

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

13/397 [ ] [ ] 2273

**Town/City:** Lexington

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

## Photograph



North (façade) elevation

**Address:** 28 Theresa Avenue

**Historic Name:**

**Uses:** Present: residential

Original: residential

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1915-27

**Source:** historic maps, style

**Style/Form:** Colonial Revival

**Architect/Builder:**

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: brick, concrete block

Wall/Trim: vinyl siding and trim

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

Detached garage

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

Artificial siding (L 20<sup>th</sup> c)

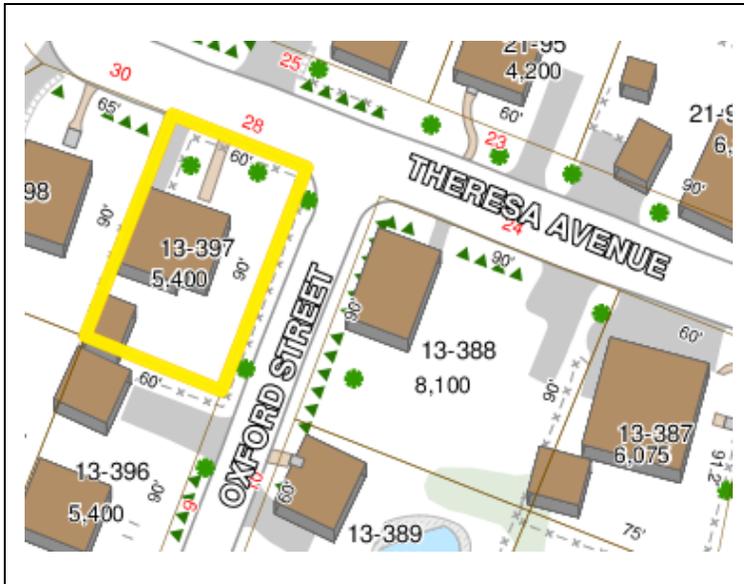
**Condition:** good

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

**Acreage:** 0.12

**Setting:** Located at the intersection of Theresa Avenue and Oxford Street. Densely built, hillside neighborhood contains heterogeneous buildings of similar scale and predominantly early to mid-20th century construction.

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Wendy Frontiero

**Organization:** Lexington Historical Commission

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

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

28 THERESA AVENUE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

	2273
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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.*

28 Theresa Avenue occupies a small corner lot that is maintained chiefly in lawn and mature trees and bordered by a wood fence around the perimeter (pickets at the front street edge, solid wood boards along the side). The house is sited near the center of the parcel, with a moderate front setback, a concrete walkway to the front door, and a paved driveway to the west of the building that extends to a garage at the back corner of the lot.

The three by two bay main block rises 2 ½ stories from a foundation of brick and concrete block to a hip roof with a chimney on the west (right) slope. Walls are clad with vinyl and vinyl trim. Windows typically have 6/1 double hung sash with band molding. The front façade (north elevation) contains a projecting center entry portico composed of wood steps and railings, square posts, a hip roof, and a single-leaf door with half-height sidelights. Paired windows flank each side of the entrance on the first floor. One 6/1 window is set in each outer bay of the second floor, flanking a set of smaller paired windows above the entrance. A hip-roofed dormer is centered in the front slope of the roof; it contains a louvered attic vent.

The west (right side) elevation contains paired windows in the forward bay and a smaller window towards the rear of the first floor, and two widely spaced windows at the second floor. The asymmetrical east (left side) elevation contains two sets of paired windows at the first floor and two single windows at the second floor. A narrow sun porch is set slightly off-center on the rear elevation, with two windows on each side, four windows and an offset, single-leaf door on the back elevation, and a low hip roof. A triplet of windows occupies the easternmost bay of the first floor, and three windows are irregularly positioned on the second floor.

A small wood-frame garage stands behind the house at the southwest corner of the parcel. It has a front-gable roof (with no returns) and a single vehicle bay.

Well preserved and maintained, 28 Theresa Avenue is a good example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century middle class suburban housing in Lexington. The house is notable for its intact massing, prominent center entrance portico, variety of fenestration (single, paired, and triple window units), and original/early garage.

## 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.*

The neighborhood centered around Bow Street and Hillcrest, Cliffe, and Rindge avenues covers a steep hillside between Massachusetts Avenue and Lowell Street along the Arlington town line. The Great Meadows and Arlington Reservoir are located to the west and east, respectively. By 1898, a very short stub of road between Mass. Avenue and the B&M Railroad tracks is labeled Bow Street. North of the tracks, it continues as a pathway to a farmhouse identified as J. A. Wilson. The 1899 directory identifies a James Wilson, farmer and market gardener, with a house off Bow, and a James A. Wilson, market gardener, with a house on Bow. The land remained undeveloped as part of the Wilson Farm until at least 1906.

Most of the streets here were laid out and platted for house lots by 1927; development most likely began after 1918. Development slowly crept up the hillside through the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, most densely along the grid of streets closest to Massachusetts Avenue. The Wilson farm remained in existence east of Bow Street (in the area now traversed by South Rindge Street) until at least 1950, at which time it encompassed a substantial farmhouse and greenhouse and two other large outbuildings.

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The area was likely developed in response to the electric street railway, which began service on Mass. Avenue in 1899. Like Liberty Heights to the south of Massachusetts Avenue (which it resembles, architecturally; LEX.Q), this neighborhood—known as Massachusetts Avenue Terrace and Arlington Heights Terrace— was laid out by Jacob W. Wilbur, a prolific Brookline developer. Wilbur typically sited his subdivisions near streetcar lines and appealed to working class residents.

Theresa Avenue was laid out by 1922, when there were only three houses on the street, all unnumbered. Based on its style, 28 Theresa Avenue might have been one of these. The households on the street in 1922 included John A. Murray, a traveling salesman, and his wife Rose M.; Wensley Barker, a manager, and his wife Christine; and James Irwin, Jr., a carpenter, and his wife Mary. 28 Theresa Avenue is first depicted on the Sanborn maps in 1927, when it appears with a one-story accessory building that is likely the present garage.

The first known residents of 28 Theresa Avenue were Louis Ruocco, an Italian-born hairdresser, and his wife Lillian (whose parents were born in Italy). The couple moved here between 1927 and 1930 and occupied the house with their three young daughters. The Ruocco family remained in the house until at least 1965. In addition to Louis and Lillian, family members residing here at various times included grown daughters Constance M. (in the army and afterwards a teacher, 1945, 1955, 1965) and Marianne J., a clerk (1945). Octogenarian Marianne Russo, possibly Lillian's mother, accompanied the Ruoccos here in 1945.

## 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 Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey, Period and Area Summaries.

<http://historicsurvey.lexingtonma.gov/index.htm> Accessed Jul 23, 2015.

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.

\_\_\_\_\_. Form A – Liberty Heights, LEX.Q. Prepared by Anne Grady and Nancy Seasholes, 1984 and 2001.

Somerville Directories: 1927.

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

## SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



North (façade) and west (right side) elevations



Rear (south) and east (left side) elevations