



New Salem Reconnaissance Report

Connecticut River Valley Reconnaissance Survey

Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory
Program



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Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

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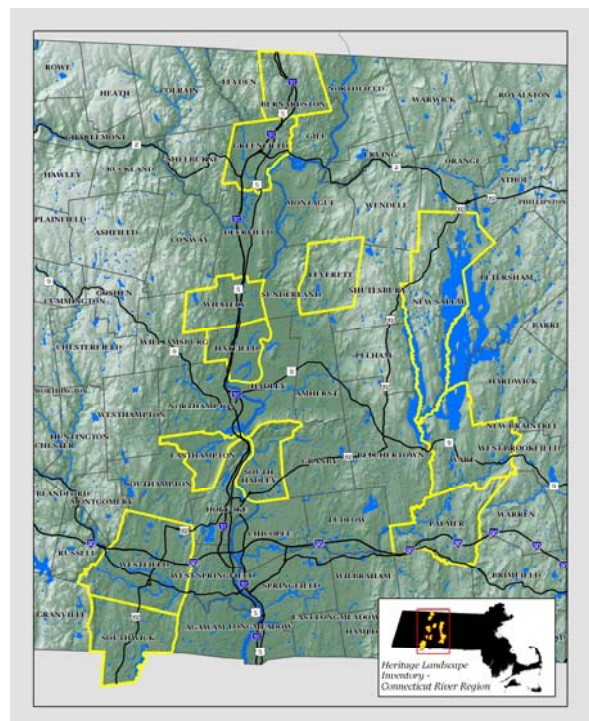
Richard K. Sullivan, Jr., Commissioner
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INTRODUCTION

Heritage landscapes are special places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past. They are dynamic and evolving, reflect the history of a community and provide a sense of place. They show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns and 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 step toward 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 or an important river corridor.

To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and its regional partners, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program to twelve communities in the Connecticut River valley region of Massachusetts. The goals of the program are to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected, and to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The communities within the Connecticut River Valley region of Massachusetts are diverse in their settlement patterns and economic histories. What they hold in common is a foundation built on agriculture that was carried out in communities traversed by a series of major waterways and tributaries, from the Connecticut River to the Deerfield, Sawmill, Green, Millers, Quaboag, Swift, Mill and Ware Rivers. This region contains significant cultural and historic resources and uncommon natural beauty. For some of the communities, industry developed alongside agriculture, so that today the heritage landscapes reflect both agrarian and industrial pasts while providing recreational and educational opportunities. From scenic town commons and natural areas, to civic buildings and burial grounds, the heritage landscapes within the region collectively tell the story of their varied and often complex history.



Connecticut River Valley Heritage Landscape Inventory project area

Methodology

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 since its inception. In summary, each community organized a heritage landscape identification meeting during which residents and town officials identified and prioritized the natural and cultural landscapes within town that embody the community's unique character. This meeting was followed by a fieldwork session led by the project team, including the local project coordinator and staff of FRCOG or PVPC, accompanied by interested community members. During the fieldwork session the Priority Heritage Landscapes were assessed and opportunities for preservation were explored and discussed. The final product for each community is an individualized Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report. This report outlines the community's landscape history, describes the Priority Heritage Landscapes along with associated opportunities, issues, and recommendations, and concludes with implementation strategies.

PART I: HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

LOCAL HISTORY

New Salem, located in Franklin County, is the sixth largest town in size in Massachusetts with a total area of 59 square miles, including nearly 14 square miles of the Quabbin Reservoir. The Town is bordered on the north by Orange, on the northeast by Athol and Petersham, on the south by the Quabbin Reservoir, and on the west by Wendell and Shutesbury.

The Town Center is located off Route 202 which runs north-south between Route 2 and Route 9. It is situated on a high hill and features one of the most scenic traditional town commons in the state. Smaller villages within other areas of Town include North New Salem, South New Salem, Morse Village, Quimby, Cooleyville, and Hagerville. New Salem has many hills with steep grades dipping to winding valleys of small streams. The northeast part of Town includes areas with relatively level land and large wetlands, such as Blackinton Swamp. Elevations range from 524 feet above sea level at the surface of the Quabbin Reservoir to 1,281 feet at the top of Packard Mountain. These elevations provide several overlooks throughout with stunning views of the surrounding areas, particularly of the Quabbin. In recognition of the rural and scenic character of the community, all roads in Town are designated as scenic roads (with the exception of Routes 122 and 202 which do not qualify for such designation).

In the 1800s, nearly all the land in New Salem had been cleared of forests and converted to pasture or other agricultural uses. As agriculture diminished, the forests returned and now only about 5% of the land in Town is cleared of forest. Many of the remaining farms in town today have owners with additional off-farm incomes. New Salem's forests are one third coniferous with white pine and hemlock predominant, and two thirds hardwoods with black birch, maple and oaks predominant. This forest landscape extends into neighboring communities and includes large expanses of protected public land, which present varied outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

New Salem has a wealth of water resources, including the Quabbin Reservoir. The 39-square-mile reservoir is the largest body of water in Massachusetts and was created in the 1930s by damming up the Swift River. It is replenished by a watershed area of approximately 80,000 acres and is the major water supply for communities in the Boston area that are home to two-thirds of Massachusetts' population. The towns of Dana, Prescott, Enfield and Greenwich were taken for its creation, and the land once in Prescott was annexed to New Salem. Many of the roads in Town now dead-end at the edge of the Quabbin. The Swift River Valley Historical Society preserves the memory of these towns and maintains a growing museum with historic buildings, artifacts, photographs and records at the historic Whitaker-Clary House (1816) on Elm Street in North New Salem. Recreational uses of the Quabbin Reservation are limited to protect the water quality. The 12,100 acre Prescott Peninsula comprises the southern half of New Salem and is a Restricted Area that is reserved to protect the public water supply. This area is closed to the public and only limited access is allowed for research. The state-owned lands in and around the Quabbin Reservoir are under the authority of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). It is important to note that nearly 80% of the land in New Salem is publicly owned for the conservation of water resources, forests and wildlife.¹

Small brooks in the western part of Town form the Middle Branch of the Swift River that drain into the Quabbin Reservoir and the West Branch of the Swift River flows from Shutesbury and forms a border between the two towns. Most of the streams in New Salem are too small to navigate, but are scenic and offer good trout fishing. The northeast corner of Town has small brooks and four ponds (Bassett Pond, South Spectacle Pond, North Spectacle Pond, and Eagleville Pond/Lake Rohunta) that drain north into the Millers River Watershed. The northeastern corner of Town is not part of the Quabbin drainage, but is located over an aquifer that supplies a large public well field for the neighboring town of Orange. Despite serving as a critical link in the provision of the water supply for the Boston metropolitan area, it is important to note that there is no public water supply and no sewer system in New Salem. Individual

¹ *New Salem Open Space and Recreation Plan*, p.1.

private wells, drilled or dug, provide water for houses and other uses. Some shallow wells run dry during droughts.

New Salem's history began on December 31, 1734, when the General Court granted a township six miles square to 60 residents of Salem, who then set about recruiting settlers. The first settlers are believed to be Jeremiah and Rebecca Meacham, who purchased land north of the center and relocated his family there in 1737. Other settlers from Salem, Peabody and Danvers soon arrived and built the first meeting house in 1739. New Salem became a frontier and agrarian settlement that was governed by Salem until it was incorporated on June 15, 1753. Subsistence farming was augmented by the use of the Swift River and other streams as waterpower for gristmills, sawmills, fulling and carding mills, and tanneries. The town was on the route taken by Captain Daniel Shays and his men in 1787 during Shays' Rebellion. A decade earlier, the town was on the route traveled by 1,000 Hessian captives who were taken from Saratoga, N. Y. to the Boston area². New Salem was also a stopover along the Brattleboro-to-Worcester stagecoach route.

In its earliest days, New Salem was a poor, isolated small town. The economy changed with the establishment of the New Salem Academy in 1795 in the center of town, when New Salem became a center for educational and cultural life. New Salem Academy was established through public subscription and a grant of public land from the state legislature. The Academy was initially a private preparatory school that provided quality secondary education to New Salem and surrounding towns and was unique in its time for being coeducational. At this time, New Salem encompassed several villages, which included areas that are now part of South Athol and the section of Orange that extends to the Millers River. New Salem prospered in farming, trades, lumber and cottage industries in the early 1800s including the production of palm leaf hats, cheese, and butter. It was also famous for supplying ferns and laurel to florists throughout North America, including decorations for the U.S. Capitol buildings for two presidential inaugurations. These jobs brought people to Town and the population rose to an all-time high of 2,146 in 1820.

From 1822 to 1837, parts of New Salem were annexed by Orange, Prescott and Athol, reducing the population to 1,305 in 1840. In 1871, the Athol & Enfield Railroad (also known as the Rabbit Run Railroad) began operations through the Swift River Valley with a depot in New Salem in the village known as Hagerville, providing economic opportunities for nearby mills and lumber operations. However, by 1900, the population declined to 809, and New Salem was gradually transformed once again into a small farming community. One of the few industrial operations in New Salem during this period was the Climax Electric Works near the Town Center. In 1940, New Salem reported 357 residents, the town's population nadir.

² New Salem, Massachusetts – Forgotten Franklin County Town <http://yeoldewoburn.net/index1.htm>

Although its population has continued to increase over the past few decades, New Salem remains a quiet, rural town that is primarily residential. There are no large residential subdivisions at present. The recent growth has not, however, led to the diversity in businesses and services that were available in the 1800s. At the present time, New Salem has a couple of small industries, a few retail and service businesses, and several enterprises and small shops operated from residents' homes. Major employers located in New Salem include the Town of New Salem, the Swift River Elementary School, Orange Oil, and Hamilton Orchard.

