

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

20-13	Marion		MRN.48
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**Town/City:** Marion

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

**Address:** 66 Moorings Road

**Historic Name:** Moorings Bell Tower

**Uses:** Present: Residential

Original: Bell tower & observatory

**Date of Construction:** Ca. 1903

**Source:** Visual analysis

**Style/Form:** Queen Anne / Shingle Style

**Architect/Builder:** Probably Tristram H. Griffin

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: Fieldstone  
Wall/Trim: Wood Shingle / Wood  
Roof: Wood shingle

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
None

## Photograph



## Locus Map



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

Second floor addition  
Fenestration pattern  
Replacement windows  
West addition

**Condition:** Excellent

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

**Acreage:** 1.63

**Setting:** Sparsely settled area at Converse Point bordered by shoreline. Interior terrain is characterized by woods and marsh land. Populated primarily by large, waterfront seasonal residences built on large parcels in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Dwellings display the Queen Anne, Shingle, and Colonial Revival styles.

**Recorded by:** Lynn Smiledge  
**Organization:** Marion Historical Commission  
**Date** (*month/year*): January 2024

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

66 MOORINGS ROAD

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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.*

**66 Moorings Road** occupies a polygonal parcel on the west side of Moorings Road and faces east. This former bell tower is set close to the road near the southeast corner of the lot, which is wooded apart from two cleared areas. A cleared area surrounding the house is maintained in lawn, ground cover and grasses. A second cleared area extends northwards from the house as a strip. A gravel driveway enters the property from Moorings Road at the southeast corner of the property and ends in a parking area at the façade. The parking area is bounded by a low, serpentine fieldstone wall.

The dwelling is a two-story, wood-frame structure comprising a rectangular, four-bay-by-two-bay, side-gabled main block with an engaged, four-story pyramidal tower at the south elevation and a one-story addition at the north elevation. Constructed as a bell tower and observatory ca. 1903 in the Shingle Style, the structure retains many of its original character-defining features. The dwelling rises from a fieldstone foundation. The walls and the roof are sheathed in weathered wood shingles. A tall brick gable-wall chimney rises from grade at the north elevation and pierces the cornice. Early photographs of the building (see below) show that the second story at the main block was a later addition and that the fenestration pattern and sash styles have been significantly altered.

The house is minimally trimmed and has deep overhanging eaves. The three northernmost bays at the first story at the façade occupy a recessed panel. The main entry at the southernmost bay, which is also recessed, contains an arched glass-and-panel door and is surmounted by a small recessed balcony supported by narrow Doric columns with square wood-shingled bases. The balcony has a slat-work railing, flank walls capped with curved trim boards, and a shingled slope awning sheltering a glass-and-panel door. The windows at the first story are double-hung, two-over-one sash with narrow flat surrounds and metal slope awnings; the upper sash are divided horizontally. The windows at the second story are paired, mullied, one-over-one sash with arched single-light transoms.

The pyramidal tower extends two stories above the roof of the main block. It is capped with a square open porch with a hipped roof and deep overhanging eaves. Three Doric columns support the porch roof at its two outside corners. The porch is surrounded by a polygonal railed deck supported by flat-sawn brackets which offers a 360-degree vista. Fenestration at the tower includes single, double-hung windows with diamond-paned upper sash and single-light lower sash at each story; the windows have metal slope awnings with small curved brackets. An entry at the north elevation of the tower contains an arched glass-and-panel door sheltered by a wood-shingled slope awning with flat-sawn brackets. The door fronts a shallow stone stoop and short brick walkway.

A slender cylindrical tower with a conical base and tall conical roof is engaged with the pyramidal tower at the north wall. It rises one-half story above the roof of the pyramidal tower and is pierced with small fixed sash with diamond-shaped panes.

The one-story, full-length, flat-roofed addition at the west elevation has a roof deck with a slat-work railing. The window openings at both stories match those at the façade. A double door at the second story opens to the deck. The one-story, shed-roofed addition spanning the rear (north) elevation of the main block envelops the brick chimney at the first floor.

