

**SINGLE BUILDING HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE
TOWN OF WELLESLEY MASSACHUSETTS**

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Erin L. Heacock, Planner

December 20, 2013

Christopher C. Skelly
Director of Local Government Programs
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

Re: Preliminary Report, Single Building Historic Districts Study
Sylvia Plath House, 26 Elmwood Road, and Fiske House, 126 Woodlawn Avenue

Dear Mr. Skelly,

In accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40C, the *Historic Districts Act*, enclosed please find the Preliminary Report for the Sylvia Plath House and Fiske House Single Building Historic Districts prepared by the Wellesley Single Building Historic District (SBHD) Study Committee and dated December 20, 2013.

The SBHD Study Committee finds that both the Sylvia Plath House and the Fiske House are worthy of designation as Historic Districts. Each of the properties offers a unique perspective on Wellesley's history, which the SBHD Study Committee and the property owners believe should be preserved. Both houses were the homes of very prominent Town residents, one of whom was also an internationally recognized author and recipient of the Pulitzer Prize. The SBHD Study Committee looks forward to presenting these two historic districts for consideration by Wellesley's Annual Town Meeting with the support of the Wellesley Planning Board and Wellesley Historical Commission during the spring of 2014.

The SBHD Study Committee requests that the Massachusetts Historical Commission review the attached Preliminary Report for completeness and transmit its recommendations to the SBHD Study Committee at its earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

FOR

Helen Robertson
Chairman, Wellesley Single Building Historic District Study Committee

cc: Wellesley Planning Board
Wellesley Historical Commission

**PRELIMINARY REPORT
SYLVIA PLATH HOUSE AND FISKE HOUSE
SINGLE BUILDING HISTORIC DISTRICTS STUDY**



**Prepared by:
Wellesley Single Building Historic District
Study Committee**

December 20, 2013

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SUMMARY SHEET

The Single Building Historic District Study Committee:

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Committee Members as of December 20, 2013

Helen Robertson, Chair
David Wright, Vice Chair
Joel Slocum
Maureen Cary
Joshua Dorin
Catherine Johnson

Expected Date of Public Hearing: February 2014

Expected Date of Town Meeting: April 2014

Total Number of Properties Included in Study: 2

Conclusion of the Preliminary Study Report

The Wellesley Single Building Historic District (SBHD) Study Committee finds that both the Sylvia Plath House and the Fiske House are worthy of designation as Historic Districts. Each of the properties offers a unique perspective on Wellesley's history, which the Study Committee and the property owners believe should be preserved. Both houses were the homes of very prominent Town residents, one of whom was also an internationally recognized author and recipient of the Pulitzer Prize.

The Sylvia Plath House is a mid-20th Century Colonial Revival located on a 10,000 square foot lot. The property was carved out of 40 acres on the east side of what is now Weston Road, and had been owned by William H. Cavanaugh in the late 19th Century. Pulitzer prize-winning author Sylvia Plath spent her childhood here, and the house and Wellesley appear in her writings. 2013 marks the 50th Anniversary of her death.

The Fiske House is also an example of the Colonial Revival style, which was very popular in this area of town, Wellesley Farms. It evolved from a simple farmhouse into an elegant residence as it changed to meet the needs of the three families who owned it over the years. Most significantly, it was the home of Joseph E. Fiske, who was largely responsible for Wellesley's split from Needham in 1881 to become a separate town. Fiske was also one of the Town's early leaders, and was highly instrumental in starting the transformation of the rural village into the thriving suburb of today.

INTRODUCTION

Historic preservation in Massachusetts took a giant leap forward with the passage of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, the Historic Districts Act, in 1960. The Act enables cities and towns to preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in their history or that of the Commonwealth. A Historic District can contain one or more buildings, and it can be of local, rather than state or national, importance.

A Historic District protects through controls on external changes to any building in the District. Each town selects which controls to impose from a list provided in 40C. An appointed Historic District Commission oversees these controls through a process of application by an owner, hearing before the Commission and decision rendered by the Commission.

Municipalities throughout the state have used Chapter 40C to create single and multiple building historic districts to preserve parts of their historic legacies. Currently there are over 200 single building historic districts in Massachusetts in towns as varied as Lincoln, Somerville and West Springfield, and over 230 multiple building districts. In 1980, Wellesley created a multiple building historic district in the Cottage Street area to preserve the houses occupied by workers in the town's nineteenth century manufacture of shoes. The area today is a congenial neighborhood that enjoys its protected status and the resiliency of property values that that status has afforded owners over the past thirty years.

Wellesley created its first two single building historic districts in 2011. These recognize and preserve individual buildings that are an integral part of the Town's legacy. Annual Town Meeting 2014 will be asked to create two additional single building Historic Districts.

METHODOLOGY

The owners of two Wellesley houses recently approached the Wellesley Historical Commission to ask that their historic homes be preserved for future generations to learn from and enjoy. Jim and Linda Gallo own the Sylvia Plath House, 26 Elmwood Road. The Fiske House at 126 Woodlawn Avenue is owned by Virginia E. Brogini. The former was the childhood home of Pulitzer Prize-winning author and poet Sylvia Plath. The latter was the home of Joseph E. Fiske, one of the founders of our Town, after whom Wellesley's Fiske School is named.

The Town's most recent Comprehensive Plan 2007 – 2017 (drafted in September 2006) urged the Historical Commission to look into ways to preserve individual buildings in Wellesley. The Historical Commission decided to do this by using Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, which as was noted above, governs the creation of Local Historic Districts and permits the establishment of a single building as a Historic District. Both of the 2011 properties were eligible for preservation in this way, each as a Single Building Historic District. Town Counsel was consulted, and he

confirmed this interpretation of 40C was accurate. 2011 Annual Town Meeting approved designating both houses Single Building Historic Districts.

Wellesley already has its own Historic District Bylaw, Section XIVD of the Zoning Bylaws, approved by Annual Town Meeting in 1980. In accord with Chapter 40C and the Wellesley Bylaw, the existing Historic District Commission is responsible for doing, or appointing another party to do, the necessary work to create any new Historic District in Town. Representatives from the Historical Commission met with the Historic District Commission on December 10, 2013 to discuss creating two new Wellesley Single Building Historic Districts (SBHD's) at Annual Town Meeting (ATM) 2014.

Brief descriptions of the Sylvia Plath House and the Fiske House were presented by the Historical Commission. The Historic District Commission voted to ask the Historical Commission to form a Single Building Historic District Study Committee (SBHDSC), and to present the members' names to the Board of Selectmen for appointment. This was done on December 20, 2013. Members appointed at that time were Helen Robertson, David Wright, Joel Slocum, Maureen Cary, and Joshua Dorin from the Historical Commission, and Catherine Johnson from the Planning Board. The Study Committee has worked closely with the Town's Planning Department.

Representatives from the Historical Commission and, later, from the SBHD Study Committee met with the owners of the two properties to learn about the history of their houses and explain the provisions of Wellesley's Historic District Zoning Bylaw, XIVD, to them. Each owner signed a letter expressing their interest in having their properties designated Single Building Historic Districts. The Study Committee prepared the Preliminary Report presenting the historical significance of both properties and recommending they be preserved by the creation of two Single Building Historic Districts.

The Study Committee then presented its Preliminary Report to the Planning Board on December 16, 2013. The Preliminary Report will be sent to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for discussion and recommendations. In accordance with MGL 40C, the Study Committee and the Planning Board will hold the required Public Hearing no less than sixty days after the Report was transmitted to MHC. In January 2014, the Study Committee will place a "place-holder" article on the Warrant for the 2014 Annual Town Meeting (ATM). A Public Hearing will be held in February 2014 by the Planning Board and the Historical Commission. The Study Committee will report its findings and present its recommendations at this hearing, and the Planning Board will vote at that time whether or not to endorse the proposed Historic Districts as overlays to the Wellesley Zoning Map. The article will be presented to the Advisory Committee and voted at Town Meeting. It will be a single article with 2 motions. Motion 1 asks Town Meeting to vote for the creation of the Sylvia Plath House Historic District and Motion 2 asks for a vote to create the Fiske House Historic District.

