

FORM B - BUILDING

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

28-92-50 Westford 087

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

Town Chelmsford

Place (neighborhood or village) West Chelmsford



203 Main Street

Name Farwell/Roby House

Present residence

Original residence

Construction 1823

date on foundation, south side

Style Georgian

Builder

Material: clapboard; now butted, formerly feathered; shingles (barn)

Foundation granite blocks

Wall/Trim

Roof gable; asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

Major Alterations (with dates) many, see continuation sheets

Condition good

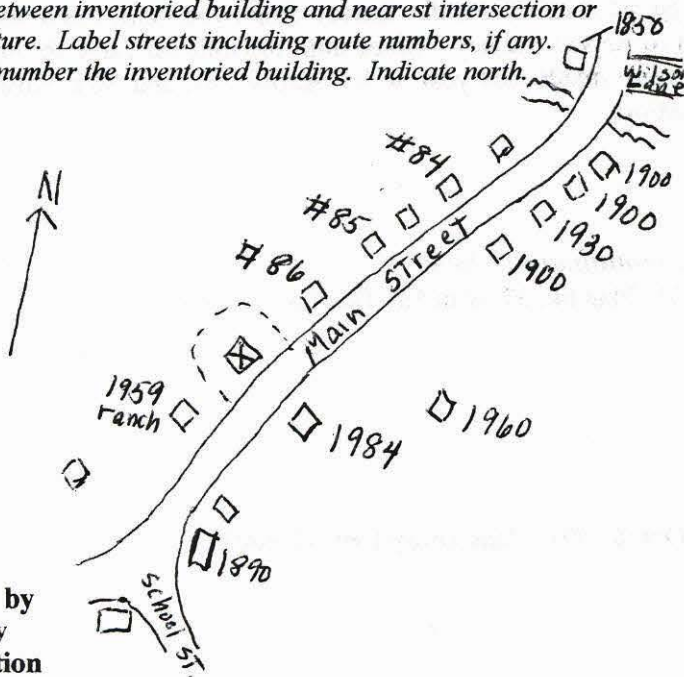
Moved no yes Date

Acreage 162,916 sq. ft.

Setting residential. There is a wooded area in back with a brook.

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) April 2004

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION *see continuation sheet*

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

In 1977 a real estate ad described this house at 203 Main Street as a Georgian farmhouse, on four acres with year-round bubbling brook, stable with six stalls, and its own tennis court. The dining room, with fireplace, was the original family living room. The kitchen, once the milking room, is large and homey, with lovely wood cabinets, pantry and a dining window looking out on the patio. The formal entrance, with its ship's stairway, is flanked on one side by a gracious parlor, and on the other by a family living room with built in piano and bookshelves galore. Old beams, sturdy wide-plank polished floors characterize this marvelous 11 room home built by one of the area's most prominent citizens. Five bedrooms, 2 baths, full attic and basement. The two-car garage, once a barn, has a loft.

A 1989 real estate ad described it thus: Ideal for horses, 2 barns, paddock, riding ring and more. 10 rooms, 4-5 bedrooms, 3 baths, 3 fireplaces. separate legal apartment. Kitchen with Italian granite, exposed beams and wide pine floors. Extensive renovations based on architectural plans designed to preserve this home special character.

Heavy wooden cornices are located over the windows on both floors of the main house. The corner boards are narrow. The main entrance door at the front side of the house is surrounded by a very simple, plain entablature, topped by a heavy cornice similar to that over the windows. Two granite slab steps lead up to the doorway.

Connected to the rear of the main house is a "hodge-podge" of modern additions. See attached pictures.

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.

Soon after 1820 Deacon John Farwell moved to West Chelmsford from Fitchburg with his family and erected a scythe factory on the Stony Brook, across the road from this house. For the next twenty years a lucrative business was carried on there by the Farwells. The Deacon rented a nearby house before building this dwelling at 203 Main St in 1823. His son John T. Farwell, another scythe maker, built the house at 193 Main St. Elias Messenger, a brick mason and employee of the factory, erected the brick house at 189 Main St. and his brother, George Messenger, another factory employee, built the house at 197 Main St. The West Chelmsford area became known as Farwell or Scythe Factory Village until the railroad came through and a post office was set up. Between 1500 and 2000 dozen scythes were made each year at the factory. Mr. and Mrs. Farwell were devout Baptists and worshipped with the church in South Chelmsford.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES *see continuation sheet*

Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds: Plan bk. 125, plan 61; Plan bk. 37, plan 58; Deed bk. 11, pg. 326

Assessors' records: 12/18/2002, 12/2/1970

Tax records

Frederick Burne: Aug. 26, 1983; July 27, 1985

Gloria Patenaude: Dec. 29, 2002

Donald & Patricia Taylor: 1985

Street directories

House visits by Diane Fay Sept. 15, 1977; Nancy Maclauchlan Oct. 8, 2001; Jane Drury Dec. 11 2003

Building inspector's records: Jan. 9, 1984; Nov. 12, 1987

Chelmsford Newsweekly: May 12, 1977

Lowell Daily Courier: Tuesday, Dec. 4, 1900

Lowell Sun: Sept. 17, 1989

Rev. Wilson Waters, History of Chelmsford: pg. 672, 674, 589, 829, 375

Clipping formerly owned by Grace Ellenwood

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
203 MAIN STREET

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

Area(s) Form No.

	087
--	-----

History

In the spring of 1844 Deacon Farwell sold the business and the house at 203 Main St. to his son, John T. Farwell, who sold the real estate two years later to Lincoln Drake and moved the machinery to Fitchburg. Capt. Drake had an extensive mill business in North Chelmsford, also on Stony Brook, and never ran the shop here. He purchased the property to secure more privileges in the water supply.

Later that same year, 1846, Christopher Roby took over, with Mr. Frederick Sawyer and Mr. Asa Farwell, the factory and the dwellings at 193 and 189 Main St., as well as what became his own homestead at 203 Main St. After a few years Messrs. Sawyer and A. Farwell withdrew as part owners of the firm. During the Civil War the farmers went into the army, and the market for scythes disappeared, so Capt. Roby turned to making swords, for which Union had become desperate. Some of these swords still exist in museums and with private collectors. At the end of the war the market for the swords fell and Capt. Roby went bankrupt. Nevertheless, the Roby family somehow retained their home and remained there until his death. In 1898 his estate sold the house and one acre of land to Isadora Virgin of New York City. It was apparently used as the Virgin summer home and sometimes rented out during the winters, as in December of 1900 the Rev. Dr. Virgin "decided to have Rev. and Mrs. Guth occupy his house during the winter." The Burne family resided there between 1901 and 1915, and apparently it was not in very good condition at that time. It remained in the Ravi family until 1915, when it was sold to Carl Nelson. Mr. Nelson was a stone cutter, as was his son, August P. Nelson. In 1943 the house was sold out of that family.

Alterations

- 1991 deck added at right side of house
- 1990 deck added to right side of house
- 1987 12x24 ft addition, barn & mud room to existing barn; board & batten siding
- 1972 12x58 ft horse barn built; brick foundation, pitched roof, set back 300 ft
- 1958 - 1972 front entrance hood removed by Draine family
- early 1900s fireplaces removed or covered over
- early 1900s Dutch oven removed
- after ca 1890 Victorian curlicues were removed from the front entrance and from the left side porch.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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

Town
CHELMSFORD

Property Address
203 MAIN STREET

Area(s) Form No.

087

Dec 12, 2003



INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
CHELMSFORD

Property Address
203 MAIN STREET

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

Area(s) Form No.

