FORM B – BUILDING

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

Photograph

Topographic or Assessor's Map

Assessor’s Number | USGS Quad | Area(s) | Form Number
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UMASS No. 97 | Williamsburg | N/A | AMH.119

Town: Amherst
Place: University of Massachusetts

Address: 270 Stockbridge Road
Historic Name: Fernald Hall
Uses: Present: Academic
      Original: Academic
Date of Construction: 1910
Source: University of Massachusetts Facilities Dept.
Style/Form: Classical Revival
Architect/Builder: C.P. Hoyt

Exterior Material:
  Foundation: Granite
  Wall/Trim: Brick
  Roof: Slate

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None


Condition: Good
Moved: no | X | yes | Date ________
Acreage: Total Campus Acreage: 1,348 Acres
Setting: Located on the east side of Stockbridge Road, on the opposite side of the road from, and to the southeast of, Building #83 Clark Hall and Building #84 Clark Hall Greenhouse.

Recorded by: W. Maros/C. Weed/C. Beagan
Organization: VHB/Pressley Associates
Date (month / year): May 2009

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.
Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

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

Fernald Hall is a two-story Classical Revival brick structure with a hip roof, broad overhanging eaves and an H-shape plan. The building is 11 bays wide and nine bays deep, with a five-bay central section that is flanked by three-bay projecting end sections. Fernald Hall has a slate roof, stone and wood trim and a granite foundation. The trim includes stringcourses and tapered brackets under the eaves.

The main entry is in the southwest elevation at the top of a short stairway. The entrance features a double-leaf door that has 2/2 panes in each leaf’s upper half and two narrow panels in its lower half. The doorway has a transom that is comprised of four 2/2 fixed windows. The southwest elevation’s central section has two windows on either side of the main entry and five evenly spaced windows on the second story. Each of the projecting end sections has three windows on its first and second stories. All of these windows are comprised of a 2/2 window with a 2/2 transom. The southwest elevation’s basement has shorter 2/2 windows, which are vertically aligned with the first and second story windows.

The nine-bay wide southeast elevation’s windows match the southwest elevation’s windows, except for the southeast elevation’s easternmost bay, where the first story has two small windows instead of a matching 2/2 window with a 2/2 transom, and the basement window has been blocked with exhaust equipment.
Landscape – Visual/Design Assessment
Fernald Hall is located on the western side of Thatcher Way to the south of Franklin Dining Hall. To the west, the building is bordered by a substantial foundation planting of a mixture of evergreen and deciduous shrubs in a mulched bed. Beyond is a large bituminous concrete parking area. A bituminous concrete vehicular access drive and smaller parking area are located to the south of the building. To the east of the building a bituminous concrete service court bordered by a screen planting of mature evergreen trees separates the building from Thatcher Way. To the north is a second bituminous concrete service area and access drive.

2005 orthophotograph of Fernald Hall (center) and surrounding landscape, north is up (MassGIS).
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.

Overview

The University of Massachusetts, Amherst was chartered as the Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1863 but did not accept its first class until 1867. As one of two land grant universities in Massachusetts, the university’s original mission was agricultural education. Its mission, however, evolved within the first 20 years in response to the changing needs of the United States. While agriculture remains, even today, a mainstay of the University’s mission, the University now also supports engineering, science, education, and liberal arts colleges and departments.

A full historical narrative of the University of Massachusetts from its founding to 1958 is contained in the survey report. This narrative was prepared in 2009 by Carol S. Weed, Senior Archaeologist with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Shown below are selected highlights from the text of the full historical narrative, along with additional information pertinent to the specific building that is described in this Massachusetts Historical Commission Building Form. This section contains: (1) highlights of the historic periods in the development of the University of Massachusetts, leading up to and including the period when the building was constructed, (2) information about the university in the decade when the building was constructed, (3) information about the circumstances that led to the construction of the building, along with information about its architect, if known, and (4) an analysis of the historic landscape of the building.

1863-1867: Administration and Initial Campus Layout

As the educational mission evolved in the years after 1863, so did the university’s approach to its facilities and its landscape. There was no accepted plan for the layout of the college, despite the preparation of various plan proposals in the 1860s, including separate proposals from the country’s preeminent landscape planners, Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted, who had formerly worked together on the winning design for New York City’s Central Park. Neither Vaux’s plan, nor Olmsted’s plan to create a campus around a central green, were accepted by the University Trustees.

