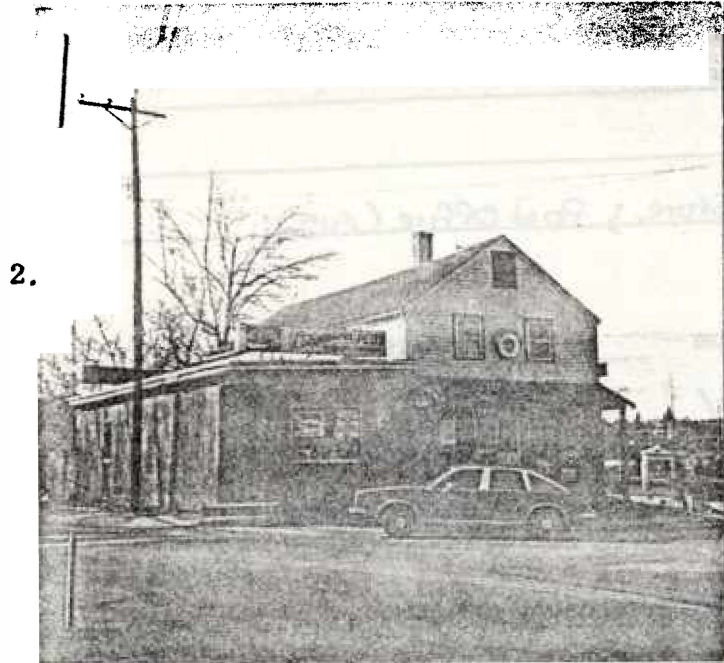


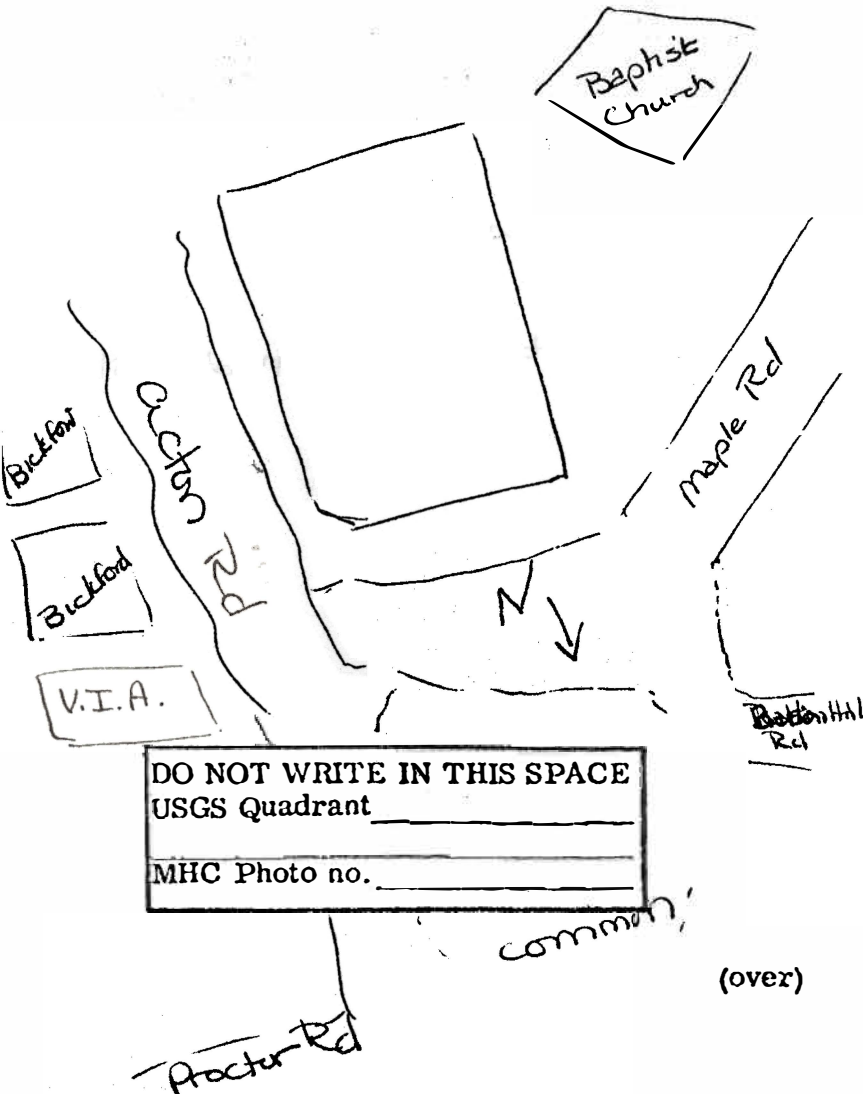
FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.	Form no.
	284



