

# ROCKPORT RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

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## ESSEX COUNTY LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

### MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY PROGRAM



Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Essex National Heritage Commission

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## INTRODUCTION

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Essex County is known for its unusually rich and varied landscapes, which are represented in each of its 34 municipalities. Heritage landscapes are places that are created by human interaction with the natural environment. They are dynamic and evolving; they reflect the history of the community and provide a sense of place; they show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns; and they often have scenic qualities. This wealth of landscapes is central to each community's character; yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first steps towards their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by the community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive neighborhood or mill village, a unique natural feature, an inland river corridor or the rocky coast. To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Essex National Heritage Commission (ENHC) have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory program (HLI) to communities in Essex County. The primary goal of the program is to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected. The focus is on landscapes that have not been identified in previous survey efforts in a given community. Another important goal of the program is to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The methodology for the Heritage Landscape Inventory program was developed in a Pilot Project conducted in southeast Massachusetts. It is outlined in the DCR publication *Reading the Land* which has provided guidance for the program in Essex County. In short, each participating community appoints a Local Project Coordinator (LPC) to assist the DCR-ENHC consulting team. The LPC organizes a heritage landscape identification meeting at which interested residents and town officials offer community input by identifying potential heritage landscapes. This meeting is followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team and the LPC, usually accompanied by other community members. This group visits the priority landscapes identified in the meeting and gathers information about the community. The final product of this phase of the Inventory Program is the Reconnaissance Report, prepared for each participating community. It outlines the history of the community; identifies the resources and documentation that provide background information; provides a short description of the priority heritage landscapes visited; discusses planning issues identified by the community; and concludes with a brief discussion of survey and planning recommendations. A list of all of the heritage landscapes identified by the community is included in the Appendix.

## ROCKPORT HISTORY

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Rockport's coastal location and its dramatic landscape features — harbors, rivers, uplands and shoreline — were instrumental in shaping the history of the community from the earliest Native American use of the land to the present day.

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Although no Contact period (1500-1620) sites have been confirmed in Rockport, native settlement activity probably occurred along the coast, especially at the mouth of Mill Brook and around the interior wetlands. Water travel remained important through the 17th century. Rockport, which was initially part of Gloucester, was settled more slowly than other parts of Cape Ann, in part because it had no natural harbors. The first permanent English settlement occurred in 1690, when lands were divided and a small fishing village was established at Sandy Bay. In 1754 the village was set aside as the fifth parish of Gloucester and a meetinghouse was erected at Long Cove.

After the Revolutionary War, the area grew more rapidly. A thriving fishing base was established at Pigeon Cove while Sandy Bay emerged as the town's commercial, institutional and residential core. As the town grew, it expanded along the shoreline, creating a series of linear villages. Maritime businesses remained the focus of industrial activity throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A major initiative of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was to create safe harbors for the town, with seawalls erected at Sandy Bay by 1815.

Rockport was incorporated as a separate community in 1840. The town continued to prosper during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with new streets, improved harbors and the arrival of the railroad. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century an active granite quarrying industry emerged in the northern part of town, making Pigeon Cove a secondary center of commercial and institutional activities. The village of Sandy Bay prospered as the home of the fishing industry, with limited textile manufacture there as well. During this period the town spread inward and more affluent residences were established along Main and Mount Pleasant Streets. By the end of the century the three economic mainstays were fishing, cotton production and quarrying.

By the 1870s, Rockport became known as a seasonal resort, with small boarding houses giving way to large hotels and later to mansions along the coast. During this period artists discovered Rockport, establishing their own residential neighborhoods and creating images that further popularized the town as a resort.

The opening of Route 128 in 1954 made Rockport more accessible, accelerating residential development. Rockport's population grew almost 22% between 1980 and 2000, and is currently about 7,800 people. Rockport also has a large number of seasonal residents.

## **RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION**

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This section of the Reconnaissance Report identifies planning documents and tools that provide information relevant to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program.

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## **Inventory of Historic Assets**

The Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets is a statewide list that identifies significant historic resources throughout the Commonwealth. In order to be included in the inventory, a property must be documented on an MHC inventory form, which is then entered into the MHC database. This searchable database, known as MACRIS, is now available online at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc>.

According to the MHC, Rockport's inventory documents 581 properties that date from 1670 to 1995. The majority of these are buildings. Many of the inventory forms were prepared in the 1970s and do not meet current standards for documentation of historic resources. Archaeological sites, landscapes and other non-traditional historic resources are under-represented.

## **State and National Registers of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. All National Register properties are also listed in the State Register. Rockport has three National Register districts: the Rockport Downtown Main Street Historic District (1976, 32 properties), the Straitsmouth Island Light (1987, 3 properties) and the Twin Lights Historic District (1971; 1987, 14 properties). Seven individual listings include six buildings and the Granite Keystone Bridge. Two of these properties were listed in the First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts thematic nomination and the two lighthouse districts are listed in the Lighthouses of Massachusetts thematic nomination. Other properties individually listed include the Old Castle, Rockport High School and the Sewall-Scripture House. The Twin Lights Historic District is also a National Historic Landmark (2001).

Rockport has two properties under preservation restrictions, the Carnegie Library and the Twin Lights North Tower on Thacher's Island, which are drawn up in accordance with MGL Chapter 183, Sections 31-33. A preservation restriction runs with the deed and is one of the strongest preservation strategies available. All properties that have preservation restrictions filed under the state statute are automatically listed in the State Register.

