

First 'town meeting' marker stands unappreciated for lack of caretaking

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By George Adams Parkhurst
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The site of Chelmsford's first "town meeting" in 1654 — actually an unofficial gathering of community leaders, since it would be a year or more before the town would be incorporated — was marked by a granite marker in 1924.

The marker was installed on a small knoll on private land on an extension of Crosby Lane at what is now the end of Meetinghouse Road. A few years ago when this land was sold, the marker was relocated a few feet to the west to a corner of the property at #14 Crosby Lane. To enhance its appearance, a small evergreen tree was planted on either side of the stone.

These trees have grown to the point where they cover the face of the stone and have not, apparently, been pruned regularly.

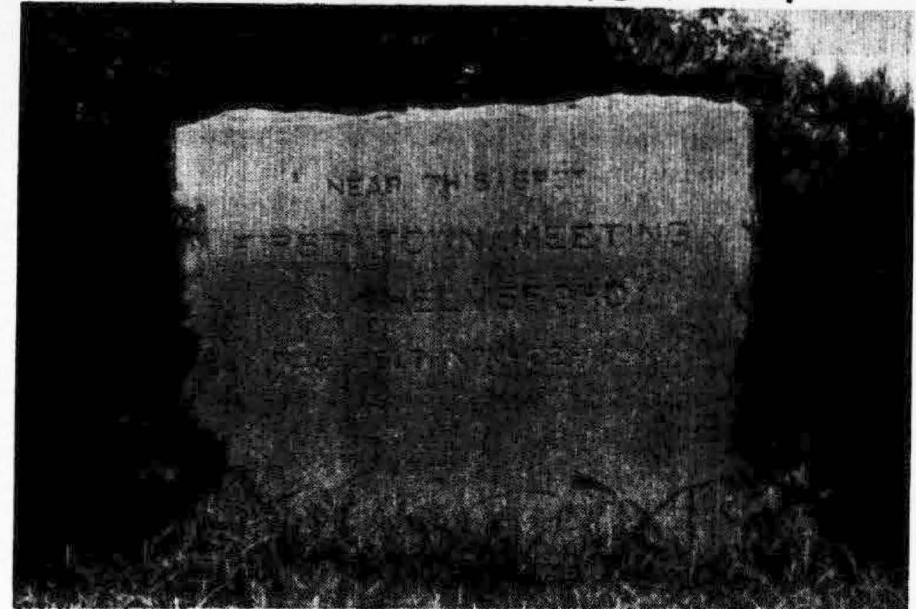
From time to time, I am contacted by people from out of state who have a historical connection with Chelmsford

and want a tour of the town's historical spots. Last summer, two people asked specifically to visit the "first town meeting monument" to take photographs of the stone. But it is just barely visible between the evergreens and cannot produce a meaningful photo.

It would be desirable to have the responsible town department remove these trees, replace them with small ones and keep them trimmed.

The first "town" meeting was held at the home of William Fletcher. History tells us that Fletcher had the first frame house in the new settlement. Although it disappeared many years ago, the Historical Commission hired an archaeologist to supervise a "dig" on the site in 1979. His work indicated that a home of that period did occupy the site.

One of the first streets in Chelmsford ran from the meeting-house (where the First Parish Church stands) along Westford Street, Worthen Street, across North Road



COURTESY PHOTO

The historic marker is much more visible in this 1973 photograph than it is today.

and down Crosby Lane. In the early days, it continued near the Radisson Hotel to Golden Cove Road and thence to Middlesex Village and Pawtucket Falls.

By the mid-1920s when I used to play there with boys from the neighborhood, Crosby Lane beyond #14 and #15 was a dirt farm road leading to T. W. Emerson's piggery at the brook in back of the present hotel and on to Perley Kimball's field of rye grain.

It seems too bad to hide this monument to the beginning of Chelmsford from historically interested individuals.

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