

Mellen Pasture/Dowse Orchard

Green Lane



Form	915
Town	Sherborn
Area	
USGS Quad	Medfield
Assessor's No.	6/37
Ownership	Private
Type Of Landscape	Orchard
Date or Period	ca. 1885
Source	Tax valuations
Alterations	
Condition	Good
Acreage	33 acres
Setting	Rural/agricultural
Recorded by	Sanford Johnson, 4/98
Photographs	Roll 11
Organization	Sherborn Historical Commission

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT

Green lane was the main road from Sherborn to Framingham during the 17th and 18th centuries. The orchard at

the east side of Green Lane, formerly called the "Mellen Pasture", is part of a 33 acre parcel with 25 acres planted in apple trees. Eight acres of the parcel are wooded with some described as waste. The ground slopes gently to the southeast. Green Lane lines the west border of the orchard and is separated from the orchard by a low stone wall. Dirt roads at the north and south edges provide for circulation by vehicles among the trees.

Trees are planted in rows and are pruned to maintain the low height required by productive apple trees.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Apple growing was the most common cash crop in many parts of the commonwealth from the period of first settlement. This was true in Sherborn as can be seen in the many orchards that continue to grow here. Most growers were farmers who processed the crop into cider and vinegar. Most orchards were between one and 5 acres, while the largest were around 20 acres. There were 22 cider mills in the town in 1798. This number rose during most of the 19th century. Some cider manufacturers achieved an industrial scale of production as at the former J. Holbrook and Sons Cider Mill at 51 Forest Street**, said to have been the world's largest refined cider mill in the late 1800s.

Prior to its cultivation as a 25 acre orchard, the Green Lane parcel was only 17 ½ acres and used as pasture by James H. Leland. From this time through the mid 20th century, the lot was known in tax valuations as the Mellen Pasture. Mr. Leland sold the lot to George King, a resident of Framingham, around 1900. By that time, it had been enlarged to its current size of 33 acres but was still a pasture.

Charles Arthur and Nathaniel H. Dowse bought the property in 1915 from George King. In the 1925 tax valuations, it was referred to as the "Mellen Pasture, Hunting Lane" and had increased in value since 1910, although it was not specifically described as an orchard. Charles Arthur Dowse planted apple trees in the pasture in 1924. In 1935 and in 1945, the parcel was called the "Mellen Pasture and Orchard". The parcel of land was abandoned during WW II but was restored with new trees after the conflict. The history of mixed use in the Mellen Pasture is illustrated by current assessor's information. Twenty-five of the 33 acres are now planted in fruit trees with the remainder in woods or waste land.

Charles H. Dowse lived in his ancestral home at [100 North Main Street**](#) by 1895. He was responsible for changing the family's economic focus from the manufacture of shoes to farming. He owned an orchard behind 100 North Main Street whose acreage he increased from 2 to 12 around 1915. In 1919, Mr. Dowse began selling fruit and vegetables from his front lawn until the 1950s when his grandson, Charles A. Dowse, Jr. built the current fruit stand. The fruit stand, orchard and house remain in the family's possession as does the house. A modern apple refrigeration and cider processing facility are located behind the roadside stand.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1856 Walling map; 1874 Beers map; 1889 Walker map
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson 12/98
- Tax valuations, 1865-1945

Sketch Map:

