

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

55-12	Boston North	AX	BLM.132
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Town/City: Belmont

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

Photograph



Address: 127 Somerset Street

Historic Name: Walter H. Piston, Jr. House

Uses: Present: single family dwelling

Original: single family dwelling

Date of Construction: 1936

Source: building permit

Style/Form: English Revival

Architect/Builder: Nelson Chase, architect

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: stucco, wood

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1981 – front entrance porch

1988 – replace wood shingled roof with asphalt shingles

2002 – new windows on facade

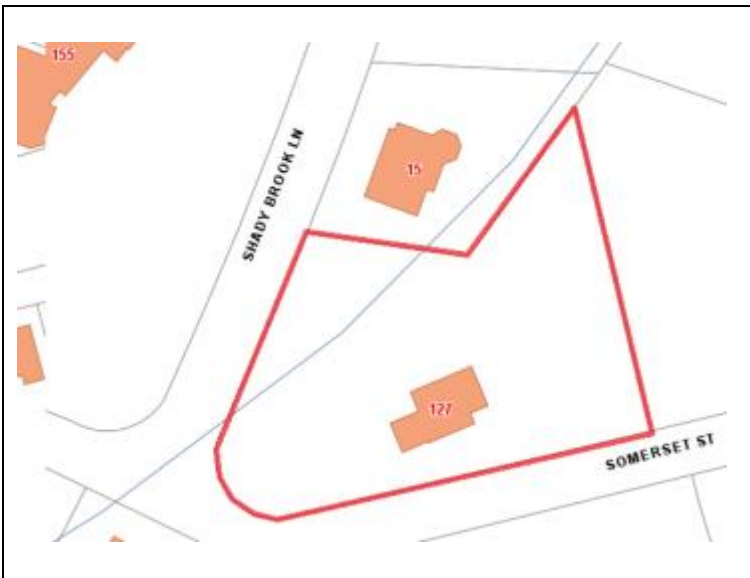
Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 40,089 SF

Setting: large lot in rustic natural setting with brook to rear

Locus Map (north at top)



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Belmont Historic District Commission

Date (*month / year*): June 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BELMONT

127 SOMERSET STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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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.

Constructed in 1936, the house at 127 Somerset Street combines an English Revival-inspired cottage with the necessities of 20th century living. The 1 ½-story dwelling features a picturesque composition and setting with asymmetrical massing and an exterior combining stucco and live-edge, rustic wood siding on the gables. An original two-car garage underlies the west portion of the house. The asymmetrical front gable extends to the ground with an off-center entrance that is sheltered by a gabled porch with plain columns and turned balusters added in 1981. Originally a simple hand-carved window lintel was located over the front door, attributed to Nelson Chase, the designer of the house (it is not known if it survives today). The front gable is punctuated by a band of double-hung windows on the first floor and a second story balustrade balcony. The windows to the east are a later addition and date to 2002.

The design of the house is enhanced by its rustic setting. A rough fieldstone wall is located along 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.

According to town building records, Walter H. Piston Jr. of 94 Somerset Street was given a building permit to construct this house in December 1935. The land was formerly owned by William Taussig. The architect of the house was Nelson Chase and Robert Pride was the builder.

Walter H. Piston, Jr. (1894-1976) was a renowned American composer of classical music, a music theorist and a professor of music at Harvard University from 1926 to 1960 where his students included Leonard Bernstein. Among his many awards and honors were two Pulitzers and eight honorary doctorates. He was elected to the American Institute and Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Piston reportedly collaborated in designing the house with his wife, artist Kathryn Nason Piston (1892-1976) and architect Chase. The house was owned by the Pistons until their deaths in 1976. It was acquired by Adrian Reti in 1977 and by David Johnson in 1992.

The architect of the house, Nelson Chauncy Chase (1893-1987), was born in Lowell and educated at MIT. He designed his own home at 41 Hay Road in 1925 and was an instructor at MIT in the 1920s and early 1930s. By 1934 he had opened a Studio Shop at 65 Leonard Street in Belmont. Chase is best known as an artist. Among his works are murals in the Claflin Room of the Belmont Public Library depicting early life in the community.

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Assessors' Photo