

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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Photograph



Town/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Amherst

Address: 85 Fearing Street

Historic Name: Michael Britt House

Uses: Present: Single-Family Residence

Original: Single-Family Residence

Date of Construction: c. 1870, older rear building

Source: Visuals and maps, assessors' records

Style/Form: New England Farmhouse/Vernacular

Architect/Builder: Michael Britt (builder)

Locus Map



Exterior Material:

Foundation: Primarily fieldstone and brick

Wall/Trim: Wooden clapboard

Roof: Metal (house); Slate and asphalt (barn)

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Barn, garage, shed/workshops

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Storage and workshop attachments to house and barn (1950s and 1960s)

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .73 acre

Setting: On a moderately busy street, the house stands in an immediate rural setting because of its placement between its large garden to the east, and its neighbor's large lot to the west, recalling this area's farm origins. In a larger neighborhood of mostly single-family suburban style houses that were built to accommodate the needs of the growing MAC/MSC/University of Massachusetts, part of which borders this house on two sides. MAC/MSC/UMass, part of which borders this house on two sides.

Recorded by: Gretchen G. Fox

Organization: LHD Study Committee

Date (*month / year*): December 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST, MA

85 FEARING ST

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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.

85 Fearing Street (formerly 27 Fearing Street) is a front-gabled, two-and-a-half-story, side-hall plan house. A Vernacular, three-bay farmhouse without revival pretensions, this New England-style was used in the early nineteenth century and continued to evolve, becoming more refined as a revival style, but remained basically the same plan and style as this house. It is similar to many others in Amherst (see those on McClellan and Beston Streets, 280 Lincoln Avenue, and 61 Fearing Street in this neighborhood).

More importantly, this is also an example of the New England-connected farm buildings, a Vernacular architectural type thoroughly described in Thomas Hubka's 1984 *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn*. It is rare to find an intact example in town, but these attached farm complexes dot country roads around Amherst, some fine examples nearby on Routes 116 and 47. As such, it is actually four buildings in one: the front, "big house" being the most recent, built approximately 1870, and the middle "little house" and "back house" are of indeterminate age, as they do not appear on tax rolls, possibly because they were considered insignificant. The four connected buildings are not shown on the Sanborn map until 1910. This historic complex stands as a reminder of the area's old farm origins. This is particularly true as the house stands between its large garden on its east side, and the large garden of its neighbor, to the west, giving it a rural appearance in the midst of more conventional single family residences that line both sides of the street.

The house stands 10 feet from the sidewalk, 20 feet from the street. The front entrance is on the west side of the south elevation, its three fieldstone steps covered by a gable portico with central pendant, supported by brackets. The three-paneled door has six lights at the top. Fenestration is regular, three bay, with a single window in the attic half story. All windows are 1/1, double-hung sash, finished with simple framing that matches the house framing boards. A fascia board breaks the clapboard cladding directly above the second story, creating a closed gable with clapboard cladding, and decorative, angled board work at the top of the gable. A corbelled brick chimney pierces the roof near its center, rising well above the height of the metal roof sheathing.

On the front elevation, the small, recessed back houses are scarcely visible from the street, but the barn, a traditional, gable-roof, New England type, painted with red stain and stark white framing boards, is the dominant feature of the joint complex. It stands four feet to the east of its attachment to the back house, well exposed, 40 feet wide and 60 feet deep. The front elevation of the barn has three windows: attic and two below, symmetrical with the broad, gable roof. The two large barn doors slide on overhead tracks. It is partly hidden by two low (c. 2-foot) basement structures extending from the front house. These have fieldstone/concrete foundation and green enamel raised-seam metal roofing. A similar five-foot high structure connects to the barn's the east side, running 80 ft. to the north. It serves as a series of workshops, with sliding barn doors. A one bay garage, moved here in the 1960s, stands on the far eastern part of the property, gabled to the front, with two hinged doors.

On the west elevation, one small, fixed pane window lights the second story, and on the first, a small octagonal window at the south end, followed by two double-hung windows matching those in front. Two slightly larger, similar windows light the larger of the two rear buildings, a cinder block chimney with stovepipe top rises alongside the smaller one. The barn is of traditional design, with four high windows visible this side, because of its height. It is recessed four feet east of the house and its extensions, which form a continuous line running 73 feet north. The off-set barn adds an additional 60 feet.

