

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 Emily Dickinson Home

AND/OR COMMON

Emily Dickinson Home

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 280 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Amherst

---NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Massachusetts

--- VICINITY OF

CODE

025

First

COUNTY

Hampshire

CODE

015

**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 type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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 Amherst College (contact: Secretary of the College)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Amherst

--- VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, Hampshire Registry of Deeds  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Northampton

STATE

Massachusetts

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE None

DATE

---FEDERAL ---STATE ---COUNTY ---LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

The Emily Dickinson Home, a substantial brick building, stands on an irregularly shaped 1.57-acre lot at the northwest corner of Main and Triangle Streets in Amherst, Massachusetts. Though set close to Main Street at the western side of the lot, the house is effectively screened by mature trees and a high hedge.

The original portion of the house, a Federal style residence built for Samuel Fowler Dickinson in 1813, consists of a 2 1/2-story main block with gabled roof and a 2-story rear service wing. The main block follows a four-room, center hall plan. The main entrance, at the center of the five-bay front facade, is covered by a 1-story porch with fluted Ionic columns, full entablature, modillioned cornice, and balustraded roof. A 2-story wooden porch, now screened, runs along the eastern side of the service wing. Windows are six-over-six double-hung sash with stone lintels and sills and flanked by louvered blinds. Marks in the masonry above the entry porch indicate that a palladian window has been replaced by french doors.

A number of changes were made in the house after it was purchased by Edward Dickinson in 1855. Additions made at that time include the 1-story wooden porch at the western end of the main block, the broad cornice which surrounds the house at the eaves and gives the gable ends a pedimented effect, and the enclosed wooden cupola with paired round-headed windows and modillioned cornice. At the eastern end of the house Edward Dickinson constructed a square (two-bay by two-bay) 2-story wing fronted by a 1-story conservatory.

Further alterations were made by the Parke family after they purchased the Dickinson property in 1915. A second flight of stairs replaced the trap door and spiral staircase which had given access to the attic story and cupola. The conservatory was removed while a brick-walled terrace was added at the eastern end of the 1855 wing and a portico at the rear of the main block. Electrical and plumbing systems were also installed. The Dickinson barn, which stood northeast of the house, was found to be near collapse. It was razed and some of its timbers were used to construct the present garage, just northwest of the house.

Although open to the public by appointment, the Dickinson Home is now essentially a faculty residence. It has been painted and papered in colors and designs appropriate to the Federal style but no attempt has been made to preserve a period character in its furnishings. The single room restored for public view is Emily Dickinson's bedroom, located on the second floor at the southwest corner; the poet's own descriptions and references by her niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, were the major source of information about the room. Pieces which belonged to Miss Dickinson are combined with family pieces from other parts of the house, including photographs, a writing table and chair, a mirror and bureau, a child's chair, and a cradle.

The Dickinson Home and its grounds are well maintained; the house itself appears to be in good condition structurally though some repair of wooden detailing may be necessary in the near future. Work is currently in progress on the restoration of Miss Dickinson's flower garden, located within a low hedge at the northeastern corner of the property.

## 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 1813; 1855-1886

BUILDER/ARCHITECT not known

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This 2 1/2-story brick house in Amherst, Massachusetts, was the birthplace of noted American poet Emily Dickinson and her home from 1855 until her death in 1886. Miss Dickinson produced hundreds of verses, most of them brief lyrics, but only seven are known to have been published during her lifetime. Although those few bewildered contemporary reviewers with their metrical originality, their fracture of grammar and diction, and their frequent obscurity, critical appreciation of Miss Dickinson's work has grown steadily, particularly in the last 40 years, and she is now generally recognized as a major figure in American literature.

The Dickinson Home was built for the poet's grandfather, Samuel Fowler Dickinson, in 1813. Sold in 1833, it was repurchased and enlarged by her father, Edward Dickinson, in 1855. Sold again by the Dickinson family in 1915, the house remained in use as a private residence until 1964, when it was purchased by Amherst College. The house is now used as a faculty residence. Portions of it, including the poet's bedroom, are open to the public each Tuesday from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. by appointment.

