

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

4-140	Salem		BEV.1133 - 1134
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Photograph



East (façade) and north elevations

**Town/City:** Beverly

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*):  
Downtown

**Address:** 14 Summit Avenue

**Historic Name:** Beverly Poor House

**Uses:** Present: multi-family residential

Original: poorhouse/almshouse

**Date of Construction:** 1803

**Source:** E.M. Stone (*History of Beverly*)

**Style/Form:** Federal

**Architect/Builder:**

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: parged brick (parged stone at front pavilion)

Wall/Trim: vinyl siding and trim

Roof: fiberglass asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
Garage (1948)

**Major Alterations (*with dates*):**  
Window replacement (L 20<sup>th</sup> – E 21<sup>st</sup> c); Vinyl siding (2004)

**Condition:** fair

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.25 acres

**Setting:** Set on a hillside in a heterogeneous residential neighborhood, surrounded by buildings of varied size, scale, siting, and date. Located near the Beverly-Salem Bridge and small-scale commercial development lining the roadway between the bridge and the intersection of Rantoul and Cabot streets.

Locus Map (north at top)



**Recorded by:** Wendy Frontiero and Pamela Hartford

**Organization:** Beverly Historic District Commission

**Date (month / year):** September 2016

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

BEVERLY

14 SUMMIT AVE.

Area(s) Form No.

BEV.1133-1134

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 Poor House occupies a modest, quarter-acre lot between Summit Ave and the railroad tracks. Located on a steep hillside, the land is flat under and directly to the north of the structure, and drops steeply down to the south of the building. The building is set towards the south end of its site, with a modest front setback that is maintained in turf and framed by a granite rubble wall on its south end. The northern end of the site is used for parking, with asphalt and gravel surfaces and an early 20<sup>th</sup> century garage.

The building consists of a rectangular block measuring 62 feet long by 48 feet deep, with a two-story pavilion set off-center on the east (façade) elevation and a smaller, one-story entrance vestibule centered on the north elevation. The building rises 2 ½ stories from a parged brick foundation to a low-pitched, side gable roof without gable returns. Exterior walls are clad with vinyl siding and trim. Windows are typically 1/1 replacement sash without trim; 8/8 sash survive at the basement level on the south elevation. A small, slender chimney rises from the front slope of the northern end of the building.

The long, asymmetrical east façade contains six window bays, including a substantial, nine feet wide by seven feet deep pavilion in the penultimate bay at the southern end. The pavilion rises two stories from a parged granite foundation to a shallow front gable roof with gable returns. Its east façade has one window centered on each story; its north elevation contains a small 9-pane window offset on the first floor.

The symmetrical north elevation contains three bays in the middle of the first and second floors, including a small entrance vestibule with a shed roof and single-leaf door facing the street, and two windows in the half story. The south elevation has five symmetrical bays on the first and second stories and two windows in the half story. A single-leaf door without ornament is centered on the first floor of this elevation, accessed by a utilitarian, modern wood stairway and deck. The fully exposed basement on the south elevation features a utilitarian, single-leaf door in the center, flanked by one 8/8 window to its west and two 8/8 windows to its east.

The garage, set in the center of the northern end of the property, is wood frame construction, rising one story to a gable-front roof with standing seam metal roofing and no gable returns. Sheathed in metal fashioned to look like wood clapboards, the garage's east (façade) elevation is occupied by two pairs of hinged wood doors, each having a column of three horizontal wood panels surmounted by a pair of glass panes. The north and south side elevations each contain a single roughly centered window; they appear to be filled in with plywood.

The Poor House is a remarkable survivor of early 19<sup>th</sup> century institutional architecture in Massachusetts. Major alterations include artificial siding and the loss of original trim and window sash. The building is notable for its large size and scale, presumably original or early fenestration, façade pavilion, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century metal garage.

