

# Sawin Academy and Dowse High School site

## Sanger Street

**Form No.** 903

**Town** Sherborn  
**Address** Off Sanger St.

**Historic Name** Sawin Academy and Dowse High School site

**Ownership, 1981** Town of Sherborn  
**" Original** Town of Sherborn

**Constructed** Academy built 1874, stone engraved 1962.

**Dedicated**

**Source** Appears on stone

**Designer**

**Individual or Group respons. for monument**

**Condition** Excellent

**Importance of monument to area** Moderate

**Monument endangered by** Not applicable

**Location of inscription** Plaque on wall

**Entire Inscription** "Site of Sawin Academy & Dowse High School, 1874-1962"

**Description** Built into southerly retaining wall of the new library.

**Foundation**

**Material** Stone

**Setting** To southeast of Church Common, adjacent to Central School

**Size** 4 feet by 2 feet

**Recorded** September 1981 by Edward W. Gordon



### DESCRIPTION OF MONUMENT

This is an engraved stone which is built into the southerly retaining wall of the new library (1971). It is surrounded on three sides by uncoursed rubble stone. The stones incised and raised lettering reads "Site of Sawin Academy & Dowse High School 1874-1962."

An examination of old photographs reveals that this stone was originally set into the third level of the school's

corner tower. "Site of" and "1874-1962" were obviously incised after the Academy was razed.

## **HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF MONUMENT**

The Sawin Academy and Dowse High School figures importantly in the educational history of Sherborn. It was completed in 1874. Martha Sawin of Natick funded its construction. She was a descendant of Thomas Sawin who came to Sherborn from Watertown November 29, 1679. He built a sawmill on Chestnut Brook and built Sherborn's first meeting house. These facts doubtless account for Martha Sawin's interest in the town. The total value of her bequest was later reported to be \$42,324.16 of which \$20,000 was expended in the erection of a brick school building. The school's site was bought from the Russell heirs for \$2,000.

Architecturally this school was a good example of High Victorian Gothic institutional design. Its most distinctive features included a tall corner tower, narrow round headed windows, projecting entrance porch with attenuated Gothicized columns, steeply pitched gables and polychromatic slate roof. Along with the First Parish Church and the Old Town Hall it picturesquely presided over the Church Common in Sherborn Center. These three buildings reflected three distinct styles in the architectural (American) history - Greek Revival, Italianate and High Victorian Gothic.

The school was dedicated September 10, 1874. It opened six days later with 64 pupils in attendance. Its first principal was Edward A. H. Allen. It was Martha Sawin's wish that it be "a select school in the center of town". For many years it was ranked in Class A for admission to Normal Schools. It became a public high school in 1910. In 1949 it closed its doors because of lack of students. It was torn down in 1962.

Note: Among these present at the school's dedication was the Vice President of the U.S. - Hon. Henry Wilson (Natick's shoemaker) who delivered a brief address.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES**

- Anne C. Shaughnessy - A Guide to Sherborn and The History of Sherborn, 1974
- Sherborn Past and Present 1674-1924, compiled by Sherborn Historical Society members

## **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

The green descriptive plaque next to the monument contains a photograph of the academy surrounded by the following description:

### **SAWIN ACADEMY and Dowse High School**

**Sawin Academy, Incorporated by act of the legislature in 1871, and made possible by the generous will of Martha Sawin was erected on this site and dedicated on September 10, 1874 with U.S. Vice President Hon. Henry Wilson as guest of honor. It continued as a high school until 1949 when Sherborn high school students were transferred to Framingham. For several years thereafter various grade school classes were conducted in the building.**

**In August 1962 the building was razed and the tablet before you was taken down from high up on the octagon tower and erected here as a memorial.**

**During the period from 1874 until 1949 many of the 430 students graduated from Sawin Academy went direct to colleges and universities throughout the land.**

Photograph of Sawin Academy:



*Courtesy of The Sherborn Historical Society*