

46 Forest Street



Morse - Barber house

Form Nos.	35 house, 223 barn, 224 pump house
Area	
Town	Sherborn
Address	46 Forest Street
Assessor's Map	12/157
USGS Map	Medfield
Historic Name	Morse - Barber house
Uses: Original	Residence/meeting house
Present	Residence
Ownership, 1981	Sarah Wragge
" Original	Capt. Joseph Morse and Mehitable Wood Morse
Constructed	House 1674, barn ca. 1790, pump house ca. 1900
Source	Local historian Max Ferro
Style/Form	Elements of Georgian and Greek Revival
Architect	
Ext. Wall Fabric	Clapboards
Outbuildings	One of the largest frame barns in Sherborn
Alterations	Enlarged in 1814, remodeled in the 1830's or 1840's
Moved	No
Acreage	4.33 acres
Setting:	Situated close to the road, across from site of Holbrook cider mill, near railroad tracks.

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

The architect and preservationist Max Ferro found parts of a very early house encased in the right side of this homestead which could easily date to 1671. Over time this house has been enlarged and remodeled. Its main block features a highly symmetrical 5 bay facade. It was apparently "updated" ca. 1830-1845 by the addition of Greek Revival elements e.g. the main entrance which displays a pedimented entablature and narrow multi pane side lights. In addition the gable roofs attic is fully enframed in the Greek Revival manner. The original house was 2 stories tall, half the size of the present house and was one room deep. It was apparently large enough to serve as a meetinghouse during the 1670's - at that time Sherborn had a little over 100 English settlers.

1999 Update

The house at 46 Forest Street **#35** survives essentially as described on the survey form completed in 1981. Major additions and changes to the south ell were made in 1988.

The rural setting of the Colonial style house and its large barn at 46 Forest Street constitute a well preserved complex of formerly agricultural buildings. The barn (**#223**) was built between the late-18th century and 1845, judging by historic photos, its form and detail, by the existence of a barn of similar proportions in the tax records and by research of the owner. The massive two-story building is approximately 40'x70', oriented parallel to the street with a gable-front plan accessed by a large rolling door in the principal (west) elevation. The foundation is built of uncut stone, barely visible below the clapboards.

The main door, pierced in the center by four fixed panes and a small pass door, hangs on rollers from an exterior track covered by a simple hood. A row of transom lights marks the top of the entry. Cladding is now wood clapboards but historically the barn was sheathed in vertical flushboard siding. Six-over-six double-hung sash are located in the gable peak and at the side of the main rolling door. A one-story, front-gabled shed, accessed by two vehicle doors, is attached to the facade and is present in 19th century photos. An 8'x10' wood shingled building (built in the 1930s) with ridge hipped roof is behind the barn and served as a milk cooler house with a well and hand pump (**#224**).

The form of the barn resembles closely the one at 35 Farm Road. (**#209**)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1981 Survey

This house probably has the strongest claim to the title "oldest structure in Sherborn"; It also has significant historical associations with the Wood and Morse families. In addition it served as Sherborn's first meeting house until the first church was built in 1685. It was built at a time when Southeast Sherborn and a portion of Medfield were known by the Indian name Boggestow. This farm originally belonged to "Sherborn's first settler", Nicholas Wood. Along with Thomas Holbrook he took possession

of land on the west side of the Charles River granted by the General Court on May 8, 1652. Wood's daughter Mahitable was born on July 22, 1665, the first Anglo- American child to be born in Sherborn. She married Capt. Joseph Morse Oct. 17, 1671. Morse, formerly of Medfield and his 16 year old bride built a portion of this house on part of her father's farm "22 rods South of his house" (Nicholas Wood's house is no longer extant but it is said that the foundations are still visible amidst underbrush). Capt. Morse, in a will dated 1716 left his farm "where I now dwell" to his two sons David and Asa. The next owner was Richard Sanger who sold it to Jonathan Partridge in 1742. Partridge in turn sold to Elisha Barber "that parcel of land being my homestead where on my dwelling house and barn now standeth". From 1753 until the late 19th century Barbers owned this "ancient dwelling". Elisha Barber is remembered for his library "which consisted of a large Bible and nineteen volumes of different sizes." Elisha's wife Silence inherited the property upon his death in 1803 but outlived him by little over a year. It then passed to her sons Elisha and Oliver who both died in 1814. At their death it passed to Oliver's son Walter who lived here into the 1850's. By 1889 a J. W. Barber lived here.

1999 Update

Given its association with what may be the oldest house in Sherborn and the appearance in a historic photo of vertical flushboard siding, the barn of the Morse- Barber House may also be quite old, possibly pre-dating the turn of the 19th century. The 1798 Inventory of Land and Dwellings describes Elisha Barber's largest barn as 55'x33' which might be the existing building (Current assessor's information states 36'x60'). The inventory gives several clues as to the uses of this barn in naming a cider mill and a grist mill on the property, whose produce may have been stored here. Also, Mr. Barber owned a plot of land named Hop Vines Pasture, indicating the possible existence of this specialized crop, commonly grown in Middlesex County at that time. Two corn barns are also enumerated in the inventory but are no longer present.

The 1865 tax valuations indicate that the farm was in use by Joseph W. and Sarah Barber for production of cider and or vinegar, for which they owned \$600 worth of casks. Two horses and a carriage as well as eleven cows were present, confirming the dairy aspect of the Barbers' varied operations. Two non-family residents appear in the 1865 census listed as a teamster and a farm servant. Cider production continued until at least 1885, by which time a carriage house, ice houses, a hen house, hog house, cottage and storehouse appear on Joseph Barber's tax list. These outbuildings are either gone or out of view of the street.

While it is not confirmed on the valuation lists, there may have been an early 20th century private water works with a pump on the property. This arrangement was common among affluent Sherborn farmers of the period and is suggested by the existence of a 1930s wood shingled building of appropriate size and age called a hand pump/milk cooling house in the current assessor records. On the 1939 W. P.A. map, the complex is described not as a farm but as a residence but the surrounding land was plowable pasture at that time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

1981 Survey

- Margaret Dowse Buntin's research
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn, and A Guide to Sherborn , 1974
- "Historical sketches, Sherborn Tercentenary 1652-1952" by Frances Bardwell
- Old Time New England, January 1939, Vol. 29 - "Some 17th Century Houses of Middlesex County" by Harriet Forbes. (Note Forbes incorrectly shows David Morse 3rd house, 210 Farm Rd. instead of 46 Forest St.)

1999 Update

- 1981 MHC B form from survey by Edward Gordon
- 1856 Walling Map; 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
- 1798 Inventory of Land and Dwellings