

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

16-85

Marion

N,
AB

MRN.295

Town/City: MARION

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

Photograph



Address: 47 South Street

Historic Name: James T. Wittet House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: [1895-1903]

Source: Deed research, 1903 Atlas

Style/Form: Victorian Eclectic

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite, cement

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:

Large addition (2000)

Window replacements (2015)

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.15 acres

Setting: This parcel is located at the west end of South Street. The surrounding area includes late-19th and early-20th century houses, most set fairly close to the street on small lots, and a few contemporary houses. A gravel driveway leads to an attached garage. The front yard is landscaped with lawn and foundation plantings.

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

47 SOUTH STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

N, AB

MRN.295

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.

The main block of this house, built in ca. 1895-1903, is similar in form and detail to another house built nearby around that time, 35 South Street (MRN.406). This house can be characterized as Queen Anne in style. That style, popular from ca. 1880-1910, employed different roof shapes and surface materials to enliven a building's elevations and create a more "picturesque" effect. The form of the house originally consisted of the 1½-story, gable-front block with an offset, one-story rear ell, and a one-story bay on the front elevation. That footprint is shown on the 1933 Sanborn Insurance Map (Figure 2). The rear ell(s) have been replaced by a large, side-gable addition that includes an attached garage (built in ca. 2000).

The original part of the house rests, like most 19th and early-20th century houses in Marion Village, on a raised, rough-cut granite foundation. The elevations are clad in wood clapboards with broad cornerboards. This siding does not appear original, and the house may have had a more complex use of wood clapboards and shingles more typical of the Queen Anne style. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles (wood shingles originally), and has a projecting molded box cornice with partial returns across the front gable (a holdover from the earlier Greek Revival style). There is a narrow side porch supported by square posts with ornamental scroll brackets. That porch is not shown on the 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Figure 2).

Fenestration consists primarily of replacement 2/1 windows set in frames with molded lintels. The 2/1 muntin pattern may have been the original muntin pattern. The main roof has a gable dormer that has been replicated on the rear addition. The main front door is set within the porch on the right side elevation. The door is set in a surround similar to the windows.

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 3). By the early-20th century, a substantial number of houses (and a fire station) had been built along this western block of South Street, including this house (Figure 4).

This house was built on land that Augustus H. and Joanna P. Smith sold in 1895 to James T. and Miriam H. (Albee) Wittet.² Much of the land on the south side of South Street on this block was owned by James T. Wittet in the late-19th century. In 1889, he sold two small parcels on which two houses were built (36 and 38 South Street). This house first appears on the 1903 Plymouth County Atlas. Wittet appears to have built this house as an investment; he was listed in the 1903 and 1907 Rochester Directories living on Front Street.

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 693/ Page 161.

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James T. Wittet (1833-1908) was a sailmaker. He was also the son of sailmaker James Wittet (1799-1872) who lived and worked at what is now 1 Main Street (MRN.218). James T. Wittet married Miriam Albee (1846-1915) in Kingston in 1869. They had three sons who inherited this house after their mother's death.

The Wittets sold this house in 1921 to Marjorie Luce.³ Many of the Luces who built or owned houses in the 19th century and early-20th century in Marion can trace their lineage back to Tisbury-born Major Rowland Luce (1756-1835). He married Elizabeth Clark (1762-1833) in Marion in 1778, and they went on to have ten children. In 1779, Elizabeth's mother, Thankful Clark (1734-1812), sold Rowland Luce over 35 acres of land for 2,000 pounds, including 5 acres in Marion Village.⁴ Rowland and Elizabeth Luce and their descendants would go on to have a great impact on the development of the village.

Marjorie Luce (b. 1897) lived here with her mother, Louise Luce, and boarders. Louise Blankinship (1861-1944) had married John F. Luce (1851-1921) in Marion in 1896. John Luce (and his daughter Marjorie) were direct descendants of Rowland and Elizabeth Luce. John Luce had worked as a janitor for the town, and his daughter, Marjorie, worked as an accountant/bookkeeper for the town. As of the 1940 Census, Louise and Marjorie Luce had a boarder who worked as a chef for a private yacht. Marjorie Luce owned this house until 1978.

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 AB, South Street, 2021.

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

Plymouth County Registry of Deeds

Sippican Historical Society Collections.



Photo 2. View from South Street, looking northwest.

³ PCRD, Book 1394/ Page 391.