SIGNIFICANCE

Sylvia Plath House Historic District

The Sylvia Plath House at 26 Elmwood Road is located in the area of Wellesley known today as the Fells. The area was originally known as “The Hundreds,” for the 100-acre land grants awarded there by the British Crown to settlers from Dedham. The house's 10,000 square foot lot was carved out of rural acreage originally owned by Michael Cavanaugh in the 1840's. It is just down Elmwood from Wellesley's Methodist Meeting House Historic District, at 377 Weston Road, which was established in 2011. The Methodist Meeting House was the former home of Michael Cavanaugh. Elmwood Road appears in the 1935 Wellesley Town Atlas. By this time the large property holdings of the 19th century had been broken up into smaller lots more typical of 20th century real estate development in the town. Elmwood Road is off of Weston Road (formerly Blossom Street), which is a well-traveled road connecting Wellesley and Weston. The Fells was not intended for higher priced homes, and the lots were smaller than those later carved out for the intended high-priced Cliff Estates and Farms areas.

The 1920's ushered in the conscious development of Wellesley as a “well-mannered, well-maintained residential community” (Hinchliffe, p. 78). Town leaders were determined to see that Wellesley “develop in the proper direction” (Hinchliffe, p. 82). For example, Albion Clapp was responsible for developing the Cliff Estates during the early years of the 20th century, and he sold only large lots, and specified there were to be no “cheap” houses or curved streets in the area. In 1925, Wellesley passed a Zoning Act to regulate construction in the Town. It was one of the first towns in Massachusetts to do so.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought a new interest in America's heritage and architecture. The Centennial Exhibition of 1876 re-introduced America to its Colonial past, and the resulting Colonial Revival Movement, a nationalistic cultural movement, started on the east coast. In the field of architecture, designs began to be based directly on forms from the time of the American Revolutionary War, not on those currently in use in European countries. Colonial Revival houses remained popular through the 1940's and 1950's.

Built in 1942, the Colonial Revival house at 26 Elmwood Road is typical of the dwellings constructed in the Fells neighborhood between the 1930s and 1950s, and it has remained largely unchanged since its construction. The original structure consists of a two-story, three-ranked, symmetrical, rectangular box with a side-gabled roof, and a central chimney. Decorative pilasters and a rectangular pediment frame the front entrance. The style of the windows is 6-over-6 double-hung sashes with the exception of the front two windows on the first floor that are 8-over-8. An attached one-car garage and a four-season room are located on the west side of the house. Modifications to the residence include a one-story addition at the rear of the house in 1988 and the application of aluminum siding to the exterior of the entire house.

The house is primarily distinguished as the home of the internationally respected, Pulitzer Prize winning author Sylvia Plath. It is just one of the many places Plath lived

during her 30-year life, but it looms large in her personal history. It is the home where her mother, Aurelia, moved in 1942, following the untimely death of her husband and Sylvia's adored father, Otto Plath. It is the home from which she attended Wellesley public schools, including the former Gamaliel Bradford Senior High School on Rice Street. Plath enjoyed walking through the neighborhood, taking trips down to the former Hathaway House bookstore (now Stuart Swan Furniture Company) then stopping for a soda across the street at Howard Johnson's. It is the home where she attempted suicide one summer while in college. An account of this is described in detail in her autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*.

Plath's years in Wellesley—both at home and at school—provided the foundation for her development as one of the most brilliant poets of the 20th century. Her work was recognized as groundbreaking in many ways, not only because she wrote in a “confessional style” that other female poets had not attempted, but also because she wrote about traditional gender roles and the way in which they stifled women. In some of her writing, she defied societal convention and made allusions to sex and sexuality. And she used her writing as an outlet for the haunting and depressed moods that would descend upon her throughout her life.

Plath entered Smith College in 1950 and graduated *summa cum laude* in 1955. She taught there briefly before winning a Fulbright Scholarship to Cambridge University in England. She wrote poetry prolifically during this period in her life. She married British poet Ted Hughes in 1956, and they had two children. Their stormy relationship ended in separation in 1962. Her novel, *The Bell Jar*, completed in 1961 and published in 1963, remains a moving tribute to her life and work.

On February 11, 1963, crippling depression once again descended on Sylvia Plath, and she took her own life. Ted Hughes, to whom she was still legally married, continued to edit and publish her writings, and she was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1982 for *Collected Poems*.

There is something about the suicide of a well-known person that invites intense scrutiny. In the case of Sylvia Plath, her life and work have been reviewed and dissected countless times, but many questions can only be answered with speculation. Her house in Wellesley, which has been little altered since she lived there, is an important piece of the puzzle.

The SBHD Study Committee and the Gallo family urge that this building, with its connections to the international literary reputation of Sylvia Plath, its former resident, be preserved for the benefit of historians and all residents of Wellesley. It can be preserved, under MGL 40C as “The Sylvia Plath House Historic District.”

Fiske House Historic District

Built during the first quarter of the 19th Century, the house at 126 Woodlawn Avenue underwent a significant renovation in the late 1930s, thereby transforming it from an unpretentious Colonial Revival farmhouse into the elegant Colonial Revival residence that blends well with the other properties in the heart of Wellesley Farms today.

Prior to its 1937-38 renovation, the original structure consisted of a two-story five-ranked, symmetrical, rectangular box with a side-gabled roof, clapboard siding, and a central chimney. The style of the original windows is unknown, but by 1881, there were 2-over-2 double-hung sashes. This, however, may have been a modification of the original windows. Prior to 1881, a large two-story addition was constructed to the rear of the house and a small vestibule was added at the front entrance. In addition, a small covered porch (now removed) was attached to part of the front of the house sometime between 1897 and 1937. During this period the foundation of a barn to the rear of 126 Woodlawn Avenue was also used in the construction of 10 Valley Road.

The most notable difference between the original house and the current structure is its orientation. Unlike today, where the front of the house faces east, the original structure was built facing south. (The reason for this orientation is unknown, but one should keep in mind that Woodlawn Avenue was nothing more than the driveway from Washington Street to the Fiske homestead when the house was constructed. Although the southern section of Woodlawn Avenue was widened and turned into a road during the mid-1800's, its northern section was not extended past the Fiske homestead until 1881 following the construction of two large estates on the current sites of Carisbrooke Road and Highgate.)

After the property was sold by the Fiske family in 1937, the house underwent a significant renovation (by architect and Wellesley resident Walter Henry Pratt), which included rotating the entire house ninety degrees and setting it on a new concrete foundation so that its front now faced east. Additionally, a two-car garage and a breezeway were constructed adjacent to the (north-facing) side entrance. On the south side, an ell-shaped porch and a small extension from the kitchen were constructed.

The exterior of the house was modified by changing the window configuration on its front façade. Four sets of narrowly separated single windows were replaced with individual ones. The new windows were 16-over-16 on the first floor and 12-over-12 on the second, each topped with a decorative crown. Other additions included placing a bracketed cornice on each of the (three) remaining corners of the original part of the house, as well as modifying the front vestibule by adding a four-panel transom and new woodwork (including square pilasters, small dentils, and a more elaborate trimmed triangular gabled-ended pediment).

The interior of the house also underwent a complete transformation, most notably relocating the chimney off-center and constructing a curved front staircase in the chimney's former location. Other renovations included the addition of elaborate moldings, archways, pilasters, built-in bookcases, and extensive cabinetry.

The house at 126 Woodlawn Avenue is most notable for serving as the lifelong residence of Joseph Emery Fiske (1839-1909), a prominent citizen and town official who helped lead the fight for the separation of Wellesley from Needham.

Its history, however, dates back to the first quarter of the 19th Century, when it is said that Enoch Fisk (1750-1827), a distant cousin of Joseph E. Fiske, built this house for

one of his sons. Unfortunately, determining with absolute certainty what year the house was constructed is difficult. Although Joseph E. Fiske writes in his *History of Wellesley, Massachusetts* that “Enoch built [the house] for his son, Isaiah, in 1804,” genealogical records show that Isaiah was only 13 years old at that time. Furthermore, the Federal Census of 1810 lists only one Fisk/Fiske homestead in all of what was then Needham – that being the farm of Enoch Fisk, located on the eastern side of Oakland Street on the current site of Mass Bay Community College.