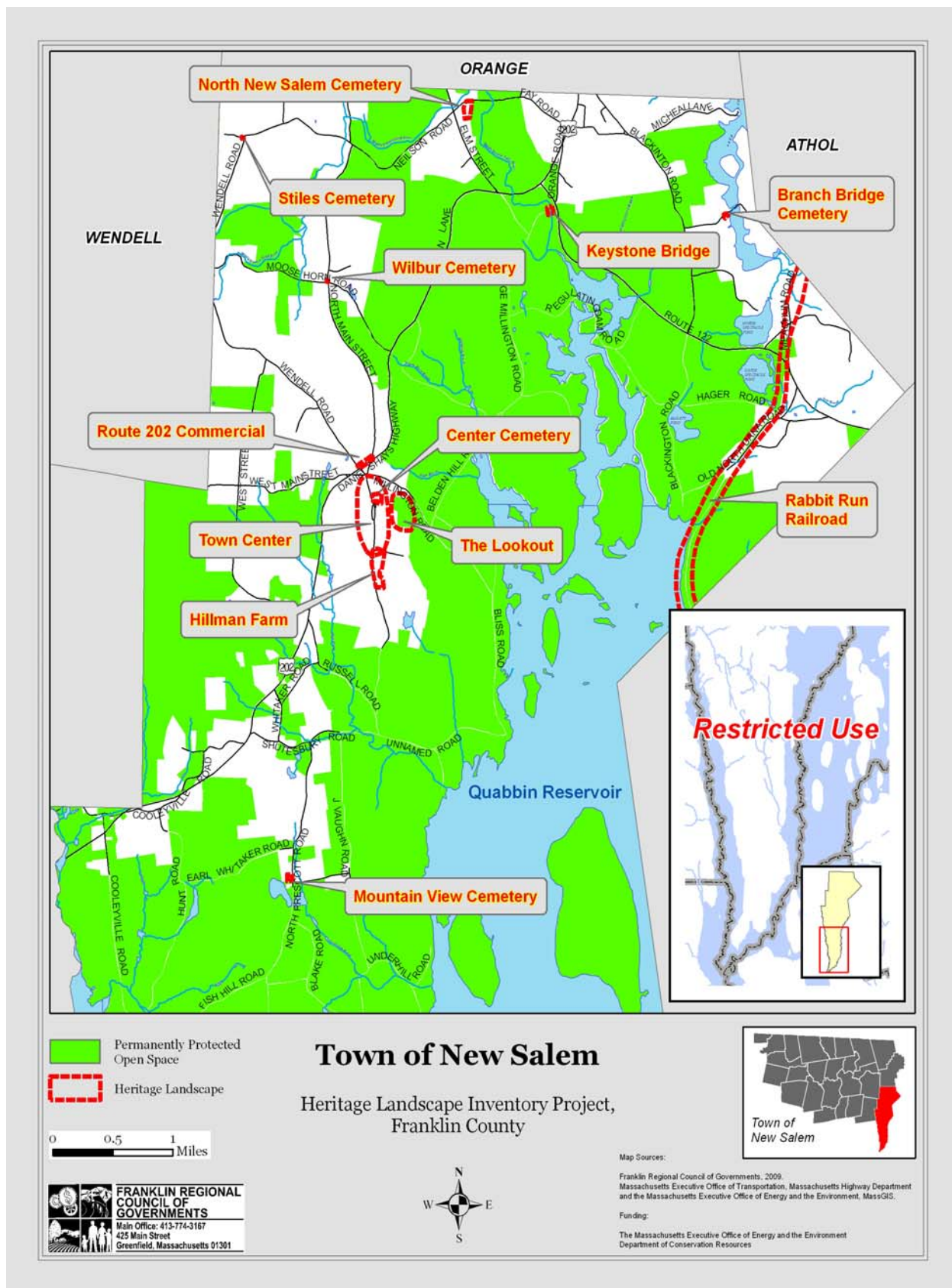
The presence of the Quabbin Reservoir and the high levels of protected lands in New Salem insulate the Town from the development pressures towards suburbanization that is being experienced in surrounding towns. New Salem has several small farms, as well as hayfields and other agricultural areas. However, these unforested lands are also the areas that could most easily be converted to house lots and thus could quickly be lost for agricultural uses.

The Community Survey conducted in October 2002 for the *New Salem Community Development Plan* found near unanimous support for preserving the Town's rural qualities and for protecting water resources, farmlands, forests, scenic areas and wildlife habitats. The survey indicates community support for enacting zoning bylaws and other measures that can improve land uses, retain scenic landscapes and protect historic resources. The Plan identifies three goals to guide economic activities: 1) Promote sustainable economic development; 2) Attract and support businesses that complement town character; and 3) Increase good and services available to New Salem residents and visitors.³ The Town has made strides in recent years in revitalizing the Town Center, protecting open space, and encouraging economic development, particularly in the cultural and recreational tourism sectors. Nonetheless, there remain many Town priorities that will require comprehensive community planning and concerted efforts of New Salem's residents to be realized in coming years.

PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

In the public identification meeting, participants identified a broad range of 38 landscapes within Town that define the heritage of the community. These heritage landscapes provide a cross section of the types of landscapes that contributed to the historical development of the town and together tell the story of New Salem's past. Meeting attendees then voted to identify 6 Priority Heritage Landscapes for the focus of this project. These Priority Heritage Landscapes are: **the Town Center, the Lookout, the Hillman Farm, Town Cemeteries, the Route 202 Commercial Area, and the Rabbit Run Railroad.** The Keystone Bridge was also noted as an important heritage landscape in Town that is addressed in this report.

³ *New Salem Community Development Plan*, p. 3-14.



The following text describes the unique value that each of these landscapes provides to the community and a set of recommendations for its preservation and protection. The recommendations are meant as a starting point for discussion among community members. It is up to town staff, boards and residents to decide which tools and techniques will fit with community goals and then work towards their implementation.

Town Center

The Town Center is defined by the New Salem Common Historic District, which was designated a National Register Historic District in 1978. The District covers approximately 35 acres and is located in the center of town at an elevation of approximately 1,000 feet. It encompasses the Town Common and its north and south environs for approximately three-fourths of a mile along the east and west sides of South Main St, from the “Five Corners” (the junction of



New Salem Common Historic District, including from left the 1794 Meetinghouse, Old Town House, and Central Congregational Church
(photo courtesy PreservationMass)

South Main Street, West Main Street, North Main Street, Wendell Road and Millington Road) southerly to approximately 100 feet beyond Lover’s Lane at the Hillman Farm. There are thirty-five historic sites and buildings within the District, most dating from the nineteenth century. These include historic homes, churches, and the former New Salem Academy (now a private residence), with the majority of the remaining properties owned by the Town. The New Salem Town Center has been the cultural and civic core of the community historically and still serves this function today.

Specific sites and buildings within the Town Center that were identified in the local identification meeting include the Town Common, Town Hall, the Center Cemetery, the Old Academy Building, the 1794 Meetinghouse, historic homes, the Town Pound, and the playing fields. These key landscapes were chosen because of their significance, community value, and potential or real threats to their long-term protection. Each is described in greater detail in the following sections. The Center Cemetery is described separately in the section on Town Cemeteries.

Other important properties in the Town Center identified during the site survey include the Stowell Building, the Central Congregational Church, the Old Town House, the Library, the New Academy Building, and the Fire Department. Several have undergone recent renovations, such as the Central Congregational Church (1854), which had its steeple restored in 2005 and is subject to a Preservation Restriction between the MHC and the Town of New Salem. Others are not threatened, such as the New Academy Building, built in 1908 of stone-faced concrete blocks with an observation tower and clock. It is now privately-owned, well-maintained, and has been subject since 1990 to a preservation restriction between the owners and the Town of New Salem that prohibits the alteration of the exterior surfaces without prior written approval of the New Salem Historical Commission.



New Salem Town Common

(photo courtesy DCR)

Town Common

This two-acre park in the center of town is the site of the annual town fair, known as "Old Home Day", and other community celebrations. The Town Common was restored in the late 1980s to a traditional New England village green with a grant from the Department of Environmental Management (now the Department of Conservation and Recreation). Utilities were put underground and the road that cut the common in half was taken up, re-seeded,

and planted with trees to restore the pastoral qualities of the original colonial New England villages. The original common, set aside for common use by the first settlers in 1734, was much larger, covering much of the present Town Center and included a training ground for soldiers of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Historic photos from 1910 show a bandstand on the Common between the Old and New Academy Buildings, and there has been discussion over the years about placing one there again.

The Town Hall

This Town-owned building of Colonial Revival design is located on the east side of South Main Street and was constructed in 1939 as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project with local labor and native materials. It has offices for municipal boards, one large meeting room in the basement, and a gymnasium/auditorium with basketball court located on the upper floor that seats about 325, with an 18' x 36' stage.



New Salem Town Hall

The Town Hall building was closed for the winter in 2008-2009 to save on heating costs, as it is poorly insulated. The building is also not fully handicapped accessible. Renovation needs and reuse options are currently being considered by the Town.

Interim Town offices are currently located in other Town buildings in the Center. These include the Stowell Agricultural Building next door which reportedly was built using excess concrete blocks from the construction of

the New Academy Building and originally housed the Climax Electric Works of Levi Flagg, which manufactured electric cars beginning in 1909. It is now owned by the Town and is currently being used for offices for the Police Department (in the basement) the Select Board, The Town Coordinator, the Board of Health, the Council on Aging, and the Building Inspector. The Greek Revival Old Town House (1839) was originally built as the Town Hall, then became the library, and is now serving as office space for the Town Clerk, the Tax Collector, and Assessor's offices, three town offices that were located in the Town Hall.

Old Academy Building

The Old Academy Building is the oldest remaining structure of the New Salem Academy, and is located on the east side of Academy Drive next to the current Library. It is owned by the Town and leased to the Friends of Historic New Salem. It was built in 1838 to replace the original New Salem Academy Building which was destroyed by fire in 1837. After the construction of the New Academy building in 1908, the Old Academy has served in a variety of other uses over the years including a natural history museum and the Town's public library. The 2 ½ story wooden building is one of the earliest and largest known surviving example of a type of structure commonly built in the Northeast during the 1840s and 1850s with "stack-plank" or "ribbon" construction. Stack plank walls consist of typically 1' x 6' boards laid flat in horizontal courses that overlay alternately at both the exterior and interior corners without any vertical members. Clapboards are nailed directly to the



Old New Salem Academy Building

exterior, while plaster is applied to the interior without lath. Except for repairs in 1998, the building has undergone very little modification since the 19th century.⁴ The number of surviving historical features in the building is unusual, including tin ceilings, original wallpaper and desks. Efforts to preserve and rehabilitate the building began in 1980 when deferred maintenance led to the threat of demolition. In 1996, the Old Academy Building was chosen by Historic Massachusetts as one of the state's Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources. The building is currently undergoing a multi-phase restoration, the first phase of which was completed in 1999 when the structure was stabilized and strengthened, windows were repaired, and a new roof was installed. In 2005, it was nationally recognized with a Save America's Treasures matching grant. Additional fundraising efforts are underway to complete Phase II of the building's restoration to bring it into use as a multi-function museum and community center that is fully accessible. The Old Academy Building is subject to a 1998 Preservation Restriction Agreement between the Town of New Salem and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to protect its architectural and historical integrity.

1794 Meeting House

The 1794 Meetinghouse, located on the west side of South Main Street, was originally constructed as the First Congregational Church. It was actually the second meetinghouse constructed on the site, when the original structure was deemed too small to accommodate the growing congregation and civic needs of New Salem. (The old Meetinghouse was moved to the northeast corner of the Town Common and was rebuilt as the first building for the New Salem Academy.) When the new Meetinghouse was completed, it was considered the finest in architectural design in Hampshire County⁵ (now divided into Hampshire and Franklin Counties). In 1837, the Meetinghouse, which faced north, was raised to rotate one-quarter to the east as part of extensive renovations in the Greek Revival style,



1794 Meetinghouse

⁴ *Old Academy Building Master Plan*, p. 4.

⁵ www.1794meetinghouse.org, History section.

including the addition of the belfry, bell and steeple. In the mid-19th century it became the Unitarian Church, although services were offered only sporadically. The building was used for town meetings and New Salem Academy graduations until the construction of a new Town hall in 1934. Through the 1950's it was the site of Academy reunions and town celebrations such as the Fourth of July. The 2-story wooden structure features a gable roof with a steeple including a square belfry and Gothic windows. The large auditorium is noteworthy because it does not contain interior supporting columns.