4. Map. Draw sketch of building location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.



DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE
USGS Quadrant _____
MHC Photo no. _____

- Town Chelmsford
Address 321-323 Acton Road
Name Byam's Store
Present use General Store (variety)
and Post Office
Present owner Ronald W. & Patricia A. Wetmore
- Description:
Date ca 1828 - before
Source Middlesex Cty. Registry of Deeds
Book 10+12A 170 & 130
Style _____
Architect Essekial Byam?
Exterior wall fabric siding
Outbuildings (describe) _____
Other features attached shed on east
side of bldg;

Altered siding; shed Date 1981
enclosed;
Moved _____ Date _____
- Lot size:
One acre or less Over one acre _____
Approximate frontage 34 feet
Approximate distance of building from street
1 1/2 feet
- Recorded by Martha Sanders
Organization Chelmsford Historical Commis
Date 9-12-83

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) Ezekiel Byam

Original use Match Shop & Barn

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates General Store; Post Office (1915)

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal		Conservation	_____	Recreation	
Agricultural		Education	_____	Religion	
Architectural		Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ Invention	
The Arts		Industry	_____	Social/ humanitarian	
Commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Political	_____		
Community development					

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

Ezekiel Byam ^{used} ~~retained~~ this building ~~as~~ as a store. When sold it was stipulated by Byam that the building and land be maintained as a store for the common good of the public. This stipulation remained through several real estate exchanges to the present where it is still used as a general store (convenience food) and a post office with the same zip code as Chelmsford Ctr. The upper floor over the store is a residence now. ~~Reference to maps at Roy D @ 7548 "match shop" probably sold from the nearby match factory on Byam road.~~

Henry B. Emerson postmaster 1915

1976 tax bill indicates 2 gas pumps present.

* hardwood floor, low ceiling, only one entrance to apt - installed heat, no other change (1971 Assessment)

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

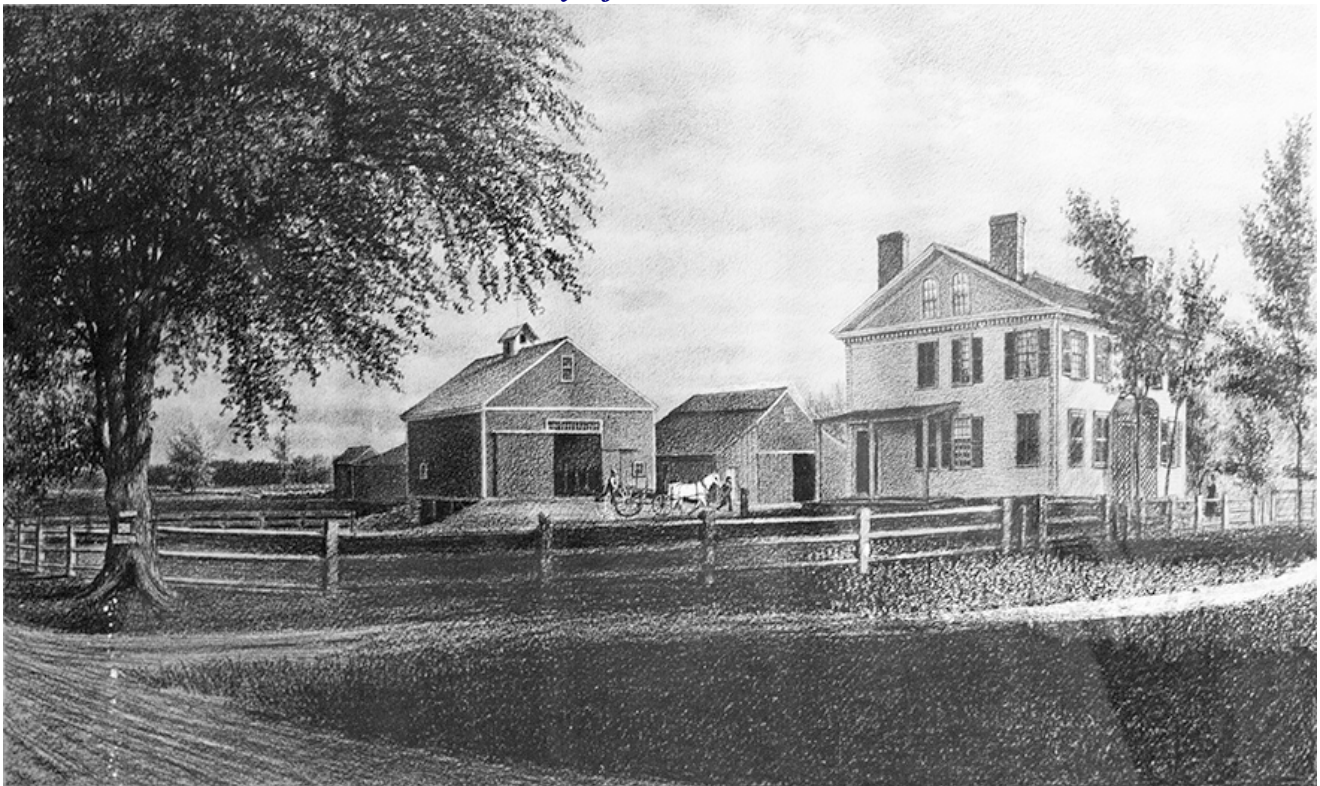
Middlesex Cty Reg of Deeds
Assessor's Maps - Chelmsford
1875 Beers Atlas
1922 Lowell Suburban Directory
1915-16 Chelmsford Directory
Waters, "History of Chelmsford."

