NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hildreth-Robbins House

other names/site number Redwing Farm; Chamberlain-Byam House

2. Location

street & number 19 Maple Road N/A not for publication

city or town Chelmsford N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Middlesex code 017 zip code 01824

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
- ☐ entered in the National Register
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ☐ removed from the National Register
- ☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Hildreth-Robbins House
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

_ private
X public-local
_ public-State
_ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

X building(s)
_ district
_ site
_ structure
_ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
4	0	structures
2	0	objects
8	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL: Georgian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: fieldstone
walls WOOD: weatherboard
roof ASPHALT
other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. SIGNIFICANCE

The Hildreth-Robbins House meets Criteria A and C of the National Register at the local level. The building is significant under **Criterion A** as the farmhouse of one of south Chelmsford's principal 18th- and 19th-century farms, as well as for its association with members of the Hildreth, Robbins, Chamberlain, Adams, and Byam families and their relatives. This particular succession of owners represents a two-centuries-long chain of descent from some of Chelmsford's original settlers. Each of the multi-generational households occupying the house from ca. 1740 through the first quarter of the 20th century illustrates, in their own way, important social, domestic, and economic trends of their respective eras. Jonas Hildreth, John Robbins, 3rd, and Phineas Chamberlain were 18th century yeoman farmers practicing a form of mixed husbandry. Subsequently, under two generations of Byams, the old farm took part in the increasingly specialized and market-oriented agriculture that characterized eastern Massachusetts farming in the second half of the 19th century. Thomas Minot Adams' occupancy from the 1840s until his death in the 1890s typifies the role of the bachelor farmer during a time when farms were often managed in tandem by more than one family member, and the presence of Nathan Bean illustrates the essential work of the mid-19th century hired farmhand. Even the property's brief ownership by innkeeper-turned-farmer Jefferson Loring in the early 1840s may shed light on the decline of the roadside tavern during that same period shortly before the coming of the regional railroads.

What is known about the women in the house is also illustrative of changing patterns in domestic and community life. Three of the 18th-century male owners outlived multiple wives, some of whom clearly died from complications of childbirth. By contrast, the life of Hannah Mariah (Adams) Byam, Chelmsford's oldest citizen in the early 1900s, spanned nearly an entire century. Her charitable works and her influence on the organization of the Chelmsford Baptist Church, which paralleled that of her husband and son, illustrate one aspect of the evolving social empowerment of women in the 19th century. Finally, the youthful, educated Sarah Hildreth, who literally left her mark on the frame of the house, and who briefly owned the major South Chelmsford farm in her own right while still in her twenties, is a rare instance of farm ownership by a young woman in the 18th century.

The property fulfills **Criterion C** as a fine, well-preserved example of an 18th-century New England farmhouse which evolved over time in ways that are as characteristic of their eras as its occupants were of the social climate of their times. The non-symmetrical plan, with rooms on one side of the "center" chimney much larger than those on the other, is a pre-1750 arrangement found throughout Middlesex County. The evidence of a rear leanto which was later raised to two stories, a major Federal remodeling that took place after the Revolution, the addition of rear stairs, and the building of an early 19th-century ell, attached line of sheds, and later 19th-century carriagehouse/stable are all important illustrations of regional architectural trends.

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In spite of some 20th-century changes, the reduction in size of the property, and the loss of some outbuildings, the property retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association.

Background and early history.

The exact date of construction of this house, and the identity of its first occupants, are both somewhat uncertain. However, it has unquestionable significance in the development of the town of Chelmsford as the well-preserved farmhouse of one of the principal farms in the south part of town, owned for over 200 years by descendants of at least a half dozen of the town's earliest families.

One of the earliest communities in Middlesex County, Chelmsford was established as a plantation in 1655. With the subsequent absorption of lands from Indian Praying Towns and a large additional grant of land by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the town increased greatly in size through the late 17th- and first quarter of the 18th century. Considerable territory was lost over the next several decades, however, to the formation of the new towns of Littleton (1725), Westford (1729-1730), Dunstable (1755), and Carlisle (1780.) More land was lost to the formation of Lowell in 1826, with subsequent minor boundary adjustments taking place through the third quarter of the 19th century.

