

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

Town: Tewksbury

Place: (*neighborhood or village*)
 Tewksbury Center

Address: 35 Helvetia Street

Historic Name: John T Gale & Sons Greenhouses

Uses: Present: Floral Wholesaler/Greenhouses
 Original: Floral Wholesaler/Greenhouses

Date of Construction: c1905

Source: Assessors Records

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete Block

Wall/Trim: Concrete Block/ Wood Shingle/Vinyl Siding

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage (c1930); Garage Addition (Mid 20th century);
Greenhouses (1981)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: Fair

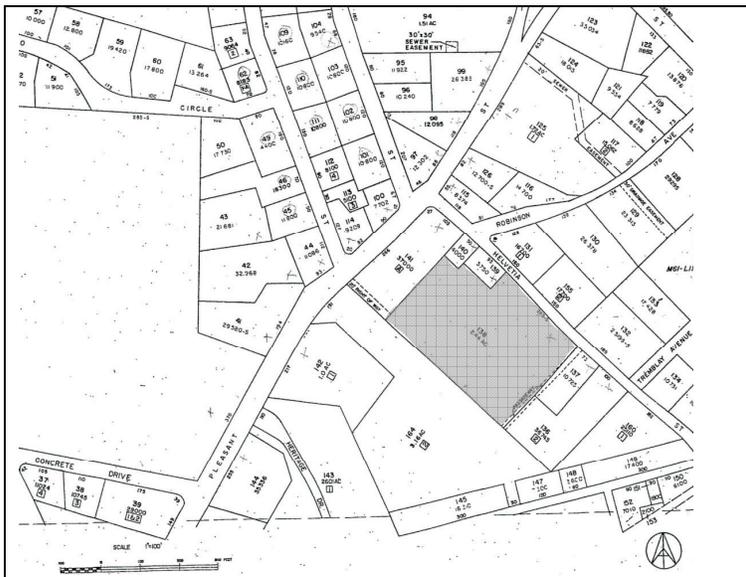
Moved: no | X | yes | | **Date** _____

Acreage: 2.44 Acres

Setting: Set near the street in a primarily residential area.



Topographic or Assessor's Map



Recorded by: Julie Ann Larry

Organization: ttl-architects

Date (*month / year*): March 2010

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TEWKSBURY

35 HELVETIA STREET

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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.

The greenhouse complex at **35 Helvetia Street** consists of twelve interconnected greenhouses, a furnace and storage building, and a six-bay garage.

The one-and-a-half story gable-front furnace building is dominated by the tall square brick chimney stack that pierces the center ridge of the building. The vinyl clad building features 2/2 sash windows flanked by shutters and overhead panel garage doors. The gable roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. A one story shed roof addition is located to the south of the main gable-front building. The addition features two overhead doors and a pedestrian entrance. One-story additions extend to the west and south to connect the large building to the greenhouses and the six-bay garage.

The twelve greenhouses range in length and width. Ten of the greenhouses are glass and steel structures. Two greenhouses at the southwest corner of the property have a metal frame sheathed in plastic poly sheeting. All are built on concrete foundations. The greenhouses are interconnected by narrow glass and metal corridors.

The six-bay garage is one-and-a-half stories in height. The lower story is constructed of concrete block, the upper story is clad in wood shingles. Fenestration includes 1/1 sash windows in the gable ends and six-panel overhead doors. The overhead doors feature two rows of rectangular glass panes over two rows of panels. The side gable roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. A pedestrian entrance is located on the north side of the garage. The garage is connected to a concrete block ell that connects to an addition to the south of the furnace building. The three-bay concrete block ell features 2/1 sash windows and an asphalt shingle side-gable roof.

A gas pump is located near the northeast corner of the six-bay garage.

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 greenhouse complex at **35 Helvetia Street** is one of several properties near the corner of Pleasant and Helvetia Streets that are associated with the Gale family. John T Gale of Lowell purchased a large lot of land from Perry Jefferson (MHC# TEW.39) in 1904. The deed indicates that the land came with the promise to lay out a portion of a new road (Helvetia Street) from Chandler Street to Pleasant Street.

Between 1890 and 1915 the Town of Tewksbury began to develop as a market gardening community. Greenhouses for nurseries and market gardening were constructed throughout the town to grow produce to sell in nearby cities. John T Gale Sons Wholesale Florist was established on the west side of the newly laid out Helvetia Street c1905. Between WWI and WWII Tewksbury became known as a carnation town as many of the town's green houses produced flowers commercially. The existing garage building at 35 Helvetia Street was built during this period of expansion for the local floral industry c 1930. In the late 20th century many of these greenhouse operations were abandoned. While some greenhouses have been completely demolished and others remain unused and deteriorating, the Gale greenhouse operation is still active. The existing greenhouses were installed in 1981. Cut flowers grown by John T Gale Sons include sweet peas and snap dragons.

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John T Gale was born in England in 1875 and immigrated to America c1885¹. He was living in Tewksbury by 1900 where he was working as a laborer in a nursery. In 1901 he lived on Main Street. He married his first wife, Edna Harper in 1903 and their daughter Thelma was born the same year. They had three additional children: John Harper (1909-1999), Richmond (1911), and Edna (1913). Edna Harper Gale died c1914 and John T Gale married his second wife, Zorah, c1915.

Gale and his family members built several houses nearby including the John T Gale House at 82 Pleasant Street (built 1920-1930) TEW. ; the Thelma [Gale] Green House at 11 Helvetia Street TEW. ; the Richmond T Gale House at 17 Helvetia Street, and the John Harper Gale House at 24 Helvetia Street.

John T Gale established John T. Gale Sons, Wholesale Florists c1905 on the land off Pleasant Street. The furnace building at **35 Helvetia Street** was built c 1905. The rectangular building surrounding the tall brick chimney is depicted on several early 20th century plans filed at the Middlesex North Registry of Deeds. The building has been slightly altered by additions, including a concrete block connection to the c1930s concrete block garage. Both the garage and power plant provide space for the storage of the company's trucks and materials as well as the office. John T Gale's two sons joined his business. J. Harper Gale graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture. He worked with his father and brother Richmond T at John T. Gale Sons, Wholesale Florists. John Harper Gale died in 1999.

Randy and Richmond T Gale Jr now operate the family business. The greenhouses were built in 1981. The chimney was previously painted. It appears to have been recently rebuilt or repointed.



(L-R) John Harper Gale, Richmond Gale, Thelma Gale, Edna Gale [circa: 1919-1920] Tewksbury Historical Society Collection, 2001²

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

The Lowell Suburban directory of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro and Westford. Salem, MA: Henry M Meek. 1896-1897. 1905. 1911. 1913. 1915. 1917. 1919. 1922. 1925. 1927. 1930. 1932. 1937. 1940. 1945. 1949. 1951. 1953. 1959. 1961. 1968. 1971. 1972. 1975.

Tewksbury Street Directory. Mass: (s.n.) 1901. 1912.

Valuation of the Real and Personal Estate of the Town of Tewksbury for the Year. 1890. 1940. 1960.

¹ 1910 United States Federal Census Record. Other census records indicate a different immigration date. In 1900, immigration in 1890 while the 1920 and 1930 census indicates an immigration in 1891.

² The Tewksbury Town Crier Sunday, January 11, 2009 10:06 AM EST

http://www.homenewshere.com/articles/2009/01/31/tewksbury_town_crier/news/doc496956a3679e8853664739 prt 4/2/2010

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Tewksbury List of Residents. 1965. 1975.
North Middlesex County Registry of Deeds.
Ancestry.com
Tewksbury Advertiser 2/11/99



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