

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

10B 54

Georgetown

GEO.11

**Town/City:** Georgetown

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

## Photograph



View from W

**Address:** 12 Elm Street

**Historic Name:** Dr. George & Sarah Moody House

**Uses:** Present: residence

Original: residence

**Date of Construction:** 1825

**Source:** assessor's records

**Style/Form:** Federal

**Architect/Builder:** Joseph & John Kimball, probable builders

## Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard siding

Roof: asphalt shingles

## Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Shed (non-historic)

## Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Renovations to kitchen ell (late 20<sup>th</sup> century)

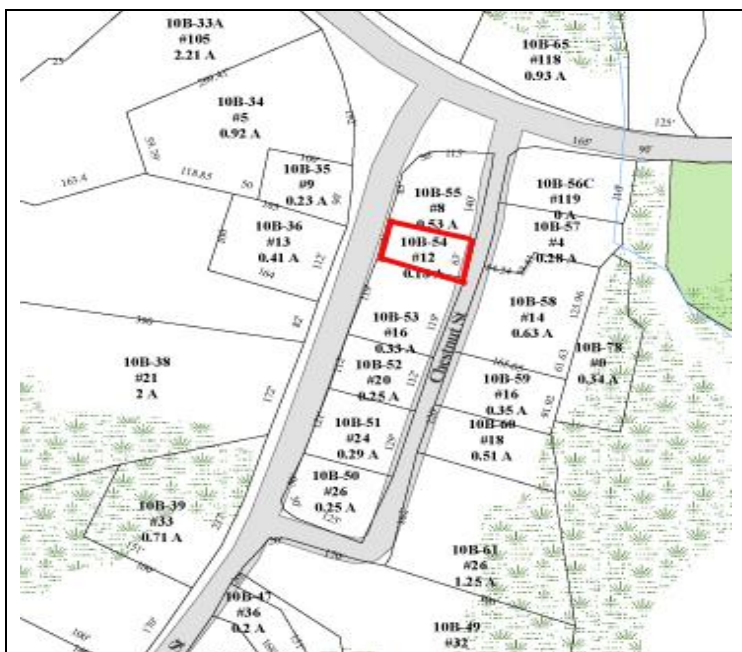
**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.18 acre

**Setting:** This property is located on the east side of Elm Street, which is primarily residential, and stands near the intersection of Elm and East Main Streets.

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson

**Organization:** Georgetown Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): January 2010

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

12 ELM 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 Dr. George & Sarah Moody House is a two-story wood frame dwelling has wood clapboard siding and a hipped roof. It is situated on a small 0.18-acre parcel that was subdivided from the Nathaniel Nelson house lot (8 Elm St.) in the early 1800s. The front of the house is oriented to Elm Street; the lot abuts Chestnut Street on the east. The house is sited along the north property line, with a small yard occupying the south and east sides of the house; a stone-paved parking area is located in the southwest corner of the lot on Elm Street.

The house plan is one room deep with two brick chimneys on the rear wall, one each at the backs of rooms flanking a center hall. This was a popular plan for houses in towns along the North Shore of Massachusetts and in Portsmouth, New Hampshire during this period and earlier. Its similarity to other nearby houses, including two owned by the Kimball family of housewrights, supports the attribution of its construction to Joseph and John Kimball. The five-bay front façade contains a center entrance with a Greek Revival-style trabeated architrave composed of fluted pilasters with ionic capitals and a hefty entablature with a modillioned cornice. Window sash appears to be replaced, although the six-over-six pattern is historically appropriate. The roofline is plainer in ornamentation, and there are attenuated corner pilasters reflecting a transitional design embodying aspects of both Federal- and Greek Revival-style decoration. A one-story, shed roof extension on the rear appears to be original and has a screened porch added to it on the south side. A story-and-a-half kitchen ell is attached to the north side, which has been more recently extended and renovated.

The Dr. George & Sarah Moody House is a distinctive example of Federal Period in the town and evinces the single-pile rear chimney plan form characteristic of Essex County and the North Shore region. The house is essentially intact and distinguished by original materials and a Greek Revival-style trabeated entrance architrave. It is a key contributing component of a historic district on Elm Street.

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 yeare." 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.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

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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.

By 1828 Nathaniel Nelson had sold a tract just south of his house lot, and by that year the house at 12 Elm was built. The building's similarities to neighboring houses owned by the Kimball family of housewrights, identifies Joseph Kimball as the probable builder. George Moody is identified as the owner of the house on an 1838 map. According to historian Thomas Gage, Moody was one of four physicians in Georgetown in 1840, and county historian Benjamin Arrington stated that Moody began his practice in Georgetown in 1830.<sup>3</sup> Moody was born about 1800 and was "of" West Bradford in 1830, when he married Sarah Cressey of Rowley in Haverhill in 1830. Their first child, Ann Sewall Moody was born in Boxford in 1832 while their second Henry Sewall Moody, was born in Rowley in 1836. According to a 1909 Georgetown history, Moody "settled in our midst" shortly after a dysentery epidemic, which itself occurred three years after a typhus pandemic. One of several typhus epidemics took place in the early to mid-1830s, and though this account does not precisely date these events it seems likely to have been the 1830s incident.<sup>4</sup> Comparatively few deaths occurred in Georgetown from either disease, and Moody is credited with having determined that a high sulphur content in the local water supply accounted for that fact. The 1909 account described Moody in great, if somewhat disparaging, detail:

