

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

13 -41	Marion	MRN.I	MRN.123
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Town/City: Marion

Place:(*neighborhood or village*): Marion Village / Old Landing

Address: 294 Front Street

Historic Name: William C. Mendall House

Uses: Present: Residential

Original: Residential

Date of Construction: Ca. 1820

Source: Deed and map research

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Not visible

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard / Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Front porch (2012)

Condition: Excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.17

Setting: Linear development of residences and a boatyard primarily developed in the late 18th–mid 19th centuries. Mid- to large-size wood-frame, single-family houses in the Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival styles predominate. Neighborhood borders the northwestern shore of Sippican Harbor.

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Lynn Smiledge

Organization: Marion Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): September 2022

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

294 Front Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MRN.I

MRN.123

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.

294 Front Street occupies a deep, narrow, rectangular parcel at the southwest corner of the intersection of Front Street and Ryder Lane. The house is set close to Front Street behind a shallow front lawn and faces east towards the Burr Brothers Boatyard and Sippican Harbor. The property is maintained primarily in grass with a few mature trees along the south elevation. Low foundation plantings surround the façade (east elevation) and side elevations of the house. A low stone retaining wall borders the parcel along Ryder Lane and ends at a short driveway that enters the property from the lane at the west (rear) elevation of the house. Beyond the driveway an expansive lawn extends west behind a tall hedgerow. The property abuts a mortared stone wall at the western lot line that marks the Tabor Academy playing fields.

This wood-frame building comprises a two-story, three-bay-by-two-bay, front-gabled main block with a hipped roof. Two two-story, hip-roofed dependencies extend west from the main block. These include a center addition that partially wraps the main block and extends one bay beyond the side elevations, and a westernmost block that projects an additional bay beyond the north wall. Constructed ca. 1820 in the Federal style, the house retains nearly all of its original character-defining features at the main block although its integrity was compromised by the addition of a disproportionately large, stylistically incompatible front porch in 2012. The house is trimmed with narrow corner boards and frieze boards. It rests on a granite foundation and is clad with painted clapboards. The roof is surfaced with asphalt shingles. A substantial brick chimney rises from the south roof slope near the cornice; a paired chimney on the north roof slope seen in a late 19th century photograph of the house is no longer extant. A second brick chimney occupies the west roof slope of the center addition.

The openings at the main block comprise double-hung, twelve-over-twelve windows with flat surrounds and lipped lintels. The windows at the second story touch the frieze board. A shallow hipped dormer with a six-light fixed sash is centered at the façade. All of the windows have blinds. The main entry at the northernmost bay comprises a glass-and-panel door framed by partial sidelights and an elliptical, leaded transom. The front porch spans the façade and the south elevation. Added after 1998, it has a clapboard knee wall and clapboard mansard roof with a slat work balustrade. The rectangular porch posts are spanned by deep, arched spandrels. An 1872 photograph of the house (see the image below) shows a Queen Anne style, open front porch; no porch is seen in a 1972 photograph of the house. The main entry fronts a four-step concrete stair that ends at the sidewalk.

The windows at the center addition are single and paired double-hung, six-over-six sash with flat surrounds and architraves. The openings at the westernmost addition, which features corner pilasters and a band course, include six-over-six windows and modern, triple-light fixed sash set close to the cornice and band course. A one-story shed extends from the southwest corner of the westernmost addition; an adjacent entry at the west elevation is sheltered by a shed roof.

294 Front Street is built in the Federal style (1780 –1820), the dominant architectural style in the United States during the early decades of the new republic. Like the preceding Georgian style, it was based on simple, rectangular building forms with strictly symmetrically-placed openings. It offered a refinement of the earlier style, however, with projecting wings, elegant ornamentation, and a general sense of lightness and restraint. Charles Bulfinch (1763-1844), considered America's first professional architect, is credited with introducing the style to the United States, where it was broadly disseminated through the pattern books of Asher Benjamin. Characteristic Federal-style features include the hipped roof, entry surround with elliptical transom and partial-height sidelights, and twelve-over-twelve window sash.

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.



