

112

**ODD FELLOWS' HALL  
534-538 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE**

LANDMARK DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT  
PREPARED BY HARRIET WHITE  
CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
APRIL 23, 1990

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Odd Fellows' Hall is importantly associated with the broad economic and social history of Cambridge. Constructed during a period of great growth in the city, the Odd Fellows' Hall reflects the commercial importance of late 19th-century Central Square. In addition it reflects the strength of the Odd Fellows' organization in Cambridge which was able to hire a prominent architecture firm to design its building in an area where real estate values were high. Architecturally, Odd Fellows' Hall is the most distinguished commercial block in Central Square. It is an outstanding example of Romanesque commercial architecture and an important work by the firm of Hartwell and Richardson, distinguished Boston architects who established a strong reputation with their designs for local businessmen, merchants and manufacturers.

## I. Location and Economic Status

### A. Address

Odd Fellows' Hall is located at 534-538 Massachusetts Avenue. The parcel is identified as Number 75 on Assessor's Map 93. The lot contains 6,058 square feet of land with a frontage of fifty feet on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue. The building is currently valued at \$240,000 and the land at \$257,000 for a total valuation of \$497,000. The total real estate tax assessment is \$9,973.83.

The building stands in a B-B zone, which allows for general business, business and professional offices, and multi-family dwellings at an FAR of 3.0 with a height limitation of fifty-five feet. The building is a contributing structure in the Central Square National Register District (October 11, 1989).

### B. Ownership and Occupancy

Odd Fellows' Hall is owned by Kenneth W. Estridge. It houses the Joy of Movement Center on the upper floors, and the Sleep-a-Rama bedding store and Hair Logic beauty salon in the ground floor storefronts.

### C. Area Description

Odd Fellows' Hall stands in the heart of the Central Square business district, which runs in linear fashion along Massachusetts Avenue between City Hall and Lafayette Square. The area contains a mixture of commercial, institutional, industrial and residential buildings dating from 1807 to 1987, and ranging in height from one to five stories. Modern signage and new construction have given the area an uneven appearance. The continuous building wall out to the sidewalk is the single unifying influence.

Adjacent to Odd Fellows' Hall at 546-550 Massachusetts Avenue are the Clark-Lamb Building, a three story brick commercial block (1873; remodelled 1902, 1928), and a nondescript one story commercial block (1924) at 520-526 Massachusetts Avenue, the original appearance of which has been obliterated by later alterations. Nearby, at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Pearl Street, is a two story Classical Revival commercial building (1925). At the opposite corner Massachusetts Avenue and Brookline Streets is the "Longfellow," a five story brick apartment house with street level storefronts (1894, C. Herbert McClare). On Green Street, to the rear of Odd Fellows' Hall, stand several multi story apartment buildings, including a Mansard style brick rowhouse (c. 1875), a corrugated metal warehouse and a parking lot.

Across Massachusetts Avenue from Odd Fellows' Hall are several large multi-story commercial buildings including the five story Central Trust Company Building (1927) at 515-527 Massachusetts Avenue and the four-story brick Kane's Furniture building (1916) at 493 Massachusetts Avenue.

#### D. Planning Issues

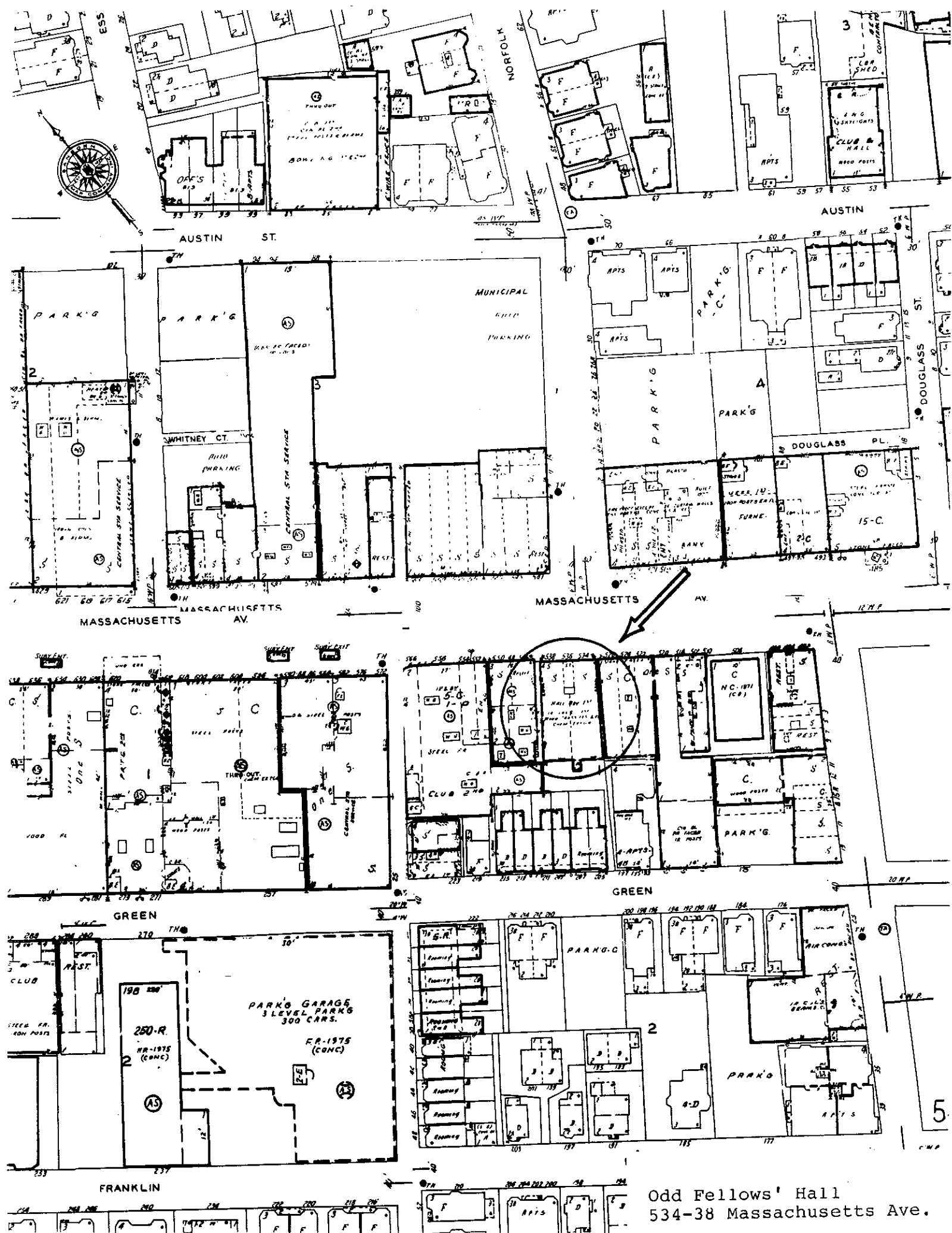
The Cambridge Community Development Office has prepared a comprehensive economic development and zoning study of Central Square, known as the Central Square Action Plan (February, 1988). The plan was designed to encourage responsible development and commercial revitalization in Central Square. One goal of the Action Plan was the creation an Overlay District in Central Square. The Central Square Overlay District (March, 1989) is an amendment to Central Square's existing base zoning and contains incentives for the preservation of contributing National Register buildings.

