

FORM B - Building

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Map and Lot # 222-70 USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number 92

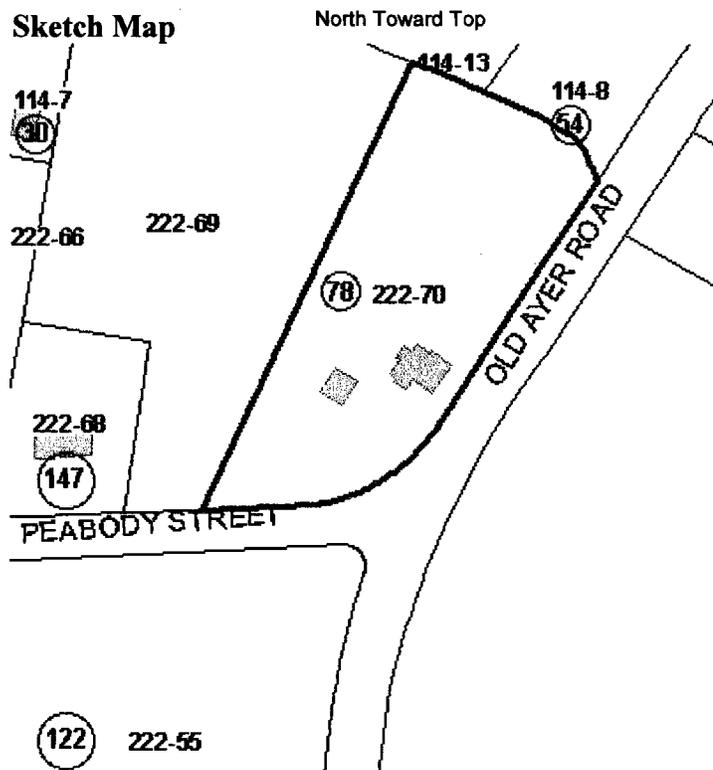
Town Groton
Place (neighborhood or village)

Photograph

(3"x3" or 3-1/2x5" black and white only) Label photo on back with town and property address. Record film roll and negative numbers here on form. Staple photo to left side of form over this space. Attach additional photos to continuation sheets.

Roll Negative(s)

Sketch Map



Recorded by Sanford Johnson
Organization Groton Historical Commission
Date (month/year) 12/07

Address 78 Old Ayer Road

Historic Name

Uses: Present Residence

Original Residential-agricultural

Date of Construction c. 1825

Source Previous GHC deed research; Butler's field notes

Style/Form Federal, Victorian Eclectic

Architect/Builder James Bennett, Architect, 1903

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Wood clapboard

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/secondary structure

Detached wood clapboard garage, c. 1950

Major Alterations (with dates)

Rebuilt with Victorian additions, 1903

Condition Good

Moved no yes Date

Acreage 2.6

Setting Rural

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

see continuation sheet

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

- * The core of the house at 78 Old Ayer Road is a ridge-hipped Federal style block of 5x2 bays and 2 1/2 stories; Additions from 1903 include the central gabled pavilion over the full-width open front porch and the cross gabled 2 1/2-story block with south facing 2-story bay window at the rear of the main block
- * Decorative features consist mainly of the deep eaves with molded cornice at both the first and second story levels that encompasses the Federal block as well as the Victorian addition, front porch and bay window; Additional details are the Doric columns in the front porch and remnants of Federal style symmetry in the façade
- * Windows are mainly 6/6 double-hung sash with other openings filled with 8/8 sash under the front porch and in the bay window; 4-pane sash exist in the peak of the bay window and in sides of the gabled pavilion and a small triangular sash is in the gable peak of the rear addition just visible over the south edge of the ridge-hipped roof; The center entry is flanked by sidelights
- * Two brick chimneys rise from the core of the plan
- * The garage was built c. 1950 and is clad in board and batten

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

see continuation sheets

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 house is on the site a Colonial Period garrison house owned by Richard Sawtell, Groton's first town clerk. Old Ayer Road was called the Old Mill Highway at that time as it led to the site of the town's first grist mill in the 17th century; the site is now included as part of Harvard. The road name was changed in 1871. Eber Woods bought the property from Samuel Babcock and Jacob Farnsworth in 1825, the year he was married to Dorcas Brown of Tewksbury. The Federal style core of the house may have been built at the time of the wedding but was definitely in place by 1832 and is described by Butler in his field notes as a 2-story form with 5 windows across the façade and painted white, all details that currently exist behind the Victorian additions. Mr. Woods owned the house through 1847. By 1856, the owner was a relative named Miss S. D. Woods. In 1873 the owner became John McGilson who owned 20 acres, 2 horses and 2 cows on property valued at \$2400. Mr. McGilson remained here until his death. Dr. Green notes that he may be the person represented in several Groton historical documents as John McGilson, McGilson and M. E. Gilson due to a misspelled sign in 1855. Mr. Gilson lived to the age of 93 and was the oldest person in town at the time of his death in 1898. He also owned "The Neck" from 1855-1885, an island in the Nashua River formed by a flood in 1751. Prior to living on Old Ayer Road, he owned the house at 197 Main Street (MHC #1). The house was partially burned (including the barn that was not rebuilt) and remodeled in 1903 according to plans drawn by James Bennett, resulting in the current porch, pavilion projecting from the façade and the rear addition. Mr. Gilson's daughter Fannie occupied the house until her death in 1924, after which time, Fannie's daughter Fannie lived here before selling to John R. Friedrich in the mid 20th century. The 1939 WPA map indicates the house was occupied, in good condition and land around was planted in hay fields.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

continuation sheet

1856 Walling map of Middlesex County; 1875 Beers atlas; 1889 Walker atlas; 1832 and 1847 Butler maps; Butler's 1829 field notes; 1939 WPA map; Federal census agricultural schedules, 1850-1880; Previous GHC Research; 1896, 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance map; Resident Directories, 1918, 1929; Butler's town history; May, "Groton Plantation", p. 77; Dr. Green; May, "Houses" pp. 25-27;

**** All properties mentioned in bold type are individually inventoried resources**

- Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement Form.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
Groton

Property Address

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

Area(s)

Form No.



78 Old Ayer Road



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