

21 Washington Street



Center School

Form No.	150
Town	Sherborn
Address	21 Washington Street
Historic Name	Center School
Uses: Original	Elementary school
Present	vacant
Ownership, 1981	Town of Sherborn
" Original	Town of Sherborn
Constructed	1910
Source	School Committee records
Style/Form	Georgian Revival although greatly modified
Architect	Gay and Proctor of Boston
Ext. Wall Fabric	Brick, stone, cement
Outbuildings	
Alterations	West wing was added to the original main facade
Moved	No
Acreage	1 acre
Setting:	Located to the south of the Town Common, surrounded by architecturally and historically significant public and private buildings.
Recorded by	Edward W. Gordon, June - July 1981

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The original part of Sherborn's Center School was completed in 1910. It is one of the Town's very few brick structures. Presently a nondescript institutional building, it once had a handsome Georgian Revival main (west) facade. Since the construction of a new wing in 1950, this facade has been obscured from view - the result has been a public building without a formal focus. The current west wall features long rectangular recessed brick panels and with the exception of openings at basement level is devoid of windows.

The present main entrance is located on the north wall. Both the old main block and "new" wing are crowned by hip roofs. The original main facade was divided into three sections - the projections central pavilion featured a handsome round arch entrance and modillion block pediment. (see illustration)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In 1908 the Sherborn School Committee "Voted: that the Town build a brick, stone or cement school building, to contain four class rooms and subsidiary rooms on the Academy grounds." Completed in 1910, the Center School was built on land leased from Sawin Academy. The annual rental fee paid to the Academy was \$500. The Committee accepted the plans of Gay and Proctor of Boston. During the 1890's and early 1900's this architectural firm designed several Boston-area schools including the Neo Renaissance Locke School in Arlington Heights (built 1899). The sum of \$20,000 was borrowed to cover construction costs. Upon completion the new elementary school contained four classrooms and housed eight grades - two per room. The Center School satisfied the Town's need for "one large central graded school." Prior to its completion the Town had been divided into 7 school districts and each district contained a school house. (The 1834 Plain School is still extant at 60 North Main St., although it has been extensively altered.) Sawin Academy, the huge Victorian Gothic building which once occupied the Sherborn Library's (built 1971) site, continued to serve as the Town's high school. A new wing was added to the Center School in 1950, enlarging the building from four rooms to eight. In addition, the old section was totally renovated. For the first time room was provided for a kindergarten class.

In 1957 a new elementary school was constructed on Pine Hill Road in east central Sherborn. The Pine Hill School housed grades K-1 and 4-8. Only grade 2 and 3 were housed in the Center School. Sherborn, like many communities in the northeastern United States has experienced a declining birth rate. This in part explains the permanent closing of the Center School in June, 1981. Pine Hill School absorbed its classes. The Center School, located in the heart of Historic Sherborn Center, is currently vacant and is in need of an imaginative, cost efficient "adaptive reuse".

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn, 1974
- School Committee Reports 1908-1910

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

After the closing of the Center School the building was used as the Town Office. At the April 1999 town meeting the town voted to fund a study of the renovation of the town office building. Two years later at the April 2001 town meeting the renovation plan proposed by the study committee was approved. Construction started in August 2001 and was essentially completed in September 2002. On Saturday, November 2, 2002, a ceremony was held to celebrate the completion of the project. The Town Office was renamed the Town Hall in recognition of the significant improvement in the facilities provided in the new building.