FORM B – BUILDING

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

Assessor’s Number | USGS Quad | Area(s) | Form Number
------------------|-----------|--------|---------------------
UMASS No. 116     | Williamsburg | N/A    | AMH.125

Town: Amherst
Place: University of Massachusetts

Address: 101 Hicks Way

Historic Name: Munson Hall/Paige Laboratory
Uses: Present: Public Relations/Administrative
      Original: Veterinary Science Laboratory

Date of Construction: 1898

Source: University of Massachusetts Facilities Dept.

Style/Form: Eclectic

Architect/Builder: Emery A. Ellsworth

Exterior Material:
  Foundation: Stone
  Wall/Trim: Brick
  Roof: Asphalt Shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: UMass Building #117 Munson Annex

Major Alterations (with dates): Replacement of Ionic columns with fluted Tuscan columns on front porch; Removal of front railings and roof balustrade from front porch; Replacement of slate roof with asphalt shingles (dates unknown).

Condition: Good

Moved: no | X | yes | Date __________

Acreage: Total Campus Acreage: 1,348 Acres

Setting: Located in well-landscaped area of historic campus core, adjacent to Building #121 Hicks Physical Education Building and Building #122 Hicks Physical Education Cage.

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.
Munson Hall, known as Paige Laboratory until the early 1950s, is a 2½-story brick structure with Federal Revival elements. The structure has a hip roof, Federal Revival-inspired two-story bow windows, a wide cornice with dentil molding, monumental brick pilasters with Ionic capitals at the corners of the building, Federal Revival elliptical windows and a semi-elliptical fanlight, and a projecting porch with fluted Tuscan columns. The building is seven bays wide and nine bays deep, with a stone foundation, brick and stone trim, and an asphalt shingle roof. Munson Hall’s two-story section has a T-shape footprint, with 1-story ells filling in the sides of the T-shape section on the building’s northwest and southwest corners. Due to the slope of the land, the basement is above grade level on the west side of the building.

The main entry is in the east elevation, sheltered within a central porch that is located between the two-story bow windows that are situated at the north and south ends of this elevation. The porch has three clustered Tuscan columns at both its north and south freestanding corners, and an engaged Tuscan column at the porch’s return with the east wall of the building. These fluted columns support a cornice that contains dentil molding and modillions. The doorway includes sidelights and a semi-elliptical fanlight. Historic photographs on file at Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst show that the porch originally had Ionic columns, additional railings at the front of the porch, and a balustrade around the porch roof. Three 1/1 windows are located above the porch in the second story. The two-story bow windows at either side of the front porch have three curved 1/1 windows in both their first and second stories. These windows retain their historic curved glass.

The north and south elevations show the building’s T-shape footprint, with 1-story ells filling in the sides of the T-shape section on the building’s northwest and southwest corners. The north elevation, which was not observed in September 2008, historically was nine bays deep, with four 1/1 windows in the main block’s first story and five 1/1 windows of the same size in the one-story ell’s first story. The main block’s second story contained a central elliptical window with a 1/1 window on either side, while the T-shape section’s second story contained four square, single pane windows.

The south elevation, which was observed in September 2008, has a more complex window arrangement than the north elevation. Its most prominent feature is the two-story arched window system that apparently provides natural light for a stairway in the main block. This window system consists of a semi-circular transom at the top of the arch, which contains Georgian-Gothic pointed-arch tracery; first and second story windows that consist of a central 2/4 window that is flanked by 1/4 sidelights; and wood panels between the first and second story windows at what appears to be the stairway landing level. The windows are framed with fluted pilasters and the cornice below the transom is ornamented with dentil molding. On the east side of this arched window, the main block’s first story has two 1/1 windows, while the second story has a 1/1 window and an elliptical window that contains Adam style tracery surrounding two rectangular panes at its center. The elliptical window’s lower rectangular pane is screened and appears to be an operable awning window. The one-story ell’s first story contains two narrow and three large 1/1 windows, while the T-shape section’s second story contains four square, single pane windows. On the east and south elevations, the rectangular and square windows all have brick lintels with stone keystones and stone sills. The two-story arched window has a more elaborate stone keystone with bead molding down its center, and the elliptical window has stone keystone motifs with decorative flanges at the window opening’s top, bottom and sides.
Landscape – Visual/Design Assessment
Munson Hall is located to the southeast of Hicks Cage. The building faces east and marks the northwest corner of a small green. The site slopes from the west to the east with the southern portion of the site consisting of mown lawn with deciduous trees. On the north side of the building is a lawn with evergreen and deciduous trees. The pedestrian approach to the building consists of a bituminous walkway leading up to brick steps and a portico. A pole light is located at the end of the walkway. On the west side of the hall a bituminous concrete drive leads to a parking area.

