

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

35/145/7	Westford		310
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Town Chelmsford

Place (neighborhood or village)

West Chelmsford
 32 School St.

Address

Whidden/Olson House

Historic Name

Uses: Present residence: single family

Original residence: single family

Date of Construction 1862-3

Source tax/real estate valuation records
 reg. Deeds, Bk. 71, pg. 489

Style/Form

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation granite, with fieldstones inside

Wall/Trim clapboard

Roof pitched roof, with ridge front to back

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

small shed in rear of lot.

Major Alterations (with dates)

1986: "addition & rebuilding": many interior changes; total of 12 rooms, increased from 5 (see attached sheets)

Condition excellent

Moved no yes Date

Acreage ca 1/3 acre

Setting See continuation sheet

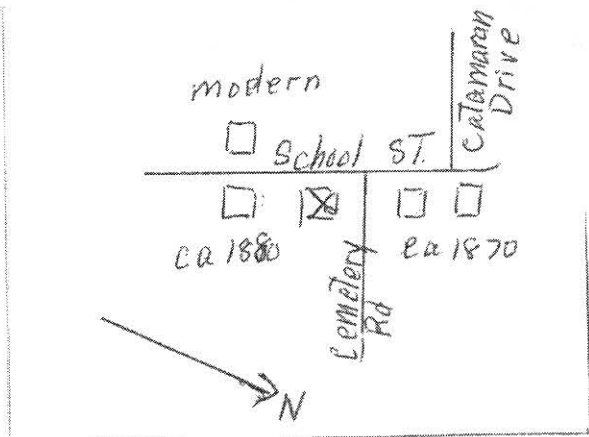
The house is located on the corner of School and Cemetery Streets. The West Cemetery overlooks the rear line. A paved driveway leads from Cemetery St. to the rear side of the



#1 IMG 3976 4-8-07

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) February 2007

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION *see continuation sheet*

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

The original house and its ell were gutted in 1985 but the exterior of the original house remains the same. The front of the main original house is three bays across. It is 22 ft. across x 38 ft. deep. An ell with a modern addition leads off the rear of the right side of the main house. Plain corner boards are on the main house. The front porch of the ell has Victorian type decorations on its posts, dated 1985. The original part of the house has a full cellar, but the ell and its addition have only a crawl space.

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.

This single family residence was probably built 1862 by John Farrar just before he sold the premises to John H. Whidden. John Farrar was a farmer who lived across the street from 32 School Street and who owned a great deal of land in the area. John Whidden was a Westford native who came to 32 School Street in 1863. At that time he purchased the premises for \$100 under the condition that John Farrar would have the right to enter the premises from an adjoining lot in order to lay pipe to a spring & take water from it. The premises were not to be sold or rented to foreigner.

He and his wife Sarah did not have any children. In 1866 he and Sarah were living in Lowell but returned to School St. by the next year. He had another house built on the rear portion of his land, which he rented out briefly before selling in March 1892. Perhaps that house was erected with the help of Sarah's brother, W. C. Edwards, a contractor. A highly respected citizen, John Whidden served on the school committee, was the village undertaker, and had charge of the nearby cemetery

The Whiddens must have been friendly with Sven Olsson, because he sold the property to the Olssons in 1892 but continued to live in the house. The house was a two family building by this time where both families resided. It is interesting that John Whidden did not adhere to the condition under he had purchased the property from John Farrar, for both of the Olssons were indeed foreigners, having been born in Sweden.

Several of both families are buried in the near by West Cemetery, and the Whidden plot overlooks the area of the house.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES *see continuation sheet*

Chelmsford street directories; Assessors' records

Lowell Courier: Aug. 8, 1894; Lowell Daily Sun: Aug. 8, 1894

Chelmsford Building Inspector records; Vital Records; Tax/Real Estate Valuation records; Street Directories

Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds: Bk. of Plans 3, Plan 106; Bk. 71, Pg. 489

1889 Atlas; Beers Atlas (1875)

Telephone: Joseph DiPietro Dec. 2006; Mrs. Pauline Breen Dec. 12, 2006

Jack Parow: December, January 2006

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

4INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
CHELMSFORD

Property Address
32 SCHOOL STR.

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

HISTORY

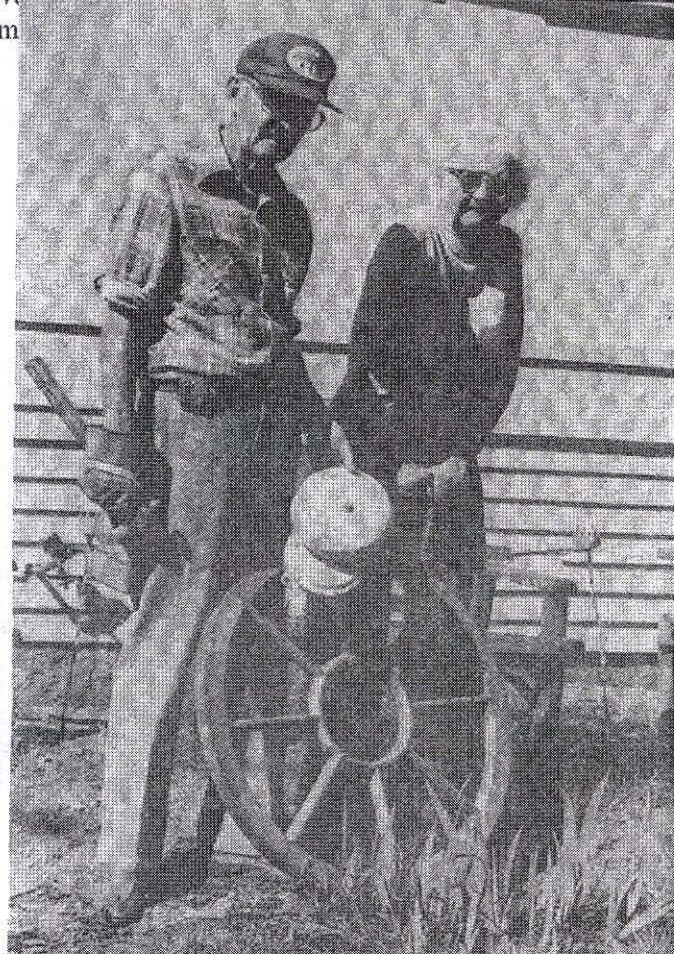
John Whidden worked as the station agent for over 23 years and postmaster for 8 years in West Chelmsford. until his tragic death on the morning of August 8th, 1894. He was just 51 years old. Some cars had to be set off for the mill located on the river in sight of the Whidden house. "It was his duty to throw the switches, and after 1 car had been thrown off the main line he started to throw the switch so to let the cars & engine go on the side track. After doing so he came along on the side track. It was the brakeman's duty to pull the pin between the cars and as he did so he saw Mr. Whidden's head just over the end of the rear car. he shouted to him as loud as he could, but he was too late and the car struck Mr. Whidden, and before a stop could be made both cars and the engine had passed over the body....Death due to a fracture in the left side of his skull..... All the railroad employees along the Stony brook railroad knew him and liked him. He was always anxious to do all he could for them and was unflinching in his courtesy toward all."

