

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

| | |
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC "Arrowhead", The Herman Melville Home

AND/OR COMMON
"Arrowhead"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
780 Holmes Road

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Pittsfield

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
First

___ VICINITY OF

STATE
Massachusetts

CODE
025

COUNTY
Berkshire

CODE
003

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Berkshire County Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER
113 East Housatonic Street

CITY, TOWN
Pittsfield

___ VICINITY OF

STATE
Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Berkshire County Registry of Deeds, Middle District

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Pittsfield

STATE
Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE
1934

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

"Arrowhead" stands on the western side of Holmes Road about one-half mile north of the line dividing Pittsfield and Lenox, Massachusetts. Though broken by suburban residential development, large portions of the immediate area retain their original rural character. When Herman Melville acquired "Arrowhead" in 1850, the house was the center of some 160 acres of farm land. However, sales during the late 19th and 20th centuries have reduced the property to its present 14.2 acres. The most recent sales, concluded in the 1960's, involved 28.4 acres to the south of the house, now devoted to agricultural purposes, and 30.7 acres to the north, owned by the Berkshire Life Insurance Company and largely maintained as open land; both parcels, but particularly that to the north, contribute to the setting of the landmark property. "Arrowhead" and related outbuildings are located on that part of the property near Holmes Road; the remainder consists of open fields and woods.

The original "Arrowhead" (now the front portion of a much larger structure) was built during the 1780's by Captain David Bush and is believed to have housed a public inn operated by Bush and his son. In 1844 the Bush family sold the property to Dr. John Brewster, a prominent Pittsfield physician, who in turn sold it to Melville on September 14, 1850. A contemporary drawing indicates that the frame and clapboard building was then, as now, 2½ stories high, 5 bays wide and 2 bays deep, with doublehung sash windows flanked by louvered blinds. A small porch--a triangular pediment supported by Doric columns--covers the main entrance, at the center of the eastern facade. The pitched roof is broken at the ridge by a massive central chimney, 12 feet square at its base. (In his sketch "I and My Chimney," Melville indicated that both roof and chimney had been lowered before he purchased the house; this statement, if accurate, would suggest that the house may have been 3 stories high when first built.) The interior of the house follows a slightly irregular four-room plan; a narrow half-turn staircase set against the front (east) side of the chimney gives access to the second floor.

Melville apparently had intended to build a new and more elaborate house on the property but limited profits from his writing during the 1850's forced him to abandon this plan. Instead, he made small repairs to the existing structure and built at its northern end a piazza, made famous in literature by his introductory essay in The Piazza Tales (1856). A low, narrow structure, the piazza took full advantage of a superb view north toward Mt. Greylock. Later owners enlarged the piazza but it was eventually removed; during the present century, a large window was cut into the north side of the house to take advantage of the same view. With this exception, little change has been made in the exterior of the main block of the house since the time of Melville's residence.

Though recent owners (mid-20th century) have made substantial changes in the interior of the main house, two significant rooms retain a good deal of their original character. Melville's chamber, at the northeast corner of the second floor, retains its wide-board floor and gun-stock posts. Melville's first-floor library is distinguished by its massive brick fireplace and paneled fireplace wall, which appear to date from the original construction of the house. Inscriptions from Melville's works have been painted on two of the panels above the mantel, perhaps by the author himself (informed visitors generally note one flagrant misspelling and recall that Melville's formal education was limited).

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1780's; 1850-1863

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Captain David Bush

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"Arrowhead," a 2½-story frame and clapboard house located at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was from 1850 until 1863 the home of Herman Melville, one of the major figures of 19th century American literature. The works which Melville completed while in residence at "Arrowhead" include Moby Dick (1851; his best known novel), Pierre (1852), Israel Potter (1855), The Confidence Man (1857), and many shorter tales and sketches.

The original portion of "Arrowhead" (the front section with its massive central chimney) was built during the 1780's; two substantial ells were later added to the house, one of them during the Melville family ownership. "Arrowhead" remained the property of the Melville family until 1927, and continued to be used as a private residence until February, 1975, when it was acquired by the Berkshire County Historical Society as its museum/headquarters.

