Renovation of 532 Beacon Street Is a Resounding Success

Fall 2014 marked a momentous occasion for Alpha Theta with the renovation and rededication of 532 Beacon Street. The 114-year-old rowhouse, home to Alpha Theta since 1919, now boasts a new fifth floor with extended central stair; a five-stop elevator; high-efficiency heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and insulation; all new bathrooms; an enclosed kitchen; all new electrical and plumbing systems; state-of-the-art and easily upgradable computer networking; all-LED lighting fixtures; and state-of-the-art life safety systems; all while preserving and restoring the historic character of the house.

Much of 2013 and 2014 were spent preparing for the job. Under the impeccable guidance of our owner’s representative, Kevin Maguire (Cornell ’90) of Oxbow Partners, the Building Committee spent hundreds of hours meeting with outstanding teams at LDa Architects and Sea-Dar Construction. Meanwhile, the undergraduates spent fall 2013 packing and emptying the house. Sea-Dar began work the Monday after last fall’s final exams and progressed at a breakneck speed through the spring and summer of 2014. With only hours to spare, the actives were able to move back in the day before Rush began, although a significant amount of work remained to be done over the next few months.

Finally, in November we opened our doors to the MIT community and our alumni to see the stunning results and formally re-dedicate the chapter house. Representatives from the building committee and LDa Architects led guests on tours of the house, pointing out many of the details that went toward achieving such a beautiful outcome. More importantly, brothers, family, and friends spent the weekend in fellowship, enjoying themselves in a place that, as numerous alumni remarked, still felt like home. Thanks to the generosity, dedication, and hard work of countless people, many generations in the future will be able to call 532 Beacon Street their home, too.

Dan Craig ’03

Teamwork Key to Success: Such an ambitious project would not have been possible without the countless hours and skillful work of the undergraduate, alumni, and professional teams. In addition to the Era Captains, Class Agents and all those who have contributed to the campaign, these individuals played key roles:

**Building Committee**
Mark Curtiss ’87, Mike Delaus ’82, Karl Büttner ’87, Dan Craig ’03, Josh Littlefield ’81, and Tom Altmann ’15

**Campaign Committee**
Doug Bailey ’72, Karl Büttner ’87, Dan Craig ’03, and Josh Littlefield ’81

**Relocation Committee**
Herb Mower ’65 (’82), Josh Littlefield ’81, Jake Mooney ’16, and Thomas Cowan ’17

**Dedication Coordinator**
Jay Krone ’74

**Professional Teams**
Owner’s Rep Kevin Maguire, Cornell ’90, LDa Architecture and Interiors, Sea-Dar Construction
Take a Tour of the Newly Renovated House

From the outside, 532 Beacon Street looks scarcely different from before, by design and requirement. Being in the Back Bay historic district means that the external appearance is regulated by the Back Bay Architectural Commission. All replacement components had to match the originals, including the front door and the new double-glazed curved windows. In fact, the only difference noticeable from street level is that the window sashes are painted black instead of white, which is consistent with historic photos of the house.

The replacement front doors, including the French doors within the vestibule, look and function much like before, but now feature double-glazed windows, tight weatherstripping, and handles that comply with modern accessibility standards. The vestibule itself was restored. Original stonework, such as the now extremely rare Tennessee pink marble steps and the marble wainscoting, were repaired and the tile floor was cleaned.

Upon entry to the building itself, the first thing you notice is how similar it looks to before. The design intent for the first floor and library was restoration and preservation of the classic beauty of these spaces, but they were not without some modification. The mail room was removed, reviving the corner that once hosted the pipe organ. The wainscoting was restored to its original painted color. Plaster details around the fireplace were repaired. The pendant light hanging in the staircase was reconditioned. The replacement front doors, including the French doors within the vestibule, look and function much like before, but now feature double-glazed windows, tight weatherstripping, and handles that comply with modern accessibility standards. The vestibule itself was restored. Original stonework, such as the now extremely rare Tennessee pink marble steps and the marble wainscoting, were repaired and the tile floor was cleaned.