A linear settlement developed early around the meetinghouse at Chelmsford center, and fishing and early colonial mill activity took place along some major local waterways, especially along Stony Brook and other tributaries of the Merrimack River in the north part of town. By the early 18th century several large, prosperous farms were operating in south Chelmsford east of Beaver Brook in the area of Heart Pond, and there were enough families in the vicinity for a garrison house, (located less than a mile northwest of the nominated property,) be designated for their protection. (CLM.100, NR-Ind., 105 Garrison Road, "Old Chelmsford Garrison House.") Colonial farming, which in Chelmsford consisted largely of general agriculture, grazing, and lumbering, grew more diversified over the course of the 18th century, with some dairying and apple growing emerging as specialties during the late colonial era.

By 1771, the population of the south part of Chelmsford was active and concentrated enough to form an early Baptist Society in that part of town. Leaders in the establishment of the church and in its subsequent operations included several members of households at the Hildreth-Robbins House. The farm's occupants were also influential in the formation of South Chelmsford as an agricultural village in the early part of the 19th century.

Hildreth family ownership, from before 1742 to 1771.

Architectural evidence indicates that the Hildreth-Robbins House was built in the 1730s or 1740s. The earliest likely recorded reference to a house on the property comes from a deed of 1742, in which **Richard Hildreth** sold his 50-acre homestead, "with orcharding and a dwelling house, barn, and

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cornhouse thereon," along with several other parcels of land, to **Jonas Hildreth**, who was apparently his son. This Richard Hildreth (1676/77-1760,) who was called Ensign Hildreth when he died, would have been of the third generation of the family founded by the original settler of the same name. In the 17th century, the first Richard Hildreth had been awarded extensive lands in the south part of Chelmsford for his services to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Future research into early Chelmsford records may reveal that this house stands on some of those original Hildreth lands. Further architectural investigation involving parts of the house not presently visible may help to determine whether any part of the structure predates the 1730s.

In the deed to Jonas, Ens. Richard Hildreth reserved the rights to half of all the buildings, lands, cattle, and farm equipment and tools for the rest of his life—a common arrangement between an aging colonial farmer and the son or nephew he had designated to follow him on the farm. In this case, however, it is not entirely clear whether part of the present building is actually Richard Hildreth's dwelling house, or whether it is a house that was built for Jonas.

Jonas Hildreth (1716-1770,) who was 26 when he acquired the farm, was married two years later. His wife was Sarah Heald of Acton. She died in 1746 at the age of 24, a week after their only daughter, Sarah, was born. Although Jonas married twice more before he died, no record has been found of any other Hildreth children being born in the house. An intriguing aspect of the house is the signature of Sarah Hildreth, which appears in chalk on the joists in the southwest chamber, as "Sarah Hildreth, her hand." It is most likely that this represents the hand of Sarah the daughter, rather than the mother. (It is also not likely to have been written by Jonas's third wife, Sarah [Proctor,] whom he married in 1759, as it appears from probate documents that she could not write her name.)

When Jonas Hildreth died in 1770, he left the rights to the customary "widow's thirds" of his real property to his wife for the rest of her life. (Her death date is not known.) His executor assigned her the east part of the homestead, including the part of the house east of a line drawn through the middle of the chimney, part of the garret (attic,) and half of the cellar.

All of the rest of Jonas Hildreth's property was inherited outright by his 24 year-old daughter. The inventory of his estate reveals that he died a reasonably wealthy man. It tells much about the farm he had built up, and about the considerable inheritance that fell to such a young woman. In addition to what by then was a 56-acre homestead farm, with house, barn, cornhouse, and root cellar, there were also 70 acres in Westford and at least 20 acres more of upland, meadow, and orchard lands. The estate included the livestock of a substantial mixed-husbandry farm of the years just before the Revolutionary War--a pair of oxen, a horse, half a dozen cows and cattle, four pigs, and 18 sheep.

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Sarah did not have to manage the farm on her own for very long, however. 17 months after her father died, she married a South Chelmsford neighbor, John Robbins, 3rd.

