

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

56/183

H

2159

## Photograph



North (façade) elevation with porte cochere  
(assessor's photo)

**Town/City:** Lexington

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*):  
Merriam Hill

**Address:** 18 Oakmount Circle

**Historic Name:**

**Uses:** Present: residential

Original: residential

**Date of Construction:** 1937-38

**Source:** town directories

**Style/Form:** Colonial Revival/Tudor Revival

**Architect/Builder:** unknown

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: fieldstone (partial), most is not visible

Wall/Trim: stucco veneer

Roof: slate shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

None visible

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):

Stucco siding, fenestration, porte cochere, side wing (1990)

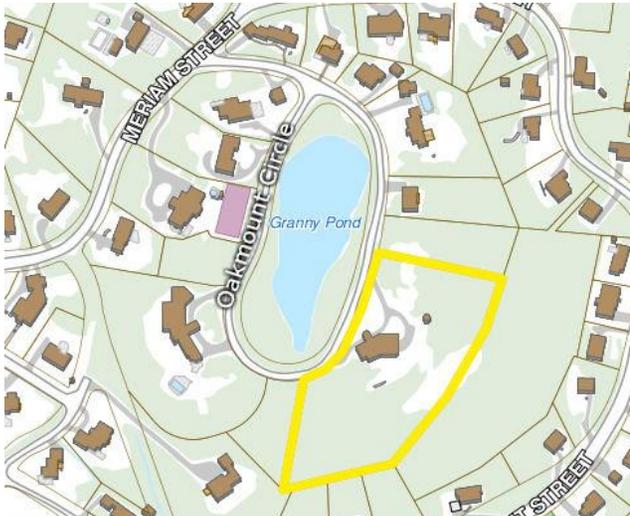
**Condition:** excellent

**Moved:** no       yes       **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.49 (+) 3.26

**Setting:** Secluded estate setting in a residential neighborhood at top of Merriam Hill, overlooking Granny's Pond to the north and birds' eye view of Lexington to the south and east. Neighboring houses are typically traditional early 20<sup>th</sup> century revival styles, much smaller in scale and comparatively modest in setting.

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Wendy Frontiero

**Organization:** Lexington Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): September 2015

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

18 OAKMOUNT CIRCLE

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.*

18 Oakmount Circle occupies a very large, hilltop lot that slopes down from the house on all sides, affording long views of the countryside from the back. The building is set well back from the street, which is lined with mature street trees. A band of large irregular stones supports the base of the slope directly in front of the house along the edge of the road. Mature trees and shrubs, including many ornamental plantings, compose the formal landscaping of the site, complemented by a large flat lawn area to the left of the house. A paved, semicircular driveway spans the front yard, passing through a porte cochere at the main front entrance. At the far left of the site, a stout, low fieldstone wall lines the street edge in front of a rectangular lawn. The paved road turns to packed earth and gravel as it slopes down and to the right of the house, around the pond in the center of this loop road.

The residence consists of a series of three rambling rectangular blocks, set at angles to each other. The sections rise 1 ½ to 2 stories to gable roofs with plain flat fascia; cross gables and dormers ornament the roofline. Walls are typically clad with stucco, while roofs are clad with slate shingles. (The first story of the main, center block is faced with fieldstone veneer.) Three chimneys include an exterior fieldstone chimney rising from the front of the left wing and two exterior brick chimneys on the end walls of the center block. Windows are varied in size, type, and placement. Most common are four-light, individual casement windows and six-light casement sash in groups of two or three.

The 1 ½ story high, left wing of the house displays banded 4-light windows on the first floor, with a recessed entry at the right end of its facade. The second floor contains an offset cross gable with an exterior fieldstone chimney flanked by a four-light windows on each side and a small gabled dormer to the right. On the 2-story high center block, a large, offset cross-gable has a tripartite window with a pedimented lintel surmounting a porte cochere, whose steep gable roof is angled at the outer end and supported by rectangular posts and exposed rafters. The main entrance door here comprises a single-leaf door with full-height sidelights and a transom. To the right of the cross gable, the second floor of the center block slightly overhangs the first floor; it contains two pairs of casement windows on the second floor and a tripartite unit on the first floor. The 1 ½ story high, right wing of the house is only one room wide, with a wood belt course between its first and half stories, single and grouped casement windows, and an end gable dominated by two vertically-aligned tripartite units of casement and transom windows, the upper set topped by a pedimented lintel.