The biggest change to the foyer is new stairs hanging in the staircase was reconditioned. The pendant light hanging in the staircase was reconditioned. The entrance to the library is protected by McKeon firewall with an embedded swinging door hidden in the wall. In the event of a fire, it automatically slides across to cover the entrance to the library. This ingenious device enabled the restoration and

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Take a Tour of the Newly Renovated House, cont’d

continued use of the original pocket doors. The library itself was splendidly restored. The existing woodwork was cleaned and refinished. The windows were all replaced with custom-made curved, double-glazed replicas. The bay window seat was rebuilt to accommodate the tighter radius of the insulated walls, as well as to conceal a radiator. Small LED lighting fixtures were mounted between the ceiling coffers to brighten the room. Along with the rest of the house, the library is ventilated and air conditioned, making meetings and ceremonies far more comfortable. All new hotel-grade furniture was installed that can be configured in the traditional perimeter meeting arrangement or an arrangement more conducive to reading and studying. With the television now in the music room, the library returns to its proper original function.

On the rear of the second floor, as on all the floors above, is the surprisingly spacious elevator lobby. Immediately inside the lobbies are the entrances to the all-new bathrooms. The bathrooms were completely rebuilt to be easily maintained. The walls are tiled with bright white subway tiles, accented with Sigma Chi blue and the fraternity crest. The floors are of wide, dark tile that can be easily mopped or sprayed into floor drains. Each bathroom has a handicap accessible toilet and urinal, and the second floor bathroom has an accessible shower. The cantilevered countertop provides few places for water collect or clutter to gather. Electric hand and hair dryers are mounted on the walls to reduce the need for paper towels. The bathrooms also feature storage shelves for residents’ bathroom caddies. All the bathrooms have janitorial closets housing brooms, mops, and vacuums. Hopefully the increased ease of accessing these cleaning supplies will correlate to increased use of them.

The bedrooms received significant overhauls. The rooms on the second and third floors mostly retained their existing footprints, slightly expanding into space reclaimed from closets and chimney masses. On the fourth floor, 4 Large Front and 4 Small Front switched sides. The new 4SF is now a single dedicated to the Graduate Resident Advisor. Four Large Back expanded to reclaim 4 Middle Back, restoring its historic footprint. The new fifth floor added two rooms to the house, christened 5 Large Front and 5 Large Back. 5LF spans the width of the house, but is set back from the front facade in compliance with architectural code requiring additions to be invisible from the sidewalk across the street. The rooftop space on the setback is wired to receive solar panels in the future. 5LB, on the hand, goes all the way to the rear facade, but narrows to make room for a mechanical well containing the rooftop air conditioner units. Each fifth floor room connects internally to its downstairs counterpart, making 4LF/5LF and 4LB/5LB each two room suites. Since the fifth floor rooms do not have window fire escapes, the internal stairs provide the second means of egress as required by fire code. They also allow the suites to technically comply with accessibility rules, since the suite as a whole is served by the fourth floor elevator and bathroom.

The additional living space provided by the fifth floor enabled the long-desired decrowing of the bedrooms. Alpha Theta had been near the bottom of the ranking of living space per person at MIT FSILGs and this has long been seen as a recruitment risk. The official occupancy of the building remains 32, but now has twelve bedrooms instead of ten. Most existing quads became triples, and triples became doubles. Now the only remaining quads are 2LB and 5LB. With a fully occupied house and a freshman class living on campus, the chapter can now comfortably and sustainably operate at around 40 total members.

The bedrooms themselves were completely renovated. All are furnished with desks, wardrobes, and bunkable full size beds. The City of Boston recently banned built-in lofted beds at all FSILGs during our construction, so the freestanding beds were a prescient design choice. Like everywhere in the house, the bedrooms are lit by LEDs and air conditioned. Gone are the days of ugly, inefficient window air conditioners blocking access to fire escapes during the summer months.

House-wide air conditioning is provided by split-type air conditioner units. Condensers sit in the rooftop mechanical well and pump chilled refrigerant to cooling units (continued on page four)

Coming Together Under a New Roof

This year marks one of the most exciting periods in our chapter’s history. Not only has our extensive renovation brought forth a beautiful, new house, but it has managed to reunite the actives with alumni and friends from the past half-century. During our dedication weekend, Alpha Theta hosted the largest alumni event in the chapter’s history as we opened our doors to all the generous donors who made this renovation possible. It is hard to fully describe the widespread nostalgia as our house filled with the stories from decades past. A major goal in the renovation was to preserve the original architecture of the house, and therefore it serves as the perfect metaphor for our brotherhood: While each new class brings a slightly new attitude, the core values on which our house is built have remained the same for the past 133 years.

