

Area WS	Form no. 419
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

XIX-25A 200



Lowell

Address 229 Andover Street

Historic Name John Nesmith House

Original Residential

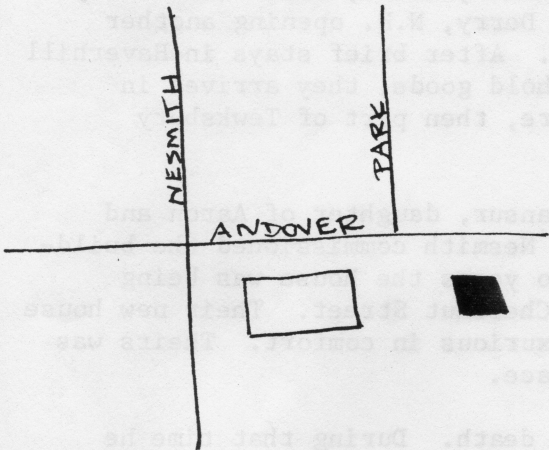
Present Residential

Ownership:  Private individual  
 Private organization

Public

Original owner John Nesmith

Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings or geographical features. Indicate north.



DESCRIPTION:

Date 1841-3

Source Nesmith papers

Style Greek Revival/Regency

Architect

Exterior wall fabric flush boarding

Outbuildings

Major alterations (with dates)

Moved Date

Approx. acreage 3/4

Setting Residential

Recorded by Elizabeth Durfee Hengen

Organization DPD Architectural Survey

Date 1/81

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

The John Nesmith House is one of Lowell's finest 19th century residences. It was the first building erected in the newly subdivided Washington Square area and the only surviving of two Greek Revival/Regency mansions built in Lowell.

Sited on a rise that originally overlooked Nesmith Street and the Merrimack River, the house was erected between 1841 and 1843 at which time only the Boott House (a Greek Revival building since demolished) was larger. The Lawrence-Butler House, also designed with Regency influence, (See Continuation Sheet)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community)

The John Nesmith House is significant for its fine architecture and for its association with one of Lowell's most prominent families.

In 1831 John (1793-1869) and his brother Thomas (1788-1870) purchased the former Gedney estate in Belvidere. The two brothers had been in business together for almost twenty years. When their merchant father John Nesmith died in 1806, he left nine children. To help support the family, in 1812 they opened a store in Windham, Maine, where the family was living. A decade later they moved to Derry, N.H. opening another store which they operated for eight years. After brief stays in Haverhill and New York City selling shoes and household goods, they arrived in Lowell and purchased 150 acres in Belvidere, then part of Tewksbury (see Washington Square area form).

Two years after his marriage to Harriet Mansur, daughter of Aaron and Rebecca who built 87 Nesmith Street, John Nesmith commissioned the building of 229 Andover Street. During the two years the house was being erected, they lived in a double house on Chestnut Street. Their new house was elegant and stylish in design, and luxurious in comfort. Theirs was the first house in Lowell to boast a furnace.

John Nesmith occupied the house until his death. During that time he engaged in numerous business, manufacturing and real estate ventures. At the 1845 Locks and Canals auction, he bought many lots on Chapel Hill. Foreseeing Lawrence's potential development as a textile city, he purchased large amounts of land there and was later closely involved in several of its mills. Other textile interests included mills in (See Continuation Form)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Illustrated History of Lowell (1897)  
Coolidge, Mill and Mansion  
Nesmith family papers (in private ownership)  
Atlas: 1879, 1896, 1936  
Maps: 1832, 1841, 1850

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Lowell	Form No:
Property Name: John Nesmith House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

had just been begun several hundred yards farther east.

The Nesmith House is cubical in form with a 1-story enclosed vestibule on the facade and a full length center bay bow on the west elevation. Windows are set in full length recessed rectangular niches articulated by broad pilasters that are flush with the frieze. Ornate iron balconies and railing contrast sharply with the strict flatness of the wall surfaces.

The shallow hip roof was once topped by a wooden balustrade.

