

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

16-72A

Marion

N,
AB

MRN.289

Town/City: MARION

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Marion Village -
South Street (MRN.AB)

Address: 38 South Street

Historic Name: Mary A. Benedict House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: [1899-1903]

Source: Deed research, 1903 Plymouth County Atlas

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete block

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Guesthouse (2003)

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:

Dormers, and window alterations (dates unknown)

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.15 acres

Setting: This house is located on the south side of South Street. The surrounding area is densely built with a mix of historic and contemporary houses. The property shares a gravel driveway with 40 South Street. The front yard is landscaped with lawn and foundation plantings.

Photograph



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

38 SOUTH 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.

This is one of a pair of modest cottages similar in form and both built ca. 1889-1903, the other being 36 South Street (MRN.288). The form of this modest cottage began as the 1½-story, gable-front block (see Figure 3, 1903 Plymouth County Atlas), onto which a stepped-down 1½-story ell was added to the right (west) side (see Figure 4, 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map). The house rests on a concrete block foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with no cornerboards (i.e. the shingles wrap the corners). The roof is clad in asphalt singles, and the main block and ell have projecting open eaves (now clad) capped with fascia boards, typical of cottage construction.

The broad front bay window may have replaced an original entrance and/or windows. Remaining fenestration includes replacement 2/2 windows set in flat casings. The right roof slope was extended farther to create the current front entrance and covered entry.

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, maritime-related development accelerated into the early-1800s, as happened in so 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 development was initially concentrated along Main Street, and the harbor became the site for maritime-related utilitarian buildings and wharfs. By the time the 1855 Walling Map was prepared, Main Street from the harbor west to Pleasant Street was the most densely developed street in the village. There was also substantial residential development along the eastern block of South Street, but this western block was not yet in place. By the time the 1879 Plymouth County Atlas was prepared, this block was labelled as "(contemplated)" with some development near the intersections with Front and Pleasant Streets (Figure 2). By the early-20th century, a substantial number of houses had been built along this western block of South Street, including this house (Figure 4).

Much of the land on this side of South Street was owned by James T. Wittet in the late-19th century. James T. Wittet (1833-1908) was a sailmaker. He was the son of sailmaker James Wittet (1799-1872) who lived and worked at what is now 1 Main Street (MRN.218). James T. Wittet himself bought land on the north side of South Street and built the ca. 1899 house at 47 South Street (MRN.295), likely as a rental property. He was listed in the 1903 and 1907 Rochester Directories living on Front Street.

James T. Wittet sold the land on which this house was built in 1889 to Mary A. Benedict of New York.² That same year, Wittet sold the land next door on which 36 South Street (MRN.288) was built. We do not know exactly when this house was built, but it was in place by the time the 1903 Plymouth County Atlas was prepared (Figure 3). According to the 1903 Rochester Directory, Mary Benedict (1854-1915) was a nurse who summered here, and otherwise lived in New York. As of the 1910 US Census, however, she appeared to be living here with her sister, Effie Benedict, also a nurse. Their neighbor at 36 South Street, Sarah Bryant, was a nurse as well. This house was inherited by Effie Benedict (1855-1927).

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 Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, Book 598/ Page 375.

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The estate of Effie Benedict sold this house to Bessie Clark Nelson of Marion.³ This house was likely bought as a rental property. Bessie Clark Nelson was a direct descendant of Noble Bates (1791-1864), one of the “Two Captains” who lived at 2 Main Street (MRN.220). Bessie Clark Blankinship (1879-1946) had married Sweden-born James Nelson in Marion in 1900. They lived at 70 Main Street (MRN.258), and also owned 72 Main Street John (ca. 1900, MRN.259). James Nelson (1872-1951) worked as a barber. They had no children.

In 1946, Bessie Nelson’s estate sold this property to Joseph Lipsitt of Marion.⁴ Joseph Lipsitt (1892-1973), with three of his sons, founded the *Sippican Compass*, reportedly the first newspaper in Marion. Joseph Lipsitt was a lawyer and newspaper man who became city editor for the *New Bedford Times*.⁵ The Lipsitt family owned this house until 2000. The Lipsitt family also owned 13 South Street (MRN.282) from 1938-1983, and 59 South Street (MRN.301) from 1955-1973.

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.

Ancestry.com – Vital records.

Dempsey, Claire. MHC Area Form AB, South Street, 2021.

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

Plymouth County Registry of Deeds

Rochester, Massachusetts City Directory, 1903.

Sippican Historical Society Collections.

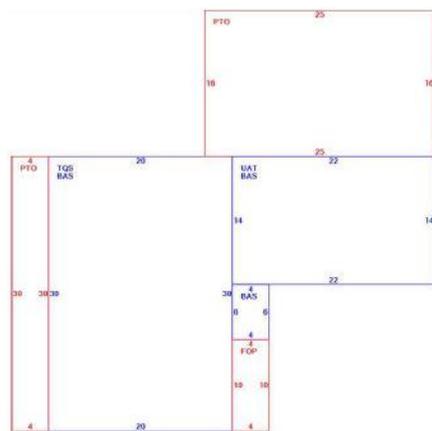


Figure 1. Marion Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from South Street, looking SSW.

³ PCR D, Book 1570/ Page 440.

⁴ PCR D, Book 1932/ Page 147.

⁵ <https://sippican.theweektoday.com/article/brothers-remember-about-creating-first-newspaper-marion/3713>.

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Figure 2. Detail of 1879 Plymouth County Atlas (arrow to site of future house added).



Figure 3. 1903 Plymouth County Atlas, (arrow added).

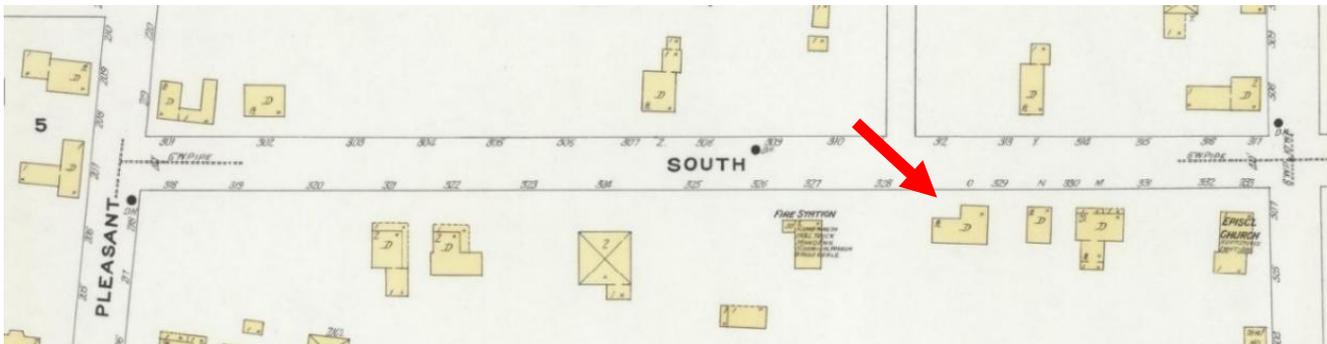


Figure 4. Detail of 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (arrow added).

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).