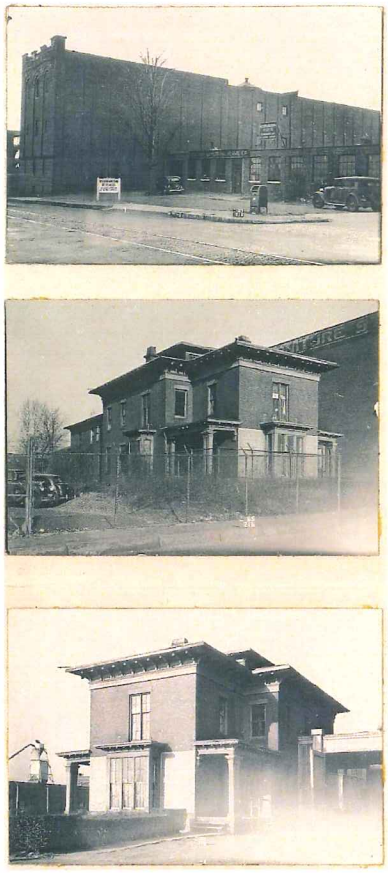
SPRINGFIELD·HISTORICAL·COMMISSION

70 TAPLEY STREET
SPRINGFIELD
MASSACHUSETTS
01104

Preliminary Report
for the proposed

THOMAS WASON HOUSE
LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Springfield, Massachusetts



Prepared for the Springfield Historical Commission
by the Office of Planning & Economic Development
January 21, 2016

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SUMMARY SHEET

Chairperson:	Ralph Slate
Contact Person: (Commission Staff)	Alvin Allen
Address:	Springfield Historical Commission 70 Tapley Street Springfield, MA 01104
Telephone:	(413) 787-6020
Commissioners:	Thomas Belton Marjorie Guess My-Ron Hatchett Robert McCarroll Benjamin Murphy Ralph Slate, Chair Vincent Walsh Steven Shultis, Alternate
Expected Date of Public Hearing:	April, 2016
Expected Date of City Council Vote:	June, 2016
Number of Properties Included in the Proposed Local Historic District Expansion:	1

Conclusion of the Preliminary Study Report: To protect the architectural integrity of the Thomas Wason House and the Central Storage Warehouse, the Thomas Wason Local Historic District should be created.

I. Introduction

The Historic Districts Act, Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40C, is the Commonwealth's enabling statute for creating local historic districts. Local historic districts are the mechanism by which municipalities can designate and protect areas of architectural and historical significance. Within a local historic district, no exterior architectural feature that is visible from a public street, park or water body can be altered without first receiving permission from the local historic district commission. The level of protection provided by a local historic district is much greater than that provided by inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Although being on the National Register is a formal recognition of property's historical significance and can offer limited review of projects funded or assisted by federal, state, or CDBG funds, the property itself is not protected from change if work is done exclusively with private funds. The local historic district provides greater protection and review for properties and has this power as a result of a town or city council vote.

Local Historic Districts were first established in Massachusetts in 1955. There are now more than 200 local historic districts in over 100 municipalities in the Commonwealth, including nine in Springfield. Neighboring municipalities with local historic districts include West Springfield, Longmeadow, Chicopee, and Holyoke.

In 1972, the Quadrangle-Mattoon historic district was the first local district established in Springfield. Over the next six years, five other districts were created, protecting more than 1,200 properties. Three districts expansions have also taken place. In 2010, local historic districts were created to protect Our Lady of Hope and Immaculate Conception churches. In 2015, local historic districts were created to protect the Willys-Overland Block and the Colony Hills area. LHDs can be credited with protecting many of the city's significant residential structures, maintaining community character, preserving important architectural treasures, and adding to the quality of residents' lives.

II. Methodology

The Liberty Heights neighborhood was surveyed in 2001, but this property lies a block beyond the survey boundary and was not surveyed. The property was only researched after a demolition permit was requested, triggering the City's 9-month Demolition Delay.

