

FORM B - BUILDING

Assessor's number

USGS Quad

Area(s)

Form Number

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
80 Boylston Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

[ ]

Norwood

[ ] [ ]

Town Canton

Place (neighborhood or village) \_\_\_\_\_

Canton Corner \_\_\_\_\_

Address 79 Pleasant St.

Historic Name Tilden House

Uses: Present residential

Original residential

Date of Construction about 1725

Source S.P.N.E.A. report, cited

Style/Form Colonial

Architect/Builder probably David Ti

Exterior Material:

Foundation concrete

Wall/Trim wood/clapboard

Roof asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures \_\_\_\_\_

gable-roofed shed to northwest house, shingled exterior, e. 20th

Major Alterations (with dates) late 18th addition to kitchen; late 18th, c. 19th addition; e. 20th c. four room and southwest addition

Condition fair

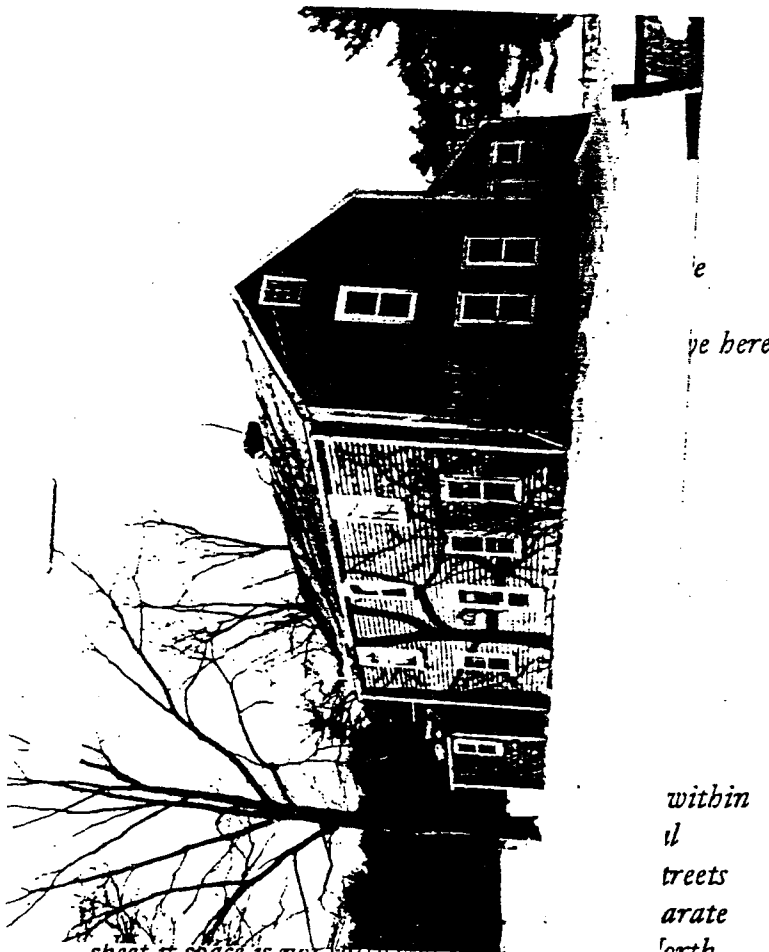
Moved  no  yes Date \_\_\_\_\_

Acreage 33.8 total acres

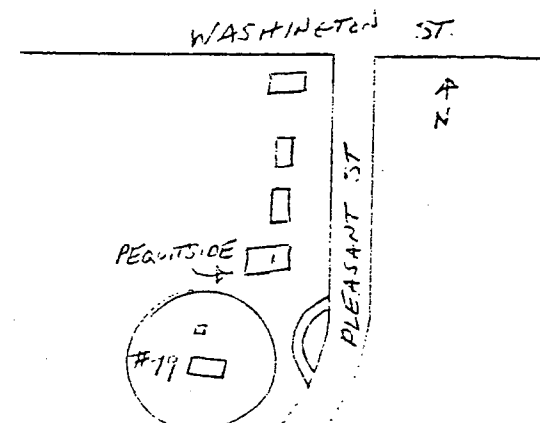
Setting set in open fields, well

back from busy street, in park

setting of Pequaside Farm



sheet if space is not sufficient here: \_\_\_\_\_ north.



Recorded by Katheryn P. Viens

Organization for the Canton Historical Commission

Date (month/day/year) March 7, 1993

## BUILDING FORM

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION see continuation sheet

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

The Tilden house, built by David Tilden about 1725, is one of the earliest structures surviving in Canton. It is a fine example of a colonial farmhouse with a significant number of its early architectural elements still in existence. The house is also an excellent place to study changes in building techniques over the past three centuries, since here evidence of 17th c. construction methods has been coupled with the early 18th c. structure. To these have been added mid- and late-18th c. improvements as well as 19th c. alterations which are valuable architectural examples in their own right. This architectural description is indebted to Frederic Detwiler's SPNEA report cited below. It is an attempt to condense and clarify Detwiler's architectural discussion for the lay reader, at the same time elaborating upon the significance of some of the changes which have been made to the building.

The Tilden house originally consisted of two rooms, a hall and hall chamber, one above the other. The exposed summer beams and girts with

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE see continuation sheet

*Discuss 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.*

The Tilden house is one of the earliest buildings which still exists in Canton. By its location, set far back from Pleasant St. in the middle of open fields not far from Pequit Brook, it immediately calls to mind the early Mission at Ponkapoag once located nearby and the granting of Dorchester land beyond the Blue Hills, plotted into twelve divisions by 1698.

