

Preliminary Study Report
Proposed John Hemenway House Historic District
Framingham, MA



Framingham Historic District Commission

Prepared by Jennifer B. Doherty, Historic Preservation Planner

May, 2018

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Cover image—undated photograph of the John Hemenway House. From the collection of the Framingham Historical Commission.

Summary Sheet

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Study Committee

Framingham Historic District Commission

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Stephen Greeley, Acting Chair | Ted Grenham |
| Sue Bernstein | Jim Kubat |
| Julie Ferrari | Helen Lemoine |
| Henry Field | Andrew Mackin |
| Amy Finstein | Ken Nowell |

Staff Support

Erika Oliver Jerram, Deputy Director, Community & Economic Development
Jennifer B. Doherty, Historic Preservation Planner

Public Hearing Date

Anticipated August, 2018

City Council Vote

Anticipated August, 2018

Total Properties

1

Conclusion

This Preliminary Study Report presents rationale for designating the John Hemenway House at 613 Pleasant Street as a single property local historic district. The building is a significant example of 18th century construction, of which only a handful are left in Framingham. In addition it was associated with the locally-prominent Hemenway family in the 18th and 19th centuries. Although there were residents in recent years, the building is currently vacant and the owner plans to demolish the building. The Historical Commission has imposed a one-year demolition delay that expires on September 13, 2018.

The Historic District Commission is seeking to establish this local historic district before that delay expires. As required under Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 40C, this Preliminary Study Report will be submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Framingham Planning Board for their comment. After the required 60-day waiting period, the Historic District Commission anticipates holding a public hearing on the project in August 2018, and bringing the proposed district to the City Council for a vote shortly thereafter. The proposed John Hemenway Historic District will fall under the City of Framingham's existing Historic Districts by-law, General By-laws Article VII, Section 5.

Introduction

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, known as the Historic Districts Act, was enacted in 1960. This act outlines the process for establishing a historic district, details how it will operate, and allows communities to establish local historic districts. Over 120 municipalities in Massachusetts have established a local historic district to protect significant buildings and historic resources in their communities. Historic districts allow for the review of changes to the exterior of a building visible from a public way. They provide for the thoughtful consideration of changes to protect the character of a community's unique historic resources.

Today Framingham's landscape displays a wide variety of historic resources. Late 17th century farmhouses remain from the community's early agricultural years while postwar subdivision development dramatically changed the landscape of the community. Population growth exploded in the 19th century with industrialization, creating dense settlements at South Framingham and Saxonville. During the late 20th century, Framingham began to recognize the importance of its historic resources. An Historical Commission was established in 1969, and many of the community's important historic resources were documented in the late 1980s. Four National Register of Historic Places districts were established as a result of that work. The City also established a demolition delay by-law in 1991 that provides for the review of proposed demolitions of buildings 75 years or older.

The Framingham Historic District Commission was established by a vote of Town Meeting in 1978; the same Town Meeting also established Framingham's first local historic district, the Centre Common Historic District. In 1994, Town Meeting voted to establish the Jonathan Maynard Historic District along Pleasant Street. Three single-property historic districts were established in the 2000s, protecting unique individual properties: the late 18th century Sarah Clayes House (2008), the H. H. Richardson Depot (2016), and the late 17th century Pike-Haven-Foster House (2016). Together these five local historic districts protect 84 properties dating from the late 17th century through the 20th century and representing a wide range of building styles and types important to Framingham's history.

Local Historic Districts vs. the National Register of Historic Places

As mentioned above, Framingham has both local historic districts, designated under MGL Chapter 40C, and properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as larger multi-property districts. Established by the National Historic Preservation Act in

1966, the National Register is a federal designation that is largely honorary. It includes a wide variety of properties, districts, and landscapes that are significant to larger events or patterns in the nation's history. The National Register provides little direct protection for buildings; buildings listed on the National Register can be demolished. The National Register provides for a non-binding review process if federal or state permits, licensing, or funding will be used during work to a National Register listed or eligible property. Because local historic districts provide more direct protection for buildings, and because the John Hemenway House is already threatened with demolition, the Historic District Commission is pursuing local historic district designation rather than listing the property on the National Register of Historic Places.

