

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.	Form no.
	50

1. Town Chelmsford

Address 16 Parkhurst Road

Name J.R. Parkhurst House (Owls' Nest)

Present use residence

Present owner Dr. Benjamin Blechman

3. Description:

Date 1804

Source Courier Citizen 5/3/1914

Style Georgian

Architect _____

Exterior wall fabric butted clapboard

Outbuildings (describe) none

Other features _____

large chestnut timbers, some
pegged, Center chimney originally
See attached sheet

Altered yes Date _____

Moved no Date _____

5. Lot size

One acre or less _____ Over one acre 6.25

Approximate frontage 838 feet

Approximate distance of building from street

75 feet

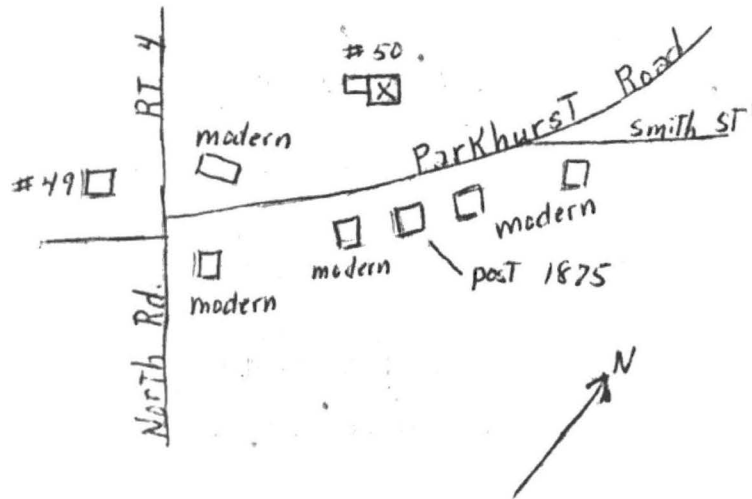
6. Recorded by Jane B. Drury

Organization Chelmsford Historical Comm.

Date 3/10/1974

2. Photo (3x3" or 3x5")
Staple to left side of form
Photo number 3 - 17

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location
in relation to nearest cross streets and
other buildings. Indicate north.



DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE
USGS Quadrant _____
MHC Photo no. _____

7. Original owner (if known) Andrew & John Parkhurst

Original use residence

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates house/barn/ cider mill ca. 1855 to 1880

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal		Conservation		Recreation
Agricultural	<u>x</u>	Education		Religion
Architectural		Exploration/		Science/
The Arts	<u>x</u>	settlement	x	invention
Commerce	<u>x</u>	Industry		Social/
Communication	<u> </u>	Military		humanitarian
Community development	<u> </u>	Political		Transportation

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above) The original Parkhurst ancestor in Chelmsford was Joseph, who probably settled in town about 1656. He or his son Joseph, Jr. shortly after moved to the Stoney Brook section (Westford), but another son, Ebenezer, lived on at the homestead, followed by his youngest son James. Philip, his son, occupied the place during the Revolution. Although Philip's two brothers joined the Minutemen, he hired a substitute, Silas Parker, for 3 pounds 12 shillings to take his place in the Continental Army.

Philip was succeeded by two of his sons, Andrew & John, and they erected the present structure, and the old house became a kitchen ell (now gone). About 1855 the estate was occupied by Henry E. Putnam, who had married the widow of Amos Parkhurst, son of Andrew. Henry, possessed of some strange freak, conceived the idea of turning $\frac{1}{2}$ of the house into a barn (see Alterations).

In 1879 Henry sold to J. Roland Parkhurst, grandson of John (1 of the builders and son of John, Jr. & Elizabeth. Elizabeth restored the building the following year and christened it "Owls' Nest." Large numbers of owls flew around the house until a very few years ago when the present owners cut down the then dead elms in which they nested. At least 1 of these trees was said to have been planted by Silas Parker, Philip's army substitute. In 1888 the property was sold out of the Parkhurst family which had owned it for 230 years, but J. Roland Parkhurst continued to live there until his death in 1928. He carried on a flourishing florist business at his green houses across the street and for many years was in charge of the Cemeteries in Chelmsford Center. He wrote many prose poems about life in Chelmsford many of which are still remembered today (see # 208, for example).

