

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02116

AREA	FORM NO.
MM A	19



Town Barnstable (Marstons Mills Center)

Address Rte 149, Marstons Mills

Historic Name Marstons Mills Hearse House

Owner: Town of Barnstable

Use: Present vacant

Original Marstons Mills Hearse House

DESCRIPTION:

Date C1885

Source Town of Barnstable Clerks' Record

Style Vernacular

Architect _____

Exterior wall fabric wood shingles-painted white

Outbuildings _____

Major alterations (with dates) Repaired-

1985, concrete footings, new timbers

to replace rotten boards. Jacked up & lowered on concrete footings 1985
Moved _____ Date _____

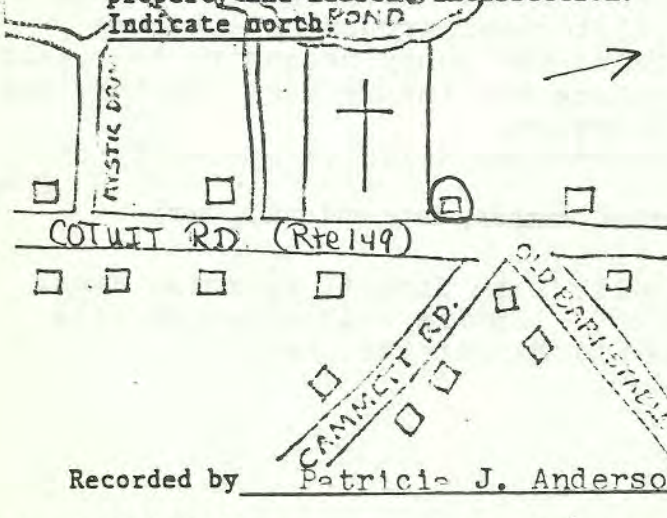
Approx. acreage n/a

Setting Abuts Marstons Mills Cemetery

& Rte 149

Photo #84-4-A19

to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection. Indicate north.



Recorded by Patricie J. Anderson

Organization Barnstable Historical Commission

Date July, 1985

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.)

Hearse Hse. is a small wood frame structure of rectangular plan and enclosed by a gable roof. A double leaf door is located on one of the gable ends. The building is sheathed with decorative shingles.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.)

The Town of Barnstable is divided into seven villages. During the 1800's each of the seven villages were provided with a horse drawn hearse and hearse house, usually built next to the oldest burying ground in the village. The money to pay for the hearses and construction of hearse houses was appropriated by town meeting. Repairs to the hearses and houses were also done at town expense. An entry in the 1889 Town of Barnstable Report states " B.F. & C.C. Crocker, paint Marstons Mills Hearse House... \$4.50." This small building ceased to serve as a hearse house during the early 1930's. The building had recently been used as a combination storage, tool shed, cemetery maintenance catch all by the Town's Structures and Grounds Department. Vandals had repeatedly broken into the building causing damage to the interior and contents.

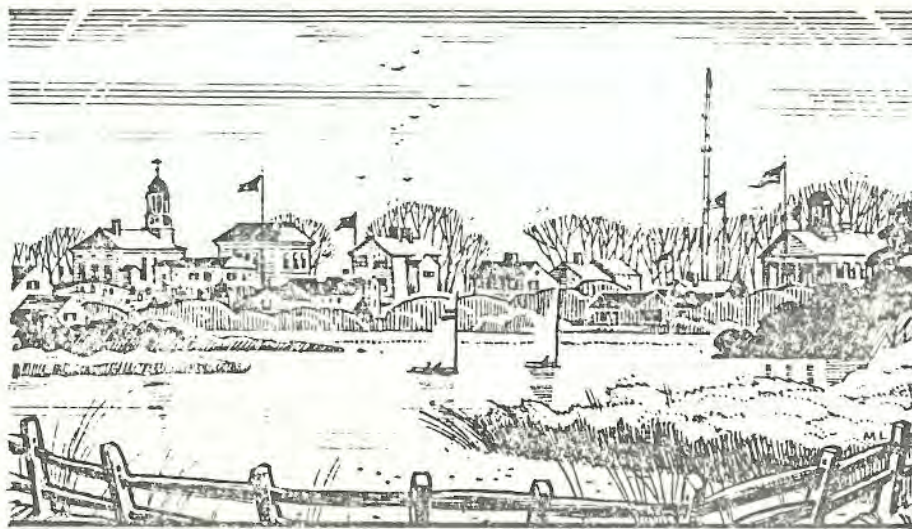
In October of 1984 the Town of Barnstable was preparing to move the building to Sandy Neck to be used as a gatehouse. Several Marstons Mills residents as well as the Barnstable Historical Commission objected to having this building moved and the operation was suspended. Although still owned by the Town, the Marstons Mills Civic and Historical groups have become guardians of the little building, fund raising the money necessary to repair where needed, protect by better street lighting and insure that the Marstons Mills Hearse House stays at its original location.

A Hearse thought to have been used in Marstons Mills is currently on

Cont.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (name of publication, author, date and publisher)

Town of Barnstable Clerks' Records, Town Hall, Main Street, Hyannis, Mass.
Town of Barnstable Annual Reports, 1885, 1889. Entire collection on file
at The Sturgis Library, Main Street (Rte 6A) Barnstable, Mass.



Panorama of Barnstable, Mass., Cape Cod 1965
 nitarian Church, Maritime Custom-House Donald G. Trayser Memorial Museum,
 ost Office, County Complex: Radio Antenna, Court House & Registry of Deeds.
 William & Harry Kerr, Charles Clagg, Publishers. Line drawing by Marsden Lore.

