

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

16-94	Marion	N, AA	MRN.39
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Town/City: MARION

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

Photograph



Address: 28 Main Street

Historic Name: Marion Congregational Church

Uses: Present: Church

Original: Church

Date of Construction: 1841

Source: H. Edmund Tripp, *Reflections of a Town*

Style/Form: Greek Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard, flushboard/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:

None

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.25 acres

Setting: This parcel is located in the heart of the mixed-use center of Marion Village. The surrounding area includes additional historic religious, commercial and residential buildings are located along Front Street, and historic houses along Main Street set close to the street on small lots. The church on this parcel fronts on and is set back from Main Street. An iron fence with granite posts borders the property.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

Organization: Sippican Historical Society

Date (*month / year*): March 2023

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MARION

28 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.

(Edited and expanded from 1998 version of Form B)

Surrounded by historic buildings dating from the late-18th to mid-19th centuries, and prominently sited on a corner lot enclosed by a simple iron and granite post fence, Marion's Congregational Church makes a prominent contribution to Marion Village's charm. In many respects this is the quintessential Greek Revival-style church, painted white, its temple form main facade dominated by a multi-stage clock tower. This tower is a major landmark on Marion's skyline.

Rising from a high granite block foundation and characterized by a boxy, rectangular form, this church's main facade is treated as a portico in antis (meaning a recessed portico supported by columns set in a line between the side walls). This portico in antis is crowned by a closed pediment with molded box cornice and broad frieze boards below – all characteristic of the Greek Revival style. Recessed behind the pair of monumental fluted Doric columns, the tall front entrance exhibits simple raised and molded surrounds and is reached via a broad flight of granite steps.

The elevations are clad in wood clapboard with broad corner pilasters (flat columns). The front elevation within the closed pediment is clad in flush board siding. The base of the clock tower is clad in wood blocks. Fenestration includes tall, stacked systems of wood, multi-paned double-hung and fixed sash.

There is a shallow apse with a stepped-down hip roof on the rear (south) elevation (Photo 3). Centered on this apse are three colorful early-1900s stained glass windows by Charles Connick, an artist who dominated his field during the first half of the 20th century. Set back from the apex of the pedimented attic and characterized by three stacked stages, the lowest of these "boxes" is an unadorned platform surmounted by a second stage exhibiting circular clock faces on three sides. Enclosed by a low, cross-crowned hip roof, the upper most box displays tall paired pilasters and louvered windows which emphasize the verticality of the third stage.

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.

(Reprinted from 1998 version of this Form B, edited)

Together with the town's first Congregational Church built across the street in 1799, now the Marion General Store (140 Front Street, MRN.22), and the 1885 Congregational Chapel at 39 Main Street (MRN.40), these buildings document two centuries of Congregationalism in the town. Built in 1841, this church, to a great degree, represents the town at the height of its powers as a maritime community. Indeed, Marion Congregational Church was known as "the sea captains church" because ten sea captains contributed \$1,000 each towards its construction. The Marion Congregational Church at 28 Main Street is a direct descendant of the first congregation of English settlers who gathered at Minister's Rock, Little Neck, Marion, then part of Rochester. During the 18th century, Marion Congregationalists had to travel all the way to Rochester Center to worship. In 1799, the completion of the first Congregational Church at Front and Main streets, now the Marion General Store (140 Front Street, MRN.22), represents an early step towards independence as a town separate from Rochester as well as the beginnings of Marion Village's distinctive architectural identity as a town center.

The Marion Congregational Church also has significant historical associations with the Cobb family of ministers and Marion's most generous philanthropist, Elizabeth Sprague Pitcher Taber. The construction of a new Congregational Church in 1841 came about, in part, because of the Congregation's unwillingness to pay for the repairs of the first meeting house, now the Marion General Store. Captain Henry Allen, captain of clipper packet boats and an important boat builder, gave land for the new church and ten

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Marion men gave \$1,000 each towards its construction. These benefactors included: Captain Henry Allen, Silas B. Allen, Captain Elisha Luce, Captain John Pitcher, Captain Roland Luce, Dr. Walton Ellis, Captain Stephen Luce, James Wittet, William Taylor and William Allen. Among this group was Captain Pitcher, brother of Elizabeth Pitcher Taber. He evidently set an example for his sister whose great patronage of the church included funding the construction of Union Hall, a church social center (1875) and the Congregational Chapel at 39 Main Street in 1885 (MRN.40).

