

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

			08-2002
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Town/City: Pittsfield

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



Address: 780 Holmes Road

Historic Name: Arrowhead (Herman Melville house)

Uses: Present: historic house museum
Original: inn and farm

Date of Construction: ca. 1790

Source: Holly Iazard, PhD, report: "The Bush Tavern in Pittsfield, Massachusetts," May 2008 unpublished, at BCHS

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: field stone

Wall/Trim: wood

Roof: cedar shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Large barn (ca. 1840); small barn/garage (date unknown)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

west ell replaced with two full story ell (ca. 1900)

north kitchen ell removed, ca. 1900

Melville's ca. 1850 piazza replaced ca. 1900; that version removed in 1940s; reproduction installed in 1977. Original front entryway replaced ca. 1870, that one removed 1940s and replaced with a series of "colonial" entryways. In 2013, reproduction of ca. 1870 entryway installed.

Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 45 acres

Setting: suburban. Holmes Road, originally farm land and estates, is now mostly house lots. Arrowhead has a large field, to the north of the house.

Locus Map

Insert here or on a Continuation Sheet a map clearly showing the location of the property including the name of the nearest road or street and at least one other intersecting road or feature.

Assessor's maps are preferred, but other forms of detailed plans such as an excerpt from a USGS topographic map or an aerial or satellite photo clearly marked are also acceptable. See MHC's Guidelines for Inventory Form Locational Information.

Recorded by: Will Garrison

Organization: Berkshire County Historical Society

Date (month / year): July 22, 2013

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

TOWN

ADDRESS

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 Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The main house at Arrowhead (also known as the Bush-Melville House), is a 2 ½ story, wooden clapboard-clad, 5-bay Federal style structure, with a 12' x 12z center chimney in the original east block (built ca. 1790). It has a gable roof. On the north side of the front block is an open porch ("piazza"), built in 1978 to represent the one built for Herman Melville in 1851.

A large 2 ½ story ell, built ca. 1900 to replace a smaller version, stretches west from the front block.

Interior of front block: there are two first floor parlors in the front; a 20th century open staircase between. The south parlor was heavily changed in the mid-20th century (wall moved, fireplace covered). Behind the parlors, south to north, is a storage room (was recently a bathroom); the so-called Chimney Room (originally the kitchen with open hearth, then the Melvilles' dining room); and a small modern kitchenette. Upstairs there is a south bedchamber and a north room used by Melville as a study. West of the study is a small bedchamber restored to represent the room where Nathaniel Hawthorne slept. There is a large attic, with a portion finished with plaster walls and a closet. The basement, part of which is finished with paneling and a tile floor, serves as the Historical Society's archives.

The ell, which served private owners as kitchen, laundry rooms, and staff housing, now has, on the first floor, the offices of the Berkshire County Historical Society. The second floor apartment now serves as collections storage.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Arrowhead, the headquarters of the Berkshire County Historical Society since 1975, is best known as the house author Herman Melville lived from 1850 to 1862. It was here he wrote *Moby-Dick* and other novels while running a small farm. Arrowhead also represents the history of land use in the area: serving as an inn on the main road between Pittsfield and Lenox, and as a farm. It was named a National Historic Landmark in 1963.

The house and farm played an important part in Melville's writings. The house and land appeared prominently in two short stories, "I and My Chimney" and "The Piazza." While at Arrowhead, Melville wrote *Moby-Dick*, considered one of the greatest novels in American literature. The view of Mount Greylock from his study window was particularly inspiring to Melville, and he dedicated his novel *Pierre* to the mountain. Arrowhead was also important to the Melville family – three of four children were born to Elizabeth and Herman here.

The original east block of the house was built in the 1790s by Captain David Bush and it is believed to have housed an inn operated by Captain Bush and his son, David, Jr. The house originally had a gambrel roof, but was changed into a simple gable roof in the 1830s or 1840s. In 1844 the Bush family sold the house to Dr. John Brewster, a Pittsfield physician. Brewster in turn sold the house and 160-acre farm to Herman Melville September 14, 1850. In 1862, Herman sold the property to his brother Allan. Allan's daughters owned Arrowhead until 1927. It then passed through several private owners before it was acquired by the Berkshire Historical Society (BHS) in 1975.

In the 1940s and 1950s major changes were made in the house. A concrete wall was formed inside the existing foundation masonry wall. The basement room that is now the Society's archives was finished, and a fireplace was added in the north wall. The basement windows were lowered at this time to accommodate the level of the finished ceiling. The window wells outside

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were probably built at the same time. On the first floor most of the walls were re-plastered. The original wood paneling in the chimney room was removed and knotty pine paneling was installed, and the original paneling on the chimney breast was reinstalled. The fire box has also been altered. Outside the house a stone patio was built south of the main block, and a stone walk at the front of the house was built. The first floor portion of the west wall of the main block was faced in brick. It is probable that this work was done as part of the renovations of the 1950s. This brick wall does not appear in the HABS drawings done in the 1930s.

Arrowhead Chronology

Date	Owner	Major Changes during tenure
1780	David Bush	Original House (perhaps built 10-15 years after purchasing property)
1834	Charles Bush	gambrel to gable roof, building current barn
1844	Dr. John Brewster	
1850	Herman Melville	piazza
1863	Allan & Jane Melville	Front entryway; house painted yellow.
1873	Lucy Florence & Katherine Melville & Maria M. Morewood	New ell & south porch
1927	Robert E. Kimball	South porch removed
1934	Madeline Cutting Hibbs	
1937	J. Dwight & Henrietta Francis	Melville's piazza removed; picture window installed in north parlor
1945	Hale Holden	New stairway (altering South Parlor) & front entry; chimney room repaneled.
1973	J. Nelson & Joan D. Hoffman	
1975	Berkshire County Historical Society	Piazza restored; picture window removed. Study restored by removing hallway, uncovering fireplace (1977) Repainted (1998; 2012-2013); new roof (1997-1998); new entryway (2013)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Smith, J.E.A., History of Pittsfield, Vol. 1, pp. 86-87; 112.

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Berkshire Eagle, December 28, 1962

Birdsall, Richard D., Berkshire County: A Cultural History, Yale University Press, 1959

Holly Izard, PhD, report detailing the chain of title: "The Bush Tavern in Pittsfield, Massachusetts," May 2008 unpublished, at Berkshire County Historical Society.

HABS – Mass Book No. 8 (1934). Library of Congress.