Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System
Scanned Record Cover Page



Inventory No:	MED.89
Historic Name:	Adams, Hannah House - South Plain Farm
Common Name:	Salisbury - Steele, Margaret House
Address:	49 Elm St
City/Town:	Medfield
Village/Neighborhood:	
Local No:	12; 169; 33-91;
Year Constructed:	C 1750
Architectural Style(s):	Federal;
Use(s):	Agricultural; Secondary Dwelling House; Shop Other; Single Family Dwelling House;
Significance:	Agriculture; Architecture; Industry; Literature; Recreation;
Area(s):	
Designation(s):	
Building Materials:	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Wall: Wood; Wood Clapboard; Foundation: Stone, Uncut;
Demolished	No

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

This file was accessed on: Sunday, September 21, 2025 at 8:13 PM

MED. 89

FORM B - BUILDING

Assessor's number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
33/91	Medfield		89

285

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Massachusetts Archives Facility
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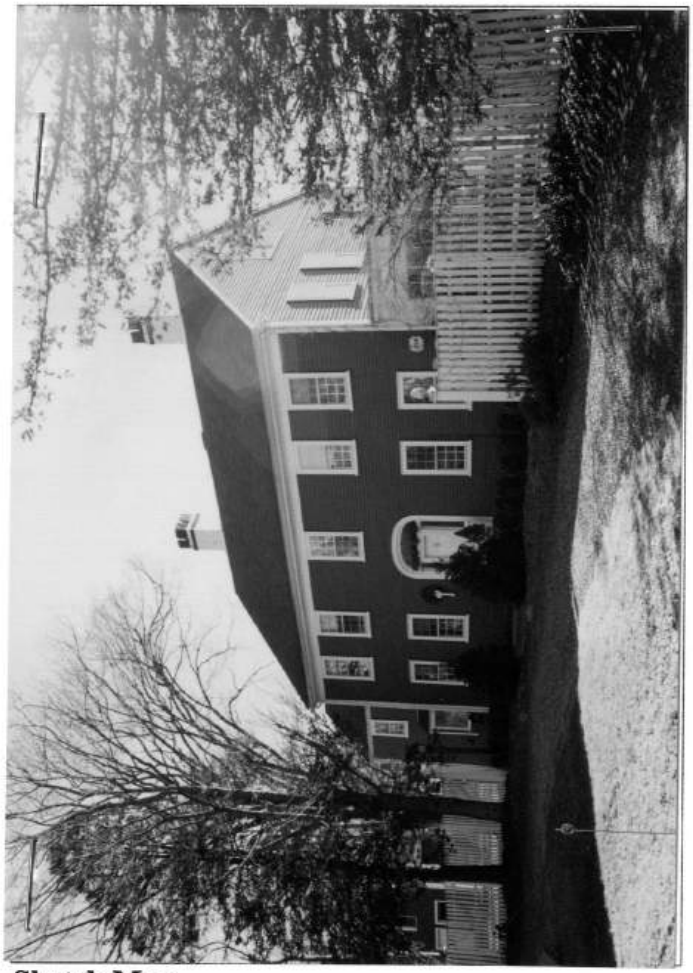

Sketch Map

see attached map

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JUL 22 1998
MASS. HIST. COMM

Recorded by NCA, JMS, VHA
Organization The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.
Date *(month/day/year)* May 1998

Town Medfield
Place *(neighborhood or village)*

Address 49 Elm Street
Historic Name Hannah Adams House/South Plain Farm
Uses: Present residence w/ landscape
Original residence/agriculture
Date of Construction 1750/ca. 1821
Source Blue Book # 1
Style/Form Federal
Architect/Builder
Exterior Material:
Foundation fieldstone
Wall/Trim clapboard
Roof asphalt shingle
Outbuildings/Secondary Structures
large, end-gambrel barn (ca.1910); 2 small storage sheds to south and east (20th c.)

Major Alterations *(with dates)*
1-story, sun-room to west (early 20th c.); 2-story, side ell to east (mid-18th c.); 2-story, rear ell-south (late 18th c.);alterations(early 20th c.)
Condition good
Moved X **no** ____ **yes** **Date**
Acreage 5.6
Setting woods to north; open fields to south

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual for instructions for completing this form.

