

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/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Amherst

Address: 118 Sunset Avenue

Historic Name: Ray Stannard Baker House

Uses: Present: College Fraternity

Original: Single-Family Residence

Date of Construction: 1916

Source: *Architectural Record*, January 1917

Style/Form: English Revival

Architect/Builder: James H. Ritchie

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: Brick; Stucco; Half Timbering/Wood

Roof: Slate

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garden shed (modern)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

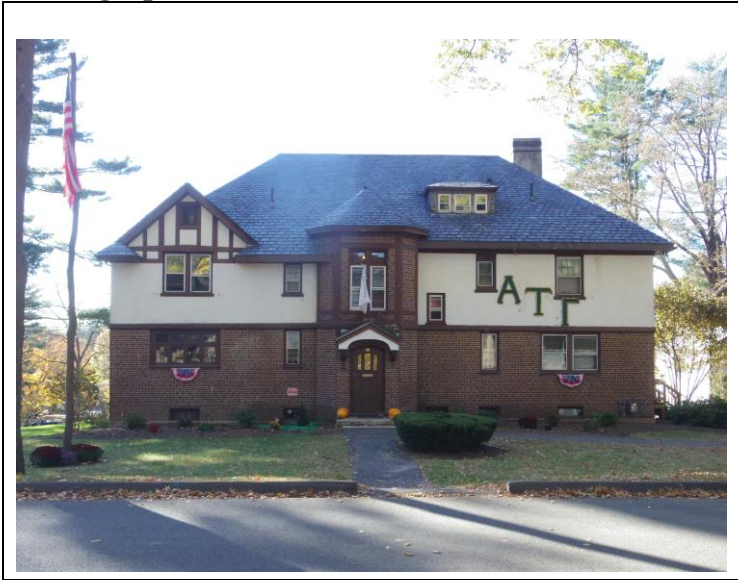
Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

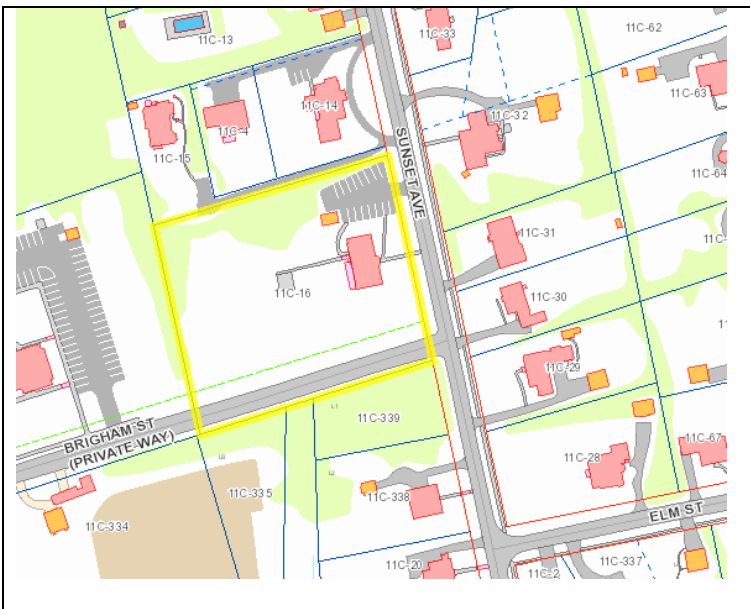
Acreage: Two acres

Setting: Residential

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Steve Bloom/Bonnie McCracken/Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (*month / year*): September 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

118 SUNSET AVE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

E

AMH.140

 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:

This is a wood-frame Arts and Crafts Style building, with a gabled hip roof covered in slate. The exterior walls of the second story are covered with stucco/masonry, and the exterior walls on the first story are covered with brick veneer. The architect was James H. Ritchie, of Boston. The Arts and Crafts Movement in England had revived interest in medieval styles, and Ritchie, who was born and educated in Scotland, here proves himself *au courant* with this trend. As Paul Norton writes, "The octagonal tower doorway, half-timbered above, has mediaeval reverberations, as has the gable, also half-timbered. The slight second-story overhang, large clustered chimney, uneven roofline, and non-uniform placement of windows suggest mediaeval antiquity altered over the centuries. Contrary to this informality are the neatly laid bricks and clean charm of the house, which reflect the handicraft tradition encouraged by the Arts and Crafts Movement."

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Ray Stannard Baker purchased a 9.5-acre parcel of land on May 20, 1911, and erected this house on a portion of it five years later. The Baker family lived here until 1947, when Mrs. Jessie Beal Baker sold the house to the Massachusetts Kappa Corporation of Sigma Alpha Epsilon. It was converted into a fraternity house that year. Ray Stannard Baker (1870-1946) was a journalist, historian, biographer and author. Before he moved to Amherst in 1910, he was a reporter for the *Chicago Record* from 1892 to 1898. He served as head of the American Press Bureau during the Paris Peace Conference at Versailles after World War I. This led to his writing fifteen volumes about President Woodrow Wilson and internationalism, including an eight-volume biography of Wilson, for the last two volumes of which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1940. His two autobiographies are *Native American* (1941) and *American Chronicle* (1945). He also wrote many books under the pseudonym David Grayson. A University of Massachusetts --Amherst dormitory is named in his honor under this pen name.

Architect James H. Ritchie (d. 1964) designed the Lincoln Building on Main Street in downtown Amherst (c. 1910; AMH.455), as well as five buildings for the Massachusetts Agricultural College: Grinnell Arena (1911; AMH.111); Stockbridge Hall (1912; AMH.105); the Turbine House (1918; AMH.117); Memorial Hall (1920; AMH.112), and Goessman Laboratory (1922; AMH.106). His many commissions in the Boston area include numerous educational buildings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Architectural Record, January 1917

Amherst Historical Commission, Form B (1975), online in the MACRIS database

Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Record Book 668, Page 145, Truman E. and Harriet N. Brigham, 20 May 1911; 669/367, R.S. and J.B. Baker, 27 June 1911; 694/227, W.J. Beal, 13 August 1913; 727/68, Ray Stannard Baker, 21 November 1916; 889/174, Jessie B. Baker, 21 August 1933, and Record Book 1021, Page 159, Mass. Kappa Corp. of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, 21 August 1947. Thanks to Ed Wilfert for deed research.

Norton, Paul F. *Amherst: A Guide to Its Architecture*. Amherst: Amherst Historical Society, 1975, p. 69.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/wilson/peoplevents/p_stannard.html