

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

47 West Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

GEO.317
GEO.318

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

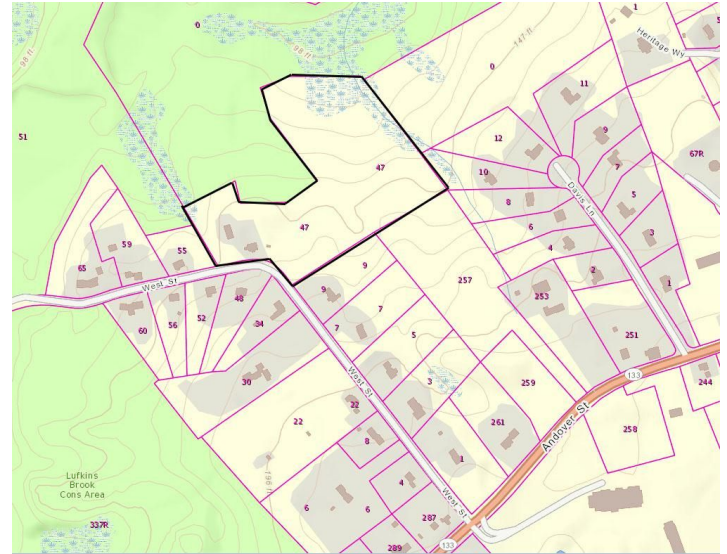
FORM B – BUILDING

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

Photograph



View from SE.



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

2-37

Georgetown

GEO.317
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Setting: Farmstead of reduced size within late 20th-century residential subdivision.

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Address: 47 West Street

Historic Name: Spofford-Tidd House & Barn

Uses: Present: vacant

Original: single family residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1792

Source: deeds & visual assessment

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Barn, late-19th century

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Addition to west end, early 20th century

Entrance porch added, early 20th century

Condition: poor

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 10.0 acres

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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 Spofford-Tidd House is a two-story wood frame single-family dwelling (now vacant) with a center-chimney plan and a gable roof built about 1792. Its five-bay front façade contains a center entrance and a pedimented porch added in the early twentieth century. The gable ends contain two windows on each and single attic windows in the gable. A two-story gable-roof wing was added to the westerly end in the house. Its front façade has four closely spaced bays with an entrance offset at the westerly corner. A dormer has been added on the rear of the house. The house looks to have been abandoned for many years and is in poor condition; its roof has failed.

A large wood frame barn with a front gable roof located northwest of the house appears to have been constructed later in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. Typical of aisle barns of the period, a Classical cornice carries along the eavelines with short returns on the gable ends. A wagon door is located on the easterly end of the front façade reached by an earthen ramp with a stone retaining wall that exposes the basement at grade on the other side where another animal door is located. The front and side walls of the building contain large square openings, presumably for windows (they currently are boarded over). There also are long, low shed dormers in the roof on both sides of the building. These are unusual features for a conventional agricultural barn and suggest another industrial or trade use. The Tidd family, which owned the property for most of the twentieth century, were engaged in shoemaking, but seemingly not at this scale. They also were carpenters, and it is possible that the anomalies in the design of the barn reflect its use as a housebuilder's workshop. Whether these features are original or were achieved by alteration still needs to be determined.

The house and barn are in the westerly corner of the 10-acre tract that remains from a late 20th-century subdivision of the original farm. Where there once were house and barn yards are new woods, and the rest of the property has gradually reforested.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In 1792, Jeremiah Spofford (1749-1827) of Groveland sold to his cousin Moody Spofford of Rowley (1744-1828) 28 acres in the west part of Rowley.¹ Moody Spofford's father Daniel (1721-1803) had lived probably on Andover Street in this western part of what became Georgetown since the 1740s. Moody Spofford married Huldah Spofford in 1766 and had thirteen children, three of whom died young, between 1767 and 1790. Spofford was a state representative and the architect of churches in Andover and Groveland and bridges in Andover, Haverhill, and Windsor, Vermont, this last being the first bridge spanning the Connecticut River at this place, in 1796.

According to Georgetown historian Henry Mighill Nelson, the original Moody Spofford house on West Street had burned about 1780, and a house was built to replace it on the same site.² Moody Spofford died in 1828, and in 1830 the administrators of his

¹ Jeremiah Spafford, Rowley, to Moody Spafford, Rowley, 24 January 1792, SECD 166:31.

