

FORM B – BUILDING

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

14 50

Marion

N,
AA

MRN.254

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

Town/City: MARION

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

Photograph



Address: 59 Main Street

Historic Name: Noah and Cynthia Handy House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: [1842-1850]

Source: Vital records (1841 marriage, 1850 US Census)

Style/Form: Greek Revival/ Full Cape

Architect/Builder: Unknown/ Noah D. Handy

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard, wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

None on record

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

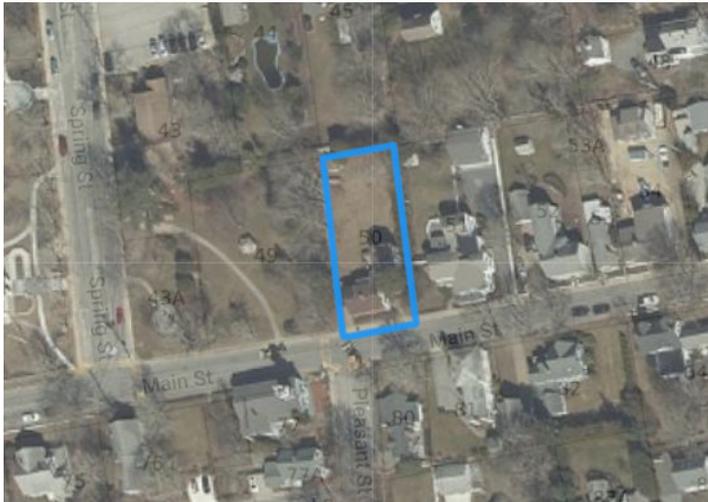
Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.25 acres

Setting: The surrounding area includes historic houses, and the former Universalist Church, sited relatively close to the street and to each other along Main and Pleasant Streets. This property abuts a small town park to the west. This house is also sited close to the street, opposite the intersection with Pleasant Street. The slightly raised front yard is secured by low granite curbstones. The front yard is landscaped with foundation plantings, and granite and wood steps lead to the raised front entrance. There is a short gravel driveway along the west side of the house.

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

59 MAIN STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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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 a good example of a mid-19th century, Greek Revival-style Full Cape. The Greek Revival style, popular from ca. 1825 to 1860, was inspired by then new Greek archeological discoveries, and employed temple forms and details for domestic American architecture. Unlike some Full Capes on Main Street which appear to have begun as Half Capes (three bays wide with off-center entrance) that were later asymmetrically expanded into Full Capes (five bays wide with center entrance), the front elevation of this house has an overall symmetry which suggests it was originally built as a Full Cape. In addition to the 1½-story, side-gable main block, there is an offset gable-front ell extending from the northeast corner of the main block. The original footprint, with the small side ell, was first shown on the 1855 Walling Map of Marion (Figure 4). By the time the 1903 Plymouth County Atlas had been prepared (Figure 5), the gable-front rear ell had been added. A small porch had been added by the time the 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map was prepared (Figure 2).

The main block rests, like most 19th century Marion Village houses, on a raised granite foundation (it is unknown what the ell rests on). The front elevation of the main block is clad in wood clapboards – an example of “dressing up” the main public elevations. The remaining elevations are clad in wood shingles. The house’s corners are ornamented with pilasters (flat columns) that have recessed panels, and the roof has a projecting molded box cornice with partial returns across the gable ends, and broad frieze boards on the front elevation – all Greek Revival-style features. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles (wood shingles originally), and a brick chimney rises from the center of the main roof ridge in alignment with the front door.

The front elevation has a higher stud wall than earlier Capes, i.e. the window surrounds do not abut the roof entablature. This was usually done to create more space for the second story. The front entrance has a six panel wood door set in a simple surround that replaced the original surround shown in a ca. 1972 photo (Photo 3). The original surround had full sidelights, pilasters with recessed panels similar to the corner pilasters, and a broad molded lintel above. Fenestration includes wood, 6/6 double-hung sash (the typical window muntin pattern for Greek Revival-style houses).

A comparison of the Marion Assessor sketch (Figure 1) with the building footprint on the 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Figure 2) shows that the footprint has remained largely unchanged since that time.

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, including this house (Figure 3).