**66 Moorings Road** exhibits a charming blend of the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles. Queen Anne, the predominant style for domestic architecture in the United States between 1880 and 1900, was devised by a group of English architects and based on the visual vocabulary of late Medieval models. It was disseminated by the country's leading architectural magazine and by pattern books and mail-order house plans. Identifying features of the Queen Anne style seen in this building include its volumetric massing, asymmetry, and distinctive double tower. The Shingle Style is a uniquely American form which was introduced in the northeastern United States in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reached its zenith of expression in New

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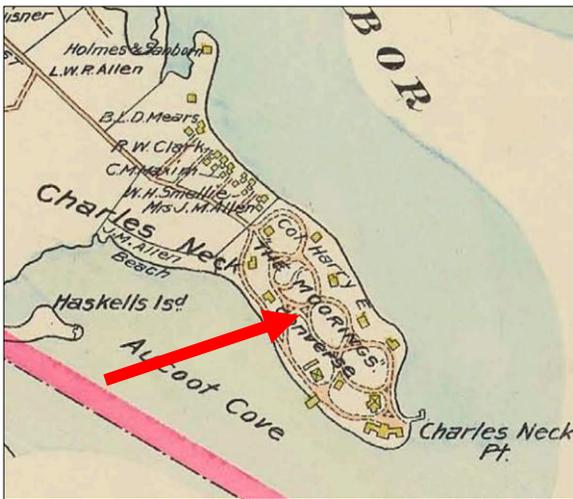
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England seaside resorts and country estates. The focus of the style was on complex shapes and forms encased within a surface of continuous, naturally weathered shingles on the roof and walls which created patterns of light and shadow, as seen in the subject building.

## 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.

This house is located at the end of Moorings Road, an approximately 0.5-mile-long extension of Converse Road [historically called Pleasant Street, Nye Street, or Charles Neck Road] which runs south from Marion Village to Converse Point [historically called Charles Neck Point], the southernmost end of the peninsula on the western shoreline of Sippican Harbor. Moorings Road, which loops back on itself at the tip of Converse Point, takes its name from "The Moorings," the name given to the Converse estate that occupies the end of the peninsula.



1903 map. Arrow shows approximate location of the bell tower.

shore of Buzzard's Bay."<sup>1</sup> Converse's new summer cottage, which he named "The Moorings," was designed by architect Tristram Griffin.

Tristram H. Griffin (1840-1927), who was born in Gloucester, was a Civil War veteran and later an active member of the Grand Army of the Republic. After his service, he studied architecture in the office of Benjamin Franklin Dwight and opened his own practice in Boston in 1870. Griffin became a well-known and prolific architect whose body of work included not only residential projects, including a house for Harry E. Converse in Malden, but many civic structures including the Malden Central Fire Station, the Malden YMCA at 83 Pleasant Street (1895, Malden Y.M.C.A. Building, MAL.178), and a number of schools. Griffin was also active in Malden city government, serving as a selectman and later as a member of the first board of alderman during the administration of mayor Elisha Converse.<sup>2</sup>

It can be reasonably assumed that the Shingle Style subject building was constructed around the same time as the main house and was designed by the same architect. This 40-foot bell tower and observatory became an immediate landmark and navigational reference point on Buzzards Bay. According to an interpretive caption on an historic image of the tower in the collection of the Sippican Historical Society, a more than one-ton bell was installed in the tower. It was eventually connected to an electrically powered system with seven street fire alarm boxes and served as a fire alarm for both the Converse estate and the town.

<sup>1</sup> *New Bedford Evening Standard*, June 3, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> "Tristram Griffin to be Buried Today," *The Boston Globe*, Boston, Aa March 10, 1927, p. 10.

