

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

11C-158	Mt. Toby	E	AMH.
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Town/City: Amherst

Place: Amherst Center

Photograph



Address: 31 Beston Street

Historic Name: John G. and Mary G. McGowan House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1910-1911

Source: Tax assessment forms and Sanborn Maps

Style/Form: Farmhouse

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick with fieldstone below grade

Wall/Trim: Aluminum

Roof: Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: frame shed and greenhouse

Major Alterations (with dates):

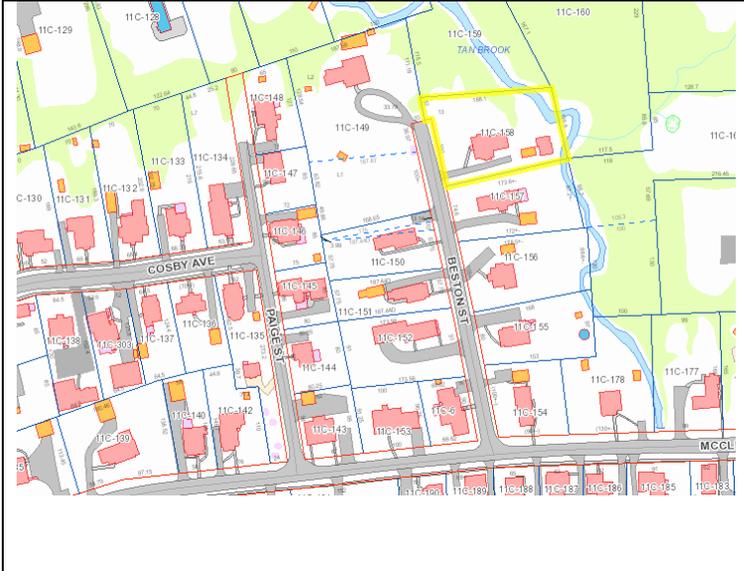
Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.50 acres

Setting: rural college town

Locus Map



Recorded by: E. Gouin, E. Wilfert, M. Adams

Organization: LSHD

Date (month / year): April 2016

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AMHERST

31 BESTON 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.

House sits on a small hill on the eastern side of the terminus of the Beston Street cul-de-sac. A full two story structure with unfinished attic. The central front door is flanked by a window on each side of the doorway. The first floor entry and windows are shaded by a farmer's porch that extends along the entire façade. Four porch pillars are simple square beams with no brackets; a shirt railing with vertical slats enclose the lower edge of the porch. Three windows, evenly spaced, are on the second story of the front façade, with a side window and attic window facing south. Recent renovations added solar panels for hot water heating, a large rear sliding door opening onto a new deck that faces into the woods and Tan Brook to the west of the house.

A narrow, two-story extension is located at the back of the house, extending east. A greenhouse and shed in poor condition are also found at the back of the property.

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 east side of Beston Street came through the hands of Horace Henderson who put the road in. The earlier history for the east side of the roadway places it as part of the Cows Farm, abutting the estate of H.D. Fearing to the north and east, and adjacent to Henderson's property to the west. Osmyn Baker sold a parcel to Luke Sweetser (June 5, 1854, 198/235), a local farmer who raised cattle and presumably wanted the water rights at Tan Brook.

Tan Brook is a year-round watercourse flowing through this and twelve other properties and bordering five others between McClellan Street and UMass, 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 19th 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 20th century, through the school grounds between Strong and Triangle Streets, beneath the East Pleasant Street commercial district, continuing under

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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. Downstream, Tan Brook waters the UMass pond and flows west through Hadley, until it empties into the Connecticut River.

On November 8, 1860 Henderson bought 4 acre 116 rods from Luke Sweetser for \$826.37 with dam rights and road easement reserved for Sweetser (198/235). On Nov 15, 1866, Henderson sold 1 acre 2 rods lot back to Sweetser for \$250 (241/86) and November 27, 1868, Sweetser sold the same lot to Patrick Canavan for \$700.(257/123-4).

The price difference suggests that Irish-born Patrick Canavan built a house on the lot between 1866-68, but evidence from tax assessments and Sanborn maps suggest that the house he built is now identified as 25 Beston, not the 31 Beston house. (See Historical Narrative for 25 Beston.) The 1868 tax records assign a \$500 house and \$200 lot evaluation to Patrick Canavan, and the 1869 Amherst Director gives McClellan as his address, there being no official Beston Street at that time. The MA Vital Records for 1869 show that Patrick Canavan, a widower, died November 23, 1869 of typhoid fever and that he is buried in Hadley, MA.

