

FORM B - Building

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

Map and Lot # 113 40 USGS Quad Y Form Number 13

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 117 Main Street

Historic Name Brown Store -Dix House

Uses: Present Multi-unit residential

Original Store

Date of Construction c. 1780

Source Sawyer "More People and Places", p. 87

Style/Form Federal

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation Brick

Wall/Trim Brick

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/secondary structure

Major Alterations (with dates)

North ell added, c. 1810

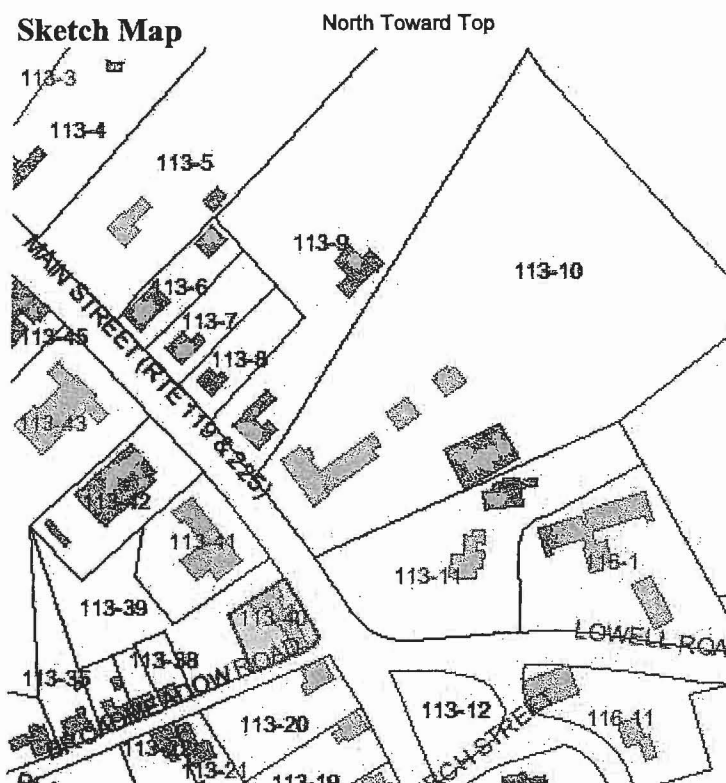
Condition Fair

Moved no ☒ yes ☐ Date

Acreage .37

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.

- * The Dix House is a locally rare residential brick example of 3 stories and 5x2 bays; the roof of the main block is a ridge-hipped form; attached to the north side of the brick block is a side-gabled wood frame addition of 2 stories and 5 bays that is expanded toward Main Street by a gabled entry porch and by an enclosed 2-story porch at the north end wall
- * Federal style decorative features in the brick block include the corner boards, molded cornice and symmetrical fenestration in the façade where the third story windows are slightly smaller than those on the first and second stories; The recessed center entry has a cornice and transom above; brick belt courses demarcate the stories on the façade; the wood frame addition has little ornament other than the Doric columns supporting the raking cornice of the entry porch
- * Windows are mainly 12/12 double-hung sash with plain trim except in the third story of the façade which has 8/8 units; multiple pane fixed sash light the second story of the enclosed porch at the north end wall
- * Chimneys exist at the north wall of the brick block, the south end of the façade of the wood block and at the north end of the wood block
- * The house occupies a prominent site at the corner of Main Street and Broadmeadow Road across from state route 40
- * Although it is only in poor to fair condition, the brick section of the building represents a more formal design than most others in the town center

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.

