

FORM B - BUILDING

NRDIS 8/2/1984

Assessor's number  
17-4

USGS Quad  
Newburyport

Area(s)  
L,W

Form Number  
395

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Massachusetts Archives Building



Town Newburyport  
Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 49 Water Street

Historic Name

Uses: Present Residential/Commercial  
Original Unknown

Date of Construction early 19th century

Source visual inspection, maps

Style/Form ---

Architect/Builder unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation Undetermined  
Wall/Trim Wood Clapboards  
Roof Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

none

Major Alterations (with dates) c.1950 - single-story  
concrete addition to south; c.1980 - replacement of  
original fenestration

Condition fair

Moved  no  yes Date

Acreage 4350 SF

Setting mixed use area along the banks of the Merrimack  
River, east of Market Square

Recorded by Lisa Mausolf  
Organization Newburyport Historical Commission  
Date (month/year) June 1999

## BUILDING FORM (49 Water Street)

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

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

Set back from Water Street, this 3 1/2-story, clapboarded building is a fairly rare example of a wooden maritime structure dating to the early 19th century. The simple and unadorned building is capped by a low gable roof with a brick chimney rising from the front slope of the asphalt roof. The east-facing facade measures six bays across. The fenestration includes a six-panel and two glass-and-wood doors on the facade as well as casement windows, sliders and 6/6 replacement windows. The third floor windows are somewhat smaller than those on the second floor. Additions to the building include a c.1950 single-story concrete addition extending to the south with metal windows and a screened addition on the rear elevation

### 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.*

This wooden building appears to date to the early 19th century and was probably built by a member of the Cushing family. It was located on what was then known as Cushing's Wharf. In 1851 John N. Cushing owned the wharf as well as 51 Water Street at the head of the wharf. The Cushings were a prominent family of merchants and imported salt, hemp and other merchandise as well as engaging the East India trade. Their mansion on High Street is now the home of the Historical Society of Old Newbury. The Cushing family continued to own the wharf and buildings on it until at least 1924.

The 1888 Sanborn map indicates that the building, which included a wing to the south, was being used as a molasses warehouse. The importation of sugar and molasses from the West Indies was a major source of revenue to the port at Newburyport. The largest importer was Bayley & Sons who were located at what is now 65 Water Street (MHC#399) from about 1850 until 1877. The 1894, 1900 and 1906 maps indicate that the building was a storehouse. By 1914 the building was being used to store coal and wood as part of J.H. Balch's coal yard. The wooden wing was removed between 1946 and 1961. Beginning about 1950, the building was used by the Port Potters' pottery which resulted in the construction of the concrete block addition to the south. The building now combines residential uses and an antique shop.

Previous survey efforts have speculated that this building may have been used as a sail loft although there does not appear to be any proof of this. Sanborn insurance maps indicate that the rear of the building next door (the current 51 Water Street; MHC#394) was being used as a sail loft until about 1900. Directories indicate that Charles Currier was the proprietor of a sail loft at Cushing's Wharf from 1850 to 1868, but are not specific as to what building at Cushing's Wharf. After Currier's death, his son, Charles O. Currier continued to make sails in the building until 1884 and died two years later. He lived at 21 Lime Street.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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