

FORM B - BUILDING

NRDIS 8/2/84

Assessor's number

47/37 & 38

USGS Quad

Newburyport

Area(s)

Form Number

2961

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building

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Town Newburyport

Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 81-83 Merrimac Street

Historic Name

Uses: Present Residential

Original Residential

Date of Construction c.1870

Source visual inspection

Style/Form French Second Empire

Architect/Builder unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation Brick

Wall/Trim Wood Shingles

Roof Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

none

Major Alterations (with dates) date? - wood shingles

Condition good

Moved ☐ no ☒ yes Date after 1934 fire

Acreage 4700 SF + 6950 SF

Setting mixed use area opposite waterfront

Recorded by Lisa Mausolf

Organization Newburyport Historical Commission

Date (month/year) June 1999

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.

## BUILDING FORM (81-83 Merrimac Street)

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

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

A simple example of the French Second Empire style, the double house at 81-83 Merrimac Street is a two-story building set above a brick foundation and capped by a mansard roof with straight sides. Projecting from the asphalt-shingled roof are a series of dormers containing paired 1/1 windows and capped by low gable roofs, the ends of which are supported by simple scroll brackets. The projecting cornice is decorated at the ends and at the center of the facade by brackets. Wood shingles obscure the original cladding and the building presents its two-bay, entryless facade to the street. Each window opening contains a pair of narrow 1/1 windows and is capped by an entablature lintel. Each of the side elevations of the main house is a single bay wide before projecting out slightly (the width of a window). The entrances are located on the side elevations, at the junction of main house and rear section. Each entrance has a simple surround and is capped by a flat roof supported by a single arched support. Extending behind the main house is a single-story addition with the same trim as the main house. A modern, single-story addition is at the rear.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Describe 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.*

According to research by local historian, Ron Irving, this house was moved to its present site after the "Million Dollar" fire of 1934 cleared nearly all of the buildings on both sides of Merrimac Street from Winter Street and Bridge Road to Titcomb Street. The building appears to date to c.1870 but its early history and where it was moved from are not known.

The first City directory to include listings by address was published in 1937 and indicates that Louis Georges was then living at 81 Merrimac Street while the owner of the building, John J. Canepa, lived at #83. Various stores and dwellings of Canepa family members on Merrimac Street were destroyed by the May 1934 blaze and it would appear that as a result, the family moved this building to one of their vacant lots. In the 20th century the Canepa family owned and operated a fruit/confectionery and liquor store at 43-47 Merrimac Street. Members of the family continued to occupy one or both sides of the house as recently as the early 1990s.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Currier, John J. *History of Newburyport, Massachusetts, 1764-1906*, vols. 1 & 2. Newburyport: 1906 & 1909.  
Irving, Ron. Unpublished research on Merrimac Street.  
Massachusetts Historical Commission. *Historic Resources Inventory*: Newburyport.  
Newburyport City Directories, various dates.  
Somerby, Charles I., Sr., "Fire Demon in Newburyport", *Newburyport Daily News*, March 1, 1951.

#### Maps

*Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts*. Philadelphia: D.B. Beers & Co., 1872.  
*Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts*. Boston: George H. Walker, 1884.  
Beck & Paul. *City of Newburyport*. Framingham, Mass.: Bigelow and Hazen, 1880.  
*Plan of Newburyport*. Philadelphia: H. McIntyre, 1851.  
Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1888, 1894, 1906, 1914, 1924, 1946. Massachusetts State Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

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