

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.

Form no.

128/439

7-19, 26-38

1. Town Brookline MRA

Address 450 Warren Street

Name Perkins Estate

Present use Residential

Present owner Mitchell Kapor

3. Description:

Date possibly 1824; probably 1850's

Source see bibliography

Style Picturesque

Architect Edward C. Cabot (?)

Brick, stone and

Exterior wall fabric shingle

Octagonal gashouse, Outbuildings (describe) now laundry, barns studio, gardener's house, greenhouses
Other features 2½-4 stories; wing with small theater; clipped gable entrance pavilion; banded & diamond pane windows; complex roof and irregular massing; fishscale shingle surface on second floor.

Altered Yes* Date _____

Moved No Date _____

5. Lot size: 963,538 sq. ft.

One acre or less _____ Over one acre X
560' on Warren St.
Approximate frontage 620' on Clyde St.

Approximate distance of building from street
170'

6. Recorded by Carla Benka

Organization BHC

Date May 1983

2. Photo (3x3" or 3x5")
Staple to left side of form
Photo number _____

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.

See attached map.

Newton Quadrangle

UTM References: A: 19/323510/4687460
B: 19/323310/4687140
C: 19/323120/4687410
D: 19/323240/4687600

Map #: 66

* late 1850's-theatre

1932 - 3' X 12' extension for room.
1936 - Enlarge dormer.
1938 - New dormer.
1955 - Windows altered, library and diningroom.

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) Eliza Perkins Cabot

Original use Single family residence

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates _____

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Horticulture/	☒	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Conservation	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	☒	Education	_____	Science/	_____
The Arts	_____	Exploration/	_____	invention	_____
Commerce	☒	settlement	_____	Social/	_____
Communication	_____	Industry	_____	humanitarian	☒
Community development	_____	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
		Political	_____		

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

We know that 450 Warren Street was one of two major residential structures on the Thomas Handasyd Perkins estate, but there appears to be some dispute among historians over its construction. Harriet Woods, author of Historical Sketches of Brookline, wrote that it was constructed as a wooden summer cottage in 1824; a previous owner of the property stated that it dates from 1830. Seabury and Paterson, in their book Merchant Prince of Boston, claim that the house was enlarged and drastically altered to its present appearance in the 1850's. Another researcher indicates that 450 Warren Street dates from 1855 and was built on the site of a house constructed in 1830, while an 1849 plan by the architect Edward Clark Cabot in the Boston Athenaeum shows a house in the location and with the dimensions of the present one. It is fair to assume that the present appearance of 450 Warren Street with its mansard roof and masonry details dates from the 1850's and was based on the designs of Edward C. Cabot, a relative of the owners Samuel and Eliza Perkins Cabot.

E.C. Cabot was the architect of the Athenaeum and the Boston Theatre; he worked on the design of the former with George Dexter, a well known promoter of the Gothic/Picturesque style. The first president of the Boston Society of Architects, Cabot founded the firm of Cabot and Chandler, architect of a number of Back Bay townhouses. Cabot and Chandler later evolved into the firm of Cabot, Everett and Mead which designed the old Runkle School (demolished) and the Sewall School in Brookline. Cabot lived at the intersection of Chestnut and High Streets in Brookline and probably designed #559 Chestnut Hill Avenue in 1851.

The architectural style and detailing of 450 Warren Street and a number of

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

Brookline Historical Society Proceedings, 1957-8, p.23
Seabury, Carl and Stanley Paterson, Merchant Prince of Boston, Harvard University Press. Cambridge, 1971; Crawford, Mary Caroline, Famous Families of Massachusetts, Little, Brown & Co., 1930, vol. I; "Thomas Handasyd Perkins: An Essay on Material Culture by Tanya Boyett, Old Time New England, Vol. LXX, 1980
McDonough, Judith B. "The Perkins Estate: A 19th Century Picturesque Legacy" Boston University, 1976- unpublished
Maps-Land Ownership In Brookline, Theodore Jones, 1923

