

CITY OF WINCHESTER ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY

Address: 230 W. Boscawen

Map & Parcel: 172- (1)
Tract & Block: C-1

Present Owner: Robert C. Green
Address:

Present Use: offices

Assessed Value: \$104,950

Historic Name: The SeEVERS House

Original Owner: Mr. George W. SeEVERS

Original Use: residence

Date: 17__ 80 90 1800 10 20 30 40 **50** 60 70 80 90 1900 19__

Style: Vern. L.Geor. **Grk.Rev. Ital** Emp. Rom. Goth. Q.A. Col.Rev.
B.Arts None+ None- transitional

Stories: B 1 1½ 2 **2½** 3 3½ 4

Material: Stone Log Clapbrd. Wd.Fr. **Brk.** Plas. _____

Modifications: **Minor** Moderate Extensive

Physical Condition: **Standard** Deteriorated Dilapidated

Environmental Context: **Strong** Moderate Weak

Architectural Significance: **Outstanding** **Excellent** Good Average None
Architectural Description

This 2½ story brick building combines Greek Revival frieze windows with Italianate arched windows, brick quoins and hood moulds. The interior contains both Greek Revival and Italianate mantelpieces. The brick paving and brick and iron gate provide an excellent terminus for the block.

The brick wall and iron gateway were built about 1940 by Dr. E. C. Stuart. (source: Lewis N. Barton)

NR

Historical Significance: National State/Regional **Local** None

Historical Description

Mr. George W. SeEVERS, an officer in the Farmer's Bank of Virginia at Winchester, bought this property in 1854 from John Diefenderfer. He probably began construction soon afterwards. Wm. G. Russell refers to the house as having been built by SeEVERS "some years before the late war." The house was used by Union General Banks during the Civil War as his headquarters.

TH

References: Quarles, 100 Houses, pp. 31-34.



H-16

WEST BOSCAWEN STREET

- 14 & 16 Stewart Bell Jr. may have information on this building.
- 19 -- 21 Built about 1910 by Dr. W. D. Myers.
- 20 I remember when there was a barber shop in the west end of this building. What was in the east end I do not remember. There was a partition between the two ends making two separate buildings.
- 25 This was the home of Dr. Love. I doubt if it was built before the Civil War.
- 35 Mr. Russell, page 133, presumes this to be one of the two original cabins in Winchester. It was certainly built in the 1700s.
- 110 Mr. Russell, page 132, mentions this house as property of Mrs. Beemer. When I first remember it, it was a private residence, and the second story had been added. According to Mr. Russell it originally had only one story. Quarles in 100 Homes says Susan Beemer purchased the lot in 1823 and probably built the house.
The casement windows were added about 1850.
- 113 The present facade of this house was built well into the present century. I cannot speak for the entire house.
- 124 Probably dated too early.
- Christ Church. The original church, built in 1827-28 has no tower and only four windows. on the side. The chimney is located at the northeast corner of the original church. The tower and the fifth window were added prior to 1850. The two vestibules were added about 1900. Other additions were made at the north end of the church from time to time.
- 220 Dr. Fuller had no connection with the Farmers and Merchants National Bank. His son was the first Cashier, and later President of the bank.
- 230 The Brick wall and iron gateway were built about 1940 by Dr. E. C. Stuart, Fr.
- 301 Occupies the site of Winchester Medical College, which was burned by order of General Banks in 1862, because one of John Brown's sons had allegedly been used as an Anatomical specimen there.
- 324 The editor of Mrs. McDonald's Diary identified General Shields headquarters as 212 W. Boscawen Street. Mrs. McDonald had only mentioned that it was at Mrs. Powell's house. Mrs. Powell owned 324 in 1862, but did not purchase 212 until 1865. 324 with the open area then around it would be much more attractive for headquarters than 212, and Mrs. McDonald mentioned it first and then then 230 as headquarters, as she walked into town after the Northern occupation. I believe we will have to call 324 Shields! headquarters.

Lewis N. Barton



1785 - Mary Wood to John Hall & Norton
(entire block plus garden lots)

1844 - Spl. Com. to Alexander Tidball
(entire block)

1852 - Site of 19 N. Washington sold to [unclear]

1850 - Site of old Dominion St L to Coble

1851 - Site of 208 N. [unclear] to [unclear]

1850 - Reserved for Tidball (2nd disc)

1853 - Site of 220 W. [unclear] to Denney

1846 - Site of 230 W. Boswell to [unclear]

Parlor

On April 19, 1854, an empty lot on the corner of Stewart St. and Boscawen St. was sold to George W. Seevers, an officer of the Farmer's Bank of Virginia. He and his wife then built the house you are now standing in.

As originally built, this was a very large house. It had approximately 4500 SF of primary living space on its two principal floors plus a third attic floor. It also had a two-story porch, a partially-useable attic, and a partial cellar. The building was organized into a "squarish" front section facing Boscawen St. (in which you are standing) and a long, narrow wing that extended back along Stewart St. (viewable through those windows).

This was the parlor, or principal reception room. Except for the double doors on the north wall, the room is largely unchanged from its original appearance, although the furnishings are all of later origin. Especially notable here are the broad pine floors, the 11'-8"-high ceiling and the very tall windows. There was probably a grand chandelier in the center of the room. Also notable is the mantle mirror. Its age is not known, but it was surely built for this location, since it fills perfectly the space above the fireplace without requiring the removal of the ceiling mould.

