

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

GEORGETOWN

64 Nelson Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

GEO.256

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING

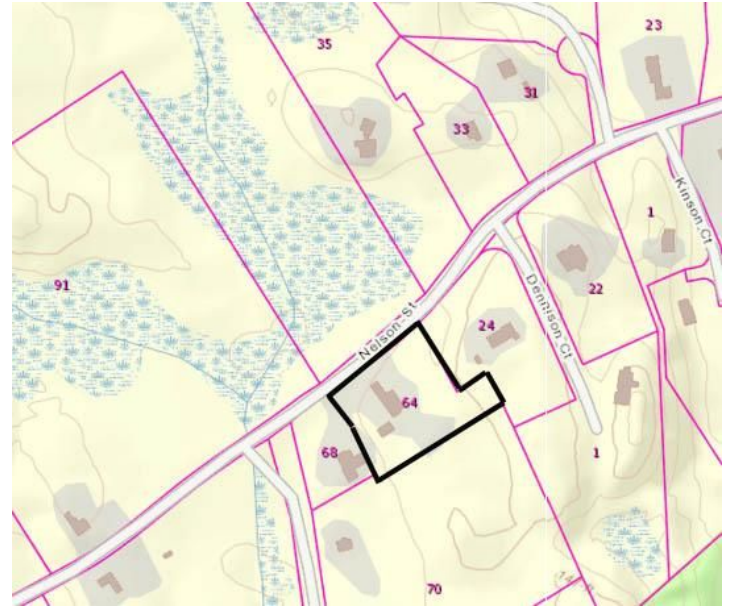
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



View from NW.



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

4-19

Georgetown

GEO.256

Setting: The house is located just west of a major crossroads and railroad depot in South Georgetown where the densely developed highway landscape (Central St.) begins to open up into farmland.

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Address: 64 Nelson Street

Historic Name: Paul & Mary Nelson House

Uses: Present: single family residential

Original: single family residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1805

Source: deeds & visual assessment

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboards

Roof: asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Domestic barn

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Large addition, late 20th century

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 1.97

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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 Paul and Mary Nelson House is a two-story wood frame single dwelling with a gable roof built about 1805. Its bilaterally symmetrical form and double-pile center-passage plan with end chimneys represents a house type common in Georgetown in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The five-bay front façade contains a center entrance embellished with sidelights and a trabeated architrave added a generation later. Pairs of windows flank the entrance and a modest Classical entablature with short returns on the gable ends distinguishes the roof edge. The northwest end contains two windows on each floor and a single attic window centered in the gable. The southeast end is now covered by a mid twentieth-century addition with a gambrel roof that more than doubled the original plan. The rear or northeast façade contains a trabeated entrance in the center flanked by pairs of windows on one side and single windows on the other. It is not known if this imbalance is original or the result of interior alterations. A barn is present on the property and may be a nineteenth-century building enlarged and altered for non-agricultural purposes.

Once part of a farm, the house and barn have been isolated on approximately two acres. The house is oriented southwest and perpendicular to the road, evidently to take advantage of solar gain. It is set back from the street the edge of which is bordered by a field stone wall and mature trees. The southwest side contains an open yard containing a driveway entering from the street and running across the façade of the house to the barn. A large yard occupies the area behind (northeast of) the house, and rest of the parcel is wooded.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The earliest history of the house at 64 Nelson Street is obscure, but it seems to have been built for Paul Nelson (1775-1857), the son of Solomon Nelson (1742-1821) and Elizabeth Mighill (1742-1777). He owned a farm here by 1806, when he sold a portion of it to his cousin Thomas Nelson in that year.¹ In 1818 Nelson married Sally Adams, the daughter of Benjamin Adams (1746-1821), who owned both his own house nearby and his father Abraham's house at 23 Nelson Street (GEO.225). Paul and Sally Nelson had no children, and when they died in 1857 and 1856, respectively, Paul Nelson's real estate—three acres, a house, a barn, and several other parcels—was sold at auction to pay the debts of his estate.

It was at this time that John A. Lovering and his second wife Elizabeth became the owners of 64 Nelson Street, and they deeded it that year to Mary Lovering Poor Nelson, the wife of Thomas Nelson's eldest son Asa Nelson (1803-63) and probably related to the grantor.² The deed described the property as containing one acre and 18 rods and "having a house thereon bounded northerly on the Andover road and other sides by the lands of the heirs of Mighill Nelson, of widow Elizabeth Nelson and land of B Adams." On the 1856 map of Georgetown, the house is marked "M. Nelson," which suggests that Mary Nelson and her family already occupied the house. Mary L. Nelson was a widow when she married Asa Nelson in 1850; with her first husband, Dennis Poor, she had a son, John L., and a daughter, Catherine M., who married English immigrant mechanic James Cartwright in Newburyport in 1850. Catherine Poor Cartwright died in Georgetown in 1854, and the 1855 census shows her mother Mary L. Nelson, stepfather Asa Nelson, her 3-year-old grandson Charles Cartwright, and Mary J. Cartwright, a 23-year-old English immigrant who was probably James Cartwright's sister. In 1860 Asa and Mary L. Nelson were in the household with son-in-law James Cartwright and his son Charles.

Asa Nelson died in 1863, and the 1865 census shows Mary L. Nelson in the house with her grandson Charles Cartwright. She probably remained in this house until she died in 1883. Her will left all but her clothing and ten dollars to grandson Charles Edwin

¹ Paul Nelson to Thomas Nelson, 26 July 1806, SECD 197:74.

² John A. and Eliza Lovering to Mary L. Nelson, 2 September 1857, SECD 572:68.

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Cartwright, but he probably did not live in the house after his grandmother's death.³ Directories and censuses show him as an unmarried heel manufacturer boarding on Central Street through 1920. In 1908 he deeded the house with a 180 ft. x 285 ft. lot to Paul Nelson Spofford of Port Chester, New York, owner of the Baldpate Inn on Baldpate Road. In January 1925, after his death, his heir Cecilia H. Spofford sold 64 Nelson Street to Florence A. Cockcroft of Dorchester, Massachusetts, who owned it until 1925 but did not occupy it, at least as a permanent residence. She sold it to Caroline Saunders of Boston, who is shown as its owner in the 1932 Georgetown street and house directory. After Saunders's death the property was sold at auction on 14 October 1938, and it changed hands often after that point. Current owners Henry B. and Joan H. Wolf acquired it in August 1999.⁴

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MAPS

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³ Charles E. Cartwright to Paul N. Spofford, New York NY, 2 April 1908, SECD 1916:353.

⁴ Cecilia H. Spofford, Port Chester NY, to Florence A. Cockcroft, Dorchester MA, 5 May 1914, SECD 2257:255; Florence F. Cockcroft, Arlington MA, to Thomas P. Walsh, Boston MA, 26 January 1925, SECD 2629:199; Thomas P. Walsh, Boston MA, to Caroline Saunders, Boston MA, 7 February 1925, SECD 2632:212; Kester J. Peers, Boston MA, and George A. Marshall, Melrose MA, executors will Caroline Saunders, to Clinton G. Mills, Swampscott, 14 October 1938, SECD 3160:555; Peter M. Durney and Beth A Shipley, Beverly MA, to Henry B. and Joan H. Wolf, 64 Nelson Street, 26 August 1999, SECD 15900:66.

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PHOTOGRAPHS (all photos by Neil Larson, 2017)



View from west.

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View from NE.