

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

10A 38

Georgetown

GEO.98

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Photograph



View from NW

Locus Map



Address: 104 Elm Street

Historic Name: Haskell & Abigail Perley House

Uses: Present: residence

Original: residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1838

Source: historic maps and family history

Style/Form: Greek Revival

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

none

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.5 acre

Setting: This property is set back from the east side of Elm Street 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 Haskell & Abigail Perley House is a two-story wood frame dwelling with a gable roof and wood clapboard siding built ca.1838. It is centered on a half-acre lot on the east side of Elm Street. There is a lawn around the house; the rear of the parcel is wooded. A driveway on the south side of the house connects the street to a parking area at the rear of the house.

The house is designed in a traditional mid-19th-century rural manner, which is unusual on Elm Street: a two-story rectangular form with flush eaves, internal chimneys and a five-bay front façade with a center entrance with sidelights contained within a trabeated architrave. Typical of other houses on Elm Street built in this period, Greek Revival features are limited to the entrance and a modest enlargement of the frieze in the otherwise simple entablature at the roofline. The Federal-period form and design details are still prominent as in many other buildings dating to this period. The Greek Revival taste was adopted very conditionally on Elm Street. Unlike other more stylish houses in the concentrated area at the north end of Elm Street, many of them attributed to the housewrights Joseph and John Kimball, this house does not have a projecting entrance nor a single-pile plan common to them. The existence of an internal chimney on the south side of the house (there was probably another on the north side), indicates that the plan of 104 Elm Street is more than one room deep. Nearly all the windows contain six-over-six sashes, which are probably original.

A small one-story wing is attached to the north side of the house. Its precise function is not known and the large, tall chimney on its rear wall suggests an other-than-domestic use. (Perhaps it was added as a second kitchen with a chimney tall enough for proper draft.) A story-and-a-half kitchen ell is attached to the center of the rear wall, and a second section is connected to the rear of the ell, which was built or renovated more recently. There are no outbuildings on the property any longer.

The Haskell & Abigail Perley House is a distinctive example of mid-19th-century domestic architecture on Elm Street that reflects the persistence of traditional house forms and decorative styles in the period. The property is a contributing feature 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 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 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.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 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 the Nelson lands reached southward is not clear from the 1800 village map but by the mid-1800s the tract on which this property is sited probably belonged to Charles Nelson (1803-74). The first Nelson to own the land in this section of Elm Street was Joseph Nelson (1682-1744), the grandson of the immigrant Thomas Nelson. According to local historian Henry Mighill Nelson, Joseph Nelson was the "first of this name to settle in Georgetown."³ The property passed to Joseph's son Aaron (1740-1804) and from Aaron to his sons Joseph (1769-1856) and Jonathan (1772-1852) and then to Joseph's son Charles (1803-74) and Jonathan's son Sylvanus (1803-82).

No house is shown on this site on a village map before 1838, when the one apparently on this site was labeled "H Perley" for Haskell Perley (1806-82), a shoemaker (and later a shoe cutter) born in Boxford. Unlike Apphia Ann Perley Merrill at 35 Elm Street and her cousins Joseph Perley Low of 126 Elm and Gilman Perley of 70 Elm Street, Haskell Perley was descended not from Thomas Perley but from his brother John, sons of the immigrant Allan Perley, who came from Wales to Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1638 and died in Ipswich in 1674. Artemas Ward Perley, Haskell's father, was born in 1776 and named for the commander in chief of the Massachusetts militia during the Revolution. Artemus Perley lived on the "parental estate" in Boxford and had nine children with his first wife Eleanor Putnam Perley.⁴

Before his marriage, according to a family history, Haskell Perley worked as a "farmhand, by the season, with parties in his own or adjoining towns." In 1833 he married Abigail Nelson (1811-50), the daughter of Jonathan and Hannah March Nelson. The couple lived in Rowley at the birth of their first child Susan in 1835 and by 1839 moved to Georgetown, where their son Sylvanus Ward Perley (1839-40) was born.⁵ In 1850 Abigail Nelson Perley died of consumption, and three years later Haskell married Almira A. Putnam of Danvers.

The Perleys remained at 104 Elm until Haskell's death in 1882. The village map of 1884 labels the property "Perley Est," and it is not clear who bought or lived in the house between that date and 1900. By the turn of the century it became home to hostler Richard M. Taylor and his wife Lelia Rogers. He was born in Rouse's Point, New York, while his wife was a Georgetown native and the daughter of Charles L. and Elizabeth Mighill Rogers. In 1900 the household included their son Lewis Rogers, who worked in a box factory, and George Keys, a boarder.

By 1909 Richard Taylor had died, and Lelia Taylor was working as a laundress and boarding Nathaniel Potter, a day laborer who continued to live at this address at least until 1925. In 1914 Harry (J. Henry) Spottiswood, an edge setter at the George H. Wilson shoe factory on Central Street, was at this address, though, by 1920, he and his family had moved to 43 Elm Street. In 1920 the census listed Lelia Taylor as a boardinghouse keeper, with three boarders, including Potter. In 1933 town assessors listed Taylor with a house, barn, shop, and garage at 104 Elm. How long she continued to live on the property is not yet clear. By 1959 Robert E. and Dorothy J. King owned 104 Elm, and in 1972 they sold it to current owners Edgar N. and Faith A. Johnson.⁶

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 Martin Van Buren Perley, *History and Genealogy of the Perley Family* (Salem: by the author, 1906), 2: 460-61, 468.

⁵ Perley, *Perley Family*, 353, states that Haskell settled in Georgetown "after his marriage," and though his son was born in the town in 1839, the family is shown in the Topsfield census of 1840.

⁶ Dorothy J. and Robert E. King to Edgar N. and Faith A. Johnson, 1 August 1972, SED 5891:307.

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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.

"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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[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 Haskell & Abigail Perley House is a distinctive example of mid-19th-century domestic architecture on Elm Street that reflects the persistence of traditional house forms and decorative styles in the period. The property is a contributing feature of the Elm Street historic district.

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View from SW



View from SW

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View from W



View from NW