

To The Editor: APR. 14, 1988

Recently published reports concerning the rezoning of the eastern end of Crosby Lane from residential to commercial use is disturbing to those persons who are seriously concerned about the preservation of remaining vestiges of Chelmsford's historical past.

If Chelmsford has a historical shrine, it is in that area. Mr. William Fletcher lived at the end of the present Crosby Lane in what is believed to have been the first frame house in town. It was at his home on November 24, 1654 that Chelmsford's first town meeting was held at which time "there was Chosen to officiate in Ordering the Public affaris of the Place by the Consent of the Major part of the Town for this present year ensuing. . ."

Thus did a collection of isolated frontier farms become what we know today as the Town of Chelmsford, confirmed by incorporation one year later.

It has also been proposed that Crosby Lane be extended and joined to Meeting House Road which "would be the access road which would provide a link from Fletcher Street to North Road." It is well within the realm of probability that Crosby Lane would soon become a favorite "short cut" for hundreds of cars during the commuter hours. At the present time, many drivers leave Fletcher Street and cut through the parking lot and around St. Mary's Church to avoid the delay at North Road.

Were this to be the case, Crosby Lane would have to be widened to accommodate the traffic, running into another conflict: Crosby Lane is officially a "scenic road." It was so designated, with several other streets, at the Annual Town Meeting on May 6, 1974. Scenic Roads come under Chapter 67 of the Acts of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1973), requiring a public hearing and written consent from the Planning Board

before making changes.

The Town Meeting vote, as passed, included: "to instruct the Planning Board, in exercising its responsibilities hereunder, to take into consideration sound planning principles, esthetic and historical consideration, and preservation of natural resources, as well as public safety."

Crosby Lane, probably the oldest street in town, ran from the center of town, along what are now Westford Street and Worthen Street and to William Fletcher's house. All of this area is included in the Historic District, having been recognized as of sufficient historical importance to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Is Chelmsford so short of commercially zoned land that encroachment on historical sites can be justified?

(s)George Adams Parkhurst
