

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

10A 33

Georgetown

GEO.99

Town/City: Georgetown

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Elm Street Area

Photograph



View from E

Address: 105 Elm Street

Historic Name: Jonathan & Susan Spiller House & Barn

Uses: Present: residence

Original: residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1820

Source: village maps & family history

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
barn

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

none

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.68 acres

Setting: This property is on the west side of Elm Street north of its intersection with Brook Street on a lot with mature hardwoods. Elm Street is primarily residential.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson

Organization: Georgetown Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): January 2010

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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 Jonathan & Susan Spiller House & Barn is a two-story wood frame dwelling with a gable roof and wood clapboard siding built c. 1820. It is situated at the front of a half-acre lot on the west side of Elm Street. There is a lawn around the house; the rear of the parcel is wooded. A driveway on the south side of the house connects the street to a parking area in front of a large barn at the rear of the house.

The house is designed in a traditional early-19th-century rural manner: a two-story, rectangular gable-roof form with flush eaves. The imbalanced arrangement of windows on the five-bay front façade suggests that the north end of the dwelling began as a half-house of undetermined dimensions. The deep plan has an internal chimney in the rear indicating that a traditional three-room center-chimney house plan was preserved even though the front fireplaces were moved to the end walls and a center hall inserted. The center entrance—now contained within a late-19th-century porch—projects in the manner of more stylish houses found at the north end of Elm Street. A small story-and-a-half kitchen is attached to the south side of the rear façade with its south wall in line with the south wall of the house. It likely connected to the barn behind the house, but presently there is a short gap filled by a fence where a back house would have been. A second ell was later added to the north side of the rear façade, which could have been used for shoe work. It also has a large chimney on the north wall.

The large wood frame, gable roof barn behind the house associates the property with an agricultural function. It also appears to have originated as a smaller building and may have been connected to the house with other back buildings. A large barn door remains off center on the east façade with two later vehicle doors added on the south side. All are topped by wide transoms typical of the region. A ventilator is centered on the ridge of the roof, and what appears to be a milk house is attached to the front.

The Jonathan & Susan Spiller House & Barn are distinctive examples of mid-19th-century farmstead architecture on Elm Street that reflects the persistence of traditional house forms and decorative styles in the period. The property is a contributing feature of the Elm Street historic district.

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.

According to local histories, aside from the road (now Massachusetts Route 133) connecting Georgetown to its parent Rowley to the east and Andover on the west, Elm Street is one of the oldest streets in Georgetown, having been opened to “public travel” about 1686.¹ At that time between ten and twenty families lived in what was known as Rowley second (or west) parish or New Rowley. Beginning in the 1650s Rowley proprietors began to make land grants in the town’s western reaches; in 1666-67, the town laid out three thousand acres in the area and granted John Spofford the job of penning cattle “the young cattle of the towne” where they had “been herded this last year.” Pen Brook is named for these pens, which stood west of Elm Street. In 1732 families in the area successfully petitioned to form the Second Church of Rowley (ultimately Georgetown’s First Congregational Church) and built a second meetinghouse at the junction of Elm and East Main Streets in 1769. In 1838 the General Court of Massachusetts incorporated Georgetown, which embraced most of the second parish.²

¹ See, for example, Benjamin F. Arrington, ed., *Municipal History of Essex County in Massachusetts* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1922), 146.

² Thomas Gage, *The History of Rowley* (Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, 1840), 31-32, 320, 324, 326, 329.

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By 1800, according to a map showing the town center at that time, various branches of the Nelson family owned large tracts embracing both sides of Elm and Chestnut Street and both sides of Main Street in this section. All of these branches descended from Thomas Nelson (1615-about 1648), who was among the twenty families who had come to the New World in the winter of 1638 with the Puritan cleric Ezekiel Rogers (1590-166). With Rogers most of these families settled at Rowley, incorporated in 1639.

