

WEST NEWBURY HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Historic Sites Survey Table of Contents  
Archelaus Place

Street Address	Page ##	Individual or Group Form	WN Historical Commission Comments
<a href="#">42 Archelaus Pl</a>	1	Individual	Formerly West Newbury's <a href="#">Almshouse</a>

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

0140 0000  
00580

Newburyport

WNB.374  
WNB.375

**Town/City:** West Newbury

**Place:**

## Photograph



House: Façade (west) and south elevations.

**Address:** 42 Archelaus Place

**Historic Name:** West Newbury Almshouse

**Uses:** Present: Single Family Residence

Original: Almshouse

**Date of Construction:** 1887-1888

**Source:** Town Records

**Style/Form:** Italianate

**Architect/Builder:** Not Known

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Wood Clapboards and Trim

Roof: Asphalt Shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** Three connected barns; two free-standing sheds/outbuildings

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*): Front entrance stoop; side entrance deck and replacement porch post

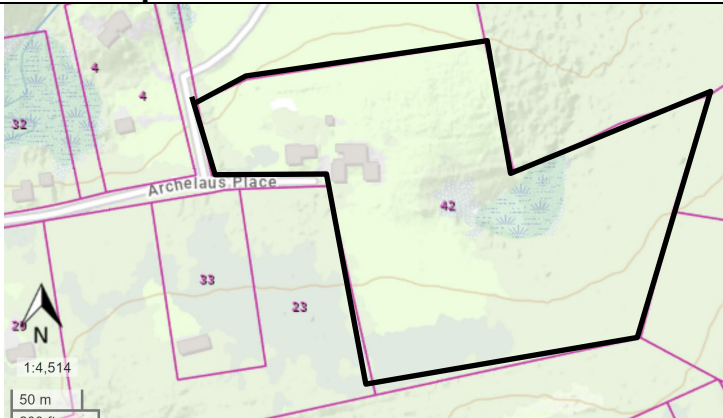
**Condition:** Fair

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 11.0 acres

**Setting:** Located at the end of a dead-end road in a semi-rural area with hilly terrain. Nearby buildings are distantly spaced, mostly residential, and a heterogeneous mix of siting, styles, forms, and construction eras.

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Stacy Spies and Wendy Frontiero

**Organization:** West Newbury Historical Commission

**Date:** June 2023

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

WEST NEWBURY 42 ARCHELAUS PLACE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	WNB.374
	WNB.375

☒ 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:

42 Archelaus Place is a large, irregularly shaped lot at the east end of Archelaus Place. The property consists of a large residential building and several small to medium-sized outbuildings. The house stands on the north side of Archelaus Place, facing west (to the side). A U-shaped configuration of attached barns stands at the terminus of the dead-end road, and two small outbuildings/sheds are located between the house and barns. The land immediately around the house and its outbuildings is relatively flat and is maintained in lawn with informal plants of shrubs and trees. Large, open fields lie to the north and southeast of the house.

The T-shaped house comprises a main block facing west (away from the street) and a large rear ell extending to the east. Both sections of the building rise 2½ stories from a brick foundation to gable roofs; the main block has slender gable returns. The main block has two narrow interior chimneys; the rear wing has one slim chimney that is set slightly off-center. Walls are sheathed with clapboard and trimmed with flat corner boards and fascia boards with a simple bed molding. Windows typically occur singly, are trimmed with flat casings, and have 2/2 sash.

The main block measures 37 feet long by 28 feet deep. Its symmetrical, three-bay façade has a 2½ story, cross-gabled pavilion in the center flanked by a single bay of windows on each end. The pavilion contains the main entrance on the first story, narrow paired windows on the second story, and a pointed-arch window in its half-story. The entrance has double-leaf, Victorian doors framed by flat casings and large carved brackets that support a hood with a flared hip roof. The asymmetrical side elevation (facing the road) has a one-story, flat-roof extension across most of the first floor, with an open entrance porch at its west end. The visible portion of the rear elevation has an offset, single-leaf door.

Measuring 33 feet long by 22 feet deep, the substantial rear wing displays an asymmetrical, 4-bay elevation facing the road. On its first floor, an entrance is placed slightly off-center. The doorway features a shallow hood with carved brackets and a flat roof.

Multifarious barns and sheds are located to the rear (east of the house). The largest of them is a 1½ story, front-gabled barn with two one-story sheds attached to its southwestern and southeastern ends. The barn has wood shingle siding, an asphalt-shingled roof, and minimal gable returns. Not clearly visible from the public way, it appears to have (or have had) a large central entrance with a sliding barn door and a multi-light, glazed transom above. A small 6/6 window occupies the gable peak. Attached to the southwest corner of this early barn is a one-story shed with a side-gabled roof and board-and-batten siding. Its asymmetrical façade has two garage bays with modern rolling doors, a single-leaf pedestrian entrance, and a 6/6 window with flat trim. The side (south) elevation of this outbuilding has two symmetrical 6/6 windows and no gable returns. A second shed, attached to the rear of the barn, is barely visible from the public way. The limited view available shows a one-story shed with flush wood panel siding, plain corner boards, and a corrugated metal roof. To the northeast of the house is a collection of non-descript, wood-frame sheds, one-story high with gable roofs.

