

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

20/49/10	Tyngsboro		115
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Town Chelmsford

Place (neighborhood or village)  
 North Chelmsford

Address 15 Church Street

Historic Name McNelley/Bowers House

Uses: Present 1 family residence

Original 1 family residence

Date of Construction 1872

Source MNDR of Deeds, 91/85; 104/334  
 Style/Form

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation granite blocks

Wall/Trim clapboard

Roof hip; with dormer facing front

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures  
 none

Major Alterations (with dates)  
 See continuation sheet

Condition good

Moved  no  yes Date

Acreage 13211 sq. ft

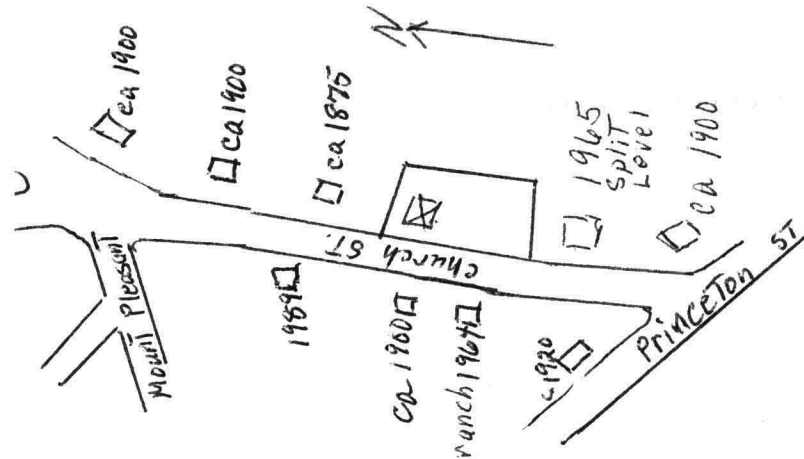
Setting Rolling topography; fairly high density of residential houses. 3 concrete steps go from the road up to sidewalk leading to front door. The left lawn is very narrow. Along the rear lot line is a high granite retaining wall. Between it & the house is a fairly flat lawn. The right side of the property is an uneven lawn. A narrow sidewalk leads from the rear right side of the house over to 2 concrete tracks for a car.



File: MA\_Chelmsford\_ChurchStreet\_15\_IMG\_3027  
 CD:CHC 2006 2 11/24/2006 FSM

## Sketch Map

Draw a map showing the building's location in relation to the nearest cross streets and/or major natural features. Show all buildings between inventoried building and nearest intersection or natural feature. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Circle and number the inventoried building. Indicate north.



Recorded by Jane B. Drury

Organization for Chelmsford Historical Commission

Date (month - year) November 2006

## BUILDING FORM

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION *see continuation sheet*

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

This residence at 15 Church St. in North Chelmsford has 3 bays in front. One narrow chimney is part way up the right side of a hip roof which covers the original house. A dormer on the hip roof faces to the front.

### 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.*

Very little is known about the first owner of this house at 15 Church St. Mary McNelley was a widow when she purchased the land from Benjamin Adams in 1872, having lived in Lowell prior to that. The house was erected that same year. She sold the property to another widow two years later.

Bridget Reddy, widow of Michael, lived here for almost 30 years after buying the house in 1874. At some point before 1896/7 Patrick J. & Mary (Ready) O'Neil and their family moved in with her. Mary probably was Bridget's daughter. In 1902 Bridget sold the house to Mary O'Neil, and she died the following year from influenza. Patrick and Mary O'Neil had 3 children, George F., William Edmond, and Loretta. Patrick and his son George were mill hands at the nearby mills in North Chelmsford. The other son, William, became a carpenter and later a music teacher before joining the Navy and then in 1921 moving to Boston. Patrick died in March 1905 of septicemia and is buried in Lowell. In 1920 Patrick's widow, Mary, sold the property to their son George F. O'Neil, who continued to reside in the house at 15 Church St. Like his father, George was a mill hand and later an overseer, probably at one of the North Chelmsford mills. In 1896 George had married a local woman, Sarah E. (Sadie) M<sup>c</sup>Coy, and six children were born to them here, one of them, Mary M., dying of meningitis at age 5. The other children moved out as adults. George and Sarah remained here for about seven years until moving to Lowell, where he was living in 1936. The house apparently became unoccupied and deteriorated. It was in rather poor condition in 1936 when Sewall & Alice Bowers purchased it and moved here from Lowell.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES *see continuation sheet*

Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds, Bk.91, pg. 85; Bk. 104, pg. 334  
Sewall Bowers, Sr.: Jan. 28, 1983; Jan. 15, 1984  
Chelmsford Street Directories  
Lowell Sun Obituaries: Nov. 20, 1986 Sewall Bowers; Jan. 26, 2005 Alice M. Bowers  
Chelmsford Assessors' records; Building Inspector's records  
Obituaries: Sewall E. Bowers, Sr. Lowell Sun Nov. 20, 1986; Alice M. Bowers, Lowell Sun Jan. 26, 2005  
Chelmsford tax records  
Mrs. Joseph Costa: Sept 27, 2006  
Mrs. Barbara Velasco: Nov. 20, 2006

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

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town  
CHELMSFORD

Property Address  
15 CHURCH ST.

