

FORM B – BUILDING

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

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s)

Form Number

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Form Number

154; 11C-337

Mt. Toby

E

AMH.150

Photograph



Town/City: Amherst

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Amherst Center

Address: 14 Elm Street

Historic Name: Frank E. and Mary Hills Whitman House

Uses: Present: Single-Family Residence

Original: Single-Family Residence

Date of Construction: 1892

Source: *Springfield Republican*, 31 Dec 1892, pp. 9-10

Style/Form: Shingle Style/Queen Anne

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Wood Shingle; Wood

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Garage (modern)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

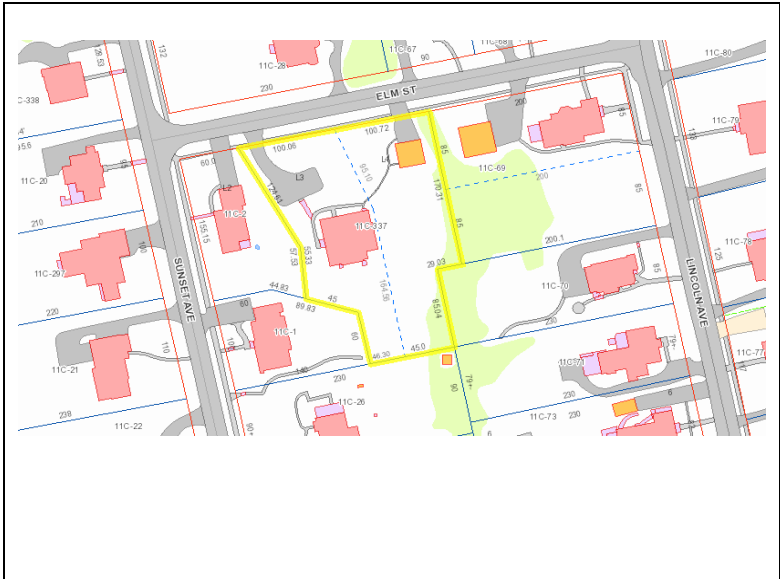
Condition: Excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .689 acres

Setting: This house sits well back from the street. on a large irregular lot in a residential neighborhood with many late-nineteenth-century homes. It faces Sunset Avenue, rather than Elm Street.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Danping Wang/Suzannah Fabing

Organization: LHDSC

Date (*month / year*): November 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AMHERST

14 Elm Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125

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AMH.150

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 house with a gambrel roof and shingled exterior is one of five buildings of this type in Amherst, and, as is typical of the style, each one is unique. This is the only example with a gambrel and cross gable pitched roof. The three-story façade incorporates a Palladian window in the gable and a recessed entrance. The north side elevation features a steeply pitched roofline, multilevel wall surfaces, and a wide exterior brick chimney with an ornamental panel. There is a veranda supported by paired columns along the west façade and a small porch at the northeast corner. The original front door was centered on this side. On the south side, an oriel bay window ornaments the second floor; there is also an oval window. In the gable, a triple window has a higher element in the center. The house boasts seven fireplaces.

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 imposing house was built in 1892 for Frank E. Whitman (1862-1946) and his recent bride, Mary Pitkin (Hills) Whitman (1869-1909). The house's address was originally 25 Sunset Avenue, and its property extended all the way to that street. Under the new numbering system adopted by Amherst around 1937, it was 75 Sunset. At some point after 1970, however, the portion of the land abutting Sunset Avenue was sold as a separate building lot, and the house was given its current address on Elm Street. This explains why its side faces Elm and its front door faces Sunset.

In its year-end wrap-up of building in the region in 1892, the *Springfield Republican* lists a house on Sunset avenue for F.E. Whitman at \$6000. There is a similar listing, at the same valuation, in the wrap-up for 1891, in the name of P.L. Whitman (unclear on digital image). Taxes were assessed on an unfinished house in 1892 and on a finished house the following year. At this cost the house was roughly 1 ½ times as expensive as other fairly grand homes being built on North Pleasant, Lincoln, and Sunset during these years. The clients were clearly well off, and they must have employed an architect, although his name is not known.

Frank Whitman, born in Michigan in 1862, was a member of the Class of 1885 at Amherst College. In June 1891, in Amherst, he married Mary Pitkin Hills, daughter of Henry and Adelaide Hills. Henry F. Hills had reorganized the family's palm-leaf hat factory, but he was also involved in many other enterprises in town: a significant donor of endowment for the MAC and one of the first directors of the Massachusetts Central Railway Company, the Amherst Gas Company and the Amherst Water Company. Mary's parents lived in a grand Victorian mansion at 390 Main Street (AMH.442). Frank Whitman joined the Hills Company, serving as its treasurer.

Mary and Frank had three children: Adelaide (b. 1892), Barrett (b. 1896), and Mary (b. 1898). Following Mary P. Whitman's death in 1909, the family moved to Manhattan. They kept the house in Amherst, however, and lived there in the summer at least through 1919. Roy E. and Rebecca Moser acquired the property in 1938.

Elm Street did not appear on the 1886 Bird's Eye View of Amherst. It is listed in City Directories but with no houses on it until after 1942.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps 1873, 1886

"Investment in Buildings," *Springfield Republican*, 31 December 1892, pp. 9-10.

Continuation sheet 1

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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14 Elm Street

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"Brisk Building in Hampshire," *Springfield Republican*, 1 January 1892, p. 3.

Amherst City Directories 1895-1919

Amherst Street Lists

Amherst Historical Commission, Form B (1988), online in the MACRIS database

Biographical information on Frank E. Whitman and Mary P. (Hills) Whitman at ancestry.com, consulted 17 November 2015.

Biographical note on the Hills family and chronology of the firm, online at https://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/amherst/ma89_bioghist.html. The Hills Family papers are in the Amherst College Archives and Special Collections.

Hampshire County Registry of Deeds, Book 756/283, heirs of Mary Hills Whitman to Frank E. Whitman, 10 April 1920; 934/175 to Roy E. Moser, 27 July 1938. Deeds pertaining to Whitman assembling the property include 451/217 from Stockbridge & Westcott, 5 November 1891; 475/219 from Mason A. Dickinson, 20 May 1895; 491/133 from William T. Reilley, 28 Sept 1896; and 491/161-2 from Stockbridge & Westcott, 24 May 1895.

Town of Amherst tax records for Frank E. Whitman, 1892 and 1893, in the Jones Library Special Collections. Thanks to Ed Wilfert for deed and tax research.