Background to the Current Proposal

City historic preservation staff was notified of the intent to demolish the John Hemenway House, 613 Pleasant Street, in August of 2017. Staff prepared an updated Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form for the property. This included deed research into the property's ownership and information on the prominent owners. This was presented at the Historical Commission's August 30, 2017 meeting, along with information provided by the property owner on the condition of the building. At that meeting, the Historical Commission voted unanimously (6-0-0) that the John Hemenway House is historically or architecturally significant. At a duly noticed public hearing on September 13, 2017, the Historical Commission reviewed the inventory form, the information provided by the owner on the building's condition, and interior photographs of the building. Neither the Historical Commission nor staff were allowed into the building. At the September meeting the Historical Commission voted unanimously (5-0-0) that the John Hemenway House should be preferentially preserved.

The Historical Commission suggested that the owner put the building up for sale, advertise it to be moved, or provide the Commission with hard figures showing that the cost of rehabilitation would be prohibitive. In a phone call with staff on November 2, 2017, the property owner indicated that they did not wish to do any of that.

At a meeting of the Historical Commission on April 11, 2018, Historic District Commission member Ken Nowell presented his concerns about the impending demolition of the building. Nowell is the owner of the Pike-Haven-Foster House (161 Belknap Road, FRM.557), one of the three established single-property local historic districts. The Historical Commission voted unanimously (5-0-0) to support efforts to establish a single-property local historic district at 613 Pleasant Street.

Methodology Statement

The proposed district was presented at the Historic District Commission meeting on May 9, 2018. After some discussion, the Historic District Commission voted unanimously (6-0-0) to pursue a local historic district at 613 Pleasant Street and designated themselves as the Local Historic District Study Committee. Shortly thereafter, the property owner was notified by mail and staff prepared this Preliminary Study Report. Source material included historic maps of Framingham, deeds recorded at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, census and other vital records, and local secondary sources.

As required by MGL Chapter 40C, the Historic District Commission will submit this Preliminary Study Report to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and the Framingham Planning Board for comment. After the required 60-day waiting period, the Historic District Commission anticipates holding a public hearing in August 2018. Comments from the MHC, Planning Board, and the public will be incorporated into the Preliminary Study Report. A Final Study Report will be submitted to the Framingham City Council in August 2018. The goal is to establish the John Hemenway Historic District before the demolition delay period expires on September 13, 2018.

Significance Statement

Historic Significance

One of the earliest roads in Framingham, 18th and 19th century houses and large farms lined rural Pleasant Street into the 20th century. The John Hemenway House is one of the earliest in the area. On December 30, 1741, Ichabod Hemenway deeded the east half of his farm with a dwelling house to his son John Hemenway.¹ Ichabod Hemenway came to Framingham as an adult and bought 100 acres in the area of the Hemenway House. He built his own house on the south side of Pleasant Street (no longer extant).² It is unclear if the house Ichabod Hemenway deeded to John Hemenway in 1741 was the extant building, or a portion of it, or if that earlier house was demolished and the extant building constructed. As discussed below, the current building shows signs of at least two building campaigns, so it is possible the east half of the house is an earlier building dating to before 1741. The house itself currently presents a late 18th century façade. The Hemenway family name is found throughout the early records of Framingham, and the family has been recognized with Hemenway Road and the Hemenway Elementary School. Neither was named for a specific Hemenway but rather a general acknowledgement of the family's history in Framingham.

John Hemenway acquired the property about ten years before his marriage to Mary Rand on November 26, 1751; the couple had three children.³ 19th century Framingham historian J. H. Temple noted that "he was known from his size, as 'Great John.'" John Hemenway's son John (1752-1816) lived on the family farm according to Temple.⁴ He married Deborah Adams (d. 1844) and they had four children. Their daughter, Polly (1785-1868) married John Johnson (1789-1869). After John Hemenway's death in 1816, Temple noted that a John Gosbee owned the property for a few years before selling to John Johnson, Polly's husband, returning the property to the Hemenway family.⁵

Johnson was listed as the property owner on the 1832, 1856, and 1875 maps (even though the last was after his death in 1869). The Johnsons had two children, one of whom – John – is believed to have built the John Johnson House on the south side of the street at 660 Pleasant Street (John Johnson House, FRM.1203).⁶ The 1850 census listed the Johnson family living

