

FORM A - AREA

Assessor's Sheets USGS Quad Area Letter Form Numbers in Area

NRDIS 11/9/1977

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

Photograph



Photo 1. Publick House, looking southeast

Town/City: Sturbridge

Place (neighborhood or village): Sturbridge Center

Name of Area: Publick House Area

Present Use: Hotel or Inn, Single Family Dwelling

Construction Dates or Period: 1771–1940

Overall Condition: Good

Major Intrusions and Alterations: alterations to Publick House, 1938; construction of Wedding Complex, 2010; relocation of Barn and Chamberlain Barn, 2017

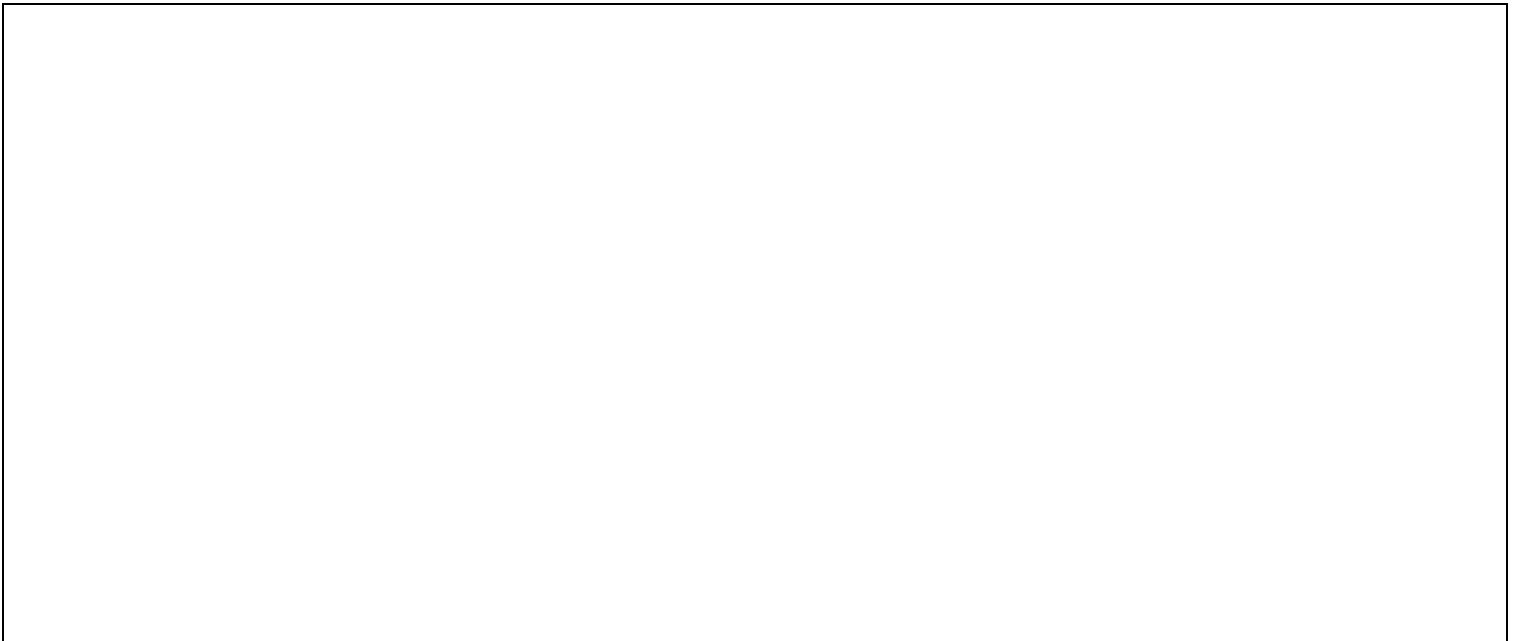
Acreage: 50.68 acres

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

Organization: Sturbridge Historical Commission

Date (month/year): May 2018

Locus Map



see continuation sheet

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 Publick House Area encompasses 10 buildings on 50.68 acres on the south side of Main Street and east of Haynes Road. The property contains a large hotel (the Publick House) with a secondary hotel building (currently under construction Spring 2018), a wedding complex comprising a stone patio and two wood-frame buildings, a historic ash house, a maintenance building, and several small sheds. At the south end of the property are two single-family houses, a non-historic barn, and the A.B. Chamberlain Grain and Feed Barn which was moved to its present location in 2017. Hobbs Brook runs south along the east side of the property. A paved road, Publick House Road, runs south from the west side of the Publick House, turning west to intersect with Haynes Road. A concrete wall, constructed ca. 1938, runs north-south along the west side of Publick House Road. Large, asphalt-paved parking lots are south of the main hotel building, and a narrow strip of the Sturbridge Common is north of the main building on the south side of Main Street.

The resources are described from north to south.

The Publick House, 277 Main Street (1772, altered by 1870, 1904-1911, 1938, STU.36, Photo 1) is a north-facing, Federal- and Colonial Revival-style, one- to two-story, wood-frame building with a stone and poured concrete foundation and a compound roof. The walls are clad with wood clapboards, and the roof is covered with slate shingles. The building is composed of the original two-story 1772 block and ell, a carriage house and two twentieth century additions, interconnected with hyphens. The original 1772 block is seven bays wide by two bays deep and has a side-gable roof and a two-story, four-bay-by-four-bay ell with an end-gable roof on the west side of the south elevation. Large, square, brick chimneys pierce the center of the ridgelines