² 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), 1:831. He identified this house as the one "now owned by James Grimes." Nelson wrote, "The present or the original house, doubtless the original, has associated with it a veritable witch story, in the noted meal-chest which, without hands and apparently possessed with occult power, travelled about the attic of the house, to the horror of all beholders. The "Esquire" was away from home at the time the excitement began, engaged in meeting-house building, and was hurriedly sent for by the alarmed family. Nothing unusual occurring, with some misgivings, perhaps, he started on his journey to complete his unfinished work, and had only reached his brother William's house when a messenger came to inform him that this humble but erratic chest was again in motion. There was an immediate necessity then for some check to be placed on such Satanic action, and, it is said, that it was only by the prayers of Mr. Chandler that this chest was restored to its normal condition. The story is often ridiculed, but good authority states that

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estate sold at auction 18/48 of the Moody Spofford homestead property to Uriah G. Spofford for \$450; on the same day one administrator sold to Uriah G. Spofford the 40-acre Moody Spofford homestead, and a few weeks later the other transferred all his right to the estate.³ Uriah Gage Spofford (1800-1885) was the son of Jacob and Sarah Coleman Spofford and was the great-grandson from John Spofford (1678-1735) and his first wife, Dorcas Hopkinson; Moody was the grandson of the same John Spofford and his second wife, Sarah Poor. In 1825 Uriah G. Spofford married Mary Perkins, and the 1830 Georgetown map attaches the name "U. Spofford" to the 47 West Street house.

If Uriah Spofford occupied 47 West Street, he did so only briefly. In May 1832 he sold the 40-acre farm "being known by the name of the homestead lot of Moody Spofford Esq late of Rowley" to William S. Balch of Bradford and moved with his family to Essex; he later moved to Appleton, Wisconsin, to the home of his married daughter Laura and her husband, Groveland native and physician James T. Reeve. Balch may not have lived in the West Street house either; the 1856 map shows that the house was occupied then by Vermont-born farmer Jonathan Leighton, a marble worker and farmer to whom Balch must have leased the property. Balch was living in Groveland by the time he sold 47 West Street in 1859 to James Grimes.⁴

Born in Ulster County, Ireland, about 1838, James Grimes was a farmer and is shown in the 1860 Georgetown census with \$1800 in real property. His household included his wife Mary, also from Ulster, and their young children John, born about 1857 in New Hampshire, and Mary, five months old. By 1870 James and Mary Grimes had three more children—Margaret, James, and Katherine, and by 1880 James Grimes and his son James were farming while eldest daughter Mary was a coat maker. Between 1884 and 1891 the Grimes family moved to Dover, New Hampshire, and sold 47 West Street to Harry L. Brown, a farmer who lived there with his wife Anna and their four children. By 1903 Brown had taken up shoe factory work and moved to Pond Street, and he sold the West Street property to Elmer E. Tidd, whose family owned it for the next century.⁵

Born in Georgetown in 1863, Elmer Ellsworth Tidd was the son of Cyrus and Clara Buckminster Tidd. Early in life he was a shoemaker, but for most of his career he worked as a house carpenter. In 1888 he married Swedish immigrant Hilda Lindgren (shown as DeLingre on her marriage record), and the 1910 census recorded the couple on West Street with their first nine children—Oscar and Alfred, both working as carpenters, Henry, George, Charles, John, Clara, William, and Charlotte. By 1920 the Tidds had two more children, Louis and Carl. By then Elmer Tidd and his son Oscar were still carpenters, but Alfred worked in a shipyard, Harry and George worked in a box factory, Charles was a laborer, and John was a shoe factory operative.

Elmer Tidd died in 1920 at the age of 56, and his widow Hilda continued to live at 47 West Street. The 1925 directory shows her there with son Oscar, who then drove a town school bus, and Charles, a farm worker. By 1940 the three were still living together at 47 West Street, and by 1957 Hilda Tidd and her adult children Oscar, Charles, and Clara were in the house. Hilda Tidd died in 1963 at the age of 92, and the next year Oscar Tidd deeded the property to his younger brother William, who had subdivided the 40-acre property. David R. and Marcia Walker Tidd owned 47 West Street from 1976 to 2004, when they sold the house and 10 acres to Jean M. Paquin, then of Tyngsboro, and Richard F. Morello Jr. of Wakefield.⁶

the "Esquire," Major Asa Nelson, the great-grandfather of the writer, and another townsman, two of whom were men of unusual weight, placed themselves upon it, and yet, in utter disregard of all known laws of natural philosophy, this chest still continued those gliding, sinuous movements along that attic floor. However, quiet finally came, and the cause, if possible, was then to be unraveled. This, the witnesses and investigators of these uncanny acts, attributed to a young girl living in the family by the name of Hazen who, it was said, had been daring enough to experiment with the black art. To-day, with many, a search for the cause would be in the direction of abnormal, electric or magnetic power. It is claimed that this veritable chest is still in existence, and in the possession of a relative of the original owner."

³ Moody Spofford and Jeremiah Spofford, administrators of estate Moody Spofford Esq late of Rowley, to Uriah G. Spofford, Essex, 11 June 1830, SECD 258:116; Moody Spofford, Bradford MA, to Uriah G. Spofford, Essex MA, 11 June 1830, SECD 258:116; Jeremiah Spofford, Bradford MA, to Uriah G. Spofford, Rowley, 28 June 1830, SECD 258:116.

⁴ Uriah G. Spofford, Rowley, to William S. Balch, Bradford MA, 4 May 1832, SECD 264:143; William S. Balch, Groveland MA, to James Grimes, 4 May 1859, SECD 587:238.

