



Final Report Whitman Community-wide Historic Properties Survey Whitman, Massachusetts

Phase IV

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PAL PN 3142

Town of Whitman

54 South Avenue
Whitman, Massachusetts 02382

and

Massachusetts Historical Commission

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Abstract

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL) undertook a project for the Town of Whitman Historical Commission (WHC) and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to document approximately 100 historic resources within the town of Whitman. PAL has completed documentation for the historic resources, identified contexts for National Register of Historic Places (National Register) evaluation, and identified properties eligible for listing in the National Register. The results of the survey are discussed in this report and the accompanying MHC Area Form As and Building Form Bs. Copies of the completed survey documentation and final report will be on file with the Whitman Historical Commission.

Whitman was incorporated as South Abington from parts of Abington and East Bridgewater in 1875, and renamed as Whitman in 1886. At the end of the nineteenth century, the town's agricultural and modest industrial economy expanded rapidly in conjunction with neighboring Brockton's shoe industry. Population nearly doubled and there was significant new building construction. Industry, population, and growth leveled off through much of the twentieth century (MHC 1981).

The Town and WHC have laid some groundwork for the community-wide survey and identification of National Register-eligible properties through the listing of the Olmsted-designed and town-owned Whitman Park, and the Commonwealth Shoe and Leather Company.

Methodology

Survey Objectives

The objectives of this project were to survey and comprehensively document approximately 100 historic resources, as selected by the WHC. These properties were selected in order to document

residences surrounding Whitman Park, the commercial core of the town, and numerous industrial complexes within the town.

Assessment of Existing Documentation and Research

Previous documentation for Whitman generally dates to the mid-2000s, but contains limited architectural and historical information, with the exception of those buildings documented as part of the preparation of a National Register nomination. 37 areas and individual resources in Whitman have been assigned inventory numbers Massachusetts Cultural Resources Inventory System (MACRIS). 3 individual properties are listed in MACRIS as being on the National Register.

Research was conducted at the Massachusetts State Archives, the Whitman Public Library, the Brockton Public Library, the Whitman Town Archives, and the Whitman Historical Commission. Resources on the overall history and development of Whitman, including historic maps and atlases, city records, local histories, and unpublished materials, are contained in both the local history room of the Whitman Public Library and the Whitman Historical Commission, as well as other local repositories. Online resources consulted included City Directories and US Census reports available through Ancestry.com and other online repositories. Limited property ownership research was conducted through the Plymouth County Registry of Deeds. PAL staff examined a number of historic maps and atlases, local records, and town histories located in the Whitman Public Library. Historic maps and atlases examined include 1848 *Map of East Bridgewater*, 1857 *Map of the County of Plymouth, Massachusetts: South Abington and Northville of E. Bridgewater*, 1879 *Atlas of Plymouth County – Map of the Towns of Abington and S. Abington*, 1896 *Map of Abington*, and 1900 *Atlas of Plymouth County – Plate 006: Bridgewater, Holbrook, Whitman, Brockton, and Weymouth*, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1891–1950. Local records examined include Town of Abington and Whitman directories from 1872–1937, and the 1981 *Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance Survey Report for Whitman* and the 1982 *Historical & Archeological Resources of Southeast Massachusetts: A Framework for Preservation Decisions*. Town histories examined include *History of Whitman* (Gardner 1985), *Whitman: Images of America Series* (Hickey 2003), *History of the Town of Abington, Plymouth County, Massachusetts, From its First Settlement* (Hobart 1866), as well as *History of Plymouth County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches of many of its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Hurd 1884).

Selection Criteria

The criteria for property selection for Whitman were derived from the Request for Proposals (RFP); a discussion at the project startup meeting among representatives of the City, the MHC, and PAL; and a list of properties included in the RFP. The list of properties predominantly consisted of previously undocumented resources, however there were a small number of previously documented resources whose forms contained limited descriptive and historical information.

Survey Procedures

The Whitman Community-wide Survey used current MHC criteria and methodology as defined in MHC's *Historic Properties Survey Manual: Guidelines for the Identification of Historic and Archaeological Resources in Massachusetts* (1992), *Survey Technical Bulletin #1* (1993), *MHC Interim Survey Guidelines* (March 1999, et seq.), *MHC Interim Guidelines for Inventory Form Photographs* (2009), and MHC's *Guidelines for Inventory Form Locational Information* (2013).

Both MHC survey guidelines and the tasks and products of the survey Scope of Work meet the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Identification* (1983).

PAL prepared and submitted an *Interim Report, Whitman Community-wide Historic Properties Survey, Whitman, MA, Phase I Methodology* in November 2015 that outlined the methodology. As part of Phase II, a list of resources to document was submitted in January and confirmed at the Phase II meeting in February.

A walking survey of Whitman was undertaken in order to assess and document the previously selected properties. The properties surveyed were commercial and residential buildings dating primarily from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. PAL utilized a mobile GIS map for research, data collection, and survey refinement, accessed via the ArcGIS Collector application on a 3G-enabled iPad tablet as well as from desktop web browsers at the office. Staff used the data collection functionality to record the attributes of pre-determined survey properties in the field via the iPad tablet, as well as with a paper survey matrix. Resources were photographically documented using a high-resolution digital SLR camera.