## 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.*

Beverly first considered the need for a poor house (also known as almshouse or work house) in 1719-20, but its first building was not erected until 1803, according to Edwin Stone's 1843 history of the town. The construction cost was nearly \$5,500 and included a working farm. Stone reported that the building

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“is pleasantly situated on a court, running northerly from Cabot street. The house is two stories high, and contains twelve rooms, besides two in the basement; one of which is used as a kitchen, and the other as a work-room. The basement story also contains the necessary cells for the confinement of disorderly persons. The house was very thoroughly repaired in 1838, at an expense of \$2,500, and under its present efficient management, affords a humane asylum for the friendless poor. Land owned, and rented by the town for that purpose, is cultivated by the inmates of this house, who raise potatoes and other vegetables sufficient for their own consumption, and cut hay enough to keep two cows.” (Stone: 107)

The following description of the Beverly Poor House is excerpted from Heli Meltner’s book, *The Poorhouses of Massachusetts: A Cultural and Architectural History* (2012):

“In 1802 Beverly purchased a 2 ½ - acre parcel for its first almshouse. It was on a hill overlooking the Essex Bridge, built in 1788 to connect to Salem across a deep Atlantic inlet. The building [was] finished in 1804. . . It was supposed to hold fifty persons, though conditions must have been crowded with this number of ‘subjects,’ as they were termed. The house contained twelve rooms and another two basement rooms, used as the kitchen and inmate workroom. The basement also contained cells for the confinement of the ‘violent insane,’ disobedient subjects, and occasional prisoners. . .

“A set of strict but uniquely benevolent rules that governed the house included detailed instructions for the inmates’ diet and recipes for cooking their food. The master was to ‘treat the persons in said house with humanity[,] and such as behave well and are confined there merely on account of their poverty are entitled to the kindest treatment and are to have every indulgence that is consistent with the order and discipline of the house. . .’ Although children had to work at suitable tasks and were taught to read only by ‘some person [in] the house’ rather than at a local school, they were explicitly allowed time for recreation, an unusual feature in an almshouse. . .

“The Beverly Work House was sold in 1872 for the construction of a more modern almshouse on Cedar Street [near today’s Hurd Stadium], which does not survive.” (Meltner: 126-127)

Beverly’s Poor House is one of only 46 purpose-built almshouses remaining in Massachusetts; only four (in Falmouth, Lincoln, Tyngsborough, and Westport) are older than Beverly’s. Surviving poorhouses in nearby communities include Andover, Essex, Peabody, and Stoneham.

The Summit Avenue property was owned in 1880 and through at least 1897 by John Meacom and George Butman, local carpenters. In 1903, at least seven members of the O’Connor family lived in the house, including Ellen, the widow of Timothy; four of the O’Connors were described as edgeseeters, and one was a shoe-cutter. In 1910, the house had five apartments; occupants included James F. O’Connor (no occupation given); Mrs. Hannah Donahue, a widow; Horace A. Morgan, “night gtnm”; and Morris McGinnis, a laborer at Beverly Gas and Electric Co, and his wife Martina.

In 1930, occupants included Edeo L. Blais, a shoemaker in Boston, and his wife Winifred; Arthur Aylwin, a gardener in Magnolia, with his wife Fernan (sic) and son George, also a gardener; Mrs. Antioia Aylwin, widow of (another) Arthur; and John Ross, a laborer, and his wife Beatrice. In 1940, the building was occupied by Charles E. Pelletier, weaver at the Naumkeag Mills in Salem, and his wife Delia; Arthur J. Aylwin, now a garage foreman, and his wife Fernande; Andrew Velardi, a leatherworker in Peabody, and his wife Cecile; and Robert W. Morin, employed by the WPA, and his wife Elizabeth.

Residents in 1955 included Mrs. Delia Pelletier, widow of Charles E.; Alfred J. Swanson, “U. S. Service”, and his wife Dolores; Mrs. Gladys Morse, an inspector at the General Electric Company in Lynn; and Robert W. Morin, a baker at Klink’s Bakery on Cabot Street. In 1965, the building was occupied by Mrs. M. Alice Jellison, widow of George; Mrs. Angeline M. Lafrenais, widow of Chambord; and Mrs. Gertrude L. Currier, widow of George.

Historic maps and atlases show a series of porches appearing and disappearing from the north end and southeast corner of the building in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A large outbuilding (apparently converted to a residence numbered 12 Summit Ave.) was located to the southwest of the Poor House as early as 1880 and survived at least until 1919. A 1948 building permit for a garage on the property called for a metal structure designed by Whittredge Portable Building Company of Lynn, for an estimated cost of \$850.

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Hepler, Margaret. *Beverly; Historic Cultural Resources Survey, 1992-93; Final Report*. June 1993.

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## SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



South and east (façade) elevations



Garage