

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

11C-28	Mt. Toby	E	AMH.
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Photograph



Town/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Amherst

Address: 91 Sunset Avenue

Historic Name: Edward Carpenter House

Uses: Present: Single-family residence

Original: Single-family residence

Date of Construction: 1892-1894

Source: documentation in Jones Library Special Collections

Style/Form: Queen Anne

Architect/Builder: R. F. Putnam, architect; E.J.Steeves, builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation: not visible

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage (2005)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .73 acres

Setting: Set back from the street behind a deep tree-shaded lawn, this house stands at the juncture of Sunset Avenue and Elm Street, in a residential neighborhood with many late-19th-century houses.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (month / year): November 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

91 SUNSET AVE.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

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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.

The clients who commissioned this house, Edward W. Carpenter (1856-1934) and his wife, Esther Hastings Carpenter (1860-after 1940), asked the architect, Roswell Field Putnam, to copy a house in Portland, Maine, that they admired in *Scientific American Architects and Builders Edition* of March 1892, pp. 34 and 40. The resulting house is a gambrel-roofed Queen Anne of two and a half stories, with a center-hall plan. Three dormers pierce the roof on the Sunset Avenue (west) side of the house, and a veranda supported by paired pillars stretches nearly the entire length of this façade. On the east, paired dormers flank a polygonal bay that extends through both stories and is topped with a tented roof. An extension at the north end of this façade shelters a secondary entrance. A variety of fenestration styles and sizes is used, including Gothic lights in the east bay, a pair of smaller windows with eight square lights apiece just to its north, and paired windows with sixteen square panes in the extension. The house's two chimneys are not symmetrically disposed.

A comparison of the plans in *Scientific American* and those on file at the Jones Library shows that Putnam made certain adjustments because of the site, such as changing the placement of the front porch, front steps, and rear entry. The sizes of rooms are similar but not exactly the same. On the Sunset Avenue façade, he has substituted a third, central dormer for the little open balcony on the Portland house. He has eliminated another small balcony over the bay window on the south facade, replacing it with a simple roof. A bay window has been eliminated in the rear bedroom. The bathroom and closets are slightly enlarged, Putnam's eye for the practical being in clear evidence.

Cherry lumber that was used in the parlor and for wainscoting in the bathroom was given by "grandfather Hastings," who had grown it on his farm on Southeast Street (later known as the Tuttle Farm and owned by Amherst College). The library, dining room, and lower hall woodwork were of ash, carefully "varnished and rubbed with pomace and linseed oil," according to the Carpenters' daughter. (The contract specified that the halls, parlors, and dining room were to be of ash, as were the seats in the vestibule and bay window, the newels, rail and balusters). The second floor woodwork was of Southern pine (the contract specifies "best selected Norway pine;" this wood was also specified for the narrow matched beadboard in the kitchen, pantry china closet, linen closets, and stairway to the attic). "The birch flooring is to be sorted and the best used for Hall and vestibule," the contract reads. The attic woodwork on the third floor was to be of matched spruce. One can see Putnam's early training as a carpenter in the degree of specificity usually found in his contract documents with regard to specific woods for various purposes. Detail drawings for the stairs, balusters, and newels are also at the Jones, indicating that these items were made to order by a local carpenter, not bought ready-made.

Mantels and door hardware were to be bought by the owner and installed by the contractor, as was the hearth tile. The house had forced hot-air heat. Carpenter's account books and many receipts connected with the house's construction are also preserved at the Jones Library. They show that a mantel was shipped from Buffalo, an oak and a cherry mantel were bought from W.L. Quinell, 333 Main Street, Springfield, and a crated mantel was shipped by Central Vermont Railroad. Chandeliers, globes, and andirons came from C.H. McKenny & Co. in Boston. More routine items—ordinary windows, door screens, and the like—came from Amherst suppliers like L.H. Allen and Dwight Graves & Co., while smaller lamps and fittings came from the Amherst Gas Co.

The house was painted in the fall of 1897.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

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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.

