

138 Farm Road



Nathaniel Holbrook House

Form Nos.	28 house, 214 barn, 215 guest house, 919 wall/gate
Area	H
Town	Sherborn
Address	138 Farm Road
Assessor's Map	15/5
USGS Map	Medfield
Historic Name	Nathaniel Holbrook House
Uses: Original	Residence
Present	Residence
Ownership, 1981	William G. Anderson
" Original	Nathaniel Holbrook
Constructed	House ca. 1763, barn ca. 1875, guest house/barn ca. 1900 Stone wall/gate ca. 1900.
Source	Morse - <u>History of Sherborn and Holliston</u>
Style/Form	House has elements of Georgian, Greek Revival and Colonial Revival.
Architect	
Ext. Wall Fabric	Clapboard
Outbuildings	Caretaker's house, sheds and camps
Alterations	Enlarged several times ca. 1840 and early 20th century
Moved	No
Acreage	57 acres (1981), 17.74 (1999)
Setting:	Situated in the heart of Sherborn's scenic area of

farmland, estates and "open space" reservation north of Farm Pond.

Recorded June-July 1981, by Edward W. Gordon
Updated 1999, by Sanford Johnson

Film Roll/Negative Roll 4

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

1981 Survey

This house is difficult to "read" as it has been greatly enlarged and modified over several centuries. Essentially "T" shaped in plan, its oldest segment projects from the northern wall of one of its ells - these ells run east-west and overlook Farm Pond. Its oldest portion which dates to ca. 1763 was Greek Revivalized ca. 1840 - it displays a heavy Greek Revival entrance, narrow corner boards and a pedimented attic.

1999 Update

The house at 138 Farm Road (**#28**) survives as it is described on the survey form completed in 1981. No major changes have been carried out since that time. It is part of the Farm Road Estate Area Form H. The Federal Period mansion with Colonial Revival design elements at 138 Farm Road is one of several large estates in this section of town with ancillary structures complementing the principal building. In this case, a guest house (**#215**) with attached carriage barn and a larger barn (**#214**) are visible from Farm Road. The front gambrel, one and one-half-story Dutch Colonial Revival style guest house 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 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 of an undetermined material. Six over six double-hung sash light the interior of the rear addition.

A large, two-story barn is behind (southwest of) the guesthouse 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 north-facing facade. The peak of the facade gable is lit by a shuttered sash just below the hay mow door and haytrack that projects from under the eave.

Entrance to the property is accessed by a gate and high random ashlar wall at the street (**#919**). The estate is comparable to those at 177 Farm Road** and 164 Forest Street** in terms of scale, lot size and early 20th century architectural design quality. These are located within the boundaries of Area H.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1981 Survey

The construction date of this spacious residence is based on the marriage date of its first owners. Nathaniel Holbrook Jr. married Asenath Kendall in 1763. By the late 18th century it belonged to a sea captain named Mears. By the 1870's it was the home of another sea captain. - Amariah Leland. He had a sailboat on Farm Pond (then known as Farm Lake) when he lived here in 1870. During his years of ownership he frequently embarked on ocean voyages on ships named "Anna", "Ellen Dyer" or

"Lancaster". Margaret Dowse Buntin observes that "with both Meats and Leland sea captains, it is interesting that W. G. Anderson (the present owner) is a marine architect". Captain Leland lived in this house until at least the 1890's. It is interesting to note that over the years Farm Road has been called "The Road to the Farm", "The Village Road to Dover" and "Trinity St.", the latter because of its proximity to the Pilgrim Church. It has been officially known as Farm Road since 1900.

The house at 138 Farm Road is presently called "Nishkenon" - an Indian name meaning "Mist of the Waters"

1999 Update

The residential complex at 138 Farm Road is an early incarnation of the gentleman's farms which would characterize this part of town by the 1930s. The Farm Road Estate Area is documented on Area Form H.

In 1865, the sea captain Amariah Leland from Eden, Maine and his wife Martha lived here with their five children and another sea captain, Victor Young and his wife. Captain Leland was taxed in 1865 for his partial ownership of the ship Horton as well as an orchard, barn, a carriage, three smaller boats kept on Farm Pond for recreation, and a boat house. By 1875, he had added the ship Lancaster and bark Ellen to his holdings and a bath house to his 88-acre estate. A carriage house and storehouse, possibly the extant barns, were recorded in tax valuations in 1875. Captain Leland operated the Farm Lake Grove where he rented sailboats to picnickers. The gambrel-roofed guest house attached to the smaller outbuilding in the front yard appears to post-date Captain Leland's ownership which ended around 1895 when he moved to Natick.

Subsequent owners were responsible for construction of a coop for raising chickens, common in the town as a way of increasing income after the turn of the century, and a tennis court, neither of which is visible from the road. These may have been built by William and Augusta Rogers, the owners from approximately 1920 to 1940. Many of the Colonial Revival style changes to the house were carried out during this period. Mr. Rogers was a stockbroker who lived in Dedham prior to moving to Sherborn. In addition to the house (#28) and barn (#214), he maintained a guest house and carriage house (#215), cottage, beach house and bath house. He later constructed a kennel for his 15 dogs.

Mr. Rogers transferred the property to William Shearer in 1941 who maintained the array of buildings. A plot plan recorded in the registry of deeds in 1941 at the time of the sale indicates the existence of six outbuildings, three of which are out of sight from Farm Road. The house was remodeled in 1956, possibly by the next owner William Anderson, however the plan of the house had reached its current level of development by 1941. The edge of the road is occupied on the plot plan by a simple stone wall (#919) which was probably elaborated upon in 1956. Owner Robert George subdivided the larger property; and subsequently 3 additional houses were erected, 2 new and one moved from a location in western Massachusetts

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

1981 Survey

- Margaret Dowse Buntin's research
- Rev. Abner Morse - History of the Towns of Sherborn and Holliston, 1856
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - A Guide To Sherborn, 1974
- Maps of 1788, 1857, 1875 and 1889

1999 Update

- 1981 MHC B form from survey by Edward Gordon
- 1874 Beers Map; 1889 Walker Map
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn and A Guide to Sherborn, 1974
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson, 1/99
- History of Middlesex County, Hurd
- Sherborn Vital Records to 1850
- Tax valuations, 1865-1945
- 1855, 1865 state censuses
- 1941 Plan in Registry of Deeds in Sherborn, Vol. I, p. 214