The major project active in the vicinity of the Odd Fellows' building is the rehabilitation of three buildings opposite the Odd Fellows' at 593-597, 599-601, 603-605 Massachusetts Avenue. The three buildings, known collectively as the Morse Buildings, have been vacant for several years and will be renovated with ground floor retail and offices above. The completion of the project will alleviate the perception of disuse engendered by the vacant buildings. It is hoped that the reuse of the Morse Buildings, in conjunction with the incentives provided by the Overlay Zone will strengthen the economic base of this section of Central Square and encourage reinvestment in other vacant buildings east of Norfolk Street.

The Odd Fellows' building currently has an F.A.R. of 4.1, which is above the maximum F.A.R. of 3.0. Thus, it is unlikely that it would be advantageous to develop a new building, which would have to conform to the lower F.A.R., on the site.

The ownership of the building is now in transition, the current owner (Kenneth Estridge) having filed for bankruptcy. It is likely that the building will be sold and new uses found for it. The Historical Commission will need to work with the new owners to ensure that the historic character of the building is respected.

#### E. Maps



Odd Fellows' Hall  
534-38 Massachusetts Ave.



## II. Description

### A. Type and Use

Odd Fellows' Hall was designed in 1883 and built the following year. A five story structure, it originally contained stores on the ground floor (typical of nineteenth century hall buildings), a two-story galleried meeting hall behind the space of the main arches, and lodge and banquet halls and offices on the upper floors. The ground floor storefronts are presently occupied by the Sleep-A-Rama bedding store and the Hair Logic beauty salon. The upper stories are operated as a dance and exercise facility by the Joy of Movement Center.

### B. Physical Description

Odd Fellows' Hall is a five story commercial building of red brick with both Romanesque and Sullivanesque decorative detail of pressed brick and terra cotta. The building is a simple rectangular form with a flat roof. The foundation measures approximately fifty feet by ninety feet, occupying a deep lot with frontage on Massachusetts Avenue. The building is separated from the street by an eight foot sidewalk. The center entrance is recessed and enframed by clusters of slender engaged colonnettes. The floor of the entrance vestibule is laid with mosaic tile containing the emblem of the International Order of Odd Fellows. From the vestibule rises an eight foot wide marble staircase, the principal passage to the upper floors. Flanking the entrance are two storefronts which have been compromised by modern alterations and signage.

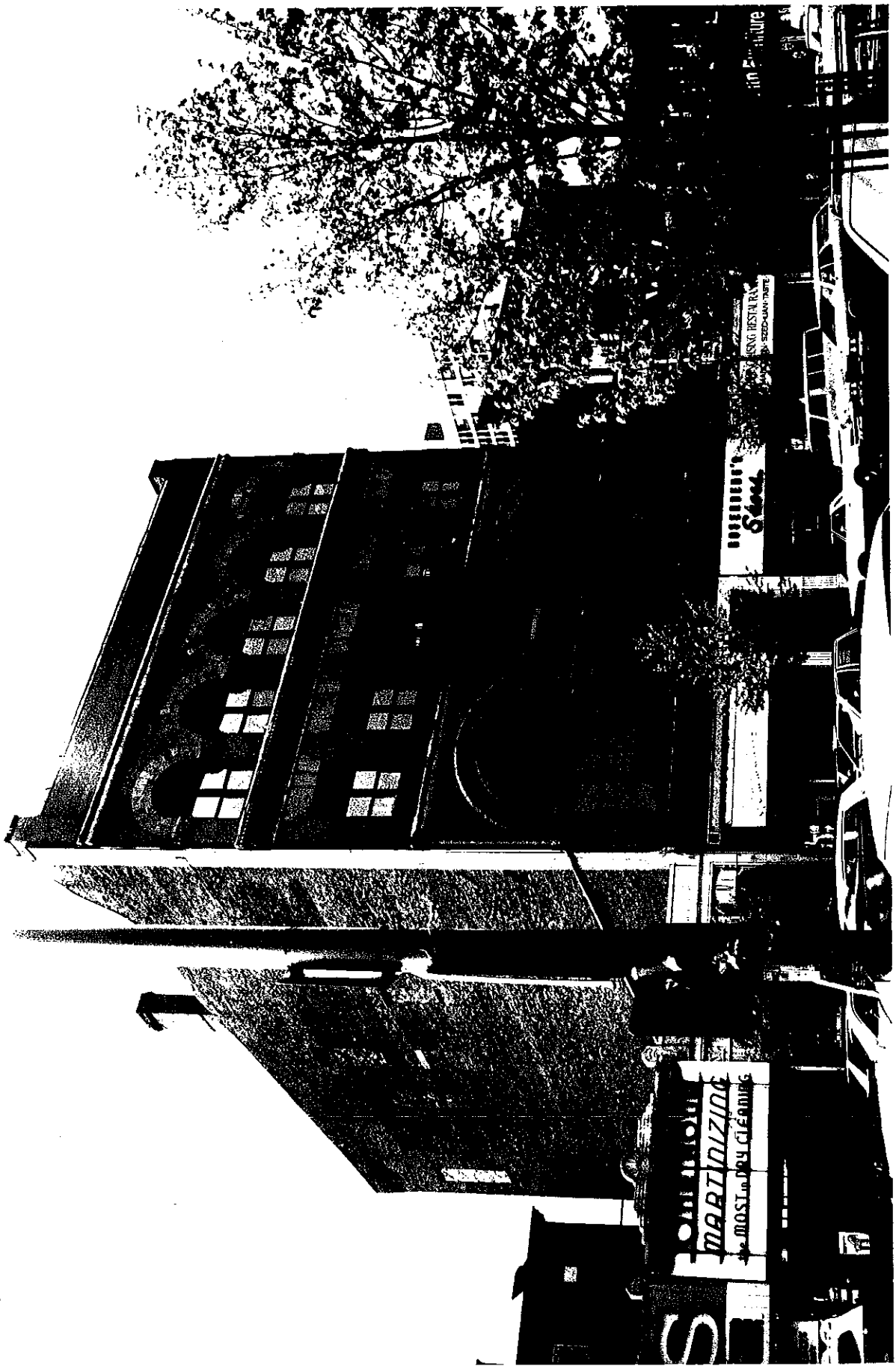
Relief ornament of pressed and molded brick and terra cotta are confined to the facade. This includes brick laid in alternating squares in checkerboard fashion, similar to the stone marquetry above the entrance arches of Henry Hobson Richardson's Austin Hall (1881-1883), and J.A. Hasty's nearby Cambridge Mutual Fire Insurance Building (1888). A terra cotta string course of stylized foliage in an interlaced pattern divides the first and second stories; a string course with a palmette motif divides the third and fourth stories.