Hearing the countless stories of alumni really makes one appreciate what it means to be a part of a brotherhood. Everyone who walked these halls shares a common experience far greater than simply living under one roof. They are bound by a commitment and ritual.

In hoc, David Sherwood ’17
Take a Tour of the Newly Renovated House, cont’d

throughout the house, which then provide cool air through short duct runs. Heat is provided by a central hot water boiler to low profile Runtal radiators, some shaped to conform to the curved bay walls, made of steel and with no moving parts. The air conditioners can also function in reverse as heat pumps, providing extra warmth if needed. Fresh air is supplied throughout the year through energy recovery ventilators.

With the exception of the fifth floor, all floors are served by the new (powered!) elevator. In addition to increasing accessibility, the elevator facilitates the movement of people, belongings, furniture, supplies, and waste in and out of the house. Strategically positioned next to the elevators on each floor are built-in cabinets housing trash and recycling bins. Taking out the trash is now an even easier and cleaner task of simply taking the bin down the elevator and out the back door to the dumpster.

The zero floor was completely stripped down and rebuilt, literally, from the ground up. The subbasement now sports a concrete slab over the original packed earth to better seal the building from rodents. The wooden plinths on which the house stands will remain healthily submerged below the water line thanks to a groundwater recharge tank beneath the back lot that redirects rainwater from the roof into the ground before sending it to the storm sewer.

The central hall of the zero floor was widened dramatically, and the former boiler room provides the space for the new staircase descending from the first floor. The game room was completely rebuilt, but retains the pub-like feel with wood paneled walls. The bar was redesigned to better facilitate conversation, and the architects designed a clever underlit shelf around the upper perimeter of the room for the bottle collection. The game room is significantly more soundproof than before, due in part to thermal insulation, double-glazed windows, thick firewalls, and air conditioning.

The zero floor bathroom was relocated adjacent to the game room, occupying the former laundry room. The former Zero Little Middle, most recently used as a weight room, now houses two sets of high efficiency washers and dryers. Through the laundry room is the entrance to the new network and mechanical rooms. The high efficiency boiler and water heater take up a tiny fraction of their predecessors, no bigger than a typical closet.

The house data network now features Cat 6 wired ethernet and 802.11.ac wireless access points throughout the house, connected to MIT via gigabit optical fiber connection as part of the recent FSILG-wide deployment of MITnet v3. While gigabit networking may be the state of the art in 2014, it will likely seem quaint in the not-too-distant future. With that in mind, the entire house network is run through flexible Innerduct tubing so that future generations of network wiring can be easily pulled without need to open any walls.

The kitchen is now enclosed, protecting it from dirt and grime tracked in from the back door. Many appliances were replaced, such as the refrigerator, freezer, and a new high-speed dishwasher. The existing stove was refurbished and reinstalled.

Along the wall at the back door are racks capable of storing 16 bicycles. The backdoor itself provides the handicap accessible entrance, and now features an automatic opener, awning, and callbox. The parking lot is paved with brick.

Consul’s Report: Making an Impact in the MIT Community

It gives me great pleasure to report on another great spring semester. Alpha Theta continued its rich history of on-campus leadership with its participation in MIT’s Sexual Assault Awareness Month. As one of only two fraternities to get involved, the house co-sponsored a consent workshop with MIT’s Violence Prevention & Response (VPR) and supported white ribbon pins in a pledge to end sexual assault on college campuses. This effort builds off of those made by Jacob Mooney ’16 last fall, who brought in a speaker to educate the house on bystander intervention.

Individual involvement on campus remains high, with brothers representing MIT through a variety of teams and clubs. In athletics, Sigma Chis compete in volleyball, sailing, swimming, lacrosse, hockey, rugby, track and field, soccer, squash, and crew, with Nick Diamantoni ’15 capturing the track and field team. Additionally, Dominic Hansford ’17 and Tyler Finkelstein ’17 have been named co-captains for the upcoming squash season.

