

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

10/15

Georgetown

GEO.112

Town/City: Georgetown

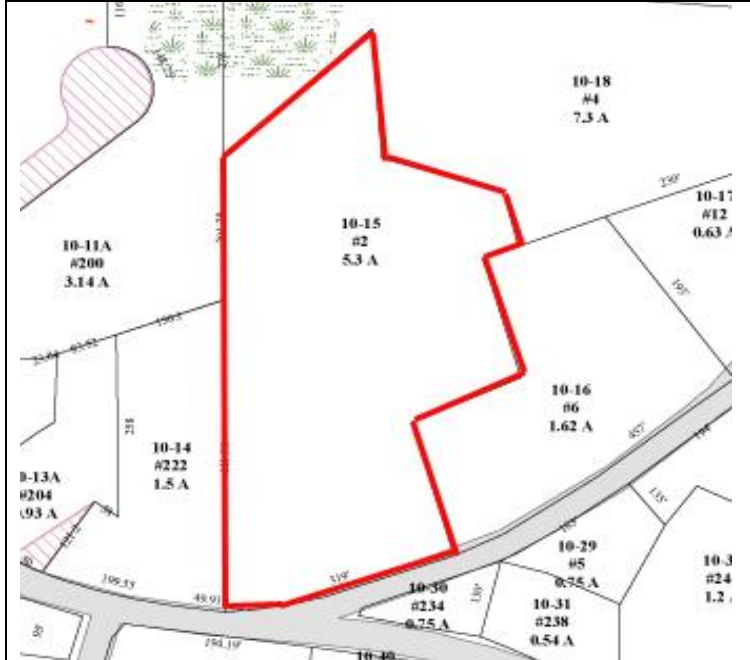
Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Marlborough

Photograph



View from SW of house (left) and shoe shop (right)

Locus Map



Address: 2 Tenney Street

Historic Name: John and Martha Palmer house/Spofford and Brown shoe shop

Uses: Present: residence

Original: residence and shop

Date of Construction: ca 1800 (house), ca 1840 (shop)

Source: maps, censuses

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood shingle

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Shoe shop, ca 1840
garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

1 story addition to east end of house

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 5.3 acres

Setting: This property is sited at the northwest corner of the intersection of East Main and Tenney Streets. The house and outbuildings are sited on a rise along the eastern border of the lot, which is partly cleared and partly forested.

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 John & Martha Palmer House and Spofford & Brown Shoe Shop are located on the north side of Tenney Street at its intersection with East Main Street in the neighborhood is known as Marlborough. The buildings are situated on a slight promontory above the road on the south and a depression on the west, which divides the property from the Moses & Mary Merrill House (222 East Main St.), which occupies a higher site. The 5.3 acre parcel reaches back up the hillside into what is now a wooded area. It evidently was once part of a larger farm that extended north and east of the extant property; a house presumably built by John Palmer Jr. is located on the neighboring lot at 6 Tenney Street.

The two-story wood frame dwelling was designed in a novel Federal-period plan with rooms in the corners of the boxy form, two of which, on the west side, were heated by fireplaces within an internal chimney and two others unheated, including an entrance lobby in the southeast corner. The off-center entrance in the four-bay front façade is set within a pedimented architrave, which appears to be a mid-20th-century Colonial Revival feature. The form and proportions of the gable-roof house and its narrow overhangs suggest a c.1800 construction date, which is when John & Martha Palmer were establishing themselves in Rowley. However, the house has been extensively remodeled in a Colonial Revival taste, probably soon after the current owners purchased the house in 1950. Window sash were replaced at this time and stained wood shingle siding also added. The one-story ell that traverses the rear of the house and projects beyond its east end also was constructed in this late period.

A gambrel-roof building east of the house is probably a shoe shop documented as being on the site in an 1846 deed. The wood-frame building has a wagon door in the west end and three windows spaced across the south façade. Like the house, it also has been covered with wood shingles. A one-story wood-frame garage is located southeast of the shop. It contains two vehicle bays with overhead doors in the west gable end.

The John & Martha Palmer House and Spofford & Brown Shoe Shop are distinctive architectural objects in the Marlborough neighborhood of Georgetown, and their histories associate them with the settlement period and local shoe industry. Both retain distinctive characteristics of their periods and functions and are valuable components of the historic area in Marlborough.

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.

This southerly end of Tenney Street is within what has been known as the Marlboro district of Georgetown. Originally called Elders Plain, it had been a settlement from the first half of the eighteenth century. The district was once the property of the Brocklebank family, which had settled in Georgetown in the mid-1600s.¹ The 1830 map shows a building labeled "J. Palmer" on the site of what is now 2 Tenney Street, for John Palmer Sr. (1749-1833), the son of Joseph Palmer of Bradford. In 1775 Palmer married Martha Friend (1749-1830) of Wenham, and by 1830 the couple, then in their early eighties, were living in a household of twelve persons, probably of a son or daughter. Their son John Palmer Jr. (1780-1867) was living in that year on property to the northeast, at the intersection of Tenney and Searle Streets.