The most prominent feature of the facade is a pair of broad Syrian arched windows, each fifteen feet wide. These arches reach the full twenty-five foot height of the second story, and contain small lights of cathedral glass which illuminate the large second story meeting room. The arches rest on spandrels embellished with foliated terra cotta ornament. Fenestration of the third story consists of rectangular openings set within deep reveals. The fourth story windows form an arcade of round arches, smaller in scale than those of the second story.

A parapet rises above the cornice of molded terra cotta. The parapet is flanked by plain brick piers. The architects' drawings show the parapet with a checkerboard pattern of brick and each pier topped by a pyramidal mound of foliated ornament. These decorative elements are not part of the present design, and it is not certain whether they were included at the time of construction.

The principal meeting room measures forty feet by fifty feet with a ceiling height of twenty-five feet occupying the second and third stories. This major room, together with its galleries provided seating for 500 persons. Private lodge rooms and other facilities for the exclusive use of the Odd Fellows were on the upper floors of the building.

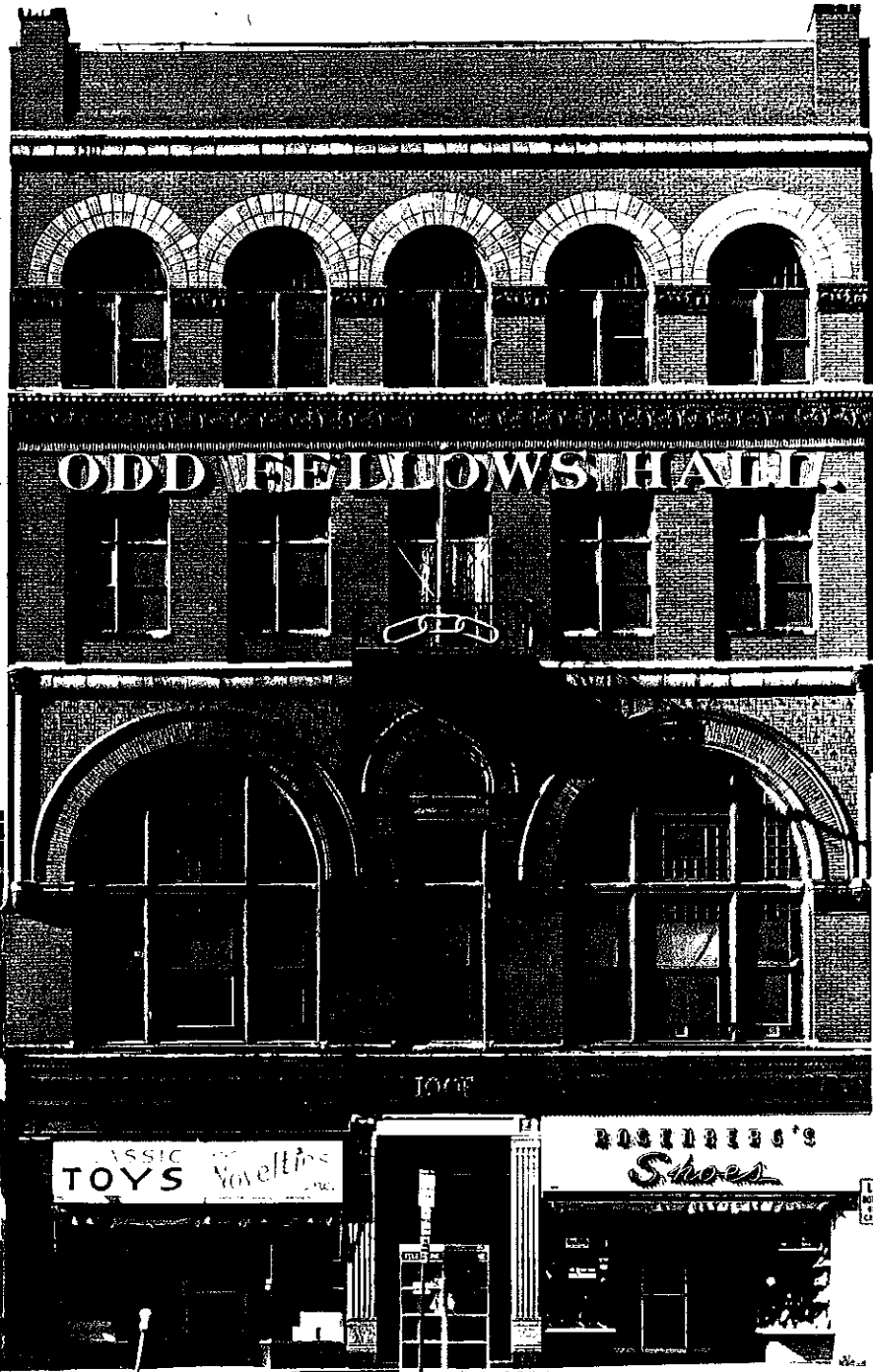
### C. Current Photographs



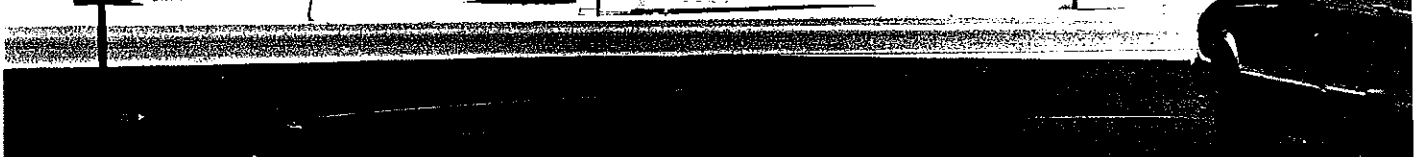
THE BEST  
**MARTINIZING**  
- MOST IN DRY CLEANING

**HISNA RESTAURANT**  
SINCE 1985

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### III. History of the Property

#### A. Historic Development Patterns

##### 1. Deed History of the Parcel

By the mid 18th century Cambridgeport land ownership had been reorganized into three large farms, the Soden farm, the Bordman farm and the Inman estate, with several smaller holdings. The land on which the Odd Fellows' Hall stands was originally part of the Soden farm. In 1777 Thomas Soden sold much of his land including his farmhouse to Chief Justice Francis Dana, who had amassed extensive Cambridgeport landholdings both north and south of Massachusetts Avenue.

In 1793 Samuel Whittemore, of Gloucester, sold a twenty-one acre tract of land in Cambridgeport to his grandson, William Watson (b.1755), a Cambridge glazier. The land was described in the deed as being "...situated in a part of the Town called 'The Neck,' and consisting of mowing, plowing, pasturing and orcharding." It was bounded on the northeast by the Town Road (now Massachusetts Avenue), and on three sides by land of Francis Dana.

Watson's house stood at the southeast corner of Mount Auburn and Brighton Streets (now JFK Street). It had belonged to his maternal grandfather, Samuel Whittemore, a deacon of the church for over forty years. In addition to the house, Watson owned a large tract of land in Cambridgeport which he used for various purposes including the keeping of an elderly slave named Venus Whittemore. This is probably the land referred to in the deed of 1793, as well as the site of the present Odd Fellows' Hall.

