

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

26 CLIFFE AVENUE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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| | 2207 |
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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.

26 Cliffe Avenue occupies a small corner lot at the corner with modest setbacks along its street frontages. The house sits on a low berm above street level. Its front yard is heavily landscaped with shrubs; the side and back yards are maintained chiefly in lawn. At the front yard, a concrete walkway and concrete steps lead to the front porch. A garage stands behind the house along Theresa Avenue, accessed by a paved driveway. The house consists of a nearly square main block with a side addition.

The main block rises 1 ½ stories from a stone foundation to a hip roof with a center chimney at the ridge line. The walls are sheathed in vinyl with vinyl trim. Windows typically have 1/1 double hung sash with band molding. A front porch whose shed roof extends the slope of the main roof covers most of the front façade (east elevation); it comprises square posts, vinyl half walls, and a center entrance. Three 1/1 windows are set to the left of the off-center single-leaf door, and a small square window is to the right of the entry. Centered on the front slope of the main roof, a hip-roofed dormer contained paired windows.

The north (right side) elevation contains a casement window on the first floor. A hip-roofed dormer is centered above in the half-story, with one double-hung window and a pair of smaller casement windows. Towards the back of this elevation is a one-story addition (perhaps an enclosed sunporch), which is set on a wood post foundation and capped by a shed roof. Clad in vinyl, it contains four 1/1 windows on its elevation facing Cliffe Avenue. The south (left side) elevation of the main block contains one single window and a group of paired windows; a half-story dormer above has a hip roof and paired windows on its face.

The west (rear) elevation of the main block contains two windows and a gable-roofed entrance vestibule. Centered on the back slope of the roof is a hip-roofed dormer with two windows.

A one-bay garage with a front gable roof stands at the back of the house, facing Theresa Avenue. This structure is also clad in vinyl.

Although it has lost architectural integrity through the application of artificial siding and trim, 26 Cliffe Avenue retains its characteristic building form and massing and is typical of modest, early 20th century suburban housing in Lexington. It is notable for its solid proportions, multiple dormer windows, front porch, and early or original 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.

Cliffe Avenue was laid out by 1922, when 13 households resided on the street, all in unnumbered houses. The house at 26 Cliffe Avenue first appears on the historic maps in 1927. Its first known occupants are the Stanbrook family, consisting of Alfred (a cigar packer), his wife Henrietta, their son Alfred J. (an inspector for an adding machine company in Boston), and his wife Lillian E., who moved here between 1930 and 1931. Alfred, Henrietta, and Alfred J. Stanbrook were all born in England; they lived in this house until at least 1935. By 1945, two other couples were identified at this address: Charles J. McDonnell, a machinist, and his wife Helen B., and John J. Gaudy, a baker, and his wife Katherine E., a telephone operator. Subsequent occupants included Thomas A. Clear, identified as a supervisor and a manager, and his wife Ann M. (1955 and 1965)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Boston Directories: 1913, 1918, 1931.

Cambridge Directories: 1928, 1930.

Historic maps and atlases: Walling 1853; Beers 1875; Walker 1889; Stady 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, 1915, 1922, 1924, 1932, 1934, 1936

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.

SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



West (back) and south elevations