

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

27 Nelson Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

GEO.250

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

FORM B – BUILDING

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

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson

Organization: Town of Georgetown Historical Commission

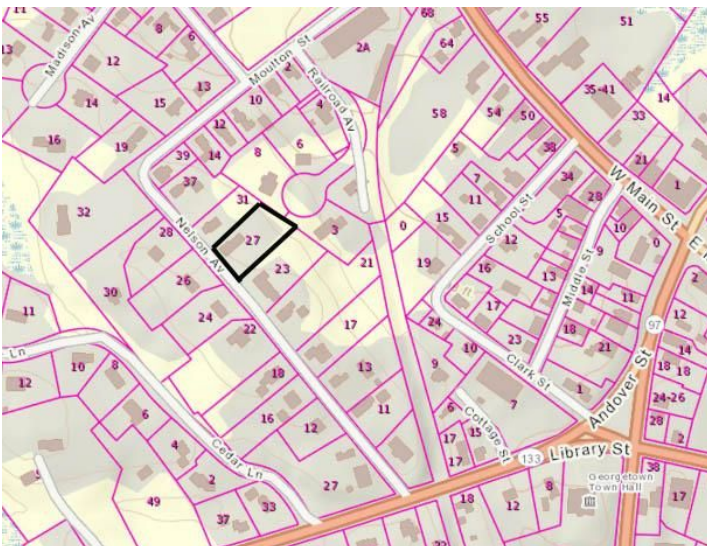
Date: June 2017

Photograph



View from south

Locus Map (north at top)



Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

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

6C-104

Georgetown

GEO.250

Setting: Residential neighborhood developed in the 19th century adjacent to commercial area of town center.

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Address: 27 Nelson Avenue

Historic Name: Frank & Susan Palmer House

Uses: Present: single family residential

Original: single family residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1887

Source: deeds & visual assessment

Style/Form: Classical Revival

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone (parged)

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage, ca. 1920

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Addition on rear; side porch altered, late 20th cent.

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.5 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 Frank and Susan Palmer House, built about 1887, is a two-story, wood frame single dwelling with a front-gable roof and a side-passage plan. Designed in an ambiguous Classically inspired style, the two-bay front facade contains an off-center entrance distinguished by an ornate hood mounted on brackets composed of "wagon-wheel" turnings. The entrance is surmounted by a single tall window and offset by paired windows on both stories; a single attic window is centered in the gable, which is embellished with a plain entablature with short returns at the base. The northwest side contains a blank area in the front corresponding to the stairs in the entry hall and two windows on each story in the rear, one of which is smaller than the rest. The southeast side contains two bays, one for each of the two principal rooms on that side and with the rear one containing paired windows. A one-story porch running along that side has an entry into the rear room within and enclosure. A two-story kitchen is appended to the rear with setbacks from the main section on both sides. The setback on the southwest side is fronted by a continuation of the porch. The southeast façade of a two-story addition on the rear of the kitchen is set back from the kitchen façade with an enclosed extension of the continuous porch providing a third entrance on that side.

The house is situated in the northwesterly corner of the lot set back from the street and northerly side behind small yards. A driveway enters the center of the frontage and runs past the house to terminate at a wood frame one-car garage, built later but with roof-line trim matching the house. Lawns fill the spaces on southeast side and rear of the parcel.

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.

Nelson himself began selling lots on the east side of Nelson Avenue in 1849, while shoe manufacturer Daniel Moulton and Jeremiah and Elisabeth Jones had begun developing the far end of Nelson Avenue, at Moulton Street, about 1875. The 1872 map of Georgetown Center shows dentist Alvah H. and Apphia Horner Howard with a large lot at what was then the northern extent of Nelson Avenue (21 Nelson Ave., GEO.248); by 1884 the portion on the east side between the Howard property and that of James Carleton near the Moulton Street intersection remained undeveloped.

