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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
ELECTION COMMISSION

May 6, 2026

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director
Cambridge Historical Commission
c/o Cambridge City Clerk's Office
795 Massachusetts Avenue, 1st Floor
Cambridge, MA 02139

RE: Application for Historical Conservation Designation of Wyman Road

Mr. Sullivan and Members of the Commission:

This letter and the accompanying 260 petition signatures serve as application for Wyman Road—a private cul-de-sac at the intersection of Huron and Sparks Street—to receive a Historical Conservation Designation through the Cambridge Historical Commission. The following pages detail the street's background, architectural styles, gardens, and notable inhabitants, maintaining that these factors should collectively confer a conservation designation for Wyman Road.

BACKGROUND:

Wyman Road was formed in the 1920s, with the splitting of what now remains as 85 Sparks Street—an 1877 Italianate—into six smaller individual lots during a period of economic boom prior to the Great Depression. Architectural firm Duguid & Martin conceived of the houses in 1926—and built in 1929—as a deliberate response to what was seen at the time as the overstated and extravagant display of wealth of the Avon Hill and Brattle Street mansions. Duguid & Martin was a three-person architectural firm that specialized in colonial homes. William Duguid (1880-1965) a civil engineer from Scotland and his wife, Mary Elkinton Duguid (1888-1975) an architect and designer who studied history at Wellesley College, started the firm in 1925, along with G.R. Martin, who died in 1927.¹

A 1926 newspaper in the CHC archives notes the intent of the development:

The old Dr. Wyman estate at the junction of Huron avenue and Sparks street has been sold to William Duguid, of 12 Dunstable road, who is to develop the property. A 20-foot road is to be put through the estate and the vacant land bordering on Huron avenue is to

¹ Susan E. Maycock and Charles M. Sullivan, *Building Old Cambridge: Architecture and Development* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), p. 576.

be cut up to make six house lots. Mr. Duguid is to erect at once three single houses and will dispose of the other three lots which will be restricted to single houses. The house will face the new roadway and not on Huron avenue. The present trees and shrubbery will not be disturbed, the lots being large enough to allow building without the removal of any of them.² (see figs. 1 and 2)

The “Dr. Wyman” of whom the newspaper speaks is Dr. Morrill Wyman (1812-1903), an American physician, Harvard overseer, and social reformer (specifically on the issue of the corporal punishment of girls and women). His son, Morrill Wyman, Jr., wrote a book about the storied medical careers of his father and grandfather, Dr. Rufus Wyman (1778-1842), the latter of which was the first director of the Asylum for the Insane, the first mental hospital in the state founded in 1811, which became known as McLean Hospital in 1823.³

The Cambridge Historical Commission’s 1973 *Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge* lists Wyman Road as one of three cul-de-sacs that serve as an intriguing counterpoint to what was lack on Sparks Street:

Sparks Street lacks the dignified display of Brattle Street or the hospitable succession of front porches and wide drives of Appleton Street. However, three interesting cul-de-sacs open off Sparks: Clement Circle, Wyman and Hemlock Roads. The first goes back to before World War I, the second to between the wars, the third to after the last war. House size, architectural style, and the way the houses are sited and the degree of privacy provided by the planting—all provide a good visual summary of changes in suburban building over a sixty-year period.⁴

NOTABLE INHABITANTS OF WYMAN ROAD

4 Wyman: Former home of Herman Feshbach Professor of Physics Emeritas, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and 2004 Nobel Laureate in physics, **Franck Wilcek** (b. 1951) and science writer **Betsy Devine** (b. 1946).

Frank Wilcek: As a Nobel Laureate, he is one of the world’s preeminent theoretical physicists, known for the discovery of asymptotic freedom, the development of quantum

² Wyman Road—Published Material, Cambridge Historical Commission, Digital Architectural Survey and History, 1926: <https://cdash.cambridgema.gov/s/cdash/item/207684>.

³ Morrill Wyman, Jr, *A Brief Record of the Lives and Writings of Dr. Rufus Wyman (1778-1842) and His Son Dr. Morrill Wyman (1812-1903)* (Cambridge, 1915).

⁴ Bainbridge Bunting and Robert H. Nylander, *Old Cambridge: Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge Historical Commission and MIT Press, 1973, pp. 64-65).

chromodynamics, the invention of axions, and the discovery and exploitation of new forms of quantum statistics.⁵ Among the many books he has authored, the three most recent are:

-*A Beautiful Question: Finding Nature's Deep Design* (2016)

-*Fundamentals: Ten Keys to Reality* (2022)

-*The Lightness of Being: Mass, Ether, and the Unification of Forces* (2010)

Betsy Devine: Physicist, science writer, and co-author of the following books:

-*Absolute Zero Gravity* with Joel E. Cohen.

-*Longing for the Harmonies: Themes and Variations from Modern Physics* (Norton, 1988) with Frank Wilcek.

