton Street, Belmont MA

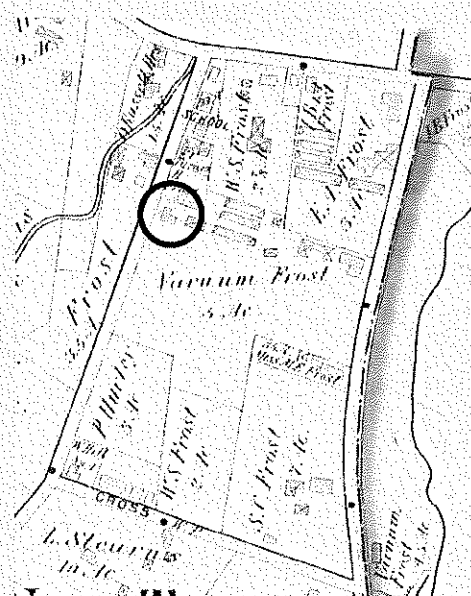


Built c. 1805 Federal-style farmhouse
c.1900 view showing ell and shed. Belmont Citizen, September 20, 1973, page 4.

Thaddeus Frost House Local Historic District 291 Brighton Street, Belmont MA



"County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts"
Plate 100 detail, F.W. Beers, 1875.



Atlas of Middlesex County, Belmont Plate, Geo.
W. Stadly & Co., Boston: 1900.

Thaddeus Frost House Local Historic District
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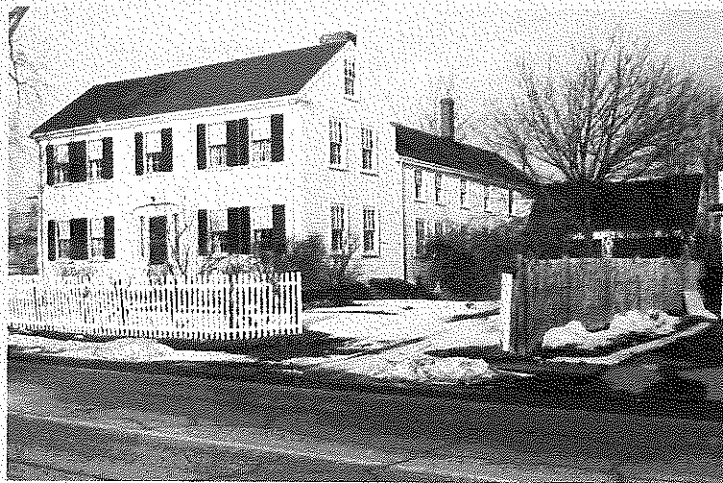


May 20, 1944 view with large farm buildings visible behind the house. Courtesy of the Belmont Historical Society.



c.1944, Courtesy of the Belmont Historical Society

Thaddeus Frost House Local Historic District
291 Brighton Street, Belmont MA



c. 1946. View of house with new garage and new house built on the right. Courtesy of the Belmont Historical Society.

Verso of photo reads: "Property of Mr. & Mrs. Richard Loring Rablin bought by them 1944 from Mr. Chas. Trenholm. Built circa 1802-1808. Became a celebrated celery farm. Developed the 'Boston Market Celery.'"

Thaddeus Frost House Local Historic District

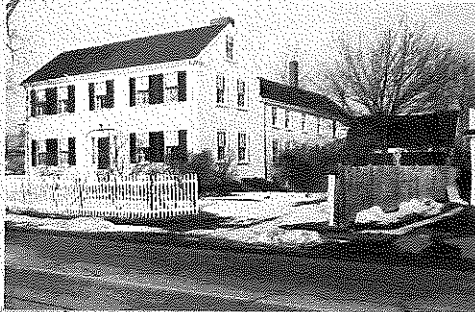
291 Brighton Street, Belmont MA



c.1900



1944



1946



2017

Special Thanks

- **Athena McInnis**, current owner of 291 Brighton St.
- **Belmont Historical Society**: Elizabeth Gibson, Viktoria Haase, Debbie Rosales, Audrey Martin
- **Belmont Office of Community Development**: Spencer Gober
- **Middlesex County Registry of Deeds**: Richard Foscarota
- **Mount Pleasant Cemetery**, Arlington: Jean Smith
- **Cambridge Historical Commission**: Samantha Elliott
- **Cambridge Historical Society**: Maggie Hoffman
- **Belmont Public Library**