Note: The present owners have considered selling, but due to the area to its rear (field and Route 3), the only prospective purchasers have been commercial developers who would have no use for the house and would probably tear it down. Hopefully this will be avoided.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

- 1831 map
- 1856 Walling's Map
- 1875 Beers Atlas
- Chelmsford Eagle, Dec. 12, 1877
- Lowell Courier Citizen, May 3, 1914
- Chelmsford Newsweekly, 1955
- Waters "History of Chelmsford"
- "Chelmsford Vital Statistics to 1850"
- Parkhurst Genealogy, by George Parkhurst
- Notebook of Miss Frances Andrews

- Deeds: Middlesex North District
- Book 8, pg. 227, 229, 232
- Book 100, pg. 66
- Book 204, pg. 94

Altered:

The house has been extensively remodelled. About 1855 Henry E. Putnam, husband of the widow of Amos Parkhurst, turned half of the house into a barn. The large chimney and big fireplaces were removed; hay was stored in the large hall, horses housed in the chimney site, and cows kept in the kitchen. A horse powered cider mill was in the rear of the hall.

An 1877 newspaper article stated, "J. Roland Parkhurst has improved his house."

In 1880 the house was restored; J. Larcom the architect (owner of #201 at 15 Adams Ave.). The big barn doors were removed from the front entrance, a new kitchen added (in ell on left side), and a new barn erected (torn down by the present owners). A Victorian style tower was added at the front door; this tower was removed sometime after 1914. Evidences of the tower can be seen in the attic and a second floor alcove. A faint outline of the tower on the house roof can be seen in the attached 1972 picture.

Further remodelling was done by "Aunt Jenny" Bean in 1914. The house afterwards deteriorated somewhat, and sometime after 1914 the old kitchen ell was removed from the right side of the house. This ell predated the present building and may now be a part of a house on the opposite side of the street.

In 1946 was again somewhat restored, and the picture windows were put on the front of the house.

During the 1950's the present owners remodelled extensively. All the fireplaces had been removed, so the Blechmans built 3 new ones in the sitting room, parlor, and den. They converted the open carriage house into a 2-car garage, removed a porch on the left side of the house, converted the loft above the kitchen (left ell) into a bedroom, installed a cellar stairway between the sitting and dining rooms (making the latter smaller), and put new dado in the dining room. The panelling in the den and kitchen is completely new, and a small window was placed in the rear of the right wall of the kitchen (and another in the bedroom above). Some new hardwood floors were installed, but the bathrooms pre-date the Blechman purchase. The Blechmans put in a rear door to the cellar, which replaced an old hatchway which led up to the now-removed porch (evidence of this very narrow hatchway can be seen from the cellar in the foundation). They removed the door which once led to the old kitchen ell (original house, on the right side), and converted the entryway there into a large closet.

16 Parkhurst Rd.

North:

