

# 100 South Main Street



*Sewall-Ware House*

**Form No.** 136

**Town** Sherborn  
**Address** 100 South Main Street

**Historic Name** Sewall-Ware House

**Uses: Original** Residence  
**Present** Residence

**Ownership, 1981** Robert Selfe  
**" Original** Judge Samuel Sewall

**Constructed** ca. 1690

**Source** Deduced from Harriet Forbes "Seventeenth Century Houses of Middlesex County".

**Style/Form** Late 17th century frame vernacular with later alterations.

**Architect**

**Ext. Wall Fabric** Clapboard

**Outbuildings** Garage

**Alterations** Lean-to portion of saltbox removed in the early 1900's. Roof; changed from gambrel to gable at undetermined date.

**Moved** No

**Acreage** 21.00 acres

**Setting:** Faces south toward Sewall Brook, adjacent to heavily traveled South Main St. (Rte. 27)

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

## **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Over time, this venerable dwelling has been greatly altered. At one time it had a gambrel roof and a one story lean-to on its north side. The present house rises 2 1/2 stories to a gable roof. Its main (south) facade is four bays wide. Its front door is flanked by narrow multi-pane sidelights and it is surmounted by a hood supported by small brackets. Its side walls are 3 bays wide. In the center, of its gable roof is a wide brick chimney which is a replacement. Early 20th century photographs show a much narrower chimney (which in turn probably replaced the original massive center chimney.) This house rests on a brick and rubble stone foundation.

The interior contains a stairway which winds up the front of the chimney. Its enclosing partition has been partially removed. The steep and narrow stair treads are eight or nine inches high. Across the top of the "bulk-head" stairs is a big timber 14 inches square.

The cellar walls are laid without mortar.

Although much altered this house is a survivor from the wave of settlement which occurred along South Main Street and vicinity in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

## **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

This house has significant historical associations with the late 17th and early 18th century diarist and Massachusetts Colony Chief Justice Samuel Sewall. From 1734 until 1876 it was the home of Sherborn's prominent Ware family. Henry Ware (1764-1845), Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard College was born in this house.

The Sewall-Ware house's land was part of a 500 acre grant secured by Captain John Hull in the 1660's. It included all of Sewall's Meadow and much of Sherborn Center. Hull resided in Boston. He was a merchant, silversmith and originator of the Pine Tree Shilling. His only daughter, Hannah, married Samuel Sewall who became Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Colony but is perhaps remembered most for serving as one of the judges of the Salem Witch Trials in the 1690's. The brook and meadow to the south of this house still bear his name. The Sewalls inherited Hulls holdings. Sewall first mentioned visiting Sherborn in 1687 in his famous diary. He and his wife traveled the 21 miles from Boston to Sherborn "to see the farm where we eat apples and drink cider". Since "farm" did not necessarily mean that buildings were on the property, it is difficult to determine if a portion of the present house was extant in 1687. This writer concurs with Harriet Forbes, Margaret Dowse Buntin and others that the oldest segment of the Sewall-Ware House was probably built ca. 1690 for Sewall's tenant, farmer Moses Adams. Beginning in November 1690, Sewall recorded rent Adams paid for this Sherborn land. The first definite reference to Adams' inhabitation occurs on April 14, 1703 when Sewall mentions "the farm Moses Adams lives on".

In 1734 it was deeded to Captain Joseph Ware by Judith Cooper, daughter of Judge Sewall and granddaughter of John Hull. Still in existence, the deed mentions a house, barn and about 200 acres of land. The price was 750£. Morse states that the first Wares to occupy this property built the present house. Harriet Forbes observes that "it does not seem very probable that in those economical days the Wares would replace a house only a little over thirty years old."

In any event, Wares lived in this house for 150 years. Members of the branch of the family associated with this dwelling distinguished themselves in business, theology, education, medicine and law. Born in this house was Joseph Ware, Revolutionary soldier who lost an arm at the Battle of White Plains. Also serving in the Revolution were his brothers John and Benjamin. Another brother, the Rev. Henry Ware

(all were sons of John and Martha Prentice Ware) was born here on April 1, 1764. He graduated from Harvard in 1785 and began preaching at Hingham's First Church in 1787. In 1805 he was elected the Chair of the Hollis Professorship of Divinity in Harvard College. His election to the position was extremely controversial because of his liberal theological views. The discussions concerned with his acceptability were among the first skirmishes of a "war" which would divide the Congregational ecclesiastical system of New England. The result would be the definition of lines which separate Unitarians from orthodox Congregationalists.

Rev. Ware's sons had distinguished careers in three different fields: Henry Jr. was also a preacher and held the position of Prof. Pulpit Eloquence and the Pastoral Care, Harvard University, 1830; Dr. John was "one of the foremost of physicians and ablest of medical professors in Boston"; and Will was the author of the narratives "Zenobia", "Probus" and "Julvan" among others.

The Rev. Henry Ware's first cousin once removed, the distinguished jurist and lawyer, Ashur Ware (1782-1873), was born in this house.

Albert Penniman Ware (1811-1871), son of Ashur's brother, Henry, and Irene Death Ware, was the last of his family to reside in the old homestead. He teamed up with the Grout family on Washington Street to harvest cranberries from Sewall's Meadow. In 1830 the historian Bigelow had written of the "very palatable cranberry sauce" which came from Sewall's Meadow.

In 1872 a Thomas Colford bought the Sewall-Ware House. His grandson, Charles, sold the ancient homestead in 1945.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES**

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- Maps of 1788, 1875 and 1889
- 1798 Assessors list