on the main block and the ell. A one-story, five-bay-by-one-bay, shed-roof addition (1904-1911) projects from the east elevation of the ell. The ell connects to a one-story hyphen (1938) with a side-gable roof pierced by two gable dormers in the north elevation. The hyphen connects the original inn to a two-story, three-bay-by-four-bay former carriage house (by 1870) with an end-gable roof. A two-story hyphen with a side-gable roof (1938) extends west from the center of the carriage house and connects to the rear of a two-story, end-gable addition (1938) that projects to the north. The addition is three bays wide by two bays deep and has a two-story, three-bay-by-three-bay addition at the southwest corner that is connected to the rest of the complex by a one-story, flat-roof hyphen south of the former carriage house. A second two-story addition projects from the south elevation of the carriage house and is six-bays wide with two one-bay-by-one-bay projecting bays with end-gable roofs at the east and west ends of the south elevation. Wide, shed-roof, one-story, enclosed porches are attached to the west elevation of the ell and the north elevation of the eastern hyphen. The main block has two entrances: one centered in the north elevation and enclosed by a one-bay-by-one-bay, end-gable entry porch and one projecting from the south bay of the west elevation and enclosed by a one-bay-by-one-bay, side-gable entry porch. The north entrance consists of a four-panel, two-light door flanked by engaged pilasters supporting a wide entablature, and the west entrance is a twelve-light wood door accessed by a set of four wood steps. Secondary entrances are in the north elevation of the enclosed porch, the center of the north elevation of the carriage house, the west bay of the north and southwest additions, and the south elevation of the rear addition to the carriage house under a wide, engaged porch supported by square piers. Fenestration in the entire building consists of evenly spaced, nine-over-nine and twelve-over-twelve, double-hung wood sash.

Immediately east of the Publick House is a small, one-story, one-bay-by-one-bay, brick Ash House (1904-1911, STU.920, Photo 2) with an end-gable roof. The gable peak is filled with vertical boards, and the roof is clad with slate shingles. A narrow door centered in the north elevation is affixed with metal strap hinges and has a granite lintel. A carved wood signboard engraved with the words "Smoke House" is centered in the gable end above the lintel. The smoke house designation is a modern interpretation of the building's function; historic maps labeled the building "Ash House," which was a fireproof repository for hot fireplace embers.