The land on which the house stands was originally part of the farm of Pomeroy Cutler. Edward Carpenter bought the lot about 1892 from Levi Stockbridge and Reuben Westcott. There were no other houses in the area, and Sunset Avenue did not extend beyond Elm Street.

"Allbreeze," as the Carpenters named the house because of the strong breezes in that elevated and isolated area, is thoroughly documented in the Jones Library's Special Collections. Although planning began in 1892 and specifications were drawn up that June, the house was not completed until 1894. "E. W. Carpenter [is putting up] a house that will cost about \$4000," wrote the *Springfield Daily Republican* on December 30, 1893 (pp. 10-11).

The publishers of *Scientific American*, Munn and Co., sold "at moderate cost the full plans, specifications, details, bills of materials, etc., ready for the builder, for any of the structures illustrated in this publication." The *Scientific American* article stated that the house would cost "\$3800 complete." As initially designed by Putnam on the basis of the magazine's plans, however, the house was more expensive than the client's budget allowed, so changes had to be made. A few items have been crossed out on the specifications document of 1892, and further changes were made after that, even after the plans that survive. This may explain the unusually long gestation period between initial design and completion. According to Carpenter's daughter, Winifred Carpenter Gates, the family moved into it in 1894.

E.J. Steeves was the contractor/builder; the contract between Steeves and the Carpenters was signed 7 September 1893, more than a year after the original set of specifications. By this time, the architect was named as Putnam & Bayley, since Putnam had just entered into a partnership, but there seems little doubt that Putnam himself was responsible for the design work and the drawings.

Edward Carpenter was born in Brattleboro, VT, 1 July 1856. He married Esther Munsell Hastings on 25 April 1882 in Amherst, and they had two children, Winifred Maud (b. 1883) and Richard Lee (b. 1896). E.W. Carpenter was a printer whose firm was named Carpenter and Morehouse, and was also publisher of the *Amherst Record* newspaper from 1890 to 1934. With the newspaper's editor, his business partner Charles F. Morehouse, he wrote *The History of the Town of Amherst*, published in 1896. (Morehouse lived at 24 North Prospect Street, also in the proposed local historic district). He lived in this house until his death in 1934. His obituary outlined his prominence in business and civic life and reported that he "never had an unkind word."

Esther Hastings was born in Amherst, 25 April 1860. Her parents were Edmund and Minerva Hastings. She is listed as living at 675 Main Street in a 1940 Amherst City Directory. Their daughter, Winifred Carpenter Gates, contributed reminiscences and scrapbooks of life at "Allbreeze" over many decades to the Jones Library. The large farmhouse kitchen was redone in the 1950s with a woodstove.

Robert and Gale McClung bought the house in the early 1960s, and Gale added her own humorous written recollections of life in the house to the file at the Jones. Trained as a zoologist, Robert McClung (1916-2006) wrote many celebrated books about animals, principally aimed at young readers. Gale Stubbs McClung (1923-2014) was also an author and edited the Mount Holyoke College alumnae magazine. His papers are at the Jones Library, and hers are at Mount Holyoke. Sharon Carty, a psychiatric nurse, bought the house in 1999 and turned the third floor into a quilting studio. The present owners bought the property in 2004 and have created an apartment on the third floor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Extensive documentation of this house, including plans, specifications, correspondence, contract, account books, invoices, scrapbooks, and written reminiscences by two owners is available in the Special Collections at the Jones Library, Amherst.

Scientific American, Architects and Builders Edition, March 1892, pp. 34, 40.

Springfield Daily Republican, 30 December 1893, pp. 10-11.

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Paul F. Norton, *Amherst: A Guide to Its Architecture* (1975), 68.

Robert Blossom, *Amherst Record*, 22 December 1974.

Cheryl Wilson, "Amherst House Tour 2001 to Feature Allbreeze," *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, 25 October 2001, p. D. 5. Same article appeared in the *Amherst Bulletin*, 26 October 2001, entitled "House tour features peek into Amherst's past."

Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, book 1380/158 to Robert S. McClung; 5765/227 McClung to Carty 16 August 1999; 8025/268 Carty to Steven V. Fischel and Lisa Plantefaber, 15 October, 2004.



