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. 209 Williamsburg N/A

Town: Amherst
Place: University of Massachusetts

Address: 101 Brooks Way
Historic Name: Brooks Tobacco Barn
Uses: Present: Barn
Original: Tobacco Drying Barn
Date of Construction: 1924
Source: University of Massachusetts Facilities Dept.
Style/Form:
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Exterior Material:
Foundation: Not Visible
Wall/Trim: Vertical Wood Boards
Roof: Asphalt Roll Roofing
Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None

Major Alterations (with dates):

Condition: Poor
Moved: no | X | yes | Date __________
Acreage: Total Campus Acreage: 1,348 Acres
Setting: Located beyond and below parking lot guard rails, in an inaccessible and overgrown declivity between parking lots #26 and #31 on the north side of Governor’s Drive

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.

The Brooks Tobacco Barn is a 2½ story New England barn with a rectangular plan, vertical board siding and asphalt roll roofing on its front gable roof. The barn has a peaked ventilator on the roof ridge at about the midpoint of the building. The structure has two double-leaf swinging doors in its gable front southeast elevation. Large sections of these doors are missing or rotted, although the southeast elevation of the barn appears to retain most of its boards, with approximately six board widths missing across this elevation. The barn is of a considerable length, most of which is not visible because of adjacent trees and lower-level vegetation overgrowth.

Landscape – Visual/Design Assessment
The Brooks Tobacco Barn is surrounded by bituminous concrete parking lots with granite curbing on the east, west, and south sides. The building is located below the grade of the adjacent parking lots, and surrounded by unmaintained, dense, high scrub growth leading to a mixed evergreen and deciduous tree forest. Lawn surrounding the building is un-mown. No maintained circulation routes lead to the building.

2005 orthophotograph of Brooks Tobacco Barn (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.
1916-1931: World War I and the Transition Years

Long range building programs were developed beginning with Landscape Gardening Professor F.A. Waugh’s 1919 plan. Like Manning’s 1911 plan, Waugh’s 1919 work emphasized building groups in order to maintain the proper balance between buildings, cultivated fields, meadows and lawns, forests and trees. 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.

The 1920s, however, had the fewest buildings constructed of any decade in the campus history to that point. The slow pace of building is largely attributed to the annual funding levels that were appropriated by the Massachusetts Legislature during the decade.

1920-1930

Following World War I, the administration was cognizant that its core missions had to be expanded to meet the educational requirements of a rapidly industrializing world. For the first time, the university administration focused on the development of comprehensive 5- and 10-year plans which meshed curricula needs with facility upgrades and expansion. During the decade, the agricultural experiment station was expanded, the farmland where Brooks Tobacco Barn stands was acquired, new laboratories (Chenoweth, Goessmann) were built, and common spaces created (Memorial Hall). Funding, however, continued to inhibit development and the capital expenditure program was still heavily indebted to public sources.

Brooks Tobacco Barn

In 1923, the Trustees of the Massachusetts Agricultural College noted that the Brooks Farm had been purchased with funding from the Massachusetts Legislature and the land would be designated as the William P. Brooks Experimental Farm. The Trustees pointed out that this was a particularly fortunate land acquisition because the recent construction of Stockbridge Hall, Flint Laboratory, Abigail Adams House and the Chemistry Laboratory had seriously encroached upon the test plots of the Experimental Station. The Trustees went on to say that the College had also lacked suitable land that could be dedicated to experimental work, particularly experimental work on the tobacco and onion problems that had caused serious agricultural losses for farmers in the Connecticut Valley. A year later, the Trustees reported that $5,000 had been allocated for the construction of the Brooks Tobacco Barn, for the purpose of drying tobacco. Based on this information from the Annual Reports of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, it appears that Brooks Tobacco Barn was built to support the College’s experimental research work that was undertaken to address agricultural problems that were specific to the Connecticut Valley region and the local farm economy.

Landscape Analysis

Historic photographs show the Brooks Tobacco Barn (1924) in an open, agricultural landscape with little vegetation aside from a few scattered evergreen and deciduous trees associated with the former Brooks residence and barn. Changes to the landscape associated with the Brooks Tobacco Barn have been significant, including changes in topography surrounding the building associated with the addition of expansive parking areas to the east, west, and south of the building. Mature forest has replaced open fields to the north of the building.
BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

___, 60th Annual Report of the Massachusetts Agricultural College (1923)

___, 61st Annual Report of the Massachusetts Agricultural College (1924)
Figures

Detailed Map
Brooks Tobacco Barn, view northwest, September 2008
Brooks Tobacco Barn, view north, November 2008
Brooks Tobacco Barn, view northwest, November 2008
The Brooks Tobacco Barn (UMass #209) is recommended not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The building is not recommended individually eligible as it does not possess individual significance nor does it display any significance in construction or architectural design.

Although a large number of buildings on the campus are recommended eligible as part of a potential historic district, the Brooks Tobacco Barn is not recommended eligible as a contributing resource to this district as it is physically isolated from this concentration of buildings and is separated from them not only by distance, but by a series of surface parking lots that separate the barn from the rest of campus.