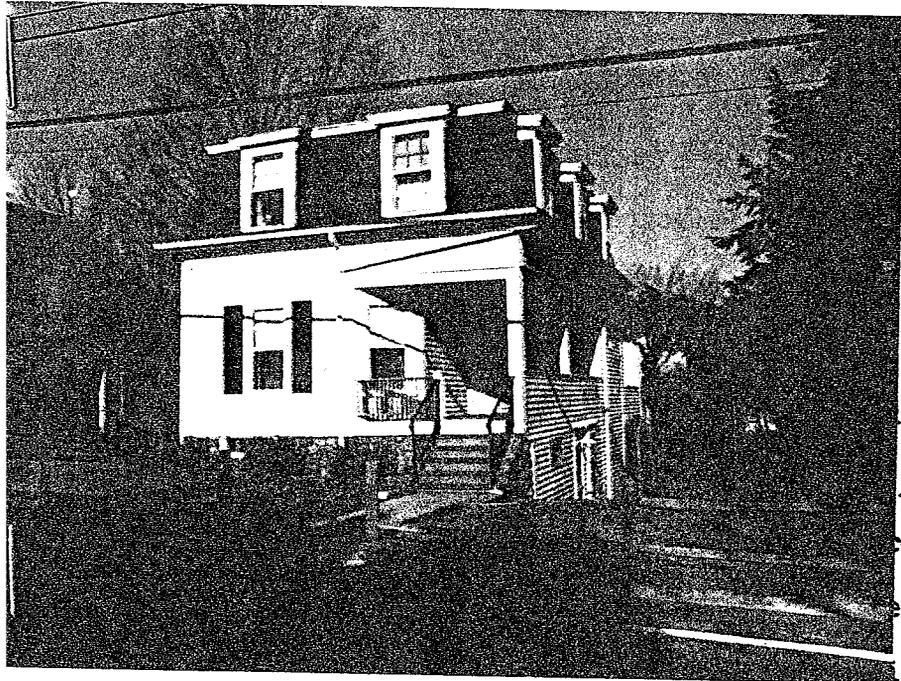


C 246

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
BOYLSTON STREET
ACTON, MA 02116



Acton

Address 525 Massachusetts Avenue

Historic Name Franklin R. Knowlton (1883)

Present single family residential

Original single family residential

DESCRIPTION

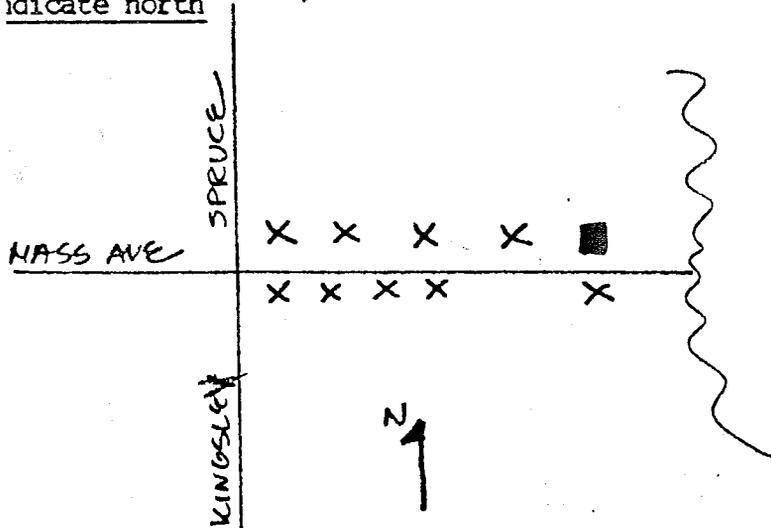
circa 1880

Source visual/maps

Mansard Cottage

Architect none

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s). F-ZA-104
Indicate north



Exterior Wall Fabric clapboards

Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates) rear addition and deck (late 20th century); windows (1980s)

Condition Good

Moved no Date _____

Acreage less than one acre

Setting The house is built into the side of a small hill on the north side of Massachusetts Avenue. The house is one in a row of dwellings dating from the latter half of the 19th century

Recorded by B. Nylander/Schuler and Johnson

Organization Acton Historical Commission

Date June 1988/March 1990

GRID REFERENCE _____

USGS QUADRANGLE _____

SCALE _____

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

INVENTORY CONTINUATION SHEET

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

INVENTORY CONTINUATION SHEET

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Atlases and Maps: 1875; 1889; 1892

Fletcher, Acton in History; Phalen, History of the Town of Acton

Directories: 1883; 1902

Clippings, AHS

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Community: ACTON | Form No: C-246 |
| Property Name: 525 Massachusetts Ave | |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

525 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE / ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The house at 525 Massachusetts Avenue is a much altered Mansard Cottage. Built in to the side of a steep slope, the 1 1/2 story clapboard-clad dwelling is three bays deep, two bays across, and rests on a rubblestone foundation. The original slate roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles. Simply enframed 6/6 dormer windows project slightly from the roof, three on the east and west facades, two on the north and south sides.

Built into the side of the hill, the house is sited with its short end to the street. The Massachusetts Avenue facade (south) consists of a 6/6 window (with a slightly projecting lintel and narrow wood shutters), and a clipped corner bay, with a 6/6 window, and two recessed entrances within an open porch. The porch is composed of a replacement plain balustrade and square posts and is reached by a set of concrete and brick steps. The diagonal entrance has an early 1900's single pane and paneled wood door; the second back entrance is contemporary. The east facade consists of two entrances and a small square window at the basement level, and the open porch above. The altered fenestration on the west facade includes paired multi-pane windows, a projecting hipped roof square bay and a single 6/6 window with a slightly projecting lintel and wood shutters. Attached to the rear (north) facade is a cantilevered enclosed contemporary porch with a modern deck and railing visible from Massachusetts Avenue.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Community: ACTON | Form No: C-246 |
| Property Name: 525 Massachusetts Ave | |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

525 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE / HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

Built circa 1880 (architectural evidence/Beers, 1875), the house at 525 Massachusetts Avenue was occupied by Franklin R. Knowlton and his wife Emma Hosmer by 1883. The Knowltons lived at this address until at least 1913.

Frank Knowlton played an important role in West Acton's vitality as a small manufacturing village in the late 19th century. Across the road from the Knowlton house, Frank Knowlton ran the Knowlton Cigar Factory, with his brother Octavius, beginning in 1889. Located on a now vacant lot (east of #520-526 Massachusetts Avenue), the long two story factory housed about 30 men and women. Cigars known as the "Yankee Star," and others, were produced from tobacco grown in the Connecticut Valley and later, Cuba and Puerto Rico. The business was begun in the 1870s on the second floor of Hanscom Littlefield's store (demolished, now site of IOOF Hall) in West Acton. Knowlton was a member of the Co. M 1st Maine Regiment, an active participant in the G.A.R. and a trustee of Acton Memorial Library for over twenty-five years.

On this section of Massachusetts Avenue, east of the village center, stood a school (now demolished) and several single family houses built primarily between 1845 and 1885. This development was associated with the 1845 arrival of the railroad and subsequent commercial and industrial growth. During the latter half of the 19th century, West Acton's industries included the cigar factory, a grist mill, cider mills, produce marketing, tub and pail manufacturing, overall manufacturing, and several other enterprises. Before the railroad, the "village" at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue (Harvard Turnpike, 1799), Arlington Street (1735), and Central Street (1766) was a sparsely settled outpost known as the "west part of town."

Staple to Inventory form at bottom