Timeline - 321-323 Acton Road, Kate's Corner

[Back to Timelines](#)

- **1786-1788** - Lt John Bateman, who served as a Minuteman during the Revolution, and his wife Hanna arrived from Concord and built the farm at 4 Proctor Road for their growing family.
- This charcoal and pencil sketch of the Bateman farm was done by artist James Francis Gilman in 1872.

Courtesy of Charlene Parlee



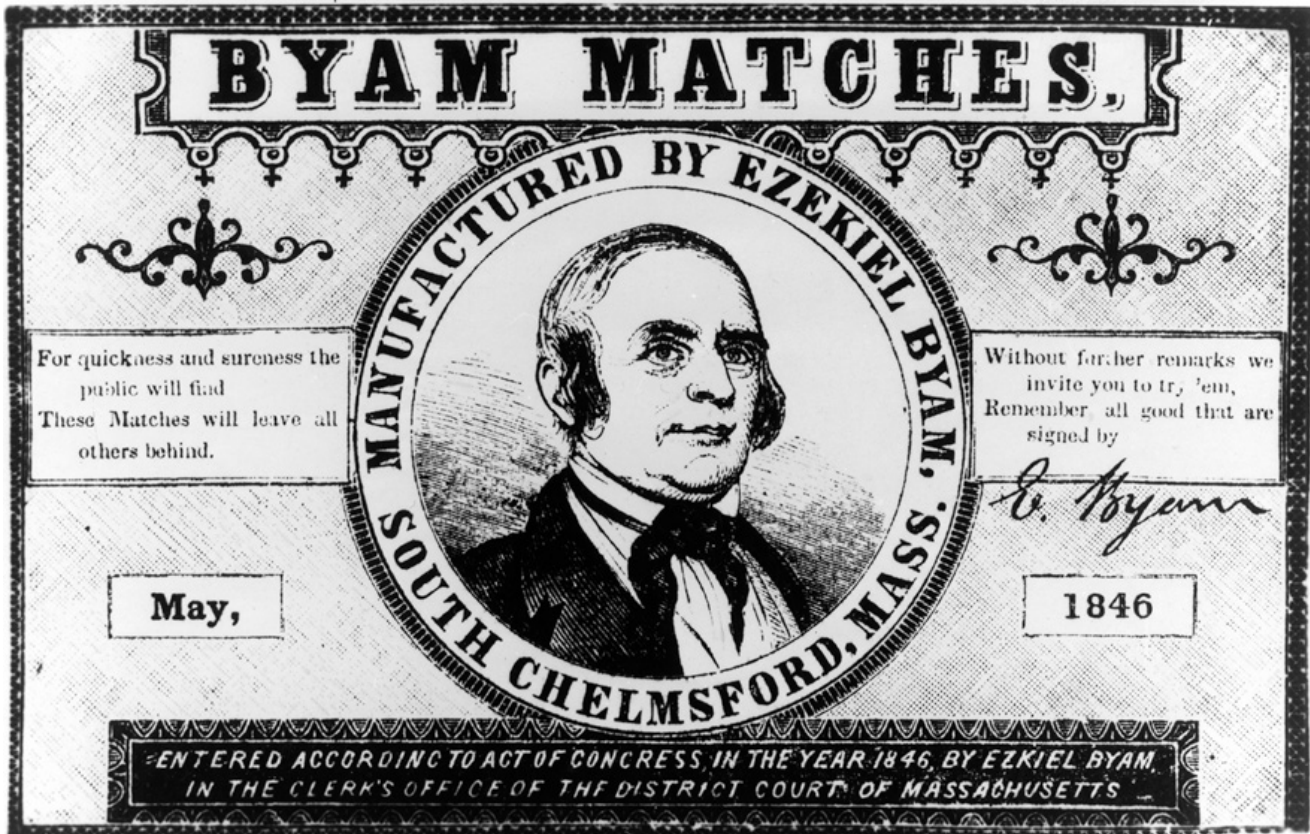
- **1818** - Ezekiel Byam married the Bateman's daughter Charlotte in February.
- **1824** - John Bateman (gentleman) and Ezekiel Byam (yeoman) purchased eight tracts of land in South Chelmsford from the heirs of Peter Proctor totalling about 47.25 acres with all buildings thereon on November 15 (deed 11/593).
- Ezekiel was an entrepreneur and operated a store at the modern address of **321/323-Acton Road** on the corner of Acton and Maple roads. He also manufactured blacking used to color shoes and stoves, a pain-relieving liniment called "Opodeldoc" and later the first practical (but dangerous to manufacture) matches in the United States.
- Opodeldoc was a medical plaster or liniment dating back to the 1500s and consisting of: powdered soap, camphor, oil of rosemary, alcohol, and water. A surviving Byam Opodeldoc liniment bottle is seen here.

Courtesy of Greg Bair