It is uncertain when the land was transferred from William Watson to his eldest son Samuel Watson (b.1796), but it is known that at the time of Samuel Watson's death the property was divided among his brother and sisters, Abraham Andros Watson, a Boston physician; Susan Wyeth Moore; and Elizabeth W. Allen. Susan Wyeth Moore (d.1802) was the daughter of William Watson and his first wife Susanna Wyeth Watson. Dr. Abraham Watson (c.1799-1868) and Elizabeth Watson Allen (b.1794) were the son and daughter of William Watson and his second wife, Catherine Lopez Watson. These three siblings retained ownership until 1855. At that time Susan Wyeth Moore and Mary Moore sold a portion of the land with a grain store and other buildings on it to Hervey Davis and Erastus Bates, Cambridge grain dealers.

In 1863 and 1864 Davis and Bates acquired two additional parcels from the Watson heirs. The first of these was bought from Elizabeth W. Allen, Susan Wyeth Moore and Mary Moore, and was described as their two-thirds of the

land they inherited from their brother Samuel Watson. The other parcel purchased by Davis and Bates was obtained from Dr. Abraham Watson of Boston, and was described as his one-third of the land inherited from his brother Samuel Watson.

Davis and Bates retained ownership of the properties which they had assembled and operated a large grain and feed store on the premises until 1872 when they sold it as an intact parcel to Daniel U. Chamberlin, Caleb C. Allen and Henry Endicott. Six years later, in 1878, the property was again sold, this time to the Friendship Hall Association, a precursor of the Odd Fellows' organization. Finally in 1884, the Odd Fellows Hall Association took possession of the property, which consisted of two adjacent parcels and included a right of way leading from Massachusetts Avenue through the block to Green Street. The land was cleared of the grain store buildings to make way for the new headquarters built by the Odd Fellows in 1884. The Odd Fellows retained ownership of the land and buildings until 1977 when they were purchased by Kenneth W. Estridge and the Joy of Movement Center.

## 2. Development History of the Property

From the time of the first settlement in 1630 until 1793, the land surrounding Odd Fellows' Hall consisted of salt marshes and woodland. It was used for pasturage, mowing, orchards and plowing, reflecting the agrarian economy of the period. The primary settlement in Cambridge continued to be in the vicinity of Harvard Square, with Massachusetts Avenue serving as a causeway linking Harvard Square with the undeveloped land to the east. Many Cambridge residents of the period lived in houses near Harvard Square and retained tracts of open land in the Cambridgeport area for grazing their livestock, gathering salt marsh hay and other agricultural purposes. Samuel Whittemore (1693-1794) was one such early resident.