Hist. Sig. Cont.

display at the Donald G. Trayser Memorial Museum, Rte 6A, Cobb's Hill, Barnstable (See Form #C-88). There are only two hearse houses left in the Town of Barnstable. The Marstons Mills house is the only one at its original location which has not been substantially altered. The other is currently a blacksmith shop in Barnstable Village (See Form #D-110).

Stopped-- in nick of time

By Fred Bodensiek

They were going to take away the hearse house. They were going to raise it onto a flat-bed trailer and move it to Sandy Neck to serve as the new gate house.

But a group of Marstons Mills residents got wind of the idea Saturday night. By Monday morning they'd marshaled their forces, and a half hour before the old building was to be taken away, the Mills people had stopped the move.

The 12-by-24-foot simplified Greek-revival barn, which has sat next to the Marstons Mills Cemetery for 130 years, remains there even if it's still on blocks.

The "they" who planned that move were town officials who had concluded that the building, vandalized and the scene of night parties for the young, would be better off elsewhere.

Before the incident closed, however, the historical commission, selectmen and an aroused citizenry had combined to squelch the idea.

Historical Commission Chairman Joe Williams said the building was used as a carriage shed for horse-drawn hearses when they carried the dead to their graves.

"By town meeting action," said Williams, "we are to be consulted when anything is done to a public building built before 1900. There was some misconception and we weren't notified."

Pat Anderson, who conducts the town's historical inventory and saved a hearse house herself a few years ago, says the Mills barn is the second she knows of in town.

The other is the one she saved, in Barnstable Village and used by her grandfather, William A. Jones, Sr., who drove the last village hearse in 1933.

Mills resident Sue Johnson said she was contacted by Claire Melix and others about the threat to the Mills house and in turn contacted Selectman Marty Flynn.

In the meantime, others had checked with Selectman John Klimm, and the selectmen combined to halt the operations of building mover Bob Hayden of the Mills in the nick of time.

Klimm phoned Hayden just as he was about to wheel the "Black Maria of house moving" down Route 149 to the cemetery near Hamblin's Pond.

Neighbor Leo Murray arrived at

the graveyard shortly thereafter and found to his relief that Hayden's men had been alerted to the "abort."

According to Ms. Johnson, Mrs. Melix called after several neighbors noticed the one-story white-sided and green-trim structure was raised onto blocks preparatory to loading onto a trailer.

"They were very concerned because the building is over 100 years old," Johnson said. After the move was halted--they even had a police detail at the scene to help shepherd the trailer--"we suggested a meeting to talk about the situation."

Selectmen agreed, and that meeting is set for 7:30 tonight in the Mills Library basement.

Vandalism, equipment in the building destroyed, beer bottles and evidence of partying were given as reasons for removing the structure, Johnson said. "It had fallen into sad disrepair.

"The meeting will address the very real concern that our heritage is being destroyed," she said. "It was used to store equipment. They call it a shed, but architecturally it was more than that. It actually had touches of Greek revival style."

Maurice (Mo) Hinckley Jr., a former police officer who has lived in the village 70 years, also had concerns. He admitted there were problems with the hearse house leaving; it is an old building.

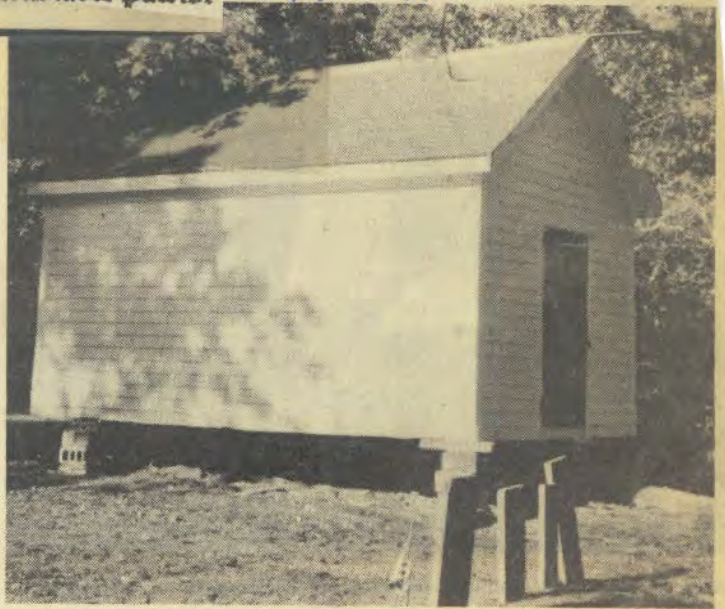
"But it's the old hearse we're really interested in. In the '60s it was moved away and we never knew where it went to. We're trying to locate that. They said it went to Trayser (the town's old Custom House museum in Barnstable Village), but I don't think so. I think it went to Sudbury.

"We have a historical society here in Marstons Mills," Hinckley said. "We want to keep that stuff in line."

Mrs. Anderson said it was a good idea to protect the barn "they went about it in the wrong way. They would have just been going from one group of vandals to another."

She said Sandy Neck is plagued with buildings being vandalized just as much as anywhere else.

In Osterville, Williams feels there may be another hearse house at Hillside Cemetery that could be a candidate for redemption.



SAVED---So far, at least, from the mover's truck is this carriage shed-hearse house at Marstons Mills Cemetery on Route 149.

Fred Bodensiek photo