1 MCSRD Book 55, Page 92, signed December 30, 1741, recorded May 18, 1757; Temple pg. 587

2 Temple pg. 586

3 Temple pg. 587

4 Temple pg. 588

5 Temple pg. 569 and 609

6 Temple pg. 588. Ancestry.com: US Federal Census of Agriculture for 1850, 1860.

together, with John Johnson the owner of real estate valued at almost \$10,000. That year he had 121 acres supporting nine milch cows that produced 1400 pounds of butter. The extremely productive farm also grew rye, Indian corn, oats, peas, Irish potatoes, buckwheat, \$100 worth of orchard products, and hay. In 1860 the family was still together and living with two additional farm laborers. The farm of 100 acres had a number of cows producing milk and butter and grew other products such as buckwheat, potatoes, and hay.

The history of the property following John Johnson's death in 1869 is unclear, but in 1888 the Framingham Savings Bank sold 13 acres, "a portion of the John Johnson homestead," to Comer A. Belknap.⁷ The 1900 census listed Belknap as a farmer on Pleasant Street, living with his wife Rebecca J., their son Roscoe H., Belknap's widowed mother Adelaide, and servant Jesse Greenleit.

In 1900 Edward Loring Estabrook acquired the property as well as additional parcels on the south side of the street, including the John Johnson House (660 Pleasant Street, FRM.1203) and the Daniel Hemenway House (713 Pleasant Street, FRM.561).⁸ The greatly enlarged property became known as Linden Farm, and was used as a gentleman's farm or summer house by Estabrook. In the early twentieth century, there were a number of large gentleman's farms in the west and northwest sections of Framingham. Estabrook and his family were enumerated in the census of 1900 and 1910 at 18 Sewall Street, Newton (NWT.4007). The Estabrook household included Edward (b. 1850), his wife Lilla (b. 1868), her mother Linda H. Dinsmore (b. 1846), and a nurse in 1900, replaced by a servant in 1910. Estabrook was the proprietor of an iron foundry.

The current 1.46-acre parcel was split off from the larger farm in 1929, when Estabrook's estate sold the property to Henry W. and Annie E. Hulbert of Groton, Connecticut.⁹ The surrounding property was owned by a separate owner until it was acquired by the Town of Framingham in 1961 for a new elementary school (Brophy Elementary School, not documented).¹⁰ The Hulberts were listed on Pleasant Street in directories from the 1930s, along with their daughter Winifred.¹¹ Following Henry W. Hulbert's death, the Hulbert women sold the

7 MCSR Book 1859, Page 245

8 MCSR Book 2492, Page 61 (not checked) and MCSR Plan Book 1929, Plan 1341

9 MCSR Book 5413, Page 457, November 5, 1929

10 MCSR Book 9938, Page 233, November 23, 1961

11 Ancestry.com: Framingham directory for 1933, 1939; US Federal Census of Population for 1930.

property in 1941 to J. Mason and Barbara F. Lincoln.¹² The couple were listed in directories from the 1940s and 1950s at the address; J. Mason Lincoln worked as a salesman in Boston, and the couple later moved to Edmands Road.¹³

In 1954 the Lincolns sold the Hemenway House to J. Henry Leon II and his wife Anne.¹⁴ Leon (d. 1964) was an engineer and manager with Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff (now known as HNTB Corporation), the firm that designed and supervised the construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike.¹⁵ The couple's daughter, Barbara, inherited the property with her husband, Ted William Isles; they did not live in Framingham. Their daughter, also named Barbara, sold the property in 2017 to new owners.¹⁶ The present owners applied to demolish the building in August of 2017; the Framingham Historical Commission imposed a one-year demolition delay in September, 2017.

Although the c. 1741 date of the Hemenway House has not been confirmed through interior investigation, the exterior appearance of the building is typical of the second half of the 18th century. There are 48 documented pre-1800 buildings in Framingham, and only 15 pre-1750 buildings, making the Hemenway House part of a rare group of buildings in Framingham. While the building retains a high degree of integrity, there has been no determination of eligibility for listing the property on the National Register of Historic Places.

