

FORM B – BUILDING

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

415-02421-552

Southbridge

STU.E

STU.145

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

Town/City: Sturbridge

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Fiskdale

Photograph



Address: 552 Main Street

Historic Name: Josiah J. Fiske Building

Uses: Present: Multi-Family Dwelling

Original: General Retail Store

Date of Construction: c. 1825

Source: WCRD 1828

Style/Form: Greek Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Parged

Wall/Trim: Aluminum Siding, Brick/Wood Trim

Roof: Asphalt Shingle, Slate Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*): enclosed porch, early 20th c.; interior renovations to convert to two-family house, c. 1940–1950; aluminum siding, mid-20th c.; vinyl windows, late 20th c.; new roof, 2014

Condition: Fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .12 acres

Setting: The building is on the north side of Main Street in a mixed-use area, adjacent to a late nineteenth-century commercial block and mill complex.

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

552 MAIN STREET

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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 building at 552 Main Street is on a rectangular lot on the north side of Main Street, across from the former Fiskdale Mills, within a mixed-use commercial and residential area. It sits close to the street edge behind a small concrete-paved area. A narrow driveway west of the house leads to a garage at the north end of the property.

The Josiah J. Fiske Building (c. 1825, STU.145) is a south-facing, Greek Revival-style, two-story, three-bay-by-four-bay, rectangular, brick, multi-family house. The building sits on a raised basement and has an asphalt and slate shingle-clad, front-gable roof, painted brick walls, and a foundation with concrete parging. The entrance is west of center in the south (facade) elevation and contains a six-panel wood door. The entrance is sheltered by a two-story enclosed porch, which is clad in aluminum siding. The porch is lit with ribbon one-over-one, double-hung aluminum sash; a sliding aluminum door at the center of the first story is accessed by a wood staircase. A secondary entrance is below grade at the west end of the facade in the raised basement and accessed by a set of concrete steps from the sidewalk. Fenestration on the house consists of irregularly spaced rectangular openings in the east and west elevations, arranged singly and in triples, which contain a mix of one-over-one and four-over-four, double-hung wood sash and modern vinyl replacement windows. Single window openings have stone sills and lintels, and tripartite openings have stone sills and wood lintels. A brick chimney pierces the east roof slope, and a rectangular window opening centered in the gable peak is covered on the inside.

A ca. 1960, two-story, two-bay garage is at the rear of the property, north of the building. The first story is constructed of concrete blocks, and the second story is clad with wood. The building has a concrete foundation and an asphalt shingle-clad, side-gable roof.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In 1826, Henry and Josiah J. Fiske purchased a farm at the west end of Sturbridge from Moses Allen, upon which they built the first factory in the immediate area. Josiah lived in Wrentham, and his brother lived in Sturbridge; they built the first mill and worker's tenements in the area that became known as Fiskdale in 1827–1828 (see Fiskdale Mill Area, STU.M). The Josiah J. Fiske Building (c. 1825, STU.145) was likely among the buildings constructed around 1826. Around that time, the Worcester-Staffordshire Turnpike (today's Main Street) was laid out (Davis 1856:136,186). An 1828 deed from Josiah J. Fiske (1785–1838) of Wrentham to the Quinabaug Manufacturing Company included a parcel of land with a two-story, 20-by-72-foot house on the northerly side of the road. An 1830 deed from the Quinabaug Manufacturing Company to Josiah J. Fiske included 7 acres on the north side of the road with "six dwelling houses, two barns, store and tavern house partly built, shop and other out buildings" (WCRD 261/541, 272/484).

In 1836, Fiske sold the parcel of land containing the present 552 Main Street to Lemuel Lumbard of Brimfield. The parcel measured 40 feet by 132 feet, and the western bound ran over the shop cellar, indicating the use of the subject building as a shop and consistent with the present parcel description (WCRD 1836, 1973). An 1857 map shows several shops and a blacksmith shop in the vicinity (Walling 1857). In 1863, Wheaton T. Knight (1815–1874), a blacksmith from Sturbridge, purchased the lot and building from John Tyler, who acquired it from Lumbard's estate earlier the same year. In 1870, Knight owned a parcel with five buildings between the Fiskdale House, 538 Main Street (c. 1826, STU.141), and property owned by the Sturbridge Manufacturing Company. Knight lived in Fiskdale with his wife, Sabra, and their five children (Find a Grave 2014, US Census 1860, WCRD 1863, Beers 1870).

George F. Sikes (1842–1899) and his brother Albert L. Sikes (1844–1873) purchased the property from Knight in 1871. George Sikes likely operated a saloon in the building, as he is listed as the proprietor of a saloon in Fiskdale in the 1874 Worcester Business Directory (Find a Grave 2014b, Find a Grave 2013, WCRD 1871, Briggs & Co., 1874).

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In 1890, William J. Kirby (1862–1913) purchased the property from George Sikes and converted the first story into a drugstore; the second story was used as tenement housing. Kirby and his brother James E. Kirby (1867–1927) operated the drugstore under the name W. J. Kirby & Co., although it was also referred to as the Fiskdale Drug Store on an 1892 map (WCRD 1890, MA Death Record 1913, Meek 1899:301, O.H. Bailey & Co. 1892). After William Kirby's death in 1913, James Kirby took ownership of the property, although its use is unclear as he worked in the auger factory in 1912 and was a clerk in a glass store by 1920. After 1912, there is no mention of a drug store in connection with James Kirby. After James Kirby's death in 1927, his three children acquired the property (US Census 1910, 1920, New England Directory Co. 1912:173, Town of Sturbridge 1919).