Book 137, pg. 22

10/27/ 1879

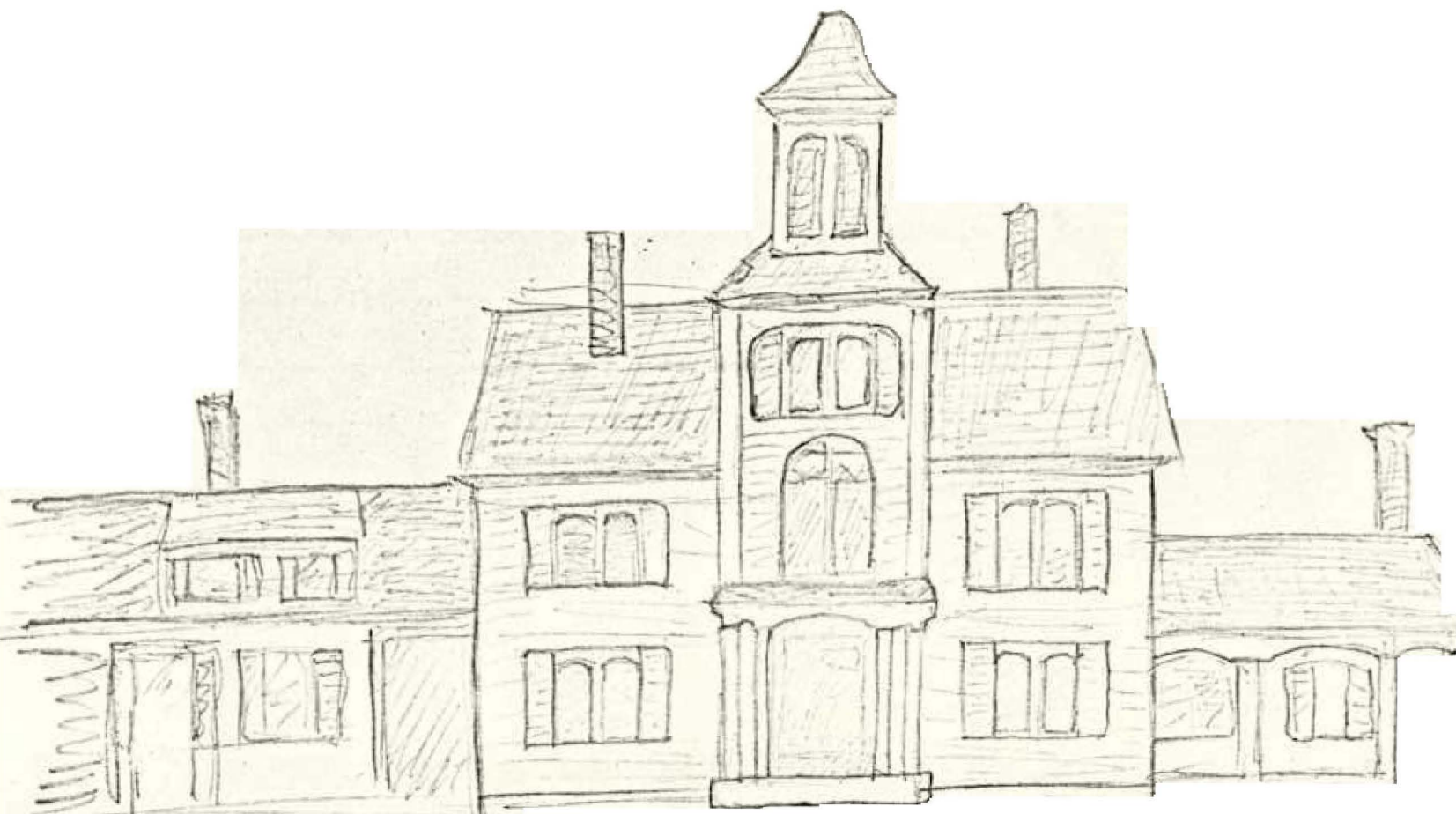
John Roland Parkhurst

from

Mary & Henry Putman and

Sarah J Parkhurst

8 acres plus other tracts



Sketched by James Mahoney Feb. 1974 from
a picture in Lowell Courier-Citizen, May 1914.

The original picture has:
carriage house & large barn on the end of the
the left ell.
several large elms in the front yard.
no roof overhang and posts on the right ell.

PARKHURST FAMILY

Waters, "History of Chelmsford"

- 375 Henry E. Putnam, died May 27, 1904
Amos A. Parkhurst, living in Escanaba, Michigan in 1913.
- 386 Amos A. Parkhurst - enlisted Aug. 30, 1862. Mustered in, Aug. 31, 1862 for 9 months, Co. K, 6th Regt. Inf. Mustered out, June 3, 1863. Age, 19. Single. Born, Chelmsford, son of Amos and Mary J. (Durgin) Parkhurst.
- 448 "The old Turnpike originally passed the Goold homestead.....
Our (Goold) nearest neighbor toward the middle of town was Andrew Parkhurst, who had a son Amos and a daughter Betsy."
- 743 Deaths:
Andrew Parkhurst, July 26, 1834. Age, 63 years.
Amos Parkhurst, Oct. 11, 1848. Age, 36 years.

