

**FORM B - BUILDING**

| AREA | FORM NO. |
|------|----------|
|      | 4004     |

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

Newton, Mass. MRA  
Town NEWTON (Auburndale)  
Address 122 Islington Road  
Historic Name The Eminence

Photo (3"x3" or 3"x5", black and white) Indicate address of property on back of photo. Staple to left side of form.

Use: Present dwelling  
Original dwelling

**DESCRIPTION**

Date circa 1853  
Source Jackson Homestead Publication  
Style Italian villa  
Architect Hammatt Billings  
Exterior Wall Fabric clapboard  
Outbuildings Carriage house with coachman's quarters, 2 horse stalls and hayloft.  
Major Alterations (with dates) House remodelled during 1880s; carriage house partially remodelled into 3-bay garage  
Condition Fair

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s).  
Indicate north

(SEE ATTACHED MAP)

Moved no Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Acreage 244,991 sq. ft. (5.63 acres)  
Setting On a bluff overlooking the Charles River.

UTM REFERENCE 19.313980.4690880  
USGS QUADRANGLE Natick, MA.  
SCALE 1:25,000

Recorded by Bruce Fernald  
Organization Newton Historical Comm.  
Date 5/20/80; rev. by H. White 4/86

## **NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**

The Eminence is significant as the last remaining estate in the Islington Park section of Auburndale, a neighborhood which contained a number of grand country estates during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Because The Eminence was designed as his own residence by Hammatt Billings (1818-1874), an early New England architect, it meets Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places.

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

The Eminence is one of two remaining examples of high-style Italian villa architecture in Auburndale ( the other is located at 62 Vista Avenue in the Lasell Neighborhood Historic District ). The Eminence was designed by Hammatt Billings, a New England architect also known as an artist and illustrator of books. The chief feature of the design is a three-story square tower with a pyramidal roof of low pitch. The round-headed windows, six-over-six sash, and the bracketed veranda with chamfered posts are all characteristic features of the Italian villa style employed in this design.

A late nineteenth century remodelling incorporated several Queen Anne and Colonial Revival features, including the modillion cornice, a two-story polygonal bay and classical entrance porch.

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

Confident of the market for suburban houses on lots within easy access to the railroad, William Jackson (who had earlier been active in real estate development in Newton Corner) entered into his most ambitious venture. Along with eleven other men, including his son Timothy, Jackson formed the North Auburn Dale Land Company. The company purchased and subdivided one hundred twenty acres adjacent to the Boston & Worcester tracks. The 1847 plan depicting the subdivision shows eighty-four houselots including the large parcels on which The Eminence was eventually built.

Of interest was the repetition of an oval park at the west end of Islington Road, a feature also used in Jackson's initial real estate venture, the development of Walnut Park in Newton Corner. For the Walnut Park project, Jackson in 1844 commissioned the noted landscape architect Alexander Wadsworth. Wadsworth surveyed numerous residential subdivisions in Boston and its suburbs during the mid-nineteenth century. Wadsworth is best known as the designer of Mount Auburn Cemetery (1831) in Cambridge. Mount Auburn is considered America's first picturesque garden cemetery.

William Jackson sold Hammatt's brother Joseph E. Billings lot #19 of the 1847 Auburndale subdivision (Middlesex County Deeds, Lib.609, fols.66-67). Joseph paid \$400 for a spectacular site high above the Charles River. This sale took place June 3, 1851.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES O'Gorman, James F.**

"H. and J.E. Billings of Boston: from Classicism to the Picturesque," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XLII: March, 1983, pp.54-61.  
Atlases: 1874, 1886, 1895, 1907. Directories: 1877, 1895.  
Newton's 19th C. Architecture: Auburndale, 1980, pp.6-8.  
Newton's Older Houses: Auburndale, Friends of the Jackson Homestead.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

|                                   |                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Community:<br>Newton, Mass. MRA   | Form No:<br>4004 |
| Property Name: 122 Islington Road |                  |