In 1896/7 his widow, Sarah E., still resided here in the same house with Sven A Olson and family, and she continued to do so at least through 1901. November 1903 Sarah married Charles Johnson, and they lived elsewhere. Born in Sweden, Sven Olson was a stone cutter, probably in the granite quarries located on the Westford-Chelmsford line. He and his wife Alma DahleAlma n had married in 1894. They installed in the formal living room a beautiful Swedish stove, probably made about 1884. Both Sven and Alma died with heart related problems, Alma in 1933 and Sven two years later. They had two children, Lelia W. and Walfred L., who inherited property

Walfred worked in sales, as a radio man, and later in maintenance. He married Margaret K. Walfred & Margaret remained in the house. Margaret died ca 1964. Lelia was first a mill worker but later became a governess in Boston. She came home during weekends and stayed upstairs, where she had a kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. She retired ca 1964 and lived with Walfred in 32 School St. but he died about 1973.

The Olsons were good friends of the Breen family, which lived near by. Lelia became an bedridden invalid, and Pauline Breen cared for her about 12 years until Lelia entered a nursing home. Lelia died at age 92 in 1987. In 1985 Pauline Breen had purchased the house, which was returned to being a one family home.

Karen Breen married Joseph DiPietro, a sales executive, and they moved in to the house after it was extensively remodeled. Additions were put on, and the residence was changed from a 5 to a 12 room house. Joe and Karen had 3 daughters, Tracey, Alena, and Gina. In 1994 the DiPictros sold the property to the present owners, and Joe and Alena moved to Strawberry Hill Rd., also in Chelmsford.



CMFD-A BELL AND A WINDOW were salvaged by West section resident Halvar Peterson on Sept. 19 when the Quessy School was bulldozed down. With him is Mrs. Leila Olson of the West section, who was among the first group of students to attend the school when it opened in 1905, housing grades 1 through 8. Mrs. Olson remembers that when the students wanted a drink of water in those early days, all they had to do was to walk across the street to a stream and ladle out

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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CHELMSFORD

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32 SCHOOL ST.

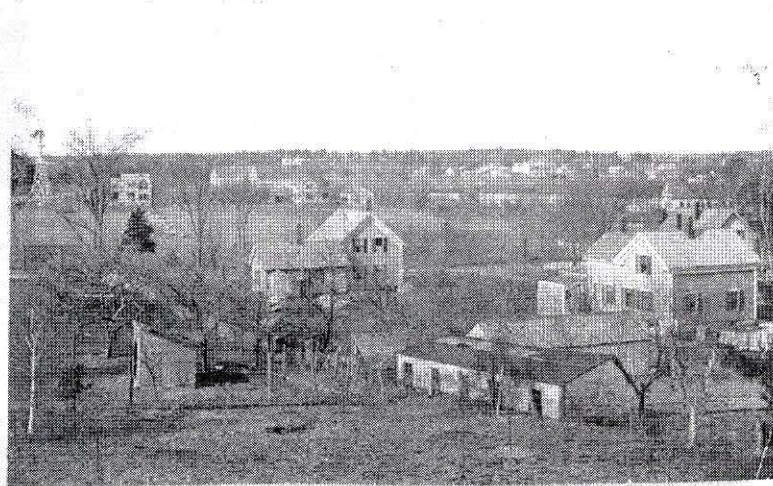
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

SETTING

house. The left rear corner of the original lot was sold in 1892, and another dwelling stands there. A shed and small pool are on the middle and right rear sides. A lawn is located on the right side between this house & the next one. On the front side of the house a town owned, paved sidewalk runs along School St. Another paved sidewalk runs from the Town sidewalk up to the main entrance and to the ell entrance to house. A modern post & rail fence runs beside this sidewalk, from about half way between the town sidewalk and the house.

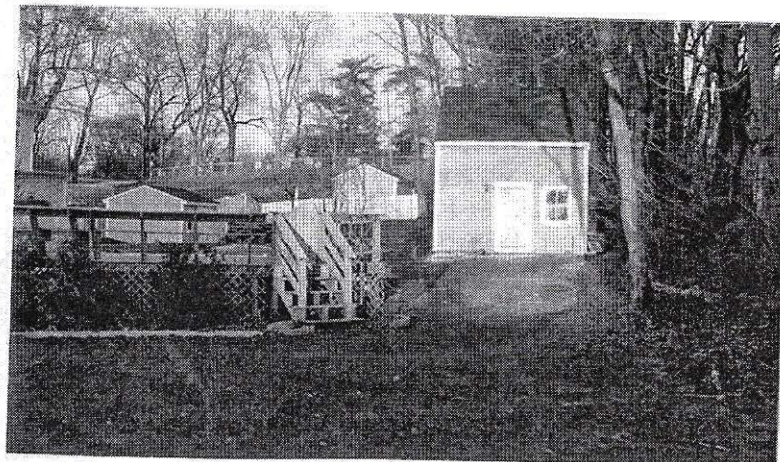
*From
Cemetery*



5 Cemetery St

↑ 32 School St.