In performing arts, brothers participate in jazz ensemble, Rambax—a Senegalese drumming ensemble, Resonance—an a cappella group, and Dance Troupe. Beyond these teams, Alpha Thetas continue to contribute positively to a variety of research projects, ranging from nanocomposites to UAVs to exoskeletons.

This semester also saw the inception of Sigma Chi’s first bubble soccer tournament for Derby Days. The tournament, led by David Sherwood ’17, was a huge success with a total of 18 teams registering, 12 of which were from MIT’s Greek community. As a result, we successfully raised money for the Huntsman Cancer Foundation and will strive to expand the tournament next year.

Further, our semester has been quite active socially. This semester saw a slight increase in capacity for Boston fraternities, allowing us to host 30 guests. We continue to host tea weekly on Wednesdays, and we had our first karaoke night this semester, which was a big hit.

I am honored to have served as Consul this past semester and grateful for the trust and support of my brothers. I am proud of the steps we have taken as a brotherhood this semester, in the house and on campus, and look forward to watching us grow further.

Andrew Liotta ’16

MIT Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart joins the brothers for dinner.
Magister’s Report: Welcoming New Brothers Into Alpha Theta

This past December, our chapter was happy to welcome the pledge class of 2018, consisting of nine new brothers: Nathaniel Johnson, Ryan Stuntz, Vickram Goel, William Arcand, Cutter O’Connel, Graham Davis, Christian Perez, Benjamin Harpt, and Josh Wilson. Over the fall semester of 2014, the then-pledges participated in our new member education program, which instilled in them the values of our fraternity through weekly meetings, weekend trips, and fun social events.

In order to meet newly-established Interfraternity Council (IFC) regulations, the pledge program had to be revised from previous years. Assistant Magister Matthew Kalinowski ’17 and I worked last summer to formally record all the events into a single document for submission to the IFC, retaining important events that we felt furthered the pledges’ education and omitting those we felt did not sufficiently enhance the program. In all, we had 10 weekly meetings spread over the course of the semester discussing key topics such as history, values, brotherhood, and ritual. In addition to those, the pledges took part in extracurricular events such as the corporate board dinner, serenading sororities, and a house-wide trip to the Sippewissett Campgrounds on Cape Cod. The program extended right up to the week of initiation which, as per the new regulations, had to be in early December as opposed to its traditional dates in February. The week involved various brotherhood bonding events, including a night with local alumni, and led up to initiation on the morning of December 7.

The new pledge class comes from all over the country, with some from California and Wisconsin and others from just outside Boston. Many of them were unsure of their majors as first-semester freshmen, but with the year coming to a close have since decided to pursue degrees in computer science, mechanical engineering, materials science, physics, and business. Throughout the pledge program, I found them to be an amicable, fun, and intelligent group. However, what struck me the most was their maturity: the way they’ve handled situations on campus and in the house, negative and positive, has been exemplary. They are sure to represent our chapter well in the coming years.

In Hoc,
George Hartoularos ’15

The Ascent: From Strangers to Brothers

It was a crisp IAP morning. The Alpha Theta ’18s had elected to sacrifice a Saturday of beautiful sleep for the challenge of hiking Mt. Monadnock in southern New Hampshire. Packed like sardines inside Ryan Stuntz’s Honda Odyssey, we left campus early, stopping along the way at Nate Johnson’s house for breakfast.

We were met with a warning when we reached the base of the mountain. The hiking trails were icy, slicked with a layer of fresh snow. It would be dangerous to climb without crampons and ice axes, advised the park ranger, and nearly impossible to summit. In spite of the ranger’s warnings, we decided as a group to test our luck—not to mention our climbing skills—and give things a try.

It didn’t take long for us to realize the ranger hadn’t been exaggerating. Ascending the mountain was like trying to scale a near-vertical ice rink. The ice-coated boulders beneath our feet offered almost no traction, and we often found ourselves clinging to sheer rock walls—one slip could have resulted in serious injury. Nevertheless, we pressed on. Guiding one another, hoisting each other over obstacles, catching one another when we fell, we were somehow able to scramble up 3,165 ft. to the summit.

