

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

- 24-25 main view of house
- 24-16 left chimney girt and post stair hall, first floor
- 24-22 owner's photo of house
- 23-33 right hand chamber rear wall
- 24-24 front doorway
- 24-18 staircase
- 24-12 detail door frame in stair hall, 2nd floor

Town Gloucester 009

Address 302 Essex Street

Historic Name Davis-Freeman House

Use: Present Shelter for Homeless

Original Residential

DESCRIPTION

Date Ca. 1709-1712

Source Local history

Style First Period

Architect None

Exterior Wall Fabric Clapboards

Outbuildings None

Major Alterations (with dates) Additions to the left side and rear, 20th century

Condition Good

Moved No Date _____

Acreage 1.675 acres

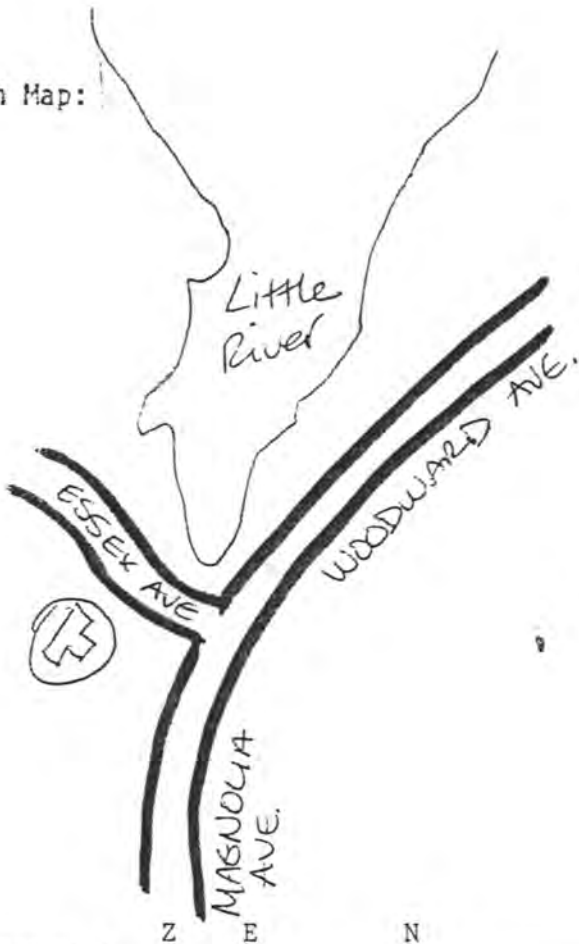
Setting At the head of Little River in an area of structures of mixed use (residential and commercial, and industrial) and date.

Recorded by Anne Grady

Organization Boston University

Date October 1985

Sketch Map:



UTM REFERENCE 19 / 359-830 / 4718-780

USGS QUADRANGLE Gloucester

SCALE 1:25,000

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: GLOUCESTER	Form No: 23
Property Name: Davis-Freeman House	

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

SIGNIFICANCE

The Davis Freeman house has integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship. The property meets criterion C because of its distinctive plank frame construction, its finely-crafted, decorated frame (particularly the rare surviving six exterior molded post heads below the overhang). The building is representative of the group of plank frame structures built in northern Essex County in the late 17th and early 18th century. The exposed braces on the outer walls of the chambers are characteristic of plank frame houses. The shorter cambered braces at the fireplace walls in the chambers may be unique to this house in the study area. The house is also significant for the transitional trim elements found in the lobby, the squat turned newel post which mimics on a larger scale the baluster turnings just coming into fashion, and the deeply molded handrail and stringer. The fashioning of the molded mitered door frames from the edges of the sheathing boards in the upstairs lobby represents an early attempt to suggest Second Period form with minimal means.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Davis Freeman House is a two and one half story plank frame structure, five bays wide. There are 20th century additions to the left side (a sun porch), rear (a two-story lean-to), and rear-right (a two-story, gable-roofed wing). The clapboarded house, built c. 1712 as a two room plan structure with central chimney, has hewn overhangs on the front and sides and at the gable ends. Original moulded post heads are still exposed below the lower overhangs. Double casement windows with leaded glass, drops along the eave of the facade, and the rebuilt central chimney reflect the 1930's restoration of the building. The double-leafed refurbished front door with transom lights appears to be the doorway shown in pre-restoration photographs.

MAJOR FIRST PERIOD FEATURES

All four of the original rooms and lobby retain exposed framing members. The summer beams and summer tie beams have flat chamfers, 1 1/2" wide, and well-executed lamb's tongue stops. All other major framing members, posts, girts, plates, and ties, have inch wide flat chamfers and lamb's tongue stops. Chimney girts in the downstairs rooms are additionally embellished with lamb's tongue stops on either side of the summer beams.

The downstairs rooms, except for the exposed frame, reflect the 1930's restoration of the building for use as an inn. Joists, 22 inches on centers, are boxed. Fireplaces are rebuilt with brick from the original chimney which was destroyed by fire in 1929. Fireplace walls are sheathed with plain boards, perhaps some of the old wood

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

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from a house in Exeter, New Hampshire known to have been installed in the house during the restoration. The right and left hand rooms are 15' 8" and 18' wide respectively, evincing the asymmetrical plan of the house.