*From
House Toward
Cemetery*



INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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ALTERATIONS

unknown	very early (before 1875) addition if not original: ell on right side of main house
1904-32?	new granite steps to front entrance porch had been added to front of ell by then
1904-32	ell porch screened in
1955	addition: staircase & porch on back removed in 1986
1986	“addition & rebuilding”: many interior changes; total of 12 rooms, increased from 5 2 story addition attached to right side of ell: 1580 sq. ft. 20.5 x 39 ft.; 9.5 x 12 ft.; 29 x 23 ft. 9 rooms: 2½ baths, 4 bedrooms (2 nd floor) atrium added: below master bedroom foundation: granite & cement roof: pitched, asphalt shingles contractor: Glen Pierce & Rick Allen, Acton new porch: off kitchen: front to rear of ell new rear entrance & mud room; patio behind rear entrance – in back of right rear of main house privy that was attached to removed right rear corner of ell was removed small den off dining room: in 1986 addition kitchen: had 44 cabinets with island in middle: changed unattached garage in back: removed; had been used for flower shop windows replaced in main house but resemble the old ones
2006	addition; dormer on front of the 1986 addition

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

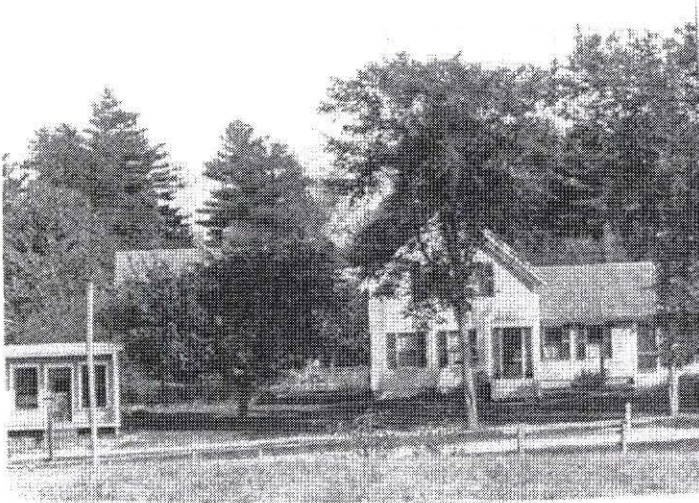
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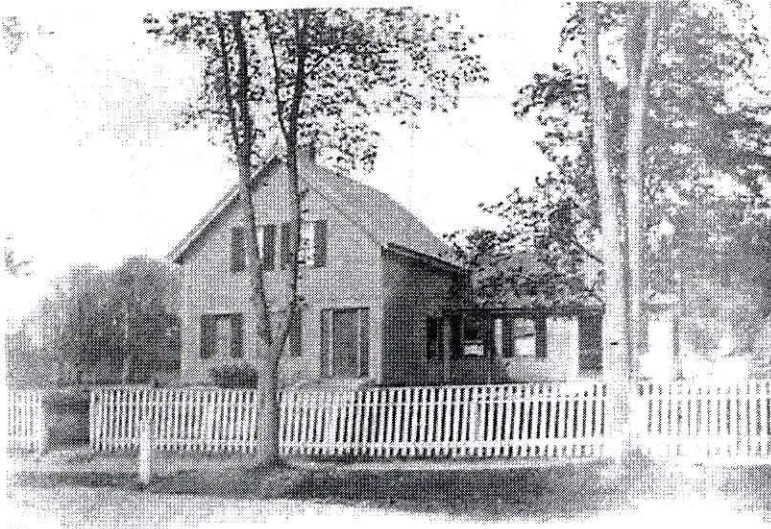


*small building
used as a "store"
of some sort*

ca 1900?



*1986 "Store" had been moved here
several years before & was
about to be torn down.*



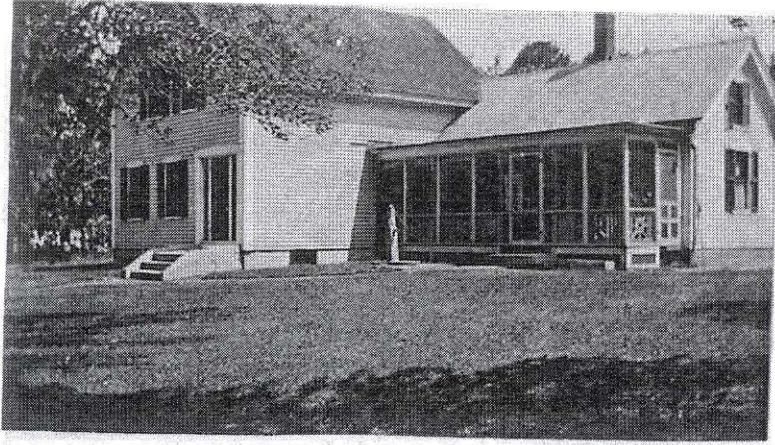
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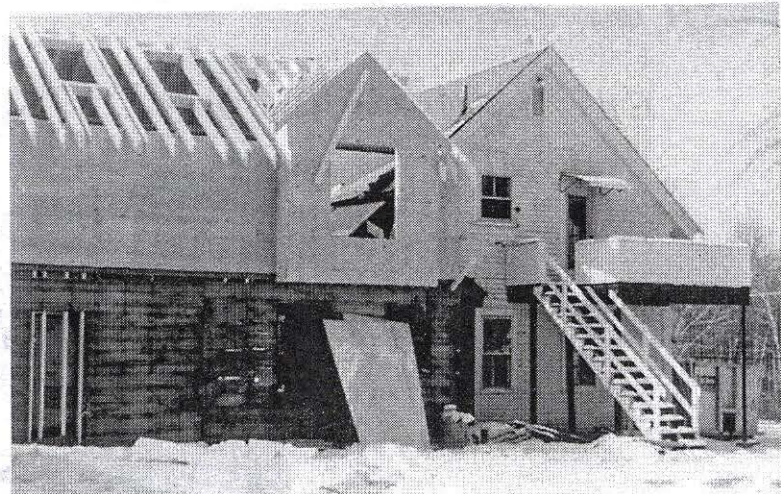
1986
before
renovations

