

FORM B – BUILDING

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

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Areas(s) Form Number
 83-336-21 Billerica 150

Town Chelmsford
 Place (neighborhood or village) Chelmsford Center

Address 55 High St.
 Historic Name Dr. Rix House
 Uses: Present residence
 Original residence
 Date of Construction 1893
 Source Lowell Weekly Journal
 Style/Form Victorian

Architect/Builder
 Exterior Material: shingles
 Foundation original house: fieldstone
 addition: cement
 Wall/Trim wood shingle
 Roof many varied angles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures
 1971 outdoor pool
 ca 1968 unattached, 2 car garage built to replace old one
Major Alterations (with dates) see attached
 1979 36' x 26' two story addition ; J. George Picard, builder
 1896 "substantial improvements" were made upon the premises

Condition excellent
 Moved no yes Date
 Acreage 2.59 acres

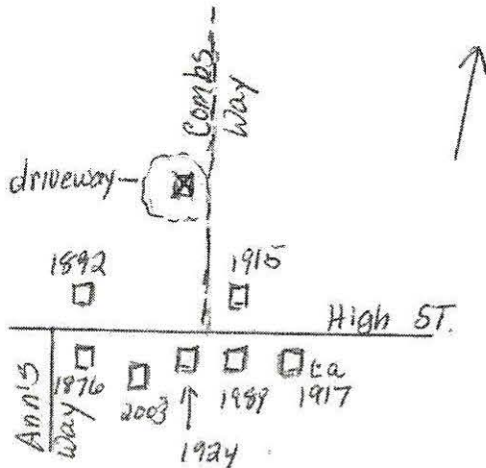
Setting set well back, on top a small hill overlooking High St. Light woods of hardwood & evergreens are on 3 sides of the house; between the house & road is mostly clear. A large beech tree is in front, with a sign on it: "Largest Beech Tree Lazy Daisy Gardeners June 1996." However, the 1 on the Center Common may be larger. A stonewall outlines the front line along High St.



MA_Chelmsford_HighStreet_55_IMG_2875
 10/14/2006 CHC_2006_2 FSM

Sketch Map

Draw a map showing the building's location in relation to the nearest cross streets and/or major natural features. Show all buildings between inventoried building and nearest intersection or natural feature. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Circle and number the inventoried building. Indicate north.



Recorded by Jane B. Drury

Organization for Chelmsford Historical Commission

Date (month / year) April 2006

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION see continuation sheet

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

This large ½ story Victorian dwelling with turret is probably unique in Chelmsford. Even when just erected it was described as a "sightly residence." Alternating shingles cover its sides. Recently added, intricately mullioned windows are on parts of the original house.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE see continuation sheet

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.

Ground was broken for the new residence at 55 High Street in Nov. 1892. By July 14, 1893 Dr. F. R. Rix's "new house on High street, is well toward completion and from its commanding elevation presents a fine appearance and commands a wide view." By Nov. 11, 1893 "Dr. F. R. Rix is fairly settled in his new and sightly residence on High Street." The house had water meter #1. Before coming to Chelmsford Dr. Frank R. & Ella Rix and family had lived in Lowell, where he worked as both a physician and as supervisor of music in the Lowell public schools. Three years after moving into the residence at 55 High St. about 7:30 PM Dr. Rix "met with an accident which was a narrow escape from more serious results. At the time he was on his way to Lowell, and when near the house of Dr. Howard [21 Chelmsford St.] turned to cross the electric track and came in collision with a car which was under full headway. The buggy was badly damaged and the horse injured in one foot, but the doctor had the good fortune to escape unharmed." In June of the following year "substantial improvements were made upon his premises on High street." On Friday evenings during the winter of 1897 he taught a singing school in the Odd Fellows Hall [Central Square]. In 1899 the Rix family moved to New York City for the winter, as he had obtained a position there as supervisor of music in the city schools there. Summers were spent in the High Street house. The family was still in New York City and the house was unoccupied on June 26th, 1900 when it "narrowly escaped being destroyed by fire, a spark from an [railroad] engine having set fire to the grass near the buildings, and the posts of the windmill were on fire when neighbors arrived and extinguished the flames." The family was again away for the winter months when on Jan. 4, 1901 the house "was recently entered by unauthorized parties and experienced a pretty thorough overhauling." During the summer of 1902 the house was occupied by Mr. & Mrs. A. J. Howe, who had owned & resided in 66 High St. for a short time a few years earlier. Mrs. Rix (Ella) had come for a short stay early in the summer of 1902, but a house in Brooklyn had been purchased by Dr. & Mrs. Rix, and the family stayed there for the rest of that summer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES see continuation sheet