The Springfield Historical Commission met with the owner, who on hearing of the age and historical association of the property, agreed to rescind his demolition request and to pursue historic status for the property.

III. Significance

Thomas Whiteredge Wason came to Springfield in the 1830s from New Hamsphire. He married Sarah Longley in Springfield in 1836. Thomas and his brother Charles dressed timbers for railroad bridges and then began repairing railway cars before forming a

business to build rail cars in 1845. Charles moved to Ohio in 1851 and sold his interest in the company to Thomas, who took on partners a few years later and operated until the name "W. T. Wason & Co." In 1862, the "Wason Manufacturing Company" was incorporated with Thomas as president. Wason built wood passenger, baggage, and freight cars. It built cars for George Pullman and for the Central Pacific Railroad. Several of these cars were present in 1869 at Promontory Utah for the uniting of the transcontinental railroad. A portion of its business was international; in 1860, Wason built an elaborate car for the Khedive (Viceroy) of Egypt. When Thomas Wason died in 1870, his company had been the largest employer in Springfield for nearly two decades.

The house remained residential through the 19th century. The Central Storage Warehouse began operating from the site circa 1909. The 1910 Springfield atlas shows in the house behind which are several brick structures. In 1911, a permit was taken out to construct a 36 feet by 70 feet addition which extended the warehouse to Liberty Street. The house now serves as the office of the storage company.

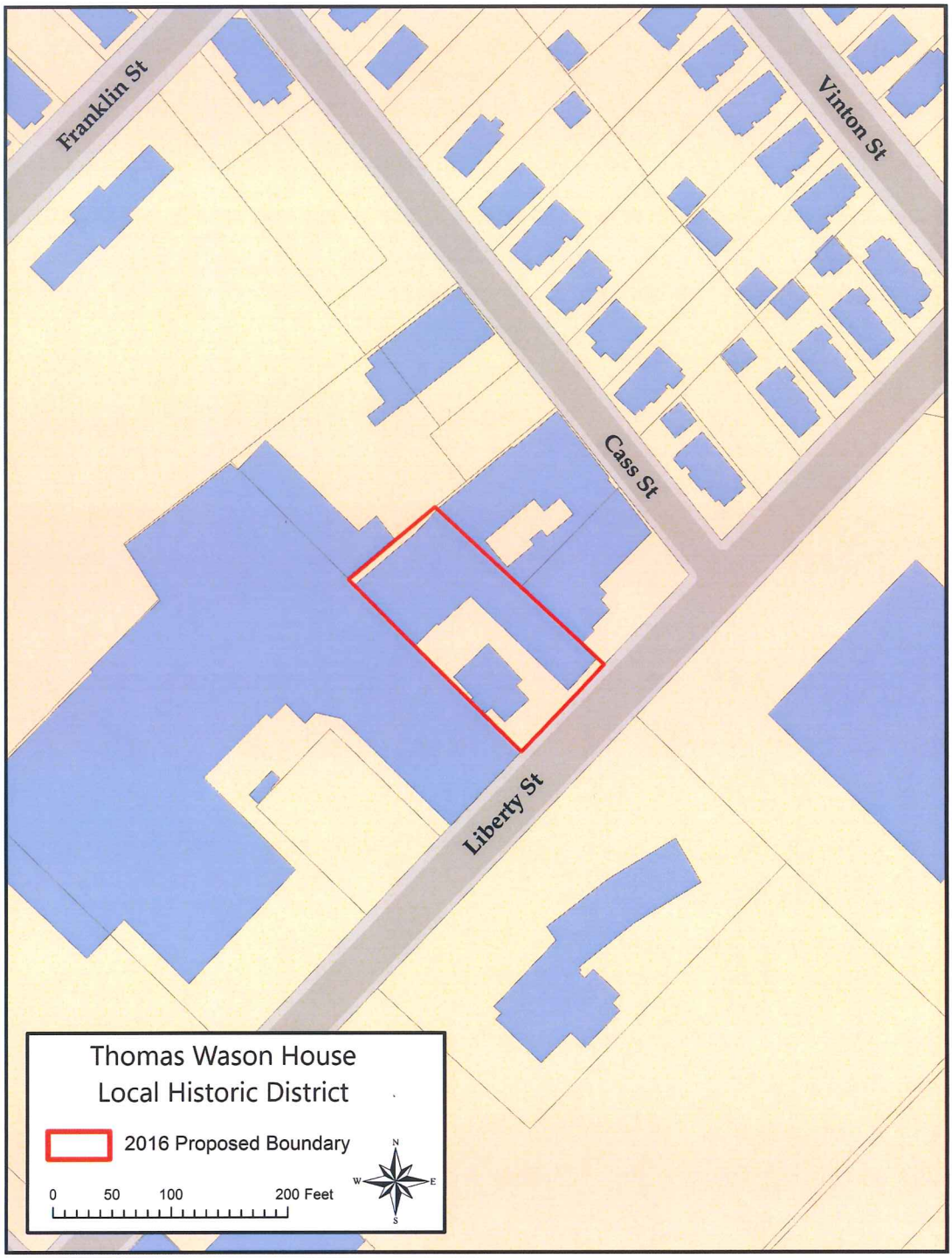
The house is a two-story brick Italianate style structure with a deeply-overhanging and heavily bracketed cornice. The façade has a central one-story bay window. The right side porch has been modified and enclosed; the left side porch has been removed. Windows have brownstone lintels and sills and six-over-six sash, although a few have been replaced. Thomas Wason first appears on Liberty Street in the City Directory of 1854/5. The house could date to that period since Italian Villa style homes began appearing in Springfield by the late 1840s.