MED.89

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION ☑ *see continuation sheet*

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☑ *see continuation sheet*

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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES ☑ *see continuation sheet*

☒ **Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.** *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

MED.89

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community: Medfield

Property Address: 49 Elm Street

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Massachusetts Archives Facility
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION *(continued)*

The Hannah Adams House at 49 Elm Street is a remarkably intact example of a large, 2 ½-story, Federal-style, single-family residence with a remnant agricultural landscape. The building has a rectangular plan with a side-gable main block, a 2-story, side ell to the east and a 2-story, rear ell to the south. The main block has a north facing, 5-bay facade and is 3-bays in depth. The primary entrance is centered on the facade and consists of a wood paneled door flanked by ¾ sidelights, topped with a fanlight, and set within a molded arched surround. The fenestration is 9/9, double-hung sash windows set within simple wood surrounds. The structural system is timber-frame set on a fieldstone foundation. The exterior wall fabric is clapboard, and the roof sheathing is asphalt. The house contains three brick chimneys: two end, interior chimneys on the main unit, and one chimney on the center ridge of the side ell. Other architectural features include dentils and corner boards on the main unit and a large Palladian window set under the gable end on the west elevation. To the east of the house is a large, 1½-story, early-20th-century, end-gambrel barn clad in clapboards with 6/6, double-hung sash windows. The barn is T-shaped in plan and has two square, louvered cupolas on the roof ridge. To the east of the barn is a 1-story garage clad in novelty siding, and to the south is a 1-story, end-gambrel shed. The property around the house is a designed landscape with a flat yard enclosed by an ornamental, Colonial Revival-style, picket fence and an in-ground swimming pool to the west. The land to the rear of the house is former agricultural land. The property is in good condition.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE *(continued)*

Elm Street was first laid out as part of a "highway from town" in 1652. This highway also included a portion of present-day South Street and ran to Mill Brook (Tilden 1887:57). Today, Elm Street is a winding and moderately traveled road that runs from the center of Medfield to the Walpole town line.

The house at 49 Elm Street is the second house to stand on this site. The first house was built circa 1714 by Thomas Adams, the grandson of Henry Adams, one of the early settlers of Medfield, who also had a house and mill at 72 Elm Street (MHC 88, late 17th c. et seq). In 1750, a 2-story addition was built, and it is in this section of the house that Hannah Adams was reputedly born in 1755 (Blue Book # 1). Hannah Adams was a distinguished authoress and one of the town's first historians. Her first published works, *Views of Religions* (1784) and *The History of New England* (1799), were published while she resided in Medfield (325th Anniversary 1976:60). Her other works included *Letters to My Nieces*, *History of the Jews*, *Truth of Christian Religion*, and *Dictionary of Religions*. The *Dictionary of Religions* went through four editions and was republished in England (Tilden 1887:283-284). Hannah Adams spent the later years of her life living in Boston. She died in 1831 and was one of the first to be buried at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The early house was removed and the present house at 49 Elm Street was built circa 1821. The 1750 addition was retained and incorporated as a side ell to the new house (Blue Book #1). By 1838, John Wickliffe Adams, Hannah's half-brother, was residing in the house with his wife and two children. He was a mechanic and a farmer and had a brush maker's shop in the side ell of the house ("Medfield-South End-Sixty Years Ago" Tilden 1898). By 1852, the property belonged to Mr. Salisbury, who removed a rear projection and remodeled the outbuildings (Walling 1852;"Medfield-South End-Sixty Years Ago" Tilden 1898). By 1876, the property was owned by Miss Margaret Steele (Atlas of Norfolk County 1876). In 1908, the property was owned by Edward True who sold it to Davenport Brown of Boston for use as a summer home (DeSorgher 1988:137). The property remains in use as a single-family, private residence to the present day.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES ***(continued)***

Blue Books" (10 volumes). [loose leaf notebooks containing street-by-street and house-by-house information and photographs. Located at Medfield Historical Society].

DeSorgher, Richard P. *History of the Town Medfield, Massachusetts, 1887-1925.* M. A. Thesis submitted to the University of Massachusetts, 1988.

Massachusetts Historical Commission. *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Report, Town of Medfield.* 1980.

325th Anniversary and Special Bicentennial Committee. *Medfield Reflections, A Pictorial Commemorative Book, 1651-1976.* Medfield, MA. 1976.

Tilden, William S. *History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1886.* George H. Ellis, Boston, MA. 1887.

Tilden, William S. "Medfield-South End-Sixty Years Ago" [Read before the Historical Society] June 1898

Maps

1852 Map of the Town of Medfield. H.F. Walling.

1876 Atlas of Norfolk County, Massachusetts. Comstock & Cline.

1888 Atlas of Norfolk County. E Robinson, Boston.

1909 Atlas of the Towns of Needham, Dover, Westwood, Millis, and Medfield, Norfolk County, Massachusetts. Walker Lithograph and Publishing Co., Boston. Plate 15.



