

# FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

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

168-03-00

Boston  
South

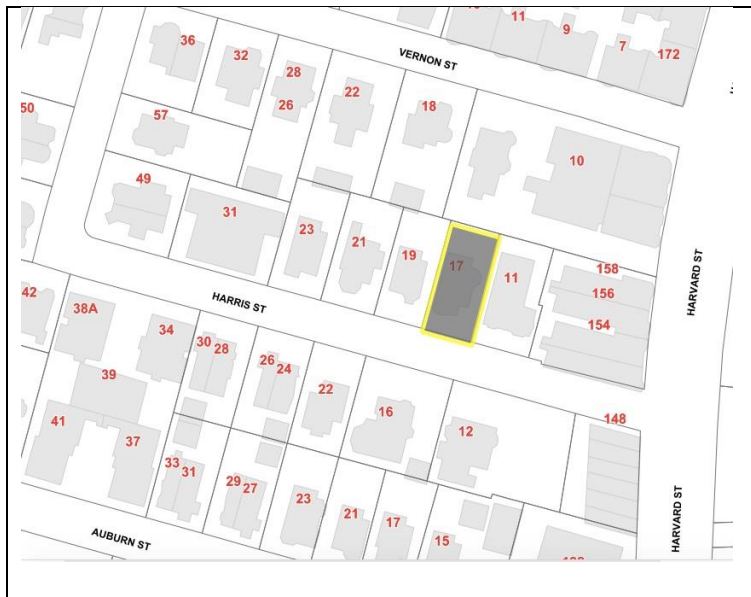
BKL.624

## Photograph



West and façade (south) elevations.

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Wendy Frontiero and Kathleen K. Broomer

**Organization:** Brookline Planning Department

**Date (month / year):** September 2021

**Town/City:** Brookline

**Place:** (neighborhood or village):  
Lower Harvard St –  
Vernon/Harris Neighborhood

**Address:** 17 Harris Street

**Historic Name:** Charles P. and Margaret B. Adams  
House

**Uses:** Present: residential – single-family

Original: residential – single family

**Date of Construction:** 1888

**Source:** Norfolk County deeds

**Style/Form:** Shingle/Queen Anne

**Architect/Builder:** David H. McKay, builder

### Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards and trim

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
none

### Major Alterations (with dates):

wood shingle siding replaced with clapboards;  
modifications to front porch openings; replacement  
window sash; metal fire escape on W side (after 1978)

**Condition:** fair to good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 4,164 s.f.

**Setting:** Heterogeneous residential neighborhood,  
developed principally in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>  
centuries. Mostly large, single-family wood frame  
houses, generally flat lots, and densely developed  
streetscapes.

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SEP 30 2021

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# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

BROOKLINE

17 HARRIS STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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☐ 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.*

The Charles and Margaret Adams House is a rectangular building, rising 2½ stories to a front-gambrel roof that encloses most of the two upper stories. Substantial cross-gables are located toward the back of the west and east elevations. The volume is further embellished with one-story, angled bay windows on the façade and east elevations, and tall shed-roofed dormers towards the front of both the east and west roof slopes. A broad exterior chimney rises above the bay window on the west portion of the façade. Walls are sheathed with clapboards and trimmed with flat narrow corner boards and a narrow frieze board with bed molding at the eaves. Fenestration is asymmetrical. Windows typically occur singly and have 1/1 replacement sash and a thick band molding. Three windows grouped at the second story of the façade are joined by wood panels, and a plaque of decorative wood paneling is applied to the front plane of the façade's bay window. The offset entrance porch is recessed, supported at the outside corners by square posts. An early, single-leaf door with glass and wood panes is trimmed similarly to the windows. The 1978 survey form shows the porch with shingled posts that flare at the top to create arched openings on both the front and east side. Parging on the foundation suggests that the entrance porch may once have extended across the mid-section of the façade.

The Adams House is a good example of aspirational middle-class suburban housing in Brookline. Notable features include the voluminous gambrel roof and active roof edge, recessed entrance porch, exterior chimney on the façade, and decorative wood panels on the façade. The loss of wood shingle siding and historic windows detract from the integrity of the design.

## 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.*

In 1888, Brookline real estate developer David H. McKay constructed four dwellings on Harris Street in the former rear yard of Justin Lawrence's Harvard Street estate. Acknowledging the potential for more intensive development of the neighborhood, Lawrence, a retired merchant, had the land platted by Aspinwall and Lincoln in November 1887, and sold all four lots to McKay the same month [Norfolk deeds, 598:287]. A short time before his death in January 1890 on Nantucket, Justin Lawrence joined others in petitioning the Brookline Board of Selectmen for street lights and roadway improvements on Harris Street.

David H. McKay (1846-1898) developed a number of residential properties in the Harvard Street vicinity in the late 1880s and 1890s. Born in St. John, New Brunswick, he immigrated to the United States at the age of twenty, residing in Boston until relocating his family about 1888 to a house he built at 143 Winchester Street, Brookline. McKay's Harris Street houses appear to be among the earliest examples of more than 90 dwellings he built in the Harvard Street vicinity, followed by houses north of Beacon Street on Coolidge, Thorndike, Fuller, Clarence, Naples, and Gibbs Streets. McKay's motivation for acquiring land in the vicinity has been attributed to the planning and construction of the West End Street Railway on Beacon Street, which opened on New Year's Day of 1889, greatly improving commuter access from Brookline to Boston. See [McKay Development Area](#) (BKL.H) for further details on McKay's activities in Brookline.