In the lobby is the original turned newel post of ample proportions and a deeply molded original hand rail and stringer. Upstairs there are remnants of the original door frame moldings. These moldings are fashioned in the edges of the sheathing boards which surround the door cut out to form miters at the corners (see photographs). The same molding is found on the battens on the rooms side of the vertical board doors to the hallway. The profile of the molding, combining First and Second Period forms of crease moldings and a quarter round, expresses the transitional date of the house.

In the upstairs chambers are the exposed rising braces one would expect to find on the outer walls of a plank framed house (no evidence of braces was found on the first floor). There are shorter, slightly chamfered braces on the fireplace wall as well. All the braces are c. 5" wide. Those on the fireplace wall are slightly chamfered on the edges. Again in accordance with plank frame construction, the only pegs in the plates and end tie beams are those to secure the braces and window studs. At least some of the window studs are original (see photograph). The casement windows, installed during the restoration of the 1930's, are correctly located in the space between the studs. The ample window length is, however, a reflection of First Period restoration tastes of the 1930's rather than the actual original size. There were no windows originally in the rear (north) wall. In the attic, there is a much reinforced roof of principal rafters and common purlins. The trenched purlins span only one bay.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Davis Freeman house is representative of restoration practices of the early 20th century and is an important example of a broad pattern in our history. As restored by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Keffer, antique dealers, the building exhibits ample lead glass casement windows with rectangular panes, and drops at the eaves which do not appear to have been based on historical evidence. The Keffers participated in the practice, common at the time, of introducing materials from another old house to restore this one. Their restoration was, nevertheless, quite careful. Reuse of old materials was apparently limited to the sheathing of the fireplace walls and replacement of the clapboards and floorboards. The boxing of the first floor joists in an otherwise exposed frame was a highly individual solution.

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The house is also associated with an early mill, alternatively described as a saw or fulling mill. Davis received "a grant of the stream at the head of the Little River to set a saw mill on" in 1682 (manuscript materials, Cape Ann Scientific, Literary and Historical Association). Jacob's son Jacob took over the business upon his father's death in 1685, and in 1709, Davis received a grant "near the fulling mill...[of] a piece of land on the easterly end of his little house to set a larger house on being 42' long and 20' wide and adjoining his little house". The house in question, the present Davis-Freeman House, was constructed by 1712. The presence nearby of a means of sawing out planks may have influenced the choice of plank frame construction.

The house was operated as a tavern for most of the 18th century. Tavern keepers included John Procter, Samuel Rust, keeper in 1738, and his son Benjamin Rust. From c. 1860 until 1929, the house was owned by Robin Freeman and his descendants. Freeman was a black who escaped from slavery in South Carolina, made his way north, where he was eventually able to purchase the house

The building saw use as a hostelry again in the 20th century. It was restored and operated as the Stage Coach Inn in the 1930's by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Keffer of F. C. Poole Antique Shops. Since 1981, the house has served as a shelter for the homeless called Wellspring.

REFERENCES

Boston Sunday Globe, 28 October 1926.

Boston Sunday Herald, 8 August 1965.

Cape Ann Shore, 13 July 1929.

"Wellspring", Essex County Newspapers, 13 February 1982.

Manuscript materials at the Cape Ann Scientific, Literary, and Historical Association. (copy in possession of Mrs. Winfred Bell, Gloucester.)

Deed Research in possession of John C. McCullough, attorney, 121 Main Street, Charlestown, MA.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1/24/90

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

- 11. Coker, Benjamin, House Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores Byers 3/9/90
Attest _____
- 12. Conant, Exercise, House Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores Byers 3/9/90
Attest _____
- 13. Corning, Samuel, House Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores Byers 3/9/90
Attest _____
- 14. Davis, Ephraim, House Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores Byers 3/9/90
Attest _____
- ~~15. Davis--Freeman House~~ Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores Byers 3/9/90
Attest _____
- 501 16. Dickinson--Pillsbury--Witham House Substantive Review Keeper Betty L. Savage 3/9/90
Attest _____
- 17. Dustin House Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores Byers 3/9/90
Attest _____
- 18. Dyke-Wheeler House Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores Byers 3/9/90
Attest _____
- 19. Emerson House Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores Byers 3/9/90
Attest _____
- 20. Foster, Phineas, House Entered in the National Register Keeper Melores 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: Davis--Freeman 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: 90000214

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 _____



302 Essex Avenue, Gloucester

Gloucester, MA
Davis-Freeman Ho
302 Essex Avenue
Plan view of house
1985

1st Period Buildings of E. Ma TR 24:25



WELLSPRING

302

Gloucester, MA

Davis - Freeman House

302 Essex Street

front door

1985

1st period building of the 18th c.

24:24



Gloucester, MA
Davis-Freeman H
302 Essex Street
Extension Molded post-lead
1985

1st Period Buildings of E. Ma, TR

24:23



Gloucester, MA

23:33

Davis-Freeman Hs

302 Essex St.

Right hand chamber - rear wall

1985

1st Period Buildings of E. Ma TR



Gloucester, MA
Davis-Freeman Ho
302 Essex Street
Staircase
1985

Is + Period Buildings of E. MA, TR

24:18



Gloucester, MA

24:12

Davis-Freeman House

302 Essex Street

Detail - door frame in stair hall

1985



GLOUCESTER, MA

24:16

DAVIS-FREEMAN Hb

302 Essex Avenue

left chimney girt + post stair hall

1985

1st Period Buildings of E. MA, TR



302 Essex Avenue, Gloucester

Gloucester, MA
Davis-Freeman Ho
302 Essex Street
old photo of house
1985

24:22

1st Period Buildings of E. Ma TR

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

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000281