087

Alterations



Feb. 1973



Undated

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

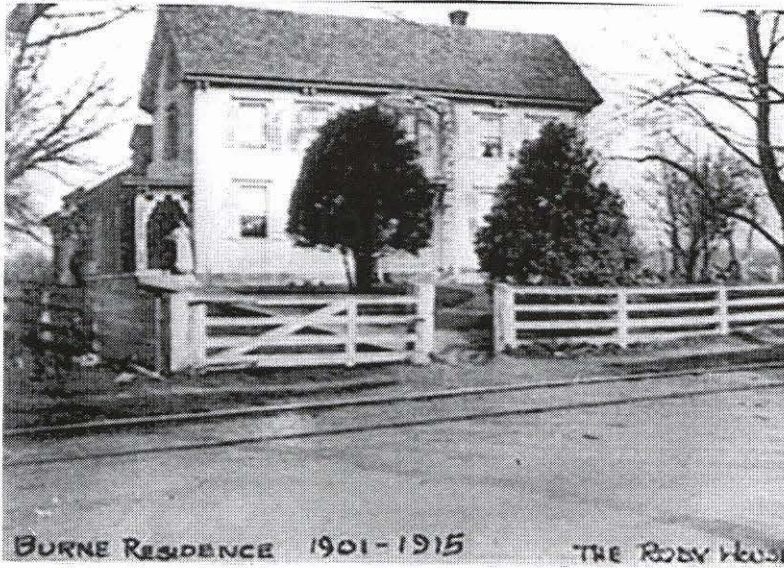
Town
CHELMSFORD

Property Address
203 MAIN STREET

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

Area(s) Form No.

Alterations:



1901-1915



1890

203 Main Street
Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds

Bk. 5207, pg. 187	Apr. 25, 1990	Donald E. & Patricia L. Taylor to Paul V. & Catherine F. Storey, 203 Main St. \$275,000 2 parcels & buildings 1) land off Barry Rd.: Lot D, 1972 Draine pl. bk. 114, pg. 167 2) 162,916 sq. ft & buildings on Main St.: Lot A, same plan excepted: land conveyed 1975 to Gonsalvas, bk. 2157, pg. 591 see: Hutcheson 1975 plan, plan bk. 125, pg. 161 same: Horowitz 1982 deed, bk. 2614, pg. 46
Bk. 2614, pg. 046	Oct. 8, 1982	Sheldon N. & Pamela Horowitz to Donald E. & Patricia L. Taylor \$105,000 2 parcels & buildings 1) land off Barry Rd.: Lot D, 1972 Draine pl. bk. 114, pg. 167 2) 162,916 sq. ft & buildings on Main St.: Lot A, same plan excepted: land conveyed 1975 to Gonsalvas, bk. 2157, pg. 591 subject: 1977 mortgage \$45,714.20 balance see: Hutcheson 1975 plan, plan bk 125, pg 161 same: Hutcheson 1977 deed, bk. 2273, pg. 597
Bk. 2273, pg. 597	Sept. 2, 1977	Rufus D. & Euphemia A. Hutcheson to Sheldon N. & Pamela Horowitz, 203 Main St., \$68,900 2 parcels & buildings 1) land off Barry Rd.: Lot D, 1972 Draine pl. bk. 114, pg. 167 2) 162,916 sq. ft & buildings on Main St.: Lot A, same plan excepted: land conveyed 1975 to Gonsalvas, bk. 2157, pg. 591 see: Hutcheson 1975 plan to be recorded same: Draine deeds, bk. 2023, pg. 622 & bk. 2031, pg. 609
Bk. 2023, pg. 620	July 18, 1972	Richard P. & Alice M. Draine to Rufus D. & Euphemia A. Hutcheson, R.F.D. #1, Box. 144, Aldie VA \$57,100 162,100 sq. ft. & buildings thereon Lot A: Draine plan bk. 114, pg. 167 portion of property in previous deed
Bk. 1409, pg. 435	July 31, 1958	Robert C. & Jean M. Donaghy to Richard P. & Alice M. Draine, Littleton land & buildings thereon
Bk. 1257, pg. 75	June 1, 1954	Harry G. & Isabell Fishburne to Robert C. & Jean M. Donaghy land & buildings thereon greater portion of property in previous deed
Bk. 1013, pg. 358	Sept. 29, 1944	Alva D. Hughes, unmarried, to Harry G. & Isabell Fishburne land & buildings Plan Bk. 37, pg. 58

Bk. 998, pg. 423	Oct. 2, 1943	Elizabeth Nelson Layton (Betty A. Patterson), Arlington, Virginia, to Alva D. Hughes land & buildings thereon
Bk. 774, pg. 124	Feb. 23, 1929	Estate of Carl Nelson to Betty A. Patterson, Washington, D.C., heir 7.71 acres & buildings thereon
Bk. 540, pg. 316	June 14, 1915	Miriam Ravi, wife of Vincent Ravi, to Carl Nelson land & buildings thereon Plan Book 37, Plan 58 (1915)
Bk. 528, pg. 431	Sept. 16, 1914	Frederick D. Virgin, N.Y.C., to Mrs. Miriam Virgin Ravi his portion as heir of mother, Isadora F. Virgin
Bk. 301, pg. 530	Mar. 19, 1898	Estate of Christopher Roby to Isadora F. Virgin, N.Y.C. \$3000 1 acre land & buildings thereon