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

Hammatt Billings and his brother Joseph were two architects of small renown. Together and separately the Billingses designed a large number of buildings in New England, beginning with the Boston Museum (1845-1846) and ending with the original buildings for Wellesley College (1869-1875). Hammatt began his study of architecture with Asher Benjamin, and worked for a time in the newly established Boston office of Ammi B. Young. Hammatt was also a talented artist and illustrator of books. Joseph (c.1821-1880) and Hammatt began their collaboration with a major commission, the Boston Museum, designed in the Italianate mode.

By the 1850s the brothers were no longer collaborating. Joseph joined Charles Sleeper in partnership from 1851-53. Together they designed the first building of the Auburndale Female Seminary (1851), Bragdon Hall (demolished 1970s).

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

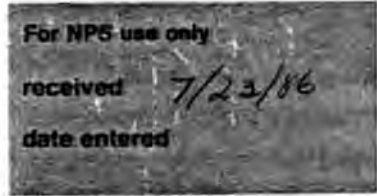
On November 18, 1853 Joseph sold the land to Thomas Hall, a magnetical instrument maker, for \$3,000. In a letter dated 1915 and written by Hall, he recalled that "...Mr. Hammatt Billings started building the house in 1852. He had the frame up and roof on when his wife was taken insane & to the Hospital. I bought the House and finished it and Occupied it in 1853 (sic)." Although this letter was written over 60 years after the events described, it is accurate in its dates. In a letter of March 11, 1852, Hammatt mentioned the "illness of Mrs. Billings" to Charles Eliot Norton (Harvard University, Houghton Library, BMS Am 1088 (471) ).

It is possible that Joseph Billings acquired the building because of Hammatt's constant financial difficulties.

The Islington Point area became home to several affluent Auburndale men, who apparently not satisfied with the size of the individual lots, purchased them in blocks of five or more. William Fowle, a mayor of Newton and owner of the Auburndale Watch Company, built his estate "Tanglewood" on the south side of Islington Road. Ezra Winslow built "Islington" on the peninsula created by the 1815 flooding of Ware's meadow.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

4

Name Newton MRA  
State Middlesex County, MA

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

41. Dupee Estate

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

42. Elliott, Charles D., House

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

43. Eminence, The

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

44. Estabrook, Rufus, House

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

45. Evangelical Baptist  
Church

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

46. Farquhar, Samuel, House

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

47. Fenno, John A., House

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

48. First Unitarian Church

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

49. Fuller, Capt. Edward,  
Farm

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

50. Gane, Henry, House

Entered in the  
National Register for Keeper

Melrose Byers 9/4/86

Attest

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Eminence, The (Newton MRA)  
Middlesex County  
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Fed. Reg. Date: JUL 23 1986 / 2/3/87  
Date Due: 8/21/86 - 9/6/86  
Action:  ACCEPT 9-4-86  
 RETURN \_\_\_\_\_  
 REJECT \_\_\_\_\_  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the  
National Register

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership<br>Public Acquisition | Status<br>Accessible | Present Use |
|----------|---------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
|----------|---------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

7. Description

|                                    |                                       |   |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Condition                          | Check one                             | Check one                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> original site    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good      | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered    |   |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> altered      |   |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

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**8. Significance**

Period      Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates                      Builder/Architect  
Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_