Architectural Description

The John Hemenway House is a c. 1741 center chimney house with an unbalanced five-bay façade. Two stories tall and two piles deep, the house has a side-gable roof. The main entry is centered on the house with two windows on either side. The windows to the west are spaced noticeably further apart than those on the east. The spacing of the windows suggests that the house was built in at least two different building campaigns. In addition, the roof of the east side of the house sweeps down in one continuous slope to a leanto at the rear of the house; there is no corresponding leanto on the west side of the house. A shed roof dormer is located on the roof slope of the leanto. A one-story side-gable ell extending east from this leanto connects a one-story end gable garage to the house. The garage has two bay doors and a

¹² Annie E. Hulbert first sold the property to her daughter in 1940 (MCSR Book 6384, Page 122, April 20, 1940) before Winifred sold the property (MCSR Book 6473, Page 40, February 21, 1941)

¹³ Ancestry.com: Framingham directory for 1943, 1950, 1960

¹⁴ MCSR Book 8309, Page 8, August 17, 1954

¹⁵ "J. Henry Leon 2d," *Boston Globe*, 4 May 1964.

¹⁶ MCSR Book 69505, Page 414 and MCSR Book 69505, Page 417, June 27, 2017

pedestrian door on the main façade. Building permits show that the garage was added to the house in 1950.¹⁷ The house sits on a stone foundation, is covered in wood clapboards, and has an asphalt shingle roof. The windows on the house are historic wood nine-over-six sash dating to the late 18th century; six-over-six and small two-over-two sash are also visible on the rear leanto. A painted brick chimney projects from the center of the house at the ridgeline.

The Hemenway House is very simple, typical of its mid-18th century construction date. The eaves are boxed and clipped close to the house, with a minimal cornice return. The windows have a very narrow entablature, and the ones at the second story are placed tight under the eaves. The door surround is an elaborate Georgian/Federal style surround that previous research stated is not original to the building; a source for this information was not provided. A pediment caps flat pilasters with a wide architrave directly above a six-panel wood door.

Sitting on the north side of Pleasant Street, the Hemenway House is angled slightly away from the street so that it faces due south, a hallmark of its mid-18th century construction. The immediate area is primarily residential, developed into neighborhoods of single-family houses in the late 20th century. As noted above, the lot was carved out of a larger parcel and an elementary school was built northwest of the house in 1968 (Brophy Elementary School, not documented). The lot of the Hemenway House is heavily wooded and overgrown. Although the house has been occupied in recent years, it has not been maintained and is visibly deteriorated, with holes visible around the main entry and at the eaves. The current property owner has stated that there is significant damage inside the house from water and termites. No interior investigation was completed for this work.