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:
Brookline

Form No:
128/439
17-19

Property Name: Perkins Estate

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

9. Historical Significance

the outbuildings reflect the strong influence of A.J. Downing and his work, The Architecture of Country Houses, published in 1850. Features such as the window-heads of the first floor of the gardener's cottage; the windows of "The College" the stickwork of one of the barns; and the roof angles, stickwork, jerkinhead dormers, and deep eaves of the main house all indicate that "the designer was familiar with Downing's principles of house design in the picturesque tradition" (McDonough). The main house is constructed of stone, slate, and wood. Dominating it is a second floor of imbricated fishscale slate and plain wooden shingling, punctuated with windows of varying sizes and design. The first floor is of stone and has two entrances on the front facade. The overall irregular massing and lively profile are created by such elements as the five chimneys, small triangular dormers, and jerkinhead as well as gabled dormers. There have been a number of alterations, perhaps the most important change in an historical framework was the addition of the "Varieties Theatre", a few years before the start of the Civil War. It is attached to the main house by a conservatory and was built to accomodate the thespian leanings of members of the owner's family. Henry Lee, son-in-law of Samuel and Eliza Cabot, was particularly interested in the theatre and in addition to producing performances acted by members of his own family, he was able to persuade Fanny Kemble, the British actress, to perform her famous Mrs. Malaprop in Sheridan's The Rivals in this small, private facility. Although it was used as a storeroom after Lee's death, in the 1930's, it was electrified and restored and hosted a number of operettas and Christmas shows.

As far as the outbuildings are concerned, none of the famous greenhouses is still standing; the last one was torn down in 1967. The original gasometer was converted into a laundry in the 1930's, while at least one of the barns predates 1854. "The College" was built by Thomas Perkins sometime ~~in~~^{during} the first third of the 19th century.

and the landscaping

The history of the land ownership ~~are~~^{are} of equal importance to the architectural significance of the structures on the estate. In 1799, Colonel Thomas Handasyd Perkins purchased 53 acres of land on the corner of Heath and Warren Streets from Moses White. Soon he increased his holdings to 70 acres, giving part to his daughter Eliza along with a wooden summer house. (See above) It is thought that one of reasons that Perkins decided to move from Boston to the "country" was the outbreak of yellow fever epidemics in 1798 and 1799. In addition, Perkins's older brother and business associate lived nearby at "Pinebank" by Jamaica Pond. Finally, a number of other well-to-do merchants were making their homes in Brookline, including George Cabot (see 215 Warren Street); Jonathan Mason, and Stephen Higginson.

Perkins's property was known as "Brookline Farm" and during the early part of his ownership, it was a working farm with chickens, cows, barns, and ice house, orchards, and gardens. Included with the purchase of this property was a house, probably dating from the 1740's. This Perkins tore down to build on the same site a house which "commanded an uninterrupted view of Boston and the Charles River." The house, which was completed in 1805-6, was two stories high with a truncated hip roof, long French windows, and an encircling verandah (see photo). His grand-

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

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Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:
Brookline

Form No:
128/439-
17-19

Property Name: Perkins Estate

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

9. Historical Significance. (Page 2)

daughter recalled a "dignified white house with a piazza along the front and white columns supporting a piazza above." Given Perkins's familiarity with the West Indies and the fact that his mother's house at the head of Sear's Wharf in Boston was built in 1795 in the same West Indian style, encircled by piazzas, Perkins's choice of design comes as no great surprise. It should be noted that this style was popular in Brookline (see 25 Cottage Street, the home of Perkins's younger brother, Samuel, and 215 Warren Street whose front portion was built by George Cabot between 1793 and 1803) and that the Nahant Hotel, part of the Perkins family's vacation complex built in 1822, also reflected the merchant's interest in West Indies architecture (see Boyett article).

While his mansion in Brookline was under construction, Perkins planned and designed the surrounding grounds and gardens. One of the first in a long line of "gentlemen gardeners" in Brookline which included Samuel Perkins, Theodore Lyman, Ignatius Sargent, and John Thayer, Colonel Perkins imported shrubs, trees, and bushes from all over the world, but particularly from England, to create his impressions of gardens which he had seen while travelling in Europe and living in France. "In the very early part of this century, the gardens and greenhouses of Colonel Thomas Handasyd Perkins were particularly distinguished. He and his brother Samuel inherited a love for fruits and flowers from their grandmother . . . Perkins's residence in France and other foreign lands where he had seen fine fruits and flowers stimulated his natural taste and induced him to erect greenhouses and glass structures for the cultivation of fruits and flowers. . . . His place was considered the most advanced in horticultural science of any in New England" (Marshall Pinckney Wilder, "The Horticulture of Boston and Vicinity" prepared for the Boston Memorial Series, Vol IV, New England Historic Genealogical Society)

