

Area	Form no.
	20

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

Town Chelmsford

Address 24 Central Square

Historic Name Mill House

Use: Original _____

Present residence

Ownership: Private individual
 Private organization _____

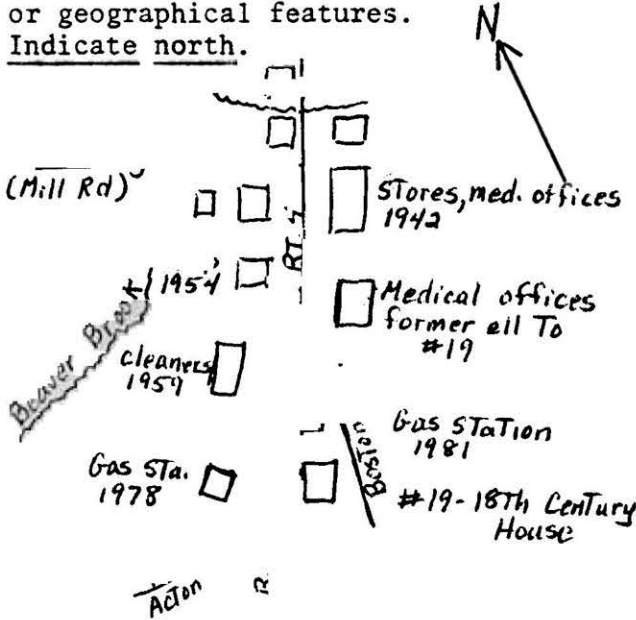
Public _____

Original owner _____

PHOTO (3x3" or 3x5", black & white)
 Staple to left side of form
 Photo number 4-8

SKETCH MAP

Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings or geographical features. Indicate north.



DESCRIPTION:

Date _____

Source _____

Architect _____

Exterior wall fabric clapboard

Outbuildings shed/garage - unattached, at rear, built ca 1943

Major alterations (with dates) _____

see attached sheet

Moved no Date _____

Approx. acreage 5589 sq. ft.

Setting in center of town, beside

Beaver Brook. Behind the buildings:

stonework containg the brook, from former mill pond

Recorded by Jane B. Drury

Organization Chelmsford Hist. Comm.

Date January 28, 1982

FORM B - BUILDING

In Area no.	Form no.
	20

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

1. Town Chilmark
 Address 24 Central Square
 Name mill house
 Present use farm

2 Photo (3x3" or 3x5")
 Staple to left side of form
 Photo number 4-8

Present owner John Handley

3. Description

Date _____
 Source deeds, tax record
 Style Creek Revival
 Architect _____
 Exterior wall fabric clapboard
 Outbuildings (describe) 20x24 - see attached
7 1/2 stoves
 Other features _____

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

Altered see attached Date 1877 c. 1943
 Moved no Date _____

5. Lot size: 55890.8
 One acre or less Over one acre
 Approximate frontage 48.7 ft.
 Approximate distance of building from street _____

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

6. Recorded by Jane B. Grady
 Organization Chilmark Hist. Commission
 Date February 28, 1997

(over)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

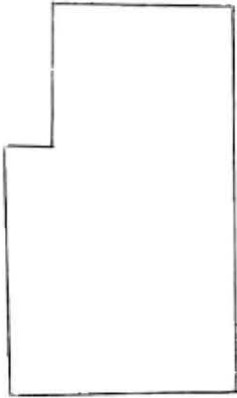
Community: Chelmsford	Form No: 20
Property Name: Mill House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below

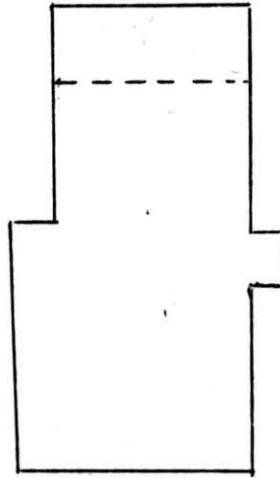
Alterations:

Dec. 12, 1877 - "The Mill House, so called, is being enlarged and repaired by its owner, Deacon David Perham."

