

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

9A 5

Georgetown

GEO.29

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Photograph



View from S

Address: 237 Central Street

Historic Name: Aaron Crombie, Jr. - John A Lovering House

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1815

Source: historic maps, vital records

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Barn & connected garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Rear ell possibly removed
Addition to NW corner

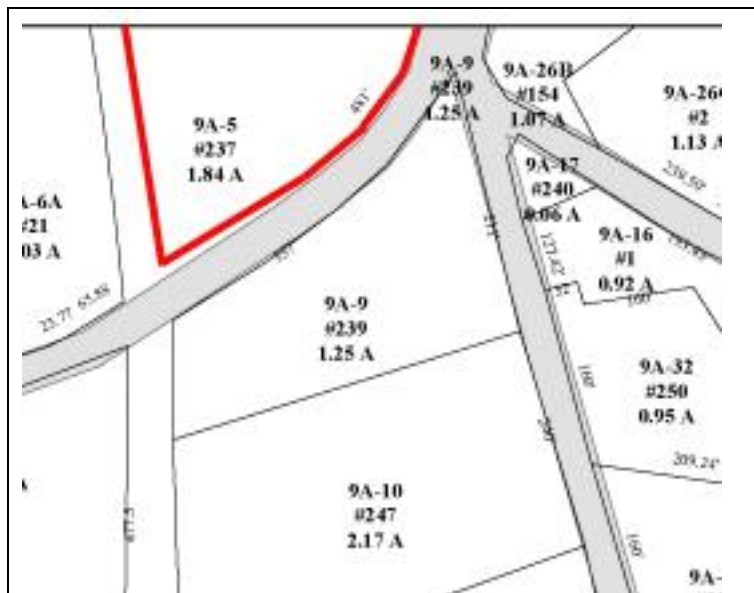
Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 1.84 acres

Setting: This property is on the north side of the intersection of Elm, Central, and Nelson Streets in an area with mostly residences but a few commercial structures. The lot has mature hardwoods and two barns.

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 Aaron Crombie, Jr. - John A Lovering House is situated in the southeast corner of a two-acre lot at the intersection of Central, Elm and Nelson streets. The parcel abuts right-of-way of the old Danvers and Georgetown Railroad, now a Metropolitan Transit Authority commuter line, on the west and a parcel subdivided from it in 1970 on the north. A barn and a garage are sited north of the house; open land west of the house and outbuildings is maintained as lawn.

Local historian O.B. Tenney infers that Aaron Crombie, Jr. built the house, and the design of it relates to the years after he was married in 1812. (Crombie's name is not on the 1798 direct tax list.) The boxy form, horizontal emphasis, internal chimneys and pedimented Classical doorway all conform to the architectural taste of the early Federal period.

The two-story wood frame house has a double-pile plan and two massive chimneys in a low-pitched hipped roof. Narrow wood clapboards cover the walls with a shaped cornice containing gutters. The five-bay front façade contains a center entrance with a demi-lune transom set within a Classical architrave. Windows have simple, square-headed architraves; those on the first story also have a cornice. The six-over-six wood sashes are later replacements. There are two window bays on the west side and three bays on the east side with a doorway centered on the first story. The rear (north) façade has three bays, with a doorway in between on the left side, which may denote the location of an earlier ell where a deck has been added. It is possible that there were connected outbuildings, which was a fairly common practice in the region. A one-story hipped roof wing has been added more recently to the northwest corner.

A two-story, wood frame barn with a gable roof is located north of the house and was built or altered in the early 20th century when the then owner operated an ice delivery business on the property. It has wagon and mow doors centered on the east façade and four stable windows across the south gable end. The roof projects at the apex on this same end where a loft door has been replaced with a tripartite window. Other windows have been added to the upper stories for other uses. A one-story wing connected perpendicularly to the northeast corner of the barn contains three vehicle bays with overhead doors.

