

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

21 Nelson Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s)    Form No.

GEO.248

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

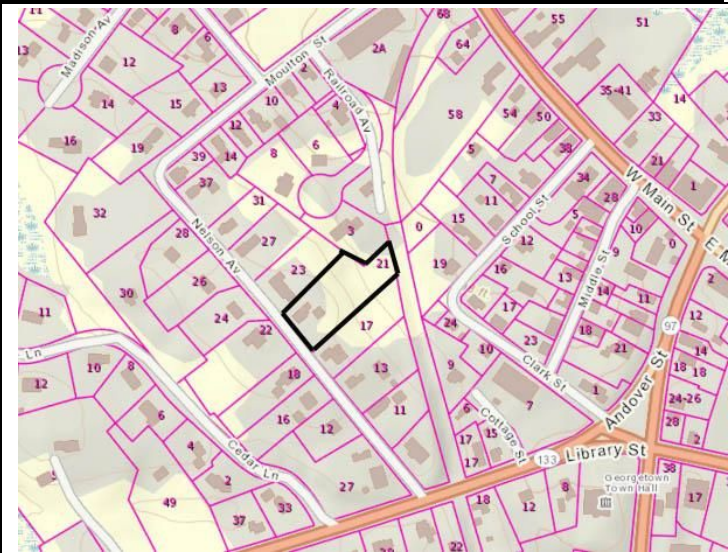
FORM B – BUILDING

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

Photograph



View from north.



Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

**Recorded by:** Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson  
**Organization:** Town of Georgetown Historical Commission  
**Date:** June 2017

Locus Map (north at top)

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

6C-102

Georgetown

GEO.248

**Setting:** Residential neighborhood developed in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century adjacent to commercial area of town center.

**Town/City:** Georgetown

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

**Address:** 21 Nelson Avenue

**Historic Name:** Alvan & Apphia Howard House

**Uses:** Present: single family residential  
Original: single family residential

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1865

**Source:** deeds & visual assessment

**Style/Form:** Second Empire

**Architect/Builder:** unknown

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
garage

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):  
Rear wing added, late 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Condition:** excellent

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 0.97 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 Alvan and Apphia Howard House, built ca. 1849, is a two-story, wood frame single dwelling with a mansard roof and a side-passage plan. Designed in the Second Empire style, the three-bay front facade is distinguished by a mansard roof with bracketed cornice and two pedimented dormers, windows with shouldered surrounds and a double-door entrance with an ornate bracketed porch. The northwest side contains a window on each floor near the front and two closely spaced windows on each floor at the rear with the intervening blank space corresponding to interior stairs. The southeast side contains two pairs of windows on each story, one pair for each of the two principal rooms on that side of the plan. All windows share the same shouldered trim. A two-story kitchen ell with a hipped roof is appended to the rear of the house, set back on the southeast where a porch once filled the void; currently that space contains an elevated, open deck with a pool that wraps around the back where a two-story extension has been added recently.

The house occupies the northwest corner of the lot with shallow set backs on the front and northwest side. A driveway enters the center of the frontage and runs past the southeast side of the house to a one-story wood frame two-car garage with a gable roof. An open yard fills the space on the southeast side of the parcel; the rear of the lot is wooded.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The houses on Nelson Avenue were built on land once belonging to Nathaniel Nelson (1767-1853), the son of Solomon Nelson Jr. (1742-1821) and his wife Elizabeth Mighill Nelson (1742-77). He was descended from English immigrant Thomas Nelson, whose sons Philip (1636-91) and Thomas (1638-1712) both have descendants in Georgetown. Philip's son Joseph (1682-1744) was the first of this surname to settle in Georgetown. Nathaniel descended from Philip's brother Thomas. He had two children with Sarah Chaplin, his first wife—Sally (1800-1869), who married housewright John Kimball of Georgetown, and Mary (1803-55), who married John's older brother Joseph Kimball, also a housewright. After Sally Chaplin Nelson's death in 1828 Nathaniel Nelson married Mary A. Spofford of Boxford, and they had one child, Elisabeth Spofford Jones (1830-1902), who in 1851 married New Hampshire native and Georgetown attorney Jeremiah Pingree Jones (1819-92). By then Nathaniel Nelson appears to have moved from Elm Street to the house at 27 Andover Street (GEO.23), built in 1815 at the northwestern corner of what is now Nelson Avenue. The 1850 census enumerated Nelson in this latter neighborhood as a farmer with real estate valued at \$17,140 and a household containing his wife Mary (with \$4000 of real estate), his yet-unmarried daughter Elisabeth, and six boarders, three men of Irish descent and one man of African descent. After Nelson's death the widowed Mary Nelson lived here with her then-married daughter Elisabeth, her son-in-law Jeremiah P. Jones, the Joneses' young daughters Mary and Elisabeth, an Irish-born domestic servant, and two boarders.