The warehouse is three stories. Its brick façade is a simple Renaissance Revival style. First floor brick courses emulate rustication, the second and third floors contain a trio of two-story recessed arches. The roof parapet is crenulated.

IV. Justification of the Boundaries

This is a single parcel historic district. On either side and across the street are one-story, nonresidential 20th century buildings.

V.Map of the Proposed District



VI. Property Street Address Index

Street Address	Historic Name	Year Built	Inventory form	Architectural Style
270 Liberty Street	T. W. Wason House Central Storage Warehouse	c. 1854 c. 1908	Y	Italianate Renaissance Revival
Total number of properties to be included in district:			**1**	

VII. Recommendations for the Ordinance

The new district will be added to existing Springfield Ordinances. Wason House will have some of the exemptions as many current historic districts overseen by the Springfield Historical Commission such temporary structures, color of paint, small signs, at grade sidewalks and driveways, exact reconstruction following disaster, screen windows and doors. The Commission will retain oversight of all other features.

VIII. The Ordinance

Proposed Ordinance

TEXT:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE REVISED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, 1986, AS AMENDED BY CHAPTER 2.46 ENTITLED "SPRINGFIELD HISTORICAL COMMISSION"

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Springfield, as follows:

"Chapter 2, section 2.46.030, of the Revised Ordinances of the City of Springfield, as amended, entitled "Historic district – Establishment" be amended by the addition of the following section:

Subsection "K" :

"There is established under the provisions of and in accordance with the Historic Districts Act, so-called, as mentioned in this chapter, the Thomas Wason House District as shown on the map, labeled Exhibit 27-2J, entitled "Thomas Wason House," said map to be considered part of this chapter.

Exemption from Controls:

1. Temporary structure or signs, subject to such conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the Commission may reasonably specify;
2. Terraces, walks, driveways, and sidewalks provided that any such structure is substantially at grade level;
3. Storm windows, screens, window air conditioners;
4. Color of paint;
5. Signs of not more than one (1) square foot in area in connection with use of a residence for a customary home occupation, or for professional purposes, provided only one (1) such sign is displayed in connection with each residence and, if illuminated, are illuminated only indirectly;
6. 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 such reconstruction is begun within one year thereafter and carried forward with due diligence.

