

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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Town/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Amherst

Address: 59 Sunset Avenue

Historic Name: James B. Harrington House

Uses: Present: Single-family residence

Original: Single-family residence

Date of Construction: c. 1939

Source: City Directories, US Census

Style/Form: Art Deco

Architect/Bulder: Herbert Neuman, Herbert Struppman,
NY

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard siding, laid horizontally on
ground floor and vertically above.

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Attached one-bay garage on south side of house.

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Cupola added 2011

Solar panels on addition

Condition: excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

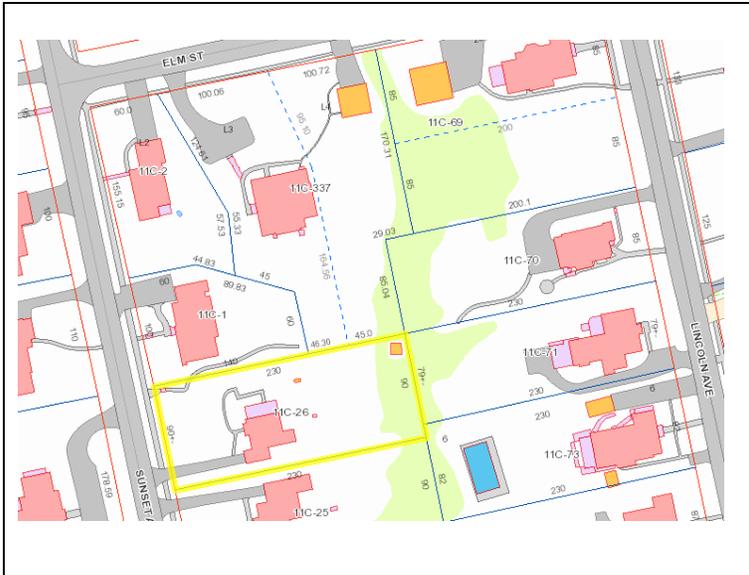
Acreage: .48 acre

Setting: On a residential street, this house is set back with
a generous front yard.

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (*month / year*): December 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

59 Sunset Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

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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 compact Art Deco gem is of a style extremely rare in Amherst. The building is nearly a cube, two stories tall, with an attached garage projecting beyond the main façade, to the south. A small one-story extension lies to the north. The clapboard siding on the central block is laid horizontally on the ground floor and vertically (with battens between the boards) on the story above. A decorative motif of applied squares is used. The hipped roof had a cupola added in 2011. Trellises enclose the front door on both sides.

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 address does not appear in City Directories or US Census reports prior to 1940. In the 1940 Census the house was the home of James B. Harrington (1888-1963), a retired Army dental officer, his wife Grace (Davis; 1889-1977), and their 16-year-old sons James B. and B. Davis. Amherst Street Lists show this family at the address as of January 1, 1940, so they probably moved in in 1939. Lt. Col. Harrington was still at this address in the 1948 City Directory. By 1950 James, Jr. and his wife Jean were the principals at the home; they continued to live there until at least 1960. Grace O. Harrington owned the house until 1978.

Other Harringtons lived on the street: Elizabeth at 92 Sunset in 1932 and 1937, and Wellesley and Marion at #8 in 1948. The relationships among these individuals, if any, have not been established.

The design for this house won first prize in the *Ladies' Home Journal* national small-house competition of 1938. Chosen from more than 700 entries, it "is simply the crystallization in one house of all the progress that has been made in home planning during the past ten years," the magazine announced. "It's not wild-eyed modern...It can have any one of a dozen different exteriors; it can be built on a small lot, in any part of the country. It is an All-America house." Plans for the house could be bought from the *Journal* for one dollar, and it appears that this is what the Harringtons did.

Writing in the *Amherst Record* in 1946 about "new style" homes in Amherst, W.R. Brown noted, "Lt. Col. Harrington's house at 59 Sunset Avenue has a good cellar under the whole building, but in its outward appearance some would call it ultra modernistic but Mrs. Harrington says it is only a 'modified.' The type is fairly common in Southern California where there is a Spanish influence. The prevailing lines of the building are horizontal; even the windows are wider than they are high. The inside is exceptionally well arranged for convenience and comfort."

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Fistere, John Cushman. "First Prize." *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1938, pp. 24, 56. Thanks to the current owner for this reference.

US Census 1930, 1940

Amherst City Directories

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Amherst Street Lists

Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Book 1231/65, to Grace O. Harrington, recorded on Town of Amherst Property Card 2015.

Brown, W.R., "New Style Amherst Homes," *Amherst Record*, 21 March 1946. A clipping of this article is included in Vol. III of the W.R. Brown scrapbooks preserved in the Jones Library Special Collections, p. 20.