

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

14-23 Marion N MRN.59  
PR 2023

**Town/City:** MARION

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*): Marion Village

## Photograph



**Address:** 16 Spring Street (2 Spring Street in MACRIS)

**Historic Name:** Tabor Academy Recitation Building

**Uses:** Present: Town Hall – Marion Town House

Original: School (Private)

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1875

**Source:** Joseph Smart, *The School and the Sea*

**Style/Form:** Italianate

**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

None

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*)\*:

2020 renovation, including replacing vinyl siding with wood clapboard, and restoration of corner quoins.

\*Based on Property Card and/or observation

**Condition:** Good

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

**Acreage:** 9.44 acres

**Setting:** Prominently sited at corner of Spring and Main streets. Key component in node of architecturally distinguished late-19th and early-20th c. institutional buildings including the Italianate Taber Library and the early-1930s Sippican School to the north, and the Colonial Revival early-20th c. Pythagorean Hall, across Spring Street.

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

**Organization:** Sippican Historical Society

**Date** (*month / year*): February 2023

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

16 SPRING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

N

MRN.59

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.*

*(Reprinted from 1998 version of this Form B, edited)*

Constructed in 1875-1877 as Tabor Academy's first building, the towered Italianate building has served as Marion's Town Hall since 1937. Clad with wood clapboard siding and rising from a heavy granite block foundation, this building is composed of a boxy, rectangular three-bay by three-bay, 2½-story main block which is enclosed by a hip roof. Projecting and rising from the center of the main block's south wall is a square three-story tower which rises to an open belfry. Atop the belfry is a distinctive pyramidal roof. A narrow, one story ell links the main block to an 1890s 1½-story octagonal addition. Projecting from the north wall of this addition is a small, square ell.

Exhibiting, an ornate center entrance portico, the main facade is divided into three bays by four Doric pilasters. Indeed the formal, tripartite division of the main façade is reminiscent of the treatments of the 1872 Taber Library next door, without the center bay delineated as a projecting center pavilion. The use of cornice headed and arched lintels for first and second floor windows also echo Taber Library's fenestration, suggesting that the same architect designed both buildings. Providing support for the porch roof are heavy, square Doric posts paired with inner Doric columns. Springing from the columns is a semi-circular arch, while extremely narrow arches appear between posts and columns. The rusticated corner quoins are a post-1998 restoration of an early feature. Brackets accent the deep eaves of the porch's gable roof.

The entrance bay is flanked by narrow, rectangular and arched tripartite windows on the first and second floors, respectively. Paired arched windows are located above the entrance porch. Rising from the center of the main facade's roof slope is a tripartite dormer which may have been added during the late-19th century. A secondary entrance appears at the east facade of the tower. The tower's fenestration strikes a picturesque note in terms of its placement and varied forms, with cornice-headed arched and oculus windows appearing at its first, second and third floors, respectively. Each side of the tower's belfry exhibits freestanding and engaged columns from which spring three arches.

Added to the rear of the 1870s building is an 1890s octagonal 1½-story building designed in the Queen Anne/ Colonial Revival style and enclosed by a belvedere-topped hip roof.

## 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.*

*(Reprinted from 1998 version of this Form B, edited)*

Built in 1875-1877 from designs by an architect yet to be identified, the original Tabor Academy building, now the Marion Town House, this Italianate institutional building symbolizes Marion's late-19th century rise as a focus for private secondary education in southeastern Massachusetts. This school has significant historical associations with the later years of the Academy movement in the United States. The school owes its existence to Marion native Elizabeth Sprague Pitcher Tabor (1791- 1888). Following the death of her husband, New Bedford clockmaker and whaling vessel shareholder Stephen Taber, Mrs. Taber (see biography included in 8 Spring Street historical narrative) focused her attention on improving the circumstances of Marion. By the time Mrs. Taber reappeared on the Marion scene in 1870, the town's maritime activities were in decline and the summer resort industry was in its infancy. In 1871, Captain Henry M. Allen sold Mrs. Taber "a piece of apparently useless, rock-strewn land for some buildings she wanted to put up."

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

16 SPRING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

N

MRN.59

During the summers of 1878 and 1879, the new Academy building was home to Elizabeth Taber, who reportedly lived uncomfortably in one of the upstairs recitation rooms. From 1880 until her death eight years later, Mrs. Taber resided on the second floor of the Italianate Taber Hall, originally located on Spring Street near the library, later moved to 13 Cottage Street (MRN.228). By 1884, seven Tabor students had entered colleges, two had completed a medical course of study, and three had been accepted by the Boston School of Technology (MIT). Tabor Academy opened its doors during the twilight of the "Age of the Academies". It was founded at a time in the mid-1870s when "the high school...was the new rising sun of secondary education."

The story of the Academy movement begins during the 1740s when Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin provided a plan to replace Latin Grammar Schools with Academies. Franklin recommended a wide, liberal curriculum that contrasted with the narrow, classical one of the Latin Schools. Central to Franklin's thoughts on Academies was that students should pursue studies that would be "more useful than ornamental." During the 1770s, the founding of the two Phillips Academies, at Andover, MA and at Exeter, NH, marked the beginnings of the Age of the Academies in New England. During the first quarter of the 19th century, "there arose in the United States a new sense of educational responsibility to match the growing economy of the expanding nation.... The nineteenth century's ideals of a liberal education and a sense of the value of education for its own sake, are important notes in the history of the Age of the Academies. Like the grammar schools before them, academies were concerned with "fitting out" students for college. Academies also may be seen as the forerunners of late-19th century Normal Schools for the training of better elementary school teachers.

In 1936, Marion's town offices were moved into this building.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

### Maps and Atlases:

1879, *Atlas of Plymouth County, Massachusetts*. Boston: Geo. H Walker & Co, 1879.

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1908, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Marion, Plymouth County, Massachusetts*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1908.

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Smart, Joseph J. *The School by the Sea*. Marion: Tabor Academy, 1964.

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**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

MARION

16 SPRING STREET

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220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

          
N

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MARION

16 SPRING STREET

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Area(s) Form No.

N	MRN.59
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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-18<sup>th</sup> century. With the rise of saltmaking, shipyards, and whaling, maritime activity increased dramatically into the mid-19<sup>th</sup> 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-19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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This building is also recommended as eligible for listing individually at the local level under Criterion A and C at the local level. Constructed during the mid-1870s as Recitation Hall, Tabor Academy's first class room building, the towered, Italianate main block and its octagonal Colonial Revival rear wing is a major landmark on the town. Representing a major gift to Marion by Elizabeth

*Continuation sheet 4*

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Pitcher Taber, this building symbolizes Marion's late-19th century renaissance as an important resource for private collegiate preparatory education in Massachusetts. Since 1937, this building has served as the seat of town government after the consolidation of the Tabor Academy campus along the western shores of Sippican Harbor.

\*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).