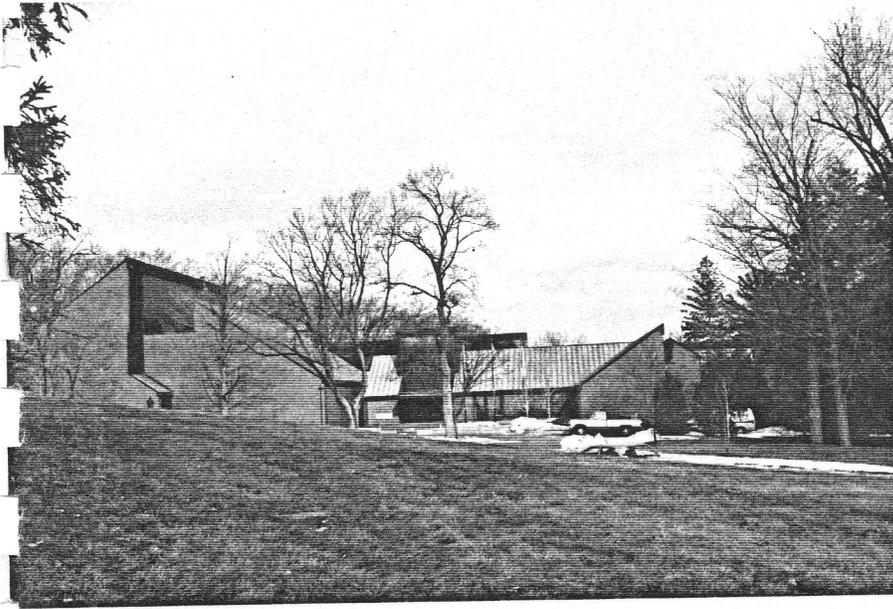


FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
 294 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02108

|      |          |
|------|----------|
| AREA | FORM NO. |
|      | 516      |

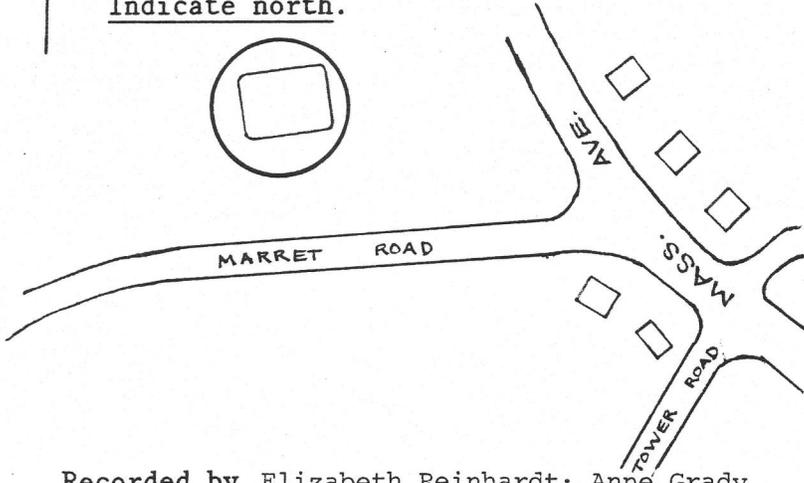
*also 610,611*



n Lexington  
 Address 33 Marrett Road  
 Historic Name Museum of Our National Heritage  
 Present museum  
 Original museum  
 DESCRIPTION:  
 Date 1974  
 Source architects

**SKETCH MAP**

Show property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection. Indicate north.



Recorded by Elizabeth Reinhardt; Anne Grady  
 Organization Lexington Historical Commission  
 Date 1975; March, 1984

Style Contemporary  
 Architect Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbott  
 Exterior wall fabric brick  
 Outbuildings \_\_\_\_\_  
 Major alterations (with dates) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approx. acreage 10.28 A.  
 Setting In a landscaped park which was the former Nunn estate.

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.)

The design of this handsome addition to Lexington's architecture successfully overcomes several difficulties of site, location and program. The primary concern of the architects was to fit what is actually a very large and complex building harmoniously into a residential neighborhood. In order to minimize the sense of the building's size it was broken up into small, interconnected units. In this way the residential scale could be maintained without jeopardizing the requirements of the museum. Essentially, the

(see Continuation Sheet)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.)