- **1825** - Ezekiel Byam purchased a small parcel of land from Joseph Chamberlain on January 21 (deed 11/596), and another from Peter Proctor's son Gaius on February 28 (deed 11/598).
- **1828** - Ezekiel (trader) purchased three acres adjacent to the Bateman farm from James Robbins on July 15 (deed 12/188), and another 0.39 acres on the opposite side of Maple Road from his store from Joseph Chamberlain on July 19 (deed 12/190).
- John Bateman died on December 22, and his farm passed to Ezekiel and Charlotte Byam.
- **1829** - John Bateman's will left 50 acres of land on the southerly side of "Hart's" Pond to his daughter Sally who married Nathan Buttrick in 1820. Ezekiel Byam (trader) purchased this land from Nathan and Sally Buttrick on May 26 (deed 14/279).
- **1835** - Ezekiel established the first lucifer match factory in the United States. His modest "factory" was a small building nestled into the bank on Robin Hill Road, near its junction with Acton Road. Locals affectionately dubbed this area "Brimstone Corner" due to its association with these matches which were sulphur-tipped splints that produced fire when drawn through coarse paper coated with phosphorus.
- **1845** - After doing business in Boston for a few years, Ezekiel briefly moved back to his South Chelmsford factory. His promotional card, registered in Massachusetts in May 1946, is below.