Accepted by the Town in 1987, the Meetinghouse is currently leased by the nonprofit 1794 Meetinghouse Inc. for \$1 per year for use as a performing arts center for the North Quabbin region. The nonprofit organization is responsible for maintenance of the building and cultural programming. A Civic Center grant was obtained which stabilized the exterior and funded architectural drawings for the complete renovation. Since 1990, incremental interior repairs (electrical upgrade, ceiling plaster repair, handicapped access) have been made to the building. Since 1994, the building has been used from June through September for community plays and concerts. The Meetinghouse is subject to a Preservation Restriction entered into in 1997 between the Town of New Salem and the Massachusetts Historical Commission to protect its architectural and historical integrity.

Historic Homes

There are numerous historic homes surrounding the New Salem Common and throughout the Historic District. A total of twenty are listed in the MHC's Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System and include a wide range of architectural styles including Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Victorian Eclectic, and Second Empire.

The William Knight House represents one of the few brick homes in the Town of New Salem. Built in 1808, this Federal home was probably built of local bricks manufactured in Cyrus Crowl's brickyard that was located at the Moosehorn Brook on Millington Road, now flooded by the waters of the Quabbin Reservoir. (This was the first and only brickyard in town, and was also the location where the Crowl Fern business got its start.) A porch was removed to restore the facade to its original appearance.



William Knight House



Another significant historic property in the Historic District is the former New Salem Academy Dormitory on Academy Drive, now a private home used seasonally. Constructed in 1871, this Second Empire style building was constructed by Porter J. Eaton and Charles A. Merriam.

Former New Salem Academy Hall – New Salem Academy Dormitory

Town Pound

The Town Pound, constructed circa 1737, is located on private property on the East side of South Main Street just south of the William White House, a Greek Revival home built in 1843. The Pound was formerly a 30' x30' square walled enclosure where stray animals were kept until claimed by their rightful owners. It was repaired in 1870, but its use was discontinued by the 1890s. Even as late as 1953, when the Town celebrated its 200th Anniversary, the Selectmen still annually appointed a pound keeper and field driver, whose job it was to deliver the stray animals to the pound keeper. The foundation of the stone enclosure remains, but it is not visible from the road.

Playing Fields

The New Salem Academy closed in 1968 and in 1988, the Town purchased the school's lands and several of its buildings for municipal facilities and public athletic fields. The athletic area is a 4-acre grass field surrounded by woods behind the Academy's former automotive shop (1958), which is now the Town's Fire Department. The field is in good condition and serves multiple uses. There are no bleachers, but an adjacent hillside serves as an area for spectators to watch games, and in the winter local youths use this hill for sledding. There is also a soccer field, tennis court, and basketball court which are in need of upkeep. The parking lot and paths to these fields are not fully handicap accessible and there are no restroom facilities.

The public volleyball court is a ¼ acre grass field next to the Town Common that is used on Old Home Days for volleyball games. In the winter of 2001, the Recreation Commission, with the help of the Highway Department, flooded this area for a skating rink, which was very popular but difficult to maintain. This mixed use area offers opportunities for lawn sports, hiking, and nature study in its surrounding woodland which offers views of the Quabbin. Similar to the other larger fields, there are invasive trees that should be removed.



New Salem Playing Fields

The playground is on a tenth of an acre adjacent to the Town Common and serves younger children throughout the town. It is the former playground for the Center Elementary School and is next to the new library. Much of the original playground equipment has been removed and what exists is in need of restoration.

The *New Salem Open Space and Recreation Plan* identifies the need for a maintenance and improvement schedule for Town recreation areas, including restroom facilities and parking improvements. It further identifies the need for the development of a financial plan to support recreation improvements.⁶

Opportunities:

- The New Salem Town Common Historic District has been a National Register Historic District since 1978. Several of the key properties have preservation restrictions held by MHC (the 1974 Meetinghouse, the Old Academy Building, and the Congregational Church) and one (the New Academy Building) has a preservation restriction held by the Town. The Old Academy Building is now structurally stable following Phase I of a two-phase planned restoration as a museum and community center.
- The Town Common was restored in the 1980s to a traditional New England village green. Utilities were put underground, which significantly enhances the historic feel of the center of Town. The Common is used by people of all ages and interests in Town, including families

⁶ *New Salem Open Space and Recreation Plan*, p. 43

using the ball fields and equestrian enthusiasts driving lorries around it and stopping to socialize.

- The Town Hall is a unique Works Progress Administration (WPA) building that contributes to the character of the Town Center that has a large auditorium/gymnasium that traditionally provided a central location for the citizens to gather for community events and New Salem Academy functions when the school was operational. In the last 10 years there has been little use of the auditorium/gymnasium, with recreational activities at the Swift River Elementary School or at R.C. Mahar Regional School. The Annual Town meeting is still held in the basement of the Town Hall.
- The Old Academy Building Master Plan provides a blueprint for the restoration and reuse of this key historical property in Town as a community center. Work done to restore the 1794 Meetinghouse and to create a Cultural Arts Center has helped put New Salem on the map as a cultural tourist destination. Other buildings, such as the Congregational Church, have undergone recent renovations to protect and preserve their historic and civic value.
- The Select Board created the Building Action Committee (BAC) to assess Town-owned buildings in the Center for the past three years. The committee was charged with three main objectives: energy efficiency, accessibility and compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, and determining options to get all town staff offices in one building, with cost being a factor to be considered throughout. The committee has been working on its assessment for the past three and a half years. The Town hired an architect Ted Galante, to assist the BAC and has more recently hired a Planning Consultant, Robert Kruger of the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), to also work with the committee to assess the best use of these buildings and to assist with the final report. Study findings are expected to be complete in June 2009. Two “Charette” type public meetings occurred in town to present information and solicit input from the community.
- To build on the assessment and work of the Building Action Committee to date, the Town is pursuing the development of a larger Comprehensive Plan for New Salem and the Town Center as a whole, which would address other planning issues and economic development. This study should make recommendations about the most efficient use of available space, including reuse options, as well as the overall design of the Town Center, to address parking, landscaping, and traffic and pedestrian circulation and amenities. The Select Board has made contact with consultants in Landscape Architecture and Planning for assistance in completing this type of plan and hopes to begin work in the Fall of 2009.
- The Town Center includes many unique scenic, cultural, and recreational outdoor resources, such as the Town Pound and the playing fields.

Issues:

- The National Register Historic District designation is honorary in nature and does not provide any protective measures for the heritage landscapes and historic buildings within the district. While several properties are protected by preservation restrictions there are many more properties that have no protection. There is a need to maintain and preserve these historic properties; otherwise, they could be lost to demolition or irreparably altered if there are no protections in place. Without the concerted efforts of a group of concerned citizens over the course of several decades, the Old Academy Building would have been demolished and an important part of the Town's history would have been lost.
- The Town Center lacks sidewalks and benches that would make it more pedestrian friendly. Traffic in the area is heavier than might be anticipated, given that South Main Street is a dead-end road. Just outside of the Common, overhead utility wires still mar the beauty of the Town, especially at the current Library where the wires are guyed to the ground directly in front of the entrance.
- Some town-owned buildings in the Town Center are under utilized in part due to the need for extensive upgrades. The Town Hall is currently closed from November 1 through May 1 due to lack of insulation, is not completely handicap accessible and requires some renovations. The three town offices that were in the Town Hall have been moved to the Old Library building. The 1794 Meetinghouse lacks plumbing and heating which might enable it to be used for cultural performances year-round.
- Many of the Town Center's unique scenic and recreational outdoor resources that set the Town apart as a special destination, such as the Lookout and the playing fields, are not well-known because of their location off of the main roads and have accessibility issues. Parking and bathroom facilities are limited.
- More than 80% of respondents to the 2002 Community Survey expressed the desire for more biking and hiking trails in Town, and nearly as many favored additional wildlife-viewing areas. Nearly four-fifths of respondents felt that nature-based educational activities are needed, and that greenways should be created in Town to connect with greenways in surrounding communities.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the Town continue efforts to develop a Comprehensive Plan for New Salem and the Town Center with the assistance of landscape architecture and planning consultants to take into account the needs of the town as a whole. This plan should put Building Action Committee report recommendations related to potential reuse options for Town-owned buildings into a larger context to address issues in the Town Center. For example, parking, landscaping, traffic, pedestrian circulation and the availability of amenities including bathroom facilities should be addressed to meet the needs of residents as well as

visitors for cultural events. Every effort should be made to work towards sensitive rehabilitation solutions for existing infrastructure, to help maintain the feel of this very special town center. This planning process would also be an opportunity to get input from the community about appropriate types of economic development in desired locations, such as businesses on Route 202 or cultural tourism events in New Salem Center, and should provide planning and zoning recommendations that support goals of the Town.

2. As part of the overall assessment of town owned buildings in the Town Center, the Town should consider the best use of Town Hall for town office space and other town needs. If the Town decides to pursue funding to renovate the Town Hall to make it handicap accessible, its location within a National Register Historic District makes it eligible for grant funds from the MHC's Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF). These grants could be used for an architect to develop plans for renovations that would make the building fully accessible and update office space. Another potential funding source is the Community Preservation Act (CPA). In 2005, New Salem Town Meeting voted to approve participating in the CPA program, but the ballot question was voted down in 2006. The Town may want to raise the issue again by engaging in a broad public education campaign with information about specific projects that could benefit from its funding.
3. The Town might consider the creation of a Local Historic District (LHD) for the Town Center under M.G.L. Chapter 40C, through a 2/3 majority vote at Town Meeting. This would provide a higher level of protection for all properties in what is a particularly unspoiled Town Center with a very high level of integrity. Local Historic Districts are administered by a Local Historic District Commission (appointed by the Select Board and distinct from the community's Historical Commission) that reviews and approves proposed changes according to the terms of the local bylaw.
4. The Town might consider the passage of an age-based Demolition Delay Bylaw to provide time (typically six months to one year) for the Historical Commission to work with a property owner to explore alternatives to demolition.
5. The Town should consider updating its MHC survey sheets describing each of the historic properties. These have not been updated since 1978 and are now incomplete and in poor physical condition. Funds for this project could be sought from the Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program, a federally funded, reimbursable, 60/40 matching grant program that supports historic preservation planning activities in communities throughout the state.

