

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 57

Georgetown

GEO.73

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Photograph



View from W

Address: 4 Chestnut Street

Historic Name: Edward and Ann Barry House

Uses: Present: residence

Original: residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1825

Source: historic maps, local history, census records

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Enclosed porch added to south end

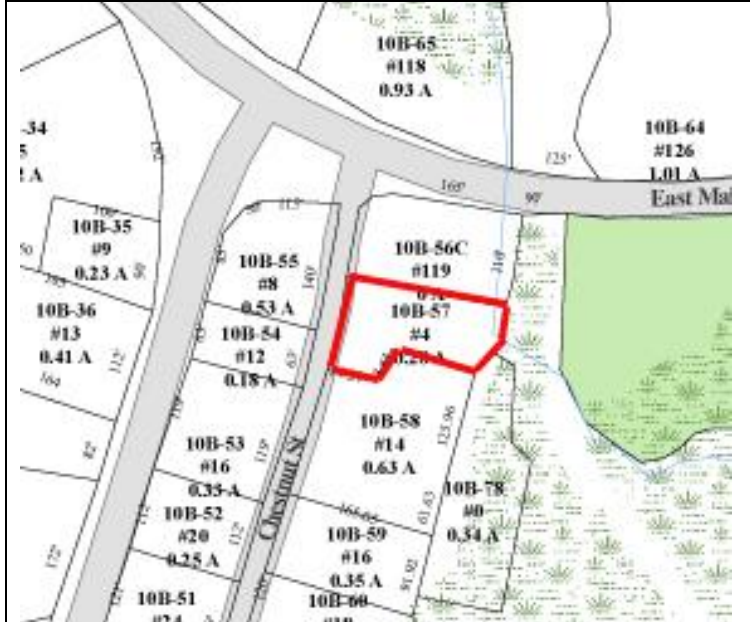
Condition: good

Moved: no ☐ yes ☒ **Date:** poss. ca. 1825

Acreage: 0.28 acres

Setting: This property is sited on the north end of Chestnut Street, which dead-ends just north of the house. The house is set back from Chestnut Street on a lot with mature hardwoods and softwoods. This section of the area is both commercial and 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 Edward and Ann Barry House is a story-and-a-half wood-frame dwelling with a gable roof and wood clapboard siding. It is located on a quarter-acre parcel on the east side of Chestnut Street. Set back from the street, the house occupies the center of the wooded lot. The house was constructed in the early 19th century (showing up on maps by 1838, but presumed to have been part of Nathaniel Nelson's tannery complex, which was operating in the vicinity in 1825.

The long, rectangular form has six windows across the front façade with an entrance squeezed in the center. Typical of other houses of the period in the neighborhood, there are two brick chimneys on the rear (east) wall. The house likely originated as a two-family tenement with separate entrances in window bays flanking the current one, which has all the appearances of having been added later, probably after Edward and Ann Barry purchased the house in the 1850s. The doorway is surmounted by a small pitched hood, and there are no other distinguishing design features. A large sun porch was added the south end of the house in the 20th century.

The Edward and Ann Barry House is a distinctive example of an early-19th-century tenement associated with a tannery operating on the premises. It is a contributing component of the Elm Street Historic District.

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 Georgetown maps, Chestnut Street was opened from East Main Street to Elm Street between 1830 and 1838. It was probably there by 1835, the year Jeremiah Nelson (1805-42) is said to have introduced "steam as a motive of power" to Georgetown industrial enterprise.¹ The street was probably opened to permit wagons more direct access to the tanneries that were arrayed along this short street from its creation; the land on which Chestnut Street and its buildings stand was earlier the back yards, in effect, of houses on the east side of Elm Street.

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.

Five members of the Nelson family—four descended from Thomas Nelson's son Sergeant Thomas Nelson (1638-1712) and the fifth from the immigrant's son Philip (1636-91)—owned the land around Elm Street and the contiguous section of East Main Street. Three were the sons of Thomas's grandson Solomon Nelson (1703-81) and Mercy Chaplin—Amos (1736-1806), Asa (1739-1815), and Solomon Jr. (1742-1821). Another, Nathaniel Nelson (1767-1853) was the son of Solomon Nelson Jr., and the fifth, Aaron Nelson (1740-1804), was the great-grandson of Philip Nelson. Nathaniel Nelson's parcel extended from the 1767 church along the east side of Elm Street. Local histories state that Nathaniel's father Solomon had built a house for him on this tract just south of the church in 1797.² Indeed, the 1798 Federal Direct Tax schedules for Rowley show that Solomon owned two

¹ Henry M. Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," in *History of Essex County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men*, ed. D. Hamilton Hurd (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1888), 1:844, 846.

² "Map of Centre of Georgetown in 1800," in Sidney Perley, "Centre of Georgetown in the Year 1800," *Essex Antiquarian* 2, 7 (July 1898), 101, based on the manuscript map "Georgetown 1800," 1996.07.01, Georgetown Historical Society. This map shows only a northern section

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houses at that time. By 1800 he had given one to Nathaniel and owned another two, one at the southwestern side of the junction of Elm and East Main Streets and the other east of these, now 144 East Main Street, which became the home of Nathaniel's brother Stephen Mighill Nelson (1770-1855). Jeremiah was Stephen M. Nelson's son.

