

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

16-138A

Marion

MRN.L

MRN.172

**Town/City:** Marion

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

**Address:** 72 (formerly 74) Water Street

**Historic Name:** George U. Crocker House

**Uses:** Present: Residential

Original: Residential

**Date of Construction:** Ca. 1897

**Source:** Map and deed research

**Style/Form:** Queen Anne

**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: Not visible

Wall/Trim: Wood shingle / Wood

Roof: Asphalt

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**

Garage

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

Window replacement

South porch entry (after 1902)

**Condition:** Excellent

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

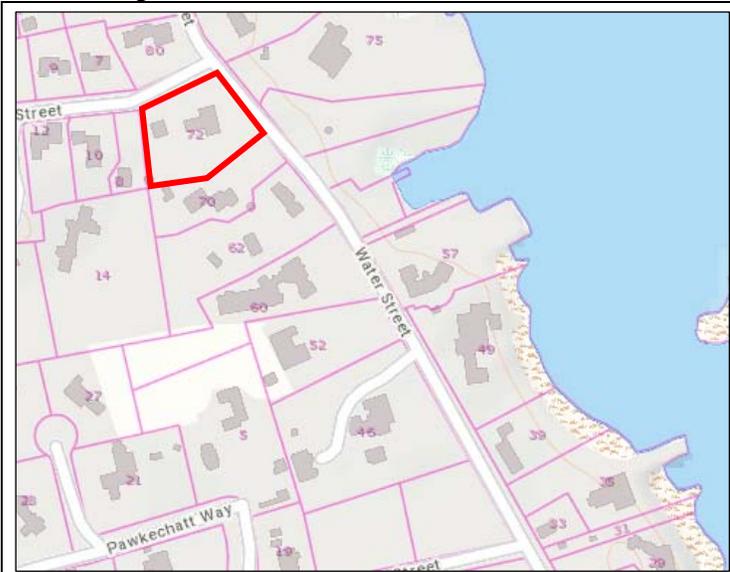
**Acreage:** 0.59

**Setting:** Homogeneous residential neighborhood of predominately high-style Shingle Style and Queen Anne houses, principally developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Surrounded mostly by large, wood-frame, single-family houses on generous lots. In close proximity to Sippican Harbor.

## Photograph



## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Lynn Smiledge

**Organization:** Marion Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): January 2022

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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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.*

**72 Water Street** occupies an irregularly-shaped lot at the southwest corner of the intersection of Vine and Water Streets. The house is positioned at the approximate center of the parcel and faces east. The yard is maintained chiefly in grass and is dotted with trees and shrubs; the house is surrounded with low foundation plantings. The property is bordered by a picket fence along Water Street and a row of tall arbor vitae along Vine Street. The southern boundary is lined with dense vegetation.

The building is a two-and-one-half-story, wood-frame house with steeply-gabled roofs. It has an L-shaped plan with a prominent cross-gable at the façade (east elevation) and a gabled west wing. Constructed ca. 1900 and retaining many if not all of its original character-defining features, it is an excellent example of the Queen Anne style. The second story deeply overhangs the first story at the main block, which is wrapped by a porch that spans the south elevation and extends north along the façade (east elevation) to end at the main entry. The house is clad in weathered wood shingles finished with flat wood trim. The roof is surfaced with asphalt shingles. The building's three brick chimneys include a corbelled chimney rising from the east roof slope of the main block; a chimney at the north slope of the west wing; and a tall, narrow eave-wall chimney rising from the ground at the southwest corner of the west wing.

Strong visual interest is provided at the façade. At the first story the northernmost bay is set back from the cross gable and clipped at the corner, where a slender Doric column supports the floor above. The roof is notched above the bay and has a small, hip-roofed dormer. A recessed opening with a curved sidewall occupies the southernmost bay at the second story. The hip-roofed porch has slender Doric columns, a slat work railing, and a vertical slat skirt; the openings at the southeast corner are screened. Openings at the façade include asymmetrically-placed six-over-one and two-over-two double-hung windows, fixed multi-light casements, and fixed multi-light sash with decorative muntin patterns. Some of these windows replaced awning and casement windows seen in a 1902 photograph of the house (see image below). The entry at the cross gable fronts a three-step wooden stair and a walkway of slate pavers leading to Water Street that widens to surround a circular planting bed.

