

# FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

415-02925-272

Southbridge

STU.A

STU.26  
STU.339

NRDIS 11/9/1977

**Town/City:** Sturbridge

**Place:** (*neighborhood or village*): Sturbridge Center

## Photograph



**Address:** 274 Main Street

**Historic Name:** John Coburn House

**Uses:** Present: Multiple Family Dwelling

Original: Single Family Dwelling

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1783

**Source:** WCRD 97/323 (1783, recorded 1785) and WCRD 106/93 (1789)

**Style/Form:** Federal

**Architect/Builder:** Unknown

**Exterior Material:**

Foundation: Stone

Wall/Trim: Vinyl Siding/Wood Trim

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

**Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:** Barn

**Major Alterations** (*with dates*): replacement of center chimney, 19<sup>th</sup> c.; vinyl siding and windows, late 20<sup>th</sup> c.; conversion to multi-family residence, late 20<sup>th</sup> c.

**Condition:** Fair

**Moved:** no  yes  **Date:**

**Acreage:** .48 acres

**Setting:** The building occupies a roughly square-shaped lot at the northeast corner of the intersection of Charlton and Main streets in a mostly residential neighborhood east of the Sturbridge Town Common.

## Locus Map



**Recorded by:** L. Kline, G. Pineo, E. Giacomarra; PAL

**Organization:** Sturbridge Historical Commission

**Date** (*month / year*): May 2018

# INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

STURBRIDGE

274 MAIN STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

STU.A

STU.26  
STU.339 Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The John Coburn House (ca. 1783, STU.26) is a south-facing, Federal-style, two-story, five-bay-by-two-bay, wood-frame building with a one-story ell extending from the north elevation. The house has a stone foundation and a cross-gable roof. The walls are clad with vinyl siding, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. A brick chimney pierces the center of the south roof slope. One-story screened porches with shed roofs supported by wood columns project from the center of the east and west elevations and protect secondary entrances. The main entrance in the center of the south elevation consists of a multi-panel wood door with a five-light transom and a molded and dentiled cornice under a flat pediment supported by fluted pilasters. Fenestration consists of symmetrically spaced, six-over-six and one-over-one, double-hung vinyl replacement sash.

Northeast of the house is a one-and-one-half story, side-gable Barn (ca. 1870, STU.339) accessed via a driveway on the east side of the house. The barn is clad in vinyl siding and has two vertical-lift doors in the south elevation. The parcel line cuts east to west through the barn, and the northern half of the building is located on the parcel for 4 Charlton Street (STU.25).

In the late twentieth century, the house was clad with vinyl siding and the windows were replaced with vinyl units.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The John Coburn House (ca. 1783, STU.26) is in the center of Sturbridge, east of the Sturbridge Town Common, at the corner of Main and Charlton streets. The area was settled ca. 1725 by residents of Medfield, and Sturbridge was incorporated as a town in 1738 (MHC 1984:3–4). In 1783, Brookline, Massachusetts, resident John Coburn (1736–1826) bought 53 acres, including the subject property, from Daniel Bullard of Brookfield, Massachusetts (WCRD 97/323).<sup>1</sup> Coburn likely built the house on the property, as the deed between Bullard and Coburn does not reference a building. In 1789, Coburn sold the property to Joseph and Nathaniel Ruggles of Roxbury, Massachusetts (WCRD 106/193). The Ruggles subdivided the property and sold the Coburn House to Dr. Thomas Babbit (1761–1813) in 1794 (WCRD 128/90).

Dr. Babbit graduated from Harvard University in 1784 and practiced medicine in Gloucester, Massachusetts, before returning to his hometown of Sturbridge in 1790. He lived with his wife, Mary Jackson Babbit (1768–1845), and their three children: Fitz Henry Babbit (1790–1840), Edward Babson Babbit (1792–1840), and William Dolliver Babbit (1794–1826) (Find A Grave 2009; Clark 1838:45). The Babbits moved 10 miles north to Brookfield in 1803.

By 1805, Joseph Shaw, a trader, owned the subject property. By 1815, it was owned by Francis Wheelock. Burt and Merrick, who owned other nearby properties, including the Jared Lamb House, 5–7 Charlton Street (STU.15), subsequently owned the subject property. In 1835, the house was owned by another physician, Dr. Hosea Wheeler (1798–1860) (Levine 1971). Dr. Wheeler studied medicine in Vermont before moving to Sturbridge. He later moved to Springville, Pennsylvania, before finishing his career in Chicago, Illinois (Wheeler 1879:565). After Dr. Wheeler, the property was occupied by Dr. Cyrus Hutchins (1788–1845) and his family (Levine 1971). After Dr. Hutchins' death in 1845, his wife Phebe (1801–1891) remained at the property with her daughter Emeline (1838–1919) (Find a Grave 2014; US Census 1880). Emeline inherited the property after her mother's death and likely lived there until her death in 1919. She worked as a town librarian by 1876, when the library was in the Sturbridge Center School, 301 Main Street (STU.39) (Richards 1898; Holley and Wilkin 1970; US Bureau of Education 1876:1157).

<sup>1</sup> Coburn was born in Dudley, Massachusetts, and married Sarah Dresser of Charlton, Massachusetts, ca. 1752. Their oldest son, John, was born in Sturbridge in 1753. Coburn's later history—in particular, his relocation to Brookline, possible involvement in the American Revolution, and the events that drew him back to Sturbridge after the war—should be further researched.

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George and Blanche Robinson purchased the property from Charles Francis Williams in 1920, shortly after Emeline Hutchins's death (WCRD 2226/342). George Robinson (1889–1951) was a state accountant, and he and his wife lived with their two children and George's brother, Clarence. George Robinson died in 1951, and Blanche Robinson died in 1970. Their daughter, Harriet Benoit of Birmingham, Michigan, inherited the property. The house remains in the Robinson-Benoit family, as the present owners, Richard and Robert Benoit of Pinckney, Michigan, acquired it in 1996 from Harriet Benoit's estate (US Census 1940; WCRD 5148/198; Holley and Wilkin 1970; Sturbridge Assessor 2018).

The John Coburn House and Barn were listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 9, 1977, as part of the Sturbridge Common Historic District.

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