note privy →



1955
Lelia's new deck
stairs - removed in 1986

Rear of House



1986

Rear - main house & ell

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

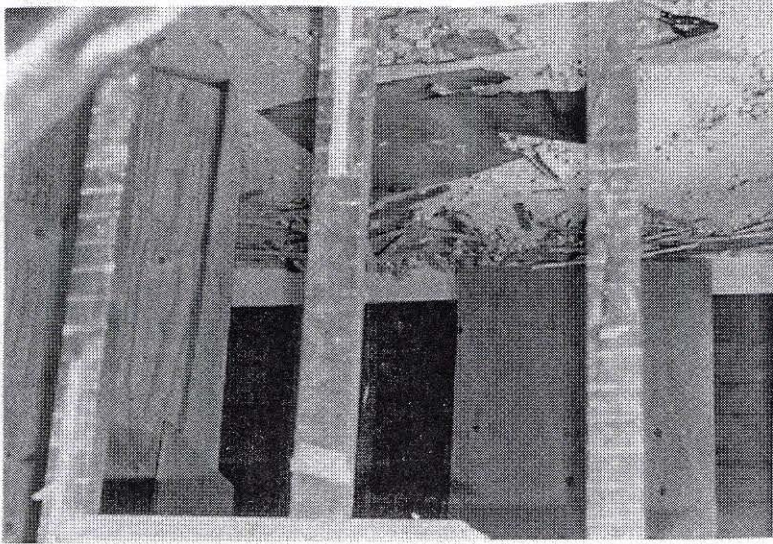
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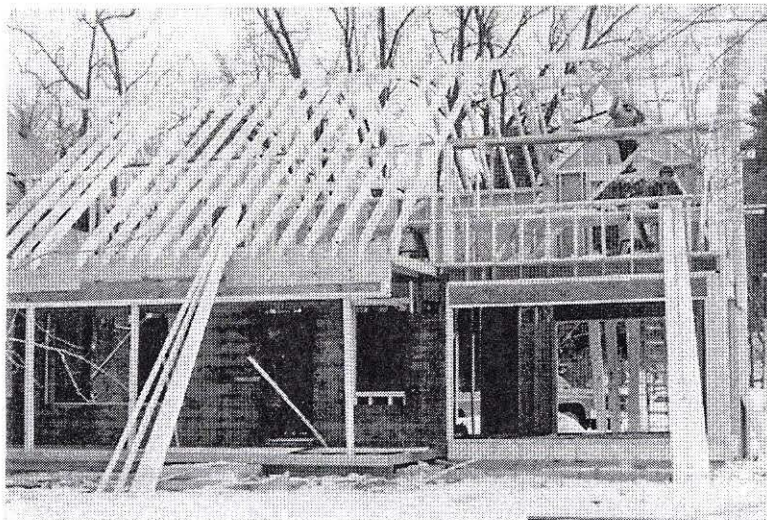
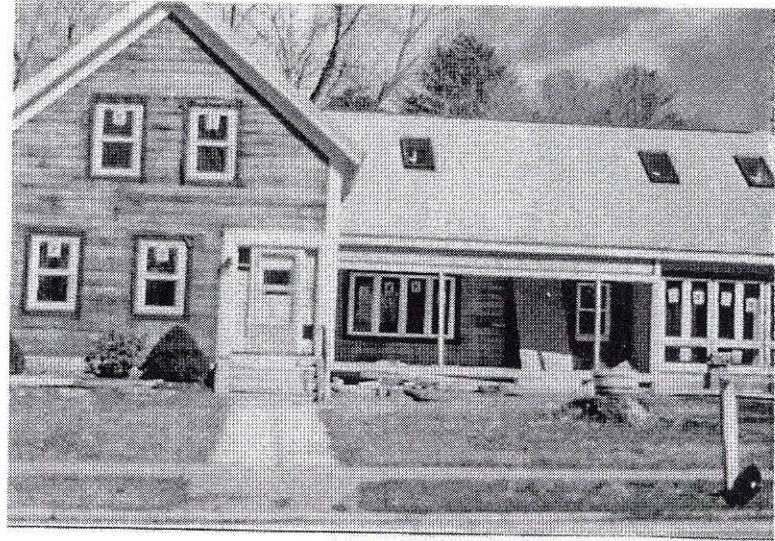
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1986

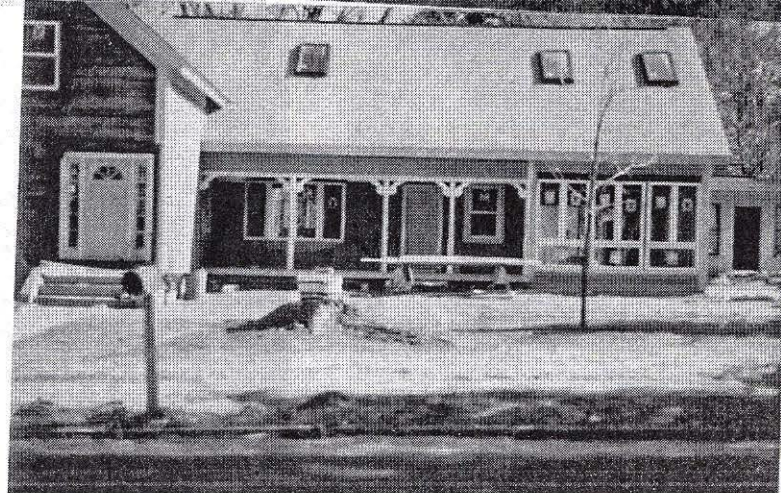
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1st floor Main House



