

FORM B - BUILDING

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| AREA | FORM NO. |
| N | 18-1 |

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02108



City Belmont
 Address 52 Washington Street
 Historic Name John Chenery House

Use: Present residence
 Original farmhouse

DESCRIPTION:
 Date 1654
 Source building department records
 Style First Period Colonial with Italianate alterations.

Architect NA

Exterior wall fabric wood clapboard

Outbuildings garage

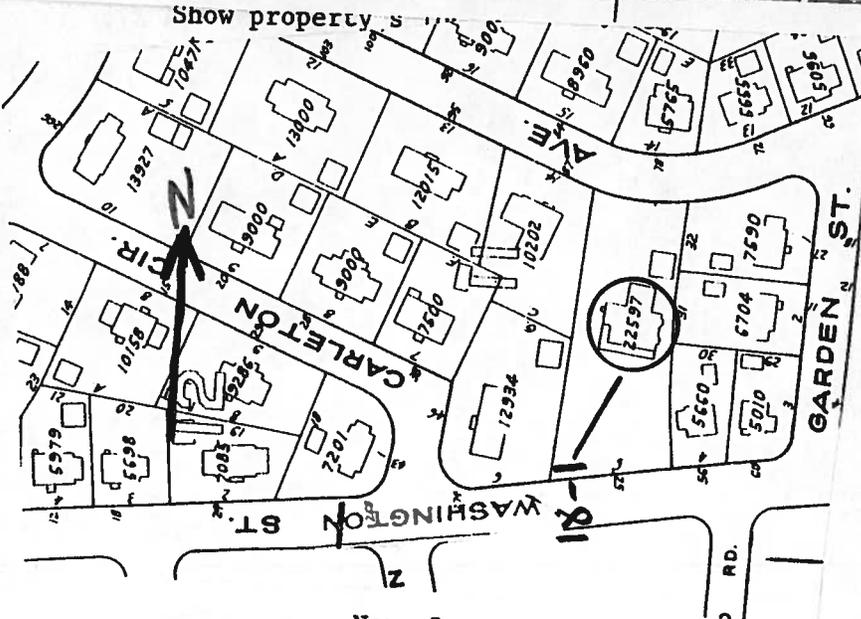
Major alterations (with dates) 1850s, 20 gabled dormers

1870s, central pedimented entry pavillion and flanking front porches

Moved NA Date _____

Approx. acreage slightly over 1 1/2 acres

Setting set back from street in residential neighborhood, hidden by trees from all sides.



Recorded by Nora Lucas
 Organization Boston University
 Date November 1982

(Staple additional sheets here)

JOHN CHENERY HOUSE 52 WASHINGTON STREET CONTINUATION

Architectural Significance Continued

The windows were filled with small panes, many in number. The "jog" in the house was as at present. The huge chimneys carrying the fireplace and the two great brick ovens were torn down and the high narrow mantel pieces were sacrificed at the same time. The rattling old latches gave way to commonplace door-knobs..."

The only documented alterations are those of Issac Chenery, who remodeled the house in the 1850s, with the addition of two gabled dormers, and of his wife, Mary Anne, who in the 1870s made alterations in a simple Italiante manner (perhaps to keep up with her neighboring relatives the Longs (form _____) who had just built an Italiante house nearby. Anne's alterations were a projected central pedimented pavillion entry, long narrow paired windows on the second story, and a single window in the gable. She also added flanking front porches with railings.

The Chenery house is illustrative of the history of many of the town's buildings; it was lived in and updated, rather than replaced as was the fate of several early Belmont houses.

Historical Significance Continued

in the family until 1971.

The Chenery's early involvement in town government began with Jonas B. Chenery who was one of Belmont's first selectmen, in 1859.

Winthrop Ward Chenery (1819-76), nephew of Ebenezer, was the first Chenery to leave the farm and work in the city. He was a partner in the West Indies Import Co., Phelps and Co., and built a house (demolished) on Chenery land on Common Street, called "Walnut Hill."

For further information see form 0.

The Chenery House is significant under Criterion A of the National Register for its association with a family important in Belmont's development.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.)

Said to be Belmont's oldest house, The John Chenery House (BEL-82-18-22-22A), built in 1654 has been remodeled, the exterior now representing architectural styles from the 1850s and 70s, rather than an authentic first period house. Its first period integrity has been compromised, although it still represents one of Belmont's architecturally historic buildings.

An article published in 1930, but probably written well before, describes the house before and after the 1850 remodeling as resembling a medieval holdover from England: "The heavy front door had but two tiny glass lights, set near the top.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.)

The house, although substantially altered from its 1864 appearance (see above) is significant for its association with the Chenery family, who played a part in Belmont's settlement and growth as subsistence farmers, market gardeners, revolutionary soldiers, and Belmont political leaders.

The house is the only surviving building original to the Chenery family, and was their first home in Belmont (then Watertown). John Chenery, an early settler of Watertown, built this house in 1654. Chenery was the first in a long line of the Chenery family who farmed the lands, and who maintained the homestead until 1971.

John Chenery died in 1675 at the house at 52 Washington Street, of wounds received serving under Captain Beer of Watertown, in King Phillip's War. One of his descendants also named John Chenery, was a minuteman who fought at Lexington; his brother, William, fought at Bunker Hill.

By the mid-18th century, the Chenery's land holdings had greatly increased, and the family was producing large quantities of apples for the Boston market. At the time of Ebenezer Chenery's (son of the minute-man John) death in 1847, his inventory mentioned eight lots of land, on which he grew carrots, turnips, and potatoes, but his most profitable lands were the apple orchards.

His son Issac Hastings Chenery remodeled the house in the 1850s and Issac's wife, Mary Anne, did so again (as is described above) in the 1870s, as their orchards, supplying Boston markets, prospered.

It was their son George, who lived until his nineties, who saw the changeover from farming to housing, and sold the land for development. The homestead itself remained

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (name of publication, author, date and publisher)

French, Mrs. Frank E. "The John Chenery House, 52 Washington Street, is Belmont's Oldest Home." Belmont Citizen, (July 26, 1973)

"Lambert Chenery," Belmont Citizen, (May 31, 1930).