

FORM B – BUILDING

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

14-36A

Marion

N

MRN.207

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

Town/City: MARION

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Marion Village -
Barden-Hiller (MRN.Y)

Photograph



Address: 168 Front Street

Historic Name: Seth and Rhoda Mendell House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: ca. 1858

Source: Vital records, 1860 US Census

Style/Form: Greek Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown/ Seth Mendell (possibly)

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:
Dormers added to side ell (date unknown)

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.23 acres

Setting: This small parcel is located on the west side of Front Street in a less developed residential stretch between the heart of Marion Village to the south and the Tabor Academy campus to the north. This house is set back slightly from the street. The front yard is landscaped with lawn, brick walkways leading to the two front doors, and foundation plantings. A gravel driveway leads along the north side of the house.

Locus Map



Aerial Imagery, 2021

Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

Organization: Sippican Historical Society

Date (*month / year*): February 2023

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

168 FRONT 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.

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.

This is a good example of a Greek Revival-style house. The Greek Revival style, popular from ca. 1825 to 1860, was inspired by then new Greek archeological discoveries, and employed temple forms and details for domestic American architecture. The main block has the gable-front form common to many 19th-century houses in Marion Village. In this case, the house form consists of a 1½-story, gable-front main block that is three bays wide, a stepped-down lateral ell, and a rear ell. A comparison of the 1921 and 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps shows how rear ells evolved (Figures 5, 6).

Features that are characteristic of the Greek Revival style include the projecting molded box roof cornice with its partial returns across the gable ends and broad two-part frieze boards below (evoking the temple form), the heavy corner pilasters (flat columns), and the door surround with pilasters and a two-part lintel above.

The house rests, like most 19th century houses in the village, on a rough-cut granite foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles (likely wood shingles originally). The main block almost certainly had a chimney that has since been removed, but a low brick chimney rises from the side ell.

Fenestration includes a combination of wood and modern, replacement 6/6 double-hung sash set in frames with molded lintels. The 6/6 muntin pattern was commonly used with Greek Revival-style houses. The side ell has two gable wall dormers (dormers that share the façade plain with the wall below). These dormers were likely a later addition. The open porch in front of this ell is also likely a later addition. The porch posts, with decorative brackets and saw-cut balustrade, are more consistent with later Victorian-era designs.

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.

While there had been some economic activity and residential development in Sippican Village prior to the Revolution, residential development accelerated in the early-1800s, as happened in many coastal Massachusetts towns, with boat building, whaling, coastal schooner trade, and the salt industry driving the economy. The construction of the First Congregational Meeting House in 1799, now Marion General Store (140 Front Street, MRN.22), also helped make Sippican Village the center for spiritual and civic life.¹ Residential (and limited commercial) development was initially concentrated along the Front Street/Main Street axis, and the harbor became the site for maritime-related utilitarian buildings and wharfs. By the time the 1855 Walling Map was prepared, additional streets had been laid out, but Main Street from the harbor west to Pleasant Street was the most densely developed street in the village (Figure 2).

Title research for this property goes back to Seth G. Mendell, although the deed wherein he bought this land has not yet been located. This house is not shown on the 1855 Walling Map of Marion, but as of the 1860 US Census, Mendell is listed living here with his wife Rhoda (Briggs) (1820-1891), whom he married in Marion in 1857. He is also shown living here on the 1879 Plymouth County Atlas (Figure 3). Seth Mendell (1832-1908) was listed as a carpenter in census records, so it is possible that he built this house himself shortly after their marriage.

¹ Marion was first settled in 1679 as Sippican, a district of Rochester, and was not incorporated as a separate town until 1852. The name Sippican Village continues to be used interchangeably with Marion Village.

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168 FRONT STREET

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In 1896, Seth Mendell sold this property to Isaac Hiller, then of Mattapoissett.² He is shown living here on the 1903 Plymouth County Atlas (Figure 4). Isaac Hiller (1825-1924) was listed as a farmer in Census records. This house passed to his two sons with his wife, Wealthy Hiller (1828-1906) – Isaac E. Hiller and Robert B. Hiller. Isaac E. Hiller (1866-1948) and Robert B. Hiller (1863-1937) founded the Hiller Brothers' livery, lumber, and coal business at 147 Front Street (MRN.394), later segueing to automobile-related businesses. This house stayed in the Hiller family until 1926, when it was conveyed to Constance Lowell of Boston.³

Constance Savage Keith (1863-1954) married Percival Lowell (1855-1916) in 1908. Percival Lowell was a renowned astronomer who founded the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, AZ in 1894. It is still in operation today. Lowell was best known for his claim that Mars was inhabited. He died suddenly at the observatory, and is buried there. Constance Lowell continued to be listed living in Boston in census records after she bought this house, so this house most likely served as her summer home. She is buried in Marion. It should be noted that the 1933 Sanborn map (Figure 5) shows multiple outbuildings on the property at that time, including an office. The property currently has no outbuildings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps and Atlases:

1855, Walling, H. F. *Map of the Town of Marion, Plymouth County, Massachusetts*, 1855.