Southeast of the Publick House is the Wedding Complex (Photos 3 and 4), which consists of a wide, Stone Patio (ca. 2010, STU.919) with a one-story, one-bay-by-one-bay, wood-frame Server Station (ca. 2010, STU.321) at the northwest corner and a one-story, three-bay-by-three-bay, wood-frame Prep Kitchen (ca. 2010, STU.320) at the south edge. A small, square, stone, outdoor fireplace is at the center of the north edge. Both buildings have slate-shingled, side-gable roofs. The northwest building is clad with vertical board siding and has two openings with stone serving counters: one centered in the east elevation, and one centered in the south elevation. The south building is also clad with vertical board siding. The roof is pierced by a louvered cupola. Pairs of horizontally sliding barn doors are centered in the east and west elevations and in the west bay of the north and south elevations. A gable-roof entry porch projects from the northwest corner. The south building contains bathrooms and a prep kitchen used during weddings. Two small, wood-frame sheds are south of the prep kitchen.

A Maintenance Building (1971–1997, STU.322, Photo 5) south of the Wedding Complex is an astylistic, one-story, L-shaped, three-bay-by-three-bay, wood-frame building with a cross-gable roof. The walls are clad with wood clapboards, and the roof is covered with asphalt and slate shingles. A one-story, full-width, shed-roof addition projects from the south elevation. An entrance is in the south bay of the west elevation. Fenestration consists of irregularly spaced, six-light and one-light casement windows and two-over-two and nine-over-one double-hung wood sash, likely salvaged from other buildings.

At the south end of the property, on the west side of Publick House Road, are two Single-Family Residences (ca. 1965, Photos 6 and 7) that are used as rental properties. The north building (STU.323, Photo 6) is an east-facing, astylistic, one-story, three-bay-by-three-bay, wood-frame house with a raised poured concrete and stone foundation and an end-gable roof. A one-story, shed-roof addition projects from the center and west bays of the north elevation, and a wide porch projects from the east bay of the north elevation. A low, brick chimney pierces the roof at the west end of the ridgeline. The walls are clad with vinyl siding, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The entrance is in the center of the exposed, raised basement and consists of a multi-panel modern door protected by a fully glazed storm door and flanked by five-light sidelights. A vertical-lift garage door is immediately north of the entrance. Fenestration consists of irregularly spaced groups of vinyl casement windows and one-over-one, double-hung vinyl sash.

The south building (STU.324, Photo 7) is a south-facing, astylistic, one-story, three-bay-by-three-bay, wood-frame building with a raised poured concrete and stone foundation and a side-gable roof. The walls are clad with vinyl siding, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. A stone chimney pierces the ridgeline of the roof at the west end. Entrances centered in the east elevation and in the west bay of the south elevation are sheltered by gable overhangs supported by metal posts and accessed by short runs of stairs. The south (main) entrance contains a four-panel modern door with an integral fanlight, protected by a fully glazed storm door. A vertical-lift garage door is in the east bay of the basement south elevation. Fenestration consists of evenly spaced, one-over-one, double-hung vinyl sash.

Two barns are on the east side of Publick House Road, across from the two residences. The A.B. Chamberlain Grain and Feed Barn (1904–1911, moved 2017, STU.37, Photo 8) was moved to this location in 2017 from its original site west of the Publick House. The Chamberlain Barn is a two-story, west-facing, four-bay-by-two-bay, wood-frame building with a poured concrete foundation and a side-gable roof. The walls are clad with wood clapboards, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Three sets of double-leaf garage doors, affixed with strap hinges, are in the south three bays of the west elevation. A hayloft door is above the north set of garage doors. Fenestration consists of irregularly spaced, six-over-six, double-hung wood sash.

