

# FORM B - Building

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

Map and Lot # 222 49 USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number 50

Town Groton  
Place (neighborhood or village)

## Photograph

(3"x3" or 3-1/2"x5" 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 264 Old Ayer Road  
Historic Name Sawtell House  
Uses: Present Residential  
Original Residential - agricultural

Date of Construction 1787  
Source Richard Dabrowski's deed research  
Style/Form Federal

Architect/Builder Joseph Sawtell, builder

### Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite  
Wall/Trim Wood clapboards  
Roof Asphalt shingles  
Outbuildings/secondary structure  
Modern attached garage; modern Greek Revival folly

### Major Alterations (with dates)

Restored, c. 1995-2005

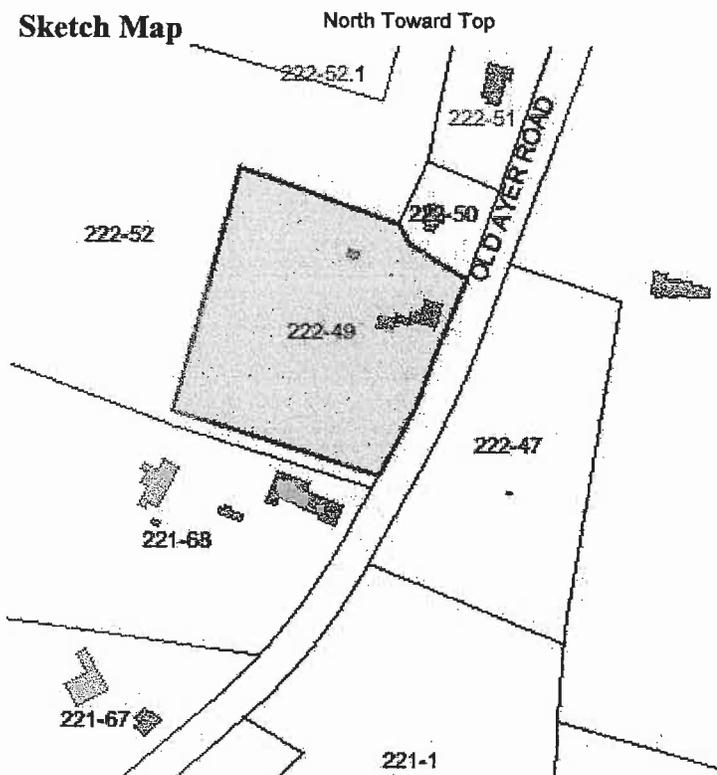
Condition Excellent

Moved no  yes  Date

Acreage 4

Setting Rural

## Sketch Map



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.*

- \* 164 Old Ayer Road is a well-preserved Federal style house of 5x3 bays, 2 1/2 stories with a side-gabled roof and two rear additions of two stories and one story; additional secondary masses are the bay window and enclosed entry porch on the south elevation and the attached modern garage attached to the rear of the second rear addition
- \* Details consist of the symmetrical fenestration in the façade, classical surround at the center entry with entablature, pilasters and transom, corner boards, molded cornice and gable returns
- \* Windows are mainly 12/12 double hung wood sash that were reproduced in the 1990s; a 6/6 sash lights the attic from the south gable peak; the first rear addition has 6/6 double-hung sash and the bay window has 9/9 units
- \* The garage and second rear addition have no windows
- \* The detached modern folly in the back yard has a temple front with columns in antis
- \* The house is in excellent condition and occupies a parcel of open land and is surrounded by additional open land and orchards; the design is very similar to others in town, particularly 653 Martins Pond Road