Much of the house is not easily visible from the street. A large rear deck with a modern wood balustrade extends from the first floor of the central block. No outbuildings are visible from the road.

18 Oakmount Circle is excellently maintained, and its landscaping appears to be a professionally-designed, original or early component of the site. The house has experienced major alterations in the last 25 years, and much of its original or early architectural character is disguised. (Building permit records from 1990 identify renovations valued at \$400,000, including an expanded and re-built porte cochere. Photographs show a 2 ½ story main block composed of fieldstone veneer at the first floor, stucco and half-timbering above, single and grouped double-hung windows, a cross-gabled façade pavilion, a porte cochere with stucco and half-timbering in its flat gable end, and a one-story, enclosed sun porch on the far right end.)

The property is distinguished by its hilltop location, its grandly picturesque landscaping, and the large scale and energetic massing of the house.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

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*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.*

On the 1906 map, this area of Merriam Hill was still part of the Hayes Estate, with buildings only along the perimeter roads (Adams and Grant streets). The land had been surveyed and laid out in house lots in 1903, however, as part of the Oakmount Park subdivision. Six houses were constructed around Oakmount Circle by 1935, but this property was still undeveloped. The present building first appears on the town maps in 1950. Assessors' records for this house show a construction date of 1938, which matches the town directory entries for residents at this address.

The house appears to have been built in 1938 for Mrs. Lulu M. Blake, widow of Hallie C. Blake. The Blakes moved from Winthrop to Lexington between 1910 and 1920, occupying Francis B. Hayes's Victorian mansion, Oakmount, at 50 Meriam Street (bounded by Meriam Street, Franklin Road, and Castle Road) until 1937. (It was demolished in 1941.)

In 1887, Hallie C. Blake (1870-1936) joined the piano dealer and music publishing business of Charles D. Blake & Co. that was established by his father in 1869. An 1885 business history reported that "There are few music and piano houses in this city better known or more appreciated than that of Messrs. Charles D. Blake & Co." (*Leading Manufacturers*: 327). Hallie Blake took charge of the business in 1898; by 1916, the company had 57 stores throughout New England.

Blake was a member of the Lexington School Committee and served as a selectman in the town; was a member of the Old Belfry Club of Lexington, the Boston Chamber of Commerce, Bostonian Society, Boston Atheneum, Mass. Horticultural Society, and Masons; and at one point described his recreations as "farming" (*Who's Who*: 124). He was also president of the Lexington Cooperative Bank and vice president of the Lexington Trust Company. After his death in 1936, Hallie's widow Lulu Blake (1875-1958) assumed the presidency of Charles D. Blake & Co. and moved to a new house built for her at 18 Oakmount Circle. (She is identified at this address in 1938, and at 50 Meriam Street in 1937.) Hallie C. and Lulu Blake had three children, who were grown by this time; Mrs. Blake lived here with only a chauffeur and cook through at least 1945.

Subsequent residents of the property included Lan Jen Chu, a professor, his wife Grace, and at least two children (1955, 1965).

Further research is recommended on the significance of the Charles D. Blake Company, the history and significance of the Blake family in Lexington, and possible associations with the Olmsted firm in landscape design for one or both of their houses in Lexington. (A Mr. and Mrs. Blake in Lexington are identified in the Olmsted archives as clients for Job Number 10559, under private estates and homesteads.)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

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*Leading Manufactures and Merchants of the City of Boston*. Boston: International Publishing Co., 1885.  
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Lexington Historical Commission (Anne Grady). Form A, LEX.H update, Merriam Hill Area (draft). 2015.  
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Wright, Thomas. "The Wright Family Genealogy." Rootsweb, May 30, 2013. <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=tcwlmo&id=I69323> Accessed July 28, 2015.

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**SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES**



North (facade) elevation, east wing



North (facade) elevations



Porte cochere and west (side) elevation



Porte cochere detail: North and west elevations

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**SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES**



Landscape detail between buildings at 10 and 18 Oakmount Circle



North (facade) elevations