Hiring William Cowan to be his head gardener, Perkins experimented with growing strawberries, grapes, pineapples, nectarines, and also raised callias. It is said that he spent \$10,000 per year on his gardening interests and that some of the ivy which grows in the estate today was sent to him from Warwick Castle. A prominent exhibitor at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Perkins introduced into this country Victoria Hamburg, West St. Peter's, and Cannon Hall muscat grape vines which had been sent to him by the Englishman, Joseph Paxton. "The College", the brick structure which Perkins built for living quarters for the gardening apprentices whom he trained, still stands.

Andrew J. Downing described the Perkins estate as "one of the most interesting in the neighborhood, with beautiful lawn and fine trees", while a visitor writing in 1968 commented:

One enters the grounds by a winding drive through shrubs and trees to the pinnacle of a small hill, where the house sets comfortably west. Everywhere one looks are fine trees, majestic with age. The path to the garden is informal. Starting north, it winds gently down the hill to the pleached allee of European hornbeam trees on the flat of the land. Passing under this allee one turns sharply north between hedges of

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

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Community:
Brookline

Form No:
128/439-
17-19

Property Name: Perkins Estate

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

Historical Significance (Page 3)

aborvitae taller than man. Emerging from the green walls, one turns around a high wooden structure- it is a gazabo on stilts! From this high vantage point, the garden can be seen in its entirety. At the side of the box garden is a grape arbor. Leaving this behind one walks a straight path east with lawns and landscaped details where once were greenhouses. All this is in the foreground of a high brick wall, the north boundary of the estate and the back wall of the greenhouses. Soon one ascends the hill to return to the house. A waist-high wall appears on the right. This wall is topped with lovely old green glazed tile sent to the Colonel from his office in Canton, China... This same path leads to the Rockery and Italian summer house. (From notes by the Chestnut Hill Garden Club.)

Thomas Perkins was one of a number of highly distinguished owners of this property which, until 1931, passed from generation to generation through daughters rather than sons. Born in 1764 in Boston, Perkins was one of eight children. At the age of five, he witnessed the results of the Boston Massacre, an event which is said to have profoundly affected his character. "Love of country was a passion with him" (Crawford, p.198) Although his father died when Thomas was nine, his mother was so successful in carrying on and even expanding her husband's business that her family lived a rather comfortable life. Although he was prepared to enter Harvard, Perkins decided instead to enter the counting house of the Shattucks, Boston merchants, in which he remained until 1785. He then visited his older brother James in Santo Domingo and joined him in business there. On returning to Boston in 1788, he married Sarah Elliot, daughter of Simon Elliot of Boston.

After forming a partnership with her uncle, James Magee, an associate of Elias Haskell Derby of Salem, Perkins served as Magee's supercargo on a trip to Batavia and China in 1789 after which he embarked in the Oriental trade. Because the slave insurrection in Santo Domingo in 1792 ended their business there, James and Samuel Perkins returned to Boston and formed J. and T.H. Perkins which lasted until the times of James in 1822. It was reorganized and Thomas remained a principal partner until his retirement in 1838. Other partners included Samuel Cabot, Perkins's son-in-law, and numerous nephews and grandsons. In 1803, Perkins and Co., a branch of J. and T.H. Perkins, was established in China; it was the second largest firm in Canton. In addition to the tiles in the garden wall, other imported items such as bamboo furniture, Chinese paper for the parlor and dining room walls, and Export dinnerware could be found in the house.

Number 450 Warren Street was a summer residence, and was not used year round until after Perkins's death in 1854. Other houses which he built included one on Temple Place and two on Pearl Street. The former, in an enlarged and altered form, is now the offices of the Provident Institute for Savings, while the second of the Pearl Street houses was, in 1833, donated to the New England Asylum for the Blind for the Purpose of Educating

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:
Brookline

Form No:
128/438
17-19;26-38

Property Name: Perkins Estate

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

9. Historical Significance (Page 4)

Blind Persons, later renamed the Perkins School for the Blind.