The portion of the porch spanning the south gable end of the main block is enclosed and contains a door with a complex, pedimented surround. The entry unit comprises a French door with a triangular transom and multi-light sidelights flanked by stacked glazed panels with decorative muntin patterns. This entry has been modified from its original configuration as seen in a photograph taken in 1902 (see image below.) The base of the closed pediment at the attic level overhangs the second story, where the recessed openings at the east and west corners of the house are marked by curved walls.

The west wing has hipped dormers at both roof slopes and contains primarily six-over-one, double-hung windows. A small, hip-roofed projection occupies the junction with the main block at the south elevation; an entry at the wing's westernmost bay fronts a four-step wood stair with slat work side railings. A full-width, flat-roofed porch with shingled side walls and a shed-roofed trellis spans the west elevation of the west wing. It faces the east side of the front-gabled, north-facing, two-car garage that is sited near the northwest corner of the property. A gravel driveway leads to the garage from Vine Street.

**72 Water Street** is arguably the finest example of the Queen Anne style in Marion. Queen Anne was the dominant style for domestic architecture in the United States between 1880 and 1900. Devised by a group of English architects and based on the visual vocabulary of late Medieval models, Queen Anne encompasses a wide range of architectural features from several stylistic traditions. The style gained popularity after being seen at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. 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 house include its steeply pitched roofs; asymmetrical façade; cross gables; irregular window placement and decorative muntin patterns; varied wall planes and projections; and open porch.

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Area(s) Form No.

MRN.L	MRN.172
-------	---------

## 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 section of Marion Village near the waterfront, which before 1860 was largely uninhabited. Prior to that time Marion, like other coastal towns, was dependent on fishing, coastal shipping and related businesses such as the production of salt from sea water. Salt was a vital commodity for fisheries, and this section of Marion Village was the site of several salt works. Maritime industries were dominant in Marion until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> 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 Tabor Academy, Elizabeth P. Taber, dramatically enriched the community.

Affluent urban dwellers from cities like Boston and New York were now able to travel in comfort to seaside destinations like Marion. The town began to attract many notable political, literary, and art world figures seeking a genteel seaside respite. Initially visitors stayed at hotels or rented private houses, but as the end of the century neared and Marion became nationally known as a desirable vacation destination, wealthy individuals began to build their own permanent summer residences. This desirable waterfront area, once home to salt works, became the site of grand summer cottages. These imposing houses include an outstanding collection of Shingle Style residences and fine examples of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles. Several of these residences were designed by prominent American architects including Charles A. Coolidge, James T. Kelley and William Gibbons Preston. Henry Hobson Richardson, the most celebrated American architect of the day, designed the first Shingle Style house in Marion. It was built in 1881 for the Reverend Percy Browne at 192 Front Street (1881, Rev. Percy Browne-Sidney Hosmer House, MRN. 211) just north of this waterfront neighborhood.

This house appears on the 1903 map with G.U. Crocker as the owner. The first recorded conveyance found for the property registered its transfer from James Luce to Francis B. Austin in 1884. Francis Boylston Austin (d.1887) was a Boston iron merchant who was very active in the city's real estate market. The property was purchased from James Luce, who owned an adjacent lot. In 1896 it was sold to George U. Crocker, who commissioned a surveyor's plan that does not show any buildings on the parcel. It can be assumed that Crocker built the house shortly after the plan was commissioned.

George Uriel Crocker (1863-1929) was born in Boston, the son of prominent lawyer Uriel Haskell Crocker (1832-1902) and his wife Clara G. Ballard (1835-1891). George Crocker attended Harvard College, practiced law in Boston and served for a number of years as the Boston city treasurer. In 1887 he married Emma Lillian Aylsworth (1863-1946) of Providence, Rhode Island. The Crockers lived at 378 Marlborough Street (1880, Frank Jones House, BOS.3332) in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood with their four daughters and summered at this house in Marion. The Sippican Historical Society has a collection of Crocker family photographs taken during summers at Marion between 1900 and 1902. The house remained in the family until the death of Emma Crocker in 1946, when it was sold to Hugh O'Neill Hencken of Newton.

