

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

152; 55; 14A-10	Mt. Toby	E	AMH. 148
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Photograph



Town/City: Amherst

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

Address: 8 Sunset Avenue

Historic Name: William A. Burnett House

Uses: Present: Private school

Original: Single-Family Residence (with museum)

Date of Construction: 1897

Source: *Springfield Republican*, 31 Dec 1897, p. 14

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: Clough & Reid, Holyoke, architects; G. E. Bosworth, builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Stone, Cut; Rough cut granite

Wall/Trim: Wood Clapboard/ Wood

Roof: Slate

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: Excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .65 acre

Setting: This house sits prominently at the corner with Amity Street, dominating its sloping site because of its height. The original property has been divided into two, one with an address on Amity.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Steve Bloom/Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (*month / year*): September 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

8 Sunset Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

E

AMH.148

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.

"W.A. Burnett of the firm of George B. Burnett & Son has built one of the finest houses in town. It is of colonial architecture and is situated at the corner of Amity street and Sunset avenue, commanding an excellent view of mountains from the Holyoke Range in the south to Mount Toby on the north. The architects were Clough & Reid of Holyoke and the cost was \$8000. G. E. Bosworth was the contractor." So wrote the *Springfield Republican* in its year-end wrap-up of building news for 1897.

This huge Colonial Revival with gambrel roof and projecting gable is one of a related handful of very well detailed buildings (374 North Pleasant Street, 151 Amity) sited on corner lots. This, however, is the largest, most impressive and only domestic building in Amherst, if not in the Pioneer Valley, to have been built with what was its own private museum. Attached to the main residence in the rear, the museum (today a separate residence at 245 Amity Street; AMH.xxx) was modeled on a classic Greek temple. It was added to the house in 1917. The house itself is three stories in height. The primary gable with an oculus is accented by fluted Ionic pilasters of the colossal order, uncommon in Amherst. Fluted pilasters and fluted cornerboards are featured on the façade and side elevations. The projecting entry portico is supported by delicate triple Doric columns, and the entry is emphasized by a tripartite stained glass window in a Neoclassical surround. Elegant swags and carvings elaborate the entry façade. The south elevation features a five-sided bay, and the north elevation includes a porte-cochère with square fluted columns and a wing. To the north of the house is a late-19th -century garage with a flared, gambrel roofline and fluted corner pilasters.

****SELECTED FOR NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT (2/22/1993)****

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.

This house was built for William Albert Burnett (1861-1924). His father, George B. Burnett, was the owner of the highly successful Burnett straw hat factory on Dickinson Street, with buildings in East Amherst near the train depot. Burnett had bought the business from H. D. Fearing in 1892. William Burnett was a partner in the business. He was also an art collector and constructed his own museum adjacent to the house. His collection was donated to the town of Amherst after his death, and some of it is maintained at the Jones Library. Straw hats had declined in popularity by 1936, when the factory finally closed.

The cost of this grand house, roughly double that of the larger houses on Lincoln and Sunset avenues, bespeaks William Burnett's prominence in the Amherst business community. He married Carrie Wooton (1864-1905) and had five sons and three daughters, one of whom died in infancy. H. Wooton Burnett, one of the sons, lived in the house in 1928, and another son, George B., lived next door at 26 Sunset (AMH.145). The house was still in the hands of Burnett's heirs in 1937. Today it houses international participants in the Institute for Training and Development.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Biographical information on William A. and Carrie W. Burnett from ancestry.com, accessed November 14, 2015. See also, on the Burnett family, Lockwood, John H., ed. *Western Massachusetts: a History 1636-1925*. 4 vols. 1926. Vol. 4, pp. 844-845.

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AMHERST

8 Sunset Avenue

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National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form, Lincoln-Sunset Historic District, Amherst, section 7, p. 9.

Norton, Paul F. *Amherst: A Guide to its Architecture*. Amherst: Amherst Historical Society, 1975, p. 70.

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Form B (1988), online in the MACRIS database.

Rand, Frank Prentice. *The Village of Amherst: A Landmark of Light*. Amherst: Amherst Historical Society, 1958, p. 9.

Springfield Daily Republican, 31 December 1897, p. 11.