Samuel Whittemore lived at the southeast corner of Mount Auburn and JFK Streets. In keeping with the practice of the time, he also kept large tracts of land in Cambridgeport, including the parcel he sold in 1793 to William Watson. Whittemore was William Watson's maternal grandfather, and served as a Deacon of Christ Church for over forty years. He is said to have kept a shop in part of his house. Watson lived in his grandfather's house, and eventually assumed ownership of his grandfather's Cambridgeport lands.

William Watson is known to have sold off some of these Cambridgeport lands, including a lot at the corner of Main and Brookline Streets in 1799, and several additional lots soon thereafter. These land sales occurred soon after the opening of the West Boston Bridge in 1793.

The West Boston Bridge provided more direct access to Boston and triggered a flurry of real estate speculation in the Central Square area. Up until this time only four houses had been built in Cambridgeport east of Dana Street. After the opening of the bridge, increased transportation along the causeway leading to the bridge (Massachusetts Avenue) created a need for travel-related businesses such as hotels, inns, taverns and livery stables. Among these were Hovey's Tavern near Lafayette Square, and Watson's Hotel built in 1801 at the corner of Main and Brookline Streets. The latter was built by William Watson on land which he had acquired from his grandfather Samuel Whittemore.

A plan of the area drawn by Peter Tufts and dated 1824 shows the block bounded by Massachusetts Avenue and Brookline, Pearl and Franklin Streets divided into three parcels, two of which were owned by Watson and the other by Phineas B. Hovey. Watson also owned all the land between Pearl and Brookline Streets south to Decatur Street. A number of the streets in the area bear the names of Watson family members, including Watson Street and Lopez Street, named for William Watson's second wife, Catharine Lopez.

The Walling Map indicates that by 1854 only five structures facing Massachusetts Avenue had been built on the block. The 1868 Sanborn Map shows that a number of the gaps along Massachusetts Avenue had been filled. The confectionery and cigar factory of Benjamin P. Clark was located east of Watson's Hotel. Next to the confectionery stood the large grain and hay store of Hervey Davis and Erastus Bates. This parcel, which stands opposite Norfolk Street, would later become the site of the Odd Fellows' Hall. East of the grain store there appears to be a row of shops, including a tailor shop. At the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Brookline Street stood the estate and large grocery store of Phineas B. Hovey. Hovey was the father of Charles Mason Hovey (1810-1887), the noted horticulturist. The 1868 Sanborn Map also shows three structures facing Brookline Street and two on Franklin Street. The interior of the block is largely vacant and Green Street had not yet been laid out.

The 1873 Atlas indicates the block to be almost entirely built up. The numerous gaps for side yards and open space had been filled.

The 1873 Atlas of the City of Cambridge shows the grain and feed store to be under the ownership of Allen and Chamberlain. A photograph of the block taken before 1883 depicts a two and one-half story frame building with its gable end to the street. This was probably the Davis grain store, demolished in 1883 to make way for Odd Fellows Hall.

An article in the Cambridge Chronicle, dated March 10, 1883 mentions plans to construct Odd Fellows' Hall, on land acquired from Davis' grain store.

The 1886 the Atlas of the City of Cambridge indicates a brick structure labelled "Friendship Hall" on the site. This is a reference to Odd Fellows' Hall, which had been constructed in 1883-1884 to house the "Friendship Lodge" of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

In 1888 a five story brick block was built by Asa P. Morse on the adjacent lot east of Odd Fellows Hall. The building, designed by J. H. Webber, was occupied by the Cambridge Chronicle on the lower floors with tenements and offices on the upper floors. The Chronicle Building was demolished during the 1920s and replaced by a one story concrete store block.

The 1894 Atlas of the City of Cambridge indicates that the nearby Hovey estate had been subdivided and built upon. In 1892, land at Brookline Street and Massachusetts Avenue in the northeastern corner of the Hovey estate was purchased by Dr. George Southwick, who built a five story brick apartment house with ground floor storefronts on the site. The building, known as the "Longfellow" was designed by C. Herbert McClare, and was pictured in American Architect and Building News in 1893.

In 1912 the rapid transit subway system to Boston was completed. The subway route followed Massachusetts Avenue with a station in Central Square. This began a new phase in the development of Central Square. For many years Cambridge residents bought their goods and services from local merchants, businessmen and professionals. But with the opening of the subway downtown Boston goods came within easy reach. Local commerce in Central Square suffered from competition with downtown Boston for business. This caused a shift away from the 19th century mix of professional offices and retail operations in Central Square, toward a more purely retail trade. Fewer professionals kept office in Central Square, while the number of small businesses increased.

As the century progressed, Central Square's economy became increasingly dependent on neighborhood trade. Though still a major commercial center, Central Square began to lose its diversity and middle class population. Residents abandoned the old urban neighborhoods for new housing in the suburbs, and were replaced by successive groups of immigrants.

After 1920 the most common form of construction came to be the one story concrete storefront housing small scale retail stores.

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#### IV. Significance of the Property

##### A. Historical Significance

The primary significance of Odd Fellows' Hall lies in its associations with the social and economic growth of Cambridge during the last quarter of the 19th century. During this period the population of Cambridge increased dramatically. Industry flourished in Cambridgeport, bringing many new factories and jobs for Cambridgeport's growing immigrant population. This period saw the proliferation of fraternal organizations and benevolent societies in many American cities. Among these were the Free Masons, the Loyal Order of Moose and the Scottish Rite, an elite branch of the Free Masons. They provided social opportunities and a vehicle for charitable and community work to meet the needs of the city's expanding population. Some of these groups constructed substantial buildings to house their organizations. Such halls accommodated group activities such as meetings, concerts, dances and receptions, and played an important role in the community life of the 19th century.

There is evidence that the Odd Fellowship existed in England as early as 1745, but the precise origins of the organization are unknown. During the early 1800s several schisms occurred among the Odd Fellows, most notably in 1813 when a group in Manchester, England seceded from the parent organization in protest of the widespread drinking and merrymaking typical of Odd Fellowship during that era.

