

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

101/357/18	Billerica, MA		CLM.419
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Town/City: Chelmsford

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

Photograph



Address: 15 Byam Road

Historic Name:

Uses: Present: Single-family dwelling

Original: Single-family dwelling

Date of Construction: ca. 1736

Source: Waters

Style/Form: Georgian

Architect/Builder: Not known

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Not visible

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboard

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Barn/Garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Chimney rebuilt 20th C; Storm windows; Ell addition (Late 20th C); sunroom additions (Late 20th C)

Condition: Excellent

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.92

Setting: Mid-20th houses in suburban setting along a winding, wooded, rural road. An adjacent *cul-de-sac* contains three early 21st C single-family houses. Scattered 18th-C dwellings are located west of the house.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Stacy Spies, Historic Preservation Consultant

Date: September 2021

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

CHELMSFORD

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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 house is located at the base of a steep hill and faces south toward Byam Road. A low, dry-laid uncoursed stone wall separates the small, grassy front yard from the road. The area surrounding the north and east elevations is wooded. A semi-circular, asphalt-paved driveway is located at the center of the Byam Road frontage and leads to a banked barn/garage located at the western edge of the lot.

The 2-story frame dwelling is five bays wide and two bays deep and clad with narrow wood clapboards edged with cornerboards. The side-gabled roof has overhanging eaves. Two telescoping lateral ells extend from the west elevation. A slightly-off-center interior chimney pierces the roof ridge; the materials used indicate that the chimney was rebuilt in the second half of the 20th century. The façade features a center entrance sheltered by a hipped-roof projection. The projection's entablature contains a tall frieze and projecting cornice. Doric pilasters are located at the corners; half-pilasters are located at the juncture with the façade. A single slender 2/2 double-hung wood sash window is located in the east and west elevations of the projection. The four-panel wood door is set flush with the south elevation of the projection. The four-panel wood door features four square roundel windows atop the panels and a pitcher thumb latch.

On the façade, windows are 6/9 double-hung wood sash at the first floor and 6/6 double hung wood sash at the second floor. The second-floor windows are tucked up against the plate. A single 6/6 wood sash window is located in the east gable peak; first-floor windows are obscured by a greenhouse. On the visible portion of the main block's west elevation, a similar 6/9 window is located at the first floor and a similar 6/6 window is located at the second floor. These windows all have narrow, molded wood surrounds and fixed metal-frame storm windows.

A series of telescoping lateral ells extends from the west elevation. The one-story frame ell contains a secondary entrance consisting of a paneled wood door flanked by 6/6 wood sash windows with flat surrounds. A shed-roof porch with boxed wood posts dating from the second half of the 20th century shelters the entrance and two windows. A slender brick chimney is located at the rear elevation. Above this ell, a half-story, side-gabled dormer contains a 3/3 wood sash window on the south elevation. The ell was enlarged in the late 20th century with a one-story addition. This westernmost addition contains a top-hung vertical board utility door, apparently now fixed in place, on the south elevation. The door is capped with a 10-light transom. Two metal-frame skylights pierce the south roof slope. A double-leaf, multi-light wood door with a fanlight is centered on the west elevation.

The barn/garage outbuilding appears to have been constructed as a small banked barn. The basement level is accessible at the south elevation; the upper level was originally accessed via a top-hung, vertical board, sliding door centered on the west elevation. In the late 20th century, based on its appearance, the south elevation was extended by a two-story frame addition that created two garage bays with overhead doors. A late 20th century wood stair at the southeast corner of the building leads to a second-story wood deck attached to the east elevation. The living space is accessed by way of the deck. The asphalt-shingled gable roof is capped with a frame cupola. The upper levels of the north and south elevations each have two bays of 8/8 double-hung wood sash windows. A multi-light, wood-frame picture window is located in the peak of the south gable end. A single 8/8 double-hung wood sash window is located on the north and south side of the sliding door.

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.

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Secondary sources have reported that the "Billy Byam" house, as it was commonly known,¹ was constructed circa 1736. This date might be associated with a portion of the existing house at 15 Byam Road, or this date could also refer to an earlier house reported to have been located on the north side of Byam Road. One secondary source reported that there was a cellar hole, located across the street from the Chelmsford Historical Society at 40 Byam Road, that was part of an "earlier" house associated with this property. In the 18th century, this area was all part of a 57-acre parcel with a single owner.² (An interior inspection of the existing house by an architectural historian with expertise on early construction practices might provide clues to the construction date.) More research is recommended.

In 1749, Oliver Barrett (1726-1777),³ a cooper, purchased land on the south side of Robbins Hill (later, Robbin's Hill and Robin's Hill) from Nathaniel and Martha Barrett.⁴ Six years later, Oliver Barrett married Anna Fiske (1735-1823) of Lexington.⁵ Oliver Barrett served as a Private in the Massachusetts 10th Continental Regiment under commander Thomas Marshall⁶ and fought in the Battle of Lexington and Concord. (Barrett is reported to have been killed in action at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777.⁷)

In 1767, Oliver Barrett sold four parcels of land totaling 57 acres on the south side of Robbin's Hill to physician Jonas Marshall.⁸ A 13-acre parcel on the north side of the road contained a house and cooper shop; this parcel appears to be 15 Byam Road. The sale also included a 30-acre parcel on the south side of Byam Road with a house and barn; that parcel appears to be 40 Byam Road (CLM.72), where secondary sources state that Jonas Marshall made his residence and is now used by the Chelmsford Historical Society. In 1783, Jonas Marshall sold the 57 acres with buildings to yeoman William Laws.⁹ William Laws (1746-1823) had married Sarah Tay in Billerica in 1779.