A much more likely date of construction is 1824, when deeds show that Enoch Fisk sold 180 acres of land, including the property of 126 Woodlawn Avenue, to two of his unmarried sons, Isaiah and Jeremiah Fisk. (Jeremiah would sell his share to Isaiah eight months later.) This land – which stretched east to Glen Road and north towards the Weston border -- had once been the farm of Thomas Hall, whose children sold their interests in the property to Enoch Fisk between 1794 and 1802. It is unknown whether the former Hall farmhouse was razed or incorporated into 126 Woodlawn Avenue.

In 1833, two years after finally getting married, 41-year-old Isaiah Fisk moved to Maine with his new wife and sold his (now 188-acre) farm at 126 Woodlawn Avenue to two of his first cousins once removed, Emery Fiske and Moses Fiske Jr. (They were the grandchildren of his father’s brother.) The following year, Moses Jr. sold his interest in the property to Emery.

For the next 103 years – until 1937 – the house at 126 Woodlawn Avenue would stay in the family of Emery Fiske, first passing to his son, Joseph Emery Fiske, and then to Joseph’s oldest daughter, Ellen Ware Fiske. Special attention should be paid to each of these three owners.

The first owner, Emery Fiske (1803-1868), was a simple yeoman when he first moved to what is now Wellesley in 1833. He was, however, able to supplement that career with one in politics beginning in 1838, first serving for three years as Selectman for the Town of Needham (to which Wellesley belonged) before his successful election to the Massachusetts Legislature in 1840. Although it appears that Emery Fiske retired to his farm in 1841 after just one term at the state level, he reentered the political arena twelve years later as a member of the 1853 convention that revised the Massachusetts Constitution.

Few people have had a more profound impact on the early development of Wellesley than Joseph Emery Fiske. Born into a sleepy (and poor) farming community, Joseph E. Fiske spent his entire life working towards helping West Needham (which became Wellesley in 1881) evolve into a modern suburb. In particular, he stands out for his commitment to public education and his leadership of a community fighting for its independence.

Such commitment and leadership was not surprising given his background. Unlike most of the other youths in Needham during the mid-19th Century, Fiske was able to graduate from high school – having attended the private school of Nathaniel T. Allen in West Newton as there was no high school in Needham at the time. He then chose to continue his schooling, enrolling at Harvard College, from which he graduated in 1861.

What was arguably more important to the strengthening of Fiske's beliefs and ideals, however, was his experience serving his country for three years during the Civil War. Enlisting in the 43rd Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry in 1862, Fiske was immediately sent to the South where he witnessed firsthand the ultimate sacrifices of war. Fiske found himself suddenly in the midst of a battle in April of 1864 when the CSS *Albemarle*, a Confederate ironclad ram, attacked and defeated the Union naval defense surrounding the fort where he was stationed. The Confederate forces were successful and Fiske was captured as a prisoner-of-war. For the next ten months, he was held in prison in South Carolina and then in Georgia before successfully escaping in February of 1865. A free soldier once again, Fiske joined General Sherman's Army in its march through the Confederate States and was put on the staff of Major General Francis Preston Blair. He would remain in that group for a month before being allowed to go home, leaving the Union Army shortly before the Confederate forces surrendered at Appomattox.

The strength and leadership that Fiske gained during the war would prove useful years after returning home when he found himself in the midst of a different sort of battle as Wellesley sought separation from Needham. Although West Needham residents tried no less than six times (beginning in the early 1800s) to form their own town, it was not until 1880 that the townspeople were able to come together and generate a formal petition calling for Wellesley's independence. Throughout the nine months that it took to accomplish this, Fiske – who had acquired political acumen as a Needham Selectman from 1873 until 1876, as well as a State Legislator and Senator from 1873-74 and 1876-77, respectively -- served as one of the *de facto* leaders of the movement. He was so highly regarded by his fellow townspeople that they selected him to present the petition to the State Legislature, which subsequently approved the request.

Once Wellesley was incorporated on April 6, 1881, Fiske continued to take a leading role in Town affairs. He not only moderated many important meetings at a time when the young town sought its footing, but also served as one of the first three members of the School Committee years before there was a Superintendent (when the School Committee, in effect, ran the entire school system). Fiske strongly believed that a high quality public school system was an absolute necessity for any prominent community. In turn, the Town honored Fiske for his service by naming a new grammar school the Fiske School, which opened in 1892 on Cedar Street at the current site of Ouellet Park.

In addition to public service, Fiske was actively involved in real estate in Wellesley during the last three decades of the 19th Century as the town began to take its modern shape. This consisted of both buying and selling small parcels of land throughout the town as well as renting out properties. It was also during this time that he sold off much of the land surrounding his family's homestead. Most of the property was sold to just two men, each of whom developed his own large estate. Although both large manor houses were torn down in the 1930s, their presence helped give Wellesley Farms the character that it enjoys today.

After the death of Joseph E. Fiske in 1909, the house at 126 Woodlawn Avenue passed to his eldest daughter, Ellen Ware Fiske (1871-1953). A 1892 graduate of

Wellesley College and one of the leading socialites throughout the first half of the 20th Century, “Nellie” Fiske was also known as Wellesley’s Town Historian, helping to organize the Wellesley Historical Society in 1925 (and serving as its first secretary), as well as editing and publishing her father’s manuscript on the history of the town.

In 1937, Ellen Fiske sold 126 Woodlawn Avenue to Frederick H. Davis and his wife, Virginia S. Davis, who undertook the house’s renovation over the course of the next year. The current owner, Virginia E. Brogini, has resided at 126 Woodlawn Avenue since 1948. Only three families have resided in the house since its construction.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE BOUNDARIES

Sylvia Plath House Historic District

Sylvia Plath is certainly one of the most well-known former residents of Wellesley. She attended local schools, and her experiences, including her home itself, figure prominently in her writings. Her house in Wellesley, which has been little altered since she lived there, is an important piece of the puzzle. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, her brief, tragic life remains in the public memory, and requests to see her former home frequently occur. Several of those seeking information about her have asked the Historical Commission why Sylvia Plath's home hasn't been preserved. The house has a truly singular place not only in the history of the Town of Wellesley, but also in the history of American literature. For these reasons, the Historical Commission, the Historic District Commission and the Study Committee decided to study and preserve this house as a Single Building Historic District under MGL 40C.