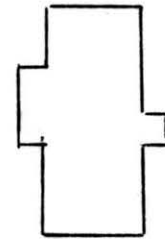
1875 Beers Atlas



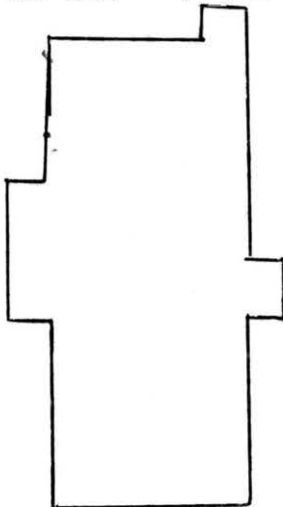
1889 Atlas



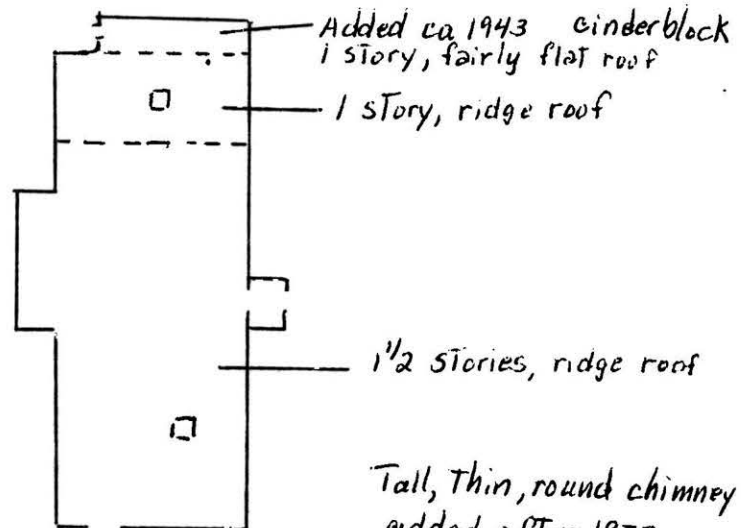
1912 Plan
Book M, plan 77
40 ft. = 1 inch



Nov. 24, 1917
Plan Bk. 37, plan 24
20 ft. = 1 inch



April 3, 1975
Visit by Historical Commission



↑ gable end

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

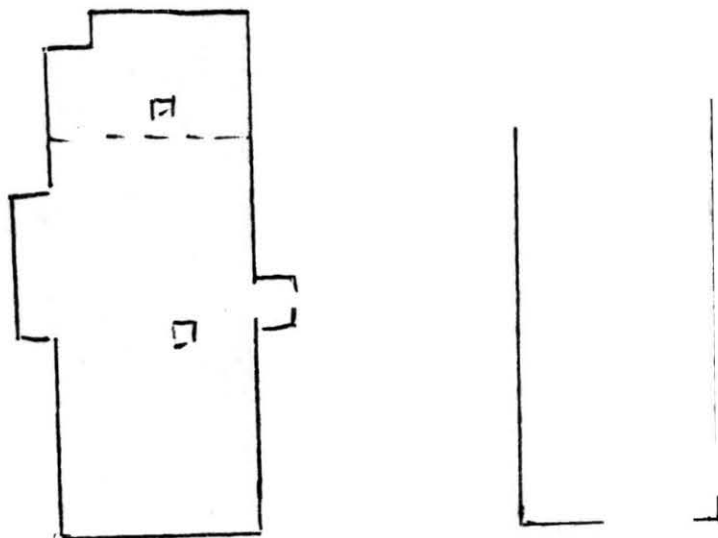
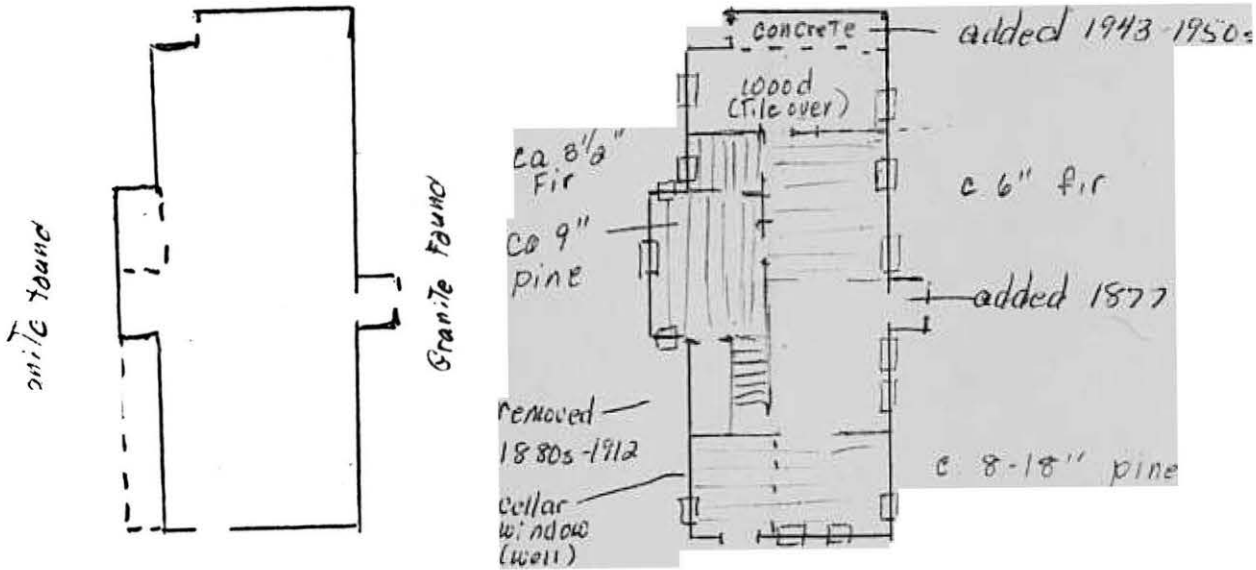
INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:	Form No:
Property Name:	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

