

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Inventory No:</b>           | SBR.O   |
| <b>Historic Name:</b>          | Wolf Pen Farm                                 |
| <b>Common Name:</b>            |   |
| <b>Address:</b>                |   |
| <b>City/Town:</b>              | Southborough                                  |
| <b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>   |   |
| <b>Local No:</b>               |   |
| <b>Year Constructed:</b>       |   |
| <b>Architect(s):</b>           |   |
| <b>Architectural Style(s):</b> |   |
| <b>Use(s):</b>                 | Agricultural; Residential District            |
| <b>Significance:</b>           | Agriculture; Architecture; Community Planning |
| <b>Area(s):</b>                |   |
| <b>Designation(s):</b>         |   |
| <b>Building Materials(s):</b>  |   |



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

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## FORM A - AREA

Massachusetts Historical Commission

220 Morrissey Boulevard

Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Assessor's Sheets

74

USGS Quad

Marlborough

Area Letter

O

Form Numbers in Area

91, 92, 396-402, 961

Town

Southborough

Neighborhood or village)

Area

Wolf Pen Farm

Use

agricultural, residential

Construction Dates or Period

early/late-19th C.

Condition

good

Intrusions and Alterations

none

Sketch Map

50 Sears Rd, view NW

Draw a map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate North.

Acreage

nine acres

Recorded by

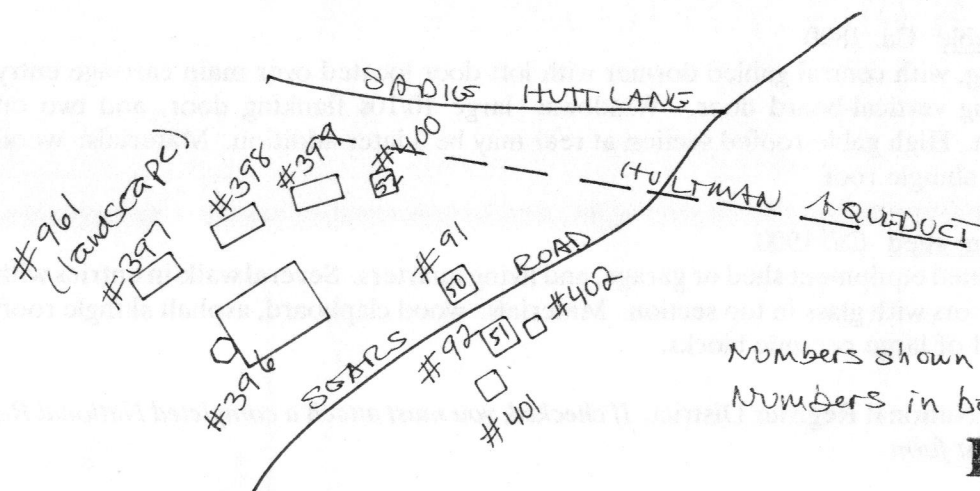
Forbes/Schuler, consultants

Organization

Southborough Historical  
Commission

Date (month/day/year)

January, 2000



Numbers shown are MHC numbers (#)  
Numbers in boxes are street addresses

RECEIVED

JUL 03 2000

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form

MASS. HIST. COMM

## AREA FORM

SBR. 0

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION [ ] *see continuation sheet*

*Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.*

The former Wolf Pen Farm though reduced almost completely to these nine acres, still conveys a sense of what it must have looked like in the 1890s, with its two early-nineteenth-century farmhouses facing each other close to the road at 50 and 51 Sears Road, the 19th-century Fay barn on the east side of the road, and on the west side, the employees' residence at 52 Sears Road that was split off from the main farmhouse, and a cluster of ca. 1890-1900 farm buildings backed by the rolling pasture **landscape** (#961) for Montgomery Sears' cows, sheep, and goats. Board fences on early-twentieth-century concrete posts form paddocks and enclosures near the barns, and criss-cross nearby fields and pastures.

#### **Architectural description: principal buildings.** (See Sketch Map)

##### **Parcel 74-1 50-52 Sears Road (west side)**

##### **MHC #**

##### **91 Nathan L. Johnson House, 50 Sears Road, early-19th-C.**

What appears now as a 2-1/2-story, 2- by 4-bay gable-front, side-hall-entry house with a two-bay northeast side wing is believed to have been reduced from a larger building. Further altered by modern changes, it is clad in vinyl siding, and has replacement 6-over-6-sash windows with vinyl shutters; the main door has been replaced by a modern metal insulated door. Architectural trim: molded, boxed cornice. Fieldstone foundation; asphalt shingle roof.

