

FORM B - Building

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

Map and Lot # 113 15 USGS Quad Y Area(s) 17 Form Number

Town Groton
Place (neighborhood or village)
Groton Center

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 85 Main Street

Historic Name Butler, Caleb House

Uses: Present Residential

Original Residential

Date of Construction 1810

Source GHS research (Green)

Style/Form Federal

Architect/Builder Joseph Sawtell, housewright

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Wood clapboards

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/secondary structure
detached 20th c. garage

Major Alterations (with dates)

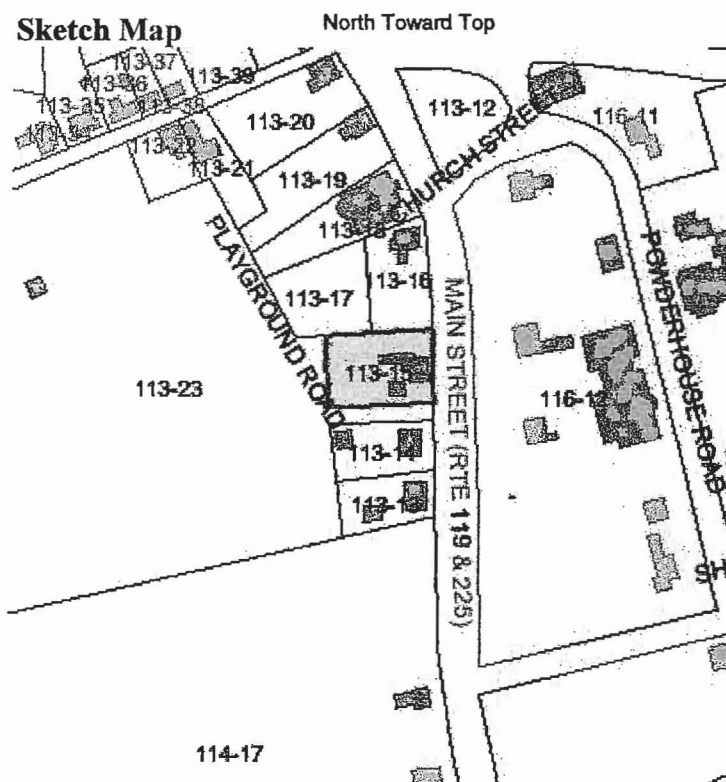
Condition Good

Moved no ☒ yes ☐ Date

Acreage .8

Setting Main Street - Town Center

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.

- * Butler House is a Federal style, 5x3-bay, side-gabled, 2 1/2-story building with a 2-story ell attached to the northwest (rear) corner
- * Ornamental features consist of the corner boards, molded cornice, gable returns and symmetrical fenestration in the façade
- * The east-facing center entry has a classical surround with a 5-pane transom, pilasters, architrave, frieze and cornice as well as an open hip-roofed porch with entablature that is supported by Doric columns; a secondary entry in the south elevation also has a transom; additional access is through the north side elevation
- * Windows are primarily 12/12 double-hung sash with beaded trim although paired 6/6 examples exist in the south gable peak
- * Two internal brick chimneys rise from the roof ridge
- * A picket fence separates the house from the road
- * The house is located close to Main Street on a small parcel across the street from Lawrence Academy, the owner of the building

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 built c. 1810 for Caleb Butler (1776-1854) may have been built by the housewright Joseph Sawtell, resident of 264 Old Ayer Road (MHC #50) according to local historians. Mr. Butler, who was a native of Pelham, NH and graduated from Dartmouth College in 1800, served numerous civic and professional functions in Groton including lawyer, Lawrence Academy preceptor (1802-1810, 1812-1815, presumably when he met his wife, the former student Clarissa Varnum), Groton postmaster (1826-39, 1841-47), land surveyor, Grand Master of Masons in 1842-43, County Commissioner of Roads, creator of the 1829, 1832 and 1847 maps of Groton and author of the "History of the Town of Groton" in 1848. Mr. Butler was also the namesake of the public high school from the time of its construction in 1871 until it was damaged by fire in 1925 and subsequently demolished. The kitchen was located in the cellar according to May who also states Mr. Butler had 8 children and studied law with Luther Lawrence (occupant of 164 Main Street, MHC #5). Mr. Butler's own field notes for his 1832 map describe his house as white. Mr. Butler's daughter Clarissa never married, continued to occupy the house after her father's death (she died in 1873) and became one of the first two women elected to the Groton School Committee in 1871 along with Mary Shumway. Subsequent owners of the house were the three sisters Augusta, Mary and Minerva Warren along with their surgeon father William from c. 1865 -1918, as well as Clarissa, by then a boarder working as a teacher according to tax records, the resident directories and to recollections of local residents. After Mary Warren's death in 1921, the house was sold to the sea captain William Norman who sold to Carroll Holt then Rene Aelion and then the Kadick Family. Lawrence Academy bought the house in 1970 and has since been using it as teacher housing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