John Robbins, 3rd ownership, 1771-1776.
It is likely that Sarah and John only lived in the house that she inherited for a few years after her father died. John Robbins, 3rd (b. 1748) was a member of another of Chelmsford's early, landed families. His parents were John and Susannah (Harwood) Robbins, and his paternal grandmother was a Hildreth. Both of his parents died in the summer of 1775, and together with his brother, Jonathan, he inherited all of his father's real estate, which included considerable lands in both Chelmsford and Acton.

Perhaps because he and Sarah took up residence on one of the Robbins farms (in 1776 they were recorded as living in Acton,) shortly after his father's estate was probated in the spring of 1776, they sold the Hildreth farm.

Chamberlain family ownership, 1776-1839.
The purchaser was **Phineas,** (also spelled **Phinehas,) Chamberlain** (1746-1813). Like John Robbins, he was soon to marry into the Hildreth family. His first wife and infant daughter had died within two months of each other the previous year, and in July of 1776 he married Sybil Hildreth, apparently of the branch of the Hildreth family who were living in Westford. She died in 1783, and Phineas later married Mary Adams of Chelmsford. Like the Hildreths, Healds, Proctors and Robbinses, both the Chamberlains and Adamses were among the oldest of the families in Chelmsford.

Phineas Chamberlain was a blacksmith as well as a farmer, and it was probably he who built the blacksmith shop which stood for many decades near the road a short distance southeast of the house. Like both Jonas and Richard Hildreth, he was married three times. Phineas had at least five children. His son, Joseph (1773-1830), who worked the farm with his father, was married in 1796, and he and his wife, Mary (Parker,) shared the house with his parents for many years. Judging by the architectural character of the many Federal style features in the building, it is likely that the house was extensively remodeled, and expanded to a full two stories (probably to better accommodate the two households,) around the time of Joseph and Mary's marriage.

In 1807, Phineas Chamberlain sold half of the farm to Joseph. When Phineas died six years later, Joseph came into full possession of the property. In 1829, the year before his own death from consumption, Joseph Chamberlain sold all his real estate holdings, consisting of over 136 acres, to his second son, **Parker Chamberlain**.

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At that time, the homestead farm measured 60 acres, and included the house, barn, the blacksmith's shop, and assorted other outbuildings. Parker (b. 1803), had married Mary Byam (of another old Chelmsford family) three years earlier. After Joseph Chamberlain died, his widow retained her widow's ownership interest in the property, and continued to live in the house with her son and his family.

In 1834, the homestead property was reduced somewhat when Parker Chamberlain sold the blacksmith shop, with ¾ of an acre, to his wife's brother, blacksmith Marcus Byam. Shortly afterward, Marcus Byam put up his own house there, the present 11 Maple Road (CLM.69).

Jefferson Loring ownership, (1839-1843.) Parker Chamberlain and his family subsequently moved to Lowell, and in 1839 he and his mother sold the farm, then 90 acres, to an innkeeper, **Jefferson Loring.** Mr. Loring owned the property for about four years, and it is believed that he operated a tavern in the house for a short time.

Thomas M. Adams ownership, (1843-1847.) By 1843, Jefferson Loring was listed as a farmer, rather than an innkeeper—probably an indication that like many others at that time, his inn and tavern had declined in profitability due to the combined forces of the temperance movement and the demise of stagecoach travel. In that year he sold the property to **Thomas Minot Adams**, a member of another old Chelmsford family which had owned considerable property in town during the colonial era. Early Adams holdings had included the large Adams-Heyward farm to the northwest, which may once have nearly adjoined the Hildreth-Robbins Farm, (see "Old Chelmsford Garrison House," 105 Garrison Road, CLM.100, NR-Ind.).

Byam family ownership (1847-1933). While Thomas Minot Adams, a lifelong bachelor, continued to live in the house for nearly 50 years more, in 1847 he sold it to his brother-in-law, **Solomon E. Byam** (1810-1873), who had married his sister, Hannah Mariah Adams. The long Byam ownership period illustrates the closely intertwined family connections that prevailed on many of Chelmsford's older farms through the 19th century. In addition to marrying an Adams, Solomon Byam was directly related to the Adams family through his mother, Abi Adams. He was the brother of Marcus Byam, who lived next door, and brother-in-law of Parker Chamberlain, husband of their sister, Mary.