5 Wyman was also the former home of **Louise E. Donovan** (d. 2011) art historian and curator at the Worcester Museum of Art and the New England Conservatory, and later Secretary to the College of Radcliffe College and Radcliffe Trustee from 1976-1996.⁶

6 Wyman: Former house of American poet and painter **E.E. Cummings** (1894-1962) and supermodel **Marion Morehouse** (1906-1969) from 1952-1953.⁷ A Cambridge native, Cummings's childhood home on Irving Street is already a designated landmark. He returned to Cambridge in 1952 to hold the Charles Elliot Norton Professorship in Poetry and present the Norton Lectures in Poetry, which he entitled "Nonlectures."⁸ Both these lectures and 6 Wyman Road are described in the newspaper article below:

On October 15, Cumming and Marion moved into a house at 6 Wyman Road in Cambridge, a little cul-de-sac far enough away from Harvard Yard to allow Cumming to feel secure from too much intrusion, and far enough from Harvard Square to make Marion feel housebound. His strains began to ease when the lectures began, for they

⁵ MIT Physics Department faculty page: <https://physics.mit.edu/faculty/frank-wilczek/>

⁶ Louise Donovan Obituary," *The Boston Globe*, 19 May 2011.
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/louise-donovan-obituary?id=22125908>

⁷ Marion Moorhouse and her relationship with artist Max Ewing (1903-1934), plays a significant role in the recent book of one of the signatories of this brief. See Alice Friedman, *Queer Moderns: Max Ewing's Jazz Age New York* (Princeton University Press, 2025).

⁸ An excerpt from the first lecture in this series can be listened to at *Harvard Voices 375*:
<https://soundcloud.com/harvard/e-e-cummings-1952>

proved to be a great popular success. The first night, October 25, Sanders Theater in Memorial Hall, the scene of Estlin's commencement triumph in 1915,⁹ was packed, and students who were turned away at the door climbed fire escapes. [...].

Morehouse had a storied career in her own right. Often referred to as the first super model, she was described by the famous *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue* photographer Edward Steichen as "[t]he greatest fashion model I ever shot [...]" (**fig. 12**).¹⁰

9 Wyman: Former home of **Harriet Ann Boyd Hawes** (1871-1945), trailblazing archeologist and her husband, **Charles H. Hawes** (1867-1943), anthropologist and associate director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.¹¹

Harriet Boyd Hawes was the discoverer and first director of Gournia (and later Vasiliki), the first archeological excavation to uncover remains of Minoan civilization on the island of Crete, and the first woman ever to speak at the Archeological Institute of America (**fig. 13**). She also had a full humanitarian career as a wartime nurse in the Greco-Turkish War (1897), Spanish-American War (1898), and World War I, and she taught Greek archeology at her alma mater Smith College, and later pre-Christian art at Wellesley College until her retirement in _____. Smith awarded her an honorary doctorate in 1910, for her "[...] distinguished achievements in the service of the humanities in laying bare and interpreting the buried secrets of two ancient civilizations, she has added also the fine devotion of the service of humanity in organizing and administering aid in camp and hospital to the sick and wounded in two recent wars."¹²

An article in *The New York Times* described her approach to archeology as follows:

She calls her explorations 'campaigns,' and treats them as if they were battles by determined, scientific armies to wrest the secrets of ancient days from the earth. She is a general too, for she is in command of a little army of her own... [she is] unassuming in her ways, modest, direct [...] Yet one of the leading scientific investigators of the time.¹³

⁹ The 1915 commencement speech referenced here was his own that he gave under the title of "The New Art," which scandalized audiences for its praise of avant-garde and modernist art.

¹⁰ "Marion Morehouse Cummings, Poet's Widow, Top Model, Dies," *The New York Times*, 19 May 1969. <https://www.nytimes.com/1969/05/19/archives/marion-morehouse-cummings-poets-widow-top-model-dies.html>

¹¹ Per record in Deed Book 5193, p. 580, 12 September 1927, Middlesex County South Registry of Deeds.

¹² "Founding Sisters: The Origins of College Collections," <https://commons.mtholyoke.edu/foundingsisters/harriet-boyd-hawes/>

¹³ "Woman Discovers a Buried City in Crete," *The New York Times*, 25 September, 1904. <https://www.nytimes.com/1904/09/25/archives/woman-discovers-a-buried-city-in-crete-miss-harriet-boyds-campaigns.html>

She is the author of *Gournia: Vasiliki and other prehistoric sites on the isthmus of Hierapetra, Crete; excavations of the Wells-Houston-Cramp expeditions, 1901, 1903, 1904* (1908), and the co-author, with her husband, of *Crete: The Forerunner of Greece* (1909).

