

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	NWB.53
<b>Historic Name:</b>	Emery, Thomas - Parton, James House
<b>Common Name:</b>	Shaw, John Edward House
<b>Address:</b>	274 High St
<b>City/Town:</b>	Newburyport
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	
<b>Local No:</b>	59-71
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	
<b>Architect(s):</b>	
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	Federal
<b>Use(s):</b>	Abandoned or Vacant; Single Family Dwelling House
<b>Significance:</b>	Architecture; Literature
<b>Area(s):</b>	NWB.A: High Street District NWB.L: Newburyport Historic District
<b>Designation(s):</b>	Nat'l Register District (8/2/1984); Preservation Restriction (12/30/2005)



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

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# FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD

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

	Newburyport	A, L	53
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**Town** Newburyport

**Location (neighborhood or village)** Newburyport Historic District

**Address** <sup>274</sup> 272 High Street

**Historic Name** Emery-Parton House

**Uses: Present** Residential

**Original** Residential

**Date of Construction** 1797

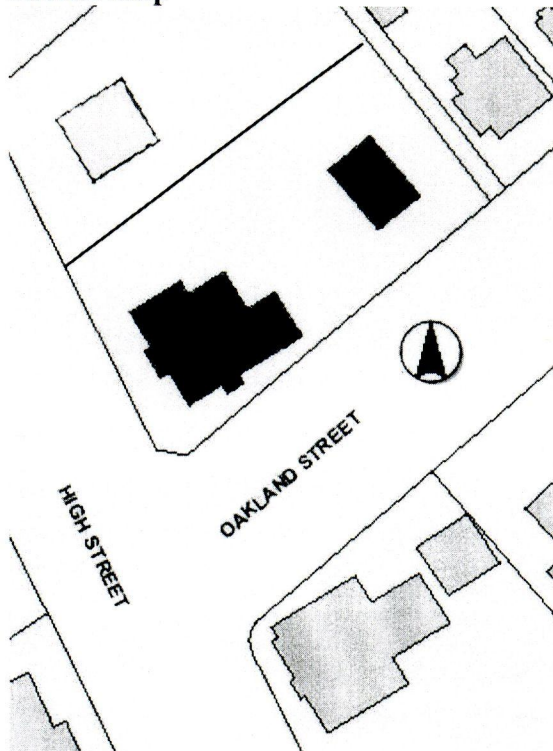
**Source** Massachusetts Historical Commission Form 'B,' Currier

**Style/Form** Federal, with Greek Revival detailing

**Architect/Builder** Thomas Emery



**Sketch Map**



## **Exterior Material:**

**Foundation** Granite, concrete

**Wall/Trim** Wood clapboard

**Roof** Hipped, gable and shed, composite shingle

## **Outbuildings/Secondary Structures**

Carriage house

## **Major Alterations (with dates)**

Greek Revival entranceway and other detailing (c.1840?)

Addition to rear north ell (c.1820?)

Brick front steps (date unknown)

Rear enclosed porch (1980s?)

Federal-period fence rebuilt (c.1970)

Windows replaced with new wood windows with salvage glass (2005)

Shutters removed throughout (2005)

**RECEIVED**

DEC 23 2005

**MASS. HIST. COMM**

**Recorded by** Pauline Chase-Harrell, Katy Hax Holmes

**Organization** Boston Affiliates, Inc.

**Date (month / year)** October, 2004; December, 2005

**Condition** Good

**Moved** ☒ no ☐ yes **Date**

**Acreage** 11,843 s. f.

**Setting** Stands on corner of High and Oakland Streets of mostly Federal Period and 19th century residences. New Federal Style residence next door.



## BUILDING FORM

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION ☒ *see continuation sheet*

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

Thomas Emery built this house shortly after he purchased this parcel of land in 1796. Built as a Federal Style residence along High Street in Newburyport, well known for its intact assemblage of Federal Style architecture, this house has the three-story form with hipped roof, the small windows on third floor, and the simple, classically inspired cornice and window lintels characteristic of the style in Newburyport. The front portico and entrance represent Greek Revival embellishments made to this house before 1840, a practice so common in Newburyport homes in this period that such details have blended into the popular perception of "Newburyport Federal."

