

FORM B – BUILDING

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

Date (month / year): September 2015

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

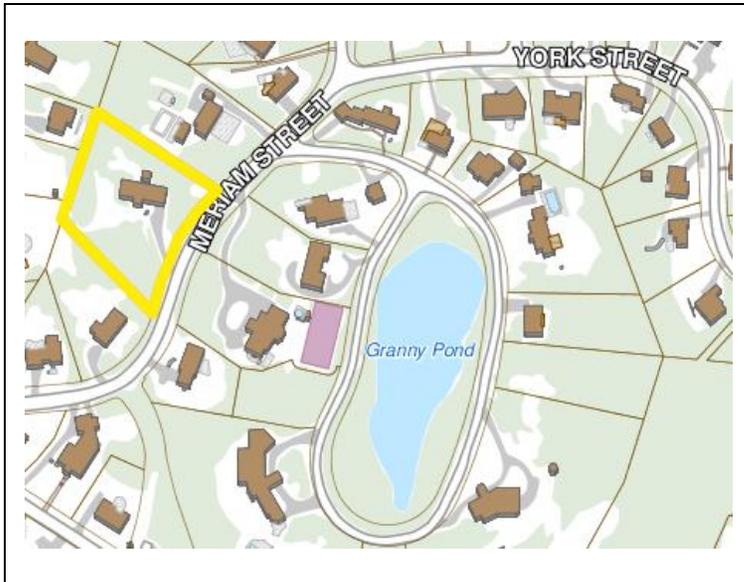
56/171 H 2145

Photograph



South (facade) elevation

Locus Map



Town/City: Lexington

Place: (neighborhood or village):
Merriam Hill

Address: 56 Meriam Street

Historic Name:

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1955-60

Source: town directories, assessors' records

Style/Form: Mid-Century Modern

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: not visible

Wall/Trim: vertical wood boards and trim

Roof: membrane

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations (with dates):

Condition: good

Moved: no yes Date:

Acreage: 1.23

Setting: Set on a steep, wooded hillside in a residential area, well below the grade of the road. Surrounding buildings have deep front setbacks, varied styles, scale, and massing.

Recorded by: Wendy Frontiero

Organization: Lexington Historical Commission

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

56 MERIAM STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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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.

56 Meriam Street occupies a steep hillside site, well below street level. Thickly wooded, the site is accessed by a paved driveway that runs at an angle from Meriam Street, to the south of the building. The house is a long rectangular shape set on an east/west axis, perpendicular to the road. An open carport is attached to the east end of the building. The building is not easily visible from the street, especially when trees are in leaf.

The building consists of a main level accessed from the driveway and a lower level that is mostly exposed because of the slope of the hill. The foundation appears to be poured concrete. The majority of the building appears to be enclosed by a butterfly roof; a jog in the center of the facade extends upward to a shed roof with clerestory windows on its north side. A wide chimney rises from the middle of the house, on the exterior of the shed-roofed projection. Walls are clad with vertical boarding. Visible windows include large picture windows and casement sash in varied configurations. The entrance is located in a small recessed porch at the corner of the house adjacent to the carport, with a single-leaf door on each of the two adjacent walls. Slender metal lally columns (presently painted red) support the flat roof of the open carport on the east end of the building. A brick patio joins the driveway to the entrance porch.

Well preserved and well maintained, 56 Meriam Street is an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture in Lexington. It is notable for the integration of building and site, its wooded setting, open carport and entrance porch, variety of roof shapes, and period siding and fenestration.

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.

At the turn of the 20th century, this area was part of the Hayes estate, which was gradually subdivided and developed with houses in the 20th century. The area bordered by Meriam Street, Hayes Avenue, Castle Road, and Franklin Road was the location of Francis B. Hayes's Victorian mansion, "Oakmount", which was demolished in 1941. The assessors' records for this house show a construction date of 1956, which is consistent with the historical records.

This address does not exist in the *List of Persons* through 1955. The first known occupants were John M. Buchanan, an MIT professor, and his wife Elsa N. in 1960. The Buchanans lived here at least through 1965. John Buchanan (1917-2007) was eminent nationwide as a teacher and researcher in the fields of biology and biochemistry. He joined the faculty at MIT in 1953 and also served as director of the university's new Division of Biochemistry; he retired from MIT in 1988. Further research is recommended to identify the architect for this house.

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 Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey, Period Summaries. <http://historicsurvey.lexingtonma.gov/index.htm>
Accessed Jul 23, 2015.

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56 MERIAM STREET

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Lexington *List of Persons*: 1935, 1945, 1955, 1960, 1965.

Massachusetts Historical Commission. "MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Lexington." 1980.

Obituary for John M. Buchanan, 2007. <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/bostonglobe/obituary.aspx?n=john-m-buchanan-jack&pid=89764003> Accessed Sep 29, 2015.

Protein/Science. "John M. Buchanan (1917-2007)". PMC, US National Library of Medicine; National Institutes of Health. V. 16(11); Nov 2007. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2211695/> Accessed Sep 29, 2015.

SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



South (facade) elevation: Carport detail