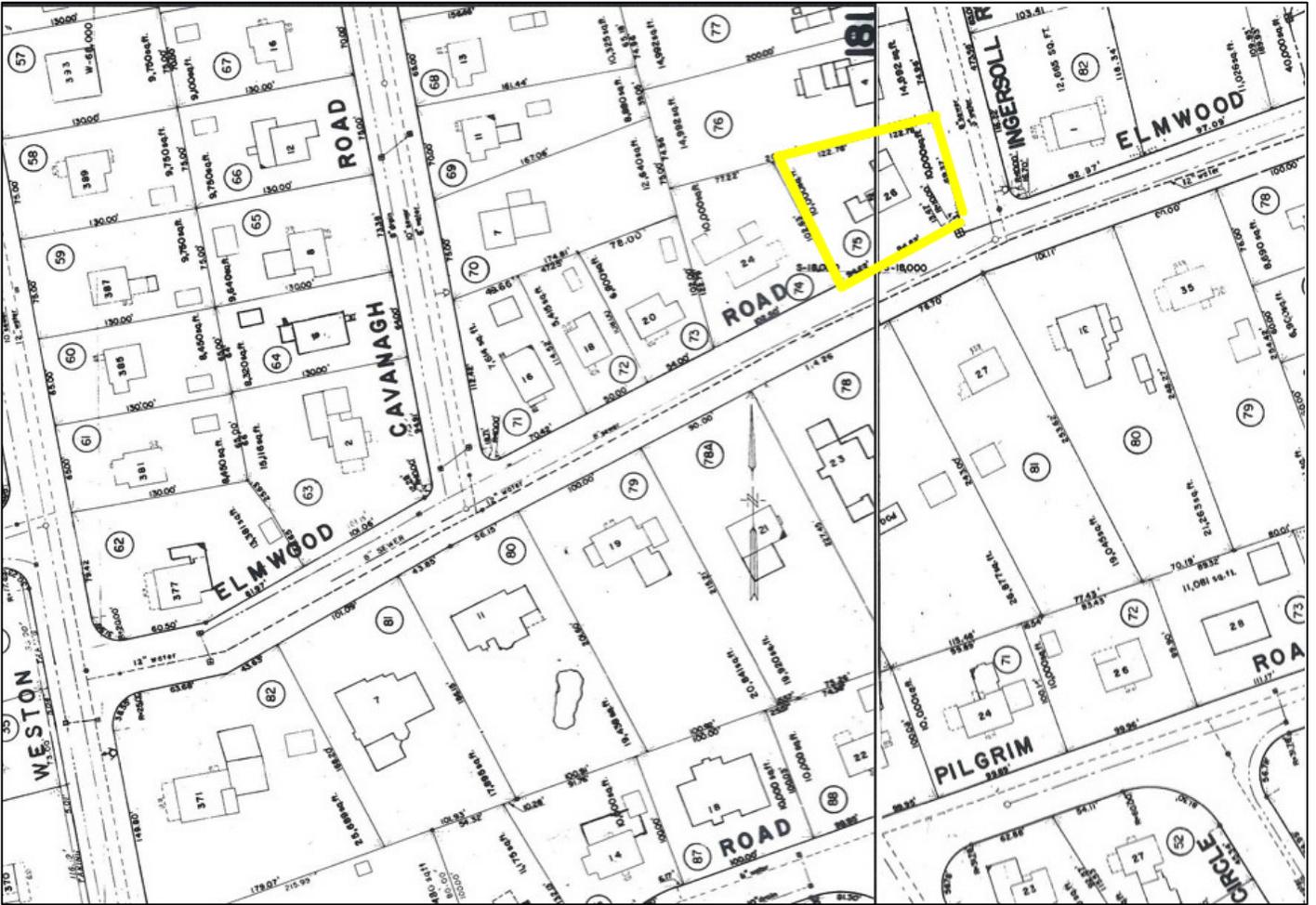
Fiske House Historic District

The Fiske House was the home of Joseph E. Fiske, a founder and leader of the Town of Wellesley. One of the Town's elementary schools bears his name. The house has been adapted to meet changing times, but it remains as an elegant reminder of the development of the Farms area of town. The Historical Commission, the Historic District Commission and the Study Committee decided, based on the house's importance to the town as the home of one of Wellesley's founders and early leaders, it should be studied and preserved as a Single Building Historic District under MGL 40C.

MAPS OF THE PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICTS



GIS Map of Wellesley showing 26 Elmwood Road



2001 Engineering Map of Wellesley



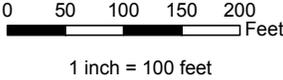
1935 Town Atlas showing site of 26 Elmwood Road

Fiske Homestead Historic District



Legend

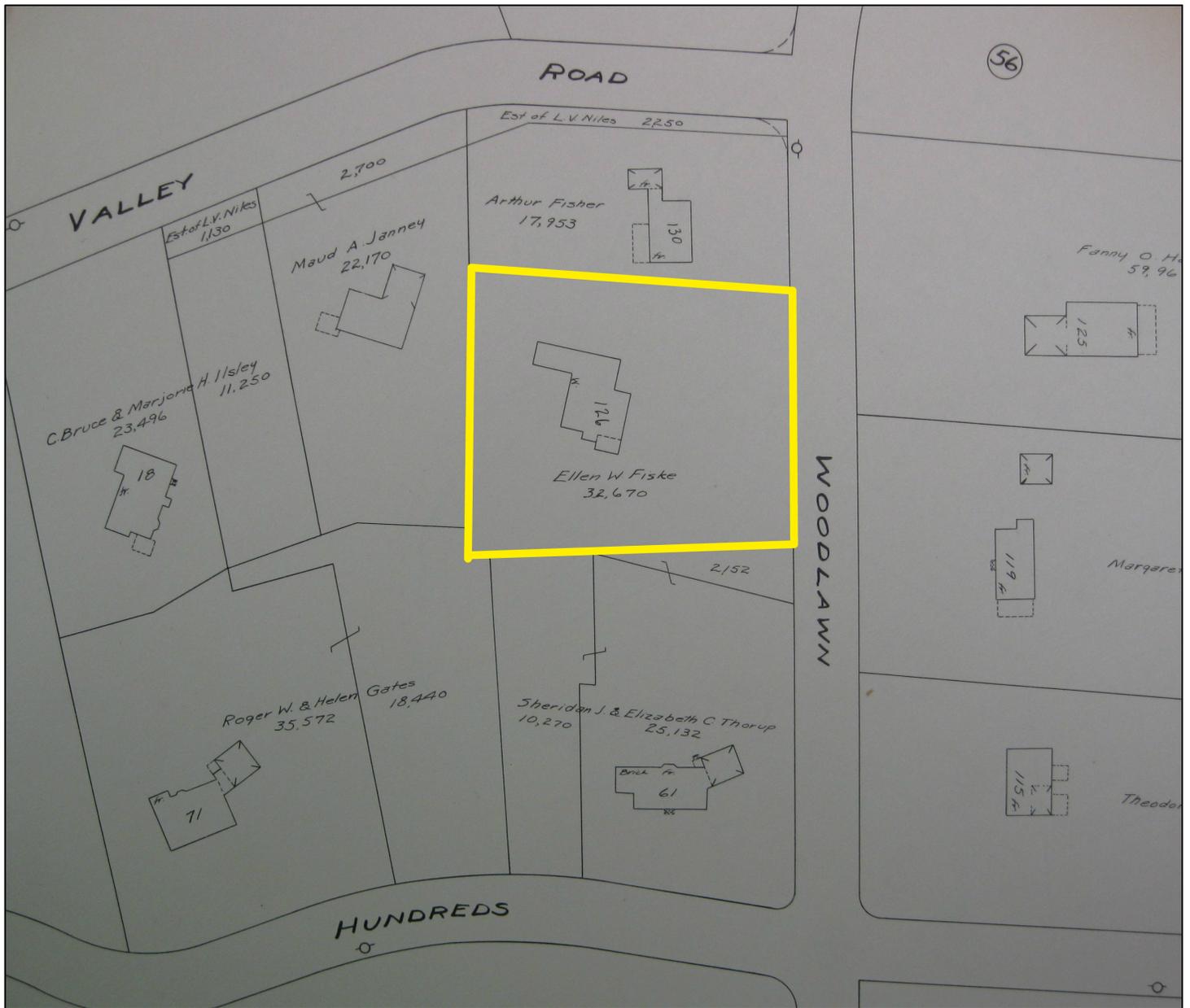
- 126 Woodlawn Avenue
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Roads



