

FORM B – BUILDING

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

113/19/22

Lowell

G

CLM.122

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

Town/City: Chelmsford

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): North Chelmsford

Photograph



Address: 54 Middlesex Street

Historic Name: Britton/Woodward House

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: 1844

Source: Middlesex County Deed Records

Style/Form: Italianate/Cape

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: granite

Wall/Trim: wood siding/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Late 19th c. Italianate detailing

Ca. 1990 replacement sash

Ca. 2003 rear fence

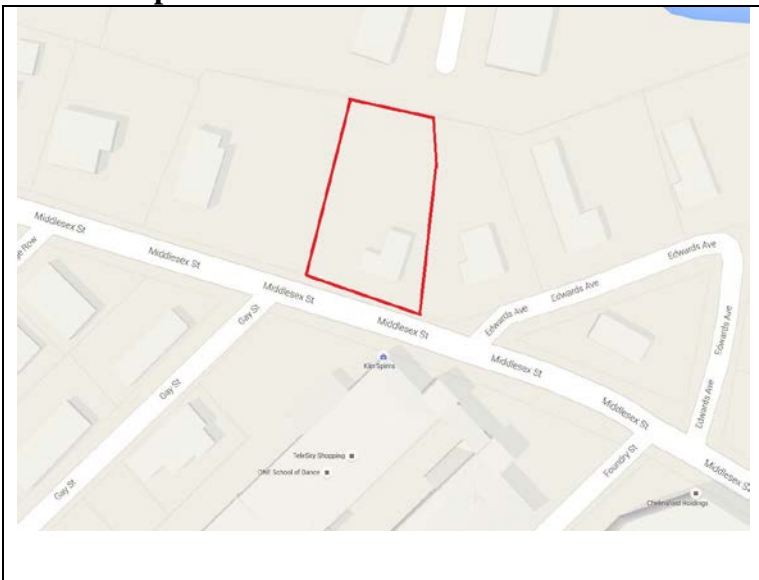
Condition: Fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .41 A

Setting: The house is located on a rise on the north side of Middlesex Rd, approximately 25' from the street. A stone retaining wall supports the front lawn. A set of granite steps leads from the sidewalk to the main entry. An asphalt drive on the east side leads to the rear of the lot. The former U.S. Worsted Mill building is directly across the street.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Jennifer Burden, Gray & Pape, Inc.

Organization: Chelmsford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): February 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

CHELMSFORD 54 MIDDLESEX STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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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.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

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

The 1.5-story house has a granite foundation, replacement wood siding with wood trim including wood cornerboards, and a steeply-pitched, side gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The roof features short gable returns. An internal, brick chimney is centrally located along the ridgeline of the roof. The chimney is slightly tapered at the top and is capped with a metal grate. Windows throughout the building are replacement, one-over-one, double-hung sash with wood surrounds.

The five-bay, symmetrical, primary (south) façade includes two single sash on the east and west bays and the main entry in the center bay. The entryway includes a solid wood door flanked by narrow sidelights. A flat roof hood shelters the entry. The porch hood is supported by heavy Italianate style wooden, scrolled brackets. The east and west walls are each two bays deep. The west wall includes two single sash on the first story and a single sash on the half story. The east wall includes an Italianate style projecting bay window in the south bay and single sash in the remaining bays. The oriel has a flat roof, replacement sash, and a wooden, paneled base. The Italianate style features were added to the building in the late nineteenth century.

A centrally located wing on the rear of the house appears to date to the period of original construction or from shortly after, as it is shown on the 1875 Beers Atlas map of the area. The one-story wing features a rear gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. An open porch on the east wall of the wing was added in the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century, as it appears on the 1930 plan (see below).

