

Leland Mill Site

Mill Street

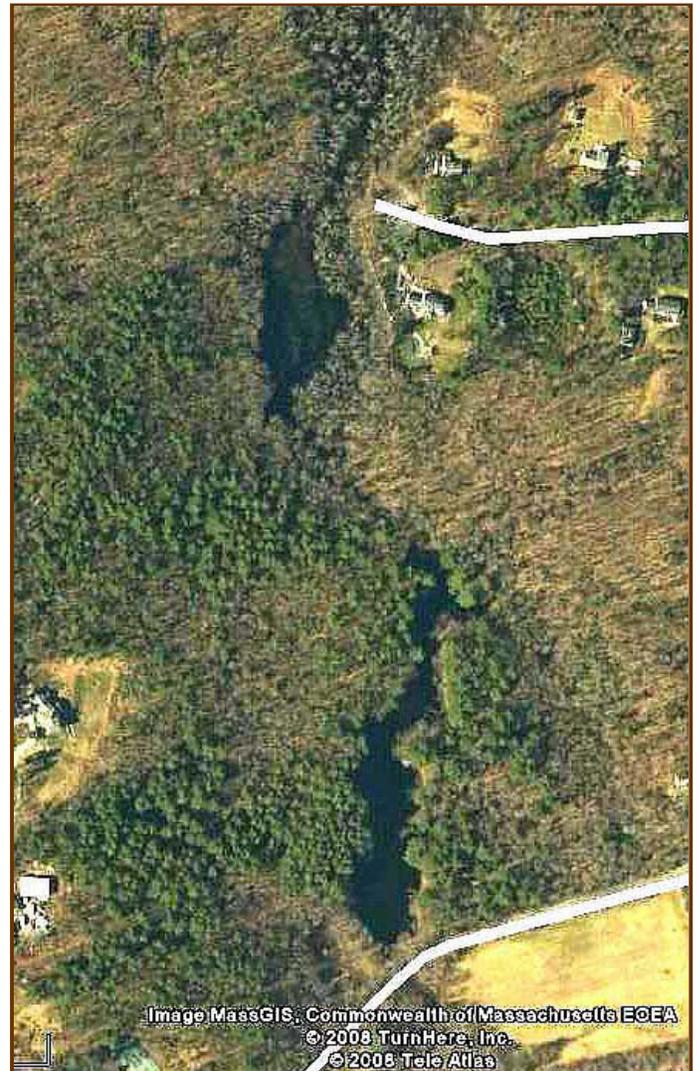


Form	912
Town	Sherborn
Area	
USGS Quad	Medfield
Assessor's Sheets	
Ownership	Public
Type Of Structure	Two Mill sites
Constructed	ca. 1860
Source	Tax valuations
Materials	Stone, concrete
Alterations	Concrete raceway built ca.1950 by Jim Leland
Condition	Ruin
Acreage	
Setting	Rural
Recorded by	Sanford Johnson, 3/99
Photographs	Roll 2
Organization	Sherborn Historical Commission

DESIGN ASSESSMENT

The ruin of the Leland saw and grist mill consists of an earthen, stone and concrete dam retaining a one acre pond. Water flows into the raceway and through walls of uncut mortared stone between four and eight feet in height. Water then flows under a bridge supporting Mill Street which marks the end of the raceway. No evidence of the building survives other than the foundation and raceways. The headrace is a concrete structure still in evidence and comprises the most significant part of the ruin.

No evidence of a building survives. The majority of the



site surrounding the dam structures, just northeast of the intersection of Mill and Hollis Streets, is wooded.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Town histories and remains of dams and foundations indicate a mill built in ca. upstream (north of) the existing site and operated by Leland family members. One of the upper Leland mills may have begun milling lumber after an 1815 hurricane toppled trees in this area. This upper mill may have been used later to turn treenails for shipbuilders by Alex Barker around 1850. The lower mill, described in "Design Assessment", may have been built in 1815 also, and continued working until the 1920's.

While State censuses from 1855 and 1865 describe Mr. James H. Leland as a farmer, historical research sources indicate he also operated a mill. Hurd's county history considered the Leland mill to be historic by the time of its publication in 1890. Tax valuations for the year 1865 corroborate the presence of a saw mill on the James H. Leland property. By 1875, his mill was described as a saw and grist mill and its value had increased from \$500 to \$1500. Mr. J. H. Leland had acquired \$1250 stock in trade, presumably lumber and milled corn. This was one of two saw mills in town in 1874 according to Nason's history. The second mill was on **Course Brook** off **Brush Hill Road****.

It was a time of general prosperity for the James H. Leland family, having improved their land holdings from 100 to 200 acres, built a new barn and two store-houses. By 1895, the number of horses and the amount of stock in trade had doubled, both important indicators of financial success of the mill and the farming operations. By this time, it was the only mill operating in town. The Lelands stock in trade increased again by 1915 to \$3500. The description of the mill in that year does not mention grist but the saw mill had a value of \$1000. The mill burned around 1922 and the dam burst in the spring of 1922, - washing out Mill St., and causing a reduction in value to \$100 by 1925. The remaining concrete headrace was added by 1950. No evidence of the mill remains except the pond, the concrete and stone foundation and raceway. The Leland family continued to saw lumber with a gasoline-powered mill from the 1930s to the present time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1856 Walling map; 1874 Beers map; 1889 Walker map; 1939 WPA map of Sherborn
- Resident directories, 1897, 1913, 1917
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson 12/98
- Tax valuations, 1865-1945
- Vital Records of Sherborn, Massachusetts to 1850
- The History of Sherborn and A Guide to Sherborn by Anne C. Shaughnessy
- History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Hurd
- A Gazetteer of the State of Massachusetts, Rev. Elias Nason

Note: There are actually the remains of three dams and two mills at the Leland Mill site. A 'middle' dam and mill ruins exist between the upper and lower dams. A large portion of the middle dam has been removed, possibly to provide material for building the lower dam. Some distinct portions of the mill are evident including a vertical semicircular rock formation which may have provided for a vertical power shaft operating from a horizontal water wheel. Portions of an underground spillway also can be seen.

Sketch Map:

