

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

174; 11C-66	Mt. Toby	E	AMH. 170
-------------	----------	---	----------

Photograph



Town/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Lincoln-Sunset National Register District

Address: 216 Lincoln Avenue

Historic Name: Mary D. Beston House

Uses: Present: Single-Family Residence

Original: Single-Family Residence

Date of Construction: 1896-97

Source: *Springfield Republican*, 31 December 1897, p. 11

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: Architect: Putnam & Bayley
Builders: Allen Brothers

Exterior Material:

Foundation: not visible

Wall/Trim: Wood Clapboard/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Condition: Excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .72 acre

Setting: Set in a residential neighborhood that encompasses many late 19th- and early 20th-century houses, this residence occupies a generous lot not far from the place where Elm Street runs into Lincoln Avenue.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Steve Bloom/Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (*month / year*): September 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

216 Lincoln Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

E

AMH.170

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 Colonial Revival house with a hipped roof is one of at least ten related structures in the Lincoln-Amity area. Common elements include a hipped roof with dormers, three-window façade, front porch and colonial details. This example has a nicely detailed Palladian-like window, modillion blocks along the eaves, and a curved bay on the north side.

With its large-scale, three-bay façade, it is one of the more elegant Colonial Revival homes in the district. A curved, two-story bay on the south corner of the house and fluted corner pilasters embellish this house and add complexity to its volume. The center entrance is similar to the entry on the George Prince House at 242 Lincoln Avenue (AMH.172), in the elliptical arch and leaded windows. A Palladian window above the entryway features fluted pilasters and unusual diamond mullions. Roofline brackets and dentils add interest to the cornice line. A porch with full-length Doric columns runs along the façade. To the rear is a small garage with a hipped roof and sliding doors.

****SELECTED TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT (2/22/1993)****

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.

This was the home of the widow Mary Beston and her daughters, who operated a millinery shop in Amherst Center.

Lincoln Avenue had been divided into building lots by 1873, which were owned and sold by Stockbridge and Westcott. When they sold the parcels they occasionally included deed restrictions relating to set-back, craftsmanship and valuation. After 1910 directories show an increase in the number of teachers and boarders on Lincoln, joining the merchants who were formerly the dominant group.

Documentation on this house is preserved in the Special Collections at the Jones Library in Amherst. A property survey was conducted in 1894, on file at the Registry of Deeds. In December 1896 bids were received from three contractors: Allen Brothers (\$3575), G. E. Bosworth (\$4290), and Steeves & Spear (\$4320). According to "Annual Building Review," *Springfield Republican*, 31 December 1897, p. 11, Allen Brothers were the builders, and the cost was \$4000. This source attributes the design to R.F. Putnam, rather than the firm Putnam & Bayley, which dissolved in 1897. Copies of the blueprints, labeled "Putnam & Bayley," are in the hands of the current owners. In 1906 Mary Beston bought new furniture, and in 1908 the house was wired for electricity.

Mary D. Beston was the widow of John Beston, Jr., an Amherst contractor and builder who died suddenly at the age of 43 on 26 February 1885. A news item in the *Springfield Daily Republican* of 27 February 1885, p. 5, said he "was the most enterprising master builder the town ever had. Having learned the carpenter business of Church & White, he soon began to take contracts in a small way and in time secured large ones. His first extensive job was the new Catholic church at Northampton, and he had the contract of rebuilding Walker hall after the stone-work had been finished. He built the Pratt gymnasium..." Beston's funeral was held at St. Brigid's Church on March 3, and B.H. Williams was named his estate administrator on March 7.

The Beston family was living at the time at the foot of the eponymous Beston Street, off McClellan Street in Amherst. Roswell F. Putnam and John Beston, Jr., must have known each other well, since Beston was the builder of two houses Putnam designed in 1884, early in his architectural career. Putnam obviously respected Beston's skills as a carpenter and builder.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

216 Lincoln Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

E

AMH.170

One can even speculate that their acquaintance might provide a hint of where Putnam himself had trained as a carpenter. Perhaps the two men, who were only two years apart in age, apprenticed together in the late 1860s and 1870s. We know from the *Republican* article about Beston's death, cited above, that he learned carpentry through Church & White—perhaps E. Stephens Church, a carpenter with whom Harvey White was first a lodger and soon the son-in-law—twice—he married two of Church's daughters in succession. White, a generation younger than Church, is listed as both carpenter and builder in the 1869 directory of Amherst businessmen. Another possible candidate is C.W. Lessey, a well-regarded builder with whom Beston worked on several projects, and for whose widow Putnam also designed a house (24 N. Prospect).

