

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

63/38 H 2150

Town/City: Lexington

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



West (facade) and south elevations

Address: 95 Meriam Street

Historic Name:

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: 1914-15

Source: land plans, directories

Style/Form: Neo-Classical Revival

Architect/Builder: Charles A. Platt

Exterior Material:

Foundation: not visible

Wall/Trim: stucco with wood trim

Roof: slate

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Detached garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Side and rear additions, new building envelope design, new garage building

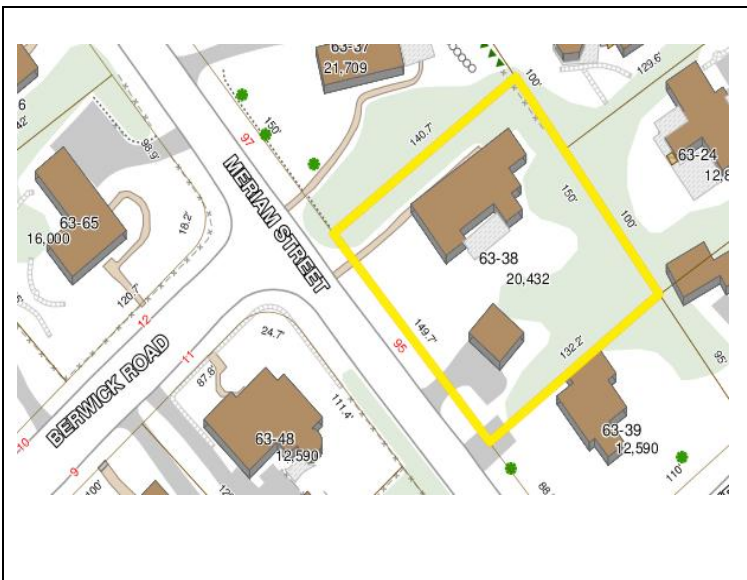
Condition: excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.47

Setting: Residential neighborhood on Meriam Hill, in an area of houses set relatively close together and to the street, typically in a similar scale and period

Locus Map



Recorded by: Wendy Frontiero

Organization: Lexington Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): September 2015

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

95 MERIAM STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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.

95 Meriam Street occupies a large, generally flat lot that is maintained chiefly in lawn. The U-shaped main block is set close to the left side of the property, with a deep front setback that contains a semi-circular paved driveway. A detached garage stands at the right front corner of the property.

The present appearance and configuration of the building dates to 2012, when the owners received a building permit to remove and replace the garage, construct a rear addition, and renovate the existing building. The existing building is one story and presents an array of hip and gable roofs; pedimented gable ends; and 2/2 and 6/6 double-hung windows, many of which are grouped, with wood trim and paneled wood shutters. Walls are clad in stucco; roofs are sheathed with slate. Offset on the front façade, the main entrance is composed of a gabled front portico with Ionic columns and a paneled single-leaf door with half-height sidelights. The complementary garage has a steep hip roof, two individual vehicle garage bays, wood shingles, a slate roof, and 6/6 windows.

The building at 95 Meriam Street represents a large-scale expansion and reconstruction of a modest but elegantly designed suburban house of the early 20th century. Remnants of the original building may be present, but they no longer retain integrity or significance. The property is notable for its historic associations with architect Charles Adams Platt.

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.

In 1906, the northern slope of Meriam Hill was still part of the Hayes Estate, with buildings only along the perimeter roads (Adams and Grant streets). In 1914, land in this area was surveyed and subdivided for house lots according to a plan made for the owner, Henry L. Seaver. Shortly thereafter, Seaver, a professor at MIT, and his wife Susan built and occupied a house at 97 Meriam Street. According to the deeds, Minnie S. bought the land on which 95 Meriam stands in 1914. The town directory for 1915 identifies Minnie S. Seaver, a designer, living at this address. Henry and Minnie were the children of Lattimer S. Seaver, a chemist, and his wife, Minnie C. Seaver, who lived in the center of town on Massachusetts Avenue. Directories continue to list Minnie S. Seaver at this address through at least 1922, although the 1920 census has her living with her parents. According to the 1920 census, Minnie S. Seaver was a designer of leaded glass.

By 1936, residents at 95 Meriam Street included Foster Osgood, in the business of advertising sales, and his wife Catherine S. By 1945, and at least through 1965, the house was occupied by Kleber Hall, an artist. His wife Ilma accompanied him here in 1945. Kleber Hall shared a studio with Aiden Lassell Ripley in Lexington center (over the Lexington Savings Bank). Deeds show that Minnie S. Seaver sold the property to her brother Henry Seaver in 1955, and he sold it in 1967 to Julian K. and Christine S. Knipp. Further research on the owners and occupants of 95 Meriam Street is recommended, to document and evaluate the artistic community in Lexington in the 20th century.

Based in New York City, Charles Adams Platt (1861-1933) was highly accomplished and nationally recognized as an architect, landscape architect, and painter. He trained as a fine artist with Stephen Parrish, studied architecture at the National Academy of Design in New York, traveled and studied in Europe for many years, and was part of an artists' colony in Cornish, New Hampshire that coalesced around the workshop of sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens. In 1894, Platt published a book called *Italian Gardens* that promulgated a formal, Renaissance-influenced aesthetic. Together with Edith Wharton's *Italian Villas and Their*

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Gardens (1904), Platt's work transformed high-style landscape design for country estates and public buildings at the turn of the 20th century.

Platt's architecture career began in the early 20th century, notable for its grand country houses, educational campuses and buildings, the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and a few commercial buildings. Platt was a trustee of the illustrious American Academy in Rome beginning in 1919, and its president from 1928 until his death. Further research is recommended to document the connection between Platt and the Seavers and the creation of this property.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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- Lexington Directories: 1899, 1908-09, 1915, 1918, 1922, 1933, 1934, 1936
- Lexington List of Persons: 1935, 1945, 1955, 1965.
- Massachusetts Historical Commission. "MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Lexington." 1980.
- U.S. Census: 1910, 1920, 1930.
- MHC Form A, Merriam Hill Area. 2015.
- Middlesex Registry of Deeds, South District. "Plan of Land in Lexington, Mass. Owned by Henry L. Seaver". Recorded Jul 7, 1914, 224/43.
- _____, "Plan of Oakmount Park, Lexington, Mass." Recorded Jul 15, 1903
- _____. Deeds: Swain to Seaver, 3897/46 (1914); Gleason to Seaver, 3892/586 (1914); Seaver to Seaver, 8518/114 (1955); Seaver to Knipp, 11429/172 (1967).
- Morgan, Keith N., ed. *Buildings of Massachusetts; Metropolitan Boston*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009.
- Personal communication between Elaine Doran and Lester E. Savage III, Aug 6, 2012.
- Savage, Lester. Photographs of building, 2012.
- Withey, Henry A. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970

SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Garage: North and west (facade) elevations

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Original house: Front and left side elevations
(Lester Savage photo, 2012)



Original house: Front and right side elevations
(Lester Savage photo, 2012)



Original house: Main entrance (left side elevation?)
(Lester Savage photo, 2012)



Original house: Living room
(Lester Savage photo, 2012)

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Original house
(Google Instant Street View, accessed 9/12/15)



Original garage
(Google Instant Street View, accessed 9/12/15)