

44 North Main Street



Jonathan Holbrook House

Form Nos.	95 house, 288 barn
Area	B,G
Town	Sherborn
Address	44 North Main Street
Assessor's Map	11/38
USGS Map	Medfield
Historic Name	Jonathan Holbrook House
Uses: Original	Residence
Present	Residence
Ownership, 1981	J. Paul Skaletsky
" Original	Jonathan Holbrook
Constructed	House and barn ca. 1880
Source	Margaret D. Buntin's research
Style/Form	Queen Anne
Architect	
Ext. Wall Fabric	Shingle
Outbuildings	Barn and shed
Alterations	
Moved	No
Acreage	Less than one acre 1981, 1 acre 1999
Setting:	Located in one of Sherborn's most densely settled areas, adjacent to 18th century Tapley Wyeth House.
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

This house is Sherborn's finest Victorian, or more specifically, Queen Anne residence. Of irregular plan, it rises 2 1/2 stories with a gable roof. Its southwest corner features a four story tower which is crowned by a mansard roof. Particularly noteworthy are its textured wall surfaces, which exhibit rows of spaced and cut, scalloped and imbricated and beveled shingles. The gable was often the imaginative focus of the Queen Anne style - 44 North Main Street's gable displays curved and raised Jacobean paneling. In terms of form this house is composed of projecting and recessed segments - projecting from its main facade is a porch with turned porch posts and a transom with punched out geometric decoration. Above the porch pediment is a small recessed porch which possesses a Chinese fretwork balcony. All of its windows are fully enframed and several have bracketed hoods. This house contributes a great deal to the architectural charm of the area.

1999 Update

The house at 44 North Main Street (#95) survives as it is described on the survey form completed in 1981. No major changes have been carried out since that time except for the removal of a large tree near the front steps.

The barn at 44 North Main Street is an ornate Victorian Eclectic style example of 1 1/2 stories and a three by two-bay plan. The side-gabled mass is augmented by a ventilator at the roof-peak and a wall-gable over the left (north) side of the facade. Ornament consists of the molded cornice and the four types of wall cladding: wood clapboards and wood shingles cut in square-butt, saw-tooth and stagger-butt patterns. Double-hung sash light the side elevations at both stories. The facade is pierced on the left side by a two-bay roll-up door, in the center by a pass-door with two fixed panes and an unglazed pass door on the right. The wall-gable over the roll-up door has a double-leaf door giving access to the upper stories of the barn. Exterior material lends the building much of its character. The four types of wall cladding and the slate shingled roof are signs of upscale design and construction typical of Sherborn Center. It is one of the town's most ornate outbuildings.

The house and barn are set fifty to one hundred feet east of North Main Street and are not well-maintained but retain integrity of design.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1981 Survey

This house has significant historical associations with Sherborn's Holbrook family. Holbrooks were among the area's first settlers and overtime served the town in various appointive and elective offices. The old Holbrook homestead, built in 1694, is still extant at 69 Forest Street. In 1880 Jonathan Holbrook built a house on North Main Street which "was a showpiece of Victorian innovation when constructed and included central heating". In addition "the house was piped for gas lights but gas was not put in on Main Street for 50 years!...The dining room radiator had a square insert with glass doors for warming plates".

Jonathan Holbrook could afford these luxuries thanks to his successful business ventures which included a grist mill on Sewall Brook and the renowned cider mill which he built in 1853 and expanded in 1856. The Holbrook cider mills capacity increased from 500 barrels during the seven-week season (Oct 1 - mid Nov.) to 1200 barrels by 1859. Mr. Holbrook financed a survey for a railroad line which would link his cider mill with the towns of Mansfield and Framingham. This shorter route realized a savings of \$50,000 a year. Anne C. Shaughnessy notes that "appropriately enough the first freight train coming into town was loaded with apples for Holbrook's Mill". The railroad enabled the Holbrooks to ship their cider directly to New York. Their cider producing operation became the largest in the country, with much of its product being shipped to England. In 1909 Jonathan's son Eben sold the business to P. McCarthy and Son. For many years John's son Dana Dowse Holbrook, lived in the North Main Street house. His widow sold it in the early 1950's.

1999 Update

Built ca. 1883 for Jonathan Franklin Holbrook, son of the successful apple cider manufacturer. He made his living for many years at the Holbrook Farm at 69 Forest Street ** and at the Holbrook Cider Mill **, also on Forest Street. The Victorian Eclectic style design was a novelty in Sherborn, there being few such ornate homes from the period. A similar designed house existed south of 83 North Main Street but was demolished in the 1930s. Mr. Holbrook was taxed for this property on only 1 3/8 acres of land, a house, barn, 2 carriages and a horse; items denoting a gentleman-farmer. His cider mill was taxed separately. Heirs of Jonathan Holbrook owned the property by 1895. By 1915, Dana Holbrook lived here and kept 40 fowls like many of his neighbors in the early 1900s. By 1925, the barn is referred to as a garage, indicating the change from hay and horse shelter to storage for an automobile. Dana Holbrook remained a resident here until at least 1945.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

1981 Survey

- Anne C. Shaughnessy - A Guide to Sherborn and The History of Sherborn, 1974
- Margaret Dowse Buntin's research

1999 Update

- 1981 MHC B form from survey by Edward Gordon
- 1889 Walker Map
- 1931 County Commissioners Map of Main and Washington Streets in Registry of Deeds
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn and A Guide to Sherborn, 1974
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson, 1/99
- History of Middlesex County, Hurd
- Tax valuations, 1865-1945
- 1855, 1865 state censuses

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION



Jonathan Holbrook House (4/12/2006 photo)