In 1817 an Odd Fellow named Thomas Wildey immigrated to the United States, and in 1819 he organized an Odd Fellows lodge in the Seven Stars Tavern in Baltimore, Maryland. This lodge was granted its charter by the Manchester group. However, records show that an unchartered lodge had appeared in Baltimore as early as 1802, and one in New York in 1806.

By 1825 the Grand Lodge of Odd Fellows in the United States was organized, with Thomas Wildey becoming the Grand Sire. In 1826 Wildey visited England where he was honored for having introduced Odd Fellowship to the United States. Wildey was an effective leader, and by the time he died in 1861, there were over forty lodges and 200,000 members in the United States.

In 1843 the Odd Fellows severed ties with the parent organization in England. This is thought to have occurred when the Manchester, England Odd Fellows granted a charter to a group of black Odd Fellows in the United States, who had been denied membership in the all-white American lodges. Since 1843 the black Odd Fellows have had a separate organization known as the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows

(G.U.O.O.F.), and the white Odd Fellows have been known as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.).

The I.O.O.F. was the first American fraternal organization to offer its members financial assistance for care of the sick, needy, orphans, and burial of deceased members. It is difficult to ascertain whether the benevolent features or social qualities had greater appeal to the membership. Whatever the reason, the I.O.O.F. flourished, and from 1830 to 1895 the group initiated over two million new members.

Odd Fellowship has been referred to as "the poor man's Masonry" and in many ways is similar to Free Masonry. It teaches its members secret passwords, signs and handshakes; candidates are blindfolded (hoodwinked) during initiation; and votes are conducted by secret ballot when admitting a candidate for membership. Membership requires belief in a supreme being, and certain moral lessons are emphasized in the group's rituals. Until 1971 its constitution restricted membership to white males; membership is currently limited to adult males.

The candidate for membership, in addition to being blindfolded, is put in chains, intended to symbolize darkness and helplessness, as the members form a funeral like procession and then march around the lodge room. After the procession the candidate's blindfold is removed and he must meditate on death as he views a human skeleton illuminated by torches.

The candidate also proclaims an oath and promises ". . . never to communicate to anyone, . . . the signs, token, or grips, the term or other traveling or other password . . . or lend any of the books or papers relating to the records or secret work of the Order . . ."

The Odd Fellows confer three degrees in addition to that bestowed upon initiation. These are known as Friendship, Love and Truth, symbolized by three chain links joined together. These three links are also the official emblem of the I.O.O.F. Members may attain three "higher" degrees by joining an Encampment Lodge.

The I.O.O.F. has a female division, the Rebekah Assemblies, which was organized in 1851. Men from the I.O.O.F. may join the Rebekah Assemblies, but the reverse is not permitted. In 1978 the entire membership numbered approximately 243,000, a striking decline from the 1915 membership of 3,400,000.

Local units are called "Lodges." Regional groups are called "Grand Lodges," and the parent organization, which includes Canada, is referred to as the "Sovereign Grand

Lodge." National headquarters are currently maintained in Baltimore, Maryland.

The History of Middlesex County, published in 1890, lists fourteen chapters of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in Cambridge. The earliest of these were the New England Lodge Number 4, instituted in 1827; the Friendship Lodge Number 20, organized in 1843; and the Charles River Encampment Number 22, of 1846.

In 1896 states that in addition to the main chapter, there were six subordinate lodges, two Encampments, and two chapters for women in Cambridge, with a combined membership of over two thousand persons. The strength of the Odd Fellows movement in Cambridge during the late 19th century is evidenced by the group's ability to engage a prominent architectural firm such as Hartwell and Richardson to design a substantial new building for them.

In addition to the organization's headquarters in Central Square, a second substantial Odd Fellows' Hall was constructed in North Cambridge in 1892. Designed by architect G.L. Nicholson, the North Cambridge Odd Fellows' Block stood at 2072-2078 Massachusetts Avenue and was the largest business block in Porter Square at the time it was built. It was destroyed by fire in 1968.

## B. Architectural Significance

Odd Fellows' Hall is a building of critical architectural importance. It is an outstanding example of late 19th century commercial design, and the most architecturally distinguished commercial block in Central Square. The Odd Fellows' Hall is also significant as a work of the firm of Hartwell and Richardson, and is characteristic of their public buildings of the early 1880s.

Built of pressed brick with molded brick and terra cotta ornament, this five story building is a typical nineteenth century hall building with stores on the ground floor and meeting and banquet rooms on the upper floors. Its verticality reflects the rising real estate values in Central Square during the 1880s. In order to maximize the revenue potential of property with street frontage on Massachusetts Avenue, multi story buildings were constructed in increasing numbers.

A sketch of Odd Fellow's Hall was published in the *American Architect and Building News* in May, 1885. Despite the elaborate, square-patterned parapet shown in the drawing, the present building, the existing parapet is plain. The use of a checkerboard pattern in the masonry was seen on H.H. Richardson's Cheney Building; this feature was often imitated by practitioners of the Romanesque Revival.

The elaborately carved terra cotta string courses resemble the interlaced Celtic decorative motifs favored by Louis Sullivan.

Odd Fellows Hall was designed in 1883 by the firm of Hartwell and Richardson. Henry W. Hartwell began his architectural practice in Boston in 1856, although his partnership with William C. Richardson was not formed until 1881. Their practice lasted for almost forty years, with the peak of their success reached during the 1880s and 1890s.

Henry W. Hartwell (1833-1920) was involved in a number of brief professional alliances early in his career. Along with Albert E. Swasey, Jr. he designed several public buildings in the Fall River area. In 1877 Hartwell formed a brief partnership with George Tilden, resulting in the design for the Milton (Mass.) Town Hall (1878). On his own Hartwell produced the designs of the Ware Town Hall (1885) and the Belmont Town Hall (1881).

