

#983

FORM C - MONUMENTS  
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

Town Chelmsford

Street Crosby Lane

Name First Town Meeting Marker

Original Owner Town

Present Owner Town On land owned by  
Ronald Greenwood

Date Constructed 1924-5

Date Dedicated \_\_\_\_\_

Source of Date Town Meeting Report 2/9/1925

Designer or Sculptor \_\_\_\_\_

Individual or group responsible for monument  
if other than owner \_\_\_\_\_

STATUE \_\_\_\_\_ MONUMENT \_\_\_\_\_  
BUST \_\_\_\_\_ FOUNTAIN \_\_\_\_\_  
MARKER \_\_\_\_\_ MILESTONE \_\_\_\_\_  
RELIGIOUS SHRINE \_\_\_\_\_ BOUNDARY MARKER \_\_\_\_\_  
GROUP COMPOSITION \_\_\_\_\_

Monument has historical connection with the  
following themes: (See also reverse side)

Agriculture \_\_\_\_\_ Commerce/Industry \_\_\_\_\_  
Architecture \_\_\_\_\_ Science/Invention \_\_\_\_\_  
Art/Sculpture \_\_\_\_\_ Travel/Communication \_\_\_\_\_  
Education \_\_\_\_\_ Military Affairs \_\_\_\_\_  
Literature \_\_\_\_\_ Indians \_\_\_\_\_  
Music \_\_\_\_\_ Development of Town/City \_\_\_\_\_  
Government \_\_\_\_\_ Religion/Philosophy \_\_\_\_\_

CONDITION: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Moved\* Altered \_\_\_\_\_

IMPORTANCE of monument to area: Great Moderate None \_\_\_\_\_

MONUMENT endangered by: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION OF INSCRIPTION: Plaque on wall, house, post; base of monument; other \_\_\_\_\_

Engraved on front of tablet

ENTIRE INSCRIPTION on monument: Near this spot first town meeting in

Chelmsford was held Nov. 22, 1654

DESCRIPTION\*\*

Foundation: Pedestal Base None Material granite

Material: Bronze Stone Marble Granite Wood Other cut granite

Setting (surroundings) Side yard-left. Field at right & rear. 28ft. from Crosby Lane

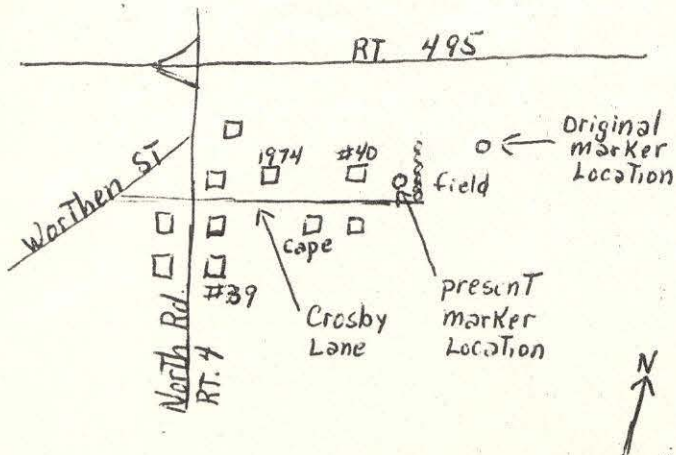
Size (approximate) Height 37 1/2"; Width 48". Base 2" high.

Indicate location of monument on map below

Recorder Jane B. Drury

For Chelmsford Historical Commission  
(Name of Organization)

Photo #10-9 Date Received 8/2/1974



\* If the monument has been moved, indicate the original location on the reverse side.  
\*\* Describe the monument on the reverse side.

GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT MATTER AND/OR DESIGN OF MONUMENT

A town meeting held 2/11/1924 appointed a committee of 5 (including Rev. Wilson Waters, local historian) to mark the historic spots in town. At the meeting held 2/9/1925 the committee reported that a tablet had been placed on Crosby Lane marking the location of the first town meeting. It stood in a field on the left (north) of a path (continuation of Crosby Lane) leading eastward from the Crosby house (#40). About 10 years ago it was moved by the Greenwoods, who had sold the field, to the side yard just east of the Crosby house, which they occupy. This move was for the protection of the stone.

GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF MONUMENT. (Refer to the theme circled on front of form. What happened? Who was important? Comment)

The first town meeting in Chelmsford was held Sept. 22, 1654 at the house of William Fletcher, which is said to have been the first frame house in town. Town officers chosen at that meeting were Esdras Reed, Edward Spaulding, William Fletcher, Isaac Lerner, Simon Thompson, William Underwood, & Thomas Adams. The house stood "some 30 rods beyond the Crosby house (#40, also known as the Capt. Josiah Fletcher house). The cellar hole of the house was filled in about 1847. Josiah R. Fletcher told Rev. Waters that his father often called his attention to it when a boy, as they passed it on their way to work. Its exact location is no longer known. The land upon which it stood continued to be occupied by descendants of William Fletcher until about 1900; it is a field in 1974. The road next to which the house stood is Crosby Lane, one of the oldest in town. Originally it ran from the meeting house by Westford Street, Worthen Street and the Crosby place to Steadman Street toward the Merrimack River. The part beyond the Crosby house has long been discontinued.

REFERENCE: (Where was this information obtained? What book, records, etc.)

Waters, "History of Chelmsford" (including the record of the first town meeting.)

Annual town reports: February 11, 1924, February 9, 1925.

## First Town Meeting

Waters, "History of Chelmsford"

Pg. 12

The following is the record of the first Town Meeting:

The: 22d: the: 9th: month: 1654

At a Meeting then at William Fletchers Houe there was Chosen to officiate in Ordering the Public Affairs of the Place by the Consent of the Major part of the Town for t his present year ensuing are as followeth.

Esdras Read: Edward Spaulding: William Flétcher: Isaac Larned: Simon Thompson: William Underwood: Thomas Adams.

We give to Mr Fisk Thirty acres of Meadow and Thirty Acres of Plowable Land for the acomidation of him for his most Conveniency: And we do Agree and Order that he shall have a Hous built for him Thirty eight foot in Length and Twenty foot in breadth with three fire rooms the Chimneys built with Brick or stone: And we promise to pay to Mr. Fisk Fifty pounds for the first year: And we promise to pay his Maintinence as the Lord shall enable us for the future.

The house where this meeting was held is said to have been the first frame house is town. It stood a few rods northeast of what is now known as the Crosby house (14 Crosby Lane). The land upon which it stood continued to be occupied by descendants of William Fletcher until about the year 1900. Some part of the original holdings still remain in the possession of the family. The road, one of the oldest in town, originally ran from the meeting house by Westford Road, ✓ Worthen street, and Crosby place, and continued to Golden Cove road near the house of Jas. F. Stearns. The part beyond the Crosby place has been long discontinued.

Pg. 38

~~There are not were not~~

If there were any roads laid out by the Town before 1659, they are not recorded. There were, however, roads in use previous to that time. One of the first of these passed between the cemetery and the common, following the line of Worthen street and Crosby place to the house of William Fletcher, some thirty rods beyond the Crosby ~~place~~ house. Soon, if not at first, this continued toward what is now the house of Jas. L. Stearns and from there by Golden Cove road and Stedman street towards the Merrimach river.

Pg. 394

The one-story gambrel-roofed building (which stood on the west of North square until recently demolished) commonly known as the Captain Bill Fletcher house, was not originally a Fletcher residence. As recently as 1840 it was known as the Bates house, and was at one time occupied by a man named Herrick. Abner Herrick was for many years sexton of the meeting house. He died in 1806, aged 55. Josiah R. Fletcher gave the writer these facts: The first home in Chelmsford owned and occupied by the Fletchers stood about 50 or 60 rods east of the Bates house in what is now a field for cultivation and on the left (north) of a cart path (a continuation of Crosby lane) leading eastward from the Crosby house. See ~~see~~ top of Plan No. 7. This was the house where the first public meetings in town was held.

That field was held in possession by lineal descendants of the original owner until within the last ten years. The cellar was not filled in until I was 25 years old (1847) and my father often called my attention to it when a boy, as we passed it on our way to work. The house in which my father was born stood 25 feet west of the Crosby house, and the well which supplies water for the same is the one from

which several generations of the Fletchers drank. This Fletcher house, although it had become too weather beaten for a dwelling, was standing until after my birth, and I was told by my mother that she carried me in her arms through it, in order that I might be able to say in after years that I was once in the house in which my father was born. My grandfather, Captain Josiah Fletcher, built the house now known as the Crosby house, and occupied it during the remainder of his life, and his oldest brother, William, who had lived with him in the old house, bought the Bates house, which he occupied until his death. Thus it has been called the Capt. Wm. Fletcher house. William Fletcher never held the rank of Captain, although he was a soldier on Bunker Hill. Another brother, who performed service in the army of the Revolution, did rank as Captain.

