

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 88

Marion

N,
AA

MRN.244

Town/City: MARION

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

Photograph



Address: 42 Main Street

Historic Name: Desire and Silas Briggs House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: [1790-1830], possibly ca. 1819

Source: MRN.AA, Vital records (marriage date)

Style/Form: Federal/ Half Cape

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage (pre-1933)

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:

Gambrel-roofed addition (date unknown)

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.13 acres

Setting: The surrounding area includes historic houses sited relatively close to the street and to each other along Main Street. The front yard of this property is landscaped with a picket fence, lawn and foundation plantings. A small granite cobblestone track driveway leads along the east side of the parcel.

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

42 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.

Four houses along Main Street appear to have begun as Half Capes that were later expanded into Full Capes, i.e. from three bays wide with an off-centered entrance to five bays wide with centered entrance (see [6, 9, 31 and 44 Main Street](#)). This is a surviving example of a Federal-style Half Cape that was not widened. 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.

This house rests, like most 19th century houses in Marion Village, on a low granite block foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles (wood shingles originally), and a tall narrow chimney rises off-centered from the roof ridge. The front entrance is characteristic of the Federal style with its new wood paneled door set in an unusual surround with fluted pilasters (flat columns) and a convex lintel with dentil (teeth-like) molding. Fenestration includes wood 12/12 windows set in molded surrounds.

The house is shown with a rear ell as far back as the 1855 Walling Map of Marion (Figure 3). The ell has since been expanded to the current L-shaped footprint. The 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the house with just the rear ell, and shows the one-car garage that appears to still be there (Figure 5). That footprint was unchanged as of the 1933 Sanborn map.

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 2).

This house has an Assessor date of 1790, and the Main Street Area Form (MRN.AA) dates it to ca. 1790-1830. This house, like so many in Marion Village, was built by a family deeply connected to the maritime industry. A title search has traced ownership of this house back to Josephine Briggs (1841-1924). She married Timothy Hiller Briggs (same surname) in 1864. Timothy (1822-1877) was listed as a mariner in the 1870 US Census. Timothy was the son of Capt. Silas Briggs, Jr. (1792-1833) and Brewster-born Desire Clark (1789-1870), whom Silas married in 1819 in Marion. Josephine was the daughter of Peleg Briggs (1799-1870) and Lucy Burgess (1817-1895), whom Peleg married in 1840.

This house is shown on the 1855 Walling Map of Marion with the name "Mrs. D. Briggs" (Figure 3). This refers to then widowed Desire Briggs. This would confirm that the house came from that line of Briggs, and could mean that the house was perhaps built in ca. 1819, around the time of Desire's marriage to Capt. Silas Briggs. In the 1865 State Census, newly wed Timothy and Josephine Briggs were living here with his mother. A title search under both sides of the family has not revealed how they first came to own this property.

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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The house is shown on the 1879 Plymouth County Atlas with the name "J. Briggs" – referring to newly widowed Josephine Briggs (Figure 4). In the 1880 US Census, Josephine Briggs was living here with her mother, Lucy Briggs. From the 1900 US Census onward, she was shown living here alone. She and Timothy, who was 20 years her senior, never had any children.

The house was inherited in 1925 by Mary Abby (King) Borden (relationship to Josephine Briggs unknown). Borden sold the property that year to Charles S. Mendell of Mattapoisett.² Charles Stetson Mendell (1861-1954) was a manufacturer of electrical supplies, and by 1930 was retired. He never lived in Marion, and likely bought this house as an investment. He sold it in 1935 to Nelson M. and Adelaide H. Weeks of Marion.³ The profession of New York-born Nelson Weeks (1884-1940) was indicative of the the impact of the summer colony – he was listed in the 1930 US Census as a captain on a private yacht. The Weeks family sold this house in 1949, and it has changed hands numerous times since then.

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.

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.

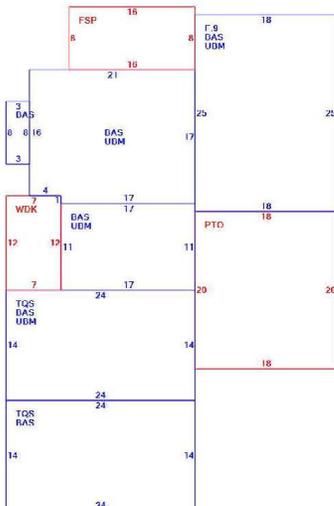


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch (decks, porches in red).



Photo 2. View from Main Street, looking southeast.

² Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, Book 1500, Page 298.

³ PCR, Book 1696/ Page 357.

