

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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Photograph



Locus Map



Town/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Prospect-Gaylord National Register District

Address: 32 North Prospect St.

Historic Name: John L. Lovell House

Uses: Present: Single-family Residence

Original: Residence

Date of Construction: 1870-71

Source: Tax record

Style/Form: Second Empire/ Gothic Revival

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Wood Clapboard/wood

Roof: Asbestos shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage (between 1916 and 1930)

Carriage house (between 1910 and 1916; expanded 1916-

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: fair

Moved: no **yes** **Date:**

Acreage: .79

Setting: This house occupies a large lot with generous space on either side and a large back yard. It is on a residential street with mature trees. A commercial and town parking lot is across the street.

Recorded by: Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (*month / year*): May 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

32 NORTH PROSPECT ST.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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 large 2 1/2-story, three-bay house is of a type unusual in Amherst. It is a "Gothic cottage," inspired perhaps by A. J. Downing's pattern books, and employing Romantic whimsy in combining Second Empire features with Gothic Revival ones. The mansard-like roof is pierced on the street side by three protruding windows (two portholes and a semicircle) with surrounding cartouches; beneath them are pitched-roof dormers that break the eaveline. The 2/2 double-hung dormer windows (narrow single windows paired on the central axis) have pointed-arch tops, repeated in the shapes of the shutters. Similar pairs of "Gothic" windows repeat on the other façades. The building's core is basically square; a two-story wing extends to the rear.

West of the residence is a one-and-one-half story carriage house with rectangular plan and a concrete foundation. The walls are clad with painted flushboard siding. The front gable roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles. The front (south) elevation features a sliding-track wood door with a six-light wood sash window in the gable above. A 6/6 double-hung wood sash window exists on the east.

Southwest of the residence is a one-story, two-bay stucco garage with square plan, on a concrete foundation. The hipped roof is sheathed with asbestos shingles. Exposed rafters are featured along the eave. The front (east) elevation features two overhead track wood doors. Each is made of diagonal wood sheathing with a fixed six-light window above. Two 6/6 double-hung wood sash windows on the side elevations provide additional light to the interior. A small wood-sash eave window is centered above the windows on the south elevation.

This property is part of the Prospect-Gaylord Historic District, which was designated a National Register Historic District on 2/4 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.

At mid-19th century Osmyn Baker bought Dr. Rufus Cowles's farm, and John Emerson Strong's house (where The Perry now stands, at the intersection of today's North Prospect and Amity street) was owned by Lewis Delano. Delano and Baker put in a new road east of the J.E. Strong house, running north and then east to about where today's Cowles Lane lies. Baker sold an acre lot on the west side, north of the J.E. Strong/Delano lot, to Enos Williams, who in turn sold it to John M. Emerson in 1853. Emerson sold it to John L. Lovell's wife Nancy in 1865.

John Lyman Lovell (1825-1903), who commissioned this house, was a professional photographer. He moved from Ware to Amherst in 1856 and established the Amherst Picture Gallery, the first photographic studio in Western Massachusetts. In addition to studio work, Lovell was interested in scientific photography, accompanying an Amherst College astronomical team to California in 1882, as well as photographing Connecticut Valley geological features.

His photos provide the best visual documentation from the 1860s to the 1890s of the successive transitions Amherst made from an agricultural town, to an industrial one, and finally, to a town known chiefly for its educational institutions. Some 1200 prints, along with many negatives, are preserved at the Jones Library.

Lovell was living farther north on North Prospect Street, at 44 North Prospect (one of the houses built as rental properties by Enos Williams) at the time of the 1860 map, but that house was sold to M. M. Marsh that same year. The Lovells acquired the

Continuation sheet 1

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property immediately to the south with twin houses on it (#10/12 North Prospect, no longer extant) from Enos Williams for \$1300 in June 1861. The Lovells apparently lived in half of the double house until their larger house at #32 North Prospect was completed. An 1865 state census and the 1870 Federal census show John's mother, Maria, and his brother George, also a photographer, living nearby—perhaps in half of the double house. At times the census indicates that photographic assistants, retouchers, or finishers lived as boarders in one or the other of the Lovell households. By 1880, John and Nancy's son Charlie had joined the family business, and son Henry later became a photographer as well.

The imposing house at #32 North Prospect first appears on Lovell's tax register in 1870 as unfinished, and in 1871 as completed.

Nancy (Wellman) Lovell, John's wife, lived in the house until her death (1903). Her son Fred, her executor, in 1904 sold the property to Cornelia Marsh, who lived next door. This enabled the Marshes to straighten out the property line between the two houses and widen the lot at #38 North Prospect by about 10 feet. Cornelia then sold the house and now-smaller lot at #32 N. Prospect to Marion P. Thomson.

The widow Mabel Smith, her mother, two sons and two daughters were living in the house at the time of the 1910 US Census. She is listed as having her "own income." She bought the house from Thompson in 1913, but it passed immediately through the Stone family to Stanley Phillips. In the 1920 Census it appears as the rental of William F. Howe and his wife Jenabelle. William was a teacher at the State College (a forerunner of the University of Massachusetts).

Since 1920, the house has been owned by the Hastings family, proprietors since 1914 of a newsagent and stationery store in town. Asa J. Hastings (b. 1887) bought the house and started the business. His wife Maud (b. 1889) and three sons also lived at 32 North Prospect. Son Donald (b. 1915) and his wife Phyllis acquired the house from Donald's siblings in 1955 and raised their son and two daughters there.

Sanborn maps indicate that the carriage house was constructed between 1910 and 1916 and added onto between 1916 and 1930. The maps establish that the automobile garage was constructed between 1916 and 1930.

The Hastings family owned the house for nearly a century. It is currently (August 2016) under agreement to a Northampton developer, who intends to turn the main house into two one-story condominium units, renovate the carriage house and garage for housing automobiles, and build four two-story townhouse condominium units along the west edge of the lot. She proposes to return the front porch to its original shape, covering the front door but not extending across nearly the full width of the east facade. The shed attached to the back of the house will be torn down and replaced with a new garage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Hampshire and Franklin Express, 10/5/1860, p. 2 "M.M. Marsh has purchased the dwelling house recently occupied by J. L. Lovell."

Hampshire County Registry of Deeds Book 153/118; 195/228; 228/198; 572/125; 581/255; 600/336; 692/323; 692/408; 759/265; 1213/79. Thanks to Ed Wilfert for deed research.

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

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (1992) section 8, pp. 11, 12.

Massachusetts Historical Commission, Form B Continuation (2014)

<http://www.digitalamherst.org/exhibits/show/muses/lovell>, with additional bibliography on Lovell and his publication, *The Amherst Photographer*.

U.S. Federal Censuses 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910.

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Massachusetts State Censuses, 1855 (Ware), 1865

Amherst City Directories--For Lovell: 1869 through 1903. For Hastings: 1921

Maps: 1873 Beers Atlas; 1887 Sanborn. For the outbuildings: Sanborn maps 1910, 1916, 1930.

Town of Amherst tax records for J. L. Lovell, especially 1870 and 1871.



Historic photograph, John L. Lovell Collection, Jones Library Special Collections. This photograph dates from before 1890 since it does not show the Marsh house next door; c. 1870 according to the Jones Library.