"Chelmsford Vital Statistics to 1850"

- 422 Deaths:
Amos, farmer, s. Andrew and Betsey, dysentery, Oct. 11, 1848, age 36 y.
Andrew, July 26, 1834, a. 63 y.

Chelmsford Town Clerk's Records

Deaths, 1844 - 1861:

Pg. 45 Amos Parkhurst, male, farmer, d. Oct. 11, 1848, age 36, cause - dysentery, internment in Chelmsford Center, born in Chelmsford, s. of Andrew & Betsy Parkhurst.

Lowell Daily Courier

August 27, 1903

Chelmsford

Wednesday, August 26, 1903 was the 86th birthday of Mrs. Elizabeth H. Parkhurst, widow of John Parkhurst, who lives in Billerica St. with her oldest son, J. Roland Parkhurst, the well-known florist.

Of the 7 children born to Mr. and Mrs. Parkhurst, 6 are living:
J. Roland Parkhurst, Leroy J. Parkhurst, Chelmsford; Jerome M. Parkhurst, Bridgeport, Conn.; Clinton E. Parkhurst, California; Mrs. Elizabeth Shaw, Redding Ridge, Conn., Mrs. Kate B. Atherton, Holyoke, Mass.

J. R. Parkhurst House
16 Parkhurst Rd.

Page 114:

"~~The~~ Owls Nest": on old Westford Road near McLarney Square.

Erected 1804

Remodeled 1880, Jonathan Larcom architect.

The old homestead dates back to 1656. Probably built of logs.

Occupied by Joseph Parkhurst, who married Mary Reed of Chelmsford. After Joseph, came Ebenezer who died in 1745.

Then James, born 1707. Next Philip, who occupied it during Revolution. Next occupied by his two sons, John & Andrew, who erected the present building.

The large elm in front of the house was planted by Silas Parker.

In 1855 the house was occupied by Henry E. Putnam who married Amos Parkhurst's widow. He turned one half of the house into a barn, tore out the large chimney, big fireplace, and staircase. Used the Hall and old kitchen for horses, hay and a cider mill.

In 1880 the place was deeded to Elizabeth R. Parkhurst, who restored it to its present condition and christened it "Owls Nest."

The Ell at the East end is the oldest part as it was standing at the time the main house was built. It contains the old fireplaces which were used for more than 100 years.

In 1888 this place which had been in the Parkhurst family for 230 years, was deeded to Laura J. Adams.

(See Lowell Courier Citizen - May 1, 1914)

Page 124: Old Parkhurst mansion

Newspaper clipping (& picture): Old structure gets face lifting. This rambling building, located at 18 Parkhurst Rd., Chelmsford, and consisting of the main house with connecting hallway leading to a storeroom, thence to the old stable, once again is being remodelled and whipped into good condition. For many years this once grand old mansion, owned by a long string of Parkhursts throughout generations, has been left to deteriorate until it was purchased by H. Arthur Hames, a Navy war veteran in 1946.

The old Parkhurst House on Parkhurst Road, Built 1656: Mr. & Mrs. Haines who bought the place in _____ became interested and decided to trace the former owners from the Registry of Deeds. In 1753 "the North end school house was conducted in the house of James Parkhurst, a few rods from the No. 2 School House". This was from the diary of Rev. Ebenezer Bridge, who "catechised the children at James Parkhurst's, the scholl being unfit." On August 30, 1771 the property was transferred from James to Philip Parkhurst. In 1798 it was transferred from Benjamin Parkhurst to Isaac Chamberlain. The next record is 1803 from

From notebook of Miss Frances Andrews

Benjamin and Joel Parkhurst to William Byam. In 1822 from Henry Spaulding to Joel Parkhurst. It is believed that the unaccounted period between 1822 and 1872 was owing to the sale of smaller lots from the original 250 acres to the present 8 acres.

It was used as an inn at one time. "Aunt Jenny" Bean remodeled the Inn in 1914.