date \_\_\_\_\_

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**13. Other**

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

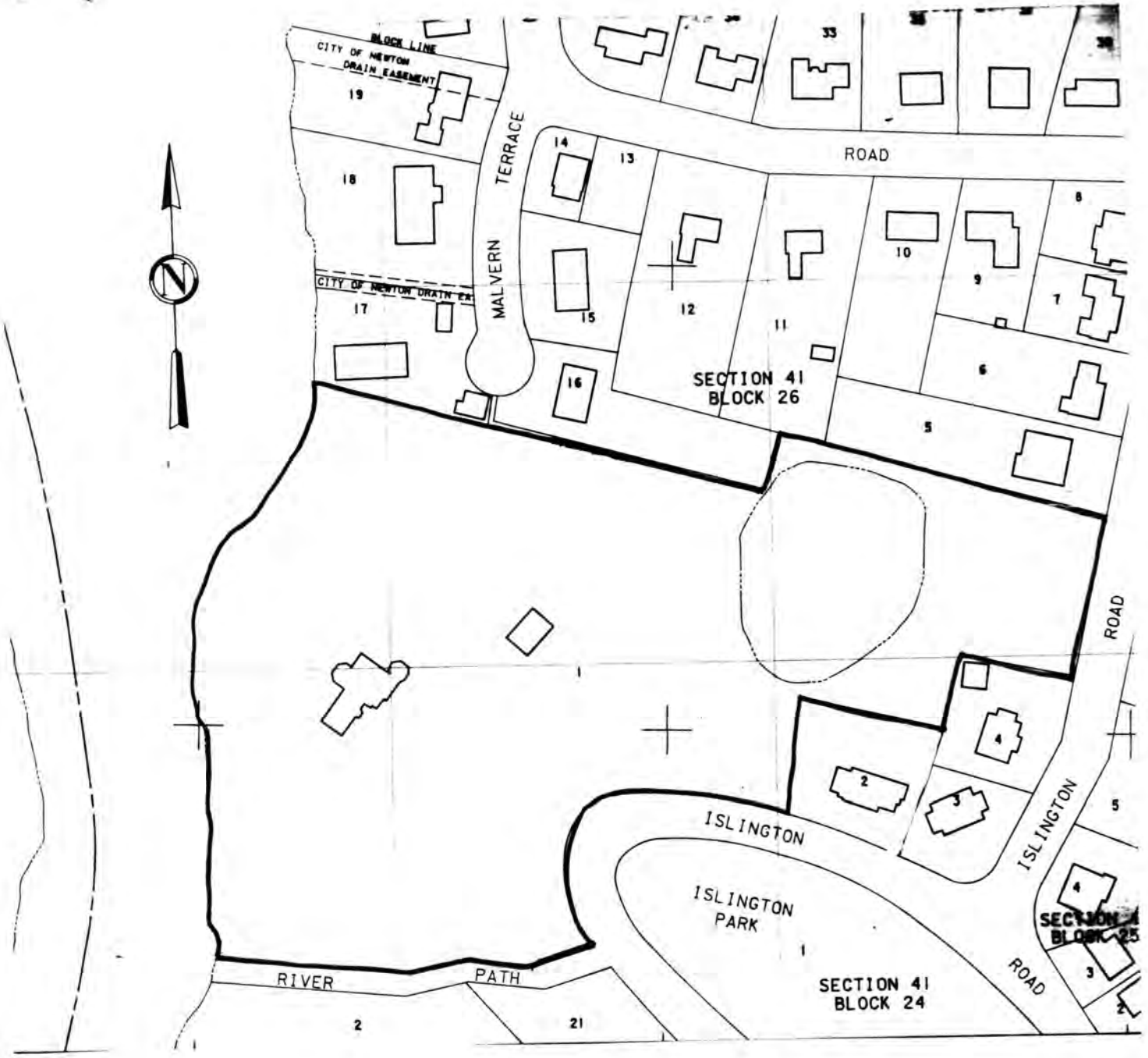
Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



Eminence, The  
Newton MRA, Ma

Newton, Mass. MRA

122 Islington Rd, Auburndale  
- 79-D-1 (8) -



City of Newton Assessor's Maps. Sheet 24  
 Metric Series. 1979  
 Scale: UTM grid line interval = 100 meters (328 feet)

Newton, Mass. M.R.A.  
 122 Islington Road, Auburndale  
 "The Eminence"  
 41-26-1