The entire one acre 2 rod lot that went with the house now identified as 25 Beston, passed from the heirs of Patrick Canavan to his son, Michael Canavan, for \$400 on Jan 31, 1874 (308/270). Michael Canavan sold the property to Michael McGrath a year later, on 5/18/1875 for \$800 (318/33) so that McGrath could secure the land east of Tan Brook and McGrath then sold $\frac{3}{4}$ acre to Michael Canavan's wife Bridget Canavan on March 18, 1881 (361/333) for the same price that consisted of the land west of Tan Brook.

Michael Canavan died March 23, 1892, age 46 and on November 10, 1892 his widow, Bridget Canavan, sold the $\frac{3}{4}$ acre parcel and house to Mary Galligan for \$1100 (454/299) This double lot would ultimately house 25 and 31 Beston Street, but that was many years late. Mary Galligan had been living across the street with her sister Kate at 20 Beston St. in the house on the McClaughlin

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double lot, which Kate and her husband Dennis E. Linnehan then divided for sale to Terrance McGowan. (See historical narratives for 20 and 26 Beston.) While Kate Galligan and her husband Dennis Linnehan stayed at 20 Beston, Kate's sister, Mary Galligan (1863-1937), who had married Irish-born John J. McGowan (1862-1922) on January 14, 1892, bought the property across the street and moved into the house (most likely) that was standing at the time, namely 25 Beston.

Street numbers, not assigned until 1938-9 (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 during this period. Family relationships are uncertain, 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.

Although it has not been possible to identify evidence beyond tax assessments, Amherst Directories, and the simple box drawings on the 1873 Beers map and the 1910 and 1916 Sanborn maps, to firmly establish whether John and Mary McGowan initially moved into the house that is now 25 Beston or the house that is now 31 Beston and with which they later became identified, it is clear that by 1911 they had built a house at 31 Beston and were living there. Tax assessments show that in 1910 there was one house on this property (located by the 1910 Beers map where the Cape at #25 Beston sits) and by 1911 there were two houses. Tax valuations in 1909 and 1910 show John McGowan assessed \$350 for one house and \$125 for a building lot of 107 rods. But the 1911 valuation has the one house assessed at \$350 and a second house also assessed for \$350.

The 1910 Directory gives John McGowan's address as 11 (become 25) Beston and the 1912 Directory places him at 15 (now 31) Beston, evidence that points to the John McGowans moving into new larger and house by 1912, once it had

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been built by 1911. The 1919 Directory has McGowans living at 15 (renumbered 31) Beston: Agnes (a bookkeeper) and her twin sister Mary [Ann] (employed by H.C. Shumway) along with brother John (laborer). The 1920 Census indicates that John J. McGowan (age 45) and Mary G[alligan] McGowan (his wife, age 55) (both Irish) had twin daughters born in Massachusetts, Agnes and Mary, age 22.

In the 1923 through 1935 directories, family members were still living at 15 (becomes 31) Beston, the twin daughters in a range of clerical and bookkeeping positions, the son John as a self-employed laborers.

In 1927, John McGowan (then age 53) is still at 15 (renumbered later as 31) Beston which was assessed at \$2200, with a barn and garage each assessed at \$50 and 107 square rods assessed at \$250. But he was still paying taxes on 11 (becomes 25) Beston, of \$1100, with \$100 for a shop and 120 rods of land at \$250. His adult daughters, Agnes and Mary McGowan, both working as bookkeepers, also owned a house at 18 (old numbering system) McClellan valued at \$1900 with a barn and shack (\$125) and 27 rods of land (\$300) and they have also own 12 (20) Beston (\$1100) with 40 rods (\$250). (Terence McGowan is stil; at 14 [26] McGowan, the house worth \$1200, the barn \$50, and 40 rods at \$250).

The 1938 Amherst Directory gives the new house numbering system, and shows Agnes and Mary [Ann] both at 31 Beston, employed as clerk and cashier at WMECo in Greenfield. The Jones Library Special Collections has a photograph of an elaborate religious "Catholic cake" in the home of Mary A. McGowan, 31 Beston, dated 27 December 1941. Amherst Plan Book 83, p. 20 shows a plan for the property prepared for owner Mary A. McGowan (23 June 1972) and shows the estate of H.D. Fearing (Book 3, p. 73) to the north and east (still wooded), with Tan Brook cutting across both the north-east and south east edges of the property. The property of Josephine Fellers Averill (at 52 Fearing) abuts the northern line, mainly Tan Brook wetlands.

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On August 1, 1982 (1650/133), Mary C. Jackson bought 31 Beston St. from Agnes C. and Mary Ann McGowan who had been granted the property through Quitlaim Covenants from their mother, Mary G[alligan] McGowan, widow of John J. McGowan (see 885/154). The Mary C. Jackson Living Trust sold the property to current owner Deborah Friedlander (and her then husband Eric Goldscheider) on July 1, 1999, with subsequent remodeling to include solar panels and a back porch.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Amherst Directories

Tax Assessments

Census reports

Jones Library Special Collections manuscripts