It was during her excavations in Crete that she met her future husband, **Charles H. Hawes** (1867-1943), and they married in 1906. Before settling in Cambridge, he was an anthropology professor at Dartmouth College and University of Wisconsin, Madison. He served as associate director of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston from 1924-1934.¹⁴ He is best known for his book *In the Uttermost East, being an account of the investigations among the Natives and Russian Convicts of the Island of Sakhalin* (1904), which documents his 1901 journey through Russia's easternmost frontier, including its notorious penal colony of Sakhalin. The work is known for its anthropological rigour because it moved beyond sensationalist travel narratives popular at the time, and instead made use of direct field observation and ethnographic work.

See [the petition](#) submitted for landmark status of 9 Wyman for a more detailed biography of Harriet.

10 Wyman: Former home of economist **Sumner Slichter** (1892-1959), who was the first Lamont University Professor at Harvard University. Described as "one of the really top economists in the world and probably the leading economist on labor problems in this country," he was the author of 18 books on economics.¹⁵ His textbook *Modern Economic Society* (1926) was the standard introductory economic text before 1950. Massachusetts's 'Slichter Law,' enacted in 1947, is named after him for his chair role on the committee, permits the state to seize and operate industries where a work stoppage would endanger public health or safety.¹⁶

14 Wyman: Former home of **Manfred Leslie Karnovsky** (d. 1918-1999), Harold T. White Professor of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology at Harvard Medical School, a pioneer researcher in white blood cells.¹⁷

¹⁴ "Professor Charles H. Hawes, obituary," *The New York Times*, 15 December 1943.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1943/12/15/archives/prof-charles-h-hawes-i-anthropologist-former-aide-at-boston-museum.html>

¹⁵ "Slichter Dies Sunday at 57," *The Harvard Crimson*, 29 September 1959.
<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1959/9/29/slichter-dies-sunday-at-67-psummer/>

¹⁶ "Sumner Slichter, Economist, Dead," *The New York Times*, 29 September 1959.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1959/09/29/archives/sumner-slichter-harvard-professor-since-30-acceptedcreeping.html>

¹⁷ "Manfred L. Karnovsky, 80, Blood-Cell Researcher," *The New York Times*, 13 January 1999.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/13/us/manfred-l-karnovsky-80-blood-cell-researcher.html>

WYMAN ROAD ARCHITECTURE: A DELIBERATE MICRO-COMMUNITY

Duguid and Martin designed Wyman Road as a cohesive micro-community, in which the most valued architectural styles of the period were built and showcased. Moving through the street right and left until the end of the cul-de sac, there is:

4 Wyman: Brick Colonial Revival

This is a classic brick colonial that had fallen into disrepair by the time it was purchased by its current owners in 2020. Hisel Flynn Architects were awarded Silver in the 2023 Prism Award Achievement in Building and Design for Best Renovation for their modernist intervention in the structure while preserving its original footprint and historical details. It was featured in the May-June 2024 issue of *New England Homes*.¹⁸ (figs. 3 and 4)

6 Wyman: Craftsman

This is a gablefront two-story craftsman style house inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement, which began in the 1880s and was a response to the perceived decline of craft due to the Industrial Revolution. Emphasizing its use of “honest” materials, 6 Wyman has double-hung wood plank doors in lieu of a garage door. Its stucco exterior of the first floor supports the wood shingled exterior on the second floor. (fig. 5)

Wood Colonial Revivals (5, 10, and 14 Wyman): (figs, 6,7, and 8)

These three houses are the ones likely to have been built by Duguid & Martin—known for their high quality residential homes—since wood colonial revivals were what they were most known for, with several other examples still standing in Cambridge, including one on Brattle Street.

9 Wyman: Storybook Cottage (figs. 9 and 10)

One house on the street is truly distinct for its unusual and unique blending of styles not seen elsewhere in Cambridge, and may have been designed as a custom home for Charles and Harriet Hawes: 9 Wyman Road. Storybook cottage architecture was inspired by old-world rural European architecture, an aesthetic which was transported back to America in the interwar period. Charles Hawes may have taken to it keenly as a British national, and he and Harriet may have even had a hand in its design, but more research is needed on this. Known for steeply

¹⁸ Alyssa Bird, “A Cambridge Colonial Is Reimagined as a Contemporary Home,” *New England Homes*, (May-June 2024): <https://nehomemag.com/a-cambridge-colonial-is-reimagined-as-a-contemporary-home/>

pitched cross-gable roofs, asymmetry, elaborate brickwork chimneys, and earthen materials (such as stone and stucco), they were often placed in enchanted moss-covered environmental settings shaded by old trees to amplify their otherworldly feel.

Noteworthy, 9 Wyman makes use of all of these components, except for its choice of materials. Instead of brick, stucco or stone, it uses wood shingles, harkening to the shingled styles seen in Cambridge between 1880-1900. Thus 9 Wyman represents an experimental hybridization of style and materials that synthesized an Old World cottage with the shingled home so iconic of New England.

