

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

9A 26

Georgetown

GEO.105

Town/City: Georgetown

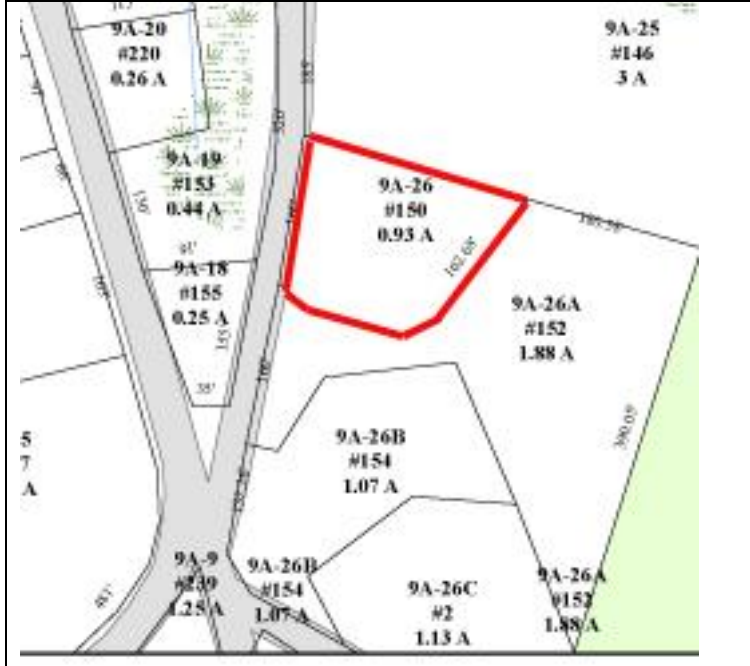
Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Elm Street Area

Photograph



View from W

Locus Map



Address: 150 Elm Street

Historic Name: Cornelius G. & Lavinia Baker House

Uses: Present: residence

Original: residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1870

Source: historic maps, census records

Style/Form: Classical Revival

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Barn

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Front piazza renovated
Sun porch added south side
Garage attached to north side

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.93 acre

Setting: The house on this property is set back from the east side of Elm Street near Lovering's Corner (the junction of Elm, Central, and Nelson Streets). It is on a lot with mature hardwoods. Elm Street is primarily residential.

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson

Organization: Georgetown Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): January 2010

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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 Cornelius G. & Lavinia Baker House is a two-story wood frame dwelling with a gable roof and wood clapboard siding built ca. 1870. It is situated on the east side of Elm Street north of Central Street on a one-acre lot, which has been subdivided recently from a larger parcel now supporting three new houses. The house is sited close to the road with a large lawn comprising the rest of the property. A barn is located southeast of the house.

The house is designed in a traditional manner, yet has a two-room-deep plan unlike many of the older single-pile plans with rear-wall chimneys that characterize the Elm Street neighborhood. In this way, the Baker house demonstrates how that early form did not survive past the antebellum period. Another distinction of its difference is that it was built without a kitchen ell. The larger plan incorporated the kitchen within the house block.

The five-bay front façade has a center entrance, which is now concealed within a recent enclosed piazza. The roofline is ornamented with a plain entablature similar to those found on older houses, but in this later case, the thin friezes are separated from the tops of second-story window heads, which associates the house with a much broader and generalized design practice. Two-over-two window sash are original and reflect the post-Civil War construction date. A sun porch was added to the south end of the house in the early 20th century, and a two-car garage was built against the northeast corner of the house much later.

A small wood frame domestic barn with a gable roof and center wagon bay is located northeast of the house and likely dates with the house.

The Cornelius G. & Lavinia Baker House is a distinctive example of post Civil War-era domestic architecture in the town and illustrates the persistence of traditional house forms, although interior planning and construction methods were influenced by broader national trends. Built ca. 1870, the house is essentially intact and is a contributing component of a historic district on Elm Street.

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.

