

FIRST PERIOD SURVEY

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

102

TRAINED
JAN 3 1990

Photos

- 13:3 east chamber
- 13:7 detail, summer beam and end girt, west chamber
- 13:9 south facade
- 14:26 attic

Town Lexington

Address 1303 Massachusetts Ave.

Historic Name John Mason House

Use: Present Residence

Original Residence

DESCRIPTION

Date ca. 1715

Source visual analysis

Style 1st Period core/Federal vernacular exterior

Architect Unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric Clapboards

Outbuildings None

Major Alterations (with dates) Lean-to added, its roof raised, ell addition to the right side, extended several times, dates unknown

Condition Good

Moved No Date N/A

Acreage 3.7 acres

Setting Suburban setting of well-

spaced houses; open land of Seasons

Four greenhouse and great meadow

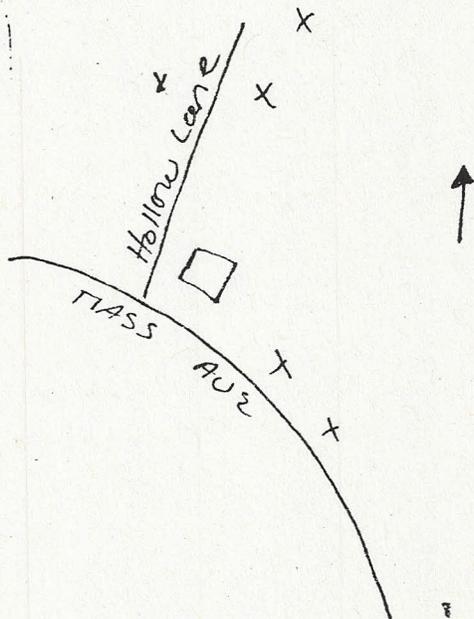
to the rear - condos to the west

Recorded by Anne Grady

Organization Boston University

Date October 1985

Sketch Map:



UTM REFERENCE 19 / 317-830 / 4700-930

USGS QUADRANGLE Lexington

SCALE 1:25,000

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: LEXINGTON	Form No: 102
Property Name: John Mason House	

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

SIGNIFICANCE

The John Mason House has integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship in its later First Period frame which embodies distinctive characteristics of form and construction eligible under Criterion C. The Mason House is one of four early 18th century houses in Lexington with quirk-beaded frames. In this house and in the Buckman Tavern (c. 1709), the bead is exceptionally wide at one inch.

The Mason house may be part of a transitional pattern noted in other houses surveyed, where horizontal beams are quirk-beaded, but vertical posts are meagrely chamfered, or plain, perhaps because the posts were intended to be boxed from the beginning.

The Mason house has an all principal rafter roof, a late First Period framing variant found primarily in Middlesex County. At least one other house surveyed with principal rafter roof also has the relatively rare longitudinal summer beams on the second floor. Further study of framing techniques in these Middlesex County houses with principal rafter roofs is likely to yield important information about the origins and rationale behind these rare framing alternatives.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The John Mason house is a two and one half story structure with two story lean-to in the rear and a long ell, added in several building campaigns to the right-hand end. The original house, (the front left-hand portion of the current house,) is a structure of modest scale, three bays wide and one bay deep, asymmetrical in plan.

The clapboarded structure has Greek Revival vernacular exterior trim, a 20th century open porch at the center entrance, and two chimneys on the rear slope. The chimneys replaced an earlier central chimney in the early 19th century.

MAJOR FIRST PERIOD FEATURES

Evidence of First Period construction is found in the southeast room and in the southeast and southwest chambers.

In the southeast room, only the east end girt is exposed. It has an inch-wide quirked bead.

In the southeast and southwest chambers, the front and rear plates, the end and chimney girts and the longitudinal summer beams are all decorated with an inch wide quirked bead. Posts exposed in the rooms are boxed, but in a closet, one flared post displays a flat chamfer.

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In the attic, the roof framing is composed of thirteen sawn principal rafters approximately 3 1/2 inches square, spaced 32 to 35 inches apart. The rafters are bridle jointed and pegged at the ridge. There is no ridge piece, and no purlins. The feet of the rafters above the four tie beams (two end tie beams and only two intermediate tie beams flanking the central bay) are framed into the tie beams. How other rafters are attached to the plates was not determined.