☐ continuation sheet

Butler, 250-252, 231; Map of the Town of Groton, 1832, 1847; Interview w/ Richard Dabrowski, 2001; 1875 Beers Atlas; 1889 Walker Atlas; 1918 resident directory; 1856 Walling map; Tax records, 1830-1889; 1855, 1865 state census; Sawyer, "People and Places of Groton", pp. 129-130; May, "Groton Houses", pp. 19-25; Whipple, p. 399;

**** 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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Boston, Massachusetts 02125

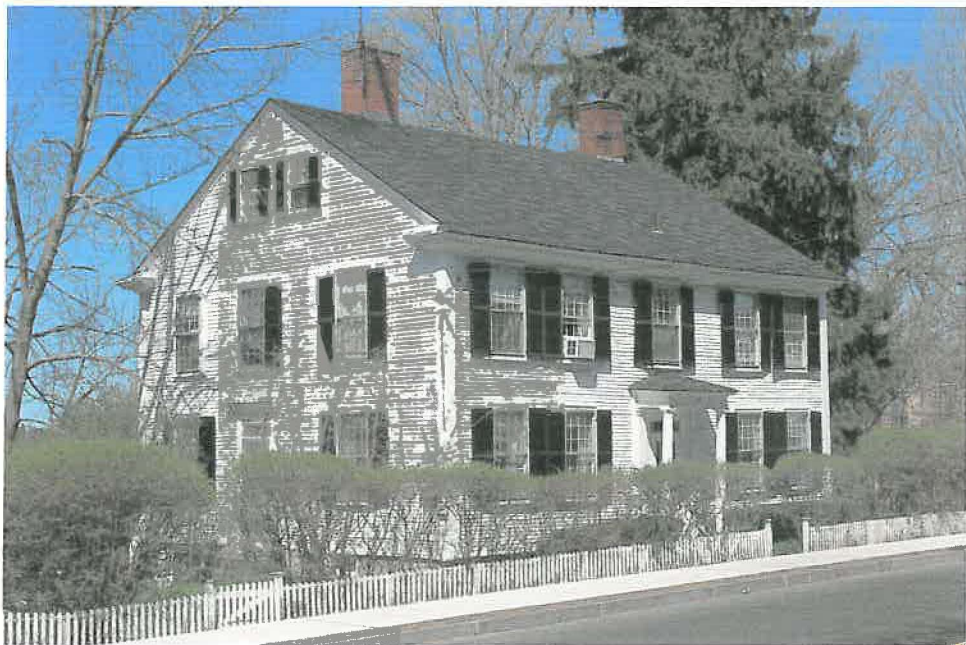
Town
Groton

Property Address

Area(s)

Form No.

85 Main Street



Massachusetts Historical Commission

Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community Groton
Property Address
85 Main Street

Area(s)
Y

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 **X**

Potential historic district

Criteria: **X** A B **X** C D

Criteria considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of significance by: Sanford Johnson

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Federal Style Butler House at 85 Main Street is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an individual resource at the local level. The house built c. 1810 for Caleb Butler (1776-1854) may have been built by the housewright Joseph Sawtell, resident of 264 Old Ayer Road (MHC #50) according to local historians. Mr. Butler, who was a native of Pelham, NH and graduated from Dartmouth College in 1800, served numerous civic and professional functions in Groton including lawyer, Lawrence Academy preceptor (1802-1810, 1812-1815, presumably when he met his wife, the former student Clarissa Varnum), Groton postmaster (1826-39, 1841-47), land surveyor, Grand Master of Masons in 1842-43, County Commissioner of Roads, creator of the 1829, 1832 and 1847 maps of Groton and author of the "History of the Town of Groton" in 1848. Mr. Butler was also the namesake of the public high school from the time of its founding in 1871 until it was damaged by fire in 1925 and demolition thereafter. The building's associations with historic educational and authorial activity in Groton establish its significance under Criterion A. The design of the house's symmetrical façade, surviving historic exterior materials make the property eligible under Criterion C. The house retains integrity of design, materials, setting and workmanship.