

PERCY BROWNE HOUSE MARION



The Percy Browne House at 192 Front Street sits on a hilly ridge overlooking Sippican Inner Harbor. Designed by architect Henry Hobson Richardson, with 1903 additions possibly by Charles Allerton Coolidge, the house was built for Richardson's friend, the Reverend Percy Browne. According to local lore, Richardson wagered that if he couldn't design the house for under \$2,500, he would waive his fee. The modest shingled home, which blends

naturally into the hillside, introduced gambrel roofs to the Shingle Style four years after McKim, Mead & White's "celebrated" sketching tour of New England vernacular architecture.

The Percy Browne House is regarded by many architectural historians as the prototype of the Shingle Style in America, influencing countless later examples throughout New England and beyond. Its design anticipated ideas later refined by Richardson's associate Stanford White in the now-demolished William Low House in Bristol, Rhode Island. The house also reflects Marion's late 19th-century associations with national intellectual life—President Grover Cleveland, a friend of Percy Brown, summered here, as did Trinity Church Rector Phillips Brooks.

Resource at Risk

Positioned on the campus of Tabor Academy, the house was used for faculty family housing until 2010 when it was found to have lead paint, after which it has been vacant. Demolition was threatened in 2019, causing a community outcry. A leaking roof was patched after some significant interior damage. The external paint is peeling, metal elements are rusting, and shingles are falling off. The foundation is not in good shape and needs shoring up. A complete survey would need to be done to give an accurate estimate of the remediation and restoration costs.

What's Happening Now

Tabor Academy acknowledges the significance of the house. The school has commissioned a campus masterplan from the design firm Sasaki, which is expected to be completed soon. Tabor Academy has also retained Saltonstall Architects to undertake a feasibility study to see what can be done with the house as part of the plan for the campus.