17 City of Framingham Building Permit #BLD06127

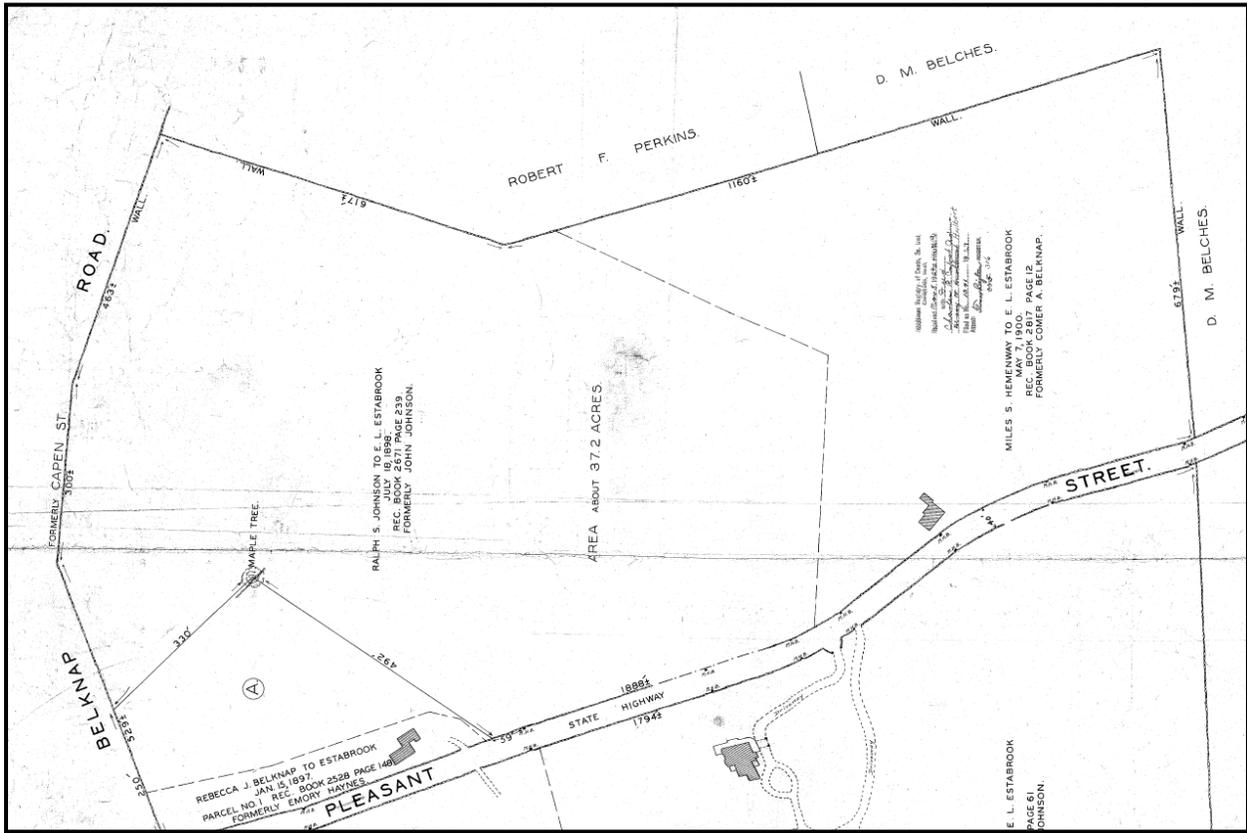
Justification of Boundaries

The proposed John Hemenway House Historic District at 613 Pleasant Street is located on rural Pleasant Street in a primarily residential area. Pleasant Street, heading west out of Framingham Center to Southborough, has historically had dispersed settlement in the form of farmsteads, and later gentleman's farms, along its length. Because of the threat to this specific building, and the dispersed nature of other nearby historic buildings, the Historic District Commission is proposing a single-property local historic district. The boundaries correspond to the present parcel for the building, identified as City of Framingham assessor's parcel 077-66-0301-000. The boundaries also correspond to the most recent deed for the property, recorded at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds Book 69505, Page 417. The property is entirely surrounded by City-owned land that holds a mid-20th century elementary school, somewhat preventing a larger district. As the building is sited close to the street, the front and sides of the building are fully visible from the public way, although currently partially obscured by overgrown trees.

Historic Maps and Images



The John Hemenway House is marked "J. Johnson" on this 1832 map of Framingham.



In the early 20th century, the John Hemenway House (right, north side of the road) was part of a large gentleman’s farm owned by Edward L. Estabrook, along with 660 Pleasant Street (south side of road, with large driveway) and 713 Pleasant Street (left). *Detail of MCSRD Plan Book 1929, Plan 1341.*



