

# 17 North Main Street



*Bickford Straw hat factory*

**Form No.** 87

**Town** Sherborn  
**Address** 17 North Main Street

**Historic Names** Bickford Straw hat factory, Bickford Hall, Unity Hall

**Uses: Original** Straw hat factory  
**Present** Residence

**Ownership, 1981** Orville and Penny Brown  
**" Original** Paleman Bickford

**Constructed** 1833

**Source** Anne C. Shaughnessy A Guide to Sherborn, 1974

**Style/Form** Greek Revival

**Architect** Capt. Bowen Adams

**Ext. Wall Fabric** Clapboard

**Outbuildings** Shed and stable

**Alterations** Top floor removed, fenestration reworked, bay window added in 1959

**Moved** From 10 South Main Street in 1959

**Acreage** 51.86 acres

**Setting:** Set back approx. 1000 ft. from North Main Street, driveway adjacent to RR tracks, grounds are exceptionally well maintained and beautifully landscaped.

**Recorded by** Edward W. Gordon, June - July 1981

## **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

A late 19th century stereopticon view shows this structure's original form. It had a steeply pitched gambrel roof and its main entrance was located on an end wall gable. Its side walls originally displayed 6 windows and a side door on the first floor and 7 windows on the second floor. This house presently retains its boxy rectangular form and Greek Revival Corner and fascia boards. Its fenestration, however, has been drastically altered by the addition of a Federal Revival entrance to its present north wall and a modern multi-pane bay window to its east wall.

## **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

This structure was originally located at 10 South Main St., behind the First Parish Church. It is one of the few Sherborn buildings that come to mind when discussing "adaptive reuse." Over time it has been used as a factory, private school, parsonage, Sunday School and presently as a private residence. It was built in 1833 to house Paleman Bickford's straw hat factory. Its builder was Capt. Bowen Adams, one of Sherborn's early 19th century master builders. Perhaps his most notable building is the Dr. Oliver Everett House at 1 North Main Street which exhibits Sherborn's finest Greek Revival entrance. It is curious that Bickford did not build the straw hat factory himself as he was an accomplished housewright or at least by the late 1840's and 50's when he built #27 Washington Street (1849, Dr. Blanchard's house) and Elbridge Bickford's house at 8 Farm Road (1859). At any rate Bickford's straw hat factory operated for only a few years. By 1855 it was a private school known as Bickford Hall and had an enrollment of 53 pupils. It cost \$4.00 per term to attend the school. The need for Bickford Hall was soon eliminated with the construction of the Town Hall in 1856, which contained a school and library. In 1873 the Unitarian Church (First Parish) bought this building for the Rev. and Mrs. Eugene Normandie. It subsequently housed a Sunday School and was known as Unity Hall.

This house was sold by the Unitarians in 1959. It was moved to its present location to the southwest of 15 North Main Street and remodeled as private residence by John Bryer.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES**

- Maps of 1857, 1875 and 1889
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - [A Guide to Sherborn](#) and [The History of Sherborn](#), 1974
- Margaret Dowse Buntin's File