

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

20/166    2208

**Town/City:** Lexington

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

## Photograph



Garage and left side elevation of main house

**Address:** 84 Cliffe Avenue

**Historic Name:**

**Uses:** Present: residential

Original: residential

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1918

**Source:** historic maps, town directories

**Style/Form:** Dutch Colonial Revival

**Architect/Builder:**

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: unknown

Wall/Trim: wood shingles and trim

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

Detached garage

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):

?

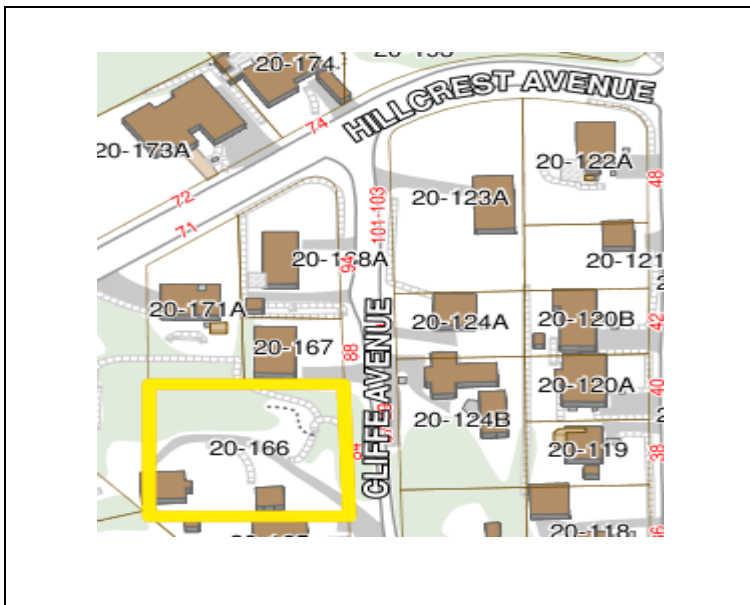
**Condition:** fair to poor

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

**Acreage:** 0.39

**Setting:** Located near the intersection of Hillcrest and Cliffe avenues in a dense residential neighborhood. Buildings are of varying size and scale and 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

84 CLIFFE AVENUE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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.*

84 Cliffe Avenue occupies a large, steep, wooded lot. Set well back from the street, the house is barely visible from a public way. A gravel driveway leads diagonally up from the street, through the center of the property and up to the house, which stands near the side property line. Fieldstone retaining walls are positioned at the front of the lot. A small garage is positioned between Cliffe Avenue and the house. The house consists of a 1 ½ -story gambrel block with a substantial side extension. For purposes of this description, the front of the house is assumed to be the gambrel end facing the right side of the lot.

The rectangular main block rises 1 ½ stories under a large gambrel roof. A two-story extension with a low-pitched shed roof runs the full length of the right side of the main block. (On the 1935 map, this extension was only one-story high.) Assessors records show that the walls are clad with wood shingles; wood trim is apparent. A narrow interior chimney rises near the center of the interface between the gambrel and shed roofs. Only one window of the house is visible from the street: a 1/1 double hung sash in a shed-roofed dormer on the left side of the main block, facing the Cliffe Avenue.

Assessors' records and views of the building available from Bing maps were consulted for further information on the building's appearance. One window appears to be centered in the half story of the front gambrel end, and a large one-story porch with a flat roof wraps around the left front corner of the house. Assessors' records show a small appendage on the rightmost bay of the front facade that may be an entrance vestibule. Four individual windows seem to be regularly arrayed across the right side elevation, on the shed-roofed extension of the main block. Two windows appear to be centered in the half-story of the back gambrel end, and assessors' records show a narrow porch along a portion of the back elevation.

The garage is set downhill of the house, near the side property line. This structure has a shallow-pitched, front gable roof and two pairs of hinged, double-leaf doors, each with vertical wood panels and eight lights above. Wood clapboards, plain flat trim, and flush veneer plywood are visible in the tympanum of the gable. Side elevations are not visible from the street; assessors' records identify the garage as a metal shed.

Although its architectural integrity could not be assessed from the streetside view, 84 Cliffe Avenue appears to be a representative example of modest, early 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban housing in Lexington. It is distinctive for its gambrel roof, secluded setting on a comparatively large lot, and original/early garage, which appears largely intact.

## 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 were located on the street, all in unnumbered houses. The section of Cliffe Avenue on which this building stands is not illustrated in the 1927 map, but the house at #84 appears in its present configuration by 1935. Its first known occupants are Albert J. Egan, a motorman with the Boston Elevated company, and his wife Elizabeth, who are identified on Cliffe Avenue as early as 1918, when the houses had no street numbers; they were certainly at this address by 1930. In 1934, Albert Egan and a much younger Blanche E. Egan, possibly his daughter, occupied the house. Subsequent residents of the property, from at least 1945 through 1965, included the Przyjemski family, which consisted of the elderly Alexandra, John, an upholsterer, and his wife Marcella in 1945 and 1955; and John, Marcella, and their two sons (both in the Navy) in 1965. The present owner of the house is Paul Przyjemski.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Arlington Directories: 1910.

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, 1918, 1922, 1926, 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: 1910, 1920, 1930.

## SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Garage: Front (façade) elevation