

Farm Road Estate Area

138, 157, 177, 210 Farm Road; 23 South Street

Town Sherborn
Area H
USGS Quad Medfield
Assessor's Sheets 16/16, 15/5, 15/2, 16/14

Form Nos. in Area
 138 Farm Road: 28, 214, 215, 919
 157 Farm Road: 30, 217, 218
 177 Farm Road: 32, 219-221, 916-918, 926
 210 Farm Road: 33, 222
 23 South St.: 125

Photographs Rolls 4,5
Current Use Residential; agricultural; estate
Construction Dates 1759; ca. 1763; 1910
Overall Condition Excellent
Alterations
Acreage 276
Recorded by Sanford Johnson, April 1999

X Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Buildings located in the Farm Road Estate Area are further described on MHC survey forms completed in 1981 and updated with additional resources as part of this survey. The Joshua Morse Farm at **177 Farm Road** is described on Form #32; The Daniel Morse III House at **210 Farm Road** on Form #33; The Holbrook House at **138 Farm Road** is described on Form #28; The Bigelow House at **157 Farm Road** is described on Form #30; The Channing House at **23 South Street** is described on Form #125. The purpose of this form is to describe associated outbuildings and the landscape in which they exist.

The Farm Road Estate Area is focused around the Joshua Morse Farm at **177 Farm Road**** and consists of four additional residences, several outbuildings and stone walls. The most prominent element is the landscape at this address which is primarily open fields divided by post and rail fences with some wooded areas, all accessed by gravel circulation paths. The principal landscape of the area is adjoined by estates at **210 Farm Road****, **157 Farm Road**** (which is assessed as part of the Morse Farm), The Holbrook House at **138 Farm Road****, and the Henry M. Channing House at **23 South Street****. The area includes land east of Farm Road and South Street and the parcels of 138 and 210 Farm Road. The houses at 157 and 177 Farm Road are working agricultural residences. Houses at 23 South Street and 138 and 210 Farm Road are mansions serving as residences only. Construction dates are between 1710 for the Daniel Morse III House and 1910 for the Channing House at 23 South Street.

The Joshua Morse Farm is a large Federal and Colonial Revival style house with 2 detached barns, a silo and sheds and other outbuildings sited among lawns, orchards and fields. The farm is on gently rolling land, largely cleared of trees and divided by post and rail fences. Low hills rise 100' in the east and north of the landscape. Fruit trees occupy the yard between Farm Road and the facade of the house. The small orchard is lined with low, parallel stone walls that approach the center of the main block of the house from Farm Road. A small stream flows northwest on the north side of the house from Farm Pond to the Charles River.

Architectural resources are focused around the Federal and Colonial Revival style Joshua Morse Farm at [177 Farm Road**](#), built in 1759 and remodeled around 1902 with Colonial Revival additions. The ridge-hipped,

five-bay, two and one-half-story Federal style main block is enlarged by a Colonial Revival style ell of three bays and two stories added to the north elevation. The ground story of the ell is lit by an arcade and enlarged by an attached greenhouse. Additions were made to the west and south elevations in the late 1980s by the current owners.

Outbuildings and barns are located west and north of the main house. The principal Horse Barn/Garage (#219) is a side-gabled, one and one-half-story, wood-framed building, approximately 70' x 40'. A ventilator with arched louvered vents and a weathervane occupies the center of the roof peak. Deep window hoods cover the 2/2 double-hung sash on the facade and the vehicle entry is lit from above by a double row of fixed sash. The exterior is clad in wood clapboards. A second side-gabled outbuilding, the Cow Barn (#221) is east of the main barn and is articulated with a row of four-pane, fixed sash on the principal elevation and cupola atop the roof-peak. Three additional smaller outbuildings are situated east of the house and main barn. The largest of these may be the Sheep Barn (#220) based on descriptions in the assessor's records, while others appear to house farm animals and supplies. A silo (#926) built of concrete staves was constructed between 1922 and 1940 according to tax valuations. It is between the main barn and the three easterly outbuildings, and with its prominent hemispherical roof, lends a strong agricultural identity to the landscape.

Post and rail fences and stone walls (#916) add additional agricultural character to the landscape (#917) as they are viewed from a great distance across open fields. The fences outline the circulation system of roads between the fields and lend a focus to the rolling grassy expanse. Fences follow the dirt road from the house leading west and north through fields to South Street and the driveway of the Henry Channing House at **23 South Street****, a comparably scaled mansion. Stone walls line the driveway and the orchard (#918) between the house and Farm Road. The low, dry-laid walls do not appear in historic photos and may have been built in 1902 during renovation of the house and barns.

An apple orchard (#918) containing a total of approximately 100 trees is between the road and the house. A pond of around a half acre in size is north of the buildings near the road. A stream drains Farm Pond in the southwest into this smaller body of water which then drains into the Charles River to the northeast.

