

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

16 165	Marion	N, AA	MRN.220
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Town/City: MARION

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

Address: 2 Main Street

Historic Name: Capt., Elisha E. Luce - Capt.
Noble E. Bates House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: ca. 1813

Source: Vital records, *Three Centuries of Marion Homes*

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage/outbuilding, built in 2007 (prior guesthouse demolished in 2006 (Photo 4))

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:

Addition (2008)

New windows (2013)

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.40 acres

Setting: This is one of the larger parcels on Main Street. It is sited at the east end of Main Street, fronts on Water Street, and extends south the South Street. The surrounding area includes historic houses sited close to the street and each other along Main and South Streets, and the Beverly Yacht Club and larger parcels with houses set farther back along Water Street to the east and south. This house is set relatively close to, and fronts on, Main Street. The front yard is formally landscaped with an ornate wood fence and mature foundation plantings. A less formal wood picket fence spans Water and South Streets. There are two large, fieldstone piers marking an entrance along Water Street that may be early landscape features. A gravel drive leads off South Street to a detached garage.

Photograph



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

2 MAIN STREET

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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 one of four examples on this block of Main Street of a Federal-style, 2½-story, side-gable house with a symmetrical five-bay front elevation. A less elaborate example is found across the street (3 Main Street, MRN.221). This house likely originally consisted just of the main block, but by the early-20th century, the 1½-story ells on both sides and the open porch across the rear elevation were in place (Figure 2).

The house, like most 19th century houses in Marion Village, rests on a raised, rough-cut granite foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in wood shingles, and has a molded box cornice with partial returns across the gable ends. Typical of Federal period houses, a large brick chimney rises from the center of the main block. Two single-window gable dormers are located on the front and rear roof slopes.

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 most character-defining feature of the Federal style for this house is the front entrance with its elegant surround. The surround consists of fluted pilasters (flat columns), a five-paned transom light above the door, and a prominent closed pediment lintel with dentil (teeth-like) molding. Fenestration consists primarily of a mix of wood and modern replacement 12/12 windows set in projecting frames with molded lintels. The projecting frames are a sign of early plank construction.

A comparison of an undated view of the south (rear) elevation to a current photo shows that the elevation has been altered with a large addition (see Photos 3 and 4).

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 3).

According to Olive Hiller Somers' *Three Centuries of Marion Houses*, this house was built in 1813. A marker on the house announces it as the "House of the Two Captains, Elisha Luce, Noble E. Bates." This refers to Captains Elisha E. Luce (1786-1850) and Noble E Bates (1791-1864). They operated part of the house as a crockery and supplies store. Captain Luce moved into the house shortly after his first marriage to Jane Hiller in 1813. Jane died in 1820, and Luce remarried in 1823 to Lucretia Clark (1801-1861). Elisha Luce was best known for captaining the *Persia*, which made numerous profitable trade missions to the Far East. Elisha Luce also operated a store across the street at 3 Main Street (MRN.221).

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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Noble Bates married Sarah Allen in 1816. It is unknown if Noble Bates lived here before he married in 1816. Title research has yet to confirm if/when Luce and/or Bates bought this property. There is an 1810 deed from Rowland Luce to Elisha Luce for what appears to have been a large amount of land in the village, but it is unclear if it included this land.²

Many of the Luces who built or owned houses in the 19th century in Marion can trace their lineage back to Tisbury-born Major 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.³ Rowland and Elizabeth Luce and their descendants would go on to have a great impact on the development of the village.

This house is also known, according to Somers, as the birthplace of the Universalist Church in Marion. In the 1820s, Universalists met in Captain Bates' half of the house, where they organized a society and planned for the construction in 1833 of the church at 80 Pleasant Street (MRN.29). Captain Bates reportedly hosted Marion's first Universalist gatherings at the risk of losing his friendship with Captain Elisha Luce who was a staunch member of the Congregational Church and a vocal critic of the more liberal "new religion".

This house is shown on the 1855 Walling Map of Marion with the names "Mr.s L. Luce and N. E. Bates" (Figure 4). "L. Luce" likely refers to widow Lucretia Luce. This house then passed to one of Elisha and Lucretia Luce's six children, George L. Luce (1825-1893). The 1870 Census listed him living in Marion and working as a mariner. By 1880, he was living with his wife, Sophia, in Cleveland OH, and he was a retired ship master.

Luce had sold this house in 1874 to Francis W. Austin of Boston.⁴ Francis Walker Austin (1827-1887) was a metal dealer and in hardware sales according to census records. This house stayed in the Austin family until 1920, when his heirs sold it to Alexander and Amy Brown(e) of Newton.⁵ Scottish-born Alexander Brown (1866-1957) was listed as a manager for an insurance company in census records until 1940, when he and his Canadian-born wife, Amy (1865-1955) had retired to Marion. They are both buried at Evergreen Cemetery in Marion. In 1958, the estate of Alexander Brown sold this house to John U. and Lillian G. Bete of Marion.⁶ They owned this house until Lillian Bete's death in 2002. Her obituary included the following information:

Lillian G. (Gemme) Bete, 85, of Marion, died Sunday, April 14, 2002 at home after a long illness. She was the wife of the late John U. Bete, an inventor and engineer who died in 1978 and the daughter of Marion's oldest resident, at 107 years of age, Kathryn R. (Moreau) Gemme and the late Ovella Gemme. Mrs. Bete was co-owner of Marion Boat Works, vice president of Bete Manufacturing Company and for many years served on the Board of Directors of Bete Fog Nozzle in Greenfield.⁷

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.

1908, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Marion, Plymouth County, Massachusetts*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1908.

Ancestry.com – Vital records.

Dempsey, Claire. MHC Area Form AA, Main Street, 2021.

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

Plymouth County Registry of Deeds

Sippican Historical Society Collections.

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

² Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, Book 114/ Page 63.

³ PCRD, Book 60/ Page 80.

⁴ PCRD, Book 408/ Page 260.

⁵ PCRD, Book 1364/ Page 536.

⁶ PCRD, Book 2649/ Page 491.

⁷ <https://www.chapmanfuneral.com/obituaries/Lillian-Lil-Bete?obId=20699570>.

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



Figure 4. Detail of 1855 Walling Inset Map (arrows added).



Figure 5. Detail of 1879 Plymouth County Atlas (arrow added).

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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).