##### **400 52 Sears Road. Ca. 1890**

Tall, two-story, gable-front 2- by 2-bay house with one-bay north wing set flush with front wall plane. (Formerly attached to the house at 50 Sears Road). Shallow 1-story rectangular bay on west side, gable-roofed entry vestibule on east facade. Windows: 6/6, with ca. 1930s vertical-board shutters. Trim: molded, boxed, cornice. Materials: wood shakes; asphalt shingle roof.

##### **396 Cow barn. Ca. 1890**

Long stucco gable-end barn, standing side to road, with two one-story cross-gabled wings extending east. Southernmost wing has a large, circular section in the center with a conical roof topped with a copper finial--possibly built as an integral silo. Northernmost wing has two garage openings on north elevation. Windows: several types, including line of 18-pane sash on main barn, 4-pane on south wing, paired and triple 6-pane windows with 3-light transoms on north wing. Materials: stucco; main roof is metal, with 2 small square louvered cupolas and one later metal vent; other roofs are asphalt shingle. Wood trim includes exposed rafter ends.

##### **398 Carriage house/stable Ca. 1890**

Hip-roofed building, with central gabled dormer with loft door located over main carriage entry with interior sliding vertical-board door. Windows: large 10/10s flanking door, and two on northeast elevation. High gable-roofed section at rear may be a later addition. Materials: wood clapboard, asphalt shingle roof.

##### **399 Dwelling/equipment shed Ca. 1900.**

Long 2-story combined equipment shed or garage, and living quarters. Several walk-in entries with horizontal-panel doors with glass in top section. Materials: wood clapboard, asphalt shingle roof; east end composed of large ceramic blocks.

[x] Recommended as a National Register District. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Southborough

Wolf Pen Farm

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Area(s)  
O

Form Nos.  
(see Data Sheet)

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, cont.

### Principal buildings, cont.

#### 397 Wagon/tractor shed Early-20th C.

Long gable-roofed vertical-board equipment shed, open on east side under projecting asphalt-shingle roof. Deteriorated condition.

### Parcel 74-5 (east side of Sears Road)

#### 92 51 Sears Road Eber S. Fay House, ca. 1810

Two-story Federal style house with shallow-hipped roof, 1 x 1-bay hip-roofed northeast wing. Southeast rear wing--2 bays on south elevation. Main facade is asymmetrical, four bays wide; main south elevation is also four bays. Windows: 2/1, in flat surrounds. Trim: molded, boxed cornice with architrave molding, narrow cornerboards. Materials: wood clapboard, asphalt shingle roof, granite block foundation. Alterations: Main entry has 20th-century gabled entry hood on square posts; small diagonal-pane modern windows flank the entry. Modern bay window, door, and deck added on south side.

#### 401 Barn 19th C.

Clapboarded gable-front New England barn with three interior-mounted vertical-board sliding doors, one loft door

#### 402 Shed/storage building. Late-19th C.

Clapboarded gable-roofed building with 6/6 windows, exposed rafter ends.



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Form Nos.  
(see Data Sheet)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☒ *see continuation sheet*

*Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this area relates to the historical development of the community.*

Although most of it has been subdivided for residential development in recent years, the remaining farmstead and associated landscape of the farm that in the 1890s became known as **Wolf Pen (Wolfpen) Farm** is a vivid reminder of the days when large portions of the north part of Southborough were converted by a few wealthy owners to picturesque, state-of-the-art "gentlemen's farms." Although rivaled by Charles F. Choate's **Chestnut Hill Farm**, located directly to the west (see Area Form M), the largest and most lavish of all was Wolf Pen Farm, which at the turn of the century covered over 400 acres on both sides of Sears Road from Main Street to the border of Marlborough.

In 1877, **Sarah Choate** of Southborough, daughter of Charles Francis Choate, married the wealthiest man in Boston, **J. Montgomery Sears** (1855-1905). While their winter residence was in Boston, and they summered in Maine, in 1889 they established a country estate in Southborough at the foot of Sears Road, (see Form #20, 1 Sears Road), where they lived in spring and fall. They also began buying property west and north of their house on both sides of the road leading north to Marlborough (later named Sears Road). By the mid-1890s Montgomery Sears, as he was known, owned no less than five old Southborough farms, complete with houses and outbuildings, which he combined into Wolf Pen Farm. Those in the vicinity of Wolf Pen Hill were the old nineteenth-century farms of Eber S. Fay (134 acres--incorporating the former Stow/Newton farm), Nathan L. Johnson (80 acres), and Elijah Crouch (103 acres).