Courtesy of Richard Byam



- **1852** - Ezekiel purchased another property from James Robbins on October 23 (deed 18/153).
- **1855** - Benjamin Dudley of South Chelmsford purchased **321/323-Acton Road** from Ezekiel Byam, consisting of 1428 square feet with a store and shed, on March 31 (deed 11/361). This deed contained restrictions: "said land not to be fenced in nor built upon nor encumbered in any way nor used for any other purpose that what it has usually been used for since the store has stood there, but always to remain common for the good of the public."
- **1857** - Julius G Parkhurst of Boston purchased **321/323-Acton Road** with restrictions from Benjamin Dudley on September 2 (deed 11/360).
- **1859** - Elias Sweetser of Chelmsford purchased **321/323-Acton Road** with restrictions from Julius G Parkhurst on November 30 (deed 22/326).
- **1868** - Elias Sweetser died on July 4.
- **1870** - Thomas M Gerrish purchased **321/323-Acton Road** with restrictions from Eldad P Bean, acting on behalf of the Sweetser estate, on October 17 (deed 120/531).
- **1871** - Thomas Gerrish was appointed South Chelmsford postmaster on February 2 (US Postal Records).
- **1879** - Daniel W Bickford purchased **320-Acton Road** from Elizabeth P Hutchins on August 1 (deed 135/144).
- **1886** - Storekeeper Daniel Bickford was appointed South Chelmsford postmaster on January 26 (US Postal Records).
- **1889** - Thomas Gerrish died on September 18.

- **1890** - Henry H Emerson of Needham purchased **321/323-Acton Road** with restrictions from Thomas Gerrish's daughter Josephine A Green on April 19 (deed 220/443).
- Henry also purchased the nearby house at 330-Acton Road this year, and leased the ground floor of the building owned by Daniel Bickford at **320-Acton Road**, operating the Emerson & Co store across Acton Road from **321/323-Acton Road**.
- Henry Emerson was appointed South Chelmsford postmaster on December 1 (US Postal Records).
- The Emerson & Co store and Post Office at **320-Acton Road** is seen below.

Historical Society glass negative 2013.2.5007 (colorized)



- Henry was one of five Emerson brothers who grew up on Dalton Road, and served in the Civil War. Everyone returned from the war unscathed except Henry who was discharged due to injuries.
- Utilizing both stores, he sold groceries, hardware, coal, fertilizer, feed and agricultural implements. The **321/323-Acton Road** photo below was dated 1898.

321/323-Acton Road, Historical Society photo 1998.20.51601



- **1900** - In this undated photo a Quaker Oats sign was installed on the second story and a Moxie cooler placed outside. Moxie outsold Coca Cola through the 1920s, but lost ground when they substituted cheaper ingredients during the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Courtesy of Pam Byam Rivard



- **1905** - Daniel Bickford, owner of **320-Acton Road**, died intestate on May 22.
- **1908** - Augusta H Bickford purchased a 3/5 interest in the **320-Acton Road** property from six heirs of Daneol Bickford on January 1 (deed 419/345).
- Floyd C Bickford purchased a 1/15 interest in the **320-Acton Road** property from William H Hartwell et al from Acton on April 6 (deed 419/349).
- Augusta Bickford purchased the 1/15 interest in the **320-Acton Road** property from Floyd Bickford on April 7 (deed 419/349).
- **1909** - Lyman A Byam, residing at 305-Acton Road next to Robin Hill Road, purchased a 1/3-acre parcel of land at **1-Common Street** from John Scoboria on December 20 (deed 443/448).
- This location is on the left side of Liberty Hall, and Lyman Byam built a general store called Byam & Company. As an agency for the Middlesex Laundry in Lowell you could drop off and pick up your laundry here. Weeks break-up-a-cold tablets advertised across the front of the building, and their motto was "You can break a broncho in a week, but it takes Weeks to break up a cold in a day." Henry Emerson's wife Louisa is standing out front in the **1-Common Street** photo below.



- **1915** - Postmaster Henry H Emerson is seen below circa 1915, with a coal hod and ash sifter beside his home at 330-Acton Road. The yellow barn behind the First Baptist Church at left was likely built by Thomas Gerish between 1870 and 1889.

