

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

17-46

Marion

MRN.10

Town/City: Marion

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Address: 135 Converse Road

Historic Name: Weston Allen - E.H. Wisner House

Uses: Present: Residential

Original: Residential

Date of Construction: Possibly ca. 1819

Source: Visual analysis

Style/Form: Federal Cape

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite block

Wall/Trim: Wood shingle / Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage-apartment (1936)

Cottage (1959)

Storage barn/horse sheds

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Replacement windows (after 1998)

Main block extended two bays to the south (after 1998)

North ell (mid-20th c.)

South addition (mid- to late-20th c.)

Northeast addition (late-20th c.)

Condition: Excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

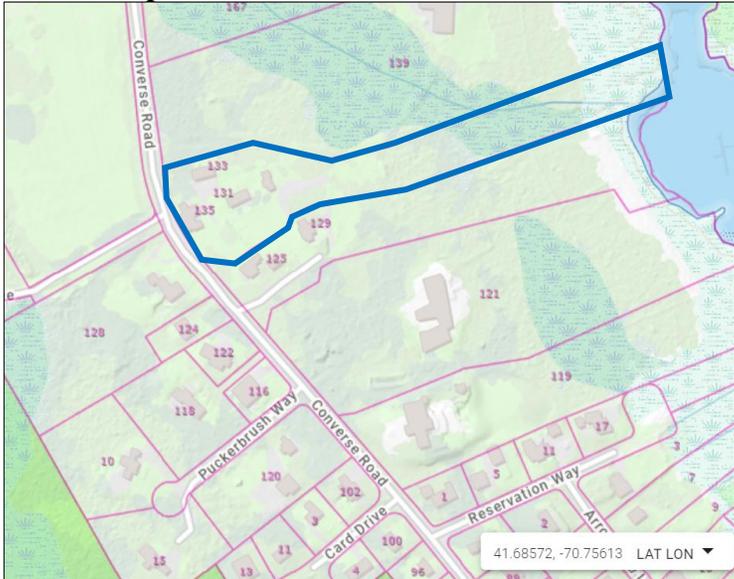
Acreage: 4.15

Setting: Diverse residential neighborhood developed in the mid-19th – early 20th centuries. Housing stock represents a range of styles including Cape, Federal, Greek Revival, Queen Anne, Craftsman and Colonial Revival. Settled mostly with moderately-sized, wood-frame, single-family houses on small- to large-sized lots.

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Lynn Smiledge

Organization: Marion Historical Commission

Date (*month/year*): October 2023

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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.

135 Converse Road occupies a long, narrow parcel on the east side of Converse Road that stretches to the western shore of Sippican Harbor and transitions to wetlands from west to east as it drops gently in grade. The house faces west and is set very close to the street at the midpoint of the western property line, which is bordered by a drystone wall. Low foundation plantings border the dwelling, which along with three adjacent outbuildings is surrounded by lawn dotted with shrubs and mature trees. Drystone walls border the north and west lot lines and intersect across the property to enclose the house and cottage. A low brick retaining wall extends south from the southeast corner of the garage apartment. A gravel driveway enters the property from the northwest corner of the property and ends in a large parking area at the garage apartment sited off the northeast corner of the house. Driveway spurs from the parking area run west to create a paved parking bay at the north elevation of the house, and southeast to serve a storage barn and a cottage sited east of the house. A long dock extends into Sippican Harbor at the shoreline.

The house comprises a one-and-one-half-story, seven-bay-by-two-bay, side-gabled main block with three dependencies including a one-story north ell, a one-story south addition, and a one-and-one-half-story northeast addition. Originally five bays wide, the dwelling was expanded after 1998 with the addition of two bays at the south elevation; it appears that the original fenestration pattern at the gable end was replicated at the addition. The main block was constructed ca. 1819 in the full Cape style and retains the majority of its original character-defining features. The house rests on a granite block foundation. The walls are clad in wood shingles and the roof is surfaced with asphalt shingles. A 20th century brick replacement chimney is centered on the roof ridge at the main block in alignment with the entry. A gable-wall chimney at the north elevation is enclosed by the north ell.

Trim elements at the main block include narrow corner boards and frieze boards. The windows at the first story are double-hung six-over-six sash with flat surrounds. They have flared lintels at the façade (west elevation), where they touch the frieze board, and lipped lintels at the side elevations. The windows at the façade have flat surrounds and blinds. Second story openings at the south gable end include one-over-one windows flanked by one-over-one, eave-closet windows surmounted by a small two-over-two window at the gable peak. These sash replaced twelve-over-twelve and six-over-six windows seen in early photographs of the house and described in the 1998 MHC Building Form B for the property. An enclosed, gabled entrance portico originally centered at the façade contains a glass-and-panel door framed by partial-height sidelights and a divided light elliptical transom. It replaced the original simple entry surround seen in an early photograph of the house (see image below) and appears to be a mid-20th century Colonial Revival addition. The door fronts a granite step and wide stone walkway that joins Converse Road at a break in the drystone wall.

