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## Are you a history buff?

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Researching, identifying and inventorying the many buildings and historic sites that have been associated with the development of Chelmsford over the past 325 years is the responsibility of the Chelmsford Historical Commission, a branch of our municipal government. Because the Commission operates on a small budget and most of its work is of a routine nature that usually goes unheralded, it seldom makes the news.

Two vacancies exist at the present time on this seven member board, which will be filled by appointment by the Board of Selectmen. Anyone having a genuine interest in local history and the work of the commission should file an application with the Selectmen's office. Appointments are for three year terms. Regular Historical Commission meetings are normally held on the last Thursday of each month in the 1802 Schoolhouse.

The commission operates under the authority contained in Section 8D, Chapter 40 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth, by which it is made responsible for "conducting researches for places of historic value and seeking to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes." In addition to this very general authorization, the Massachusetts Historical Commission has assigned a few specific duties to the local boards which include, among other things, the preparation of inventories of historic properties for inclusion in the State Historic Preservation Plan. More than 100 such inventories have been com-

pleted by the local commission and there are still more to be done.

The Historical Commission has no regulatory or enforcement authority and absolutely no restrictions are placed on inventoried properties. The purpose of the State Historic Preservation Plan, made up of the historic site inventories of the various towns and cities, is to provide information with which the Massachusetts Historical Commission can help to defend historic properties from adverse effects caused by publicly funded or licensed projects, such as highway construction, urban renewal, and subsidized housing. Also, inclusion in this plan is a prerequisite for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Some of the other activities of the commission are the erection of historic markers, an active interest in the preservation of old Town records, and cooperation with the Middlesex Canal Commission in preserving the canal site. The Board of Selectmen has also delegated to the Historical Commission responsibility for the maintenance of the 1802 Schoolhouse and the old Middlesex Canal Toll House.

The Historical Commission should not be confused with two other organizations that have similar names: the Historic District Commission, which operates under an entirely different authority and deals with properties located in the Historic District, and the Chelmsford Historical Society which is a private corporation.