



Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Heritage Landscape Inventory Program

Lakeville

Reconnaissance Report

Prepared for
The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
by
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MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY LAKEVILLE RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

PLANNING ISSUES

Need. Lakeville expresses the same urgent need for assistance in documenting its heritage landscapes that has been iterated in surrounding communities. The high demand for rural/suburban housing in southeast Massachusetts and the close proximity to improved transportation, namely Rt. 495 and the new MBTA commuter rail station, threaten the unprotected land areas that may be viewed as ripe for development. Only 13% of Lakeville's undeveloped land is protected by conservation and watershed regulations. These factors contribute to the potentially imminent loss of unprotected and significant landscapes, particularly the non-renewable archaeological resources known to be in the area of Assawompsett Pond complex.

Resources and Documentation. The Lakeville Draft Open Space Plan, recently distributed for public comment, includes an intensive identification, evaluation and mapping of scenic resources as well as protection strategies for the same. This process has led to consideration of a number of scenic road designations as one albeit limited preservation strategy. However, the historic landscapes, particularly archaeological resources were not included in this process with the exception of those farms that may be part of the vista from public ways. Lakeville presently has an appointed Master Plan Committee that is establishing the framework for such a document.

MHC historic resource documentation includes 80 individual resources and three areas (the Tack Factory Neighborhood, the Lakeville State Sanatorium and Camp Joe Hooker) recorded on 83 survey forms. Most were completed in 1982. There are two properties that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places; the Lakeville Town Hall and the Wampanoag Royal Cemetery. The MHC Lakeville Reconnaissance Survey Report of 1981 establishes the basis for the local historic context.

Planning Issues. Planning issues and preservation of community character in a rapidly growing environment have led Lakeville to state in its draft Open Space Plan that the preservation of its cultural, historical and archaeological integrity is an objective and action should be taken to develop a protective framework for such resources. The land surrounding the Assawompsett Pond complex is a focus of the Open Space Sub-Committee, the Conservation Commission and the Historical Commission. The sensitivity of the area and the extreme importance of the resources in the wider regional and state-wide context are understood by the activists in Lakeville. Public / private partnerships to protect this unique area are being explored.

SITE VISIT REPORT

The meeting was attended by the Local Project Coordinator, members of the Historical Commission and other interested citizens as well as PAL team members. The purpose was to review the preliminary list of potential heritage landscapes compiled by the town and to conduct a windshield survey. Lakeville used its recently completed Open Space Plan as the basis for identifying heritage landscape sites. Many of the sites selected have traditionally been valued for their natural resources, so the town welcomed the opportunity to expand the understanding of their cultural resources. Town representatives repeatedly stressed the importance of groundwater to the community, as Lakeville has neither town water nor town sewer.

Betty's Neck. This roughly 500-acre peninsula jutting out into Assawompsett Pond is regionally significant as watershed, habitat and cultural landscape. Betty's Neck is privately owned, largely by Deca Cranberry Corporation. There are extensive cranberry bogs (currently inactive), two large meadows, two small ponds, forested areas, and a nursing home at the former Eaton estate. Natural resources appear to be well understood; cultural resources are not as well documented. There are also Native American claim issues. This site is a very high priority for the town. There is already some development at the edges. Two development scenarios were recently presented to the town, both of which would drastically alter the site.

Nemasket River. The upstream area of the river runs along the boundary with Middleborough, which also included the river as a high priority heritage landscape. There is a regionally significant herring run, archeologically sensitive areas, and former mill sites. The area is great for canoeing but is under utilized, in part because access is difficult. Bridge reconstruction at Vaughan Street may offer opportunities for expanded access and interpretation. There is some threat of nearby development. A portion of the adjacent area is zoned industrial.

Rocky Woods. This also is a two-community resource, as a portion of it extends into Freetown. There are unusual natural rock formations, caves (King Phillip's cave, Devils Den), old house sites, foundations, 1680s pottery. The site is also of floristic interest because of its acidic soils. It is largely under single ownership, with some potential for development and might be rezoned industrial as it is near the highway. There would be potential impacts on groundwater if the site were developed. The town would like to get a conservation agency interested or possibly see the area as a state park.

Assonet Cedar Swamp. The swamp itself (rare community type, red maple/white cedar) is owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society but is not open to public access and is largely invisible from public roads. Changing land use around the swamp is threatening the fragile ecology. There are also potential impacts associated with proposed replacement of the second railroad track. The swamp is bordered by uplands with a rich cultural history – historic houses and barns, well-crafted stone walls, open fields. Pierce Avenue was recently voted a scenic road. Mill Street and Howland Road are also potential scenic roads. The goal is to preserve some road frontage that is now in fields so swamp is more visible and potentially accessible. There are many Chapter 61 forestry lands on Pierce and County Roads and a 100-acre conservation restriction. There is an unprotected 50-acre farm on Mill Street.

Route 105 South. This unusually pristine area of watershed land, mostly covered with pine plantations, extends south from Long Point Road into Rochester. With its narrow winding road and absence of development, it feels extremely rural for southeastern Massachusetts. It is also the site of native settlement and the Royal Wompanoag Cemetery, with outstanding views of adjacent ponds. This road was considered for scenic road designation but is ineligible because it is a state highway.

Crooked Lane/Old Main Street. This area has the highest concentration of farmland in town and is another potential scenic road. There is one APR at the center of the area, the ends are unprotected. Agricultural zoning would be difficult because the farms are so scattered. Several farms have already been lost to development. Resources include: historic houses, slab bridges (circa 1770s), dairy barn (unused), Sprout House (reportedly oldest house in town), and mill nearby on stream.

Highland Road. This cluster of cultural resources includes: several churches, four cemeteries, Eggers cranberry bog, Sailors Home Tower (now owned by Historical Society), King Phillip's lookout (site now destroyed, house built there), view across pond, Rotch Farm, purple martin houses and possibly osprey. The issue is partly getting this area defined as a distinct place. Consider extending this area to include Tamarack site and explore scenic road designation.

Loon Pond. Former Ted Williams Baseball Camp and cottage area adjacent to pond is now the town recreation area. A new library and senior center are proposed nearby. MHC is reportedly concerned over development. There is also potential for sand and gravel extraction. The area near the old town hall has already been altered by changed road patterns and has lost much of its sense of place.

Other Resources Discussed

The former Tamarack Restaurant site on Bedford Street south of Town Hall is in a visible and key location. A Self Help application for acquisition is pending and has received strong interest from Conservation Services, thus this site is not currently perceived as threatened. The area has natural significance, borders on conservation land, and has archeological and historical interest as well. University of Massachusetts did data recovery in 1993.

Another area of interest is the Tack Factory District on Taunton Street, considered a possible historic district. There are potential impacts associated with changes to the rotary at Route 44.

The Master List of Projects of the Olmsted Firm in Massachusetts does not indicate any Olmsted firm projects in Lakeville.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Preliminary List of Sites Recommended For Intensive Study

The following sites are recommended for intensive study:

Lakeville

- Betty's Neck
- Assonet Cedar Swamp
- Crooked Lane/Old Main Street
- Route 105 south (possibly as part of waterworks complex)

Lakeville/Middleborough

- Nemasket River Corridor

This recommendation is based on site visits and discussion with Lakeville's Local Project Coordinator, Town Manager and members of the Historical Commission.

9/7/01