

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

12 Parsonage Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

GEO.287

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

FORM B – BUILDING

Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

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

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson

Organization: Town of Georgetown Historical Commission

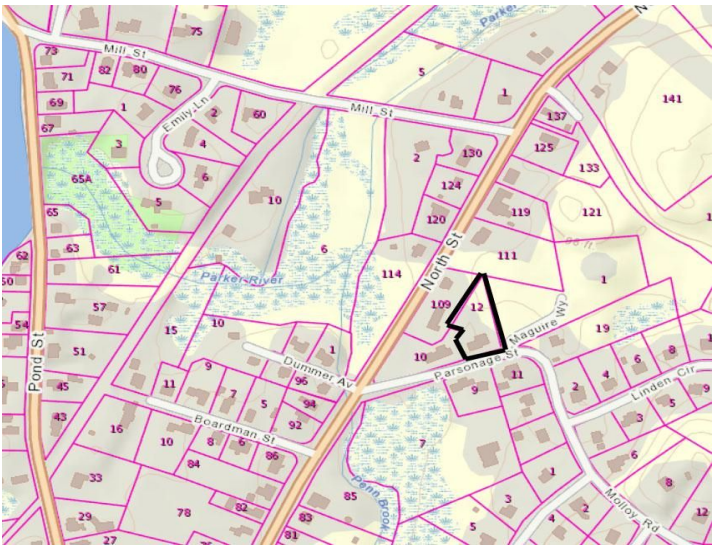
Date: June 2017

Photograph



View from west.

Locus Map (north at top)



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

11B-81

Georgetown

GEO.287

Setting: Concentrated neighborhood of single-family homes in proximity to town center.

Town/City: Georgetown

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
Georgetown Center

Address: 12 Parsonage Street

Historic Name: First Baptist Church Parsonage
James P. & Catherine Molloy House

Uses: Present: single family residential

Original: single family residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1850

Source: deeds & visual assessment

Style/Form: Greek Revival

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
2 sty wing added, late 20th century
Window sash replaced

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.35 acre

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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.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The First Baptist Church Parsonage (also known as the James P. and Catherine Molloy House) is a two-story wood frame single dwelling with a gable roof built about 1850. Its bilaterally symmetrical form and double-pile center-chimney plan reflect the persistence of the traditional center-chimney plan in early nineteenth-century New England. The focal point of the five-bay front façade is the center entrance with its trabeated architrave evincing the post-and-lintel structural system of ancient Greek temples. This subtle Classicism is also conveyed in wide corner boards representing pilasters and a frieze board at the base of the traditional modest cornice with gable-end returns. End walls also are symmetrical with two windows on each floor and single attic windows centered in the gables, although the fenestration pattern on the westerly end has been altered by the addition of a sliding glass door in the rear of the first floor. A two-story wing with a front-gable roof has been constructed on the easterly end of the building and connects to the house by a two-story hyphen that may be a remnant of a kitchen wing. A one-story shed-roof extension attached on the rear of the house also appears to be a more recent addition.

The house is centered on the frontage of a narrow, deep polygonal lot with small yards on the front and sides and a large open space in the rear. A driveway is located on the easterly side of the house; there is no garage.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In early January 1823, the brothers Samuel and Benjamin Plummer sold to the First Baptist Church and Society of Rowley a sixty-acre farm "which is now improved as a parsonage together with all the buildings thereon" on both sides of North Street in Rowley West Parish (now Georgetown) in order to support "the Calvinist Gospel minister" in the town.¹ A house was very likely included among the buildings, although it is not specifically mentioned in the deed, and it likely is the house identified as "Rev. E. Wilmarth" on the west side of North Street just north of where it crosses Penn Brook. (This house may be one of those that appear to have been moved at some later time to the east side of the street, now 83 and 85 North Street [GEO.265 & 266].) On the Georgetown Center inset map in the 1856 Essex County atlas, a building marked "Parsonage" is shown in the vicinity of the 12 Parsonage Street property.

Arising from a dispute within the Second Church at Rowley (in the west parish) beginning in the 1750s, the First Baptist Society was a group of Rowley West Parish, Bradford, and Newbury persons who set themselves off in a new church. In 1769 they bought the Second Church meetinghouse, took it down, and rebuilt it in Bradford; in 1782, a year after becoming a branch of the Haverhill Baptist Church, the trustees again took the old building down and rebuilt it on the east side of North Street "to the chagrin, it has been said, of some who twelve years before had been highly gratified to see it removed," according to local historian Henry M. Nelson. Nelson further noted that once relocated in the west parish it was placed "directly in front of the saw-mill then or soon after owned by John Wood." Nelson added that the farm the Plummers deeded to the First Baptist Society was then known as the "Shepard farm," which stood on the southwest side of North Street and ranged from Pen Brook to the home of S. S. Hardy. The Shepard farm, Nelson stated, was at the time of the sale "occupied and improved as a parsonage" by a "Mr. Lovell" who might have been on the property "from a much earlier date." This was almost certainly Shubael Lovell, a minister born in Barnstable in 1770 who is shown occupying property in Rowley in the 1798 direct tax. The owners of the tract are shown as Samuel Plummer, Samuel Harriman, Nathaniel Perley, and Daniel Cheney, who were probably the First Baptist Society trustees at the time. Lovell is shown in the 1810 Rowley census but not afterward, and he died in Bridgewater in 1846.²

¹ Samuel Plummer and Benjamin Plummer to Timothy Mors Jr, Solomon Nelson, and John Broklebank [sic], trustee First Baptist Church and Society, 2 January 1823, SECD 261:285.

