



Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Heritage Landscape Inventory Program

Marion

Reconnaissance Report

Prepared for
The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
by
Public Archaeology Lab, Inc.
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MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY MARION RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

PLANNING ISSUES

Need. Marion's build-out study of an additional 7300 units is a somewhat alarming rate of potential development similar to other towns of the region. The land area of the town is small compared to adjacent towns. The proximity of Rt I-195 and I-495 as well as the potential expansion of rail service to New Bedford or Wareham, combined with the regions status as the fastest growing area in Massachusetts sets the stage for loss of important heritage landscapes. Presently Marion has a planning assistant to the volunteer Planning Board, but no professional Town Planner. There also is a need for consolidation of existing studies with new information gleaned about heritage landscapes and coordination of action plans to protect Marion's resources. Presently the Sippican Historical Society, the Sippican Lands Trust, and town boards and committees voluntarily work together to gather information and develop strategies to protect resources.

Resources and Documentation. Marion's Open Space and Recreation Plan is a five year plan dated 1998-2003. While it does not identify specific heritage landscapes, the goals of preserving "the natural and historic character of the community – with emphasis on open spaces and the harbor....[and] the charm of New England village life" clearly articulate the essence of protecting heritage landscapes. The Open Space Acquisition Commission has been established as well as a Land Bank funded through a property tax surcharge. In 1989 the Planning Board, through a Community Diagnosis process and public workshops, prepared a Land Use Plan consisting of a Map and Policy Planning Chart which includes three categories: community diagnosis, objectives and implementation strategies. The historic resource inventory includes documentation of 315 resources, most described in the twelve area forms. Most of the survey work was completed in 1998 as part of a Survey and Planning Grant to the Sippican Historical Society through the MHC. A survey of Marion's archaeological resources also was conducted in 1998. The MHC Marion Reconnaissance Survey Report of 1981 and the Narrative History included in the 1998 Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey Project mentioned above establish the historic context for Marion's resources. Furthermore, several pages of the 1998 Project Report are devoted to recommended National Register listings as well as resources for which further study is needed. Only one resource is listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Bird Island Light Station as part of the Thematic Group Nomination for Lighthouses of Massachusetts.

Planning Issues. Planning issues and protection of Marion's community character presently are focused on the adoption of a cluster development bylaw and an amendment to the Flexible Development By-Law to protect scenic landscapes. The Planning Board also is considering the use of Transferable Development Rights (TDR), possibly to move development away from the harbor area protecting views of the harbor. The Town has limited the number of developments that would be approved within each calendar year and statistically reviews small subdivisions of only a few lots per development proposal which indicates "infill" development of relatively small lots. In 1999 the Town expanded the minimum lot size in many areas to two acres which decreased the maximum build-out to approximately 4500 units.

SITE VISIT REPORT – OCTOBER 3, 2001

The meeting was attended by Barbara Mauro, Local Project Coordinator as well as PAL team members and a representative from DEM's office of Historic Resources. The purpose of the meeting was to review the list of potential heritage landscapes compiled by the town and to conduct a windshield survey. A list of eleven sites was compiled by the Local Project Coordinator in collaboration with the Finance Committee, the Historical Commission and the Harbormaster. One additional site was added after the site visit. Data sheets on individual sites were not available prior to the site visit so only limited historical information is included in this report.

Stone Estate. This estate occupies approximately 300 acres on either side of Delano Road in the eastern part of Marion. The portion of the estate west of Delano Road is largely forested and some of it is now owned by the Sippican Land Trust. The eastern portion of the estate occupies a peninsula known as Great Hill, which juts out into Buzzards Bay south of the Weweantic River. There are several older estate buildings (already documented as part of a recent historic survey) and several newer residences occupied by members of the extended Stone family. Goat raising and cheese production are the primary agricultural activities on this former dairy farm. There is a formal garden open to the public on a limited basis. A tall iron fence encloses the entire road frontage. The 1998 survey recommended this property for National Register listing.

Front Street. This area focuses on the water edge north of the town center between Burr Brothers and Barden's boatyards. It includes Tabor Academy, several boatyards, and several parcels of town-owned land. Some building survey has already been done. The east side of Front Street is visually important because it is the main route into town and there are spectacular views of the harbor between the buildings. Changes in building scale or density, or the addition of high fencing, could block these views.

Kittansett Club. This private country club is located off Point Road at the end of Sippican Neck. Main features are a links style golf course and a 1922 Colonial Revival shingled clubhouse located in a spectacular setting.