## **Local Historic District**

Local historic districts, which are administered at the municipal level, are special places within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by a local historic district commission. Rockport has four contiguous local historic districts located in the downtown area: Broadway (1983, 95 properties); Downtown (1981, 50 properties); Main Street (1977, 38 properties); and Mount Pleasant-South Street (1977, 54 properties). All properties included in the local historic districts are also included in the State Register but only the two smaller local historic districts are also listed

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in the National Register. In 2002 the Historical District Commission was merged with the Historical Commission which now administers the historic districts.

### **Planning Documents**

Rockport completed its Community Development Plan in 2001, which includes recommendations that address a broad range of town wide issues. The vision statement specifies,

*"The Town of Rockport seeks a proactive planning process that carefully balances the need for economic development, encompassing residential and non-residential uses, with the preservation of key natural, scenic, historic and recreational resources."*

The plan identifies three community focal points: harbor/waterfront, downtown and villages/neighborhoods. It also lists 14 areas where residents "envisioned and described the future of specific areas in town." Many of the areas identified as heritage landscapes are also considered priorities in the Community Development Plan.

Rockport's most recent Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed in 1997. It is currently in the process of being updated to include priorities and strategies for protecting natural resources, with a focus on water supply, recharge and wetland resource areas. Other issues addressed in the update include coastal access, views and priorities for acquisition such as fields, trails, farms and native study areas.

Rockport completed Phase 1 of its Harbor Plan in 2003. The plan identifies existing problems and establishes consensus about the desired character and quality of Rockport's four major harbor areas in the future. It stresses the importance of protecting the economic value of the harbor while also developing the waterfront's unique qualities for public enjoyment. Quality and amenities afforded by the waterfront are integral to the success of both tourism and fishing, which are at the core of Rockport's economy. Town residents expressed interest in providing continuous access, increased view corridors and more public open spaces. Rockport has an active Harbor Advisory Committee and an active Rights of Way Committee, which also has a Friends Group.

### **Other Planning Tools and Bylaws**

The Planning Board and Historical Commission are currently working with other town agencies to consider a demolition delay bylaw that would provide for a potential delay on demolition of structures over 65 years old that have been determined historically significant and preferably preserved. The town recently passed a site plan review bylaw. Rockport approved the Community Preservation Act in 2002 with a 3% surcharge on local property taxes. The amount of the surcharge was reduced by exempting the first \$100,000 in value of any property and exempting low income residents and low to moderate income seniors.

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## **PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES**

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Rockport's Heritage Landscape Identification meeting, attended by approximately 36 residents, some representing town boards and local non-profit organizations, was held on November 15, 2004. During the meeting residents compiled a lengthy list of the town's heritage landscapes, which is included in the Appendix. Once the comprehensive list was created, attendees were asked to articulate the value of each landscape and to identify issues relating to its preservation. Based on the information gathered, community members selected a group of priority heritage landscapes to be visited by the consulting team during the fieldwork. Each of the priority landscapes is highly valued, contributes to community character and is not permanently protected or preserved.

This section describes the priority landscapes that were the focus of the reconnaissance work in Rockport. In most instances intensive survey work will be needed to fully document the physical characteristics and the historical development of the landscape. These heritage landscapes, which are listed alphabetically, represent a range of scales and land use types.



### **Atlantic Path including Andrews Point**

In Rockport, as in many of Essex County's coastal communities, access to the ocean is highly valued. Rockport has an active Rights-of-Way committee that has worked over the past decade to document public paths and town landings. Some of these date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and permit access to the intertidal zone only for "fishing, fowling and navigation" while others are historic boat landings and still others cross private land and grant only the right to "pass and repass." Other coastal areas owned outright by the town include public beaches, wharves, parks and conservation land. One of the most popular coastal areas is Atlantic Path, which extends north from Cathedral Avenue in Pigeon Cove to Halibut Point Reservation. A section of pathway near Thornwood Avenue is private and no longer shared as part of the path. This precedent is a serious concern to Rockport residents who fear that access to the path may become more limited as the scale and density of development increases along the coastline. Andrews

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Point, located along Atlantic Path at the end of Point De Chene Avenue, is one of the most popular coastal spots in Rockport, known for its scenic value and as a bird watching area. Only a small section of Andrews Point is open to public access and parking is limited.

### **Downtown**

Rockport's downtown is a seaport village that is the historic, civic and economic core of the community. It includes commercial and residential buildings, a working waterfront, a vibrant artists' colony and important public buildings and spaces. Main Street is home to the Rockport Art Association and is the commercial spine of the village. Mount Pleasant Street contains a distinguished collection of houses reflecting the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the community. Beach Street, which runs along the waterfront, passes both Front and Back Beaches and the town bandstand. The Old Parish Burying Ground and the Mill Brook Meadow are located off Beach Street. The Union Burial Grounds are located off Main Street, adjacent to the Mill Pond. Dock Square is located at the junction of Main Street and Mount Pleasant Street, at the foot of Broadway. It intersects with South Road which leads out onto Bearskin Neck. The Neck, which forms a peninsula jutting out into the harbor, was once known primarily as an artists' colony, but now is populated with shops and restaurants that are a magnet for tourists. It offers spectacular views of the harbor and of Sandy Bay. The Neck is considered an important and fragile area that is of particular concern to Rockport residents and was the focus of a recent planning study completed in 2004. Railroad Avenue leads from Five Corners to the start of Granite Street and is the site of most of the town's local (non-tourist) retail business, as well as its MBTA station.

Many factors contribute to the unique character of Rockport's downtown — the compact scale, irregular pattern of narrow streets, idiosyncratic historic buildings on small lots and the mix of uses. However, what distinguishes it from most other Essex County communities is the close relationship to the working waterfront and the spectacular views of the harbor and the coastal headlands beyond. Preserving the diverse but fragile character of this area is both a personal priority for residents and an important economic strategy for the town.