+ look down cellar
ck. exact found.
outside + inside



Staple to Inventory form at bottom

Mill Counting House/Bake Shop
24 Central Square

992, pg. 429	6/11/1943	Daniel E. & Augusta A. Haley to Ruby M. Emery 5589 sq. ft.
623, pg. 59	4/ 3/1920	George W. Day to William E. Dobbins 5589 sq. ft.
Bk 992, pg. 427	5/ 7/1943	William E. & Blanche Dobbins to Daniel E. & Augusta A. Haley 5589 sq. ft.
431, pg. 396	1/11/1909	Herbert C. Sweetser to George W. Day easterly on said last named road (Mill) to land formerly of Charles Proctor; thence northerly on Proctor's land to land now or formerly of one Smith.
Bk. 307, pg. 109	5/12/1899	Nellie P. Parker (guardian of heirs of Lewis M. & Lizanna N. Dutton) to Herbert C. Sweetser same description
Bk. 165, pg. 277	4/ 8/1884	David Perham to Edwin E. & Lewis M. Dutton same description
41, pg. 480	4/12/1865	George S. Wood to David Perham, Levi, Benjamin M. Fiske & Edwin K. Parkhurst westerly on land now or formerly of Charles Proctor to the brook thence northerly on the last named land crossing the brook to land of David Perham, thence westerly on Perham's land and land of Levi Lamphere to a corner in the wall, thence northerly on said Lamphere's land to Littleton road....
17, pg. 228	10/20/1849) to)
16, pg. 358	8/28/1847	George W. Aldrich to Stephen C. Roundy (Marblehead) same description

Water&s "History of Chelmsford"

From the Diary of Rev. Ebenezer Bridge:

789 1767
June 22. My new mill raided.
June 26. Began to grind.
June 28. Mill dam carried away by water raised by violent storm.

1771
Raised a floom (flume) at my upper dam. (The mill was on Beaver Brook at the center of the Town.)

Part of the Inventory of the Estate of Ebenezer Bridge:

783 The Homestead including about 15 acres of Land, with the dwelling house, Barn, Grist Mill and appurtenances thereto belonging£350.0.0
About 7 acres of Fresh Meadow.....£50.0.0

Mill/Bake Shop
24 Central Square

1831 map

1856 map see Waters, pg. 672): G.S. Wood

1875 Beers Atlas: D. Perham

Arnold Perham: the superintendent of the mill lived there. Grain & corn grist mill and saw mill. Owned at one time by David Perham, who cut ice there and had several ice houses around the pond.

Margaret Mills (3/13/72): she remembers skating on the lower mill pond. There was also another building just south of this bake shop; it was an old house that set back of Eddie Hart's shop (26 Central Sq.). Simai Simard and his wife lived there for quite a while.

Wilkes Allen's History (1820):

40 "On this stream (Beaver Brook), though less than three miles in length, are a saw mill, a grist mill, a carding machine, lathe and apparatus for sawing felloes for wheels, moved by water."

Pg. 86 "1816 - Several new mills were built, a saw mill on deep brook, by Messrs. Chamberlains. A saw and grist mill, at Pawtucket falls, by Mr. Luke Bowers and sons; a grist mill on the Locks and canals on Merrimack River, by Mr. N. Tyler; and a saw mill on Beaver Brook, by Mr. Moses Hale."

Waters' History (1917):

Pg. 52 "The first mill on Beaver Brook at the center of the town, Allen tells us, was erected in '1678.-John Parker, son of Abraham, built a saw-mill on Beaver-brook, of which some remains are yet to be seen.' I am unable to find any reference to this mill in the town records, but in an ancient deed from Abraham Parker, Senr., to his eldest son, John, occurs this language: 'Also whereas the said John Parker of his own estate hath ben at one third pt of ye charge in building of a saw milne now standing upon his father Abrahams land.....both ye upper & lower Dam with all the profits and comodityes of ye same According to his proportion of interest in ye said mill.....Dec. 29, 1679' and from another deed, from the same to son Moses, it is plain that the mill was on Beaver brook."