In 1795, William Byam, known as Billy, (1772-1852) purchased the house and land from William Laws on the south side of Robbin's Hill.¹⁰ William Byam was born in Chelmsford and worked as a cordwainer (shoemaker) and farmer. William Byam married Rebecca Herrick in 1795. In 1836, William and Rebecca Byam gave approximately .40 acre located adjacent to William Byam's shop on Littleton Road to the First Baptist Church of Chelmsford to build a church.¹¹

In 1857, John Parkhurst, Jr. of Chelmsford purchased 30 acres on the south side of Robbins Hill from William A. Byam, the grandson of William Byam.¹² Parkhurst worked as a carpenter, according to the deed. Parkhurst sold the property and house three years later. The property changed hands several times over the next decades.¹³

¹ Waters: 398.

² Buswick: 91.

³ Sons of the American Revolution Membership Application for Harold Warriner Stevens, descendant of Oliver Barrett. S.A.R. Membership Number 24287. Ancestry.com. Accessed Sept. 2, 2021.

⁴ Barrett: 31-32. Citing Middlesex South Registry of Deeds Book 67, p. 394, Book 75, p. 138, Book 75, p. 277.

⁵ Barrett: 17.

⁶ Sons of the American Revolution Membership Application for Harold Warriner Stevens, descendant of Oliver Barrett. S.A.R. Membership Number 24287. Ancestry.com. Accessed Sept. 2, 2021.

⁷ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/160200879/oliver-barrett>. Accessed September 2, 2021.

⁸ Middlesex South Registry of Deeds Book 67, p. 363.

⁹ Middlesex South Registry of Deeds Book 249, p. 495. (Not recorded until 1823.)

¹⁰ Middlesex South Registry of Deeds Book 124, p. 277.

¹¹ Byam: 41, citing Middlesex South Registry of Deeds Book 13, p. 447

¹² Middlesex North Registry of Deeds Book 12, p. 216.

¹³ 1860 John Parkhurst to George Henry Byam of Chelmsford in 1860. M.N.R.D. Book 23, p. 54.

1865 George H. Byam to George Wright of Boston. M.N.R.D. Book 41, p. 326.

1865 George Wright to Arvis (or Orvis) W. Hazen. M.N.R.D. Book 42, p. 580.

1867 Arvis (or Orvis) W. Hazen to Rebecca Goodwin. M.N.R.D. Book 55, p. 308

1874 Benjamin and Rebecca Goodwin to Charles R. Hazen. M.N.R.D. Book 104, p. 527.

1878 Charles R. Hazen to George S. Tyler. M.N.R.D. Book 129, 27.

1880 George S. Tyler and Mary L.B. Tyler of Lowell to Barbara Bothwick. M.N.R.D. Book 137, 162.

1881 Barbara Bothwick of Halifax Nova Scotia to Lydia Packard of Lowell. 149, p. 103.

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Rachel S. Simons (1839-) and her husband, Walter S. Simons (1838-), purchased the property in 1883.¹⁴ The couple had married in 1858. From 1887-1890, Walter S. Simons operated a hotel on the second floor of the Wilson Block in Chelmsford Center (CLM.204) and named it the Central House. Rachel Simons operated an ice cream parlor at Central House. Walter S. Simons was also the proprietor of the Summit House (ca. 1886) on top of Robin's Hill, which offered views of Mount Monadnock and Wachusett Mountain. Simons provided a 14-person wagon to the top of Robin's Hill for excursions.¹⁵ Simons sold 15 Byam Road in 1908.¹⁶ The property was sold several times through 1925.¹⁷

Daniel and James Crowley owned the property from 1925¹⁸ until 1938.¹⁹ The 1931 list of Chelmsford Voters includes brothers James and Jeremiah Crowley living on Byam Road and working as dairy farmers. The brothers were born in Ireland and immigrated in 1902.

From 1938 until 1970, Richard (known as Ray) D. Case owned the property.²⁰ City directories and a WWII draft card indicate that Ray Case (1904-ca.1970) worked as a statistician and as a research analyst at Scudder, Stevens & Clark in Boston. Harvey and Barbara Richards owned the property from 1970 until 2006.²¹

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¹⁴ Middlesex North Registry of Deeds Book 164, p. 260.

¹⁵ Parkhurst: 260.

¹⁶ Middlesex North Registry of Deeds Book 415, p. 113.

¹⁷ 1908 Rachel S. Simons to Fred Armitage. M.N.R.D. Book 415, p. 113.

1911 Fred Armitage to Jennie A. Byam. M.N.R.D. Book 470, p. 191.

1918 Jennie A. Byam to Edward C. Wright. M.N.R.D. Book 588, p. 392.

1918 Edward C. Wright to Sarrell E. Clark and Marcella T. Clark. M.N.R.D. Book 593, p. 432.

1924 Marcella T. Clark to Gladys Ingram. M.N.R.D. Book 708, p. 536.

1924 Gladys V. Ingram to Marcella and Alison Clark. M.N.R.D. Book 708, p. 537.

¹⁸ Middlesex North Registry of Deeds Book 720, p. 325

¹⁹ Middlesex North Registry of Deeds Book 917, p. 142.

²⁰ Middlesex North Registry of Deeds Book 917, p. 142; Middlesex North Registry of Deeds Book 1942, p. 192.

²¹ Middlesex North Registry of Deeds Book 20251, p. 213.

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



View looking north.



Entrance detail. View looking northwest.

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Barn/Garage, north and west elevations. View looking southeast.



Photograph in Chelmsford Assessor's database, providing a clearer view of ell.