The doctor was very peculiar — rather too much of a scientist to become a successful practitioner, although no doubt his cataplasms, febrifuges, and nauseants would have been very effective had they been given or applied in season, and to the parts affected, but upon being called to a case he wished to know what the patient and his or her family thought was the matter. After hearing their idea of the nature of the disease, he would at once give the Greek and Latin names for it, the roots from which it was derived, etc., and then go home to study up what there was for him to do about it; and by the time he was ready to apply his remedies, the patient was either recovered or dead.<sup>5</sup>

Twelve Elm Street is shown on an 1838 map of the town with "G. Moody" appended. George Moody was not located in the 1830 Rowley census (or anywhere in Essex County), but in 1840 Moody and his family were enumerated in Rowley and certainly occupied the house. He died in 1866, and his widow continued to live in the house until her death in 1880. An 1884 map shows "C. Hall" at 12 Elm; she was Charlotte Sawyer Hall, widow of the shoemaker Seth Hall, and in 1880 the census lists her, apparently on Elm Street, in the household of her son-in-law, the house carpenter Edwin Carr Kimball, who married Hall's daughter Martha in Newburyport in 1866. Kimball was the son of the carpenter John Kimball, who lived at 20 Elm Street, two doors south; next to her, at 16 Elm, was John Kimball's brother Joseph, a housewright. John Kimball's wife Sarah (or Sally) was the daughter of Nathaniel Nelson, who lived at 8 Elm Street, next to 12 Elm. Charlotte Hall died in February 1899.

By 1870 Edwin Kimball and his wife lived on Chestnut Street with the shoemaker John Saunders and his wife. Kimball was listed as a farmer on that street in the 1900-1 town directory, but by 1910 he was living at 20 Elm Street, the house in which he grew up; his mother had died in 1869 and both his father and his wife in 1889. In 1910 Kimball lived in the house with his brother William Nelson Kimball, also a widower, until he died in 1917.

By 1917 12 Elm Street was occupied by the contractor Edward Thayer Greenleaf, who in 1910 was and 1914 was living in his father's household at 24 Elm Street. By and in the town directory of 1912 both he and his son Edward T., who lived in his father's household, were shown as farmers. When he registered for the draft in 1917 he was single and living at 12 Elm Street with his mother Lina, his wife Blanche, and their three children. He was renting the house. In 1930 he was shown in the census as a heeler in a shoe factory, by then his brother Leslie, a nurseryman, his sister Marjorie, and her husband Kenneth L. Poole, a bakery salesman. Assessor's records show all three men living at 12 Elm in 1933, but he had moved to 42 Elm, the home of

<sup>3</sup> Gage, *History of Rowley*, 392; Arrington, *Municipal History*, 797.

<sup>4</sup> *Souvenir of Old Home Week Georgetown Massachusetts July 25-28 1909* (Boston: John G. Allen, 1909), 18, 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Souvenir History*, 18.

**INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET**

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Kenneth Poole's father William, by 1942.<sup>6</sup> Who owned the house before 1951, when it was occupied by John J. and Jean H. McKiernan, is unclear. The current owner, Stephen W. Keene, bought the property in 1969.<sup>7</sup>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

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- Gage, Thomas. *The History of Rowley, Anciently Including Bradford, Boxford, and Georgetown, from the Year 1639 to the Present Time*. Boston: F. Andrews, 1840.
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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.
- Map of Georgetown in 1810 and 1840. In Gage, Thomas. *The History of Rowley, Anciently Including Bradford, Boxford, and Georgetown, from the Year 1639 to the Present Time*. Boston: F. Andrews, 1840. 320.
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- "Town of Georgetown Mass." and "Village of Georgetown Mass." In *Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts* (Boston: George H. Walker, 1884).
- "Georgetown, Mass. 1887." Drawn and Published by George E. Norris, Brockton, Massachusetts. Troy, NY: Burleigh Lithographic Establishment, 1887."

<sup>6</sup> The 1930 census also shows the shoe factory foreman Edward Morse and his wife at 12 Elm; the enumerator listed five families at this address, but many households in this census are shown with no house numbers.

<sup>7</sup> James G. and Marilyn Beaver to Stephen W. Keene, 25 March 1969, SED 5597:631.

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GEO.11

*[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 Dr. George & Sarah Moody House is a distinctive example of Federal Period in the town and evinces the single-pile rear chimney plan form characteristic of Essex County and the North Shore region. The house is essentially intact and distinguished by original materials and a Greek Revival-style trabeated entrance architrave. It is a key contributing component of a historic district on Elm Street.



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Area(s)    Form No.

	GEO.11
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View from NW



View from SW



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Area(s)    Form No.

	GEO.11
--	--------



View from SE



Aerial view from SW