

JAN 24 1980

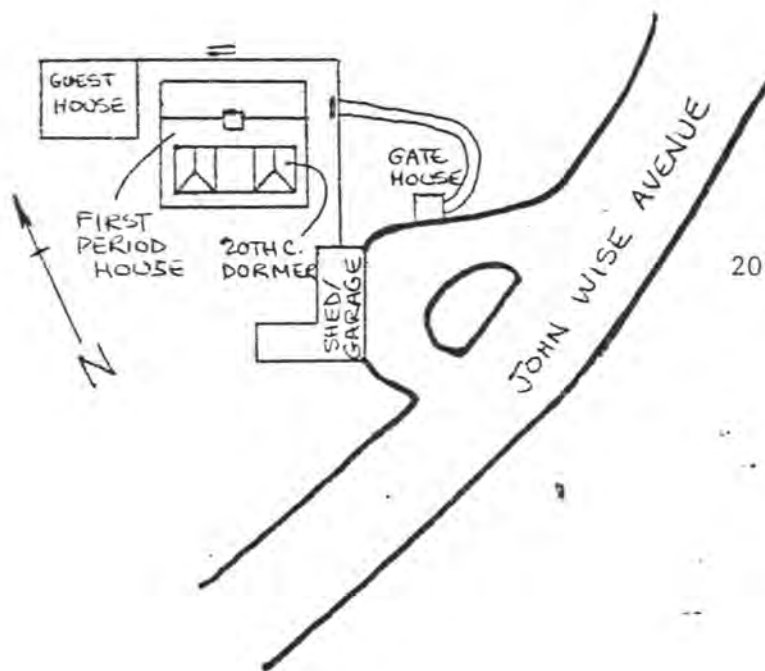
208  
FORM NO.MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

19

## PHOTOGRAPHS:

- 58:01 front and right facades
- 58:00 rear and right facades
- 58:10 longitudinal summer beam into chimney in left first-floor room
- 58:16 longitudinal summer beam into chimney in right first-floor room
- 58:11 staircase in vestibule entryway
- 58:13 staircase in vestibule entryway
- 58:22 bladed scarf joint in upper hallway
- 58:20 front-end corner post, end tie, front plate, summer tie, and joists of left chamber

## Sketch Map:

Town EssexAddress 189 John Wise AvenueHistoric Name Benaiah Titcomb HouseUse: Present residenceOriginal residence

## DESCRIPTION

Date shortly after 1700Source Abbott Lowell CummingsStyle First PeriodArchitect unknownExterior Wall Fabric clapboardsOutbuildings shed/garage - 20th c.  
1980s  
guest house - 20th c. attached by hvphenMajor Alterations (with dates) 1917: lar  
rear dormer designed by N. M. Isham  
20th c. guest house attached to house - late 1980sCondition goodMoved yes dismantled in Newburyport - 191  
re-erected in Essex - 191Acreage 8.8 acresSetting amid open fields and wooded  
areas; a rural setting though not  
authentic to this urban house

Z E N

TM REFERENCE 19 / 352-700 / 4723-450GCS QUADRANGLE IpswichSCALE 1:25,000Recorded by James KyprianosOrganization Boston UniversityDate December 1985 / 1989

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: ESSEX	Form No: 19
Property Name: Beniah Titcomb House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The Benaiah Titcomb House retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling in its First-Period frame which embodies distinctive characteristics of form and construction under criterion C. Its central chimney, double-cell plan evolving into a leanto form is very typical for many First-Period Houses in Massachusetts. This house is particularly significant for its original, First-Period staircase possibly the finest of a surviving few, the surviving evidence for the exterior plaster cove cornice, the completely intact and exposed interior frame from both its first and second phase, and the hewn overhangs which were continued along the sides when the second-phase leanto was added.

## EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Benaiah Titcomb House is a five-bay, two-and-a-half story, central chimney, clapboarded structure. It was originally one bay deep with a double-cell, center chimney plan, and had a full leanto added by the end of the First Period. The principal rafters of the rear leanto were abutted directly to the ridge purlin in order for the rear slope of the roof to maintain an even pitch. At the time of the house's re-erection on this site, the simple chimney was reconstructed with an embellished configuration of flat pilasters applied to each face above the roof. Two-inch hewn overhangs extend along the front and both sides of the second story and attic levels. The lines of the overhangs are continued along the sides of the added leanto. On the main facade, the base of a plaster cove cornice consists of a wooden transition molding shaped in a cold reverse cyma curve with a rabbetted groove on its lower edge which receives the upper edge of the top course of clapboards and also the tenons of the side rails of the chamber windows. The present wide casement windows are modern, but occupy approximately the original window openings, which were preserved despite the eighteenth century transition to sash windows. On the rear slope of the roof, a large dormer with perpendicular gables at either end enlarges the leanto attic to nearly the full breath and width of the ground floor. Since this 1917 addition does not extend to the edge of the roof, the original slope of the leanto is uninterrupted. Above the large dormer are two very small dormers over each of the gables.