The original landscaping (of which nothing remains) was elaborate. On the immediate grounds (5 acres) were hot houses, a grape arbor, fruit trees and extensive gardens. An attached conservatory augmented the exterior plantings. As Nesmith's children married, houses were built for them on the estate: 257 and 275 Andover; 40 Wyman - demolished.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Chelmsford, Dracut, Franklin, New Hampshire, and, of course, Lowell. To supply sufficient power for the Lowell Mills, Nesmith bought water rights from Winnepesaukee and Squam Lakes in New Hampshire as back-up during dry spells.

From 1862-3 he served as Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts. He was also appointed collector by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service for his district.

Harriet Mansur Nesmith was John's third wife. Earlier wives, Mary and Eliza (d. 1836), died leaving only one surviving child. Harriet and John had five children who lived to maturity.

Nesmith's will illustrated his philanthropic tendencies. A fund for the blind was left to the State of New Hampshire, and the town of Franklin was left monies to create a public park.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom



229 ANDOVER

WEST ELEVATION

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

247

1. Town Lowell

Address 229 Andover Street

Name John Nesmith House

Present use \_\_\_\_\_

Present owner Charles P. Giannarakos

3. Description:

Date 1841 (M&M)

Source \_\_\_\_\_

Style English Regency

Architect John Nesmith

Exterior wall fabric wood

Outbuildings (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Other features \_\_\_\_\_

Altered \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

5. Lot size:

One acre or less \_\_\_\_\_ Over one acre \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate frontage \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate distance of building from street \_\_\_\_\_

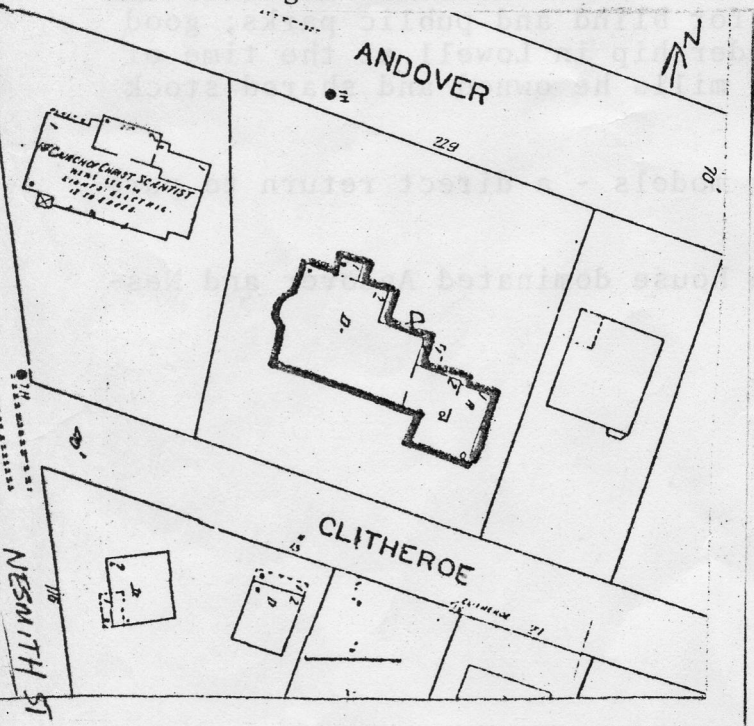
6. Recorded by \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

2. Photo (3x3" or 3x5")  
Staple to left side of form  
Photo number \_\_\_\_\_

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location  
in relation to nearest cross streets and  
other buildings. Indicate north.



DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE  
USGS Quadrant \_\_\_\_\_

MHC Photo no. \_\_\_\_\_

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

Original use Residence \_\_\_\_\_

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates \_\_\_\_\_

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	<u>X</u>	Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ invention	_____
The Arts	_____	Industry	<u>X</u>	Social/ humanitarian	_____
Commerce	_____	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
Communication	_____	Political	_____		_____
Community development	<u>X</u>				

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

Nesmith was an agent for mills in Lowell, Dracut, Chelmsford - and he secured power of Winnipiscoque and Squam Lakes in N.H. as reservoirs for Lowell in dry seasons. Lieut. Gov. of Mass. in 1862. He returned money to the city in the form of care for blind and public parks; good example of man investing money and leadership in Lowell at the time of the boom. His fortune came out of the mills he owned and shared stock in.

The style derives from English regency models - a direct return to pure English.

On the original condition of site, the house dominated Andover and Nesmith Streets.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

Illustrated History of Lowell p. 530.  
Mill and Mansion p.98