

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

10B 53

Georgetown

GEO.79

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Photograph



View from W

Address: 16 Elm Street

Historic Name: Joseph & Mary Kimball house

Uses: Present: residence

Original: residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1824

Source: historic maps & family history

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: Joseph & John Kimball, probable builders

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Barn (attached)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Replacement sash
Additions to rear ell

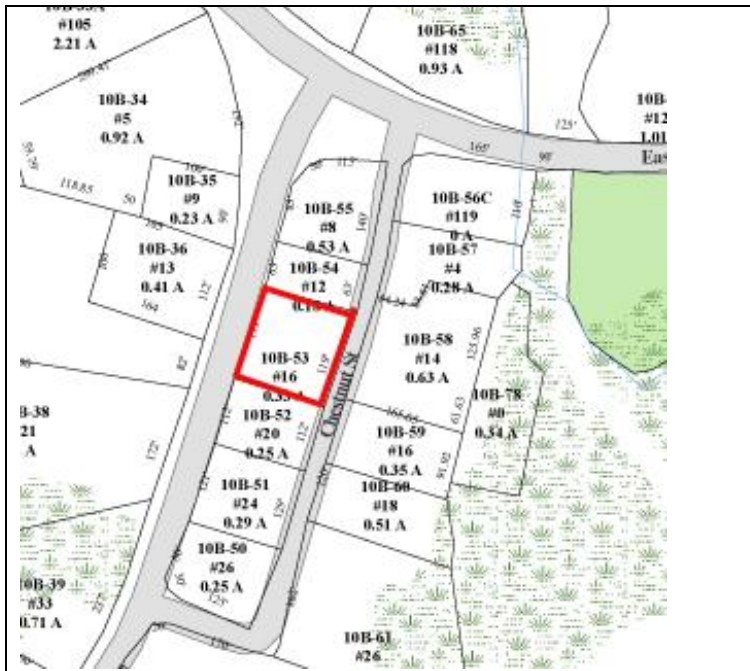
Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.33 acres

Setting: This property is on the east side of Elm Street near its intersection with East Main Street in a lot with mature hardwoods and softwoods. Elm Street is primarily residential.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson

Organization: Georgetown Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): January 2010

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

16 ELM STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

GEO.79

☒ 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 Joseph & Mary Kimball House is a two-story wood frame single dwelling with wood clapboard siding and a hipped roof. It is situated in the center of a one-third-acre lot on the east side of Elm Street. It is oriented to Elm Street and flanked by yards with mature plantings; its barn and rear yard face Chestnut Street. The barn is connected to the house at the back end of a kitchen ell, which is a rare surviving feature of what was probably common to more properties in on Elm Street. The entire property is bordered by a wood picket fence.

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. Joseph Kimball was a carpenter and housewright, so he very likely built this house with his brother and partner, John Kimball, who lived in a near-identical house next door (20 Elm St.) The similar form and design of other nearby houses, notably 12, 13 and 17 Elm Street, support the attribution of their construction by the Kimballs. The five-bay front façade contains an unusual projecting center entrance with a Greek Revival-style trabeated architrave composed of pilasters and a hefty entablature. The door is flanked by sidelights. Window sash appears to be replaced, although the first-story nine-over-six and second-story six-over-six patterns are historically appropriate. The roofline is ornamented with a plain entablature, and there are attenuated corner pilasters reflecting a transitional design embodying aspects of both Federal- and Greek Revival-style decoration. End walls contain single windows on lower and upper stories.

A long, narrow two-story kitchen ell is attached to the north side of the rear wall; its low-pitch gable roof abuts the rear wall just below the roof entablature. An enclosed porch was added to the north wall of the ell, and the south wall has been built-out as well. A wide brick chimney has been built against the east end of the ell for one or more fireplaces within. The wagon barn is connected to the northeast corner of the rear ell, overlapping sufficiently to allow for passage between the two sections. The east end of the barn contains swinging vehicle doors that open on a driveway linking to Chestnut Street. Doors and windows on the side walls indicate all or part of this section has been adapted to household use.

