

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

33/219                2280

**Town/City:**      Lexington

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

**Address:**      35 Wachusett Drive

**Historic Name:**

**Uses:** Present:      residential

Original:      residential

**Date of Construction:**      ca. 1870-82

**Source:**      historic maps, U.S. census, town directories, Charles Hudson *History*

**Style/Form:**      Queen Anne

**Architect/Builder:**

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation:      not visible

Wall/Trim:      wood clapboards, shingles, and trim

Roof:      asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

None visible

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

Three-story side wing (by 1950)

**Condition:**      good

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

**Acreage:**      1.2

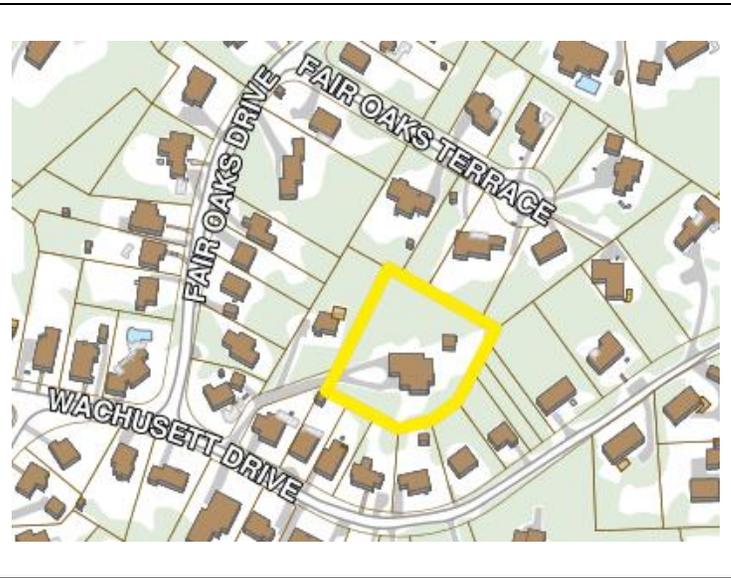
**Setting:**      Secluded hilltop location in center of early 20<sup>th</sup> century subdivision, near main thoroughfare of Waltham Street.

## Photograph



Front (façade) elevation

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:**      Wendy Frontiero

**Organization:**      Lexington Historical Commission

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

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

35 WACHUSETT DRIVE

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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.*

35 Wachusett Drive occupies a large lot at the end of a narrow, paved extension of the main road. Surrounded by woodland, the front yard has a paved circular driveway with shrubs and a small lawn area in the center. The house consists of two main sections: a three-story, flat-roofed volume on the left and a two-story, side gabled volume on the right. The front façade is the only portion of the building visible from the public way.

Windows typically have 2/2 double-hung sash and flat casings without molding. Two chimneys are visible: an interior end wall chimney on the left side of the three-story section of the house, and an interior chimney on the back slope of the gabled right wing, near the center and the ridge line.

The three-story section of the house is sheathed with wood clapboards and trimmed with flat corner boards and a fascia board with bed molding. Its façade contains two widely spaced window bays at the outer ends with a single window on each floor and a pair of square windows centered at the first floor. The two-story volume on the right has a side gable roof with a shallow, cross-gabled pavilion on the left end of its facade. This wing of the building is sheathed with clapboards on the first floor and wood shingles above. The second floor wall flares slightly at the base. Flat corner boards trim the first floor and a wide flat belt course runs between the first and second floors and along the eave line.

The façade pavilion contains a single leaf doorway centered on its first floor, flanked by small, square Queen Anne windows. One window is centered above at the second floor and the gable peak is decorated with patterned shingles and a flat belt course near the peak. On the bay to the right of the pavilion, a pair of windows is centered on the first floor and a single window is positioned slightly off-center on the second floor, topped by a small cross-gable with patterned wood shingles.

The scale, size, massing, and utilitarian character of the three-story volume of this house detract from the picturesque qualities of the right side of the building, which presumably is original. The right wing is notable for its lively roofline, textured wall surfaces, informal fenestration, and Queen Anne sash.

Although well-maintained, the historical integrity of the original house—the two-story wing—is compromised by the overwhelming scale and massing of the three-story addition. The building is architecturally significant as the remnant of a Victorian country house in the setting of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century subdivision. Notable features of the original house include the picturesque roofline and massing, combination of wall textures, and variety of informal fenestration. The addition is remarkable for its size, scale, and flat roof.