National Register Eligibility

The National Register eligibility recommendations for the resources included in this survey update were based on analysis of the background information available for each property, including the general context of the historic development of Whitman, and the visual data collected during fieldwork against the National Register criteria (36 CFR 60). These criteria are the standards for evaluating the significance of resources as established by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The criteria are designed to guide the evaluation of potential entries for the National Register. The National Register criteria state that, "the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose component may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Results

MHC Area Form A and Building Form B inventory forms were completed for each surveyed resource on the final list. Each form includes an architectural description of the resource(s), discussion of the historic context, locus map, and digital image of the resource(s). MHC National Register Eligibility

forms were completed for five areas and four individual properties. See “Recommendations” below for details on these evaluations.

Inventoried Properties

Property	MHC #
AREA A FORMS	
Whitman Park Area	WHI.C
Whitman Center Area	WHI.D
Dunbar, Hobart, and Whidden Tack Manufactory Area	WHI.E
Peaceful Meadows Dairy Area	WHI.F
National Foundry, Inc. Area	WHI.G
D. B. Gurney Tack, Nail, and Box Factory Area	WHI.H
INDIVIDUAL B FORMS	
262 Bedford Street	WHI.21
351 High Street	WHI.22
24 Linden Street	WHI.23
65 Plymouth Street	WHI.24
169 Plymouth Street	WHI.25–WHI.26
54 South Avenue	WHI.5
110 South Avenue	WHI.27
120 South Avenue	WHI.28–WHI.29
458 South Avenue	WHI.30
54 Temple Street	WHI. 31
127 Warren Avenue	WHI.32
760 Washington Street	WHI.33–WHI.34
58 West Street	WHI.35
168 Whitman Avenue	WHI.36
OBJECT C FORMS	
54 Temple Street	WHI.917
BURIAL GROUND E FORMS	
Mt. Zion Cemetery	WHI.800
STRUCTURE F FORMS	
478 South Avenue	WHI.915–WHI.916

Recommendations

National Register of Historic Places evaluation criteria were applied to all properties included in the survey effort. A total of five areas and four individual properties was evaluated as eligible for listing in the National Register, either as of potential historic districts or individual nominations.

National Register Eligibility

Five properties were assessed as being potentially eligible for listing in the National Register as historic districts: Whitman Park Area, Whitman Center Area, Dunbar, Hobart & Whidden Manufactory on Colebrook Avenue, Peaceful Meadows Dairy at 98 Bedford Street, and D. B. Gurney Tack, Nail, and Box Factory at 746 Washington Street. Four properties were assessed as being potentially eligible for individual listing in the National Register: Whitman Town Hall at 54 South Avenue, the Hobart Tunnel and Canal at 478 South Avenue, the David Porter House at 351 High Street, and the Harrison Prouty House and Barn at 169 Plymouth Street.

The Whitman Park Area is eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion A and C in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture as a discrete residential area in Whitman enframing, and associated with the development of, the Olmsted-designed Whitman Park in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The area is also eligible for its diverse collection of 19th-and 20th-century residential buildings that represent a range of architectural styles and levels of ornamentation, and form a coherent and distinguishable entity. The Whitman Center Area is eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion A and C in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture. The area is eligible under Criterion A as a discrete commercial area in Whitman associated with the development of Whitman Center as the central business district and the changing industries of the town in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The area is eligible under Criterion C for its diverse collection of 19th-and 20th-century commercial and institutional buildings that represent a range of architectural styles and levels of ornamentation, and form a coherent and distinguishable entity. Peaceful Meadows Dairy, 94 Bedford Street is eligible for listing at the state and local levels under Criterion A in the area of Agriculture as a dairy farm which has operated continuously on the property for over a century, and run by the same family nearly a century (1920–2016). The farm is significant for its association with 20th-century small-scale dairy farming practices in Massachusetts, and as one of a small number of remaining dairy farms in the state, only 160 as of 2011, and one of only 11 dairy farms, as of 1997, in Plymouth County (Holm et al. n.d.:30). The Dunbar, Hobart, and Whidden Tack Manufactory complex is recommended eligible for National Register listing at the local level under Criteria A and C in the areas of Industry and Architecture. Under Criterion A, the complex is significant for its associations with the early tack making industry in Whitman, an important economic activity in the town. Under Criterion C, the complex is a significant and distinguishable grouping of late-nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century industrial buildings erected to form an integrated plant for tack manufacturing. The D. B. Gurney Tack, Nail, and Box Factory is eligible at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its association with the history of tack making in Whitman. The site has been continuously occupied by the Gurney company since 1875, and is now the only remaining cut tack and nail factory in the United States

The Harrison Prouty House and Barn, 169 Plymouth Street is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion C in the area of

Architecture, primarily for its attached barn, an unusual form of a gambrel-roofed English barn seated on a raised rubblestone foundation, and as a late and unusual, for Whitman, example of a connected farm complex. The David Porter House, 351 High Street (possibly ca. 1730) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an unusual example of a Colonial-era brick residence constructed in Whitman. The Hobart Canal and Tunnel is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A, C, and D. It is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its association with the early industrial development of Whitman, under Criterion C in the area of engineering as the earliest canal and tunnel system in Plymouth County, and under Criterion D for its potential to yield substantive archaeological information about the early industrial development in this part of Whitman, particularly early saw- and gristmills. Whitman Town Hall, 54 South Avenue (1906–1907) is eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development for its association with the development of Whitman, beginning in 1905. The building is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of Classical Revival architecture in Whitman. Whitman Town Hall is also eligible for listing in the National Register as a contributing resource of a potential Whitman Center Historic District (see Whitman Center Area).

Further Study Recommendations

PAL recommends that National Register documentation be undertaken for the above properties. Additionally, further research is recommended for the D.B. Gurney Tack, Nail, and Box Factory.

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