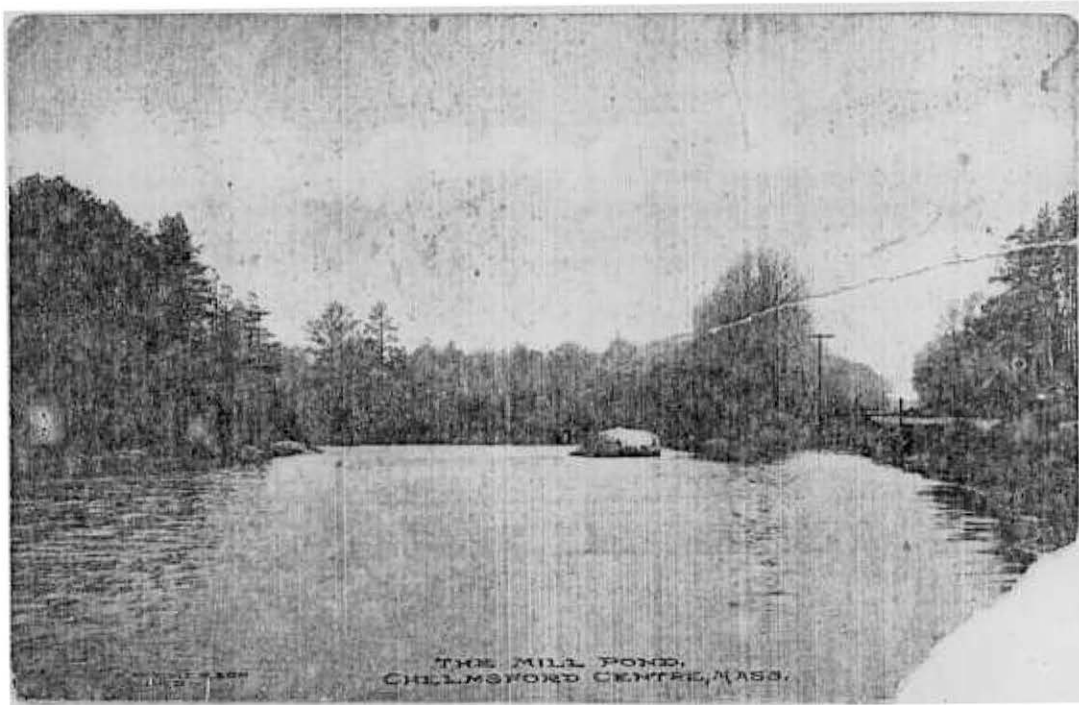
662 "In 1794 a map or plan of the Town was made from a survey by Frederick French. From this map it appears that there were at that time.....a grist-mill on Beaver brook at the centre of the Town, and one on Great brook (then Adams mill)."

664 "There may still be seen at the bottom of the Paasche lot on the north side of the railroad track by the mill pond at the Centre Village a wheel pit, and an old sluice-way running low on the south side of the track. This, no doubt, belonged to the Parker mill at the upper dam. The mill was removed to the lower dam within the memory of persons living twenty-five years ago. The entrance to the mill at the upper dam was through what is now Bridge street at a point just west

of Forefathers' cemetery. In the late forties the mill was owned by Mr. Roundy. In 1857 Joseph Stearns sold to George S. Wood, and in 1864 the transaction was reversed. For about twenty years the 'Chelmsford Mill Company', consisting of David Perham, Levi Howard, Benj. M. Fiske and E.K. Parkhurst, carried on the business.

David Perham sold the mill to Edwin E. Dutton in 1884. He operated it in partnership with his brother Lewis M., until 1899, when it was sold to H.C. Sweetser. The firm name was for some years, Sweetser and Day. George W. Day is now the owner. The grist-mill was burned and rebuilt in the early years of its ownership by Mr. Wood."

These ownership changes are not completely accurate - see deeds as recorded in Middlesex Registry of Deeds J.B.D.)





Lowell Daily Courier

Aug. 18, 1903 - The body of George S. Woods was brought to this village for burial last week. He was a former resident of the town and at one time owned the saw and grist mill here. His home in late years has been in Hollis, New Hampshire. He was 81 years of age.

Dec. 2, 1903 - The office of Sweetser and Day proprietors of the grist mill was recently entered at night by rogues who pried up a window.

Dec. 29, 1903 - Sweetser and Day have filled their ice houses with an excellent quality of ice 12 inches thick and free from snow.

Lowell Courier - Citizen

March 15, 1908 - Batters were set on Friday for George W. Gay's new residence at the corner of Bridge and Westford streets. W. A. Mitchell has the contract.

March 17, 1908 - As soon as the condition of the ground will permit, work will be begun upon a two-story grain elevator for Sweetser & Day, the local grain firm. The building will be 30x106 feet and will have a capacity of 20 carloads. It will be located about midway between the present storehouse and H. L. Parkhurst's coal sheds, and will stand end to the spur track. The office of the firm will also be provided for in this building. A gas engine will provide power for elevating the grain, also for conveying to the old mill across the yard. The work of construction will be done by Samuel Hagerman.

