

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

65 NORTH PROSPECT ST.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

H

AMH.216

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 Second Empire cottage is closely related to three others on McClellan and High Streets. Elements common to all are the mansard roof and modest scale. This example, perhaps the most complex in the group, has an L-plan and a slight concave curve to its roof profile. The center portion of the roof, above the mansard, is slightly pitched. Two dormer windows pierce the roof on the North Prospect Street façade. A full Queen Anne veranda was added to the street façade after 1902. It is supported by turned posts and has a tiny gable in the center of its roofline, marking the front door. Some decorative brackets and pieces of an open-rail frieze along the top of the veranda survive, but others have been lost. There is an open-rail baluster at the veranda's base.

This house currently comprises two living units; the entrance to one unit is on the west (North Prospect Street) façade, while the other is entered from the eastern end of the south façade.

This property is part of the Prospect-Gaylord Historic District, which was designated a National Register Historic District on 4 February 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.

North Prospect Street was laid out in the mid-19th century, and the first house was erected around 1855. The third quarter of the 19th century saw the street's greatest growth. By 1873 there were fourteen houses on North Prospect, belonging mainly to successful merchants and professionals. Because of that, there is a variety of high style architecture dating from 1860-1875 on the street. This house, however, is a modest version of a high style that is exemplified at 32 North Prospect (AMH.222), built a few years earlier.

The land was part of the farm of Dr. Rufus Cowles in the early 19th century. Levi D. Cowles (1809-1892), who lived in Rufus Cowles's homestead on today's Cowles Lane, sold the 50-rod property on which this house stands to Jeremiah J. Young, a furniture-dealer, in 1871. Young was at that time living at today's #90 North Prospect. Tax records suggest that Young built this house the following year. His brother Thomas, likewise in the furniture business, had bought property nearby (82 North Prospect) in 1863. Jeremiah J. Young, his wife Mary, a sister-in-law and an elderly female boarder are listed as a household in the 1880 census of Amherst, which does not give street addresses; they appear near the Holland family, who lived at 74 North Prospect at this time. The Young brothers became partners of Merrick Marsh, the firm being called Marsh & Young, around 1863 (the Marshes lived at 44 North Prospect). They next operated as Young Brothers, with offices at 2 Pleasant Street, so listed in the Amherst city directory of 1873. By 1879 the firm is again Marsh & Young, at 3 Pleasant Street, with J.J. Young as a principal, along with Edwin D. Marsh.

By 1885 J. J. Young had moved to the Boston area; the 1886 Amherst city directory lists him as "removed to Concord, New Hampshire," and by 1900 he was living in Pasadena, CA. Young sold the property to John E. Williams in 1887. Williams (c. 1853-1890), a member of the MAC class of 1876, was the Editor of the *Amherst Record*, a weekly newspaper. His widow, Lizzie J. (née Draper), was still living in the house in 1903. She was married again in 1906, to a near neighbor, Wilbur Ward, and took up residence at 62 North Prospect, where she died in 1920.

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The Williamses' heirs sold the property at 65 North Prospect to Herbert S. Field in 1920. Field, who hailed from Leverett MA, was a janitor at Amherst College. He initially lived in the mansard cottage but appears to have later moved into a subsidiary building on the property and rented out the main house.

The subsidiary building at the rear of the lot, perhaps converted from a barn, seems to have been occupied as a house from about 1924-25 onward and was at that point designated with a separate street number (it is #63 today). The house at #65 then occupied 38 square rods of land, and #63 occupied the remaining 12 square rods. In 1925 Field sold the rear parcel to Susan Whitaker, who handled real estate transactions for the Williams family, but he appears to have lived in the building that is now #63 after 1925, rather than #65. He died in 1948.

Aspiring poet and author Robert Francis was a tenant at 65 North Prospect in 1933 and later wrote a memoir, *We Fly Away* (New York: Wm. Morrow & Co., 1948), about his year there. The elderly landlady and fellow roomers, and his description of the genteel yet weathered homes on the street (pp. 24-25) may reflect what it was like there in the shadow of the Depression.

The two parcels, #63 and #65, were officially separated in 2011.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

U. S. Census, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940

Beers Atlas map, 1873

Amherst City Directories, 1886-1903, 1933-1948.

Town of Amherst tax records for J. J. Young, 1871 and 1872. For Herbert Field, 1924, 1925, Special Collections, Jones Library, Amherst.

Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Book 286/221-212, Levi Cowles to J. J. Young, 28 March 1871; 408/473, J. J. Young to John E. Williams, 9 April 1887; 765/211-212, Garven F. Williams *et al.*, to Herbert S. Field, 11 December 1920. Thanks to Ed Wilfert for deed and tax research.

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

National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form, Prospect Gaylord Historic District, Amherst, section 8, pp. 12, 14 [erroneously as 63 North Prospect].

Francis, Robert. *We Fly Away*. New York: Swallow Press and William Morrow & Co., 1948, esp. pp. 24-25.