GIS Map of Wellesley showing 126 Woodlawn Avenue



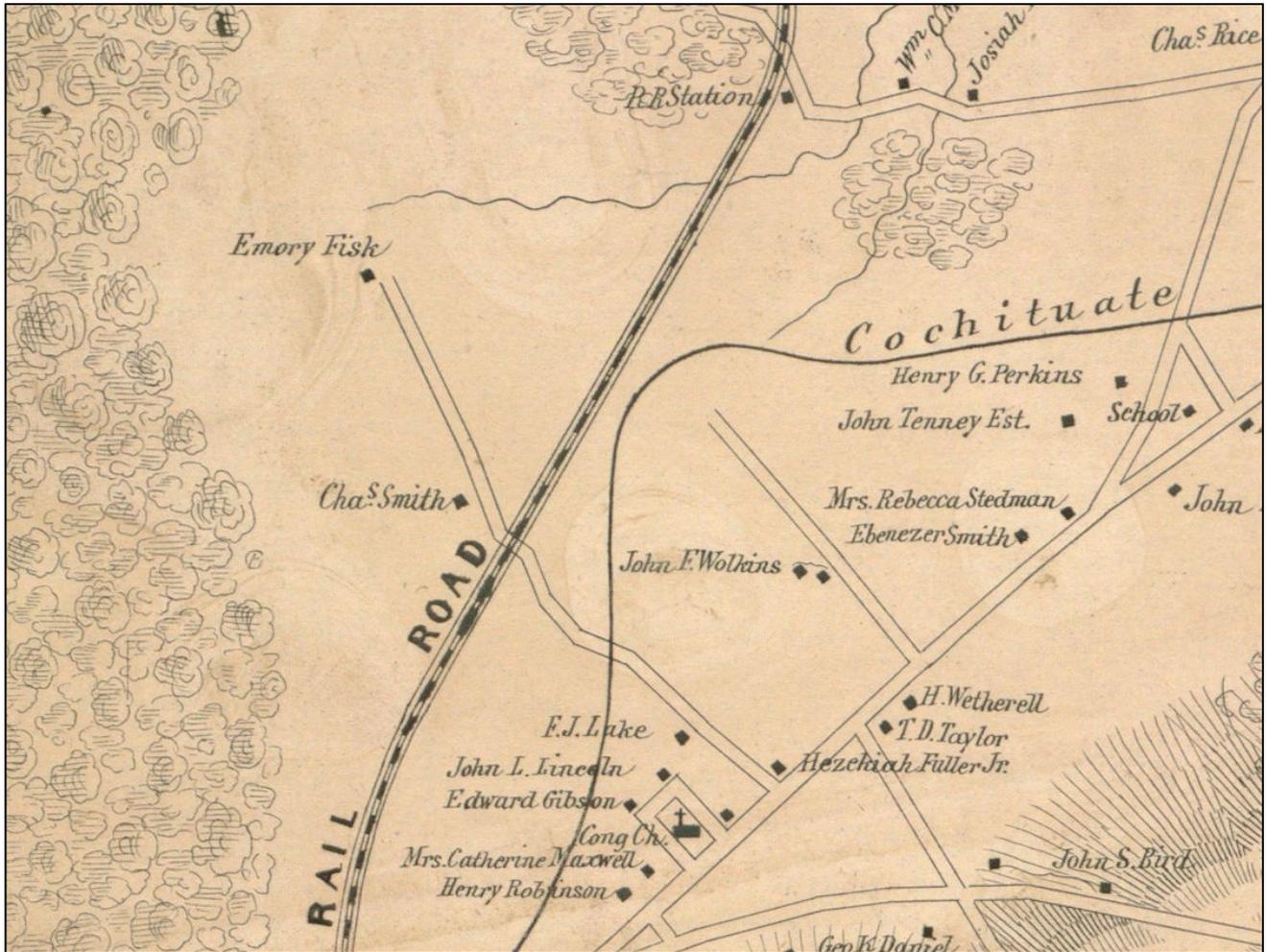
2001 Engineering Map of Wellesley



1935 Town Atlas showing 126 Woodlawn Avenue



1897 Town Atlas showing 126 Woodlawn Avenue



1856 Map of Needham showing 126 Woodlawn Avenue

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BYLAW

The Study Committee recommends that the Sylvia Plath House Historic District and the Fiske House Historic District be governed by Wellesley's existing Historic District Zoning Bylaw XIVD and administered by the existing Historic District Commission. This decision was reached after consultation with the Historic District Commission.

SECTION XIVD. HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Part A. Purpose.

The purpose of the Historic District is to promote the education, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the Town of Wellesley and the Commonwealth, or their architecture, and through the maintenance and improvement of settings of such buildings and places and the encouragement of design compatible therewith.

This Bylaw is not intended to conflict with any other Section of this Zoning Bylaw or other Bylaws of the Town of Wellesley. The requirements established herein do not relieve any person from also satisfying any and all applicable Zoning Bylaws or other applicable rules, regulations and laws.

Part B. Authority.

Historic Districts in the Town of Wellesley shall be created and maintained in every respect under and according to the provisions of General Laws of the Commonwealth, Chapter 40C and all amendments thereto, and this Section shall be in every respect controlled by and subject to the provisions of said Chapter 40C of the General Laws and all amendments thereto.

Part C. Definitions.

For the purposes of this Section, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

Altered - includes the words "rebuilt", "reconstructed", "restored", "removed" and "demolished" and the phrase "changed in exterior color".

Building - means a combination of materials forming a shelter for persons, animals or property.

Commission - means the commission acting as the Historic District Commission.

Constructed - includes the words "built", "erected", "installed", "enlarged", and "moved".

Exterior Architectural Feature - means such portion of the exterior of a building or structure as is open to view from a public street, public way, public park or public body of water, including but not limited to the architectural style and general arrangement and setting thereof, the kind, color and texture of exterior building materials, the color of paint or other materials applied to exterior surfaces and the type and style of windows, doors, lights, signs and other appurtenant exterior fixtures.

Structure - means a combination of materials other than a building, including a sign, fence, wall, terrace, walk, or driveway.

Part D. Applicability.

1. The boundaries of the Historic District are shown on a map of the Historic District which is filed with the Town Clerk of the Town of Wellesley and recorded in the Registry of Deeds. The Historic District is indicated on the Zoning Map of the Town of Wellesley.
2. Historic Districts shall be considered as overlapping other zoning districts.

Part E. Certification.

1. Except as this Section may otherwise provide under Part G Exceptions no building or structure within an Historic District shall be constructed or altered in any way that effects exterior architectural features unless the Commission shall first have issued a certificate of appropriateness, a certificate of non-applicability, or a certificate of hardship, with respect to such construction or alteration.
2. Any person who desires to obtain a certificate from the Commission shall file with the Commission an application for a certificate of appropriateness, a certificate of non-applicability or a certificate of hardship, as the case may be, in such form as the Commission may reasonably determine, together with such plans, elevations, specifications, material and other information, including in the case of demolition or removal a statement of the proposed condition and appearance of the property thereafter, as may be reasonably deemed necessary by the Commission to enable it to make a determination on the application.
3. No building permit for construction of a building or structure or for alteration of an exterior architectural feature within an Historic District and no demolition permit for demolition or removal of a building or structure within an Historic District shall be issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals or by the Building Inspector until the certificate required by this Section has been issued by the Commission.

4. If the Commission determines that the construction or alteration for which an application for a certificate of appropriateness has been filed will be appropriate for or compatible with the preservation or protection of the Historic District, the Commission shall cause a certificate of appropriateness to be issued to the applicant. In the case of a disapproval of an application for a certificate of appropriateness, the Commission shall place upon its record the reasons for such determination and shall forthwith cause a notice of its determination, accompanied by a copy of the reasons therefor as set forth in the records of the Commission, to be issued to the applicant, and the Commission may make recommendations to the applicant with respect to appropriateness of design, arrangement, texture, material and similar features. Prior to the issuance of any disapproval, the Commission may notify the applicant of its proposed action accompanied by recommendations of changes in the applicant's proposal which, if made, would make the application acceptable to the Commission. If within fourteen days of the receipt of such notice the applicant files a written modification of his application in conformity with the recommended changes of the Commission, the Commission shall cause a certificate of appropriateness to be issued to the applicant.
5. In case of a determination by the Commission that an application for a certificate of appropriateness or for a certificate of non-applicability does not involve any exterior architectural feature, or involves an exterior architectural feature which is not then subject to review by the Commission in accordance with the provisions of Part G., the Commission shall cause a certificate of non-applicability to be issued to the applicant.
6. If the construction or alteration for which an application for a certificate of appropriateness has been filed shall be determined to be inappropriate, or in the event of an application for a certificate of hardship, the Commission shall determine whether owing to conditions especially affecting the building or structure involved, but not affecting the Historic District generally, failure to approve an application will involve a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the applicant and whether such application may be approved without substantial detriment to the public welfare and without substantial derogation from the intent and purpose of this Bylaw. If the Commission determines in either such instance that owing to such conditions failure to approve an application will involve substantial hardship to the applicant and approval thereof may be made without such substantial detriment or derogation, or if the Commission fails to make a determination on an application within the time specified in Section 11 of Chapter 40C of the General Laws, the Commission shall cause a certificate of hardship to be issued to the applicant.

