

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

35/104/3	Westford		CLM.367
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Town/City: Chelmsford

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

Photograph



Address: 212 Main Street

Historic Name: John N. Perry Store and Post Office

Uses: Present: multiple-family dwelling

Original: commercial

Date of Construction: ca. 1850

Source: deed research

Style/Form: no style

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood siding/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Change of use

Mid-20th c.: roof extension, fenestration change

Ca. 1990: replacement siding and windows

Condition: Fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: .53 A

Setting: The building is located at the northeast corner of Main and School Sts. A wide sidewalk is between the building front and Main St. An asphalt parking area is behind the building. Mature shrubs are along the front of the building. The surrounding area includes 19th and 20th c. residential development.

Locus Map



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

Organization: Chelmsford Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): June 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

CHELMSFORD

212 MAIN STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

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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 two-story building has a granite foundation, walls clad in painted wood shingles with wood trim and an asphalt-shingled side gable roof with gable returns. No chimneys are visible on the building. Fenestration throughout the building consists of replacement one-over-one double-hung, sliding, and casement windows. The primary (west) façade is nine bays wide. Single windows are located in the first, second, and fifth bays from the north. Casement windows flanked by double-hung windows are located in the fourth and eighth bays. Paired windows are in the sixth bay. Entries leading into the apartment complex are located in the third and seventh bays. The entries feature replacement doors and one-bay porches with flat roofs supported by round columns. The porches also feature short railings at the door and along the roof. The ninth bay features a single window as well as the same one-bay porch, thus suggesting an entry was historically in this bay as well.

An undated photograph of the building shows it when it was in use as a store (see below). At this date the roof line had two front gable portions at the north and south ends. Since that date, the roof line has been altered so that the north front gable is still visible and the side gable portion has been heightened. The fenestration pattern has also been altered to accommodate residential units.

The building is an altered example of a mid-nineteenth century commercial building that retains historic integrity of setting and location.

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.

Deed research traced the property's ownership history to 1849 when David Simonds and John Goss sold the property to John Farrer, who in turn sold the property in 1856 to John N. Perry. The 1856 map of the area shows a building at this location and is labeled as the post office. In 1848 the Boston and Lowell Railroad opened through West Chelmsford and shortly thereafter the post office opened to serve the area, saving citizens the hassle of traveling to North Chelmsford for this purpose. The 1875 map also shows the building serving as the post office as well as a store; it was still owned by Perry at this date. Perry (1819-1885, born in Maine) is listed in the 1870 US Population Census as a retail store keeper in Chelmsford with a combined real estate and personal value of \$17,000, which was among the highest in the area. Living with him at this date were wife Abigail (born ca. 1825 in Massachusetts) and daughter Carrie (born ca. 1857 in Maine). The Perry family resided at 197-199 Main Street (CLM.86). Soon after Perry's death his wife Abigail sold the property in 1886 to Marcus H. Winship. The 1889 map of West Chelmsford shows that Winship owned the property and operating a store and scale house on the site; the map also shows the post office relocated to School Street. The 1900 census lists Winship (1849-1912, born in Massachusetts) living on West Chelmsford Road, which is Main Street, and working as a grocer. Living with Winship were his wife Clara (1855-1903), two daughters Florence and Edla, his mother Mary, and sister Lizzie.

In 1904 Winship sold the property to Frank Bickford. The 1910 census lists Bickford (born ca. 1864) living on Main Street and employed as the postmaster; therefore, the post office was relocated back to this building. Living with Bickford were his wife Lillian (born ca. 1872), teenaged children Ralph and Rita, and boarder Robert Gunson (born ca. 1885), who worked in the grocery store. In addition to postmaster Bickford was also a special police officer, distributor of books for the North Chelmsford Library Association, and publisher of local postcards. In 1929 Bickford transferred the property to daughter Rita, who by this date had married Anthony Anderson. In 1940 Rita was listed in the census as the postmaster living on Main Street with Anthony, a foreman in the quarry, as well as father Frank Bickford, who at the age of 75 was a mail messenger. Rita was listed as postmaster until 1954 when she and Anthony sold the property to Warren and Naomi Lahue. City directory research suggests

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shortly after this sale that the property was converted into multiple-family dwellings. The 1956 directory lists several people living at 212 Main Street, but the Lahues were then living on Linwood Street. The Lahues sold the property in 1971 to a realty trust and one member of this trust, Anthony Decarolis, retains ownership of the building.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Beers, F.W. *County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts*. J.B. Beers & Co., New York. 1875.

Drury, Jane. Personal collection of building history materials for 212 Main Street. Currently kept in private collection.

Genealogical research, including U.S. and Massachusetts census records; birth, marriage, and death records; and city directory records from ancestry.com.

Geo. H. Walker & Co. *Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*. Geo. H. Walker & Co., Boston, MA. 1889.

Merriam, Fred. *Images of America: North and West Chelmsford*. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina.

Middlesex North Registry of Deeds. www.lowelldeeds.com.

Walling, Henry F. *Map of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*. Smith & Bumstead, Boston, MA. 1856.

Waters, Dr. Wilson. *The History of Chelmsford, Massachusetts*. Lowell, Mass., 1917.



Undated photograph showing building at 212 Main Street before alterations on the left from Jane Drury Collection.

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Published by F. E. Bickford

Post Office Square, West Chelmsford, Mass.

Undated postcard showing the building at 212 Main Street during Frank Bickford's ownership from Jane Drury Collection.

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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 building at 212 Main Street would be a contributing resource to that district as an example of residential architecture constructed during its period of significance that retains some historic integrity.