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In 1876 Jeremiah P. Jones sold house carpenter Chauncey Noyes a lot of land north of the Howard property, but Noyes had not built on it by 1886, when he sold it to Frank A. Palmer for \$250.¹ In the 1900 census, Palmer is shown to have been a shoe cutter living in a house he owned free and clear on Nelson Avenue with his wife Susan A. Hammond Parker, whom he married in Georgetown in 1883, and their children Herbert Hammond, Eleanor Ross, and John Edward, born between 1884 and 1893. In 1910 the family was still together at 27 Nelson Avenue: by then Herbert was an assistant in an unidentified physics department, Eleanor was a coal company bookkeeper, and John, then seventeen, was an express company teamster. Susan Hammond Palmer died in 1933, and the 1940 census shows Frank Palmer as 87 years old and retired with his children Herbert, a school principal, Eleanor and John, both in their forties and without occupation, in his household. None had married by that point.

Frank Palmer died in 1943, and the 1957 directory shows his children Herbert, John, and Eleanor at the 27 Nelson Avenue address; only John, then a custodian, was still working. Eleanor Ross Palmer died in 1968, John in 1973, and Herbert in 1979. The chain of title does not indicate how the house passed from the Palmers to Steven G. and Sally L. Hopkins by August 1976, but they owned it until 1987. Current owners Jeffrey T. and Elizabeth B. Wade acquired the property in 1993.²

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

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DIRECTORIES

The Essex County Directory. 1866. Boston: Innes & Niles, 1866.*Essex County History and Directory*. Boston: C. A. & J. F. Wood, 1870.*Resident and Business Directory of Groveland and Georgetown, Mass., for 1885-1886*. Needham, MA: Local Directory Publishing Co., 1885.*Georgetown, Boxford, Byfield, Newbury, and West Newbury, Massachusetts, Directory*. Boston: W. E. Shaw, 1901-2, 1905.

North Essex Directory for Boxford, Georgetown, Merrimac, Newbury, Rowley, Salisbury, West Newbury. Salem, MA: Henry M. Meek Publishing Co., 1907, 1909-10, 1912, 1914-15, 1916-17, 1918, 1925.

Ipswich, Boxford, Byfield, Georgetown, Newbury, Rowley, Salisbury, Salisbury Beach, Topsfield, West Newbury Directory. Vol. 1, 1932-'34. Beverly, MA, and Portland, ME: Crowley & Lunt, 1932.*Haverhill, Mass. Suburban Directory for Georgetown, Groveland, Merrimac and West Newbury 1940*. North Hampton, NH: Crosby Publishing Co., 1940.*Ipswich, Boxford, Georgetown, Middleton, Newbury, Rowley, Salisbury, Topsfield, West Newbury Directory 1957*. New Haven, CT: Price & Lee Co., 1957.

MAPS

"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.*Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts*. Philadelphia: D. G. Beers and Co., 1872). Plates 59 and 61.

¹ Chauncey O. and Letitia A. Noyes to Frank A. Palmer, 8 November 1886, SECD 2136:402. This deed cites the 1 November 1876 deed from J. P. Jones to Noyes without a deed book and page citation.

² Matthew R. Kelloway to Steven G. and Sally L. Hopkins, 24 August 1976, SECD 6275:407; Stevan G. and Sally L. Hopkins to Edward Scott Reed and Katherine Rockwell Reed, 22 May 1987, SECD 8980:436; Edward Scott Reed and Katherine Rockwell Reed to Jeffrey T. and Elizabeth B. Wade, 27 Nelson Ave, 30 July 1993, SECD 12034:515.

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“Town of Georgetown Mass.” and “Village of Georgetown Mass.” In *Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts* (Boston: George H. Walker, 1884).
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PHOTOGRAPHS (all photos by Neil Larson, 2017)



View from south.

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View from NW.

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

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.

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

The Frank and Susan Palmer House, built about 1887, appears to be eligible for the National Register under criteria A and C as a contributing component of a historic district in Georgetown Center, the boundaries of which are yet to be determined. It is a representative example of domestic architecture assembled using commonly available millwork with only vague references to prevailing architectural styles. These were builder-designed houses where neither the craftsman nor the client invested much in the expressions of taste. The house was built for shoe worker Edward P. Hughes and his family, which lived there into the 1970s.