

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

35-133-4

Westford

CLM.414

Town/City: Chelmsford

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

Photograph



Address: School Street

Historic Name: Stony Brook Railroad: West Chelmsford Freight Depot

Uses: Present: vacant

Original: freight depot

Date of Construction: pre 1875

Source: 1875 map of West Chelmsford

Style/Form: no style

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard/wood

Roof: slate

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Relocated across School Street

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:** unknown

Acreage: N/A (on railroad property)

Setting: The depot is located approximately 30' north of School St. and southeast of the railroad tracks. A small asphalt-paved area is in front of the building while the other sides are gravel-covered or grassy. The former Eagle Mill is across School St. and the rest of the area includes 19th and 20th c. residential and commercial developments.

Locus Map



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

Organization: Chelmsford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): June 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

CHELMSFORD

SCHOOL STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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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 freight house is located on the southeast side of the railroad tracks and just north of School Street. Built ca. 1870, the freight house is a small, rectangular-shaped front-gabled building that stands one and a-half-stories in height. The freight house is a wood frame building that rests atop a stone foundation. The footprint of the building measures roughly 20 by 30 feet. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles and the exterior walls are clad with clapboard with wood trim. A short section of vertical wood plank siding is located directly under each of the gables, providing decorative relief. The building rests atop a stone foundation that was built tall enough to facilitate the loading and unloading of freight cars, wagons, and eventually motorized trucks. The primary (southwest) façade, which faces School Street, is divided into three bays with the front pedestrian entrance located directly in the center of the facade. A short, wood frame staircase, consisting of four risers and a small platform, provides access from grade level to the front entrance. The door is flanked on either side by six-over-six double-hung windows. A single, six-over-six double-hung window is located in the center of the gable, directly above the front entrance. A large, trackside freight door and a pair of boarded window openings are located on the west side of the building. An identical arrangement is located on the opposite, south side of the building, with a pair of boarded windows and a freight door for wagons and trucks. Window and door surrounds consist of simple, unadorned boards of moderate thickness.

The building is a good example of a mid-nineteenth century freight house that retains all historic integrity, except location; however, due to vacancy of the building, it has experienced vandalism on the exterior and interior.

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 freight house was constructed by the Stony Brook Railroad. The railroad opened in 1848 and ran approximately 11 miles between the Nashua and Lowell Railroad main line at North Chelmsford southwesterly to Ayer where it connected to the Fitchburg Railroad. The Nashua and Lowell Railroad operated along the Stony Brook until the Boston & Maine Railroad acquired the line. The line, now owned by Pan-Am Railways, is an active freight corridor (passenger service stopped in 1961) and utilizes the spur track next to the freight house for its maintenance equipment.

The former Stony Brook Railroad freight house was originally located on the other side of School Street, behind the former passenger depot and closer to the former Chelmsford Woolen Mill/Eagle Mill complex. The historic photograph below shows that the freight house had a platform to easily load and unload materials from the train to the building. The date of the building's relocation to its current site is unknown. While the fenestration and door configuration has been modified, the building's dimensions noted on the 1916 Interstate Commerce Commission form match the dimensions of this building. Also, brick piers were added under the building when it was relocated, and then a new stone foundation was constructed. Furthermore, the decorative feature shown on the gable in the historical photograph below is extant on the building's primary façade.

The freight house played a significant role in the function of local industries as moving goods via the railroad was the most efficient and cost effective way to receive raw materials and to ship finished products to market. It is not known when the freight house was moved to its current location. Stanley P. Woodward, who resided next door at 6-8 School Street, ran a model train store in the freight house for many years until his death in 2007.

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Undated photograph of the freight house prior to its relocation. (Chelmsford Historical Society.)



Rear of freight house, facing south. May 2016.

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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 West Chelmsford is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a locally significant historic district under Criterion A for the development of this area around the Roby Manufacturing Company and Chelmsford Woolen Mills as well as under Criterion C for its intact examples of mid-nineteenth through early twentieth century residential architecture. The boundary of the proposed district would include resources built during the period of significance along Main Street from approximately Loiselle Lane in the north to the Westford Town Line, as well as resources along School Street between Main Street and Graniteville Road. This freight house would be a contributing resource to that district as an example of industrial architecture constructed during its period of significance that retains some historic integrity.