

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

6 Tenney Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

GEO.304

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

## FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING

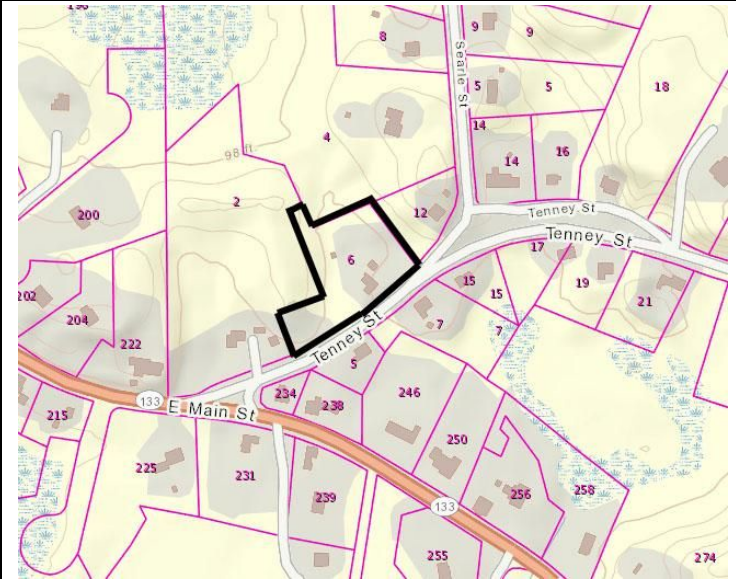
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

### Photograph



View from east.



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

10-16

Georgetown

GEO.304

**Setting:** Rural crossroads built up with 20<sup>th</sup>-century residential development.

**Town/City:** Georgetown

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*):  
Marlborough

**Address:** 6 Tenney Street

**Historic Name:** Merrill-Palmer House

**Uses:** Present: single family residential

Original: single family residential

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1762, ca. 1822

**Source:** deeds & visual assessment

**Style/Form:** Federal

**Architect/Builder:** unknown

## Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards

Roof: asphalt shingles

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:**  
garage

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*):  
Wing added SW end, ca. 1822

**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 1.62 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 Merrill-Palmer House is a two-story wood frame single-family dwelling with a gable roof built in two stages, about 1762 and about 1822. Its uniform bilaterally symmetrical front façade belies what is an eighteenth-century side-passage center-chimney house with a single-pile addition with two window bays appended to the southwest end. The amended façade is modestly decorated with a shallow eave with molded cornice and a pedimented entrance architrave. Nine-over-six wood sash in simple frames are widely spaced on front and end walls. Gable eaves are tight against the end walls. A more recent bank of four windows with elevated sills has been added to the rear of the northeast end. Two shed-roof wings extend from the first story of the rear of the original house, while a one-story flat-roof wing squares off the space behind the added front wing.

The house is situated close to the highway set back behind a yard with mature trees along the roadside. A driveway enters northeast of the house and leads up to a large wood frame two-car garage. A large yard occupies an area behind the house and garage; the rest of the property, formerly farmland, is wooded.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The older portion of the house at 6 Tenney Street appears to have been built for Thomas Merrill Jr. (1737-1820) around the time he married Sarah Friend of Wenham in 1762. According to a Merrill family history, Thomas Merrill (1704-74) and his wife Abigail Stevens Merrill had moved their family to this part of Rowley West Parish from Newbury about 1748 and built a house in which his son Thomas lived and which remained in the family until 1898. However, the deed by which Thomas Merrill, Jr's heirs conveyed the property to his daughter Sarah Merrill Palmer in 1822 mentions this house as standing next to the "old original house."<sup>1</sup> And it was after this transition that an addition was constructed on the southwesterly end of Thomas Jr. and Sarah Merrill's house to create a symmetrical front façade. The "old original house" is not depicted on maps of Georgetown published in 1830 and later, suggesting that it had been demolished by then. Alternatively, the old house became a dependency beneath the recognition of mapmakers, but in any event this early dwelling is not extant.

Born in Rowley in 1780, John Palmer Jr. was the son of John and Martha Friend Palmer, who lived next door at 2 Tenney Street (GEO.112) by 1830. He married Sarah Merrill in 1807. The 1850 census recorded him as a 70-year-old farmer with \$2000 in real property living with his wife, their daughter Martha Friend Palmer (1825-79), and boarding farmer Elijah Baker. Son John Milton Palmer (1823-73), a shoemaker, lived in another part of the house with his wife Hannah Kimball Staniford Palmer of Ipswich, whom he married in 1848. The 1855 census appears to show the families of Palmer father and son in separate sequential domiciles. John and Martha Palmer continued to live with their daughter Martha and Elijah Baker, and by then John M. Palmer is shown as a shoestrapping manufacturer living with his wife and three children, Lucy, Frank, and Sarah. In 1865 the families again appear in separate households, and John M. and Hannah Palmer had two other children, Mary A. and John H.

<sup>1</sup> James Merrill to Thomas Merrill, John Palmer Jr, and Benjamin Merrill, 18 April 1822, SECD 229:238. This deed conveyed, for \$191.50, 50 "a certain lot of land situate in Rowley aforesaid with a dwelling house upon the same containing by estimation about fifteen square rods more or less and bounded as follows viz beginning at the northeast corner of the dwelling house lately owned by Dr. Thomas Merrill ate of Rowley deceased thence southerly by said house and parallel with shay house to a stone wall in front of said house thence westerly bounded by said wall to the barn yard fence thence northerly by said yard fence to the corner of the shay house thence northwardly to the hog pen, thence westerly northerly and easterly bounded by Asa Hardys land to said dwelling house thence northerly and easterly bounded by the old original house to the bounds first mentioned." On the Merrill family see Samuel Merrill, *A Merrill Memorial: An Account of the Descendants of Nathaniel Merrill, An Early Settler of Newbury Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA, 1917-28).