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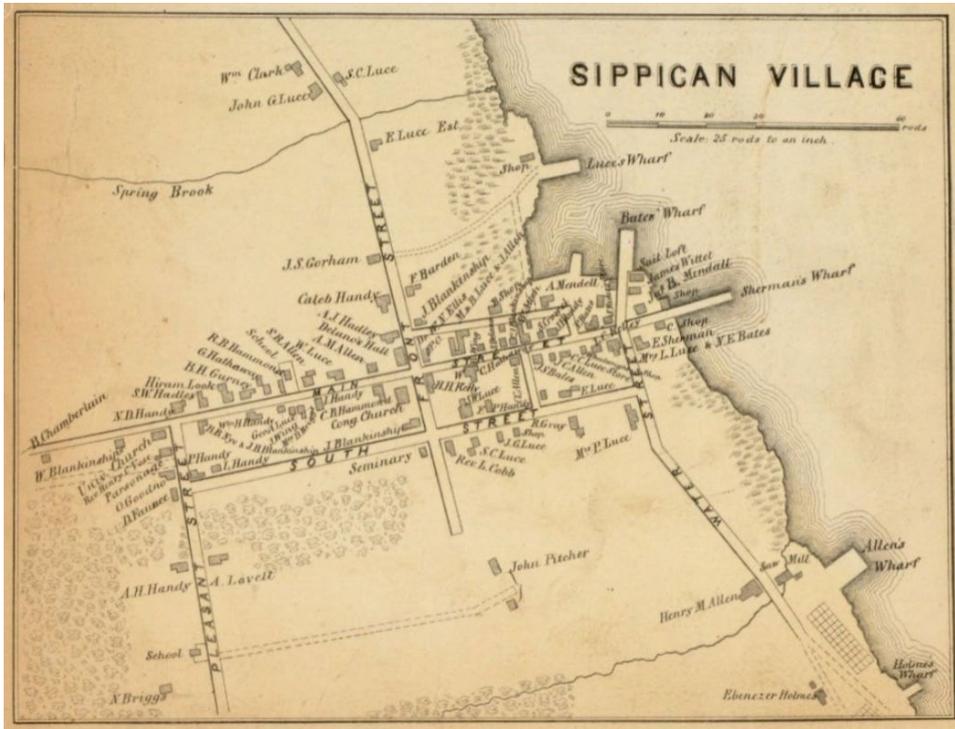


Figure 2. 1855 Walling Map of Marion, Sippican Village Inset Map.

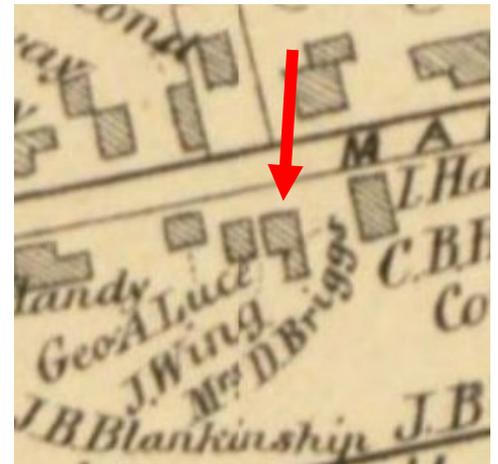


Figure 3. Detail of 1855 Inset Map (arrow added).

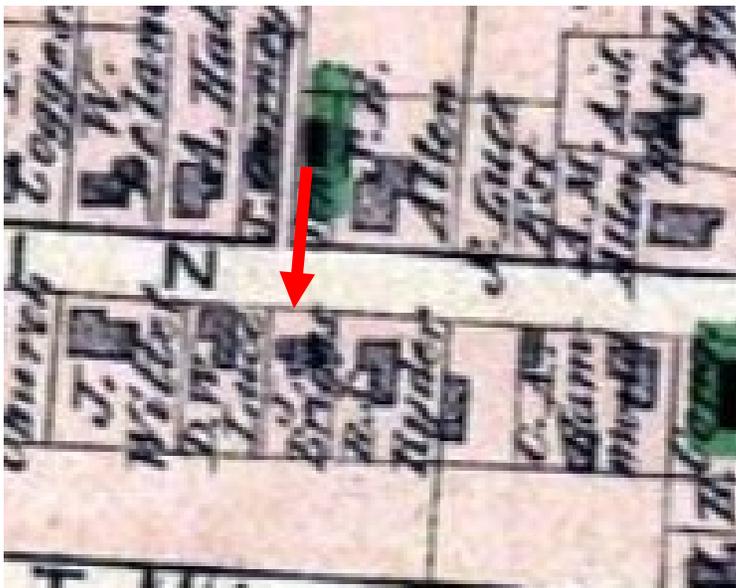


Figure 4. Detail of 1879 Plymouth County Atlas (arrow added).

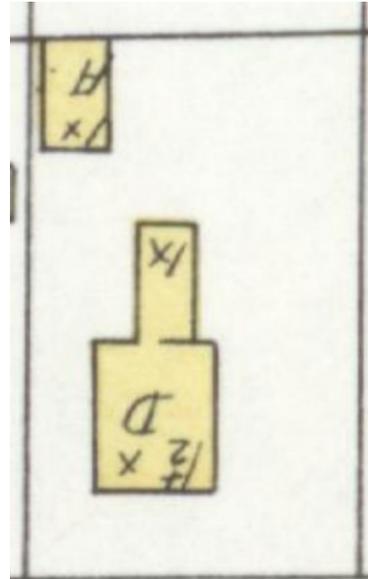


Figure 5. Detail of 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

