

MAY 22 1989

626

FORM B - BUILDING

AREA

FORM NO.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

276

Winchester, Mass., MRA

Town WINCHESTER

Address 290 Highland Avenue

Historic Name Edward A. Brackett House

Use: Present dwelling

Original dwelling

DESCRIPTION

Date c1850-54

Source Old-Time New England

Style Octagon

Architect Edward A. Brackett

Exterior Wall Fabric stucco

Outbuildings garage-NC

Major Alterations (with dates) octagonal shed, porches and stucco cladding added c1900

Condition excellent

Moved no Date n/a

Acreage 4.28A 04-0020

Setting rural: wooded hillside on west

slope of Middlesex Fells Reserva-

tion.

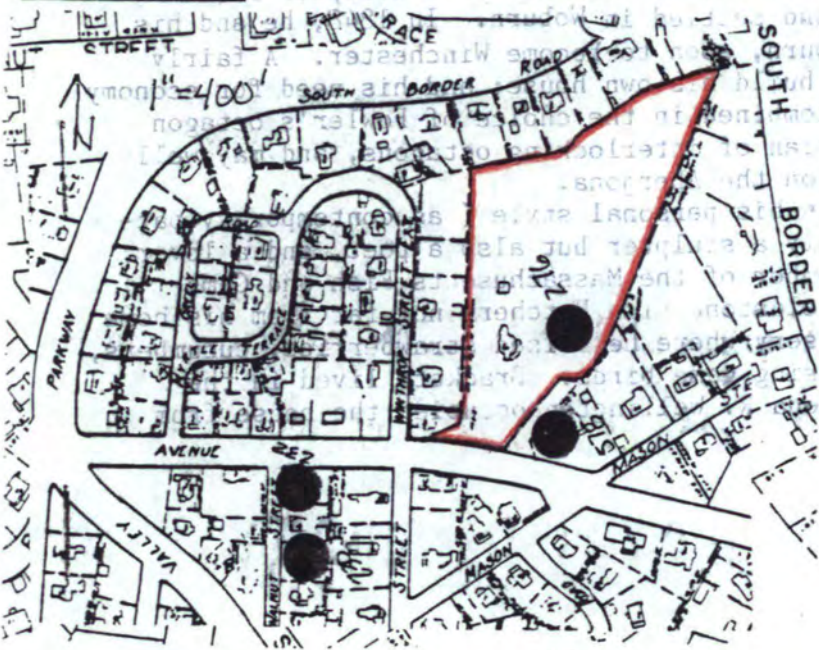
Recorded by Carol Ely, Bettina Cooper

Organization Winchester Historical Comm.

Date 12/78; 10/87 revised by C. Jenkins

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

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



UTM REFERENCE 19.324900.4701720

USGS QUADRANGLE LEXINGTON MASS

SCALE 1:25,000

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

The Edward A. Brackett House possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and associations. Its significance lies primarily in its unique architectural design which Brackett derived himself from Orson S. Fowler's 1848 pattern book, "A Home For All". The house was built on a plan consisting of four interlocking octagons that were emphasized on the exterior by varied rooflines, epitomizing the romantic precepts being espoused by pattern book writers in the mid-19th century. Its natural setting and architectural design remain nearly intact. The house 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.**

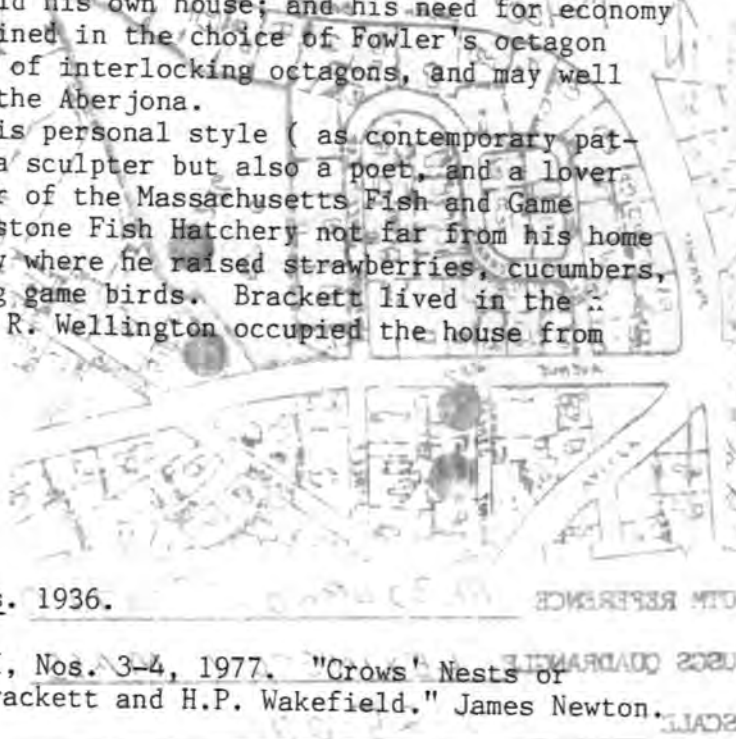
The Edward A. Brackett House is an extremely idiosyncratic example of the octagonal house form espoused by Orson Fowler in his two pattern books on the subject published in 1848 and 1853. Brackett used the earlier book which promoted an interlocking wood-frame crib construction; the second book emphasized the use of concrete and gravel wall construction. What makes the house so unique is its use of four interlocking octagons, all with varied rooflines, to produce a highly irregular and picturesque effect. When constructed sometime between 1850-54, the Brackett House was sided with vertical board and batten and trimmed with brackets at the overhanging rooflines. Later, c1900, the house was enlarged with a fifth octagon that served as a shed at the first story and a bedroom at the second; a verandah was wrapped around two elevations, and a stuccoed exterior replaced the original. The changes were carried out by Brackett himself, and are keeping with both his and Fowler's design intent. This Winchester's only example of an octagon; it achieves at least statewide significance due to its inventive design.