² See Henry M. Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," in D. Hamilton Hurd, *History of Essex County, Massachusetts* (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1888), 1: 807, 828-29, and Benjamin F. Arrington, ed., *Municipal History of Essex County in Massachusetts* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1922), 126.

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In 1829, Nelson noted, the old Baptist Society meetinghouse was sold at auction to Orin Weston for \$89, and a new meetinghouse was completed “near the old house on the parsonage grounds” in 1829. It is shown on the west side of North Street on the 1830 map, and it was moved in 1837 to the corner of North and Pleasant Streets. The Baptist Society owned what is now 12 Parsonage Street until 1867, when a committee for the society sold it and its 2.5-acre lot to Catherine Molloy for \$670.³ Molloy, born in Ireland about 1805, was the wife of Irish immigrant laborer and shoe stitcher James P. Molloy, who had lived in Georgetown since at least 1850. In 1865 the Molloys were living in the home of Martin and Mary Coyne, probably their daughter and son-in-law. The Molloy family owned 12 Parsonage Street until the early 1980s.

The Molloys had at least six children—Maria, born in 1861; Ellen, born in 1862; Annie, born in 1866; Catherine, born in 1873; Patrick, born in 1875; and Susan, born in 1879. Their mother Catherine died in 1899, and the sisters Ellen and Annie had married by 1900. The 1900 census shows daughter “Katie” Molloy in the house with her brother Patrick, a farm worker, sister Susan, an adopted son named Patsy Scanlon, and four boarders. Catherine Molloy married in 1902 and died in 1905, and her brother, sister, and Patrick Scanlon (or Scannel) are shown in the house on Parsonage Street, then called “St. Peter’s Court.” The 1916 directory lists Patrick Molloy, a shoe worker, and his sister Susan at 12 Parsonage Street. By 1918 Patrick Molloy was an ice man for Merrimack Ice Company in Haverhill. The siblings were at this address with two boarders in the household in 1920, and there with no boarders in 1930; by then Patrick Molloy was a railroad section man, and by 1940 he was employed by the Works Progress Administration.

Susan Molloy died in 1948 and Patrick Molloy died in April 1952. In 1954 the administrator of Patrick’s estate sold 12 Parsonage Street to their sister Annie Drusilla, who had married Thomas Conley in 1892 and lived in Brooklyn, New York. In 1965 she sold part of the tract to the family of her sister’s Catherine’s widowed husband, John W. Ross, and in 1970 she sold another part to the family of Frank Maguire, who had married her sister Maria in 1886. In 1983 the house was sold to Joan M. McWhorter of San Francisco, who owned it for only three months. Current owners Joseph R. and Joanne L. O’Donnell acquired the property in 1996.⁴

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Southern Essex County Registry of Deeds website, salemdeeds.com.

MAPS

Thomas Gage, *The History of Rowley* (Boston: F. Andrews, 1840), 39–40, states that the Plummer brothers and Samuel Harriman, an elder in the First Baptist Society, gave the 60-acre farm to the society, but he is not mentioned in SECD 261:285, and no deed from him to the society has yet been located. Harriman was the church’s presiding elder when it became a branch of Haverhill Baptist Church in 1782, which strengthens the possibility that the Baptist Society was associated with the land Shubael Lovell occupied in 1798.

³ Edwin P. Perkins and Flint Weston, Georgetown, and Rufus D. Lothrop, Bradford MA, committee for the Baptist Society in Georgetown, to Catharine Molloy, 7 May 1867, SECD 725:90.

⁴ Kathryn J. Lagasse, administrator estate Patrick J. Molloy, to Drusilla Conley, Brooklyn NY, 7 June 1954, SECD 4079:451; Kurt R. Umholtz and Lisa M. Forbush-Umholtz, West Newbury MA, to Joseph R. and Joanne L. O’Donnell, 12 Parsonage St, 27 September 1996, SECD 13774:262. The 12 Parsonage Street parcel is shown as Parcel 2 on “Plan on Land in Georgetown,” September 1984 revised 23 October 1984, SECP 191:94.

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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.

"Map of New Rowley Surveyed and Drawn by Philander Anderson 1830." Georgetown Historical Society.

Map of Georgetown. 1856. In Walling. H. F. *A Topographical Map Essex County Massachusetts*. Boston: Smith and Morley, 1856.

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"Georgetown, Mass. 1887." Drawn and Published by George E. Norris, Brockton, Massachusetts. Troy, NY: Burleigh Lithographic Establishment, 1887."

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PHOTOGRAPHS (all photos by Neil Larson, 2017)



View from SE.

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Aerial view from north. Source: [bing.com/maps](https://www.bing.com/maps).