

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

6-25	Marion	M	MRN.175
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Town/City: Marion

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

Address: 8 West Drive

Historic Name: Charles W. Leatherbee House / "Merrycourt"

Uses: Present: Residential

Original: Residential

Date of Construction: Ca.1901

Source: Map & title research.

Style/Form: Shingle Style

Architect/Builder: Attr. Coolidge & Carlson

Exterior Material:

- Foundation: Not visible
- Wall/Trim: Wood shingle & Wood
- Roof: Wood and asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

None apparent

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

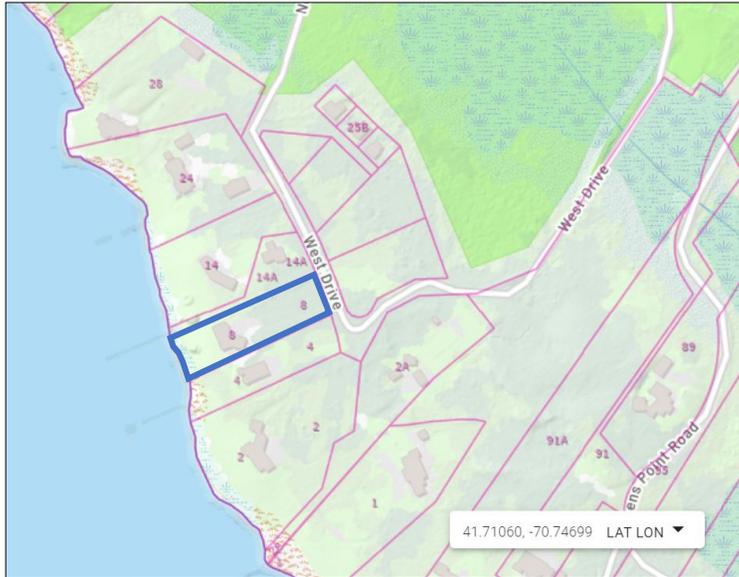
Acreage: 1.11

Setting: Moderately settled area developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries on the eastern shore of Sippican Harbor. Small enclave of large summer residences on generous lots in the Shingle and Colonial Revival styles. Terrain distinguished by rolling lawns, elaborate gardens, and wooded areas.

Photograph



Locus Map



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

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

8 West Drive

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Area(s) Form No.

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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.

8 West Drive occupies a narrow rectangular lot that meets the eastern shore of Sippican Harbor. The dwelling is positioned in the western half of the parcel and faces east. Low foundation plantings line the façade, and heavier shrubs border the west elevation. The property west of the house drops gently in grade to the waterfront and is maintained in lawn. A dock extends into the harbor at the shoreline. The eastern half of the parcel is wooded. A gravel driveway enters the property from West Drive and ends in a parking area at the façade (east elevation) of the house.

This Shingle Style house was built around 1901 and retains a high degree of architectural integrity. Similar in form but less elaborate than the house next door at 2 West Drive, it is a two-story building comprising a side-gabled main block with a two-story wing extending from one end at a 45-degree angle. The steep gambrel roof flares at the eaves. Like some other waterfront houses in Marion, its visual interest is focused on the rear, shoreline-facing elevation, which includes a deep verandah. The house is clad in wood shingles. The lower roof slopes are surfaced with wood shingles and the upper slopes with asphalt shingles. Short brick chimneys rise from the roof ridge at the gable ends of the main block and from the west roof slope of the south wing.

Trim comprises frieze boards and band courses at the gable ends. A nearly continuous shed dormer dominates the main block and south wing at the façade. The dormer at the main block is surmounted in turn by a shallow shed dormer at the upper roof slope; the upper dormer has mullied, four-light fixed sash. The main entry, which occupies the center bay of the main block, contains a glass-and-panel door framed by full-height blinds. It is flanked by a single six-over-two window at the north bay and a tripartite window at the south bay with diamond-paned upper sash. A deep recess at the junction of the main block and south wing features a balcony with a shingled knee wall at the second story. An entry pierces the south wall of the south wing. The fenestration is asymmetrically placed at all elevations of the house and includes six-over-two, eight-over-two, eight-over-eight, single-light sash, and fixed multi-light sash of various sizes. Mullied eight-light casements occupy the gable peaks at the main block, and there is a semi-hexagonal oriel at the south elevation.