Mr. Sears utilized some of the old buildings, including the early-nineteenth-century **Johnson** and **Fay farmhouses** (MHC #s 91 and 92), and some outbuildings, including the Fay barn. He installed tenants and farm managers in the houses, building several more residences for his employees, including the house at 52 Sears Road, which incorporates a relocated section of the Johnson farmhouse. He also added a host of new agricultural buildings and structures. Among them are the stucco **cow barn** which remains today at 50 Sears Road, and the two other outbuildings behind it. MHC #398 is apparently the **carriage house** he built, and the long combined building to its east (MHC #399), now apparently a combined dwelling and equipment shed, may have been his sheep barn.

More buildings were added further south on Sears Road. On the west side of the road, Mr. Sears had a blacksmith shop (shown as a "forge" on the map of 1898,) and several rental houses. On the east side, on part of the former Fay farm, were a large house (demolished), assorted outbuildings, and a calf barn. Among the other buildings and structures either listed in tax records or shown on the map of 1898 were a stable, a water tower, a wind mill, two corn cribs, two ice houses, a carpenter shop, two hay ricks, a "swiss cottage", and a small cheese factory. While nearly all of these have apparently been demolished, a few may have been moved to other locations or reused as modern outbuildings.

A gentleman farmer in the truest sense, at the turn of the century Mr. Sears had the only flock of sheep in Southborough (76 sheep in 1900), a dozen goats, a prize herd of over 40 cows (mostly Jerseys) that was rivaled only by that of the Burnetts' Deerfoot Farm, two bulls, a dozen pigs, 250 fowl, and ten horses.  
(Cont.)

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Southborough

Wolf Pen Farm

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
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Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Area(s)  
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Form Nos.  
(see Data Sheet)

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

Pre-Sears history

The two farms which Montgomery Sears acquired at this location on the northern part of Sears Road (50/52 and 51 Sears Road) had been among the most productive of Southborough's agricultural properties in the middle of the nineteenth century. **Eber Fay's** farm at 51 Sears Road had covered 134 acres, and in 1850 had the fourth highest value in town. At that time he had over 20 cows and other cattle, and the largest number of pigs in Southborough, which he housed in their own hog house. The value of his livestock was second only to that of another Fay family member, Deacon Peter Fay on Chestnut Hill Road. He produced the second-largest amount of butter in Southborough in that year, (2027 pounds), the greatest amount of oats, and was one of only a few farmers to grow barley. **Nathan Johnson's** farm across the road, at 50 Sears Road, was somewhat smaller, and average in size and production. He owned 80 acres, and in 1850 he had sixteen cows and other cattle, and 14 pigs.

Later history

After Mr. Sears' untimely death in 1905, his sheep herd was sold off. Mrs. Sears continued to operate the property as a dairy farm, however, with her son-in-law James D. Cameron Bradley in charge. The Bradleys resided at 60 Sears Road, which had been built in 1913 as a wedding present from Mrs. Sears. (NR Ind., 1999). J.D.C. Bradley was also an official of American Agricultural Chemicals Co., and over the course of the early twentieth century the farm operations gradually diminished. Like his father-in-law, he died at a young age, and by 1928, his wife, **Helen Sears Bradley**, was a widow, as well.

When Sarah Choate Sears died in 1935, **Helen Bradley** inherited the house at 1 Sears Road, along with much of both the Sears and Choate real estate in Southborough. She ran Wolf Pen Farm under a farm manager for many years, until its operations were taken over after World War II by her son, **J.D.C. (Cameron) Bradley, Jr.** Under his management the farm produced many champion Golden Guernsey cows, and operated a farm store in one of the outbuildings. Cameron Bradley, he operated Wolf Pen Farm as a dairy farm until the early 1970s, when 150 head of cattle were sold off. Then, in 1975, most of the remaining acreage of the vast farm, and all the dairy equipment and farm machinery, were sold at auction. Over the last twenty years, subdivisions of large houses on large lots have been built on much of the former farmland.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES [ ] *see continuation sheet*

Maps and Atlases: 1831; 1857 (NL Johnson; -- S. Fay); 1870 (NL Johnson, ES Fay); 1898 (JM Sears); 1937 WPA maps.

The Marlborough Directory. Various dates and publishers.

Noble, Richard. Fences of Stone: a History of Southborough, MA. Portsmouth, NH: Peter Randall, 1990.

Simpson, H. Louise. Old Houses in Southborough. Unpublished manuscript, 1904.

Town of Southborough: Vital Records; Assessor's Reports, various dates.

Worcester Evening Gazette. 7/12/1975: "Southboro's Cameron Bradley, last of dairymen, shuts down."