The landscape (#917) around the house appears to have been more formally laid out at the time of the renovation of the house and barns in the 1902 by Boston architect Joseph Everett Chandler. Stone walls were constructed leading to the front of the house. A turn-of-the-century photograph from Francis Bardewell's *Historical Sketches* (1952) shows the main ridge-hipped, center chimney, Federal style block of the house without the side-gabled addition or the stone walls and orchard now in the front of the house. A one-story ell was attached to the right (south) side prior to renovations as well. Finally, the driveway in the historic photo approaches directly from the road instead of circling toward the house from the north as is currently the case.

The Daniel Morse III Farm at **210 Farm Road**** is a two and one-half-story, three by two-bay saltbox with an attached side gabled mass built onto the south side in the 1950s and 1980s. The main block is marked by a prominent center chimney, weathered wood shingle siding and a classical pediment over the center entry. The barn east of the Daniel Morse III House at 210 Farm Road (#222) is a Shingle style example built on a front-gabled, two and one-half-story, three by four-bay plan. A cross-gable, built flush with the wall, elevates the roof at its eastern slope and adds complexity to the massing in a way that is typical of the style. Decorative elements consist of the wood shingle cladding, exposed rafter ends, beltcourses of shingles across the gable peaks and the louvered ventilator at the roofline. Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash with simple trim. Access to the interior is through the vehicle opening in the middle of the west-facing facade. A second-story hay-mow door and a third door in the peak with hay track above also pierce the facade. A slim brick chimney rises from the roof peak of the gable, possibly for heating living space or work space inside. The well-maintained barn is flanked by post and rail fences and a low stone wall at the street.

The house at **157 Farm Road**** is a Colonial style residence with a large barn (#217) and attached early 20th century garage (#218). The buildings are adjacent to the north side of Farm Road with large fields behind. The

fields are connected by fences and by views to those at 177 Farm Road. The houses occupy the same lot in the assessor's list of properties. The four by two-bay, side-gabled principal mass is one and one-half stories in height and is expanded at the east wall by a one-story, five-bay block with three shed dormers. The east block was the original house which was later expanded. Both the main block and the ell have entry hoods with carved brackets and 6/6 double-hung sash. Windows at the second story (added in the 1980s) of the main block are smaller 6-pane fixed sash placed immediately underneath the eave, similar to a Greek Revival style frieze window. Ornament consists of the slim molded cornice, corner boards, entry hoods and plain window trim. Two brick chimneys mark the roofline, both apparently rebuilt within the last twenty years.

The barn (#217) is a large, two-story, gable front form built parallel to the road. A shed roofed addition constructed of poles has been made at the north elevation to shelter hay. The facade is pierced in the center by a vehicle door with transom lights and hood, 6/6 sash and fixed sash in the peak. Gable returns, corner boards and molded cornice also articulate the building, whose roof is topped by a louvered ventilator. A second rolling door gives access through the east elevation. A small secondary shed-roofed mass, possibly a granary, projects from this elevation as well. The walls are clad in wood shingles, the roof in asphalt shingles and the foundation is constructed of stone. At the northwest corner is an attached pyramidal-hipped garage (#218) of a single bay. The garage door is a double-leaf rolling unit. A 6/6 double-hung sash and a pass door occupy secondary openings in the wood clapboard facade.

The house at [138 Farm Road**](#) is a Colonial Period four by two-bay building that is oriented perpendicular to the road. This has been significantly enlarged with the addition of side-gabled, two and one-half-story ells that are oriented parallel to the road. The Colonial block forms the short axis of the T-shaped plan. The long axis consists of the additions that are sited to face Farm Pond to the south. The view from the road is the rear elevation.

The mansion has several ancillary structures to complement the principal building. A guest house with attached carriage barn and a larger barn are visible from Farm Road. The front gambrel, one and one-half-story Dutch Colonial Revival style guest house (#215) is the closest building in the complex to the road and faces it from the southwest. A one and one-half-story side-gabled carriage barn is attached to the rear of the house and doubles the size of the plan. The three-bay facade of the house is protected by a hipped porch that wraps around the north side elevation. Windows are 2/2 double-hung sash with simple trim. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles, the walls in wood clapboards and the foundation is built of an undetermined material. A six over six double-hung sash lights the rear gable of the carriage house and a vehicle opening is located at ground level.

A large, two-story barn(#214) is behind (southwest of) the guest house and is oriented parallel to Farm Road. This is also built of wood clapboards with an asphalt shingle roof. Vehicle access is through the rolling door in the northwest facade. The peak of the facade gable is lit by a shuttered sash just below the hay mow door and hay track that projects from under the eave.