### **Flat Ledge Quarry/Granite Pier Area**

This area comprises an important group of historic resources associated with the Flat Ledge Quarry and the larger Rockport granite industry. Resources include the Flat Ledge Quarry, the railroad that carried granite from Pigeon Hill down to the harbor, the Granite Company building, the Granite Keystone Bridge which carries Granite Street over the railroad, and Granite Pier, as well as the marina and vernal pools. The area is still a working industrial landscape. It links the inland granite industry directly with the coast and offers a remarkable range of experiences and visual character in a small area, with enormous potential for a unique recreational experience. Ownership is mixed.

The primary concern associated with this area is the proposal to build a large dam immediately adjacent to the Granite Keystone Bridge. The project was proposed



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in the late 1990s to provide additional storage for Rockport's water supply and is still in the permitting phase. While the bridge would remain, it could be damaged during the construction process and there would be impacts on the historic and recreational resources of the area.



### **Johnson's Quarry and Dogtown**

Dogtown Common has traditionally been perceived as open space but large portions of it are not permanently protected and are vulnerable to development, particularly around the edges. Dogtown was settled in 1719 when distribution of Gloucester's open land made lots available to settlers. By 1741 there were 25 families living there. Additional families moved to the area during the Revolution because they feared a coastal attack by the British. The population gradually declined after the war and was largely abandoned by 1830.

Today Dogtown consists of approximately 3,000 acres of rugged undeveloped land in interior sections of Rockport and Gloucester, by far the largest undeveloped area on Cape Ann. It includes forests, wetlands, glacially created rock formations, old fields, pastures, quarries and trails. Two of Cape Ann's reservoirs, Babson and Goose Cove, are also located in Dogtown and much of the area has been designated as watershed protection land. Dogtown has long been a priority for both Rockport and Gloucester. The recent Dogtown Management Plan initiated by the City of Gloucester lists two basic objectives: preservation of the important natural and cultural features that make Dogtown unique, and protection of it as a clean, quiet place for traditional forms of passive recreation. The plan stressed the consensus to preserve distinctive features as they are and not to make Dogtown into a park "or other such manicured tract." It also recommended that new structures be kept to a minimum. Land ownership in Dogtown is complex and in many cases unclear, making land transfers difficult. This is one factor inhibiting development of the area.

An important access point to Dogtown from Rockport is Johnson's Quarry. Rockport's recent planning documents have consistently identified the quarry as an important area that should be considered a priority for acquisition because of its significance as a potential part of the town's drinking water supply; its value

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as core habitat; and its wetland resources. It also has recreational potential and has significant historical values for its association with the granite quarry industry. It still retains standing wood and steel derricks dating to the late 1800's to mid 1900's. The town voted in 2004 to authorize the Selectmen to negotiate purchase of Johnson's Quarry. Negotiations for this transaction are ongoing.

### **Nugent Stretch**

Nugent Stretch is a section of roadway corridor along Route 127 in the southwestern corner of Rockport. It is the principal gateway to the community and is valued because of the rural character of the road and adjacent woods, which passes through former farmland that is now watershed protection land associated with Gloucester's Babson and Rockport's Cape Pond Reservoirs. This primarily wooded stretch of roadway also includes Babson Field and Babson Museum, a stone structure that was part of the Babson Farm. A proposal is pending to widen the road and to add sidewalks. This is a concern to some Rockport residents because it would greatly change the character of the roadway and would require extensive tree removal.

### **Pigeon Cove**

The Pigeon Cove neighborhood, Rockport's northern village, was initially associated with the community's fishing industry and during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century became the heart of the granite industry. Today it is primarily a residential village with a mix of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings laid out primarily along Granite Street and on a series of side streets. Major concerns are retaining the village character in light of extensive residential development, preserving the fishing industry in the pier area and assuring continued access to the waterfront as coastal areas become more densely developed. Proposed development of the former Cape Ann Tool Company at Pigeon Cove Harbor for 22 townhouses and associated buildings is an important issue mentioned in Pigeon Cove.

### **Pigeon Hill**

Pigeon Hill, a drumlin that is the highest point in Rockport, has a panoramic view in almost all directions. It was set aside as a Sea Mark or navigational landmark in 1642. The five-acre field at the top of the hill known as Land Mark Field Park has been town-owned since 1929. An adjacent parcel on the eastern slope of the hill was purchased by the Village Improvement Society early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now owned by the Sandy Bay Historical Society with a conservation restriction held by Essex County Greenbelt Association. There is also a town-owned water tower at the summit, which since September 2001 has been enclosed by a chain link fence. The summit is overgrown with vegetation that blocks the panoramic views from the summit. The Sandy Bay Historical Society is interested in re-establishing the historic views from the hill. Other issues are preserving adjacent privately owned areas and preserving the scenic qualities of the road leading to the summit, where development of large houses is beginning to occur.

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## **Sandy Bay**

The Sandy Bay frontage from the headlands south of the town harbor to Back Beach is Rockport's most important interface with the ocean. The area includes the town harbor, a working waterfront framed by Bearskin Neck and the Headlands that is known for its scenic values and is also very popular with tourists. The north side of Bearskin Neck includes White Wharf, Middle Wharf, Lumber Wharf and Old Harbor Wharf, all owned by the town. Next is the outflow from Mill Brook and Front Beach. Northernmost is Back Beach and the town landing associated with it. A popular local landmark is the stone gazebo overlooking the harbor which is part of a private residential property located along the shorefront. The gazebo, while inaccessible to the public, is visually important. The area also includes Sandy Bay Yacht Club and the breakwater.

