

100 North Main Street



Joseph Dowse Sr. House

Form Nos.	110 house, 295 fruit stand, 296 barn
Area	B,G
Town	Sherborn
Address	100 North Main Street
Assessor's Map	10/63
USGS Map	Framingham
Historic Name	Joseph Dowse Sr. House
Uses: Original	Residence
Present	Residence/C. A. Dowse & Sons Apple Growers
Ownership, 1981	Charles A. Dowse Jr.
" Original	Joseph Dowse Sr.
Constructed	Rear ell of house in late 18th century, main block ca. 1844 Barn ca. 1860, fruit stand ca. 1953, apple storage barn ca. 1980.
Source	Margaret Dowse Buntin's file
Style/Form	Greek Revival
Architect	
Ext. Wall Fabric	Aluminum (clapboard)
Outbuildings	Barn, farm stand, storage and commercial sales complex
Alterations	Greek Revival main block replaced 1783, cottage in 1844
Moved	No
Acreage	11.24 acres

Setting: Situated in one of the town's more densely settled areas, surrounded by primarily Greek Revival residences opposite key intersection.

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

Film Roll/Negative Roll 9

X Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. NRDIS/MRA 1/3/86

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

1981 Survey

During the 1840's and 1850's Sherborn enjoyed a high degree of prosperity. Small manufacturing concerns flourished in the Edward's Plain - Dowse Corner section of town. The Greek Revival style, temple form house highly popular in Sherborn at that time - particularly at Dowse's Corner where half a dozen houses were built in this mode - 100 north Main St. is one of the more full blown examples of this style.

In 1844 the old 1783 cottage was taken down and the present classicized main block was attached to the old ell. Generally, Temple form houses were built with their gables facing the road. This house continues the 17th and 18th century tradition of the main facade facing south. (Lake St. is to the south and was laid out in the 1850's). Essentially rectangular in plan, it rests on a granite block foundation and rises 2 1/2 stories to a pedimented attic. Projecting from its 3 bay main facade is a handsome perch with fluted Tuscan columns. This dwelling's edges are crisply defined by corner and fascia boards. Its entrance is flanked by narrow multi-pane sidelights.

It is interesting to note that the main block's front rooms have double beams reinforcing the floors. Reinforcement was needed due to the weight of leather shoes accumulated during the Civil War. To the south of this homestead is a roadside stand (Dowse's Apples) and storage/commercial sales complex which were built in the early 1950's.

1999 Update

The house at 100 North Main Street (**#110**) survives as it is described on the survey form completed in 1981. No major changes have been carried out since that time. In an effort to update the 1981 inventory form, sixth-generation current owners Alexander and Jonathan Dowse wrote to SHC that the front doors had been altered to a double leaf entry in the late 19th or early 20th century. In 1947, a project was undertaken to return the opening to its original appearance, resulting in the current front door. Also, the rear apartment in the house was built from a former woodshed and from a shop moved to the site at an unknown date.

Four major outbuildings exist on the property. The oldest is a front-gabled, banked barn (**#296**) located behind (east of) the house. The left (north) side of the building is built into the banked earth while the other is sheathed in wood clapboards to the level of the foundation footings. The south side of the foundation is open for access by machinery or animals. A retaining wall built of cinderblocks supports the side of the driveway approaching the front door of the barn. The wood-clapboard building is enlarged by a shed-roofed ell at the left elevation. Ornamental elements on the barn include gable returns, a molded cornice and corner boards. The facade is pierced by a vehicle door lit from above by a row of transom lights. Six over six double-hung sash light the side walls.

The fruit stand (#295) was built south of the house in 1951-52 and used for storage and sorting of fruit. The northerly section of the stand is a prefabricated building manufactured by the Butler Company. This one-story, side-gabled building has a metal frame and a corrugated tin roof. The southern section is made of wood and was added later. This is a side-gabled addition with a rolled asphalt roof that follows the roofline of the Butler building. The facade is accessed by two roll-up doors and a single pass door. A metal ventilator marks the peak of the original section of roof.

A second barn (#297) that serves as an apple storage facility is behind the fruit stand and does not appear to be historic. The two-story, vinyl-clad building has two sash on the north elevation at the first story. It is otherwise unfenestrated and lacks ornament. Apparatus that may be refrigeration equipment is attached to the upper portion of the north side-elevation. A weathervane marks the roof peak of this building. A second modern barn is north of the storage building. This may be an equipment and large-vehicle garage built in the late 20th century.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1981 Survey

This house has significant historical associations with Sherborn's leather dressing Dowse family. Its first owner was Joseph Dowse Sr. It was this Joseph who gave his name to Dowse's Corner. He was born in Charlestown, Ma. in 1760 and came to Sherborn with his parents in 1775 on the eve of the Battle of Bunker Hill. The Dowse's Charlestown home was burned by the British. Joseph's father, Eleazer, settled on Everett St. He utilized the boggy lowlands of the area for the digging of pits in which to soak hides. Eleazer's two Everett St. houses are no longer extant.