The Britton/Woodward House is a good example of a mid-nineteenth century Cape type house. It retains historic integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

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 iron industry in Chelmsford was influenced by General Sheperd Leach (1778-1832), who operated a foundry in Easton, south of Boston. Leach was brought to the area by William Adams of Lowell, who believed manufacturers in Lowell could benefit from iron implements made in Chelmsford of bog iron. After Leach's death, Lincoln Drake (1794-1880), also from Easton, assumed operations in North Chelmsford. After the financial Panic of 1857, the North Chelmsford foundry was reorganized under new ownership as the Chelmsford Foundry Company.

According to previous research, this property at 54 Middlesex was one of several lots sold by Lincoln Drake. Jared B. Britton (1814-1880), who also relocated from Easton, purchased the land in 1843 and constructed the house in 1844. The 1860 U.S. Population Census lists Britton living in North Chelmsford with wife Keziah (1820-1905, née Dean) and working as a moulder; no children are listed with the Brittons. The Chelmsford Iron Foundry (CLM.297) was located across Middlesex Street. The 1870 Census also lists the Brittons as living alone, with Jared working as a moulder. At this date, Jared's values of real estate and personal estate were each \$2,000. The 1880 Census, taken in June only four months before his death, lists Jared as 'at home,' indicating he was no longer working. The next year, Keziah sold the property to Horace and Lucy Woodward. After Jared's death, Keziah married Nathan King. She is buried in the William Dean Cemetery along with other members of the Dean family in Bristol County, MA. Prior to their purchase of the property in 1881, the Woodwards lived in Chelmsford, with Horace (ca. 1816-1883) working as a retail merchant and Lucy (ca. 1819-1901) keeping house; the 1880 Census shows they lived alone at this date. After Horace's death in 1883, Lucy remained on the property until she died in 1901.

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The property was then purchased by George C. Moore, mill owner, and eventually transferred to the U.S. Worsted Company in 1918. Between 1901 and 1930, the company leased out the house, presumably to mill workers. On June 30, 1930, John and Catherine Dixon purchased the property from the company for \$2,850. Prior to the sale, the surrounding area was surveyed by the Brooks, Jordan & Graves, Civil Engineers in May 1930. This property then became known as Lot 14 in this plan (see below for the plan map).

The 1940 Census lists the Dixon family at this address and notes they were in the same house in 1935. In 1940, John (1892-1973) was working as a lineman for the Electric Light Company and Catherine (ca. 1894-1979) was not employed. Also living with the Dixons were three of their children – Anna (born ca. 1916) a stenographer at a woolen mill, George (born ca. 1917) a trucker at the wool mill, and Dorothy (born ca. 1929) likely in school. Catherine remained in the house until her death in 1979. At this date, her son George sold the property to Bruce and Bernard Clarke. The property remained in the Clarke family until 1992.

