

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

209-02914-017

Southbridge

STU.A

STU.18
STU.334

NRDIS 11/9/1977

Town/City: Sturbridge

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Sturbridge Center

Photograph



Address: 17 Charlton Street

Historic Name: Roswell Warner House and barn

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling

Original: Single Family Dwelling

Date of Construction: 1815–1820

Source: Levine 1971; US Census 1820

Style/Form: Federal

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Granite

Wall/Trim: Wood Clapboard/Wood Trim

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: swimming pool

Major Alterations (*with dates*): window sash replaced, late 20th c.; enclosed porch built, 1997; pool added, 2003; greenhouse added, 2004; barn siding replaced, 2015

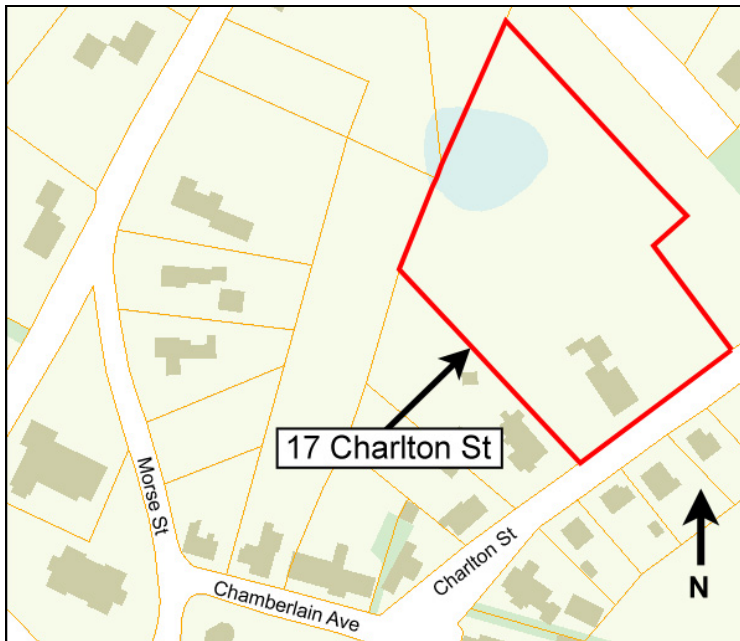
Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 2.52 acres

Setting: The building occupies a large, roughly rectangular lot on the west side of Charlton Street. It is set slightly back from the street at the northern edge of a residential neighborhood adjacent to the Sturbridge Town Common. A small pond is along the property's northwest boundary, and a pool is north of the house.

Locus Map



Recorded by: L. Kline, G. Pineo, E. Giacomarra; PAL

Organization: Sturbridge Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): May 2018

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STURBRIDGE

17 CHARLTON STREET

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Roswell Warner House (1815–1820, STU.18) is an east-facing, Federal-style, two-story, five-bay-by-one-bay, wood-frame building with an ashlar granite foundation and a side-gable roof with a brick chimney on the west slope. The house has a typical New England farmhouse configuration of “big house, little house, back house, barn,” with a one-and-one-half-story, two-bay-by-two-bay ell projecting from the west elevation and a one-story, two-bay-by-two-bay ell projecting from the ell’s west elevation, connecting the house to a one-and-one-half-story Barn (1815–1820, STU.334). A one-story, shed-roof enclosed porch spans three of the four bays on the north elevations of the ells. The ells and barn have end-gable roofs. A gable wall dormer pierces the south slope of the eastern ell’s roof, and a brick chimney pierces the center of the ridgeline. The walls of the house and both ells are clad with wood shingles, and the roofs are covered with asphalt shingles. The barn is clad with wide clapboard siding. A one-story glass greenhouse projects from the west bay of the barn’s south elevation. The main entrance to the house is in the center of the east elevation and consists of a six-panel modern door topped with a fanlight. Beveled pilasters flanking the door support a wide lintel with a projecting molded cornice. Secondary entrances in the south elevation are east of the east ell’s center bay and in the west ell’s east bay. The east entrance contains a four-panel wood door with a wide wood surround, and the west entrance contains a multi-light wood door. A pair of six-light doors fills a wide entrance in the north bay of the barn’s east elevation. Fenestration consists of three-over-three and six-over-six, double-hung vinyl replacement sash. An oriel window with a hip roof and wood brackets projects from the west bay of the east ell. Windows in the main block are symmetrically spaced, while those in the ells and barn are irregularly spaced.