Hugh O'Neill Hencken (1902-1981) was a leading American archaeologist. He served for 40 years as both the curator of European archaeology and the director of the American School of Prehistoric Research at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. Hencken attended Princeton University and received his doctorate from Cambridge University in England. He led a number of archaeological digs in the British Isles and Europe and was the author of more than a dozen books. He was married to Thalassa Cruso Hencken (1909-1997), also a trained archaeologist, who he had met on one of his many trips to Britain. Born in London, Mary Thalassa Alford Cruso attended the London School of Economics and was a curator at the London Museum. Using Thalassa Cruso as her professional name, she became well known for her work as a gardening expert and advocate. She appeared from 1966-1969 on the highly successful WGBH-TV series "Making Things Grow," was the author of four books and numerous magazine articles on gardening, and for many years wrote a gardening column for the *Boston Globe*. Hugh Hencken was a founding member of the Sippican Historical Society and the editor of *Three Centuries of Marion Houses*. The house was sold in 1981, the year of Hugh Hencken's death. That same year, Thalassa Cruso Hencken acquired an early Cape-style house located on Ryder Lane and moved it to the nearby undeveloped property at 62 Water Street (18<sup>th</sup> c., Frederick Mendell House, MRN.170), one of two adjacent parcels (62 and 70 Water Street) which been purchased by Hugh Hencken in 1957.

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

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Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

MRN.L	MRN.172
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72 Water Street was sold to Michael and Margherita B. Baldwin in 1981. The Baldwins owned this house until 2010 when it was purchased by the current owners, William C. and Heather R. Vratos.

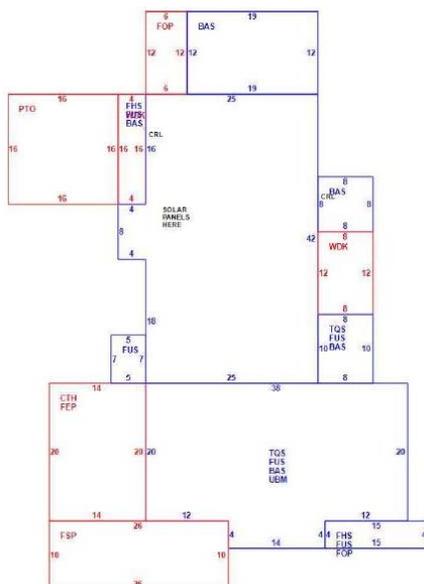
## Deed Research

Date	Book-Page	Grantor	Grantee
03-01-2010	38282-48	Michael & Margherita B. Baldwin	William C. & Heather R. Vratos
04-27-1992	10927-128	Margherita B. Baldwin	Michael & Margherita B. Baldwin
08-18-1981	5041-314	Hugh O'Neill & Thalassa Alford Hencken	Margherita B. Baldwin
11-02-1973	3945-264	Hugh O'Neill Hencken	Hugh O'Neill & Thalassa Alford Hencken
11-19-1946	1946-476	Eleanor C. Howland et al.	Hugh O'Neill Hencken
11-25-1896	731-173	Estate of Francis B. Austin	George U. Crocker
07-19-1884	504-34	James Luce	Francis B. Austin

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*Map of the Town of Marion, Plymouth County, Massachusetts 1855* H.F. Walling  
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"Recent Death: Francis Boylston Austin," *Boston Evening Transcript*, Boston, MA February 14, 1987.  
 "Many at the Funeral of George U. Crocker," *The Boston Globe*, Boston, MA, November 7, 1929.  
 "George U. Crocker Funeral," *The Boston Globe*, Boston, MA, November 8, 1929  
 "Hugh O'Neill Hencken, 79: Noted Archaeologist and Museum Chief" *The New York Times*, September 4, 1981.  
 "Thalassa Cruso, 88, Plant Lover Who Shared Her Passion on TV," *The New York Times*, June 18, 1997.



Assessor's card plan

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-------	---------



East elevation (façade).



South and east elevations.

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Area(s) Form No.

MRN.L	MRN.172
-------	---------



Facade (east elevation) of house. Image from Crocker family album, "Summer of 1902." Photograph courtesy of Sippican Historical Society.



Enclosed porch at south elevation. Image from Crocker family album, "Summer of 1902." Photograph courtesy of Sippican Historical Society.



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Area(s) Form No.

MRN.L	MRN.172
-------	---------

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Additionally, the early 19<sup>th</sup> century residence at 60 Water Street (MRN.169) was originally owned by Captain Henry M. Allen, one of the pioneers of Marion's salt-making industry.

**Under Criterion C**, the area is recommended as eligible at the local, and possibly the state, level in the area of Architecture for its outstanding and exceptionally well-preserved collection of high-style houses on generous lots which date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The area includes distinguished examples of the Queen Anne, Shingle Style, and Colonial Revival styles, several of which were designed by prominent American architects including Charles A. Coolidge, James T. Kelley and William Gibbons Preston. The only non-residential building in the area is the Craftsman-style, Charles A. Coolidge-designed Sippican Tennis Club at 20 Holmes Street (MRN.157).

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