

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

12-133	Boston North	C	BLM.827
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Town/City: Belmont

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Cushing Square

Address: 105-115 Trapelo Road/453-455 Common St.

Historic Name: Zebedee Cliff Block

Uses: Present: commercial

Original: commercial

Date of Construction: 1922

Source: building permit

Style/Form: Classical Revival

Architect/Builder: Zebedee Cliff, arch./bldr.

Exterior Material:

Foundation: not visible

Wall/Trim: stone and brick

Roof: tar and gravel

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1981 – new storefront 105-113 Trapelo
date? – new storefronts Common Street
date? – removal of rooftop ornament

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

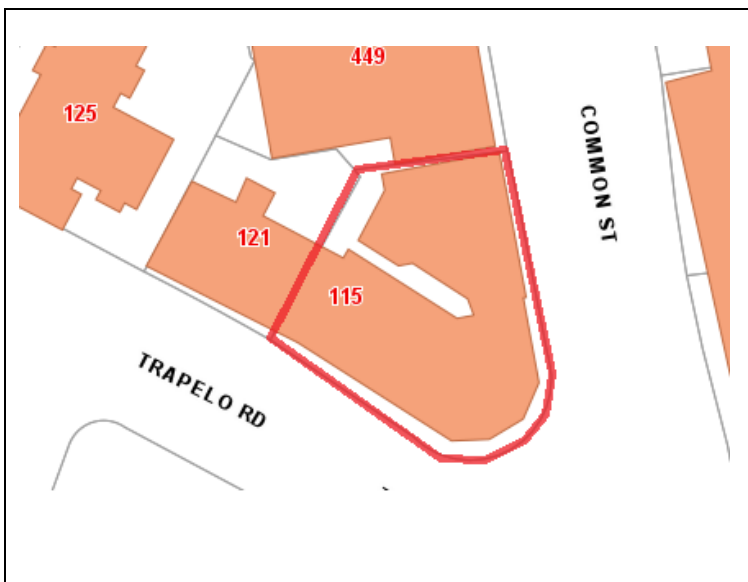
Acreage: 9,668 SF

Setting: corner lot in busy commercial center

Photograph



Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): September 2014

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

105-115 TRAPELO ROAD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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.

This block of early 20th century Classical Revival storefronts wraps around the corner of Trapelo Road and Common Street. Although the storefronts have all been remodeled with new lower panels, metal doors and new glass, the individual stores are still defined by a system of fluted pilasters which support a wide frieze decorated by elongated quatrefoil panels. It appears that additional ornament (anthemion?) once capped each pilaster but these have been wrapped in metal or removed. On the corner the parapet is capped by an arched panel flanked by finials.

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 block is one of many so-called "taxpayer" blocks constructed in Cushing Square in the 1920's to provide shops and services for the area's rapidly growing population. There is no building on the site at the time of the March 1922 Sanborn map but it was likely built soon thereafter and was definitely in place by 1925. The land, part of the 36-acre Palfrey Estate was subdivided in 1920. This property was lots 1, 2 & 44 of the subdivision.

The land was sold by Ursula Ryan of Malden to Zebedee Cliff of Somerville in May 1922 (Book 4515, Page 76). Zebedee Estey Cliff (1863-1934) was born in New Brunswick, Canada and came to Boston at the age of 18 initially working as a carpenter. In time he became a successful builder/developer and constructed many buildings in Somerville, served as Mayor of Somerville for four terms, and was president of a shipbuilding company in Maine (East Coast Ship Company). His home at 29 Powderhouse Terrace in Somerville is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Cliff applied for a building permit to build these stores in June 1922 and is listed as the owner/architect/builder. As constructed, the block consisted of nine stores, 16 feet high and was valued at \$40,000. In November 1922 Cliff sold "land with buildings" to Bella Chaffee of Belmont (Book 4574, Page 88). The property passed through several hands in the next few years including Matilda Roche of Belmont, Willard Stevens of Brookline and David Garfinkle and Samuel Barkin of Brookline. In 1927 Garfinkle and Barkin sold the block to Moses Williams, Edwin Brooks and George Howland, Trustees of the Chain Store Realty Trust (Book 5116, Page 108). The property was purchased by Hagop and Nevert Misakian in 1957 and has been owned by the family ever since.

Directories indicate that the block has been historically occupied by a mix of businesses. In 1925 the tenants included Arlington Fruit Store (453 Common), Edward T. Harrington Real Estate (455), the Payson Park Drug Store (459), Raymond Foyle real estate (105 Trapelo), N.M. Brown dry goods (109), Craft & McDonald Provisions (111), and J.W. Stone & Co. autos (115). By 1939 several larger regional/national stores had been added into the mix of smaller businesses. These included A & P at 453 Common and Hood Creamery at 455. Macy Drug was located at 459 Common.

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Ancestry.com.

Belmont Directories, various dates.

Belmont: The Architecture and Development of the Town of Homes. Prepared for the Belmont Historic District Commission, 1984.

Betts, Richard B. *The Streets of Belmont and How they Were Named (2nd edition).* Belmont: Belmont Historical Society, 2012.

Boston Globe, June 14, 1934 [obituary of Zebedee Cliff].

Massachusetts Historical Commission. MACRIS database.

Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, MA

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1915, 1922, 1931, 1949.

Town of Belmont, Building Department files.

U.S. Census, various dates.