The Joseph & Mary Kimball House is a distinctive example of Federal Period architecture in the town and evinces the single-pile rear chimney plan form characteristic of Essex County and the North Shore region. Built ca. 1824, the house is essentially intact and distinguished by original materials and a projecting entrance with Federal-style architrave. It was probably built by Joseph Kimball and his brother and neighbor, John, who were housewrights. 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 1686.¹ 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

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

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

16 ELM STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

GEO.79

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.²

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 (1590-1666). With Rogers most of these families settled at Rowley, incorporated in 1639.

This house was built about 1824, probably by its longtime owner, the house carpenter and builder Joseph Kimball (1798-1881) and remained in his family for more than a century. Kimball was the son of Samuel and Susannah Kimball and was born in Boxford, the town bordering Georgetown on the southwest; Elm Street was the main route between the two towns. He was the brother of John Kimball,³ who lived at 20 Elm Street, and both were housewrights, as local historian Henry M. Nelson noted in 1888:

Many of the earlier house-builders have been already named, as several of the Spoffords, eminent in this especially honorable avocation, also two or three of the Hazens, and others. . . . The Kimball brothers, of which John, survives, were active for many years in their chosen work, and is now repeated in their sons also.⁴

Sixteen Elm Street appears on the 1830 map of Rowley on land owned in 1800 by Nathaniel Nelson, who lived at 8 Elm Street. In 1827 Kimball, who had married Nathaniel's daughter Mary, bought the land from his father-in-law.⁵ The marriage took place in 1824, and it seems likely that he built the house for himself and his new wife on a lot that Nathaniel Nelson still owned. All of the couple's eight children were born in Georgetown between 1830 and 1841. His brother, John Kimball, married Nelson's daughter Sarah in 1828.

Joseph Kimball's diaries, extant from 1832 to 1881, the year of his death, are in the collections of Phillips Library and may document that he and his brother built numerous houses in Georgetown, including many on Elm Street itself. By 1860 Kimball's son Charles Alfred, born in 1837, was working as a carpenter as well, but his son Joseph Henry, born four years later, worked first as a farm laborer and then as a shoemaker; he remained in his father's household in 1880. After the death of his first wife in 1855 Joseph Kimball married again, to Martha P. Holmes, and survived her as well; she died in 1867. After he died in 1881 his daughter Mary Susan, who died in 1895, continued to live in the house. By 1900 the census listed Joseph H. Kimball as a farmer and in 1910 as a shoe factory clerk. The younger Joseph Kimball married by 1884, when his first child Mary Josephine was born. The couple had one other child, Joseph Stickney Kimball, born in 1888. Joseph H. Kimball died sometime between 1914 and 1917, for his son's World War I draft registration notes that he was then living with his mother at 16 Elm Street. His sister, a stenographer in Haverhill who had married by 1922, transferred her title to the property to her brother Joseph S., who lived there until 1939. In that year Kimball sold the house to Arthur C. Merrill Jr. From that year until 1973 the house had six owners; in the latter year current owner Judith C. Gordon, who then rented the property, bought 16 Elm.⁶

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

³ John Kimball is often shown as John Kimball Jr.; in the manner of the time it might more appropriately have been John Kimball 2d, because he was contemporary with the older Colonel John Kimball of Georgetown.

⁴ "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: 847.

⁵ The transfer of title from Joseph S. Kimball's sister Josephine refers to his grandfather's 18 September 1827 purchase from Nelson (SED 244:121); see Josephine K. Smith to Joseph S. Kimball, 10 March 1922, SED 2508:278.

⁶ Smith to Kimball;; Kimball to Arthur C. Merrill Jr., 21 October 1939, SED 3198:56; Louise F Morris to Judith C Gordon, 14 June 1973, SED 5983:575.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

16 ELM STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

GEO.79

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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.

"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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INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

16 ELM STREET

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Area(s) Form No.

GEO.79

[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 Joseph & Mary Kimball House is a distinctive example of Federal Period architecture in the town and evinces the single-pile rear chimney plan form characteristic of Essex County and the North Shore region. Built ca. 1824, the house is essentially intact and distinguished by original materials and a projecting entrance with Federal-style architrave. It was probably built by Joseph Kimball and his brother and neighbor, John, who were housewrights. It is a key contributing component of a historic district on Elm Street.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

16 ELM STREET

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Area(s) Form No.

	GEO.79
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View from SW



View from NW

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

16 ELM STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	GEO.79
--	--------



View from SE

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

16 ELM STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

	GEO.79
--	--------



View from E



Aerial view from SW