This main house block has a rear ell on the northeast side, partly original to the house, which is five bays in length over what is now a concrete foundation, and represents what appear to be two construction periods. The three-bay portion of this ell closest to the house appears original, while the two northernmost bays appear to have been added c.1820. A modern one-story porch constructed c.1980 stands in the angle.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☒ *see continuation sheet*

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

Thomas Emery, born in Newbury in 1771, purchased this parcel of land at the northwesterly corner of High and Oakland Street from Moses Moody shortly before his marriage to Elizabeth Hale in November 1796. He built the three story Federal home shortly thereafter. At that time, the property was not in Newburyport, but just across the boundary line in what was then the Belleville section of Newbury; and North Street, which would later become Oakland Street, was not built along that line until 1815. Emery's first wife died in 1803 but he remarried and lived in the house until his death in 1860, by which time Belleville had become part of the city of Newburyport.

His son, Capt. Flavius Emery, born in 1797, married Elizabeth Emery in 1826, and they had two sons. Flavius died in Newburyport in 1830, a few days after his one year old second son, Flavius. His first son, Rufus, born in Newburyport in 1827, became a minister and served churches in Southport and Stonington, CT, where he married a Connecticut woman, Adelaide Brainerd, in 1858. By 1860, when Thomas Emery's estate was left to his grandson, they had moved to Newburgh, NY. Apparently Rufus Emery did not live in the house in Newburyport, but remained in Newburgh, where his mother died in 1880, and his wife in 1891. In later life he became something of an antiquarian, publishing works on the historic burying grounds in Newburgh and on the genealogy of the Emery family of Newbury before his death in 1913. In 1886 Rufus Emery, of Newburgh, New York sold this house to James Parton.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES ☐ *see continuation sheet*

- Currier, John J., *History of Newburyport, 1764-1905*, vols. I and II. Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1906 and 1909.
- Stirgwort, Mary Jane, for Newburyport Office of Community Development. Massachusetts Historical Commission Building Form B: Newburyport, 272 High Street, 1980.
- United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Newburyport Historic District*, 1984.
- Newburyport City Directories at State Library, Special Collections Department.
- Essex South District Registry of Deeds deed research.
- Genealogy.rootsweb.com, accessed February 2005.

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

272 High Street is in the Newburyport National Register Historic District



**INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
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**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, continued**

Windows on the west, south and east sides of the house are graduated in keeping with the Federal Style and framed in wooden ogee moldings with slightly projecting lintels and sills. Lintels on the south front façade of the house have more elaborate lintels topped with a projecting molding cornice echoing the treatment of the entrance portico. Windows on the rear north side are framed in simple wooden surrounds. All 6/6 wooden sash windows on the house are modern replacement sash with salvaged period glass panes from the area, and are part of a 2004-2005 restoration project which replaced deteriorated windows, and several that did not fit the frames properly. In the same project, interior pocket shutters have been restored in their original tracks and all later exterior wooden shutters have been removed. In addition, a few odd sized windows, as noted below, have been replaced with different pane configurations, based on historical evidence.

The south front façade rises three stories and is five symmetrical bays in width, with a central entrance and wood clapboard sheathing above a fieldstone and granite foundation capped with stuccoed brick. The hipped roof is sheathed in composite shingles and is pierced by one corbelled brick chimney on the east side, and a smaller corbelled brick chimney on the rear west side. The small rectangular windows on the third story have six panes and no lintels. White painted corner posts frame each corner. A plaque on the front right side reads: 'James Parton, prominent American biographer, journalist and social crusader of the 19th century, occupied this house from 1885 until his death in 1891. Author, editor and translator of over 30 volumes, Parton is "The Father of Modern Biography." Built in 1797 by Thomas Emery.'

The Greek Revival Style entrance consists of a single wood-paneled door with sidelights beneath a hipped roof portico supported by paneled squared columns. The roof sits atop a deeply projecting cornice of molding underlined by a row of simple modillions above a planar frieze and architrave separated by a single wooden bead. The portico stands on an elevated brick stoop with three brick steps ascending to the landing.