Entrance to the property is controlled by a gate and high random ashlar wall at the street. (#919)

[Twenty-three South Street**](#) is a two-story brick mansion built as a country estate for Henry M. Channing in 1910. The multiple-bay, two story facade is lit with a combination of multiple-pane casements and double-hung sash on the second story and segmental arched, floor length sash on the first. The ridge hipped roof is articulated with dormers and ornamental, paired brick chimneys. The house is sited at the west end of a long driveway lined with an allee of trees. The northwest elevation of the house looks over a 45 foot high bluff at Little Farm Pond.

An additional mansion not visible from the road is located at 32 South Street, across from 23 South Street. A large house, barns and stables were owned by Dudley Clark and later by the Saltonstall family. It is now part of the estate at 177 Farm Road.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

For the early history of this property, see the 1981 MHC inventory form.

Farm Road was built from Sherborn Center to Medfield by 1720, bypassing the town's largest body of water. The Farm Road Estate Area was settled during the Colonial Period, primarily by farmers. Joshua Morse, Converse Bigelow, Daniel Morse III and Nathaniel Holbrook Jr. were early occupants of the homes at **177****, **157****, **210**** and **138 Farm Road****. The "Road to the Farmes" was a Colonial period name indicating the travel route to farms in the south part of Sherborn that had been granted prior to the town's incorporation. Agricultural activities continue to characterize much of the area today. Histories of these properties as agricultural residences are written on previous survey forms.

The first gentleman or leisure farmer to own property in the Farm Road Estate Area was Dr. Walter Channing in 1902. His alteration of the Joshua Morse farm house (**177 Farm Road****) with Colonial Revival style elements marked the first transition of a property from purely agricultural uses to a leisure property in the town. The southern block of the current residence was built by Joshua Morse in 1759 on land owned by his ancestor, Daniel Morse Sr. The senior Morse housed his family in his garrison during King Philip's War, and was later named one of Sherborn's first selectmen (1678-1688). During the mid-late 19th century, the farm consisted of approximately 135 acres on which, in 1880, Leonard T. Morse kept a horse, two oxen, seven cows and a carriage in his barn. He also had four store houses according to town valuations. Leonard Morse and his descendants continued to occupy this land until 1902, at which time it was sold by heirs of Albert P. Morse, a well-known entomologist who kept no livestock on the property. The house was sold to Dr. Walter Channing who lived here with his sons, Walter Jr. and Hayden until the early 1920s, raising cows, swine and a large number of chickens.

During the Channings' occupation, the architect Joseph Everett Chandler from Boston's fashionable Back Bay remodeled and enlarged the residence in the Colonial Revival style. The Colonial Period hipped block was retained to act as the focal point of the facade. The northern two-story ell was added around 1903 and possibly Classical trim around the center entry of the Colonial block. Around this time, the house acquired the name Charlescote Farm, meaning the farm at the side of the Charles River. It was the Charlescote Farm and the Norfolk Hunt Club rides that inspired other Bostonians to come to Sherborn, upgrade existing farmhouses to mansion or estate-quality residences, and transform this section of Sherborn. Walter Channing Jr. continued to maintain property in the area and worked as a real estate agent in the region into the 1940s.

Richard Saltonstall, his wife Mary and their family were the subsequent occupants in 1922, the descendants of whom continue to occupy and farm the property. The owners of the farm were Mr. Saltonstall, his brother Leverett and sister Eleanor. These trustees of the Charlescote Farm Trust also owned other large parcels of land in this section of Sherborn and estates at **164 Forest Street**** and in Dover. The farm continued in agricultural use and was enlarged with construction of a second silo in the 1930s and the addition of land to create the current 200 acre estate by 1940. Richard Saltonstall was a banker with the State Street and Shawmut Banks, a lawyer and brother of the politician Leverett Saltonstall, who served as Massachusetts governor and U. S. Senator. While he worked in downtown Boston on Federal Street, this appears in the resident directories to be Richard Saltonstall's primary address, making him an early suburban commuter. He served as a Sherborn selectman from 1934-40 and was responsible for donating the Sherborn Library building in 1971, among other local philanthropic acts.

Changes to the property since the 1930s include the addition to the west and south sides in the 1980s. Farm Road was widened in 1936 from a narrow lane to a modern street. A greenhouse has been added to the front of the Colonial Revival addition at the left (north) of the facade. The ancillary agricultural buildings and structures remain as well as the open fields lined with fences, stone walls, orchards and other landscape elements which make the property more than just a large residence but a cohesive agricultural/residential complex. The WPA map of 1939 indicates this property to be an estate. Also, the large open hay fields and orchards are in their current locations.