1855 Walling map of Marion.

The town of Marion was established in 1852 when it broke off from the town of Rochester. The Village of Marion, the commercial and residential center of the town, is set on the western shore of Sippican Harbor which leads into Buzzards Bay. The northern portion of the Village running along Front Street, where this house is located, has been referred to historically as Old Landing. While there are several late 18th century buildings in the area, most of the houses along this northern section of Front Street were built in the first half of the 19th century. With a very few exceptions, the first owners of the houses were seamen. Maritime industries were dominant in Marion until the mid-19th century, when the advent of rail service began to facilitate tourism. At the same time, new cultural and educational institutions endowed by the founder of the nearby Tabor Academy, Elizabeth P. Taber, dramatically enriched the town. With this economic shift, some of the properties on Front Street became summer residences for city dwellers. Others were acquired by Tabor Academy for use as dormitories, and several became commercial properties, including the boatyard complex on the harbor side of Front Street.

This house appears on the 1855 and 1879 maps with W.C. Mendell [sic] shown as owner and on the 1903 map with T.E. Chapin as owner. The first recorded conveyance found for the property was its sale by Mary A. Mendall to Hosea

Knowlton in 1884. Although it is not part of an unbroken chain of ownership, a conveyance was found which documented the sale in 1839 of a tract of land and messuage [dwelling house with outbuildings] for \$900 in what appears to be the general location of the subject property from Stephen Delano to William C. Mendall.

William C. Mendall was born in Rochester in 1809, the son of William and Betsey Mendall. As noted in the 1867 *Directory of Plymouth County*, Mendall was a master mariner, and censuses from 1850 through 1880 reported his occupation as seaman. He was married in 1835 to Mary Ann Dexter Delano (1812-1890). Captain Mendall died in 1883 and his widow sold the house in 1884 to New Bedford lawyer Hosea Knowlton and his wife Sylvia B. Knowlton.

Born in rural Maine, Hosea Morrill Knowlton¹ (1847-1902) was the son of an itinerant Universalist clergyman, Isaac Knowlton. Hosea Knowlton worked his way through Tufts College followed by Harvard Law School, which he attended for only one year before being admitted to the Massachusetts Bar. He joined a law practice in New Bedford and within a few years started his own firm. Hosea Knowlton combined his law practice with politics with his election as representative to the Massachusetts General Court in 1875. He then served a term as state senator before being appointed district attorney for southeastern Massachusetts, a position that he held for 15 years. In 1893 he was elected Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and served in that role until 1902. Fame came to this skillful and highly successful criminal lawyer with his role as district attorney in the prosecution of Lizzie Borden for the murder of her parents in Fall River in 1892. He was joined in the prosecution by future United States Supreme Court Justice William H. Moody, and although Borden was acquitted, Knowlton's skill and intensity in his handling of the case was much admired. The subject house was the summer home of Knowlton until 1898 when it was sold to Harriet E. Chapin of Boston. The Knowltons had a new house built, also located on Front Street but directly on the waterfront at 283 Front Street (ca. 1900, The Knowlton House, MRN.29). After the death of her husband in 1902, Sylvia Knowlton became active in Marion community affairs. She was a founder and president of the Visiting Nurses Association, chair of the Marion branch of the American Red Cross, and member of the school board.

Harriet Esterbrooks Chapin (1856-1943) was the sister of Austin B.H. Chapin, a Boston real estate broker and insurance agent. Census records noted no occupation for Harriet, who lived with her brother, other siblings, and servants in Roxbury. While real estate was not listed as an occupation for Harriet Chapin, she appeared to have been a principal in a number of property sales in Boston. Occupancy of the subject property during her ownership is not clear. One of her siblings was Thomas E. Chapin, who

¹ "Ex-Attorney General Hosea Knowlton Passes Away," *The Boston Globe*, Boston, MA December 19, 1902.

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in the 1900 census was listed as a varnish salesman living with the rest of the family in Roxbury. This is likely the T.E. Austin who appears on the 1903 map as owner of the house. However, deed research clearly shows Harriet Austin as the property owner. Thomas Austin first appeared in the censuses for Marion in 1910. In 1910 and 1930 he was living on Front Street, but as a boarder. It seems probable that Harriet Chapin used this property as a rental during her 20+ years of ownership. By the 1920s the Chapin family had moved from Roxbury to Beacon Street in Brookline.

