

FORM B – BUILDING

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

14 90

Marion

N,
AA

MRN.217

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

Town/City: MARION

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Marion Village -
Main Street (MRN.AA)

Photograph



Address: 0 Main Street

Historic Name: George and Betty Blankinship House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: ca. 1800, poss. ca. 1776

Source: Deed research

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Unknown (likely granite)

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Sherman's (Long) Wharf, ca. 1805

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:

Renovation, Garage addition (1996)

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.60 acres

Setting: This property is dramatically sited at the east end of Main Street on Sippican Harbor. The surrounding area includes historic houses sited close to the street and each other along Main Street, and the Beverly Yacht Club and larger parcels with houses set farther back along Water Street. This property has minimal street frontage, and the visibility is screened by mature plantings. A gravel driveway leads to an attached garage on the south side of the house. This parcel includes the large former town wharf, now covered in grass.

Locus Map



Aerial Imagery, 2021

Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

Organization: Sippican Historical Society

Date (*month / year*): February 2023

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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 Federal-style house was built in ca. 1800, and possibly earlier. The Federal style, popular from ca. 1780-1820, 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 form of this house consists of a two-story main block with side-gable roof, and an offset two-story rear ell that was present as of the 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Figure 2). A porch that wrapped around the right side of the house has been replaced by a modern two-bay garage. A comparison of an undated early view of the house to current photos shows how the window arrangements have been slightly altered over time. The windows were symmetrically arrayed across the front elevation in a way that they are not now (Photo 2). What has remained consistent is the offset front entrance with a modest pedimented surround with pilasters (flat columns).

The elevations are clad in wood shingles, with courses of tightly layered shingles that is modern detail. The roof is clad in wood shingles. A brick chimney rises from the center of the main roof ridge, and a second chimney rises from the front slope of the stepped-down left ell. Windows consist primarily of modern replacement 6/6 windows.

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 (Figures 3, 4).

This house was referred to in an 1839 deed as the homestead of George Blankinship. In 1776, "John Clark third...Shipwright" sold a parcel of land on which this house was built to George Blankinship, Boatman.² The sale price was two pounds, thirteen shillings and four pence. The house has an Assessor date of 1815, and the Main Street Area Form (MRN.AA) dates it to ca. 1790-1830. However, it is possible that the house, or some component of it, was built closer to Blankinship's acquisition of the land in 1776.

George Blankinship (1751-1837) was born in Marion and married Betty Turner (1757-1833) in 1773. As noted above, he was listed as a boatman in 1776 when he bought this land, but rose to be a sea captain. It was he who sold Bird Island in 1819 for \$200 to the federal government for a lighthouse.

The house passed from heirs of George Blankinship to Mary W. Mendell. Mary (1816-1905) was the daughter of John and Lydia Blankinship (relationship to George unclear). She had married James B. Mendell (ca. 1817-1884) in 1846. Mendell was listed as

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.

² Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, Book 59/ Page 20.

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a mariner or master mariner in Census records. The house is shown with the name "Jas. B Mendell" on the 1855 Walling Map of Marion (Figure 4).

Three Centuries of Marion Houses provides the following story about the house when the Mendells owned it:

Mr. and Mrs. James Mendell, known as Uncle Jim and Aunt Mary, owned this house..., when it was a very important place to any family who had men going to sea, and there were many of them. In 1867 there were sixty-seven master-mariners (captains) and twenty-three mariners (sailors). The Sippican lookout was in the attic of this house with a telescope where one could watch for a vessel in Buzzard's Bay as she sailed past Bird Island Light and headed for Long Wharf next door.... Friends and families would gather at the wharf and pray that the flag was not at half-mast, and that their men were coming home safe and sound from a short voyage or a long one lasting a few years. When the house was built, ropes were run through the house and fastened to houses nearer the center of the village so that high tides would not wash it away.³

In 1887, Mary Mendell sold this house to James DeKay of NY, NY.⁴ That deed stated that the ca. 1805 long wharf, which would eventually be incorporated into this parcel, was then owned by George Delano, and the sale included the right to "lay abreast at the north side of said Delano's wharf." The wharf, known alternately as Long Wharf, Sherman's Wharf and Central Wharf, was frequented by whalers, and was the home of Marion's last whaler, the *Admiral Blake*, whose final voyage in the 1880s marked the end of whaling in Sippican Harbor, which had begun in the mid-18th century.

James DeKay (1834-1925) was born in Oyster Bay, NY. He married Laura Tompkins in 1866. Laura (1836-1908) was the granddaughter of Daniel Tompkins, governor of New York from 1807-1817 and Vice-President under James Monroe from 1817-1825. According to Pete Smith's *A Picture Postcard History of Marion*, it was James and Laura DeKay who started the fund to build a clubhouse for Marion's summer colony of artists and literary elite. Erected in 1884, Club Hall, later named Nelson Block, was demolished in 1947. As stated on the Marion Art Center's website, during Marion's "Gilded Age" many famous writers and artists were drawn to Marion's shore including Richard Watson Gilder and Helena DeKay Gilder (cousin of James DeKay), Henry James, Charles Dana Gibson, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Stanford White, Richard Harding Davis and Cecil Clark Davis, and Ethel, John, and Lionel Barrymore.

The DeKays became a part of Marion summer society. In their son James E. DeKay's obituary in *The Ithaca Journal*, it was noted that among his survivors was niece Mrs. Amory Houghton, wife of Board Chairman of Corning Glass Works and U.S. Ambassador to France. The Houghtons maintained a summer home on Water Street. James DeKay sold this house to his sister, Elizabeth DeKay Richardson, wife of James Richardson of Providence, whom she had married in 1899. The *Boston Globe* ran a florid account of the wedding in its October 27 edition: "Since Miss de Kay is one of the belles of Marion's summer settlement and of a leading New York family, it was a significant occasion to Marion summerites."