June 16, 1908 - The absence of George W. Day for the past few days, ostensibly on a vacation trip is more fully explained in the following clipping from a Belfast, Me. paper and the news contained will occasion the best wishes from many friends for future happiness and prosperity.

A very pretty home wedding occurred at the residence of Mrs. Sarah Peavey in Swanville, June 14, at 1 o'clock when her daughter, Daisy Lillian, was united in marriage to Mr. George W. Day. The ceremony was performed in the parlor, which had been prettily decorated with cut flowers and evergreen, by Rev. Ashley A. Smith, pastor of the Universalist church. The bride was gowned in white and carried white bride roses. The single ring service was used. The bride is the daughter of the late Geo. T. and Mrs. Peavey and is well known in Swanville, having spent most of her life there. Mr. Day is a partner in the firm of Sweetser & Day at Chelmsford, Mass., where Mr. & Mrs. Day will make their future home. No cards.

June 22, 1908 - Mr. & Mrs. George W. Day reached town on Friday following a brief wedding trip, and pending the completion of their new home at the corner of Bridge and Westford streets are located at C. A. Aiken's on Westford street.

Feb. 16, 1909 - Charles Baker of Littleton street had a very narrow escape from serious injury this afternoon by being struck in the face by a piece of board thrown from a circular saw at which he was working at Sweetser & Day's mill.

Lowell Courier - Citizen

July 23, 1913 - Some Modern Industries

.....George W. Day is another man who has developed an industry. His business is known under the firm name of Sweetser and Day, and was established by H. C. Sweetser. Originally it was a grist and saw mill. Now it deals also in poultry feeds, roofing, farm machinery and tools. The mill occupied by Mr. Day was originally Deacon Perham's grist mill. He has greatly developed it, putting in power grinding, and operating a saw mill in the winter, to which many logs are drawn. He employs many men, and his teams cover a wide territory, his specialty being the Town's trade.

Chelmsford Eagle

Dec. 12, 1877 - The "Mill House," so called, is being enlarged and repaired with a view to its immediate occupancy by the owner, Deacon David Perham.

Dec. 15, 1883 - In consequence of advanced age, Deacon David Perham contemplates disposing of his valuable mill property.

ADVERTISEMENTS

1. The valuable mill property near the depot, Chelmsford Centre, for sale. David Perham.

Lowell Courier - Citizen

Mar. 9, 1909 - While playing games with his mates this afternoon, George Chapman his under the bridge that crosses the mill brook, through which at the time the water was not running.

Soon after he was there the water was turned on, but his companions having discovered his position, caused it to be turned off quickly and the lad who had, when the deluge began, climbed to the highest available rocks, escaped with no more serious damage.....(missing)

July 16, 1909 - Clarence Spaulding, employed at Sweetser & Day's grain mill, met with an accident this morning while at his work, several bags of grain falling from a pile and pinning him against a truck. He was attended by Dr. Scoboria and later removed to his home in Centre street. His injuries are not thought to be serious.

CHELMSFORD Newsweekly

Vol. 19 CHELMSFORD, MASS. THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1954 PRICE 5 CENTS