According to Sawyer's research, the brick portion of the building was built as a store c. 1773 by Jonas Cutler and later owned by Aaron Brown around 1798. The two story ell was built c. 1780 as a horse shed with law offices above. Lawyers working here may have included Samuel Dana (Resident of 86 Main Street MHC #23) and Timothy Bigelow, instructor of the student and engineer Loammi Baldwin Jr. The building is said by GHS researchers to have been built of brick imported from England. Mr. Brown's business partner was for a time James Brazer who lived at 86 Main Street (MHC #24). Mr. Brazer dissolved his partnership with Mr. Brown in 1805 according to a newspaper ad in the Boston Columbian Sentinel and afterward ran the store with his son William (later owner of the store at 95 Main Street, MHC #16). Amos Lawrence, philanthropist, capitalist, industrialist and namesake of Lawrence Academy, served an apprenticeship in this store until he left to conduct business in Boston c. 1807. The house is inexplicably not depicted on the 1832 Butler map or described in his field notes for the map. Subsequent storekeepers were Moses Carleton, a Mr. Merriam, Benjamin P. Dix in 1825 and Benjamin P. Dix Jr. from 1838 until at least 1875 according to the Beers atlas from that year. Tax records from 1847 show that Mr. Dix had \$700 in stock in trade and in 1875 he had a horse, carriage, house, barn and a tannery building on a half-acre of land. Census schedules from 1855 and 1865 list Mr. Dix as Esquire and a trader respectively. He lived with his wife Caroline, three children and a female Irish immigrant, a common arrangement for wealthy people at the time. Mr. Dix took out a newspaper ad detailing his items for sale that included paint, oils, drugs, medicines, boots, shoes and leather according to Sawyer. George S. Boutwell (MHC #4, 172 Main Street) Governor of Massachusetts from 1851-53 once worked in the store. Green notes that the building was in residential use by 1885. This was around the time of Mr. Dix's daughter, Roxa Dix Southard's marriage to Charles Zibeon Southard, shortly after which they moved to New York City for 27 years before returning to occupy the building in 1910. Mr. Southard was listed

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

☐ continuation sheet

Green, Vol. I, No. XII. P. 6; Previous historic resource survey form #16; 1832 and 1847 Butler maps; 1856 Walling map; 1875 Beers Atlas; 1889 Walker Atlas; Sawyer, "More People and Places of Groton", p. 87; May, "Groton Houses", p. 93; Resident directories, 1888, 1918, 1929; Sanborn fire insurance maps, 1896-1906; Southard, Roxa Dix. New York Times obituary, March 20, 1924.

**** 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
Massachusetts Archives Building
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Town
Groton

Area(s)
Form No.

117 Main Street **Historical Narrative**

in the 1918 and 1929 resident directories as a consulting engineer who worked out of his house. Mrs. Southard was a great, great granddaughter of General Artemus Ward of the Continental Army, director of the New England Division of the D.A.R., musician, trained soprano singer and contributor of articles on India and the American west to the New York Times. Sanborn fire insurance maps from 1906 depict the building as a double residence with a detached shed in the back yard.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Massachusetts Archives Building
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

117 Main Street

Town
Groton

Property Address

Area(s)

Form No.



Massachusetts Historical Commission

Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community Groton
Property Address
117 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: ☒ 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 117 Main Street is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an individual resource at the local level. According to Helen Sawyer's research, the brick portion of the building was built as a store c. 1773 by Jonas Cutler and later owned by Aaron Brown around 1798. The two story ell was built c. 1780 as a horse shed with law offices above. Lawyers working here may have included Samuel Dana (Resident of 86 Main Street MHC #23) and Timothy Bigelow, instructor of the student and engineer Loammi Baldwin Jr. The building is said by GHC researchers to have been built of brick imported from England. Mr. Brown's business partner was for a time James Brazer who lived at 86 Main Street (MHC #24). Mr. Brazer dissolved his partnership with Mr. Brown in 1805 according to a newspaper ad in the Boston Columbian Sentinel and afterward ran the store with his son William (later owner of the store at 95 Main Street, MHC #16). Amos Lawrence, philanthropist, capitalist, industrialist and namesake of Lawrence Academy, served an apprenticeship in this store until he left to conduct business in Boston c. 1807. The building's associations with historic commercial and legal activity in Groton establish its significance under Criterion A. The design of the house's symmetrical façade, 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.