⁴ PCRD, Book 60/ Page 80.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

47 SOUTH STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

N, AB MRN.295

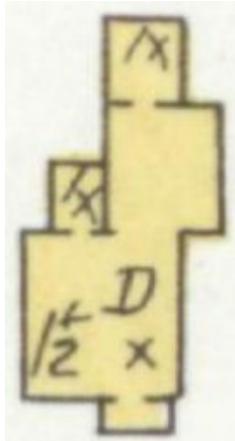
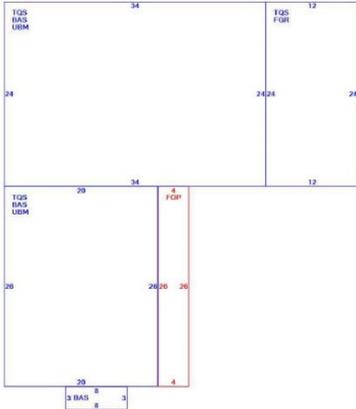


Figure 1. Marion Assessor Sketch.

Figure 2. Detail of 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

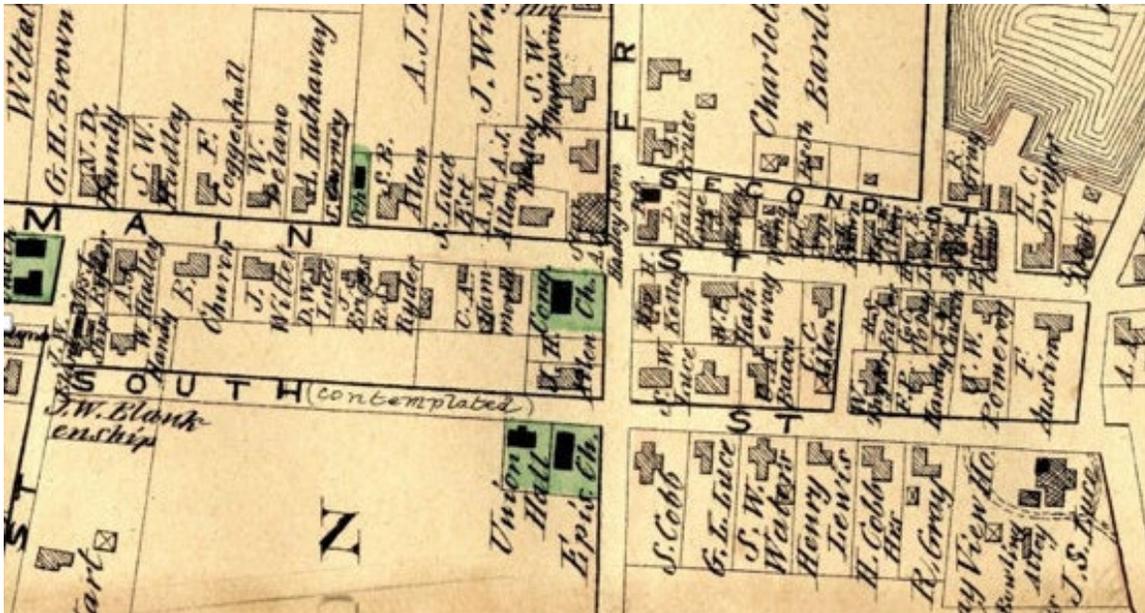


Figure 3. Detail of 1879 Plymouth County Atlas.

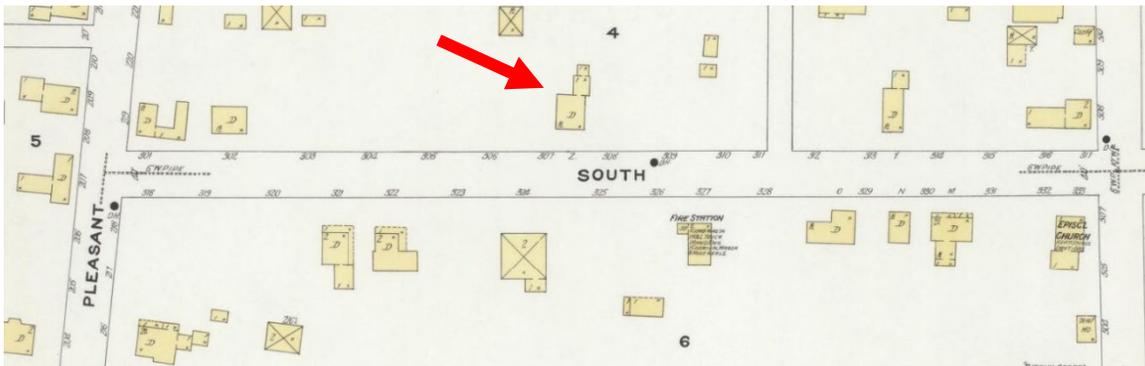


Figure 4. Detail of 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (arrow added).

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).