Joseph served in the Revolutionary War as a guard at Sherborn's ammunition garrison which was located on the site of 86 North Main Street (south of Dowse's Corner). After the War he built a cottage with a large ell at 100 North Main St. Only a portion of the present ell dates to the late 18th century. The present main block was built in 1844.

Joseph joined his father and brothers in the leather dressing business. One of each of the two ash and two buttonwood trees he set out across the street still stand.

Joseph's son, Nathaniel, inherited this house. Initially engaged in whip making with his brothers Benjamin and Joseph, he branched out into shoe manufacturing. All three had whip shops where 20 foot long stage coach whips were made entirely by hand. The decline of whip making was heralded by the advent of the Rail Road Age and the passing of the stage coach. (Dowses made whips in Sherborn as late as 1876).

In 1859 Nathaniel built a three story frame building on a triangular lot of land formed by the Coolidge St. - North Main St. intersection. In this structure he operated a sizable shoe industry which employed 20 men. They hand crafted the "Brogan" or heavy work shoe. It was sold primarily to southern markets for use on plantations. The Civil War temporarily halted Sherborn's shoe business. In 1870 Nathaniel sent his sons to the south with a freight car load of shoes to resume trade. During the mid 19th century Sherborn supported a dozen small shoe shops but the two largest were those of Nathaniel Dowse and Lowell Coolidge (both at Dowse's Corner). By the early 1900's the United Shoe Machinery Corporation drove hundreds of small shoe shops out of business. Nathaniel Dowse's shoe manufactory burned in 1907. Coolidge's shop went out of business the following year.

Nathaniel's son Charles Herbert (born 1853) lived in this house for 83 years. An avid historian, he made whips and shoes and later turned to market gardening. In 1919 he opened one of the first roadside stands, catering to the automobile touring trade. His apples, small fruits and fresh vegetables stand was the

forerunner of "Dowse's Apples". The present stand, an apple sorting and storing complex as well as commercial sales, was built in the early 1950's.

The present owner, Charles Arthur Jr., is the fifth generation to live in this homestead. It is one of eight 19th century houses at and near Dowse's Corner, associated with the Dowse family.

1999 Update

In 1859, Nathaniel Dowse, owner of 100 North Main Street**, built a three-story factory across the road from his house for the manufacture of shoes. The shop's presence is reflected in the 1865 tax valuations at a value of \$1200, and on the 1874 Beers Atlas. State censuses indicate that two generations of Dowses were in the shoe manufacturing business in 1855. Their neighbors at 93 North Main Street**, the Coolidges, owned a separate shoe manufactory. Twenty seven local residents were listed as shoe makers at that time and probably worked for Mr. Dowse and Mr. Coolidge. The factory had ceased operation shortly before it burned in 1907.

The family was also engaged in agricultural activities on this property, judging by the nature and size of the existing barn, built ca. 1860. A barn is recorded in tax valuations in 1865 which appears to be the surviving example. The form and detail of the current building corroborate the possibility of a mid 19th century construction date. Two cows, 2 carriages and a horse were kept in the barn at that time. After his family abandoned the shoe business, Nathaniel Dowse's son Charles Herbert Dowse began to focus on growing, processing, storing and selling apples. Around 1905, Mr. Dowse had acquired a flock of chickens and accompanying hen houses, but this was a short-lived enterprise, having been discontinued by 1925. He later kept as many as dozen cows whose milk Mr. Dowse sold to neighbors. The house was among the first wired for electricity around this time.

Charles H. Dowse raised many types of produce, including currants and gooseberries which he shipped to Boston via Natick for retail sale. He began roadside fruit sales here in 1914. Apples were sold from the house during the week and on weekends from a wagon loaded with fruit on the front lawn. Mr. Dowse's Grandson Charles Arthur Dowse, Jr., built the current fruit stand with a paved parking lot in 1951-52; the apple storage and processing building came sometime later. Charles A. Dowse built his first refrigerated storage area in the cellar of the main barn which is still in use today. He also built a shed onto the north wall of the barn to house his cider press. The majority of the native Sherborn apples are grown in the orchards at the northern end of **Rockwood Street**** and on **Green Lane****. The apple stand and processing facility remain in business today. The operation was expanded within the last ten years with the construction of a modern large vehicle garage in the rear of the house.

Presently, Alexander and Jonathan Dowse sell bedding plants in the spring, vegetables in season, as well as cider and apples.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

1981 Survey

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- Anne C. Shaughnessy - A Guide to Sherborn and The History of Sherborn, 1974
- Dowse Genealogy
- "Sherborn Past and Present" 1674-1924
- Maps of 1788, 1857, 1875 and 1889

1999 Update

- 1856 Walling Map; 1857 Ellis Map; 1874 Beers Map; 1889 Walker Map; 1939 W.P.A. Map
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson 12/98
- Tax valuations
- Vital Records of Sherborn, Massachusetts to 1850
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn and A Guide to Sherborn, 1974
- History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Hurd
- Comments of Peggy Dowse