

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

11/119	Reading		382
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

**Town:** Reading

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

## Photograph



**Address:** 56 Hillcrest Road

**Historic Name:** Marc S. Wright House

**Uses:** Present: residential

Original: residential

**Date of Construction:** 1926

**Source:** water department records

**Style/Form:** 20<sup>th</sup> Century Eclectic/Revival

**Architect/Builder:** Eldred Mowery

## Exterior Material:

Foundation:

Wall/Trim: wood shingle

Roof: slate

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
none

## Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1988 – addition with lower level garage

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no | x | yes | | **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acreage:** 0.40 acre

**Setting:** mixed residential neighborhood

## Topographic or Assessor's Map



**Recorded by:** Lisa Mausolf

**Organization:** Reading Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): December 2009

**RECEIVED**  
**AUG 20 2010**  
**MASS. HIST. COMM.**

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

READING

56 Hillcrest Road

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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 house at 56 Hillcrest Road is an unusual early 20<sup>th</sup> century dwelling which is reminiscent of a Swiss Chalet or gingerbread cottage. Sheathed in wood shingles, the house is oriented with its steeply-pitched gable to the street with its main entry recessed alongside the small clipped gable nook containing a wooden bench. There is a 1½-story ell extending to the north of the main gablefront. Windows include a mix of double-hung 6/6 and 9/6 windows arranged individually and in pairs and flanked by board shutters with four petal cutouts. Many of the windows also have window boxes. Rising from the polychromatic slate roof are a series of shed dormers containing multi-light casement windows and a large brick chimney is centered on the ridge. To the north of the house there is a 1988 addition with a lower level two-car garage. It is topped by a modern deck.

## 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.*

According to water records, this house was constructed for Marc S. Wright in 1926. It was designed by architect Eldred Mowery. The land was lots 48 and 49 of the Scotland Park subdivision laid out by the Estate of George Heath in 1907. Restrictions in the deed required that no dwelling be constructed with a value of less than \$1,800.

Born in Chicago in 1890, Marcus "Marc" Snowell Wright attended Dartmouth College. At the 1912 Olympic trials, Wright, a left-handed pole vaulter, set a world record of 4.02 meters to become the first 4-meter vaulter in history. At the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, he was well below his best but tied for a silver medal. After graduating in 1913, Wright served as a Navy pilot in the Caribbean during World War I. After the war, he started his own shoe manufacturing business and finally retired in 1965.

At the time of the 1920 Census, Wright was living at 77 Pleasant Street in Reading with his wife Frances. After the construction of the house in 1926, Marc and Frances continued to live here (originally 32 Hillcrest) for the remainder of their lives. Marc Wright died on August 5, 1975. In 1976 Frances D. Wright conveyed the property to herself and daughter, Ellen Beschler. Ellen Beschler sold the property to the present owners in 1987.

Little additional information has emerged concerning the architect of this unusual home. Lawrence Eldred Mowery was born in New Ulm, Minnesota in 1887. His father, Christian Mowery, was born in Switzerland. His mother, Carrie, was an artist. Mowery graduated from Carleton College in 1907. He received a Masters of Architecture at Harvard College in 1914 and was awarded the Robinson Traveling Fellowship in 1916. Relatively little is known concerning his architectural practice other than he was a member of the A.I.A. in the District of Columbia from 1929 to 1935 and designed at least one theatre there. The 1930 U.S. Census lists him as the architect of a lumber company, living in Washington, D.C. In 1929 Eldred Mowery produced a 32 page booklet of house plans for the National Lumber Manufacturers Association entitled *For Home Lovers*. The drawing on the cover bears some resemblance to the house at 56 Hillcrest Road with its steeply-pitched gable front and side ell (see continuation sheet). Ironically, on June 13, 1930 this same illustration appeared in the *Reading Chronicle* in an advertisement for W.Bancroft & Co., a local business.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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Johnson, George Henry. *One branch of the Fay family tree: an account of the ancestors and descendants of William and Elizabeth Fay*. Columbus, Ohio: Champlin Press, 1913. [googlebooks]. Information on Lawrence Eldred Mowery.

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U.S. Census

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Cover of *For Home Lovers* by Eldred Mowery, 1929.

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Community      Property Address  
READING        56 HILLCREST ROAD

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## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible       Eligible **only** in a historic district  
 Contributing to a potential historic district       Potential historic district

Criteria:     **A**     **B**     **C**     **D**

Criteria Considerations:     **A**     **B**     **C**     **D**     **E**     **F**     **G**

Statement of Significance by           Lisa Mausolf          

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

Constructed in 1926, the house at 56 Hillcrest Road is unique example of Eclectic 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic architecture which evokes the sense of a Swiss Chalet. It is notable as the work of a relatively unknown architect named Eldred Mowery who designed it for a former Olympian athlete named Marc Wright. The property is potentially eligible for the National Register for its associations with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century development of Reading and as a good example of a variation on the Eclectic Revival modes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.