6. The Town could explore improvements to the Town Common and the rest of the Center to make it more pedestrian friendly; look into the cost of burying the rest of the overhead wires underground; and pursue restoration of the playground. A potential funding source for playground restoration is the PARC grant through the state Division of Conservation Services.
7. The Town could pursue the creation of a Cultural Overlay District to encourage the formation of cultural institutions and related businesses in appropriate areas.
8. The Town should explore appropriate ways to direct residents and visitors to its unique scenic and recreational outdoor resources within the Town Center. This could involve installing signs consistent with the historic character of the Town to direct people to these locations and publishing guides and maps clearly indicating where they are located and highlighting their features.
9. The Town should continue efforts to identify and acquire scenic fields, forests and waterfront areas through collaborative efforts of town boards and regional land trusts to establish and expand recreational trails within New Salem and explore possible linkages with neighboring towns. DCR's Recreational Trails Program is a potential funding source that provides grants for trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects. Another potential funding source recommended in the New Salem Community Development Plan for acquisition of additional recreational resources is the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

The Lookout

The Quabbin Reservoir is a manmade landscape that was created in the 1930s in the evacuated Swift River Valley to create a reservoir to supply water to the Boston area. It is one of the largest manmade public water supplies and is also a valuable resource both locally and regionally for its forest, wildlife and recreational values. In the mid 1990s, an area of land was cleared to provide a scenic overlook to the Quabbin Reservoir and a trail was constructed to access what is now referred to by local residents as the "Lookout". The trail is located just behind the Fire Station and beyond the playing fields in the Town Center. There are no signs alerting visitors to the presence of the trail and the Lookout beyond.



Panoramic view from the Lookout

(photo courtesy PreservationMass)

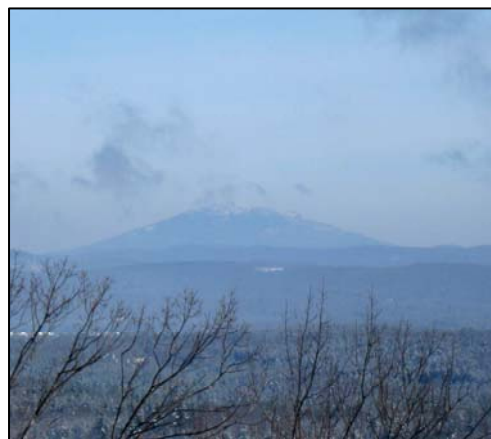
A wide gravel path was constructed in order to provide vehicle access for those individuals who would have difficulty walking to the viewpoint. Several picnic tables are provided to enable visitors to sit and enjoy the spectacular 180-degree panoramic view of the Quabbin, with distant Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire to the north and Mount Wachusett to the east in the background. The land containing the parking lot, trail, and picnic area is owned and maintained by the Town; abutting land The Town-owned land is mostly forested, and well maintained. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) owns and manages the steeply sloping area between the picnic area and the Quabbin which has the potential for growth of trees to begin to obscure the scenic vista over time.

Opportunities:

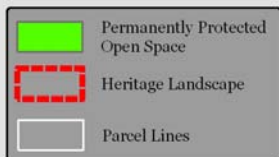
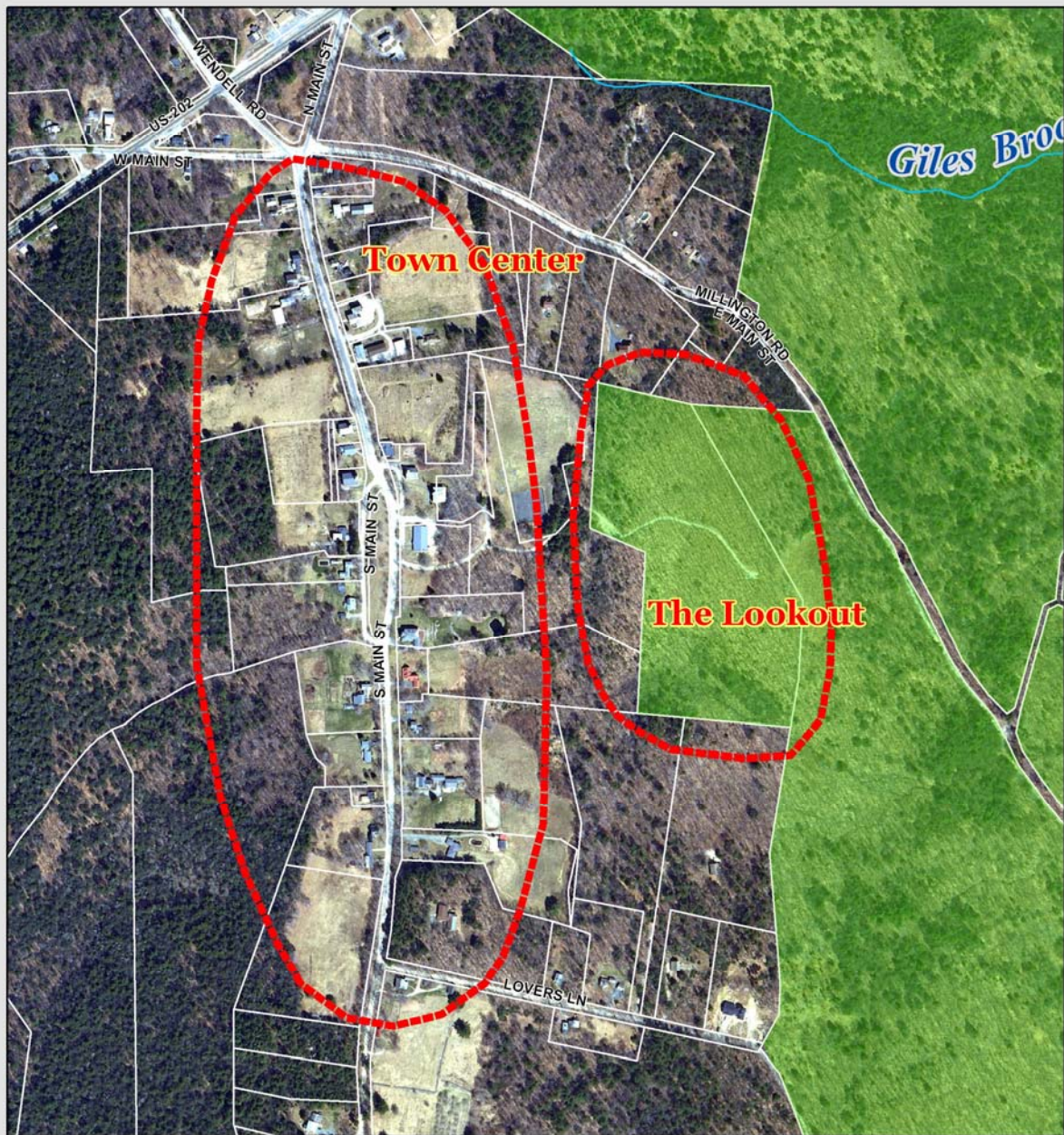
- The forested landscape in New Salem extends into neighboring communities and includes large expanses of protected public land which present varied outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.
- The Lookout is a valuable resource that sets the Town apart as a special destination for outdoor recreation.
- A wide gravel path provides wheelchair access close to the Lookout.
- The town owned portion of the Lookout is currently well maintained.

Issues:

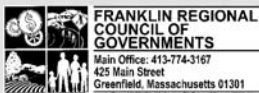
- Parts of the Lookout are not fully handicapped accessible.
- There is potential for the trees on DCR land to grow so tall as to block the panoramic view.
- There are no signs alerting residents and visitors to the existence of the Lookout or the trail that leads to it just beyond the Town Center.



View of Mount Monadnock from the Lookout



0 500 1,000 Feet



Town Center & The Lookout

Town of New Salem, Massachusetts,
Heritage Landscape Inventory Project,
Franklin County



Map Sources:

Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2009.
Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, Massachusetts Highway Department
and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment, MassGIS.

Funding:

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment
Department of Conservation Resources

Recommendations:

1. Changes to make the Lookout fully handicap accessible include further improvement of the roadway/trail and handicap parking spaces, construction of accessible walkway and handicap picnic facilities. The Town should pursue grant funding to accomplish these tasks and to provide for the continued maintenance of this unique resource over time.
2. The Town should work with DCR to ensure that a program of regular tree cutting and clearing of vegetation exists so that the view at the Lookout is protected over time.
3. The Town could explore ways to better direct residents and visitors to the Lookout. This could involve installing signs consistent with the historic character of the Town to direct people to the trail and gravel roadway. The Lookout should also be included in guides and maps that clearly indicate its location.
4. The Town should consider the creation of a local trails committee to assist in the oversight of a trails maintenance and acquisition program, including the development of guides and maps.

Hillman Farm

One of the two oldest houses in the center of Town, the Hillman Farm is located on the east side of South Main Street, on the south corner of the intersection with Lover's Lane. While this is the southernmost property included in the New Salem Common Historic District, it is visually separate and has its own issues unique to this agricultural landscape, so it is being addressed as its own heritage



Hillman Farm House

landscape. It consists of about 100 acres, including an apple orchard with trees that are over a hundred years old, berry bushes, a cider mill, and a commercial kitchen in which the out-of-town owners produce Hillman Farm Preserves during the growing season when they are in residence. The farm also boasts an impressive view of the Quabbin from the orchard. The farm's many open fields are not permanently protected.



Hillman Farm orchard and view (photo courtesy DCR)

The farm house was built around 1800 by a Dutch sea captain named Charles Roboteau. The captain dug out many stones and built many of the huge stone walls still visible on the property, some being as wide as six to eight feet across. When asked by a neighbor why he was digging out so many rocks, he is reported to have replied, “I’m trying to find the soil.”⁷ Other owners over the years include the Atwood family, Benjamin H. Royce, and several generations of the Stowell family, who purchased it in 1871. Joel

Hillman II purchased the property from the Stowell family in 1968 and it has remained in the Hillman family since that time.

The house is a Georgian-style, two-story frame building with a central hall, gable roof, twin chimneys, and clapboarded exterior. The south chimney rests on a brick arch and the north chimney rests on a stone wall. There were originally fireplaces in each room and a large one in the kitchen. There are many original features in the interior of the house, and the exterior has been restored in recent years by removing a porch, replacing modern windows with historically appropriate 12-over-12 divided lights, and using unpainted clapboards typical of its era of origin.

Opportunities

- The Hillman Farm house and surrounding fields are beautifully maintained.
- The property includes a cider mill and commercial kitchen that is currently being used for the production of Hillman Farm Preserves.
- The orchard on the property has trees that are over one hundred years old.
- The property is located in a National Register Historic District.
- The property boasts spectacular views of the Quabbin in the distance.

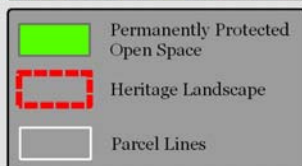
Issues

- The property is not permanently protected from development. It is temporarily protected through the State’s Chapter 61 tax abatement program for forest land.