North of the house is a pool constructed in 2003. The enclosed porch was constructed in 1997, and the greenhouse was constructed in 2004. The siding on the barn was replaced in 2015; it is possible that the windows were also replaced at that time.

The front hall of the house has painted plaster walls in the style of Rufus Porter portraying water, ships, houses, and a windmill. The paintings may be similar in style to those in the Oliver Wight House, 371 Main Street (STU.74) (Wilkin 1970).

The Roswell Warner house is a well-preserved example of a Federal-style house in Sturbridge.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Roswell Warner House and Barn (1815–1820, STU.18, STU.334) is in the center of Sturbridge, north of the Sturbridge Town Common. The area was settled ca. 1725 by residents of Medfield, and Sturbridge was incorporated as a town in 1738 (MHC 1984:3–4). Charlton Street runs northeast from the Common to the town of Charlton and was built in 1810 as part of the Worcester-Stafford Turnpike. The routing of the turnpike through the center of Sturbridge, near the meetinghouse (no longer extant), was an important stimulus for the nineteenth-century growth of the town as it was part of a major overland stage route from Boston to New York.

The house was likely constructed for Roswell Warner (1775–1863) between 1815 and 1820. Old Sturbridge Village scholar Herbert Levine indicates there was no building on the lot in 1815 but the house existed by 1825, and the US Census records Warner as living in Sturbridge in 1820 (Levine 1971; US Census 1820). Warner was a farmer born in nearby Brookfield and married Mary Scott Gibson in Hopkinton in 1799. He likely hired the itinerant painter and muralist Rufus Porter (1792–1884) shortly after the construction of his new house to paint the murals in the front hall (Rufus Porter Museum 2018). In 1850, Warner lived at the property with his son Otis and Otis’s family (Find a Grave 2014; US Census 1820, 1850). According to Levine, by 1845 a small parcel at the northwest corner of the property with a building on it had been set off from the main parcel and was

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owned by Roswell Warner, with Otis retaining ownership of the larger parcel.¹ Otis Warner (1801–1878) was a blacksmith and farmer married to Clementina Watkins Warner (1809–1884), and the couple had six children by 1870. Mid-nineteenth-century deeds for the properties at 16 through 20 Charlton Street mention a blacksmith shop owned by Otis Warner on the east side of Charlton Street (see Otis Warner Shop, 16 Charlton Street [ca. 1835, STU.21]) (WCRD 1258/439; Walling 1857; US Census 1850, 1870; Ancestry.com 2013).

After Otis Warner's death in 1877, his widow moved to Leicester, Massachusetts, and lived with her son George and his family (US Census 1880). In 1886, George's widow, Augusta, sold the Sturbridge property in two parcels to Dr. William G. Reed (b. 1849) (WCRD 1231/204, 1231/205). It is unknown if Reed ever occupied the property; by 1900, he lived on Hamilton Road in Southbridge with his family (Richards 1898; US Census 1900).

In 1899, Henry B. Hamilton (1858–1942) purchased the subject property from Reed. Hamilton worked as a forger at the Snell Manufacturing Company and was married to Evelyn E. Benson (1860–1942) (WCRD 1613/356). The Hamiltons had two children, Clarence H. and Francis A.; Clarence acquired the property from his father in 1941 (WCRD 2819/429). Clarence Hamilton (b. 1887) also worked at the Snell Manufacturing Company and was married to Minnie Hamilton. They lived on Main Street before moving to 17 Charlton Street. The Hamiltons sold the property in 1952 to Arthur and Edith Suominen (WCRD 3448/101; Sturbridge Assessor 2018; US Census 1910; Manning 1936, 1949). Arthur grew up in Brooklyn, New York, with his Finnish immigrant parents and served in the Army Air Force during World War II (US Census 1910; NCA 2006). The Suominens owned the property until 2001, when they sold it to William H. Widmeier, who owned the property for 10 years before selling it to Sarah Greene in 2011 (WCRD 25018/169, 47425/279). The present owners, Joel Stern and Emily Laviolette, purchased the property from Greene in 2016 (Sturbridge Assessor 2018).

The Roswell Warner House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 9, 1977, as part of the Sturbridge Common Historic District.

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¹ The building on the smaller parcel is no longer extant, but the current parcel boundary for 17 Charlton Street retains the 1845 configuration.

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HISTORIC IMAGES



Rufus Porter mural in front hall of 17 Charlton Street (realtor.com 2018).