

FORM B - BUILDING

NRDIS 8/2/1984

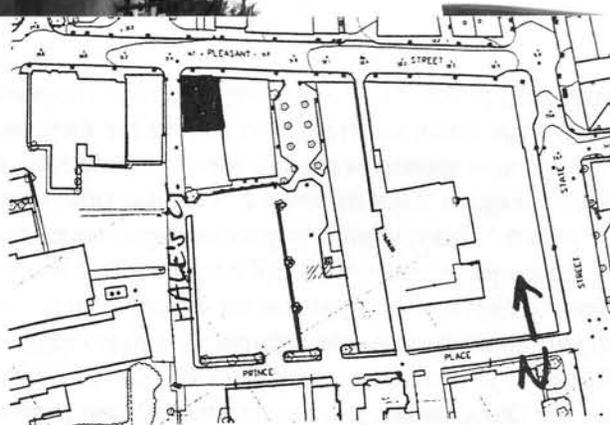
Assessor's number  
1-24

USGS Quad  
Newburyport

Area(s)  
L

Form Number  
2006

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125



Town Newburyport

Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 37-39 Pleasant Street (SE corner Hale's Ct.)

Historic Name Hunt & Davis Block

Uses: Present Commercial/Offices

Original Commercial

Date of Construction 1880

Source Herald, 2/9/1880

Style/Form ---

Architect/Builder unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation Undetermined

Wall/Trim Stucco/Wood

Roof Tar

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

none

Major Alterations (with dates) date? - major "facelift"  
including new cornice, window lintels, stuccoed exterior;  
c.1980 - new storefronts & new windows

Condition good

Moved  no  yes Date

Acreage 2020 SF

Setting central business district

Recorded by Lisa Mausolf

Organization Newburyport Historical Commission

Date (month/year) April 1999

## BUILDING FORM (37-39 Pleasant Street)

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

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

Located at the southeast corner of Pleasant Street and Hale's Court, this three-story, wood-frame, flat-roofed block which is six bays wide and six bays deep. Inspection of historic photographs suggests that the building underwent a major "facelift" in the 20th century including a new cornice (more shallow than the original cornice) and new window lintels. The upper two stories of the building are covered in stucco (first installed after the turn of the century) and the building is capped by a projecting cornice with a plain frieze and dentil course. The two first floor storefronts have all been replaced by modern display cases with anodized aluminum frames, resting on brick bases. Visible inside the display windows are attenuated metal support columns. Facing the alley, the first floor is stuccoed with a plain frieze and a single rear door. The second and third floor openings have molded surrounds with modern replacement 1/1 sash protected by storm windows. Those on the second floor are capped by entablature lintels while the third floor windows are slightly smaller and lack lintels; the tops of the windows abut the plain frieze. The rear of the building is covered with vinyl siding and is without openings.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Describe 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.*

On February 9, 1880 the Herald reported that George Hunt and Thomas Davis, dealers of groceries and crockery ware had purchased a half acre parcel of land at the corner of Pleasant Street and Hale's Court and were going to erect a building for manufacturing and other purposes. The 1880 directory lists Hunt and Davis as operating a grocery store here. A three-story block is shown on the site at the time of the 1884 map. Members of the Hunt and Davis families sold the property to J. Albert Walker in 1905, who sold it to Charles Fullerton in 1908.

In 1908 the Fullerton Brothers built the two-story Premier Theater at the rear of the block which was then occupied by Biddle's bakery. The theater opened to the public on September 24, 1908 and had a capacity of 600 seats. A nine-foot high electric sign spelled out the word "Premier" was mounted on the building at the corner of Pleasant Street and Hale's Court. "Talkies" were inaugurated in the Premier Theater in 1929.

In 1914 the Premier Furniture Company, owned by Mr. and Mrs. William O'Brien, began operations at 37 Pleasant Street, utilizing all three floors of the block. The building had been acquired by the Dugan family in 1910 and the family continued to own it until 1966 when it was sold to Donald Safford. Safford's Jewelry Shop moved from 36 Pleasant Street to 39 Pleasant Street in 1967 and remained here until it closed in 1983. The business closed after 113 years of doing business and was founded in 1870 by William Safford and John Lunt. Daniel and Joyce Orfant acquired the building from Safford in 1983 and continued to own it until 1988.

The theater at the rear of the block was renovated after a fire on September 30, 1945 and reopened to the public on February 14, 1946. The last directory listing for the Premier Theater appears in the 1949 directory, the theater building was removed completely prior to 1961.

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attached a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*