⁷ *History of New Salem, Massachusetts 1753-1953*, p.72.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that landowners work with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and a local land trust (such the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust or the Franklin Land Trust) to consider placing an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) on the property to permanently protect the land, and help keep the land in agricultural use in the future. An APR is a voluntary program which is intended to offer a non-development alternative to farmers and other owners of "prime" and "state important" agricultural land who are faced with a decision regarding future use and disposition of their farms. Towards this end, the program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability.
2. Landowners could be encouraged to apply to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' Farm Viability Enhancement Program. This program seeks to improve the economic viability and environmental integrity of participating farms through the development and implementation of farm viability plans. The program offers farmers environmental, technical and business planning assistance to expand, upgrade and modernize their existing operations. Capital for the implementation of the improvements recommended in the viability plan is available in exchange for an agricultural covenant on the farm property for a fixed term of five or ten years.
3. The Town should consider developing a Chapter 61 policy that prioritizes parcels currently enrolled in the Chapter 61 program based on conservation interest by the Town. The Town could utilize its right-of-first-refusal option under Chapter 61 to purchase Conservation Restrictions on these parcels if they become available. This right-of-first-refusal provides the town with the opportunity to match a fair market value offer for the property or to transfer the right to a public agency or conservation organization, such as the Franklin Land Trust, in order to protect this property.
4. The Town's Agricultural Commission should consider developing a Right to Farm Bylaw which would support farms in Town and help to minimize conflicts between agricultural and residential uses.



0 500 1,000 Feet



Hillman Farm

Town of New Salem, Massachusetts,
Heritage Landscape Inventory Project,
Franklin County



Map Sources:

Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2009.
Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, Massachusetts Highway Department
and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment, MassGIS.

Funding:

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment
Department of Conservation Resources

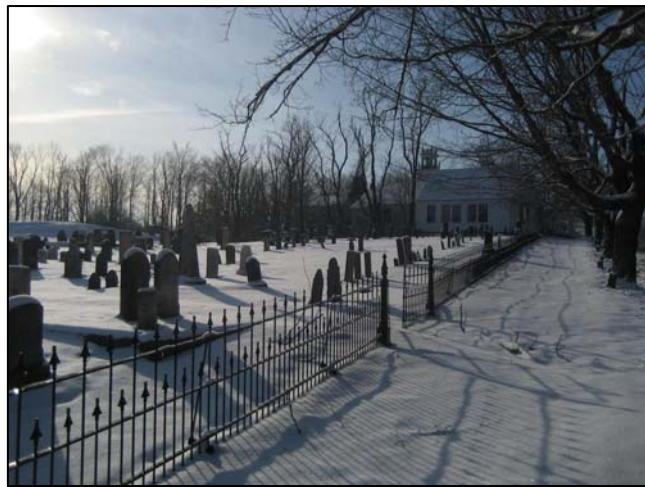
Town Cemeteries

There are a total of 6 cemeteries in the Town of New Salem, four of which are large public cemeteries and two which were originally small family plots. All are now owned and maintained by the Town. The four large cemeteries are: Center Cemetery, North New Salem Cemetery, Branch Bridge Cemetery, and Mountain View Cemetery. The former family plots are the Wilber and Stiles Cemeteries, each containing only a couple of headstones.

Cemeteries are a necessary part of any community, reflecting not just a Town's evolving burial practices but also evidence of the early history of a community and its changing social fabric over time. Many also reflect an important artistic legacy, displaying the work of a long tradition of skilled stone carvers and documenting the evolution of funereal iconography. As public properties, historic cemeteries and burial grounds present many unique preservation challenges, including damaged and vandalized headstones, deterioration of older walks and enclosures, and aging and hazardous trees. Inactive sites (closed to further burials) and active sites face different challenges.⁸ Each of the Town's four major cemeteries will be described briefly below, highlighting their most significant features and issues.

Center Cemetery

The Center Cemetery is located in the Town Center Historic District on the east side of South Main Street. It is an integral part of the Town Center heritage landscape as well, but more specific issues are touched upon here. It consists of approximately three acres and is currently inactive. It is assumed that it was established not long after the first settlers arrived in 1737.



Center Cemetery

(photo courtesy DCR)

There are over 65 carved stones in the Center Cemetery reflecting a variety of designs common during the 18th and early 19th centuries. The burying ground reflects much of the early history of New Salem and contains the graves of early settlers; the first female white child born in the Town; veterans of the French and Indian, Revolutionary, 1812 and Civil Wars; militia and Shay's rebels; the first settled minister; descendants of a Hessian prisoner; early physicians, town officials, and New Salem Academy trustees.

⁸*Preservation Guidelines for Municipally-Owned Historic Burial Grounds*, DCR, p. 2.



New Salem's oldest gravestone

deposited in small alcoves. More work would need to be done to find a suitable location where no graves would be disturbed for its construction.

The cemetery contains a stone tomb. It is separated from adjoining land by stone walls on three sides and a wrought iron fence along the west side facing the street which has recently been restored. Standing just outside the fence are a row of granite hitching posts. The earliest gravestone in the cemetery is dated 1745, for a member of the Southwick family who were among the earliest settlers of New Salem.⁹

Because of its central location and historical significance to the Town, many residents still wish to be buried here. Several proposals are pending to expand the cemetery across the road on a property that may be donated to the Town. In addition, the Cemetery Commission is considering constructing a "cremaburiam" in the cemetery itself where the ashes of the departed could be

North New Salem Cemetery



North New Salem Cemetery Carved Sign

The North New Salem Cemetery is located on Fay Road in North New Salem. This is one of the most active cemeteries in town, with the oldest stone dating from 1809. Recent work was done to remove trees and enlarge the cemetery to prepare for future demand.

⁹ "Heare Lyes Salim New Grant 1734-1763", by Dr. David K. Wetherbee, quoted on the website: *New Salem Massachusetts: Forgotten Franklin County Town*.

Branch Bridge Cemetery

The Branch Bridge Cemetery is located on Branch Bridge Road in the northeastern corner of New Salem, near Lake Rohunta/Eagleville Pond. The oldest stone in this burial ground is dated 1875. This is a small cemetery, with a fence made of cast iron chains suspended between granite posts. The stones are scattered throughout and there is one family plot delineated with granite posts (a fence or chain probably once connected them). Many of the stones are covered with lichen and are now difficult to read.



Branch Bridge Cemetery

Mountain View Cemetery

Mountain View Cemetery is located on North Prescott Road just north of the Quabbin Reservoir Restricted Area. This active cemetery's oldest gravestone is dated 1821. It has undergone recent renovations, including the replacement of the arch with the name on it at the entrance and the repairing of the gates and the iron fence along the front. Additional work is needed to fix the iron fence along the other sides and to address problems with a retaining wall in the back. The Cemetery Commission is also exploring the possibility of expanding the cemetery in the back to allow more room for burials.

Wilber Cemetery and Stiles Cemetery



Wilber Cemetery

These two former family plots are located on or near private property. Wilber Cemetery is located at the intersection of North Main Street and Moosehorn Road in northwestern New Salem and Stiles Cemetery is located on Fay Road in the far northwestern section of Town.

Opportunities

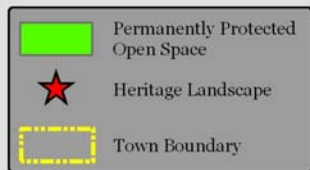
- New Salem's cemeteries contain a wealth of historical and cultural information about the Town.
- Center Cemetery is a favorite place for local residents to explore the Town's history and to sit quietly in the Town Center.
- The North New Salem Cemetery is an active cemetery with a newly expanded area available for burials.
- Some residents of New Salem are interested in creating a green cemetery , an environmentally sound alternative to cremation and traditional burial practices..

Issues

- Because of the central location and cultural significance of the Center Cemetery, many residents wish to be buried there.
- Many gravestones in all the cemeteries in Town are covered with lichen and dirt and are difficult to read.
- Catalogues of the cemeteries, their gravestones, and inscriptions were included in the New Salem Reunion Banner in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but have not been updated or archived in digital format, other than by amateur genealogists. Old photos of gravestones in existing histories are grainy and difficult to read.
- The general public may not be aware of the advantages of a green cemetery as an alternative to cremation and traditional burial practices. No location has yet been decided upon as the most appropriate for a green cemetery.

Recommendations

1. The Town should work with the private owner of a nearby property to develop a plan for expanding the Center Cemetery so that it can be brought back into active use for new burials. In addition, the Cemetery Commission should continue its efforts to locate an area where a repository of cremated remains could be constructed without disturbing existing graves.
2. The Cemetery Commission should continue its efforts to clean gravestones of lichen and dirt in all the cemeteries in Town, using appropriate procedures, as laid out in DCR's Guidebook, to enable visitors to read their inscriptions.



0 4,000 8,000 Feet



Cemeteries

Town of New Salem, Massachusetts,
Heritage Landscape Inventory Project,
Franklin County



Map Sources:

Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2009,
Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, Massachusetts Highway Department
and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment, MassGIS.

Funding:

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment
Department of Conservation Resources

3. The Cemetery Commission and the Historical Commission should collaborate on a project to update and digitize the catalogues of the graveyards that were included in the New Salem Reunion Banner in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Westport Cemetery Identification Group that mapped and recorded the cemeteries in Westport, MA provides a good model, which can be viewed at: <http://westport.loreprojects.com/home.cfm>. Photos or rubbings of significant gravestones should be archived before they deteriorate even further.
4. The general public will need to be educated about the advantages of a green cemetery as an alternative to cremation and traditional burial practices. In addition, the Cemetery Commission should involve citizens in the decision of where a green cemetery would best be located, if a decision is made to expand one of the existing historic cemeteries

Route 202 Commercial Area

The Route 202 Commercial Area is located on the state highway just north of the Town Center, and is the only commercial area in New Salem. It consists of three properties that are now or have in the past been commercial enterprises, including the site of the current New Salem General Store. The General Store is privately run and a portion of the building is leased by the U.S. Post Office. The property is well-maintained and serves as a community gathering place, selling necessities (including beer and wine), featuring local products, and providing information about historic and recreational resources in the area to residents and visitors alike. Originally built as a Gulf gas station in the 1940s, it was expanded into a package store in the 1970s. The building consists of 1,564 sq. ft. located on a .57 acre parcel.



New Salem General Store



Former New Salem Restaurant and Yankee Strudel

The two properties on either side of the General Store are both privately owned and each used to be a restaurant at one time. The property to the north was known as the New Salem Restaurant in the late 1980s and also included the Yankee Strudel Bakery. The property consists of 1,752 sq. ft. of living area on .68 acres of land. It is used as a private residence and the owner is not interested in bringing it back into commercial use at this time.

The third property in the New Salem Commercial Area, located to the south of the General Store, is privately owned and is neither occupied nor maintained at the present time. This property once was a restaurant and then was used as retail space (doll shop). The building has 2,781 sq. ft. on a property of nearly two acres.

The property once also included a cabin court, but the cabins have been sold off and moved elsewhere. The property continues to be assessed as a commercial use. In 2004 an abutting parcel was purchased by the owners, consisting of an additional .38 acres.