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

Area(s) Form No.  
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## HISTORY

Sewall Bowers grew up in what is claimed to be the oldest house in Lowell, just over the line from Chelmsford. He was superintendent of the George C. Moore Wool Scouring Co. in North Chelmsford until his retirement in 1975. He was a charter member of the Chelmsford Choral Society and active in several local organizations. Sewall & Alice raised three children here, Sewall, jr. born 1937, Barbara born 1938, and Elizabeth born 1940. Sewall Sr. died in 1986 but his widow, Alice M. Bowers, remained in the house, where she was joined by her daughter, Barbara Velasco, who still lives there in 2005. Alice Bowers was born in Canada but was valedictorian of her graduating class at Chelmsford High School. During World War II she worked as a nurse's aide at Fort Devens and the Waltham Army Base. After the war she worked at the veterans' hospital in Bedford and later was employed with Avco in Lowell, "which reportedly was contracted with NASA during the Apollo missions to the moon. Prior to her retirement in 1974, she worked for the Prince Spaghetti Co. in Lowell." Like her husband, she was active in the local Grange and in their church, where she was the organist. She was also pianist for her son's orchestra, the Harmon Aires Orchestra, and played for the Town and Country Play House. She died in 2005.

## ALTERATIONS

At unknown time: rear part of house added: probably ca 1940 or earlier

According to Sewall Bowers:

The residence at 15 Church St. was an old farm house in very poor condition when he purchased it in 1936.

It had no heat or electricity; had cast iron sink

A porch "tumbled down" was replaced by a new sun porch 6 years after Sewall Jr. was born, therefore ca 1943.

pine floor boards in the house itself were taken up and used for the sun porch

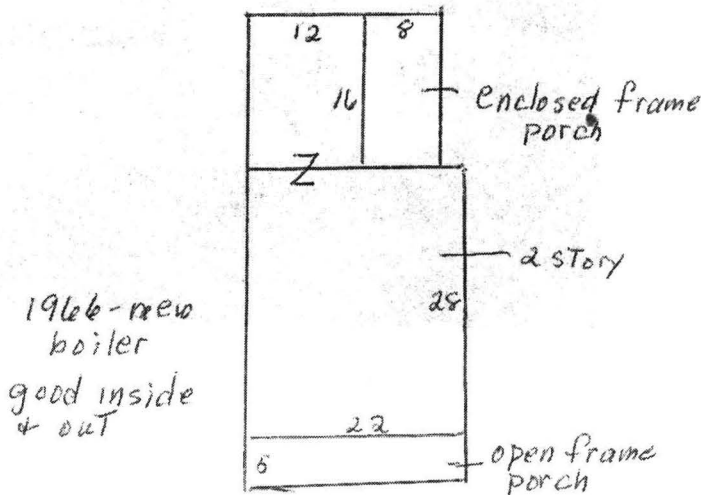
located off kitchen, at right rear of house.

Bathroom, fireplace in living room were put in, some partitions changed, and cast iron kitchen sink replaced.

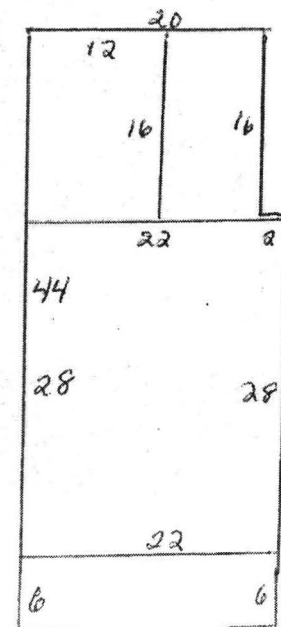
vinyl siding: ca 1985 or 2000

2 new windows on right side of house, resemble small bow windows: ca 1990 or 2000

