

FORM B - Building

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

Map and Lot # 116 12 USGS Quad Area(s) Y Form Number 24

Town Groton
Place (neighborhood or village)
Groton Center-Lawrence Academy

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 98 Main Street
Historic Name Brazer, James House
Uses: Present Residential
Original Residential

Date of Construction 1802

Source Whipple, p. 394

Style/Form Federal

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Wood clapboard, Flushboard

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/secondary structure

Major Alterations (with dates)

Addition, c. 2000

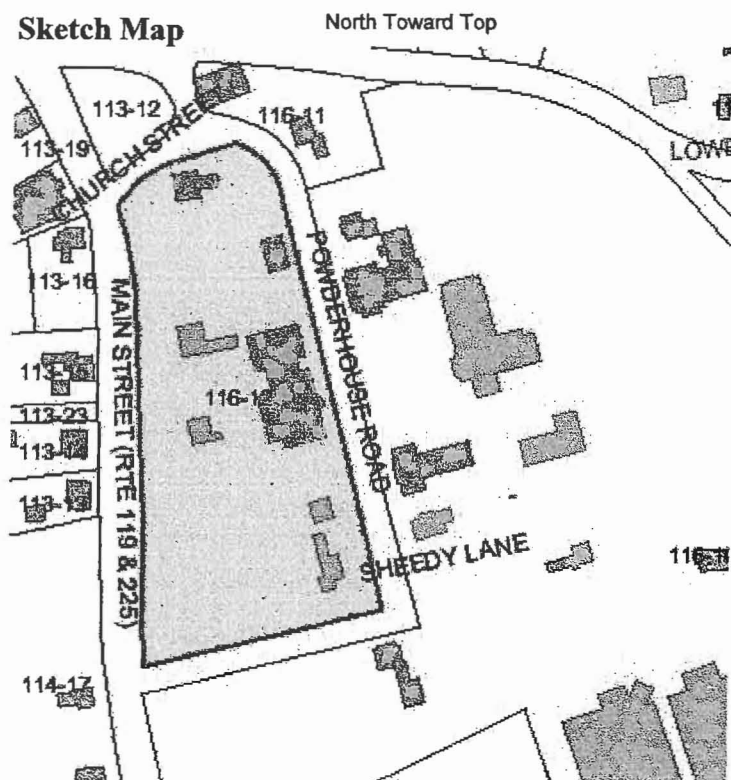
Condition Excellent

Moved no ☒ yes ☐ Date

Acreage Part of large school campus

Setting Main Street in 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.

- * Brazer House is a two and one-half-story, six by five bay ridge-hipped form with two corbelled chimneys
- * Major exterior features include the center pavilion of two bays with gabled roof; symmetrical fenestration; denticulated cornice; colossal pilasters with pulvinated frieze at the corners and flanking the pavilion; elaborate entry surround with denticulated cornice, architrave, sidelights, fanlight and pilasters
- * Windows are 6/6 double hung sash with aluminum storm windows and plain trim
- * Exterior materials are wood clapboard and flushboard on the facade; chimneys are brick
- * The setting is elevated above the east side of Main Street with terraced ground, granite steps and railing posts
- * The house is one of the most ornate Federal style designs in Groton and is among the most well preserved in the town
- * A rear ell of one story may have been an early 20th century addition; a second ell was built in 1992

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.

