

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

| AREA | FORM NO. |
|------|----------|
|      | 2016     |

Town Newton, Mass. MRA  
NEWTON (Nonantum)

Address 524 California Street

Historic Name Celia Thaxter House

Use: Present Residence

Original Residence

DESCRIPTION

Date c.1856

Source Thaxter biography

Style Italianate/Late Victorian

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings Garage

Major Alterations (with dates) Wing,  
veranda (late 19th cent.)

Condition Fair

Moved no Date ---

Acreage 16,144 sq. ft. (less than 1 acre)

Setting Corner lot at California  
and Nevada streets

Recorded by Kathlyn Hatch

Organization Newton Historical Comm.

Date December 1976

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

(SEE ATTACHED MAP)

UTM REFERENCE 19.318030.4692060

USGS QUADRANGLE NEWTON, MA

SCALE 1:25,000

## NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

As the home of the poet Celia Loughton Thaxter and its associations with Newton's literary history, the Celia Thaxter House meets criteria A and B of the National Register of Historic Places.

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

The initial section of the Thaxter residence, probably constructed in 1856, is a front-gabled Italianate house with bracketed eaves. A wing, at the eastern side of the house, was remodeled in the Victorian era, most likely during the period Charles Binney lived here. The high roof at the end of the wing dates from this remodeling, as does the awning-roofed veranda which curves around to the Nevada Street side of the house. Most of the building's ornate wood trim is well preserved.

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

Celia Loughton Thaxter (1835-1894) moved to Newtonville with her husband Levi Lincoln Thaxter in 1856. Mrs. Thaxter's poetry, which dealt with household topics and natural phenomena -- particularly of the Maine and New Hampshire seacoasts -- was widely acclaimed in contemporary literary circles. The Thaxters moved freely in a world of Boston literary friendships that included John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Dean Howells, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Levi Lincoln Thaxter (1824-1884) married Celia Loughton in 1851. Thaxter had been born in Watertown, where his parents lived at the time of their marriage. After moving to Boston, the Thaxters decided to make their home nearby in Newtonville, in what was then a semi-rural setting on California Street. Many of the major literary figures of the mid-19th century visited the Thaxter residence. It was here that Celia Thaxter wrote her first published poem in 1860.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Atlases 1907, 1895, 1886, 1874.
- City Directories 1907-1868.
- Frank P. Stearns, Sketches from Concord and Appledore (1895), pp. 223-252.
- M.F. Sweetser, King's Handbook of Newton (1889), p. 159.
- Rosamund Thaxter, Sandpiper: The Life and Letters of Celia Thaxter (Revised edition, 1963).

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

|                                    |                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Community:<br>Newton, Mass. MRA    | Form No:<br>2016 |
| Property Name: Celia Thaxter House |                  |

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

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

Rosamund Thaxter, in her biography of Celia Thaxter, wrote:

"It was not until five years after their marriage that Levi Thaxter acquired a house of his own. The land, on the corner of Nevada and California streets in Newtonville, Massachusetts, was probably given him by his father. California Street was a long boulevard bordered by Maple trees, and Nevada Street, crossing it, ran down to the Charles.

From the back windows of the new house a lovely view of the river could be seen, and in another direction lay the hills of Waltham. Between the house and river a small bridge crossed a little glen in sight of which was a rolling dam and grist mill...." (p.52).

Mrs. Thaxter spent a large part of her time away from Newtonville because of illness in her family and an unsuccessful marriage. The house was described by her as "forlorn and shabby" in an 1877 letter. It was sold at auction three years later and the Thaxter family moved to Maine.

Charles E. Binney, whose business was umbrellas (in Boston), apparently bought the house. His family had moved in by 1884. Binney left Newton around 1900, after which the house was sold and rented.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

7/23/86

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

Name Newton-MRA  
State Middlesex County, MA

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

111. Souther, John, House

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

112. Staples--Crafts--Wiswall Farm

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

113. Stone, Ebenezer, House

~~Entered in the~~  
~~National Register~~ *for* Keeper  
**Substantive Review**  
**DEFERRED ELIGIBILITY**

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

114. Stone, Joseph L., House

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

115. Strong's Block

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

116. Thaxter, Celia, House

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

117. Thayer House

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

118. Ward, Ephraim, House

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

119. Wheat, Samuel, House

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

120. Woodward, John, House

Entered in the  
National Register *for* Keeper

*Attest*  
*Delores Byers* 9/4/86

Attest

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Thaxter, Celia, House (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          | 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
- good
- fair
- deteriorated
- ruins
- 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