At any rate, given the men's documented working relationship on 24 North Prospect and 22 Seelye Street in 1884, the year before Beston died, it is not surprising that his widow turned to Putnam when she was ready to build a new, imposing home on Lincoln Avenue more than a decade later. By this time, Putnam was in partnership with Lewis D. Bayley, and their architectural style had evolved with the times. The Queen Anne style was fading out.

Like many of the firm's dwellings in Northampton from the mid-1890s, 216 Lincoln Avenue incorporates classicizing Colonial Revival motifs such as dentil trim and slender Doric columns supporting the porch. It is a more symmetrical, center-entrance house, the windows aligned one above another rather than scattered in the Queen Anne manner. A "Palladian" window on the second floor and a dormer with three windows on the third sit directly above the front door with its graceful side- and fan-lights, establishing a strong midline in the east (Lincoln Ave.) façade and evoking American Federal-period precedents. The house is all clapboard; the Shingle Style is no longer in vogue. A shallow, rounded bay on the south and a rectangular bay on the north side gently break the rectangle of the main block. Bow-tied garlands in relief give a feminine touch to the north dormer and south bay.

It is difficult to know to what extent Bayley's influence was at play in the shift of style in the mid-1890s. Because of the long-running personal connections between Mary Beston and Roswell Putnam, one can speculate that Putnam would have taken the lead in designing her house. The firm was quite busy in 1895-97, however, and the partners may have juggled jobs as necessary, so one cannot be sure. By the time the house was finished, the firm had dissolved.

John Beston, Jr. (1843-1885), was born in Ireland in 1843. He married Mary Grady (1837-1926) in Holyoke, MA, on 11 January 1866. According to her obituary, Mary was born in County Cork, Ireland, 17 January 1837; her birthdate is given in other sources as 1841. She was the daughter of John and Margaret Grady and had come to Amherst with her parents as a young child. John and Mary's first child, Margaret, born in September 1866, died young. Katie was born in 1868 and Mary in 1869, Amy in 1872, Nellie in 1874, Anna in 1876, and young John in 1878.

John, Jr., a carpenter, Mary, and Patrick Beston, age 26, a bricklayer—perhaps a brother—were already living in Amherst at the time of the 1870 census (no street address given). Daughters Kate and Mary are listed with them. The whole nuclear family, plus two boarders, is found together in the 1880 US Census of Amherst (no street address given). Early City Directories give their address as "foot of Beston Street."

It must have been daunting for Mary to face supporting her large family once John died in 1885. John was a Civil War veteran, and Mary was given an "original pension" according to a news note in the *Springfield Daily Republican* on 29 December 1890. Daughters Katie, Mary, and Annie opened millinery rooms in the Williams Block in Amherst, according to the *Springfield Daily Republican* of April 1, 1890. One Beston young lady, referred to in the newspapers as Mamie (perhaps Amy?), performed socially as a pianist.

In the 1900 Census, Mary D. is listed as a widow, at home at 48 [sic] Lincoln with all the children except Amy (who may have married already?). The City Directory of that year shows Mary more accurately, at #44—the house that now bears the street number 216. In 1905 Mary's son, John A. Beston, a 27-year-old plumber, also lived here. By the 1910 Census Mary is still at the house (now accurately #44), Amy has married and is already a widow (her married name is Powers), and her young children—Mary's grandchildren—Frances (b. 1898) and Burr or Bern (b. 1900), are also part of the household, as is a black servant. Anna, Mary, and Katherine, all unmarried, are also living at home. The same situation exists in 1920, but there is no servant. Mary Beston died at home on 10 May 1926 after an illness of several months. She was buried in Plainville, after a funeral at St. Bridgid's, the church of which she had been one of the earliest parishioners.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

216 Lincoln Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

E

AMH.170

Patrick Beston became a contractor, builder, and mason in Springfield. His bankruptcy in December 1890 was fodder for many newspaper articles.

Mary Beston, daughter of John, Jr. and Mary D., died at the home on Lincoln on 2 April 1929.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps: 1873, 1886, 1900, 1916.

Amherst Street Lists and City Directories.

National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form, Lincoln-Sunset Historic District, Amherst, section 7, p. 8.

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

Jones Library, Amherst, Special Collections, file on 216 Lincoln Avenue.

Springfield Daily Republican, 1 April 1890, note about Mary's widow's pension.

