

FORM B – BUILDING

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

21/176	Reading	D	352
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town: Reading

Place: (*neighborhood or village*)

Photograph



Address: 14 Bancroft Avenue

Historic Name: Symonds-Abbott House

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: 1904

Source: water department records

Style/Form: Shingle Style

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: rubble

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

attached garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

date? – garage addition

Condition: good

Moved: no | x | yes | | **Date** _____

Acreage: 0.10 acre

Setting: mixed residential neighborhood

Topographic or Assessor's Map



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Reading Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): December 2009

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INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

READING

14 Bancroft Avenue

Area(s) Form No.

D

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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.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The house at 14 Bancroft Avenue is a modest expression of the Shingle Style, displaying an asymmetrical massing and mix of wood shingles and stone favored by this mode. The façade of the 1½-story, side-gabled structure is spanned by a porch which is recessed under the extension of the front roof slope. The overhang is supported by square, shingled porch posts and was probably originally open but was enclosed at some point with multi-light panes. Emerging from the front roof slope are two oversized polygonal dormers displaying a double-hung 12/1 window on the front with fixed diamond-panes to either side. Remaining windows consist of double-hung sash with multi-panes above a single pane lower sash. At the rear of the north and south elevations there is a single-story, three-sided bay window. Offset to the northwest is a single-car, flat-roofed garage addition.

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.

According to water records, 14 Bancroft Avenue (originally 12 Bancroft Avenue) was constructed for Betsey W. Symonds and the water was first connected on November 28, 1904.

Betsey Symonds (1835-1916) was born in Maine and was the widow of Nelson Symonds. The couple lived at the Symonds Farm on Haverhill Street until 1893 when they built the house that is now 18 Bancroft Avenue (originally 14 Bancroft Avenue). Mr. Symonds died in 1897. Mrs. Symonds was a founder and on the first board of directors of the Reading Home for Aged Women, a member of the Reading Woman's Club and active in the Christian Union Church.

Valuation records indicate that Mrs. Symonds owned two houses on Bancroft Avenue in 1905 and by 1909 had increased her holdings to four houses on Bancroft and one on Mount Vernon Street. The 1910 Census indicates that Mrs. Symonds was then living at what was 14 Bancroft (now #18) with her grandson, Theodore Guild, a 23 year old automobile salesman. Mrs. Symonds died on Feb. 13, 1916.

The house at 14 Bancroft (originally 12 Bancroft) was subsequently rented out for several years before Grace Abbott purchased it from Arthur Webster in 1925 for \$4,500. The 1930 Census indicates that Miss Abbott was then 49 and worked as a librarian. She lived here with her 71 year old mother, Josephine, and brothers Edwin K., a 43 year old bank clerk and H. Kingman Abbott, a 36 year old civil engineer/surveyor. The three siblings continued to live here for more than fifty years. Grace died Nov. 27, 1975; Edwin died May 29, 1977 and Henry Kingman Abbott died April 24, 1981. (Their father, George Edwin Abbott, was born in Reading in 1850 and was an architect of some note in Fall River and Boston. Buildings constructed in Reading according to his designs include 189-191 Summer Avenue, 145 High Street, 128 Salem Street, Reading Electric Light on Ash Street and the former Water Pumping Station on Mill Street.) The property was sold to the present owners in 1979 by H. Kingman Abbott.

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Adams, Virginia. Information on George Edwin Abbott, Jan. 2010.

Middlesex County South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, Mass.

Reading Chronicle, Feb. 18, 1916 [obituary of Betsey W. Symonds].

Reading 350th Book Committee. *At Wood End – Reading, Massachusetts 1644-1994, A Pictorial History*, 1994.

Town of Reading. List of Persons Twenty Years of Age and Over. Compiled by the Board of Registrars, Reading, Massachusetts, 1907-1979. (No women listed until 1924).

Town of Reading. Valuation of Real and Personal Estates, various dates.

Town of Reading, Water Department Records, 1891-present.

U.S. Census

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Community Property Address
READING 14 BANCROFT AVENUE

Area(s) Form No.

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
 Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Criteria Considerations: **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G**

Statement of Significance by Lisa Mausolf

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

Constructed in 1904, the house at 14 Bancroft Avenue is a modest but good example of an early 20th century Shingle Style residence displaying an asymmetrical massing and mix of wood shingles and stone which are common to the style. The property is potentially eligible for the National Register as an amendment to the 1984 Reading Multiple Resource Area under Criteria A and C, for its associations with the early 20th century development of Reading and as a good example of the Shingle Style.