---

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

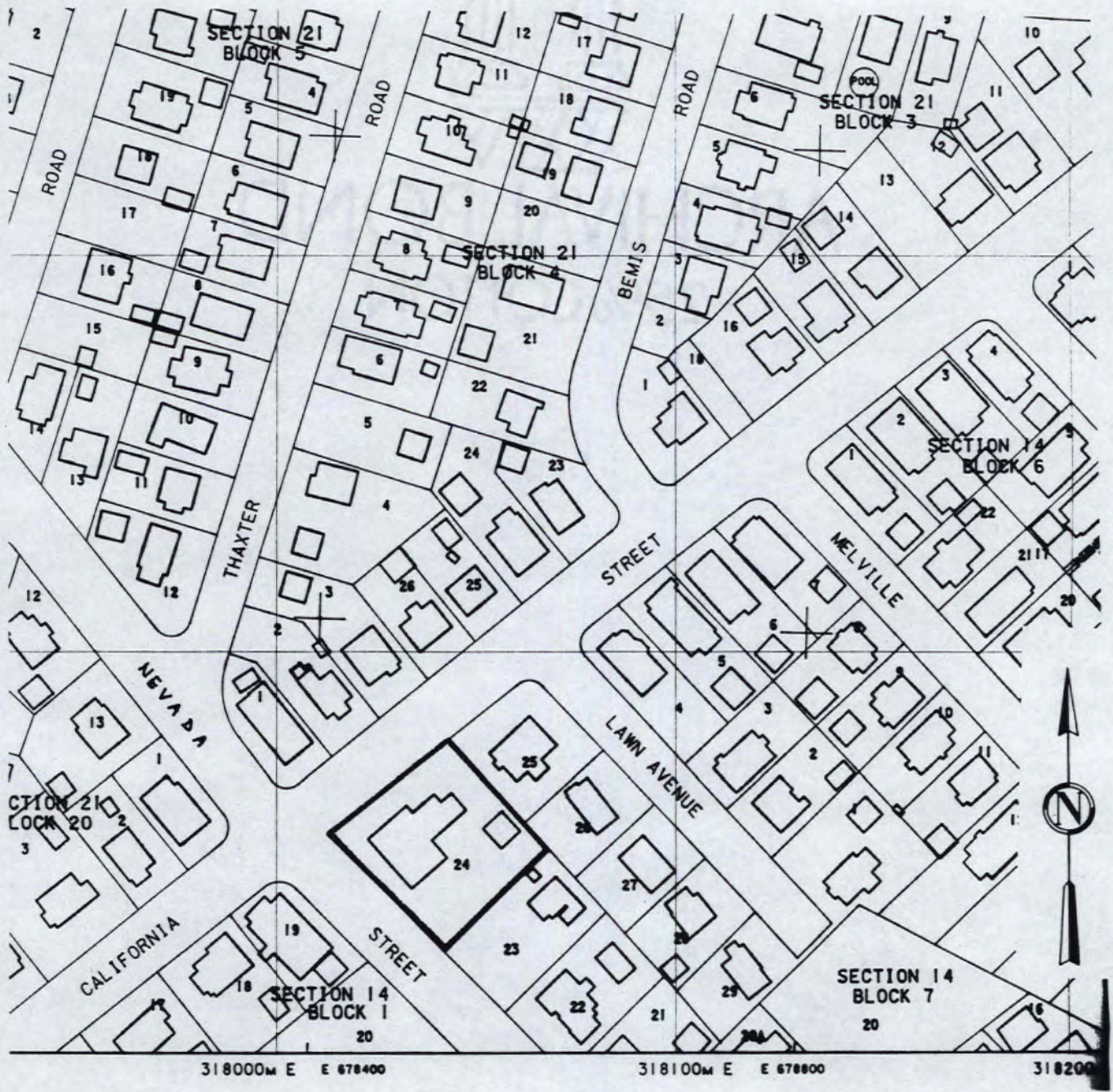
Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



Newton, Mass. MRA  
524 California St., Nonantum  
(Celia Thaxter House)  
Inv. #2016

Newton, Mass. MRA





City of Newton Assessor's Maps. Sheet 8  
 Metric Series. 1979  
 Scale: UTM grid line interval = 100 meters (328 feet)

Newton, Mass. MRA  
 524 California St., Nonantum  
 (Celia Thaxter House)  
 14-7-24