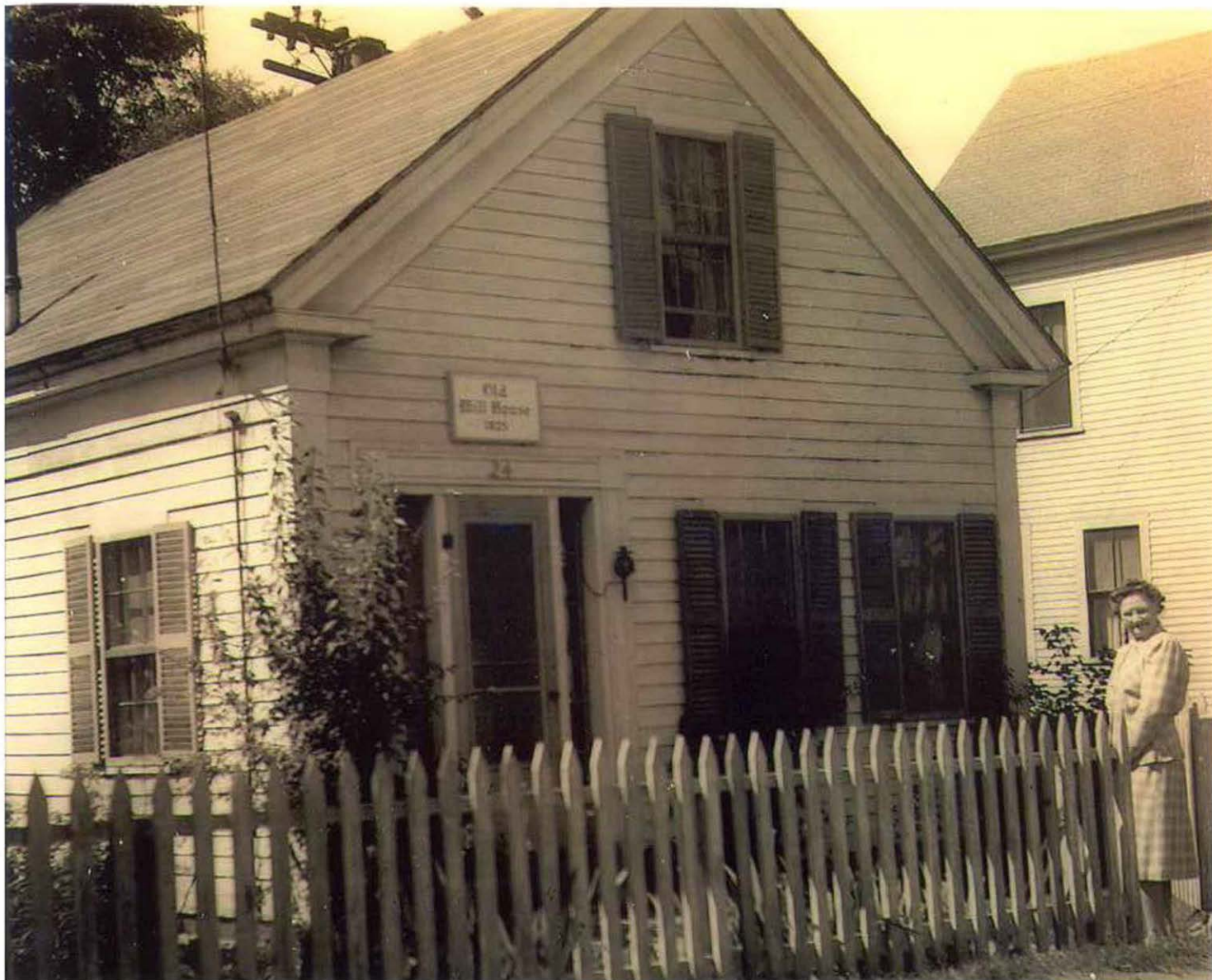


A VIEW OF BEAVER BROOK in the rear of the Old Mill House in Central Square on Saturday evening after Hurricane Edna had struck. Note the rail of the bridge which was installed last year.



Old
Mill House
1825

Women
Exhibit
May 1-6
FOOT
Office





The centrally located historic property known as the Mill House is being considered for purchase by the town of Chelmsford.

Mill House for sale

By Sharon Flaherty Weitz
Staff Writer

The tiny, antique Mill House, located at 24 Central Square and once the site of a bustling bakery operated by Ruby Emery, is up for sale. Among the prospective buyers is the town of Chelmsford.

Long-time Chelmsford resident Ruby Emery, who this year celebrated her 96th birthday, recently moved to Sunny Acres Nursing Home on Billerica Road for health reasons. Sale of the Mill House is being handled by Emery's attorney John Connell of Westford. Connell said private negotiations are underway with more than one prospective buyer at this point.

See **HISTORIC**, page 12

12/23/93

Chelmsford Independent

Historic property up for sale

HISTORIC, from page 1

Town Manager Bernard Lynch confirmed that the town is considering making an offer on the 12,000 square foot property. "We are exploring the possible uses for the property," Lynch said. "However, there are also private individuals considering a purchase."

There have been people in town suggesting that the Mill House be razed and the property used as a parking area for Central Square, but Lynch declined to comment on any potential uses for the land.

During a birthday celebration for Ruby Emery in September of last year, Selectman Peter Lawlor recalled how he had often walked to her bakery as a child and has yet to find a jelly doughnut to rival the ones she used to bake.

Former Selectman Dennis Ready recalled how Emery would allow children to fill their own freshly

baked doughnuts. "We would take the doughnut to the jelly machine, push the spout all the way to the bottom and stuff about two pounds of jelly in the doughnut," Ready laughed. "I'll never forget that bakery."

The small white Mill House, which Ruby Emery claims was built in the year 1656, was bustling a mere 20 years ago with people coming to purchase the wonderful goods she baked in what was then called The Mill House Bakery. At that time, the bakery was located in the front of the building with Emery living in the back. However, shortly after Dunkin Donuts arrived in Chelmsford, The Mill House Bakery closed its doors.

Resident Jane Drury who conducts research for the Historical Commission, said the architecture of the Mill House suggests it was actually constructed in the 1840s. The original mill, which was located in the woods, was both a saw and grist

mill, Drury said. In the early 1800s, the mill was moved next to the Mill Pond, behind the house. It is believed that a portion of the Mill House was used as a countinghouse for the saw and grist mill, according to Drury's research.

The house, with hand-pegged beams and wide-planked flooring, has six first floor rooms, including a front room, dining room, kitchen, pantry, bedroom and workroom as well as a bathroom. The upper level has four rooms.

