# FORM B – BUILDING

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

| Assessor's Number | USGS Quad | Area(s) | Form Number |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14-74 | Marion | N | MRN.210 |

**Town/City:** MARION

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

**Address:** 183 Front Street

**Historic Name:** Luce House (either Rowland and Elizabeth Luce, or Rowland Jr. and Polly)

**Uses:** Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

**Date of Construction:** Late-1790s, poss. ca. 1819

**Source:** MRN.N, house marker

**Style/Form:** Federal

**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

**Exterior Material:**
Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**
Garage (2nd story addition, 2012)

**Major Alterations** *(with dates)*:*
Addition – kitchen, master suite (2009)

*Based on Property Card and/or observation
**Condition:** Good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 1.41 acres

**Setting:** This large, level parcel is located on the east side of Front Street in a less developed stretch of Front Street between the heart of Marion Village to the south and the Tabor Academy campus to the north. The property is set along Marion Harbor. This house is set close to the street. The property is formally landscaped with expanses of lawn, planting beds, foundation plantings, and a hedge, fence and stone wall along the street. An asphalt driveway and parking area is located between the house and garage.

## Photograph

## Locus Map

Aerial Imagery, 2021

**Recorded by:** Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

**Organization:** Sippican Historical Society

**Date** (*month / year*): February 2023

☒ 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 one of two Full Capes facing each other at the north end of Marion Village (then known as Sippican Lower Village). It has the 1½-story, side-gable form, five bays wide with a centered entrance, typical of the Full Cape form. The exact date this house was built is not known. However, the house form is consistent with a date of ca. 1800, and possibly earlier. This house is an example of the Federal style – a style popular from ca. 1780-1820 that represented the first architecture of the new republic. Like the Colonial-era Georgian style, it used classical forms but in a refined and simplified manner.

The house rests, like most late-18th and 19th century houses in the village, on a rough-cut granite foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles (wood shingles originally), and a substantial brick chimney rises from the center of the roof ridge. This chimney is corbelled (bands of bricks) which likely means the chimney has been rebuilt.

The house has received a series of additions. As can be seen on the 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Figure 5), the south side ell was in place by then. It is worth noting that the house is described as two stories on the 1933 map, while the Cape across the street is described as 1½-stories. This may be an indication that the hexagonal dormer windows with connecting shed dormer had been added by that time resulting in a full second story. This is an unusual dormer design, but is commonly found in Marion Village. The 1933 Sanborn map also shows a wrap-around porch on the north side and rear elevations that are no longer present. Today, there is an open deck across the harbor-facing rear elevation. The right side ell may have been rebuilt and/or expanded, and now has an open porch across the front elevation.

Fenestration includes modern, replacement 6/6 double-hung windows set in slightly-projecting frames with flared lintels that abut the roof cornice. Projecting frames are a sign of early plank construction. The entrance is characteristic of a Federal-period house with a six-panel wood panel door set in a surround with full sidelights flanked on either side by narrow pilasters (flat columns), and a lintel above that is cut into the roof cornice frieze boards (the low wall plate is another indication of early construction). The dormers have modern, replacement 8/8 double-hung sash, square four-light sash, and horizontal band windows in the shed portion. An undated photo included in R*eflections on a Town* shows the fenestration at that time consisting of 2/2 windows in the first story, 6/6 windows in the dormers, and diamond-paned windows in the shed portion of the dormer (Photo 3). The original window muntin patterns on the first story would undoubtedly have been either 6/6 or smaller panes.

## 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. There was also some development along Front Street, including this house (Figure 2).

[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.

According to the 1998 Marion Village Area Form (MRN.N), this house was built in the 1790s, and an historic marker on the house states that it was built in ca. 1797. Research to date has not confirmed whether those dates are accurate. Deed research tracks back to Capt. Rowland Luce, Jr. (1791-1851). He married Polly Hiller (d. 1860) in 1819. Perhaps he built this house around the time of his marriage. But if the ca. 1797 house marker date is accurate, he could not have built it.

He was the son of Tisbury-born Rowland Luce. Maj. Rowland Luce (1756-1835) married Elizabeth Clark (1762-1833) in Marion in 1778, and they went on to have ten children. In 1779, Elizabeth's mother, Thankful Clark (1734-1812), sold Rowland Luce over 35 acres of land for 2,000 pounds, including 5 acres in Marion Village that may have included this land.[2] Rowland and Elizabeth Luce and their descendants would go on to have a great impact on the development of the village, including this house. This house could have been built by Rowland, Sr. in ca. 1797. However, he had built 9 Main Street (MRN.224) in ca. 1779, was forced to sell it in 1811 to settle a legal dispute, and built 25 Main Street (MRN.235) in ca. 1815. Perhaps he built this house in the interim.

Rowland Luce, Jr. sold this house to his younger brother, Stephen C. Luce, in 1839.[3] Capt. Stephen Luce (1796-1874) had married Eunice Delano (1803-1866) in Marion that same year. The house is shown on the 1855 Walling Map of Marion with the name "S. C. Luce" (Figure 2). Stephen and Eunice Luce did not have any children.