Lowell Weekly Journal: Nov. 4, 1892 through Dec. 20, 1901
Lowell Sunday Telegram: June 1, 1902
Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds: Bk. 236, pg. 199; Aug. 29, 1892
Records of Chelmsford Assessors, Town Clerk, Building Inspector
Chelmsford & Lowell Street directories
Charles McGowan: Feb. 15, 1979
Beth Benoit & Carole Russell: April 4, 2006

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
CHELMSFORD

Property Address
55 HIGH STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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Area(s) Form No.

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HISTORY

In July 1907 the residence was sold by the Rixes to Azella A. & Amasa H. Smith, who moved in with their daughter, Alice. The Smiths came from Lowell, where Amasa worked as a clerk in the post office. He died in 1913, age 65, but his widow, Arzella, remained in the High Street house until 1920, when she sold it and moved to nearby Bartlett Street.

George H. & Esther Spillane were the owners for the next 21 years. They also moved here from Lowell. He worked in insurance. They moved to Billerica in 1926, and the house was rented or unoccupied for the rest of their ownership, and, as a result, deteriorated. The Miller families did rent it from the early 1920s until the early 1940s. Both Andrew P. Miller & his wife Selma and Anthony W. Miller & his wife Eline had several children. Andrew was a farmer and Anthony was an auto mechanic.

Kendrick D. & Helen P. Rollins of Winthrop purchased the property early in 1947, and they were the next known occupants. He was the manager of a telephone company before becoming its superintendent. Twenty years later, in 1967, Charles and Marie McGowan bought the house and soon moved in with several children, and more were born after that. Charles was a dentist. His mother, Lucy McGowan also lived with them in a new addition made for her; she was here until her death probably in 1972. By 1984 the family had moved to Westford, and James W. & Catherine McClutchy took over the ownership. Mr. McClutchy was a builder and erected several houses in Chelmsford. Lisa and Troy Boley, an engineer, were the owner/occupants between 2000 & 2005.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
CHELMSFORD