Delphis Chauvin (1889–1966) and his wife, Exina, purchased the property in 1932 from the heirs of James E. Kirby (WCRD 1932). Chauvin, a house carpenter born in Canada, lived in Sturbridge with his wife and son, Raymond D. Chauvin (1922–2017). Raymond worked as a carpenter for his father by 1936, and the two men owned and operated Chauvin Builders together from 1948 to 1966. The company did house building, repairs, and commercial industrial work in central Massachusetts. The Chauvins renovated both stories of 552 Main Street c. 1940–1950 to convert the building into a two-family dwelling (US Census 1930, Manning 1936:195, Holley 1973, Ancestry.com 2011, Morrill Funeral Home 2018). Raymond Chauvin and his wife, Ada, acquired the property from his parents in 1959 (WCRD 1959). Raymond or his father may have constructed the two-story garage at the rear of the property to use for their carpentry business.

After a short ownership by Bernard and Veronica Jalbert from 1969 to 1973, the present owner, Edward A. Smith, purchased the property in 1973. A bait and tackle shop operated out of the basement by 1973 and closed in 2012. Today, the property is used as a two-family residence (Sturbridge Assessor 2017, WCRD 1969, WCRD 1973, Holley 1973).

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INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

STURBRIDGE

552 MAIN STREET

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PHOTOGRAPH



Photo 2. Garage, 552 Main Street, looking southeast.

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

STURBRIDGE

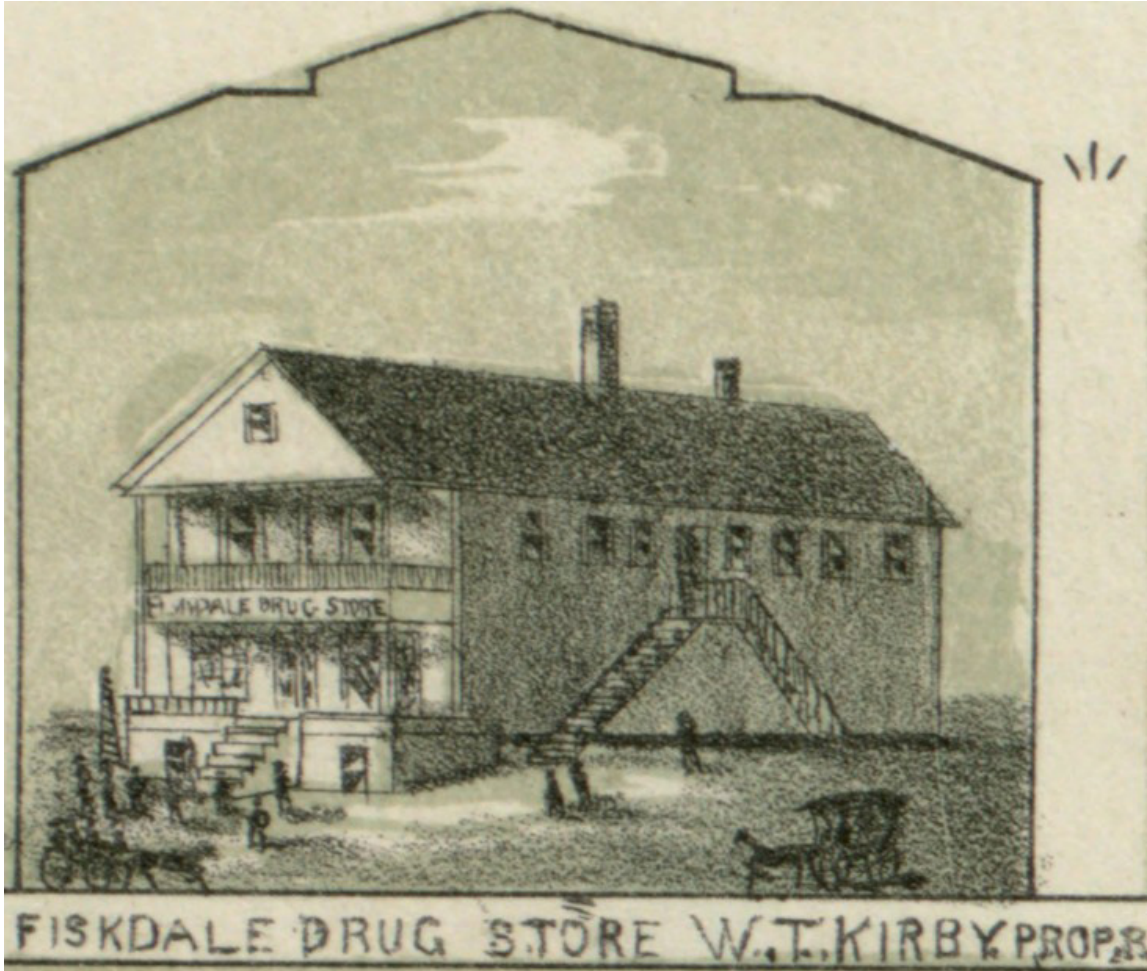
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STU.E STU.145

HISTORIC IMAGE



552 Main Street as the Fiskdale Drug Store in 1892 (O.H. Bailey 1892).