2005 orthophotograph of Munson Hall (center, right) 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
By the early 1890s, the Trustees had determined that the ongoing growth of the Massachusetts Agricultural College as an institution meant that the campus would have to undergo a substantial reorganization in terms of land use. Additional dormitories and lectures halls were badly needed; the logical place for these buildings was within the core campus, where the College’s agricultural facilities were presently located; and the Trustees were quite aware that putting new residential and classroom buildings in close proximity of barnyards would be exceedingly undesirable for students and faculty. The farms would have to be relocated farther away from the core, not only for hygienic and esthetic reasons, but also for logistic reasons: the Trustees thought that the existing farm setup was becoming inconvenient from a farmer’s point of view. The Trustees were concerned that farmers would have to spend too much time and expense carting materials from fields to barns that had become (or would become) stranded among non-farm campus buildings. The challenge of relocating the farms was also regarded by the Trustees as an opportunity to create new, sanitary, model barns and veterinary laboratories where hard-to-eradicate problems like tuberculosis among livestock might be overcome. During this decade and into the 20th century, new state-of-the-art agricultural facilities were built, including the 1894 Horse Barn, Munson Hall and Munson Hall Annex.

Munson Hall
This structure was previously known as Paige Laboratory. In the early 1950s a new laboratory was constructed elsewhere on campus and the name Paige Laboratory was transferred to the new building, after which this 1898 structure became known as Munson Hall. The building was named for James J. Paige, who was Head of the Veterinary Science Department at the Massachusetts Agricultural College from 1891 to 1922. The building’s current name honors Willard A. Munson, long-time director of the University’s Extension Service. Paige Laboratory, now Munson Hall, was designed to contain animal veterinary laboratories and lecture halls, despite having the outward appearance of a large and costly house. The laboratories were fitted with tiled surfaces that could be thoroughly washed in order to keep these spaces as sanitary as possible. The adjacent Munson Hall Annex served as a hospital stable for horses.

Landscape Analysis
The buildings to the west of the Campus Pond were historically organized along two circulation routes, neither of which is extant. The eastern façade of buildings closest to the pond, including the Chapel and Memorial Hall, were organized along Olmsted Road/Ellis Drive overlooking an open space indicated as Front Slope on a 1901 campus plan and the Campus Pond. Olmsted Road/Ellis Drive was an historic tree-lined street that curved along the west side of the campus pond, connecting to North Pleasant Street at both its northern and southern ends.

The western façade of the buildings faced an extension of Lincoln Avenue (no longer extant). Historically, the northern terminus of the Lincoln Avenue axis was occupied by North College (no longer extant), which stood on the approximate site of Machmer Hall (1957). The southern axis of Lincoln Avenue was obstructed by the construction of Whitmore Hall in 1967. Historically, Lincoln Avenue was tree-lined and featured some open lots interspersed with athletic fields.

Munson Hall (1898) Munson Hall Annex (1899) included and access drive perpendicular to Lincoln Avenue. With the addition of the Hicks Physical Education Building and Case in 1931, access to the building was reconfigured and included a loop around Munson Hall. Early historic photographs show no planting near Munson Hall, but later photographs show shrubs at the foundation. The foundation of the building remains un-vegetated, matching the historic appearance. The configuration of walks and roads surrounding the buildings has changed dramatically from the time the buildings were constructed, while the vegetation associated with the buildings retains its historic appearance.
BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES


30th Annual Report of the Massachusetts Agricultural College (1893)

37th Annual Report of the Massachusetts Agricultural College (1900)

Joseph S. Larson, Personal communication to VHB 25 March 2009 concerning Willard A. Munson.
Figures

Detailed Map
Munson Hall, view southwest, September 2008
Munson Hall, view northeast, September 2008
Munson Hall, no date (early 20th century), with roof of Munson Hall Annex (UMass Building #117) at the left
Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Munson Hall, no date (early 20th century), with roof and arcade of Munson Hall Annex (UMass Building #117) at the left

Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Munson Hall, no date (mid 20th century)
Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Munson Hall, 1918
Courtesy Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Munson Hall, no date (circa 1900), with Munson Hall Annex (UMass Building #117) at the right
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]; Gunnness 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.