7. Each certificate issued by the Commission shall be dated and signed by its chairman, vice-chairman, secretary or such other person designated by the Commission to sign such certificates on its behalf.
8. The Commission shall file with the Town Clerk and with the Building Inspector, Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Planning Board a copy of all certificates and determination of disapproval issued by it.
9. The Commission shall determine promptly, and in all events within fourteen days after the filing of an application for a certificate of appropriateness, a certificate of non-applicability or a certificate of hardship, as the case may be, whether the application involves any exterior architectural features which are subject to approval by the Commission. If the Commission determines that such application involves any such features which are subject to approval by the Commission, the Commission shall hold a public hearing on such application unless such hearing is dispensed with as hereinafter provided. The Commission shall fix a reasonable time for the hearing on any application and shall give public notice of the time, place and purposes thereof at least fourteen days before said hearing in such manner as it may determine, and by mailing, postage prepaid, a copy of said notice to the applicant, to the owners of all adjoining property and other property deemed by the Commission to be materially affected thereby as they appear on the most recent real estate tax list, to the Building Inspector, to the Planning Board of the Town, and to any person filing written request for notice of hearings, such request to be renewed yearly in December, and to such other persons as the Commission shall deem entitled to notice.*

*See also SECTION XXVIA.

10. As soon as convenient after such public hearing but in any event within sixty days after the filing of the application, or within such further time as the applicant may allow in writing, the Commission shall make a determination of the application. If the Commission shall fail to make a determination within such period of time the Commission shall thereupon issue a certificate of hardship.
11. A public hearing on an application need not be held if such hearing is waived in writing by all persons entitled to notice thereof. In addition, a public hearing on an application may be waived by the Commission if the Commission determines that the exterior architectural feature involved is so insubstantial in its effect on the Historic District that it may be reviewed by the Commission without public hearing on the application, provided, however, that if the Commission dispenses with a public hearing on an application a notice of the application shall be given to the owners of all adjoining property and other property deemed by the Commission to be

materially affected thereby as above provided, and ten days shall elapse after the mailing of such notice before the Commission may act upon such application.

Part F. Guidelines.

1. In passing upon matters before it the Commission shall consider, among other things, the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design arrangement, texture, and material of the features involved, and the relation of such features to similar features of buildings and structures in the surrounding area. In the case of new construction or additions to existing buildings or structures, the Commission shall consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the building or structure, both in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is situated and to buildings and structures in the vicinity, and the Commission may in appropriate cases impose dimensional and set-back requirements in addition to those required by other applicable Bylaws. The Commission shall not consider interior arrangements or architectural features not subject to public view.
2. The Commission shall not make any recommendation or requirement except for the purpose of preventing developments incongruous to the historic aspects or the architectural characteristics of the surroundings and of the Historic District.
3. The Commission may after public hearing set forth in such manner as it may determine the various designs of certain appurtenances, such as light fixtures, which will meet the requirements of an Historic District and a roster of certain colors of paint and roofing materials which will meet the requirements of an Historic District, but no such determination shall limit the right of an applicant to present other designs or colors to the Commission for its approval.

Part G. Exceptions.

1. The authority of the Commission shall not extend to the review of the following categories of buildings or structures or exterior architectural features in the Historic District, and the buildings or structures or exterior architectural features so excluded may be constructed or altered within the Historic District without review by the Commission:
 - a) Temporary structures or signs, subject however, to the other applicable sections of this Zoning Bylaw.
 - b) Terraces, walks, sidewalks and similar structures, or and one or more of them, provided that any such structure is substantially at grade level.

- c) One antenna per building, storm doors and windows, screens, window air conditioners, lighting fixtures and similar appurtenances.
 - d) The color of paint, provided that the paint color does not cause substantial derogation from the intent and purpose of the Bylaw and is in keeping with accepted aesthetic standards.
 - e) The color or materials used on roofs.
 - f) Signs of not more than one square foot in area in connection with use of a residence for a customary home occupation, or for professional purposes, provided only one such sign is displayed in connection with each residence and if illuminated is illuminated only indirectly.
 - g) The reconstruction, substantially similar in exterior design, of a building, structure or exterior architectural feature damaged or destroyed by fire, storm or other disaster, provided that the exterior design is substantially similar to the original and that such reconstruction is begun within one year thereafter and carried forward with due diligence.
2. The Commission may determine from time to time after public hearing that certain categories of exterior architectural features, colors, structures or signs, including without limitation, any of those enumerated under paragraph 1., may be constructed or altered with out review by the Commission without causing substantial derogation from the intent and purpose of this Bylaw.
3. Upon request the Commission shall issue a certificate of non-applicability with respect to construction or alteration in any category then not subject to review by the Commission in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 1. and 2.

Part H. Ordinary Maintenance, Repairs or Replacement.

Nothing in this Section shall be construed to prevent the ordinary maintenance, repair or replacement of any exterior architectural feature within an Historic District which does not involve a change in design, material, color or the outward appearance thereof, nor to prevent the landscaping with plants, trees or shrubs, nor construed to prevent the meeting of requirements certified by a duly authorized public officer to be necessary for public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition, nor construed to prevent any construction or alteration under a permit duly issued prior to the adoption of this Section.

Part I. Further Review and Rights of Appeal.

Any applicant aggrieved by a determination of the Historic District Commission may within twenty days after the filing of the notice of such determination with the Town Clerk, file a written request with the Commission for a review by a person or person of competence and experience in such matters, designated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

The finding of the person or persons making such review shall be filed with the Town Clerk within forty-five days after the request, and shall be binding on the applicant and the Commission, unless a further appeal is sought in the Superior Court as provided in Section 12A of Chapter 40C of the General Laws.

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

Photograph



Town/City: Wellesley

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): The Fells

Address: 26 Elmwood Road

Historic Name: Sylvia Plath House

Uses: Present: Residential

Original: Residential

Date of Construction: 1942

Source: Norfolk County Registry of Deeds;
Annual Town Reports

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete

Wall/Trim: Aluminum Siding

Roof: Asphalt Shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Application of aluminum siding (date unknown)

One-story addition to rear of house (1988)

Condition: Average

Moved: no | yes | | **Date:**

Acreage: 10,000 sq. ft. (.23 acres)

Setting: Located at the west corner of Elmwood Road and Ingersoll Road about 650 ft east of Weston Road.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Maureen Cary, Joshua Dorin, & Helen Robertson

Organization: Wellesley Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): December 2013

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN Wellesley ADDRESS 26 Elmwood

Road

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.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

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

Built in 1942, the house at 26 Elmwood Road is very typical of the dwellings constructed in the Fells between the 1930s and 1950s and has remained largely unchanged since its construction. The original structure consists of a two-story, three-ranked, symmetrical, rectangular box with a side-gabled roof, and a central chimney. Decorative pilasters and a rectangular pediment frame the front entrance. The style of the windows is 6-over-6 double-hung sashes with the exception of the front two windows on the first floor that are 8-over-8. A one-car attached garage and a four-season room are located on the west side of the house. Modifications to the residence include the addition of a one-level story at the rear of the house in 1988 and the application of aluminum siding to the exterior of entire house.

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.

The house is primarily distinguished as the home of the internationally respected, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Sylvia Plath. It is just one of the many places Plath lived during her 30-year life, but it looms large in her personal history. It is the home where her mother, Aurelia, moved in 1942, following the untimely death of her husband and Sylvia's adored father, Otto Plath. It is the home from which she attended Wellesley public schools, including the former Gamaliel Bradford Senior High School on Rice Street. Plath enjoyed walking through the neighborhood, taking trips down to the former Hathaway House bookstore (now Stuart Swan Furniture Company) and then stopping for a soda across the street at Howard Johnson's.