## **Southern Woods**

Southern Woods is a largely undeveloped area located in the south central part of Rockport between the Cape Pond Watershed and the Rockport Golf Club. It is valued as open space contiguous to other undeveloped natural areas and includes a network of trails interconnecting Rockport and Gloucester. The area is important for its water resources and as wetlands and open space. The land comprising the South Woods is primarily in private ownership. There are few roads leading to the rocky area but as development pressures increase throughout the community, previously unbuildable areas become more desirable.

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## **PLANNING**

### **Preservation Strategies**

Rockport residents place high value on the community's strong sense of place, which is created by its scenic villages, sweeping ocean views and traditional land use patterns. Rockport's dramatic coastal landscape and granite hills played a critical role in the settlement and historical development of the community. Rockport is also fortunate to have a large and diverse collection of historic resources. The town has already taken steps to preserve its most significant buildings and natural areas. It is now looking beyond these resources to the landscapes, streetscapes, rural roads, neighborhoods and other natural and cultural assets that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most Essex County municipalities, Rockport is facing multiple pressures for change that threaten land-based uses and natural resources, especially in waterfront areas. Special places within the community that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to development.

### **Planning Issues**

In addition to the priority landscapes listed in the previous section, residents identified general issues related to heritage landscapes and community character. Each of the critical planning issues affects at least one of the priority landscapes. These issues are listed in alphabetical order. Community members also

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expressed interest in learning about preservation tools and strategies that have been effective in other Massachusetts communities and in identifying sources for preservation funding.

### ***Agriculture***

There is limited agriculture in Rockport. Preserving the remaining active farms, both for their agricultural use and for their scenic value and importance as watershed lands, wetlands and open space is a community priority. The two active farms left in town are Rowe's Horse Farm, a portion of which was recently purchased with Community Preservation funds, and Lane's Farm, which is valued by the community as farmland and is also strategically located as a potential access point to the South Woods area. A 22-acre woodlot associated with Lane's Farm was recently donated to Essex County Greenbelt Association. Both farms are privately owned and their long-term future is unknown. The farms and the associated pasture lands owned or leased by the farms will likely come under intense development pressure if the properties change hands. In addition to acquiring farmland through purchase or donation, agricultural preservation restrictions are another tool that Rockport could consider to preserve farmland.

### ***Burial Grounds and Cemeteries***

Rockport residents expressed concern about its two older burial grounds, Old Parish and Union, which are no longer active and both exhibit major preservation needs. Old Parish is the burial place of the town's founder and first citizen Richard Tarr, as well as many veterans of the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Issues include inadequate maintenance, vandalism, deteriorated monuments, poor landscape character, hazardous trees, impacts from abutters, poor or absent signage and lack of interpretation. Old Parish Burial Ground (also known as Beach Street Burial Ground or Fifth Parish Burial Ground) was included in DCR's Historic Cemeteries Initiative which included documentation on an MHC inventory form and preparation of a preservation plan. No recent documentation or planning has been done for Union Cemetery.

### ***Neighborhoods and Villages***

Preserving neighborhood character was a major theme expressed at the heritage landscape meeting. Rockport's villages and neighborhoods are rich in historic resources and essential to community vitality. Churches, schools and other institutions were mentioned as important anchors in the community. Closing of such institutions is often a blow to the neighborhood, especially when they are replaced with new uses that are no longer integral to the community. While almost all neighborhoods are facing changes that threaten community character, historic villages and waterfront areas were perceived as the most threatened. Specific concerns were that villages are losing their distinctive character, and that small houses are being replaced by larger ones that long term Rockport residents cannot afford. One participant noted the importance of steeples as visual landmarks within the village.



### ***Scenic Roads***

Rockport's rural roads were mentioned as scenic and historic assets that contribute much to the character of the community. Route 127 is the primary gateway to Rockport. The section known as Nugent Stretch is particularly valued by the community, as are the other major access points, Thacher Road/South Street (Route 127A) to the south and Granite Street (Route 127) to the north. Community members also mentioned several coastal roads, Caleb's Lane, Marmion Way and Straitsmouth Way, as scenic roads with dramatic views to the east, as well as Drumlin Road on Pigeon Hill, with views out over Pigeon Cove.

## **PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Preservation planning is a three step process: identification, evaluation and protection. Four useful documents to consult before beginning to implement preservation strategies are the Massachusetts Historical Commission's *Survey Manual* and *Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances*; the Department of Conservation and Recreation's *Reading the Land*; and the Essex National Heritage Commission's *Essex National Heritage Area Plan*. Each publication provides necessary information for the identification, evaluation and protection of the rich cultural heritage of Massachusetts communities. The recommendations that follow are in two parts. General recommendations are listed first, followed by more specific recommendations.

Each community will have to determine the best way to implement the recommendations discussed below. One approach that might help Rockport begin the process is to form a Heritage Landscape Committee, as described in *Reading the Land*.

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## **General Recommendations**

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of resources are discussed below. The general recommendations are listed in the order in which they are most logically addressed when applying the three step preservation planning process as described above. Thus the goal will be to (1) identify, (2) evaluate and (3) protect.

### ***Inventory of Heritage Landscapes and Other Historic Assets***

The vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record information about the resources. One cannot advocate for something unless one knows precisely what it is – the physical characteristics and historical development. Although Rockport has surveyed many of its historic resources, much of the work was done many years ago. Most of the town's historic landscapes have not been documented at all. All resources that have been recorded in the past should be reviewed, particularly those documented in the 1970s because survey methodology has changed since that time. New procedures are more comprehensive and link properties in a more coherent way than in the past. Thus, using the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey methodology:

- Document heritage landscapes and other resources identified by the community that are not already represented in the MHC inventory, with emphasis on priority landscapes and areas vulnerable to change such as Bearskin Neck, Flat Ledge Quarry/Granite Pier area and Pigeon Cove.
- Make sure to document secondary features on farms and residential properties, such as barns, stone walls and landscape elements.

