

113 Western Avenue



Thomas Morse House

Form Nos. 162 house, 365 barn, 366 shop, 931 silo 1, 932 silo 2, 936 stone wall.

Area

Town Sherborn
Address 113 Western Avenue
Assessor's Map 2/74
USGS Map Medfield

Historic Name Thomas Morse House

Uses: Original Residence
Present Residence

Ownership, 1981 Dr. David J. and Carole Hand
" Original Thomas Morse

Constructed House ca. 1740, barn and shop ca. 1870, silo 1 1956, silo 2 1957, wall ca. 1970

Source Morse Genealogy

Style/Form Mid 18th century frame vernacular

Architect

Ext. Wall Fabric Shingle

Outbuildings Barns, garage

Alterations Recent porch addition

Moved No

Acreage 19.52 acres 1981, 19.5 acres 1999

Setting: Stands close to Western Avenue behind Fieldstone wall. 1960s and 70s houses to rear.

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

Film Roll/Negative Roll 7

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

1981 Survey

This mid 18th century farmhouse is located on the eastern side of Western Ave near Brush Hill Road. To the east of this property are 1960's and 70's homes which line Harrington Ridge Road. Over time this house has been greatly enlarged and modified. (e.g. the bay window which projects from the north facade.) It is composed of a 2 story main block and ell. Its 5 bay main facade faces south. It is obscured by an enclosed porch. This dwelling rests on a granite foundation and rises to a gable roof. Its property encompasses several barns and outbuildings.

1999 Update

The house at 113 Western Avenue (**#162**) was documented during the 1981 survey project and remains unchanged. It has undergone no major changes to its form, materials or location.

Several outbuildings occupy the former Thomas Morse property. The largest is a 1 ½ story, front-gabled barn with low sloped roof (**#365**), oriented perpendicular to the street, northeast of the house. The plan of the barn is extended to the east by a long one-story rear addition. Three vehicle openings pierce the facade, one of which is oversized to accommodate large farm machinery. Two smaller double-hung windows light the north side elevation, as well as one in the front gable peak. Walls are clad in wood clapboards and the roof appears to be sheathed in asphalt shingles. A metal ventilator occupies the center of the roof ridge of the main block with two additional examples on the rear addition. The facades of the barn and the house create a northwest-facing dooryard. South of the barn are two metal silos with hemispherical roofs, built 1956 and 1957 (**#s 931, 932**).

Directly behind (east) of the house is a building possibly used for a shop (**#366**). The narrow, gable-front building has a single window in the gable peak and a brick chimney at the south side eave. The exterior is sheathed in wood clapboards. South of the house and other buildings exists a low, gable roofed building that resembles a pool house and is not historic. A six-foot-high wall (**#936**) built in the late 1960s or 1970s of uncoursed rubble encloses all the buildings and fields along Western Avenue. All buildings and the wall are well-maintained and comprise an apparently functional agricultural complex.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

1981 Survey

This house's land was part of Henry Leland's large estate. His father Hopestill, settled in Sherborn as early as 1654. Henry acquired approximately 500 acres of land. In his will of 1680 he left 11 acres of land called "Oldfields" to his sister Experience and her husband Thomas Holbrook. "Oldfields" lay west of Brush Hill and east of Western Avenue. Bardwell notes that at the time of first settlement this area "was probably a cleared field when it came into his possession and a former garden spot of the Indians."

By ca. 1740 Thomas Morse owned the Leland-Holbrook land and built a portion of the present house. Morses built the Morse-Tay House further to the south on Western Avenue about 1700. In the 18th century Western Avenue was called "The Road to the Sudbury River." In any event Thomas Morse was the first permanent English settler of New Dublin, New Hampshire. Of the early settlers of the town, by

far the largest number came from Sherborn. The immigration to New Dublin began about 1762.

It is known that between 1760 and 1762 Sherborn men cut pathways through the woods in the District of North Monadnock No. 3, as it was then called. That Thomas Morse and other Sherborn citizens settled in New Dublin probably is due to the fact that Joseph Twitchell of Pleasant St., Sherborn, was the agent of the proprietors for the sale of the land. He, himself, owned a large amount of New Dublin land but never lived there.

Capt. Thomas Morse was one of the oldest New Dublin settlers. The Royalist governor Wentworth offered him a commission in the British army (on the eve of The Revolution) but he refused it. Morse's Sherborn property was inherited by his 11th child, Ezra (born 1752). This house appears unlabeled on the 1788 map. By 1875 an H. Alger owned this house. He was a railroad engineer. In recent years Jeanette McGregor raised cattle on this property. She named it "Oldfields".

1999 Update

Jesse F. Kingsbury appears to be the occupant of this house on the Walling map of 1856. 1855 census information states he worked as a farmer, had a wife named Mary and two young children. By 1875, the owner was Henry H. Alger, a railroad engineer and farmer with 4 horses, 3 cows, 6 swine and 2 carriages stored in his barn, probably the current building (#365). A shed and a storehouse provided space for apples he grew in his orchard and hay he grew on his 90 acres. The existing shop (#366) may have served in this capacity. Mr. Alger continued this operation until at least 1890 at which time the farm changed hands to an undetermined owner. The owner by 1939, according to W.P.A. maps printed in that year, maintained an orchard and hay fields as well as many acres of pasture. By 1945, the farm buildings included a cottage, garage, kennels and a tool shed owned by Jeannette McGregor, who raised cattle on the farm. It was around this time that a milk house was added to the large barn, a new smaller barn (1950), silos (#s 931, 932) in 1956 and 1957, and wagon sheds were constructed. The property was sold to the developer Guile Wood in ca. 1960. He built a pool and cabana in the mid 1960s.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and REFERENCES

1981 Survey

- Maps of 1788, 1857, 1875 and 1989
- Sherborn Past and Present 1674-1924, by Sherborn Historical Society members
- Margaret Dowse Buntins File

1999 Update

- 1981 MHC B form from survey by Edward Gordon
- 1856 Walling Map; 1874 Beers Map; 1889 Walker Map
- Anne C. Shaughnessy - The History of Sherborn and A Guide to Sherborn, 1974
- Conversation with Betsy Johnson, 1/99
- Tax valuations, 1865-1945
- 1855, 1865 state censuses