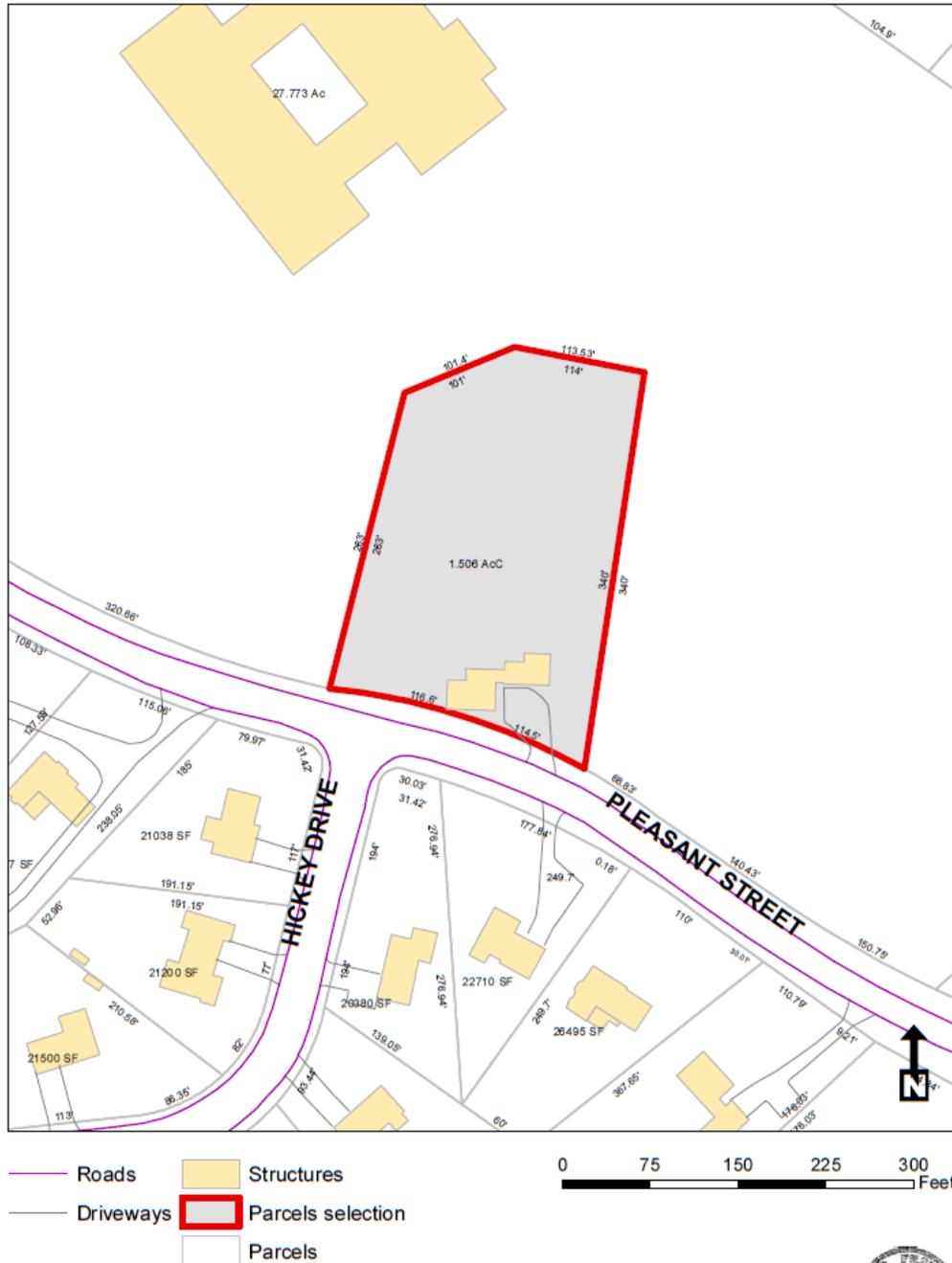
An undated historic image of the John Hemenway House. From the collection of the Framingham Historical Commission.



The John Hemenway House in 1968. From the collection of the Framingham Historical Commission.

Map of Proposed District

John Hemenway House Historic District 613 Pleasant Street, Framingham, Mass.



Prepared by City of Framingham
Community & Economic Development Division
May 2018



Property Index

Parcel Number	Street Address	Inventory Form	Construction Date	Historic Name	Architectural Style
077-66-0301-000	613 Pleasant Street	FRM.560	c. 1741	John Hemenway House	Colonial

Total Properties to Include: 1

Total Buildings to Include: 1

Bibliography

1832 Map of Framingham. Boston, MA: Pendleton's Lithog.

1856 Map of Middlesex County, Massachusetts. Boston, MA: Smith & Bumstead.

1875 County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts. New York, NY: J. B. Beers & Co.

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1895 Atlas of the Town of Framingham, Mass. Pittsfield, MA: Jas. P. Beirne.

1908 Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Vol. 3. Boston, MA: Geo. H. Walker & Co.

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Doherty, Jennifer B. "FRM.560 – John Hemenway House," Massachusetts Historical Commission Building Inventory Form. For the Framingham Historical Commission, November, 2017.

Evans, M., S. Roper, and L. Dennison. "FRM.560 – John Hemenway House," Massachusetts Historical Commission Building Inventory Form. For the Framingham Planning Department and Framingham Historical Commission, October, 1979.

Middlesex County South Registry of Deeds (MCSR): see footnotes

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Appendix—Current Photographs

All photographs taken August, 2017 by Jennifer B. Doherty



The main façade (above) and east elevation (below) of the John Hemenway House.





The west (side) and north (rear) elevations of the John Hemenway House.





A detail of the main entry door at the John Hemenway House.



A detail of one of the historic windows at the John Hemenway House.