### ***National Register Program***

As additional survey work is completed, evaluate properties for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Develop a National Register listing plan taking into consideration a property's significance, integrity and vulnerability. Properties that are in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority. Rockport's unlisted local historic districts should be considered high priorities for nomination to the National Register, as should Bearskin Neck.

### ***Burial Grounds and Cemeteries***

Rockport has three town-owned burial grounds. The documentation and preservation needs vary for each site. The DCR publication *Preservation Guidelines for Municipally Owned Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries* provides guidance on developing preservation plans for burial grounds, including identification and evaluation of the resources as well as preservation strategies. Using this guide Rockport should:

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- Prepare updated MHC inventory form for Union Cemetery. Complete MHC inventory form for Beech Grove Cemetery which has not yet been inventoried.
  - List eligible burial grounds and cemeteries in the National Register of Historic Places. Old Parish Burial Ground has already been determined eligible and it is likely that Union, and possibly Beech Grove, would be as well.
  - Develop a preservation and management plan for Union Cemetery taking into consideration repair of stone markers, stone walls and stone fencing related to cemeteries, repair of iron work, removal of invasive growth and on-going maintenance of plant material.
  - Review, prioritize and implement recommendations contained in preservation plan prepared for Old Parish Burial Ground as part of the Historic Cemeteries Initiative.
  - Establish community interest and support for burial ground preservation through existing organizations such as the Historical Commission or Sandy Bay Historical Society or through a friends group.

### *Neighborhood Character*

Nearly all preservation strategies seek to retain neighborhood character in some manner. As described above, thorough documentation on MHC inventory forms is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. Rockport has four contiguous local historic districts, which are also adjacent to Bearskin Neck, which has many of the same planning issues.

The 2004 Bearskin Neck planning study listed a variety of planning tools, all of which would also be applicable to other downtown neighborhoods, including the current local historic districts. One tool not mentioned in that report that should also be considered is neighborhood conservation districts, which recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected. While local historic districts offer the strongest form of protection for the preservation of historic resources, neighborhood conservation districts are less restrictive but still embrace neighborhood character. Areas with a high level of historical significance and integrity should be considered as potential local historic districts, while neighborhood conservation districts would be more appropriate for residential neighborhoods that may have less integrity and where more flexibility is needed.

- Pass demolition delay bylaw with a six-month or one year delay. Include a requirement to provide public notice of all demolition requests, including notice to abutters, to reinforce the value of local historic resources.

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- Review documentation, boundaries and administrative procedures for current local historic districts. Consider consolidating them into one large historic district that might also include Bearskin Neck. Ideally, boundaries for local historic districts should be contiguous with National Register districts. Develop and publish design review guidelines for the districts.
  - Consider neighborhood conservation districts as a preservation strategy for neighborhoods that many benefit from more flexibility than a local historic district. Such districts may be the most appropriate way to preserve the land use pattern of an area where there are changes in materials but the overall size, scale and orientation of structures within the heritage landscape are retained. Consider Bearskin Neck as a possible local historic district or neighborhood conservation district.

### *Quarries*

Among the most distinctive landscape features in Rockport are its quarries. Halibut Point, which is now a state park, is the most visible and accessible to the public. Steel Derrick is owned by a private association and used for swimming. Others are considered important as part of Rockport's water supply. Some are municipally owned; others are in private ownership. Safety issues associated with environmental hazards or recreational use are also a concern. Probably 100 quarries of various sizes exist; Little Parker, Big Parker, Johnson and Steel Derrick are the main quarries. Steel Derrick is surrounded by abandoned farms and old trails that serve an important open space function but are not permanently protected. Preserve historic and scenic value where possible by successfully acquiring Johnson's Quarry and protecting other privately owned quarries through acquisition or conservation restrictions.

### *Scenic Roads*

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of the community. They are highly valued by Rockport residents and visitors alike. Yet roads must also accommodate modern transportation needs and decisions regarding roadways are often made with travel requirements as the only consideration. The Scenic Roads Act (MGL Chapter 40-15C) that has been adopted by other communities only addresses removal of trees and stone walls that are within the right-of-way. Yet, in addition to roadway issues, much of what we value about scenic roads — the stone walls, views across open fields or to the ocean — is not within the public right-of-way. This is an important distinction and requires more than one approach. Also, numbered routes cannot be designed as scenic roads under Chapter 40-15C; thus other approaches are necessary.

- Develop a list with descriptions and photo documentation of each rural road in Rockport. Use this as the basis for designation of scenic roads, particularly those in rural/agricultural areas and adjacent to the coast.



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- Adopt a Scenic Roads Bylaw consistent with MGL chapter 40-15C and designate certain roads as scenic roads. Include design criteria to be considered when approving removal of trees and stone walls. Add other design criteria such as a provision allowing only one driveway cut per property on scenic roads. Coordinate procedures between Highway Department and Planning Board.
  - Establish an overlay to reinforce preservation of important views by establishing a no-disturb buffer on private property bordering on scenic roads or adopting flexible zoning standards to protect certain views. Such bylaws could be written to apply to the numbered routes also, which are not protected under the Scenic Roads Ordinance.
  - Develop policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstruction, which address the scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety. This is an important public process in which the town may have to accept responsibility for some costs to implement certain standards that are not acceptable to projects funded by Mass. Highway Department. Such standards should have a section addressing the way in which the local Highway Department maintains roads, for example requiring a public hearing if any additional pavement is to be added to a town road during reconstruction or repair. Policies can be adopted by local boards having jurisdiction over roads, or can be adopted through a bylaw. In developing policies consider factors such as road width, clearing of shoulders, walking paths and posted speeds. A delicate balance is required.

