

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108 M-32



Reading

Address 81 Prospect Street

Historic Name Asa M. Cook House

Original Dwelling

Present Dwelling

Ownership: ☒ Private individual
Private organization

Public

Original owner Major Asa M. Cook

DESCRIPTION:

Date 1872

Source Genealogical HistoryStyle Second EmpireArchitect unknownExterior wall fabric Clapboards, slate
roofAdditions Garage now is residence.

Major alterations (with dates)

Addition of screened porch on west.

Revised no DateApprox. acreage 20, 426 sq. ft.

Recorded by Architectural
 Organization Preservation Associates
Reading Historical
Commission
 Date November 1980

Setting On hill, shaded by large
copper beech tree.

Date 6/82

UTM: 19/325800/4709860

(Staple additional sheets here)

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

This is a large and imposing, 2-1/2 story, French 2nd Empire house, with a wealth of architectural detail, including rope-edged corner boards, paired bossed brackets, pedimented windows, an Eastlake-style veranda ornament, and a scallop-patterned slate roof over paired bay windows. The door reflects earlier design ideas, having both long sidelights and a transom. Dormers in the mansard have cut-out designs in their pediments. While Reading had a fair number of French 2nd Empire buildings, this is distinguished by its high architectural quality.

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

Major A. M. Cook--Commander of Cook's Battery, Boston -- fought in the Civil War. He had made money in the trucking business in Boston. Appointed superintendent of warehouses of the Boston Custom House in 1861, he built this house a year after his move to Reading. He ^{soon} commuted to his job in Boston via the train--probably using the nearby Highland Depot, built in 1873.

By 1910, the house and land was owned by Edward H. Palmer and occupied by his son, Harold, for many years. Edward had purchased nearby 118 Prospect Street from Oscar Foote by 1889, and developed the north end of Prospect Street that was known as Palmer Hill.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1875 map A. M. Cook (Asa)
1889 map A. M. Cook

Eaton, Memorial Volume, p. 270 photo

Eaton, Genealogical History, p. 556

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

Reading

Form No:

C-145

Property Name: 81 Prospect St.

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

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

This property is significant (1) for its role as the home of rail-road commuters and real estate developers; (2) for its connection with Major Asa W. Cook, Civil War veteran and Superintendent of Warehouses for Custom House in Boston; and (3) as an intact example of high-style Second Empire architecture in Reading. It retains integrity of location, design, setting, and meets Criteria A, B, and C of the National Register.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received 6/14/84

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 3 of 9

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Reading Multiple Resource Area
State Middlesex County, MASSACHUSETTS

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

21. Beard, Benjamin, House Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

22. Boston and Maine Railroad Depot
Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

23. Bowser Gazebo Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

24. Brackett House Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

25. Brande House Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

26. Brooks, Francis, House Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

27. Carroll-Hartshorn House
Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

28. Carter Mansion Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

29. Coggin, Gilman, House
Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

30. Cook, Asa M., House Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper Delores Byers 7/19/84

Attest

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Cook, Asa M., House (Reading MRA)
Middlesex County
MASSACHUSETTS

Working No. JUN 4 1984
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/5/85
Date Due: 7-5-84 / 7-19-84
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 7-19-84
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Entered in the National Register
Federal Agency: _____

- ☐ 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	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

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

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ excellent | ☐ deteriorated |
| ☐ good | ☐ ruins |
| ☐ fair | ☐ unexposed |

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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

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

Cook, Asa M., House (Reading MRA)
Middlesex County
MASSACHUSETTS



9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

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

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Cook, Asa M., House
Reading MR. M.

81 Prospect St.

M-32A

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000290