The one-story, cross-gabled south addition is a screened porch with continuous louvered openings. It aligns along the south elevation of the main block and subsumed an earlier ell, as evidenced by its granite foundation and noted on the 1998 MHC Building Form B for the property. The one-story north ell, constructed of brick in the mid-20th century, is set back one bay from the façade of the main block. It has shallow one-over-one windows with blinds. The one-and-one-half-story, cross-gabled northeast addition is L-shaped and extends from the northeast corner of the main block. It is articulated with vertical trim boards and has bands of continuous four-over-four windows at the north and east walls. An entry unit at the east elevation adjacent to the north ell comprises a six-panel door flanked by eight-over-eight windows; the door fronts a concrete deck bordered by a fieldstone flank wall and granite steps leading to a stone pathway.

The two-story, side-gabled, south-facing garage-apartment located northeast of the house at the northern property line is eight bays wide and two bays deep. Constructed in 1936 according to town assessor's records and whimsically ornamented, it is clad with stucco at the first story and vertical-plank wood siding at the second story. The three garage door openings that occupy the

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westernmost bays at the first story have double-leaf, diagonal-slat doors with strap hinges. The easternmost bay contains a large window composed of five vertical piers separating stacked six-light sash. A shallow overhang at the second story is decorated with triangular brackets. The L-shaped, one-and-one-half-story cottage behind the storage barn, which was constructed in 1959, has vinyl siding and contemporary single and triple-mulled one-over-one windows. The garage-apartment and cottage are rental properties.

The Cape Cod house form, a one-story side-gabled house with a central chimney and steeply pitched roof, emerged in southeastern New England ca. 1700 and saw continued use through the mid-19th century. The full Cape design was one of the later iterations of the house type. Defining characteristics of the Cape form illustrated in this house include the original full Cape configuration (five bays with centered entry), side-gabled roof, center chimney, and corner and frieze boards. The entrance portico with its partial sidelights and elliptical fanlight appears to be a Colonial Revival-era interpretation of a characteristic Federal-era feature (1780–1820).

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.



The Village of Marion, the commercial and residential center of the town, is set on the western shore of Sippican Harbor. The town has historically consisted of a northern portion, often referred to as the Old Landing, and a southern portion, known once as Wharf Village but more commonly referred to today as The Village or Marion Village.

This house is located in the southernmost portion of Converse Road which runs from Marion Village southward towards Converse Point (formerly called Charles Neck Point), the end of the peninsula which forms the western side of Sippican Harbor. Originally called Nye Street, Converse Road was also inconsistently known as Pleasant Street or Charles Neck Road. When the 1903 map was drawn, this section of Marion was largely open with only a few scattered buildings. Today, the area is settled with late-20th and early-21st century houses at the midpoint of Charles Neck, and much earlier dwellings on large parcels at the southern part of the Neck as it approaches Converse Point.

1855 map.

This full Cape form house is seen on the 1855 map with Weston Allen shown as the owner. The owner is identified as J. [James] Luce on the 1879 map and E.H. [Elizabeth Horner] Wisner on the 1903 map. E.H. Wisner is the labeled owner of two dwellings in this general location. The northernmost house is the subject property and the southernmost building is the house at 125 Converse Road (ca.1900, Elizabeth H. Wisner House, MRN.608).

Weston Allen (1793-1878) was the son of Weston Allen (1741-1809) and Thankful Clark (1753-1853). He was married in 1819 to Patty Blankinship (1797-1841), the daughter of Capt. Job Blankinship and Elizabeth Hammond, and after her death to Nancy Hammett Snow (1798-1874). Census records noted his occupation as carpenter. It is likely that Weston Allen was the builder of this Cape form house around the time of his first marriage. In 1872 Weston and Nancy Allen sold the house and land for \$1,300 to Elizabeth F. Luce of New Rochelle, New York. Elizabeth Luce was the wife of James Luce, the likely owner appearing on the 1879 map. Title research did not show a clear chain of ownership between James and Elizabeth Luce and Elizabeth and Josephine Wisner.

Elizabeth Horner [var. Hornor] Wisner (1842-1930) was the daughter of William Henry Wisner and Eleanor Bowne Hornor of New York City. In a series of transactions beginning in the late 19th century, Elizabeth Wisner and her sister Josephine Wisner (1848-1914), both unmarried, began to purchase land on the eastern side of Converse Road including the subject property. In 1913 Elizabeth and Josephine Wisner conveyed all of their real estate holdings to their nephew, John H. Wisner, Jr.

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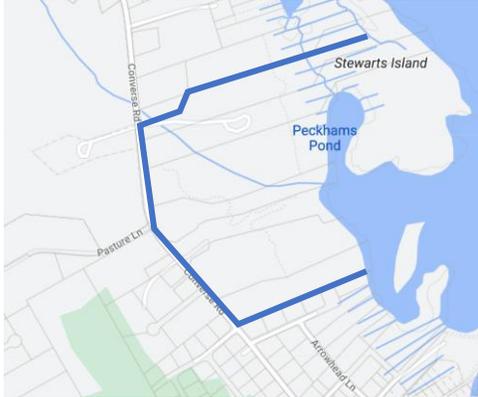
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Approximate boundaries of John H. Wisner properties in 1919.

