

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number
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Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (month / year): May 2015

Town/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Prospect-Gaylord National Register District

Address: 38 North Prospect St.

Historic Name: Edwin D. Marsh House

Uses: Present: Single-Family Residence

Original: Single-Family Residence

Date of Construction: 1890

Source: *Amherst Record*, 6 Dec 1890, p. 1

Style/Form: Shingle Style Queen Anne

Architect/Builder: Roswell Field Putnam

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Fieldstone, brick, cinder block at rear

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard below; shingle above/wood

Roof: asphalt composite

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

c.1942: front veranda moved to become screened porch on rear; polygonal porch over front door removed. A garage was created under the back porch. 1974: changes to fenestration at rear. Small porch at NW corner eliminated when kitchen was enlarged.

Condition: excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .53 acres

Setting: Located across the street from the CVS/town parking lot. A tall hemlock hedge shields it from the street. The deep rear garden, which formerly sported a Victorian pergola, was redesigned by owner Lyle Blundell, a UMass horticulturalist, in the 1940s.

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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.

This 2 1/2-story, cross-gable Queen Anne house incorporates Shingle Style features, such as “eyebrows” over upper windows, shingles laid in patterns, and upper stories slightly overhanging those below. Its irregular placement of windows and variety of window types is typical of Queen Anne houses, of which Amherst boasts quite a few. The attribution to Roswell Putnam as architect is based on the analogies between this house and 30 Orchard Street (1892/3), which is one of his documented works. Although they differ slightly in exterior detail, their floor plans and dimensions are quite similar. A third house with the same floor plan is 87 North Pleasant (1885), built for William Kellogg and today the Douglass Funeral Home. Comparisons of old photographs of this house and one of the Kellogg house before the modern siding was applied (1974; at Jones Library) render the similarities even more striking. The row of zigzag shingles delineating the upper stories is something of a Putnam signature. The front door is at the left of the east facade, leading to a wide hallway with elaborate woodwork. A large multi-paned window of “cathedral glass” lights the stair.

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.

“E.D. Marsh is getting ready to move into his new house which is about completed,” states the *Amherst Record* of 6 December 1890, p. 1. Edwin D. Marsh (1855-1913) was a cabinetmaker, furniture store operator, and undertaker, who owned The E. D. Marsh Furniture and Carpet Rooms on Main Street. The business was the largest of its kind in western Massachusetts, except for Springfield. His father, Merrick M. Marsh, had preceded him in the furniture trade. The Marsh family owned or lived in various houses in the neighborhood. Merrick Marsh bought 44 N. Prospect from Enos Williams in 1861 and bought the lot on which 38 N. Prospect was later erected from John L. Lovell’s wife Nancy in November 1880. At that time, there was a pair of small twin houses (or a double house) on the lot. These bore the old street numbers 10 and 12 North Prospect, next door to the Lovells’ #8. The 1890 tax record shows Merrick as owner of the land and a new house (not valued). In July 1890 he deeded the half-acre lot with twin houses to his son Edwin. The following year, Edwin Marsh is taxed on a house at \$3600 and the twin houses at \$1400. The lot line between #32 and #38 was shifted and straightened through a property transaction in 1904.

[The twin houses (no longer extant) appear to have been built by Enos Williams in 1858-59; Williams was taxed for three houses in 1859, probably these two and #44. *The Hampshire Express* noted in June 1858 that Enos D. Williams was building two houses to rent on “the new street lately opened to the public by Mr. Hallock...presenting the finest views our town affords.” The 1860 map shows two houses near the intersection of Cowles Lane and North Prospect, occupied by J. L. Lovell, a photographer, and D. Lord, a carriage trimmer. It is not clear whether there were originally two separate small buildings at #10 and #12 that were later connected, or whether they were joined from the outset, but they were inhabited as two separate dwelling units throughout their existence and are a conjoined double house in an old photograph at the Jones Library.

Williams sold the twin houses to John L. Lovell in 1861, along with the land to the south on which Lovell later built his Second Empire home (#32 North Prospect). Lovell had been renting the Williams-owned house at #44, but when Williams sold that property to Marsh, the Lovells apparently moved into one of the twin houses. At various times J. L. Lovell’s brother and other relatives and assistants in the photography business lived in one or the other half of the twin/double house. Mrs. Lovell sold the

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twin house property to Merrick Marsh on 15 November 1880. The double house was dismantled before 1930, and half of it was moved to Hadley, according to a handwritten notation on a photograph in the Lincoln W. Barnes collection at the Jones Library.]

Although E.D. Marsh paid taxes on two horses, there was apparently never a barn at 38 N. Prospect, probably because of the double house's presence farther back on the lot. He may have used the livery stable that existed across the street. A granite mounting block survives on the north side of the lot.

Edwin Marsh had multiple civic involvements in town, as president of the Street Sprinkling Association (1891), one of the first directors of the Amherst Board of Trade, president of the Amherst Gas Company, and a director, treasurer and superintendent of Wildwood Cemetery. His obituary describes him as "warm-hearted" and "the best-liked man in Amherst." His wife Cornelia and daughter Nellie occupied the house with him.

