

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC William Morris Davis House

AND/OR COMMON

17 Francis Street

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 17 Francis Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

___ VICINITY OF

___NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8th

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE

75

COUNTY

Middlesex

CODE

017

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
___DISTRICT	___PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE ___MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	___UNOCCUPIED	___COMMERCIAL ___PARK
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	___EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	___ENTERTAINMENT ___RELIGIOUS
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	___YES: RESTRICTED	___GOVERNMENT ___SCIENTIFIC
	___BEING CONSIDERED	___YES: UNRESTRICTED	___INDUSTRIAL ___TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	___MILITARY ___OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Francis M. Shea

STREET & NUMBER

17 Francis Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Middlesex Registry of Deeds--Southern District
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

3rd and Ottis Streets

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

STATE

Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None

DATE

___FEDERAL ___STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

15

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR (unrestored)	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The William Morris Davis House in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a frame, 2½ story gabled roof house with a gambreled roof wing. The exterior is sheathed in shingles. The main entrance is located on the side of the house and there is also a rear entrance. The front elevation is characterized by an irregular or assymetrical window arrangement and a columned porch at the entrance. An end bay window faces the street.

The date of construction and the builder are unknown. The use of shingles as covering indicates that the house belongs to what the authors of the Cambridge Historical Commission's Old Cambridge (1973) call the "shingle style" of the Queen Anne movement in Cambridge. This would indicate that the house was probably built in the 1890's. Old Cambridge does not note 17 Francis Street as a distinguished illustration of the "shingle style." In itself the building appears to be of no particular architectural significance.

17 Francis Street was the home Willima Morris Davis lived in from approximately 1898, the time he was appointed to the Sturgis-Hooper Professorship at Harvard, until 1916. It was during this period that Davis performed some of his most productive work in geography.

17 Francis Street retains an integrity of association with the Davis period. The building has undergone no significant exterior alterations since its construction. The basic interior floor plan is also intact with the exception that the present owner has installed an apartment on the third floor. The structure continues to function as a private residence.

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8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1898-1916

BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

William Morris Davis was born February 12, 1850, in Philadelphia. His father was a successful Philadelphia businessman and young Davis grew up in comfortable and secure surroundings. His early education was typical of the period. His mother taught him at home until he was eleven at which time he entered a private school. In 1866 at age 16 Davis enrolled at Harvard's Lawrence Scientific School. In 1869 he earned a bachelor of science degree magna cum laude and a year later he received an engineering degree. Although Davis early displayed a high aptitude for scientific and engineering subjects, he returned to Philadelphia in 1873 and entered his father's business. The life of a businessman soon proved unsatisfactory to the young man and in 1876 Davis returned to Harvard to pursue the study of geology under Nathaniel S. Shaler. In 1877-78 he took a trip around the world studying geological formations and meeting his colleagues in other countries. Upon his return Davis was appointed an instructor of geology at Harvard. The appointment marked the beginning of a teaching career at Harvard that lasted until 1912. Davis' academic career was highly successful and reached its high point in 1898 when he was appointed to the Sturgis-Hooper Professorship of Geology. In 1912 Davis resigned from the Harvard faculty. His elevation to emeritus status did not mean the end of his research, writing, and active participation in geological and geographical circles. According to Herman R. Friss, Davis' biographer in the Dictionary of American Biography, it was during the 36 years between his appointment as Sturgis-Hooper professor in 1898 and his death in 1934 that Davis, "...profoundly affected the science of geology and geography."¹

After his retirement from Harvard, Davis traveled widely at home and abroad. In 1908-09 and again in 1911-12 he taught in Germany and France. Upon returning home in 1912 he lead a cross country excursion of leading American geologists and geographers. During World War I Davis served as chairman of the geography committee of the National Research Council. Beginning in approximately 1924 his interest centered on California where he studied oceanography and coral formations and lectured at various universities. Davis was active until the end of his life. He died on February 5, 1934, at Pasadena during the National Academy of Science annual meeting.

¹Herman R. Friss, "William Morris Davis," Dictionary of American Biography, 21, (New York, 1944), p. 230.

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(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Reginald A. Daly, "William Morris Davis, 1850-1934," National Academy of Science Biographical Memoirs, 23, (Washington, 1945).
 Herman R. Friss, "William Morris Davis," Dictionary of American Biography, 21, (New York, 1944).
New York Times, February 7, 1934.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	3,26	1,5,5	4,494	0,3,0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James Sheire, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

July 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE _____

LOCAL _____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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William M. Davis House, Mass.

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

William Morris Davis' significance in the history of science in America rests in his contributions to meteorology, geology, and geomorphology. In over 500 books and periodical publications he created a body of work in the earth sciences that mark him as an outstanding American scientist.

In 1894 Davis published Elementary Meteorology. Although the work, which was essentially a textbook, did not contain any new basic science knowledge, it did bring organization and refinement to a large body of previously uncoordinated knowledge. Elementary Meteorology became the standard textbook on the subject for many years.

Davis' international fame as a creator of new knowledge rests chiefly on his contributions to geology and geomorphology. In 1912, after he had resigned from Harvard and while teaching in Germany, Davis published Die erklärende Beschreibung der Landformen (A Reasoned Description of Landforms). The work represented a summation of Davis' forty year study of the shape of the earth and the evolution of the earth's forms. Employing the knowledge of meteorology, geography, and geology Davis offered an explanation of the genesis, development, and classification of landforms. His system, which could be applied to the topography of the entire earth, became known as the Davisian or American school of geomorphological thought. In this work and subsequent studies Davis created new doctrines and concepts (for example the concept of "erosion cycle") to explain the shaping and forming of the earth. In so doing he opened new areas of study for geologists and geographers. According to Reginald A. Daly, the distinguished geologist, Davis transformed the study of geography in America into a true earth science.

Davis' contributions to the earth sciences earned him the esteem and recognition of his peers. Among his awards were the Cullum Medal of the American Geographical Society (1903), the Academy of Natural Sciences' Hayden Medal, and the Patron's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society. Leading scientific societies both here and abroad, among them the National Academy of Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Deutsche Meteorologische Gesellschaft, elected him to membership.

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