

FORM B - Building

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

Map and Lot # 113 47 USGS Quad Y Form Number 6

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 163 Main Street
Historic Name Whiton, Elijah House
Uses: Present Bank
Original Residential
Date of Construction 1838

Source Butler Maps, 1830, 1847; May, Houses, p. 169

Style/Form Federal

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Wood clapboard

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/secondary structure

Major Alterations (with dates)

Asbestos shingles removed, c. 1970, adapted for use as a bank

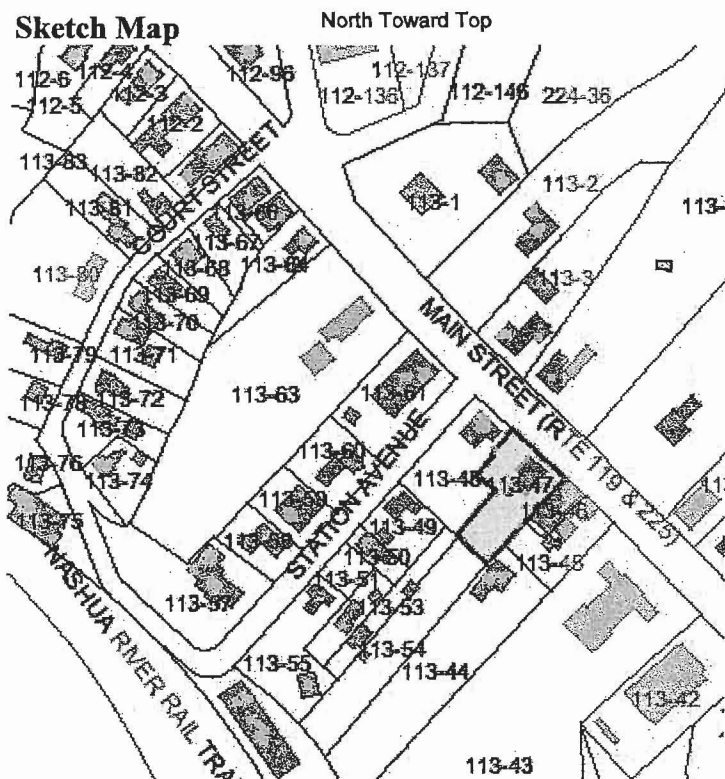
Condition Excellent

Moved no ☒ yes ☐ Date

Acreage .44

Setting Town Center-Main Street

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 Whiton House is a 5x2-bay, side-gabled, 2 1/2-story Federal style design with a 2-story rear addition and a 1-story porch at the south side of the rear addition; a shallow porch with fluted Doric columns, entablature and roof balustrade projects slightly from the façade to cover the center entry; a second entry porch with a hipped roof projects from the south side elevation of the rear addition
- * Architectural ornament consists of the molded cornice, gable returns, corner boards and symmetrical fenestration in the façade
- * Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash with beaded trim
- * The center entry is flanked by pilasters and fluted trim with corner bosses at the upper corners
- * The house is close to Main Street and is similar to others from the period in terms of scale and level of detail

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.

Elijah Whiton was probably the first owner of the house and worked as an inventor and industrialist who was granted a U. S. patent in 1834 for his pump designs. State census records list 130 soapstone pumps manufactured in Groton which may be attributable to Mr. Whiton. According to Dr. Green who quotes a news advertisement requesting their return, Mr. Whiton owned a shop in 1824 where he had stolen from him a scale, surveying compass marked "E. Whiton, Maker", spirit level, watch chains, ribbons and tea spoons. The Union Engine Co., which began service in 1830, was founded by Elijah Whiton among others. Tax records from 1830 show Mr. Whiton owned only a house worth \$100 but by 1847, he had a house valued at \$2,800, \$4,030 in cash and stocks and four additional houses. He wrote a letter to the journal "Scientific American" in 1857 stating he built pumps of wood, glass, metal and soapstone, powered them from his steam engine in Groton from 1833-1842, possibly the source of his relatively sudden wealth. The 1847 Butler map appends the title "Esquire" to his name at this location. He later operated his inventions at his bucket factory in Hingham, Ma. where he moved c. 1850. The 1855 census suggests but does ascertain that the resident of the house was Caleb Blake, operator of a bookstore very near this location which confirms the presence of such an operation depicted on the 1856 Walling map. Mr. Blake may have shared the house with the attorney Bradford Russell who had offices in the store at 148 Main Street (MHC #144) and is depicted at this location on the 1856 map. Subsequent owners of the house were the farmer Jonas Eaton according to maps from 1875, and 1889. Mr. Eaton was a former resident of the farm at 193 Chicopee Row (MHC #172) from 1832 -1856 according to maps from those years. By the time of the publication of the 1929 resident directory, A. Leon Cutler was the occupant. He was a historian of the Middlesex Canal, knowledgeable Groton historian, former president of the Bay State Historical League and Groton selectman c. 1930-1941 according to GHS research and recollections.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

☐ continuation sheet

Scientific American, Volume 12, Issue 25, Feb 28, 1857; Previous GHS research; May, "Groton Houses", p. 169; 1832 and 1847 Butler maps; 1856 Walling map; 1875 Beers atlas; 1889 Walker atlas; 1918 and 1929 resident directories; Green, Vol. 2, pp. 393-396; Vol. 4, p. 212; Previous GHS Research; Bigelow, "Statistical Tables: Exhibiting the Condition and Products of Certain Branches of Industry in Massachusetts, for the Year Ending April 1, 1837"

**** 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

Property Address

Area(s)

Form No.

163 Main Street



Massachusetts Historical Commission

Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community Groton

Property Address
163 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

The Federal Style house at 163 Main Street is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an individual resource at the local level. Elijah Whiton was probably the first owner of the house and worked as an inventor and industrialist who was granted a U. S. patent in 1834 for his pump designs. State census records from the period list 130 soapstone pumps manufactured in Groton which may be attributable to Mr. Whiton. According to Dr. Green who quotes a news advertisement requesting their return, Mr. Whiton owned a shop in 1824 where he had stolen from him a scale, surveying compass marked "E. Whiton, Maker", spirit level, watch chains, ribbons and tea spoons. The Union Engine Co., which began service in 1830, was founded by Elijah Whiton and Thomas A. Staples (storekeeper and resident of Dana House at 86 Main Street, MHC #23). Tax records from 1830 show Mr. Whiton owned only a house worth \$100 but by 1847, he had a house valued at \$2,800, \$4,030 in cash and stocks, four additional houses and a large amount of acreage. He wrote a letter to the journal "Scientific American" in 1857 saying that he built pumps of wood, glass, metal and soapstone, powered them from his own steam engine in Groton from 1833-1842 which may have been the source of his relatively sudden wealth. The 1847 Butler map appends the title "Esquire" to his name at this location. He later operated his inventions at his bucket factory in Hingham, Ma. where he moved c. 1850. The building's associations with historic early industry and invention establish its significance under Criterion A. The design of the house and the surviving historic exterior materials make the property eligible under Criterion C. The house retains integrity of design, materials and workmanship.