

**FORM B - Building**

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

Map and Lot # 222 54 USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number 52, 220

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)

Address 170 Old Ayer Road  
Historic Name Prescott, Oliver Jr. House  
Uses: Present Residential  
Original Residential

Date of Construction 1791

Source Green, May, "Houses"

Style/Form Federal

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Wood clapboard

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/secondary structure

Detached barn, early to mid 20th c.

Major Alterations (with dates)

Enclosed front porch, c. 1920

Condition Good

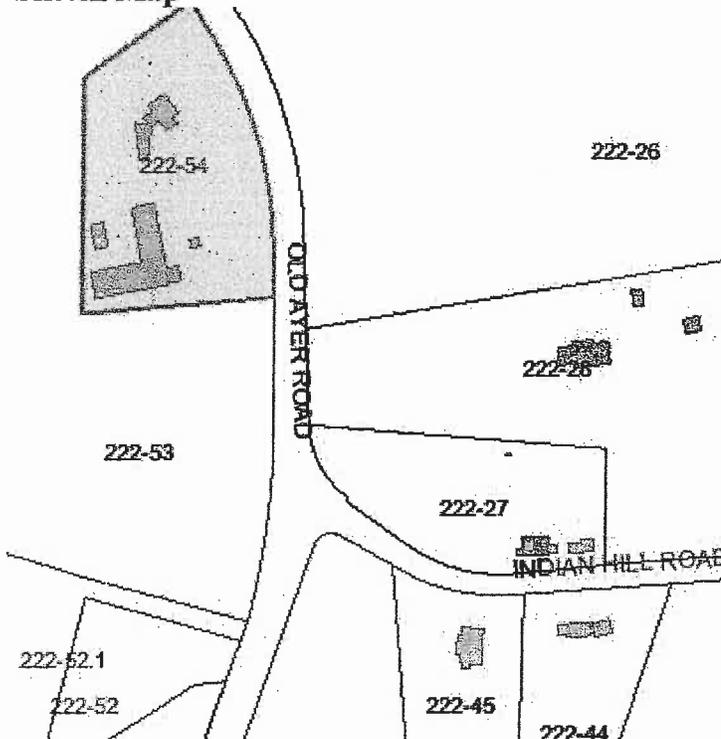
Moved no  yes  Date

Acreage 1.91

Setting Rural

**Sketch Map**

North Toward Top



Recorded by Sanford Johnson

Organization Groton Historical Commission

Date (month/year) 6/06

*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.*

- \* 170 Old Ayer Road is a 5x3-bay, pyramidal-hipped, Federal style house of 2 stories built on a nearly square plan with an enclosed shed porch attached to the first story of the façade and additions to the south side and the rear
- \* Decorative features include the stout center brick chimney, symmetrical fenestration in the façade and the molded cornice with dentils
- \* Windows are 12/12 double-hung sash with projecting beaded trim and hoods over those on the first story
- \* The center entry is obscured by the 3/5 width shed porch covering the façade
- \* The portion of the large barn that is visible from the road has a gambrel roof and is clad in vertical flushboard; dependencies project from the west elevation and may house milking operations; 2 shed dormers, a mow door, some 6/6 sash, fixed 6-pane sash and a large rolling vehicle door on the south elevation are also visible; a large section of the building projects to the west but is not visible
- \* The house and barn occupy a parcel that is surrounded by open land and orchards, lending an agricultural sensibility to the property; the house is an example of refined Federal style design although it has been altered by the addition of the porch; it is formally set on a ridge overlooking the road and is comparable in scale and design to the house at 518 Farmers Row

