



## **The Sanborn/Shaw House retains style through generations in Clearwater 605 Main Street**

(Excerpted from *The Sanborn/Shaw House*, written by Steve Houle in May 2010)

Gracing the corner of Main and Ash Streets since 1873, the stately house built by Thomas W. Sanborn has weathered generations and renovations under the loving care of several owners.

Thomas Sanborn, born in New England in about 1836, came with his family to the Clearwater area in the 1850s. He married Jeanette Dunklee in 1861, and the couple came to the village of Clearwater some time before 1870. According to that year's census records, Thomas was fairly well-to-do for that time, with real-estate holdings worth \$1,500. Jeanette died in 1872, just before the house at 605 Main Street was built; and Thomas died a few years later.

The couple had two daughters. Bertha married and moved to Montana; Mary J. was raised by an aunt and uncle, Dexter and Elisabeth Collins, who lived next door and had a blacksmith shop. Later, Jeanette taught school in Clearwater. She married Charles D. Whittemore.

Thomas Sanborn, along with John B. and Walter H. Sanborn, bought and sold land in the 1850s, perhaps for timber, and were involved in lumbering. Wright County's first recorded deed, in 1873, shows that Sanborn paid \$75 for the lot on which he built the house. It seems he also owned the house next door.

In 1887, the Sanborn sisters, Bertha, 25, and Jeanette, 15, sold the house to Guy H. and Hattie E. Shirley for \$1,000. The Shirleys had a general store three blocks north on Main Street. They borrowed the \$1,000 they paid for the Sanborn House, and paid off the loan a short time later—the only mortgage recorded on the house in its first 80 years. Guy Shirley died in the early 1890s. Hattie, about 30 at the time, and her family (a brother, half sister and two children) continued to live in the house and she continued to operate the store. It was a successful business in Clearwater for more than 25 years.

The house's third owners, Willis and Dora Shaw bought it from Hattie Shirley in 1910, and lived there the rest of their lives, until about 1950. Shaw, born in Clearwater in 1860, founded the Clearwater State Bank in 1902. He died in March 1950, at age 90, still in possession of the house.

Curtis and Evelyn Heaton bought the property from the Shaw estate in 1950, for \$1,500. The Heaton's lived there for several years, eventually selling it to Verne and Esther Fiedler in 1965. They continued to live there until 1997. The Sanborn/Shaw was a big house for 1873. Some of its carpentry elements were pretty and fun, not merely functional like most early Clearwater houses. It was meant to be seen, quite showy and on a prime corner. Very modern for its time, it boasted two cellars and a cistern. Local stories compare it with the large Thomas and Abigail Porter house, also of the 1870s, both built with exceptionally large white-pine logs, already rare by then. Both houses were likely built with wood sawn from logs from the Mississippi River. They

are the same size and have similar floor plans, window placements, front bay windows etc. Perhaps Sanborn and Porter worked together to procure the wood, and shared the labors of craftsmen.

Several additional changes were made to the house, over the years. The Shirleys may have made some of these, between 1887 and 1910. Apparently after 1910, the Shaws replaced the interior chimneys with a fireplace and exterior chimney; installed a hot-water system; and added a columned passageway between the dining room and one of the parlors. At some point, plumbing and electricity were added; the windows were replaced; and, in 1950, the porches were altered. More recent work on the house included restoring the original gable ends, which are unique and define the house.

*(Revisions by Elaine Paumen, Jan. 2015)*