

37 Ash Lane



*Dawson House, Lowcroft; March 1999
(No longer extant)*

Form No.	186, 187 - guest house
Town	Sherborn
Address	37 Ash Lane
Assessor's #	8/50
USGS Quad	Medfield
Historic Name	Dawson House; Lowcroft
Uses: Present	Residence
Original	Residence
Constructed	1913
Source	Researcher Faith Tiberio
Style/Form	Bungalow
Architect/Builder	James Frederick Dawson
Exterior Material:	
Foundation	Fieldstone
Wall/Trim	Wood clapboards
Roof	Asphalt shingles
Outbuildings	Garage; barn; guest house
Alterations	Porch partially enclosed; 6/6 sash replaced; board and batten siding covered with clapboards
Condition	Good
Moved	No
Acreage	5.35 acres
Setting	Rural
Film Roll/Negative	Roll 10
Recorded by	Sanford Johnson, May 1999

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The main block of the Arts and Crafts-influenced house is anchored at the north end of the plan by a two-story pyramidal roofed block. A porch and a wall of large pane windows traverse the facade of the building at the second story. A stone chimney rises from the center of the pyramidal roof. The southerly portion of the plan is a one and one-half-story gabled block lit by a band of single-pane casement windows located immediately beneath the eave.

Significant landscape elements include the circular driveway in the front; the mounting levels of vegetation between the drive and the house; a single tall tree at one side which was a common element in landscapes influenced by F. L. Olmsted. The extraordinary variety of plants surrounding the house mark this as a significant design.

A Craftsman style guest house (33 Ash Lane) is present on the property and was also designed by Mr. Dawson. The one and one half story building is clad in wood shingles and overlooks the circular driveway from its location atop a glacial esker. A stone chimney rises at the north side of the side-gabled block. A pyramidal hipped, wood clapboard garage, built in the 1930s, is adjacent to the main house. A two-story hip-roofed barn, built in 1993, is north of the house. A wire fence lines the 200' driveway.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The house, guest house and landscape at 37 Ash Lane were designed as a summer residence in 1913 for James Frederick Dawson(1874-1941), by a student of the architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Mr. Dawson was the son of the legendary Jackson Dawson, chief plant propagator of the Arnold Arboretum, and studied at the Roxbury Latin School, Harvard University's Bussey Institute and at European schools before being hired by the Olmsted Brothers in 1896. He did much of his work on the west coast where he founded the Redondo Beach office of the Olmsted firm. While there, he designed the Washington State Capitol grounds, Palos Verdes Estates, golf courses, parkways and arboreta. Mr. Dawson was also responsible for the plans of the landscapes at the Alabama State Capitol, Russell Sage College and other schools in Troy, New York. He was named partner of the firm in 1906 and managed the Brookline office at the time of his death.

Tax valuations indicate that Mr. Dawson grew apples, raised hens, cows, horses and hogs on 72 acres. He also had a packing house, suggesting he retailed his apples and other crops. A sales booth was present in 1935 for distribution of the crop. Two orchards and pasture land are depicted on the W.P.A. map of Sherborn, printed in 1939. Mr. Dawson's brother and sisters operated a nursery in Holliston in which he had a hand. The farm was divided up and sold ca. 1960. The house and its grounds were bought by Theodore and Barbara Wood by 1961. The guest cottage at 33 Ash Lane was sold to John and Janet Jacobs, who lived there, enlarging it somewhat, until October 2000 when it was sold to Gary and Deborah LaFave. The LaFaves demolished the building and replaced it with a large stone and brick-faced mansion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

- Resident Directories: 1898, 1915, 1917, 1930-31.
- 1939 W.P.A. map of Sherborn.
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson 12/98.
- Tax valuations.
- Conversation with researcher Faith Tiberio and owner Cary Everett, 5/99.
- New York Times obituary, 4/25/1941.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The Dawson House and most of the outbuildings were demolished ca. 2012. All that remains of the original Dawson Buildings is the barn.