At some point during that perilous climb, it hit me just how far we had come as a pledge class. The transformation was nothing short of remarkable. Barely four months before, I had been shaking hands with these boys for the first time, introducing myself after receiving our bids from Sigma Chi. At that point in time, I had no idea how we would get along. Yet over the following months, I had grown close to every one of them. Now, I could be welcomed into their homes as family to share breakfast; I could trust them with my life on an icy cliff face; I could call them my best friends; I could call them my brothers.

In my first semester as a Sig, I’ve shared an array of experiences—some hilarious, some solemn—with the others in the house. Out of all of them, though, the most profound has been discovering the meaning of brotherhood in my fellow Alpha Thetas. It’s something I never knew I was searching for—something I stumbled upon like an icy patch on a mountain face. But now that I’ve found it, I look forward to carrying it with me these next four years and beyond.

In Hoc,
Ben Harpt ’18
Internal staircase connecting 5 Large Front to 4 Large Front.

Internal staircase connecting 5 Large Back to 4 Large Back.
Hundreds Attend Open House and Dedication

Several hundred alumni, family, and members of the MIT and FSILG communities attended Dedication Weekend, November 14-15, 2014. Friday evening was an open house for the MIT community, where we shared the beautiful results of our renovation, and our model for what an ideal student living and learning environment can be for the 21st century. MIT Chancellor Barnhart and many other MIT administrators and members of the FSILG community attended.

Saturday was an open house for Alpha Theta alumni and family. Capital Campaign Chairman Doug Bailey ’72 offered his remarks after the unveiling of the Honor Roll plaque facsimiles. Consul Jake Mooney ’16 conducted the dedication ceremony from the Ritual. Artist Alexia Wilbur, wife of Jim Wilbur ’81, presented a commemorative painting of the renovated house. Special dedications were made in memory of Roger Renshaw ’77 and Brian Robertson ’96.
Hundreds Attend Open House and Dedication

Jay Krone ’74 describes details of the house.

John Piotti ’83, Mark Curtiss ’87, and Richard Yeh ’01.


Mike Whelan ’80, Gerald Tourgee ’76, and Dock Williams ’80.

Owner’s Representative Kevin Maguire, Cornell ’90.

Rick Bye ’75

Doug Bailey ’72 and Karl Büttner ’87 giving MIT Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart a tour.

Doug Dick, Principal at LDa Architects, giving a tour to Senior Associate Dean for Student Life Henry Humphreys and other community members.

Campaign Executive Chair Karl Büttner ’87.
The Beacon to the Future capital campaign has already been a tremendous success, with more than 300 brothers pledging a total of $3.9 million to support the beautiful restoration, renovation, and expansion of our beloved home!

The success of the campaign is a testament to the amazing quality of our brotherhood and to how much Alpha Theta meant and continues to mean to all of us. Thank you to everyone who has already pledged, and to all of the Class Agents and Era Captains for all of their dedication and effort over the past years that has made this campaign and project possible.

Yet, with the renovation now complete and it’s amazing, quality results available for all to see, many brothers have recently asked “is it too late” to join in and support the capital campaign—or to increase a pledge—now that the quality and worthiness of the project is so apparent. Given this interest, the last day to be included on the bronze honor roll plaques has been extended to December 31, 2015 (end of this calendar year).

The plaques will be prominently and permanently displayed in the first-floor hallway. Generations of Alpha Thetas to come will see all the names of those brothers who helped support the historic renovation and kept Alpha Theta strong for decades more.

The original campaign goal was $4 million, and we’re almost there at just over $3.9 million. And if we can exceed that goal, we’ll help further ensure the long-term maintenance of this first-class home, and reduce the financial burden of the renovation on future generations of Alpha Thetas.

So, please review the latest version of the honor roll included with this newsletter or online at http://sigmachi.mit.edu/renovation.

If you’ve already pledged to the campaign—thank you! Make sure your name is listed how and where you’d like it to appear in the ranks of your fellow brothers.

If you haven’t yet pledged, please do so now and be forever remembered as a brother who loved and supported this once-in-a-lifetime, historic project!

Also, please pass the word on to all of your pledge brothers and others from your era that it’s not too late to be included on the honor roll plaques, and that the campaign and Alpha Theta can really use the greatest level of support that each brother can provide.

If you have any questions about the campaign or still wish to donate, please contact me at kbuttnr@alum.mit.edu.

