

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

415-02446-408

Southbridge

STU.C

STU.84
STU.85

Town/City: Sturbridge

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Snellville

Photograph



Address: 408 Main Street

Historic Name: J. Dwight Underwood House

Uses: Present: Multiple Family Dwelling; Business Office

Original: Single Family Dwelling; Multiple Family Dwelling

Date of Construction: ca. 1884

Source: WCRD 1115/274; Bailey 1892; marriage date

Style/Form: Queen Anne

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Wood Clapboard and Vinyl Siding/ Wood Trim

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: Motel (1972) north of house at rear of property

Major Alterations (*with dates*): vinyl windows and siding, late 20th century

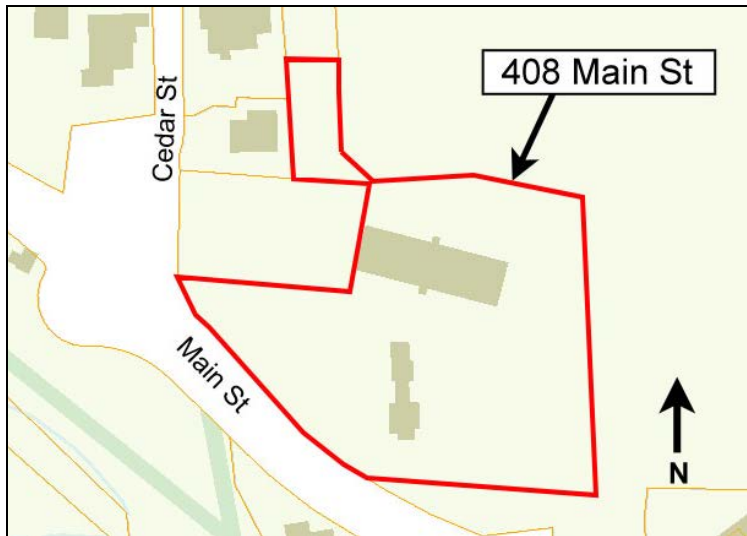
Condition: Fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 2.64 acres

Setting: The building occupies an irregular-shaped lot on the north side of Main Street. It is set back from the street atop a bluff overlooking Main Street and the Quinebaug River in a mixed-use area in Snellville. A long paved driveway leads southeast from Cedar Street to the north side of the property, where a large paved parking lot surrounds a two-story motel. A second driveway leads north from Main Street east of the house to the parking lot. A mortared stone retaining wall runs between the south edge of the parcel and the sidewalk.

Locus Map



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

Organization: Sturbridge Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): May 2018

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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STURBRIDGE

408 MAIN 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 J. Dwight Underwood House (ca. 1884, STU.84) is a south-facing, Queen Anne-style farmhouse with a typical New England “big house, little house, back house” configuration. The big house is two-and-one-half stories and three bays wide by three bays deep. The little house is a two-story ell extending from the north elevation, and the back house is a two-and-one-half-story ell connected to the north elevation of the little house. The building has a cross-gable roof covered in asphalt shingles and pierced by a brick chimney in the big house and the little house. The walls are clad with wood clapboards and vinyl siding, and the foundation is brick. A two-story bay window with a gable roof and carved brackets is in the east bay of the south (facade) elevation. A wrap-around porch supported by carved posts and brackets encloses the southeast corner of the building, sheltering an entrance in the east elevation filled with a nine-paneled modern door. A large porte-cochère supported by square columns on tall pedestals extends from the north elevation of the back house. The porte-cochère shelters an entrance surrounded by fluted pilasters and a broken pediment and filled with a half-light paneled door. Irregularly spaced window openings are filled with one-over-one, double-hung vinyl replacement sash and fixed vinyl sash in the north elevation of the back house.

A two-story motel, the Sturbridge Motor Coach Motel (408 Main Street, STU.85) built in 1972, now an Econo Lodge, is north of the house, across the parking lot.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The J. Dwight Underwood House (ca. 1884, STU.84) is at the east edge of the village of Snellville in the town of Sturbridge. Sturbridge was settled ca. 1725 by residents of Medfield and was incorporated as a town in 1738 (MHC 1984:3–4).