"Annual Building Review," *Springfield Republican*, 31 December 1897, p. 11.

"Mrs. Mary Beston Dead at 89 Years," *Springfield Daily Republican*, 11 May 1926, p. 6.

"Miss Mary Beston Dies. Milliner Succumbs at Home After a Long Illness," *Springfield Daily Republican*, 3 April 1929, p. 11.

Thanks to Susan Bellak, who shared the original blueprints.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

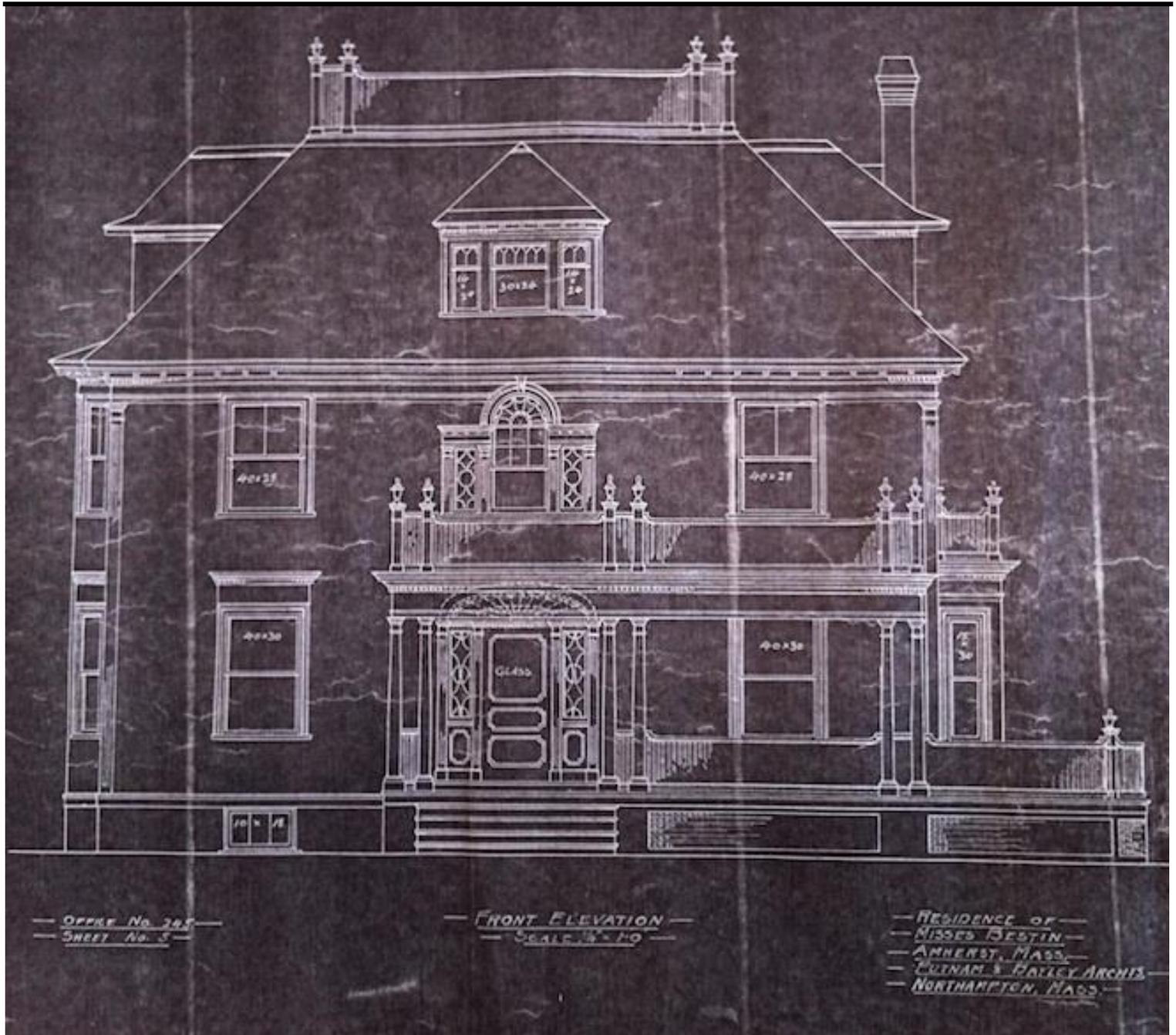
216 Lincoln Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

E AMH.170



Front Elevation of 216 Lincoln, Putnam & Bayley Architects (property of Andrew and Susan Bellak)