A second Barn (1971–1997, moved 2017, STU.325, Photo 8) west of the Chamberlain barn is partially surrounded by a wood post-and-rail fence. The barn is a west-facing, astylistic, one-bay-by-three-bay, wood-frame building with a poured concrete foundation and a gambrel roof. A square, louvered cupola pierces the center of the roof. The main entrance is in the center of the west elevation and contains a set of double-leaf garage doors affixed with strap hinges. A secondary entrance in the west bay of the south elevation contains a six-panel, modern door.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Publick House Area is in the center of Sturbridge and faces east toward the Sturbridge Town Common. Sturbridge was settled ca. 1725 by residents of Medfield, and Sturbridge was incorporated as a town in 1738 (MHC 1984:3–4). Stagecoach travel in New England began in the early eighteenth century and quickly spurred the construction of taverns to accommodate travelers along the highways (Forbes and Eastman 1954:1). In the late eighteenth century, the center of Sturbridge began to develop, and by 1810, the Worcester-Stafford Turnpike (now Main Street) through the village center had been built (MHC 1984:4).

In 1772, Dr. Erasmus Babbitt sold a parcel of land on the south side of the Town Common to Colonel Ebenezer Crafts (1740–1810). Crafts, originally from Pomfret, Connecticut, graduated from Yale in 1759 and married his wife Mehitable in 1762. In 1768, the family settled in Woodstock, Connecticut, near Sturbridge. It is believed that, after acquiring the property in Sturbridge from Babbitt, Crafts built a large house (the Publick House) on it facing the Common and ran a tavern out of it. In 1775, Crafts rallied a cavalry composed of men from Sturbridge and three nearby towns: Charlton, Dudley, and Oxford. Crafts was commissioned the captain of the cavalry and ordered to join up with the Continental Army in Cambridge. Crafts served in the army until Boston was evacuated by the British, at which time he returned to Sturbridge (Find A Grave 2018; Crafts and Crafts 1893:132).

About 1810, Simeon Burt (1788–1855), a stagecoach operator from Monson, Massachusetts, came to Sturbridge with Cyrus Merrick (1782–1872). About that same time, the Worcester-Stafford Turnpike was built through the center of Sturbridge, facilitating the flow of people and manufactured goods through the town (Wood 1919: 26, 158–159). The two men purchased the Crafts tavern, which they operated until about 1820, when they sold it to David K. Porter (1784–1868), who was also in the stagecoach business (Nutt 1919:1099; Crane 1903:88). Porter retained the property until 1827, when he sold it to Cromwell Bullard (1803–1849). Bullard and his wife, Mary, purchased the property shortly after their marriage. The Bullards ran the tavern until 1843, when they sold it to John N. Chamberlain. That same year, Chamberlain sold the property to Perez Walker, who in turn sold it to a stock company formed by Elisha Southwick (1809–1875), Benjamin D. Hyde (b. 1803) and 16 other people for \$1,200 (OSV n.d.). Southwick, a boot manufacturer, retained ownership of the property through 1865, when he sold it to Amasa Morse (US Census 1860; OSV n.d.). In the 1870s, the property was known as the Central House and was run by Frances Southwick (Beers 1870, Figure 1). By that time, there was a livery stable (likely the current carriage house) at the southwest corner of the main building. The property changed hands multiple times through the remainder of the nineteenth century, with most owners retaining it for five years or less, until Lizzie A. Copeland purchased it in 1888 (WCRD 1276/192). In 1898, the inn was called The Elms Hotel and appears to have been run by H. L. Bigelow (Richards 1898, Figures 2 and 3). During Copeland's tenure as owner, a small Ash House and an addition off the ell's east elevation was constructed (Figure 4). A wide, covered porch spanned the width of the north elevation, likely providing a shady place for visitors to sit and look out over the Common (Figure 5). In 1899, the property was sold to John S. Hubbard. The Hubbards ran the property as a general inn until 1923, when it became a boarding house for women. During the Hubbard's ownership, additional acreage was acquired from Aretas Hooker and Alpheus Wight (WCRD 1616/626, 1956/284). Hubbard and his wife owned the property until 1934, when the Southbridge National Bank acquired it through foreclosure proceedings. The bank holding was later taken over by the Sturbridge Corporation and then the Southbridge Investment Company (OSV n.d.).