Brazer House was constructed in 1802 on the site of a house that burned the previous year. The first owner, James Brazer, Esquire (1760-1818), was representative to the Massachusetts General Court in 1810, captain in the militia, and a founder of the Groton Academy in 1793, later called the Lawrence Academy. Mr. Brazer, a storekeeper in partnership with his son William (later a resident and storekeeper at 95 Main Street MHC #16) at a building north of 117 Main Street, also served as the initial Master of the Masons Lodge and trustee of the academy from 1795 until his death in 1818 when he dropped dead tending his store. He was described in Dr. Green's work as the richest and most important merchant in the town. Thomas Staples and William Bancroft were depicted as the owners on the 1832 map of Groton and in the 1828-29 field notes by Butler. James Brazer's widow Hannah died in 1835 and made a bequest of \$2000 to the academy, pending the deaths of her siblings. From 1843-c. 1846, the house was owned by Dr. Amos Bancroft which he kept as a boarding house and was the home of Dr. Charles E. Thompson, a dentist. The prominent Boston industrialist Amos Lawrence, a Groton native and Groton Academy alumnus, purchased the house (which was his former residence as an employee and boarder of Mr. Brazer) for \$4,400 in July, 1846 and conveyed it to the academy. This was a year after trustees of the academy voted to change the name from Groton Academy to The Lawrence Academy at Groton in honor of the generosity of William and Amos Lawrence, sons of a founder, during the previous eight years. A print of the house's façade from c. 1820 shows a railing along the ridge of the hipped roof, a fence around the front dooryard and carriage sheds in the rear. The railing, sheds and fence are no longer extant. The various principals of the academy, also called preceptor and headmaster, occupied Brazer House from the mid 1800s until the late 20th century. Local researchers indicate the fire that destroyed the predecessor to Brazer House in 1801 was the inspiration for the law student and engineer Loammi Baldwin Jr. to design and build Groton's first fire engine which survives in the barn at the

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

☐ continuation sheet

Butler, Caleb: "History of the Town of Groton", pp. 239-240, 234-235, 229-230; Frank, Douglas Alan: "The History of Lawrence Academy at Groton 1792-1992"; Previous research by James K. Gilson, GHS; Whipple, Alan: "Academy Days", pp. 106, 399; Green, Samuel Abbot: Groton Historical Series Vol. 1, Chapter XVII, p 13, Chapter VII, p. 4, Vol. 3, p. 66; Interview with Dick Jeffers, Lawrence Academy Archivist, 2/8/06; 1832 Butler map; 1847 Butler map and 1828-29 field notes; Sanborn fire insurance maps, 1896-1906; Brazer, James. Death notice in the New England Galaxy, November 11, 1818.

**** 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

Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
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Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Town
Groton

Area(s) **Form No.**

98 Main Street

Historical Narrative

Groton Historical Society (GRO #4, 172 Main Street). Mr. Baldwin later built dry docks in Charlestown, Ma., Norfolk, Va. and the Bunker Hill Monument. In 1893, the house was owned by Lawrence Academy and occupied by Mrs. Charlotte Sibley, donor of land and money for construction of the GPL. The house is now a dormitory for students at Lawrence Academy. Until at least 1906 the house had an attached barn at the rear. Until the 1940s, this building was one of four that constituted the Lawrence Academy campus. Others were the Dana House (MHC #23), Bigelow Hall MHC #178) and the school building (1792, burned 1868; rebuilt 1871, burned 1956). Expansion since the 1940s has taken the focus of the campus to the east and up the hill on Powderhouse Road.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
Groton

Property Address

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

Area(s)

Form No.

86 Main Street – Brazer House



Massachusetts Historical Commission

Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community Groton

Property Address

~~86~~ Main Street

98

Area(s)

Y

Form No.

24

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: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ 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 house at 86 Main Street is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an individual resource at the local level. Brazer House was constructed in 1802 on the site of a house that burned the previous year. The first owner, James Brazer, Esquire (1760-1818), was a native of Pepperell, representative to the Massachusetts General Court in 1810, a founder of the Groton Academy in 1793, later called the Lawrence Academy. Mr. Brazer, a storekeeper in partnership with his son William (later a resident and storekeeper at 95 Main Street MHC #16) at a building north of 117 Main Street, also served as the initial Master of the Masons Lodge and trustee of the academy from 1795 until his death in 1818 when he dropped dead tending his store. He was described in Dr. Green's work as the richest and most important merchant in the town. Thomas Staples and William Bancroft were depicted as the owners on the 1832 map of Groton and in the 1828-29 field notes by Butler. James Brazer's widow Hannah died in 1835 and made a bequest of \$2000 to the academy, pending the deaths of her siblings. The building's associations with historic educational and commercial activity in Groton establish its significance under Criterion A. The design of the house's symmetrical façade with colossal pavilion and prominent fanlight, the surviving historic exterior materials and architectural details make the property eligible under Criterion C. The house retains integrity of design, materials, setting and workmanship.