Soon after receiving the commission for the Belmont Town Hall, Hartwell formed a partnership with William Richardson (1854-1935). Within the firm Hartwell seems to have been responsible for construction, and Richardson for design. Their local works include the First Baptist Church (1881) in Central Square, the Henry Yerxa House (1887-1888), the Stillman Kelley House (1887-1888), the Ritchie House (1889-1890), and the James Mellen House (1888). Also among their commissions were a number of suburban houses in the Boston area and the remodelling of the 1793 Lyman House in Waltham.

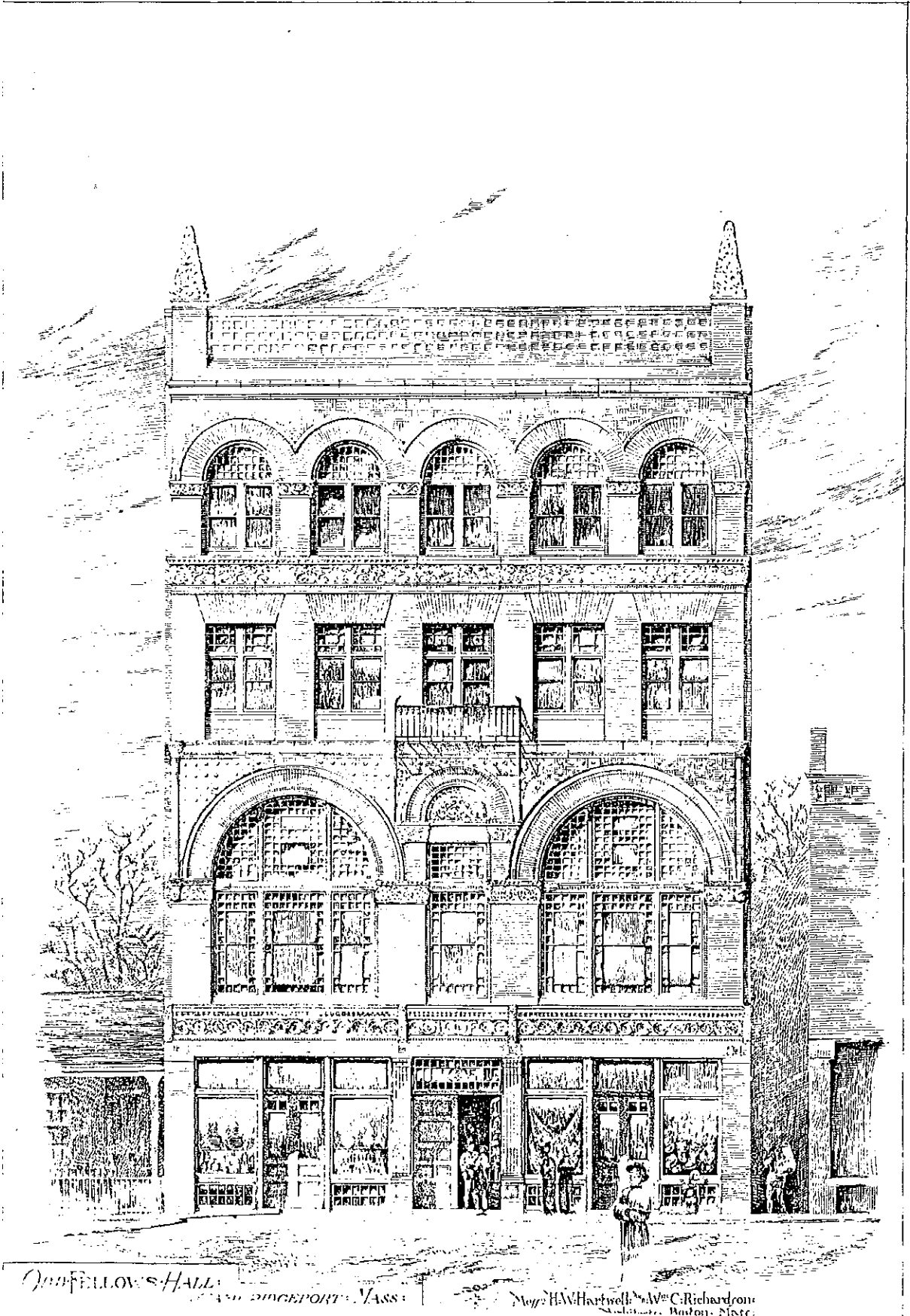
Among Hartwell and Richardson's commissions for public and institutional buildings were the First Spiritual Temple, later known as the Exeter Street Theater (1884), the Normal Art School (1886) in Boston, Christ Church (1886-1887) in Andover, the Eliot Church (1888) in Newton, and the Acton Public Library (1889).

Although both Hartwell and Richardson practiced well into the twentieth century, their best work dates from the 1880s and early 1890s. Although not particularly innovative, Hartwell and Richardson had nonetheless achieved a great measure of success, and their work, including Odd Fellows' Hall, reflects the popular architectural taste of the period in the Boston area.

### C. Historic Photographs

VPD SHEET PROTECTOR

VPD SHEET PROTECTOR



ODD FELLOWS' HALL

DANVERS, MASS.

Des. H. W. Hartwell. Wm. C. Richardson.

OR PS-5

## V. Relationship to Criteria

### A. Section 4, Ordinance 1002

Section 4 states the criteria for landmark designation. It states that the Commission:

. . . may recommend for designation as a landmark any . . . structure . . . either (a) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the city . . . or (b) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of construction, or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures.

### B. Relationship of Property to Criteria

Odd Fellows Hall is importantly associated with the broad pattern of economic and social history of Cambridge. It was constructed during the 1880s, a period of economic prosperity and growth in the city, when Central Square was a thriving commercial center. During this period the city's population expanded rapidly, in part due to the increasing numbers of European immigrants. Widening industrialization increased employment opportunities, attracting many people to the city. Benevolent societies such as the Odd Fellows proliferated to meet the social and financial needs of the population. By 1900, the Odd Fellows had over two thousand members in Cambridge. The strength of the Odd Fellows movement is evidenced by the groups' ability to engage a prominent architectural firm to design a substantial new building at a location where real estate values were quite high. Odd Fellows Hall is a reminder of the unprecedented growth of the city of Cambridge during the later years of the 19th century.