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John Palmer Sr. died on 4 July 1867 at the age of 87, and his wife Sarah died a little more than two months later. By 1870 John M. Palmer was heading a household in his parents' house; at that time he was employed as a house carpenter and had \$2000 in real property. Daughter Lucy was then a dressmaker, and son Frank was a shoe shop operative. Martha, the unmarried daughter of John and Sarah Merrill Palmer, had moved in with her brother's family. In 1873 John Milton Palmer died, and the 1880 census shows his widow Hannah in this neighborhood with sons Frank and J. Howard, both shoe shop workers, and 11-year-old son Henry.

In April 1892 Hannah S. Palmer sold the 6 Tenney Street house and 3.5 acres to Estelle J. Bateman and moved to 12 North Street, where she died in March 1910.<sup>2</sup> The 1900 census shows Estella Jane Bateman living at 6 Tenney Street with her husband John Milton Bateman, a farmer and the son of John B. and Sarah Bateman of Georgetown. Estella Jane Organ, from Groveland, became Bateman's second wife after his first wife, Martha Hinkson, died of consumption in 1877, when she was 25 years old. By 1900 the Batemans had six children and the income of a boarder.

By 1910 Bateman was doing odd jobs, and his wife was doing washing on a day's work basis in town. Estella Bateman sold 6 Tenney Street three year earlier, and the property changed hands with great frequency after that point. In 1932 the widow Minnie C. Neill bought the property and transferred its title to her son-in-law Ralph E. Aiken Jr. in 1935, who owned the house until 1958. The 1932 directory lists both Neill and Aiken on Tenney Street; he was then superintendent of construction at General Electric Company plant in Lynn and had earlier worked for the same company in Pittsfield. The 1940 census shows him as an electric company supervisor living on Tenney Street with his wife Mildred Neill Aiken, 24-year-old son Ralph, an insurance salesman, and two other children, Neill and Janet. Mildred Neill Aiken subdivided the larger property before she sold it, and current owner Stephanie M. Parsons acquired it in 2015.<sup>3</sup>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

AmericanAncestors.org.

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Assessor's Records, Georgetown and Rowley. 1883, 1902, 1920, 1933.

Bureau of the Census. United States Census, 1790-1930.

Merrill, Samuel. *A Merrill Memorial: An Account of the Descendants of Nathaniel Merrill, An Early Settler of Newbury Massachusetts*. 1917-28)Nelson, Henry M. "Town of Georgetown History." In Hurd, D. Hamilton. *History of Essex County, Massachusetts, with Southern Essex County Registry of Deeds website*, salemdeeds.com.

## DIRECTORIES

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.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah S. Palmer to Estelle J. Bateman, 8 April 1892, SECD 1339:242.

<sup>3</sup> Estelle J. Bateman to William S. Dole, Groveland MA, 13 April 1907, SECD 1911:383; Frank A. and Margaret E. Poor, Swampscott MA, to Minnie C. Neil, Lynn MA, 15 June 1932, SECD 2921:68; Minnie C. Neil to Ralph E. Aiken Jr., 24 July 1935, SECD 3041:111; Mildred Neill Aiken to Lewis M. and Lillian B. Martin, 29 December 1958, SECD 4532:301; Kari M. Richards, Peabody MA, representative of will Terrance Patrick Hart, to Stephanie H. Parsons, 6 Tenney St, 22 October 2015, SECD 34460:537. The house at 70,500 square feet are shown on "Plan of Land on Tenney Street, Georgetown, Owned by Mildred N. Aiken," 26 December 1958, Plan 37 of 1959.

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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.  
“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 NE.

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View from SW.



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Aerial view from south.



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## 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  
Not enlarged

Criteria:    ☒ A    ☐ B    ☒ C    ☐ D

Criteria Considerations:    ☐ A    ☐ B    ☐ C    ☐ D    ☐ E    ☐ F    ☐ G

Statement of Significance by Neil Larson

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

The Merrill-Palmer House, built about 1762 and enlarged and altered about 1822, is a distinctive surviving example of mid eighteenth-century farmhouse architecture in the local Georgetown context. Essentially intact, the two-story wood frame single dwelling has a bilaterally-symmetrical form is comprised of a center-chimney side-passage-plan dwelling built about 1762 and a single-pile addition built about 1822 to balance the façade and add a new room to the plan.

The older portion of the house appears to have been built for Thomas Merrill Jr. (1737-1820) about the time he married Sarah Friend of Wenham in 1762. Merrill came to Georgetown from Newbury with his parents Thomas Merrill (1704-74) and Abigail Stevens about 1748. The first house on the property is not extant. Thomas and Sarah Merrill's daughter, Sarah Merrill Palmer obtained title to the house from her father's other heirs in 1822, and she and her husband John Palmer, Jr., who grew up next door, lived out their lives in the Merrill house. They likely built the addition that updated the house in function and design. Their son, John Milton Palmer (1823-73), a shoemaker, inherited the house, and his widow sold the house out of the family in 1892.

The property appears to meet National Register criteria A and C as a significant surviving eighteenth-century house associated with important people and events in the history of Georgetown.