

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	PHL.63
Historic Name:	Seaver, Abraham - Smith, Cyrus E. House
Common Name:	
Address:	555 Highland Ave
City/Town:	Phillipston
Village/Neighborhood:	
Local No:	43-5;
Year Constructed:	R 1820
Architectural Style(s):	Federal;
Use(s):	Agricultural; Orchard; Single Family Dwelling House;
Significance:	Agriculture; Architecture;
Area(s):	
Designation(s):	
Building Materials:	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Wall: Asphalt Shingle; Wood; Wood Clapboard; Foundation: Granite; Stone, Cut;
Demolished	No



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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

Map 43/5	ATH		63
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Town Phillipston

Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 555 Highland Avenue

Historic Name Sever-Smith House

Uses: Present dwelling

Original “

Date of Construction 1790-1830

Source visual assessment

Style/Form Federal

Architect/Builder unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation granite slab

Wall/Trim clapboard/wood
asphalt shingle; wood on farthest attached shed

Roof asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures three attached sheds (19thc; end shed possibly e20th c?)

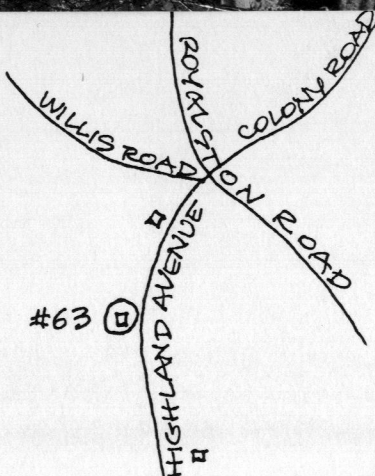
Major Alterations (with dates) 2/2 sash (late 19th-e20thc); door (late 20th c)

Condition good

Moved no yes Date

Acreage 2.08 acres

Setting rural, open fields and wooded around house, large maples, fruit trees, stone fences



Recorded by Susan McDaniel Ceccacci

Organization Phillipston Historical Commission

Date (month/year) February 2000

RECEIVED

APR 03 2000

MASS. HIST. COMM

Phillipston

555 Highland Avenue

PHL.63
Form # 63

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION see continuation sheet

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

This one-and-a-half-story, five-bay, center-entry, double-pile, side-gable house has broad eaves with gable returns, a small center chimney, and a wing on the north end. Attached to the north end of the wing are a shed and small barn. At the half story level of the main facade are four eyebrow windows corresponding to the ground floor windows below. Window frames are of the plank type. Sash are 2/2 and 3/3. The doorframe at the main entrance is a simple frame with a moulded outer edge and a narrow cornice cap

One and one-and-a-half-story houses were commonly built in Phillipston all during its history. During the pre-Revolutionary War period there were very few two-story houses built here. Even during the town's period of greatest prosperity and expansion from the late 18th century through the mid-19th century, two-story houses continued to be more common than two-story houses.

This house, with its kneewall half-story lighted by eyebrow windows, is an example of a type of house often built in Central Massachusetts during the early-mid 19th century period. The kneewall structure allowed higher ceilings at the second level while the eyebrow windows offered more light. These two features provided more satisfactory living space without the expense of building a full two-story house.

Physical investigation of this house could determine whether the kneewall was original to its construction or whether it might have been the result of an early 19th century expansion. The garrets of one-story houses were often expanded by the addition of a kneewall during this period, allowing their conversion from unfinished space to bedrooms.

Also characteristic of the 19th century period in Central Massachusetts is the use of attached outbuildings, seen here and generally associated with progressive farming during that period.

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.

The earliest identified owner of this house is Abraham Seaver. Born in 1787 in Swansea, Massachusetts, he was the son of Joseph (d.1832, Phillipston) and Esther Seaver. In 1819 he married Mercy Cole (d.1848), daughter of Elkanor and Elizabeth Cole. The Phillipston vital records show four children born to them. In 1851 Seaver was taxed for buildings (unenumerated), a 119-acre farm, an additional 20 acres of land with buildings, one horse, two oxen, three cows, and one swine.

Abraham Seaver's father, Joseph, was recorded in the 1798 Federal Direct Tax Census as living in Phillipston in a one-story house of 1,064 square feet on a 40-acre farm. Further research is necessary to determine whether or not there is any relationship between that farm and this one and, possibly, that house and this one.

By 1870 Abraham Seaver's farm had passed into the hands of Cyrus E. Smith, who still owned it as late as 1898. The 1878 tax records record Smith as owning one house and one barn, a 139-acre farm, one horse, two oxen, three cows, two yearlings, and two two-year-olds. By 1890 he had added a 45-acre pasture to his land holdings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES see continuation sheet

maps: 1857, 1870, 1898

Phillipston Vital Records to 1849

1798 Direct Tax Census, Schedules A & B, Joseph Sever (sic)

Phillipston Tax Records 1851, 1878, 1886, 1890

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

PHL.63

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Community Property Address
PHILLIPSTON 555 HIGHLAND AVENUE

Area(s) Form No.

	63
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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

Criteria: A B C D

Criteria Considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of Significance by Susan McDaniel Ceccacci
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

Under Criterion A the Seaver-Smith House is significant as an example of a rural farmhouse that is representative of Phillipston's period of greatest growth and prosperity as an agricultural community, from the late 18th century through the mid-19th century. This house preserves its 19th century attached outbuildings, and a broader setting that, although it is not part of the property, still retains much of its rural appearance.

Under Criterion C this house is architecturally significant as a well-preserved example of one version of the sort of unadorned Federal style farmhouses that were often built in Phillipston at the end of the 18th century and during the early decades of the 19th century. The kneewall half-story with eyebrow windows is an example of the desire for expanded and more individualized living space that was characteristic of this period. The use of attached outbuildings is also typical of progressive New England farms of the period.