

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

13/30A	Boston North		
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Town: Lexington

Place: (*neighborhood or village*)
East Lexington

Address: 23-25 Sylvia Street

Historic Name: Temple B'nai Jacob

Uses: Present: residential

Original: synagogue

Date of Construction: 1913

Source: Worthen, *Calendar History*, p. 110.

Style/Form:

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: rubble

Wall/Trim: aluminum siding

Roof: tar & gravel

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1955 – conversion to residential use

Date? - siding

Condition: fair (due to siding)

Moved: no | x | yes | | **Date** _____

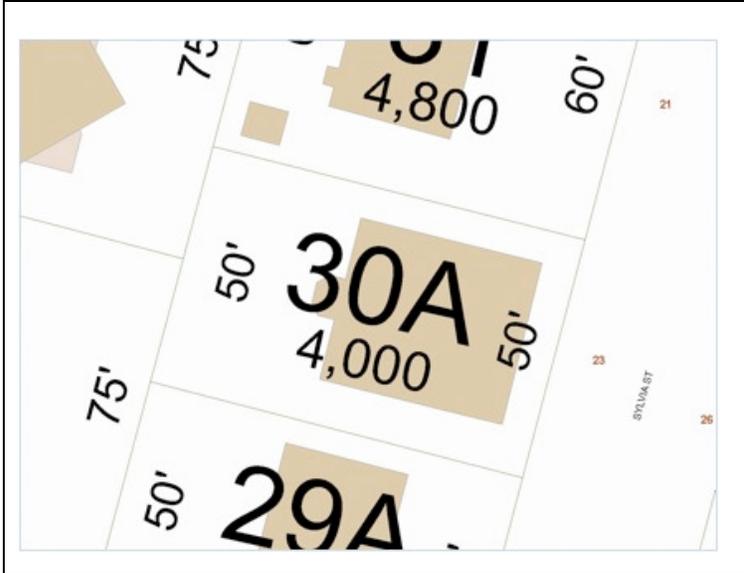
Acreage: 0.09 acre

Setting: residential neighborhood above Mass. Ave.
streetcar route, near Arlington town line

Photograph



Topographic or Assessor's Map



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Lexington Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): January 2010

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

LEXINGTON

23-25 Sylvia Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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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.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

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

The building at 23-25 Sylvia Street is Lexington's first synagogue and dates to the early 20th century. The two-story, flat-roofed structure was originally designed for Jewish worship with the foresight that it could be converted to residential use if the synagogue didn't flourish. The building is set on a rubble foundation and is sheathed in siding with simple wooden cornerboards and a bold cornice adorned by dentils and modillions. Centered on the three-bay façade is a steeply-pitched, pedimented porch, a single bay wide, supported on either end by a column and pier resting on a concrete base. The main entrance retains an original wooden door with oval glass. Windows contain double-hung 1/1 sash. The two bays of windows on the façade are flanked by shutters and are topped by entablature lintels decorated by dentils with the second story windows overlapping the cornice. The four bays of windows on the side elevations have simple molded surrounds.

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.

The building at 23-25 Sylvia Street is noteworthy as Lexington's first synagogue. A small group of Jewish families formed the East Lexington Hebrew congregation in 1911. Initially the congregation met in homes. Soon, land on Sylvia Street was purchased. Local historian Edwin Worthen indicated that the cornerstone for the building was laid on August 31, 1913 (*Calendar History*, p. 110). According to other sources, the "Sylvia Street Shul" held its first service on Passover, 1916. Initially the temple was Orthodox but changed to a Conservative affiliation prior to 1945. Members came from a number of towns, especially Lexington, Arlington and Bedford.

In 1955 the Sylvia Street building was sold and the sacred scrolls were transferred to the Arlington-Lexington-Bedford Jewish Community Center which had been established in a residential structure at 1508 Massachusetts Avenue in Lexington. Since 1955 the Sylvia Street structure has been residential in use.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, Mass.
Sanborn Insurance Maps.
Temple Emunah website. <http://templeemunah.org/history>
Temple Isaiah website. <http://www.templeisaiah.net>
Worthen, Edwin B. *Calendar History of Lexington, Massachusetts.*