In the mid-19th century, Solomon Byam and Thomas Adams worked together to make the old farm one of the more productive agricultural operations in the south part of Chelmsford. In 1850 they were managing a total of about 75 acres in mixed agricultural use. The land supported 10 cows and other cattle, and fields of hay, Indian corn, potatoes, and vegetables. Over the third quarter of the century,

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like many farms in the Chelmsford area, Solomon Byam's farm developed more of a specialty in dairying. By 1870 he was selling milk to regional markets, and in that year produced the largest amount of butter of any farmer in town, 820 pounds.

Solomon Byam was a shoemaker as well as a farmer, and probably had a small shoeshop on the property. In 1871, the Framingham and Lowell Railroad was built through the farm, passing north just west of the house on its way to Lowell. The South Chelmsford railroad depot was erected directly across the road, and Solomon Byam became the first stationmaster, a job he held until his death a few years later.

As noted above, over the years the inhabitants of 19 Maple Road were closely connected with the Chelmsford First Baptist Church. (CLM. 214, 2-4 Maple Road.) The Chelmsford Baptist Society was an early one in the region, founded in 1771, with its first meetinghouse built in South Chelmsford in 1772. In fact, by the middle of the 19th century the area around the intersection of Maple Road and the adjoining road to Acton, where the society erected its second meetinghouse in 1836, came to be known as "Baptist Village." From the beginning, the Baptist society included many members of the Robbins, Chamberlain, Adams, and Byam families. In his generation, Solomon Byam was the longtime church sexton, its Clerk for 17 years, and Superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School for over 11 years. Hannah Mariah Byam was also deeply involved with the church. She was an officer at the founding of its Social Circle in 1846, played a prominent role in the Sunday School, and was noted locally for her devotion to religious works and charitable causes.

Solomon E. Byam was also active in civic affairs at both the local and state levels. He was the town Tax Collector for five years, was active in the Republican party, and served as State Representative from Chelmsford in 1864. He was also one of the founding trustees of the 1859-1862 Chelmsford Academy, a private school which succeeded the "classical school" begun in 1825 under the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Solomon and Hannah Mariah Byam occupied the farm longer than any other owners—he for over 27 years, until his death in 1873, and she for more than 60 years. They had eight children, one of whom, Rufus Edwin, died of consumption at 26 after serving in the Civil War. A look at the household in 1855 provides some clues about how the spaces in the large farmhouse may have been used by the large extended Byam family, which filled it with three generations in much the same way that their predecessors had done. At that time, Solomon and Hannah Mariah were both in their forties, and were rearing six children—3 girls and 3 boys—ranging in age from one to 18. Thomas Minot Adams, then 45, would have occupied one room—perhaps the southeast chamber, the smaller of the two bedrooms at the front of the house. Mrs. Byam's 77 year-old mother also lived with them, and as an elderly person, she may have occupied the first-story bedroom off the former leanto

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kitchen. Their boarder and hired hand, a local young man named Nathan Bean, might have slept in part of the ell or in one of the outbuildings, and the older Byam children probably would have filled the rear second-story rooms.

When Solomon died in 1873, the house and farm passed to the Byams' son **Frank Colby Byam** (1848-1933). Hannah Mariah continued to live there until her death in 1909 at the age of 96, a few years after she was honored as Chelmsford's oldest citizen. Thomas Minot Adams remained part of the household as well, until his death in 1895 at the age of 84.

Since his teenage years, Frank Byam had worked the farm with his father and uncle, and at times with his brothers. After Solomon's death, Frank continued to raise cows and cattle, selling milk to market, but he no longer produced butter for sale. By 1880 he was also raising poultry and selling eggs, and maintained a sizable apple orchard from which he harvested several hundred bushels of apples a year. The 1914 Chelmsford tax list shows that he had two henhouses and a windmill, and owned both a barn and a horse barn. The "horse barn" may refer to the smaller stable/carriagehouse at the east end of the ell.

In addition to running the family farm, Frank Byam followed his father as caretaker of the nearby Baptist Church, and as station agent at the railroad depot across the road. In that capacity, he saw the railroad through several changes in ownership, as the Framingham & Lowell was succeeded by the Boston, Clinton, & Fitchburg Railroad, was subsequently absorbed by the Old Colony line, and later became part of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford. In 1895, Frank's son, Lyman, took over as station agent until the depot closed in 1921.