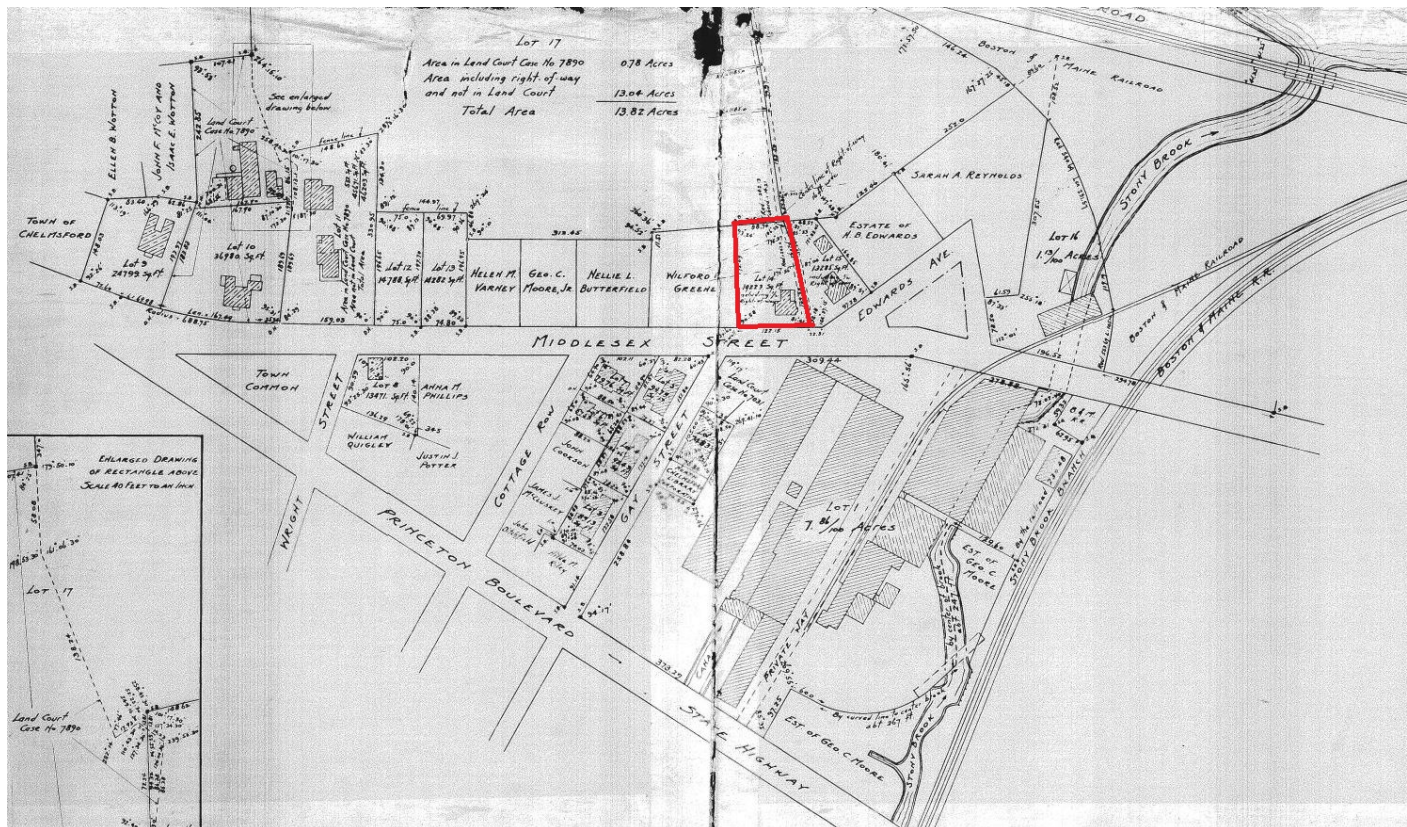
BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Drury, Jane B. Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form CLM.122, completed 23 January 1984.

Middlesex County Deed and Plan Records

Genealogical data from ancestry.com including U.S. and Massachusetts Population Schedules, Massachusetts City Directories, and Massachusetts Birth, Death, and Marriage Records

Perham, Henry S. *A Sketch of the History of Chelmsford, Massachusetts*. Philadelphia, PA, J.W. Lewis. 1890.



Detail of 1930 "Plan of Property in North Chelmsford, Mass. Belonging to the United States Worsted Corp." 54 Middlesex Street/Lot 14 is outlined in red.

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Criteria Considerations: **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G**

Statement of Significance

The area of North Chelmsford was determined eligible for inclusion in the NRHP by MHC in 1987 for its local level of historical significance. The historic district boundary of Area G roughly includes resources along Middlesex and Princeton streets between Wright Street, Gay Street, and Edwards Avenue. The district is eligible for inclusion in the NRHP at the local level under Criterion A for its association with the industrialization of North Chelmsford in the mid- to late-nineteenth century and under Criterion C for its examples of workers' cottages, modest single-family houses, and elaborate residences owned by local industrialists. Resource CLM.122 retains sufficient historic integrity to contribute to this potential historic district.