Two small shrubs line the front foundation on either side of the portico, behind a small lawn of mown grass. Along the brick sidewalk, and curving around the corner to extend the full length of the house and ell on the east side, is a white Federal Style wooden fence of alternating-height spindles interspersed at regular intervals by square pilastered wooden posts with urn finials. This style, found on a few other Federal period High Street houses, is among the most elaborate in Newburyport, and is believed to date from the Federal period to the 1840s.

The east and west façades of the main house are three stories in height with wooden sash windows framed in simple ogee moldings. The west façade is two bays in width and the east façade has three narrower bays, possibly reflecting smaller rooms and service areas such as the buttery and kitchen built in tandem with the ell, with an enclosed, single-story, hipped roof entrance porch and door projecting from the lower northeast corner of the east façade. This porch, which appears to have been constructed with the 1820s addition, has two 12/8 replacement sash windows (formerly 20th century replacement 4/4 wooden sash) on its north and south sides, and is reached by granite steps extending to the sidewalk. On the grass embankment between the sidewalk and the street, and thus on City land, but probably original to the house, is a set of granite steps with granite stringers. Windows on the first and second stories of the east façade are 6/6 wooden sash, with the exception of the second story window in the right bay, which now contains a 9/6 wooden sash replacement window.

On the west side, two bays of 6/6 replacement sash windows are located on all three stories. A painted sill board sits above the stone foundation, which has some brick infill around a central three-pane basement window.



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**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, continued**

Three bays on the right side of the rear north façade contain 6/6 wooden sash windows, all of which are similar in size and have simple wooden enframements and slightly projecting sills. Three 6/6 sash windows are evenly stacked to form the westernmost rear bay, while a single, unevenly ranked 6/6 sash window on the third story forms the second bay. Two windows, on the second and third stories respectively, form the third bay. The modern porch addition obscures the first story from the exterior.

Extending from the rear northeast side of the house is a two-story, five-bay, wooden clapboard, end-gabled ell, with four bays containing 9/6 wooden sash windows and one bay with no window on the west side second story, and five bays of evenly ranked, shuttered, 9/6 windows on the east side. The middle 9/6 wooden sash window on the first story of this ell, where the frame height was 2" shorter than the four 9/6 windows flanking it, has been replaced with the only combination that fits the frame, a 12/12 wooden sash window with 6" by 8" glass panes. Wooden enframements on the east side ell windows correspond to those of the east side of the main house. A break in the gutter line and corresponding peak in the roofline between the third and fourth bays appears to indicate where the c.1820 addition was constructed. A shed roof portico supported by scrolled wooden brackets covers a single "cross and bible" door set within a simple wooden frame on the west side of the c.1820 section of this ell. Simpler wooden enframements on the west side ell windows correspond to those on the rear windows of the main house. Two brick on concrete steps, and one wooden step at sill board level, ascend from ground level.

The north wall of this ell has a wooden sash window, with a louvered upper sash over a 6-pane lower sash, located in the gable peak. A single 9/6 wooden sash window sits to its lower right on the second story, and a single 8/4 wooden sash window, believed to be original to this location, overlooks the rear yard on the first story from the left side of the façade.

Extending from the northwest side of the house and the west wall of the ell is an enclosed one-story, shed-roofed porch built c.1980, with a small louver in the angle, comprising pairs of sliding glass and screen doors with multi-pane interior muntins, with clapboard sheathing above and between. The porch is supported by a concrete foundation and trimmed with a sill board that matches the height of that on the house.

The wooden clapboard early 19th century carriage house/garage, entered through two wooden carriage/garage doors on the east side, is two stories in height with an end-gable roof and clapboard sheathing. Wooden, 6/6 sash windows are placed at irregular intervals on the south façade, and stacked in a single bay on the west side. At the southwest corner of the building is a single wooden plank door in a simple wooden frame. The north side is windowless. Above the two carriage doors on the east facade is a single wooden plank door on a side hinge, set in simple wooden framing.

A mature garden in the rear north yard between the main house and the carriage house is surrounded by a simpler and lower extension of the front fence, which curves around to the north and encloses the narrow east yard. Young deciduous trees also frame the garden at its north end and stand on either side of the carriage house. Mown grass comprises much of the west side yard, where three air conditioning units and a stone slab bench sit next to the west façade, and a row of tall evergreens backed by more of the low fencing edges the western property line. On the east side, a few deciduous shrubs sit between the house and the fenceline, and mature deciduous trees line the sidewalk along Oakland Street.