Following the chapel's construction, Mrs. Taber funded \$1,000 of a total cost of \$1,800 for the new building's organ. She also paid for renovations in back of the altar to make room for the new organ. Dismayed, however, by the production of amateur theatricals in her new chapel, Mrs. Taber left a generous bequest in her will towards the construction of a Music Hall (164 Main Street, MRN.23).

Designed by Seth Eaton of Mattapoisett, architect of Marion's Universalist Church (1833), this church was variously called "The Harbor Meeting House," "The Captain's Church" and the "Puritan Church." The church's completion on December 1, 1841 marked the beginning of the nine year co-pastorate of Rev. Oliver Cobb and his son, Rev. Leander Cobb. The former came to Marion from Kingston, MA in 1799. He built the large late-Georgian residence which still stands at 460 Front Street (MRN.149), a location roughly half-way between his ministries at Rochester Center and Marion Village. In 1827, he became the full-time pastor of Marion's Congregational Church. Rev. Oliver and Leander Cobb's pastorate's ended with their deaths in 1849 and 1872, respectively.

From the 1870s to 1890s, parishioners witnessed considerable turn-over in the ministry, with the Reverends C. A. Kingsbury (1872-77), Edward Pomeroy (1877- 1881), J. L. Litch (1881-1884) and Rufus P. Gardner (1888-1893) serving for relatively short terms and, indeed, the church had no pastor at all during the mid-1880s. Fortunately, Elizabeth Pitcher Taber, benefactress of Tabor Academy, stepped in to fund Union Hall - a center for Congregational social activities on South Street (later demolished), and the Congregational Chapel at 39 Main Street (MRN.40). In 1872, clocks were installed in the church tower by an unidentified benefactor.

The interior of the church was "renovated" in ca. 1900 during the pastorate of Rev. H. L. Brickett. Funds were raised via benefit entertainments, bazaars, and lectures by celebrated journalist and Marion summer resident Richard Harding Davis. During the first quarter of the 20th century, a circular stained glass "rose" window was removed and three stained glass windows by Charles Connick were installed above the altar. Charles Connick established a studio in Boston in 1910, providing stained glass for the great churches of Gothicist Ralph Adams Cram and others. According to Douglas Shand Tucci, "stained glass for Connick was pure, translucent color." Connick's glass is well represented in Boston at the Cowley Father's Monastery in Cambridge, All Saints Brookline, Church of the Emmanuel's Lindsay Chapel on Newbury Street, and St. Anne's Chapel in Arlington Heights.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps and Atlases:

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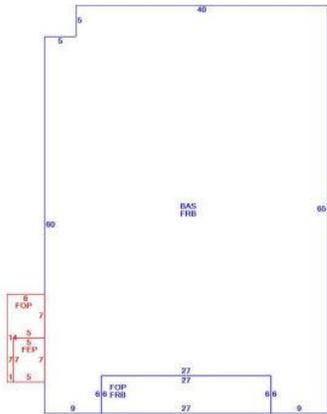


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from Main Street, looking southeast.



Photo 3. View from South Street, looking northeast.

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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).

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This building is recommended as eligible individually as a fine example of a frame, towered, Greek Revival-style meeting house. Built for Marion's Congregational Society in 1841, this ecclesiastical building was called the "Captain's Church" because ten local sea captains each contributed one thousand dollars towards its construction. When the church was built, local carpenter Silas Allen volunteered his services as its construction supervisor. During the mid-to-late 19th century, Elizabeth Pitcher Taber and her brother Captain John Pitcher were significant benefactors of this church. During the 1910s three stained glass windows by the noted American stained glass artist Charles Connick.