According to local histories, aside from the road (now Massachusetts Route 133) connecting Georgetown to its parent Rowley to the east and Andover on the west, Elm Street is one of the oldest streets in Georgetown, having been opened to "public travel" about 1686.¹ At that time between ten and twenty families lived in what was known as Rowley second (or west) parish or New Rowley. Beginning in the 1650s Rowley proprietors began to make land grants in the town's western reaches; in 1666-67, the town laid out three thousand acres in the area and granted John Spofford the job of penning cattle "the young cattle of the towne" where they had "been herded this last year." Pen Brook is named for these pens, which stood west of Elm Street. In 1732 families in the area successfully petitioned to form the Second Church of Rowley (ultimately Georgetown's First Congregational Church) and built a second meetinghouse at the junction of Elm and East Main Streets in 1769. In 1838 the General Court of Massachusetts incorporated Georgetown, which embraced most of the second parish.²

¹ See, for example, Benjamin F. Arrington, ed., *Municipal History of Essex County in Massachusetts* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1922), 146.

² Thomas Gage, *The History of Rowley* (Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, 1840), 31-32, 320, 324, 326, 329.

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By 1800, according to a map showing the town center at that time, various branches of the Nelson family owned large tracts embracing both sides of Elm and Chestnut Street and both sides of East Main Street in this section. All of these branches descended from Thomas Nelson (1615-about 1648), who was among the twenty families who had come to the New World in the winter of 1638 with the Puritan cleric Ezekiel Rogers (1590-166). With Rogers most of these families settled at Rowley, incorporated in 1639.

The extent to which Nelson family lands reached southward is not clear from the 1800 Georgetown map, but it probably extended nearly to Lovering's Corner, the intersection of Elm, Central, and Nelson Streets. By the 1830s, and probably earlier, the land at this junction probably belonged to Benjamin Adams (1773-1852), part of the sixth generation descended from immigrant Robert Adams, who settled in Newbury about 1635. By the 1830s the north, east, and west boundaries of Adams's land abutted that of Asa Nelson (1790-1855), who lived at 123 Elm Street and was the great great grandson of the immigrant Thomas.³

Georgetown maps show no house on the site of 150 Elm Street until 1884, but one may have been built before the 1872 map was published.⁴ According to the order of the 1870 census the family of shoemaker Cornelius Gould Baker probably lived at this address. Baker was born in Georgetown in 1845. His father Cornelius, born in West Newbury in 1812, died of typhus the same year. In 1866, when Baker married Lavinia Bartlett of Salisbury, Massachusetts, he was working as a boot treer. A treer, among the last workers in the shoe manufacturing process, put the shoe over a last-shaped form to clean the upper and then smooth out all wrinkles with a hot iron. Baker was still working in an unnamed shoe factory in 1870, but by 1880 he had begun to manufacture shoes on his own, for "the Essex county and home trade"; many other Georgetown boot and shoe makers sold their footwear in southern and western markets. Baker's mother, Clarissa Robbins Baker, was stitching boots by hand at that time and living with her son's family in 1880.

In 1890 Baker's son Fred W., born about 1867, joined his father as a partner in the shoe business, then called C. G. Baker and Son, and in 1900 began manufacturing on his own "the famous Little Ripper' shoes for boys and youths," according to local historian Benjamin Arrington. "From the start the business was very successful." Baker's Central Street plant burned in 1917, at which point he became partners with Salem shoe manufacturers Cass and Daly to form F. W. Baker Shoe Company, which acquired the shoe factory earlier occupied by Henry Prescott Chaplin. Baker modernized and expanded the facility; Arrington noted that the company "will, under normal business conditions, do upwards of half a million dollar business annually."⁵

Cornelius G. Baker continued to run his own company through about 1905, and by 1909 he was working for his son, apparently as a stitcher. In 1906 his daughter Cornelia Vine Baker, born in 1869, married the shoe stitcher Clarence Cushman Adams, who was born in 1872 and had grown up at his father Jophanus's 5 Elm Street home.⁶ Of Jophanus Adams's four sons, only Clarence did not follow his father in the livery and sale stable business. By 1900 he was working at the Georgetown Boot and Shoe Company, founded in 1885, and was living with his brother Louis at 9 Elm Street. After his marriage to Cornelia Baker Adams appears to have moved to his in-laws' home. In 1907 the Adams's son Baker was born.

