

**Wenham Historical Commission
Wenham Community-Wide
Historic Properties Survey
Completion Report
October, 2017**

1 Description of the Project

The purpose of this project was to undertake a historic resources survey for the Wenham Historical Commission (WHC). The survey includes historic resources located in Wenham but outside of the local and National Register-listed Wenham Historic District. The objective was to research and document on standard MHC forms built prior to 1890 or, if constructed after 1890, that appeared to be historically or architecturally significant. A target list provided by the WHC, was used as a starting point for the survey. The majority of the buildings surveyed were late 18th-, 19th-, and early 20th-century single-family dwellings of vernacular design. The survey uncovered some unexpected results, including a notable collection of ca. 1920s single-family dwellings located along Monument Street, three Mid-Century Modern dwellings of architectural interest, and, one rare International Style/Art Modern dwelling.

Form B – Building inventory forms were prepared for 61 primary buildings and seven (7) secondary buildings and structures. Form A – Area inventory forms were prepared for five (5) areas involving 52 buildings. National Register contexts were identified in the areas of: Growth of Wenham Neck (ca. 1725-1940); Expansion of Wenham Village to Cherry Street and Cedar Street Area (ca. 1775-1925); Expansion of Wenham Village to Larch Row and Patch Avenue (ca. 1840-ca.1920); Greek Revival Domestic Architecture in Wenham (1840-1860); Apiarist and Innovator Henry Alley, Sr. (1858-1908); Gold Coast Estates (ca. 1880-1915); Philanthropy during the Progressive Period (1909-1970); Civil Engineering and Water Supply (1915-1925); Early Suburbanization (1915-1940); Education in Wenham (1906-1970); and, Mid-Twentieth Century Suburbanization (1940-1953).

As a result of the survey, (6) historic districts and thirteen (13) individual properties are recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

2. Methodology

The Wenham Historical Commission provided the consultants with a target list of 92 properties that WHC believed to have been constructed prior to 1890 as well as several non-residential buildings and structures constructed after 1890. Construction dates were provided by the tax assessor's office and were not necessarily reliable. Included in this target list were the five buildings included in the First Period Thematic Resource Nomination. The thematic resource nomination focused on the construction and design

of First Period dwellings; as a result, neither later alterations nor building histories were undertaken.

All of the pre-1890 buildings on the target list are residential; some of them include outbuildings. The predominance of single-family residential buildings included in this list is reflective of the composition of Wenham's built environment. The post-1890 buildings identified by the WHC are public in nature: schools; a canal and associated pump building; and, municipally-owned recreation land and facilities.

After discussion with MHC and the WHC, the consultants were authorized (1) to identify buildings beyond the target list that appear to fit the pre-1890 construction date profile and (2) to identify post-1890 buildings that are of sufficient architectural or historical significance to warrant documentation.

Phase 1 involved reconnaissance survey to obtain a sense of property types and styles, architectural integrity, and geographical distribution. Buildings on the target list that did not retain sufficient architectural integrity were removed from the proposed survey list.

Initial observations of target list properties revealed:

- As anticipated, the majority of the buildings on the target list were late 18th- and 19th-century single-family dwellings of vernacular design.
- Several locations had potential as Area Forms, including Friend Court, the intersection of Cherry Street and Cedar Street, the intersection of Dodges Row and Larch Row, and Arbor Street between Bruce Lane and Main Street.
- Of the buildings included on the target list, fewer than 10 buildings had been too significantly altered to remain on the target list.
- Of the buildings on the target list, at least five were not visible from the public way.

The reconnaissance survey uncovered some unexpected results:

- A notable collection of ca. 1920 single-family dwellings located along Monument Street that appeared to have potential as a historic district.
- Three Mid-Century Modern dwellings of architectural interest and a high level of integrity.
- One rare International Style/Art Modern dwelling.

Consideration for inclusion in the Survey was influenced by visibility, physical context, and related planning processes. Efforts to create a demolition delay by-law were defeated at Town Meeting in 2016. However, concerns about demolition and subsequent subdivision have brought land-use pressures into focus. For example, the First Period

Henry Perkins House, 75 Arbor Street (WNH.112) (NRIND/NRTRA 1990) was demolished in May 2011.