⁵ James Grimes, Dover NH, to Harry L. Brown, Groveland MA, 3 July 1891, SECD 1315:421; Harry L. Brown to Elmer E. Tidd, 11 April 1904, SECD 2410:45

⁶ Elmer E. Tidd to Hilda A. Tidd, 4 April 1919, SECD 2415:355; Hilda A. Tidd to Charles A. and Oscar E. Tidd, 7 August 1927, SECD 2741:376; Charles A. Tidd to Oscar E. Tidd, 30 March 1929, SECD 2801:458; Oscar E. Tidd to William A. Tidd, 3 July 1964, SECD 5186:40; William A. and Alvena M. Tidd to David R. Tidd, trustee David R. Tidd Trust, 5 January 1976, SECD 6209:625; David R. and Marcia Walker Tidd to Jean M. Paquin, Tyngsboro MA, and Richard F. Morello

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MAPS

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

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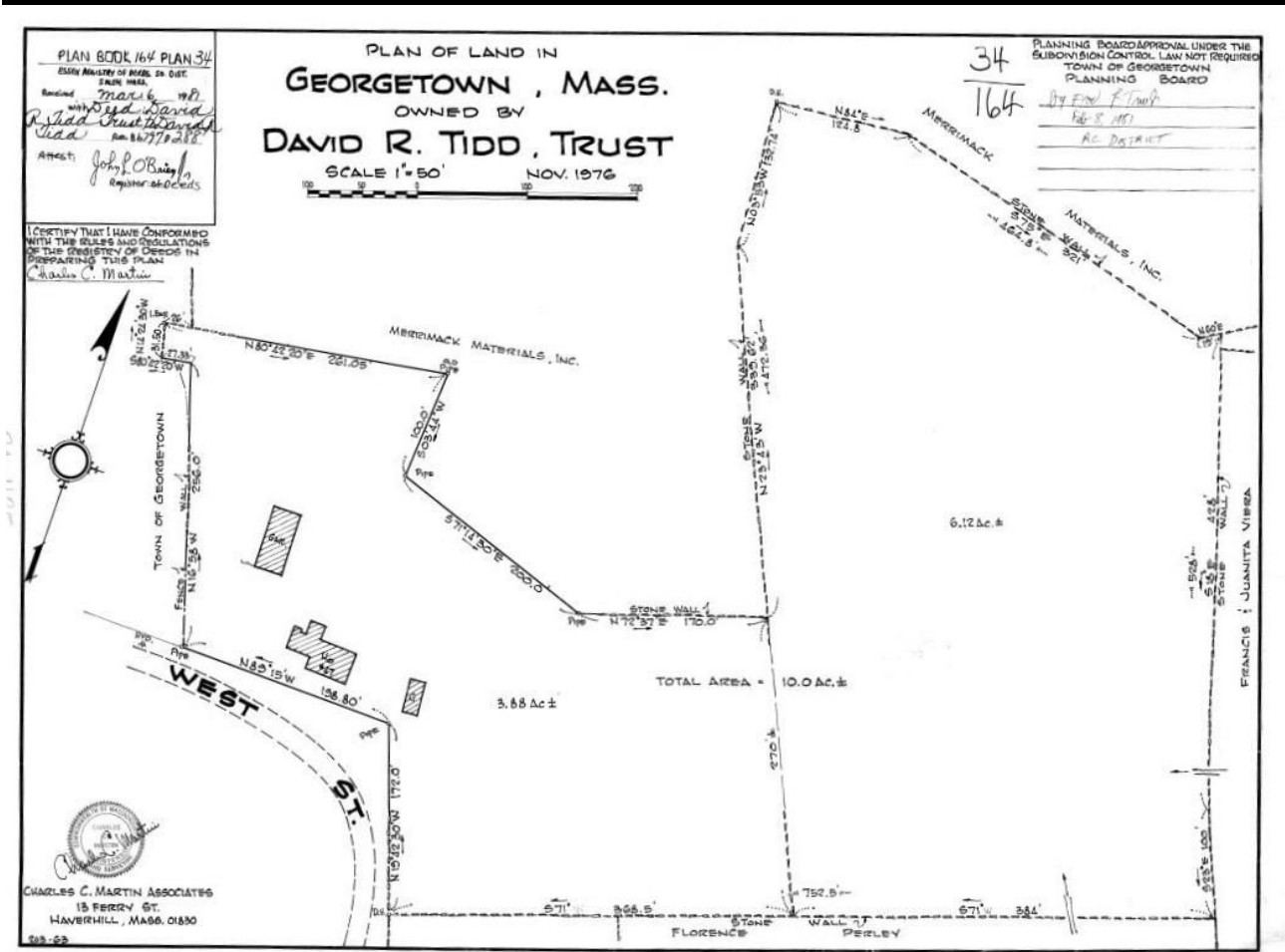
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FIGURES:

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Plan of Land in Georgetown owned by David R. Tidd Trust, 1976. (SECP 164:34).

PHOTOGRAPHS (all photos by Neil Larson, 2017)

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View from SE.



View from SW.

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View of barn from SW.

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Aerial view of property from north. Source: bing.com/maps.

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Aerial view from north. Source: [bing.com/maps](https://www.bing.com/maps).