Historical Background

Herman Melville was born at New York City on August 1, 1819. After the death of his father in 1830, the family moved to Albany and later to Lansingburgh, New York. Melville became familiar with the Berkshire region during his youth, spending vacations with his uncle, Major Thomas Melville, on the latter's farm at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and serving briefly as a teacher at the Sikes School, also at Pittsfield. However, like many of his Dutch and British ancestors, Melville found the sea more appealing than teaching. In June, 1839, at the age of 19, he shipped on a Liverpool trader, returning to the United States the following October. His experiences on this voyage later furnished material for his partly autobiographical novel Redburn, His First Voyage (1849).

On January 3, 1841, Melville again went to sea on the whaler Acushnet out of New Bedford, Massachusetts, but jumped ship at Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands in July, 1842. Melville and a companion, Richard Greene, made their way to the interior of the island where they were captured by the supposedly cannibalistic tribe of Taipis. The two were well-treated, however, and both managed to escape within a few weeks. Melville made the brief adventure the subject of his first novel Typee (1846). His experiences following his short service on the Australian whaler Lucy Ann (August 9 to September 20, 1842)-- his brief imprisonment at Tahiti for refusing to return to the ship, his escape with "Doctor" Long Ghost, and their subsequent ramblings about the nearby island of Eimeo-- furnished Melville with the substance of his second book Omoo (1847).

Melville's next voyage, aboard the whaler Charles and Henry, covered approximately the southern Pacific route which he described in his third book, Mardi (1849). Then followed, from May to August, 1843, a stay at Lahaina, on Maui, and at Honolulu. When Melville shipped as an ordinary seaman on the frigate United States, on August 17, 1843, he began

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Hillway, Tyrus. "Herman Melville's 'Arrowhead,' a Berkshire Landmark," The Berkshire Eagle (December 10, 1972).
- Leyda, Jay. The Melville Log, a Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 2 vols., (New York, 1951).
- Mattheissen, F. O. American Renaissance (New York, 1941).
- Mumford, Lewis. Herman Melville (New York, 1929; revised 1962).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 14.189 acres
 UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---|------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| A | <u>1,8</u> | <u>6,4,4</u> | <u>2,0,0</u> | <u>4,6,9,7</u> | <u>2,0,0</u> | B | <u>1,8</u> | <u>6,4,4</u> | <u>0,4,0</u> | <u>4,6,9,7</u> | <u>0,6,0</u> |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | |
| C | <u>1,8</u> | <u>6,4,3</u> | <u>6,3,0</u> | <u>4,6,9,7</u> | <u>1,9,0</u> | D | <u>1,8</u> | <u>6,4,3</u> | <u>6,8,0</u> | <u>4,6,9,7</u> | <u>3,3,0</u> |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the national historic landmark designation for "Arrowhead," shown in red on the accompanying survey map (a photocopy reduction of the original recorded in the Berkshire County Registry of Deeds, Middle District), are those of the 14.189-acre property acquired in two parcels by the Berkshire County Historical Society.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by J. Walter Coleman, Historian 7/21/61

| | |
|--|--------------|
| ORGANIZATION | DATE |
| Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service | 8/13/75 |
| STREET & NUMBER | TELEPHONE |
| 1100 L Street, N.W. | 202-523-5464 |
| CITY OR TOWN | STATE |
| Washington | D.C. |

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE N/A National Historic Landmark

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

TITLE _____ DATE _____

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER | |
| DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION | DATE <u>12/7/77</u> |
| ATTEST: | DATE |
| KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER | |

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET "Arrowhead"

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

The small outbuildings which stood at the rear (west) of the house when Melville purchased it have been replaced by two frame and clapboard ells, each 2 stories high with pitched roof; one was added during the Melville family ownership, the other more recently. Immediately west of the rear ell is a frame and clapboard garage of modern construction, 1½ stories high with pitched roof. Still further west is a moderate-sized barn covered with board and batten siding; this structure, which pre-dates Melville's purchase of "Arrowhead," has a pitched roof broken at the center of the ridge by a square cupola topped by a weathervane. All of the outbuildings are in good condition, while the house itself appears to be in excellent condition.