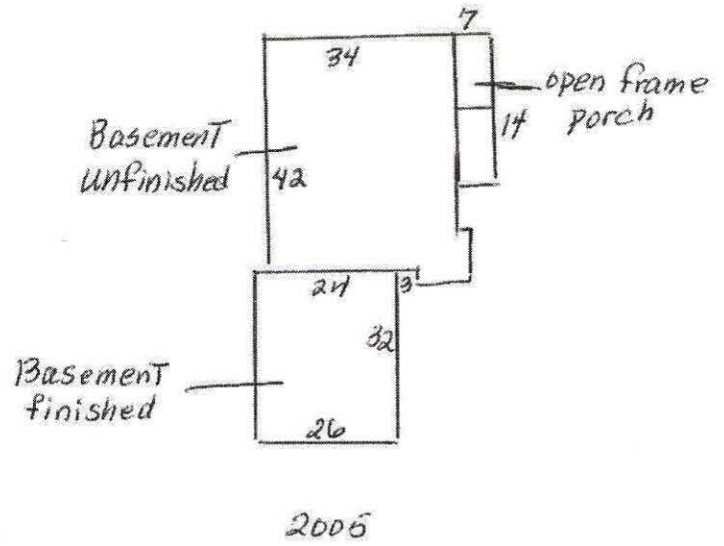
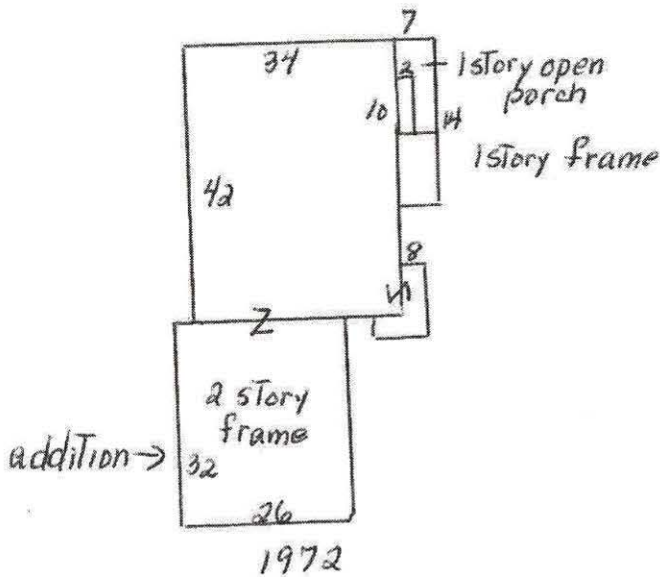
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Area(s) Form No.

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ALTERATIONS



1897

"substantial improvements upon his premises"

ca 1950

new fireplace

undated

deck added on left side, near rear of house; rather poor condition in 2005

1967

remodeled kitchen fireplace

ca 1950 fireplace replaced

2 story addition; 36' x 26'; 24' high; wood; builder: J. George Picard of Lowell

apartment on 1st story; some items used from remodeled kitchen upstairs

ca 1970

unattached garage replaced by a new one; behind house

1971

new pool; left of house; concrete; 25' x 50'

ca 1975

hot tub built on porch at right rear of house. This has been removed at an unknown time.

undated

most windows are replacements: bow & picture windows not recent changes; intricate mullions 2004 or 5
turret windows: not original, need replacing; are replacement casement windows

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Area(s) . Form No.

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ALTERATIONS

southeast side

March 2006



1968 addition



May 17, 1990



INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Chelmsford 55 High Street

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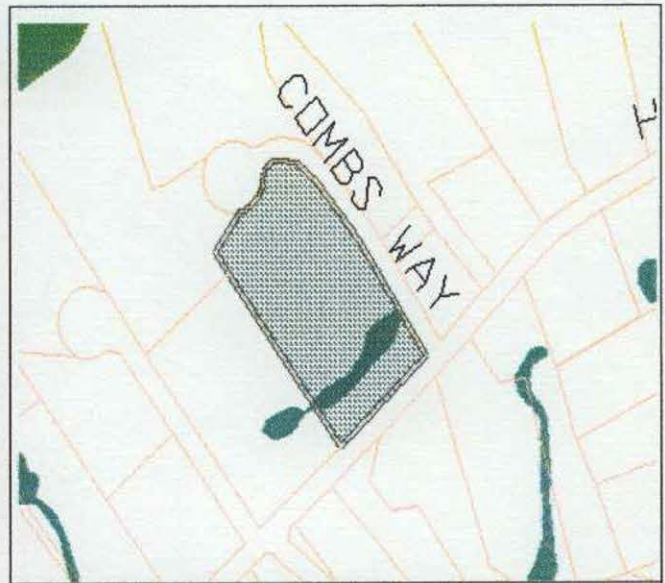
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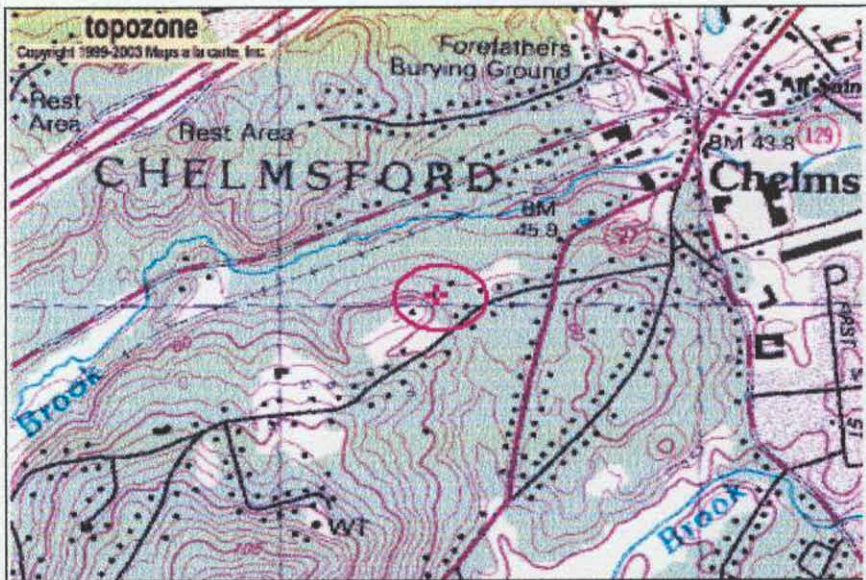
Locational Information