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**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, continued**

James Parton was born in Canterbury, England in 1822, and emigrated to America with his mother following his father's death in 1826. After attending school in New York City he later taught school in both New York and Philadelphia. Parton became a regular contributor to the Home Journal in the 1840's, and in 1855 published a biography, *The Life of Horace Greeley*. It was such a success that Parton devoted the rest of his life to literary efforts. He contributed articles to the New York Ledger and in 1857 published *The Life and Times of Aaron Burr*. He later wrote biographies of Thomas Jefferson and Voltaire.

Parton married Sarah Payson (Willis) Eldredge, a widow with two children, in Hoboken, NJ, in 1856. Following her death in 1872, Parton moved to Newburyport in 1875, where in 1876 he married Ellen Willis Eldredge and lived in the recently built house at 270 High Street, on the easterly corner of High and Oakland. In 1886 he bought and moved into the house on the westerly corner, 272 High Street, where he lived until his death in 1891. Parton published many volumes while in Newburyport, and became one of the city's prominent citizens, often called upon to speak at public occasions such as the 1885 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Newbury. He lectured at the Newburyport Athenaeum, and in 1890 assisted in the formation of the City Improvement Society.

The house remained in the Parton family until 1935, when his son Hugo Parton of Manhattan sold it to John Edward Shaw of Newburyport. Shaw operated it as a rental property until 1966, when, after it had been vacant for several years, he sold it to the Channel Building Company of Andover. This company owned it for a year, during which time the rear lot line was adjusted, with a small portion going to the abutting property owner at #48 Oakland Street. In 1967, Channel sold it to Robert and Sally Webster of Andover, who sold it in 1968 to Harold and Virginia Cogger of Acton. The Coggers undertook restoration work on the property, including extensively rebuilding the Federal style fence, before selling it to Lloyd and Suzanne Armstrong in 1976. In 1999, the lot was subdivided, and the western half sold for construction of a new Federal style house; and in 2002, Suzanne Armstrong sold #272 to Kemble Widmer.

After immediate repairs to serious leak problems, the present owner has undertaken a restoration project to restore numerous aspects of the property that had undergone changes in the 20th century, based on historical evidence. In this project, deteriorated windows and several that did not fit the original frames properly have been replaced with new wooden sash windows using salvaged glass panes of the period from the Newburyport area. In most windows, the pane configuration has remained the same, but a few odd sized windows have been replaced with different pane configurations determined by internal and historical evidence, e. g., working from the original frame size and known dimensions of panes in the area and period. In the same project, later exterior wooden shutters have been removed, and interior pocket shutters restored in their original tracks. Paint scraping and analysis has been used to determine the original colors for repainting.



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PHOTOS





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## PHOTOS





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PHOTOS







LEFT SIDE



WEST PROFILE





















N PROFILE (NW ELEVATION)



NORTH PROFILE





NORTH PROFILE







NW ELEVATION







GARAGE (E PROFILE)

