

SUNSET FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

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Town/City: Amherst

Place: Amherst

Photograph



Address: 109 Fearing Street

Historic Name: None

Uses: Present: Single-Family Residence

Original: Single-Family Residence

Date of Construction: c. 1930

Source: Amherst Street Directory, HLR

Style/Form: Half-Timber Tudor Revival

Architect/Builder: N/A

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Stucco/masonry/wood

Roof: Slate

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Garage w/ overstory

Major Alterations (with dates): None

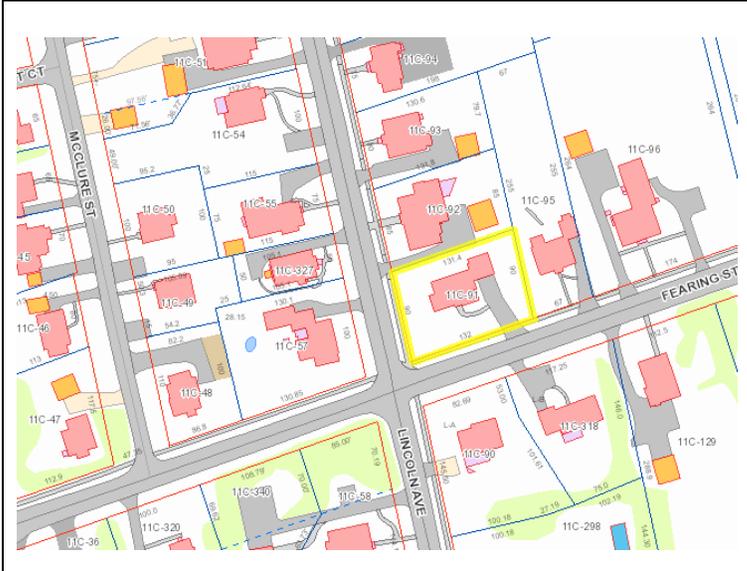
Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.27 acre

Setting: Corner of two moderately busy streets, on a lot smaller than most houses in this residential single family neighborhood near University of Massachusetts.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Gretchen G. Fox

Organization: Lincoln Sunset LHDSC

Date: October 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

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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.

Half-Timber, Tudor Revival with varied architectural elements and surface materials that give visual interest to this large, two-and-a-half-story house. The detailing shows a revival of Arts and Crafts styling, remarkable for this part of Amherst, where more simple suburban vernacular houses were built. The unusual three-wing plan and detailing suggests an architect-inspired rather than plan book model. There is nothing of the "Storybook Tudor" about this sober design.

The 45-foot front elevation is broken into three levels: the long slate roof over the three, east and west facing gable end wings is equal in height to the combined first and second stories, each section separated by heavy beams. The second story's surface is plaster and vertical timbers; the first story is flat red brick notably well laid. Two hip-roof dormers pierce the elevation on the elevation's western side, at the point where roof and Half-Timber Stucco meet. These and all second story windows are paired in heavy framing, each with 6/6 lights. First floor windows, in triplets with 9/9 lights, are set just below the main exposed beam but are otherwise more simply framed.

All sash, double-hung, they are aligned with the windows above by the vertical surface timbers, whose decorated ends appear just below the exposed major beam around the periphery of the house. This fenestration pattern also continues on other sides of the house, which due to its corner location is almost all visible from the streets it faces.

On the eastern side of the front elevation, the prominent entry appears to be recessed due to its dark decorative framing and open porch composed of six posts, the two flanking the door applied to the surface. The porch posts are decorated with hammer beams; short balusters are set between short crosspieces tying the side posts together. The posts reach to the major exposed beam separating the two stories. The underside of the beam is further emphasized around the entire periphery by what appear to be the carved ends of the vertical surface timbers.

To the entry's immediate east a slightly (2-foot) projecting two-story extension with end-gabled roof, a shallow shed roof over its first story. Its western side of the gable slopes with a long, exaggerated curve toward the center of the house, where it covers the framed open porch. The triangle it leaves above the right side of the entry is faced with dark wood, all parts of the entry matching the dark stained timbers. The ridge extension projects from the main roof about twelve feet. One pair of windows matching the dormers' again lie over triplet windows below in the shallower projection.

An attached two-car garage, recessed 14 feet, is fronted by posts at either end, and posts returning to the structure, decorated with hammer braces. The garage has two overhead track doors, each with a row of four 2/2 lights. Two gable roof dormers also with 2/2 lights pierce the garage roof, gabled at the east end, where two single 6/6 windows first floor and a 2/2 attic window light the interior. That extension and its connecting back entry and hallway facing south, add 23 feet to the total length, giving the house an especially long width on this street of relatively narrow houses. The broad, eastern, doubled-gabled wing is the major part of the house, having two-and-a-half stories; windows at the back south facing back door and east facing kitchen door, facing south, and east-facing kitchen follow a more functional, small-paned pattern. A double-gable wing faces east, the smaller gable projecting two feet, matching the front-gabled projection.

