

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

5-78	Boston North	B	BLM.13
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Town/City: Belmont

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

Photograph



Address: 34 Oak Avenue

Historic Name: Henry McGahey House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: ca. 1922

Source: Sanborn maps, directories

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: Henry McGahey, builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: brick

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
garage (1921)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1955 – addition south side

1999 – addition southwest corner

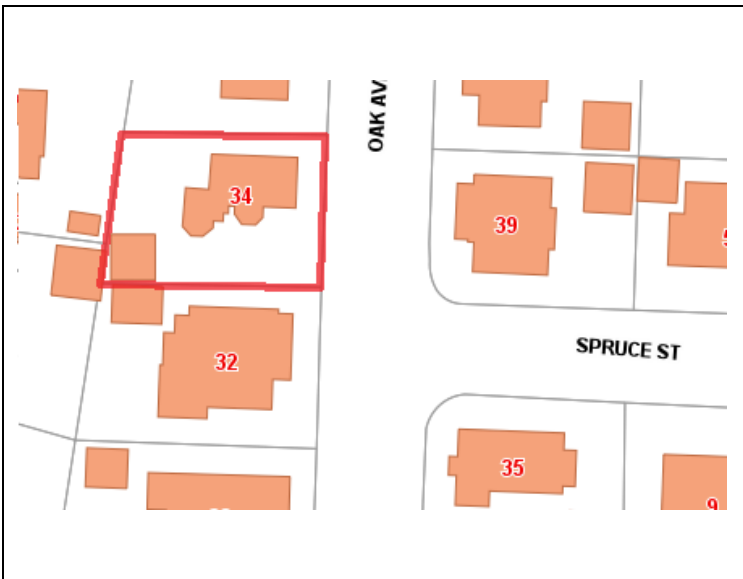
Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 6,320 SF

Setting: densely populated residential neighborhood
dating to late 19th and early 20th c.

Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): May 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

34 OAK 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.

The house at 34 Oak Avenue is an unusual brick, flat-roofed single-family dwelling constructed in the early 1920s by a successful Cambridge contractor as a retirement home. The building presents a three-bay façade to the street with a low parapet top capped by a metal cornice. A decorative brick band and soldier course extends above the second floor façade windows and extends to the front bay on the side elevations as well. A three-bay wood-framed porch extends across the façade with thin porch posts on pedestals and jigsaw balusters. Decorative details include inset tiles above the second story windows and at the sidehall entrance. The arched entrance bay contains a glazed door with sidelights. Most of the windows contain 6/1 sash. There is a single-story, three-sided bay on the south elevation which was added in 1955. The polygonal bay with conical roof at the southwest corner was added in 1999.

A driveway extends along the south side of the house terminating at a brick garage which was constructed in 1921, just prior to the construction of the house.

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 is located within the Payson Park subdivision which occupies land that was originally part of J.P. Cushing's estate, "Bellmont". After Cushing's death in 1862, the estate was purchased by Samuel Payson who sold the property to the Payson Park Land Company in 1886. The former estate was developed in three stages between 1886 and 1920 by the trustees. This was lot 203 and 103 of the 1899 Payson Park plan.

The house was constructed by prominent Boston/Cambridge contractor Henry McGahey for his own use. He had married his second wife, Melinda Lewis Loring, a nurse, in 1915 and the couple had previously lived in a multi-family brick and stone building he had built at 14 Wendell Street in Cambridge. Henry McGahey (1857-1929) was born in Massachusetts; his parents had immigrated from Ireland. McGahey's masonry/contracting business was located in Cambridge from the 1890s. Among the buildings he constructed were schools in East Boston and Charlestown; the North Bennett school; an armory in Charlestown and other buildings costing from \$20,000 to \$50,000 in the Cambridge/Boston area. In 1905 McGahey was employing 40 to 100 skilled workers depending on the volume of business (*Cambridge Chronicle*, Sept. 9, 1905). Before moving to Belmont, McGahey had lived in a three-apartment building at 14 Wendell Street in Cambridge. The brick building had a distinctive limestone bowed front; it was designed by George Fogerty and constructed by McGahey in 1905.

Sanborn maps indicate that the garage was built prior to the house. The garage is shown on the March 1922 Sanborn map while the house is not and was apparently built slightly later (the garage was built after the 1915 Sanborn map). The McGaheys moved to the Belmont house about 1924. Henry also constructed a brick house for his sister, Sarah McGahey, at 14 Linden Street in Belmont; she died in 1928. McGahey lived at 34 Oak Avenue until his death (January 19, 1929). At the time of his death he left an estate of about \$20,000 to his widow who continued to live here until at least 1934.

Herman H. Bailey was living here in 1954 and made a small addition to the south side of the house in 1955. Later owners included the DeMariano family from 1956 to 1972 and the Linder family from 1973 to 1978. The house was sold by Annabelle Linder to Arthur and Pearl Janszen in 1978 and sold by Pearl's estate in 1992. Slaten and Edna Cunha owned the property from 1992 to 1997. Later owners included Bruce Levine who acquired the property in 1998 and sold it to Joshua Nyambose and Maria Herrera in 2006 (Book 47718, Page 527).

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