91 Sunset Avenue, soon after its construction. Photograph in Jones Library, Special Collections

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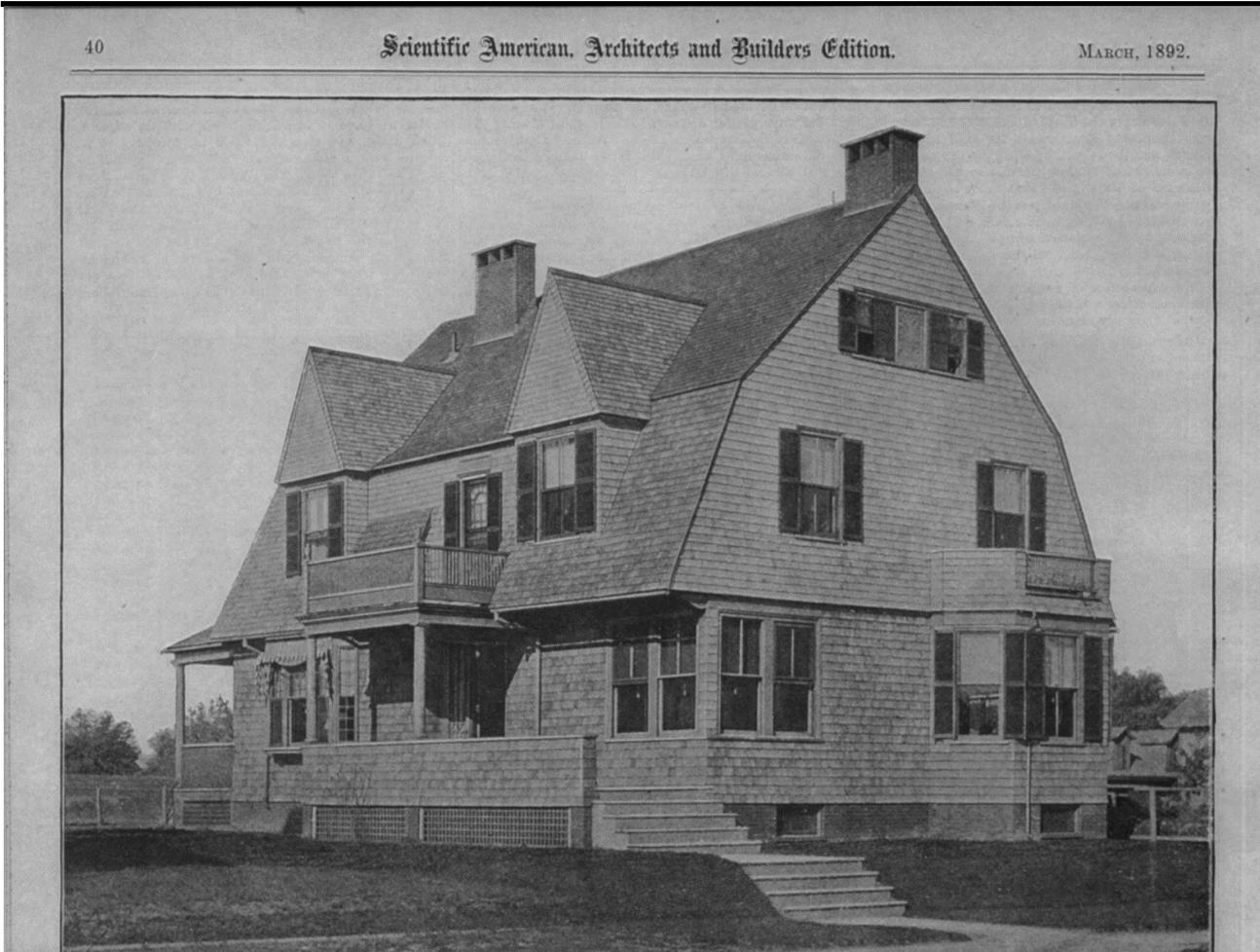
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The house in Portland, Maine, on which 91 Sunset Avenue was based.

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South façade, 91 Sunset Avenue

East façade, 91 Sunset Avenue