Like his father, Frank Byam was active in town affairs. He served six years on the Chelmsford School Committee, and was one of the town's early police officers. In the 1870s he was involved in the organization of the South Chelmsford Village Improvement Association and in the construction of its Liberty Hall. (CLM.275, 318 Acton Road.)

Frank Byam and his wife Amelia (Wetherbee) had three children, Lyman, Nettie, and Lucy. Amelia Byam died in 1925, and at the end of his life Frank lived with Lyman in Lowell. In the late 1920s and early '30s, the family used the house mainly as a summer residence.

Later 20th-century ownership. A year after Frank Byam's death in 1933, the Byam children sold 20 acres of the farm, with the farmstead, to **Glen R.** and **Abbie M. Blaisdell.** Mr. Blaisdell was a local mail carrier. The Blaisdells owned the property until 1946.

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The next owners were **George W. Nold, Jr.,** an electrical engineer, and his wife, **Virginia.** They in turn sold the property in 1953 to **Richard** and **Constance R. Porter**. Mr. Porter was an electronics engineer. The Porters, who gave the name "Redwing Farm" to the property, owned it for less than six years. During that time, however, they reduced it to 13.9 acres, and did considerable restoration work on the house. Changes made by the Porters included stripping woodwork, replicating paneling, and removing the partition that formed a passage across the rear kitchen. (See Section 7, Description.)

In 1959, the Porters sold the property to **G. Gordon Olsen, M.D.** of Carlisle, a hospital administrator. He and his wife, **Dr. Paula Olsen**, continued the restoration of the house. Dr. Gordon Olson died in 1966. The Olsons had bought back a piece of land across the road in 1964, part of which was subdivided into two house lots, and which ran with the title to the farmstead until at least the mid-1980s.

Subsequent owners of the Hildreth-Robbins House were contractor **Thomas A. Maloney** (from 1971 to 1973,) who lived there with his wife Jacqueline, and children Kathleen, a secretary, and son Thomas, Jr., a carpenter trained in historic restoration work. The Maloneys were succeeded by court officer **Leo H. Bourgeault** and his wife **Lucille** (1973-1976;) and **Dr. Michael Bartleson** and his wife **Donna**, a nurse, from 1976 to 1980. Dr. Bartleson owned the property solely after that time, and subsequently with his second wife **Nancy** until his death in 2000.

In the fall of 2002, the **Town of Chelmsford** purchased the house and remaining farmstead from Nancy Bartleson. At the time of the purchase the property was divided into two lots—1.32 acres with the house and the small pond to the rear, and 12.6 acres to the east and north. The larger piece will remain as conservation land under the Town of Chelmsford, and current plans are for the house and pond parcel to be sold to a private owner.

(end)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Books, articles and manuscripts

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Byam, Edwin C. Descendants of George Byam. 1975.

Drake, Samuel A., ed. *History of Middlesex County*, Vol. I. Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1880.

Hurd, D.H., ed. *History of Middlesex County, Mass.*, Vol. II. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co., 1890.

Stewart, Dwight C. *From John Heald to Jane Hale Howerton: a Hale Genealogy*. Louisville, KY: D.C. Stewart, 1994.

Waters, Rev. Wilson. *History of Chelmsford*. Lowell: Courier Citizen, 1917.

Public records:

Vital records of Acton, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, and Westford.

Federal Agricultural Census: 1850, 1870, 1880.

Massachusetts censuses: 1790, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, 1855, 1865.

Middlesex County Registry of Deeds.

Middlesex County probate records.

Massachusetts Historical Commission. Survey and Inventory of Historic, Architectural, and Cultural Resources of Chelmsford.

____. Reconnaissance Survey Report for Chelmsford. 1980.

Maps, plans, and atlases

Beers, F.W. *Atlas of Middlesex County*. New York: F.W. Beers, 1875.

Walker, George. *Atlas of Middlesex County*. Boston: 1889.

Other

Porter, Richard. Interview with Anne Forbes, 2004.

(End)

Hildreth-Robbins House
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.32 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	19	304640	4715760
2.			
3.			
4.			

_ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Forbes, consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date June 1, 2005

street & number 220 Morrissey Blvd. telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

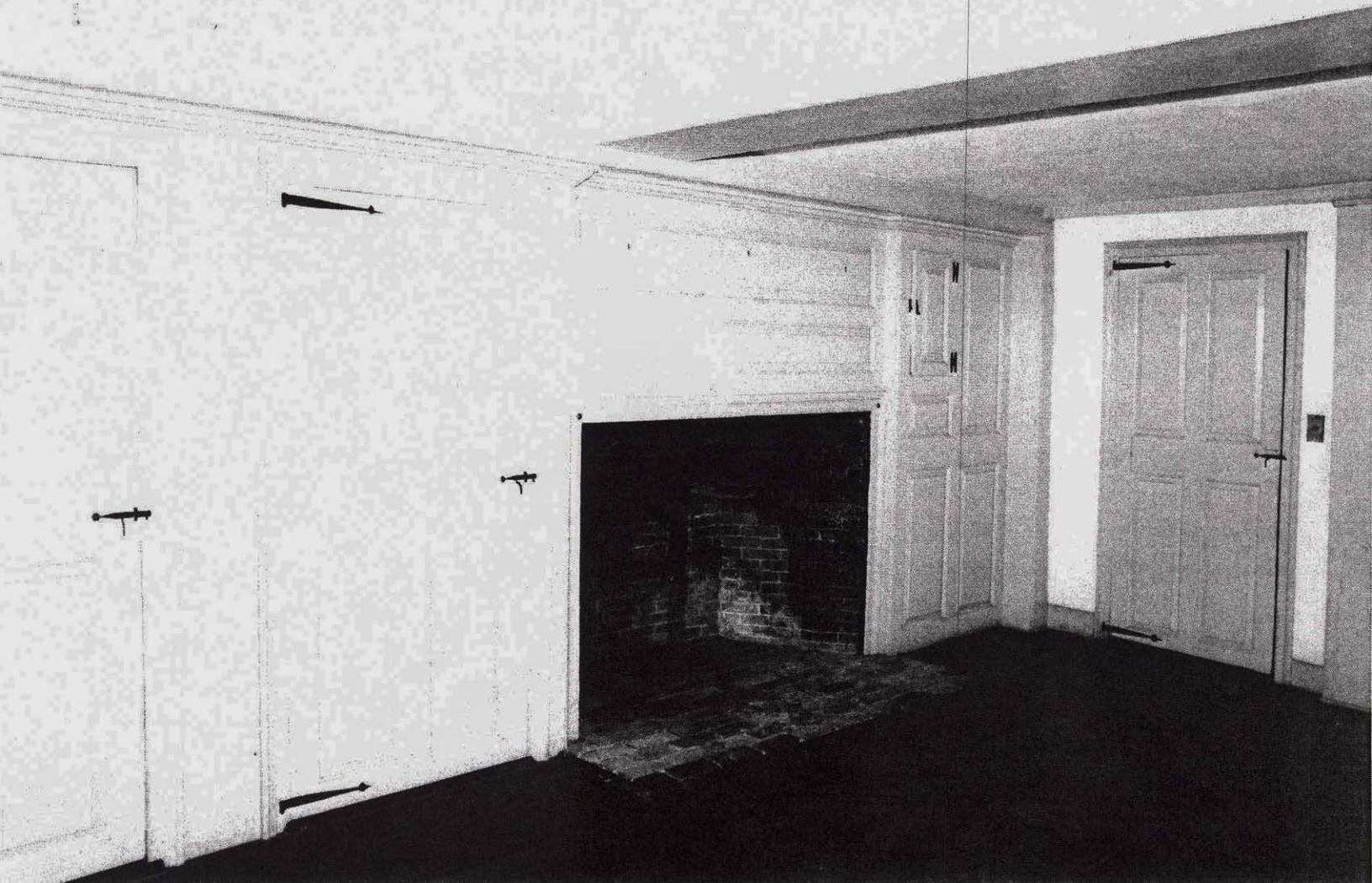
Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Chelmsford

street & number 50 Billerica Road telephone 978-250-5201

city or town Chelmsford state MA zip code 01824-3188



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19 Maple Road Dec 1973

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