Former restaurant and doll shop

Opportunities

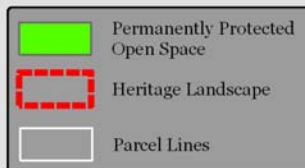
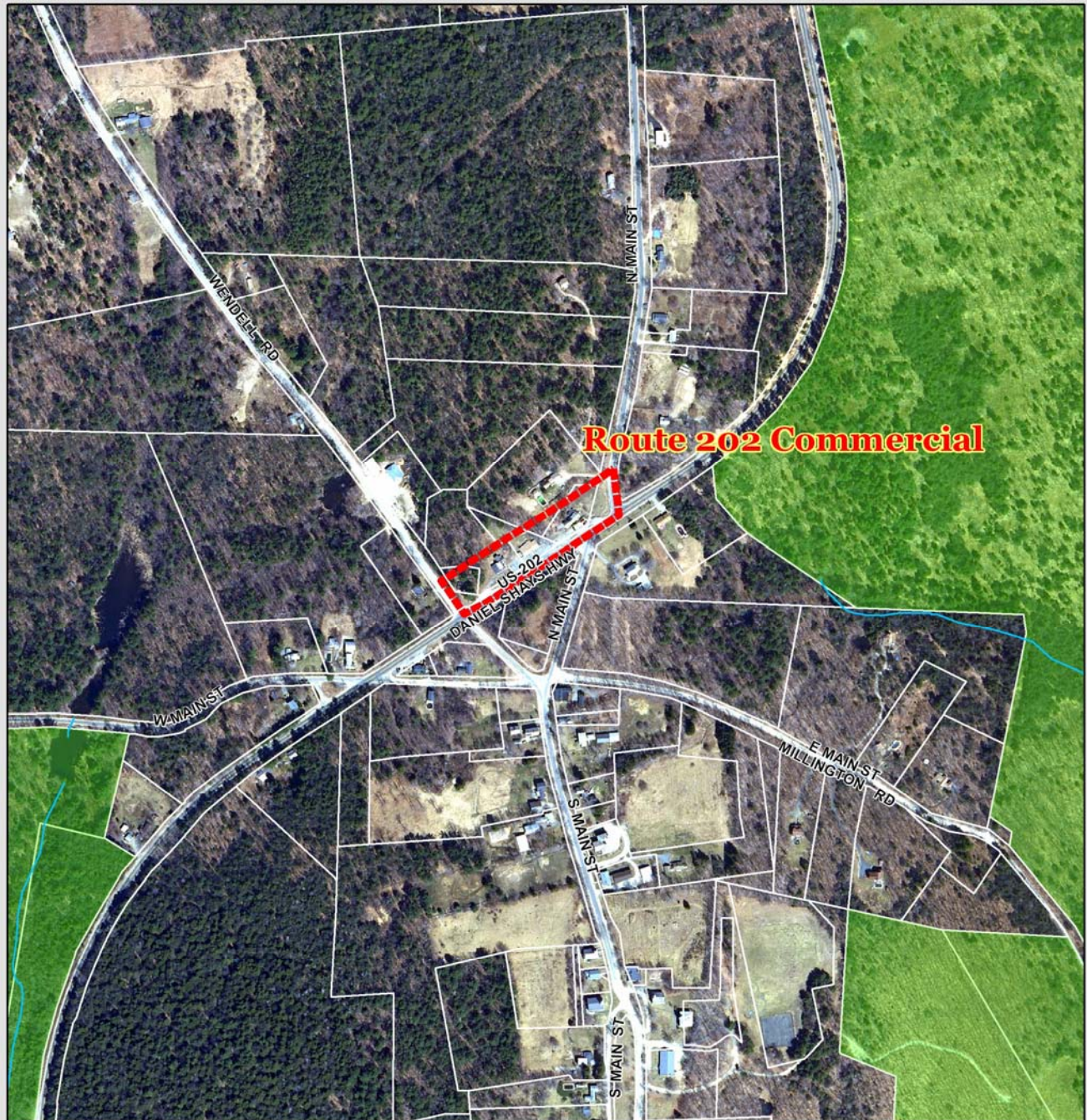
- The New Salem General Store is an active retail outlet and post office that provides necessary products and services to the community and to visitors passing by on Route 202.
- These three properties have been used as commercial entities in the past, including two previous restaurants.
- The Town of New Salem has an active business association.
- Route 202 is a busy road that is a major connector between towns such as Orange and Athol on Route 2 and Amherst and Northampton on Route 9.

Issues

- One of the economic development goals of the Community Development Plan is to encourage the establishment of a restaurant in town. There is a strong sense among residents that a restaurant would be a necessary element of any plan to market the community as a cultural and recreational destination, not to mention a welcome amenity for themselves.
- The entire town of New Salem is zoned Residential-Agricultural. Some commercial uses, including restaurants, are allowed only by Special Permit of the Planning Board.
- The three properties in the Route 202 Commercial Area are in separate ownership, limiting the ability of the Town to work with the owners to develop complementary uses for them that meet the Town's economic development needs.
- There is an issue regarding safe pedestrian access when crossing Route 202 at this location, to access the General Store from the Town Center. Because Route 202 is a State Highway there is a need for the Town of New Salem to work with MassHighway to incorporate pedestrian safety improvements as road improvement projects occur.

Recommendations

1. Town leaders and members of the business association should maintain a dialogue with the owners of the properties surrounding the General Store and continue to discuss the need for a restaurant and other commercial uses that complement one another in this area. The owners' perspectives and priorities can change over time and an ongoing dialogue will keep the issue current in the event that one of the properties becomes available again for commercial use.
2. The Town Planning Board should consider the creation of a Mixed Use Village District in this area of Route 202. Certain uses that the Town would like to encourage in the district, such as a restaurant, could be allowed by right with Site Plan Review to simplify the development process for an interested business owner. Through the public discussion process, the Town could determine what kinds of restaurants it would prefer and write bylaws that encourage, for example, sit-down establishments and limit drive-through or fast food restaurants.
3. The Economic Development Chapter of the proposed Comprehensive Plan should address what types of uses are appropriate for the Route 202 Commercial Area. The Plan's recommendations could build on existing efforts to develop New Salem as a destination for cultural tourism and identify other complementary uses that would be appropriate in this area.
4. The Town of New Salem should work with MassHighway to encourage them to improve pedestrian safety, by adding amenities such as sidewalks or wider shoulders, a crosswalk, and other traffic calming measures to increase the safety of customers of the Route 202 Commercial Area and of residents traveling between the Swift River School and the Town Center.



0 500 1,000 Feet



Route 202 Commercial

Town of New Salem, Massachusetts,
Heritage Landscape Inventory Project,
Franklin County



Map Sources:

Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2009,
Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, Massachusetts Highway Department
and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment, MassGIS.

Funding:

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment
Department of Conservation Resources

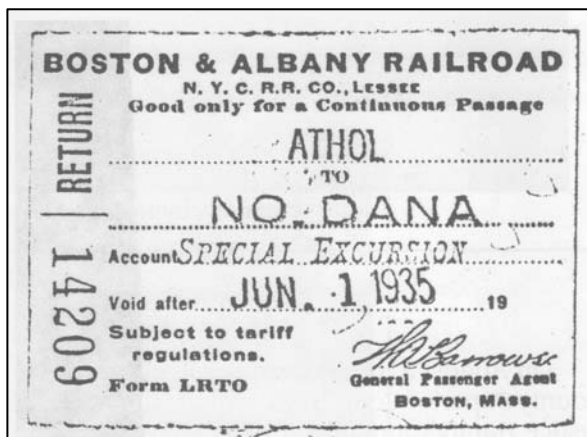
Rabbit Run Railroad

In 1871, the Athol & Enfield Railroad (also known as the Rabbit Line, Bunny Road, and the Soapstone Limited) began operations through the Swift River Valley. In the summer of 1873 the Athol Branch was extended to Springfield and trains began running on this extension beginning in December of that year. The completed line became the Springfield, Athol & Northeastern Railroad. The 48-mile trip from Springfield to Athol took three hours. Stations along the route included South Athol, New Salem (in the northeastern section of town known as Hagerville), North Dana, Soapstone, Morgan Crossing, Greenwich Village, Greenwich, Smiths, Enfield, West Ware, Bondsville, Barrett's Junction, Three Rivers, Red Bridge, Collins, Ludlow, and Indian Orchard.



New Salem Station, on the Athol Branch, early 1900s. *Boston and Albany Railroad Collection.* (Photo courtesy Historic New England)

After being foreclosed upon by the bondholders in 1878, the railroad was reorganized in 1879 as the Springfield & Northeastern Railroad. In 1880 the railroad was sold and became known as the Athol Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad. The northern part of the line was discontinued in 1935 as a result of the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir. The last excursion of the Rabbit Line was on June 1, 1935 and the dismantling of the tracks began immediately thereafter.¹⁰ The New Salem Station was dismantled and rebuilt on Route 202 for use by the Town as a Fire Station. The building is currently used for offices for a plumbing contractor and a lawyer.



Last trip ticket (courtesy J.R. Greene and the Swift River Valley Historical Society)

¹⁰ J.R. Greene, *Quabbin's Railroad: The Rabbit*, Volume II (2007), p. 225

The Rabbit Run opened up the northeast section of New Salem to new economic opportunities and was a lifeline in the pre-automobile age, taking people shopping, to school, and picking up and delivering the mail along the way. A side track was installed at Hager's Crossing in New Salem to accommodate lumber and occasional ice shipments. A sawmill was located nearby that provided the raw material for a chair factory in Orange. In addition, the village of Millington in New Salem was one mile away, which contained a grist mill, a saw mill, a hotel, a brick village school, and a store/post office. A stagecoach line connected the New Salem Station with both Millington and New Salem Center.