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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community:
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Property Address:
49 Elm Street

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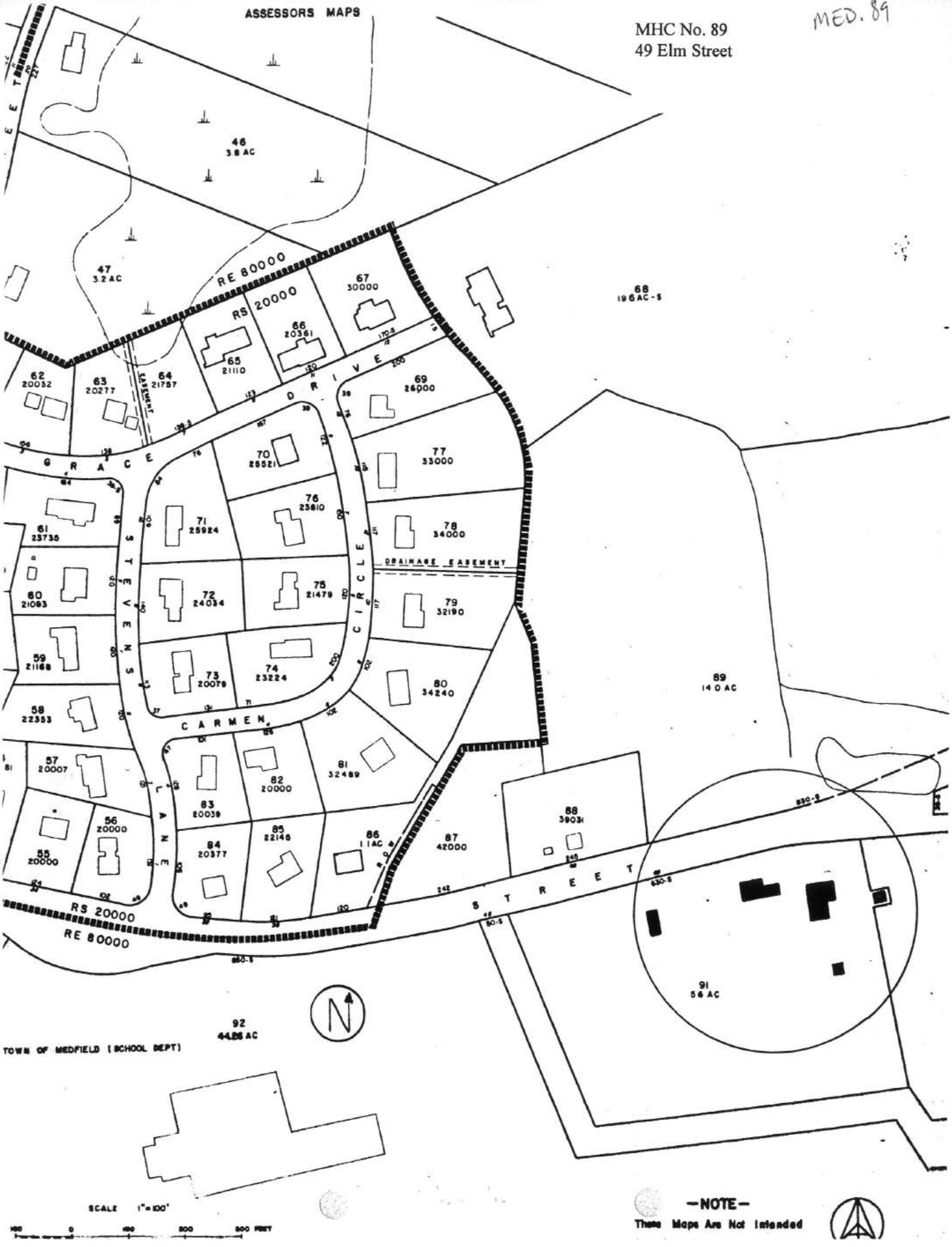
PHOTOGRAPHS






ASSESSORS MAPS
MHC No. 89
49 Elm Street
MED. 89
46
3.8 AC
47
3.2 AC
RE 80000
RS 20000
67
30000
66
20361
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21110
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20032
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20277
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21757
EASEMENT
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19.6 AC-±
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DRAINAGE EASEMENT
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20007
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84
20377
85
22148
86
1.1 AC ±
87
42000
88
39031
91
5.6 AC
92
44.26 AC
GRACE DRIVE
STEVENS CIRCLE
CARMEN LANE
ELM STREET
RS 20000
RE 80000
TOWN OF MEDFIELD (SCHOOL DEPT)
SCALE 1"=100'
100 0 400 800 800 FEET
—NOTE—
These Maps Are Not Intended

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Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archive Facility
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Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community
Medfield

