

# 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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## Photograph



**Town/City:** Amherst

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

**Address:** 20 Beston Street

**Historic Name:** The Christopher McLaughlin House

**Uses:** Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

**Date of Construction:** c. 1868-69

**Source:** Amherst Registry of Deeds

**Style/Form:** New Englander / Farmhouse

**Architect/Builder:** unknown

## Exterior Material:

Foundation: painted brick and cinder-block above-grade, stone below, cinder blocks appear on back 3ft of house and garage.

Wall/Trim: fiber-cement on house & plain pine clapboard on garage

Roof: standing seam metal with solar panels

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** yes, garage and workroom. Garage is to the right side at the end of the driveway built to include a work shop

**Major Alterations (*with dates*):** Renovated from a clapboard house with asphalt roof to an energy efficient house with fiber-cement cladding, metal roof, and solar panels between in 2014. The rear 8' of the house has a poured concrete foundation. Garage & workroom entirely rebuilt 2014.

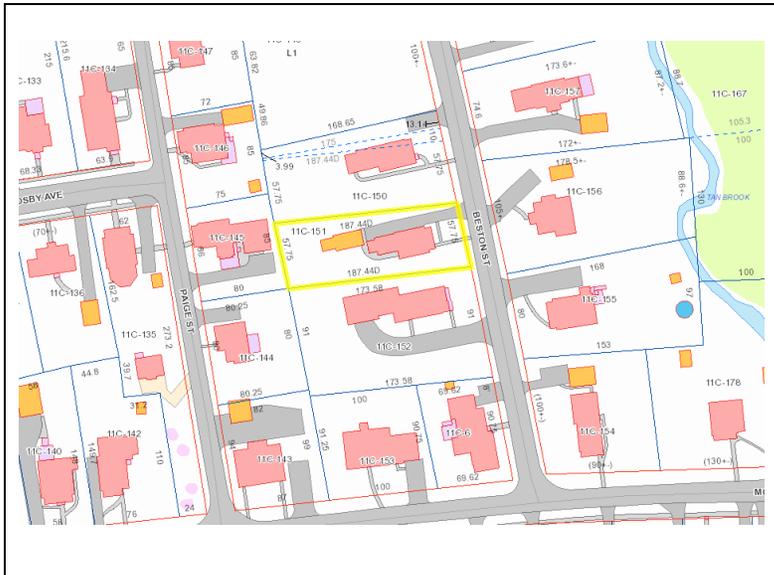
**Condition:** Newly renovated

**Moved:** no     yes     **Date:** NA

**Acreage:** 0.23 acres

**Setting:** rural college town

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Elizabeth Gouin and Maurianne Adams

**Organization:** LHSC

**Date (month / year):** April 2016

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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.*

Similar to the adjacent houses at 14 and 26 Beston St, this 19<sup>th</sup> century farm- house has a gable-ended façade with a front door positioned on the left that leads directly to the stairwell to the second floor. It has a front porch extending across the whole of the front façade, unscreened access to the front door, with a screened segment extending from just to the right of the front door to the far right end of the front facade. Behind the screened porch are the two front windows and another two directly above on the second story. The front door leads to a renovated, open style interior design that includes the original living room to the right opening to the dining room behind and separate study close study to the right of the dining area. The kitchen is located in the rear, with a side entrance facing south and leading from the lawn and garden to the deck and into the kitchen. The façade retains the original farmhouse design, although the building materials were entirely replaced in 2014 to provide for a solar-heated energy self-sufficient farmhouse.

The driveway along the right of the house, leads to a free-standing pine-board garage in back on poured concrete foundation, with a workroom on the left of the garage that has two separate entrances to the work shop to the left (south) of the garage, and that open from the workroom to the garden on the southerly side. Although the house was built 1868-9, the dating for the previous attached workroom and garage is unknown.

**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 area north of Beston Street - extending northwards beyond the H.D. Fearing property and Fearing Street toward what is now the University of Massachusetts Amherst -- was originally farmland owned successively by Theodore Lyman, John Borland and Horace Henderson. The area to the east was owned by Luke Sweetser, a merchant and farmer who raised cattle near the current high school and wanted the land east of what is now Beston Street to provide access to water for his cattle at Tan Brook which runs parallel to

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Beston St. to the east, midway between Beston St and current day East Pleasant St.

Henderson's 80 acre farm was the former Lyman/Borland farm to the north of Beston St. Sweetser, who had bought 4+ acres from Henderson for access to Tan Brook, sold the 4+ acres 116 rods back to Henderson (198/235) on Nov 8, 1860. Henderson at some uncertain date established Beston Street on his westward boundary. The eastern boundary was Tan Brook, reserving Sweeter's dam right.

McClellan Street had been planned as early as 1854, probably for access to the farm to the north at that time owned by Borland. The future Beston Street may have been a farm lane from McClellan Street located due north to the Lyman/Boland/Henderson farm, but the 1860 Walling map shows only the brook, no roads or building in the area. The 1873 revised Beers map (pp. 42-43) shows (but does not name) Beston Street due north from its southerly beginning at McClellan and terminating in the lot identified as H.D. Fearing to the south of Fearing Street. It also shows the house on the southeast corner of the lot, noted on the map as belonging to C. McLaughlin, situated between the property of Jane White to the south (now 14 Beston) and John Bestin (as misspelled on the map) to the north (now 44 Beston).

Beston Street's first residents were mostly Irish immigrant families of modest means, until Erwin Pettyjohn's African American (listed in the censuses as "mulatto") family moved into 44 Beston in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and then bought a double-lot including the house at 17 Beston and an empty lot next door onto which they moved a house from Tillson Court (the house is now 15 Beston). (See Historical narratives for those properties.) Beston runs directly from McClellan and consists of lower-lying land, which drains down from the elevated topography of McClellan and becomes swampy during heavy rainfalls.

