

FORM B – BUILDING

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

14 24 Marion N MRN.60

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

Town/City: MARION

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

Photograph



Address: 8 Spring Street

Historic Name: Elizabeth Taber Library and Natural History Museum

Uses: Present: Institutional – Library

Original: Institutional – Library/ Museum

Date of Construction: 1872

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

Style/Form: Italianate

Architect/Builder: O. F. Hackett/ Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*)*:

One-Story north and south wings (mid-20th century)

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.33 acres

Setting: Together with the Marion Town House to the south, Sippican School to the north and Pythagorean Hall across the street to the east, the Elizabeth Taber Library and Museum forms an architecturally distinguished node of institutional buildings.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

Organization: Sippican Historical Society

Date (*month / year*): February 2023

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

8 SPRING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

N

MRN.60

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)

Architecturally, The Elizabeth Taber Library and Natural History Museum is a fine example of an early 1870s institutional building. Clad with clapboards, this cross-shaped building rises 2½-stories from a granite block foundation to a low pitched hip roof. In terms of massing, its main facade is formal and symmetrical exhibiting a pedimented center pavilion and flanking "wings". Set back from the center pavilion's pediment is an octagonal cupola whose walls are pierced by oculus windows and roof is enclosed by an elegant balustrade. One-story north and south one-bay by five-bay wings post-date 1972 and exhibit surface treatments identical to those of the original building, including keystone arched windows, Doric corner boards and bracketed cornice. Projecting from the center pavilion is an ornate portico characterized by paired and single fluted Corinthian columns which rise from a substantial granite block platform to a molded entablature that is sheltered by the deep bracketed eaves of the porch roof.

The building is clad in wood clapboard, and the roof is clad in asphalt shingles (wood shingles originally). No longer extant is the ornate balustrade on the front porch roofs which was extant until at least the early 1970s. Opening on to the porch roof are tripartite arched windows. The edges of the center pavilion's and flanking wings' first floor are accented with quoins. The second floor of this building is edged by broad Doric cornerboards (flat columns). In general, first floor windows of the main facade are fully enframed and surmounted by deep bracketed cornices. Narrow double windows appear on either side of the center pavilion while identically rendered single windows pierce the pavilion's narrow side walls. The windows of the second floor are narrow and culminate in key stone arches which project deeply from wall surfaces.

This building has been modernized-little in the way of original fabric remains.

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 1871-1872, the Elizabeth Taber Library and Natural History Museum was the first of numerous philanthropic gifts to the town of Marion by Elizabeth Sprague Pitcher Taber. According to Edmund Tripp's *Reflections on a Town*, "no other individual in Marion's history has done more or had such a lasting effect on the town". Born in Marion on August 22, 1791, Elizabeth Pitcher Taber was the daughter of mariner Theophilus Pitcher (1762-1838) and Sarah Foster. Her paternal grandfather, Dr. John Pitcher, was born in Scituate in 1732 and was "a physician eminent in his profession and chief surgeon of a regiment in the Revolutionary War." By the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Sprague in 1760, he was living in Rochester (Marion). During the early years of her parents' marriage, the family lived on a little lane that once ran between Main and South Street, later moving to a house at 18 Main Street - none of these houses are still standing. As a philanthropist, Mrs. Taber followed the example set by her brother, Captain John Pitcher who was a major benefactor of the Marion Congregational Church, pledging \$1,000 towards its construction.

By the time Mrs. Taber set her sights on improving Marion during the early 1870s, the town's shipping activities were in decline and its status as a premiere east coast summer resort was still in its infancy. In 1871, The Elizabeth Taber Library and Natural History Museum's lot was carved from a 10-acre tract of land owned by Captain Henry M. Allen. This land bordered a country way known as Academy Lane, later Spring Street. In 1855, Mrs. Taber made her earliest known gift to her native town - a donation of \$200 towards establishing a public library. Beginning ca. 1860, the library was housed in the Sippican Seminary (no longer extant) on the present site of St. Gabriel's Church, and by 1867 the library association no longer held meetings. Prior to the Taber Library's construction, the Marion Library Association's collection of "ancient books" had been housed on the second floor of Postmaster Dr. Walton Nathan Ellis at 27 Main Street.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

8 SPRING STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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Constructed in 1871-1872 by an unidentified master builder or architect, Mrs. Taber granted the library and museum an income, bequeathing \$15,000 to the former and \$6,000 to the latter. Additionally, she insured the building for \$4,000 and stated that her generous gift represented "a testimonial of my esteem and kind regards for the Library association and Natural History Society and for the inhabitants of Marion, generally."

By the late-1870s, the Taber Library and Natural History Museum had become a key component of the Tabor Academy campus. The natural history museum has been eclipsed in importance by the library which was expanded by north and south wings during the mid-20th century. Encompassing a collection of rocks, minerals, stuffed birds and other curiosities, the second floor museum was designed to complement the first floor's book-learning activities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Maps and Atlases:

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

1903, *Atlas of Surveys of Plymouth County*. Springfield, MA: L. J. Richards Co., 1903.

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.

Tripp, Edmund H. *Reflections on a Town*. Marion: The Sippican Historical Society, 1991.

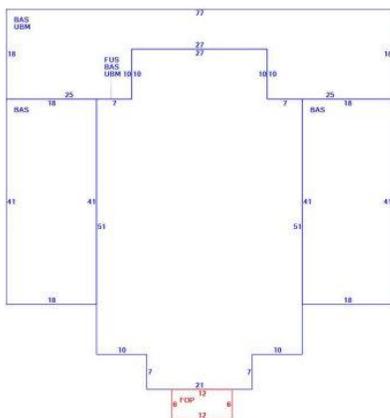


Figure 1. Marion Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from Spring Street, looking southwest.

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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-18th century. With the rise of saltmaking, shipyards, and whaling, maritime activity increased dramatically into the mid-19th 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-19th 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.

*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).