Josiah kept some of ~~the~~ his cider in the cellar of the Bates house when his brother William lived there, and one day went to draw a pail full, but none would come out when he turned the spigot. William called out to him, "Try the other end of the barrel, Brother Si, I got all I could out of that end."

# CHELMSFORD

## Granite Marker Is Placed on Spot Where First Town Meeting Locally Was Held.

Chelmsford, Sept. 5.

The committee chosen at the last annual town meeting to mark historic spots, has placed a granite block, four feet in size, on Fred Russell's land in what is known as Crosby lane, bearing this inscription: "Near this spot first town meeting in Chelmsford held, Nov. 22, 1654." This land was at that time part of the Fletcher estate, and the meeting was held in William Fletcher's house. It was a frequently expressed wish of the late Josiah R. Fletcher that this spot be marked. At this first town meeting the following men were chosen to "order the public affairs of the town." Esdras Read, Edward Staulding, William Fletcher, Isaac Larned, Simon Thompson, William Underwood and Thomas Adams, and the article acted upon was the gift of Rev. Mr. Fisk of 30 acres of meadow and 30 acres of plowable land, and to have a house built for him 33 feet long and 20 feet wide with three fire rooms, and to pay him the sum of 50 pounds a year.

This house where the meeting was held, is said to have been the first frame house built in Chelmsford and stood a few rods to the northeast of the house now known as the Crosby house.

There are a few other places to be marked but the committee thought that the above named spot should be the first.

The committee consists of Rev. Wilson Waters, chairman; Stewart MacKay, secretary and treasurer; Joseph E. Warren, John J. Monahan and Henry Shedd.

"I don't agree with burying the wires in the town center. The economy right now is in tough shape. As it

schools. If he wants to tax our electric, telephone and cable bills 2 percent a month for five years, I'd like all that money to go to bringing teach-

shop. They give them a good feeling. It's not because the prices are cheap. That's a moderator. I think people go to Jones Farm. They're very well. Thank you."

# First 'town meeting' marker stands unappreciated for lack of caretaking

By George Adams Parkhurst  
*Correspondent*

The site of Chelmsford's first "town meeting" in 1654 — actually an unofficial gathering of community leaders, since it would be a year or more before the town would be incorporated — was marked by a granite marker in 1924.

The marker was installed on a small knoll on private land on an extension of Crosby Lane at what is now the end of Meetinghouse Road. A few years ago when this land was sold, the marker was relocated a few feet to the west to a corner of the property at #14 Crosby Lane. To enhance its appearance, a small evergreen tree was planted on either side of the stone.

These trees have grown to the point where they cover the face of the stone and have not, apparently, been pruned regularly.

From time to time, I am contacted by people from out of state who have a historical connection with Chelmsford

and want a tour of the town's historical spots. Last summer, two people asked specifically to visit the "first town meeting monument" to take photographs of the stone. But it is just barely visible between the evergreens and cannot produce a meaningful photo.

It would be desirable to have the responsible town department remove these trees, replace them with small ones and keep them trimmed.

The first "town" meeting was held at the home of William Fletcher. History tells us that Fletcher had the first frame house in the new settlement. Although it disappeared many years ago, the Historical Commission hired an archaeologist to supervise a "dig" on the site in 1979. His work indicated that a home of that period did occupy the site.

One of the first streets in Chelmsford ran from the meetinghouse (where the First Parish Church stands) along Westford Street, Worthen Street, across North Road



COURTESY PHOTO

The historic marker is much more visible in this 1973 photograph than it is today.

and down Crosby Lane. In the early days, it continued near the Radisson Hotel to Golden Cove Road and thence to Middlesex Village and Pawtucket Falls.

By the mid-1920s when I used to play there with boys from the neighborhood, Crosby Lane beyond #14 and #15 was a dirt farm road leading to T. W. Emerson's piggery at the brook in

NEAR THIS SPOT  
FIRST TOWN MEETING  
IN CHELMSFORD  
WAS HELD NOV-22-1650



**Crosby Lane and Meeting House Road**

**8/4/2004 F. Merriam**