Was in the Parkhurst family 230 years. The first was built of logs. Present building erected in 1804. Remodeled in 1946 by H. Arthur Hames, a navy war veteran.

Page 178: Chelmsford Eagle, Dec. 12, 1877

J.R. Parkhurst, florist - "1 mile north of Chelmsford Center."

Page 181: Chelmsford Eagle, Dec. 12, 1877

J. Roland Parkhurst, a mile from No. Chelmsford, has improved his house and greenhouse.

JOSEPH PARKHURST HOUSE

(called "The Owls Nest")

The old Homestead dates back to 1656.
Probably originally built of logs.
Occupied by Joseph Parkhurst, who married Mary Reed of Chelmsford.

After Joseph came EBENEZER who died in 1745.

Then JAMES, born 1707.

Next PHILIP who occupied it during the Revolution.

Was next occupied by his two sons, JOHN and ANDREW who erected the present building in 1804.

In 1855 the house was occupied by HENRY E. PUTNAM who married Amos Parkhurst's widow.

He turned one-half of it into a barn, tore out the large chimney, the big fireplace and staircase. Used the hall and old kitchen for his horses, hay and a cider mill.

1880 In 1880 the place was deeded to ELIZABETH R. PARKHURST who restored it to its present condition and named it the "Owl's Nest".

The ell at the east end is the oldest part as it was standing at the time the main house was built. It contains the old fireplaces which were used for more than 100 years.

In 1888 this place, which was in the Parkhurst family for 230 years, was deeded to Laura J. Adams.

When this house was remodeled in 1880 the work was done by Jonathan Larcom, a very fine carpenter. He was a brother of Lucy Larcom, the famous mill-girl poetess.

The large elm in front of the house was planted by Silas Parkhurst.

see Lowell Courier-Citizen, May 1, 1914.

Owl's Nest
16 Parkhurst Road

Lowell Courier-Citizen, May 3, 1914

Among the real estate transfers the past week in the town of Chelmsford was the old homestead known as "Owl's Nest". Philip A. Donahue, the owner, conveyed the property to Mrs. Jennie S. Bean of Lowell, the transfer being made through the office of C.W. Johnson & Son, real estate agency.

The property is situated on the Old Westford road, near McLarney's corner, and consists of a large house, barn, 40x50, with accommodations for 12 head of stock and four horses, large carriage shed, slaughter house, 34x40, and a large lot of fruit trees.

As one enters the hall in the centre of the house, which is 10x30, he is confronted by a marble slab, 12x14, at the foot of the stairs, which reads, "Owl's Nest, erected 1804, remodelled 1880, J. Larcom, Arct."

On the right of the hall are two rooms - a front room, 14x15, and a back room, 12x15, with large fireplaces, this half being originally the old house, while on the left of the hall is another front room, 14x15, small hall connecting this with a dining room, 12x15, and an L with a kitchen, 16x17, and a buttry.

Upon going upstairs, one sees at the front of the hall, directly under the tower, a small alcove, 10x10, while on each side of the hall are two front bedrooms, 14x15, and two back bedrooms, 12x15; and going up still another flight of stairs, one sees a large unfinished attic.

Upon going into the cellar, one sees the old large stone in the foundation, the hand-hewn timbers, and the old-fashioned boiler, which as was used in the olden times; also a large brick-in vegetable cellar, and in the part under the latter part of the house is the up-to-date boiler of today, the house being piped for steam heat.

The old homestead was owned and occupied by the Parkhurst family for many generations. It dates back to 1656, when Joseph Parkhurst, who had come from England, married Mary Reed of Chelmsford. The first house, which was probably of logs, was erected on this spot. After Joseph came his son, Ebenezer, who died in 1745.

Ebenezer was succeeded by his youngest son, James, who was born in 1707, and so it went on, each son inheriting the hearthstone of his father.

An ancient deed signed by James Parkhurst, dated "July 9, 1771, in the eleventh year of His Majesty's reign," hands down the old homestead to his son, Philip, and it was Philip who occupied it during the Revolutionary War.