In May 1865 Elisabeth Jones sold a lot just to the north of 17 Nelson Avenue, then owned and occupied by Samuel Perkins, to Apphia W. Howard of Boston.<sup>1</sup> According to the deed the parcel, 1 acre and 20 rods, had on or near it "cellar stone" that Jones's late father had drawn onto it, presumably for a foundation. In 1865, 1871, and 1885, Howard and her husband bought three more lots adjacent to the first, and the 1872 map of Georgetown center shows "Dr. Howard" with a substantially larger lot than most other Nelson Avenue houses occupied.<sup>2</sup>

Born in 1832 in Rowley, Apphia Winter Horner Howard was the daughter of Andrew and Mary Chaplin Horner; her brother William Spofford Horner had lived at 13 Nelson Avenue since about 1850. In 1856 she married the oral surgeon and dentist

<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth S. Jones to Apphia W. Howard, Boston MA, 6 May 1865, SECD 683:287.

<sup>2</sup> Betsey P. Dale to Apphia W. Howard, Boston MA, 15 May 1865, SECD 694:15; Elisabeth S. Jones to Apphia W. Howard, 22 April 1871, SECD 2132:74; Mary T. Wildes, Andover, to Alvah H. Howard, 19 June 1885, SECD 2132:75.

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Alvah Heaton Howard, a native of Thetford, Vermont, then living in Boston. The 1870 census shows the Howards in this neighborhood; he is listed with \$8000 in real property, and the household included his wife's sister Sarah, a grammar school teacher who had earlier lived with her brother at 13 Nelson Avenue. She was still living in the Howard household in 1880, when the Howards also boarded an elderly woman named Mary B. Gould.

Alvah Howard died in 1897, and the 1900 census shows his widow Apphia alone in the house. She died in 1903, and her will, made three years before, left all of her property to her sister Sarah, then living with another sister, the widow Susan Nelson. "I leave all to her, instead of my other surviving sister, Susan R. Nelson, because she Sara E Horner has neither home or children while Susan R Nelson has both," the will stated. Sarah Horner was then in her seventies and living in Haverhill with the family of attorney Boyd B. Jones; she died there in 1906.

In 1912 the executor of Sarah Horner's estate sold 21 Nelson Avenue to Wilbur B. Spaulding of Georgetown, who owned it only briefly; in 1916 Georgetown Savings Bank owned the property and sold it to Herbert C. Reed, in whose family the property remained until 1952.<sup>3</sup> Born in Lawrence about 1884, Reed married the widow Alice Thankful Cottle Young in 1908 and worked as a railroad station agent. The 1920 census shows the Reeds at 21 Nelson with their two young daughters, Martha and Pauline, and Reed's parents—Alexander, who had emigrated from England in 1886, and Mary Ann, a native of New York State. Alice Reed died in 1946, and Herbert Reed and his daughters remained in the house until 1952, when he sold 21 Nelson Avenue to Robert C. and Elizabeth A. Dexter. The Dexters sold the property in 1985, and current owners Linda G. and William M. Montroe bought it in 1993.<sup>4</sup>

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## DIRECTORIES

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*Ipswich, Boxford, Georgetown, Middleton, Newbury, Rowley, Salisbury, Topsfield, West Newbury Directory 1957*. New Haven, CT: Price & Lee Co., 1957.

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte N. Jones, Haverhill MA, executor will Sarah E. Horner, to Wilbur B. Spaulding, 27 March 1912, SECD 2139:14; Georgetown Savings Bank to Herbert C. Reed, 2 November 1916, SECD 2349:56.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert C. Reed to Robert Charles and Elizabeth A. Dexter, Lynn MA, 24 April 1952, SECD 3890:391; Elizabeth Dexter to Janice A. and Dennis M. Grappi, Lynn MA, 14 August 1985, SECD 7871:419; Elizabeth Dexter to Janice A. and Dennis M. Grappi, Lynn MA, 14 August 1985, SECD 7871:419.

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---------

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MAPS

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

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PHOTOGRAPHS (all photos by Neil Larson, 2017)



View from SW.



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Aerial view from south. Source: bing.com/maps.

## 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

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Statement of Significance by Neil Larson

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The Alvan and Apphia Howard House, built about 1865, appears to be eligible for the National Register under criteria A and C. It is a distinctive example of domestic architecture designed in the Second Empire style in Georgetown and is essentially intact from that period. It was built for Alvan Howard, a Boston oral surgeon, and his wife Apphia Horner Howard whose brother William S. Horner had earlier built the nearby house at 13 Nelson Avenue. The property also appears eligible as a contributing component of a historic district in Georgetown Center, the boundaries of which are yet to be determined.