

FORM B - BUILDING

Area	Form no.
H	215

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
 Street Boston, MA 02108



Newburyport

Address 20-22 Merrill Street

Historic Name Capt. Thomas Witham House

Original Residence

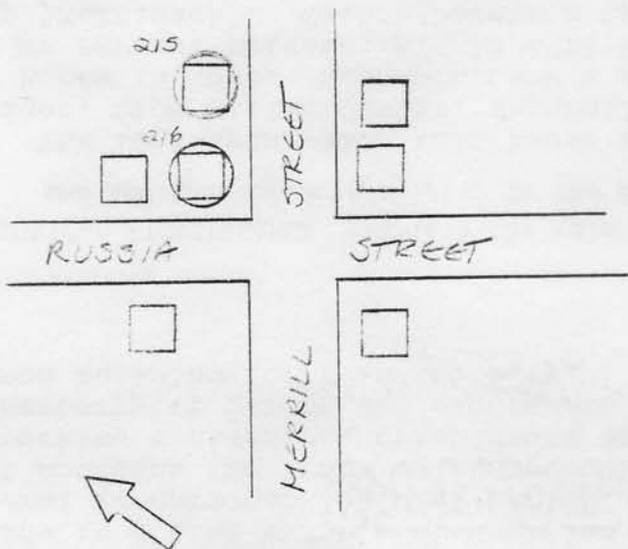
Present Residence

Ownership:  Private individual  
 Private organization

Public

Original owner Capt. Thomas Witham

Draw map showing proposed location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings or geographical features. Indicate north.



DESCRIPTION:

Date 1805

Source Essex County Registry of Deeds

Style Georgian

Architect Unknown

Exterior wall fabric Clapboards

Outbuildings

Major alterations (with dates)

Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approx. acreage 3,969 sq. ft.

Setting in residential area of primarily eighteenth and nineteenth century domestic architecture.

Recorded by Mary Jane Stirgwort

Organization Office of Community Development

Date 12-01-80

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

This two story house with gambrel roof and symmetrical five bay facade is a fine example of Georgian domestic architecture. The house has several exceptional features including a projecting pedimented central bay that contains the front entrance. The door is flanked by Doric pilasters supporting a classical entablature above. The gambrel roof was very popular in Newburyport during the eighteenth century and remains one of the more common building forms in the city.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community)

The land upon which this house stands was purchased by Thomas Witham, mariner, from William Cross, shipbuilder, in 1802. Witham completed his new house in 1805. Witham became a sailor at a young age and he sailed out on several privateers. In 1798 Witham became chief gunner on the ship "Merrimack". Witham became a master-mariner. He owned the house until he was seventy-six years of age. In 1838 he sold the property to Henry Merrill, Newburyport merchant.

Henry Merrill never lived in the home but rented it out. In 1859, he died leaving the property to one of his sons, William. In 1867 William H. Huse acquired the house. Huse was the publisher of the Newburyport Herald, held various city offices and was elected mayor shortly before his death. In 1876, Huse sold this house to Timothy Haley, who later sold it to Margaret Lyons.

This house remains today a single family residence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- R. Booth, "History of House, Twenty Merrill Street, Newburyport, Massachusetts" typescript, Newburyport Historical Commission Assessor's Records 1890-1980
- 1851 Plan of Newburyport, Mass. H. McIntire
- 1872 Map of the City of Newburyport, Mass. D. G. Beers and Co.