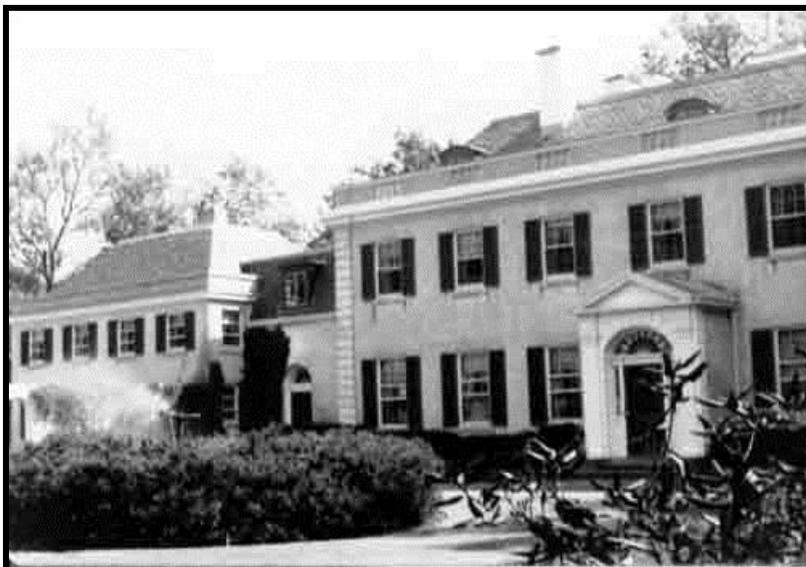


172 Forest Street



Assington

Form No.	39
Town	Sherborn
Address	172 Forest Street
Historic Name	Assington
Ownership, 1981	Mrs. G. S. Lewis
Original Owner	Mr. & Mrs. Lewis
Uses: Original	Residence
Present	Residence
Constructed	1929-1930
Source	Mrs. G. S. Lewis
Style/Form	Neo-Palladian-mid 18th century English
Architect	Wm T. Aldrich
Ext. Wall Fabric	Stucco
Outbuildings	Tea house, caretakers house, several service structures
Alterations	
Moved	No
Acreage	170 acres
Setting:	Situated on a rise overlooking the Charles River - exceptional landscaping - formal gardens and a Versailles-like allee.
Recorded by	Edward W. Gordon, August 1981.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Assington is the centerpiece of a large estate on the southern side of Forest street in South Sherborn. In terms of scale, surface treatments, and landscaping it is Sherborn's most palatial home. Its northern elevation faces a circular driveway. To the west are formal gardens and tree shaded paths. The South facade overlooks a Versailles-like allee which has been cut through dense woods. It stretches from the manicured south lawn to the Charles River. Buildings on the property include a caretakers house, tea house and several service structures.

The main house is composed of two 2 1/2 story segments - a large rectangular main block and an east wing. A arcaded porch projects from the west wall. Its form and style alludes to mid 18th century English country house architecture. Its facades are covered with stucco and are characterized by symmetrical fenestration and restrained surface treatments. The main block's corners are defined by quoins. Both the main block and east wing are crowned by slate shingle covered hip roofs.

Its north elevation is 7 bays wide, with an enclosed and pedimented entrance perch. The front door is flanked by narrow sidelights and is surmounted by an elegant fanlight. The front wall of the entrance porch is rusticated and exhibits Doric pilasters.

Shutters flank the 6/6 sash windows. The hip roof of the main block is set back behind an open and closed balustrade. Three dormers with segmented hoods project from the northern slope of the roof. Four chimneys project from the roof.

The southern facade of the main block has Assington's most distinctive feature - a wide, centrally located 3 story bow front. The bow front is three bays wide and features projecting entrance porch - its ionic columns support an entablature, cornice and balcony. The third level of the bow breaks the flow of the balustrade. It is surrounded by a parapet which in turn is crowned by four neo-classical urns. The first floor windows (7 bays wide) are longer than those of the upper floors.

Architecturally, Assington's main block is reminiscent of James Wyatt's mid 18th century neo Palladian English country houses. Unlike Joseph Everett Chandler, who favored the popular American Georgian Revival (23 Hollis Street) or Arthur Little who designed the picturesque Dutch Colonial Revival Vaughn house (Sparhawk road) William Truman Aldrich looked to the grandeur of mid 18th century English country estates for Assington's prototype.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Assington was designed by the Boston architect William Truman Aldrich (1880-1956) for George and Muriel Saltonstall Lewis. George Lewis was an investment counselor with Thorndike, Paine and Lewis of Boston until his death in the early 1950's. His wife is the sister of Leverett Saltonstall, former Massachusetts Senator.

Assington's construction was begun in 1929. It was ready for occupancy in October 1930. According to Mrs. Lewis the house was named for Assington Hall, home of the Gurden family of West Suffolk, England. Sherborn's Assington in no way resembles its English namesake. The Gurdon's Assington was built in the 16th century to house a religious order. Architecturally it may be classified as Tudoresque. In terms of an English prototype the Lewis House more closely resembles the mid 18th century work of James Wyatt (eg. the main block of Heaton Hall, Manchester, begun in 1772.)

The landscaping of the extensive grounds was a collaborative effort on the part of the Lewis', William T. Aldrich, and Inno Chenti, a New York City landscape architect.

Assington's architect, William Truman Aldrich, was born in Washington, D.C. on February 16, 1880. At the beginning of his career he worked for the New York City architectural firm of Carrere and Hastings (1909-1911). He was a partner in the Boston architectural firm of Bellows and Aldrich from 1911 until 1923. He headed his own firm from 1923 until his death in 1956. He designed buildings for the Rhode Island School of Design (1926), remodeled Boston's Shreve Crump and Low building (Art Deco, 1930) and the Worcester Art Museum (1932).

Aldrich was among several distinguished Boston architects who designed country estates in South Sherborn during the first decades of the 20th century. He provided the Lewis's with a house which was Newport-like in scale and architectural sophistication.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

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- "West Suffolk Illustrated" by H. R. Baker (1907)
- Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (deceased) by Henry F. Withey A.I.A. and Elsie Rathbone Withey (1970)