The museum was built by the Masonic Order as a gift to the nation at the time of the Bicentennial. The property combines the land of the former Charles Nunn estate adjacent to Massachusetts Avenue and the Richard G. Tower estate along Marrett Road. The substantial Italianate house of Charles Nunn, a wool broker, occupied until the early 1970s a prominent site on the rise of land between Massachusetts Avenue and Marrett Road. The house of Richard Tower, partner in his father's brokerage firm, is now used as a Masonic headquarters. The estate of the father, William A. Tower, was immediately north of the museum site.

The Richard Tower house was designed by Fehmer and Page of Boston. The carriage house was moved by horses from the estate of William Augustus Tower, the site of which is now occupied by the Grey Nuns. Mrs. Dailey at 114 Marrett Road who was employed by the Towers, is the source of information.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (name of publication, author, date and publisher)

Hudson, Charles. History of the Town of Lexington, revised and continued to 1912 by the Lexington Historical Society, Volume II, p. 703. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913.

1889 atlas

1906 atlas

1887 Directory

1894 Directory

1899 Directory

1906 Directory

Personal communication from Larry Whipple.

Plans in the possession of the owners.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Community:<br>Lexington                        | Form No:<br>516 |
| Property Name: Museum of Our National Heritage |                 |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

building is designed around two courtyards, one open and one closed but skylighted. The auditorium, largest element in the complex, was nestled back into the hillside farther to minimize its scale. The building houses four exhibition galleries, a library, and administrative offices as well as the auditorium, all on one level so that all areas are as accessible to the handicapped as to the sound visitor. A full basement provides maximum security and controlled climate storage for the permanent collection of the museum. Exhibits will be drawn from this collection as well as from traveling materials from other historical collections in the United States.

The siting of the many units, their interconnections and juxtapositions, the dramatic shed roofs and the brick exterior finish are all drawn from traditional New England elements. In spite of the great sophistication of their handling they remind the visitor of the many rambling additions to eighteenth century farmhouses, the pitch of a barn roof or an early gable, or the brick ended houses of the Federal period. On a more urban level the combination of red brick and copper sheathed roof is a variant of that used originally by Charles Bulfinch in the Boston State House, the gilded dome of which was originally covered with copper provided by Paul Revere and Son. Hugh Shepley was the partner in charge and Wagdy Anis was the project architect. The building won an A.I.A. award.

At the west end of the property is the Richard Tower house built in 1905 and several outbuildings probably associated with the Tower estate. The house is an interesting Colonial Revival structure rendered in brick with decorative tiles set in the facade. A tall semicircular portico is the focal point of the facade.



#611

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Community:<br>Lexington        | Form No:<br>516 |
| Property Name: 33 Marrett Road |                 |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.



Masonic Headquarters Building, Fehmer and Page, Architects

#610



Staple to Inventory form at bottom

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town  
LEXINGTON

Property Address  
33 MARRETT RD

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

Area(s) Form No.

|  |     |
|--|-----|
|  | 610 |
|--|-----|

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The brick building now used as a Masonic headquarters was constructed in 1905 for Richard Gleason Tower (1857-1921), youngest child of William Augustus Tower (1824-1904). On August 19, 1905, the *Lexington Minute-Man* reported that "Mr. Richard Tower's new house, on Middle street, not far from his old home, is commenced, inasmuch as Mr. Bartlett Harrington will build the cellar and John Daley, with men, is making the necessary excavation". Tower's previous home was destroyed by fire. A few months later, Richard Tower married Henrietta Lockwood (*Minute-Man*, Oct. 7, 1905).

The Richard Tower House was designed by Boston architects Fehmer and Page (Carl Fehmer and Samuel F. Page). Carl Fehmer was born in Germany in 1835. He immigrated to the U.S. with his mother and siblings in 1852 and attended public school in Boston. He received training in the office of prominent Boston architect George Snell for eight years before beginning an architectural practice some time during the 1860s. He performed all of the architectural work for the Massachusetts General Hospital for 25 years and later designed a number of buildings for the McLean Hospital as well as a number of Back Bay houses and lesser numbers of residences in Brookline, Easton, and Weston. Fehmer was a charter member of the Boston Society of Architects. The firm of Fehmer and Page formed about 1890. Fehmer died in Boston in 1917.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

*Lexington Minute-Man*, Aug. 19, 1905; Oct. 7, 1905.  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, MACRIS database.  
[www.bosarchitecture.com](http://www.bosarchitecture.com)  
<http://en.wikipedia.org>

Supplement prepared by:  
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