55 High Street viewed from local.live.com



55 High Street, Assessor's Map



Topozone excerpt from Billerica USGS quadrangle.

Decimal coordinates as provided by Topozone: 42°35'31" N 71°21'36" W

Deed Summary Additions

Bk. 19482, pg. 184	24 Oct. 2005	Troy M. & Lisa Boley to Beth Benoit & Carole Russell, 55 High St. \$860,000 2.59 A. & buildings: Lot 1, McClutchy 1985 subdivision plan, Pl. Bk 151, Pl. 45 including: easement right to pass over Combs Way in common with lots 2 & 3
Bk. 13100, pg. 054	14 May 2002	James W. & Catherine L. McClutchy to Troy M. & Lisa Boley, 55 High St. \$675,000 2.59 A. & buildings: southeast side of Combs Way Lot 1 on 1985 McClutchy Plan, Plan Bk. 151, Plan 45 including: easement right to pass over Combs Way in common with lots 2 & 3 same: 1988 McClutchy deed, bk. 4429, pg. 35
Bk. 4429, pg. 35	3 March 1988	James W. McClutchy to James W. & Catherine L. McClutchy \$1 2.59 A. & buildings: southeast side of Combs Way Lot 1 on 1985 McClutchy Plan, Plan Bk. 151, Plan 45 including: easement right to pass over Combs Way in common with lots 2 & 3 same: portion of 1984 McGowan deed, bk. 2367, pg. 307
Bk. 2367, pg. 307	10 Oct. 1984	Charles E. & Marie L. McGowan, Westford. to James W. McClutchy, 55 High St. \$320,000 land & buildings: north side of High St. leading over Robbins Hill same: 1967 Rollins deed, Bk. 1790, pg. 411