IX. Inventory Form

See following two pages

FORM B – BUILDING

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

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
077700079	Springfield South		

Town/City: Springfield

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*: Lower Liberty

Address: 270 Liberty Street

Historic Name: Thomas Wason House/Central Storage Warehouse

Uses: Present: storage warehouse and office

Original: residential

Date of Construction: c. 1854; c. 1908

Source: 1854/1855 City Directory

Style/Form: Italianate; Renaissance Revival

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: brick with brownstone trim

Roof: rolled roofing

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: carriage house and storage warehouse

Major Alterations *(with dates)*:
1911 warehouse enlarged

Condition: fair

Moved: **no** ☐ **yes** ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: ½ acre

Setting: industrial

Photograph

Insert here or on a Continuation Sheet a digital photograph (either color or black and white).

*A paper photographic print (3½x5¼" or 4x6" must **also** be attached to the form in this space or to a Continuation Sheet. Prints, from a photo-quality inkjet printer, must use brand name paper and inks approved by MHC. Attached photographs should be clearly identified with town name and property address. See MHC's Guidelines for Inventory Form Photographs.*

Locus Map

Insert here or on a Continuation Sheet a map clearly showing the location of the property including the name of the nearest road or street and at least one other intersecting road or feature.

Assessor's maps are preferred, but other forms of detailed plans such as an excerpt from a USGS topographic map or an aerial or satellite photo clearly marked are also acceptable. See MHC's Guidelines for Inventory Form Locational Information.

Recorded by: Robert McCarroll

Organization: Springfield Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): Jan 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN ADDRESS

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

☐ 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.

~~A~~RCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

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

The house is a two-story brick Italianate style structure with a deeply-overhanging and heavily bracketed cornice. There is a central one-story bay window on the facade. The right side porch has been modified and enclosed; the left side porch has been removed. Windows have brownstone lintels and sills and six-over-six sash, although a few have been replaced. Thomas Wason first appears on Liberty Street in the City Directory of 1854/5. The house could date to that period since Italian Villa style homes began being built in Springfield by the late 1840s.

The Central Storage Warehouse first appears in this location in the 1909 City Directory. In 1911, a 36 foot by 70 foot addition was designed by architect George Allen, extending the warehouse to Liberty Street. The warehouse is three stories and made of brick. Its façade is a simple Renaissance Revival style with bricks emulating a rusticated first floor, a trio of two-story recessed arches on the second and third floors, and a crenulated parapet.

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.

Thomas Whiteredge Wason came to Springfield in the 1830s from New Hampshire. He married Sarah Longley in Springfield in 1836. Thomas and his brother Charles dressed timbers for railroad bridges and then began repairing railway cars before forming a business to build rail cars in 1845. Charles moved to Ohio in 1851 and sold his interest in the company to Thomas, who took on partners a few years later and operated under the name "W. T. Wason & Co." In 1862, the "Wason Manufacturing Company" was incorporated with Thomas as president. Wason built wood passenger, baggage, and freight cars. It built cars for George Pullman and the Central Pacific Railroad. Several of these cars were present in 1869 at Promontory Utah for the uniting of the transcontinental railroad. A portion of its business was international, and in 1862, Wason built an elaborate car for the Khedive of Egypt. When Thomas Wason died in 1870, his company was the largest employer in Springfield.

The Central Storage Warehouse was established on Lyman Street in the 1890s. It appears in the 1909 City Directory also at 270 Liberty Street. It specialized in storage of furniture and household items.