1879, *Atlas of Plymouth County, Massachusetts*. Boston: Geo. H Walker & Co, 1879.

1903, *Atlas of Surveys of Plymouth County*. Springfield, MA: L. J. Richards Co., 1903.

1933, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Marion, Plymouth County, Massachusetts*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1933.

Ancestry.com – Vital records.

Gordon, Edward. MHC Area Form N, Wharf Village, 1998.

Plymouth County Registry of Deeds

Sippican Historical Society Collections.

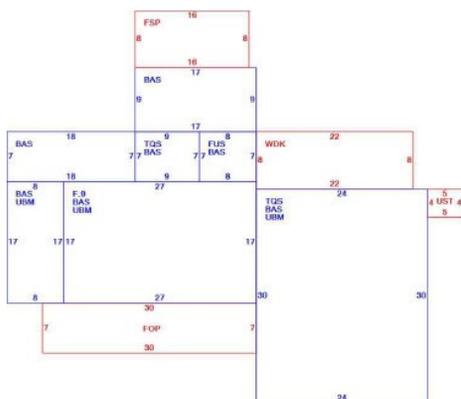


Figure 1. Marion Assessor Sketch (decks, porches in red).



Photo 2. View from Front Street, looking northwest.

² Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, Book 717/ Page 556

³ PCRD, Book 1536/ Page 466.

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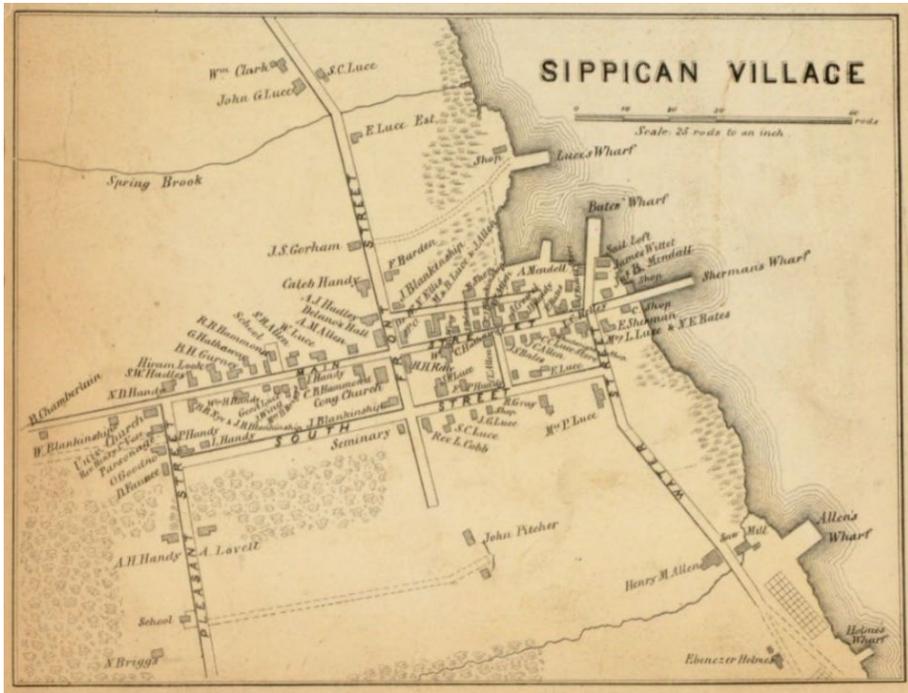


Figure 2. 1855 Walling Map of Marion, Sippican Village Inset Map.



Figure 3. Detail of 1879 Plymouth County Atlas (arrow added).