### 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 Nathaniel Sawtell House, also called the Joseph Sawtell house after the housewright who built and first occupied it, was built c. 1787 according to the owner's deed research. Joseph Sawtell (b. 1755) was a native of Shirley who marched from Littleton to Concord in April, 1775. He married Betty Cobligh in Littleton in 1777 and lived there for a time. He had moved to Groton by the time of the birth of his son Joseph in 1783. Deeds which indicate Mr. Sawtell bought 45 acres from Ephraim Ware, physician of Cambridge, in 1787, describe him as a housewright. Alan Whipple's book "Academy Days" describes him as a carpenter which supports the theory that, based on design similarities, he also built the Caleb Butler House (MHC #17, 79 Main Street), the Bennett-Shattuck House (MHC #120, 653 Martins Pond Road) among others in Groton and surrounding towns. He was a founder of the Groton Academy in 1792 and was voted deacon of the First Parish Church in 1811 but was later part of the Congregationalist group that separated itself from the First Parish Church in 1826. Mr. Sawtell was taxed in 1830 for ownership of real property valued at \$1,800, an average sum for Groton. At this time, the house was painted white according to Butler's field notes for his 1832 map. Mr. Sawtell died in 1844 at the age of 93 and was sufficiently well-known to have had his obituary appear in the Boston Evening Mercantile Journal. Subsequent owners were N. Sawtell (probably his son Nathaniel) according to maps from 1847 and 1856. State census records from 1855 and 1865 show Nathan was born c. 1798, was married first to Frances and later to Sarah and that he worked as a farmer. Non-population Census Schedules from 1850 show he owned 114 acres, a horse, 7 cows, 12 other cattle, farmed corn, potatoes, hay and oats, The 1875 Beers Atlas depicts A. L. Race as the occupant. The 1889 atlas shows Arthur Tuttle as the occupant and the 1888 resident directory lists him as a milkman and farmer. Tax valuations from 1888 show he had 15 cows which is slightly more than the average sized herd. He raised apples and operated a farm on the property according to the 1918 and 1929 resident directories from 1918 and 1929. By 1930, the

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

continuation sheet

Owner Richard Dabrowski's research; Whipple, p. 398; Butler, pp. 194, 229; maps from 1832, 1847, 1856, 1875; 1918, 1929 resident directories, 1888, 1918, 1929; "People and Places", pp. 95-96; "Groton Plantation", p. 203; Butler's 1828-29 field notes;

**\*\* 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**

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**Town**  
Groton

**Area(s)**      **Form No.**

**264 Old Ayer Road      Historical Narrative**

the occupants were Arthur Tuttle's son Clarence and his wife Bertha who also farmed the property. The owner from 1945-1952 was Edward O'Neill, a partner in the J.P. Sullivan Co., apple distributors in Ayer, owner in the 1960s of the Fairview Farms Fruit Stand near 120 Boston Road and former president of the International Apple Association. Mr. O'Neill moved next door in 1952. A subsequent owner was Maynard Renners. The property had large barns until the mid 20th century. Restoration of the house with in-kind materials has been ongoing since c. 1995.

**INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**

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**Area(s)**

**Form No.**

264 Old Ayer Road



Massachusetts Historical Commission

Community Groton

Property Address

264 Old Ayer Road

Massachusetts Archives Building

220 Morrissey Boulevard

Boston, Massachusetts 02125

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 264 Old Ayer Road is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an individual resource at the local level. The Nathan Sawtell House, also called the Joseph Sawtell house after the housewright who built and first occupied it, was built c. 1787 according to the owner's deed research. Joseph Sawtell (b. 1755) was a native of Shirley who marched from Littleton to Concord in April, 1775. He had moved to Groton by the time of the birth of his son Joseph in 1783. Deeds which indicate Mr. Sawtell bought 45 acres from Ephraim Ware, physician of Cambridge, in 1787, describe him as a housewright. Alan Whipple's book "Academy Days" describes him as a carpenter which supports the theory that, based on design similarities, he also built the Caleb Butler House (MHC #17, 79 Main Street), the Bennett-Shattuck House (MHC #120, 653 Martins Pond Road) among others in Groton and surrounding towns. He was a founder of the Groton Academy in 1792 and was voted deacon of the First Parish Church in 1811 but was later part of the Congregationalist group that separated itself from the First Parish Church in 1826. Mr. Sawtell was taxed in 1830 for ownership of real property valued at \$1,800, an average sum for Groton. The building's associations with early residential design and construction, civic and military activities and agriculture establish its significance under Criterion A. The design of the symmetrical façade and the recently completed professional restoration of the property make the property eligible under Criterion C. The house retains integrity of design, materials, setting and workmanship.