### 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 Dr. Oliver Prescott Jr. House was built c. 1791 for Dr. Prescott's bride Nancy Whiting according to previous research by Virginia May. Dr. Prescott (1762-1827), a nephew of Col. William Prescott, leader of American forces at Bunker Hill, was educated at Harvard College and trained as a physician with his father, Dr. Oliver Prescott Sr. who lived in a house that later burned on the site of 14 Main Street (MHC #20). Dr. Prescott served in 1787 in the militia to suppress Shays' Rebellion in Middlesex County which was led in part by his townsman Job Shattuck (owner of 573 Longley Road, MHC #80). Dr. Prescott later served as a justice of the peace, member of the general court, state representative, town clerk, selectman, founder of Groton Academy (later Lawrence Academy) and overseer of the poor. Dr. Prescott was also president of the Western Society of Middlesex Husbandmen, served as a Groton Academy trustee in 1793, was a founding member and High Priest of Groton's Mason Lodge, was a member of the corporation of Massachusetts General Hospital and vice president of the Massachusetts Medical Society. He left for Newburyport in 1811 with his family for health reasons. Slate milestone markers placed in 1783 in Groton Center (MHC #XX) and on Farmers Row are the work of the young Dr. Prescott. The house was sold c. 1811 to Sylvester Jacobs whose family stayed for over 100 years. Mr. Jacobs was taxed in 1830 and 1847 for ownership of real property worth \$3,200-\$6,500, well above the average for Groton. Non-population Census Schedules from 1850 show that his farm increased in worth to \$8,000. The 1828-29 Butler field notes describe the house as white. Around 1835, Mr. Jacobs hired itinerant mural painter J. D. Poor, an assistant to and nephew of muralist Rufus Porter who may also have worked on the murals, to decorate the northeast room with painted figures that are said to include a steamboat. Nina Fletcher Little describes the scenes of water and islands as typical for Poor. Also, she states that later owners named Priest held the notion that Nathan Thayer of Hollis took part in the mural work. Mr. Jacobs' son Charles, a lawyer and farmer, was a subsequent owner from c. 1860-1890

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

continuation sheet

Butler, pp. 116, 121, 122, 251-252, 294-295, 429, 464; Tercentenary Booklet, p. 88; Green, Vol. 3, pp. 9-14; May, "Groton Houses", p. 108; "Groton Plantation", pp. 85, 214; WPA maps of 1939; Previous GHS research; Little, Nina Fletcher, "American Decorative Painting", p. 127; Non-population Census Schedules;

\*\* *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  
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Boston, Massachusetts 02125**Area(s)**      **Form No.****170 Old Ayer Road      Historical Narrative**

based on maps from 1856, 1875 and 1889. Charles was taxed in 1875 for ownership of a horse, 2 oxen, 13 cows, 7 sheep, swine a house and barn on 60 acres. Charles' and his wife Elizabeth's holdings increased substantially by 1889 to include more livestock, a second house (at 25 Indian Hill Road MHC #53) and additional acreage, 4 of which were in orchards. Elizabeth Jacobs bequeathed the property to her relative Miss Floretta Vining who conveyed it to James A. Bailey in 1914 who is listed in the 1918 resident directory as a lawyer and who added the front porch. Mr. Bailey sold to Donald Priest in 1921. Mr. Priest was a fruit grower with extensive orchards on the property and remained here until at least 1967. WPA maps from 1939 depict large hayfields and orchards on both sides of the road.

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**Town**  
Groton

**Property Address**

**Area(s)**

**Form No.**

170 Old Ayer Road



Massachusetts Historical Commission

Community Groton

Massachusetts Archives Building  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Property Address  
170 Old Ayer Road

Area(s)

Form No.

### National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

Individually eligible  X

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

The Federal Style house at 170 Old Ayer Road is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an individual resource at the local level. The Dr. Oliver Prescott Jr. House was built in 1791 for Dr. Prescott's bride Nancy Whiting according to previous research in Dr. Green's Historical Series. Dr. Prescott (1762-1827), a nephew of Col. William Prescott, leader of American forces at Bunker Hill, was educated at Harvard College and trained as a physician with his father, Dr. Oliver Prescott Sr. who lived in a house that later burned on the site of 14 Main Street (MHC #20). Dr. Prescott served in 1787 in the militia to suppress Shays' Rebellion in Middlesex County which was led in part by his townsman Job Shattuck (owner of 573 Longley Road, MHC #80). Dr. Prescott later served as a justice of the peace, member of the general court, state representative, town clerk, selectman, founder and trustee of Groton Academy (later Lawrence Academy) and overseer of the poor. Dr. Prescott was also president of the Western Society of Middlesex Husbandmen, was a founding member and High Priest of Groton's Mason Lodge, was a member of the corporation of Massachusetts General Hospital and vice president of the Massachusetts Medical Society. The building's associations with medical practice, civic activities and agriculture establish its significance under Criterion A. The design of the symmetrical façade, hipped roof and formal setting above the road make the property eligible under Criterion C. The house retains integrity of design, materials, setting and workmanship.