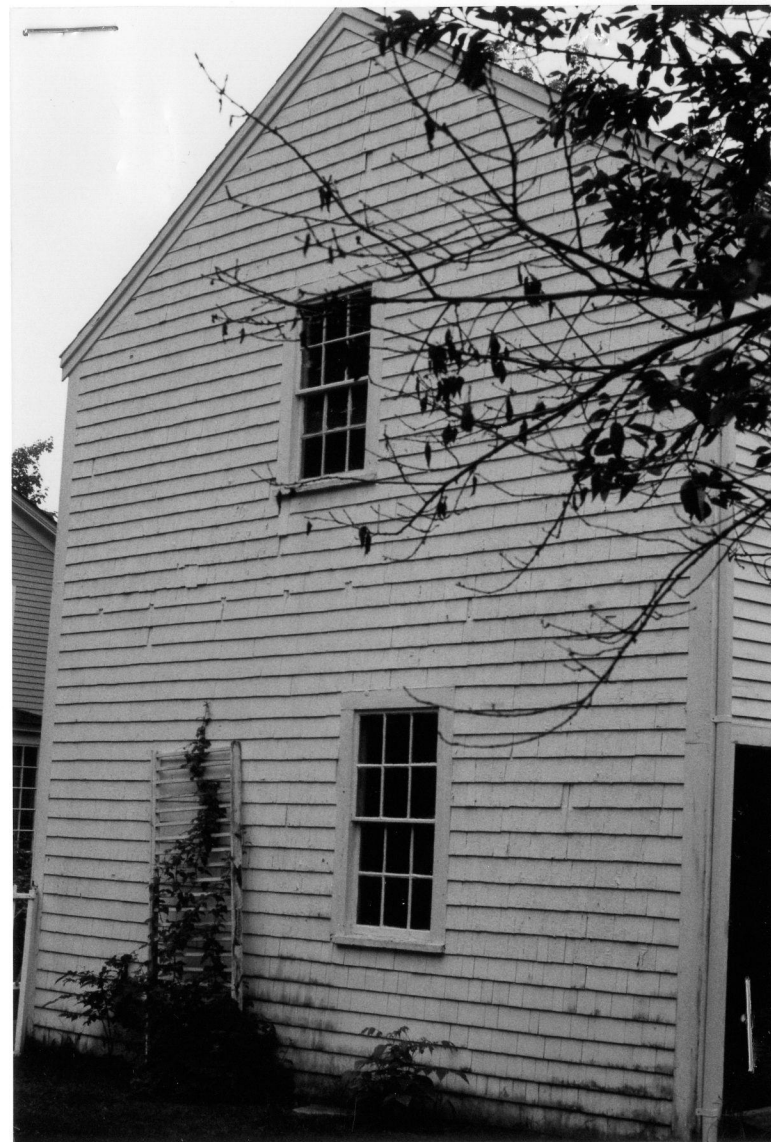


GARAGE (NE ELEVATION)





GARAGE (SW ELEVATION)

