

20 Prospect Street



Tucker Tavern

Form No.	119
Town	Sherborn
Address	20 Prospect Street
Historic Name	Tucker Tavern
Uses: Original	Tavern
Present	Residence
Ownership, 1981	William and Susan Ware
" Original	William Tucker
Constructed	1780
Source	Owner' s research
Style/Form	Originally Georgian, Colonial Revivalized in the early 1900's
Architect	
Ext. Wall Fabric	Clapboard
Outbuildings	Garage, stone water tower
Alterations	Colonial Revivalized in the early 1900's - dormer added as well as pilasters and enclosed main entrance porch.
Moved	From Prospect St. roadside in 1904
Acreage	68 acres
Setting:	Set back on a knoll, approximately 450 ft. from street - access gained via winding road which leads past picturesque stone water tower. Upper floors command fine view of Peter's Hill
Recorded by	Edward W. Gordon, June - July 1981

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This handsome residence is set back approximately 450' from Prospect St. and dramatically sited on a grassy, tree covered knoll. It was originally adjacent to the north side of Prospect St. at its intersection with Coolidge St. The house is composed of a large rectangular main block (2 1/2 stories) and a 2 story rear wing. It was moved to its present location in 1904 and was remodeled in the Colonial Revival style. Situated over interesting rock outcroppings which are clearly visible in its basement, it rises 2 1/2 stories to a gable roof. Its western slope is lined with a regimental row of 5 Georgian Revival dormers. The central, double dormers are aligned with the enclosed main entrance porch which projects from the 5 bay main facade. The rooms of its southern side were extended in the early 1900's. The "new" addition rises 2 stories and pilasters, corner and fascia boards were added to the new southern end wall. At the same time the southern gable became fully pedimented. A 2 story porch projects from the north gable. Particularly noteworthy is the leaded glass decoration in its front door's sidelights. Still intact inside are wide 18th century floorboards and a handsome Victorian stair rail. Original 1780's paneling is still extant in a second floor bedroom. Also noteworthy is this property's stone water tower and garage. The garage doors feature large panels containing diagonal boards and the whole structure is swathed in wood shingles. A bell situated on the southern gable looks like it may have been situated on a fire department building. (No evidence has been found to suggest that this structure once housed volunteers and fire dept. equipment.) At any rate this structure appears to date to the early 1900's.

The 3 story stone water tower on this property is one of two turn of the century water towers in Sherborn. (A conical stone and wood water tower is located on Nason Hill and is associated with Stannox Farm). It was apparently built for Dr. John Merriam who acquired this property in 1899.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

For many years Prospect Street was known as the "New Road to Framingham". During the late 19th century four houses were spread out along this thoroughfare which meanders along the north side of Brush Hill. John Death, the son of John Death who came to Sherborn in 1677, settled on the site of 20 Prospect Street at the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Barber in 1698. Later, during the 1700's, this area was associated with the Perry family. Cooper Moses Perry (1755-1819) made barrels and casks on the site of 3 Prospect Street. In 1780 William Tucker bought property at 20 Prospect Street from Moses Perry and built "Tucker's Tavern" much closer to the road than it is today. Before the Mansfield and Framingham Railroad tracks were laid out in 1869, Coolidge St. intersected with Prospect St. just to the south of Tucker's Tavern. Thus Tucker's enterprise was located at a key North Sherborn intersection.

William Tucker brought his family from Milton to Sherborn in 1780. At that time he built a structure which contained his living quarters, a West India Goods Store and a tavern. Tucker's son, Deacon William Tucker married Julia Twitchell in 1786 and gained prominence in late 18th century Sherborn as Town Clerk and Representative to the General Court in 1787 and as Selectman in 1787 and 1790.

"Tucker's Tavern" was to figure prominently in the not very extensive annals of Sherborn crime. An attempted robbery and a murder took place on this property in 1799 and 1853, respectively. On the night of 21 June, 1799, Isaac Moore and Samuel Smith, both of Sudbury, entered Tucker's house with intent to steal a variety of goods. Among the items included in the inventory of spoils were linen, handkerchiefs, knives, hats tea, "3 Pairs of spectacles", etc. - in other words, the stock of Tucker's store. The Sudbury men were immediately apprehended and were "tried at the October term, 1799, for the offence". The jury found Moore not guilty of burglary but guilty of stealing and found Smith guilty of both. Moore was sentenced to be publicly whipped and "to be confined at hard labor three years, to pay William Tucker \$170.00, which, with the goods restored, is treble the value of the goods stolen, and to pay the cost of prosecution." Smith was sentenced to be "hanged by the neck until he was dead". Tradition says

that he sold his body to the town doctors and while awaiting execution spent the money for a last meal consisting of gingerbread.

Deacon William and Julia Twitchell Tucker's daughter, Sally, married Nathaniel Perry, son of Moses Perry 3rd of 3 Prospect Street and their son. William inherited this property. He sold it in 1853 to Galem Bowditch. In that year a notorious murder took place here. Reuben Cozzens was murdered and his wife was mortally wounded "when some villain entered this house on the evening of the 14th inst." (September). The Selectmen offered a \$300.00 reward for the murderer's apprehension. Mrs. Cozzens later identified the murderer as a John L. Chapman. Joseph Valentine, owner of this house from 1957-1975 claimed that "the tools in the fireplace swing and clang on the anniversary of the murder in the room where it occurred."

Late 19th century owners of this property included an H. P. Chase (listed in 1875) and a Craigin and Ackman (1886-1899). In 1899 Dr. John Merriam of Framingham bought the old Tucker Tavern and moved it to its present hill top location. In 1904 he remodeled and enlarged this house adding Colonial Revival surface treatments. Named "Merryfields", it served as a summer home for his large family. In addition he ran a dairy farm on its ample grounds. One of his sons recalled that when his father entertained his colleagues on the farm the conductors of the Old Colony Railroad trains made special stops at the foot of Prospect Street to accommodate the Merriam's guests.

The Merriams lived here until at least the late nineteen teens when Adele S. Kaufman bought the property. She sold to Carl Bonwitt in 1925 who turned around and sold it the same year to James H. and Hattie Shedd, formerly of Arlington, Ma. He was the "president and general manager of Indian Head Quarries on Coolidge St." In 1925 Shedd's company began to mine the ledge which 'towered over Coolidge St. His project was short lived however, as the townspeople feared general loss of land values in the area.

In 1938 Homeowners Corp. took over this property but by 1941 Henry and Illa Flanders had bought it. In 1948, one time Chief of Staff at Children's Hospital, Dr. Paul F. Ware and his wife Mary bought the old Tucker's Tavern and sold to Joseph W. Valentine in 1957 who in turn sold to William and Susan L. Ware in 1975.

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