

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

20 CHARLES STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	2204
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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.

20 Charles Street occupies a small lot at the corner of Stevens Road. The land slopes down gently from right to left across the site. Set at the front left corner of its parcel, the house has a minimal front setback; the yard is maintained chiefly in lawn. A short asphalt sidewalk leads from the sidewalk to the front entrance. A paved driveway extends to the left of the house. The building consists of a 1 ½ story main block with a rear appendage.

The main block rises from a fieldstone foundation with deeply recessed mortar joints to a front gambrel roof with a center chimney and a flared roof skirt joining the ends of the gambrel and separating the upper and lower floors. Walls are sheathed with clapboards and trimmed with flat corner boards and a narrow bed molding at the eaves. Windows typically have 1/1 double hung replacement sash with a narrow band molding. The front façade (west elevation) contains an off-center, single-leaf door accessed by stone steps; it is flanked by a small horizontal window to the right and two 1/1 windows to the left. Centered in the half-story are three loosely grouped windows, comprised of a large 1/1 window flanked by a narrow 1/1 window on either side. All three half-story windows have diamond-paned lights in their upper sash.

The symmetrical left (north side) elevation contains a tripartite window unit centered between two single windows in the outer bays. A shed-roofed dormer with a single window projects above the back end of the gambrel roof. The irregular south (right side) elevation of the main block features two small awning windows and a single 1/1 window towards the back. A one-story, shed-roofed extension spans the entire length of the back elevation and projects beyond the right side of the main block. It has a shed-roofed dormer with a single window on the right (south) side. Lined by a modern wood deck, the rear elevation of the extension features two 1/1 windows and a bow window.

Well preserved and well maintained, 20 Charles Street is representative of modest, early 20th century suburban housing in Lexington. The house is notable for its simple, intact massing; rustic masonry foundation; distinctive front-gambrel roof; and diamond-paned window sash at the front façade.

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 small grid of streets bordered by Massachusetts Avenue, Hibbert Street, Taft Avenue, and Bowker Street represents an early area of suburban infill in East Lexington, near the Arlington town line. Immediately south of Taft Avenue is Liberty Heights (LEX.Q), a hilltop subdivision laid out by Brookline developer Jacob W. Wilbur in 1909 and developed in the teens and twenties. The growth of both these neighborhoods followed the arrival of the electric street railway on Massachusetts Avenue in 1899 and was directed at working class residents.

In the area adjacent to Massachusetts Avenue known as Dexter Hillside, Hibbert and Sylvia streets, which straddle the Lexington/Arlington line, were laid out, platted, and partially developed by 1898. The only other evidence of development here at that time is the L-shaped beginning of Charles and Cherry streets, where ten house lots were laid out but vacant. By 1927, both Charles and Bowker streets extended from Massachusetts Avenue to Taft Avenue, and the western ends of Cherry Street, Stevens (then Cary) Road, and Camden (then Smythe) Street pushed a few lots eastward from Charles. Development was gradual through the 1920s and 30s and was virtually complete, with the present network of streets, by 1950.

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The house at 20 Charles Street appears on the 1927 map with what seems to be a full-length front porch and a small accessory building, likely a garage, at the back left corner. The first known residents at this address, in 1930, were Francis P. Stymast, foreman in a retail ice business, his wife Sadie M. (both born in Canada), and their eight children, the oldest of whom worked as a sales girl in a five-and-ten-cent store. Subsequent occupants included Stanley Doucette, a salesman, and his wife Pansy F. (1945), and Milton E. Merksamer a financial officer, and his wife Jean R. (1955 and 1965). Carole R. Merksamer, a clerk-typist, was also living here in 1965.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Historic maps and atlases: Walling 1853; Beers 1875; Walker 1889; Stadly 1898; Walker 1906; Sanborn 1908, 1918, 1927, 1935, 1935/1950.
- Lexington Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey, Period and Area Summaries.
<http://historicsurvey.lexingtonma.gov/index.htm> Accessed Jul 23, 2015.
- Lexington Directories: 1899, 1908-09, 1922, 1928, 1934, 1936, 1938, 1942.
- Lexington *List of Persons*: 1935, 1945, 1955, 1965.
- Massachusetts Historical Commission. "MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Lexington." 1980.
_____. Form A – Liberty Heights, LEX.Q. Prepared by Anne Grady and Nancy Seasholes, 1984 and 2001.
- U.S. Census: 1920, 1930, 1940.

SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



West (façade) and south elevations