

Lewis Estate; Assington

172 Forest Street

[Birdseye view of Assington Estate](#)

Town	Sherborn
Area	I
USGS Quad	Medfield
Assessor's Sheets	16/20A, B
Form #s in Area	39 (house) 226 (gazebo) 227 (caretaker house) 228 (help) 920 (gates/wall)
Photographs	Roll 4
Current Use	Residential
Construction Dates	1930
Overall Condition	Excellent
Alterations	
Acreage	60
Recorded by	Sanford Johnson, April 4, 1999

X Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The house at [172 Forest Street](#) is described on MHC inventory Form #39 for Sherborn, written in 1981. It has undergone no significant changes since that time. The purpose of this area form is to document the landscape and the outbuildings on the Lewis Estate.

The Lewis Estate at 172 Forest Street, known as Assington after an English manor, is focused around a two and one-half-story Colonial Revival mansion set amid a professionally designed and maintained landscape overlooking the Charles River to the south. The grounds slope gently downward to the southeast from Forest Street to the banks of the Charles River. At least five historic architectural resources exist on the property, including the mansion (**MHC #39**), caretaker house (**227**), guest house (**228**), gazebo (**226**) and extensive stone walls and gates (**920**) at the road. The predominant architectural style is Colonial Revival with elements of the Classical Revival. The buildings are clad in stucco with slate-shingled roofs which creates a tightly cohesive design theme that distinguishes the estate among other cultural resources in the town.

The driveway facade of the mansion is a seven-bay design supporting a hipped roof. The mansion was designed by William Aldrich, architect, of Boston. The center bay of the first story is articulated with a gabled entry porch exhibiting Colonial Revival details. Five brick chimneys and three segmental arched dormers mark the roofline while a low balustrade is located at the cornice. Window openings march rhythmically across the facade, filled at the second story with 6/6 double-hung sash and at the first with 6/9 sash that are extended in length. The entry porch, acting as the principal driveway facade ornament, is lit with an intricate fanlight and ½ length sidelights, articulated at the corners with pilasters and has a closed gable above. The facade looks out on a circular drive, surrounded by a low concrete balustrade with urns. The river facade has three bowed central bays at the center with a Classically trimmed entry and an attic story portico with decorative urns at the cornice.

The design of the caretaker house is similar to the exterior design of the mansion but on a smaller scale. The stucco exterior, 6/6 windows and Colonial Revival sensibility are retained in a three by two-bay, two-story plan. The guest house at 162 Forest Street is located adjacent to the stone wall and main entry gates on Forest Street.

The stucco-clad horse barn at 164 Forest Street is a multiple-bay, multiple-residential unit converted stable owned by Eleanor Campbell. It is located northwest of the mansion and has a plan that suggests the letter H. The middle seven bays of the facade comprise a one-story, side-gabled form with projecting hipped entry porch in the center. The north end of the building is enlarged by a front-gambrel block two stories in height with an opening to the second floor, recalling a hay mow door in a barn. The south end is enlarged with a front-gabled block, also of two stories. Two louvered ventilators and two stout brick chimneys mark the slate-clad roof of the building. Trim at the 6/6 double-hung sash and three entries is simple with the only ornament expressed by a copper finial in the coping on the peak of the central entry porch.

A glade near the mansion is the location of an octagonal Classical Revival style gazebo. The ogee roof appears to be copper, capped by a sculpture of a bird. Eight columns with Scamozzi capitals support the Classically molded cornice. The low base of the gazebo is built of rubble stone and supports a wrought iron railing.

The main access to the Lewis Estate is through two eight-foot high ivy-covered piers built of uncoursed fieldstone. Secondary piers flank the principal ivy-covered piers and support wooden gates between. Gates are braced in a cross buck pattern. A low wall departs from the gateway to line the property along Forest Street. A second break in the stone wall is west of the gateway and provides another access to the property.

Circulation among the buildings is accomplished for vehicles on paved driveways with curbs and sidewalks in some places. Pedestrians walk between outbuildings and house on narrow foot paths. The landscape around the buildings varies between naturally wooded areas like the glade site of the gazebo, formally planted geometrical designs as at the circular drive, grassy expanses and designed naturalistic plantings. The view to and from the Charles River is along a narrow sloping allee cut from the forest. It is approximately 300 yards long and 50 yards wide.

The Lewis Mansion "Assington" is very well-maintained. A full-time crew of grounds keepers and building maintenance personnel is employed. This is Sherborn's largest, most formally designed estate compound.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

For additional history of this property, see the 1981 MHC inventory form.

The mansion named Assington was constructed by George and Muriel Saltonstall Lewis in 1929-1930 according to prior research and to tax valuations. Mrs. Lewis owned a residence at 281 Beacon Street in Boston by 1915 which she retained until at least 1946. This may have been her primary or winter home. By 1920, Mr. Lewis Sr. was employed at Lewis & Co. Dry Goods, a Boston retail establishment owned either by himself or a relative. He was employed by 1930 as a banker according to resident directories.

Tax valuations indicate the Lewises built several buildings in addition to their home on the 98 acre property. A pair of cottages, one for help (#227) and one for the caretaker (#228), had been constructed at the same time as the main house. Three garages and a barn were also built by that time, labeled "main", "service" and "caretaker's" garages. Also, there were a stable and a barn to house the 8 horses on the estate. A pump house with water works provided water to the complex. The only additions made to the estate since that time have been a fourth car shed and a greenhouse which may be the gazebo (#226) detailed in the architectural description. This estate remains in the Lewis family. The family previously owned a house on Forest Street closer to Lake and Goulding Streets.

The southeast section of Sherborn developed into the town's estate district during the first quarter of the 20th century. The trend was begun by Dr. Walter Channing in 1902 at his residence at [177 Farm Road**](#). He hired architect Joseph Everett Chandler to redesign his Georgian farmhouse into a modern Colonial Revival mansion. The house was later owned by George Lewis's in-laws, Richard, Eleanor and Leverett Saltonstall. Other properties in the area were similarly upgraded, including the Nathaniel Holbrook House at [138 Farm Road**](#). Here, a large Colonial Revival ell was added in the early 20th century to the Greek Revival style house to create an estate quality home with a view of Farm Pond. Dr. Channing's brother Henry Channing built a Classical Revival mansion in 1910 that overlooks Little Farm Pond ([23 South Street**](#)). Assington was the final, most substantial addition to the collection of Sherborn's estates.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Sherborn Resident directories, 1913, 1917, 1930-31
- Boston Resident Directories, 1915, 1946
- 1939 WPA map of Sherborn
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson 12/98
- Tax valuations, 19335, 1945
- Langtry - [Metropolitan Boston: A Modern History](#)
- MHC inventory Form #39

x Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Sketch Map:



Area Data Sheet

MHC	Street	Property Name	Date	Style	Type / Status	NR Elig.
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39	172 Forest St.	Assington	ca. 1900	Classical Rev.	Area form	NRIND
226	164 Forest St.	Assington Gazebo	ca. 1900	Classical Rev.	Area form	
227	170 Forest St.	Assington Caretaker House	ca. 1900	Colonial Rev.	Area form	
228	162 Forest St.	Assington Help House	ca. 1900	Colonial Rev.	Area form	
920	164 Forest St.	Assington Gates	ca. 1900	N/A	Area form	