Property Address:
49 Elm Street

Area(s)	Form No.
	89

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: NCA, JMS, VHA

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

The Hannah Adams House/South Plain Farm at 49 Elm Street is noteworthy as a well-preserved example of a Federal farmhouse in Medfield. It possesses historical associations with agricultural land use patterns important in the settlement and development of town, as well as association with the locally prominent Adams family, including authoress Hannah Adams. The first house on the site, built circa 1714 by a descendant of Henry Adams, one of the early settlers of Medfield, was enlarged by a 2-story addition about 1750 (now the side ell of the main house built ca. 1821) where Hannah Adams, a distinguished authoress and one of the town's first historians is thought to have been born. Her first published works, Views of Religions (1784) and The History of New England (1799), were published while she resided in Medfield. Hannah Adams died in 1831 and was one of the earliest burialsed at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The property continued to be used as a working farm by the Adams family until the first decade of the 20th-century, when it was sold for use as a summer home. The Hannah Adams House/South Plain Farm possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association and meets criteria A, B, and C of the NRHP. Additional historical research will be required to complete the nomination.

MED.89 169 89

(attach photo here)

FORM B - STRUCTURE SURVEY
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

1. Is this structure historically significant to:
(Town) (Commonwealth) (Nation)

Structure has historical connection with the following themes (See also reverse side):

Agriculture	Commerce/industry
Architecture	Science/invention
Art/sculpture	Travel/communication
Education	Military affairs
Government	Religion/philosophy
(Literature)	Indians
Music	Development of town/city

2. Town Medfield

Street address 49 Elm Street

Name Hannah Adams Birthplace

Original use Residence R

Present use Residence USES MED

Present owner Henry SEE B

Open to public No

Date 1715 Style Eighteenth century

Source of date See over

Architect ?

3. CONDITION: (Excellent) Good Fair Deteriorated Moved (Altered) (Added)

4. DESCRIPTION

FOUNDATION/BASEMENT: High (Regular) Low Material: Stone

WALL COVER: Wood Clapboards Brick Stone Other

ROOF: (Ridge) Gambrel Flat Hip Mansard
Tower Cupola Dormer windows Balustrade Grillwork

CHIMNEYS: 1 (2) 3 4 Center End (End interior) Cluster Elaborate Irregular

STORIES: 1 2 (3) 4 ATTACHMENTS: Wings Ell Shed Dependency Barn

PORCHES: (1) 2 3 4 Portico Balcony Recessed:

FACADE: Gable end: (Front/Side) Ornament:

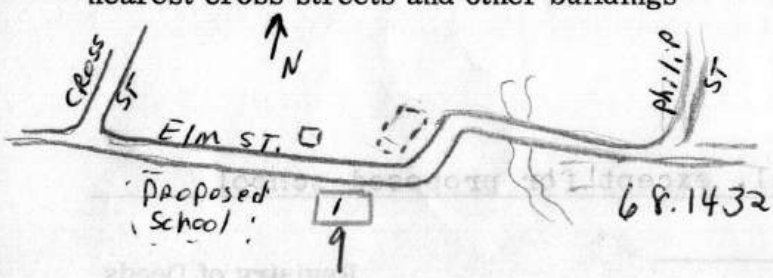
Entrance: Side (Front: Center/Side) Details:

Windows: Spacing: (Regular/Irregular) Identical/(Varied)

Corners: Plain Pilasters Quoins (Cornerboards)

OUTBUILDINGS Barn (garage)

5. Indicate location of structure in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings



6. Footage of structure from street 25'
Property has 600 * feet frontage on street

Recorder

For Medfield Historical Society

Photo x I-23

Date Dec. 1967

NOTE: Recorder should obtain written permission from Commission or sponsoring organization before using this form.

SEE REVERSE SIDE

FORM MHC-B 10M-4-67-944872

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RELATION OF SURROUNDING TO STRUCTURE

Neighboring Structures 1 ordinary house diagonally across street.
Style: Colonial Federal Greek Revival Gothic Revival Italian Villa Lombard Rom. Venetian Gothic Mansard Richardsonian. Also note: proposed (firm) location for new Medfield school. Will not affect this land.
Type Buildings: _____ Conditions: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Use: Residential Commercial Religious Proximity: _____ _____ _____

Landscape Features: Agriculture Open Wooded Garden: Formal/Informal
Predominent Features Woods and fields
Landscape Architect _____

GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF SITE (Refer and elaborate on theme circled on front of form)

Birthplace of Hannah Adams (B. 1755, died 1831). First pioneer woman author in America. Hannah 5th generation from Lt. Henry Adams (note site #2 on form A).

There is a marker stone in front yard.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND/OR REFERENCE

Dedham Historical Register, Vol. 7, #3, July 1896 - "Hannah Adams", by Mrs. Olive M. Tilden

RESTRICTIONS Zoned mostly residential, except for proposed school

Original Owner: _____
Deed Information: Book Number _____ Page _____, _____ Registry of Deeds



