

41 North Main Street



Whitney-Paul House, ca 1979

Form Nos.	94 house, 285 guesthouse, 286 barn, 287 garage
Area	B,G
Town	Sherborn
Address	41 North Main Street
Assessor's Map	11/41
USGS Map	Medfield
Historic Name	Whitney-Paul House
Uses: Original	Residence
Present	Residence
Ownership, 1981	Doris Nilson (Sirod Corp.)
" Original	Jonathan Whitney
Constructed	1680 dwelling may be encased in present structure, enlarged ca. 1760 and in 1820's and 1830's, Barn ca. 1830, guest house ca. 1925, garage ca. 1930.
Source	Morse - <u>History of Sherborn and Holliston</u> , 1856
Style/Form	Elements of Georgian, Federal and Colonial Revival
Architect	
Ext. Wall Fabric	Clapboards
Outbuildings	Barn, carriage house
Alterations	South ell added in 1824, west wing added in 18??
Moved	No
Acreage	5.03 acres 1981, 5.8 acres 1999
Setting:	Located on Edward's Plain, in one of more densely settled areas of town, opposite key intersection of North Main St. and Eliot St.

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

Film Roll/Negative Roll 5

X Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. NRDIS/MRA 1/3/86; LHD 8/18/83

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

1981 Survey

The Whitney-Paul House, near the town center, is one of at least three Sherborn structures which have served as Taverns, (the other two are Tucker's Tavern, 20 Prospect St. in north Sherborn and the Ware Tavern, 113 South Main St. in south Sherborn). While all three have been altered and modified, the Whitney-Paul House with its ells and porches is readily recognizable as a former lodging House for "paying guests".

Its 2 1/2 story main block may contain a dwelling which Jonathan Whitney built here about 1678. It was probably enlarged in 1761 when the Hon. Daniel Whitney married Miriam Leland. The main block culminates in a gable roof and retains its massive brick central chimney. The south wing was added in 1824. It rises 2 stories to a hip roof. Late 19th century photographs show an open porch with a shed roof and simple columns projecting from the street facades of the south ell and main block. This continuous porch was removed ca. 1900 and was replaced by handsome colonial revival entrance porches. The main block's porch is crowned by a balustrade while the south ell's porch features a pedimented roof. Both porches exhibit Tuscan columns. The south ell rests on a high brick basement. In 1830 Capt. Paul added a west ell which was the old central school, formerly located on the site of 15 North Main St.

During the early 20th century (upon the death of Edwin R. Paul) its interior was extensively renovated - four apartments were created, roofs were raised and fireplaces were opened.

Architecturally, the Whitney-Paul House or the Old Paul Tavern is integral to the late 18th and 19th century character of the area between Powder House Lane and Dowse's Corner. It is a landmark opposite the key North Main St. and Eliot St. intersection.

1999 Update

The house at 41 North Main Street (**#94**) 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 the property at 41 North Main Street (**#286**) is a large, front- gabled, two-story form clad in wood clapboards. A shed-roofed addition has been made to the left (south) side and a north-side ell attaches it to a second outbuilding, clad in wood shingles. The center of the facade is pierced by a rolling vehicle door, approximately 15 feet in height, with a slim hood and transom above. The door is thought by local historians to have been built to accommodate tall stage coaches. A secondary entry with paired hinged doors is to the right of the rolling door. The three windows in the facade are 6/6 double-hung sash with plain trim. Other ornament includes the molded cornice and gable-roofed ventilator at the peak of the roof. The well-maintained barn is located one hundred fifty feet west of North Main Street.

A one-story secondary residence (**#285**) is north of the house. The wood- framed building has a low-pitched front-gabled roof and a side-gabled mass attached to the rear. A wood-shingled garage (**#287**) is west of the house and principal barn. The one and one-half-story, side-gabled form is accessed by three

roll-up doors on the south elevation. A full-width shed dormer raises the front slope of the roof.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1981 Survey

The historical significance of the Whitney-Paul House is three-fold. First and foremost, it was the home of the Hon. Daniel Whitney, member of the provincial Congress of 1775 and later of the Convention to form the state constitution. Secondly, it was the home of Capt. Daniel Paul, Newbury port Captain, agent for the Middlesex Fire Insurance Co. and licensed "Inn Holder". Thirdly, as the Paul Tavern or "Sheldon Inn", it was a popular "stop-over" on the way to Boston, 21 miles to the east. It was the most centrally located of Sherborn's Taverns and was operated as a lodging house by the same family for 122 years (1824-1946).

This house's story begins with Jonathan Whitney's arrival in Sherborn in 1678. He was born in England in 1634 and initially settled in Watertown in the 1670's. His Sherborn home lot encompassed 30 acres including the Rocky Hill north of his house and land lying on both sides of the main road. Jonathan Whitney's dwelling (built ca. 1678- 1680) may be encased in the present rambling residence. His grandson James inherited the property in 1727.

The main block is said to have acquired its present form in 1761. In that year the Hon. Daniel Whitney married Miriam Leland. He is remembered as a "much respected and honored citizen". He was a member of the Provincial Congress in 1775 and the convention to form the state constitution, and that which adopted the Federal Constitution. In addition he was a representative of the General Court for fourteen years and served the town in many offices.

He died in 1810. His children preferred their north Sherborn holdings and sold the old homestead to Capt. Daniel Paul in 1824.