1 new window in front of house: ca 1997-8



Assessors' record  
alan 11970



Assessors' records  
alulanc

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town  
CHELMSFORD

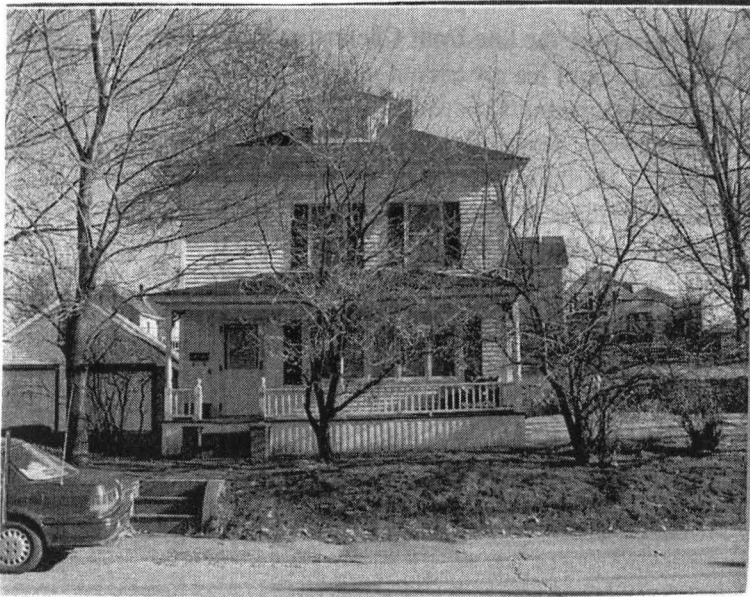
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
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November 21, 2006

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Front



Right side



Left side



Right side

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CONFIRMED THE "MEMBER OF THE YEAR" AWARD was given by the Chelmsford Choral Society to Sewell Bowers by President Diane Burke at the Speare House recently during a dinner attended by Choral Society members and guests.

*Chelmsford Newsweekly  
Aug 2, 1979*

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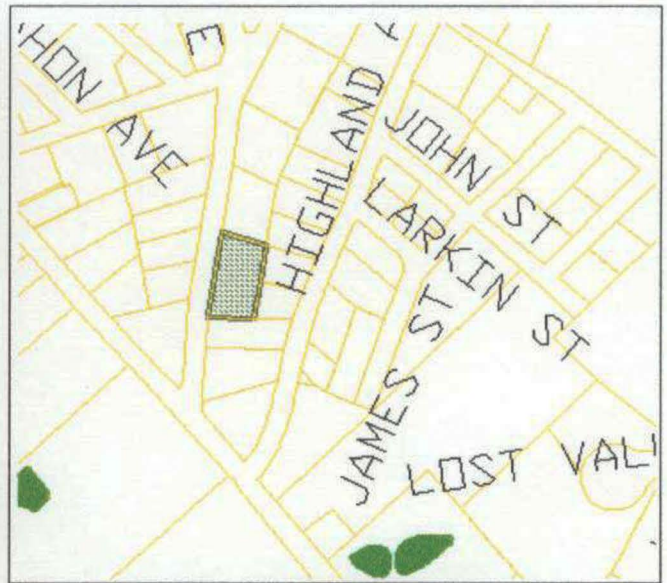
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**Locational Information**



15 Church Street viewed from locallive.com



15 Church Street , town assessor's map



Topozone excerpt from Lowell USGS quadrangle.

Decimal coordinates as provided by Topozone: 42°38'04" N 71°22'35" W

15 Church Street  
Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds

Probate Docket Docket #	d. Jan. 24, 2005	Estate of Alice M. Bowers
Bk. 10662, pg. 295	Feb. 6, 2000	Alice M. Bowers, to Alice M. Bowers, for duration of her life, & remainder interest to Barbara H. Velasco & Elizabeth M. Costa, 15 Church St 2 parcels land & improvements: easterly side Church St. (formerly Mill Rd.) 1. beginning at southwest corner of land of George O'Neil 2. adjoining southwest corner of 1 <sup>st</sup> parcel same: 1936 O'Neil deed: Bk. 879, pg. 151, pg. 150, 1936 Garvey deed, Bk. 878, pg. 372
Bk. 9691, pg. 114	Nov. 09, 1998	Alice M. Bowers
Bk. 549, pg. 264	Feb. 11, 1991	Alice M. Bowers, to Alice M. Bowers for duration of her life, & remainder portion to Barbara H. Velasco & Elizabeth M. Costa, 15 Church St. land & buildings: east side of Church St. same: 1936 O'Neil deed Bk. 150, pg. 483; 1936 Garvey deed Bk. 372, pg. 290
Probate Docket #98P5744EP	d. Nov. 19, 1986	Estate of Sewall E. Bowers
Bk. 879, pg. 150	Jan. 29, 1936	George F. O'Neil, Lowell, to Sewall E. & Alice M. Bowers, Lowell land & buildings: east side of Church St. same: 1920 M. O'Neil deed Bk. 634, pg. 373
Bk. 634, pg. 373	Oct. 11, 1920	Mary O'Neil, to George F. O'Neil land & buildings same: 1902 Ready deed Bk. 343, pg. 26
Bk. 343, pg. 26	May 10, 1902	Bridget Reddy to Mary O'Neil land & buildings same: 1874 McNelley deed, Bk. 104, pg. 334
Bk. 104, pg. 334	Aug. 12, 1874	Mary McNelley to Bridget Reddy \$1000 land & buildings same: portion of 1872 Adams deed, not westerly half
Bk. 91, pg. 85	June 4, 1872	Benjamin Adams to Mary McNelley, widow \$100 land in North Chelmsford