## MAJOR FIRST PERIOD FEATURES

Built sometime after 1700, the first phase of the Benaiah Titcomb House was originally double-cell in plan measuring 20' x 44' with a central chimney and two-and-a-half stories in height. The framing of the first floor room (16' x 19'6") to the left of the front entry is completely exposed. The posts have flat chamfers which might have

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: ESSEX	Form No: 19
Property Name: Beniah Titcomb House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ended with lamb's tongue stops as indicated by the rear corner post. The four girts and the small post at the right of the fireplace supporting the chimney girt have continuously running wide quirk beads (1.25"). The longitudinal summer beam (11" x 11" x 16') is decorated with flat chamfers and lamb's tongue stops (which are now missing at the end wall side). The ceiling joists are 21" apart. Above the lintel of the reconstructed hearth is a large plaster cove rising up to the chimney girt. The raised-field panelled chimney wall and door are possibly original and transitional to the Second-Period. Over the modern casement of the end wall is a cut into the girt indicating that it had previously received Second-Period sash. This is also substantiated by old photographs taken in Newburyport before the house was dismantled in 1911.

The frame of the right first-floor room (17' x 19'6"), also entirely exposed, is decorated identically as its counterpart in the left room except for the longitudinal summer beam. This beam is chamfered with wide quirk beads (1.25") which strangely terminate before reaching the girts with tiny, narrow lamb's tongues placed directly upon the arrises of the beam. The joists average 21.5" apart. The chimney wall has the same possibly original Second-Period treatment. There is a plaster cove again over the reconstructed fireplace and the same cut appears in the end girt. Old photographs show that this room's end wall originally faced Green Street in downtown Newburyport. (The house was formerly located at 4 Green Street in Newburyport.) Houses forced to be oriented perpendicularly to streets because of the narrow urban lots upon which they were built, as was Benaiah Titcomb's, usually had their parlors look onto the street. This could help explain the special though unusual treatment of the summer beam in a room which probably originally served as a parlor.

In the front entry vestibule is a First-Period staircase built as a solid unit of more open proportions than usually done at this time. It has three unusually wide winders and short stubby balusters with a molded handrail. Below the closed string staircase is a sheathed wall with applied moldings to create the visual effect of panels. Cut into this wall is a door which originally led to the cellar. The joists in the entry are late examples of tusk tenon joist joints. The upper hallway shows a bladed scarf plate, proving the structure was originally of two-room plan.

Both chambers have ties with flat chamfers and lamb's tongue stops and have joists at 23" on centers at the widest. Corner posts are flared. The roof is principal rafter and purlin construction, with surviving rear rafters showing beneath the addition of the leanto roof. Collars are found only on the rafters on either side of the chimney.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: ESSEX	Form No: 19
Property Name: Beniah Titcomb House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

LATER SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

The addition of the rear dormers, the chimney restoration and the exterior features of the building are important additions by the noted restoration and Colonial Revival architect, Norman M. Isham. It is unclear whether the raised paneled fireplace walls are original, alterations of the Second Period, or introduced by Isham.

SETTING

The house sits amid eight acres of open fields and wooded areas. In 1917, when the house was re-erected on this site, it was oriented to the north in order to take advantage of the view of salt marshes and of Castle Hill, the Crane Estate, in Ipswich across the inlet. The southeastern corner of the structure faces John Wise Avenue, (Route 133 - originally called Northern Avenue), which has connected Ipswich with Chebacco Parish, now Essex, for over three hundred years. A shed used as a garage, a stockade fence, and a covered gateway nearly hide all view of the house from the road. A non-contributing large guest house, built in the mid twentieth century was built very close to the house at its northeastern corner, and has recently been attached with a connecting hyphen. The natural landscape of this property as well as the buildings on it, are well maintained.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The son of immigrant William Titcomb (d. 1676), Benaiah Titcomb (1653-1729) married Sarah Brown (1653-1741), daughter of Richard Brown, Sr. (d. 1661), and granddaughter of immigrant dyer Edmund Greenleaf (1573-1671). A merchant, military officier, seacaptain, and ship owner, Benaiah Titcomb was an active and aggressive entrepreneur of the second generation - a virtual archetype resident of Newbury's waterfront community. In 1695, Benaiah Titcomb purchased a half-acre of land at what is now the corner of Green and Merrimack Streets in Newburyport and built this house shortly after 1700. His son Edmund Titcomb (1682-1723)<sup>1</sup>, who was a turner and joiner, may have provided interior finish woodwork such as stair balusters and paneling. (1)

In 1911, the city of Newburyport decided to build a Georgian Revival police station at 4 Green Street, the original location of this dwelling. "It was then that Ralph W. Burnham, of Ipswich, bought the house from the city, took it down with the utmost care, and transported it to Ipswich with the object of re-erecting the house there." (2) In 1917, Langdon Warner, Esq., purchased the dismantled house from Burnham to use it as a summer residence on an estate in Essex and hired Norman M. Isham, Architect, to draw up plans of reconstruction to include additional space needed (the large rear dormer). (3) Isham was selected because he earlier had been asked by the city of