Among the other institutions which benefitted from Perkin's generosity were: the Massachusetts General Hospital, the Boston Atheneum, and the Bunker Hill and National Monument Association. In addition to his trading ventures, Perkins served in the Massachusetts Senate for eight terms and in the House for three. During 1811-12, he was the dispatcher of messages to France from the United States. He was also an officer in the Massachusetts Militia, hence the title Colonel; president of the Boston branch of the United States Bank, and president of one of the first railways built in the United States. This was the Granite Railway, built to transport granite from the Quincy quarries to the seaboard, some two miles away.

After his death in 1854, the estate passed on to his daughter, Eliza, one of his eleven children. She had married Samuel Cabot and eventually left the estate to Elizabeth Perkins Cabot, who married Henry Lee, owner of 617 Boylston Street; a merchant, and member of the firm of Lee, Higginson. One of their children, Elliot Cabot Lee, built an "automobile stable" on the estate in 1901, but never actually owned the property. A daughter, Elizabeth Perkins Lee, did own the property, however; she married Frederick Cheever Stattuck, and one of their children, George Cheever Shattuck, was a prominent physician in the treatment of tropical diseases. He and his brother Henry Lee Shattuck became owners of the estate in 1831. To the credit of all who owned this property, little alteration has taken place at the main house, and although the grounds and gardens have been changed to a degree, they still contain extraordinary horticultural specimens, and are fine examples of landscape design, which provide an appropriate setting for the mid nineteenth century house, built by a member of one of Boston's most prestigious and successful merchant families.

The Perkins Estate meets criteria A, B and C for listing to the National Register of Historic Places, being an outstanding example of nineteenth century Picturesque architecture and a property with direct historical associations with Thomas Handasyd Perkins, who purchased the land in 1799, and the Perkins family, which retained ownership through the mid twentieth century. The Perkins', and their progenitor, Thomas Handasyd, were among Massachusetts' most illustrious citizens and were noted for their financial acuity and philanthropic concerns. The property itself is exceptional both for its architecture and for the excellent state of preservation of its eighteenth and nineteenth century landscaping.

Buildings and Structures at the Perkins Estate (All Contributing)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Main House | 6. Barn |
| 2. Gasometer | 7. Woodshed |
| 3. Chauffeur's cottage and barn | 8. Gardener's cottage |
| 4. 99 Clyde Street | 9. "The Pit" |
| 5. "Garage" | 10. "The College" |
| | 11. Greenhouse |

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic GroupName Brookline MRA
State MASSACHUSETTS

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

61. Milestone
(Boylston St.)Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

62. Murphy, William, House

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

63. Orrock, Rev. John, House

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

64. Paine Estate

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

65. Perkins Estate

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

66. Reservoir Park

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

67. Ritchie Building

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

68. Roughwood

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

69. Saint Aidan's Church and
RectoryEntered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

70. Saint Mary of the Assumption
Church, Rectory, School and
ConventEntered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 10/17/85

Attest

85 003306

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Perkins Estate (Brookline MRA)
Norfolk County
MASSACHUSETTS

SEP 4 1985

Working No. _____
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/3/87
Date Due: 10/3/85 - 10/19/85
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 10-17-85
☐ 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: _____



450 Warren

Old farmhouse wall
+ chimneys

Perkins Estate
Brookline (Ma) MRA)



450 Warren -

"The College"

Perkins Estate

Brookline (MA) MRA



450 Warren
"The College"

Perkins Estate
Brookline (Ma) MKA



450 Warren
Allse'

Perkins Estate
Brookline (MA) MRA



450 Warren

Perkins Estate
Brookline (Ma) MRA)



450 Warren

The farmhouse

Perkins Estate

Brookline (MA) MRA



450 Warren-
woodshed

Perkins Estate
Brookline (Ma) MRA



450 Warren

The Beehive

Perkins Estate
Brookline (MA) MRA



450 Warren -

Sandrus's Cottage

Perkins Estate

Brookline (MA) MRA



450 Warren
detail - baru - garage

Perkins Estate
Brookline (MA) MRA



450 Warren -
"The Pit"

Perkins Estate
Brookline (Ma) MRA)

JUN 1930

Perkins Prints

by Berkeley



450 Warren - Barus

Perkins Estate
Brookline (Ma) MRA

Brookline (Ma) MRA

450 WARREN ST 128/439-7-19;
Perkins Estate 26-38
TOWN OF BROOKLINE MAP JAN, 1981

$$1/2'' = 200'$$
