

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

Town/City: Amherst

Place: Amherst

Photograph



Address: 27 Fearing Street

Historic Name: Thomas J. & Nellie Thurston House

Uses: Present: Multi-Family Duplex

Original: Single-Family Residence

Date of Construction: c. 1905

Source: Amherst tax records

Style/Form: Cross-Gable/Farmhouse/Vernacular

Architect/Builder: N/A

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Vinyl clapboard siding

Roof: Asphalt composition

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Shared garage, entry on Allen Street

Major Alterations: None

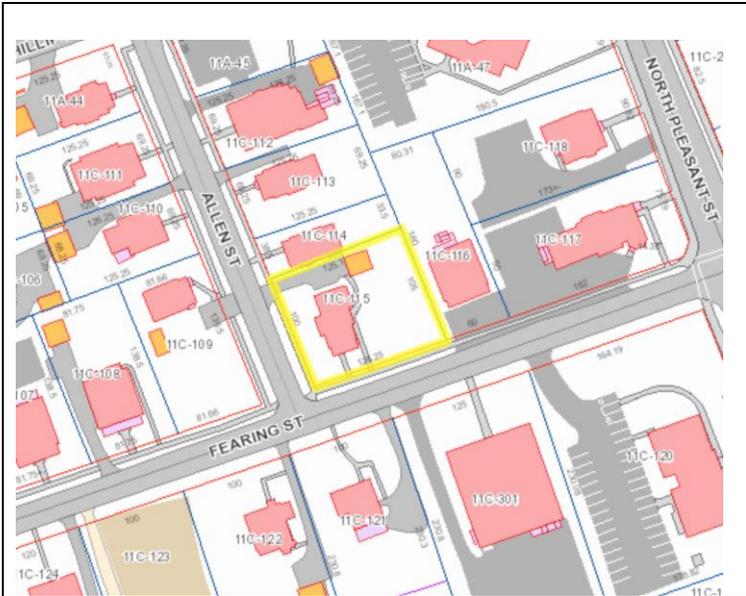
Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .29 acre

Setting: Corner house faces somewhat busy Fearing Street and to the east short, quiet Allen Street. Residential heavily-treed neighborhood of Vernacular, mostly single-family residences of the same age, early 20th century.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Gretchen G. Fox

Organization: LHDSC

Date: October 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

27 FEARING ST

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

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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.***ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

27 Fearing Street is a large, two-and-a-half-story, two-bay Vernacular Farmhouse, built in Cross-Gable style c. 1905. The 15-foot-wide gabled wings intersect with the main house 13 feet beyond its 23-foot-wide façade, projecting three feet on each end. All four gabled roofs project about a foot beyond the cladding, the soffits faced with similar vinyl clapboards, eaves projecting at the base. These serve to emphasize the gabled half-story, a Greek Revival element that, with the cross gables, formalizes the farmhouse. A deep (8-foot) front porch extends just shy of the width of the house, and adds to its commodious appearance. The porch's shed roof is stepped-in three feet on either end, broken by a pediment over the front entry. That narrow door is paired with a narrow window to its left. The porch roof is supported by five Tuscan column posts: a pair at either end, and one marking the right hand side of the entry). The surrounding porch railing with simple balustrade discontinues here, at the top of three wooden steps; this is repeated at the eastern end of the porch and railing.

All windows are 1/1 simply framed. A pair of windows is set close to the eaves in the front half story shuttered as one; two shuttered windows mark the bays on the second story, while the door and east unshuttered window under the porch roof on the first story are set wider apart, to give pyramidal symmetry. Flanking the front elevation, one front-facing window marks each floor of the projecting western wing, the eastern wing being blind above and formed into a three window canted bay below. Fenestration is otherwise proportional and regular, visible on both east and west elevations. The west faces Allen Street, the east faces a garden on Fearing Street.

Two interior brick chimneys straddle the roof ridge of the main wing: a larger one near the crossing, and a smaller one at the rear. The foundation is brick, relatively high, showing more height toward the northwest corner of the house where the land slopes slightly downward. The foundation is pierced on all sides with half windows, mostly welled, below grade.

A 17-foot-long porch runs along the northeast length of the house, projecting 6 feet, creating an entry for the east-facing rear door, approachable from three wooden steps on the south, giving further width to the front elevation. The porch lies a few steps from the east-facing gable roof garage with two bays and sliding barn doors. It lies on a concrete foundation, at the end of a driveway off Allen Street. It is shared with the neighbor to the rear, according to an easement agreement in the deeds. The side of the garage shows as the back of the large side garden.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:

The site of this house, the corner of Fearing and Allen Streets, combines two building lots, 10 and 11, on a subdivision created by Stanley Phillips in 1896 from land he acquired from Henry Fearing that year. This eastern portion of the old Lyman/Henderson Farm, on which land all of Fearing Street lies, was the first to be systematically subdivided and developed. The two lots were combined in 1903 by Thomas J. and Nellie Thurston, who built the house apparently disregarding the covenant imposed by Phillips for the corner lot, first sold separately in 1896 to another buyer, that no house be built within 40 feet of Fearing St. The house lies approximately 20 feet from the curb, the same as other houses on this side of the street. Thurston, according to the 1909 Amherst Street directory, was the town's Selectman, Assessor, and member of the Board of Health.

In 1921, the widowed Nellie Thurston sold the house to Alexander Cance, a noted agricultural economist at MAC, and his wife May. Cance, best known for his work promoting the agricultural cooperative movement in the U.S., had been appointed in 1913 by President Theodore Roosevelt to a committee of seven to study European credit and cooperative agriculture for its applications in this country, which study resulted in a four-volume report to the U.S. Senate in 1914. His international work was especially noteworthy. He published widely, received honorary degrees, and, in 1919, was the Chevalier d'Agriculture in France. In Massachusetts, he was known for marketing research, cost-of-living studies, and a ten-year plan for the Commonwealth's future food supply. Cance Hall, in the UMass Southwest Complex, memorializes him. Cance had joined the MAC faculty in 1909, retired from MSC in 1942, and sold this house in 1949.

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References and Sources

HLR
Amherst assessors records
Amherst Street Directories, 1909, 1937
Amherst Tax records 1903, 1904, 1905.
"Cance, Alexander," filed biographical materials, UMass W.E.B.DuPois Library Archives, SCUA.
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