9 Wyman has a significant amount more green space than other lots on the street, which has been preserved for 100 years. Approaching the lot from Wyman Road, a visitor is confronted with the lot's historic trees that shade the entirety of the lot, giving a sense of 9 Wyman being nestled deep in a forest even as the house abuts the busy Huron Avenue. This attention to placement of the home deep within the landscape for overall environmental effect is not something that the architects followed with the other homes on Wyman to the same extent they did for 9 Wyman, even as the other lots were also designed to preserve the trees of the street.

As noted by The May Group real estate agents, "Some streets are hidden in plain sight. Wyman Road, tucked quietly between Huron Village and Observatory Hill, is one of them. And at the very end? A home [9 Wyman] that feels like a secret worth sharing."¹⁹

GARDENS OF WYMAN ROAD

The garden of **10 Wyman Road** is on the Smithsonian Archives of American Gardens (AAG) Known as Muffin's Garden, its current form was largely constructed in 1963 with interventions by landscape architects and owners since that time See the Smithsonian's online catalogue entry for this garden in the footnote for a length description (**fig. 11**).²⁰

The gardens of **4 Wyman**, **5 Wyman**, and **10 Wyman** are ongoing participants in the Secret Gardens of Cambridge. Sponsored by Friends of the Cambridge Public Library, Secret Gardens opens to the public about 45 residential gardens across Cambridge and serves as a significant fundraiser for the Cambridge Public Library.²¹

¹⁹ <https://www.instagram.com/p/DJceuGJOG7m/>

²⁰ For a detailed description of Muffin's Garden at 14 Wyman in the Smithsonian's online catalogue, see: <https://www.si.edu/object/archives/components/sova-aag-gca-ref17580>

²¹ Friends of the Cambridge Public Library, Secret Gardens of Cambridge: <https://www.cambridgepubliclibraryfriends.org/secret-gardens-cambridge>

That three of the six homes on Wyman Road participate in an event that showcases about only 45 home gardens across Cambridge speaks to our stewardship of its green spaces, in alignment with its original conception.

CONCLUSION AND CURRENT RISKS TO CONSERVATION

Rather than constructing cookie-cutter homes and generic boxes in which to live, Wyman Road was conscientiously designed by its planner and architects as a cohesive entity showcasing the most desired styles of architecture in the early 20th century. As pedestrians stroll down Wyman, they first encounter a brick colonial revival, then craftsman home, then wood colonial revivals, only to end at a storybook cottage adapted in a distinctly New England idiom.

The original intent for Wyman Road, as noted in the 1926 newspaper article announcing its development, was one in which, “the trees and shrubbery will not be disturbed,” something all the more pressing today as tree canopy in urban centers regulates temperatures, rain runoff, and air quality. The resident custodians of Wyman Road have preserved this green legacy throughout the street’s 100-year history, and it is most encapsulated by the significant green space and largest number of historic trees that reside on the 9 Wyman lot.

Real estate agents of The May Group recently said in their advertisements of 9 Wyman:

[... T]his house is out of a storybook. It’s hidden in plain sight. You come down Wyman Road, which is a little dead end, and you can’t even see it. And it just unfolds in front of you. [...T]his is really one of those houses where we can’t wait to see what somebody does with it.”²²

Replacement of the house and trees with a concrete box was not what they had in mind when they said this. It is neither a secret nor surprise that we submit this petition at a moment when the small cul-de-sac of Wyman Road is at greater risk than it has been in its history. The Cyprus-based firm DND Homes seeks to demolish 9 Wyman, replacing it with a block of 56 studio apartments, which do nothing to aid affordable living for families in Cambridge. In testimony before the Joint Housing/Neighborhood Committee on April 7, 2026, Tim Love, assistant director of the Master in Real Estate program and lecturer and senior fellow in real estate and urban planning at Harvard University spoke of several six-story proposed projects—9 Wyman included—as being used by this developer to turn a quick profit. According to Love, “Their poor quality of design speaks to the fact that, “[they aren’t] meant to move ahead, but are meant to get sites entitled, so that those developers can then flip the sites with a fully entitled

²² The May Group, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DJceuGJOG7m/>

project. And I say that just because of the mixed quality of some of the designs that we see up here.”²³

When plans, property, and permitting for 9 Wyman are purchased by another developer, it will result in all 23 trees on the lot being cut down, the erasure from architectural history of a unique storybook style home, and a rupture in the holistic design of the street—a rupture that is directly at odds with the street’s original conception and intent, all to be replaced with something of notably poor quality (see footprint and elevation comparisons in figs. 14 and 15).