The house was apparently planned to receive a neighboring townhouse on its east side, since there are no original windows on this wall.

Holly House was sold by the Seevers to the Conrad family in 1879, and resold to Dr. E.C. Stuart, Jr in 1940. The Stuarts were the last owners to live in the house, and contemporary accounts credit them with an excellent record of loving care and maintenance. It was they who added the fine brick wall that separates the house from the sidewalk, adding intimacy and character to this prestigious property.

Behind the parlor were other grand rooms—a second parlor immediately behind this one, and beyond that a huge dining room, 29' long and 18' wide that could serve 20 guests at a single table. The kitchen and servants' areas were beyond that. The second parlor and the dining room probably occupied the entire width of the house, so that one could exit directly from the dining room onto the porch and out to the garden.

Sadly, the porch, which was two-stories tall, was completely enclosed in an extraordinarily insensitive renovation that followed Dr. Stewart's retirement and sale of the house in about 1958. The new owners established a medical

practice here and subdivided most of the rooms into offices. Even the large dining room was cut up into smaller spaces at that time. Only the room we are standing in survived, because a large space was needed for a patient waiting room. You can see what the original 2-story porch looked like from this 1915 photograph.

Also look through the glass in these double doors (which were installed to separate the medical offices from the waiting room), to get a sense of the great depth of the original house.

An interesting historical event involves this house. On March 12, 1862 Holly House was occupied by a Union General, Nathaniel Prentice Banks, the commander of Federal forces in the lower Shenandoah Valley. This may have been by invitation. The Diarist Mrs. Hugh Holmes Lee wrote at the time: "Gen. Banks and staff arrived here Wednesday night (March 12) in the middle of the night: went to Mr. Seevers...Mr. Seevers admitted them and put them in his chamber..."

General Banks was a "political" general without military training, appointed by Lincoln because he was influential in raising money and troops in Massachusetts, where he had served as Governor. He had also served in Congress and was the Speaker of the House of Representatives before the War. Two months after his arrival in Winchester, Banks was ordered to engage "Stonewall" Jackson's forces to prevent them from joining the defense of Richmond, and he did so at the 1st battle of Winchester, on May 25, 1862, but Jackson won the battle and chased Banks' army north all the way to the Potomac River. Jackson's movements were then unimpeded, and General Banks presumably found other lodgings.

Since 2004, Holly House has been the business office of New Lifestyles, a clinically supervised program for young adult men and women.

I would ask you now to please exit this room and go up the stairs to view one of the original bedrooms. Take a good look at the quality and size of the staircase as you go.

Bedroom

You are now standing in one of the houses 6 original bedrooms (4 for family and 2 for servants), which lined the Stewart Street side of the house to its full length. A full porch ran the length of the garden side. Note here the broad pine floors, the 10'-4" ceiling, and the arched windows (the downstairs windows are flat-topped).

Here I would like to talk a bit about the overall exterior design of the house. We have some pictures showing the house now and in the past. As you have already heard, the house was built in about 1854. Its style is a mixture of several popular American patterns that are a part of what is called the "picturesque" movement of the mid- to late 1800's. The "picturesque" movement is related to the earlier "Romantic" movement in art and it corresponds to the political period of Queen Victoria's reign in England. In this period, from 1840—1900, architects and builders allowed themselves a new freedom of expression in architectural design. They abandoned rigidity and formal, imposing, "academic" rules in favor of flexibility and creativity. They borrowed exotic foreign architectural styles. They made floor plans that were informal and irregular, and they added playful elements to their designs according to their tastes and the tastes of their clients. Much of this inspiration was taken from the rural, pastoral and exotic images seen in popular paintings. The "Picturesque" movement emphasized emotional responses rather than the order of the intellectual mind. One of the "freedoms" introduced into the Holly house was the placing of the entrance on a recessed side face of the front elevation, in rejection of the past tendency of architects and builders to place the entrances of wealthy homes front and center in a symmetrical design. This irregular front façade is a design feature of the "Italian Villa" style of 1845-1870, but the Italian Villa style always featured a tower, which this house does not have. The Holly house also reminds us of the "Italianate" style, which featured a flat roof with a broad overhang, narrow windows located at the attic level and arched second-floor windows; but the full "Italianate" style was usually square with a central entrance and it had wide brackets supporting the roof overhang. Both of these elements are missing here. Another related style, the "Italian Renaissance" style emphasized the restrained decorative features seen over the ground-floor windows, but this style was usually carried out in limestone or stucco, as in Italy. The Holly House is built of brick, with brick quoins at the corners. Judging from the photo we have from 1915, the house was not originally painted white, as it is today, so back then it would have looked

much darker and more textured than Italian buildings. It also had no shutters, further exposing the dark brick.

One of the interesting features of the house is the front porch, which can be seen in the photo from 1915. It no longer exists. The front door has changed, as well. Both of these elements contributed a heaviness to the building's original appearance that is not present today.

So, in summary, the Holly house has no pure architectural style. It is a mixture of various styles combined by the Seevers family and their builders to produce the house that they wanted for themselves.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Thank you very much for visiting the Holly House. We hope you have enjoyed it.

I would now ask you now to please proceed carefully down the main staircase and out the front door. Please remember that another group may be in the main parlor, so go quietly if you can.