In 1877, the Mill House was enlarged by then-miller and deacon of the Central Baptist Church, David Perham, Drury said. Ruby Emery purchase the Mill House and property in 1943 from William Dobbins and first ran a tea room before opening the bakery. When Emery moved in, the bathroom was added and a stove was removed from the living room to reveal a fireplace. Drury said.

Is this building historical? Absolutely.

The Mill House standing near the middle of Central Square served as a dwelling for the various mill owners throughout much of its history. In early days people usually also used their homes as their office, and that is the situation in this case. During the last half of 1877 Deacon David Perham, the then mill owner and resident in the house, enlarged it at the rear and moved the office into the new section of the house. In 1993 that is the 1 story section with ridge roof, located between the rear chimney and the small 1 story section with fairly flat roof added ca 1943 to the very rear (by Ruby Emery).

The first mill on Beaver Brook was a saw mill erected by John Parker in 1698. Remains of that mill could still be seen when Wilson Waters wrote his history, published in 1917. The entrance to that mill at the upper dam was through what is now Bridge Street, just west of Forefathers' Cemetery. By 1794 it was both a saw mill and a grist mill.

In 1826 the saw & grist mills were moved by Jonathan Parker to the lower location and a new mill erected. The mill pond extended west from behind the house at 24 Central Square, behind and well beyond the ginger ale factory. Railroad tracks were located built on its northern bank. This mill building burned in 1861, was replaced the following year and remained until 1923, when it was torn down. It was replaced by store houses of the J. Cushing Co. The mill pond is well remembered by older residents of Chelmsford, who recall many pleasant hours of skating on it.

Although not the first mill erected in town, this complex located at the center of town served a vital part in the development of Chelmsford. To quote the Lowell Sun (1923), "Our forefathers were very dependent on the miller and consequently anxious to have a mill established as a part of the industries" in the center of town. "The mill yard was filled with the fragrant fresh sawed boards....Loads of corn and other grains were also brought to the old mill by the farmers who raised them, to be ground into meal and flour." During the late 1800s and early 1900s Chelmsford center experienced a huge real estate boom when many, many new houses and some commercial buildings were erected. Billerica Road, Littleton Road, the Westlands, Warren Avenue area, High Street, are just a few areas which were developed at that time. People were flocking out from Lowell to live in the "country", taking the train into the city for their work. The mill, with its office/residence, played an indispensable part in providing lumber for much this construction. Ice to cool many local ice boxes came from the pond until replaced by electricity in the Twentieth Century.

Moses Hale, a part owner, ran the mills in the 1820s (he also erected and ran carding & powder mills on the Concord River in what is now Lowell). George S. Wood, a Billerica man, purchased the mill property in 1849 and moved into the house. It was he who rebuilt the mill burned in 1861. A company called the Chelmsford Mill Co. operated the business for about twenty years and consisted of Deacon David Perham (deacon of the Central Baptist Church, miller, & resident of the house), Dr. Levi Howard, Benjamin Minot Fiske, and E. King Parkhurst, all very prominent men in Chelmsford. He gave up the property in 1884 because of advanced age. The Dutton Brothers, Edwin E. & Lewis M., bought it from Mr. Perham. Herbert Sweetser later owned it with George W. Day, and they ran it under the name of Sweetser & Day, for 21 years. Mr. Day also dealt with poultry feeds, roofing, farm machinery and tools. He put in power grinding at the mill, "operating a saw mill in the winter, to which many logs were drawn. He employed many men, and his teams covered a wide territory, his specialty being the Town's trade."

The age of the house is not known at this time, but it was probably erected in

the first half of the 19th century, perhaps about the time of the move of the mill. Many of the windows contain old bubbled glass. Federal paneled doors are throughout the house (1 floor seen by J.B.D.) The nice federal style, shallow fireplace with warming oven would be typical of that period. It was in working condition in 1975. Boards located under the stairs leading from 1st to 2nd floors are circular sawed (could date either from erection of the house, or if new stairs were installed at some time); the mill used an early up & down saw, later replaced by a circular saw.

Miss Ruby Emery and Miss Meserve ran a "home cooked food shop" here for a few years after leaving the "Ark" (located at the corner of Bartlett & High Acton Rd.). After that they ran a very popular bakery in the house.

This small house, the last remaining portion of the old mill complex, should not be torn down to provide a parking area for just a few cars. More and more of our old heritage is disappearing; let us guard what our sires have won.