Largely intact but suffering from lack of maintenance, the dwelling is a remarkably large and relatively stylish example of farmhouse architecture. Notable features include its ample proportions, stylish entry pavilion, historic window sash, and clapboard siding. The front-gable barn is an uncommon and mostly intact representation of 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural history.

## 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 was constructed in 1887-1888 as the West Newbury Almshouse, also known as the West Newbury Poor Farm. An almshouse was established in West Newbury in 1837, when the town purchased the Stephen and Mary Adams house at this

*Continuation sheet 1*

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

WEST NEWBURY 42 ARCHELAUS PLACE

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220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	WNB.374
	WNB.375

location<sup>1</sup> and advertised for an Almshouse Master (a resident caretaker) for the property and "inmates," as the residents were then called. Almshouses were created for people unable to support themselves for a variety of reasons: sickness, disability, mental illness, old age, or minors that had been orphaned. Indigent travelers were also lodged and fed at the almshouse.<sup>2</sup> In 1837, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed an act that required each municipality to set aside a sum of money to provide for the poor. The act also required that each town's Overseer of the Poor report on the number of "persons relieved or supported as paupers" each year. The 1839 Massachusetts report noted that West Newbury supported 29 persons in the previous year, with an average of 12 persons in residence.<sup>3</sup> The 1887-1888 town report noted that the West Newbury almshouse had supported 15 inmates the prior year, with an average of 11.5 persons. Some residents of the almshouse were buried in the Almshouse Cemetery on Poor House Lane (WNB.804). The earliest burial there occurred soon after the almshouse was opened in 1837.

In 1887-1888, the town pulled down the Adams house on this site, constructed the existing building and new agricultural buildings, and equipped the farm with livestock and feed. When almshouses were established, it was expected that the inmates would work on the farm and the farm products would offset the costs of operation. In reality, this was not a sustainable model, as the difficulties that inmates had in supporting themselves outside the almshouse setting remained upon arrival at the almshouse. The West Newbury almshouse always required municipal funding, as was typical of most, if not all, almshouses. Prevailing thought about the self-sustaining agricultural model continued into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was extended to other charitable and custodial populations. In Massachusetts, the self-sufficient agricultural models were also used for populations with developmental or physical disabilities and "reform" schools for wayward juveniles.

"In 1911, when the average number of inmates present over the year had dwindled to 1.25, and the Town had begun a decades-long debate about what to do with the Almshouse complex, \$3,029.29 was spent to replace the burned-down Town Farm barn."<sup>4</sup> By 1925, the town no longer paid the Almshouse Master a salary, but charged him rent to live there. The Master would be paid for any inmates that did need food and lodging at the farm. Around that same time, the town began advertising the property for sale, but it wasn't until 1946 that a buyer was found.

In 1946, Elmer K. Thompson, who had been renting the property for some time, purchased the farm from the town.<sup>5</sup> The 1940 census recorded Elmer K. Thompson, his wife, Hazel, and their six children as residents of Archelaus Place. At the time, Elmer Thompson was working as a foreman in the local gypsy moth removal project. In 1950, the census noted that Elmer Thompson, Jr. farmed the property and Elmer Thompson, Sr. worked in an orchard. The Thompson family owned the house until 1986.<sup>6</sup> Much of the property was subdivided for a residential neighborhood in the 1980s.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Essex County Registry of Deeds Book 303, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Town of West Newbury, *Annual Statement of the Receipts and Expenditures of the Town of West Newbury...March 1887 to ...March 1888*. Newburyport: Caleb B. Huse, Printer, 1888.

<sup>3</sup> Secretary of the Commonwealth, "Abstract of the Returns of the Overseers of the Poor in Massachusetts, for 1839..."

<sup>4</sup> Grammar, Elisa. [https://www.wnewbury.org/sites/g/files/vyhli1436/f/uploads/almshouse\\_story.pdf](https://www.wnewbury.org/sites/g/files/vyhli1436/f/uploads/almshouse_story.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Essex County Registry of Deeds Book 3507, p. 482.

<sup>6</sup> Essex County Registry of Deeds Book 8423, p. 95.

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220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	WNB.374
	WNB.375

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House and rear ell: south elevations.



Barns: west elevations.



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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 Stacy E. Spies, Historic Preservation Consultant

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

The West Newbury Almshouse is recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level for its association with the town's social welfare obligations during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. West Newbury established an almshouse in response to an 1837 state law that towns set aside funds to care for the poor. The almshouse's agricultural outbuildings demonstrate the self-sufficient agricultural model that towns sought, but rarely achieved. When almshouses were established, it was expected that the inmates would work on the farm and the farm products would offset the costs of operation. In reality, this was not a sustainable model, as the difficulties that inmates had in supporting themselves outside the almshouse setting remained upon arrival at the almshouse. The period of significance is 1887-1946.

The building retains integrity of location, design, feeling, materials, setting, association, and workmanship. Information on the integrity of the interior and the nature and extent of modern alterations would be needed to confirm this recommendation.