

FORM B – BUILDING

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

11/126	Reading		363
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town: Reading

Place: (*neighborhood or village*)

Photograph



Address: 39 Ellis Avenue

Historic Name: Albert M. French House

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: 1909

Source: water department records

Style/Form: Craftsman

Architect/Builder: Adden & Parker, architects;
Stewart & Robertson, builders

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: stucco, wood

Roof:

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

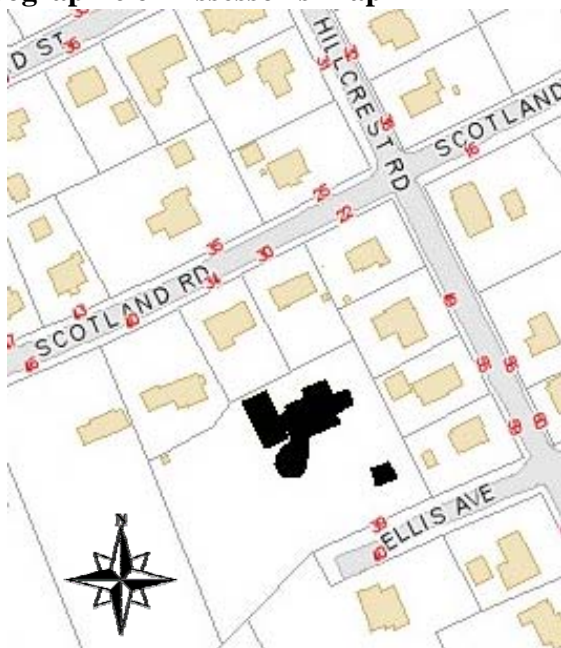
Condition: good

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

Acreage: 1.37 acres

Setting: setback from road, surrounded by woods

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

READING

39 Ellis Avenue

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.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

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

Very little of this house can actually be seen from the public way although it is clearly a grand, Craftsman-style structure. The house was oriented to face Scotland Road to the north, thus the original façade of the house is now the rear elevation. The two-story, stuccoed structure is capped by a hip roof with widely overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. The plan contained in the local assessors records indicates that there are various appendages but again these are not visible from the road.

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.

This house has had several addresses over its lifetime. Its façade actually faces Scotland Road and it originally had a Scotland Road address. It was known first as #20 and later as #32. The Ellis Avenue designation did not come until about 1965 when 30 and 34 Scotland Road were built.

Town water records indicate that the house at 39 Ellis Avenue was constructed for A.M. French and that the water was turned on June 9, 1909. On August 22, 1908 the *Reading Chronicle* reported that A.M. French of Boston and Melrose had bought six lots on the summit of Scotland Park which had recently been sold by the Temple agency for Charles Harkness. The parcel of land measured more than 50,000 square feet and extended from Scotland Road to Ellis Avenue. Another brief mention on December 23, 1910 notes that the cement house of E.L. French in Scotland Park was to serve as a model for Dr. Kelley's new house in Woburn. (This apparently should have read A.M. French as E.L. French's house at 3 (now 11) Oak Street was a modest wood frame structure). The report goes on that both the French House and the Kelley House were designed by Adden and Parker and were to be built by Stewart & Robertson. (The Kelley House still stands at 690 Main Street in Woburn but has seen alterations including the addition of a brick veneer).

The 1910 Census indicates that Albert and Julie French had already moved into their Scotland Road residence. Both were 39 years old and they had been married three years. Albert was employed as a wholesale oil dealer in Boston. The couple lived here until about 1930 when the property was sold to Ralph (d. 12-11-1943) and Hazel (d. 5-15-1977) Sawyer. According to his 1943 obituary, Ralph Sawyer worked as an agent for Palmer & Parker and led a life of adventure, making more than a dozen trips to Africa and almost as many to Latin America (*Chronicle*, Dec. 17, 1943).

In the mid 1940s the house was purchased by Charles and Lillian Godfrey. John and Mildred Bergin owned it in the 1960s, followed by Robert Dearborn and Peter Cameron.

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued)

The architects, Willard P. Adden (1868-1958) and Winthrop D. Parker (1871-1955) were both Reading natives. Winthrop D. Parker graduated from MIT in 1896 and may well have designed the waterworks engineer's house at 75 Mill Street the following year. Willard Parker Adden was in practice in the 1890s with other architects including Russell W. Porter with whom he designed the Spafford Town Library in Springfield, Vermont in 1895 and prominent Boston architect Charles Brigham with whom he designed the James Library Building in Madison, New Jersey in 1900 (Mausolf). According to MACRIS, the 1898 design for the Cleveland Chandler House in Brookline is also attributed to Adden & Parker but was probably the work of one of the architects working alone.

Adden & Parker formally joined in partnership about 1905. They were the architects for the Congregational Church in Laconia, New Hampshire in 1905 and the Goss Reading Room in the Lakeport section of Laconia in 1905. In 1906 they designed a large estate in North Andover, "Broadfields" for George H. Simonds. Other residential commissions of note include the Elliot Taber House at 271 Hawthorn Street in New Bedford (1916) and the James Murray House at 41 Orchard Street in New Bedford (1922). All of these homes were Colonial Revival in style.

In the early 1920s they designed a number of buildings at Shawsheen Village in Andover for the American Woolen Company. The designs for a garage at 339 North Main Street (1921), executive offices at 10 Haverhill Street (1923) and an administration building at 16 Balmoral Street (1923) have all been attributed to the firm but there are also probably other buildings they designed for the complex, including possibly homes.

The earliest known work by Adden and Parker in Reading is the former Reading High School at 52 Sanborn Street in 1906. The pair were architects for a number of other buildings in Reading including the First Congregational Church (1911), Reading Town Hall (1918), Reading Public Library (1918), the Masonic Block Addition (1930) as well as a number of buildings which are no longer extant: original Parker Jr. High School, Oakland Road High School, and Reading Police Station. No other local residential commissions by Adden & Parker have emerged at this time.

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

Community Property Address
READING 39 ELLIS 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 1909, the Albert French House at 39 Ellis Avenue is an impressive example of a Craftsman Villa residence displaying a rambling plan, an exaggerated horizontality and overhanging hip roof with exposed rafter tails. The house is notable as one of the few known residential works of the Boston architects, Adden & Parker, both of whom were Reading residents. 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 Craftsman style.