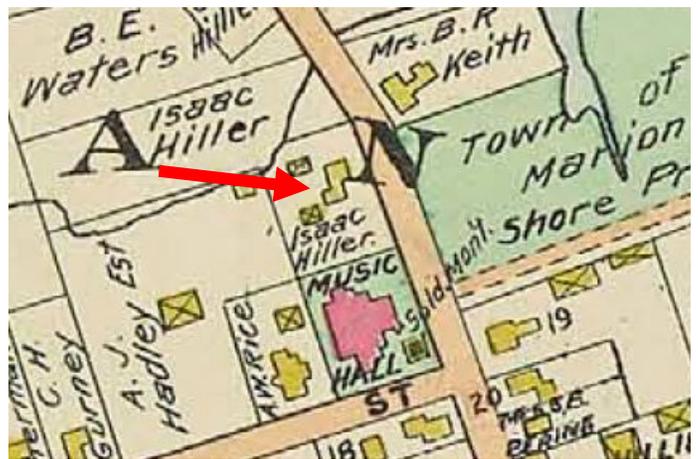


Figure 4. Detail of 1903 Plymouth County Atlas (arrow added).

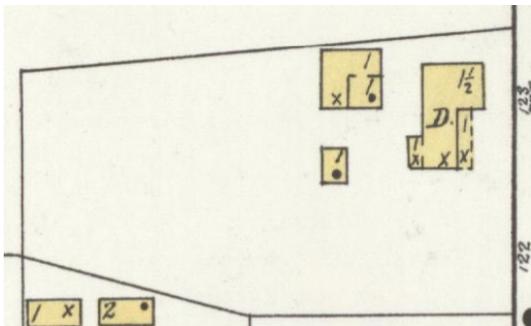


Figure 5. Detail, 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

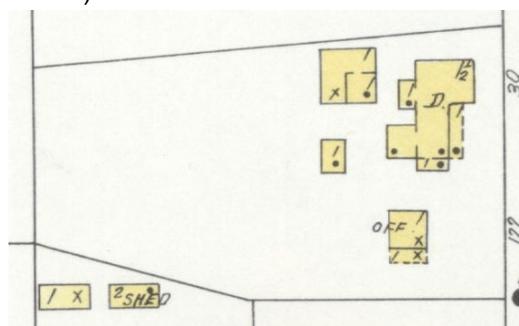


Figure 6. Detail, 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

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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 Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant for Sippican Historical Society
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

This property is a contributing resource in the combined Areas of Wharf Village-Sippican Village (MRN.N) and Water Street (MRN.L), hereinafter referred to as Marion Village.*

Marion Village is recommended as eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Maritime History. Marion Village contains the great majority of buildings connected to Marion's historical maritime development beginning in the late-18th century. With the rise of saltmaking, shipyards, and whaling, maritime activity increased dramatically into the mid-19th century, as did residential development in Marion Village. In addition to the houses built by those in the maritime industry, Marion Village contains numerous buildings and structures associated with maritime industrial activity, including a chandlery, sail loft, cooperage, and wharves. As Marion Village's prosperity became linked to Sippican Harbor, Marion Village also became the commercial, political and institutional center of the town.

Marion Village is also recommended as eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/ Recreation. Starting in the mid-19th century, maritime activity declined significantly. The decline in maritime activity was eventually replaced by the rise in the 1870s of a summer colony as Marion Village emerged as an elite summer resort. This was facilitated by the arrival of train service in the 1854. Summer visitors, including artists and writers, were drawn Sippican Harbor's beauty and tranquility. A large hotel, the Sippican Hotel, was located at the corner of South and Water Streets, and a few houses were converted to inns. While the hotel was town down in 1929, a large livery complex built by the Hiller Brothers at 147 Front Street (MRN.216) is extant. They provided horse-drawn vehicles to summer visitors registered at the Sippican Hotel, and ferried guests back and forth between the hotel and the train depot. In Marion Village, ownership (or occupancy through rental) of many houses began to shift from local maritime families to seasonal residents, including nationally-noteworthy politicians, businessmen, artists and writers. During this period, Marion Village also saw the addition of high style, architect-designed summer cottages and recreation resources.

Marion Village is recommended as eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Marion Village is a remarkably intact historic town center, including a compact collection of historic dwellings, along with a few churches, schools, commercial buildings and recreation buildings. Marion Village contains a great concentration of Federal and Greek Revival houses; and examples of later Victorian-era styles, including high-style examples of summer house architecture along Sippican Harbor and large institutional buildings not found elsewhere in Marion.

The great majority of resources in Marion Village retain substantial integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, design, feeling, and association.

*The potential Marion Village district boundaries include surveyed areas within the boundary of MRN.N completed in 2020-2022 for Barden-Hiller (MRN.Y), Cottage Street (MRN.Z), Main Street (MRN.AA), South Street (MRN.AB), Upper Pleasant Street (MRN.AC), and Upper Main Street (MRN.AH).