

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

20/124B [] [] [] 2209

Town/City: Lexington

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



North and west (façade) elevations

Address: 87 Cliffe Avenue

Historic Name:

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1918-30

Source: historic maps, U.S. census

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: fieldstone

Wall/Trim: vinyl siding and trim

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Not visible from the street

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Artificial siding (L 20th c)

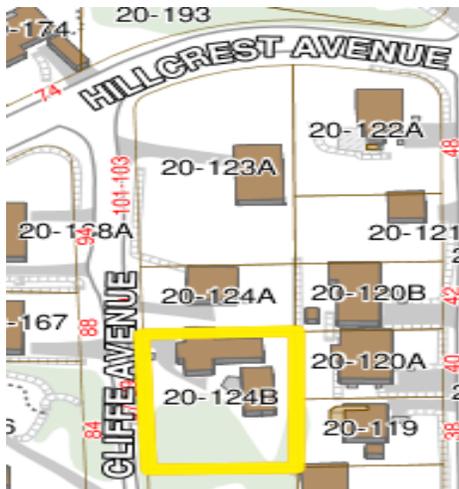
Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.25

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

87 CLIFFE AVENUE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	2209
--	------

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.

87-89 Cliffe Avenue occupies a modest lot that slopes steeply down from the street behind the house. Shrubs, lawn, and decorative stone paths comprise the front yard, while the larger yard on the right side contains mostly lawn and mature trees. The building is positioned at the front left corner of the parcel, with a paved drive in front of the building. A stone walkway, framed by sturdy cobblestone pillars, leads to the front entry. The T-shaped building consists of a 1 ½ story main block with a substantial rear wing.

The rectangular main block rises from a fieldstone foundation to a side gable roof with gable returns and dentils and modillion blocks at the eaves. Each end wall has an interior chimney. Walls are sheathed in vinyl with vinyl trim. Windows typically have 1/1 or 4/4 double hung sash. The front façade (west elevation) has a substantial projecting center entry vestibule with a low flat roof and dentils and modillion blocks at the eaves. The entry comprises a center single-leaf door framed by half-height sidelights and a paneled wood header above. Each side of the vestibule contains a pair of 8-light casement windows with a paneled wood header. A molded wood band rings the vestibule above the window and door heads. To each side of the entrance vestibule is a tri-partite window unit with 1/1 sash. The front slope of the roof contains three gabled dormers, all with gable returns, crown moldings on their raking fascia boards, and dentilled eaves. A large dormer is centered over the entrance vestibule; its 4/4 center window is trimmed with a bold cornice molding on small modillion brackets. The side dormers are smaller and slightly off-center in their bays; each contains one 4/4 window.

The side elevations are not easily visible from the street due to surrounding trees. The south (right side) elevation of the main block contains a partially exposed basement, due to the slope of the site, four 4/4 windows on the upper levels, and a side door with a stone and concrete stair. Similarly, the north (left side) elevation main block contains an exposed basement level and six 4/4 windows. Due to the steepness of the sloping parcel, the rear wing rises 2 ½ stories to a gable roof and features an interior chimney, 4/4 windows, and a center dormer on both long sides.

Well maintained, 87 Cliffe Avenue is an uncommonly stylish example of small-scale, early 20th century suburban housing in Lexington. Although it has lost architectural integrity due to the application of artificial siding, the house is remarkable for its decorative eave trim, emphatic dormers, unusually detailed entrance vestibule, and the cobblestone pillars at the street edge.

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

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

87 CLIFFE AVENUE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	2209
--	------

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 #87 appears in its present configuration by 1935. Its first known occupants, from at least 1930 through 1965, were the Julin family. In the former year, the household consisted of Gustaf, a cabinetmaker and carpenter (born in Sweden; 1880-1967), Vanja, their five sons, and a small family that boarded with them: Ralph M. Roberts, a building contractor, his wife Alvene, and their young daughter.

Gustaf Julin was identified at this address from 1930 through 1965; Vanja was here at least through 1945. The house officially became two-family (with the compound street numbers) by 1945, when Edward T. Donahue, in the Navy, and his wife Hilda C. were living at #89; Gustaf, Vanja, and John (in the Army) were at #87 in that year. In 1955 and 1965, Gustaf Julin lived in the house with Norman Julin, a plasterer, and his wife Wilhelmina J.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Ancestry.com. U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2011. Original data: Social Security Administration. Social Security Death Index, Master File. Social Security Administration.
- 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, 1922, 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: 1930.

SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



West (façade) elevation