

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 82	Marion	N, AA	MRN. 252, 393
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Town/City: MARION

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

Photograph



Address: 54 Main Street

Historic Name: Susan Sherman House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: 1876

Source: Title research

Style/Form: Gothic Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Barn (late-19th c., MRN.393, Photo 3)

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:
None on record

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.28 acres

Setting: The surrounding area includes historic houses sited relatively close to the street and to each other along Main Street. This house is set back slightly from the street. The front yard is landscaped with lawn, mature trees, planting beds and foundation plantings. A gravel driveway, demarcated by granite posts at the street, leads up to the barn.

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

54 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 charming house, built in 1876, is a rare example of the Gothic Revival style in Marion. The Gothic Revival style was popular from ca. 1840-1880. The 1½-story, two-bay by two-bay main block has a side-gable form with prominent cross gables on the front and rear elevations, creating in effect tall wall dormers. These tall wall dormers are examples of the Gothic Revival style's emphasize on verticality (the Gothic style, which inspired the Gothic Revival, used verticality in churches to suggest an aspiration to Heaven).

The form of the main block is replicated in the stepped-back ell on the right (west) side. The house rests, like most 19th century houses in Marion Village, on a granite foundation. The elevations are clad in wood clapboards with plain cornerboards. Raised molding forms triangles in the gable peaks that echo the varying pitches of the gables. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles (wood shingles originally), and the roof has a deeply-projecting, molded box cornice.

Fenestration includes wood 2/2, double-hung sash on the first story set in frames with unusual hooded lintels, and single and paired round-headed windows on the second story. The front elevation of both the main block and stepped-back ell have broad bays with 1/1 windows and molded panels below. Two entrances are located within the open porch. The porch is supported by chamfered posts with decorative brackets. There is a one-story rear addition extending off the back of the side ell. A comparison of the 1908 and 1933 Sanborn Insurance Maps shows that this rear addition was built sometime between those years (Figures 2, 3).

A late-19th century barn is located at the northwest corner of the property (Photo 3). This tall, gable-front building is austere in design, with an offset door on the front elevation, and a hay loft door centered above. This barn is not shown on the 1879 Atlas (Figure 6), but is present on the 1903 Atlas (Figure 7), as well as the 1908 and 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (Figures 2, 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.

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 4).

There is no house in this location on the 1855 Walling Inset Map of Sippican Village (Figure 5).² This land was sold in August, 1875 by Noah D. Handy of Marion to Susan W. Sherman, also of Marion.³ That deed did not reference buildings. Susan West Taber (1848-1906) had married shoe-maker Eli Sherman in 1853. Prior to building this house, they owned the house at 17 Main

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 It should be noted that a Form B prepared for this house in 2020 mistakenly conducted a title search for the adjacent house at 48 Main Street (MRN.248).

³ Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, Book 420/ Page 10.

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Street (MRN.232), which they sold in June of 1875. They sold that house to Henry C. and Sarah Nye – the importance of which will be revealed if you read on.

Three months after buying this land, Eli Sherman died. We do not know if the house had been built by then, or if it was Susan Sherman who forged ahead and completed it herself. What we do know is that, by September of 1876, Susan Sherman was living in New Bedford when she sold this property, now with reference to buildings, to Benjamin B. Church, also of New Bedford.⁴

The house is shown on the 1879 Plymouth County Atlas with the name “B. Church” (Figure 6). Benjamin B. Church (1813-1883) was listed as a farmer on Martha’s Vineyard in the 1850 US Census, and a pilot living in New Bedford in the 1870 Census. It is unclear if he ever lived in this house. It was inherited by his daughter, Ellen E. Warren. She was living in New Bedford in 1890 when she sold it to Z. Willis Kemp of Marion.⁵

In 1893, Kemp sold it to Henry C. and Sarah H. Nye.⁶ These are the same Nyes mentioned above who had purchased 17 Main Street from the Shermans in 1875. Henry C. Nye (1838-1917) married Sarah H. Cole (1845-1938) in Marion in 1866. Henry Nye had a varied professional life: retail grocer (1870 US Census), railroad station agent (1880), expressman (1900), and town treasurer (1910). The house remained in the extended Nye family until 1951.

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.

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.

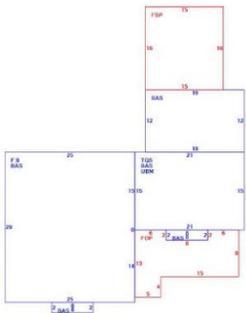


Figure 1. Marion Assessor Sketch (decks, porches in red).

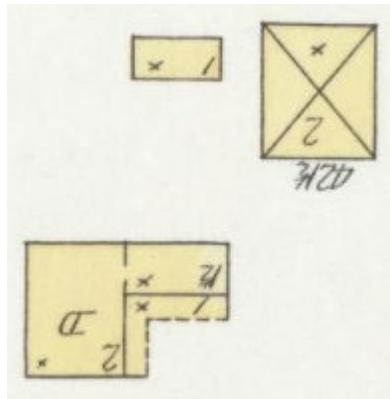


Figure 2. Detail, 1908 Sanborn Map.