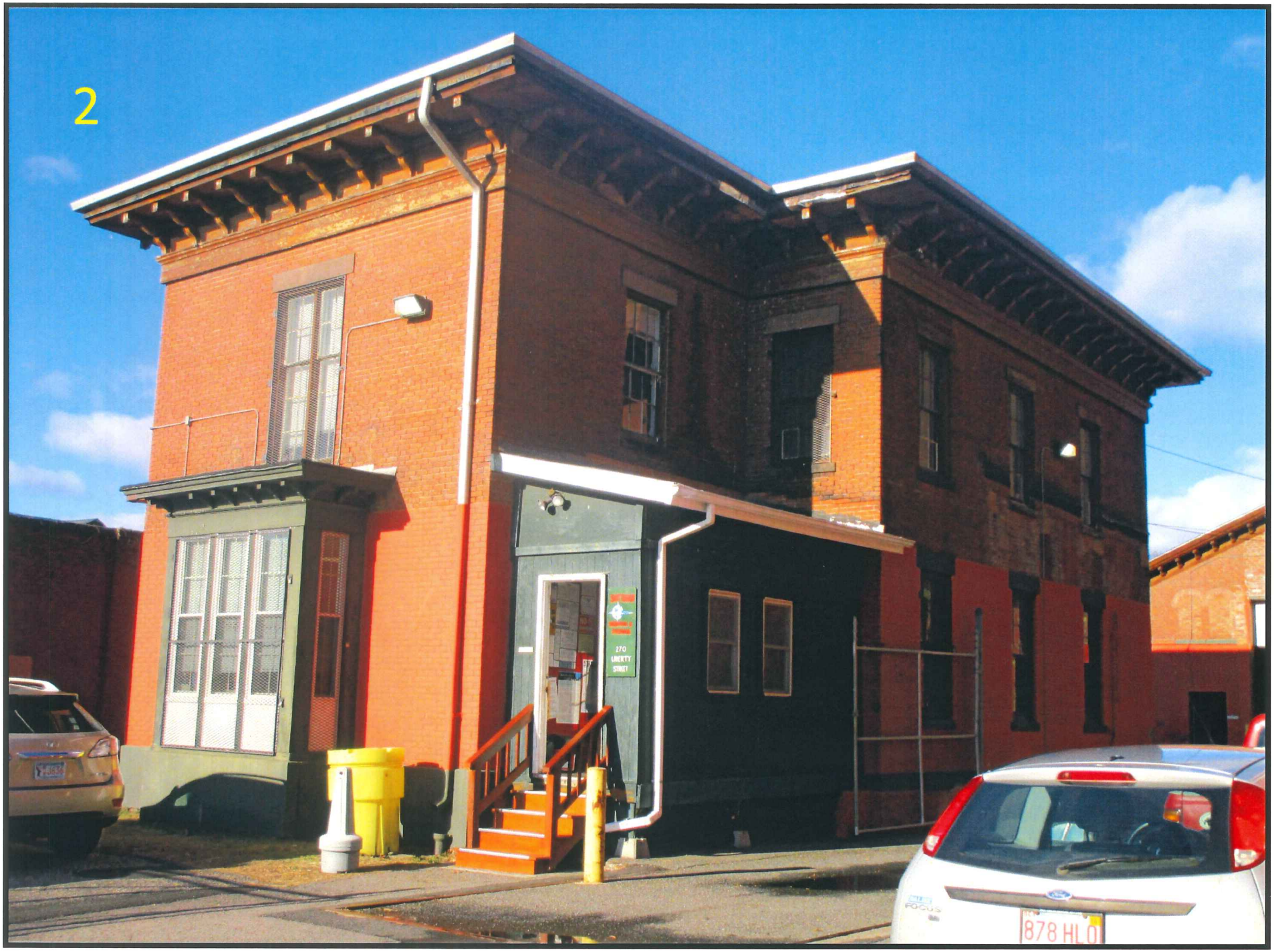
BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