The 27-foot depth facing west along Lincoln Avenue, divides into two gable-roofed wings, the northern, three-story one recessed five feet, and roofed in such a way that the southern slope covers the smaller wing, forming the south side of its gabled roof. An interior brick chimney rises just on the north side of the ridge at this west end. One hip-roof dormer and three pairs of windows and a single window line up at the dormer level where the roof stops to create an eave at the height of the single dormer roof. Because the house is exposed completely on all four sides, its sophisticated detailing is most notable, a solid and formal statement on the end of this block of Fearing Street.

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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.

The history of this building lot indicates how frequently land speculators bought, probably mortgaged, and sold buildable properties on this northern side of Fearing Street in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in contrast to the southern side, where in the mid to late 1920s almost every lot was bought and fairly quickly built upon by the new owner. Clearly the growth of nearby MAC into MSC and later University of Massachusetts, hastened the building of houses in that decade, but not the prior years, when MAC was forming.

In 1868, Jared T. Westcott and Leonard M. Hills obtained from Horace Henderson the land that had until 1830 been the Lyman Farm, 80 acres between Sunderland Road (now North Pleasant Street) and the Hadley town line. The Lyman Farm had remained intact in size through several owners, until Hills and Westcott developed it into building lots. Various parts were sold off, and by the late 1890s, W. S. Westcott, (heir to the property), had a basically L-shaped piece largely on the east side of Lincoln Avenue surveyed into lots. Lincoln Avenue was at that time the major road to MAC from Amity Street and the center of town. Large houses had been built on almost the entire length of the street ("Millionaire's Row"). The plan book page showing the lots as surveyed dates to June 8, 1898. Almost immediately, on June 24, 1898, W. S. Westcott sold Lot 1 at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Fearing Street for \$350 to Mason Dickinson and Lot 2, adjacent to the north along Lincoln Avenue, to Thomas Smith for \$300. In 1903, Smith deeded his lot to Dickinson, thereby creating a single large lot of 96 square rods, with 200-foot frontage on Fearing Street, and 132 feet on Lincoln Avenue. A local banker, William Chapin, acquired the double lot in 1910, from another owner, held it until 1927, and sold it to a Northampton buyer as a smaller (90-foot by 132-foot) lot. (Chapin retained 42 feet on the north side of the lot and 69 feet on the east side for himself.) That lot sold two years later to the builders of this house.

It would have been expected that the house to be built on the combined lots would face Lincoln Avenue, along the line of the original survey, and a more prestigious address. But the new diminished lot size almost precluded that, and certainly precluded a sizeable garden, especially desirable at the time for growing a family's own food, and may have been difficult to sell. In any case, after one more owner (in all it had passed through six owners) it was bought in 1929 and finally built upon in 1930/31, roughly the same time the south side of Fearing Street was quickly developed, and thirty three years after Westcott's Lots 1 and 2 were first sold. It was one of the largest houses to be built on Fearing Street on perhaps the smallest lot.

It is no coincidence that 1931 was the year MAC enlarged and became MSC, and most home builders, tenants, and lodgers in this neighborhood had already been working or studying at MAC throughout the 20s, including Fred J. Sievers, who, with his wife, Emma B., purchased the small corner lot. Sievers had been a professor of agronomy and soil science in Wisconsin and Washington until he came to MAC in 1928 at age 49 as Superintendent of the Experiment Station, and later for some time head of the Graduate School of Agriculture. He retired from UMass in 1950. At the time they bought the corner lot, the Sieverses lived in the neighborhood at 7 East Pleasant Street until they moved into their new house in 1931 with their son. In 1953, Emma, a widow, sold the house to Ralph W. Goodrich, Superintendent of the Amherst Schools. Nine years later, it was acquired by Dr. Kenneth Monroe, a well-known Amherst physician. He and his wife and two children lived there for 17 years. Young Kim Westort, a real estate agent and the current owner, bought the house in 1979, and raised her two children there.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

HLR (thanks to Ed Wilfert)

CEN 1930

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Amherst Street Directories, 1931-19

“Fred J. Sievers Scientist –Philosopher- Friend” obituary in *Research in Review*, vol.2,no.2, p3, UMass.

Shelly Timberlake and Sidney Treyz, neighbors, conversation with Gretchen G. Fox

Gottfried, H. and J. Jennings. *American Vernacular Buildings*, 2009.