In 1920, she sold this house to Dr. William McDonald, Jr.⁵ McDonald then purchased the Central Wharf property in 1922.⁶ Dr. William McDonald, Jr. (1873-1936) was a Providence-based physician who would go on to summer in Marion. He was a polio specialist, and was most noted for having treated Franklin Delano Roosevelt in Marion in the mid-1920s, employing water treatments that included swimming in Sippican Harbor (Photos 3, 4). He had married Elizabeth Huskamp (1872-1934) in 1909. William McDonald died in Marion in 1936.

The estate of William McDonald sold this property to Mary Lena Perry of Marion.⁷ She had married and was living in Wareham in 1947 when she and her husband, J. Joseph Stott sold this property to William Davis Taylor.⁸ William Davis Taylor (1908-2002) was the publisher of *The Boston Globe*, the third of five members of the Taylor family who led the paper from 1873 to 1999. In 1957, Taylor sold this property to W. Van Alan Clark, Jr. of Ram Island, Marion.⁹ According to his *New York Times* obituary, William Van Alan Clark, Jr. (d. 1983) was an industrialist, yachtsman, and heir to the Avon cosmetics fortune. He co-founded The Sippican Company with Thayer (Tim) Francis, who lived at 26 Cottage Street (MRN.285). Clark was on the faculty of the Sloan

³ Olive Hiller Somers, *Three Centuries of Marion Houses* (Marion: Sippican Historical Society, 1972), 66.

⁴ PCRD, Book 550/ Page 166.

⁵ PCRD, Book 1379/ Page 41.

⁶ PCRD, Book 1424/ Page 90.

⁷ PCRD, Cert. of Title 1287.

⁸ PCRD, Cert. of Title 5799.

⁹ PCRD, Cert. of Title 25127.

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School of Industrial Management at MIT for 12 years and served as assistant dean, and he was a trustee of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, established with Avon stock, and one of the wealthiest in the US. In 1961, the Clarks sold this property to Donald and Shirley May of Huntington, NY.¹⁰ They sold it in 1964 to Rich and Jean Angle.¹¹ Richard W. (Rick) Angle (d. 1998) lived in Marion for fifty years where he served the town in many capacities, including as chairman of the Board of Selectmen. He was also a former commodore of the Beverly Yacht Club, certified yacht racing judge, and a member of the New York Yacht Club. They sold this property in 1976, and subsequent owners have been largely trusts.

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Photo 2. Undated view, looking east (Source: SHS 2006.010.005).

¹⁰ PCRD, Cert. of Title 25128.

¹¹ PCRD, Cert. of Title 34962.

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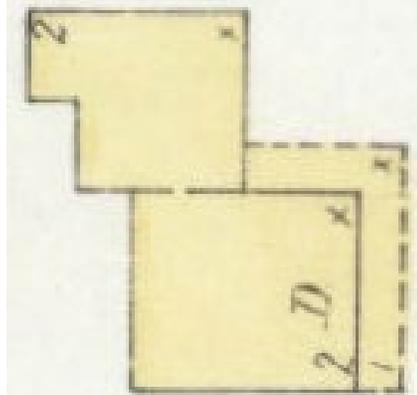
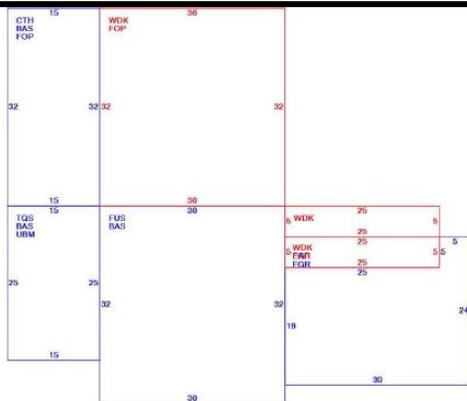


Figure 1. Marion Assessor Sketch.

Figure 2. Detail of 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

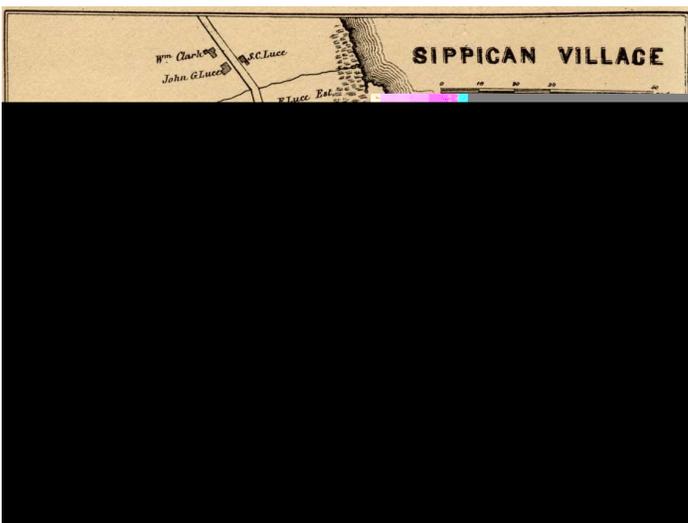


Figure 3. 1855 Walling Map, Inset Map of Sippican Village.



Figure 4. Detail of 1855 Inset Map (arrow added).



Photo 3. Undated view, FDR (center), Dr. William McDonald (right), (Source: SHS 2008.007.081).



Photo 4. Undated view, FDR (left), Dr. William McDonald (right) (Source: SHS 2006.010.005).

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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).