Therefore, the petitioners ask the Cambridge Historic Commission to conserve Wyman Road in its entirety as the quirky, self-consciously historicist sampling of architecture that it was designed to be, with its culminating point at 9 Wyman being an imaginative, hybridized architectural style not seen elsewhere in Cambridge. Should 9 Wyman be expanded to accommodate more housing in Cambridge, it should be done in a manner consistent with conservation aims of preserving scale, aesthetic, and trees of the surrounding area.

The unique urban and architectural planning of Wyman Road as a cohesive entity, its list of renowned residents spanning the 20th and 21st centuries, its legacy of green space enshrined at its conception, and its locally and nationally recognized gardens make Wyman Road worthy of historical conservation.

Sincerely,

Liza Oliver, PhD
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In consultation with:

Alice Friedman, PhD
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²³ See timestamp 21:25: <https://cambridgema.v3.swagit.com/videos/381382>

Kathryn O'Rourke, PhD
Grace Slack McNeil Professor of American Architecture
Wellesley College
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APPENDIX: FIGURES

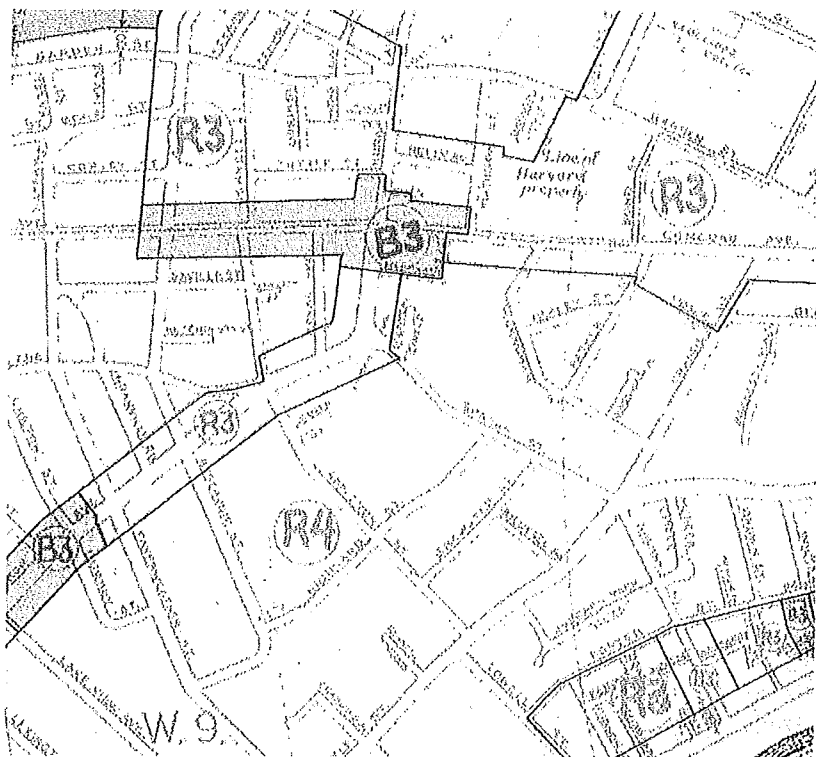


Figure 1. Detail of 1924 Cambridge Zoning Map before the creation of Wyman Road, showing Dr. Wyman's property between the square formed Huron, Sparks, Highland, and Appleton.

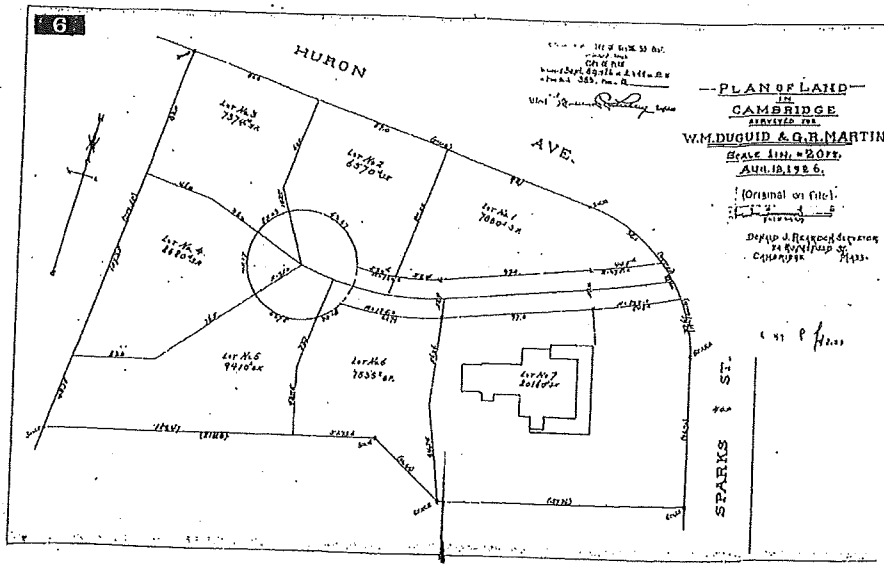
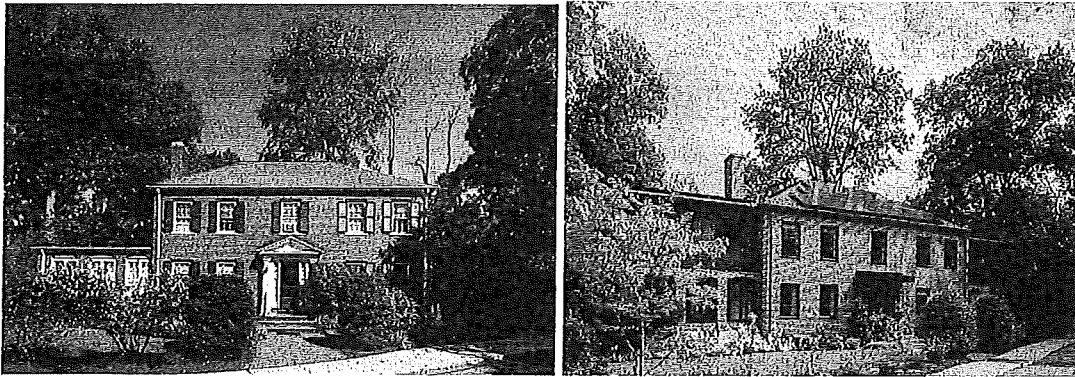