This house was originally numbered 13 Harris Street, and renumbered by 1907. The first owner-occupants were Charles P. and Margaret B. Adams, who purchased the property from David McKay in October 1888 [Norfolk deeds, 611:525]. Charles Adams was a retired Boston produce merchant. George A. Chipman of Boston, who operated a "gent's furnishings" or gentlemen's clothing and accessories business, owned the property with members of his family from about 1900 into the 1920s. Chipman initially leased the house to Arthur G. Wood, who was associated with N. G. Wood and Sons, silversmiths, but resided here himself by 1918. Investor ownership apparently resumed, and the house technically remained in single-family use, though

*Continuation sheet 1*

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tenants often took in lodgers. The widowed Agnes Dehl rented the house in 1930, residing here with her daughter and son-in-law, a granddaughter, and four lodgers. Most of the lodgers, like Mrs. Dehl, were Canadian immigrants, and included two bookkeepers, a waitress, and a chauffeur. McCullough's Express, a general trucking and moving company, advertised its services from the 17 Harris Street address for a few months in 1931, but the owner of the company has not been identified.

While 17 Harris Street was not officially converted to a two-family dwelling until 1996, there were three families in two households residing here in 1940; all were Canadian immigrants. The widowed Annie G. Thompson owned the house, and her son, Miner Thompson, worked as a steam fitter in the plumbing business. Identified on the census as Annie's "partner," perhaps in the ownership and maintenance of the house, was Daniel MacIver, a carpenter, along with his wife, Eunice, both residing in the Thompson household. In a separate household, Andrew Wayson, salesman for a bearing and brushing factory, lived with his wife, Mabel, their young son, and the family's maid, Ann Roper.

The family of James P. and Susan P. Babcock held the property from 1950 to 1990 [Norfolk deeds, 2957:264, 8793:225]. Before moving to Brookline, the Babcocks operated a lodging house in Boston's South End. James Babcock was a carpenter by trade, and the family moved into the house with existing tenants Albert W. Perry, who was retired, and John Santilli, a cook. By 1970, Susan Babcock and her daughter, Marilyn, had four tenants: two retired women in their eighties, and Robert McNeilly, employed as a supervisor, and his wife, Miriam.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- 17 Harris Street inventory form prepared by G. Kapstein and L. Larkin, Brookline Historical Commission, 1978.  
Brookline building permits (original permit not located). Research by Valerie Birmingham, Brookline Planning Department.  
Brookline maps and atlases: 1874, 1888, 1897, 1907, 1913, 1919, 1927, 1956, 1965, 1976.  
Brookline and Boston directories.  
Brookline street lists of residents/poll tax payers (title varies): 1940, 1951, 1970.  
Advertisement for McCullough's Express. *The Brookline News* (March 27, 1931), 8:4.  
Lawrence, Justin. Death record, Brookline (January 19, 1890). *Massachusetts, U. S., Death Records, 1841-1915*. Database and images. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).  
Norfolk County Registry of Deeds: as noted in text.  
"Real Estate." *The Suburban*, Brookline (October 12, 1900), 5:2.  
"Selectmen's Meeting." *The Chronicle*, Brookline (March 23, 1889), 6:2.  
U. S. census records: 1850-1940 (excludes 1890). Database and images. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

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|         |          |
|---------|----------|
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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES

|                                                                                                                             |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|  <p>Façade (south) and east elevations.</p> |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.

Form no.

34  
168-3



1. Town Brookline

Address 17 Harris Street

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Present use Residence

Present owner S. P. Babcock

3. Description:

Date 1889

Source Tax List

Style Queen Anne variation-Shingle details

Architect Information not available

Exterior wall fabric Shingle

Outbuildings (describe) Garage

Other features 2 1/2 story, gambrel roof, Q. A. style chimney rising from 1st floor bay, regular massing, vertical appearance, off-center windows, side porch entrance w/shingle style

curves  
Altered \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Moved \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

5. Lot size: 4164 sq. ft.

One acre or less x Over one acre \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate frontage 45'

Approximate distance of building from street

20'

6. Recorded by G. Kapstein, L. Larkin

Organization Brookline Historical Comm

Date Fall, 1978

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) Margaret & Charles P. Adams

Original use Residence

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates \_\_\_\_\_

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

|                       |          |                            |       |                         |       |
|-----------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| Aboriginal            | _____    | Conservation               | _____ | Recreation              | _____ |
| Agricultural          | _____    | Education                  | _____ | Religion                | _____ |
| Architectural         | <u>X</u> | Exploration/<br>settlement | _____ | Science/<br>invention   | _____ |
| The Arts              | _____    | Industry                   | _____ | Social/<br>humanitarian | _____ |
| Commerce              | _____    | Military                   | _____ | Transportation          | _____ |
| Communication         | _____    | Political                  | _____ |                         |       |
| Community development | <u>X</u> |                            |       |                         |       |

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

See #12 Harris for the development of the street.

A well-maintained house, of a type frequently seen in Brookline, this one presents the same narrow front to the street, and the same emphasis on verticality as #21 Harris and # 44-46 Vernon around the corner. All are shingled, also, although this house does not resemble the others. The decorations on the 1st floor bay and between the 2nd floor windows are typical of Queen Anne, while the slight curves at the top of the porch opening point to Shingle Style influence.

No occupation is given for Charles Adams in the Brookline Directory or in the Boston Directory.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, early maps, etc.)

Brookline Atlases 1888, 1893, 1978  
Brookline Tax List, 1888-90  
Brookline Directory 1889  
Boston Directory 1889