Access to a roadway to be built by Horace Henderson on the east side of the 399 sq. rod parcel was promised for all lots, presumably providing access from McClellan to the Henderson farm to the north.

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The west side of what became Beston Street was developed by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farmer and developer Leavitt Hallock, who sold 399 sq. rods of land (about 2.5 acres) to Emeline S. Williams on August 17, 1863, for \$459.69, with a mortgage for the full amount to be paid off by 1868 (Deed Book, 214/p. 30). Also in 1863, Emeline acquired her residence on North Prospect Street, part of Hallock's development there, where she continued to live. Emeline was the wife of Edward Williams (7/16/1814-9/13/1865), a carpenter who died two years after Emeline bought the Beston St property and did not build any of the Beston Street houses. Emeline Williams's 399 rod parcel eventually became the present-day properties at 14, 20, 26, and 44 Beston Street as well as the corner house at 51 McClellan.

On June 3, 1868, Emeline Williams sold the first of several lots, 40 rods fronting McClellan Street, to Benjamin B. Thompson for \$1300 (249/201). The price suggests a building already on that corner lot.

The same date, Emeline Williams sold lots 150 and 151, totaling a half acre (a double lot) to Christopher ("Christy") McLaughlin for \$200 . (These two lots eventually became 20 and 26 Beston). "Christy" McLaughlin (1838-1911), a brick mason from County Kildare, Ireland, had a house (now 20 Beston) built in 1868 and lived there with his wife, Ellen Powers (1842-1898, also from Ireland) and son Walter (age 13 in 1880, born the year before Christy bought the property).

Amherst Tax Records for 1868 show Christopher McLaughlin owning a house valued at \$250 and a half-acre house lot valued at \$125. The family moved away by 1888, but Christopher and Ellen are buried in St. Brigid's cemetery. Christopher's older brother, Thomas McLaughlin (1833-1914) lived around the corner on the western end of McClellan Street and is listed in the 1870 Census and the 1873 Amherst Directory as a laborer. The 1879 Directory lists a Michael as well as Thomas McLaughlin, both with houses on McClellan, but no Christy McLaughlin is listed in the 1879 Directory.

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There are several Powers connections on Beston Street in the 19<sup>th</sup> century - Ellen Powers (Mrs. Christy McLaughlin noted above), the Powers sisters of South Prospect whom two daughters of John Beston Jr. joined for a dressmaker business, and David Powers whom Amy Beston married. But there is no evidence of family connections in the Census or Directory.

The McLaughlin house and half-acre lot (11C/ 150 and 151) were bought by Irish-born sisters Kate and Mary Galligan in August 1888 for \$1300., with only the one house (now 20 Beston) on the lot. Mary Galligan (1863-1937) married Irish-born John J. McGowan (1862-1922) on January 14, 1892 and moved into a house across the street. (See Historical narrative for 25 Beston.)

Kate Galligan (1858-1932), who emigrated with her sister Mary from Ireland in 1890, married a Massachusetts man of Irish parentage, Dennis E. Linnehan (1861-1934), a lineman with the Electric Light company. The Linnehans stayed in the original house (20 Beston) (1888 Amherst Directory) and sold the north half of the lot to Terrance McGowan (1858-1943), a laborer who immigrated in 1888 with two children, and his wife Susan (1858-1925), both Irish-born, who had a house built by 1893 on the empty lot next door to the Linnehans, where they raised a large family - the two children born in Ireland and Scotland, and a third born in Massachusetts. Terrance McGowan was probably a John J. McGowan relative. One of Terrance McGowan's sons was also named John J. McGowan, age 19 in the 1900 Census - a plumber - illustrative of the confusion of tracing home-ownership by names using the Census and Amherst Directory records. [See historical narrative for 31 Beston.]

The Linnehan (#20) and Terrance McGowan (#26) houses are two of the three similarly designed houses at 14 (built c. 1872), 20 (built 1868-9) and 26 Beston Street (built 1893). Street numbers, not assigned until 1937-8 (many but not all street and house addresses appear in an annotated 1937-8 street listing at the Jones Library Special Collections), varied more than usual on Beston Street and it is challenging to assign with certainty which of the McGowan clan lived in specific Beston Street houses. Family relationships are uncertain,

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many members of the family have the same given names (Mary, John), middle initials are not always recorded in Amherst Directories or census reports, and neither directories nor census reports give street addresses when they list family members living under the same roof.

The McGowan twins Agnes and Mary Ann lived in 31 Beston, but owned 20 Beston until 1953, when 20 Beston was granted by Warranty Deed of January 23, 1948 [1028/254] to Alfred E. and Charlotte S Putnam - identified as the same premises that were conveyed to them by the will of Patrick Galligan in 1919. (The 1936-7 renumbering list places Frank D. Kikoski (a meterman) and wife Helen at 12 [renumbered #20], perhaps tenants.) The Putnams then sold the property to Gerald J. and Margaret M. Fitzgerald [1136/399] in 1953 who sold it back to the Putnams in 1978 for \$1 and to A. Edwin & Joyce Putnam for \$0. Its subsequent owners included Edna McGlynn in 1883 (\$51,000.); John & Tammy Gravell in 1989 (\$115,000); John and Barbara Heins in 2000 (\$150,000.); and Lisa Scott (\$268,000).

The current owner, Shirley Griffin, completely renovated the house for environmental self-sufficiency, retaining the original footprint but replacing the exterior with environmental updates: solar panels, new windows, a metal roof, and fiber-cement cladding. She added a side deck and built a large rear workroom of pine.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Research done by Ed Wilfert and Maurianne Adams via Deed Books, Maps, Registries, and Tax Records at the Jones Library.

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