

# FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

10B 37

Georgetown

GEO.10

**Town/City:** Georgetown

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

## Photograph



View from E

**Address:** 17 Elm Street

**Historic Name:** Benjamin & Apphia Winter House

**Uses:** Present: residence

Original: residence

**Date of Construction:** ca. 1825

**Source:** historic maps

**Style/Form:** Federal

**Architect/Builder:** Joseph & John Kimball,  
probable builders

## Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

## Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Masonry workshop (non-contributing)

## Major Alterations (*with dates*):

none

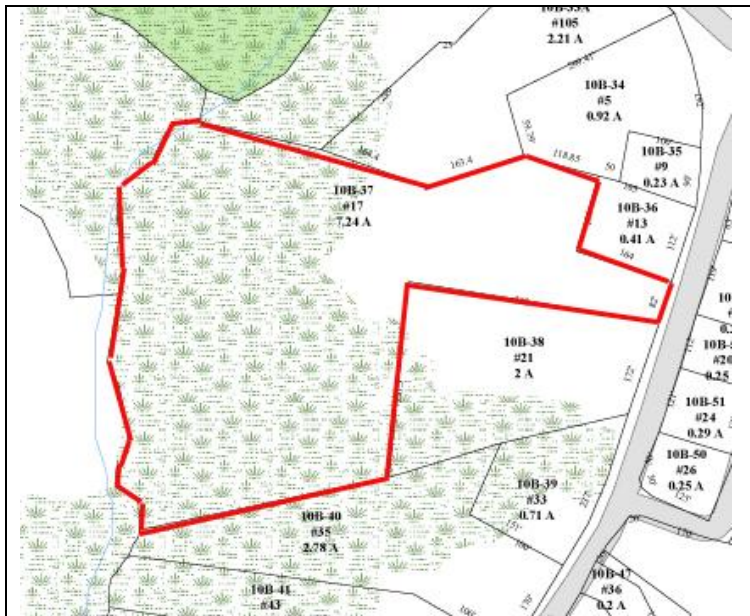
**Condition:** good

**Moved:** no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

**Acreage:** 7.24 acres

**Setting:** This property is set back from the west side of Elm Street on a lot with mature hardwoods. Elm Street is primarily residential.

## Locus Map



**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 Benjamin & Apphia Winter House is a two-story wood frame single dwelling with wood clapboard siding and a hipped roof. It is situated at the narrow Elm Street side of a 7.24-acre parcel that extends back and widens in the rear, abutting the historic circular section of Harmony Cemetery on its western limit. Smaller adjoining parcels on Elm Street containing the Rev. Isaac & Sarah Braman House (13 Elm St.) and the William B. & Mary Hammond House (21 Elm St.) appear to have been partitioned from the Winter property leaving it with only 82 feet of street frontage. This reduction has left the house with little in the way of side yards, and the section immediately behind the property contains a large, one-story masonry shop and a work yard containing numerous abandoned vehicles. West of this is a small clearing, with the rest of the parcel forested.

The house plan is one room deep with two brick chimneys on the rear wall, one each at the backs of rooms flanking a center hall. This was a popular plan for houses in towns along the North Shore of Massachusetts and in Portsmouth, New Hampshire during this period and earlier. Its similarity to other nearby houses, notably those that carpenters Joseph and John Kimball built for themselves (16 & 20 Elm St., respectively), suggests that the Winter house was constructed by the Kimballs soon after their arrival in Georgetown in 1824. The five-bay front façade contains an unusual projecting center entrance with a Greek Revival-style trabeated architrave composed of pilasters and a hefty entablature. Novel to this example is the elliptical-arched, leaded glass transom above the door and sidelights. A tripartite window is centered in the second story above the entrance. Window sash appears to be original. The roofline is ornamented with a plain entablature. End walls contain single windows on lower and upper stories.

A long, narrow two-story kitchen ell is attached to the north side of the rear wall; its low-pitch gable roof abuts the rear wall just below the roof entablature. A partially-enclosed porch exists on the north wall of the ell, and a shed extension is attached to the rear of the house south of the ell. A wagon barn may have been connected to the rear of the ell, but evidence for it has not been found. A driveway runs from Elm Street along the north property line to the work yard and shop behind the house; an unpaved parking area is located south side of the house.