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

Edward Brackett, artist, naturalist, and eccentric built this unusual octagon house in the early 1850s to his own plans that were inspired by Orson S. Fowler's pattern book "A Home For All" published in 1848. Brackett was Maine-born, and trained as a sculpter in New York. When unsuccessful, he moved to Boston and settled in Woburn. In 1848, he and his wife began assembling a house lot in South Woburn, soon to become Winchester. A fairly poor man, Brackett was faced with the need to build his own house; and his need for economy love of nature, and artist's sensibility all combined in the choice of Fowler's octagon plan. Brackett himself developed the unique plan of interlocking octagons, and may well have built the house himself with timber sawn on the Aberjona. Brackett was a romantic, and his house reflects his personal style (as contemporary pattern book writers recommended). He was not only a sculpter but also a poet, and a lover of wildlife. For 37 years he was an active member of the Massachusetts Fish and Game Commission, and the early 1860s, he built a fieldstone Fish Hatchery not far from his home on South Border Road. He had a commercial nursery where he raised strawberries, cucumbers, and grapes, and also developed methods for raising game birds. Brackett lived in the house until his death in 1908. Harry E. and Lena R. Wellington occupied the house from that time until 1949.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

Chapman, Henry Smith. History of Winchester, Mass. 1936.  
Winchester Star, March 20, 1908.  
Old-Time New England, Journal of SPNEA, Vol. LXVII, Nos. 3-4, 1977. "Crows' Nests or Eagles' Aeries? The Octagon Houses of E.A. Brackett and H.P. Wakefield." James Newton.



MAY 22 1989

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

Name Winchester MRA  
State Middlesex County, MASSACHUSETTS

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

Cover ~~Substantive Review~~

for Keeper Betty Savage 7-5-89

1. Ayer, Albert, House Entered in the National Register

for Keeper Melrose Byers 7/5/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

2. Ayer, Thomas, House National Register

for Keeper Melrose Byers 7/5/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

3. Bacon, Robert, House Entered in the National Register

for Keeper Melrose Byers 7/5/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

4. Baker, Kenelum, House Entered in the National Register

for Keeper Melrose Byers 7/5/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

5. Brackett, Edward A., House Entered in the National Register

for Keeper Melrose Byers 7/5/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

6. Braddock, Edward, House Entered in the National Register

for Keeper Melrose Byers 7/5/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

7. Brine, George, House Entered in the National Register

for Keeper Melrose Byers 7/5/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

8. Carr--Jeeves House

for Keeper Melrose Byers 8/2/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

9. Central Street Historic District Substantive Review

for Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

10. Childs, Webster, House

for Keeper Melrose Byers 7/5/89

Attest \_\_\_\_\_

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Brackett, Edward A., House  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Winchester MRA  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Middlesex

DATE RECEIVED: 5/22/89 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/06/89  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/22/89 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/06/89  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 89000626

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 7/27/89 DATE Entered in the National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_  
REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_  
DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

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CLASSIFICATION

count       resource type

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STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

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FUNCTION

historic       current

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DESCRIPTION

architectural classification  
 materials  
 descriptive text

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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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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

acreage       verbal boundary description  
 UTM's       boundary justification

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ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

sketch maps       USGS maps       photographs       presentation

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OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



Edward Brachett House  
290 Highland Ave.  
Winchester MA MRA

1/88

MHC Inv. # 276

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

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000303