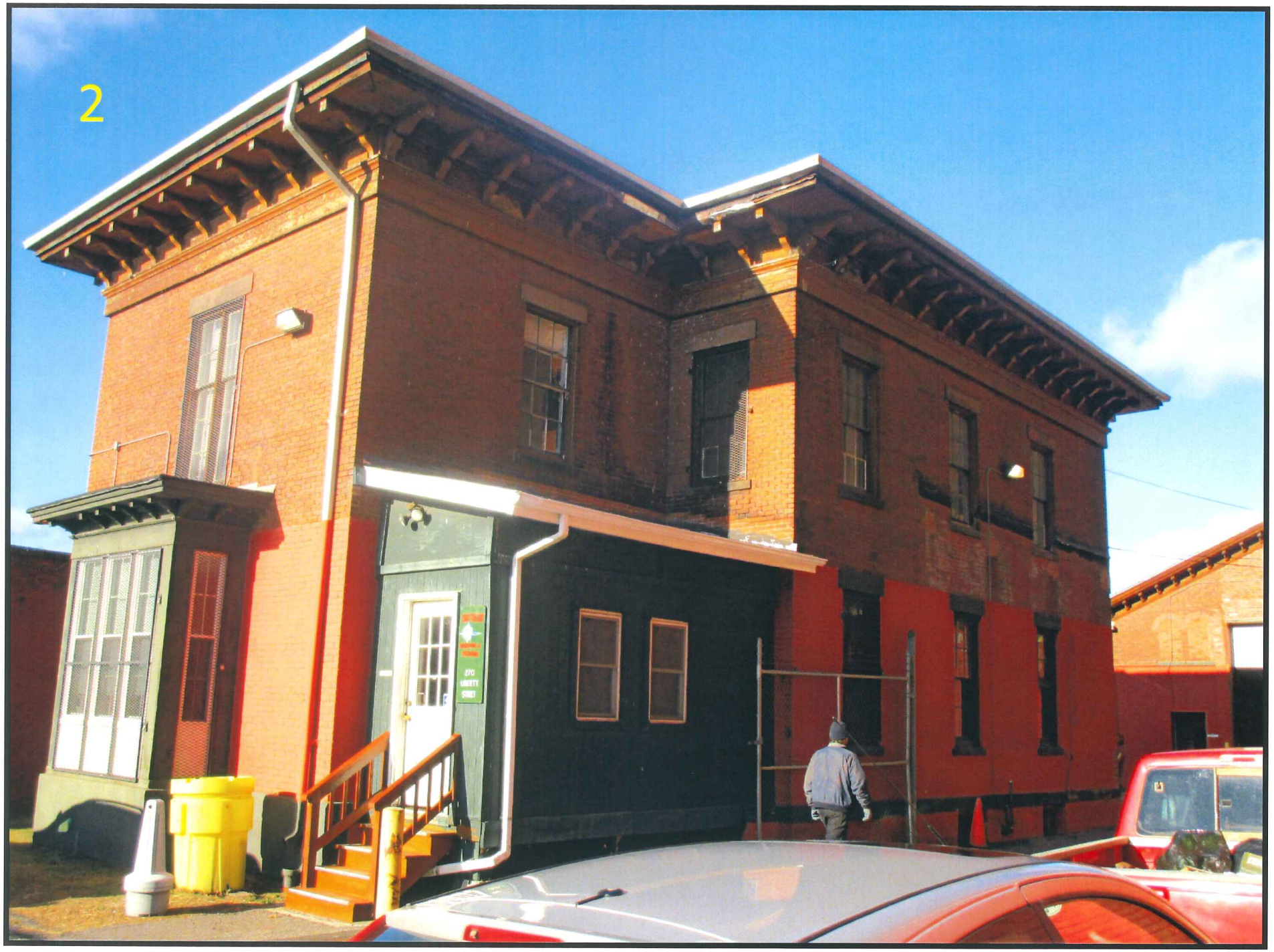
Springfield Building Department records
Springfield City Directories
The Story of Western Massachusetts Vol 6
Mid-Continent Railway Museum http://www.midcontinent.org/rollingstock/builders/wason1.htm

X. Photographs

PHOTOGRAPHS ID	Photograph Description
1	Front façade & west elevation of house
2	Front façade & east elevation of house
3	Front façade & west elevation of warehouse
4	Front façade of warehouse
5	Front façade & east elevation of warehouse
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

1


2
270
LIBERTY
STREET
878 HLO


2

3

4

5
Atlas
SITTERLY MOVERS