Figure 2. "Plan of Land for Wyman Road," submitted by Duguid and Martin in 1926.



Figures 3 and 4. 4 Wyman Road (Lot 1), brick colonial revival (before and after renovation). Home of Frank Wilczek and Betsy Devine.

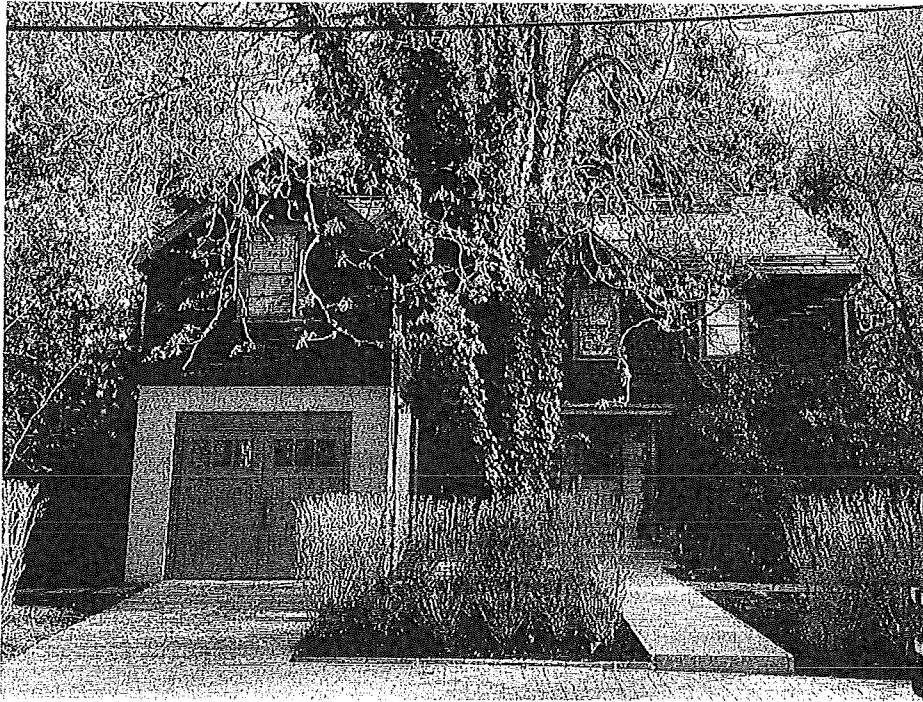


Figure 5. 6 Wyman Road (Lot 6). Home of E.E. Cummings and Marion Morehouse from 1952-53.