This house is shown on the 1855 Walling Map of Marion with the name “N. D. Handy” (Figure 4). This refers to Noah D. Handy (1816-1883). He was listed as a carpenter throughout his life in Census records, as were other members of his family. It is likely

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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that he built this house himself. He married Cynthia E. Mendell (1820-1892) in 1841, so a ca. 1842 construction date is possible, but it was certainly in place by 1850.² As stated in the 1998 Marion Village Area Form (MRN.N), from the late-18th until the early 1900s, Pleasant Street north of Pitcher was essentially a Handy neighborhood with a number of dwellings in this area associated with this family. Title research has not yet found the deed wherein he purchased the land. This house passed to their daughter, Cynthia M. Handy (1858-1930). She was listed living here in the 1900, 1910, and 1920 Census records. She operated the house as a boarding house. The house passed out of the family following her death in 1930.

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.

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

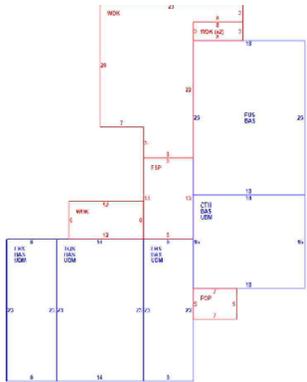


Figure 1. Marion Assessor Sketch.

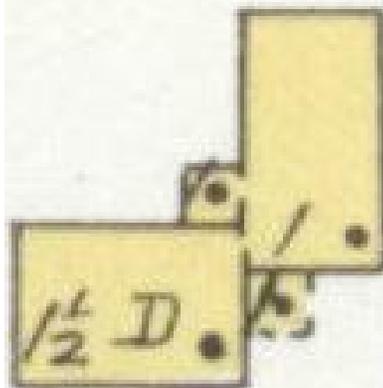


Figure 2. Detail of 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.



Photo 2. View from Main Street, looking northeast.

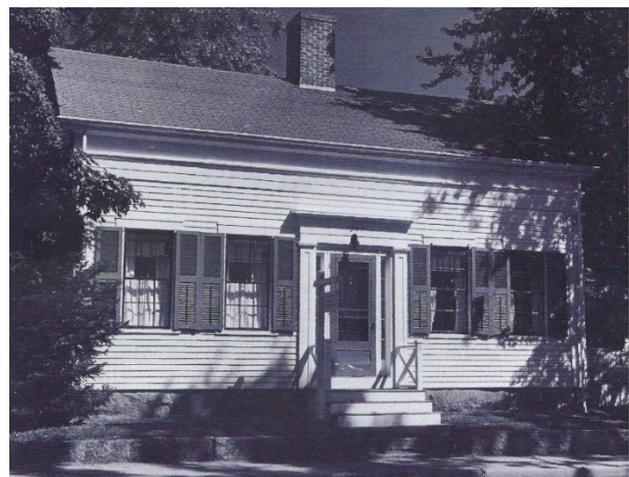


Photo 3. Ca. 1972 view from Main Street, looking northeast

² A review of neighbors in the 1850 Census is very similar to the names on the 1855 Walling Map.

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(Source: Three Centuries of Marion Houses).



Figure 3. 1855 Walling Map of Marion, Sippican Village Inset Map (arrow added).



Figure 4. Detail to 1855 Walling Map of Marion (arrow added).

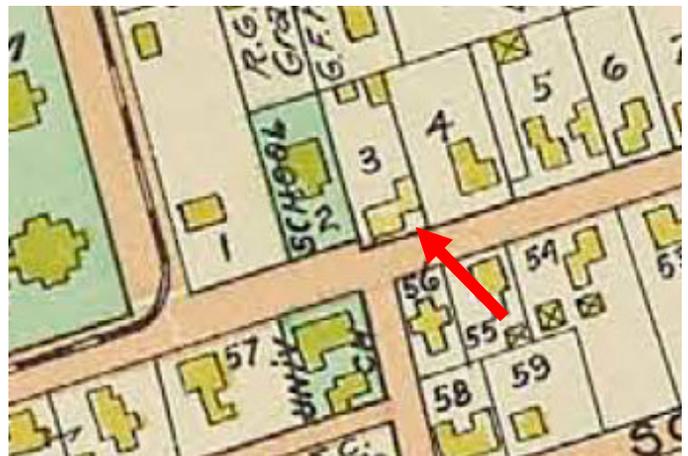


Figure 5. Detail of 1903 Plymouth County Atlas (arrow added).

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).