Judging by the position of Pen Brook on early village maps, Chestnut Street was on the tract owned by Nathaniel Nelson, whose longtime home was at 8 Elm Street. Nathaniel, his father Solomon Nelson Jr., his uncle Asa Nelson, his brother Jeremiah (1768-1838) and his son William were (1810-89) all owned and operated tanneries. "The most important and extensive early mechanical industry established in this town was that of tanning and currying, the annual production of leather being quite large," local historian Edwin Hill wrote in 1878. A statistical survey mandated by the state in 1837 found sixteen tanneries in Rowley, nine of which were in the Georgetown section of the town, that processed \$43,400 of leather from 11,600 hides and employed thirty-one people.³

The local tanning industry is believed to have been initiated by Captain Benjamin Adams on Central Street, just west of Elm, in 1780. According to local historian Henry Mighill Nelson, Deacon Solomon Nelson (his uncle) trained "most of the young men who learned this trade in New Rowley from 1810 to 1830." Nelson added, "The privileges of the apprentice were to dress for himself two dozen calf-skins, one-half dozen sides of leather, and as many sheep-skins as the apprentice pleased." He noted too that some of these tanners used locally supplied hides:

An extensive business in the slaughtering of cattle was carried on in town early in the present century and during the war with England. This was conducted principally by Deacon Solomon Nelson and his cousin, Nathaniel Nelson. Drovers of fifty or more head were often purchased at one time. Cattle were frequently bought of Governor Colby, of New Hampshire. The deacon was also State inspector of beef. The cellar floor under his house has at times been completely covered with barrels of beef awaiting shipment. The hides were converted into leather, and both industries carried on simultaneously.⁴

Nelson stated that Jeremiah Nelson, who served his apprenticeship under his first cousin Deacon Solomon Nelson, began a tannery "near the meetinghouse" about 1824-25.⁵ He added that Nathaniel Nelson moved buildings, apparently including a house, from another part of town to Chestnut Street to use in his tannery business, but he neither dated the move nor specified the Chestnut Street location of the buildings. Thus whether 4 Chestnut was one of these moved buildings is not known.

The 1838 map indicates that Nathaniel Nelson owned both 4 and 18 Chestnut Street property at that time. The order of census enumeration suggests that Charles Coburn may have occupied the house in 1840. Henry M. Nelson stated in his 1888 history of Georgetown that Coburn made shoe-pegs "forty years ago, in a building on Chestnut Street."⁶ Coburn was born in Tyngsborough, Massachusetts, about 1805 and was in Georgetown by 1830. Vital statistics and later censuses indicate that Coburn was a carpenter. His wife Abigail Spofford was born in New Hampshire. By 1850 the Coburn family moved to Lawrence and remained there through at least 1880.

The 1856 map labels the house at 4 Chestnut Street "E. Berry." Edward Berry (also Barry) was likely one of the earliest Irish immigrants to settle in Georgetown. Born in 1822 in Munster province, Barry came to the United States in 1849 and was a boarder in the house of Moses Wright (98 Elm Street) in 1850. He worked as a boot treer, who was one of the last persons in the process of footwear manufacture. A treer placed a fully formed boot or shoe on a last-shaped frame and tightened the shoe around the form with a foot lever. The worker then brushed and cleaned the shoe, fixed any cuts or imperfections, and then ironed the upper to remove wrinkles and smooth the shoe.⁷

of Elm Street and does not show how far south Nathaniel Nelson's tract extended. On the west side of Elm Street Aaron Nelson's tract abutted Solomon Nelson's on the south, but again the map does not reveal how far it extended southward. Perley, "Centre of Georgetown," 105, asserts the probability that Solomon Nelson Jr. built 8 Elm Street for his son.

³ See Gage, History of Rowley, 402-3, 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.

⁴ Nelson, "Georgetown History," 844-45.

⁵ Henry M. Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," in *History of Essex County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men*, ed. D. Hamilton Hurd (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1888), 1:844.

⁶ Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," 1: 846.

⁷ For an explanation of the various processes of shoe manufacture, see Hazard, *Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry*, 160-67.

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The Barry family remained at 4 Chestnut Street through the mid-1940s. About 1851 Edward Barry married Ann Riley, who emigrated from Connaught in 1850, and the couple had four children between 1853 and 1863 (birth records have not been found for any of them). By 1870 Barry was still making boots, and his eldest daughter Catherine (or Kate) worked in a tailor's shop. The 1880 census shows Barry as a boot crimper (either essentially the same as a treer or what was later called a "puller-over," who placed the upper over the last and insole and tacked it into position) and his three of his four children were still in the household, all working with textiles rather than shoes: Catherine and Margaret were coatmakers, and Edward H., then seventeen, worked in an upholstery shop. Edward Barry Sr. is shown as a crimper in censuses and directories through 1900 and in the 1901 directory as a treer. By that year Edward Jr. worked as a liquor dealer in Haverhill and is listed as living on Chestnut Street, though he may by then have moved to Haverhill, where he was certainly living by 1905.

Ann Barry died in Georgetown in April 1905, and Edward Barry Sr. died about three years later. The 1910 census shows the sisters Catherine and Margaret, in the fifties and living on their "own income," at 4 Chestnut. Town assessor's records show them as the owner of the property, the only building on which was the house, in 1933. In 1947 the executor of Edward H. Barry's will sold the property to Osgood F. and Edith M. Haskell, and in 1991 Mary Jo Haskell, representing Osgood Haskell's estate, sold 4 Chestnut to its current owner, Peter Haskell.⁸

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MAPS

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⁸ Mary C. Canarie, executor of will of Edward H. Barry, to Osgood F. and Edith M. Haskell, 30 July 1947, SED 3589:320; Mary Jo Haskell to Peter Haskell, 10 September 1991, SED 10937:598.

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View from W



View from E

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View from SW



View from NW