It is recorded that, while the two brothers of Philip, Ephriam and Benjamin, responded to the call of the Minutemen, Philip hired a substitute. In the Revolutionary archives there is a paper signed by one Silas Parker in which he acknowledges receiving from Philip Parkis the sum of three pounds, 12 shillings lawful money for doing a turn for him in the Continental army. It was this Silas Parker who planted the large elm which stands in front of the house today and is probably 140 years old.

Philip was succeeded by his two sons, John and Andrew, and they erected the present structure, which is 112 years old. Its huge chestnut timbers were probably hewn near the spot. They are immense and seem to partake of that strength which we are accustomed to connect with the memory of our forefathers. Their earthly habitations, like their principles, were of a kind made to last.

About 1855 the estate was occupied by Henry E. Putnam, who had married the widow of Amos Parkhurst, and he, possessed of some strange freak, conceived the idea of turning one-half of the house into a barn.

The large chimney and big fireplaces were torn away and on removing the staircase, it was found that the large hall would easily accommodate a load of

hay. While a load of hay stood in the hall, two horses were stamping in their stalls where the chimney once stood and cows were quietly taking their supper in what was once the family kitchen, while there was ample room in the rear of the hall for a horse power cider mill. Little sentiment seemed to be left with the owner, judging from the desecration of the household goods.

In 1880, the place was deeded to Elizabeth R. Parkhurst, the wife of John Parkhurst, and the work of restoration began. The big barn doors were removed and an ornamental tower built on to the front. A new kitchen was added, and a new barn erected and the whole structure placed in its present condition and christened "Owl's Nest." The ell at the east end is the oldest part of the structure as it was standing when the main house was built. This part contains the old family fireplaces which were used for more than 100 years. It is an ideal spot to plant a home, the old house having been fully restored.

It was much harder than it would have been to build a new one, but nothing else would answer. The great chambers, the grandmother's favorite sitting room and the big closet where her china was kept; the great hall, the pride of the house, opening to the north on fields of clover and on the south the wide lawn sloping to the street and shaded by Magnificent elms, were restored.

In 1888 the place, which had been in the Parkhurst name for 230 years, was deeded to Laura J. Adams. Since then it has been occupied by different owners. The enterprising real estate agents have been kept busy and a new owner has now taken possession.

There is a tradition that during King Philip's War a woman while drawing water from the well was killed by an arrow shot by a Pawtucket Indian, but there is no record of any other tragedy. The house being situated just off the main traveled road was not visited by war parties and the family was not disturbed.

JOSEPH R. PARKHURST HOUSE
(OWL'S NEST)

1831 map: yes

1875 Beers Atlas: H.E. Putnam

1955 Chelmsford Newsweekly:

The original ancestor in Chelmsford was Joseph Parkhurst who probably settled in town about 1656. He or his son Joseph, Jr. shortly thereafter moved to Stoney Brook section in Westford, but another son, Ebenezer, lived on at the homestead, followed by his youngest son, James. Philip, his son, occupied the place during the Revolution and his two sons, John and Andrew, succeeded him and built the present structure which has since been extensively remodelled. In 1880, the property was deeded to Mrs. John Parkhurst, mother of Roland, LeRoy, and seven other children. At this time it was christened Owl's Nest and although it was sold out of the family in 1888, J. Roland Parkhurst continued to live here until his death.

Peter Blechman (16 Parkhurst Rd.) 11/4/73:

There used to be two large elms in front of the house (one was right by the corner); they died around 1955 and had to be cut down. Until then, many owls nested in the trees and flew all around the house.

"Aunt Jenny" Bean was living in Lowell when she died a few years ago.

J.R. Parkhurst's greenhouses were across the street from the house.

The house had a large Victorian style tower on it at one time, but this tower was taken off again about 20 years later. This tower was at the center front of the house at the front door. Evidences of where it was removed can be seen in the attic and 2nd floor (odd little alcove, etc.)

House is in danger of being sold and torn down. The type of people who are interested in buying the property have no interest in the house.

Chelmsford Newsweekly Dec 21, 1978



CUNNINGHAM home at 16 Parkhurst Road (Photo by Regina Linsley)







16 Parkhurst Road

8/22/2004 F. Merriam

