

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

AREA	FORM NO.
B	93



Location ACTON

Address 491 Main Street

Historic Name Samuel Law

Present single family residential

Original single family residential

Description ca. 1806

Style Phalen / Nvlander

Level Federal

Architect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric wood clapboard

Outbuildings attached 2-car garage (1953)

Major Alterations (with dates) blind fan-light over door (1952) - barn replaced by garage

Condition good

Moved no Date n/a

Acreage less than one acre

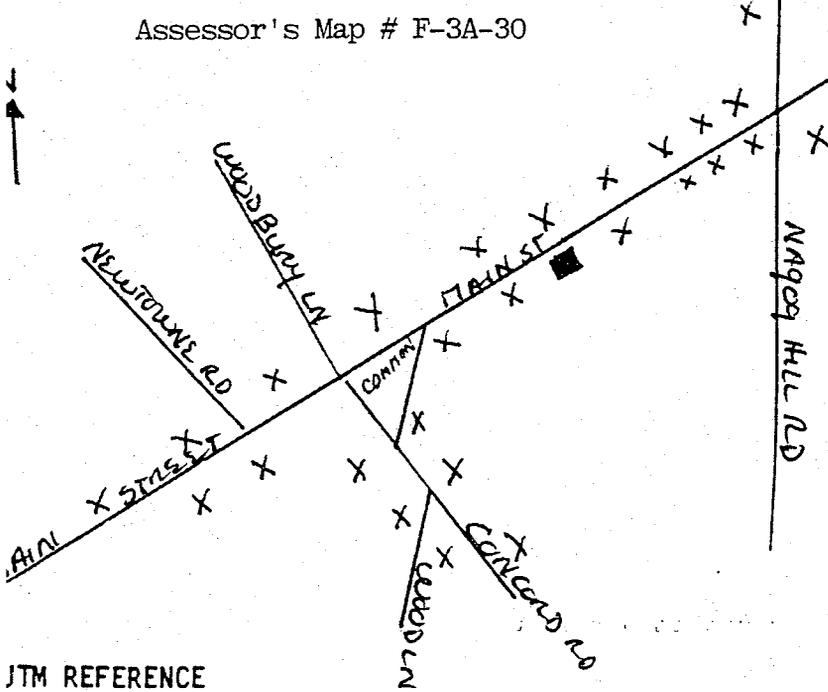
Setting South side of main route at village center - opposite civic buildings and among other 19th century dwellings

Recorded by Gretchen G. Schuler

Organization Acton Historical Commission

Date March 1990

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s). Indicate north



JTM REFERENCE _____

USGS QUADRANGLE _____

SCALE _____

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

**LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER IN 1983
ACTON CENTRE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Atlases / Birdseye, Maps: 1851, 1856, 1871, 1875, 1889, 1892.
- Fletcher, Acton In History, 1890.
- Phalen, History of the Town of Acton, 1954.
- National Register Nomination, MHC, 1983.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: ACTON	Form No: B-93
Property Name: 491 Main St.	

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION - 491 MAIN STREET

The Federal Style, 2 1/2 story, 5-bay house retains most of its early features with only some minor mid-20th century alterations. The traditional form of the gable roof dwelling with a 1-story rear ell is built on a granite foundation and has wood clapboard siding and an asphalt roof. A mid-20th century porch extends from the east side and a small screened breezeway has been added to attach the rear ell to the 1953 2-car garage.

The main facade is characterized by the center entrance door of four panels flanked by 1/2 side-lights with recessed wood panels below. A mid-20th century segmental arched blind fan with a molded cornice surmounts the door. Windows have 6/6 sash with plain projecting sills and lintels. All windows have louvered shutters. Other trim includes narrow cornerboards and frieze under the eaves that have little overhang. The chimneys are similar to those found in 487 Main Street with a large early 19th century chimney with corbelled top located behind the ridge at the connecting point of the rear ell, the other just within the end wall at the ridge on the east gable end.

The south side displays the gable end of the main block with two 6/6 windows up and down and one small 6/6 in the gable peak, the 1 1/2 story rear ell which may have been built in two sections due to a consistent cut in the clapboards. A 4-panelled entrance door with a three-light transom and a multi-light storm door is tucked in next to the corner post of the main block with a 6/6 window next to it over which there are two small 3/3 sash. At the far end of the rear ell there are two 12/12 windows with shutters and one 3/3 over them. The small connecting screened breezeway is viewed from the roadway as is the attached two car clapboard garage with small cupola.

The fencing to the right of the house is of interest and is said to be from the 1840s. It is the only example of domestic scale mid-19th century fencing similar to what may have been found enclosing kitchen gardens. The lattice and dowel sections are set between irregularly cut granite blocks that are turned on end.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

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HISTORICAL STATEMENT - 491 MAIN STREET

Acton Centre, once known as Acton Village, developed as the civic and institutional center of the large sprawling town which has several 19th century village centers. Acton Centre took on its suburban institutional form around an elongated Common from 1806 when the Second Meeting House was built and several local citizens bought surrounding farms and laid out house lots and built an hotel and some commercial buildings around the Common. The only industrial site was a shoe factory (no longer extant) opposite the Common. Most Acton industrial properties were located in South and West Acton due to the water power and location of the railroad in 1844 both of which bypassed Acton Centre. Subsequent development included the Evangelical Church, the Town Hall replacing the Second Meeting House, and finally the Library as well as many mid-19th century Greek Revival houses for artisans and professionals. Acton Centre is the approximate geographic center of Acton and appropriately remains the civic center.

Main Street has always been a main route through Acton serving as an early native trail and later a carriage route. From the early 1800s when Acton Centre developed into the civic center the section of Main Street from west of Concord Road to Nagog Hill Road was two carriage lanes separated by a long narrow greensward strip that was part of the Common. In the late 1800s Main Street was known as Elm Street for the rows of elms and other trees planted by the Committee established to beautify the Town Common. The 20th century highway improvement of Route 27 resulted in the shift of Main Street to a two lane road north of the Common.

Well known for its early 20th century resident, Arthur F. Davis, artist and librarian, the Samuel Law House was one of the three houses built just after the Second Meeting House construction in 1806. Samuel Jones, Esq., the Rev. James Jones, and Samuel Law had purchased surrounding farmland and lots to begin the development of the town center around the Meeting House. In 1806 and 1807 this house, 487 Main Street, and 10 Wood Lane were built as well as an hotel, a law office, and a blacksmith shop. Stephen Weston, a local storekeeper lived here from 1816 to 1840. In the 1850s to 1870s there was a store on the property and Stephens Hayward lived here. Following Hayward was John Davis, farmer, and later Arthur F. Davis (1876-1952) who was not related to Isaac Davis of local revolutionary fame. Arthur F. Davis is important for his contributions to the community including his extensive art work much of which depicts scenes of local history, and his work as the town's librarian from 1903 to 1945.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom



Arthur Davis' Home, 1903

View of the rear ell and side-yard of Davis' house (491 Main Street).
Figure is a self-portrait.

Oil Painting

Size: 7 ½" wide x 5 ½" high

491 Main St.
4/23/07

