

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

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| 14A-11 | Mt. Toby | E | AMH. |
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Photograph



Town/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Lincoln-Sunset National Register District

Address: 33 Sunset Avenue

Historic Name: Dr. V.W. Leach/Richard Nelligan House

Uses: Present: Single-Family Residence

Original: Single-Family Residence

Date of Construction: c. 1872

Source: 1873 City Directory, tax records for V.W. Leach
1873

Style/Form: Four-square

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage (1994)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Sun room added 1986; swimming pool 2015

Condition: excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 1.2 acres

Setting: This house occupies a large through-block lot facing two attractive residential streets (Sunset and Lincoln Avenues) lined with many houses from the last quarter of the 19th century.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (*month / year*): November 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

33 Sunset Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

E

AMH.

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.

This two-story house is basically a rectangle, with a bay window on the first floor to the left of the front door. The front of the house is the south façade; it is the west façade that faces Sunset Avenue. There is a shallow hip roof. Windows on the ground floor on the west façade reach all the way to the floor.

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.

Stockbridge & Westcott sold Dr. and Mrs. V.W. Leach land in 1872 that was considered to front on Lincoln Avenue, but their house was set back nearer to what later became Sunset Avenue, and most of the Lincoln Avenue frontage was sold off. Their deed restriction stated, "No dwelling house shall be erected on the east part of said lot...at a cash cost less than \$2500."

The dentist Vallette Washburn Leach and his brother, B. F. Leach, constituted Leach Brothers Dentists, listed in the 1873 City Directory. V. W.'s home address is given there as simply "off Amity;" Sunset Avenue was not yet formally identified. The house appears on the original 1873 Beers map of downtown, but on the revision the house is off the map, although Dr. Leach's name appears on land in the area west of Lincoln Avenue, one property in from Amity. V.W. and his wife Mary (both born c. 1834) were living in New York State at the time of the 1870 US Census. They are taxed in Amherst on a new house in 1873, on 1 ¼ acres of land. They appear next to Henry H. Goodale (=Goodell) in the 1880 Census listings for Amherst, although no addresses are given. Goodell lived at what became 43 Sunset Avenue, next door to this house. The Leaches sold their house in 1893 to Cornelia Hastings. By 1900 Dr. Leach was widowed and had moved to New Hampshire.

Richard Francis Nelligan (1861-1945) and his wife Margaret (née Nolan; 1867-1962) occupied this house from at least 1895 through 1942. He came to Amherst College in the fall of 1892 as an Instructor in Gymnastics and Athletics. He was appointed trainer of the track team and assistant to Dr. Hitchcock in gymnasium exercises. According to Walter Tower, he "had a strong influence on Amherst athletics and athletes," and "scores of Amherst graduates look up to Professor Nelligan as a foster-father." Nelligan was instrumental in developing the sport of fencing at Amherst College. He finished his career as Associate Professor of Hygiene and Physical Education.

Both of Irish descent, the Nelligans had four children: Katharine (b. 1892), Thomas (b. 1894), Honora (b. 1896), and Mary (b. 1897). Their household in 1900 included a widowed servant, Elizabeth Norton. Thomas became a surgeon in Pittsfield, and it was to that city that Margaret moved after Richard's death. She sold the house in 1946 to Albert E. and Frances W. Wood.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Amherst City Directories, 1873, 1895-1942

Beers map of Amherst, 1873.

Town of Amherst tax valuations, 1872 and 1873 for V.W. Leach, in Jones Library Special Collections.

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AMHERST

33 Sunset Avenue

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Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Book 296/423, L. Stockbridge/WS and RDJ Westcott and Elizabeth Hamilton, to Mary E. and Valette W. Leach, 31 August 1872, 1 acre 52 ½ rods, \$1259; 450/1, frontage on the new Sunset Avenue, 5 May 1892; 444/117 Leach to Cornelia A. Hastings, 30 September 1893; 545/193-94, Hastings to Estelle Tyler Warner, 6 February 1901; 1007/333, Margaret A. Nelligan to Albert E. and Frances W. Wood, 26 August 1946. Thanks to Ed Wilfert for deed and tax research.

Pittsfield City Directories 1940s-1950

US Census 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940

Tower, Walter. "A Glance at Amherst Athletics," (1935) in Amherst College Archives and Special Collections. Viewed online November 2015.

Town of Amherst property card (2014)