

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

14-67, 14-64A,
14-159

Marion

N,
AA

MRN.40

Town/City: MARION

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

Photograph



Address: 39 Main Street

Historic Name: Congregational Chapel

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1885

Source: Joseph Smart, *The School by the Sea*

Style/Form: Shingle Style

Architect/Builder: Unknown

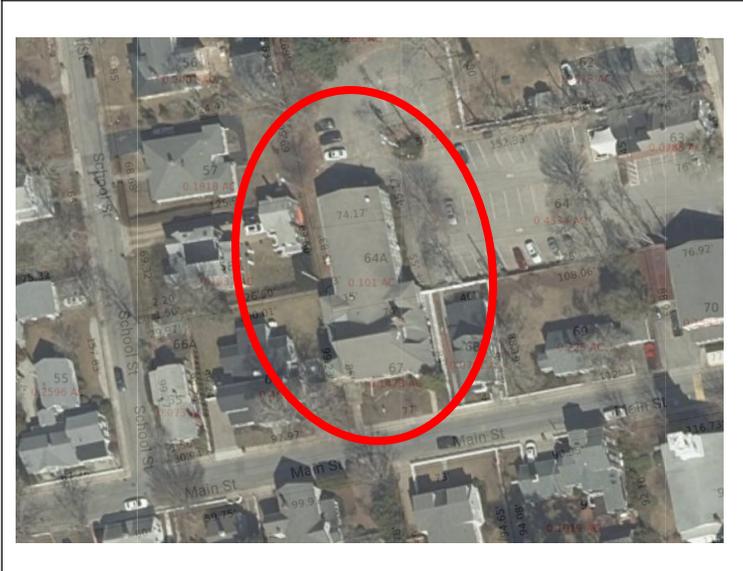
Exterior Material:

Foundation: Rubblestone

Wall/Trim: Rubblestone, cut stone, wood shingles, T-111 plywood/ Wood, cut stone

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Locus Map



Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Ca. 1970 rear addition

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.25 acres

Setting: The surrounding area includes historic houses sited relatively close to the street and to each other along Main Street. This former chapel is set back farther than neighboring houses.

Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

Organization: Sippican Historical Society

Date (*month / year*):

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

39 MAIN STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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)

This building extends across three parcels, owned by the First Congregational Church, that span from Main Street north to Cottage Street. The original rubblestone core of this building, built in 1885, sits on the southern parcel, a two-story rear addition built in ca. 1970, covers the small middle parcel and the southern end of the third parcel on which the Congregational Parsonage sits (10 Cottage Street, MRN.182).

The design of the original block is an ecclesiastical echo of Shingle Style architecture then fashionable for Marion summer houses. This remarkable building is roughly T-shaped in form. Characterized by sculptural qualities, textures, and sweeping lines. The building's form consists of a low tower which rises two stories from the main block's southwest corner. Composed of rubble stone, it is enclosed by a finial-topped "candle snuffer" roof cap. A curved, wood shingle-covered wall with a modified conical roof cap marks the transition from tower to roof. Recessed within a stone arch, each of the tower's original doors exhibits three small square windows, with an 8-sash transom above. Pairs of small, wood, multi-paned arched windows light the tower's second story. There is a heavy primitive stone lintel above the door, and exposed rafter-like stones accent the roof's cornice.

To the right of the tower, the main block's street facade exhibits a trio of polygonal bays that are covered with wood shingles and rest on the capstone of the high rubble stone basement. Each bay has wood, multi-paned fixed sash. At the eastern end of the main facade is a solid, multi-panel door. To the right of this entrance is a small rectangular window containing bull's-eye glass. The main block is noteworthy for the great sweep of its hip roof slopes. Further evidence of this building's sculptural qualities is evidenced by the small rounded dormer that rises from the apex of the east roof slope.

The large, gable-roofed rear addition is clad in what appears to be T1-11 textured plywood siding (Photo 3).

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)

Built in 1885, Marion's Congregational Chapel represents one of Elizabeth Pitcher Taber's last substantial gifts to her community. Born in Marion in 1791, Mrs. Taber taught grammar school in Marion as a young woman. She married Stephen Taber, clock maker and whaling ship-owner, in 1823, and they subsequently living in Acushnet and New Bedford. She refocused her interest in Marion after the death of her husband in 1862. A wealthy, childless widow, Mrs. Taber funded a library/natural history museum which still stands at 8 Spring Street (MRN.60) in 1872. During the mid-late 1870s, she set about the daunting task of founding a private academy in Marion which still thrives in the town as Tabor Academy. The funding of the Congregational Chapel at 37 Main Street represents Elizabeth Pitcher Taber as well the Pitcher family's long-term commitment towards the financial support of Congregationalism in Marion. Her brother, Captain John Pitcher, made a comfortable living as owner of a wharf, vessels, cranberry bogs and salt marsh as well as buildings in Fairhaven. He was one of ten parishioners who gave \$1,000 towards the construction of the Marion Congregational Church in 1841. Upon his death in 1867, he left his residence at 113 Front Street (MRN.194) to the Congregational Church to serve as a parsonage.

During her visits to Marion from New Bedford, Elizabeth Pitcher Taber attended three services each Sunday at the Congregational Church. A member of the Ladies Benevolent and Sewing Society, Mrs. Taber decried the "dank" conditions of this organization's meeting room in the church basement. In 1875, she funded the construction of Union Hall (demolished in 1957) which was built

Continuation sheet 1

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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on a lot next door to St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church on South Street. Constructed to provide more healthful conditions for her sewing group, Mrs. Taber stipulated that the new building was to be used for Congregational social activities rather than religious services. She left \$2,000 in her will towards the periodic refurbishment of Union Hall.

Despite the spacious facilities available at Union Hall, the Congregational Church still needed space for its Sunday School and "for social events, which were of great importance in the self-sufficient life of nineteenth century Marion." Three years before her death in 1885, Mrs. Taber, in one of her last acts of generosity to her church and town, purchased a vacant lot owned by her Tabor Academy's principal and downstairs neighbor, Clark P. Howland. She paid Howland \$300 for his land and subsequently had the Congregational Chapel built in the up-to-date Shingle Style. One unnamed resident of Sippican Village was not amused by the new chapel's design noting that "it is of odd design. The front is to have bay windows, and at the southwest corner, the principal entrance will be through a tower built of moss grown rocks from the pasture. On the chimney a few bricks at irregular distances are to project an inch or two, as if brickbats had been thrown at it and some of them had stuck on...."

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.

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

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

Gordon, Edward. MHC Form B, MRN.39, 1998.

Sippican Historical Society Collections.

Smart, Joseph J. *The School by the Sea*. Marion: Tabor Academy, 1964.

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



Photo 2. View from Main Street, looking northeast.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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Photo 3. View from Marion General Store parking lot, looking WSW.

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).