### ***Funding of Preservation Projects***

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing preservation strategies. In recent years, the ENHC has maintained a small grants program for Essex County communities. In addition, both the MHC and the DCR have had funding programs to assist communities in preservation related issues including:

- Survey and Planning Grants administered by the MHC support survey, National Register and preservation planning work.
- The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) administered by the MHC funds restoration and rehabilitation projects.
- The Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program (HLPGP) administered by DCR funds planning, rehabilitation, education and stewardship projects focused on historic landscapes, including cemeteries.

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Funding for state programs varies from year to year. When planning Rockport's Heritage Landscape Inventory program, contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding is available.

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is an excellent source of funding for many heritage landscape projects. Rockport adopted the CPA in 2002 with a 3% surcharge on each real estate bill with some exemptions. Many of the recommendations in this report could be funded with CPA money, including survey and National Register projects, preservation and conservation restrictions and agricultural preservation restrictions, which may be applicable to some of the more vulnerable landscapes. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is charged with developing a plan, considering projects and recommending expenditure of the CPA funds to the Selectmen. The plan helps to guide the community in selecting the most appropriate projects for CPA funding.

Towns like Rockport that have a local historic district ordinance, may apply for Certified Local Government (CLG) status which is granted by the National Park Service through the MHC. After the town completes an application and is accepted as a CLG, it files a report yearly on the status of applications, meetings and decisions. In return the town is eligible for federal funding that is distributed by the MHC. The matching funds are competitive; however a proportion of the federal allocation must be distributed to CLGs for Survey and Planning projects. CPA funds can be used for matching funds.

### **Specific Recommendations**



#### ***Bearskin Neck***

The Bearskin Neck Planning Study completed by the Cecil Group in 2004 documents the general features of the Neck that are valued by the community. These include: design character, streetscape, historic character, waterfront, land use, access and circulation, and economic opportunities. The report recommends aspects that should be preserved and aspects that could be improved. It also identifies specific issues and suggests ways to supplement existing regulations that allow Rockport to control growth and new development. Almost all of the recommendations also support heritage landscapes. These include documenting

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historic resources, establishing a Bearskin Neck Historic District, establishing a Bearskin Neck Zoning Overlay District, establishing design review guidelines and procedures, preparing a streetscape improvement plan and others. The recommendation to document Bearskin Neck's historic resources should be the first step taken in implementing the recommendations.

### ***Downtown***

General recommendations for neighborhood character are applicable for the downtown. Much of the area already is a local historic district. This strategy would be strengthened by the publication of design review guidelines that address commercial and residential properties. Some of the most pressing concerns are traffic and parking. Additional recommendations are as follows:

- Develop a village overlay zoning district that addresses density through dimensional regulations, which enhance the existing village plan in Rockport's downtown.
- Study traffic and parking and search for traffic mitigation strategies such as one-way streets and pattern road surface to slow traffic. Search for parcels of land that are screened for parking. The shuttle service from parking outside the village center to the downtown is one solution that has already been tried on a limited basis.

### ***Pigeon Hill***

- Document historic attributes associated with Pigeon Hill on an MHC inventory form.
- Prepare management plan for Pigeon Hill area that establishes goals, identifies key issues and lists recommended actions for stewardship. Plan should identify specific parcels that are critical to preserving the viewshed. It should also address issues related to town-owned land as well as other significant parcels and should include specific recommendations for land stewardship and community partnerships.
- Study traffic and parking and search for traffic mitigation strategies such as one-way streets and patterned road surface to slow traffic.
- Purchase easements or establish overlay district to preserve historic views. Community preservation funds are one potential source of revenue.

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## CONCLUSION

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The Rockport Reconnaissance Report is a critical tool in starting to identify the rich and diverse heritage landscapes in Rockport and in beginning to think about preservation strategies. However, it is only the first step in the planning process. Landscapes identified in this report, especially the priority landscapes, will typically need further documentation on MHC inventory forms. The documentation in turn can be used to build consensus and gather public support for their preservation. Implementation of recommendations will require a concerted effort of and partnerships with municipal boards and agencies, local non-profits, and state agencies and commissions.

Distribution of this Reconnaissance Report to the municipal land use boards and commissions will assist in making this one of the planning documents that guides Rockport in preserving important features of the community's character. The tasks that are recommended will require cooperation and coordination among boards and commissions, particularly Rockport's Historical Commission, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Harbor Advisory Committee, Harbor Planning Committee and Rights of Way Committee. It also is advisable to present this information to the Board of Selectmen, applicants to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program on behalf of the town. Finally, distribution of the report to conservation organizations, neighborhood associations and other preservation minded groups such as the Sandy Bay Historical Society will broaden the audience and assist in gathering interest and support for Rockport's heritage landscapes.

## APPENDIX: HERITAGE LANDSCAPES IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY

This list was prepared as a summary of the Heritage Landscape Identification meeting held in Rockport on November 15 and follow-up fieldwork on November 30, 2004. This is a working list and can be updated by the community. **There may be other heritage landscapes that were not identified at the HLI meeting noted above.** The chart has two columns, the name and location of the resource are in the first, notes about the resource are in the second. Landscapes are grouped by land use category. Abbreviations used are listed below.