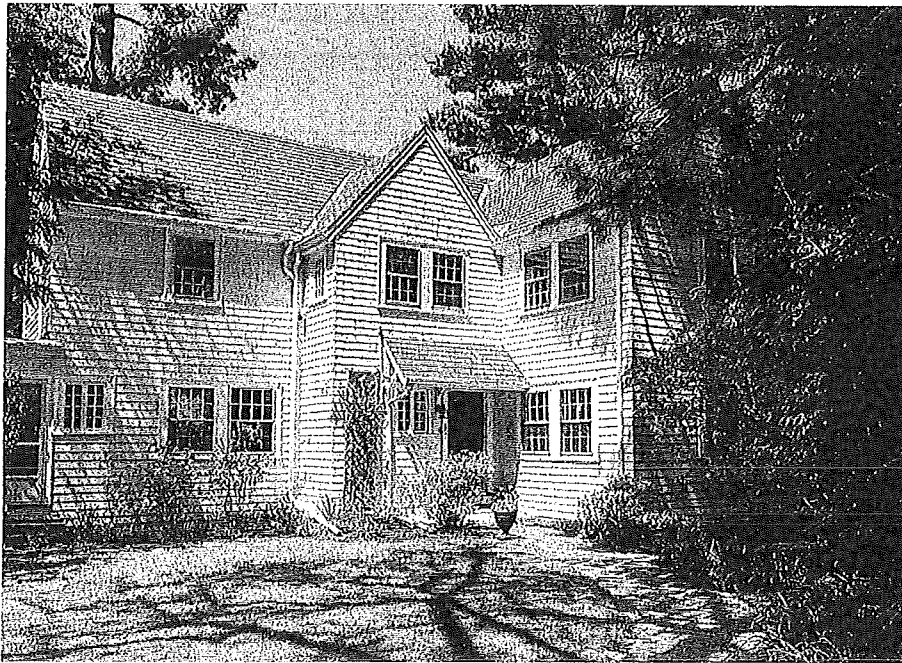
Figure 6. 5 Wyman Road (Lot 2).



Figure 7. 10 Wyman Road (Lot 5). Home of Sumner Slichter.



Figure 8. 14 Wyman Road (Lot 4). Home of Manfred Leslie Karnovsky.



Figures 9 and 10. 9 Wyman Road (Lot 3), Home of Harriet Boyd Hawes.

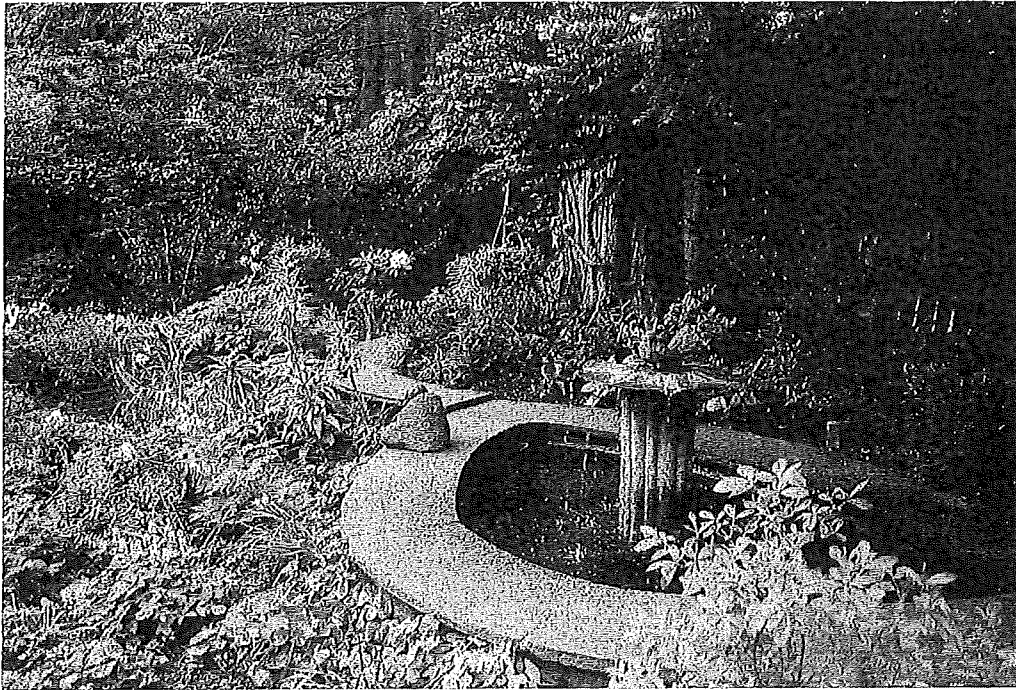


Figure 11. “Muffin’s Garden” at 10 Wyman Road (Lot 5), listed in the Smithsonian’s Archives of American Gardens.

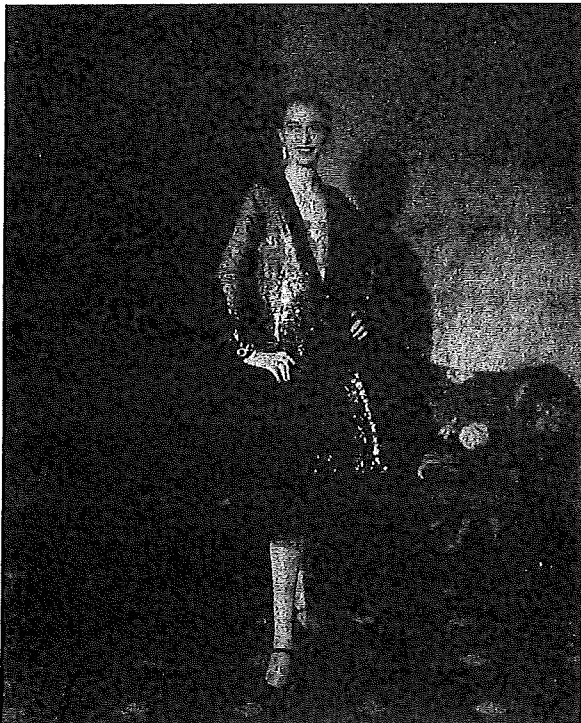


Figure 12. Edward Steichen, *Cheirut Gown. Marion Morehouse (Mrs. E.E. Cummings)*, 1927, gelatin silver print (Museum of Modern Art, New York).