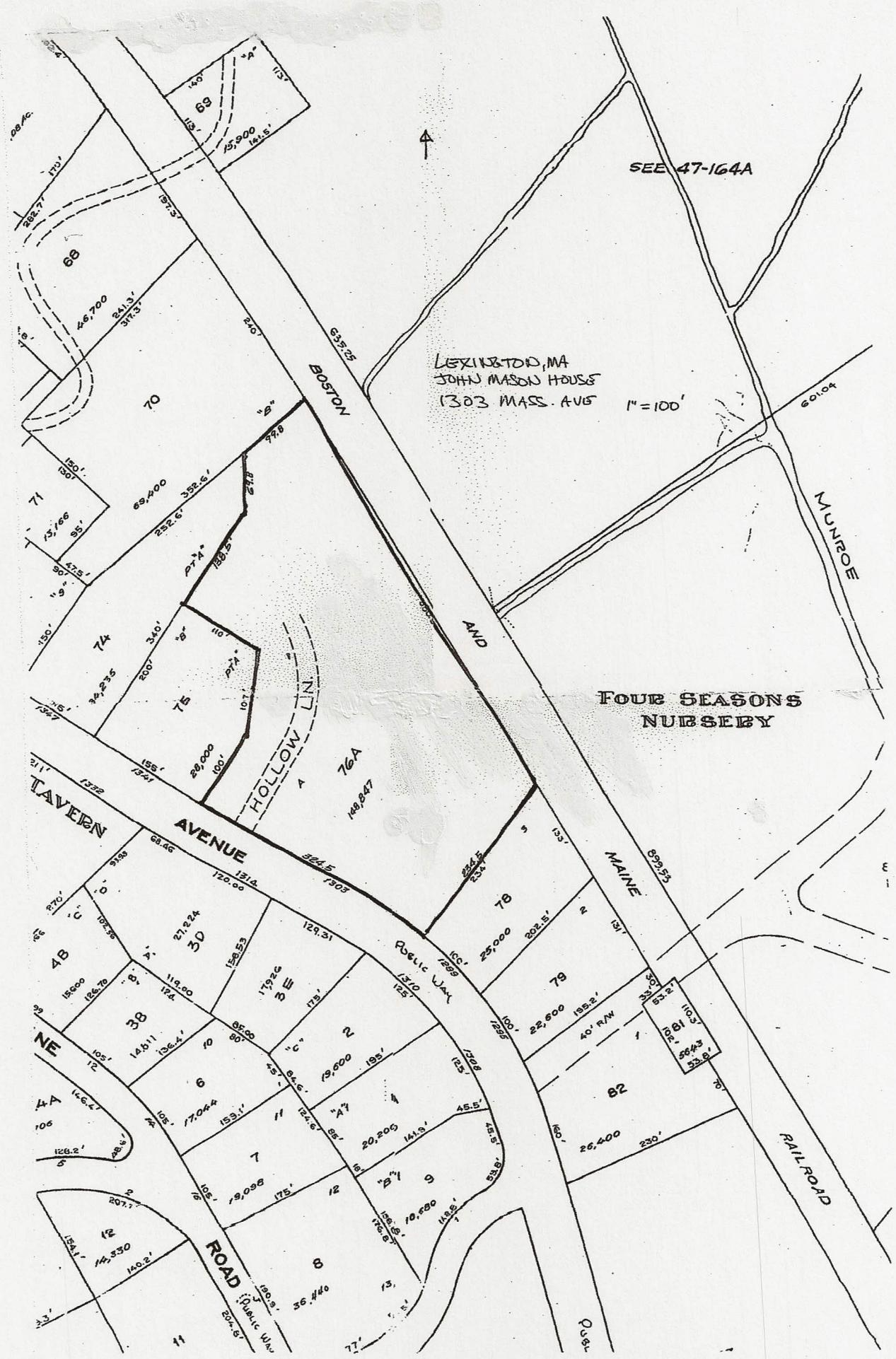
Rafters at the center of the rear slope are slightly different in character, suggesting that they may have been installed after the central chimney was removed and replaced by rear chimneys.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

John Mason owned the site of this house by 1706, but the deed was not recorded until 1714, a likely time, on the basis of style, for this house to have been built. John Mason was a prominent early citizen of Lexington, which until 1713 was called Cambridge Farms. He served as constable, town clerk and selectman at various times in the early years of the town's history.