The garage does not contribute to the significance of the landmark.

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CONTINUATION SHEET "Arrowhead" ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

a new series of adventures which were to supply him with the materials, supplemented with those of other sailors, for White-Jacket (1850).

After being discharged at Boston on October 14, 1844, Melville returned to his mother's home where by wintertime he had begun the composition of Typee. For the most part reviewers were pleased with the novelty of the book and its straightforward style. Omoo followed the next year and also met with great success. With the sense of security afforded by the fame of his first two books, Melville married Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw of Massachusetts in August, 1847. The young couple settled in New York City, where Melville was taken up by the Duyckinck brothers, whose literary circle was the most interesting and influential in the city. Melville read widely at this time (as he would do throughout his life) in an attempt to make up for the deficiencies in his formal education, which had taken him only part way through the Albany Academy.

Early in 1847 Melville had begun Mardi, which he then intended to be a sequel to Omoo. However, by the end of the year he had resolved to make the book a political and moral allegory expressing his ideas about contemporary western civilization and the nature of literature, religion, and philosophy. When Mardi was published in 1849, critical reaction was negative and Melville returned to what the public had liked before, quickly producing Redburn (1849) and White Jacket (1850).

In the fall of 1850 Melville bought a late 18th century farmhouse with some 160 acres of land near Pittsfield, Massachusetts, naming the place "Arrowhead" after finding several Indian relics. Here in 1850-51 Melville developed his famous friendship with Nathaniel Hawthorne, then staying at nearby Lenox. During the same period and clearly under Hawthorne's influence, he completed Moby Dick. Though now generally regarded as Melville's masterpiece, the book generated mixed reactions at the time of its publication. Most reviewers were puzzled by it; some were abusive; only a few sensed its power. The dominant theme of the nature of evil and the author's ambiguous attitude toward nature and God were out of tune with the optimistic, romantic, Transcendental temper of the age, and its symbolistic style ran counter to the new trend toward realism in the writing of fiction.

Despite the critical reaction to Moby Dick, Melville plunged at once into his next book, Pierre (1852), in which he anticipated the use of depth psychology by 20th century novelists. There is evidence that Melville suffered a near breakdown after finishing Pierre, but he continued to write steadily through 1856. He published two novels, Israel Potter (1855) and The Confidence Man (1857), and also contributed a number of sketches and a dozen stories to Putnam's and Harper's, collecting six of them in The Piazza Tales (1856). Outstanding among these pieces are "The Encantadas," "Bartleby," "The Bell Tower," and "Benito Cereno" (perhaps his best short story).

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CONTINUATION SHEET "Arrowhead" ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

Again in poor health, Melville toured Europe and the Holy Land in 1856-57, stopping briefly on the voyage out to visit Hawthorne, then United States Consul in Liverpool. After his return to the United States in May, 1857, Melville lectured intermittently in the east and middle west. Unsuccessful in obtaining a government appointment, he sold "Arrowhead" to his brother Allan Melville in 1863 and moved to New York City; thereafter, he returned to the Pittsfield house only for occasional visits. In December, 1866, Melville was made a district inspector of customs and held that post until December, 1885, when he and his wife were placed in comfortable circumstances through family bequests.

Melville's active period as a writer ended with the publication in 1866 of Battle-Pieces, a collection of poems about the Civil War, though Clarel, a long narrative poem, appeared in 1876 and two other volumes of verse, John Marr and Other Sailors (1888) and Timoleon (1891), were privately issued. Among the projects, either completed or half-finished, which Melville left at his death (September 28, 1891), three works are notable: two travel diaries of 1849 and 1856-57 and the superb short novel Billy Budd, Foretopman.