The Benjamin & Apphia Winter House is a distinctive example of Federal Period architecture in the town and evinces the single-pile rear chimney plan form characteristic of Essex County and the North Shore region. Built ca. 1825, the house is essentially intact and distinguished by original materials and a projecting entrance with Federal-style architrave. It was probably built by housewrights Joseph and John Kimball, who also lived on Elm Street. It is a key 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

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

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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 yeare." 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.<sup>2</sup>

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 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 house at 17 Elm Street appears on an 1830 map. It was then owned by shoemaker Benjamin Winter (1790-1865). Winter was born in Danbury, New Hampshire, in 1789; his brother David Mighill Winter, born in Danbury in 1797, was also a shoemaker who lived and worked south of Benjamin on the other (east) side of Elm Street, although neither his shop nor house is extant.<sup>3</sup> Edwin Hill's town history states that Benjamin and David Winter were among twelve "early shoemakers" in Georgetown. Benjamin Arrington's 1922 history states that Benjamin Winter "was another one of the early old-time and successful shoe manufacturers; he began in 1818 and he made a specialty of boys' brogans, the first ever made in a commercial way in the parish."<sup>4</sup> These coarse, heavy shoes ended at the ankle, and they and other boots were the footwear for which Georgetown was best known. As a boot and shoe manufacturing town, Georgetown was far eclipsed by many Essex County towns—chiefly Lynn, the largest producer of footwear in the commonwealth, as well as Haverhill and Marblehead. But an industrial census mandated by the state found that in the year previous Rowley (of which Georgetown was part until 1838) made more boots--- 32,600 pair---than any other place in the county. The town also made 300,250 pair of shoes, according to this survey, employed 518 men and 192 women, and produced footwear with an estimated value of \$315,360. It is clear that most of this production took place in what soon became Georgetown: according to an 1888 local history, twenty-seven shoe shops operated in Georgetown at the time and produced boots and shoes worth \$221,900, or roughly 70 percent of the estimated value of footwear in Rowley as a whole. By the 1830s Georgetown was both larger than Rowley and much more focused on industrial development; Rowley remained by and large agricultural.<sup>5</sup>

According to Arrington, about 1830 "there was scarcely a farmhouse (or any other house) but that had in its back-yard a 12x12 foot shoe-shop. It was in these small shops that the countrywide known Georgetown boots and shoes were made until recent years, when they were manufactured in factories."<sup>6</sup> Local historian Henry M. Nelson described the town's early industry:

The trade was largely with Baltimore, Norfolk and Charleston, as well as with New York City. At first goods were carried over the road to Boston in medium-sized wagons, but as the business became extensive, large baggage-wagons, drawn by six horses, were in use for carrying shoes, with a return load of West India goods for the several stores. After the opening of the Eastern Railroad boots and shoes were sometimes carted to Rowley, and shipped by rail from there. By 1840 thirty or more persons in the south part of the town had been, or were to some extent, engaged in the shoe industry.<sup>7</sup>

The so-called "ten footer" (a shoe shop ranging from ten to fourteen feet square), small as it was, may not have been indicated on town maps, and given the number of shoemakers and manufacturers on Elm Street it seems likely that more existed than

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

<sup>3</sup> The Winters's grandfather Benjamin, born in 1737, married Mary Cressey in Rowley in 1761; their father lived in Bristol, NH. See Frank Winter, "Ancestors and Descendants of Benjamin Winter of Carthage, Franklin County, Maine" (1972; photo-offset copy at Newberry Library, Chicago), Ancestry.com website, <http://search.ancestry.myfamily.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=28423>.

<sup>4</sup> Edwin P. Hill, "History of Georgetown, Massachusetts," in Cyrus M. Tracey et al., eds., *Standard History of Essex County, Massachusetts* (Boston: C. F. Jewett, 1878), 126; Arrington, *Municipal History*, 253.

<sup>5</sup> See Gage, *History of Rowley*, 402-3; Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," 835; and Blanche Evans Hazard, *The Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts before 1875* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 210, which notes that these statistics were gathered and published by John Warner Barber in *Historical Collections of Every Town in Massachusetts* (Worcester: Dorr, Howland and Co., 1839), 66, 201.

<sup>6</sup> Arrington, *Municipal History*, 254.

<sup>7</sup> Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," 845.

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were shown on the map. As many as eight shoemakers (including journeymen and apprentices) made a shoe from start to finish in these ten-footers. Beginning about 1820 the "central shop," where leather was cut and put out to men and women in the community to sew the "uppers" among other tasks; these domestic workers then sent the uppers back, and the central shop sent them out again with soles and thread to finish the shoe, which the central shop then gathered and marketed.<sup>8</sup> According to industry historian William H. Mulligan Jr., the move from the central shop to the factory system took place incrementally as various shoemaking processes were mechanized, and as late as 1870 this transition was still underway.<sup>9</sup>

In ca. 1825 Benjamin Winter's elegant Federal-style house was probably built by local housewrights Joseph and John Kimball, who lived across Elm Street in nearly identical houses they would have erected themselves (16 & 20 Elm St.). The Kimball brothers were Boxford natives who appeared in Georgetown following Joseph's marriage to Nathaniel Nelson's daughter in 1824. The Winter house is depicted on maps dated 1830 and 1838, the latter map showing a store just south of the house. According to Nelson, early shoemakers often supplemented their businesses with trade in general merchandise, and this is apparently what Winter did as well.<sup>10</sup> In 1856 this building was simply called a shop, suggesting that the store had been taken over by Winter's shoe business; it was one of three such buildings shown on Elm Street at the time. At various times, the second floor of this of this store/shop also accommodated the Congregational Church vestry, public meetings and a school (see 21 Elm Street).