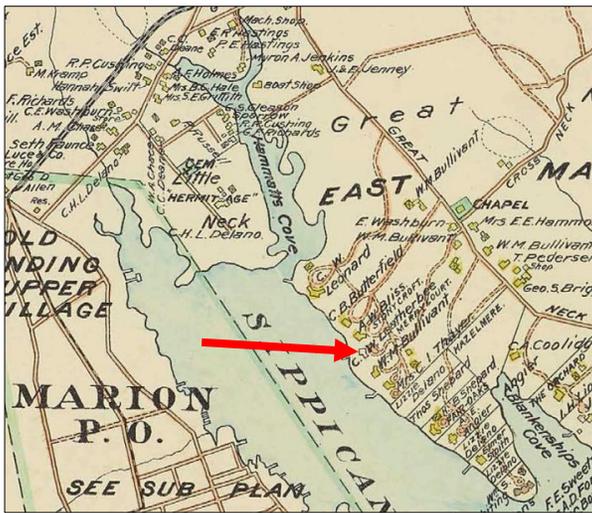
The sweeping porch roof at the west elevation is a dramatic extension of the lower roof slope. The northern third of the porch is enclosed by a bank of one-light windows over a shingled knee wall. The southern two-thirds of the porch is open and supported by a combination of heavy wood-shingled posts and Doric columns. An entry fronts a two-step stair that descends to the lawn. A continuous shed dormer at the lower roof slope contains an off-center, semi-hexagonal dormer with a pyramidal roof. A four-part oriel wraps the northwest corner of the lower roof slope.

8 West Drive is a fine example of a Shingle Style house. The Shingle Style is a uniquely American form which was introduced in the northeastern United States in the last quarter of the 19th century and reached its zenith of expression in New England seaside resorts and country estates. A high-fashion style favored by architects, it was primarily employed from 1880 to 1900. 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. In addition to the use of wood shingles, the subject house exhibits other elements of the style including the gambrel roofs with flared eaves, shed dormers, open porch with shingled posts, recess and balcony at the façade, and oriels.

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 peninsulas, called necks, surrounding Sippican Harbor remained largely undeveloped until the last quarter of the 19th century. The land was used for common pasturage, and salt marsh hay was a principal crop. Sippican Neck, which bounds the harbor on the east, is shown to be sparsely settled on the 1855 map. Early Marion families including the Blankinships, Briggses, and Ellises were among the few property owners in the area. The 1879 map shows the neck still largely undeveloped, but by 1903 growth of the area is seen along the northwestern shoreline with numerous residences on large parcels facing the harbor. West Drive is linked to Point Road, which runs north from Butler’s Point (also called Ruggles Point) at the south end of the neck to County Road, where it terminates.



1903 map.

This house appears on the 1903 map with C.W. [Charles Williams] Leatherbee shown as the owner. It is also labeled “Merrycourt.” The dwelling was built on land which was purchased in 1900 by Harriet G. and Charles Leatherbee from William and Libbie Bullivant. It is likely that the house was built by Weatherbee shortly after the land purchase.

Along with the other houses in the West Drive enclave, it is reasonable to attribute the design of this house to architects Coolidge & Carlson. The 1998 MHC Area Form (MRN.M) for the West Drive area, which includes the subject property, cites a 1919 article in *The American Architect* which credited the design of the houses at 14 West Drive (MRN.176) and 24 West Drive (MRN.177) to the firm of Coolidge & Carlson and extrapolates that attribution to all of the houses on West Drive. That firm was led by J. [Joseph] Randolph Coolidge, Jr. (1864-1928). A graduate of Harvard College, Coolidge studied architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the University of Berlin. Coolidge & Carlson has been credited with the design of ten residences in Marion, most of them in the Shingle Style, at the turn of the 20th century. These dwellings are all located on Allen’s Point Road, West Drive, and Point Road. In addition to residential work,

Coolidge & Carlson was responsible for a number of commercial, municipal, and academic buildings including Claflin Hall at Wellesley College (1917, WEL.436), and the West Hill Apartment House (1916, BOS.15879) and Brimmer Street Garage (1909, BOS.15711) in Boston. There appears to be no professional or family connection to Charles Allerton Coolidge of the Boston architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, who also designed homes in Marion and was himself a summer resident.

The parcel that Leatherbee purchased in 1900 was a portion of a parcel of land on Sippican Neck acquired by Libbie Bullivant in 1895 from Ella Kellen, the wife of Boston lawyer William Vail Kellen. Kellen had acquired this land through several purchases from local land owners including Edwy Hammond, Howard Briggs and Abby Delano. William Vail Kellen (1852-1942), who was born in Truro, graduated from Brown University in 1872 and later served on the board of trustees of that school. He received a law degree from Boston University in 1875 and practiced law in Boston until his death. He was married to Ella Sturtevant (1853-1946).

William Maurice Bullivant (1858-1939) was born in New Jersey and moved with his family to Boston as a boy. He entered the leather business and eventually became the founder and president of the Northwestern Leather Company.¹ Bullivant began summering in Marion in the early 1890s, and soon became active in the Marion real estate market.² According to the 1998 MHC Area Form MRN.M for the West Drive area, over time he acquired more than 450 acres of property in Great Neck. Bullivant was the owner of several other East Marion properties including 683 Point Road (early 19th c., Union Chapel – John M. & Ruth C. Berto House, MRN.654), 669 Point Road (ca. 1797, Ephraim Allen – Capt. Edwy E. Hammond/Clement M. Hammond House,

¹ “William M. Bullivant,” *The Boston Globe*, Boston, MA, May 29, 1939.
² “Marion Man Dies Suddenly,” *The Standard-Times*, New Bedford, MA, May 28, 1939.