### Historical Background

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born at Amherst, Massachusetts, on December 10, 1830. Her grandfather, Samuel Fowler Dickinson, was a prominent lawyer and one of the founders of Amherst College. Her father, Edward Dickinson, also a distinguished lawyer, served in the Massachusetts Legislature and the United States House of Representatives and was treasurer of Amherst College from 1835 until 1872. In 1828, Edward Dickinson married Emily Norcross. The couple had three children-- Austin (1829-95), Emily, and Lavinia (1833-99).

After intermittent attendance at the Amherst Academy, Emily Dickinson was admitted at the age of sixteen to the middle of the three classes at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, South Hadley, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1847. Her initial enthusiasm for the school dwindled both because she could not bring herself to become a "professing Christian," as the girls were hopefully expected to do, and because she found the separation from her home and family distasteful. She completed the year's work but did not return. Thereafter, she chose to limit her world exclusively to her home and her gardens. With the exception of a trip to Washington, D.C., with her mother and sister during her father's term in Congress (1854-55) and an enforced stay in Boston and Cambridge for treatment of an eye ailment (summers of 1864, 1865), she did not leave Amherst again.

(Continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bianchi, Martha Dickinson. Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson (1924).  
 Bingham, Millicent. Ancestor's Brocades (1945).  
 \_\_\_\_\_. Emily Dickinson's Home (1955).  
 Bradford, Gamaliel. Portraits of American Women (1919).

(Continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.57 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 704640 4694300  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuance Sheet)

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
<u>Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service</u>	<u>2/6/75</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L Street NW.</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington 20240</u>	<u>D.C.</u>

# 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

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  
 ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 11/24/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Miss Dickinson's first poems were apparently written soon after her return from Mount Holyoke, but she did not start to work seriously as a poet until about 1858, when she began to collect her verses into manuscript packets, small "volumes" of a few sheets of stationery, folded and threaded at the spine. In 1862 her creative talent was at its peak and in April of that year, in response to an Atlantic Monthly article written by critic and publicist Thomas Wentworth Higginson, she brought herself to his attention by sending him four carefully chosen poems. Their metrical originalities bewildered Higginson, but he asked to see more and by midsummer gave his opinion--a verdict as it turned out--that her obscurity and fracture of grammar and dictionary stood in the way of public acceptance of Miss Dickinson's work. Rather than alter her poetic style, Miss Dickinson chose to remain unknown to the public and did not willingly allow any publication of her work during her lifetime. However, she continued to correspond with Higginson for the remainder of her life.

By 1866 the greater part of Miss Dickinson's poetry had been written, though she continued to produce verses, usually composed for some special occasion or for friends to whom they were sent, until her death. While people continued to be of utmost importance to her, direct contact so exhausted her emotionally that she withdrew from all but her most intimate friends. After 1870 her seclusion became nearly absolute, though she maintained a few close relationships through letters. The care that she lavished on their revised drafts suggests that, as her poetic energy waned, she sublimated her creative urge in letter writing.

It was by means of her letters that Miss Dickinson found a private audience for her poetry. Only seven of her poems are known to have been published in her lifetime. Most of them were surreptitiously issued, perhaps by her sister-in-law Susan Dickinson, who from the first encouraged Miss Dickinson's dedication to her work and received over 300 of her poems. Miss Dickinson sent Higginson more than 100, which he once acknowledged by thanking her, not for poems, but for the "beautiful thoughts and words."

Among her contemporaries only Helen Hunt Jackson unreservedly believed that Miss Dickinson was a poet of genuine stature. Mrs. Jackson by the late 1870s had become a successful writer and was then generally acclaimed the best woman poet in America. Both women had been born in Amherst, members of the academic community. But Mrs. Jackson had grown up elsewhere, and it was Higginson who brought Miss Dickinson's poetry to her attention. Mrs. Jackson's persistent requests secured Miss Dickinson's "Success" for inclusion in A Masque of Poets (1878), a collection published anonymously, but her later plea for enough poems to fill a separate volume went unanswered, as did her request to be designated Miss Dickinson's literary executor.

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Otis P. Lord of Salem, Massachusetts, a lifelong friend of Edward Dickinson and a Justice of the Superior Court and later the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, frequently visited the Dickinson home with his wife until her death in 1877. Thereafter, a deep mutual attachment developed between Judge Lord and Miss Dickinson, as evidenced by the surviving drafts of her letters. He may have offered marriage but the pattern of Miss Dickinson's life was too firmly established to allow such a drastic change. However, Judge Lord continued to visit Amherst regularly until his death in 1884. The "nervous exhaustion" which overtook Miss Dickinson after Judge Lord's death gradually intensified. She was confined with increasing frequency to her room or her bed in 1885 and died on May 15, 1886.