Capt. Daniel Paul was born in Sanford, Maine in 1787. A captain of Newburyport vessels for many years, he moved his family to Sherborn in 1824. His wife was Sarah Smith of Needham. There is a difference of opinion among local historians as to whether a Tavern existed in this structure at the time of the Paul purchase. In any case it is certain that Capt. Paul greatly enlarged the old Whitney place to accommodate a store, tavern and living quarters for his family. He added the south ell in 1824. It contained a store on the first floor and a ballroom on the second floor. The store's merchandise included dry goods, shoes, hardware as well as groceries. Undoubtedly, the shoes were supplied to Paul by the leather dressing Dowse family of upper North Main St. and Everett St.

The west wing was added in 1830, presumably to accommodate more guests. It had originally served as the old Central School and was moved from the site of 15 North Main St. For many years Paul's Tavern was known as the Sheldon Inn.

Capt. Paul, in addition to running the tavern, became an agent of the Middlesex Mutual Fire Insurance Co. in 1828. He was also the town tax collector and keeper of the powder house.

Upon Capt. Paul's death in 1855, his son Edwin Ruthven inherited the property. Although he closed the store, he found time to conduct a cider vinegar business in New York and to maintain six teams of horses, each assigned to a specific employee. He also maintained many of the town's roads

During the early 20th century the Paul Place was extensively renovated - partitions and stairways were removed, bathrooms added, roofs raised and fireplaces opened. Four comfortable suites of rooms were created for "paying guests". Known as Hunting Lane Farm, it was operated by Paul aunts until 1946.

The Paul family continued to own this property as well as the family's insurance business until the 1970's.

1999 Update

Plans of the buildings at 41 North Main Street were drawn in 1819 and again in 1835. The first indicates the farm was owned by Daniel Whitney and that the barn was to the north of the house, not the southwest as is now the case. At that time, the house lacked the secondary mass (built 1824 by Daniel Paul, later owner) now attached to the southwest corner. Land associated with the farm primarily extended west along Hunting Lane, comprised a total of 73 acres and included around 6 acres of orchard. The 1835 plan of land and buildings belonging now to Capt. Daniel Paul shows the barn in its current site at approximately its current scale, suggesting the existing building had been built by that date. Other outbuildings represented include a carriage house, horse shed, bee house, ash house (built of brick), corn house, 2 vinegar houses, a shed and one unnamed outbuilding. A kitchen, aqueduct, woodshed and pump are depicted within the house. The existing secondary mass at the southwest corner is also shown and is in use as a store in 1835. The barn depicted on the map may represent the existing building, given their similarity in size and location. Captain Paul was sailor, shipbuilder, insurance agent, tavern keeper, tax collector, powderhouse keeper, and a store keeper, according to research by author Ann Shaughnessy.

Captain Paul's son Edwin Ruthven Paul inherited the house at 41 North Main Street in 1855 at the age of 18. In 1865, he was described in censuses as a farmer/vinegar maker with a wife and two children. He paid tax on 10 horses, 2 oxen, 7 cows, 7 swine, 4 vinegar houses, 5 storehouses, 4 acres of orchard, 120 mixed-use acres and a house and barn. This is significantly more property and livestock than is found on most farms in town. In 1885, the tax lists describe, among other buildings, two barns, which may include the carriage house that is mentioned on the 1981 MHC inventory form Form no. 94 but is not visible from the road.

Edwin Paul remained in residence until 1905 when daughter Ettie Carter was recorded as the taxpayer. Between this time and 1915, she improved the value of the house from \$1300 to \$5000, a major increase in value which corresponds in its timing to the remodeling described on the earlier inventory form. Ms. Carter and her sister Eleanor Paul operated the Hunting Lane Farm until after 1945 and continued to keep cows, horses and chickens. The presence of Alma and Eleanor Paul is recorded in resident directories from the period. The value of the house continued to increase until 1945 up to \$7500, indicating the ongoing improvements carried out by Ms. Carter and Ms. Paul. The secondary dwelling may be the Bungalow described in tax valuations as a converted hen house, possibly built around 1925. The existing garage is listed in the tax records for the first time in 1935. The Paul Family owned the house and barns until approximately 1968. The house may be considered to be two dwellings in terms of its form, making it one of Sherborn's largest. From 1905-1915, the orchard comprised 20 acres, one of the largest in a town of numerous orchards. Indeed, the W.P.A. map of 1939 depicts the town's largest orchard on Hunting Lane adjacent to the Paul Farm, on a parcel recorded in 1819 as belonging to former owner Daniel Whitney.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

1981 Survey

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- Margaret Dowse Buntin's research
- Rev. Abner Morse - History of the Towns of Sherborn and Holliston, 1856
- "Sherborn Past and Present 1674-1924" by the Sherborn Historical Society
- "Historical Sketches, Sherborn Tercentenary 1652-1952" - Francis Bardwell
- Maps of 1788, 1874 and 1889

1999 Update

- 1981 MHC B form from survey by Edward Gordon
- 1856 Walling Map; 1874 Beers Map; 1889 Walker Map; 1939 W.P.A. Map
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn and A Guide to Sherborn, 1974
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson, 1/99
- Tax valuations, 1865-1945
- 1855, 1865 state censuses
- 1819, 1835 plans of land and buildings at 41 North Main Street
- Resident directories, 1898, 1915, 1917, 1930-31