

69 Forest Street



John Holbrook House

Form Nos.	37 house, 225 barn
Area	
Town	Sherborn
Address	69 Forest Street
Assessor's Map	12/135
USGS Map	Medfield
Historic Name	John Holbrook House
Uses: Original	Residence
Present	Residence
Ownership, 1981	Burlen Mahn
" Original	John Holbrook
Constructed	House in 1694, barn ca. 1840
Source	Anne C. Shaughnessy - <u>A Guide to Sherborn</u>
Style/Form	Late 17th and mid 18th century frame vernacular
Architect	
Ext. Wall Fabric	Aluminum siding
Outbuildings	Barns
Alterations	Original 1694 segment was moved to become "ell" of a 1769 main block.
Moved	No
Acreage	15.75 acres 1981, 17.85 acres 1999
Setting:	Situated close to road on well maintained, tree shaded lot - east of railroad tracks.
Recorded	June-July 1981, by Edward W. Gordon

Updated 1999, by Sanford Johnson

Film Roll/Negative Roll 4

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

1981 Survey

Unfortunately, the Holbrook House, the homestead of a family which figured prominently in Sherborn's 17th, 18th and 19th century affairs, has been denatured by the application of aluminum siding to its walls. It is composed of a 2 1/2 story main block and a rear ell. The ell is part of the original 1694 dwelling. It was moved in 1769 and the main block was subsequently constructed. Rising from the center of its gable roof is a massive brick chimney.

1999 Update

The house at 69 Forest Street (**#37**) survives in large part as it is described on the survey form completed in 1981. Changes from 1994-96 include construction of a 24' x 48' garage behind the garage existing in 1981 and conversion of the original garage to living space. The current owners made several interior improvements such as replacing acoustical ceiling tiles, installed in 1960, with plaster, restoring woodwork and refinishing the floors.

The barn (**#225**) associated with the John Holbrook House at 69 Forest Street is a large two and one-half-story building constructed on a tall brick foundation and an L-shaped plan. Openings are placed regularly along the walls, including in the gable peaks and in the high foundation. Two vehicle doors give access to the ground floor of the barn and an earthen drive to the first story. The barn has been re-sided with asbestos shingles, but the original form and the historic 6/6 double-hung sash survive. An apartment house was partially completed on the rear of the barn after destruction of an ell there by the 1938 hurricane. The building continues to be surrounded by open fields with stone walls and post and rail fences among them.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1981 Survey

This venerable dwelling has significant historical associations with Sherborn's Holbrook family. It was built in 1694 by John Holbrook. He was the son of Thomas Holbrook, one of Sherborn's first settlers and the only settler to receive a direct grant from the General Court of Massachusetts. He received 50 acres adjoining his original piece on the north side of the Charles River. At any rate, his son John married Silence Wood, granddaughter of another first settler, Nicholas Wood. She was born in the Bullard Fort during the King Phillip War. John and Silence built their house in 1694 on land inherited from her father, Jonathan. In the mid 19th century the Holbrook owners of this house were associated with the grist mill built nearby the homestead on Sewell Brook and the renowned cider mill which was built by Jonathan Holbrook in 1853. The cider producing operation became the largest in the U.S. with much of its product shipped to England. Descendants of the 17th century Holbrook's continue to live in this house (1981).

1999 Update

Cider-making occurred on the property as early as 1768 in combination with a grist mill on the nearby Sewall's Brook. The barn appears to have been built during the 1840s according to local historians, a time of great expansion in the apple cider business. There is indeed a barn represented on the 1865 tax

valuation lists for Jonathan Holbrook and the form of the building suggests a similar construction date. Regular patterns of fenestration with 6/6 sash may indicate some use other than the typical sheltering of cows and horses, such as a valuable cider and grist mill, another sideline of this industrious family. A historic photo of the house and barn ca. 1873 shows stacks of barrels against the distinctive tall brick foundation of the barn, preparing to be shipped on the (then new) Framingham and Mansfield Railroad, now CSX that runs west of the farm.

The John Holbrook House and barn were intimately associated with the large apple cider-making operation just west of the farm. Local historians indicate the grist mill was used for cider making before the construction of the large industrial apple cider manufactory built ½ mile to the west in 1853 (**51 Forest Street****). Agricultural operations other than cider and grist milling appear to have been carried out on a smaller scale on the farm, probably just for the subsistence of the Holbrook family. The herd of cows numbered only 5 in 1865, with three horses and two swine. While a carriage was also maintained at the farm, these items do not justify the construction of such a large barn, reinforcing the supposition that cider was made here prior to construction of the mill.

After becoming the largest "refined" cider producer in the world during the late 19th century, the mill burned in 1909. Eben Holbrook was the owner at the time according to tax valuations. The house remains under Holbrook ownership.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

1981 Survey

- Margaret Dowse Buntin's research
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - A guide to Sherborn and A History of Sherborn, 1974
- Maps of 1788, 1875 and 1889

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
- Visser, Thomas. Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings
- Comments of owner, Jan Burruss