"Arrowhead" was owned by Allan Melville until his death in 1872 and thereafter by his descendants until 1927; Herman Melville apparently had intended to replace the original house with a new and more elaborate structure; however, limited profits from his writing during the 1850's forced him to abandon this plan. Instead, he made necessary repairs to the existing building and constructed at its northern end a low, narrow piazza which took full advantage of "Arrowhead's" superb view of nearby Mt. Greylock. The piazza itself, made famous in literature in the introductory essay in The Piazza Tales, was enlarged and then removed by subsequent owners of the house, but the vista which the author so frequently enjoyed from it remains relatively unchanged. The Berkshire County Historical Society purchased "Arrowhead" for use as its museum/headquarters in February, 1975, and hopes to open the building to the public on a regular basis beginning in the spring of 1976.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

This is an amendment to the National Historic Landmark form prepared by Polly M. Rettig and dated 8/13/75. This amendment changes the acreage of the Landmark from 14.189 acres to 44.909 acres by the addition of 30.72 acres known as the north meadow or parcel 1204C.

The verbal boundary description is hereby amended to read, "The boundaries of Arrowhead, the Home of Herman Melville, located at 780 Holmes Road are the boundaries of lots 1204A and 1204C taken together as recorded in the Berkshire County Registry of Deeds, Middle District and generally running from a point at the northeast corner of the subdivision known as Lori Court, 1383.46 feet generally north along the west side of Holmes Road, then generally west 1605 feet, then generally south, 1,115.65 feet, then generally east 1560.74 feet along the north side of Lori Court to the point of the beginning.

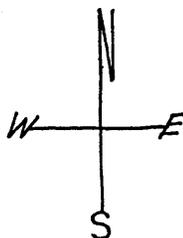
The addition of lot 1204C to the Landmark is justified on several grounds:

1. It was part of the Arrowhead farm during Melville's occupancy.
2. Lot 1204C protects the view of Mount Greylock from Melville's second floor writing room. It is known that the author cherished this view. Nathaniel Hawthorn in 1851 wrote of Melville in his study, "Shaping out the gigantic conception of his white whale, while the gigantic shape of Greylock loomed upon him." Melville later dedicated his novel Pierre to "Greylock's most excellent majesty."

South Street

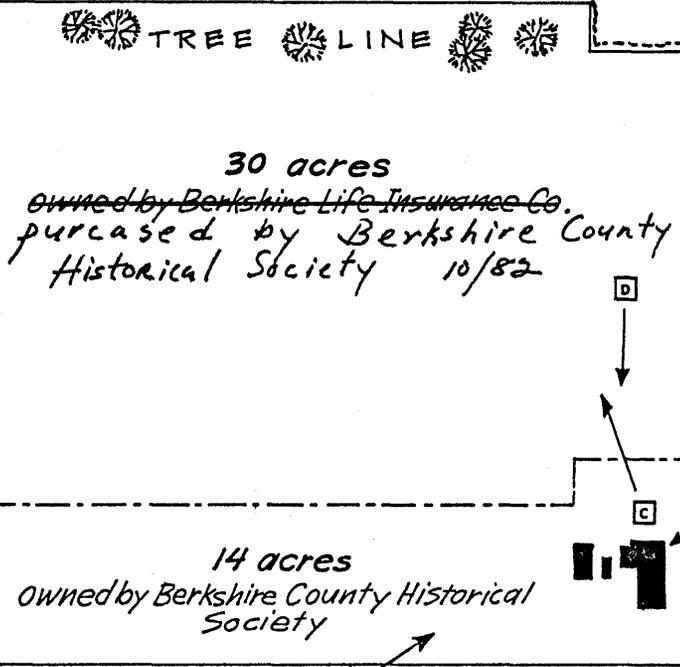
TO PITTSFIELD

Holmes Road



80 acres
owned by Pittsfield Country Club

This schematic shows the general boundary of the Arrowhead National Historic Landmark represented by the broken line. Photos A, B, and C are included in this study. Photo C is important because it shows the view to Mount Greylock from Melville's writing room.



TO LENOX

The above four parcels originally comprised Melville's Arrowhead. It is the 30 acres to the north of Arrowhead the Berkshire County Historical Society wishes to acquire from the Berkshire Life [thus acquired] Insurance Co. Thanks to a formidable tree line to the extreme north of the 30-acre meadow, the view of Greylock would be preserved forever. Pictures are: (A) Arrowhead with the newly restored door and piazza as it appears today from Holmes Road; (B) looking northeast in 1870; (C) the view from Melville's writing room; and (D) the earliest known photograph of Arrowhead made in 1862.