## Obituaries

Lowell Sun: Thursday, Nov. 20, 1986

### Sewall E. Bowers Sr.

Sewall E. Bowers of 15 Church St., North Chelmsford, died yesterday at Lowell General Hospital.

He and his wife, Mrs. Alice (Fisher) Bowers, would have celebrated their 52<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary on June 23.

He was born in Lowell on Jan. 27, 1911, the son of the late J. Walter and Eva (Goss) Bowers, and was educated in the Lowell school system.

He was superintendent of the George C. Moore Scouring Co., in North Chelmsford, and was a supervisor with the Burlington Pacific Mills in Clarksville, Va. for about 19 years, until his retirement in 1975.

He lived in North Chelmsford for 64 years and was a member and past superintendent of Sunday school at the North Chelmsford Congregational Church.

While living in Virginia, he was active with the Red Cross, setting up the blood bank in Mecklenburg County, Va. He was also a member of the Lions Club in Clarksville, Va.

He was a charter member and past treasurer of the Chelmsford Choral Society and an Honorary Life Member of the Merrimack Chorale. He, his children and grandchildren would perform together.

He was a Mason with the Ancient York Lodge A. F. & A. M. of Lowell and was a member and Past Worthy Patron of the Puritan Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. He was the Past Lecture of the Chelmsford Grange and a member of the Middlesex North Pomona Grange.

Besides his wife, he is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Barbara H. Velasco of North Chelmsford and Mrs. Joseph (Elizabeth) Costa of Chelmsford; one son, Sewall E. Bowers Jr. of Beverly; one sister, Mrs. Sylvia Goss of Milford, Pa.; four grandchildren, Karen E. Velasco of North Chelmsford, Virginia L. Bowers and Alan S. Bowers, both of Beverly, and Joseph M. Costa of Chelmsford; and several nieces and nephews.

Lowell Sun, Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Alice M. Bowers...No. Chelmsford, church organist, pianist in orchestra; 92

### PICTURE

CHELMSFORD – Alice M. Bowers, 92, a Chelmsford resident who had been an organist and pianist, died Monday morning, Jan. 24, at her home. She was the wife of Sewall Bowers Sr., who died on Nov. 19, 1986

She was born in Canada's New Brunswick on Oct. 27, 1912, a daughter of George A. and Lena (Donnelly) Fisher. She graduated from Chelmsford High School in 1929, and was the school's first valedictorian, according to family members. She was a resident of the town's North Chelmsford section.

Mrs. Bowers worked as a nurse's aide at former Fort Devens and the Waltham Army Base during World War II. After the war, she worked at the veterans hospital in Bedford. She later was employed with Avco Co. in Lowell, which reportedly was contracted with NASA during the Apollo missions to the moon. Prior to her retirement in 1974, she worked for Prince Spaghetti Co. of Lowell.

She was a member of the Calvary Baptist Church in Lowell and the North Chelmsford Congregational Church in Chelmsford, where she played the organ and taught Sunday School. She was the master of the Chelmsford Grange and a member of the Pomona Grange, and the installing officer of the State and National Grange. She was Worthy Matron of the Eastern Star. Mrs. Bowers was a pianist for the Harmon Aires Orchestra, which was her son's orchestra and played for the Town and Country Play House.

She is survived by two daughters, Barbara Velasco of North Chelmsford, and Elizabeth and her husband Joseph J. Costa of Chelmsford; a brother, Glenn Fisher of Lowell; a sister-in-law, Sylvia Goss, residing in New Jersey, four grandchildren, William Doherty and their spouses, Virginia and Thomas Doherty; Karen Velasco Duffy and John Duffy, Alan and Barbara Bowers, and Joseph M. and Lisa Costa; four great grandchildren, William Doherty, Jeremy Costa, Alex Velasco-Duffy and Casey Costa.

She was the mother of Sewall E. Bowers Jr., who died in 1988, and the sister-in-law to the late Mildred Walghren.





15 Church Street

11/24/2006 F. Merriam



