FORM B – BUILDING

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Photograph

Topographic or Assessor's Map

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

Assessor’s Number    USGS Quad    Area(s)    Form Number
UMASS No. 104    Williamsburg    N/A    

Town: Amherst
Place: University of Massachusetts

Address: 232 Stockbridge Road
Historic Name: French Hall Greenhouse
Uses: Present: Greenhouse
      Original: Greenhouse
Date of Construction: 1908
Source: University of Massachusetts Facilities Dept.
Style/Form:
Architect/Builder:
Exterior Material:
  Foundation: Concrete
  Wall/Trim: Glass, in Metal Frame
  Roof: Glass, in Metal Frame
Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None

Major Alterations (with dates): Insertion of fan units through sides of greenhouse structures (dates unknown)

Condition: Good
Moved: no | X | yes | Date __________
Acreage: Total Campus Acreage: 1,348 Acres
Setting: University Campus. Located at rear (east) side of French Hall
Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement 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.

French Hall Greenhouse is comprised of five connected greenhouses located on the rear (east) side of French Hall. The greenhouses are connected to French Hall by way of the one-story brick ell that extends off French Hall’s east elevation.

The main entry to the connected greenhouses is in the front gable main greenhouse that is connected to the east side of the brick ell. This greenhouse’s entry is in its south elevation, through a central two-leaf door that has 2/3 fixed panes in its upper half and two panels in its wood lower half. The main greenhouse has a symmetrical gable front, unlike several of the other four greenhouses that have asymmetrical gable fronts that resemble the outline of a saltbox house’s end gable. The main greenhouse is connected to French Hall and the other four greenhouses by way of short greenhouse link structures on its east and west elevations.

The other four greenhouses are on the east side of the main greenhouse and have their gable ends on their east and west elevations, with their long sides facing north and south. These four greenhouses are interconnected at the center line of their east-west elevations, by short north-south greenhouse link structures that form a lateral spine for the greenhouse complex.
Landscape – Visual/Design Assessment

French Hall Greenhouse is located on the west side of Thatcher Way at the intersection of Infirmary Way on a flat site. The Greenhouse is bordered by bituminous concrete parking areas with granite curbing to the south and west, and by Thatcher Way to the east. Access to the building from the parking area to the south is provided by granite steps. The landscape surrounding the building includes mature deciduous trees to the north and low evergreen shrubs, groundcover, perennial planting, and mown lawn to the east and south. The landscape also includes a stone wall.

2005 orthophotograph of French Hall Greenhouse (center, right) and surrounding landscape, north is up (MassGIS).
INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET  
[AMHERST]  
[232 Stockbridge Road]  
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125  

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
1900-1910
At the turn of the twentieth century, UMass-Amherst remained focused on its core missions: agriculture, education, military preparation, and industrial support. The student population did not grow substantially during these years and individual freshman classes still remained less than a thousand persons strong. Nonetheless, the administration focused during the decade on building upgrades and new construction in order to support expanding curricula. Classroom/laboratory buildings with faculty offices including Clark and French halls, new agricultural buildings such as the Clark and French greenhouses, and the photography laboratory were all commissioned and/or constructed during the decade. The administration also realized that the expanding physical plant was encumbering land with buildings and literally decreasing available agricultural land usable as experimental plots. To counteract this trend, the administration began a program of land acquisition in the 1890s which continued with increasing vigor through the 1920s. In the period from 1900-1910, 128 acres, some with associated farm buildings and one with a cranberry bog, were bought.

French Hall Greenhouse
This structure was built in conjunction with French Hall, to serve as a commercial floriculture and market gardening facility for the Massachusetts Agricultural College. These buildings, named for Henry French, first President of the College, were part of the building program planned under the leadership of President Goodell, who sought to improve the College’s research and educational facilities.

Landscape Analysis
The historic buildings along Stockbridge Road developed in two phases. The first phase included the construction of Homestead House, Stockbridge House, and the Durfee Plant House (no longer extant) in 1867. The second phase of development occurred from 1906-1909 and included Wilder Hall, Clark Hall, Clark Hall Greenhouse, French Hall Greenhouse, and French Hall. In 1955 the Durfee Range was added to replace the historic 1867 Durfee Plant House. Historically, Stockbridge Street was a tree-lined street with a scale conducive to the integration of residential-style houses with small academic buildings. The loss of the once prominent street tree planting along Stockbridge Street has changed the character of the landscape associated with all of the buildings. New construction along the street and within the sites associates with the historic buildings has changed the scale of the area. New parking lots and associated vehicular access routes have also diminished the integrity of many of the building’s landscapes.

French Hall Greenhouse was constructed in 1908 shortly after Clark Hall and Clark Hall Greenhouse. The Greenhouses were followed by French Hall immediately to the west in 1909. Pedestrian access to the building was provided by a walk from Stockbridge Road (extant). Historic photographs show deciduous and evergreen foundation plantings and a planting bed in the lawn between Stockbridge Road and the building. A 1918 historic photograph shows crushed stone access drive leading to the southeast corner of the building, which is indicated on campus maps as late as 1955. By 1959 a parking area was added to the south of the buildings, which remains today, reduced in size. Both the size of the new parking lot and the setting for French Hall were impacted by the construction of the Franklin Dining Hall in 1965. The setting of French Hall and French Hall Greenhouse was also impacted by the construction of University Health Center (1962, addition 1973) and Brett House (1963) to the east.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES
Harold Whiting Cary, The University of Massachusetts: A History of One Hundred Years (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1962)
Figures

Detailed Map
French Hall Greenhouse, view northeast, September 2008
French Hall Greenhouse, view north, showing French Hall on the left, September 2008
French Hall Greenhouse, view southeast, showing inserted fan units, September 2008
French Hall Greenhouse, view northeast, September 2008
French Hall Greenhouse at extreme right, view northwest, showing French Hall on the left, September 2008
French Hall at left, French Hall Greenhouse at right, view northeast, no date (between 1909 and 1918)
Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
French Hall at left, French Hall Greenhouse at right, view northwest, no date (between 1909 and 1918), showing the extension and reconstruction of French Hall that was completed by at least 1918

Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
French Hall at left, French Hall Greenhouse at right, view north, no date (early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, showing the extension and reconstruction of French Hall that was completed by at least 1918

Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
French Hall Greenhouse with French Hall in background, view west, (early to mid-20th century)
Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
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.