Adamson Shoreline. The Adamson property is located at the end of Hermitage Road in an area known as Little Neck. It is a roughly 10-acre parcel that has outstanding views of the harbor. The property is named for the main house, a late eighteenth century Cape Cod cottage with late nineteenth century additions. There are also several smaller more recent residences. Much of the property is forested. The 1998 survey recommended this property for National Register listing.

Marion Village. This area extends from Holmes Lane south to Island Wharf, encompassing portions of Tabor Academy and the town center. Some properties in this area have already been surveyed.

Water Street. Water Street extends south along the western edge of the harbor from Vine Street near the town center to Silver Shell Beach. While buildings in the town center have generally been well documented, landscape values have not been as carefully analyzed. A critical aspect of Water Street is that it offers spectacular views out towards the harbor. As development pressures increase, these views could easily be blocked by tall fences or larger buildings. The 1998 survey recommended this area for National Register listing.

County Road at Front Road. A short section of County Road just north of Route 195 includes the Methodist Church, a wood frame L-plan building with prominent corner tower and two graveyards, one circa 18th century and the other 19th century, as well as an adjacent gentleman's farm. This small area with strong historical associations is threatened by its proximity to Route 195 and by proposals to place a small treatment plant in the immediate area.

Creek Road Pumping Station Site. A town-owned property lying on either side of Creek Road at Brigg's Cove includes a several acre wetland parcel on the north side of the road and a small parcel with a pumping station on the south side. This site is valued for its location at the head of the harbor, which is extremely scenic, and for its natural resource values associated with the tidal estuary. It is the site of the town's well fields.

Aucoot Cove. Aucoot Cove is located at the southern edge of town, extending east from the terminus of Indian Cove Road towards Converse Point. It is a scenic coastal wetland that lies within the tidal area. No information was available about likely cultural resources.

Route 105. This roughly one-mile section of road in the northwestern section of town extends from County Road to the Rochester line. It is a numbered state highway that has been designated a state scenic road. Many of the older houses along this section of road were included in a recent historic survey. Due to its proximity to Route 195 the road is subject to heavy traffic, especially truck traffic. The town is unsure what protections exist with the state scenic road designation and is concerned about the potential impacts of road widening.

Sparrow Mills. This mill site is located along Borden's Brook in the southwestern section of town off Route 6 near Rocky Nook. Little information was available and it was not visited as it is accessible only on foot and is on private property. Ownership is unclear. Boy Scouts have done some repair work.

Tacca Christian Community. This site, which was added to the list after the site visit, lies south of Wareham Street (Route 6) off Oakdale Avenue near Brigg's Cove. The roughly 10-12 acre property, a single parcel owned by a religious organization, consists of an early 20th century campground with dining hall, nurse's station and other small rustic buildings, as well as a dozen or more small cottages. The site, which is used seasonally, has a unified architectural character and compact site plan similar to other campgrounds of this period. The proximity of the adjacent cove enhances the scenic qualities of this site.

No additional resources were discussed.

The Master List of Projects of the Olmsted Firm in Massachusetts indicates six residential projects by the Olmsted firm in Marion, as well as the Kittansett Club.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Preliminary List of Sites Recommended For Further Study

The following sites are recommended for intensive study:

- Front Street north of town center
- Kittansett Club
- Marion Village
- County Road (Methodist Church and graveyards)
- Tacca Christian Community

This recommendation is based on site visits and discussion with Marion's Planning Administrator.

2. National Register Nominations

Several properties or areas that were on Marion's list of ten heritage landscapes also were included in the 1998 list of National Register recommendations. Thus it would be appropriate to re-emphasize the following potential eligibility for National Register listings:

- the Water Street area as defined in the MHC Area Form titled Water Street Area,
- the Hermitage
- Great Hill (MHC Area G) – the 313-acre Stone Estate on Delano Road

3. Scenic Roads

Marion's Open Space Plan refers to adopting MGL Chapter 40-15C, the Scenic Roads Act, in order to designate certain town owned roads as scenic. A number of roads would be eligible for this designation. The Commonwealth has designated Rt. 105 as a scenic road. Additional information is necessary to determine how the town can play a role in maintaining the character of this route between Rt. 195 north to the Rochester-Marion town line. Discussions with Rochester town officials may be appropriate to determine how that town has worked with the State designation. [Let's find out what this State designation does for the town and inform them of how they can play a role in reviewing projects affecting the scenic quality of this route.]