The extent to which the Nelson lands reached southward is not clear from the 1800 village map, but by 1880 the tract on which this property is sited belonged to Sylvanus Nelson (1803-82). The first Nelson to own the land in this section of Elm Street was Joseph Nelson (1682-1744), the grandson of the immigrant Thomas Nelson. According to local historian Henry Mighill Nelson, Joseph Nelson was the "first of this name to settle in Georgetown."³ The property passed to Joseph's son Aaron (1740-1804) and from Aaron to his sons Joseph (1769-1856) and Jonathan (1772-1852) and then to Joseph's son Charles (1803-74) and Jonathan's son Sylvanus (1803-82).

By 1830 the shoemaker Jonathan Spiller had built a house on this site. Born in Ipswich in 1796, Spiller married Susan Bailey in Rowley in 1820 and had three children there through 1830. A house labeled J. Spiller is shown on Elm Street on the 1830 village map. In 1850 this Elm Street property was valued at \$2565, and Spiller lived there with his wife, two daughters, his mother-in-law Susan Bailey, and his daughter Louisa Kimball Spiller's infant daughter Louisa M. Whitehouse; Louisa had married Andover carpenter William Whitehouse in 1848. The 1860 census shows Spiller as a shoe stitcher, but by 1870 he was farming. A shoe shop is shown just south of Spiller's house in 1872, although it may have belonged to his neighbor. By 1880 Spiller is shown as eighty-four years old in the census, working as a farmer/gardener, and living in the household of his granddaughter Louisa Whitehead Ilsley and her husband William, an upper leather cutter and Haverhill natives. Three years later Spiller died, but the 1884 map shows the house still labeled with his name.

In 1894 Orlando Tenney sold the land and buildings "known as the Jonathan Spiller place" to John W. Pingree, who by the mid-1910s occupied a house at 107 Elm Street, which was either Spiller's or a house no longer standing on that site. In 1918 Pingree had sold the property to the Rowley farmer Gorham Hardy, Ruth Jones's father, and two years later his daughter Ruth and her husband Harold J. Jones, a shoe factory laster, were living at 105 Elm Street. In 1930 Hardy's heirs (his children and widow) transferred title to the property to the Joneses. The property belonged to Ruth Jones until about 1988, when she subdivided her property into the 105 Elm and 107 Elm house lots. The next year the property was conveyed to its current owners, John F. and Jean S. Howland.⁴

³ Henry M. Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," in D. Hamilton Hurd. *History of Essex County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1888), 1: 812.

⁴ Orlando S. Tenney to J. William Pingree, 1894, SED 1424:275; Pingree to Gorham Hardy, 1918, SED 2401:479, and Arthur H. Conant to Hardys, deed reference only; "Plan of Land at 105 and 107 elm street, Georgetown, Massachusetts, Property of Robert M. and Ruth L. Jones," 8 April 1933, Southern Essex County Registry Plan Book 242 plan 31; Donald I. Desmond Jr., trustee Desmond-Lindh Realty Trust, to John F. and Jean S. Howland, 1 September 1989, SED 10138:555.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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- Assessor's Records. Georgetown Town Hall.
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- Bureau of the Census. United States Census, 1790-1930.
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MAPS

- "Map of the Centre of Georgetown in 1800." In Perley, Sidney H., "Centre of Georgetown in the Year 1800." *The Essex Antiquarian: A Quarterly Magazine Devoted to the Biography, Genealogy, History, and Antiquities of Essex County, Massachusetts* 2, 7 (July 1898): 201.
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- "Map of New Rowley Surveyed and Drawn by Philander Anderson 1830." Georgetown Historical Society.
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[Delete this page if no Criteria Statement is prepared]

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible **only** in a historic district
☒ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ **A** ☐ **B** ☒ **C** ☐ **D**

Criteria Considerations: ☐ **A** ☐ **B** ☐ **C** ☐ **D** ☐ **E** ☐ **F** ☐ **G**

Statement of Significance by___Neil Larson and Kathryn Grover_____

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

The Jonathan & Susan Spiller House & Barn are distinctive examples of mid-19th-century farmstead architecture on Elm Street that reflects the persistence of traditional house forms and decorative styles in the period. The property is a contributing feature of the Elm Street historic district.

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View from NE



View from SE

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View from E



View from SE

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View from NE



Aerial view from NE