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After the death of Harry Converse in 1920, the property was conveyed to three of his children, Margaret Converse Butler (b.1896), Parker Converse (1897-1965), and Roger Wolcott Converse (1900-1969). In 1922 the siblings drew up a plan subdividing of the Moorings estate into 24 building lots. (See the land plan below.) In a 1995 recorded interview, H. [Harry] Peter Converse, the son of Parker Converse, described how the property was divided:

“They cut the point in half and Aunt Peggy [Margaret Converse Butler] took everything on the Aucoot Cove side and this is after my grandfather [Harry E. Converse] died leaving the land to his children. Dad [Parker Converse] had the land on the Sippican Harbor side and Uncle Govy [Roger Converse] got a strip across the middle which in my youth was called Govy’s Alley.”<sup>3</sup>

Parker Converse acquired the subject property as part of this arrangement, and it remained in the Converse family until 1996. It is not known when the tower was converted to residential use, but it was referred to as a dwelling in a 1959 article in the *New Bedford Times*. The article reported that a fire had caused \$10,000 damage to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Courtland Converse “at Bell Tower on Converse Point.”<sup>4</sup> The property was purchased by the current owner in 1998.

Title Research

Date	Book-Page (Certificate)	Grantor	Grantee
11-03-1998	16776-183	Estate of John M. Bolger	Neil A. & Jane M. Pappalardo
03-14-1996	14214-249	Jonathan S. Converse et al.	John M. Bolger
	149159	June B. Converse	Jonathan S. Converse et al.
06-19-1950	2101-355	Roger W. Converse	June B. Converse
08-29-1924	1467-440	Parker Converse & Margaret C. Butler	Roger W. & Barbara Converse
07-28-1922	1422-395	Harold S. Davis	Margaret C. Butler, Parker Converse, & Roger Converse
07-28-1922	1422-394	Estate of Harry E. Converse	Harold Davis
11-18-1898	777-57	Estate of Marian Hovey	Harry E. Converse
06-19-1885	526-119	Horace S. Crowell	Marian Hovey
06-19-1885	516360	Emma R. Blake	Horace S. Crowell
		Estate of Lyman Blake	Emma R. Blake
01-23-1880	459-198	Nelson Sanborn	Lyman R. Blake
01-17-1879	457-285	John W. & Lizzie W.R. Allen	Lyman R. Blake
09-11-1878	442-229	John W. & Lizzie W.R. Allen	Lyman R. Blake
04-26-1875	421-11	Elizabeth & James C. Luce	John M. Allen
10-07-1872	395-202	Thomas M. LeBaron & Nahum F. Morse	Elizabeth Luce
03-19-1864	332-244	Estate of John B. Blankinship	Thomas M. LeBaron & Nahum F. Morse

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

- Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org: census records, vital records, city directories  
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*Atlas of Plymouth County*, Boston, MA: L.J. Richards Co., 1903  
*Map of the Town of Marion, Plymouth County, Massachusetts* 1855 H.F. Walling  
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 Rosbe, Judith. *Marion*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.  
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 Smith, Pete. (ed.) *A Picture Postcard History of Marion, Massachusetts*. New Bedford, MA: Spinner Publications, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Transcript of audio tape, Sippican Historical Society Object 2005.007.003 (1995).

<sup>4</sup> “Fire Damages Marion Home,” *New Bedford Standard-Times*, March 14, 1959.