John Honor Wisner Jr. (1879-1973) was born in Shanghai, China. Wisner was an engineer and a principal at Wesshoeft & Wisner, a highly successful international firm specializing in railroad construction founded by his father, John Horner Wisner, Sr. The senior Wisner built a Colonial Revival country estate in Summit, New Jersey now known as "The Clearing," the Reeves-Reed Arboretum.¹ John Wisner, Jr. was married to Sybil Holmes Buck (193-2004) in 1930. Summit was the couple's primary residence for 45 years and the subject property in Marion was their summer home.

In 1919 Wisner acquired an additional group of properties from George C. Thomas, bringing the total area under his ownership to 45 plus acres (shown as left). The subject property was conveyed to his wife Sybil shortly before his death, and she owned it until it was sold by her estate in 2008. At that point the property included several dwelling houses and outbuildings (see the land plan below), including 125 Converse Road (ca.1900, Elizabeth H. Wisner House, MRN.608) and 129 Converse Road (ca. 1913, John H. Wisner Cottage, MRN.609). The large property was purchased in 2008 by a development company, Copper Medal LLC, which converted

it to condominiums.

Title Research

Date	Book-Page (Certificate)	Grantor	Grantee
10-11-2018	50393-126	Copper Medal, LLC	Brittney L. Abbott & Joseph S. Whitney
09-25-2008	36405-338	Estate of Sybil Wisner	Copper Medal, LLC
12-02-1972	3844-293	John H. Wisner, Jr.	John H., Jr. & Sybil H. Wisner
12-30-1919	1359-576	George C. Thomas	John H. Wisner, Jr.
07-11-1913	1162-100	Elizabeth H. Wisner & Josephine Wisner	John H. Wisner, Jr.
			Elizabeth H. Wisner & Josephine Wisner
07-10-1872	391-285	Weston Allen	Elizabeth F. Luce

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 Smith, Pete. (ed.) *A Picture Postcard History of Marion, Massachusetts*. New Bedford, MA: Spinner Publications, 2008.

¹ <https://www.reeves-reedarboretum.org/discover/history/?The-Reeves-the-Reeds-The-Clearing-3>

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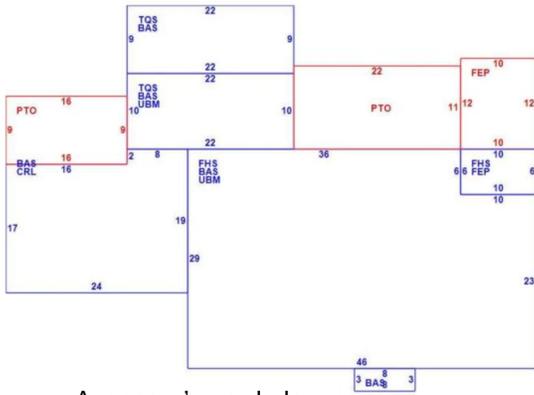
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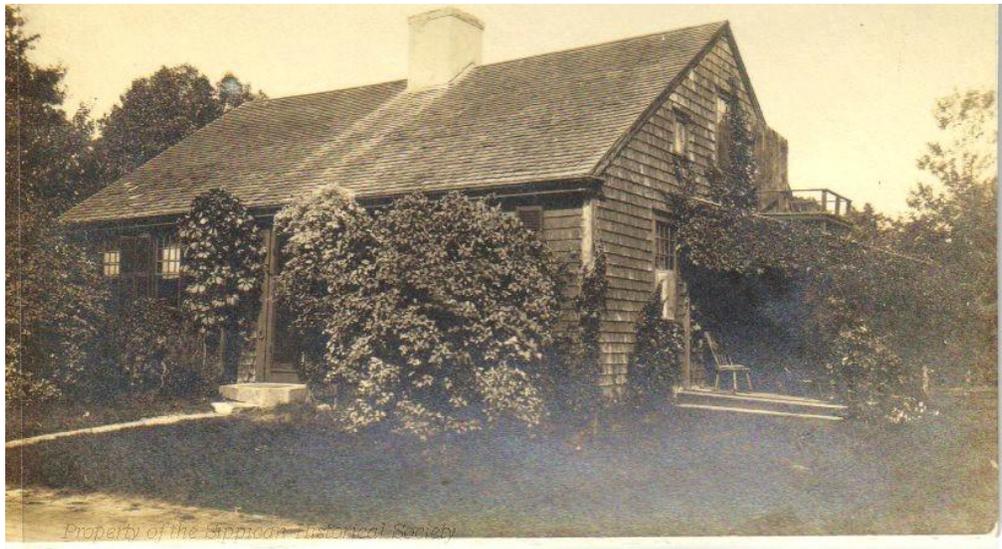
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Assessor's card plan



Garage-apartment, built 1936. West and south (façade) elevations.



"The Old Wisner House." Undated photograph courtesy of the Sippican Historical Society.