

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

Town/City: Lexington

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

Address: 19 Hancock Street

Historic Name: Norman Locke Skene House

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1921

Source: assessors' records, historic maps

Style/Form: Tudor Revival

Architect/Builder: Ralph H. Hannaford

Exterior Material:

Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: brick and brick with brick trim

Roof: terra cotta tile

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Re-pointing (L 20th – E 21st c)

Condition: good to excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.31

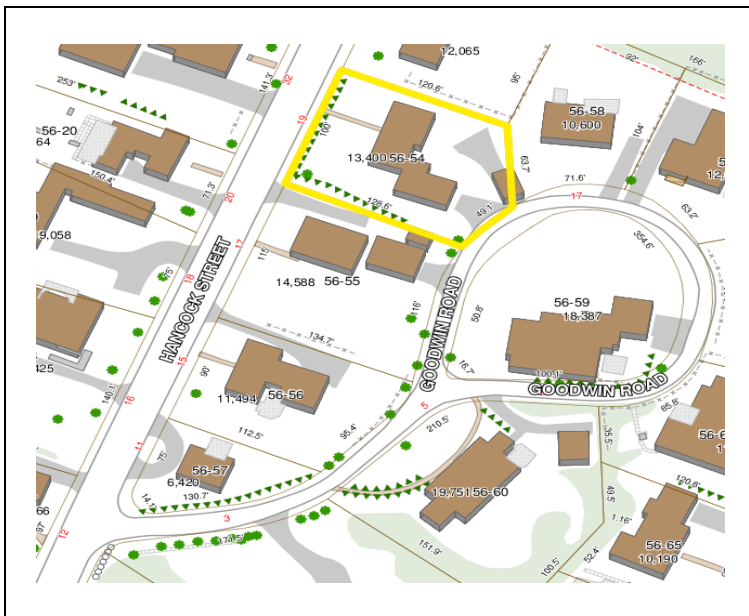
Setting: Located on main thoroughfare between Lexington center and northeast Lexington, near intersection with Mass. Avenue. Densely developed residential neighborhood with most houses built from the 19th through early 20th centuries.

Photograph



North and west (facade) elevations

Locus Map



Recorded by: Wendy Frontiero

Organization: Lexington Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): September 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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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.

19 Hancock Street occupies a large lot that slopes up gradually to the rear. Maintained chiefly in lawn, the property includes an evergreen hedge at the front and foundation plantings. A straight brick walkway extends between the house and the street and is lined with shrubbery. The building consists of a 2 story main block and a wing at the back right corner, which contains a carport accessed from Goodwin Circle.

The rectangular main block rises two stories to a side gable roof (no gable returns) with a saltbox form on the right side. The roof of the main block is clad with terra cotta tile. A two-story cross-gabled wing on the left side of the house projects slightly; at the interface of the two volumes is a wide entrance pavilion with a steep gable roof, large recessed entryway, and a thin rectangular window centered in the peak. Walls are clad in brick veneer in an English cross bond pattern of alternating course of headers and stretchers. "Live edge" wood siding sheathes the gable peaks of the main block and the visible elevations of the rear wing. Windows typically have multi-light, steel casement sash with brick sills and wood or metal-faced lintels. An exterior chimney rises from the right side elevation of the main block, and an end wall chimney on the right rear wing is flush with but exposed on the exterior sheathing; both chimneys have terra cotta chimney pots.

The façade has a variety of asymmetrically set single, double, and triple window sash. The right side elevation contains an exterior chimney in the center, flanked by two windows of various sizes on the first floor and one window on the second floor. The left side elevation has brick buttress elements extending from the front and rear wall planes, asymmetrical windows of various sizes, and a single-leaf doorway offset towards the front.

The right rear wing has a gable roof parallel to the portion of the main block to which it is attached. Its saltbox roof accommodates a change of level between the front and back elevations, a large pair of 12-light windows at the front façade, and an open upper level at the back.

Well preserved and generally well maintained, 19 Hancock Street is an idiosyncratic version of the locally distinctive Tudor Revival style, executed on a relatively large scale. Although it suffers from inappropriate re-pointing, the house is notable for its picturesque massing, unusual brick coursing pattern and side buttresses, tile roof and chimney pots, use of steel sash and live edge siding, and formal setting.

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.

Established by the early 18th century, Hancock Street is one of the radial roads leading outward from the meeting house in the town center. Numerous houses were already in place along the street by 1853, and by 1875 fashionable residences occupied most of the western side of the street. The eastern side of Hancock Street borders Merriam Hill and was more sparsely developed. By 1898, this property was part of a small, planned development known as Colonial Park, which consisted of 10 lots laid out around the loop road now called Goodwin Drive on what had been the estate of M. H. Merriam. Merriam moved to Oakland Street and left his house standing in the center of the loop road.

Assessors' records for 19 Hancock Street show a construction date of 1921, which is generally supported by the historical records. The house appears on the historic maps between 1918 and 1927. The house was built for a prominent naval architect, Norman Skene (1878-1932), who graduated from MIT's School of Naval Architecture in 1901 and became pre-eminent as a

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designer and builder of yachts and power boats. Skene was also well known as an author of books and articles on vessel design.

By 1930, the house was occupied by Charles P. Nelson, an investment broker in a bond office, his wife Margery, their two young children, and a maid (1930). The Nelson family remained at this address at least through 1935. By 1945, 19 Hancock Street was occupied by Henry C. Wiltshire, who worked in the candy manufacturing business, and his wife Catherine E. By 1965, Herbert H. Glassman, an architect, was living here with his wife Anne S. The Glassmans' son Jack has written a detailed history of the house that is appended at the end of this form. The Glassman family still owns the property.