The Daniel Morse III House at **210 Farm Road**** was built ca. 1710 by the grandson of the area's first settler, Daniel Morse Sr. J. W. Barber, farmer and partner in a vinegar manufacturing firm, was the owner by 1856. His relative Oliver N. Barber was the subsequent occupant who also farmed the property. Mr. Barber harvested cranberries on the property as part of his crop. He had the current barn built around 1900 according to tax valuations which indicate a large increase in value around that time. By 1935, Gelston and Mary King were the owners. The Kings were clients of the Realtor Walter Channing. Mr. Channing was responsible for subdividing and marketing land and houses in this area of Sherborn to wealthy home buyers from 1920-1950. The Kings constructed a water works, swimming pool, boat house, hen houses and a new barn by 1945, creating a working gentleman's farm comparable to others in the Area. The Kings had a water works constructed around 1930. A water supply building from the water works survives according to current assessor information. It is not visible from the street. Other homes in Sherborn with pump houses are located at **46 Forest Street**** and **137 Western Avenue****. Hay was being grown on the farm in 1939 according to the W.P.A. map of that year, although the house is not depicted as a farm.

The Converse Bigelow House at **157 Farm Road**** was added to the property at 177 Farm Road by the 1920s as a secondary dwelling to house the full time farm manager. No Colonial Revival additions or design updates have been carried out except the addition of the second story of the ell in the 1980s. The house and barn retain their appearance and function from the mid-19th century. The 1856 map shows the house as a vinegar manufactory.

Colonial Revival style additions were carried out at **138 Farm Road**** ca. 1920-1940 by William Rogers. He added the large side-gabled block that is oriented parallel to the road. In addition to the house and barn, he maintained a guest house and carriage house, a cottage, beach house and bath house. He later constructed a kennel for his 15 dogs. The WPA map of 1939 indicates this property to be a private estate. A plot plan recorded in the registry of deeds in 1941, the time of the sale to William Shearer, depicts six outbuildings, three of which are out of sight from Farm Road. The house was remodeled in 1956 by the next owner William Anderson, however the plan of the house had reached its current level of development by 1941.

The mansion at **23 South Street**** was constructed for Henry M. Channing, brother of Walter Channing who lived at 177 Farm Road from 1902-22. The brothers were frequent visitors to the area as young men. Henry Channing's house was built in 1910. The WPA map of 1939 indicates this property to be a private estate. Henry Channing was one of the town officers to get the town forest easement from the Shell Oil Company in the late 1930s-40s.

The Farm Road estate Area is one of the town's most significant cultural resources. The historic agricultural processes continue to be apparent in the fields, barns, fences, animals and silos. The agricultural aspects of the area bear primary responsibility for the lending historical character to the area.

Resources with ** indicates a previously existing survey form in MHC files.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1830 series map; 1856 Walling map; 1874 Beers map; 1889 Walker map; 1939 WPA map of Sherborn
- Resident directories, 1897, 1913, 1917, 1930-31
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson 12/98
- Tax valuations 1865-1945
- Vital Records of Sherborn, Massachusetts to 1850
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn and A Guide to Sherborn
- Hurd - History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts
- 1981 MHC inventory forms #32, #125, #30
- Plans Recorded in Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Vol I, p. 214
- Bardwell, Francis, Historical Sketches

X Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If checked, you must attach a National Register Criteria Statement Form

Sketch Map:



Area Data Sheet

MHC	Street	Property Name	Date	Style	Type / Status	NR Elig
28	138 Farm Road	Nathaniel Holbrook House	ca. 1763	Colonial Rev.	Outbldg update	Yes
214	138 Farm Road	Barn	ca. 1875	No style	Outbldg update	
215	138 Farm Road	Guest house/barn	ca. 1900	Colonial Rev.	Outbldg update	
919	138 Farm Road	Stone wall/gate	ca. 1900	N/A	Outbldg update	
30	157 Farm Road	Caretaker's house	ca. 1800	Colonial	Outbldg update	Yes
217	157 Farm Road	Barn	ca. 1875	No style	Outbldg update	
218	157 Farm Road	Garage	ca. 1920	Four square	Outbldg update	
32	177 Farm Road	Joshua Morse Farm	ca. 1759	Georgian	Outbldg update	Yes
219	177 Farm Road	Horse Barn/Garage	ca. 1900	No style	Outbldg update	
220	177 Farm Road	Sheep Barn	ca. 1900	No style	Outbldg update	
221	177 Farm Road	Cow barn	ca. 1900	No style	Outbldg update	
916	177 Farm Road	Stone wall/Fence	ca. 1902	N/A	Outbldg update	
917	177 Farm Road	Landscape	ca. 1759	N/A	Outbldg update	
918	177 Farm Road	Orchard	ca. 1900	N/A	Outbldg update	
926	177 Farm Road	Silo	ca. 1930	N/A	Outbldg update	
33	210 Farm Road	Daniel Morse III House	ca. 1710	Shingle	Outbldg update	NRIND
222	210 Farm Road	Barn	ca. 1900	Shingle	Outbldg update	
125	23 South St.	Channing Mansion	ca. 1910	Classical Rev.	Outbldg Update	