CR = Conservation Restriction	NR = National Register
ECGA = Essex County Greenbelt Association	PR = Preservation Restriction
LHD = Local Historic District	* = Priority Landscape
NHL = National Historic Landmark	TTOR = The Trustees of Reservations

Agriculture	
<b><i>Lane Farm *</i></b> off South Street	One of the few remaining active farms in town, located in a visible location near the school complex. Farmland serves as aquifer recharge area and gateway to the Saw Mill Brook watershed. 21 acres recently given to ECGA, rest is still privately owned. Identified as an important parcel in Community Development Plan.
<b><i>Rowe's Horse Farm</i></b> Jerdens Lane	Horse farm located near school complex, very visible. Portion of Rowe farmland recently purchased by town with CPA funds.
Building / Structure	
<b><i>Babson Museum</i></b> Route 127	Stone building originally built in 1658 and operated as a cooperage by James Babson. Area also includes foundations of other early structures. Currently operated as a historical museum that is open seasonally.
<b><i>Cable House</i></b> Norwood Avenue	Landing location of one of the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cables. Overlooks the harbor. Building has been recently altered.
<b><i>Churches</i></b>	All churches are important civic institutions and integral components of their neighborhoods. Old Sloop Church was mentioned as especially significant.
<b><i>Hannah Jumper House</i></b> 35 Mt Pleasant St.	Historic house located downtown near harbor.
<b><i>Rockport Lodge and Barn</i></b> South Street	Former Rockport Lodge is complex of buildings proposed for reuse as affordable housing. Property includes a historic wooden barn, circa 1870. Preservation of the barn is a concern to some in the community.
Burial Grounds and Cemeteries	
<b><i>Beech Grove Cemetery</i></b> Prospect Street	Large 19 <sup>th</sup> century municipally owned cemetery, still active.

<b><i>Old Parish Burial Ground *</i></b> Beach Street	Also known as Beach Street Cemetery and Fifth Parish Cemetery. Town owned, inactive. Established 1727, approximately one acre with roughly 400 stones dating from 1727 to 1966. Included in DCR Historic Cemetery Initiative.
<b><i>Union Cemetery *</i></b> Union Lane	Municipally owned small burial ground, not well maintained, inactive.
<b>Industrial</b>	
<b><i>Flat Ledge Quarry/ Granite Pier Area *</i></b> Granite Street	Area includes quarry, railroad beds, Granite Company building, Keystone Bridge, boatshops, marina, ocean, vernal pools. Historic site, strong association with local granite industry. Railroad transported granite from quarries on Pigeon Hill to Granite Pier where it was used to build breakwater. Area is still a working industrial landscape.
<b><i>Johnson's Quarry *</i></b> Edge of Dogtown	Johnson's Quarry is pending open space acquisition and addition to the town's water supply. It is an important connector to Dogtown, but is not well-known. Future of quarries was also mentioned as a general issue in town.
<b><i>Kelly's Pond &amp; Pescucci Gravel Pit</i></b> Near Cape Pond	Former industrial sites that are important as part of town's watershed.
<b><i>Mill Pond Meadow and Mill Pond</i></b> Between Beach, Main and King Sts.	Includes Mill Pond and dam (site of historic grist mill), adjacent brook and meadow, once a colonial hayfield and later became the site of a piano factory and of LePage's in the 19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup> centuries. Now town-owned parkland. Located downtown adjacent to Old Parish Burial Ground. Pond is threatened by filling from storm water sediments.
<b>Maritime</b>	
<b><i>Atlantic Path *</i></b> North of Pigeon Cove	Atlantic Path is an important coastal pathway north of Pigeon Cove that has been documented by the Rockport Rights of Way Committee and published in <i>Rockport Guide to Public Paths and Town Landings</i> . It includes Andrews Point, a scenic overlook that has been a favorite picnic spot for generations. Path includes some tax title land.
<b><i>Beaches</i></b>	Back, Cape Hedge, Folly Cove, Front, Loblolly, Long, Old Garden, Pebble, Steep Bank Landing. All town-owned.
<b><i>Coastal Fortifications</i></b>	20 <sup>th</sup> century submarine lookout towers. The concrete tower that is a part of the Visitor's Center at Halibut Point State Park is one. There is another located at the south end of town near Penryn Way.
<b><i>Gap Cove</i></b>	Adjacent to Gap Head, near Straitsmouth Cove. Scenic views of Straitsmouth Island.
<b><i>Harbors</i></b>	All harbors in town are man-made. Pigeon Cove Harbor (working harbor used by fishing industry) and Rockport Harbor (inner harbor including Town Wharf, White Wharf) were especially mentioned.
<b><i>Lobster Pool</i></b>	Adjacent to Knowlton's field at intersection of Granite and Beach Streets.
<b><i>Milk Island</i></b>	Southeast of town. Central portion is Knight Wildlife Reservation.