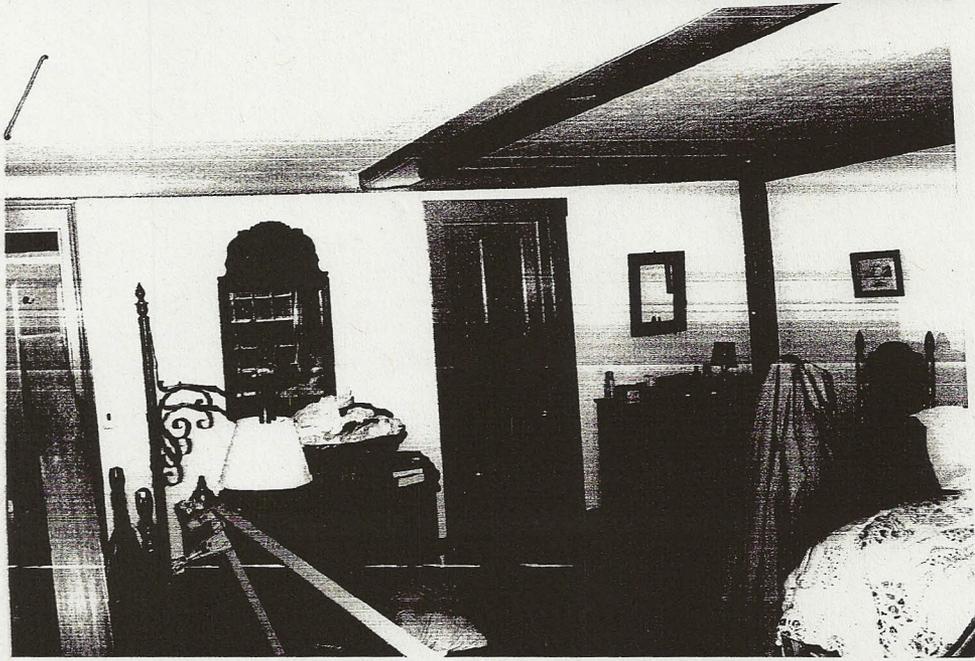
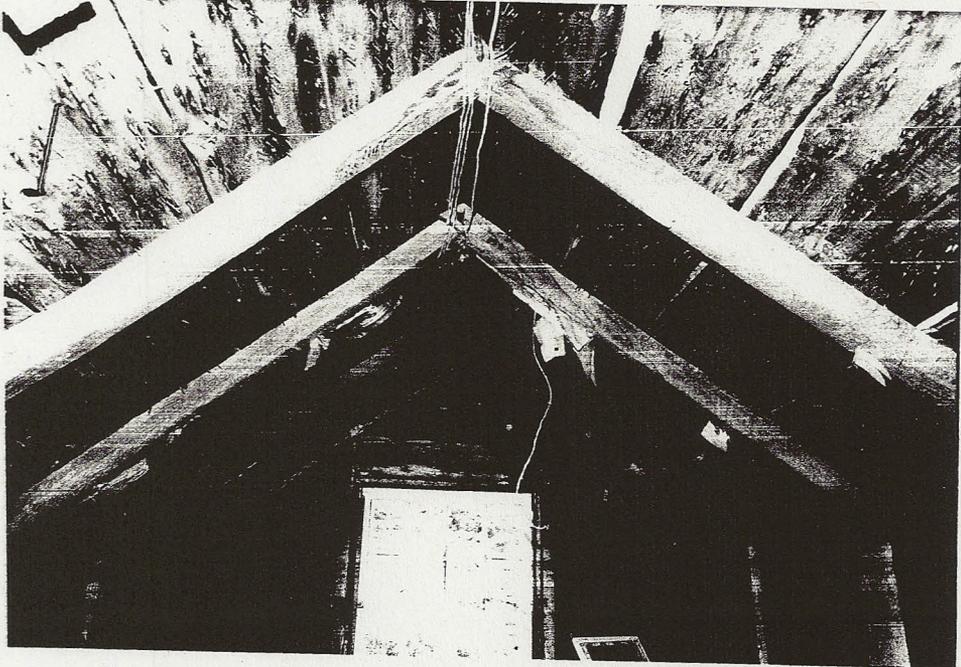
REFERENCES

Joan Webber, Study of the John Mason House, unpublished paper,
Lexington Historical Society.





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