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Essex	Form No: 19
Property Name: Beniah Titcomb House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Newburyport "to make careful measurements of the house" (4) before it was slated for demolition, information which was in a book he wrote on "Early American Houses." (5)

FOOTNOTES

1. Peter Benes, Old Town and The Waterside, (Newburyport: Historical Society of Old Newbury, 1986), p. 192.
2. Old Time New England (Bulletin of the Society for the Perservation of New England Antiquities), vol. III, no. 2, Boston: June, 1912), p.16.
3. Original linen restoration drawings of the Benaiah Titcomb House of Newburyport) by Norman M. Isham for Langdon Warner, Esq., Archives of The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities; original blueprint copies in possession of Eric Jostrom, current owner of the Benaiah Titcomb House.
4. Old Time New England (Bulletin of the Society for the Perservation of New England Antiquities), vol. II, no. 2, (Boston: August, 1911), p. 17.
5. Norman Morrison Isham, Early American Houses: The Seventeenth Century, (The Walpole Society, 1928), p. 32 and fig. 28 on p. 34.

REFERENCES

- Benes, Peter. Old-Town and the Waterside. Newburyport: Historical Society of Old Newbury, 1986.
- Grady, Anne Andrus. "The Architectural Museum: An Exhibition." Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1981.
- Isham, Norman Morrison. Early American Houses and A Glossary of Colonial Architectural Terms. New York: Da Capo Press, 1967. (An unabridged replication of two works published originally by The Walpole Society in seperate volumes in 1928 and 1939 respectively).
- Old Time New England (The Bulletin of the Society of the Perservation of New England Antiquities). Boston. Vol. II, no. 2, August, 1911, serial no. 4; Vol. III, no. 2, July, 1912, serial no. 7; Vol. IX, no. 1, November, 1918, serial no. 18.

1/24/90

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

Name First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts TR  
State \_\_\_\_\_

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- 71. Putnam, Deacon Edward, Jr., House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 72. Putnam, James, Jr., House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 73. Ross Tavern **Substantive Review**  
Keeper *Betty L. Searse* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 74. Sawyer House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 75. Smith House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 76. Smith, Hazariah, House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 77. Thorndike, Capt. John, House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 78. Titcomb, Benaiah, House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 79. Tufts, Rev. John, House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_
- 80. White--Ellery House  
Entered in the National Register  
Keeper *Melrose Byers* 3/9/90  
Attest \_\_\_\_\_

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Titcomb, Benaiah, House

MULTIPLE NAME: First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts TR

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Essex

DATE RECEIVED: 1/24/90      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/07/90  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/23/90      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/10/90  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 90000208

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    3/9/90 DATE Entered in the  
National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_  
REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_  
DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

CLASSIFICATION

\_\_\_ count \_\_\_ resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

\_\_\_ historic \_\_\_ current

DESCRIPTION

\_\_\_ architectural classification  
\_\_\_ materials  
\_\_\_ descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect  
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- \_\_\_ summary paragraph
- \_\_\_ completeness
- \_\_\_ clarity
- \_\_\_ applicable criteria
- \_\_\_ justification of areas checked
- \_\_\_ relating significance to the resource
- \_\_\_ context
- \_\_\_ relationship of integrity to significance
- \_\_\_ justification of exception
- \_\_\_ other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

\_\_\_ acreage \_\_\_ verbal boundary description  
\_\_\_ UTM's \_\_\_ boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

\_\_\_ sketch maps \_\_\_ USGS maps \_\_\_ photographs \_\_\_ presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



20:85

ESSEX, MA

Benaiah Titcomb Hs  
189 John Wise Avenue  
rear + right + facades  
1985

1st Period Buildings of E. Ma., TR



Benaiah Titcomb House  
189 John Wise Avenue  
Essex

front & right facades  
1985

1st Period Buildings of E. Mass., TR

58:01



ESSEX, MA

BENJAMIN Titcomb Ho  
189 John Wise Ave

longitudinal summer

beam → chimney gird  
1985

58:10

1st Period Buildings of E. Ma., TR



11:85

ESSEX, MA

Benaiah Titcomb H  
189 John Wise Avenue  
Staircase in vestibule  
1985

1st Period Buildings of E. Mass, TR



Essex, ITA

Berniah Titcomb to

189 John Wise Ave

Staircase in

vestibule

1985

1st Period Buildings of E. May TR

58:13



ESSEX, MA

Benaiah Titcomb Hb

189 John Wise Avenue

Longitudinal summer beam with  
chimney girt

1985

1st Period Buildings of E. Mass, TR

58:16



ESSEX, MA

Berniah Titcomb House

189 John Wise Avenue

front-end corner post, end tie,  
front plate etc.

1985

1st Period Building of E. May, TR

58:20



ESSEX, VA

Berniah Titcomb House  
189 John Luxe Avenue  
bladed scarf joint  
1985

1st Period Buildings of E. May, TR

58:22



Please refer to the map in the  
Multiple Property Cover Sheet  
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000281