Bk. 58, pg. 416	Apr. 27, 1867	Jabez A. Sawyer, Assignee of Christopher Roby, bankrupt, to George Stark, Nashua \$2000 Scythe Factory, 203 Main St., 189 Main St.
Bk. 16, pg. 241	Apr. 26, 1847	Frederick T. Sawyer to Christopher Roby \$3000 ½ part: 15 acres: Factory, 203 Main St. 193 Main St. 189 Main St.
Bk. 16, pg. 195	Dec. 15, 1846	Christopher Roby to Frederick T. Sawyer \$3000 ½ part: 15 acres: Factory, 203 Main St. 193 Main St. 189 Main St.
Bk. 16, pg. 160	Sept. 28, 1846	Lincoln Drake to Frederick T. Sawyer \$6000 15 acres: Factory, 203 Main St. 193 Main St. 189 Main St.
Bk. 16, pg. 128	Aug. 1, 1846	John T. Farwell to Lincoln Drake \$6000 15 acres: Factory, 203 Main St. 58 sq. rods: 189 Main St.

Bk. 15, pg. 589	Oct. 13, 1843	John Farwell to John T. Farwell 15 acres: Factory & 203 Main St. ½ part: 58 sq. rods (189 Main St.)
Probably: North: B. 11, p. 326 South: B. 247, p. 143		Dec. 27, 1822 Jonas Keyes, Westford, yeoman, to John Farwell, Fitchburg \$525 1) 1 acre: north side Stoney Brook 2) 1 acre: west side of the road 3) 1¼ acre: between road & Stoney Brook right of flowing water of said brook

Christopher Robey

Waters, "History of Chelmsford"

pg. 672

The West Village

Ninety years ago, there were only three houses in West Chelmsford, including Westford Corner. One street ran through it from North Chelmsford to Westford. The nearest way to the Centre Village was by a bridge across Stony Brook near Brookside.

Soon after 1820, Deacon John Farwell from Fitchburg, an enterprising scythe maker, with an old-fashioned family of smart boys and girls, rented the Farwar house, one of the three mentioned, bought land and the water privilege upon Stony Brook, built a factory, and carried on a lucrative business for about twenty years, making scythes. He and his son each built a dwelling house, as did George Messenger, one of Farwell's employe's. Elias, brother of George, a brick mason, built his house of brick. The village was known as Farwell, until after the building of the railroad, and it was also called Scythe Factory Village.

From 1,500 to 2,000 dozen scythes were turned out annually, from which was realized from \$15,000 to \$20,000. In the spring of 1844, Deacon Farwell gave up the business to his sons and son-in-law, who two years later, sold the real estate to Lincoln Drake of North Chelmsford, and removed the machinery to Fitchburg. Drake sold it to F.T. Sawyer, who sold a half interest to Christopher Roby. Roby, Sawyer & Company refurnished the plant and manufactured scythes.

The factory was destroyed by fire, but was soon rebuilt. In 1855, Mr. Sawyer retired, and the business was then conducted under the name of C. Roby & Co. The market for these goods was largely in the southern and border states, and when the war broke out in 1861, this company found their trade destroyed, and, in addition to that, suffered the loss of most of their goods which had been shipped during the previous winter.

The company now ceased to manufacture implements of peace, and proceeded to furnish implements of war. They manufactured swords and sabres until 1865, when the company closed up its affairs.

The Hiscox File Company purchased the scythe works, and engaged in the manufacture of files and machine knives. They discontinued business about 1888.

.....

Trains on the railroad through West Chelmsford began running July 4, 1848; soon afterwards, a post office was established, relieving the citizens from the inconvenience of going two miles to North Chelmsford for their mail. John Goss, road-master on the Boston and Lowell Railroad, was the first station agent. Captain C. Roby, Frederick T. Sawyer, associated with him in the scythe business, and William Calvert, of the Chelmsford Woolen Mills, were active in having the post office established, and the name of the place was changed to West Chelmsford. David Simons was the first postmaster. In 1852, Captain Roby was appointed postmaster, and continued in that office for thirty-four years.

pg. 674 Selectman: 1850, 1852, 1860, 1861
 Representative: 1866

pg. 589 Member of executive committee of the Chelmsford Monument Association.

