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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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Assessors #
2-40.1.1+

USGS quad
Ayer

area
outlying

form # 163

Town Harvard

Place outlying

Address
157 Shaker Road

Historic Name
North Shaker House

Use: Present residence
Original residence

Date of construction ca. 1830

Source NR nom.

Style Greek Revival

Form gable block 2.5

Architect N/A

Exterior Material:
Roof asphalt
Wall/trim clapboard
Foundation granite

Outbuildings barn
See rear of form for detailed description

Alterations porch
See rear of form for detailed description

Condition good

Moved no

Acreage 3.3 acres

Setting rural
See rear of form for detailed description

Recorded by: Dempsey & FitzPatrick

Organization: Harvard Historical Commission

Date: March 1994

MASS. HIST. COMM.
BUILDING FORM

North Shaker Office, 157 Shaker Road

DESCRIPTION

The North Shaker Office is the last remnant building of the North Shaker Family. It is located on the border of Harvard with the neighboring town of Ayer and much of the lot lies within that town. The house is located at an abrupt west turn in Shaker Road, on a suburban-style lot of lawn and shade trees. The four-bay, two-and-a-half story gable block has been recently restored and demonstrates the simple design and ornament that can be seen in multiple examples in the Church and South families of the Shaker Village area. Its walls are clapboarded, trimmed with narrow corner boards and a molded cornice, and its openings are arranged symmetrically on each elevation. The entry is located in bay three and treated with a narrow entablature and three-quarter sidelights; windows are replacement two-over-one sash. A historic photograph of the building show that its original entry was flanked by three quarter side lights. Formerly two extensions were attached to the building: adjacent to the house on the north was a single-story, gable-roofed, three-bay wing, set flush with the facade of the surviving building; set at a right angle from the rear of this wing was a larger two-and-one-half story building whose function is not known. On the north lateral elevation a new porch has been added, offset past the facade plane; its front portion is screened, its rear has been enclosed. Across Shaker Road is located the modern garage associated with the house, a gable-roofed two-car garage with a shed-roofed addition along its south elevation. Both the house and the fields adjacent to the garage are surrounded by a post and rail fence. A Harvard-Ayer border marker (# ) is located near the garage.

NARRATIVE

The North Shaker House is the last surviving element of one of the four Shaker clusters or families in Harvard. Ann Lee, founder of the group first came to Harvard in 1781. The Church Family, located along Shaker Road, was the largest and earliest cluster and the best preserved. The smaller East and North families appear to have been in place by 1831, the South Family shortly thereafter. The Shaker community grew, reaching its peak in 1850 with about 200 individuals in residence. In 1853 the Shakers constructed the large brick Rural Home, to the north from this house across Shaker Road. The three-and-a-half story building had a rear ell, sat on a high basement, was topped by a cupola, and screened by a broad front porch. Shakers leased the property and it served as a summer boarding house and a sanitarium; it was demolished in 1939. A saw mill and its associated mill pond were located to the east of the Home; the pond remains. After the numbers diminished at the turn of the century the remaining members disband their community and relocated at Mount Lebanon. The North Family House was then sold to the Wright family, in about 1920.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Directions of a Town, 1976.
Friedberg, Harvard Shaker Village Historic District NR nomination.

x Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. See NR Criteria Statement Form, attached.
National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

X Individually eligible.
X Contributing to a potential district.

Eligible only in a historic district.
Potential historic district.

Criteria:  X  A  ___  B  X  C  ___  D

Criteria Considerations:  ___  A  ___  B  ___  C  ___  D  ___  E  ___  F  ___  G

Statement of Significance by Claire W. Dempsey.

The North Shaker Office is the last surviving building of the Harvard Shaker's North Family. Built as Harvard's Shaker community expanded to four families during the second quarter of the 19th century, the North Family formerly included additional buildings including the Rural Home and a saw mill complex which are likely to have left significant archaeological remains. Other surviving components of the Harvard Shaker community include the South and Church families, listed on the National Register and protected as a local historic district; the East Family was destroyed early in the 20th century. The North Family Office meets criteria A and C at the local level. It retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.