Sources:

Lowell Courier-Citizen, July 23, 1913

Lowell Sun, 1923

Chelmsford Eagle, Dec. 12, 1877; Dec. 15, 1883

Illustrated History of Lowell & Vicinity, published by Courier-Citizen Company, 1897

Architecture in Early New England, by Abbott Lowell Cummings, 1959

Ruby Emery, April 22, 1975, January 1982

History of Chelmsford, by Rev. Wilson Waters, 1917

Atlases & maps: 1875 Beers Atlas; 1889 Atlas; 1912 Plan 77, Bk. M; 1856 Walling's County Map; 1831 Map

Lowell North District Registry of Deeds



Handley brothers are restoring Chelms-

Chelmsford's Old Mill House finds a pair of saviors

By LAURA DOYLE
Sun Staff

CHELMSFORD — For years, the historic Old Mill House in the town center has stood dilapidated and crumbling.

On the market for three years, the only potential buyer for the home at 24 Central St. was the town, which planned to replace it with a parking lot. But despite its appearance, Town Meeting representatives spared the building and hoped for someone with the means and the desire to restore it.

Their gamble paid off this year, when two longtime Chelmsford businessmen bought and began to restore the house that has stood in the town's center for hundreds of years.

Jack and Jay Handley, owners of the Chelmsford Card and Gift Shop, have poured their energy and resources into refurbishing the building.

"It's a nice house, and there's no reason for it to be ruined," Jack Handley said. "It's very

Please see **HOUSE/15**

Old Mill House FOR PERFECTION IN FOOD



Has an unexcelled reputation for home cooked food - using the finest recipes, some very old, some very new, all with the highest quality ingredients.

All cooking is done in our kitchen under strict supervision.

24 CENTRAL SQUARE
CHELMSFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

HISTORIC MASSACHUSETTS
Endangered Resources Program

* RESOURCE INFORMATION FORM *

1. Date 14 Dec. 94

2. Applicant Name Chelmsford Historical Commission
Applicant Address 50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford, MA 01824
Applicant Telephone (508) 256-6240

3. Property Name The Mill House
Property Address 24 Central Square, Chelmsford, MA 01824
(provide labeled photos of property if possible)

4. Property Owner Ruby Emery
Owner Address _____
Owner Telephone _____

5. Description of the endangered resource:

Briefly describe the property's structures, setting or major features including the architectural style, later additions, and alterations.

1½ story frame constructed house.

Enlarged in 1889, 1917. Back portion reconstructed in 1943. This is what exists today. Federal doors and a federal fireplace on the inside are nice features.

6. **Describe the setting:**

Does the immediate site retain its original character? Are there open space issues? Is there evidence of early landscape planning?

The setting is much changed. The house was used by the mill owner and his other buildings ran back along the brook. The house is all that is left.

7. **Context:**

What does the surrounding area look like? Is it similar to the original setting? How has it changed? For example, is the eighteenth century farmhouse sitting in the middle of a sub-division? Does the covered bridge abut a gas station?

The area has grown around this property. It is now a town center
The original setting was open space along the brook.

8. **Historical Significance:**

Briefly state the historical significance and relevance to the local community of the property or threatened open space. Is the resource listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places?

This house was occupied by the mill owner in a location used since 1678, first as a grist and saw mill and in later years as a bakery.

9. **Describe the circumstances which cause the resource to be threatened:**
What is the nature of the threat to the property? Threats might include demolition, arson, neglect, inappropriate rehabilitation, vandalism, isolation and pending sale or foreclosure without restrictions in place. Threats may also include projected developments which destroy essential contexts and viewsheds for significant properties.

The building was up for sale and the Town Manager attempted to purchase it for a parking lot. This was rejected at Town Meeting.

10. **Commitment of the Community:**
Is there any indication of community support for the preservation of the nominated resource? Have there been any suggestions or plans for the re-use of the property?

The Town Meeting Representatives voted to keep this property as it is, citing many historical places have been lost and they did not want this property taken for a parking lot.

Please return this completed Property Information Form no later than January 6, 1995



R. W. EMERSON
PUBL.

THE MILL POND,
CHELMSFORD CENTRE, MASS.



Courtesy of Richard O. Lahue

Old Mill House

FOR PERFECTION IN FOOD



"Old Mill House" - Chelmsford, Mass.

Has an unexcelled reputation for home cooked food - using only the finest recipes, some very, very old, some very new, all made with the highest quality ingredients.

All cooking is done in our own kitchen under strict supervision.

24 CENTRAL SQUARE
CHELMSFORD, MASSACHUSETTS



Jan 1979 Flood



7/30/2004 F. Merriam



FIRST MILL ERECTED ON BEAVER BROOK IN 1676
THIS BUILDING WAS USED AS THE COUNTING HOUSE
FOR THE MILL, AND FOR MANY YEARS AS A
RESIDENCE. LATER OPERATED AS THE OLD MILL
HOUSE BAKE SHOP.

1943 - 1972 BY
RUBY MARY EMERY

RESTORED BY:
JOHN M. HANDLEY
AND SONS 1997





Old
Mill House
1656

NEWCOMB & ASSOCIATES, LLC
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