## 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.*

35 Wachusett Drive occupies a prominent site on Loring Hill, southwest of the town center, off Waltham Street. The early part of the present building may have been constructed by 1875, when an L-shaped building and an outbuilding are illustrated in this location, owned by Joseph Richardson. Depiction of the same L-shaped house persisted in 1898.

According to Worthen, this property was part of the John Bridge farm in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, passing through several subsequent owners until acquired by Joseph Richardson of Boston in 1869. Richardson was a merchant and evidently a gentleman farmer. In the 1880 census, he was living in Lexington (at an unspecified address) with his wife Amelia, three young

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daughters, and a servant. The federal agricultural schedule of that year shows him owning 37 acres of land valued at \$7,000. Richardson and his wife Amelia O. Currier, both born in Boston, had five children, all born in Lexington between 1871 and 1881.

Robert Means Lawrence, a Boston physician (b. 1847), moved to Lexington in 1882, soon after he bought the property that is now 35 Wachusett Drive. Grandson of the industrialist and businessman Amos Lawrence, Robert Lawrence was a member of a prestigious and wealthy Massachusetts family. Lawrence graduated from Harvard College in 1869 and Harvard Medical School in 1873, continued his medical studies in Vienna and Paris, and had a medical practice in Boston. During preparatory school, he was a member of the Oneida Football Club of Boston, which is thought to be the first organized football club in the country, active from 1862 through 1865. A monument to the group was erected in Boston Common in 1925, and Lawrence was one of six of the seven surviving team members who attended the dedication ceremony. (See attached photograph.)

Robert Lawrence was married in 1870 to Katherine Cleaveland, with whom he had five children. The Lawrence family occupied this house until at least 1902. By 1905, they seem to have left Lexington for the fashionable Back Bay neighborhood of Boston, where they had lived before coming to Lexington and where they appear to have maintained a winter residence during their time in Lexington. Robert Lawrence was active in the Lexington community, serving as a selectman from 1884-86, as a member of the school committee from 1888-90, and a founder of the Episcopalian Church of Our Redeemer. In addition to his general medical practice, Lawrence pursued genealogy, medical folklore, and psychotherapy, publishing several books on these subjects. In his application for a passport in 1896, Lawrence gave his occupation simply as "literature".

In 1909, the property was acquired by Francesca Scamman of Saco, Maine, and occupied by her nephew, Arthur E. Horton; the property was then known as Fair Oaks. Horton took title to the property in 1916 under the name of the Fair Oaks Realty Corporation. A progressive residential development was planned, and Horton, a landscape architect, laid out curvilinear roads to follow the topography of the site and preserve the natural landscape. The subdivision plan that Horton originally promoted contained 52 house lots, including one at the bend between Wachusett Drive and Fair Oaks Drive that contained the "Old Mansion" and a development office. A denser subdivision plan, incorporating 150 lots, was accepted by the town in 1924 and built out as the "Fair Oaks" neighborhood by the prolific local developer, Neil McIntosh (see Area Form LEX.Y).

Ralph B. Maloney, a manager, his wife Margaret V., and William H. Smith, retired, and his wife Mary were living at this address by 1955. Residents in 1965 included Otis H. Bramhall, an engineer, his wife Eleanor C., and Harry L. Hoisington, retired.

The origins and evolution of the present house on the property are merely suggested in available documentation. Worthen notes that in 1876, a house that stood on the property "was almost entirely destroyed by fire, and it was probably not restored until after it passed to Dr. Lawrence" in 1881 (Worthen: 112). Worthen further reports that

"The Lawrences did much to improve the old house, adding a cottage during their early years there, which was occupied for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Murray Smith. Dr. Lawrence purchased additional land so that in 1902 he was assessed for a house \$3,900, cottage \$800, barn \$600, and eighty-eight acres \$14,200" (Worthen: 112).

Further research is recommended on the lives of both Joseph Richardson and Robert Means Lawrence, and to determine the date, builder, and original/early appearance of the present house.

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**SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES**



Front (façade) elevation



Oneida Football Club in 1925. Robert Means Lawrence is second from the right. (photograph published in *The Boston Globe*, Nov. 21, 2012)