Architecturally, Odd Fellows Hall is the most distinguished commercial block in Central Square. It is an outstanding example of late 19th century commercial design. It is one of few surviving nineteenth buildings in the city which combine commercial and meeting hall functions, and is in an excellent state of preservation. Odd Fellows Hall is also significant as a work of the architectural firm of Hartwell and Richardson, and is characteristic of their public buildings of the early 1880s. The building is one of the few surviving nineteenth century commercial structures in Central Square and makes a critical contribution to the streetscape.

The staff finds the Odd Fellows' Hall eligible for landmark designation under criteria (a) and (b) of Section 4, Ordinance 1002.

## VI. Recommendations

### A. Section 1, Ordinance 1002

The purpose of landmark designation is stated in Section 1 of Ordinance 1002:

. . . to preserve, conserve, and protect the beauty and heritage of the city. . .and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation, and maintenance of. . .structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; (and) to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose.

### B. Preservation Options

Odd Fellows Hall is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building in the Central Square National Register District (October, 1989). It is protected from the adverse effects of federally licensed, permitted, or funded projects and, through listing on the parallel State Register of Historic Places, from the adverse effects of state funded projects. At the local level, it is covered by the provisions of the Central Square Overlay District, in addition to the general zoning regulations of the city.

The National and State Registers provide limited protection from public projects through review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The Overlay District establishes zoning incentives for the preservation of contributing National Register properties and also calls for review of certain projects by the Central Square Advisory Committee. However, neither the Massachusetts Historical Commission's nor the Advisory Committee's powers allow for detailed, binding review of architectural designs. The Advisory Committee also cannot mandate the retention of a particular property.

Other options for the preservation of Odd Fellows Hall include designation as a Landmark under Ordinance 1002, or placement of a Preservation Easement on the property under the provisions of MGL Chapter 184.

The other major protective designation, a Local Historic District in Central Square, is possible. It is, however, unlikely that the Historical Commission would act to designate the area as a district in the absence of strong support from the property owners.

### C. Staff Recommendation

The Cambridge Historical Commission is mandated to identify, protect and preserve landmark buildings. Having found the building eligible under the landmark criteria, the staff recommendation is that the Odd Fellows' Hall be forwarded to the City Council for designation as a Protected Landmark.

## VII. Standards for Design Review

### A. Introduction

The Commission's primary charge under Ordinance 1002 is to review "all construction, demolition, or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features, other than color, of any landmark." This landmark study report describes exterior architectural features that are among the characteristics which led to consideration of the property as a landmark. Except as the order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, those features should be preserved and/or enhanced in any constructions, demolition, or alteration of a landmark.

Section 8 of the ordinance sets general guidelines to be considered by the Historical Commission in reviewing changes to landmarks. Among other things, the Commission is directed to consider:

the historic and architectural value and significance of the site or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture and material of the features involved, and the relation of such features to similar features or structures in the surrounding area.

In all cases, a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship, or Non-Applicability must be issued by the Historical Commission prior to making any changes to a landmark. The Commission does not have authority to regulate interiors of landmarks nor can they control changes to exterior architectural features not subject to public view. Nonetheless, Certificates of Non-Applicability must be issued for those changes. All applications are carefully reviewed by the Commission at a public hearing, in accordance with Ordinance 1002.

### B. General Standards

1. Historic and architectural features of the landmark shall be preserved.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark which have taken place over time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have acquired significance in their own right and that significance should be recognized and respected.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.

5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.
6. The surface cleaning of a landmark shall be done by the gentlest possible means. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage exterior architectural features shall not be used.
7. New additions must not destroy significant exterior architectural features and shall not be incongruous with the historic aspects, architectural significance, or distinctive character of the landmark, neighborhood and environment.
8. New additions should be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landmark would be unimpaired.

#### C. Statement of Standards

##### 1. General

- a. Preserve and protect insofar as possible the streetscape views of Odd Fellows Hall.
- b. If replacement of the surrounding buildings located on Massachusetts Avenue between Pearl and Brookline Streets is ever contemplated, care should be taken that the fabric of Odd Fellows Hall is protected and enhanced.

##### 2. Exterior Walls

- a. Retain brick exterior.
- b. Repointing of brick masonry should be done using mortar that matches the existing mortar in color, texture, consistency and strength.
- c. Cleaning of all brick surfaces should employ a mild form of wash under low pressure. Sandblasting of brick walls is to be avoided at all costs.
- d. Sealers are to be avoided.

##### 3. Windows

- a. Replacement sash shall match the original in size, function and configuration.

#### 4. Storefronts

- a. Alterations to the storefronts should involve a return to the original design and configuration.

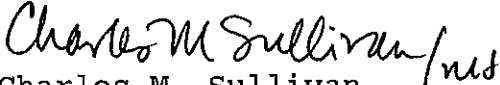
## VIII. Proposed Order

## ORDERED:

That the Odd Fellows Hall, 536 Massachusetts Avenue, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter Two, Article XVI, Section 2-147(k) of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on June 7, 1990. The premises so designated are defined as Parcel 75 on Assessors' Map 93.

The designation is justified by the important associations of the building with the broad social and economic history of the City of Cambridge. Specifically, it is associated with the rise to commercial prominence of Central Square during the last quarter of the 19th century. In addition, Odd Fellows Hall is associated with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, a social and civic organization typical of those which proliferated in American cities during the period. Architecturally, Odd Fellows Hall is an outstanding and well-preserved example of 19th century commercial architecture and is an important reminder of the commercial hegemony of Central Square. Odd Fellows Hall makes a critical contribution to the diversity of the streetscape in Central Square.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction activity can take place within the designated landmark area, and no action can be taken affecting the appearance of Odd Fellows Hall, that would in either case be visible from a public way without review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability, as the case may be. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the landmark designation report, and applicable sections of Ordinance 1002.

  
Charles M. Sullivan  
Executive Director  
Cambridge Historical Commission.