1867-1916: The Early Growth

In the absence of a coordinated plan, the Trustees put existing buildings that were acquired with the campus land into service as agricultural laboratories. Campus development for several decades after 1863 was sporadic and focused on the construction of individual buildings to meet specific functional needs of the fledgling university. It was not until after 1900, during a period of rapid student population growth and resultant new building construction, that the University Trustees again sought proposals for comprehensive campus planning.

In 1912, a professional landscaping publication reported that Warren H. Manning, formerly affiliated with the Olmsted firm, had spent over four years preparing a comprehensive plan for the University Trustees. The Trustees had considered it imperative for the college to plan harmonious development that would conserve the beauty of campus grounds while meeting the needs of a growing student population whose expanding range of activities was unprecedented.

Manning’s plan designated three distinct sections of the campus, the Upland, Midland and Lowland Sections. Each section was intended to be the locus of specific functions, with clusters of purpose-built structures to serve those functions. For example, one section would be designated for faculty, women’s and horticultural facilities. A second section would contain administration, research, science and student life (dormitory, dining hall, and sports) facilities. The third section would be dedicated to poultry, farming and sewage disposal facilities.

Although Manning’s Upland, Midland, and Lowland sections are not fully realized, it is apparent that discipline specific groupings were developed. Building clusters, especially those related to agriculture, administration, and the hard and earth sciences (physics, chemistry, and geology) continued to expand through the present day.

Continuation sheet 3
1910-1920
By World War I and continuing through the 1920s, University records frequently refer to the inadequacy of the physical plant; the lack of class room space; the lack of properly ventilated and lighted spaces; and the danger of having to cancel classes because of a lack of appropriate facilities. Expansion of the campus through acquisition of additional land was considered essential if the University were to construct new and better facilities to address these deficiencies and excel as an institution of higher education.

Fernald Hall
This structure was one of a number of research and instructional buildings that were planned under the leadership of Massachusetts Agricultural College President Goodell, who sought to improve the College’s facilities. Fernald Hall served as an entomology building and was named for Charles H. Fernald, who was an internationally known entomologist, head of the MAC science department and acting President of the College. More information about Charles Fernald may be found in Frank Prentice Rand’s *Yesterdays at Massachusetts State College, 1863-1933* (Amherst: The Associate Alumni Massachusetts State College, 1933).

Landscape Analysis
Historic photographs of Fernald Hall (1910) show a dense foundation planting along the building’s western side (replaced) and vines growing on the façade of the building at the corners (no longer extant). The approach to the building consisted of two diagonal pedestrian walks from Stockbridge Road through mown lawn that converged at the main entrance on the western façade (no longer extant). This area has been replaced by an expansion of the bituminous concrete parking lot to the west in recent years. Historically, an area of cultivated land was located to the east of the building (no longer extant). This area is now the location of a service court, mature evergreen tree planting, and Thatcher Way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES


Joseph S. Larson, Personal communication to VHB 25 March 2009 concerning biographical information/references for Charles H. Fernald.
Detailed Map
Fernald Hall, view northeast, September 2008
Fernald Hall, 1918
Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Fernald Hall, showing former Fernald Hall Greenhouse at left, 1918
Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
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:  Rita Walsh and Walter Maros, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

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

First established in 1863 under the provisions of the Federal Morrill Land-Grant Colleges Act, the University of Massachusetts Amherst retains a significant collection of buildings dating from its first period of operation as the Massachusetts Agricultural College (1863-1931). These include, but are not limited to: substantial brick and masonry classroom, laboratory, research and administrative buildings dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, barns and stables related to its function as an agricultural college, pre-existing wood frame buildings (including two 18th century buildings [117, 118]) incorporated into campus functions, the power plant [107], the Chancellor’s House [124], and the Old Chapel [126] and Memorial Hall [112], historic centerpieces of the campus. The historic buildings from the “Mass Aggie” period for the most part are concentrated in three areas: (1) an arc that extends west to east between the Mullins Center and the Northeast Residential Area, including the Grinnell barn complex [109, 110, 111], Blaisdell [108], the power plant [107], Flint [104], Stockbridge [105], Draper [103], Goessmann [106], and West [114] and East [113] Experiment Stations; (2) a smaller grouping that includes, Wilder [115], the University Club buildings [117, 118], Clark [116] and Fernald [119]; (3) and the group of South College [128], Old Chapel [126] and Memorial Hall [112] at the center of the campus. Other individual buildings [including 120, 124, 125] also survive outside these areas. Although the campus has expanded significantly in and around the Massachusetts Agricultural College core, both individual buildings and groups of buildings that still convey their relationship to each other as part of the Agricultural College are campus plan, are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at the state level.