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MRN.57) and the adjacent house at 2 West Drive (ca. 1900, William M. Bullivant House, MRN. 174). William Bullivant was first married to Libbie Priscilla Lodge (1859-1911) of Boston and later to Susan Ross (1857-1937) of Portland, Maine.

Harriet Gray Felton Leatherbee (1855-1943) purchased the property from William Bullivant in 1900. Her husband, Charles William Leatherbee (1852-1926), was born in Boston, the son of lumber merchant William Holt Leatherbee. Charles Leatherbee joined his father's business after attending Boston English High School and eventually became its proprietor.³ The couple owned this house until 1925 when it was purchased by Philip L. Reed.

Born in Beverly and a graduate of Philips Academy in Andover, Philip Loring Reed (1883-1964) was an executive with the Chicago-based Armour Company. He joined the meat processing company in 1904 and served as treasurer and executive vice president. In 1937 Reed moved to Dedham, which became his primary residence, to operate a Boston area-based subsidiary of Armour. He served as director of a number of companies and trustee of several educational and philanthropic organizations. Philip Reed and his wife Sarah Bond Morrill Shattuck (1895-1964) owned this house for 22 years.⁴

From 1943 until 1947 the property was held by Edwin V. Babbitt and his wife Dorothy D. Babbitt. Edwin Babbitt (1926-2005) was a lifelong resident of Marion, where he attended Tabor Academy. He served as president of the Babbitt Steam Specialty Company of New Bedford, a business started by his grandfather. An active member of the Marion community, Edwin Babbitt was one of the founders of the Marion Art Center.⁵

In 1947 Dorothy Babbitt sold three parcels, including the subject parcel, to the Howard D. Johnson Company, which was described in the deed as "a Massachusetts corporation having a usual place of business in the City of Quincy." The Howard Johnson Company, an American chain of restaurants and motels and the first modern restaurant franchise, was founded in Quincy by entrepreneur Howard Deering Johnson. It is not known how the company employed the dwelling.

This house was purchased by the current owner in 1981.

Title Research

Date	Book-Page (Certificate)	Grantor	Grantee
04-15-1981	4978-341	Lewis P., Cyrus D. & Paul D. Lipsitt	Nancy K. Boit
07-23-1979	4693-237	John A. & Karen H. Perkins	Lewis P., Cyrus D. & Paul D. Lipsitt
06-06-1958	2635-136	Hunter G. & Marjorie Scott Trotter	John A. & Karen H. Perkins
11-28-1952	2246-90	Howard D. Johnson Company	Hunter G. & Marjorie Scott Trotter
05-13-1947	1962-371	Dorothy D. Babbitt	Howard D. Johnson Company
04-20-1943	1843-221	Philip L. Reed	Dorothy D. Babbitt
10-13-1925	1497-253	Harriet G. & Charles Leatherbee	Philip L. Reed
12-01-1900	815-477	William W. & Libbie P. Bullivant	Harriet G. Leatherbee
10-10-1895	697-519	William V. & Ella S. Kellen	Libbie P. Bullivant

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org: census records, vital records, city directories
Atlas of Plymouth County, Boston, MA: George H. Walker & Co., 1879
Atlas of Plymouth County, Boston, MA: L.J. Richards Co., 1903
Map of the Town of Marion, Plymouth County, Massachusetts 1855 H.F. Walling
 McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019.
 Plymouth County Registry of Deeds
 Rosbe, Judith. *Marion*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.
 Rosbe, Judith. *Marion in the Golden Age*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2009.
 Sippican Historical Society: online database

³ "Newton," *Boston Globe*, Boston, MA October 5, 1926.

⁴ "Philip L. Reed," *The Chicago Tribune*, Chicago, IL, July 28, 1964.

⁵ "Edwin Babbitt, 79, headed company," *The Boston Globe*, Boston, MA September 4, 2005.

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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 _____ Edward Gordon / Lynn Smiledge _____

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

This house and the other dwellings in the West Drive Area (MRN.M) are recommended for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as contributing to the prospective Allen’s Point District (MRN.C). This small waterfront development on the eastern shore of Sippican Harbor includes five architecturally significant residences in the Shingle and Colonial Revival styles. Built between 1900 and 1905 for Boston-area businessmen, these seasonal dwellings represent the work of the firm Coolidge & Carlson. The nearby Allen’s Point area, home to a collection of early 20th-century high-style seasonal residences in the Shingle, Tudor Revival, and Colonial Revival styles, also includes the work of Coolidge & Carlson.

Under Criterion C, the West Drive Area is recommended as eligible at the local level in the area of Architecture for its intact collection of distinguished, high-style dwellings built during the peak of Marion’s development as a desirable summer destination. The Boston firm of Coolidge & Carlson has been credited with the design of ten residences in Marion, most of them in the Shingle Style, at the turn of the 20th century.

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