This house is next shown on the 1879 Plymouth County Atlas with the name "B. Young" (Figure 3). This refers to Betsy Young (1812-1890). By that time, she was the widow of Capt. Alvin Young (1802-1857). It is unclear how this house passed from the Luces to Betsy Young. In 1897, the estate of Betsy Young sold this property, now consisting of 5 acres, to Mary L. and Charles E. Hellier of Boston.[4] The house is shown on the 1903 Plymouth County Atlas with the name "C. E. Hellier" (Figure 4). The Helliers also bought the house across the street, 182 Front Street (MRN.209) in 1902.

Charles Edward Hellier (1865-1940) was born in Maine, and married Mary Harmon (1864-1937) in 1886. He attended Yale as an undergraduate, and received his law degree from Boston University, after which he had a career as a lawyer based in Boston. According to Marion Village Area Form, the Helliers rented this house to John Hay and John Nicolay, former secretaries to President Abraham Lincoln, in the summer of 1887 where they wrote their biography of Lincoln for *Century Magazine*. However, the Helliers did not own this house until 1897. Perhaps Hay and Nicolay rented the house from the prior owner, Betsy Young. The other possibility is that Hay and Nicolay did rent this house to work on a different book they published in 1905 entitled, *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln: Comprising his Speeches, Letters, State Papers and Miscellaneous Papers (Excerpts)*. The Helliers lost the property through a mortgage foreclosure in 1934. The Helliers continued to own 182 Front Street until the1970s.

From 1958 to 2006, the house was owned by Tabor Academy and referred to as Pond House. It served as a residence for professors.

## 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.

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Sippican Historical Society Collections.
Tripp, Edmund H. *Reflections on a Town*. Marion: The Sippican Historical Society, 1991.

[2] Plymouth
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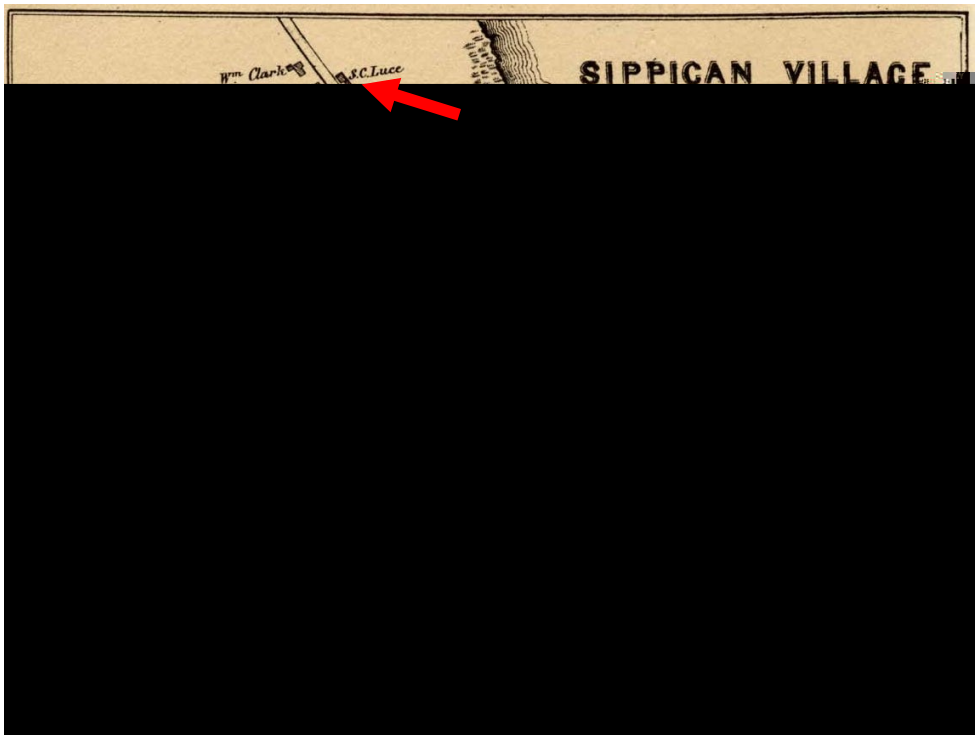


Figure 2. 1855 Walling Map of Marion, Sippican Village Inset Map (arrow added)

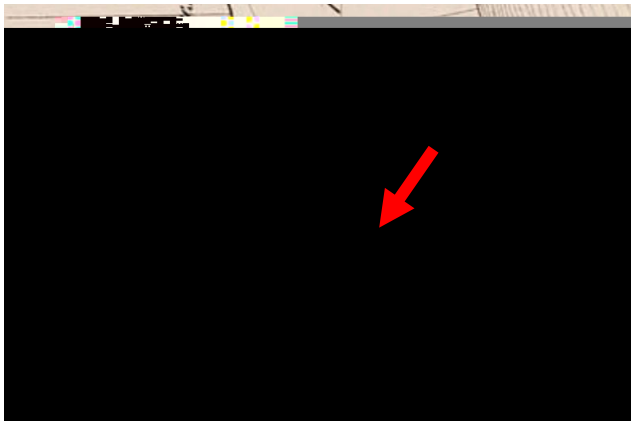

Figure 3. Detail of 1879 Plymouth County Atlas (arrow added).

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

Figure 5. Detail of 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.