

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

D4/ 5/ 12/ / Brockton AVO.1

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: Avon

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



Address: 533 West Main Street

Historic Name: Relief and Peter Dunbar House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling

Original: Single Family Dwelling

Date of Construction: ca. 1794

Source: Deed

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder: Not Known

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Stone, Cut

Wall/Trim: Wood Shingles / Wood Trim

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Attached Carriage House

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Rear ell

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 1.6

Setting: Located on a busy suburban thoroughfare. Surrounding houses date from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Stacy Spies

Organization: Avon Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): December 2022

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AVON

533 WEST MAIN STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The house is located on a level lot and oriented to the northeast, toward the street. The lot is covered with lawn, with mature trees at the lot's edges. A cast concrete retaining wall lines the lawn's edge at the sidewalk. An asphalt-paved driveway leads past the house's southeast elevation to a large garage constructed to look like a 19th-century carriage house.

The 1-story frame house is capped with a side-gabled roof with shallow eaves. The house is covered with wood shingles and trimmed with corner boards and gable-end cornice returns. The house is five bays wide with a center entrance that contains a Colonial Revival-style paneled wood door. The house is two bays deep with an exterior brick chimney at the southeast gable end. Windows at the first story are 12/12 wood sash; windows in the gable peaks are 6/6 wood sash. A 1-story, perpendicular ell extends from the rear elevation. A shed-roof porch supported by wood columns atop a poured concrete base extends the length of the southeast elevation. A brick chimney is located on the northwest slope of the ell roof.

The barn attached to the south corner of the house has a front-gabled roof with overhanging eaves. The building is clad with wood shingles trimmed with corner boards, a frieze, and gable-end cornice returns. An overhead vehicle door (mid-20th C) is centered in the northeast elevation. A sash window is centered over the door. A frame cupola with a pyramidal metal roof is centered on the roof ridge. The southeast elevation contains four bays of windows. A 1-story ell is attached to the barn's west elevation.

Interior inspections were beyond the scope of this survey, but a closer examination of surviving framing, floorplans, and interior features and finishes by an architectural historian with expertise in early Massachusetts building technology could provide additional insights into a likely original construction date and on the physical evolution of the building over time.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

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.

533 West Main Street was likely constructed circa 1794 for Relief Curtis Dunbar (1745-1838)¹ and her husband, Peter Dunbar (1741-1817).² In that year, Captain Theophilus Curtis (1710-1795) sold twenty acres of land at the south end of his homestead to his daughter, Relief Curtis Dunbar.³ Relief Curtis and Peter Dunbar, a Bridgewater native, married in 1764 and had nine children. Peter Dunbar and his father-in-law, Theophilus Curtis, were among the militia members under the command of Peter Talbot who responded to the April 19, 1775 events at Lexington and Concord.⁴ Peter Dunbar was also part of the East Company who marched from Stoughton on March 4, 1776 to fortify Dorchester Heights.⁵

Isaac French purchased the house and 20 acres of land from Relief and Peter Dunbar in 1802.⁶ French worked as a cordwainer (shoemaker). The property, which was described at the time as a "farm with a dwelling house, shop, shed, and barn," was sold

¹ Findagrave.com Memorial #166149869. Accessed Oct. 10, 2022.

² Findagrave.com Memorial #163948894. Accessed Oct. 10, 2022.

³ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 6, p. 152. (Recorded in 1796).

⁴ Hanna: 19, citing Massachusetts State Archives, Vol. 13, pp. 134, p. 134A. Also *Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolutionary War*. Vol. 5. P. 31.

⁵ *Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolutionary War*. Vol. 5. P. 31.

⁶ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 23, p. 345.

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four more times over the next twenty years: to "gentleman" Jonathan Linfield in 1812; to cordwainer Isaac G. Blanchard in 1816; to housewright (house builder) Ambrose Packard in 1820; and to cordwainer Charles Packard in 1824.⁷

Charles Packard (1798-1884)⁸ and his wife, Esther F. May Packard (1803-1896),⁹ were married in 1823 in Stoughton. Charles Packard worked as a farmer and shoemaker and served as a deacon of the East Stoughton Baptist Church. The couple lived here with their adopted son, Charles Minot Packard (1839-1870), and Esther's mother, Sarah Beals May. At the outbreak of the Civil war, Charles Minot Packard was the first commander of the East Stoughton Home Guard, which organized to protect against Confederate "invasion or infiltration."¹⁰ Packard then entered the Union army and served as a sergeant in the First Massachusetts Cavalry and the Fourth Massachusetts Cavalry, "where he saw a good deal of fighting and was taken prisoner of war by the Confederates."¹¹ Packard survived the war and returned to East Stoughton in the summer of 1865. Upon his return, Packard was made village constable. Charles Minot Packard died in the line of duty when he was shot to death by a fugitive who had barricaded himself inside a house on Pratt Street. The Grand Army of the Republic Post No. 193 was named for Packard.¹² (Also see 39 South Street, AVO.68.)

In 1881, Charles Packard sold the house and eleven acres for \$210 to Azel E. Gurney, with the provision that Gurney care for Charles Packard and his wife, Esther, in their old age.¹³ The agreement stated that Esther and Charles Packard would move into the south part of the house and Gurney would provide "a good, comfortable and honorable maintenance and support at his own table, with suitable care and nursing, also clothing if so required" for the remainder of their lives. Azel Gurney worked in a shoe factory and came to live here with his wife, Laura, and their son.

In 1912, Swedish immigrant David A. Nelson (a.k.a. Nilsson) purchased the property from Azel E. Gurney.¹⁴ David Nelson (1884-) emigrated in 1887 and operated a grain and coal company in Stoughton. The house remained in the Nelson family until 1995.¹⁵

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⁷ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 43, p. 448, Book 54, p. 5, Book 63, p. 85, and Book 73, p. 149 [283].

⁸ Findagrave.com Memorial #102191232. Accessed Oct. 10, 2022.

⁹ Findagrave.com Memorial #102191261. Accessed Oct. 10, 2022.

¹⁰ Hanna: 49.

¹¹ Hanna: 49.

¹² Hanna: 49.

¹³ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 527, p. 155.

¹⁴ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 1216, p. 462.

¹⁵ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 11105, p. 478.