In 1938, Richard Paige (1907–1998) acquired The Elms Hotel from the Southbridge Investment Company. He renamed the property the Publick House and expanded the facility with multiple additions connected to the main building via short hyphens (Figures 6 and 7). Due to the inn's increasing popularity, Paige offered to buy the adjacent Wheelock-Champion-Bachelor House, 283 Main Street (ca. 1820–1857, STU.38), from Clifford Chamberlain to create more space for parking. However, Chamberlain refused to sell his income-producing property, which included six rental garage spaces in the A. B. Chamberlain Grain and Feed Barn (1904–1911). Paige responded by constructing a concrete boundary wall between the two properties, which left a narrow driveway leading to the rear of the Publick House and cut off access to the Chamberlain barn. Paige purchased 38 acres of public land south of the Publick House from the town to use for parking. Chamberlain, who was the Town Clerk, and others were upset by the sale, as many residents had hoped that the land would be turned into a town park (Lieberman 1980a).

INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

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In 1944, L. G. Treadway acquired the Publick House property, which remained in his family until 1948, when it was sold to the Publick House Corporation (WCRD 2910/176, 3177/55). Between 1942 and 1945, a road was laid out from Haynes Road to the rear of the Publick House. The road ran east/northeast from Haynes Road before turning north after passing a swampy area created by Hobbs Brook. In the mid-1960s, two Single-Family Residences were built at the south end of the property, on the west side of the new road, at the curve by the swamp. Both residences are currently used as rental properties (Sturbridge Assessor 2018). Between 1971 and 1997, a small Barn was constructed on the east side of the road, across from the houses, and a Maintenance Building was constructed southeast of the Publick House (NETR 2018). In 2003, Resurrection Real Estate, the current owners, acquired the Publick House and the two adjacent properties (the Chamberlain House, 275 Main Street (1918, STU.35), and the Wheelock-Champion-Bachelor House). About 2010, the Wedding Complex—consisting of a Stone Patio, a Prep Kitchen, and a Server Station—was built south of the Publick House to provide a space for outdoor weddings. In 2017, the A. B. Chamberlain Grain and Feed Barn was moved from its former location at 283 Main Street to the south end of the Publick House property to make room for a new hotel building (under construction as of early 2018). The smaller Barn was also moved to its current location in 2017.

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**Public House Area
277 Main Street, Assessor No. 415-02934-277
Sturbridge, Massachusetts
Data Sheet**

MHC No.	Historic Name/Feature	Est. Date of Const.	Architectural Style/Type	Photograph No.
STU.36	Publick House	1772, altered by 1870, 1904–1911, 1938	Federal, Colonial Revival	1
STU.920	Ash House	1904–1911	No Style	2
STU.321	Server Station	ca. 2010	No Style	3
STU.919	Stone Patio	ca. 2010	N/A	3
STU.320	Prep Kitchen	ca. 2010	No Style	4
STU.313	Maintenance Building	1971–1977	No Style	5
STU.323	North Single-Family Residence	ca. 1965	No Style	6
STU.324	South Single-Family Residence	ca. 1965	No Style	7
STU.314	Barn	1971–1997; moved 2017	No Style	8
STU.37	A.B. Chamberlain Grain and Feed Barn	1904–1911; moved 2017	No Style	8

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Aerial map of the Publick House Area, showing the location of buildings (www.google.com).

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 2. Ash House, looking southwest.

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Photo 3. Stone Patio and Server Station (left), looking northeast.



Photo 4. Prep Kitchen, looking southwest.

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Photo 5. Maintenance Building, looking northeast.



Photo 6. North Single-Family Residence, looking northwest.

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Photo 7. South Single-Family Residence, looking northwest.



Photo 8. A. B. Chamberlain Grain and Feed Barn (right) and Barn (left), looking northeast.

HISTORIC IMAGES



Figure 1. Map detail showing 1870 configuration of the Public House, then known as the Central House (Beers 1870).



Figure 2. 1892 sketch of the Public House when it was known as The Elms Hotel (O.H. Bailey & Co. 1892).