After her sister's death, Lavinia Dickinson discovered a locked box containing the manuscripts of hundreds of poems. At her insistence--and despite his own doubts as to whether the poems merited publication--Higginson agreed to prepare a small volume with the help of Mrs. Mabel Loomis Todd, who had become acquainted with the Dickinson family during Emily's lifetime. Together they edited Poems by Emily Dickinson (1890), 114 brief lyrics selected with an eye to public taste and tailored to fit accepted standards of metre and rhyme. Though reviewers were uniformly bewildered and for the most part hostile, public response to the volume encouraged Higginson and Mrs. Todd to issue Poems: Second Series the following year.

Mrs. Todd subsequently brought out two volumes of Letters (1894) and a further selection, Poems: Third Series (1896). Nothing more appeared until Miss Dickinson's niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, published The Single Hound (1914), Further Poems (1929), and Unpublished Poems (1932). With the appearance of Bolts of Melody (1945), edited by Mrs. Todd and her daughter, virtually all of Miss Dickinson's poetry had been brought to light.

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Dickinson Manuscripts, Galatea Collection, Boston Public Library, Boston,  
Massachusetts.

Johnson, T. H. Emily Dickinson (1955).

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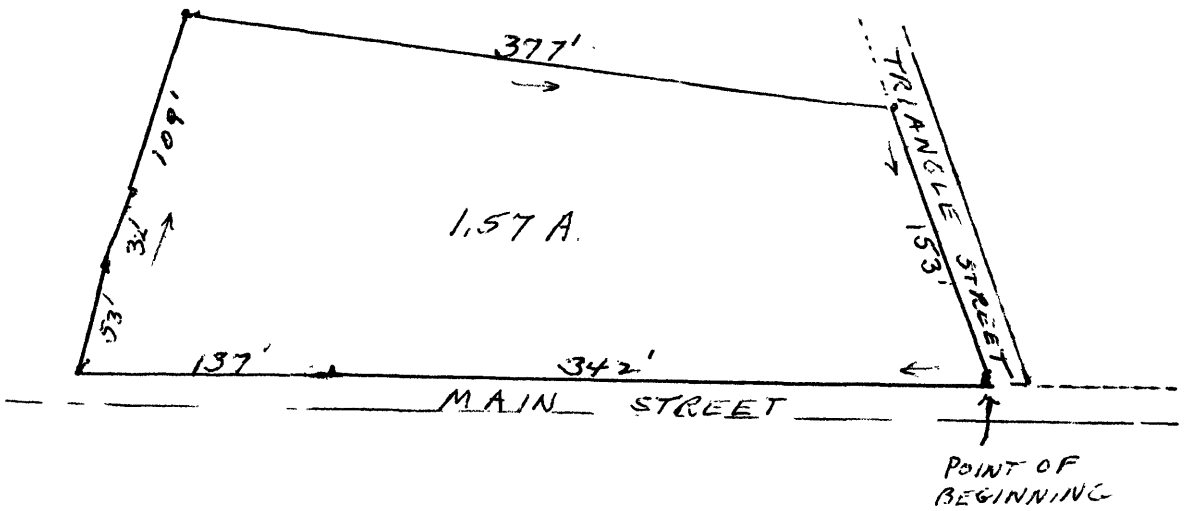
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark designation for the Dickinson Home are those of the property as purchased by Amherst College in 1964: beginning at the intersection of the curblines of Main Street and Triangle Street, western corner; bounded southerly by the northern curblines of Main Street in sections of 342 feet and 137 feet, more or less; westerly by the line of residential property now or formerly owned by Mrs. Alfred Hampson and known as the "Evergreens" in sections of 53 feet, 32 feet, and 109 feet, more or less; northerly by the lines of residential property on Lessey Street and Triangle Street 377 feet, more or less; and easterly by the western curblines of Triangle Street 153 feet, more or less.





EMILY DICKINSON NAT. HIST. LANDMARK  
AMHERST, MASS.  
1" = 1'