Historical Society glass negative 2013.2.5040 (colorized)



- **1917** - Augusta Bickford, owner of **320-Acton Road**, died intestate on September 17.
- **1919** - Henry Emerson was removed as postmaster, with the official reason being "Removed-insane," in March. His son and assistant postmaster, John B Emerson, was appointed to fill the postmaster position on March 18 (both, US Postal Records).
- **1921** - Henry Emerson died on March 21.
- John Emerson purchased the store at **320-Acton Road** his father had leased since 1890, from Floyd C Bickford and six other heirs of Augusta Bickford on August 12 (deed 649/511).
- **1922** - Emile E Paignon purchased the store at **321/323-Acton Road** from John Emerson, administrator of his father Henry's estate, and from Louisa F Emerson, Henry's widow, on January 22 (deeds 656/555 and 656/556).
- **1923** - Charles Simpson purchased the store at **1-Common Street** from Lyman Byam on March 7 (deed 760/227).
- Emile Paignon purchased the store at **320-Acton Road** from John Emerson on November 30 (deed 699/398).
- John Emerson resigned as South Chelmsford postmaster, and Emile Paignon's daughter Mabel was appointed as acting postmaster on December 19 (US Postal Records).
- Emile Paignon leased the railroad station on Maple Road after 1921 when passenger service ended, and established a post office there. He may have enclosed the open shed at

321/323-Acton Road below with the display window and corner door as a more convenient location for his daughter's post office.

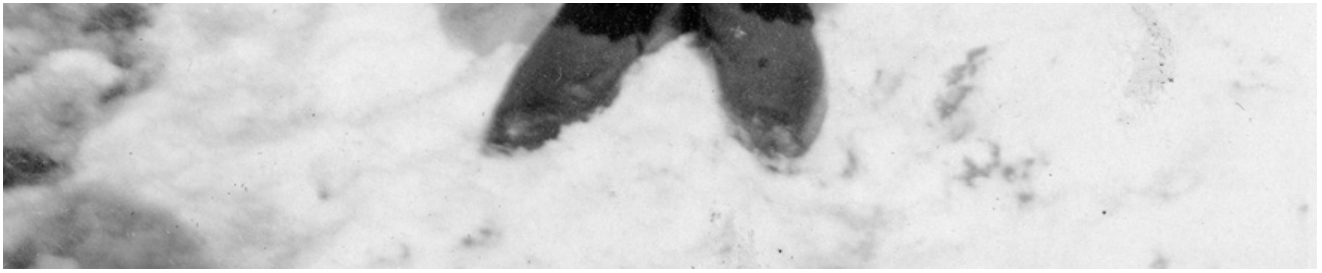
Historical Society photo 1998.20.1130



- **1924** - Mabel Paignon was appointed South Chelmsford postmaster on January 7 (US Postal Records).
- Postmistress Mabel Paignon is seen here with the store at **1-Common Street** at left and Liberty Hall at right. By all accounts of people that knew her, she was a memorable character.

Historical Society photo 1989.25.32





- **1925** - Axel H Lindbloom of Chelmsford purchased both stores from Emile Paignon on February 11 (deed 718/294). This sale included the stores at **321/323-and 320-Acton Road**, and the same day Axel granted a mortgage to the Central Savings Bank (deed 718/295).
- Axel moved into the upstairs living quarters in the former Bickford store at 320-Acton Road.
- **1926** - Axel defaulted on his mortgage obligations, and Emile Paignon purchased back both stores from Central Savings Bank at auction on December 4 (deed 744/441).
- **1937** - Charles Jr and Doris Simpson purchased the stores at **320-Acton Road** and **321/323-Acton Road**, from Emile Paignon on April 21 (deed 898/103).
- Now called Simpson's Market, the store at **321/323-Acton Road** continued as the South Chelmsford Post Office and provided Mobilgas service on the Acton Road side. Don McGillivray's wife Kay was a niece of Charles Simpson.

Courtesy of Don McGillivray



- Charles Simpson's original store at **1-Common Street** was called the Trio Store, as seen in the photo below, likely in recognition that there were three stores on the block. He now owned them all.

Courtesy of Paul Goulas



- **1940** - Charles Simpson demolished his store at **1-Common Street** and constructed a one-story house with a roofline oriented parallel to the road (town GIS).

Historical Society postcard 1972.42.1028



- **1945** - Ralph E and Gertrude I McGarry purchased the house at **1-Common Street** from Charles and Doris Simpson on December 29 (deed 1035/246).

- The recent photo below shows left to right, the house that replaced the store at **1-Common Street**, Liberty Hall now converted to a residence, Kate's Corner at **321/323-Acton Road**, and the First Baptist Church.