In 1850 Benjamin Winter's household consisted of his wife Apphia, 13-year-old Mary F. Winter of New Hampshire, probably a niece, his wife's parents, Stephen and Apphia Nelson, and Jacob Hobson, a boarder. Stephen Mighill Nelson (1770-1855) was the son of Solomon Nelson Jr. (1742-1841), who in 1800 owned the land on the west side of Elm Street where The Winter house is located. Humphrey Nelson and his family, along with two single male shoemakers and a teenage female domestic are listed in a separate household within the house. He likely was Apphia Winter's brother. Benjamin Winter's occupation was still recorded as a shoe manufacturer in 1850 and suggests that the scale of his business exceeded what a shoe shop could produce. By 1860 Winter evidently had retired as the census reports his occupation as a farmer. The house was continued to support two households, Benjamin, Apphia and Orin W. Harwood in one household, and shoe cutter Edwin C. Spofford and his wife and two teenage daughters in the other. Mary Winter, the presumed niece, and her husband David Bridges were enumerated next, perhaps living in what once was the store. She was 20 years of age and employed as a shoe binder.

Benjamin Winter died in 1865, and his widow Apphia remained in the house until her death in 1894. The 1870 census records her as living alone with a second household of three unmarried New Hampshire women headed by Siloam Chapman. Preceding Apphia Winter on the list is aged farm laborer Timothy Bryant and his wife in a rented dwelling. Mary W. and David W. Bridges are recorded in the entry before that along with their daughter, Mary E., who was 12 years of age. David W. Bridges worked as a shoemaker. The 1872 map shows two unlabeled buildings on a lot south of Mrs. Winter's house that are bracketed with her name as if in her ownership. Shortly after, this parcel became the location of a new house built for newspaper publisher William B. Hammond (see 21 Elm St.).

After Apphia Winter's death, her presumed niece, Mary Winter Bridges, assumed title to the house. By 1900 the shoemaker Thomas C. Tracy, who had married Mary Eliza Beth Bridges in 1881 was the head of household in the Winter house. His daughter Margaret, and his mother-in-law Mary Bridges were members of the household. Benjamin Arrington's 1922 history states that the former Winter house, then the Mary Tracy's Colonial Tea House, was "full of valuable and interesting heirlooms of the Winter family, whose descendants still occupy it."<sup>11</sup> Tracy had opened the Colonial Tea House by 1916, and such tearooms were common in the early automobile age when motorists traveling unfamiliar roads sought genteel, feminine, and therefore safe places to stop. Tracey operated the tearoom until at least 1925. Town assessor's records continued to record a shop on the Winter property up to 1920.

By 1930 Thomas Tracy had died, and Mary Tracey lived at 17 Elm with her forty-eight-year-old daughter Margaret, who worked as a bookkeeper. Margaret Tracy apparently continued to live in the house until her death in 1960. Four years earlier she had added Fitch L. and Eula L. Brennan to the title, and in 1980 her estate transferred full title to the Brennans; that deed cites the

<sup>8</sup> Hazard, *Boot and Shoe Industry*, 8-9, 42, 44.

<sup>9</sup> William H. Mulligan Jr., e-mail to Kathryn Grover, 9 December 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," 845.

<sup>11</sup> Arrington, *Municipal History*, 248.

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estates of Mary Eliza Beth Tracy and Benjamin Winter as grantees as well. In 1993 the Brennans conveyed the property in trust to George K. Brennan, the current owner.<sup>12</sup>

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

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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.

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

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"Town of Georgetown Mass." and "Village of Georgetown Mass." In *Atlas of Essex County, Massachusetts* (Boston: George H. Walker, 1884).

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

<sup>12</sup> Margaret R. Tracy and the estates of Mary Eliza Beth Tracy and Benjamin Winter to Fitch L. and Eula L. Brennan, 29 February 1980, SED 6682:42, which appears to correct the deed of 6 February 1956; Brennans to George K. Brennan, trustee, 24 February 1993, SED 11755:1.

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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 Benjamin & Apphia Winter House is a distinctive example of Federal Period architecture in the town and evinces the single-pile rear chimney plan form characteristic of Essex County and the North Shore region. Built ca. 1825, the house is essentially intact and distinguished by original materials and a projecting entrance with Federal-style architrave. It was probably built by housewrights Joseph and John Kimball, who also lived on Elm Street. It is a key contributing component of a historic district on Elm Street.



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View from SE



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View from NE



Aerial view from NE