55 High Street

Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds

Bk. 1170, pg. 41	4/ 5/1967	Kendrick D. & Helen R. Rollins to Charles E. & Marie L. McGowan land & buildings
Bk. 1066, pg. 93	4/23/1947	George H. & Esther E. Spillane, Billerica, to Kendrick D. & Helen R. Rollins, of Winthrop land & buildings
Bk. 735, pg. 177	4/ 9/1926	Elizabeth F. Tiffany, Lowell, to George H. & Esther E. Spillane, Billerica land & buildings
Bk. 735, pg. 176	4/ 9/1926	George H. Spillane, Billerica, to Elizabeth F. Tiffany, Lowell land & buildings
Bk. 626, pg. 443	5/15/1920	Arzella A. Smith, widow, to George H. Spillane, Lowell land & buildings
Bk. 407, pg. 574	7/20/1907	Ella M. Rix, Flushing, N.Y., to Arzelle A. Smith, Lowell land & buildings
Bk. 262, pg. 164	3/19/1895	Mary E. Walker, Lowell, to Ella M. Rix land & buildings subject - 1849 rights to Sewall Parkhurst
Bk. 262, pg. 163	3/19/1895	Frank R. Rix to Mary E. Walker, Lowell land & buildings subject - 1849 rights to Sewall Parkhurst
Bk. 236, pg. 199	8/29/1892	Alonzo L. Russell, Lowell, to Frank R. Rix, Lowell land subject - 1849 rights to Sewall Parkhurst

Lowell Weekly Journal

- Nov. 4, 1892 Dr. Rix is soon to break ground for his new house on High street.
- Dec. 2, 1892 Dr. Rix has broken ground for the cellar of his new house on High street,
- July 14, 1893 Dr. Rix's new house on High street is well toward completion and from its commanding elevation presents a fine appearance and commands a wide view.
- Nov. 11, 1893 Dr. F. R. Rix is fairly settled in his new and slightly residence on High street.
- Mar. 6, 1896 Dr. F. R. Rix of Chelmsford, while driving in that town Monday night about 7:30 o'clock met with an accident which was a narrow escape from more serious results. At the time he was on the way to Lowell, and when near the house of Dr. Howard turned to cross the electric track and came in collision with a car which was under full headway. The buggy was badly damaged and the horse injured in one foot, but the doctor had the good fortune to escape unharmed.
- June 4, 1897 Dr. F. R. Rix is making substantial improvements upon his premises on High street.
- Oct. 29, 1897 A singing school to be taught by Dr. F. R. Rix is an assured fact. The use of Odd Fellows hall has been secured and a preliminary meeting, free to all interested, will be held Friday evening, November 5, at 7:30 o'clock.
- Aug. 5, 1898 Dr. F. R. Rix and family are at their cottage, Baker's Island, for two weeks.
- June 30, 1899 Dr. F. R. Rix and family expect to remove in September to New York city for the winter. This change seems to be necessary on account of Dr. Rix's position there as supervisor of music in the city schools.
- May 4, 1900 The buildings of Dr. F. R. Rix in High street narrowly escaped being destroyed by fire, 26th, a spark from an engine having set fire to the grass near the buildings and the posts of the windmill were on fire when neighbors arrived and extinguished the flames. Dr. Rix and family are yet in New York and the house is unoccupied.
- June 8, 1900 The house of Dr. F. R. Rix in High street is re-opened for the summer, a part of the family having returned from New York Friday.
- Jan. 4, 1901 The house of Dr. F. R. Rix in High street was recently entered by unauthorized parties and experienced a pretty thorough overhauling. The house is unoccupied during the winter as the owner and family are here only in the summer.
- July 5, 1901 The family of Dr. F. R. Rix is in town for the summer months.
- Sept. 6, 1901 Helen, only daughter of Dr. & Mrs. F. R. Rix is critically ill with peritonitis at their summer home in High street. A consultation of physicians was held Sunday.
- Sept. 13, 1901 Helen Rix, who has been critically ill, is steadily improving.
- Dec. 20, 1901 Helen, daughter of Dr. & Mrs. F. R. Rix, who was seriously ill here last summer, but so far recovered as to return in the autumn to their home in Flushing, New York, has been much worse, and last week was obliged to submit to a surgical operation to save her life. At last accounts her condition was hopeful.

Lowell Sunday Telegram

June 1, 1902 Mr. & Mrs. A. J. Howe are to occupy the Rix homestead this summer. Mrs. Rix was in town for a short stay recently but Dr. Rix has purchased a house in Brooklyn and they will remain there this summer.



High Street #55

10/13/2006 F. Merriam