The University of Massachusetts Amherst also retains a significant collection of buildings dating from 1931-1958, which is a period characterized by the expansion of the school’s mission and physical plant that began in the 1930s with its name change to Massachusetts State College. At this time, the Trustees made a concerted effort to modernize and increase campus facilities, through the post-World War II mid-20th century period when there was unprecedented growth in the size of the university student population and a concurrent growth in specialized academic research and degree work.
Significant buildings that were constructed to meet the University’s needs between 1931 and 1958, as well as significant buildings predating 1931 which have no prior Form B on file with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, include (listed in order of construction date): [UMass 58]; Hatch Laboratory, built 1891 [UMass 118]; Clark Hall Greenhouse, built 1907 [UMass 84]; French Hall Greenhouse, built 1908 [UMass 105]; French Hall, built 1909 [UMass 104]; Waiting Station Shelter, built 1911 [UMass 63]; Apiary Laboratory, built 1911 [UMass 74]; Hicks Physical Education Building, built 1931 [UMass 121]; Hicks Physical Education Cage, built 1932 [UMass 122]; Thatcher House, built 1935 [UMass 30]; Research Administration Building, built 1939 [UMass 579]; Lewis House, built 1940 [UMass 28]; Butterfield House, built 1940 [UMass 5]; Greenough House, built 1946 [UMass 24]; Chadbourne House, built 1947 [UMass 6]; Mills House (New Africa House), built 1948 [UMass 29]; Skinner Hall, built 1948 [UMass 128]; Gunness Laboratory, built 1949 [UMass 91]; Brooks House, built 1949 [UMass 4]; Hamlin House, built 1949 [UMass 25]; Knowlton House, built 1949 [UMass 26]; Marston Hall, built 1950 [UMass 92]; Paige Laboratory, built 1947 [UMass 6]; Hasbrouck Laboratory, built 1950 [UMass 124]; Baker House, built 1952 [UMass 3]; Crabtree House, built 1953 [UMass 12]; Leach House, built 1953 [UMass 27]; Worcester Dining Hall, built 1953 [UMass 85]; Arnold House, built 1954 [UMass 2]; Durfee Range, built 1955 [UMass 96]; Van Meter House, built 1957 [UMass 32]; Machmer Hall, built 1957 [UMass 111]; Student Union, built 1957 [UMass 131]; Wheeler House, built 1958 [UMass 33]; and Johnson House, built 1959 [UMass 36].

The recommended University of Massachusetts Amherst historic district meets Criterion A for its association with the ongoing mission of this state university to meet the educational requirements of a rapidly changing world. From the inception of the University in 1863 as the Massachusetts Agricultural College, through the current day, the Trustees have sought to provide educational programming and facilities that would enable students to advance the practice of agriculture and a steadily increasing host of other fields, meet the needs of a rapidly-industrializing world, and succeed in leading a post-industrial information and technology-based economy.

The historic district also meets Criterion C for its stock of buildings and landscape features whose forms and functions reflect the evolving and expanding mission of the University in the 95 years between its 1863 founding and 1959 (1959 being the 50 year cut-off for National Register consideration). A number of architects, landscape architects and planners of local, regional and/or national prominence were involved in the design of the individual buildings and the overall plan of the current University of Massachusetts Amherst campus. The aggregate efforts of these design professionals produced a distinctive public university campus landscape, primarily of the mid-19th to mid-20th century, which is unique in Massachusetts.

Despite the loss of certain buildings and landscape features up to the present time in 2009 and incremental physical changes seen in new window, door and roofing replacements, as well as siding replacements in a small number of buildings, the district retains integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, association, workmanship, and materials.