A portion of the Rabbit Run railbed, now a private drive

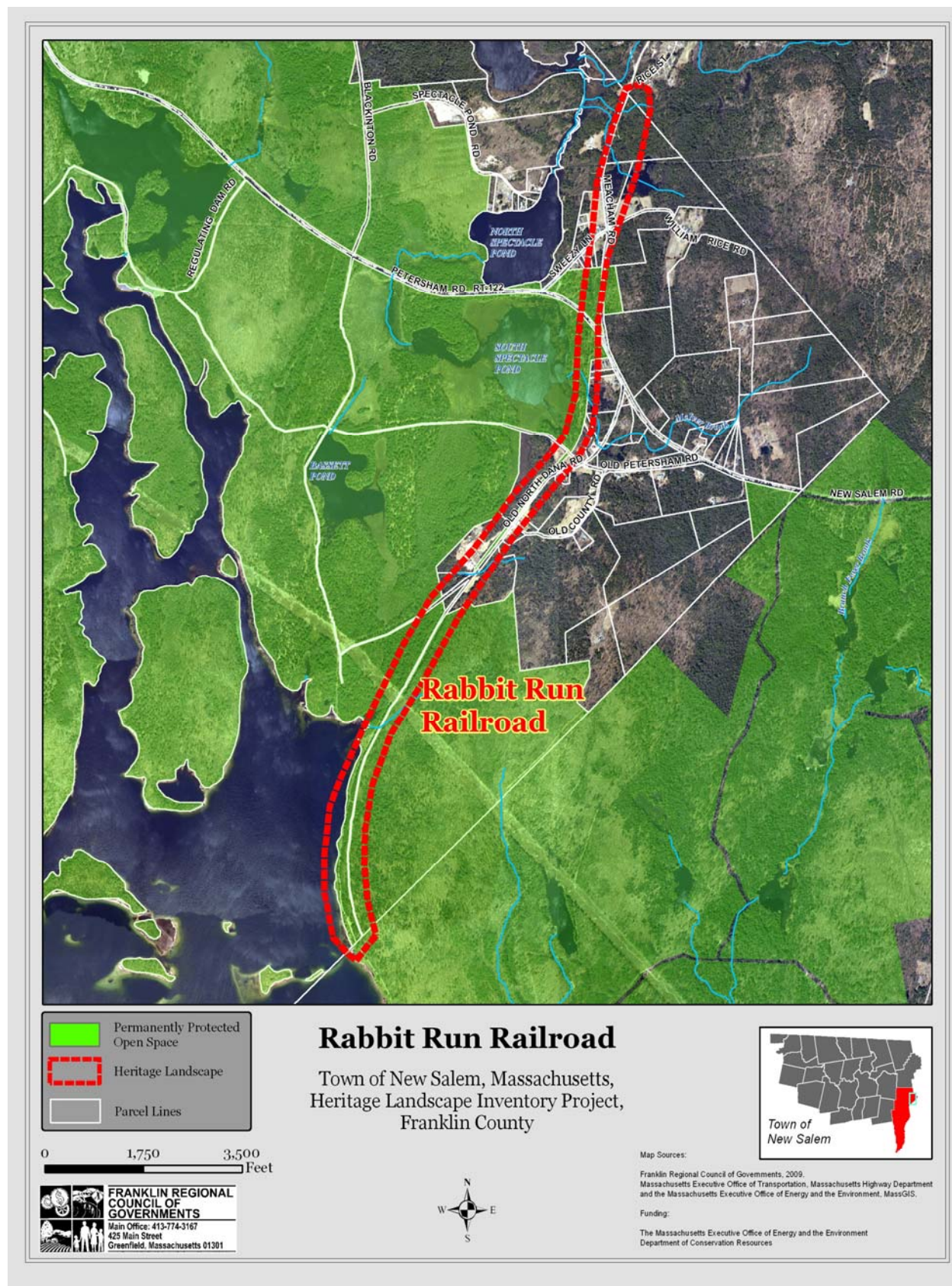
Parts of the railroad bed are still evident in New Salem where it runs parallel to Meacham Road in the Hagerville section and continuing on North Dana Road toward the Quabbin. On William Rice Rd. a portion of the roadbed now serves as a private driveway. The railroad berm can be seen running parallel to the west side of Old Dana Road north of Quabbin Gate 35. Near C&M lumber, the road is bumpy where the ties are still embedded in the pavement at a former crossing. Inside Gate 35, a hiker can turn left at the fork and follow a well-preserved section of the bed (complete with soot-soaked soil) for over a mile along the northeast shore of the Quabbin, with several of the old stone culverts still in use. The

railroad bed goes into the water near where a gravel connector road continues south along the shoreline and meets up with a section of the original paved roadway before it too is inundated by the waters of the Quabbin. Starting from Gate 35, the remnants of the railbed and the connector road form a 2-mile shoreline walkway that is open to the public for daytime hiking or bicycling without a permit.¹¹ The Rabbit Run name lives on in New Salem as the official title of the annual race (3K and 10K) that is run in Town the third weekend in May.

Opportunities

- Remnants of the Rabbit Run railbed still exist in the Hagerville section of New Salem and continue into the Quabbin at Gate 35, where they form part of a 2-mile shoreline trail.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 231. Also personal communication with J.R. Greene 4-15-09.



Issues

- The history of the Rabbit Run Railroad in the Hagerville section of New Salem is little known and existing remnants of the railroad, industry, and settlement that it spurred are not identified.
- Hiking trails following the former railbed in the Quabbin are little known and are not tied to the history of the railroad.
- Portions of the railbed that run through private property have not been identified and could be explored for their potential use as hiking and/or biking trails.

Recommendations

1. Establish a volunteer Trails Committee in town.
2. Interested residents and the Historical Commission should document the history of the Rabbit Run Railroad and the Hagerville section of Town and produce a brochure or other educational materials for use by other residents and visitors.
3. The Town of New Salem should coordinate with DCR on ways to promote the 2-mile trail at Quabbin Gate 35 that follows the railbed and continues along the Quabbin shoreline as a recreational resource in the Town, and develop interpretive materials and signage explaining the history of the trail to inform users of its origins. This could be a good project for the proposed new Trails Committee in Town.
4. The Town could work with willing landowners to explore the potential for extending the use of the railbed for hiking/biking trails on portions that run through private property.



Keystone Bridge

Keystone Bridge

The Keystone Bridge is a stone-arched bridge that was built in 1866 over the Middle Branch of the Swift River on Orange Road, the main road from the Millington village in New Salem to the Town of Orange. The granite stones that form the bridge were hand fit under the supervision of Adolphus Porter. The bridge is located on land owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), just beyond the entrance to Quabbin Gate 30 off of Route 122. The Y-shaped posts still evident along the top of the bridge once held wooden guardrails. In the

1800s, there was a sawmill located downstream run by Captain Adams.¹² Nearby cellar holes indicate that there were once private homes nearby,¹³ one of which was owned by Captain Adams and another by the Bigwood family¹⁴, leading to its occasional reference as the Bigwood or Adams Bridge. The bridge and the area around it is a popular fishing spot. There is still a remnant of the road that is used and maintained by DCR that can be used for hiking.

Opportunities

- The Keystone Bridge is a beautiful example of a hand set stone-arched bridge that is easily accessible to the public in an area popular for fishing and hiking.
- Route 122 was designated a Scenic Byway by the Commonwealth in 2005.
- Gate 30 provides convenient access to the bridge from Route 122.
- The bridge provides a beautiful view of the river underneath.

Issues

- Stones around the arch of the Keystone Bridge appear to be shifting from their original locations.
- Wooden guardrails that used to be along the top of the bridge have been removed.
- There is no signage at Gate 30 alerting visitors to the presence of the bridge and its history.

Recommendations

1. DCR should conduct a structural assessment of the Keystone Bridge to ensure that it is safe for continued use and make any repairs that may be required. The status of Route 122 as a state-designated Scenic Byway may open up additional sources of funding for repair and maintenance of the bridge.
2. The New Salem Historical Commission should work with DCR to research and develop interpretive signage for Gate 30 that alerts visitors to the presence of the bridge and explains its history.

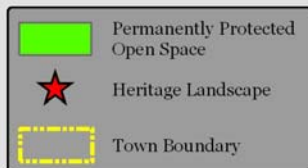
¹²Greene, *Historic Quabbin Hikes*, p. 52.

¹³ Personal communication with J.R. Greene 4-15-09.

¹⁴ *History of New Salem Massachusetts 1753-1953*, p. 110.



Keystone Bridge



Keystone Bridge

Town of New Salem, Massachusetts,
Heritage Landscape Inventory Project,
Franklin County



Map Sources:

Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2009,
Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation, Massachusetts Highway Department
and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment, MassGIS.

Funding:

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and the Environment
Department of Conservation Resources

PART II: PLANNING FOR HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

As our communities undergo rapid land use changes, heritage landscapes are particularly threatened because they are often taken for granted. There are a broad variety of resources that communities can call upon to protect these irreplaceable landscapes. See the Community Planning Checklist in this section for a review of the tools that New Salem already has in place, any tools that are currently in process, as well as recommended actions for the future. The measures already in place for New Salem provide a strong foundation for heritage landscape preservation, but additional measures that have been identified in Part I for New Salem's Priority Heritage Landscapes in combination with the following text will aid in the development of a holistic preservation planning strategy. Terra Firma #7 - Taking Action: A Toolkit for Protecting Community Character (2009) should also be referred to for a more complete description of available planning tools and preservation measures as the Town moves forward to implement recommended actions.

INVENTORY AND DOCUMENTATION

1. Massachusetts Historical Commission Records

We cannot advocate for something until we clearly identify it, which in this case are the physical characteristics and historical development of the town's historic and archeological resources. The necessary first step is to record information about the resources at the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). The MHC's 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 the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), is now available online at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc>.

Current Listings: According to the MHC, New Salem's inventory documents 151 cultural resources from the late 18th century to the 20th century including individual homes, civic buildings, and many properties associated with the New Salem Academy. Many Heritage Landscapes identified by the community as Priority resources are on this list, including the New Salem Common Historic District and many of its surrounding buildings and sites including the the Town Common, Town Hall, the Center Cemetery, the Old Academy Building, the 1794 Meeting House, and the Town Pound. Many historic homes in New Salem are also included in the MHC listing, including the William Knight House, the former New Salem Academy

Dormitory, the Roboteau/Stowell/Hillman House at Hillman Farm, and the Whitaker-Clary House in North New Salem (now the site of the Swift River Valley Historical Society Museum).

Recommendations: The Town should update its MHC survey sheets describing each of the historic properties. These have not been updated since 1978 and are in poor physical condition and do not meet current survey standards. Funds for this project could be sought from the Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program, a federally funded, reimbursable, 60/40 matching grant program that supports historic preservation planning activities in communities throughout the state.

2. National and State Register Listing

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. Listing brings a number of benefits including recognition, consideration when federally-or state-funded projects may impact the resource, eligibility for tax credits, and qualification for certain grant programs. Resources on the National Register are automatically added to the State Register of Historic Places.

Current Listings: The New Salem Common Historic District is listed with the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). It was listed in April of 1978 and covers approximately 35 acres in the center of town. It encompasses the Town Common and its north and south environs for approximately three-fourths of a mile along the east and west sides of South Main St, from the “Five Corners” (the junction of South Main Street, West Main Street, North Main Street, Wendell Road and Millington Road) southerly to approximately 100 feet beyond Lover’s Lane at the Hillman Farm. There are thirty-five historic sites and buildings within the District, most dating from the nineteenth century, many of them associated with the New Salem Academy. The Whitaker-Clary House in North New Salem has been listed on the National Register since June 1975.

Recommended Listings:

The New Salem Historical Commission should consider working with MHC to explore the potential for making the New Salem Common a Local Historic District. There is also interest in exploring National Register Districts for other historic districts in Town, such as North New Salem and Morse Village.

3. Heritage Landscape Inventory List from Local Identification Meeting

Each town involved in the Connecticut River Valley Heritage Landscape Inventory held a local identification meeting to solicit input from a range of community members to identify potential heritage landscapes throughout the town. The lists were prioritized by the community, with help from the consultants, to create a list of seven Priority areas, which were described in Part I of this report. The complete list of the 38 heritage landscapes identified at the meeting is included as Appendix A of this report and provides a sound resource list for future documentation activities and potential funding opportunities.

New Salem's meeting was held on January 27, 2009 with 42 community members present. The historic, vernacular, ethnographic and/or designed landscapes of the town were grouped into the following categories:

- Agricultural
- Civic
- Institutional
- Open Space and Recreation
- Archaeological
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential
- Burial
- Historical
- Natural
- Transportation

TOWNWIDE PLANNING AND ZONING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Detailed descriptions of planning tools and techniques can be found in The Department of Conservation and Recreation publication Terra Firma #7 - Taking Action: A Toolkit for Protecting Community Character (2009). This document includes the following sections: Municipal Roles in Landscape Preservation, Thinking in Context: Comprehensive and Open Space Planning; Engaging the Public; and Defending the Resources: Laws, Bylaws and Regulations. This document should be used in conjunction with this report, as a guide to acting on specific recommendations for the Priority Heritage Landscapes included in Part I.