<b><i>Old Garden Path</i></b>	Pathway along coastal headlands near Ocean Avenue and Old Garden Road.
<b><i>Outlook to Thacher Island</i></b>	Scenic view of Thacher Island from Flat Point to Loblolly Point, especially from end of Eden Road.
<b><i>Rights-of-way</i></b>	Rights-of-way to the water have been documented by the Rockport Rights of Way Committee and the Friends of the Rockport Rights-of-Way Committee. They are published in <i>Rockport Guide to Public Paths and Town Landings</i> .
<b><i>Salvages Island</i></b>	Three intertidal outcrop islands between the breakwater and Straitsmouth Island.
<b><i>Sandy Bay *</i></b>	Area includes Sandy Bay itself as well as shoreline from headlands south of Rockport Harbor to Back Beach area, which constitutes the downtown interface with the ocean. Sandy Bay Yacht Club is an important feature of this area.
<b><i>Shipwrecks</i></b>	Some still occasionally visible at low tide.
<b><i>Straitsmouth Island</i></b>	Off Gap Head. Mostly protected.
<b><i>Thacher Island</i></b>	NHL. Two lighthouses. Largely protected. Thacher Island Association involved in administering island. A portion is National Wildlife Refuge.
<b><i>Town Landings</i></b>	Important access points to the shore. Well documented and protected in Rockport.
<b>Natural Feature</b>	
<b><i>Folly Cove</i> Off Granite Street</b>	Scenic area on Rockport/Gloucester border at northern edge of town. Known for its dramatic views of the sunset over the water.
<b><i>Henry's Pond</i> Penzance Road</b>	Also known as Cambourne Pond. Near Pebble Beach. Geologically unstable barrier beach protects the pond.
<b><i>Pigeon Hill *</i> Landmark Lane/ Drumlin Road</b>	Glacially formed drumlin that is the tallest hill in Rockport, visible from ocean. In 1642 Pigeon Hill was set aside as a landmark to guide mariners. Long distance views from Pigeon Hill are blocked by growth of trees and development. Area also includes Pingree Park.
<b><i>Poole's Hill</i></b>	Site of an old hospital, has open space value and archaeological potential. This area is adjacent to the Town Forest.
<b>Open Space</b>	
<b><i>Delamater Sanctuary</i> South Street</b>	Portion given to ECGA. Protected.
<b><i>Dogtown Common *</i></b>	Regional landscape mostly in Gloucester. Rugged hilly area with scrub vegetation. Partially protected, edges vulnerable. Cellar holes from Revolutionary times.
<b><i>Evans Field</i> Off Railroad Avenue</b>	Distinctive WPA era stadium near railroad station.

<b><i>Halibut Point</i></b> Off Gott Lane	Former quarry at northern tip of Rockport, now a state reservation. Quarry and ocean visible at the same time. Samuel Gott House (NR) is located nearby.
<b><i>Harvey Park</i></b>	In front of Baptist Church. Across road from original harbor of Sandy Bay Parish.
<b><i>Rockport Golf Club</i></b> Country Club Road	The Rockport Golf Club is important open space adjacent to the few remaining farms in town. It also abuts the South Woods, which connects with Dogtown Common.
<b><i>South Woods Area *</i></b> Country Club Road	The South Woods area surrounds the Rockport Golf Club. It contains wetlands and abuts critical Saw Mill Brook watershed land. It is also important open space adjacent to the few remaining farms in town and an important connector to Dogtown Common. The South Woods is listed as a priority area in the Community Development Plan. The woods are in multiple ownership, making preservation difficult.
<b><i>Town Forest</i></b>	Southwest corner of town, includes Poole's Hill (includes pitcher plants, mosses, boardwalk). Briar Swamp and Babson Reservoir lands lie to the west.
<b><i>Waring Field</i></b> off South St.	Town-owned field leased as hay pasture, near Whale Cove and Golf Club. Formerly agricultural land, most of surrounding area now residential development.
<b>Residential / Neighborhood</b>	
<b><i>Bearskin Neck *</i></b>	Peninsula adjacent to Rockport Harbor. Mixed commercial, residential area with strong ties to Rockport's artist community and harbor. Motif #1 and 2 located on Bearskin Neck is scenic view popularized by local painters. Also significant as site of Rockport's shipbuilding industry. Very vulnerable, study has been done. Key area, not in historic district but surrounded by it.
<b><i>Downtown *</i></b>	Mix of civic, commercial and residential uses extending along Main Street, Broadway, Mount Pleasant Street and Beach Street. Important civic buildings along Main Street include Carnegie Library, Rockport Art Association. Streetscape and private gardens are an important feature in downtown area. Also Dock Square and associated boat ramp.
<b><i>Pigeon Cove *</i></b> Granite Street	Pigeon Cove is Rockport's northern village, initially associated with the quarry industry. Emerson Inn is important feature of Pigeon Cove, also Old Garrison House (Witch House) 188 Granite Street (NR, First Period) and Old Castle (1711, NR) owned by Sandy Bay Historical Society.
<b>Transportation</b>	
<b><i>Granite Keystone Bridge</i></b> Granite Street	NR. Stone arch bridge carries Granite Street over the quarry. Part of Granite Pier/Flat Ledge Quarry area. Proposed construction of a dam adjacent to bridge is a concern.
<b><i>Nugent Stretch *</i></b> Route 127	Site of old Nugent Piggery. Important open space with views, gateway to town. Scenic section of Route 127 and adjacent railroad tracks. Proposed roadway alterations and addition of sidewalk would change Route 127 corridor.
<b><i>Railroad/Trolley Tracks</i></b>	Trolley tracks found in Pigeon Cove, also railroad tracks leading to granite quarries.



<b><i>Railroad Station</i></b>	Includes old station, railroad derrick and freight house. Derrick was active until the 1970s. It is one of two surviving in Massachusetts and the only one converted to electric power. New station is proposed. MBTA and town are deciding what to do with freight house.
<b><i>Scenic Roads</i></b>	Many in town, characterized by narrow winding alignment, old stone walls along roadside. Sometimes with dramatic seaside views and mature trees. Straitsmouth Road mentioned as particularly scenic. Also Marmion Way, Straitsmouth Way, Caleb's Lane and Eden Road, all with dramatic ocean views to the east. Drumlin Road is a scenic road near Pigeon Hill with views out over Pigeon Cove.
<b><i>Tercentenary Signs and other Features</i></b>	Six of the seven original signs remain - stewardship issue. WPA murals in Post Office and Community House illustrate the history of the community. Community House murals are owned by Sandy Bay Historical Society. Town honor rolls - stewardship issue.

# ROCKPORT OPENSOURCE & HISTORIC RESOURCES

