

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\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION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
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> 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		

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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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## 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	3,2+6	1,5,5	4,4	9,4	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

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

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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