The Aaron Crombie, Jr. - John A Lovering House is a distinctive example of early Federal architecture with its square plan, horizontal massing and Classical front facade. It illustrates the persistence of traditional house design and construction methods in the hinterlands of Essex County. The property is individually eligible for the National Register in the local context for its architectural integrity and distinction as well as its historical associations. It is a key component in an 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 a 1922 local history, Central Street began as a "fenced lane" and was made a street "in the early part of 1800." It has historically also been called the Salem Road, and it is today state route 97. From an early point it was both residential and industrial. In 1760 Captain Benjamin Adams opened the town's first tannery here and through the nineteenth century shoe shops stood on both sides of the street.¹ The Georgetown plate from the 1884 Essex County Atlas shows five such shops on Central

¹ Benjamin F. Arrington, ed., *Municipal History of Essex County in Massachusetts* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1922), 246; 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), 1:844.

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Street, and the village directory of the next year lists four factories—G. W. Chaplin and Company, H. P. Chaplin, John H. Lovering (at the corner of Elm Street), and C. G. Baker (at the corner of Nelson Street.).

According to local historian O. B. Tenney, the house at 237 Central Street was built by Aaron Crombie. The Crombie family was in the Georgetown section of Rowley from the 1740s. In 1741 in Rowley Benjamin Crombie, shown in his marriage record as “of Rowley,” married Rebecca Davis of Ipswich, and the next year, according to historian Henry Mighill Nelson, Rebecca Davis Crombie joined the New Rowley (later Georgetown) church, then called the Second Church of Rowley and founded a decade earlier.² In 1838 the General Court of Massachusetts incorporated Georgetown, which embraced most of the second parish.³

Aaron Crombie (1753-1821), a son of Benjamin, was born in Rowley, and his son Aaron Jr. (1790-1869), both lived in what became Georgetown, and because Tenney did not specify roughly when the house was built or whether father or son was the owner, vital records cannot help to establish when 237 Central was built. The tract on which it stands was probably owned by Captain Benjamin Adams, who was born in Rowley in 1746. Adams was part of the fifth generation descended from immigrant Robert Adams, who settled in Newbury about 1635. By the 1830s the north, east, and west boundaries of Adams’s land abutted that of Asa Nelson (1790-1855), who lived at 123 Elm Street and was the great great grandson of the Rowley immigrant Thomas Nelson (1615-about 1648).⁴

An Aaron Crombie is listed in the 1820 and 1830 Rowley censuses, and the age composition of the household indicates that this man was Aaron Crombie Jr. The younger Aaron married Dolly Dorman in Boxford in 1812, and he was living in Rowley at the birth of his first child in 1816 (the child died a month after birth), the same year that Mary (also Polly) Lowell Crombie, the wife of Aaron Sr., committed suicide by hanging herself.⁵ Her death also took place in Rowley, but census cannot indicate whether Aaron Sr., Aaron Jr., or both were living in the house at 237 Central. By 1840 Aaron Crombie Jr. is listed as a resident of Topsfield, though he returned to Georgetown by 1850 and died there in 1869. Censuses make clear that Crombie was not in this neighborhood after his return.

If Crombie built the house at 237 Central Street, he had certainly vacated it by 1830, when a Georgetown map shows “J. Lovering” next to a building on its site. Born in Exeter, New Hampshire about 1800, John A. Lovering was living in Rowley by 1829, when he married Mehitable P. Adams (1804-30), the daughter of Benjamin Adams (1773-1852) of Georgetown. Adams owned considerable property in the area of Lovering’s Corner, and the family homestead was on Nelson Avenue, just west of this intersection. If this house was not the Crombie house, it may well have stood on Adams family land and have been built for the newly married couple.

Mehitable Lovering died of consumption less than a year after her marriage, and nine months later Lovering married Eliza Jewett, who was born in Groton about 1805 to Joshua and Rebecca Robinson Jewett.⁶

Federal censuses from 1850 through 1880 show John Lovering as a shoe manufacturer of some affluence; his estate of eight thousand dollars in 1850 had increased to thirty thousand dollars by 1860. Local histories offer almost no information about him or his business, however. Yet he was sufficiently prominent that he was named (but declined) to moderate the meeting called to request separating the second parish from Rowley, and the votes and legislature approved his suggestion of boundary lines. And Lovering was one of the Georgetown’s first three selectman at its 1838 incorporation.⁷

Historian Henry Mighill Nelson states that Lovering was among the “thirty or more persons in the south part of town” who were making shoes.⁸ The 1852, 1872 and 1884 maps show the house and a shoe manufactory, and the 1885 directory sites his shop or factory on Central Street at the corner with Elm—in other words, on this property. Lovering had also put a signal or flag station

² “Hon. O. B. Tenney,” *Georgetown Advocate*, n.d. (ca. 1900); 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: 831.

