

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 9

Georgetown

GEO.72

Town/City: Georgetown

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

Photograph



View from E

Address: 239 Central Street

Historic Name: Abraham & Charles H. Adams Store

Uses: Present: residential

Original: residential

Date of Construction: 1832-1837

Source: historic maps, deeds, date stone

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Garage

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

none

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 1.25 acres

Setting: This property is within a triangular tract created by the intersection of Elm, Central, and Nelson Streets on a lot with some mature hardwoods. This area is largely residential.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Kathryn Grover and Neil Larson

Organization: Georgetown Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): January 2010

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GEORGETOWN

239 CENTRAL ST.

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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 Abraham & Charles H. Adams Store is a two-story wood frame building with wood clapboard siding and a gable roof. It is situated on a 1.25-acre lot on the southwest corner of the intersection of Central, Nelson and Elm streets. The surrounding space is maintained as a mown yard. A one-story wood frame garage and a wood frame shed are sited behind (west of) the house. A wood board fence screens the property from Central Street.

Built in one or two phases between 1832-1837, the building is comprised of a two-story section with a four-bay front façade containing an off-center entrance and a smaller two-story wing with a two-bay front façade. A long story-and-a-half ell attached to the rear of the building was added at an undetermined date somewhat later. The house has a center chimney and the wing and ell have end chimneys. The front entrance is distinguished by a pediment molding over the door. Windows are fairly evenly spaced and contain six-over-six wood sash that appear to be original. The roof has deep eaves with simple edge decoration. It is evident that alterations have been made over the intervening years as the use of the building has become solely residential.

A screened porch has been added across the south side of the rear ell. The garage has a front gable roof and a single vehicle bay; a second vehicle bay is contained in a shed-roof addition on the south side.

The Abraham & Charles H. Adams Store is a distinctive example of Federal Period architecture in the town. Built between 1832 and 1837, the building is a noteworthy example of an early commercial or mixed use building. It is essentially intact, although alterations have been made to convert it exclusively to residential use. It is a key 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 a 1922 local history, Central Street began as a "fenced lane" and was made a street "in the early part of 1800." It has historically also been called the Salem Road, and it is today state route 97. From an early point it was both residential and industrial. In 1760 Captain Benjamin Adams opened the town's first tannery here and through the nineteenth century shoe shops stood on both sides of the street.¹ The Georgetown plate from the 1884 Essex County Atlas shows five such shops on Central Street, and the village directory of the next year lists four factories—G. W. Chaplin and Company, H. P. Chaplin, John H. Lovering (at the corner of Elm Street), and C. G. Baker (at the corner of Nelson Street.).

From at least the 1830s and probably much earlier, the land on which the building at 239 Central Street stands was owned by Captain Benjamin Adams (born in Rowley in 1746), who is believed to have been Georgetown's first tanner and currier, beginning business at a tanyard near his Central Street home in 1780. Adams was part of the fifth 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 Rowley immigrant Thomas Nelson (1615-about 1648).²

¹ Benjamin F. Arrington, ed., *Municipal History of Essex County in Massachusetts* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1922), 246; 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), 1:844.

² Nelson, "Town of Georgetown History," 1: 812.

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In 1832 the land on which 239 Central Street house stands was deeded in two parcels to Abraham Adams (1800-1849) by his father, Captain Benjamin Adams (1773-1852), and Joseph Perley Low of Georgetown.³ The Low deed was a six-acre tract that included buildings, but the specific location of these buildings is unstated. No building was identified with the property on the 1830 Georgetown map. So, as early as 1832, but definitely by 1837 the existing building was completed and owned in common by Abraham Adams and his brother Charles H. Adams.⁴ The 1838 map of Georgetown depicts a house (A & C Adams) and the store just north of it, in its current location at the intersection. In 1850 Charles H. Adams deeded land with half of the house he shared with Abraham to shoe manufacturer John A. Lovering. Lovering lived across Nelson Street at 237 Central and whose first wife was their sister Mehitabel (1804-30). By 1856 maps associated the store with George Washington Adams (1815-77), a brother of Abraham and Charles. Charles probably transferred the title to his part of the house and lot to George at some point after his move to Danvers in 1852. Portions of the building could have been used as living and work space for shoeworkers, which could account for the size of the building and particularly the ell attached to the west side.

In 1887 Lovering defaulted on the mortgage Georgetown Savings Bank held on the property, and in that year Charles Edwin Tyler bought it at auction for \$853.⁵ Born in July 1839, Charles E. Tyler was the son of merchant Caleb Greenleaf Tyler and Roxbe Chaplin Tyler and grew up at 140 Elm Street, just north and east of this house. Caleb G. Tyler was a merchant who had earlier lived in both Montgomery, Alabama, and Boston before settling in Georgetown in the early 1840s. A shoe cutter by trade, in 1862 Charles Tyler married Caroline N. Harriman, the daughter of shoe manufacturer William B. Harriman, who lived at 94 Elm Street, and then enlisted in Company K of the Fiftieth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. Tyler was a musician and was discharged in 1863. He and his wife are shown in the Harriman house in the 1870 census but by 1883 were living at 95 Elm Street.

In 1892 Tyler sold part of this 239 Central tract—1.25 acres and buildings thereon—to Hugh Ross of Groveland, an ice company laborer and later foreman who lived in Georgetown from that point but not at this address. He must have rented it, but directories from 1914 to 1925 do not list the house by number. By 1925 Robert Kent James of Newton, a newspaper editor and publisher, sold the property to his sister Adelaide W. James, who ran a bookstore in her native Boston and lived in an apartment on Beacon Street. She owned it, but also does not appear to have lived in it, until 1941, when she sold the property to George E. and Myrtle E. Tolman. In 1930 George Tolman was a car salesman in Malden and lived with his wife and three children. The Tolmans owned 239 Central until George Tolman's death about 1970, when his Robert transferred the title to James N. and Jean A. Tolman of Georgetown. Current owners Gavin R. and Kristen Doughty Danaher bought the property in 2007.⁶

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- Bryant, Seth. *Shoe and Leather Trade of the Last Hundred Years*. Boston: Seth Bryant, 1891.

³ Benjamin Adams to Abraham Adams, 9 April 1832, SED 260:213; Joseph P. Low to Abraham Adams, 17 March 1832, SED 260:212.

⁴ The current owner of the house has discovered a date stone in the basement of the south wing of the house dated 1837. It is carved with the name S. Adams, whose identity is not known for certain. [<http://leo.james.wordpress.com/2009/11/11/history-of-our-house-part-i/>]

⁵ Charles H. Adams to John A. Lovering, 31 December 1850, SED 438:245; Georgetown Savings Bank to Charles E. Tyler, 22 August 1887, SED 1220:172.

⁶ Charles E. Tyler to Hugh Ross, 18 November 1892, SED 1361:219; Robert Kent James to Adelaide James, 16 January 1925, SED 2625:383; Adelaide W. James to George E. and Myrtle E. Tolman, 27 August 1941, SED 3268:273; Robert E. Tolman to James N. and Jean A. Tolman, 25 April 1970, SED 5679:20; Stephen B. and Melissa T. McLoy to Gavin R. and Kristen Doughty Danaher, 19 January 2007, SED 26492:65.

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Bureau of the Census. United States Census, 1790-1930.

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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 Abraham & Charles H. Adams Store is a distinctive example of Federal Period architecture in the town. Built between 1832 and 1837, the building is a noteworthy example of an early commercial or mixed use building. It is essentially intact, although alterations have been made to convert it exclusively to residential use. It is a key contributing component of the Elm Street historic district.

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View from SE



View from NE

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View from W



Aerial view from E