When Cornelia Marsh died in 1938, Prof. Lyle L. Blundell, a horticulturalist at the University of Massachusetts, and his wife Lois purchased the house. They moved the front porch to the rear, eliminated the polygonal porch over the front door, created a garage under the back porch and a deck above it, made internal alterations, and redesigned the garden, incorporating granite posts moved when the guardrail around the Quabbin Reservoir was replaced. The next owners (1963-70) were Prof. Andrew and Alice Scheffy, he of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University. They were followed (1970-1992) by UMass Prof. of Chemistry John F. Brandts and his wife Susan. The Brandts made substantial alterations to the second floor and finished the third. For a time, they offered a rental apartment at the rear of the second floor (removed in 1992). In revising the kitchen, they eliminated a former small porch at the NW corner of the house, changed the fenestration, and added a greenhouse window in the adjoining breakfast room.

This house and the two others that are nearly identical in plan are among a number of large cross-gable Queen Anne homes in Amherst. One of the best known stands at 90 Spring Street, the home of David and Mabel Loomis Todd, also designed by Roswell Putnam, dated 1886/87. Numbers 194 and 204 Lincoln Avenue, (AMH.166 and 168) in the proposed LHD, are also examples.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Beers Atlas map 1873, revised (showing two small houses).

Sanborn maps 1887, 1892, 1910 and 1916, with double house.

Amherst Record, 6 December 1890, p. 1.

Amherst Tax Records for Merrick M. Marsh and Edwin D. Marsh, especially 1890, 1891, in the Special Collections, Jones Library, Amherst.

Daniel Lombardo, *A Hedge Away: The Other Side of Emily Dickinson's Amherst* (Daily Hampshire Gazette: 1977), 348-350.

"Death of Edwin D. Marsh," *Springfield Republican*, 20 December 1913, p. 11.

Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Book 359/108, from Nancy Lovell to M. M. Marsh, November 1880, \$1500; Book 434/268, Merrick M. Marsh to Edwin D. Marsh, 1 July 1890, \$2000. Also 572/125; 933/506; 1399/38; 1565/312. Thanks to Ed Wilfert for deed research.

Historical photographs of the house and garden, taken before the 1940s renovations by Brown Studio of Springfield; copies in the Special Collections, Jones Library, Amherst.

Architectural plans for Blundell and Brandts renovations, property of the house's current owner, Suzannah Fabing. Copies of some in Special Collections, Jones Library, Amherst.

Historical photograph of the double house: Lincoln W. Barnes Collection, Special Collections, Jones Library, Amherst.

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38 North Prospect Street, before 1940s renovation



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38 North Prospect Street, from the southeast.

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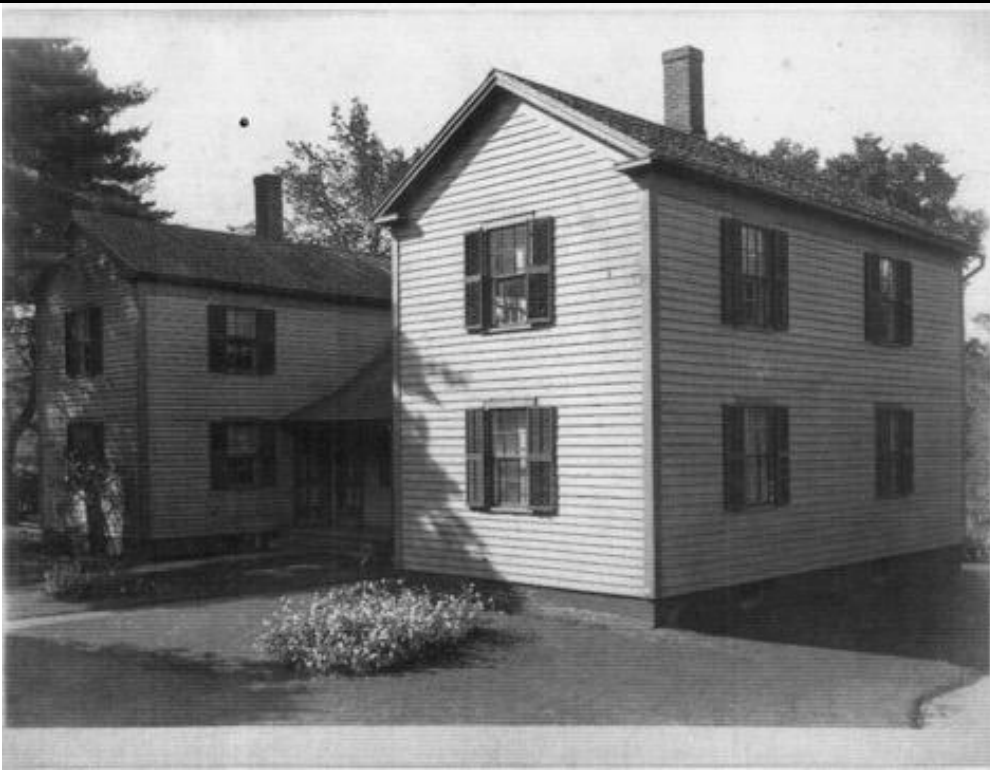
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The double house that stood at the rear of the property at 38 North Prospect from about 1858 until about 1930, when it was taken down. The house bore numbers 12 and 14 in the pre-1937 street numbering system. Photo from the Lincoln Barnes