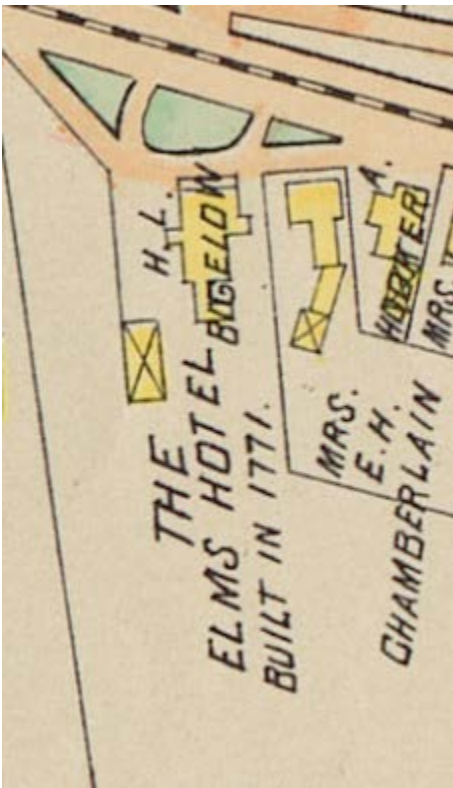


Figure 3. 1898 map detail showing late nineteenth-century configuration of The Elms Hotel (Richards 1898).

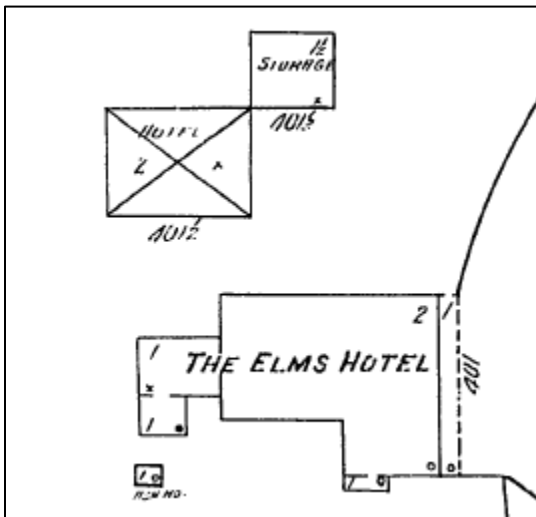


Figure 4. 1911 map detail showing early twentieth-century configuration of The Elms Hotel (Sanborn 1911).

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Figure 5. Postcard of The Elms Hotel, prior to 1938 (cardcow.com).

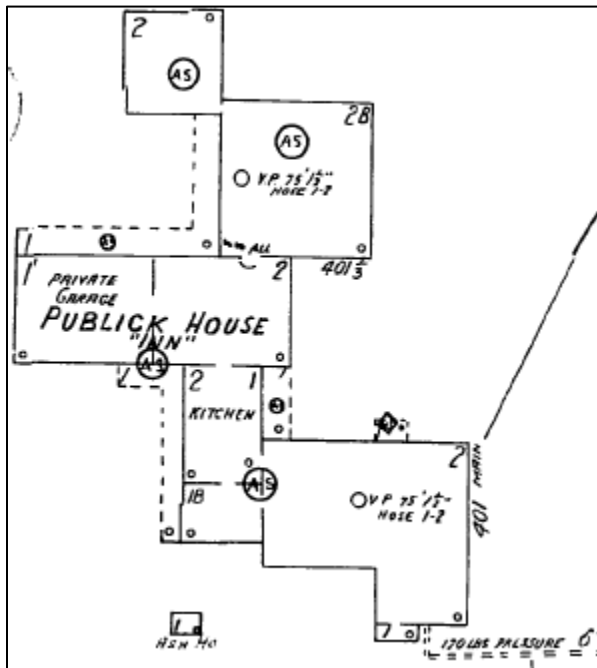


Figure 6. 1948 map detail showing ca. 1938 alterations to Publick House (Sanborn 1925–1948).

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Figure 7. 1950 postcard of the Public House (cardcow.com).