Jabez Searle (d. 1724), who may have built the older part of the Tilden house, by some accounts lived on the property as early as 1719. Searle may also have been an original communicant of the First Parish in Stoughton. In 1725, David Tilden leased the property from local Ponkapoag Indians, who had been deeding the lands of their plantation (established by John Eliot with 6,000 acres in 1657) to English settlers since at least 1704. Tilden was among the church members who invited Samuel Dunbar to become the second minister of the First Parish in 1727. In 1729, he won a dispute with John Wentworth over the boundaries of their land. In 1747, Tilden sold the property to his son, David Tilden, Jr., a cordwainer.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES see continuation sheet

Huntoon, Daniel T.V. History of the Town of Canton, Norfolk County, Massachusetts (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1893), pp. 73,177,307,388, 416,617,626,11,76.

Detwiler, Frederic C. "The David Tilden House...An Architectural - Historical Analysis," a 1973 report of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, pp. 2-7, appendix.

Notes of conversation with Eugene Williams in possession of Mary Crane, 54 Pleasant St.

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

Canton, 79 Pleasant St. - Tilden  
HouseMassachusetts Historical Commission  
80 Boylston Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Area(s) FormNo.

--	--

## Architectural Description - continued

beaded edges still reflect early 18th c. construction methods. A door and stairway stood at the southwest corner of the house, with a chimney in the west wall behind the stairs. A third room, a leanto kitchen, was soon added to the west end of the house to make use of this same chimney. The front, south facade of the building had four windows at this time, one to either side of the door, and two others above the first-floor door and east window.

Older than this structure, however, is the leanto which was probably connected to the north elevation in the late 18th or early 19th c., judging by its roof construction. By its crudely chamfered structural elements which recall 17th c. building techniques, it appears to predate the main house and may even be the house which records tell us was on the property at the time Tilden leased the land. Its height and width appear to have been cut down.

According to Detwiller's drawings, by the time this early structure was added to the main building, an addition may already have been made to the north side of the kitchen leanto. Therefore, the structure added to the north side of the house could be tied together with the kitchen off of the west end. A leanto roof then "wrapped around" two sides of the building.

During the years Tilden occupied the house, it apparently was covered with wide weatherboards (10" to weather). These still exist under the leanto roof on what was once the original north wall of the leanto kitchen. An early 18th c. floor also remains in the attic below this leanto roof.

In the north wall of the addition to the kitchen, there remains an early 18th c. sash. The attic window in the east facade of the house also dates from the early 18th c. Inside the house there remains early feather-edge sheathing, remnants of early 18th c. batten doors to either side of the fireplace in the first-floor east room, and a 4' x 8' sheathed fireplace opening in this room. A mid-18th c. panel door connects this room with the front hall.

During the Revolutionary War era, when Theophilus Lyon, a successful tanner, occupied the house, more modern and decorative four-panel doors and a panelled chimney piece were added to the second floor east room. During the Federal era, Rev. Zachariah Howard lived in the house. It was he who may have had the older leanto added to the north side of the building. This room became his kitchen, and the original kitchen was converted to a parlor, making the first-floor plan of the house somewhat more formal. A Federal mantelpiece was added to the parlor, along with two large, late 18th c. windows which are visible in what remains of the room's west wall.

Following Rev. Howard's death in 1806, his wife continued to occupy the house until her death 50 years later. About 1825, the stairs may have been rebuilt. According to Detwiller, evidence of these curved stairs remains beneath the second floor hallway. The present stairway dates from about 1850. Other mid-19th c. changes included a new chimney, to accommodate stoves in the front rooms as well as the fireplace or a range in the rear kitchen. The kitchen fireplace contains a beehive oven.

Later changes included partitioning the 18th c. addition to the north side of the original kitchen so that a bathroom could be added.

Externally, a porch was added to the house and later removed. A small,

Canton, 79 Pleasant St. - Tilden  
House

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
80 Boylston Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Area(s) FormNo.

--	--

Architectural Description - continued

gable-roofed addition was built onto the southwest corner of the house. Perhaps the most significant alteration affecting the appearance of the Tilden house, however, was the construction, around the turn of this century, of a second floor room above the original lean-to kitchen. The original roofline of the main house and the south, west, and original north facades were extended to create this space. In the 1950s, a full foundation was poured under the building.

Historical Narrative - continued

The next resident of the house was Theophilus Lyon, who purchased the property from Tilden and his wife Rachel in 1773. Lyon was Tilden's nephew, a distinguished Revolutionary War soldier. He was a 2nd lieutenant with the Second Company of the Stoughton minutemen in 1775, and as a captain, he was assigned to protect the town of Braintree.

At the time he bought the Tilden house, Lyon was listed as a farmer, but according to a local history, by 1777, he had established a tannery at the edge of his property. In 1786, "gentleman" Lyon sold half of the 1/4-acre tanyard to George Crosman, with whom he remained in partnership until the following year.

On Jan. 16, 1787, Lyon sold his property, excluding Crosman's half of the tanyard, to Rev. Zachariah Howard, the third minister of the First Parish from 1786-1806. After Howard's death, a large part of the property was sold to Rev. William Ritchie, who built on it the neighboring residence of Pequitside. Howard's widow, Martha Crafts, continued to live in the Tilden house until her death in 1856. In the following year, Thomas Ward, then owner of Pequitside, purchased the Howard property. In 1876, when the property was owned by George Higginson, and later, when it was owned by Charles Draper, a gardener occupied the Tilden house. The Harry M. Alexander family took up residence there in 1923.

In 1975, the Friends of the Little Red House Committee commissioned an important architectural-historical analysis prepared for them by S.P.N.E.A. The study made many recommendations for the restoration and interpretation of the building. The house is presently owned by the town as a rental property.