The property was purchased in 1920 by Florence R. Hill (1869-1953), a summer resident. She appeared to live most of her life in Syracuse, New York with censuses and directories of the time reporting her occupation variously as seamstress, furrier, and decorator. Florence Hill owned the house until her death in 1953.

Deed Research

Date	Book-Page	Grantor	Grantee
09-08-2004	29033-289	James B. Grinnell, Jr.	Frederick Rosiak
03-27-2002	21809-243	James T. & Linda S. Kenney	James B. Grinnell, Jr.
10-28-1986	7230-262	Conrad & Judith D. Chapman	James T. & Linda S. Kenney
07-26-1977	4298-219	L. Howard, Jr. & Maryett C. Carl	Conrad & Judith D. Chapman
06-10-1966	3300-270	Frederick Winston & Elizabeth M. Bendall	L. Howard, Jr. & Maryett C. Carl
08-01-1961	2869-436	Edward & A. Wylde Butt	Frederick Winston & Elizabeth M. Bendall
04-05-1957	2561-378	Estate of Willis Munro	Edward & A. Wylde Butt
11-03-1953	2317-152	Evelyn Will Olmstead et al.	Willis Munro
Probate		Florence R. Hill	Evelyn Will Olmstead et al.
05-25-1951	2151-387	Florence R. Hill	Willis Munro
05-04-1920	1357-118	Lester W. Jenney	Florence R. Hill
05-03-1920	1357-118	Harriet E. Chapin	Lester W. Jenney
09-28-1898	764-546	Sylvia B. & Hosea M. Knowlton	Harriet E. Chapin
11-01-1884	514-1	Mary A. Mendall	Hosea M. Knowlton
10-1-1839	2841-119	Stephen Delano	William C. Mendall

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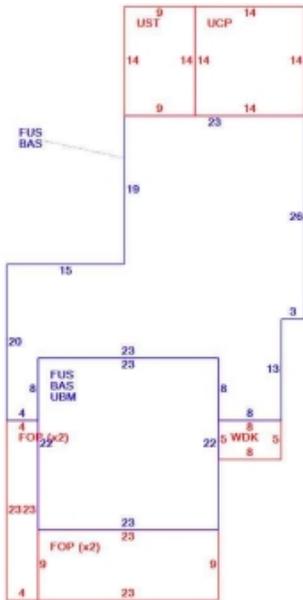
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Assessor's card plan



L. Howard Carl House, 1972. Photograph courtesy of Sippican Historical Society.



Sippican Historical Society ca. 1872

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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 Lynn Smiledge

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

This house is recommended as a contributing element in a potential National Register Historic District for the Old Landing Area of Marion Village. The Old Landing Area (MRN.I) is recommended as eligible for listing as a National Register District at the local level under Criterion A for Social History and Criterion C for Architecture. Old Landing is among the oldest neighborhoods in Marion, with development dating to the 18th century. Historically a maritime community with two wharves and a boat yard near the head of Sippican Harbor, the Old Landing area is a linear development of residences extending from Tabor Academy's campus on the south to Wareham Road (Rte. 6) on the north. The potential district's boundaries are those defined in the 1998 MHC survey for the Old Landing Area (MRN.I).

Under Criterion A, the area is recommended as eligible at the local level for its association with Marion's the maritime industry, upon which the economy of Marion depended from the 18th century to the mid-19th century. Home to two wharves and many mariners in the 19th century, the area today maintains its connection to the sea with the active operation of Burr Brothers Boatyard located on Sippican Harbor along the eastern boundary of the area.

Under Criterion C, the area is recommended as eligible at the local level in the area of Architecture for its nearly intact collection of houses that provides a sense of the progression of architectural styles from the late 18th through the early 20th centuries. The Old Landing Area contains mostly moderate- to large-scaled, one-and-one half to two-story wood-frame dwellings on generous lots in the Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, and Queen Anne styles. Along with several high-style examples of these styles, the area also includes several earlier dwellings that pre-date the building boom that began in the second half of the 19th century.

The majority of the resources here retain substantial integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, design, feeling, and association. The district would likely meet criteria A and C at the local level, with areas of significance in social history and architecture.