Ell addition
Front



INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town
CHELMSFORD

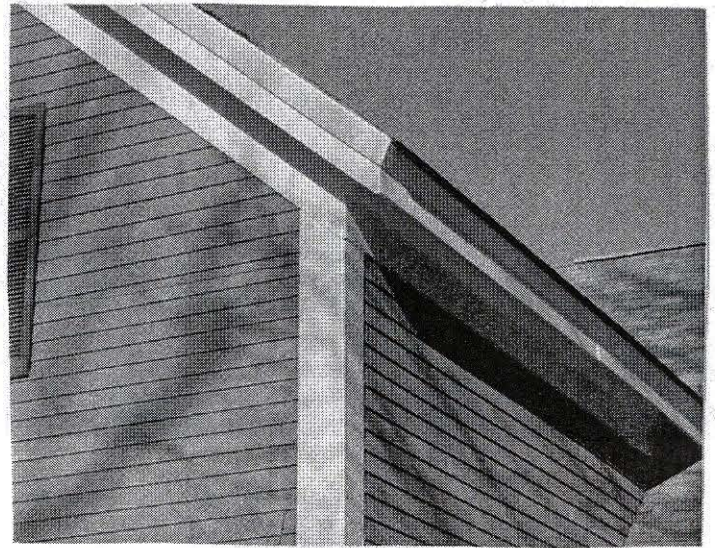
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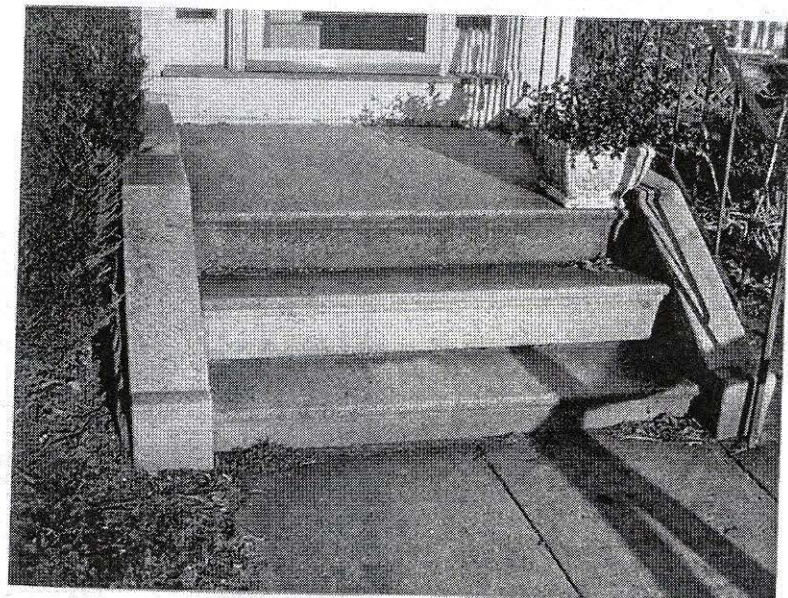
1986 Lelia Olson enjoying her "new" ell



2006 Cornerboards on main house-unchanged



Main Ell



Main house-entrance

Front-2006

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

CHELMSFORD 32 SCHOOL STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
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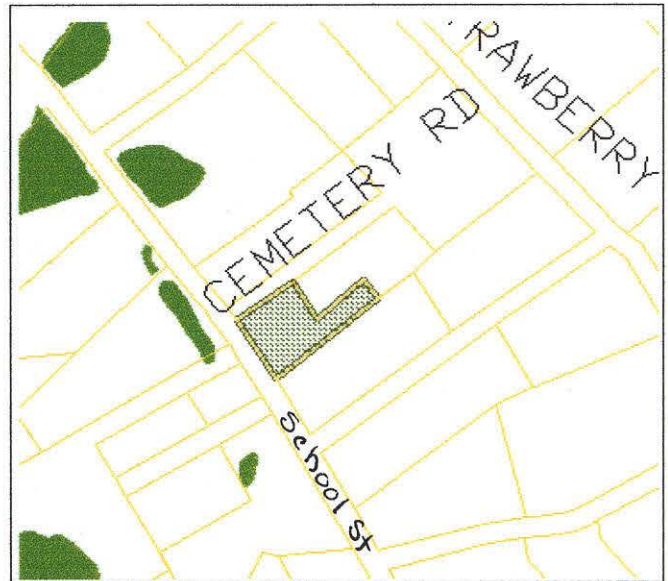
Area(s) Form No.

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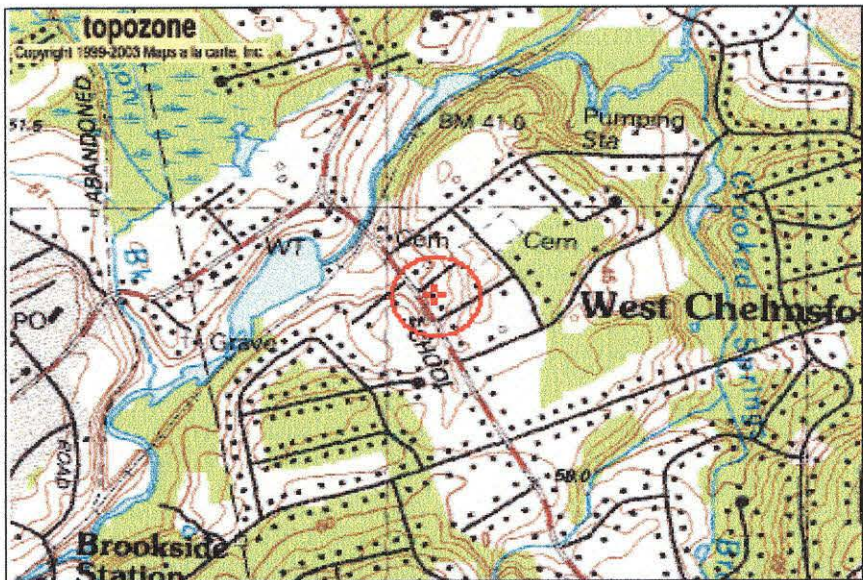
Locational Information



