

118 Mill Street



James Leland House or Hopestill Farm, November 1998

Form Nos.	76 house, 274 barn, 937 mill
Area	
Town	Sherborn
Address	118 Mill Street
Assessor's Map	8/82
USGS Map	Medfield
Historic Name	James Leland House or Hopestill Farm
Uses: Original	Residence
Present	Residence
Ownership, 1981	Robert Leland
" Original	James Leland
Constructed	House in 1939, barn ca. 1830, sawmill ca. 1939
Source	James Leland
Style/Form	Saltbox
Architect	
Ext. Wall Fabric	Wood shingle
Outbuildings	Barn, shed
Alterations	Third house to occupy this site, second house, built 1730, burned in 1939.
Moved	No
Acreage	16.80 acres

Setting: Situated on a rise overlooking Mill and Hollis Street, hayfields located immediately to the left and right.

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

Film Roll/Negative Roll 2

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

1981 Survey

This house is a replica of a saltbox which had been built in 1730 and was destroyed by fire in 1939. Part of the fire-destroyed homestead was incorporated into a barn which was consumed by fire in 1968. The present structure is 2 1/2 stories tall, swathed in shingles, and has a much smaller central chimney than that of the 1730 structure. In terms of its architectural significance within the town, it represents the strength of family ties to a particular property - Lelands have owned their land since 1654. In this case the choice of a saltbox for a colonial 20th century dwelling is more than just a picturesque revival of a colonial architectural form.

1999 Update

The house at 118 Mill Street (**#76**) survives as it is described on the survey form completed in 1981. No major changes have been carried out since that time.

The barn on Hopestill Farm is a large, gable-front, two-story building clad in wood clapboards (**#274**). The single large opening at ground level in the south-facing facade has paired rolling doors hung from an exterior track covered by a simple hood. A single-pane window occupies the gable peak. Other windows are fixed six pane sash and a row of tall 2/2 sash on the west elevation that may have been intended to act as a greenhouse. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles and the foundation, consisting of piers in the northwest corner, is built of uncut granite. The facade of the barn and the front door of the house face one another and create a south-facing door yard.

Behind the barn at Hopestill Farm is the mill (**#937**), built around 1940. This consists of four poles supporting a metal roof that covers what looks like a historic and operational sawmill. The pile of sawdust, log moving equipment and piles of logs combine to give the appearance of an old-fashioned mill yard.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1981 Survey

Although the present Leland house of "Hopestill Farm" was built in 1939, its land has significant historical associations with the Lelands, one of Sherborn's founding families. Its land has been in the same family since 1654, a record that would be difficult to equal anywhere in the United States.

Hopestill Leland was born in England about 1580 into a family associated with Elizabeth court circles. He was in his 70's when he crossed the Atlantic with Fernand Gorges. Arriving in Sherborn via Watertown in 1654, he died the following year and was the first to be buried in the old South Cemetery. Hopestill's son Henry was deeded 80 acres of his brother-in-laws Thomas Holbrook land in 1666. (The

80 acres had been part of a 500 acre tract deeded by Richard Parker of Boston to Nicholas Wood, Andrew Pitcher and Thomas Holbrook in 1652.) Henry Leland had occupied this land for twelve years. Henry Leland married Margaret Badcock and built the first Leland farm house to the northeast of the present house. The second Leland house was built on the site of the current homestead in 1730.

Over time the Lelands have figured prominently in the annals of local and state military, political and commercial history. Seventeen Lelands went to the American Revolution and three participated in the Civil War. At an undetermined date Lelands began operating a grist mill and later a sawmill on Mill Pond to the northeast of their house. It burned in 1922 and its ruins are still visible.

During the late 19th century the house and mill are labeled James H. Leland. He was a Sherborn selectman and vice president of the Investment Committee of the Holliston Savings Bank. He was also a Representative to the General Court from Sherborn in 1867. His son James H. Leland was a wholesale and retail dealer in pine, oak and chestnut lumber and slabs.

The "Hopestill Farm" has long been plagued by fire. The first Leland House was burned by Indians. The second house was destroyed by a conflagration precipitated by an electrical storm in 1939. Despite these disasters, Lelands continue to live and work on their land. It is interesting to note that one Hopestill Leland descendant became a First Lady of the United States. Thankful Lelands daughter, Abigail Powers married Millard Fillmore who became President upon the death of Zachary Taylor, July 9, 1850.

1999 Update

The Leland barn appears to have been built prior to the mid 19th century, judging by its form and the rolling doors hung from a track on the exterior of the facade. These exterior doors may have been retrofitted from a pair of swinging doors in common use at that time. A barn is represented in the 1865 tax valuations. It served as housing for horse, 2 oxen, 2 swine, a carriage and 8 cows which is a slightly larger than average sized herd in Sherborn. A sawmill and storehouse were also in use by that time but do not survive. The former mill** was on Mill Street and is now a ruin.

By 1875, James H. Leland had \$1250 stock in trade, probably lumber stored in his two storehouses, and an additional horse, barn, grist mill and 200 total acres. During this period, Mr. Leland is described in resident directories as a lumber dealer instead of a farmer which indicates his primary vocational focus. His son James is considered a farmer, however. The value of the Leland's stock in trade and number of horses continued to increase until around 1922 when, with \$3500 and 6 horses, fire claimed the mill. By that time, one of the barns, probably the surviving one, had a silo and milk house attached which may be the existing secondary mass to the right of the main door. After the 1922 fire, the Lelands focused more on dairy and poultry production, with a herd of 10 cows and 50 fowls. A storehouse, second dwelling and a garage were also present by this time, but the family did not give up on lumber milling.

After rebuilding the house lost to another fire in 1939, a new sawmill was constructed and survives behind (north of) the barn. The reorientation to milling may have caused the disappearance of the fowls by 1945, although a coop not visible from the road survives according to assessor information. A third fire took the second barn that was located across the street, called the horse barn, and a shed in approximately 1969. The silo may have been burned at this time but did exist until at least 1945. This is one of the more intact agricultural/industrial sites in Sherborn.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

1981 Survey

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- Historical Sketches, Sherborn Tercentenary, 1652-1952

1999 Update

- 1981 MHC B form from survey by Edward Gordon
- 1856 Walling Map; 1874 Beers Map; 1889 Walker Map
- Anne C. Shaughnessey - The History of Sherborn and A Guide to Sherborn, 1974
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- Sherborn Vital Records to 1850
- Tax valuations, 1865-1945
- 1855, 1865 state censuses
- Visser, Thomas. Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings
- Resident Directories, 1898, 1915, 1917, 1930-31