Ipsford Vital Statistics to 1850"

Marrriages:

Roby, Christopher, and Susan B. Bowers, Aug. 31, 1843
Farwell, John T., and Mersylvia Todd of New Ipswich, N.H.,
int. Jan. 24, 1830

Waters, "History of Chelmsford"

pg. 829 General Store-Keepers
1840: Roby, Sawyer & Co.

pg. 375 Troop F Cavalry, M. V. M.

In the year 1864, when raids on the Canadian border were being made by those in sympathy with the Southern Confederacy, Christopher Roby of Chelmsford, who at one time was a member of the Governor's Horse Guards of New Hampshire, made application to Adjutant-General Schouler of Massachusetts, for permission to raise a troop of cavalry that would be in readiness for any call that might be made to suppress the depredations referred to.

The permission was granted, provided a troop of 100 men could be recruited. This the energetic Roby speedily accomplished and at Chelmsford Centre, Sept. 5, 1864, the troop was organized. The election for officers resulted in the choice of Christopher Roby, Captain; Edgar S. Parhurst, 1st Lieut. and Warren C. Hamblet 2nd Lieut., all residents of Chelmsford, the rank and file being made up by men from Chelmsford, Carlisle, Billerica, Dracut and Westford.

Its organization complete, the troop became a portion of the Mass. Vol. Militia. Then troop held its first encampment at Westford in 1865. While in camp the troop was presented with a stand of colors by Col. Charles H. Dalton, a grandson of Capt. Noah Spalding, of Chelmsford, who in olden times commanded a ~~troop~~ company of troopers in Chelmsford. The troop adopted the name of "The Spalding Light Cavalry." The town of Chelmsford previous to this organization supported two mounted bodies, - one antedating the war of the Revolution, and the other during the War of 1812. Soon after the troop was organized, it was designated as "Company F Unattached Cavalry."

While the troop, in the performance of its annual tour of duty, had been attached, as a rule, to the First Brigade until May 19, 1906, at which time it was assigned to the First Squadron of Cavalry, nevertheless, during a brief portion of its existence it was attached to the Second Brigade, and in a few instances also performed service with the Third Brigade. For the purpose of further instruction and drills, the troop was divided into squads, and squads have at various times been attached at Ayer, Billerica, Carlisle, Chelmsford Centre, Dracut, Groton, Lowell, North Chelmsford, Pepperell, West Chelmsford and Westford.

On July 24, 1866, H. Herbert Emerson of Chelmsford was appointed adjutant with the rank of 1st Lieutenant, which office he held until 1874, when Elijah D. Bearce of Chelmsford succeeded him and held that office until it was abolished in 1878.

On July 24, 1866, Levi Howard of Chelmsford was appointed Asst. Surgeon with the rank of 1st Lieutenant. Capt. Roby continued in command until 1877, a period of 13 years, when he was succeeded by Capt. Sherman H. Fletcher of Westford. The troop was disbanded July 1, 1907.