Finally, for anyone who has not yet had the opportunity to see the renovation results in-person, here is a note sent by an alumnus after touring our renovated home:

“I was overwhelmed by the extent of the renovation and by the quality with which it was planned and executed.

“When this project was first announced, I was envisioning yet another layer of pipes, wires, fire-barriers, plastic pop-out windows, sheetrock to cover it all, and modern trim and molding tacked on top of that. Moreover, when I heard about the fifth floor, I couldn’t help but think ‘tarpaper shack stick-built on top of the gravel roof!’ Of course, I exaggerate, but I was expecting something more like a complete gutting and modern rebuilding of the interior with little of the original grace of 532 remaining.

“I was also amazed at how much background had to be dealt with: The building codes, the zoning regulations, the neighborhood association, roof drainage, access, the disappearing sprinkler system, etc. It was unbelievable what was undertaken. A job well done. We should all be proud!”

Indeed, so true!

In Hoc,
Karl Büttner ’87
Beacon to the Future, Administrative Chairman
Alumni Send News From Far And Near

During their 50th Reunion in June 2014, 1964 alumni Dan Blossey, Rob Johnston, Bert Knight, Dick Kurth, Bill McClure, Jim McEachery, and John O’Brien enjoyed a tour of the 532 Beacon Street renovation project by Dan Craig ’03, Karl Büttner ’87, and Herb Mower ’65, along with several contracting and architectural employees. Writes Bert, “This was a great time to view the progress. Everything had been torn out, and much was put back but not covered up. The scope of the project is impressive. Credit to those who worked for years to make this happen and the generous contributors who supported it.” Bert makes his home at 606 Woodlake Dr., Louisville, KY 40245. Send email to cknight2654@gmail.com.

Congratulations to Herbert W. Mower ’65, who recently received the Marvin M. D. Williams Award from the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM). The award is the AAPM’s highest clinical award and recognizes an AAPM’s highest clinical award and recognizes an eminence in medical physics with an emphasis on clinical medical physics. As award recipient, Herb is being recognized for his significant influence on the development of the profession through professional matters, education of medical physicists, and clinical practice development, as well as leadership in national and international organizations. He adds, “We continue to enjoy our retirement and the increased travel opportunities it provides.” Their recent travels have included England; Portland, Oregon; Indianapolis; Myrtle Beach; Savannah and Atlanta, Georgia; the Blue Ridge Mountains; Gettysburg; and a weeklong cruise down the Danube. Catch up with him at mower@alum.mit.edu or 88 Masonic Home Rd., T106, Charlton, MA 01507.

“It was great to have some Alpha Theta visitors this year,” reports Iain H. Hueton ’84. “Jeremy Verba ’86 and his son, Nathan, joined us for a few days of skiing, and we also hosted Bruce Kirch ’81 and Dock Williams ’80 for a boys weekend on the slopes.”

After 15 years in Boston, Daniel R. Craig ’03, along with wife Sally and two-year-old Huxley, moved to Southern California last October. Dan is now a software engineer at Space Exploration Technologies in Hawthorne and lives in south Orange County at 25582 Maximus St, Mission Viejo, CA 92691. Email Dan at dr craig@alum.mit.edu.

Annual Fund Donors
This honor roll includes donors who contributed to the annual fund from May 1, 2014, through July 9, 2015.

THE ORDER OF THE WHITE CROSS
($1,000 or more)
Hunter M. Bennett Jr. ’47
Christopher J. Davis ’68

532 PATRON
($532–$999)
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Ronald A. Norelli ’67
Andrew Pierson ’12
Raymond W. Sauer Jr. ’53
Samuel T. Towell ’00
Christopher Webb Young ’92

DECEASED
We regret to announce the deaths of the following alumni:

George S. Dundon ’48
January 21, 2015

George H. Dickson ’50
April 1, 2014

Eugene B. Jacobi Jr. ’61
February 13, 2015

How Can We Email You?
Please visit the alumni section of the Alpha Theta website to make sure we have your most recent email address: http://sigmachi.mit.edu/alumni.

The Beaver Sig is published regularly by the Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity at MIT for its friends and members. News should be sent to Alumni Records Office, Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity Inc., P.O. Box 390528, Cambridge, MA 02139-0006.