Plath's years in Wellesley—both at home and at school—provided the foundation for her development as one of the most brilliant poets of the 20th century. Her work was recognized as groundbreaking in many ways, not only because she wrote in a “confessional style” that other female poets had not attempted, but also because she wrote about traditional gender roles and the way in which they stifled women. In some of her writing, she defied societal convention and made allusions to sex and sexuality. And she used her writing as an outlet for the haunting and depressed moods that would descend upon her throughout her life.

Plath entered Smith College in 1950 and graduated in 1955. She taught there briefly before winning a Fulbright Scholarship to Cambridge University in England. She wrote poetry prolifically during this period in her life. She married British poet Ted Hughes in 1956, and they had two children. Their stormy relationship ended in separation in 1962. Her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, completed in 1961 and published in 1963, remains a moving tribute to her life and work.

On February 11, 1963, crippling depression once again descended on Sylvia Plath, and she took her own life. Ted Hughes, to whom she was still legally married, continued to edit and publish her writings, and she was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1982 for *Collected Poems*.

There is something about the suicide of a well-known person that invites intense scrutiny. In the case of Sylvia Plath, her life and work have been reviewed and dissected countless times, but many questions can only be answered with speculation. Her house in Wellesley, which has been little altered since she lived there, is an important piece of the puzzle.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN Wellesley ADDRESS 26 Elmwood

Road

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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List of Owners (with dates):		Book/Page
08/07/1984	Aurelia S. Plath to Linda R. Brundage	6468/148
<i>Site of 26 Elmwood Road as 10,000 sq. ft. lot</i>		
10/24/1942	Theodore M. Inderlied & Eunice L. Inderlied to Aurelia S. Plath	2417/481
03/28/1941	Fred Martin & William Martin (Trustees of the Fells Estate Trust)	2324/94
<i>Sites of 24 & 26 Elmwood Road and 4,8,10,14 Ingersoll Road as 80,000 sq. ft. lot</i>		
07/09/1940	Elmira A. White (formerly Elmira A. Fowler) to Fred Martin & William Martin (Trustees of the Fells Estate Trust)	2286/55
06/30/1916	Edmund B. Fowler (Heir of Arthur P. Fowler) to Elmira A. Fowler (widow of Arthur P. Fowler)	2286/56
02/17/1910	Edmund B. Fowler (Heir of Edmund A. Fowler) to Arthur P. Fowler	1134/225
01/29/1908	Walter F. Ellis to Edmund A. Fowler	1073/254
<i>Site of 26 Elmwood Road as part of 40+ acres of property on the eastern side of Weston Road</i>		
03/09/1906	William H. Cavanagh to Walter F. Ellis	1022/299

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INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

Road

TOWN Wellesley

ADDRESS 26 Elmwood

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

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Town/City: Wellesley

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Wellesley Farms

Photograph



Address: 126 Woodlawn Avenue

Historic Name: Joseph E. Fiske House

Uses: Present: Single-family residence

Original: Single-family residence

Date of Construction: 1824

Source: Norfolk County Registry of Deeds; Federal Census Reports

Style/Form: Colonial Revival (see below)

Architect/Builder: Unknown; renovated in 1937-38 by Walter Henry Pratt

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete

Wall/Trim: Clapboard

Roof: Wooden Shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Rear two-story addition (pre-1897)

1937-38 renovation (see Architectural Description)

Condition: Very good

Moved: no | | yes | x | **Date:** 1937-38 (rotated on axis)

Acreage: .75 acres (32,670 square feet)

Setting: Located on Woodlawn Avenue about 300 feet north of Hundreds Road. House is set back from the road with the garage and driveway to the north side.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Joshua Dorin

Organization: Wellesley Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): November 2013

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN Wellesley ADDRESS 126 Woodlawn Avenue

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.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

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

Built during the first quarter of the 19th Century, the house at 126 Woodlawn Avenue underwent a significant renovation in the late 1930s, thereby transforming it from a rather simple farmhouse into the elegant residence that blends well with the other properties in the heart of Wellesley Farms.

According to photographs of the house prior to its 1937-38 renovation, the original structure consisted of a two-story five-ranked, symmetrical, rectangular box with a side-gabled roof, clapboard siding, and a central chimney. The style of the original windows is unknown, but by 1881, there were 2-over-2 double-hung sashes. This, however, may have been a modification of the original windows.

The most notable difference between the original house and the current structure is its orientation. Unlike today, where the front of the house faces east, the original structure was built facing south. (The reason for this orientation is unknown, but one should keep in mind that Woodlawn Avenue was nothing more than the driveway from Washington Street to the Fiske homestead when the house was constructed. Although the southern section of Woodlawn Avenue was widened and turned into a road during the mid-1800s, its northern section was not extended past the Fiske homestead until 1881 following the construction of two large estates on the current sites of Carisbrooke Road and Highgate.)

Prior to 1881, a large two-story addition was constructed to the rear of the house and a small vestibule was added at the front entrance. In addition, a small covered porch (now removed) was attached to part of the front of the house sometime between 1897 and 1937.

After the property was sold by the Fiske family in 1937, the house underwent a significant renovation (by architect and Wellesley resident, Walter Henry Pratt), which included rotating the entire house ninety degrees and setting it on a new concrete foundation so that its front now faced east. Additionally, a two-car garage and a breezeway were constructed adjacent to the (north-facing) side entrance. On the south side, an ell-shaped porch and a small extension from the kitchen were constructed.

The exterior of the house also was modified by changing the window configuration on its front façade. Four sets of narrowly separated single windows were replaced with individual ones. The new windows were 16-over-16 on the first floor and 12-over-12 on the second, each topped with a decorative crown. Other additions included placing a bracketed cornice on each of the (three) remaining corners of the original part of the house, as well as modifying the front vestibule by adding a four-panel transom and new woodwork (including square pilasters, small dentils, and a more elaborate trimmed triangular gabled-ended pediment).

The interior of the house also underwent a complete transformation, most notably relocating the chimney off-center and constructing a curved front staircase in the chimney's former location. Other renovations included the addition of elaborate moldings, archways, pilasters, built-in bookcases, and extensive cabinetry.

In addition, several years prior to the 1937-38 renovations, the foundation of the barn to the rear of 126 Woodlawn Avenue became for the construction of 10 Valley Road.

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.

The house at 126 Woodlawn Avenue is most notable for serving as the lifelong residence of Joseph Emery Fiske (1839-1909), a prominent citizen and town official who helped lead the fight for the separation of Wellesley from Needham.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN Wellesley ADDRESS 126 Woodlawn Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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Its history, however, dates back to the first quarter of the 19th Century, when it is said that Enoch Fisk (1750-1827), a distant cousin of Joseph E. Fiske, built this house for one of his sons. Unfortunately, determining with absolute certainty what year the house was constructed is difficult. Although Joseph E. Fiske writes in his *History of Wellesley, Massachusetts* that “Enoch built [the house] for his son, Isaiah, in 1804,” genealogical records show that Isaiah was only 13 years old at that time. Furthermore, the Federal Census of 1810 lists only one Fisk/Fiske homestead in all of what was then Needham – that being the farm of Enoch Fisk, located on the eastern side of Oakland Street on the current site of Mass Bay Community College.

A much more likely date of construction is 1824, when deeds show that Enoch Fisk sold 180 acres of land, including the property of 126 Woodlawn Avenue, to two of his unmarried sons, Isaiah and Jeremiah Fisk. (Jeremiah would sell his share to Isaiah eight months later.) This land – which stretched east to Glen Road and north towards the Weston border -- had once been the farm of Thomas Hall, whose children sold their interests in the property to Enoch Fisk between 1794 and 1802. It is unknown whether the former Hall farmhouse was razed or incorporated into 126 Woodlawn Avenue.

In 1833, two years after finally getting married, 41-year-old Isaiah Fisk moved to Maine with his new wife and sold his (now 188-acre) farm at 126 Woodlawn Avenue to two of his first cousins once removed, Emery Fiske and Moses Fiske Jr. (They were the grandchildren of his father’s brother.) The following year, Moses Jr. sold his interest in the property to Emery.

