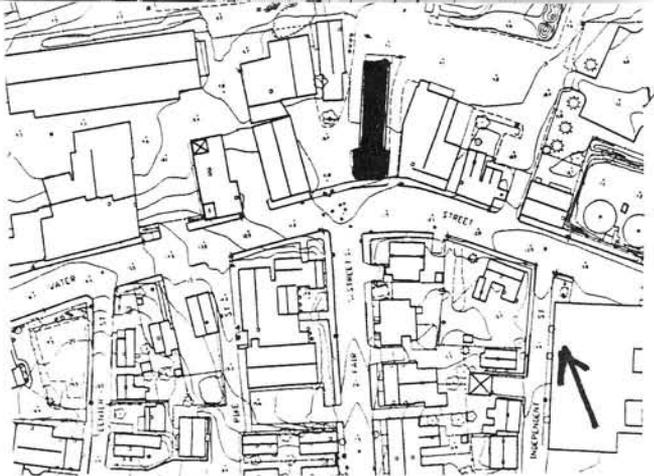


Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building



Town Newburyport
Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 51 Water Street

Historic Name

Uses: Present Commercial

Original Commercial

Date of Construction early 19th c.

Source visual inspection

Style/Form ---

Architect/Builder unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation Undetermined

Wall/Trim Brick

Roof Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

none

Major Alterations (with dates) c.1990 - original windows

replaced with 1/1 sash; date? - rear addition

Condition good

Moved no yes Date

Acreage 8700 SF

Setting mixed use area along historic waterfront

Recorded by Lisa Mausolf

Organization Newburyport Historical Commission

Date (month/year) May 1999

BUILDING FORM (51 Water Street)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

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

Probably constructed in the early 19th century, this 2 1/2-story brick building is oriented with its three-bay facade facing Water Street. The brick is laid in a bond alternating nine courses of stretchers to a single course alternating stretchers and headers. The building displays flush eaves and stuccoed brick chimneys rise from the edges of the front roof slope which is covered with asphalt shingles. The center entrance contains a modern varnished door and almost all of the windows contain replacement 1/1 sash, replacing 12/8 sash. The only remaining original windows appear to be the 9/6 windows in the attic. Centered on the east gable end is an additional entrance consisting of a wooden door set above a granite sill. On the west end of the building there is a diagonal wooden door with 2 x 3-lights. A wooden firescape leads upstairs to a steel door.

Extending behind the main building is a long, two-story ell sheathed in wood shingles and capped by an asphalt roof. The fenestration on this section includes 6/6 windows, 1/1 sash and steel and modern wood-and-glass doors. At the rear is a two-story deck.

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 brick mercantile building appears to have been built in the early 19th century and was probably constructed by the Cushing family who owned the nearby wharf. The Cushings were prominent merchants, importing salt, hemp and other merchandise as well as engaging in the East India trade. In 1851 the property was owned by John N. Cushing who owned the wharf and resided in the mansion on High Street that now houses the Historical Society of Old Newbury. Cushing also served as a director of the Merchants National Bank from 1856 until his death in 1904. The property remained in the Cushing family into the 20th century. In 1884 the property was still owned by J.N. Cushing; Lawrence B. Cushing was the owner in 1924.

This building was known as 49 Water Street until about 1920. The 1888 Sanborn insurance map indicates that in that year the main brick building was vacant although the rear two-story ell was being used as a sail loft and warehouse. On both the 1894 and 1900 maps, the J.H. Balch, Jr. Coal Co. was using the brick building as an office while the rear portion continued to be used for storage on the first floor with the sail loft upstairs. 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.

The Balch family, initially George P. Balch and later John H. Balch, Jr., operated a prosperous coal and wood business here from about 1890 to about 1940, using the brick building as the coal office and the wooden section behind as wood storage. John Balch, Jr. was a prominent local citizen who was serving as president of the First and Ocean National Bank in 1939. Goodwin's Fish Market was located here from about 1951 into the 1960s. In the mid 1970s a craft center and second-hand clothing store were here. The building now houses Bennett & Company.

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
51 Water Street
Area(s) Form No.

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

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BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Currier, John J. *History of Newburyport, Massachusetts, 1764-1906*, vols. 1 & 2. Newburyport: 1906 & 1909.
Erickson, Candace Chapman. "Dooryard and Shipyard: Four Walking Tours of Newburyport".
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Maps

Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts. Philadelphia: D.B. Beers & Co., 1872.
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Beck & Paul. *City of Newburyport*. Framingham, Mass.: Bigelow and Hazen, 1880.
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