

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

1-105	Boston North	BU	BLM.535
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**Town/City:** Belmont

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

**Address:** 185-187 Belmont Street

**Historic Name:** Rosen's Drug Store

**Uses:** Present: commercial

Original: commercial

**Date of Construction:** 1912

**Source:** building permit

**Style/Form:** Commercial

**Architect/Builder:** Charles Greco

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: brick/concrete

Roof: tar and gravel

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
none

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

1955, 1989, c.2000 – storefronts replaced  
ca.2000 – some veneer brick rebuilt on Grove St. elev.

**Condition:** good

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

**Acreage:** 5,595 SF

**Setting:** mixed uses along heavily traveled road in densely built southeast corner of town

## Photograph



## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Lisa Mausolf

**Organization:** Belmont Historic District Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): September 2014

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

185-187 BELMONT STREET

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.*

Although altered over the years, the building at 185-187 Belmont Street is a representative example of the small-scaled commercial buildings which were built along the streetcar routes in town to accommodate population growth in the area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The single-story, wedge-shaped building has its main entrance at its narrow south end facing Belmont Street with two additional storefronts on the west wall facing Grove Street. The east elevation is bordered by Marion Road and has five bays with windows that are now covered.

The building is organized into a series of bays by piers and decorative panels that feature veneer brickwork in various patterns including all headers, all stretchers, common bonds and dentils. Small stone squares decorate the corners of some of the panels and larger rectangular blocks fill the center of some panels and is used in horizontal bands between piers above storefronts. The building has recessed storefronts which were typical of the period although the storefronts themselves have been replaced multiple times (in 1955, 1989 and ca.2000 according to building department records) including new brickwork below the windows. A car crash on the Grove Street side also resulted in rebuilding the brick veneer and replacing windows and doors.

Despite alterations, this is an example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings which were constructed throughout Belmont and is a neighborhood landmark which has been owned by the same family for 75 years. It is also notable for its scale which is an important transition between the heavily traveled commercial route and the residential areas behind.

## 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.*

In 1912 the subway to Harvard Square opened, fueling speculative building in the southeast corner of Belmont. According to town building permits, this building was constructed in 1912 for James Honley of Cambridge. The architect was Charles Greco and the builder was J.B. Byrne of Cambridge. No further information has been found concerning Honley. From at least 1915 to 1918 apothecary Chester Hull was the proprietor of the store at 185 Belmont Street. In the late 1920s and early 1930s the drug store was operated by Louis C. Sumberg who lived in Dorchester. In 1936 an employee, William M. Rosen purchased the store which he renamed Rosen's Pharmacy. William Milton Rosen (1906-2003) was born in Odessa, Russia and immigrated to the United States when he was 2 years old. The family settled in Lawrence and after graduating from Lawrence High School, he attended the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in Boston. He became a registered pharmacist in 1927. William and his wife Celia were among the founding families of Beth El Temple Center in Belmont and he was also active in the Masons and Kiwanis Club. William Rosen retired in the late 1980s and sold the business to his son Robert who later turned it over to his son.

Over the years, the other storefront was occupied by a food store and later by a dry cleaner. The Rosen family still owns the block today. Belmont Medical Supply now occupies the entire space.

The building at 185 Belmont Street was designed by Boston architect Charles R. Greco (1873-1963). Greco graduated from English High School of Boston in 1892 and took engineering courses at Harvard. He worked for the firms of Waite & Cutter and Peabody & Stearns before forming his own practice in 1908. He designed a large number of buildings in the Boston area, primarily schools and municipal buildings. The building at 185 Belmont is one of a handful of known commercial buildings he designed and is an early example of his work.

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