Given ongoing concerns regarding demolition threats, priority was given to efforts to document the largest number of properties possible. With hopes of continuing the community discussion of a demolition delay by-law, the WHC sought a framework within which properties could be identified for demolition delay protection. Although additional information on First Period Houses is desirable, listing on the National Register of Historic Places provides *de facto* significance for the purposes of creating a demolition delay by-law. Therefore, survey of First Period houses was deferred in favor of previously unsurveyed properties.

The following criteria for selecting properties for survey were chosen:

- Inclusion on the target list;
- Not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- Architectural quality and integrity: Higher rather than lower, given the extent of other inventoried properties; Strength and clarity of visual character are important factors;
- Historical Merit: Resources associated with themes or events that represent patterns in local history;
- Contribution to the streetscape: Visibility, prominence, relation to nearby properties that may better demonstrate historical or architectural themes as a group than as individual properties;
- Threats: Including demolition or subdivision;
- Construction date prior to 1890;
- Locally unusual or under-documented resource types: e.g. mid-century modern dwellings;
- Buildings located outside the Historic District that were inventoried during the 1970s and still retain a sufficiently high level of architectural integrity and historic significance to warrant re-surveying to present-day standards.

The buildings re-surveyed are:

WNH.111	Wenham First Baptist Church	6 Dodges Row
WNH.113	Kimball, Edmund House	20 Arbor Street
WNH.120	Center Junior High School	11 School Street

PROCEDURES AND PRODUCTS

The Survey followed the basic procedures of all inventory work: field survey; research; evaluation; and, production of inventory forms.

In Phase I, preliminary work encompassed a reconnaissance survey of the types and geographical distribution of cultural resources throughout the town of Wenham, site observation of all of the target list properties visible from the public way, and an overview of documentary research with which to establish a context for analyzing target

list properties. Criteria for selecting and removing properties from the target list were developed in collaboration with the WHC and MHC. Potential additional properties were suggested as a result of field reconnaissance, where distinctive properties previously overlooked might be identified.

In Phase 2, architectural assessments and documentary research were continued, agreed-upon selection criteria were applied to the target list, and a final list of specific properties to be surveyed was developed in collaboration with the WHC and the MHC. Draft inventory forms for different property types were produced for review and comment by the WHC and the MHC.

In Phase 3, Form B – Building inventory forms were prepared for 61 primary buildings and seven (7) secondary buildings and structures. Form A – Area inventory forms were prepared for five (5) areas involving 52 buildings. Potential National Register contexts were identified, and National Register criteria were applied to all inventoried resources.

Research sources included town directories, historic atlases, town histories, and local history resources at the Beverly Public Library and the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, and professional journals. When merited and where possible, state and federal censuses and genealogical information were consulted through Ancestry.com. Additional information was acquired through online sources such as Findagrave.com and Babel.Hathitrust.com. When merited, the Essex County Registry of Deeds was also consulted.

In Phase 4, inventory forms were finalized and numbered according to MHC requirements. National Register Criteria Statements were finalized, and a final base map and street index of all inventoried properties was prepared. Copies of the final report and inventory forms are on file with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Wenham Town Hall.

3. Explanation of Accomplishments

The initial definition of this project called for a survey of the properties in the Town of Wenham that were outside of the Historic District that were build prior to 1890. 92 properties meeting these qualifications were to be surveyed. At the kickoff meeting with the Massachusetts Historic Commission, the MHC recommended that the survey include historically significant properties built after 1890. The Wenham Historical Commission agreed to do so. In order to stay within the overall budget for the project it was further agreed that for each property built after 1890 added to the list, a property on the original list judged to be historically insignificant would be dropped from the list to be surveyed. So, properties such as the Center School, the Buker School, The Iron Rail, and the Wenham Canal were added to the list of properties to be surveyed. In addition, after the consultants completed their preliminary survey of the areas outside of the Historic District, they identified several architecturally significant properties built in the 20th century and several areas that they considered architecturally and historically significant. After discussion with the WHC and the MHC, these properties and areas were added to

the project and several more properties on the original list were dropped to make room for the additions.

As a result of these changes, the final completed survey essentially contains surveys of all the most historically and architecturally significant properties in Wenham that are outside of the Historic District. It is thus a more useful survey for the purposes of the WHC. The Commission's primary role is to assess the impact on Historic properties of major construction projects or possible demolitions. The other major responsibility of the Commission is to prepare long term plans to preserve the properties that survey has identified as architecturally or historically significant.

4. Budget Narrative

The budget for this project was \$20,000. All of the \$20,000 was for the consultant fees. The consultants were paid \$20,000 for the project. There were no other expenses.

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