

# 23 South Street



*Henry M. Channing House (aerial photo by Bing.com)*

<b>Form No.</b>	125
<b>Town</b>	Sherborn
<b>Address</b>	23 South Street
<b>Historic Name</b>	Henry M. Channing House or "Little Pond"
<b>Uses: Original</b>	Residence
<b>Present</b>	Residence
<b>Ownership, 1981</b>	Neil W. Wallace
<b>" Original</b>	Henry M. Channing
<b>Constructed</b>	1910
<b>Source</b>	Mrs. Francis Birch (daughter of Henry Channing)
<b>Style/Form</b>	Neo Georgian
<b>Architect</b>	Biglow or Bigelow
<b>Ext. Wall Fabric</b>	Brick, wood trim
<b>Outbuildings</b>	Attached garage
<b>Alterations</b>	Southwest wing completed in 1922
<b>Moved</b>	No
<b>Acreage</b>	33.33 acres
<b>Setting:</b>	Adjacent to Little Pond Wild Life Sanctuary, surrounded by well maintained grounds.
<b>Recorded by</b>	Edward W. Gordon, July 1981

## **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Between 1900 and 1930 Sherborn's oldest area of settlement, the southeastern and southwestern portions of town, became known for its country estates. Wealthy Bostonians built rambling houses and acquired large tracts of land along Farm Road, the Charles River, South St. etc. Much of this area was and is unspoiled - its countryside is characterized by forests, brooks, ponds and marshland. The Henry M. Channing House or Little Pond is one of the very few brick structures in Sherborn. It was built in 1910 by Lock Lumber Company of Norwood and its architect was either Biglow or Bigelow. It reflects Mrs. Henry M. Channing's "love of the chaste 18th century style" Originally L-shaped in plan it became U-shaped upon the completion of the southwest wing in 1922 by an architect named Henderson. Two stories tall, it is crowned by a hip roof. Stylistically it may be called Neo-Georgian. Its main (south) facade is flanked by wings and faces a circular driveway. A long straight road links the circular driveway with South St. The center of its 7 bay main facade is set off by six Doric pilasters (with dentillated capitals). The pilasters, together with the "French doors" of the first and second floors provide a vertical note countering the horizontality of the house's massing. A simple wrought iron balcony projects from beneath the second floor's three central windows. Above the pilasters is a narrow entablature. The southwest wing's double chimneys are linked by a segmental brick arch.

The northern facade's rendering is considerably less cohesive. Its 7 central bays are sandwiched in between a colonnaded porch at its northeast corner and three Doric pilasters with a broken entablature at its southwest corner. The central portion of the northern wall's roofline is accented by a row of 5 projecting round headed dormers which are sheathed in copper. Projecting from the west wall is a "glassed in porch" which is crowned by a wrought iron porch railing.

Henry M. Channing's daughter, Mrs. Francis Birch, recalls that the "big living room" had mahogany bookcases, mantles and a mirror from 409 Commonwealth Ave. - this townhouse was built in 1898 by Peabody and Stearns for the Minors, her mother's family.

## **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Henry M. Channing (1880-1965) first came to Sherborn's Little Pond area around the turn of the century. An enthusiastic gunner, he and his brother would take the train from Chestnut Hill to Dover's Farm Station and walk to their rented shack at Little Pond, to the northwest of South Street. Henry bought his first tract of Sherborn land in 1901 and purchased Charlescote Farm, the old Morse place, in 1903. He ran Charlescote Farm as a club for his duck hunting Harvard friends. (He sold it in 1922 to Richard Saltonstall). He built "Little Pond" in 1910. It was named after the nearby glacial kettle drum pond which is rich in fish and water fowl. His daughter, Mrs. Francis Birch, recalls that she contracted malaria from the Italian laborers who dug its foundations. Over several decades he acquired large tracts. That southeast Sherborn retains much of its wild natural beauty is due largely to the generosity of Henry M. Channing.

His first gift, a stretch of high cliffs along the Charles River, was the nucleus of the more than 500 acres which would comprise the Town Forest. In addition he donated the Little Pond Sanctuary's 283 acres to the Massachusetts Audubon Society. In 1939 he was Chairman of Sherborn's first Planning Board. He was also active in the Sherborn Historical Society. His children sold "Little Pond" in 1965.

"Little Pond" fits squarely within the trend of southeast Sherborn's development as a country estate district between 1910 and 1930. During the early 20th century wealthy Bostonians had to pay more taxes on their securities. They moved to suburbs like Dover and Sherborn living there in the summer and staying over night the first of January so as to be taxed in those smaller towns.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES**

- Telephone interview with Mrs. Francis Birch
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn, 1974