32 School Street viewed from local.live.com



32 School Street, Assessor's Maps



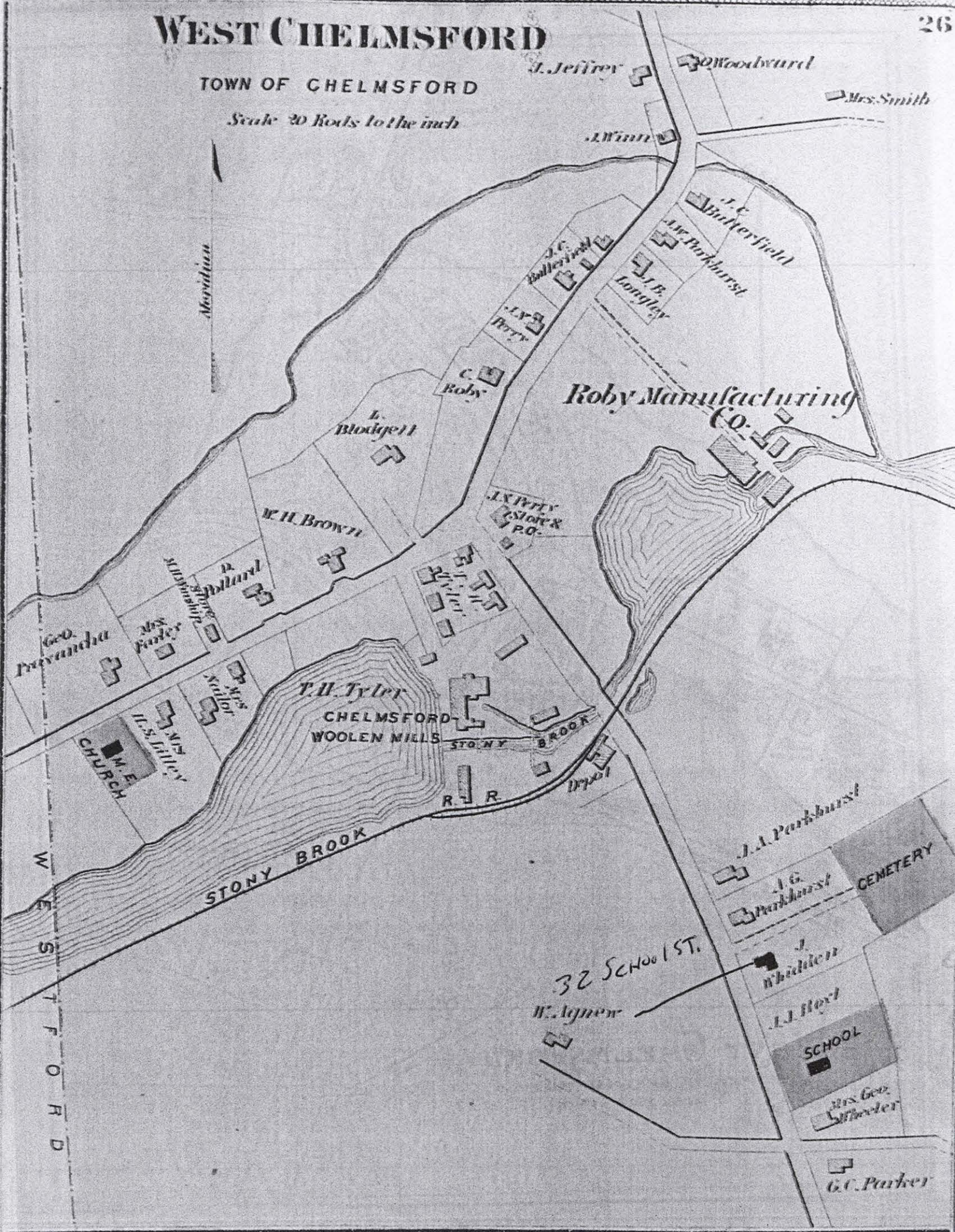
Topozone excerpt from Billerica USGS quadrangle.

Decimal coordinates as provided by Topozone: 42°36'57" N 71°24'02" W

WEST CHELMSFORD

TOWN OF CHELMSFORD

Scale 20 Rods to the inch



Roby Manufacturing Co.