Google Earth Pro 2023



- **1950** - Howard and Miriam L Lawson of Westford purchased the **321/323-Acton Road** store from Charles and Doris Simpson on October 5 (deed 1153/208) and operated the store as Lawson's Market.
- **1952** - Sometime before 1952 Charles Simpson converted the store at **320-Acton Road** into a house.
- Edward J and Anna C Sears purchased the **320-Acton Road** store to house conversion, as seen below next door to Liberty Hall, from Charles Simpson on January 7 (deed 1186/213).

Historical Society photo



- **1954** - George Jr and Lilian Marchand purchased **321/323-Acton Road** from Howard and Miriam Lawson on February 4 (deed 1247/321).
- Operating as Marchand's Market, they continued to provide Mobil gasoline service, and the store is seen below with a bread delivery truck out front.

Historical Society photo 1968.34.31075



- **1961** - Lionel D and Josephine A Marchand purchased **321/323-Acton Road** from George Jr and Lilian Marchand on January 3 (deed 1502/31).

- Lionel Marchand was an employee of the Marchand Oil Company along with several siblings, and according to family recollections posted on Facebook, the Mobil gasoline tanks at **321/323-Acton Road** were removed and utilized elsewhere by the Marchand Oil Company.
- Elmer and Dorothy Burns purchased **321/323-Acton Road** from Lionel and Josephine Marchand on December 22 (deed 1541/464).
- Philip and Marjorie McCormack rented **321/323-Acton Road** from Elmer Burns, lived upstairs, and ran the store as Phil's Village Market.
- **1965** - The South Chelmsford post office in **321/323-Acton Road** was downgraded to a Rural Station in March, and then officially discontinued as a post office in April.
- **1966** - Postmistress Mabel Paignon retired.
- **1973** - In December this year, Phil's Village Market had a Coca Cola vending machine outside, a clock between the windows on the second floor, and provided postal services even though it was no longer an independent US Post Office.

Historical Commission photo



- **1975** - Tenants Philip and Marjorie McCormack purchased **321/323-Acton Road** from Elmer and Dorothy Burns on December 9 (deed 2176/580).
- **1976** - Ronald and Patricia Wetmore purchased **321/323-Acton Road** from Philip and Marjorie McCormack on January 29 (deed 2182/376).
- Ronald Wetmore, a carpenter, operated the store as Ron's Village Market.
- **1983**- William D Keohane leased **321/323-Acton Road** from the Wetmores and operated as Convenience Plus.

- **1993** - Kathleen Connors took over the lease from William Keohane and operated **321/323-Acton Road** as Kate's Corner.
- **1998** - Tenant Kathleen Connors purchased **321/323-Acton Road** from Ronald and Patricia Wetmore on December 30 (deed 9830/54).
- **2004** - A public pay phone, now nearly extinct, can be seen on the front porch below.

August 7, 2004 photo by Fred Merriam



- **2021** - Kate's Corner is colorfully decked out for the holidays in the time-lapse photo below, as posted on Facebook by Stephen Beyer in November.

Courtesy of Stephen Beyer on Facebook



- **2023** - Kathleen Connors, and the former owner of **1-Common Street** Paul Goulas, continue a long tradition of service to the South Chelmsford community at the **321/323-Acton Road** Kate's Corner store.

Top

REFERENCES:

1. All photos labeled (colorized) are black and white images edited by Fred Merriam
2. Book, Arcadia Publishing, "Images of America South and East Chelmsford" by Fred Merriam
3. Bottle Collection, Greg Bair
4. Cemetery Records, Town of Chelmsford
5. Deeds, Middlesex North Registry, as listed
6. Directories, Chelmsford Historical Society website Directories page
7. GIS Mapping, Town of Chelmsford
8. Google Earth Pro 2023, as listed
9. Original Gilman Sketch, Charlene Parlee, Chelmsford
10. Photo collection, Chelmsford Historical Commission
11. Photo collection, Chelmsford Historical Society
12. Photo collection, Don McGillivray, Chelmsford
13. Photo collection, Fred Merriam, Chelmsford
14. Photo collection, Stephen Beyer, Chelmsford
15. Photo Collection, Pam Byam Rivard, Chelmsford
16. Photo Collection, Paul Goulas, Chelmsford
17. Search Utility, Microsoft Copilot

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