The east elevation of the front house has two 1/1 sash windows on each story. The next connecting house provides a side entrance to the complex, with a porch of 30 feet in length, approached by two stairs. The porch's full-length shed roof extends from its gable roof. The porch roof is supported by bracketed posts. One full size and one half-size sash window light the interior

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as well as a wood framed glass door. A covered cellar door with lower shed roof lies between these two rear connected buildings. The small back house, 29 feet long, with lower gabled roof connecting to the barn, has two 1/1 windows. The two rear houses are 15 feet wide.

Foundations are mixed fieldstone, brick, and concrete, some with cement coating. Roofs are variously sheathed in tin-like metal plates, raised seam green enamel metal, the barn's in both slate and asphalt composition shingles.

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 north side of Fearing Street did not become populated until about 1910, the south side in 1925. Before that, this lot, purchased by MB in 1869, and the three-acre Thomas Courtney farm next door had the only buildings in this area. Fearing Street and these buildings are shown in rudimentary form on the 1873 (Beers Map of Amherst, 1875?). Levi D. Cows, the seller of both properties, had acquired 20 acres in 1868 from Leonard M. Hills and Jared Westcott, owners of this old, 80-acre Lyman/Henderson Farm as of earlier 1868. L. D. Cows stipulated in the two deeds of 1869 that he would build a new road between Lincoln Avenue and Sunderland Road (now North Pleasant Street, by the turn of the century the road Cows).

Michael Britt, an Irish immigrant stonemason who bought this land as a two-acre lot, was living on McClellan Street at the time of the purchase. His brother, also a stonemason, owned a house on Railroad Street at one time mortgaged to Michael. That land remains in the Britt family today. With his wife, Bridget, he raised his seven children here. Early on, he also acquired adjacent properties from the W. S. Westcott subdivision of other Henderson farmland, adjacent to this property, as well as several lots on the west side of Lincoln Avenue, from the J. B. T. Beecher subdivision. Eventually the adjacent land as well as part of his original lot, through several sales and assemblages, was sold to the Commonwealth to become part of MAC. On one of the western Lincoln Ave. sites (today 318 Lincoln Avenue) he and his son, Michael H. Britt, a member of the local carpenters union, built a house for his daughter, Mary Ann, and her husband, Warren M. Dudley.

By 1910, Michael Britt owned seven other properties in Amherst, and Michael H. Britt owned a house on South Prospect Street. The 1910 US Census shows his daughter Nellie Atherton and two granddaughters living here, along with another son.

In 1920, the heirs of Michael Britt sold this property to Alden and Margaret Day, who apparently used the property primarily as rental property.

In 1927 and 1930, H. Newton and Mabel Glick are shown in local directories as a tenants in this house. H. Newton Glick was a psychologist, a specialist in development of intelligence tests (the Glick-Germany Test). He served on the faculty of the fledgling philosophy department at MAC and MSC. In 1936/37, Gertrude and Grant Shampo, an engineer, were tenants.

In 1939 and 1940, Pauline and Albion Johnson, a tailor, and their three children rented this property.

In 1941, H. Newton Glick was named guardian of Margaret Day, she having no heirs, and managed her finances. He sold the houses and barn to his wife Mabel, who in turn sold it to Lota and Frank Welcome, a postal worker. Frank Welcome added the many storage buildings and workshops here, some of which remain, as described. The Welcomes raised their six children here, and the property remains in the Welcome family today.

Tan Brook is a year-round watercourse flowing through this and 12 other properties and bordering five others between McClellan Street and the University of Massachusetts, including lots on North Pleasant Street, Beston Street, Fearing Street, and Nutting Avenue, as well as wooded lots west of North Pleasant Street. Its name derives from the tanneries, which once flanked the stream during the early nineteenth century, the area of which is now part of Kendrick Park. The brook's sources lie to the north and east, and were piped underground in the twentieth century, through the school grounds between Strong and Triangle Streets, beneath the East Pleasant Street commercial district, continuing under Kendrick Park and along McClellan Street. Until the arrival of piped sewerage, the brook served the north edge of the West Village for waste-water outflow, a reason for the more modest development of the neighborhood know by the Irish epithet, "the Curragh," a small boat or vessel. Downstream, Tan Brook waters the UMass pond and flows west through Hadley, until it empties into the Connecticut River.

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Amherst town directories 1879- 1940s.

Sanborn insurance maps 1910, 1916.

HLR

Amherst assessor's records 1860-1910.

"Glick, Harry Newton" file, UMass WEB DuBois Library, SCUA, thanks to Caroline J. White, Kenneth R. Feinberg
Archivist. .

U.S Census, 1910,1920,1930,