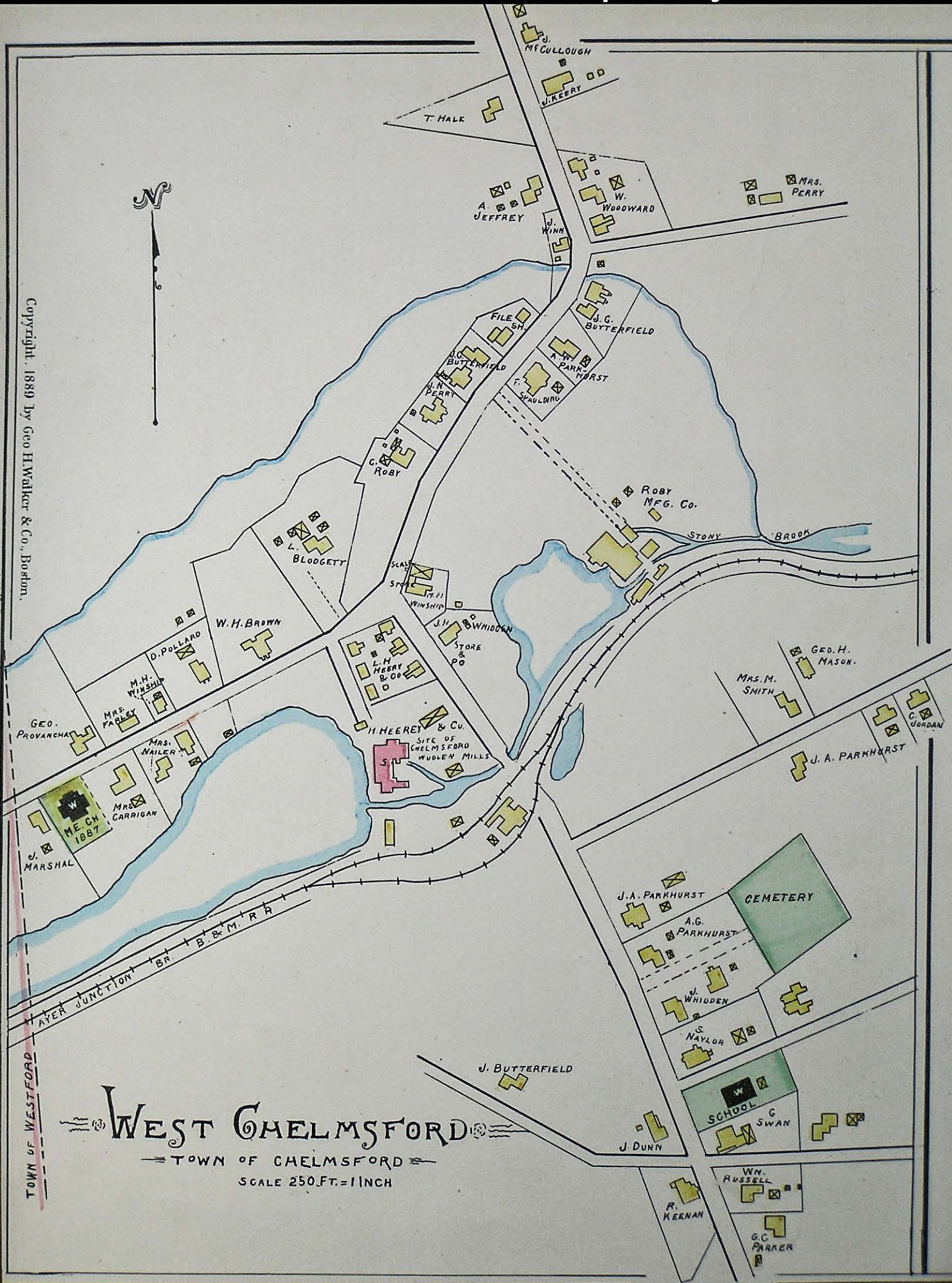
White 1883

Sixty-five years ago there were only three houses in this village, including Westford Corner. Two of these houses are still standing at the Corner, and in good condition. The large old fashioned one owned by Mr. Joseph Marshall, and the cottage opposite, owned by the Jackson heirs and Mr. John Logue. The third house was a one story building on the old Farrar Farm, situated on the eminence near the depot. One street ran through the place from North Chelmsford to Westford, and the nearest way to the middle of Chelmsford was by a bridge across Stony Brook, near Brookside, and following a road which came out by the present residence of Mr. F. Furlong. In 1820 or 1821. Dea. John Farwell an enterprising scythe-maker, with an old-fashioned family of smart boys and girls, rented the Farrar House, bought land and the water privilege upon Stony Brook, at the present time owned by the Hiscox File Company, built a scythe shop and carried on a lucrative business for some twenty years. In 1822 he built the two story house now owned by Capt. Roby, and moved his family from their small quarters into it. After a time his son John built the house at this time owned by Mr. J.C. Butterfield. The next house built was by Mr. George Messenger, one of Dea. Farwell's employees. It was burnt in July 1840, was rebuilt by Dea. Thomas Farwell and at the present time is owned and occupied by Mr. J.N. Perry. The brick house comes next, and was built by Mr. Elias Messenger a brick mason and brother to George, who after a time sold it to a Mr. Pernam, now of Nasqua, and Mr. Messenger moved to Lowell. The village till after the railroad was built was known as Farwell, or Scythe Factory Village. Mr. and Mrs. Farwell were devout Christians