P.H. Tyler
CHELMSFORD
WOOLEN MILLS

STONY BROOK

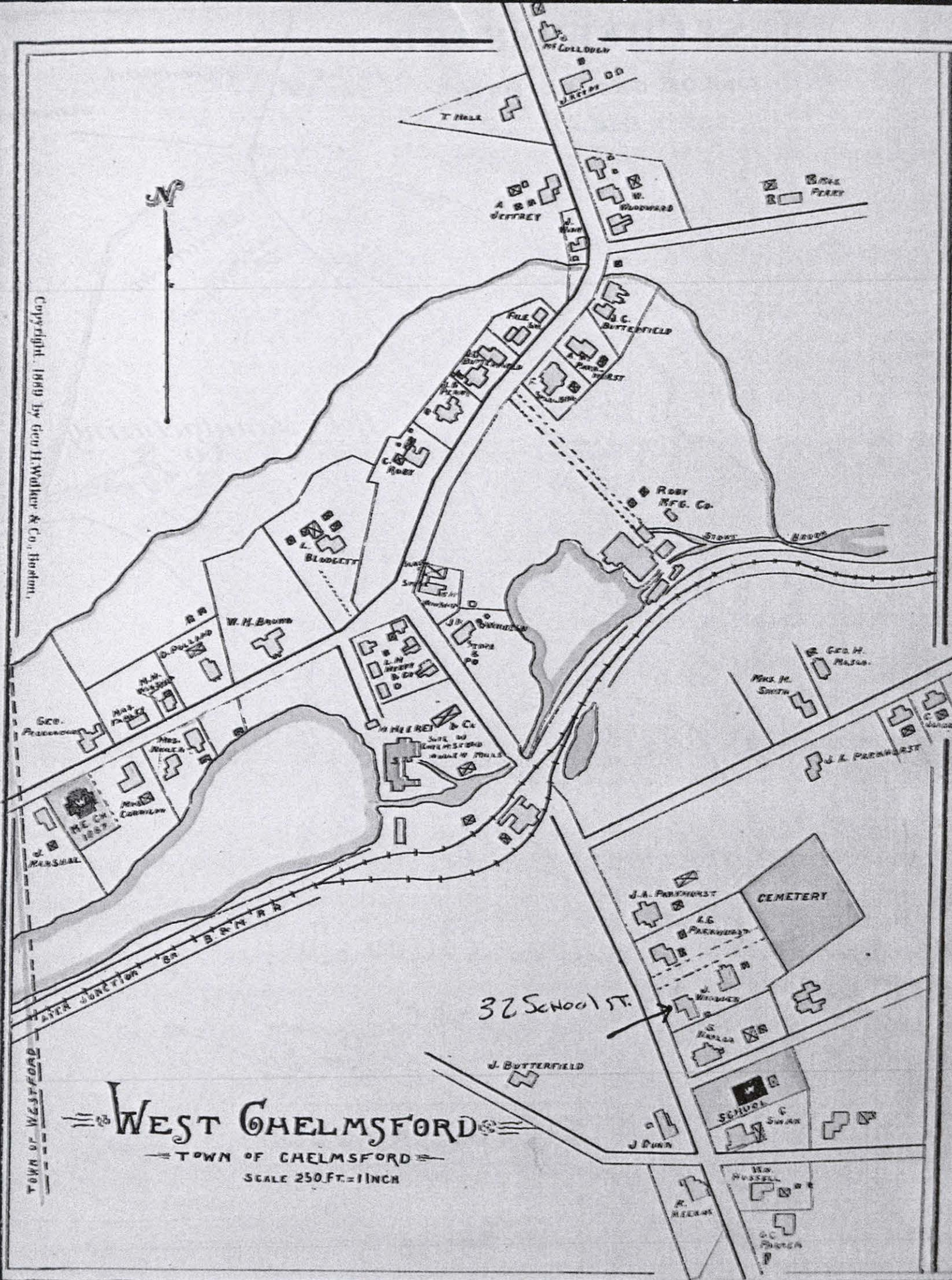
CEMETERY

SCHOOL

W
E
S
T
F
O
R
D

32 School St.

W. Agnew



Copyright, 1889 by Geo. H. Walker & Co., Boston.

WEST CHELMSFORD

TOWN OF CHELMSFORD

SCALE 250 FT. = 1 INCH

32 School St.

TOWN OF WESTFORD

32 School Street Deed Summary

Bk. 7054, Pg. 306	29 Apr. 1994	Joseph & Karen DiPietro to John E. & Patricia A. Parow, 32 School St. \$209,000 1/3 acre & buildings same: 1989 Breen deed, Bk. 4325, pg. 164
Bk. 4325, Pg. 164	16 Nov. 1987	John A. & E. Pauline Breen, West Chelmsford, to Joseph & Karen DiPietro, 32 School St. \$1 1/3 acre & buildings same: 1987 DiPietro deed, Bk. 4009, pg. 156
Bk. 4009, Pg. 156	15 Apr. 1987	Joseph J. & Karen DiPietro to John A. & E. Pauline Breen, 14 Naylor St. \$1 1/3 acre & buildings same: 1985 Breen deed, Bk. 3236, pg. 201
Bk. 3236, pg. 201	01 Nov. 1985	John A. & E. Pauline Breen, West Chelmsford, to Joseph & Karen DiPietro, 21 Harold St. 1/3 acre & buildings same: 1984 Olsson deed, Bk. 2703, pg. 555
Bk. 2703, Pg. 555	08 Mar. 1984	Lelia W. Olsson to John A. & E. Pauline Breen, 14 Naylor St. \$1 1/3 acre & buildings same: Olsson deed, Bk. 251, pg. 324 [is not locus]
Bk. 901, Pg. 324 mortgage deposition	23 July 1937	Lelia W. Olsson made peaceable entry, foreclosure of 1937 mortgage Bk. 840, pg. 251
Bk. 840, pg. 251 mortgage	29 Jan. 1934	Sven A. Olsson, unmarried, to Lelia W. Olsson \$2000, 5% interest 1/3 A. & buildings part: 1904 Snow deed, Bk. 366, pg. 264
Bk. 366, pg. 264		Estate of Chal. Gusta Olsson, Valdez, Alaska George F. Snow, Administrator to Sven August Olsson \$1600 land: Lots 4,5,19,20 & small triangular [piece adjoining lot 20 1/3 A. & buildings same: Bk of Plans 3 B, Plan 106 also Bk. 276, pg. 571; bk. 268, pg. 164; bk. 282, pg. 508; bk. 283, pg. 9; bk. 231, pg. 466
Bk. 231, pg. 466	22 Mar. 1892	John H. Whidden to Clas G. Olsson \$1500 land

Bk. 71, pg. 492

12 Jan. 1870

Abel G. Whidden, Providence, to
John H. Whidden
\$8000

½ part: 1863 Farrar deed
subject to the same reservation and restriction in
Farrar deed

Bk. 71, pg. 489

14 Oct. 1863

John Farrar to
A. G. & J. H. Whidden
land & buildings
\$100

conditions: right to enter premises from adjoining lot
to lay pipe to spring & take water
premises not to be sold or rented to foreigner

STATION AGENT KILLED

*Terrible Death of John H. Whidden
of West Chelmsford*

Run Over by Freight Cars and Engine Near
His Station

The little village of West Chelmsford was thrown into a high state of excitement this morning over the sad and fatal accident that befel John H. Whidden, one of its foremost citizens and the local station agent. he was struck by some cars and run over, being so seriously injured that he breathed his last in a minute or two after the accident happened.

