

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

20/88A [] [] [] 2194

Town/City: Lexington

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



West (façade) and south elevations

Address: 81-83 Bow Street

Historic Name:

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1918-1930

Source: historic maps, town directories, U.S. census

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: vinyl siding and trim

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Detached garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Artificial siding, rear addition (L 20th c)

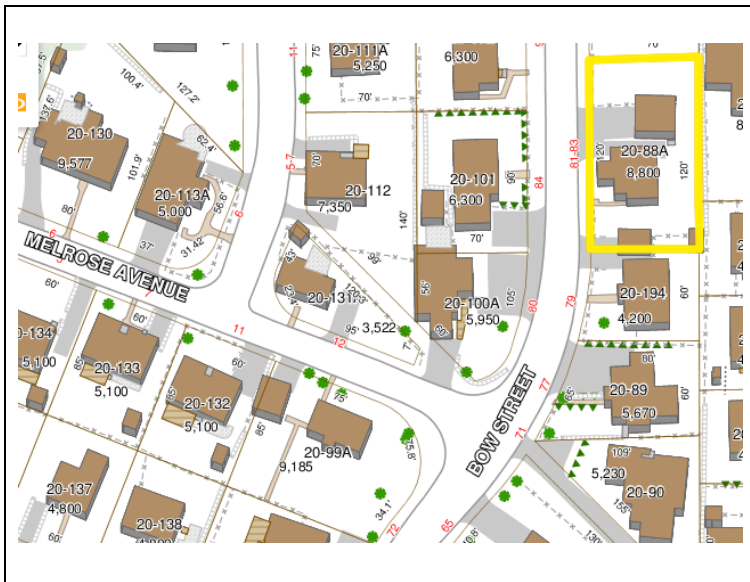
Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.20

Setting: Near the intersection of Bow Street and Melrose Avenue, in a dense residential neighborhood. Buildings are of varying size and scale, predominantly early to mid 20th century construction.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Wendy Frontiero

Organization: Lexington Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): September 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

81-83 BOW STREET

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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.

81-83 Bow Street is two-family house occupying a wide, flat lot. The property has a small side yard of lawn on one side and pavement on the other, with few foundation plantings. The building has no front setback. A paved sidewalk leads to a broad front stairway with brick risers, bluestone treads, and iron railings. Another paved walkway leads to a side doorway. The building consists of a nearly square main block, a large rear addition, and a detached garage. The left side yard is paved between the street and the garage; the outer end is maintained in lawn.

The two by two bay main block rises 2 ½ stories in height from a concrete foundation to a high hip roof with a center chimney. The walls are clad and trimmed with vinyl. Windows typically have 1/1 double hung sash. The front façade (west elevation) contains a two-story angled bay window on the left bay, which extends to a one-story projection with a shed roof and offset doorway. The bay window has one window in each exposed face; the entry projection has two narrow windows flanking the doorway and two windows above on the second story. Two tall, conjoined dormers with gable roofs and flat thin fascia boards are centered in the front slope of the main roof, each containing one window.

The south (right side) elevation of the main block contains irregular, asymmetrical fenestration of varying sizes and head heights. A large gabled dormer on this elevation has no returns and one window. The north (left side) elevation of the main block contains two asymmetrical window bays and a gabled dormer with no returns, a narrow flat fascia and one window. A one-room deep, two-story addition with a shed roof extends across the full length of the back of the house. It has one window on each floor of the north (left side) elevation, and three varied windows on its south (right side) elevation. Its south elevation also contains a shallow entry vestibule with a shed roof, single-leaf door facing the street, and sliding glass door leading to a raised wood deck. A gabled dormer is just visible on the back slope of the main roof.

Constructed of concrete block, the garage has two individual vehicle bays and a high hip roof. One 1/1 window is centered on each side wall.

The architectural integrity of 81-83 Bow Street has suffered from the loss of original siding and trim, but remains an ambitious example of early 20th century suburban housing in Lexington. The house is notable for its large size and scale, ample roof, multiple dormers, two-story bay window and integral entry vestibule, and original or early garage.

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 neighborhood centered around Bow Street and Hillcrest, Cliffe, and Rindge avenues covers a steep hillside between Massachusetts Avenue and Lowell Street along the Arlington town line. The Great Meadows and Arlington Reservoir are located to the west and east, respectively. By 1898, a very short stub of road between Mass. Avenue and the B&M Railroad tracks is labeled Bow Street. North of the tracks, it continues as a pathway to a farmhouse identified as J. A. Wilson. The 1899 directory identifies a James Wilson, farmer and market gardener, with a house off Bow, and a James A. Wilson, market gardener, with a house on Bow. The land remained undeveloped as part of the Wilson Farm until at least 1906.

Most of the streets here were laid out and platted for house lots by 1927; development most likely began after 1918. Development slowly crept up the hillside through the early and mid 20th century, most densely along the grid of streets closest to Massachusetts Avenue. The Wilson farm remained in existence east of Bow Street (in the area now traversed by South Rindge

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Street) until at least 1950, at which time it encompassed a substantial farmhouse and greenhouse and two other large outbuildings.

The area was likely developed in response to the electric street railway, which began service on Mass. Avenue in 1899. Like Liberty Heights to the south of Massachusetts Avenue (which it resembles, architecturally; LEX.Q), this neighborhood—known as Massachusetts Avenue Terrace and Arlington Heights Terrace— was laid out by Jacob W. Wilbur, a prolific Brookline developer. Wilbur typically sited his subdivisions near streetcar lines and appealed to working class residents.

Bow Street appears to have been laid out between 1918 and 1920, when five households are listed on this road. 81-83 Bow Street was likely built as a two-family house. The first known occupants are the Santosuosso family, who were here (at both #81 and #83) from at least 1930 through 1965. In 1930, Benigno Santosuosso (1890-1940), who was working as a coal truck driver (he was previously a chauffeur and later worked in a lab), lived here with his wife Maria (born in Italy) and their seven young children. Renting an apartment in the house in that year were Herbert S. Seeley, a house painter, his wife Margaret, and two boarders, one a packer in a candy factory, the other a coal truck driver. Family members who later lived at this address included Benigno's wife Maria (through at least 1965), and several younger Santosuossos: Mary, described as a clothing worker and later as a factory worker (1945 and 1955); Generino, who was in the Navy (1945); Angelo R., a metal worker (1955), and Benny A., a metal worker, and his wife Mary A. (1965).

Other families who have occupied the house include Edward Dattaoli, a mechanic at Colonial Garage, and his wife Susie in 1936, and Felix F. Costanza, "general work", and his wife Louise in 1945.

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Lexington Directories: 1899, 1908-09, 1915, 1922, 1924, 1934, 1936

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



North and west (façade) elevations



North and west (façade) elevations