of the Baptist persuasion and worshipped with the church at South Chelmsford. In 1840 the old deacon gave up his business to his three sons and a son-in-law who carried it on until about 1845, when they sold out to Capt. Drake who was doing quite an extensive business in North Chelmsford. Capt. Drake never ran the shop, having bought the property to sell again and to secure to himself more privileges in the water supply from Stony Brook. In 1846 he sold to Mr. Christopher Roby then a young man Mr. Frederick Sawyer and Mr. Asa Farwell, after a time became associate with Mr. Roby; then after a few years they withdrew from the firm. Mr. Sawyer going into trade in Milford, N.H. He is now cashier of the Souhegan Bank. Mr. Farwell remained in the place for a number of years and worked for Mr. Roby. His present home is in Hinsdale N.Y. At the breaking out of the Civil War, swords being in greater demand than scythes or skates, Mr Roby converted his whole establishment into the manufacture of swords, employing a good deal of the time more than 100 hands. After the war, the exact date we do not know, a joint stock company was formed under the name of Roby Manufacturing Co. About nine years ago this property again changed hands, having been purchased by the Hiscox File Co. We do not know to whom Mr. Pernam sold the Brick House but it is to be occupied the 1st. of April by Mr. A Garner who has been living for some time in the Blodgett House. Mr. F. W. Spaulding has decided to build a stable near his house. His father and brother Clarence are to do the work.

*This is a partial copy of some year clipping, I have
trust it may be released for annual publication
As far as I know. 2 residents have copies of it*

Edw.

Copyright 1889 by Geo H. Walker & Co., Boston.