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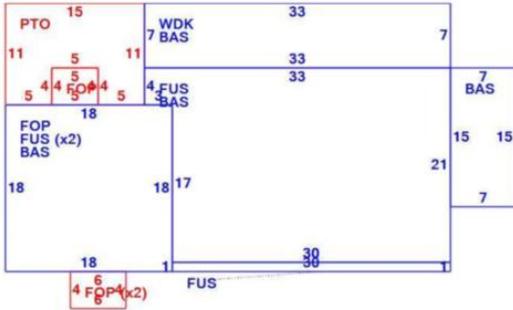
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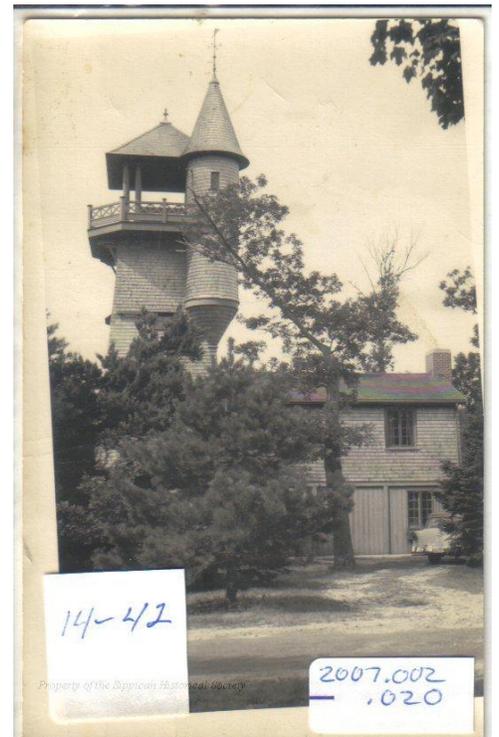
Assessor's card plan



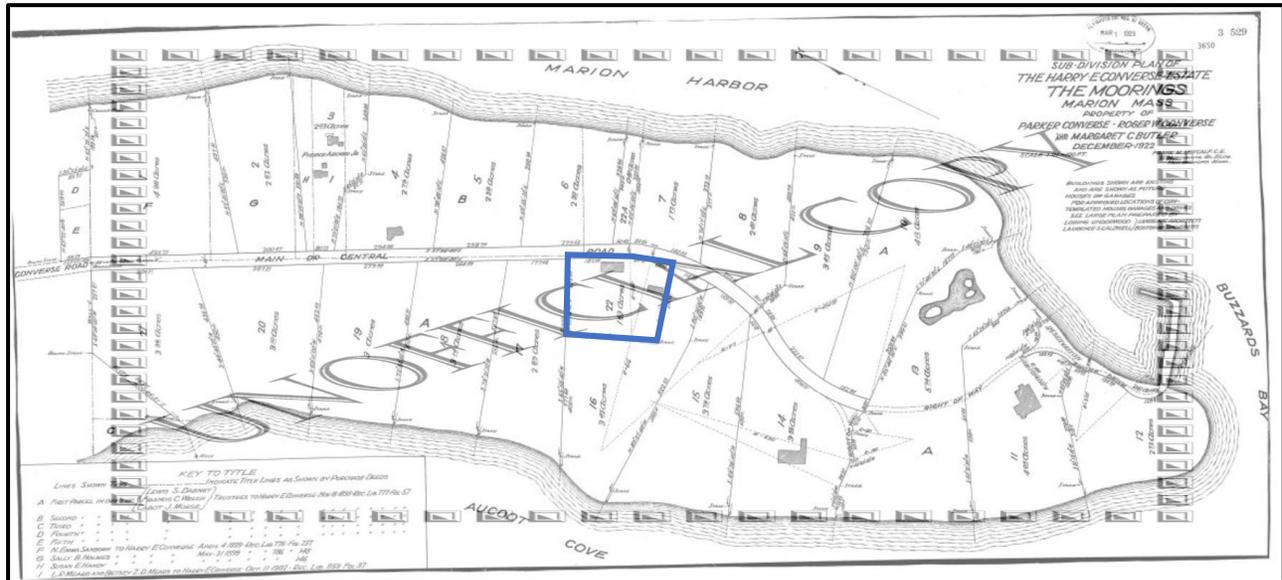
North and west elevations.



Undated postcard image showing building prior to the addition of the second floor.



Undated photograph. Image courtesy of the Sippican Historical Society.



Subdivision Plan of Harry E. Converse Estate, 1922. Plymouth County Registry of Deeds Plan Book 3, Page 529. Subject property outlined in blue.