³ Thomas Gage, *The History of Rowley* (Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, 1840), 31-32, 320, 324, 326, 329.

⁴ Nelson, “Town of Georgetown History,” 1: 812.

⁵ Gage, *History of Rowley*, 436.

⁶ Eliza is listed among the “unclaimed Jewetts” in Frederic Clarke Jewett, *History and Genealogy of the Jewetts of America: A Record of Edward Jewett . . .* (Rowley, MA: Jewett Family of America, 1908), 1058.

⁷ Arrington, *Municipal History*, 265.

⁸ Nelson, “Town of Georgetown History,” 845.

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for the Danvers and Georgetown Railroad, probably near the time it began to operate in 1853, as an inducement to "stopping the trains at South Georgetown," one source notes. After 1884 the station was moved a short distance away until the South Georgetown station was built in 1893.⁹

By 1860 Lovering's son John Henry, born about 1837, had joined the business, which became known as J. A. Lovering and Son. He lived in his father's household with his parents and his sisters Mary (born 1831), Eliza (born 1833), Sarah Mehitable (born 1835), Frances (born about 1841), and Harriet (born about 1843). The younger John married Lucia Nickerson Cook in her native Provincetown in 1875, and they along with his siblings lived at this address through 1870. By 1873 Sarah, Eliza, and Harriet had married. Lovering's 1870 household includes his family except for his daughter Eliza as well as a granddaughter, Eliza S. Scott, and the mariner Alfred E. Poor. Both Scott and Poor still lived at 237 Central in 1880; Poor in fact remained at this address until 1914. In 1880 Lovering was eighty years old, and his single daughters were living at home and working, Mary as a dressmaker and Frances as a vestmaker. Poor had become a shoe finisher.

In 1881, on the Fourth of July, John A. Lovering hanged himself; no reason for his suicide has yet been uncovered. His widow Eliza resided in the house until she died in 1892, and his son, by then no longer at home, died in 1899. Mary and Frances Lovering remained at the house until Mary's death in December 1917, when her sister moved to Provincetown, probably to live with her sister Harriet E. Lovering Gifford, who married the banker Moses Gifford in 1870.

By 1925 David E. Hemeon, who was born in 1880 in Nova Scotia and came to the United States in 1885, acquired the house. Up to at least 1920 Hemeon lived in Malden and drove an ice wagon. By 1925 he had founded Pentucket Pond Ice Company, which he ran from this address, and 1933 assessor's records show the house, a garage, an ice house with a garage, a scale house and scales, a "new storehouse," and a gas tank and pump on the property. Hemeon may have lived at 237 Central until he died in December 1963. In 1970 the property was owned by William G. Priess, who divided it in two; the northern section was 41,700 square feet and contained no buildings, while the southern, at Nelson and Central Streets, was 80,200 square feet and contained the house and two outbuildings. In that year Priess sold 237 Central to Bruce A. and Eleanor S. Crouse, and the property changed hands several times before 1997, when current owners Peter E. and Marcia M. Brown acquired it.¹⁰

⁹ "The Newburyport and Danvers Railroads," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* (1910), 54.

¹⁰ "Plan of Land in Georgetown Owned by William G. Priess," 11 September 1970, Southern Essex Registry Plan Book 117 Plan 61; Brenda G., William G., and Brenda Priess to Bruce A. and Eleanor S. Crouse, 1 October 1970, SED 5716:275; Kevin M. and Cynthia L. Kern to Peter E. and Marcia M. Brown, 27 October 1997, SED 14429:309.

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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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[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 Aaron Crombie, Jr. - John A Lovering House is a distinctive example of early Federal architecture with its square plan, horizontal massing and Classical front facade. It illustrates the persistence of traditional house design and construction methods in the hinterlands of Essex County. The property is individually eligible for the National Register in the local context for its architectural integrity and distinction as well as its historical associations. It is a key component in an Elm Street historic district.

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View from SE



View from N

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View from W



View from E

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View from SW



Aerial view from S