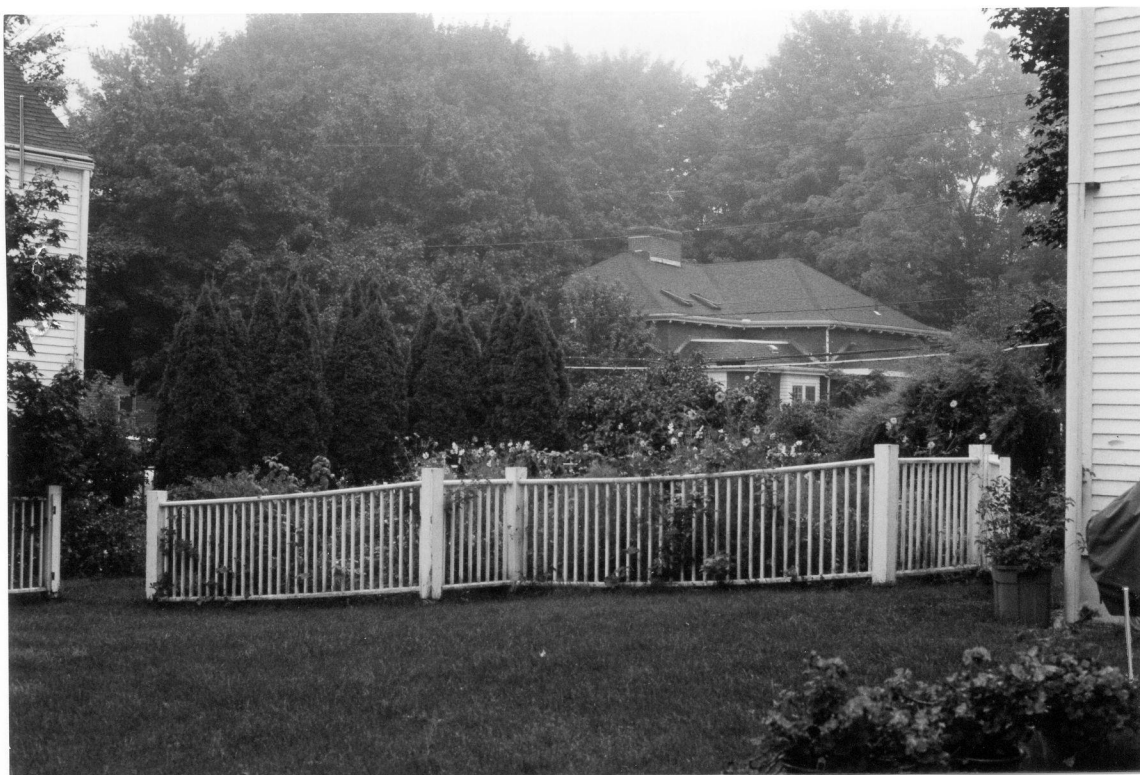


GARAGE (NW ELEVATION)





GARAGE (SW ELEVATION)



YARD







## FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

Area A+L Form no. 53

PR  
12/30/25

NWB.53

USGS - Newb-W



Newburyport

272 High Street

Historic Name Emery-Parton House

Original Residence

Present Residence

Ship: ☒ Private individual  
Private organization

Public

Original owner Thomas Emery

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

## DESCRIPTION:

Date 1796

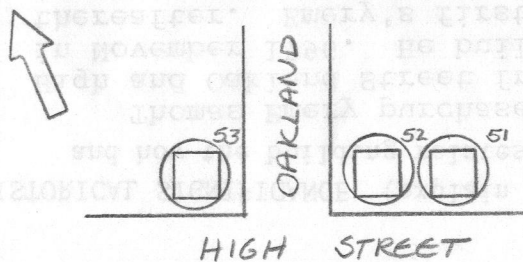
Source Currier, "Ould Newbury"

Style Federal

Architect Unknown

Exterior wall fabric Clapboards

Outbuildings Barn



Major alterations (with dates) addition at rear, doorway altered and portico added (dates unknown)

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

Approx. acreage 23,090 sq. ft.

Recorded by Mary Jane Stirgwalt

Organization Office of Community Development

Date 8-11-80

Setting on Newburyport's main thoroughfare noted for its excellent examples of domestic architecture dating from the Colonial period through the early 20th century.

(Staple additional sheets here)



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

This house is a fine example of the Federal domestic architecture that has made High Street famous. The house has the three story form with hipped roof so characteristic of the Federal period. The small nearly square windows on the third floor and the simple classically inspired cornice and window lintels, are also typical of the style. The doorway was altered during the Greek Revival period and the Greek entrance portico was added at that time.

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

Thomas Emery purchased this parcel of land at the corner of High and Oakland Street from Moses Moody shortly before his marriage in November 1796. He built the three story Federal home shortly thereafter. Emery's first wife died in 1803 but he remarried and lived in the house until his death in 1860. At that time the estate was left to his grandson Rufus Emery. Apparently Rufus Emery did not live in the house. He is not listed in the city directory for 1871. In 1886 Rufus Emery, of Newburgh, New York sold this house to James Parton.

James Parton was born in Canterbury, England in 1822. Parton attended school in New York City and later taught school in both New York and Philadelphia. Parton was a regular contributor to the Home Journal in the 1840's. In 1855 he published a biography entitled "The Life of Horace Greeley." It was a great success and Parton devoted the rest of his life to literary efforts. He contributed articles to the New York Leger and in 1857 published "The Life and Times of Aaron Burr". He also wrote a biography of Thomas Jefferson.

Parton moved to Newburyport in 1875 and lived in the house at 270 High Street. In 1886 he moved into the house on the other corner of High and Oakland, 272 High Street. Parton published many volumes while in Newburyport. He lived in this house until his death in 1891.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- O. B. Merrill, "North End Papers" Newburyport Daily News, June 23, 1906. Newburyport Daily News, January 9, 1969.
- 1851 Plan of Newburyport, Mass. H. McIntire
- 1872 Map of the City of Newburyport, Mass. D. G. Beers and Co. Assessor's Records 1890-1980
- J. J. Currier, Ould Newbury Historical and Biographical Sketches, Boston, 1896.



**MHC INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**

*MHC Inventory scanning project, 2008-2011*

MACRIS No. NWB.53