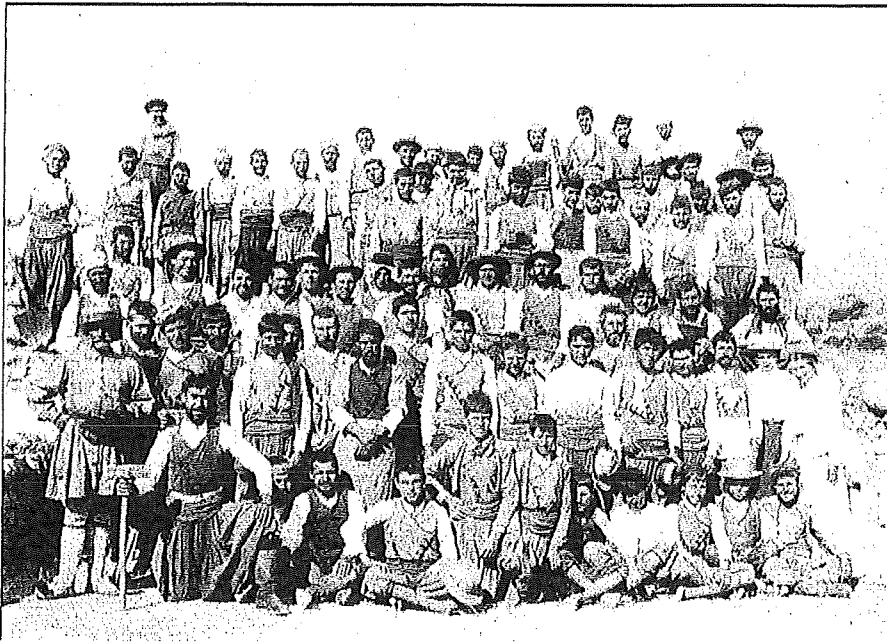
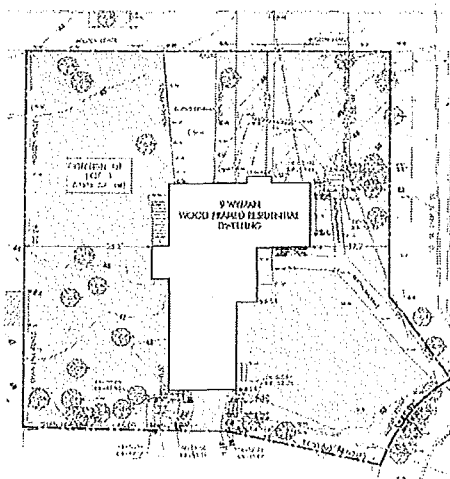


Figure 13. Harriet Boyd Hawes (second row, far right), at excavation in Gournia, 1904 (Harriet Boyd Hawes Papers, Smith College Archives).

Before:



After:

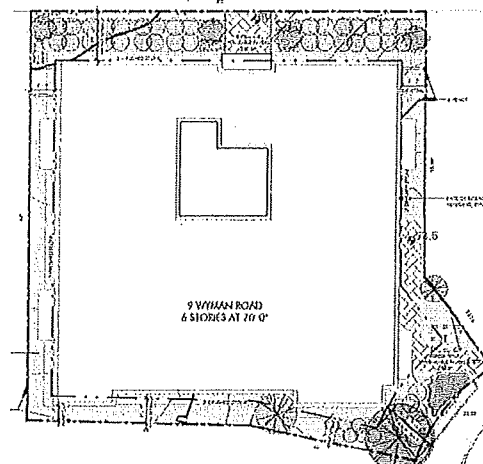


Figure 12. Footprint comparison before and after plans for 9 Wyman Road per current development agenda.

Petition for Designation Study of a Landmark or Neighborhood Conservation District

We, the undersigned registered voters of the City of Cambridge, request the Cambridge Historical Commission to initiate the process of designating the building or neighborhood named below, bounded by or containing properties located on the named streets, as a Landmark or Neighborhood Conservation District under Chapter 2.78, Article III of the Code of the City of Cambridge.

Address if a single property, or boundaries if a district: Wyman Rd as a Conservation District

Significance of the proposed landmark or district: _____

See Attached Document