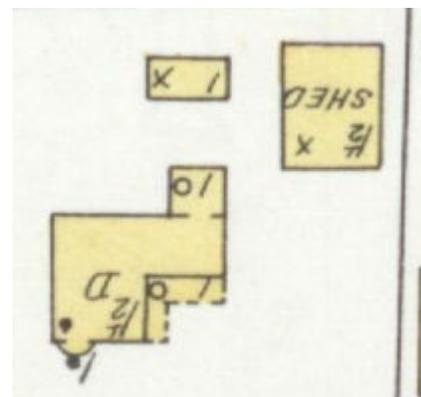


Figure 3. Detail, 1933 Sanborn Map.

⁴ PCRD, Book 426/ Page 249.

⁵ PCRD, Book 612/ Page 29.

⁶ PCRD, Book 689/ Page 240.

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Photo 2. View from Main Street, looking southwest.



Photo 3. View of barn, looking south.

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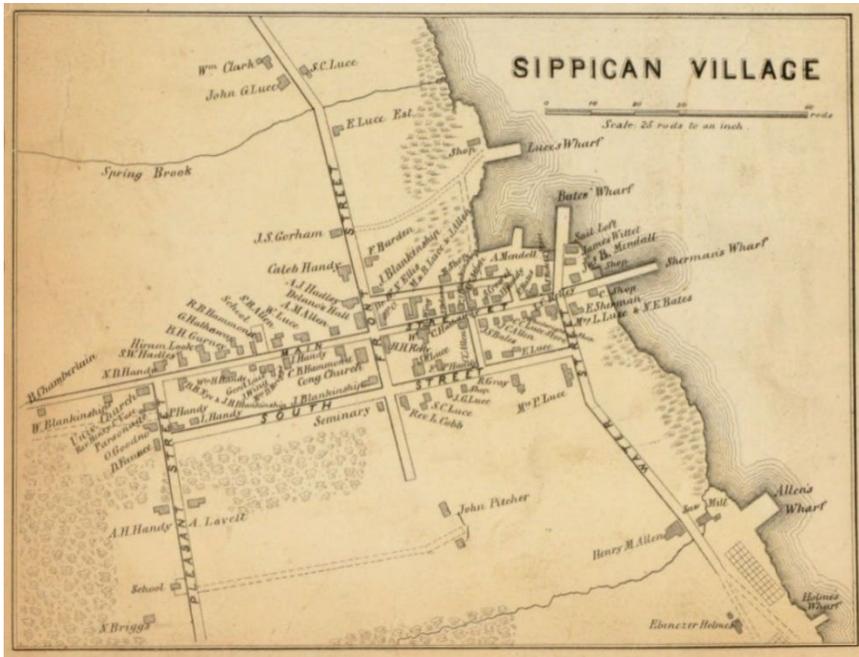


Figure 4. 1855 Walling Map of Marion, Sippican Village Inset Map.

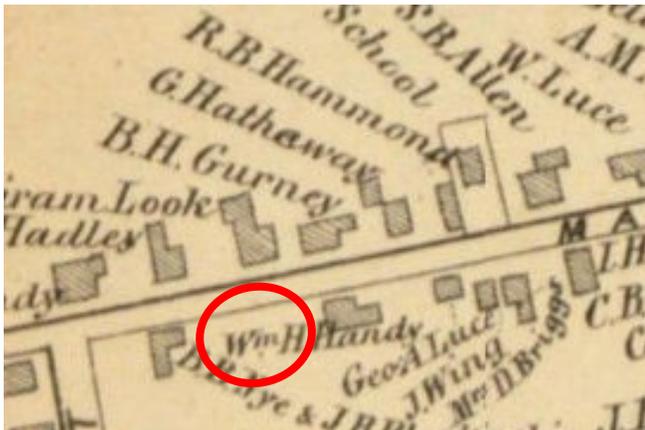


Figure 5. Detail of 1855 Walling Map (circle added).

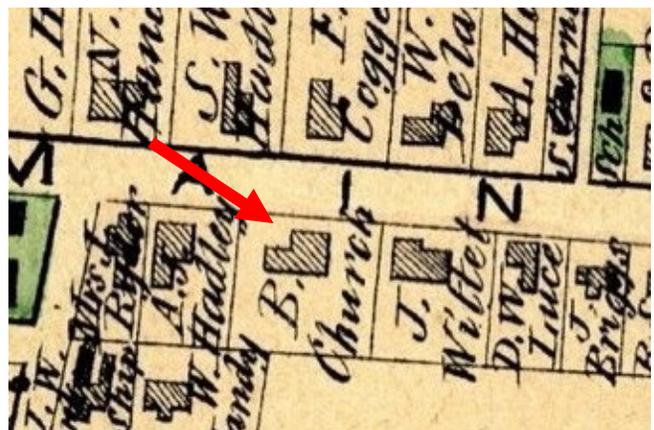


Figure 6. Detail of 1879 Plymouth County Atlas (arrow added).



Figure 7. Detail of 1903 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).