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 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.

Personal communication between Jack Glassman and Marilyn Fenollosa, Aug 26, 2015.

U.S. Census: 1920, 1930, 1940.

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



West (facade) and south elevations



West (facade) and south elevations



Interior: Mantel



Interior: Coat of arms

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HISTORY OF 19 HANCOCK STREET**Jack Glassman AIA, 2009**

The house at 19 Hancock Street was erected ca. 1921, following drawings prepared by "R. H. Hannaford, Arch't., 100 Boylston St., Boston." A resident of Wellesley, Ralph Herman Hannaford also designed the Wellesley Hills Branch Library (1928) and the Sprague School (1924). According to one historical account, the stone for the Sprague School's façade was quarried directly from the site and the leadwork on the cupola was intended to resemble traditional English craftsmanship. At the library's main entrance hung a wrought iron lantern fabricated by noted craftsman Frank Koralewsky. 19 Hancock features distinctive iron lanterns flanking the entrance and candelabra sconces in the living room, but the suppliers and/or craftsmen are not known at this time.

The exterior of the wood-frame house is clad with water-struck brick selected for its cottage-like picturesque effect. The roof of the original sections is clad with Ludowici "Imperial" clay tile, with copper valleys.

The house was designed for Norman Locke Skene (1878-1932), a prominent naval architect, and nautical motifs are found throughout the house. A 1901 graduate of MIT's School of Naval Architecture, Mr. Skene would maintain an office in downtown Boston, designing and constructing yachts and power boats. A frequent contributor to The Rudder magazine, Mr. Skene is best known for his treatise Elements of Yacht Design, first published in 1904 and considered to be one of the most important yacht design books ever written. The book was reprinted several times until 1938, re-issued decades later as Skene's Elements of Yacht Design, and is back in print in a new edition edited by Maynard E. Bray, technical editor of Wooden Boat magazine.

With its gently vaulted ceiling (suggesting the underside of a ship's deck) trimmed with carved rope molding and its exquisite fireplace surround, the living room remains the focal point of 19 Hancock Street. The painted nautical scene depicting both sailing and steam-powered ships is signed by "N" or "H" Skene; the signature is partly concealed by wood trim. Norman's younger brother Harold attended MIT's School of Architecture and may have had a role in the painting and other parts of the house.

The hand-carved fruitwood panels flanking the fireplace and painting may be the work of master woodcarver Johannes Kirchmayer (1860-1930) or his studio. Recipient of a Bronze Medal from the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston, Kirchmayer lived in Arlington Heights and did carving for a number of area homes. Kirchmayer's apprentice Arcangelo Cascieri, who would become a master sculptor in his own right and also Dean of the Boston Architectural Center, believed that the carving might be the hand of his old master Kirchmayer. The foliate carving features thistle, a traditional Scottish motif, and is crowned with a beautifully carved rendition of the Clan Skene coat of arms.

The massive oak front door features a wrought-iron thumb latch and mail slot, and a three-part stained-glass light depicting a Viking ship scene. Viking themes were occasionally found in Pre-Raphaelite art, one of the inspirations of the English Arts & Crafts movement.

The story is passed down that Mr. Skene built kayaks of his own design in the northeast bedroom. Skene contributed plans and instructions for building "Walrus, Eskimo Kayak" and other vessels to The Rudder. In 1932, Norman Skene tragically drowned on Wakefield's Lake Quinnapowitt, while piloting one of his beloved kayaks.

Original interior finishes include stained and varnished cottonwood paneling with wood battens, oak flooring (living room, den, bedrooms), and painted battened ceilings. Many of the steel casement windows were subsequently fitted with "Rolscreen" coiling interior screens. Although a number of upstairs interior doors were replaced during the 1960s 70s, most of the original raised-panel doors were stored in the basement and will remain with the house. Many of the original glass doorknobs also survive.

A rare "sit-down" bathtub occupies the small bathroom off the former master bedroom. The toilets here and in the other two bathrooms include commercial "flushometers," rather than tanks. The house is heated by an oil-fired boiler with an integral coil system for domestic hot water. A number of the original cast-iron radiators remain (some with original metal covers).

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The property was subsequently purchased by the Glassman family, the current owners. Herbert Glassman, an award-winning architect practicing in Lowell, Massachusetts, designed the first of a number of additions and alterations to the house beginning in 1962. The 1962 work involved converting the two-car garage to a family room clad with pecky cypress and exposed brick and featuring a cork floor. The family room features a storage wall with various hidden closets and cabinets, including a fold-down sewing table. Other early renovations included a redwood-lined den, the conversion of two small upstairs bedrooms to one large room with a walk-in closet, and bathroom renovations. A number of modern cast-iron upright and baseboard radiators were also added.

In 1967, a substantial addition to the house designed by Mr. Glassman was completed the addition includes a large dining room illuminated by modern versions of the steel casements and featuring a fireplace with raised hearth, a back hall, two-car carport and various storage areas. The stucco walls, custom-designed doors and exposed, bracketed wood posts were inspired by vernacular Mexican architecture, and the slate floor tiles originated from the blackboards of a demolished Victorian schoolhouse. The rough-sawn exterior siding with exposed bark of the addition matches the original gables ends of the house. The red asphalt shingles cladding the carport and dining room wing roofs was replaced approximately 5 years ago.