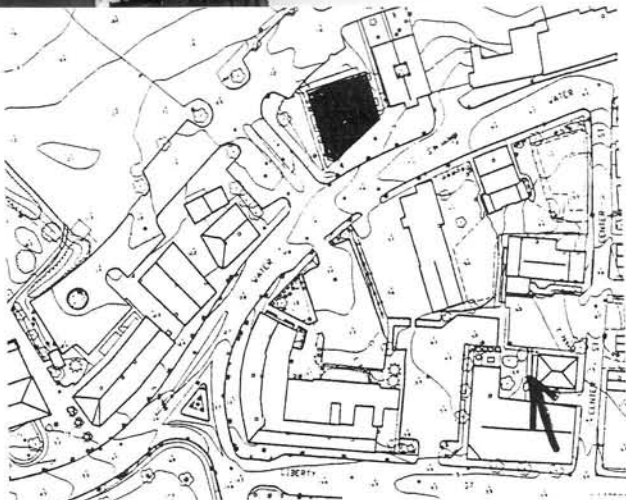


Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building



Town Newburyport

Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 19-23 Water Street

Historic Name Gunnison Building

Uses: Present Commercial/Residential

Original Commercial

Date of Construction c1830

Source visual inspection

Style/Form Altered

Architect/Builder unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation Undetermined

Wall/Trim Brick

Roof Slate

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

none

Major Alterations (with dates) c.1870 - mansard roof;  
new windows; c.1970 - rehab. of building including new  
first floor facade

Condition good

Moved  no  yes Date

Acreage 5297 SF

Setting near Merrimack River waterfront, adjacent  
to Custom House and in close proximity to Market  
Square

Recorded by Lisa Mausolf

Organization Newburyport Historical Commission

Date (month/year) June 1999

## BUILDING FORM (19-23 Water Street)

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

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

The Gunnison Building is a two-story brick block which is topped by a later, c.1870 slate mansard roof with recessed dormers. The brick on the building is laid in a stretcher bond alternating seven courses of stretchers to a single course alternating headers and stretchers. The upper story of the building appears to have been sandblasted and the first floor of the facade appears to have been reconstructed c.1970. The Water Street facade is punctuated by ten evenly-spaced bays. The upper level contains wooden replacement 6/6 sash with stone sills and brick lintels which extend nearly to the brick dentil course. On the first floor the openings are all in alignment with those above and consist of segmental arch openings which are filled with single-pane glass windows above anodized metal bulkheads. The southwest corner of the building is angled.

On the eight bay-wide east elevation all of the windows consist of 6/6 windows which are somewhat smaller on the upper level. At the rear of the elevation there is an early 20th century door with three recessed panels. On the west elevation the upper story has seven 6/6 windows and a large single-pane window filling the former loft opening. Below, on the first floor, there are five 6/6 windows and a late 19th century double-doored opening. A former loading door opening with stone lintel has been filled with plate glass. Spanning the rear elevation is a c.1970 two-story wooden deck with iron railings, accessed by sliding patio doors.

The various storage/warehouse buildings which were formerly located at the rear of this building were removed as part of the Urban Renewal efforts.

### 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.*

In the 1830s and 1840s William Gunnison began acquiring parcels in the vicinity of the present 19-23 Water Street and eventually replaced an existing building with the brick building that still stands on the site. (Until about 1920, this property was known as 15-19 Water Street). The first directory published for Newburyport in 1849 indicates that William Gunnison & Son, a dealer in flour and grain was located here. In 1852 William & Son sold grain, flour, wood and coal at 17 & 21 Water Street while William Gunnison, a blacksmith, was located at 15 Water Street. Over the years, the blacksmith shop evolved into a machine shop. In the 1870s Albert F. Hunt had a steam printing shop at 17 Water Street. The building also housed a manufactory of drive belts for line-shaft machinery. In 1873 in his shop in the Gunnison Building, W. Everett Pearson built the first "donkey" (stationary) steam engine to be installed on a Newburyport-built ship. Pearson also made boilers for the ship building industry.

The building was gutted by fire at least twice and each time the interior was rebuilt. On January 14, 1873 the Newburyport Herald reported that there had been a most disastrous fire in the Payne Block, the brick block owned by Charles Coffin and located next to the Custom House. On May 6, 1873 the paper indicated that the Payne building had been thoroughly repaired and was to be occupied by William Noyes for a comb factory. Noyes does not appear to have been located here for long. The mansard roof was apparently added to the building at this time.

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

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town  
NewburyportProperty Address  
19-23 Water Street  
Area(s) Form No.Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

|     |      |
|-----|------|
| L,W | 2382 |
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## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued):

In the late 19th century the building was surrounded by the Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Company operations. By 1874 John C. Stanley, junkdealer was located at 17 Water Street. Later directories describe Stanley as the proprietor of a hardware store. About 1898 William Holker succeeded Stanley as the owner of the hardware store at 15-17 Water Street. By 1906 Holker had moved to Market Square and the building was completely vacant. Only the west third was in use in 1914, serving as storage for the National Biscuit Company. The 1924 map labels the building as vacant but indicates it is to be used as a garage. By 1946 steel posts and beams had been inserted on the first floor. Most of the building was occupied by the Baird & Eliot Inc. furniture store and a large addition on the rear served as storage for road-building equipment. Today, after its c.1970 rehabilitation, the building contains apartments and an antique shop.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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## Maps

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