

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 52

Georgetown

GEO.80

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Photograph



View from W

Address: 20 Elm Street

Historic Name: John & Sarah Kimball House

Uses: Present: residence

Original: residence

Date of Construction: 1828

Source: historic maps & family history

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: Joseph & John Kimball

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
2 sheds (non-historic)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Window sash replacement

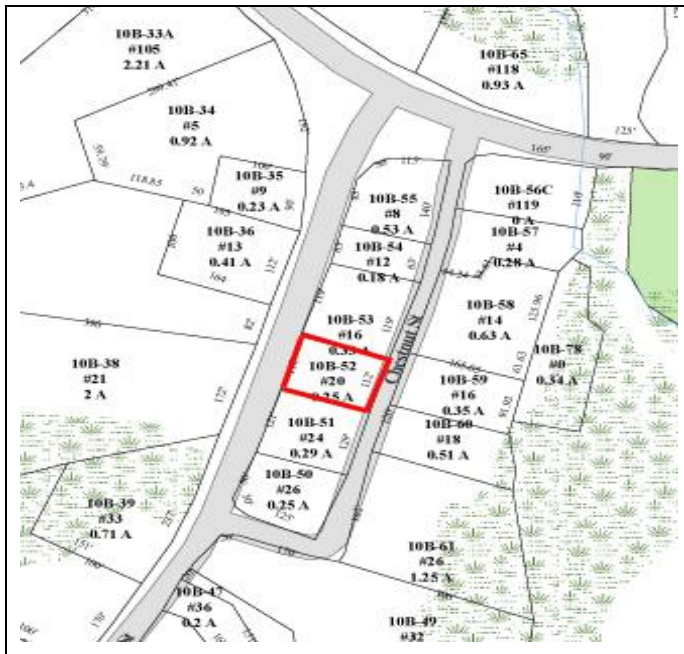
Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.25 acres

Setting: This property is on the east side of Elm Street south of the intersection of Elm and East Main Streets. It sits on a lot with mature hardwoods in a primarily residential area.

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 John & Sarah 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 quarter-acre lot on the east side of Elm Street. It is oriented to Elm Street and flanked by yards with mature plantings; its rear yard terminates at Chestnut Street. Two recently-constructed wood frame sheds and a swimming pool occupy the rear yard. Parking areas have been created in the northwest and southwest corners along Elm Street.

The form of the house is based on the one room deep plan with two brick chimneys on the rear wall, one each at the backs of rooms flanking a center hall, such as the design of his brother Joseph's house next door (16 Elm Street) and those others, which the Kimballs probably built at 12, 13 and 17 Elm Street. 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. John Kimball's house differs in that the kitchen ell, rather than being a separate section abutting the rear wall of the house as is the case in the other examples, is integrated into the north end wall and main roof to create an L-shaped plan. A small vestigial chimney at emanating from the roof at this intersection and where a rear-wall chimney is located in the other houses suggests that the present plan may be the result of a later renovation.

John Kimball was a carpenter and housewright, so he very likely built this house with his brother and partner, Joseph Kimball, who lived in a near-identical house next door (16 Elm St.) 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, which also appears on the other Elm Street houses attributed to the builders. The door is flanked by sidelights. Window sashes appears to be replaced, although the six-over-six pattern is historically appropriate. The roofline is ornamented with a plain entablature, and there are attenuated corner boards reflecting a transitional design embodying aspects of both Federal- and Greek Revival-style decoration. The south end wall contains single windows on lower and upper stories; the longer north wall has two widely-spaced window bays.

The two-story kitchen ell is aligned with the north wall of the house, and its east end is gabled rather than hipped. The front roof entablature returns across the entire north side and also meanders along the south and east sides to terminate at the southeast corner of the ell.

The John & Sarah 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. 1828, the house is essentially intact and distinguished by original materials and a Greek Revival-style trabeated entrance architrave. John Kimball was a carpenter and probably built this house with his brother, Joseph Kimball. 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"

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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 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 year." 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 (1590-166). With Rogers most of these families settled at Rowley, incorporated in 1639.

This house was built in 1828, probably by its longtime owner, the carpenter John Kimball (1800-1889). The property remained in his family until 1917. Kimball was the son of Samuel and Susannah Kimball and was born in Boxford,³ the town bordering Georgetown on the southwest; Elm Street was the main route between the two towns. He was the brother of housewright Joseph Kimball (1798-1881), who lived at 16 Elm Street. Joseph and John were in partnership, as local historian Henry 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

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 John built numerous houses in Georgetown, including many on Elm Street itself.

Sixteen Elm Street appears on the 1830 map of Rowley on land owned in 1800 by Nathaniel Nelson, who lived at 8 Elm Street. Kimball, who had married Nathaniel's daughter Sarah, bought the land from his father-in-law, as did his brother, who married Nelson's daughter Mary.⁵ The marriage took place in 1828, and it seems likely that he built the house for himself and his new wife at this time. The couple's sons, William Nelson Kimball and Edwin Carr Kimball, were born in Rowley (of which Georgetown was then part) in 1832 and 1835 respectively.

As Nelson noted, sons of John and Joseph—Edwin and Charles Alfred respectively—took up their fathers' trade. The 1860 census shows Edwin as a carpenter living in his father's household with his mother and the family of his brother William, a shoemaker, who had married Susan M. Thompson in 1854. In 1866 Edwin married Martha Hall, the daughter of shoemaker Seth Hall and his wife Charlotte Sawyer, and by 1870 the couple was living with the shoemaker John Saunders on Chestnut Street, a little south and east of his childhood home. In 1880 William Kimball, his family, and his father John, then eighty years old and still listed as a housewright, lived at 20 Elm Street. John Kimball died in 1889, about six weeks later Edwin's wife Martha died, and William's wife died in 1898. By 1910 the brothers Edwin and William Kimball were living together at 20 Elm Street. Edwin died in May 1917, and by the next year his brother had moved to Manchester, New Hampshire.

World War I draft registration records also show Fred Munroe Morse at 20 Elm Street. Born in Georgetown in 1892, Morse was the son of James Morse, a shoemaker who lived on Main Street when Fred was a child and lived at 59 Elm by the time his son registered for the draft. Fred Morse was a hostler who worked for Lewis S. Adams, who took over his father Jophanus's stable at

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

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 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: 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.

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5 Elm Street in the mid-1910s and lived himself at 9 Elm Street. By 1925 Morse had moved to 119 East Main Street, which he bought from Jophanus Adams's heirs in 1946.

Who lived at 20 Elm Street from 1918 to 1946 is not clear, but in the latter year John C. Wilkins occupied the property. Born in 1924, Wilkins was a Georgetown native whose father John was a shoe factory edge setter. Wilkins bought 20 Elm in 1948 from Crosley and Mildred Fitton. In 1930 Crosley Fitton lived in Groveland and worked as a turner in a heel factory. John C. and Lenora L. Wilkins are the current owners.⁶

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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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⁶ Crosley and Mildred I. Fitton to John C. and Lenora L. Wilkins, 10 September 1948, SED 3484:478; Wilkinses to same as trustees, 13 December 1993, SED 12388:236.

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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 & Sarah 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. 1828, the house is essentially intact and distinguished by original materials and a Greek Revival-style trabeated entrance architrave. John Kimball was a carpenter and probably built this house with his brother, Joseph Kimball. It is a key contributing component of a historic district on Elm Street.

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View from SW



View from NW

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View from E



Aerial view from SW