WEST CHELMSFORD

TOWN OF CHELMSFORD

SCALE 250.FT.=1 INCH

TOWN OF WESTFORD

G. MILLS

Christopher Roby 1814-1897

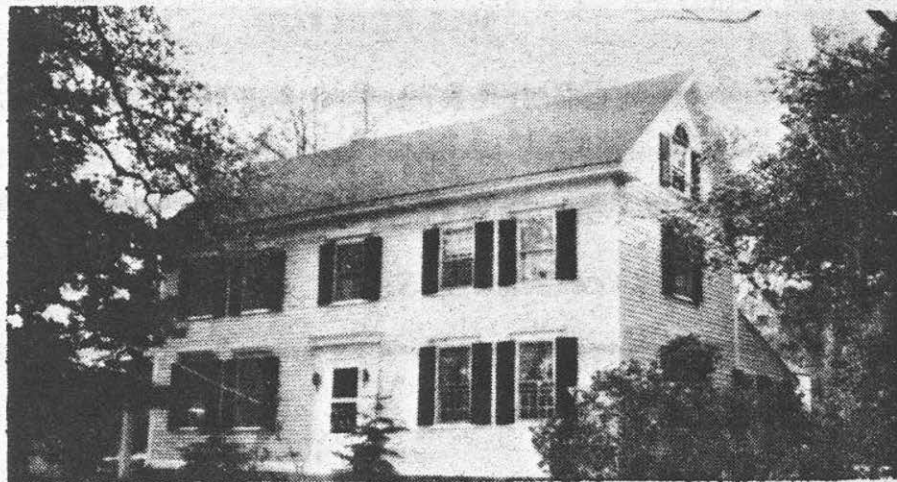




203 MAIN ST

Chelmsford Horseman's Paradise

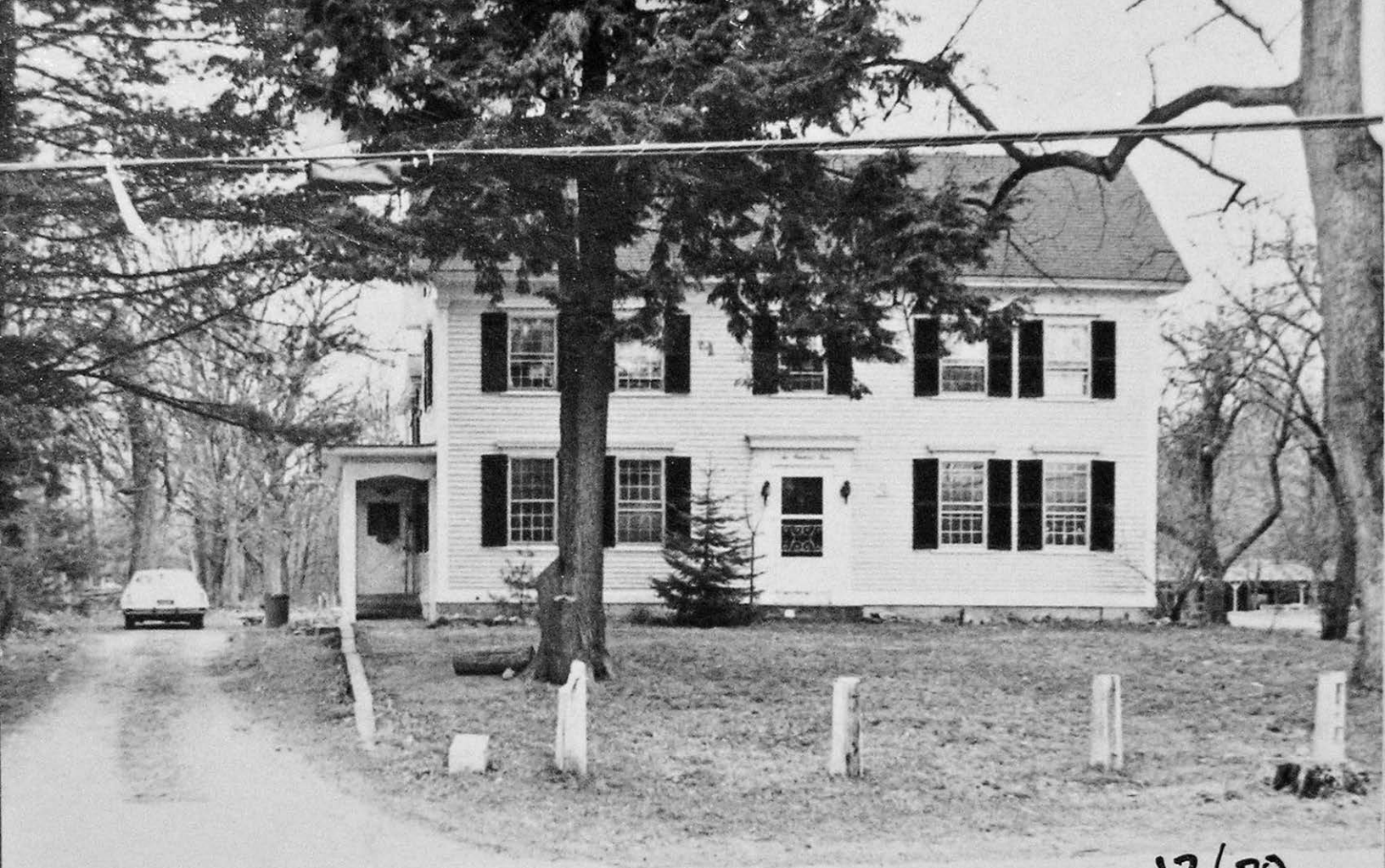
\$79,900



Rare Opportunity

This historic Georgian farmhouse reflects the gentility of Federal America, yet is built to accommodate the interests and activities of a large contemporary family. On four acres with its own tennis court, there is delight at every turn. Step from the side porch into the oldest part of the home, built prior to 1822. The dining room, with fireplace, Williamsburg print on the walls, valances and curtains, was the original family living room. The kitchen, once the milking room, is large and homey, with lovely wood cabinets, pantry, and a dining window looking out on the patio, old apple trees, and a stable. The formal entrance, with its ship's stairway, is flanked on one side by a gracious entertaining parlor, on the other by a family living room with built-in piano and bookshelves galore. Fascinating nooks and crannies, built-ins, old beams, and sturdy wide-plank polished floors characterize this marvelous 11-room home built by one of the area's most prominent citizens. Five bedrooms, 2 baths, full attic and basement. The two-car garage, once a barn, has a loft.

Situated on over four acres with year-round bubbling brook, stable with six box stalls, official dressage ring (20 x 40 meters) and electric fencing. Plan your visit early.



12/79











203

203 Main Street
F. Merriam



203 Main Street

1/17/2005 F. Merriam