The property occupied by the Underwood House was originally owned by Alpheus Wight, one of the early settlers of the Snellville area (see Wight-Snell Manufacturing Area for more information on Wight). In 1834, Wight sold the property to Abijah Prouty (1786–1851), who farmed it until his death (WCRD 299/454). The property first appears on the 1870 Beers map with A. W. Prouty listed as the owner (Beers 1870). After the Prouty occupation, Emmons Twichell (1807–1891) transferred the property to farmer Joseph Dwight Underwood (1845–1914) in 1882 (WCRD 1115/274). Underwood was born in Holland, Massachusetts, and married Mary A. Montgomery (1849–1923) in Sturbridge in 1881. By 1900, the couple had an adopted daughter, J. Louise (US Census 1900). Underwood apparently replaced an eighteenth-century barn on the property with the current house, likely ca. 1884 shortly after his marriage.¹ The house appears to have been remodeled in the late 1890s in the Queen Anne style, with the addition of the cross gable and wrap-around porch.

In 1913, Underwood sold the property to Eugene and Abbie Rudiger, who lived there with Abbie’s daughter Leona (WCRD 2035/81). By 1920, Eugene (1852–1933) was a widower and had likely divided the house into apartments, as the 1920 US Census recorded six households, including Eugene and his stepdaughter and five renters. Most of the residents worked in the nearby Snell auger shop or in a glass shop, likely the American Optical shop in Southbridge (US Census 1920). In 1930, Eugene and Leona lived alone, with no other households recorded at the property (US Census 1930). After Eugene died, Leona acquired the property and in 1940 lived there with two lodgers, both public school teachers (US Census 1940).

In 1957, Leona’s heirs sold a portion of the former Underwood property to Beatrice Crawford (WCRD 3916/335). Crawford and her husband Ian (1901–1967), an engineer at the American Optical Company in Southbridge, operated the Patriot Motel and Lodge at the property. The Crawfords may have lodged visitors in the Underwood House or an auxiliary building (Polk 1965).

¹ Previous documentation indicated that the barn, which burned shortly before the current house was constructed, had been built by David Wight, who had extensive land holdings to the south (Beers 1870; Long 1973).

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Beatrice sold the property in 1968, and in 1971 it was purchased by Thure and Irja Oja, who appear to have built the Sturbridge Motor Coach Motel (1972, STU.85) on the property.

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- Worcester County Registry of Deeds (WCRD). Book/Page (Year). 299/454 (1834), 1115/274 (1882), 2035/81 (1913), 3916/335 (1957).

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 2. 408 Main Street (STU.84), looking southeast.

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Photo 3. Motel, 408 Main Street (STU.85), looking northeast.

HISTORIC IMAGE

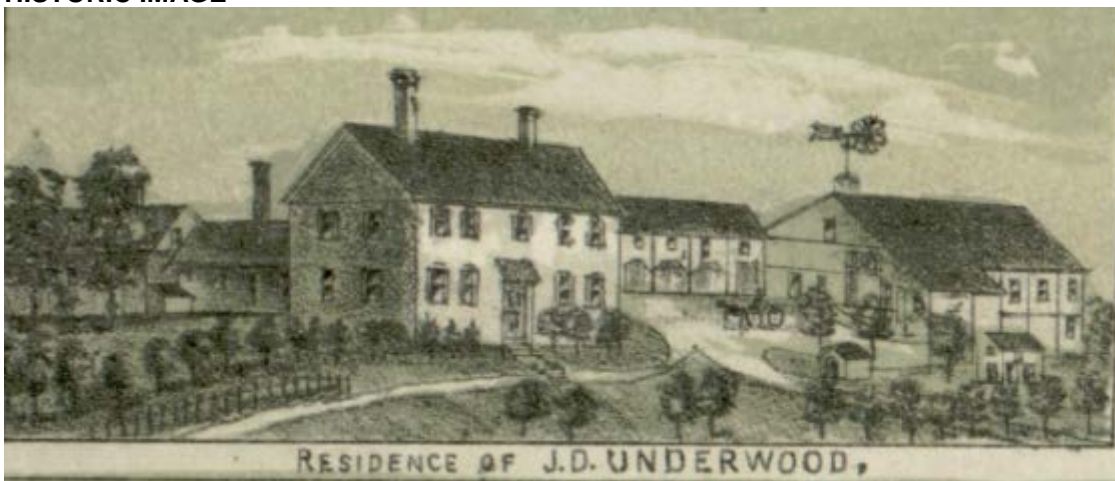


Figure 1. 1892 drawing of the Underwood house and barn (Bailey 1892).