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Southborough

Wolf Pen Farm

Area(s)  
O

Form Nos.  
(see Data Sheet)

## AREA DATA SHEET

| MHC#               | Parcel # | Street Address          | Historic Name           | Date          | Style/type                              |
|--------------------|----------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|---|
| 91<br>(See B-Form) | 74-1     | 50 Sears Road<br>garage | Nathan L. Johnson House | 19th C.       | Astylistic 2 1/2-<br>story, gable-front |
| 396                | 74-1     |                         | barn                    | ca. 1889      | utilitarian                             |
| 397                | 74-1     |                         | wagon/tractor shed      | early 20th C. | utilitarian                             |
| 398                | 74-1     |                         | carriagehouse/stable    | ca. 1890      | utilitarian                             |
| 399                | 74-1     |                         | dwelling/equipment shed | ca. 1900      | utilitarian                             |
| 400                | 74-1     | 52 Sears Road           | employee house          | ca. 1890      | utilitarian                             |
| 92<br>(See B-Form) | 74-5     | 51 Sears Road           | Eber S. Fay House       | ca. 1810      | Federal                                 |
| 401                |          |                         | barn                    | 19th C.       | utilitarian                             |
| 402                |          |                         | storehouse (shed)       | late-19th C.  | utilitarian                             |
| 961                | 74-1     | 50, 52 Sears Road       | Wolf Pen Farm landscape | N/A           | rural landscape                         |

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Community  
Southborough

Property Address  
Wolf Pen Farm

Area(s)  
O

Form No(s).  
(see data sheet)

## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Individually eligible    ☐ Eligible only in a historic district  
☐ Contributing to a potential historic district    ☒ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A    ☐ B    ☒ C    ☐ D

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

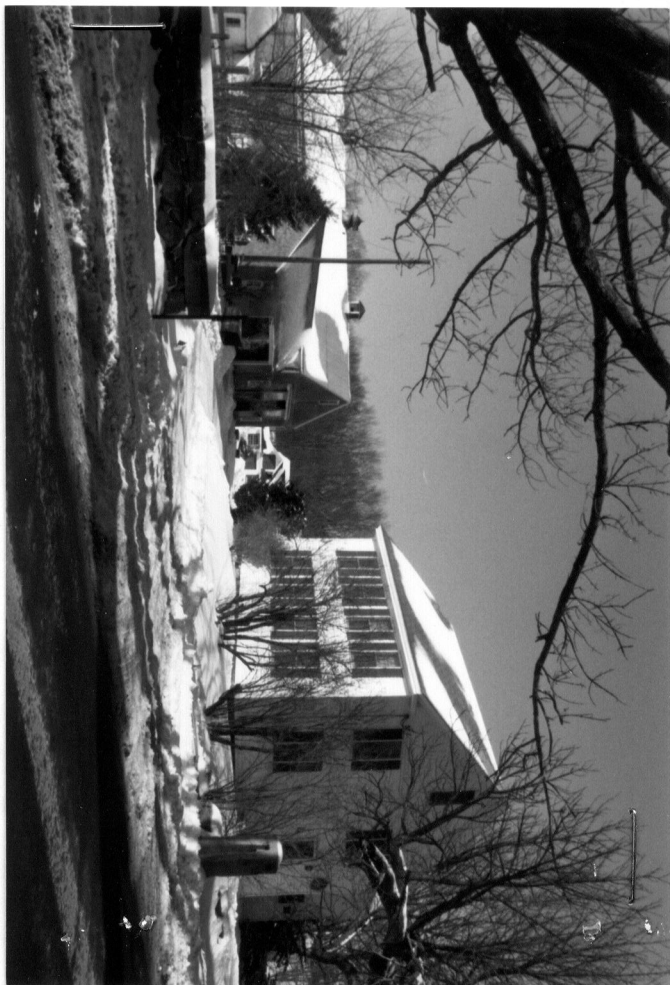
Statement of Significance by Forbes/Schuler, Consultants

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The complex of buildings, structures, and agricultural landscape remaining from the huge Wolf Pen Farm is eligible for the National Register as a district at the local level under Criterion A as the surviving manifestation of Southborough's largest and most lavish "gentleman's farm" of the end of the nineteenth century. It is also significant for its association with the prominent J. Montgomery Sears of Boston and Southborough and his wife, artist and Arts and Crafts promoter Sarah Choate Sears. The property also meets Criterion C as a well preserved collection of architectural and agricultural resources that illustrate the design and architecture of both early-nineteenth-century Southborough (in the Federal Style Eber Fay House and divided Nathan Johnson House), and later nineteenth-century agricultural architecture, including a gable-front New England barn, a large carriage house/stable, several storage sheds, and an 1890s stucco cow barn, complete with round silo.

The property retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association.





50 Sears Road

50 Sears Road, view SW



50 Sears Road

51 Sears Road



51 Sears Road



52 Sears Road