In 1914 Clarence Adams was a foreman at Georgetown Boot and Shoe Company, and Cornelius G. Baker continued to work for his son's company. In 1920 Baker, then seventy-two years old, his wife Lavinia, Clarence and Cornelia Adams, and their son Baker shared 150 Elm, as they did in 1930. By 1933 Cornelius Baker had died, and town assessor's records show his daughter Cornelia and son-in-law Clarence Adams with a house, barn, and shop on the property.

³ Henry M. Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," in D. Hamilton Hurd. *History of Essex County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1888), 1: 812.

⁴ Deeds relating to 150 Elm Street allude to deeds dated 2 February 1869, SED 756:6, and 9 March 1875, SED 923:253, which were not searched during this survey. In 1950, when 150 Elm was owned by Baker's grandson Baker Adams, the property was 18.2 acres; the 1875 deed cited above may have transferred additional land.

⁵ Arrington, *Municipal History*, 257-58; Jane Field, *A Brief History of Georgetown Massachusetts 1838-1963*, rev. ed. (Georgetown: Georgetown Historical Commission, 1988), 19.

⁶ Jophanus Adams descended from the immigrant Philip Adams, who settled first in Braintree, Massachusetts, and moved to York, Maine, by 1650. Philip and Robert Adams of Newbury, from whom Benjamin Adams descended, were unrelated. See George Thomas Little, comp., *Genealogical and Family History of the State of Maine* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1909), 4:1944-45; Colby Connection website, <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=SHOW&db=dmcolby&recno=7224>; and Andrew N. Adams, *A Genealogical History of Robert Adams, of Newbury, Mass., and His Descendants, 1635-1900* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Co., 1900), 175-76.

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Baker Adams, who inherited the 150 Elm Street property from his mother in 1938, became a well-known and prosperous attorney in Georgetown. He graduated from Tufts University and Harvard Law School and practiced in Georgetown as well as Boston and Haverhill. Adams enlisted in the military in 1942 and served in the Judge General Department of the Tenth Air Force; he retired as a captain in the Army Air Corps. He held numerous town offices in Georgetown. Baker Adams died in September 1997, and his will left a one-million-dollar endowment to the Georgetown School Committee to be used for scholarships.⁷ In 1998 the executor of Baker Adams's will sold 150 Elm Street to Robert W. Nixon and Robyn Holt. Current owners Paul and Barbara J. Schoonman bought the property in 2000.⁸

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

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MAPS

"Map of the Centre of Georgetown in 1800." In Perley, Sidney H., "Centre of Georgetown in the Year 1800." *The Essex Antiquarian: A Quarterly Magazine Devoted to the Biography, Genealogy, History, and Antiquities of Essex County, Massachusetts* 2, 7 (July 1898): 201.

Map of Georgetown in 1810 and 1840. In Gage, Thomas. *The History of Rowley, Anciently Including Bradford, Boxford, and Georgetown, from the Year 1639 to the Present Time*. Boston: F. Andrews, 1840. 320.

"Map of New Rowley Surveyed and Drawn by Philander Anderson 1830." Georgetown Historical Society.

Map of Georgetown. 1856. In Walling, H. F. *A Topographical Map Essex County Massachusetts*. Boston: Smith and Morley, 1856.

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"Georgetown, Mass. 1887." Drawn and Published by George E. Norris, Brockton, Massachusetts. Troy, NY: Burleigh Lithographic Establishment, 1887.

⁷ Chris Shores, "Honoring Baker Adams' Legacy," *Georgetown Record*, 4 August 2009.

⁸ Robert E. Andrews, executor, to Robert W. Nixon and Robyn Holt, 1 September 1998, SED 15066:181; Nixon and Holt to Charles L. and Simone E. Brett, 20 November 1998, SED 15258:163; Bretts to Barbara J. Schoonman, 11 September 2000, SED 16558:45; Schoonman to self and Paul Schoonman, 11 September 2000, SED 17408:285.

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[Delete this page if no Criteria Statement is prepared]

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 by ___Neil Larson and Kathryn Grover_____

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Cornelius G. & Lavinia Baker House is a distinctive example of post Civil War-era domestic architecture in the town and illustrates the persistence of traditional house forms, although interior planning and construction methods were influenced by broader national trends. Built ca. 1870, the house is essentially intact and is a contributing component of a historic district on Elm Street.

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View from SW



View from NW

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View from SW



Aerial view from W