The accident occurred about 8:45 o'clock, just after the arrival of the regular freight from Ayer Junction. Brakeman Stearns, who was left behind to care for the body and testify before the medical examiner, told the Courier reporter when he visited the scene that there were some cars to be set off at the mill just this side of the depot. Mr. Whidden boarded the engine and rode down to the switch, exchanging bills with the conductor. It was part of his duty to throw the switches, and after one car had been thrown off the main line he started to throw the switch so as to let the cars and engine go on the side track. After doing so he came along on the side track.

It was Brakeman Stearn's duty to pull the pin between the cars and as he did so he saw Mr. Whidden's head just over the end of the rear car. He shouted to him as loud as he could, but he was too late and the car struck Mr. Whidden, and before a stop could be made both cars and the engine had passed over the body. Mr. Stearns ran back and was just in time to see him breathe his last.

The body was picked up and taken to the baggageroom and thence to his home by Undertaker Currier, where it was laid out, permission having been given by Medial Examiner Irish. The accident occurred about four rods beyond the switch and was in full view of the home of the deceased.

Medical Examiner Irish came up on the noon train and viewed the remains. He heard the story of Brakeman Stearns and gleaned what information he could in regard to the accident.

After he had examined the body he pronounced death due to fracture in the left side of the skull near the base. Death would therefore be instantaneous.

The train causing the accident in No. 402, the regular freight from Ayer Junction to Lawrence.

Notice of the accident was sent to the relatives of the deceased, and they at once hastened to West Chelmsford to care for the body. Mrs. Whidden was nearly prostrated by the accident and required the services of a physician. As yet no arrangements have been made for the funeral.

Conductor Conher of the freight left Brakeman Stearns in charge of the station, and at noon the relatives and bondsman took charge of the station and post office pending permanent settlement.

John H. Whidden was a native of Westford and was the second youngest son born to Joshua and Martha Whidden. Had he lived until September 20 he would have been 52 years old. He had been station agent at West Chelmsford for over twenty-three years, and in addition had served on the school committee, was constable and had been postmaster for eight years. He was a regular attendant at the M.E. church and had charge of the cemetery. he was also the village undertaker.

Mr. Whidden married Miss Sarah Edwards of Chelmsford, who survives him. They had no children.

The deceased was a member of several fraternal organizations, Ancient York lodge of Masons, Passaconaway tribe of Red Men, and Samuel H. Hines, K. of P. He had also taken his 33d degree in the Scottish rite Masons.

During his very long residence in West Chelmsford, Mr. Whidden had made many warm friends. He was a very highly respected citizen. All the railroad employes along the Stony Brook railroad knew him and liked him. He was always anxious to do all he could for them and was unflinching in his courtesy towards all.

Mr. Whidden is survived by his widow, three brothers, Charles E. Whidden, station agent at Westford, Augustus F. Whidden, agent at the Bleachery station on the southern division, and George W. Whidden of North Chelmsford, and one sister, Mrs. Maria Gilson of Dunstable. One brother, Abel Whidden, for 23 years a member of the police force of Providence, R.I. died a short time since. Clarence W. Whidden of the Central Savings bank is a nephew and W.C. Edwards, the well known contractor of West Chelmsford, is a brother-in-law.

Lowell Sun Wednesday, August 8, 1894

KILLED BY CARS

Station Agent John

Whidden Was the Victim

IT IS NOT KNOWN JUST HOW HE

WAS PROBABLY STRUCK BY a FREIGHT

John Whidden, the wellknown and well liked station agent and postmaster at West Chelmsford met his death on the rail about 8.30 a.m. The circumstances which led to his death are not known but it seems probable that he was working on the track and was hit by a freight train.

Mr. Whidden was apparently struck from the rear and he met instant death his head nearly being severed from the body.

The sad accident will be felt throughout the entire community, for Mr. Whidden was widely known and respected in Chelmsford, Westford and Lowell.

He was a man in the prime of life and lived in a comfortable home near the station. He had been postmaster for many years.

He is survived by a wife besides relatives in the town and Westford. He was an uncle of Clarence W. Whidden of the Central savings bank.

Lowell Courier August 11, 1894

West Chelmsford

The funeral of Mr. John H. Whidden was largely attended from his late residence, Friday, Aug. 10, at 10 a.m. Mr. George F. Snow had general charge. Three clergymen had part in the exercises. reading of the scriptures was by the local pastor, Rev. Mr. McConnell; remarks by Rev. C. E. Spaulding of East Cambridge and prayer by Rev. Dr. Virgin of New York. "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," "Passing Away," and "Shall we Meet Beyond the River," were rendered by a quartette, Mrs. F. W. Spaulding, Miss Lulu Spaulding, Messrs. Eugene Dutton and Fred Virgin. The various orders or lodges, Free Masons, Red men and Knights of Pythias, of which Mr. Whidden had been an honored member, were represented, and elegant flowers were contributed by each. Conspicuous among the other floral offerings were gates ajar by the widow, a handsome piece with "Brother" upon it, etc. The remains were borne up[on a bier from the house to the cemetery, and after being lowered into the crypt, which the deceased had had the oversight in building, the usual solemn Masonic rites were observed, Rev. Dr. Court of Lowell officiating. "Goodnight" was sung by the quartette.

Lowell Sun August 11, 1894

The funeral services of the late John Whidden, who was run over and killed by a train on Wednesday, took place at his late home in West Chelmsford at 10 o'clock this morning. There was a very large attendance and delegations from the Ancient York Lodge of Masons, Red Men and Knights of Pythias, of which the deceased was a member, were present. The pastor of the West Chelmsford church, Rev. L. C. McConnell, officiated, assisted by Rev. Dr. Virgin of New York and Rev. Charles Spaulding of Boston, and there was singing by the choir of the church. Many floral tributes were sent by friends and relatives. The bearers were members of of Masonic order. Mr. Stowe of West Chelmsford and Currier of this city had charge.





32 School Street

4/7/2007 F. Merriam



32 School Street

3/31/2007 F. Merriam