Who lived in the house after the deaths of John and Martha Friend Palmer (1833 and 1830, respectively) is not clear, but by 1846 the house was owned in halves, one by their daughter, the widow Sarah P. Spofford (1788-1873) and the other by their grandson, Luther Platts Palmer (1815-92). Sarah Palmer Spofford's husband Eliphalet, who died of consumption in 1830,

¹ Henry M. Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," in *History of Essex County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men*, ed. D. Hamilton Hurd (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1888), 1:795, 808.

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descended from John Spofford, whom Rowley town fathers appointed to the task of penning "the young cattle of the towne" where they had "been herded this last yeare" in the mid-1660s. Pen Brook is named for these pens, which stood east of Elm Street.² John Spofford settled on what was later called Spofford's Hill (near the junction of Andover and West Streets) in 1669 and is thus believed to be the first settlers of what became Georgetown in 1838.³

The 1840 census shows Sarah P. Spofford enumerated next to her brother John Palmer; because the 1856 map shows no house between 2 Tenney and John Palmer Jr.'s house at 6 Tenney, she was almost certainly living at 2 Tenney by 1840. In 1846 she sold "that part of the house now improved" by her son Sumner Palmer Spofford (1812-1901) and a shop on the property for four hundred dollars. At the same time John Palmer Jr. and his wife sold "field and meadow land" to Sumner P. Spofford for \$72.50.⁴ Sarah Spofford's deed to her son notes that the other half of the house was then owned by Luther P. Palmer, who had married her daughter Martha. Luther Palmer's birth record states that he was the foster child of "Palmer Jr.," almost certainly John Palmer Jr. His father was John Platts and his mother Mary Palmer, probably John Jr.'s sister, born in 1776, and was given the surname Palmer by the commonwealth's General Court.

The 1850 census shows the Spofford and Palmer families in the same household—Spofford with his wife Abigail Marden Spofford and son Charles Augustus, born in 1838; Palmer with his wife and the fourteen-year-old New Hampshire native Robert O. Glidden. Spofford's estate valued at five hundred dollars and Palmer's at one thousand dollars. Both men were shoemakers, and it seems likely that Glidden was an apprentice. By 1850 Sarah Spofford was living in another part of Georgetown with her son Edwin's family, though in 1860 she was in Sumner's household; by 1870 she had returned to Edwin's household, and she died in 1873.

The 1856 village map labels the building on the site of 2 Tenney Street "L. P. Palmer and S. P. Spofford," and the 1872 map shows a building marked "Spofford & Brown shoe shop" just north of an unlabeled structure that is the shared house at 2 Tenney. The federal census of 1880 shows Spofford enumerated next to the shoemaker Leland H. Brown, born about 1859 in New Hampshire. Though the census does not show the families in the same household, a later deed indicates that the Browns lived in that half of the house Luther and Martha Palmer earlier occupied. Leland Brown lived at 2 Tenney Street with his father Noah F. Brown, a stone mason and millwright born in Sanbornton, New Hampshire, about 1834, his mother Ellen, three siblings, and a boarding shoemaker named Frank Danforth. The Browns had moved to Georgetown between 1864 and 1867 and are shown elsewhere in Georgetown in the 1870 census.

By 1885 Leland Brown had become a hairdresser, his presumed partnership with Spofford having ended. In 1892 Abigail Spofford died, and the next year Sumner Spofford sold his land and half-house to Wilbur B. Spaulding.⁵ Spofford moved to Nelson Street, where he died in 1901. Wilbur Spaulding (born 1868) was the son of the furrier and fur dealer Alfred A. Spaulding and was part of a large extended family that lived for the most part along Tenney Street. In 1900 Wilbur Spaulding was a farmer, but he became an antique dealer with a shop on Georgetown's Main Street by 1909. In 1912 Spaulding deeded the property to his son Charles, who four years later sold it out of the Spaulding family. In 1938 John and Elizabeth Lancaster and John Lancaster Jr. acquired 2 Tenney Street, and in 1950 current owners Charles E. and Dorothy H. Blanchard acquired the property.⁶

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

³ Spofford Family Register website, <http://www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com/GtGen/johnspoffordregister1-4.html>.

⁴ Sarah P. Spofford to Sumner P. Spofford, 1846, SED 380:249; John and Sarah Palmer to Sumner P. Spofford, 1846, SED 380:248.

⁵ Sumner P. Spofford to Wilbur B. Spaulding, 1893, SSED 1379:405.

⁶ Wilbur B. Spaulding to Charles A. Spaulding, 1912, SED 2351:181; Charles A. Spaulding to Charles S. Hamilton, 1916, SED 2501:303; Evelyn E. and Hazel Lancaster to Charles E. and Dorothy H. Blanchard, 1948, 3541:596; Olive R. Metcalf to Blanchards, 2 May 1950, SED 3730:181. See also Blanchards, Declaration of Homestead, 16 October 2003, SED 21986:590.

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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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[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 John & Martha Palmer House and Spofford & Brown Shoe Shop are distinctive architectural objects in the Marlborough neighborhood of Georgetown, and their histories associate them with the settlement period and local shoe industry. Both retain distinctive characteristics of their periods and functions and are valuable components of the historic area in Marlborough.

	GEO.112
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View from SW showing house, shoe shop and garage, left to right



View of house from SE

	GEO.112
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Aerial view from S