For the next 103 years – until 1937 – the house at 126 Woodlawn Avenue would stay in the family of Emery Fiske, first passing to his son, Joseph Emery Fiske, and then to Joseph’s oldest daughter, Ellen Ware Fiske. Special attention should be given to each of these three owners.

The first owner, Emery Fiske (1803-1868), was a simple yeoman when he first moved to what is now Wellesley in 1833. He was, however, able to supplement that career with one in politics beginning in 1838, first serving for three years as Selectman for the Town of Needham (to which Wellesley belonged) before his successful election to the Massachusetts Legislature in 1840. Although it appears that Emery Fiske retired to his farm in 1841 after just one term at the state level, he reentered the political arena twelve years later as a member of the 1853 convention that revised the Massachusetts Constitution.

Emery Fiske’s professional success, however, was in stark contrast to the tragedies that filled his personal life. Of his eight children, all born between 1829 and 1839, six died before the age of nine months. The only surviving son was his youngest child, Joseph Emery.

Few people have had a more profound impact on the early development of Wellesley than Joseph Emery Fiske. Born into a sleepy (and poor) farming community, Joseph E. Fiske spent his entire life working towards helping West Needham (which became Wellesley in 1881) evolve into a modern suburb. In particular, he stands out for his commitment to public education and his leadership of a community fighting for its independence.

Such commitment and leadership was not surprising given his background. Unlike most of the other youths in Needham during the mid-19th Century, Fiske was able to graduate from high school – having attended the private school of Nathaniel T. Allen in West Newton as there was no high school in Needham at the time. He then chose to continue his schooling, enrolling at Harvard College, from which he graduated in 1861.

What was arguably more important to the strengthening of Fiske’s beliefs and ideals, however, was his experience serving his country for three years during the Civil War. Enlisting in the 43rd Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry in 1862 as the nation teetered on the brink of collapse, Fiske was immediately sent to the South where he witnessed firsthand the ultimate sacrifices of war. Although he spent the first two years away from the battlefields – having been put in charge of running the daily operations at forts in North Carolina and Virginia – Fiske found himself suddenly in the midst of a battle in April of 1864 when the CSS *Albemarle*, a Confederate ironclad ram, attacked the Union naval defense surrounding the fort where he was stationed. Unfortunately, the Confederate forces were successful and Fiske was captured as a prisoner-of-war. For the next ten months, he was held in prison in South Carolina and then in Georgia before successfully escaping in February of 1865. A free soldier once again, Fiske joined General Sherman’s Army in the middle of its march through the Confederate States and was put on the staff of Major General Francis Preston Blair. He would remain in that group for a month before being allowed to go home, leaving the Union Army shortly before the Confederate forces surrendered at Appomattox.

The strength and leadership that Fiske gained during the war would prove useful years after returning home when he found himself in the midst of a different sort of battle as Wellesley sought separation from Needham. Although West Needham residents tried no less than six times (beginning in the early 1800s) to form their own town, it was not until 1880 that the townspeople were able to come together and generate a formal petition calling for Wellesley’s independence. Throughout the nine months that it took to accomplish this, Fiske – who had

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN Wellesley ADDRESS 126 Woodlawn Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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acquired political acumen as a Needham Selectmen from 1873 until 1876, as well as a State Legislator and Senator from 1873-74 and 1876-77, respectively -- served as one of the de facto leaders of the movement. He was so highly regarded by his fellow townspeople that they selected him to present the petition to the State Legislature, which subsequently approved the request.

Once Wellesley was incorporated on April 6, 1881, Fiske continued to take a leading role in Town affairs. He not only moderated many important meetings at a time when the young town sought its footing, but also served as one of the first three members of the School Committee years before there was a Superintendent (when the School Committee, in effect, ran the entire school system). Fiske strongly believed that a high quality public school system was an absolute necessity for any prominent community. In turn, the Town honored Fiske for his service with the Fiske School, which opened in 1892 on Cedar Street at the current site of Ouellet Park.

In addition to public service, Fiske was actively involved in real estate in Wellesley during the last three decades of the 19th Century as the town began to take its modern shape. This consisted of both buying and selling small parcels of land all throughout the town as well as renting out properties. It was also during this time that he sold off much of the land surrounding his family's homestead. (Most of the property was sold to just two men, each of whom developed his own large estate. Although both large manor houses were torn down in the 1930s, their presence helped give Wellesley Farms the character that it enjoys today.)

After the death of Joseph E. Fiske in 1909, the house at 126 Woodlawn Avenue passed to his eldest daughter, Ellen Ware Fiske (1871-1953). A 1892 graduate of Wellesley College and one of the leading socialites throughout the first half of the 20th Century, "Nellie" Fiske was also known as Wellesley's Town Historian, helping to organize the Wellesley Historical Society in 1925 (and serving as its first secretary), as well as editing and publishing her father's manuscript on the history of the town.

In 1937, Ellen Fiske sold 126 Woodlawn Avenue to Frederick H. Davis and his wife, Virginia S. Davis. Over the course of the next year, the house underwent an extreme renovation. (See architectural narrative for more details.)

The current owner, Virginia E. Brogini, has resided at 126 Woodlawn Avenue since 1948.

List of Owners (with dates):

		<u>Book/Page</u>
10/05/1948	Jane Winkley Bartol to Adrian J. Brogini & Virginia E. Brogini	Certificate #37549 in Land Court Records
08/06/1942	Virginia S. Davis to Jane Winkley Bartol	Certificate #28244 in Land Court Records
07/15/1937	Ellen W. Fiske to Virginia S. Davis	2153/160
<i>Includes 126 Woodlawn Avenue on slightly more than 10 acres</i>		
03/22/1911	Isabella P. Conant to Ellen W. Fiske (1/2 half interest – they were sole heirs of Joseph E. Fiske)	1173/493
<i>Includes 126 Woodlawn Avenue on 194 acres</i>		
02/28/1878	Eunice M. Fiske (widow of Emery Fiske) to Joseph E. Fiske	499/57
<i>Includes 126 Woodlawn Avenue on 188 acres</i>		
07/16/1834	Moses Fisk to Emery Fisk (1/2 half interest)	104/157
07/15/1833	Isaiah Fisk to Moses Fisk Jr. and Emery Fisk	100/228
<i>Includes 126 Woodlawn Avenue on 180 acres</i>		
10/04/1824	Jeremiah Fisk to Isaiah Fisk	67/267
02/26/1824	Enoch Fisk to Isaiah Fisk & Jeremiah Fisk	73/244
<i>Includes site of 126 Woodlawn Avenue on tract of land of unspecified size</i>		
01/08/1802	Ephraim Jackson to Enoch Fiske (1/5 interest given to Emerson Hall)	18/202
12/23/1794	Paul Pratt to Enoch Fiske (1/5 interest given to Porridell Pratt)	5/41
09/29/1794	Edward Jackson to Enoch Fiske (1/5 interest given to Abner Hall)	3/223
02/03/1794	Moses Hall to Enoch Fiske (1/5 interest)	2/24

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN Wellesley ADDRESS 126 Woodlawn Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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[<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=82861727> --- accessed October 2013]

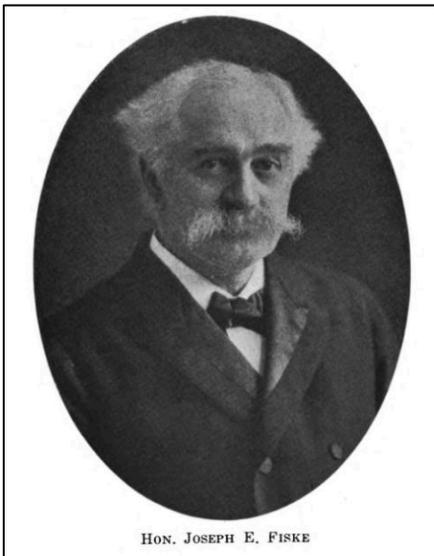
INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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**Current north side of
126 Woodlawn Avenue
(pre-1937)**



**126 Woodlawn Avenue
(pre-1881)**



PHOTOGRAPHS



Sylvia Plath House at 26 Elmwood Road



Fiske House at 126 Woodlawn Avenue

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