This following Community Planning Checklist provides an overview of planning and zoning that currently exists within the Town of New Salem, zoning changes that are currently underway, and recommendations for further changes that were included in this report and other planning documents.

COMMUNITY PLANNING CHECKLIST

TOWN OF NEW SALEM

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS	BUILDING BLOCK	NOTES
	Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)	
	Transit Oriented Development (TOD)	
*	Mixed Use Village Districts	Potential for Route 202 Commercial Area
	Planned Unit Development (PUD)	
	Adaptive Reuse and Infill Development	
	Tax Incentive Programs and Business Improvement Districts	
□	Open Space Residential Development	Researching Natural Resource Protection Zoning and OSRD
✓	Accessory Apartments	
	Inclusionary Zoning	
✓	Home Based Business Bylaw	Home Occupations and Accessory Uses (§5A.8)
✓	Brownfields Inventory	Former New Salem Restaurant
	Brownfields Redevelopment Projects	
	Transfer of Development Rights	
✓	Agricultural Commission	
*	Right to Farm Bylaw	
	River Protection Overlay District	
*	Community Preservation Act	
	Scenic Upland Overlay District	
*	Bike and Pedestrian Features	
*	Traffic Calming Measures	
✓	Water Supply Protection District	75% of Town land owned by DCR to protect Quabbin Reservoir and its watershed
*	Low Impact Development	
	Stormwater and Erosion Control Bylaw	
	Stormwater Utilities	
*	Commercial Site Plan Review	
	Residential Site Plan Review	
	Commercial Performance Standards	
	Urban Growth Boundaries / Limits of Sewer and Water Extensions	
*	Green Building Standards	
	Municipally Owned Renewable Energy	
✓	Other Energy Efficiency Measures	Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan Memorandum of Understanding (2-25-08)
	Smart Growth Zoning Districts (Ch. 40R)	
✓	Intergovernmental Compact	See Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan MOA
✓ *	Historic District (Local or National)	New Salem Common National Register Historic District (4-15-1978); potential for making Town Center a Local Historic District
*	Demolition Delay Bylaw	Age-based recommended
✓	Scenic Road Bylaw	All roads in Town except for 122 and 202 have been designated scenic roads under MGL Ch. 40 Sec. 15c; Route 122 was designated as a Scenic Byway by the State in 2005

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS	BUILDING BLOCK	NOTES
	Downtown Revitalization District	
✱	Phased Growth Bylaw	
	Back Lot Development with Open Space Set-Aside	
✓	Flag Lots	Rear Lot (§6.1.b)
	Flood Plain Overlay District	
✱	Other Overlay Districts	Cultural Overlay District for Town Center
	Wetlands Protection Bylaw	
☐ ✱	Establish Town Trails Committee	

✓ Successfully Implemented

☐ Under Consideration

✱ Should Consider Adopting

Comprehensive, Open Space and other Planning Documents

It is important that Open Space Plans, Comprehensive or Master Plans, and other planning documents address heritage landscapes as vital features of the community, contributing not only to unique sense of place but also to environmental, recreational and economic health.

Current Plans:

- Old Academy Building Master Plan (June 2008)
- Town of New Salem Community Development Plan (June 2004)
- New Salem Open Space and Recreation Plan (May 2004)
- Forest Stewardship Plan, Town of New Salem, MA (Final Draft, October 2001)
- Town of New Salem, City and Town Commons Program Excerpts from the Final Proposal (March 1985)
- New Salem Academy Preservation Inventory & Marketing Plan (October 1980)

Recommended Plans: Comprehensive planning provides an important frame of reference for land use decisions and incorporates all of a community's issues into an integrated plan. Heritage Landscapes need to be considered as the town uses these plans to move forward with implementation efforts related to community character, historic preservation, environmental health, and economic viability and growth. Their future and the values they contribute should be addressed within these multiple perspectives, not solely as historical assets of the community.

It is recommended that the Town continue efforts to develop a Comprehensive Plan for New Salem with the assistance of landscape architecture and planning consultants. The Plan should take into account needs of the town and recommended potential reuse options for town-owned properties. This planning process is also an opportunity to get input from the community about appropriate types of economic development, such as cultural tourism, to encourage within New Salem.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Outreach, Education and Interpretation

In order to create a community of advocates, we need to raise public awareness and broaden the base of support. This includes developing opportunities to learn about and celebrate the places and history of the town, as well as to care for them.

Collaboration

Protecting community character, respecting history, and promoting smart growth are interrelated concerns that impact Heritage Landscapes and require collaboration across a broad spectrum of the community. This includes communication among town boards and departments, as well as public-private partnerships.

Technical Assistance

Regulations and creative solutions for heritage landscapes are constantly changing and emerging. Public and private agencies offer technical assistance with the many issues to be addressed, including the State Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

Funding Opportunities

Funding rarely comes from a single source, more often depending on collaborative underwriting by private, municipal, and regional sources. Each town also has a variety of funding sources that are locally-based and sometimes site-specific. If adopted, Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds could provide funding to support many of these recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report for New Salem provides an initial preservation-planning document that identifies Priority Heritage Landscapes and discusses strategies for their long-term protection. New Salem contains a rich diversity of heritage landscape types ranging from the historic structures in the Town Center to the scenic vistas and recreational areas around the Quabbin Reservoir. These landscapes reflect the strong history and character of the community and are tangible pieces of the New Salem story.

This Report provides a starting point for preservation strategies but the heritage landscapes identified, especially the Priority Heritage Landscapes, may need additional research and documentation including the preparation of additional MHC inventory forms and survey work. The information provided and further research will allow for better consensus building and the

support of the broader community in order to successfully implement the recommendations for these landscapes. Ultimately, implementation of the recommendations will likely require a collaboration of local boards and commissions, regional and state agencies and non-profit entities.

Many in New Salem are already moving forward with a variety of initiatives and projects that advance the celebration and preservation of its heritage landscapes that are enumerated above. Distribution of this Reconnaissance Report to various municipal boards and commissions involved in making land use decisions will assist New Salem with an overall strategy for the preservation of its community's character. The breadth of action steps outlined in this document will require a cooperative effort and a variety of local groups to take the lead on implementation. Some recommendations for heritage landscape preservation within this report are customized for particular Priority Heritage Landscapes and others address townwide planning and preservation techniques that will strengthen the efforts that the Town has already accomplished. This report should be used in conjunction with Terra Firma #7 - Taking Action: A Toolkit for Protecting Community Character (2009), which provides more detail about specific tools available.

The top three recommendations from this report that the town of New Salem should focus on in the near future are:

- Creation of a Local Historic District or an Architectural Preservation District for the Town Center to provide a higher level of protection for all of the properties in the district.
- The Town should continue efforts to develop a Comprehensive Plan for New Salem that addresses town needs including: 1) parking, traffic and pedestrian circulation in relation to reuse of town owned buildings in the Town Center; 2) appropriate types and locations to encourage economic development, and 3) other planning and zoning recommendations that support town goals.
- Creation of a Mixed Use Village District in the Route 202 Commercial Area that would allow desired uses.

Dissemination of the community's Heritage Landscape resources to the general public is also an important tool for increasing awareness and support for protection of these landscapes. This report provides an important step for New Salem's preservation planning program and can provide the foundation for future historic preservation, conservation and recreation planning activities. The commitment of the citizens of New Salem to their heritage is apparent in the historic landscape character and fabric that makes New Salem the unique cultural, historic, and recreational resource that it is.

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1794 Meetinghouse. www.1794meetinghouse.org

APPENDIX A: NEW SALEM HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Note: Landscapes marked with an asterisk (*) have been designated “Priority Heritage Landscapes” by the town.

LANDSCAPE NAME	NOTES
Agricultural	
<i>*Hillman Farm</i>	Apple orchard and historic home (1800); site of New Salem Preserves
<i>Hamilton’s Apple Orchard</i>	
<i>Hunt Dairy Farm</i>	Primarily located in Orange
Archaeological	
<i>Stone Chamber</i>	
Cemetery	
<i>*Cemeteries:</i>	
<i>*Stiles Cemetery</i>	Nielson Road
<i>*Mountain View Cemetery</i>	North Prescott Road
<i>*North New Salem Cemetery</i>	Fay Road
<i>*Branch Bridge Cemetery</i>	Branch Bridge Road; maintenance needs
Civic	
<i>*New Salem Common Historic District</i>	National Register Historic District (4-15-1978)
<i>*Old Academy Building</i>	
<i>*Town Hall</i>	
<i>*1794 Meeting House</i>	
<i>*Center Cemetery</i>	
<i>*Town Pound</i>	1737; also Historical
<i>*Historic homes</i>	Also Residential
<i>*Playing fields</i>	Also Recreational
<i>Veterans “Soldiers Memorial”</i>	Orange Road; also Historical
<i>Town Villages</i>	Also Residential
Commercial	
<i>*Route 202 Commercial</i>	General Store and former restaurants
<i>Millington Crossing</i>	Bullard Tavern; former inn foundation marker; opposite Elm Street in Quabbin Reservoir
Historical	
<i>North New Salem</i>	Not designated as a registered district
<i>New Salem/Prescott Town Line Sign</i>	Only surviving house from Prescott nearby

<i>First Meeting House Site Marker</i>	
<i>Hessians Trail Historic Marker</i>	
<i>Fort Markers</i>	Several in the Town Center
<i>Blueberry Hill First Settlement Marker</i>	
Industrial	
<i>Mill Sites</i>	North New Salem, Cooleyville Road, Wendell Road
<i>Old Dam</i>	Intersection of North Main Street and Nielsen Road
<i>Cooleyville Road Electric Dam</i>	Chandler property; maintenance issues
Institutional	
<i>Poor Farm</i>	Blueberry Hill; also Residential
Natural Resources	
<i>*The Lookout</i>	Scenic vista of the north end of Quabbin Reservoir located in Town Center behind Fire Department
<i>Route 202 Scenic View of Quabbin Reservoir</i>	
<i>Lover's Lane Lookout</i>	
<i>Bear's Den</i>	Nielson Road
<i>Moosehorn Road Swamp Complex</i>	Swift River
<i>Keystone Bridge</i>	Quabbin Gate 30; near Route 122 Scenic Byway
Open Space/Recreational	
<i>West Hill Project</i>	Thurber/Tate property; conservation restriction in place
<i>North Spectacle/Eagleville Pond</i>	
<i>Macedonia Road</i>	Scenic
<i>Elm Street south of Route 202</i>	Quabbin Gate 29; hiking and birdwatching
<i>Gate 33—Quabbin Reservoir</i>	Access trail and fishing dock; also Natural Resources
<i>Branch Bridge Road</i>	Fishing, birdwatching, and camping
Residential	
<i>Bullard Farm</i>	86 Elm St.; former B&B; one of oldest homes; protected lands
<i>Haskell Tavern</i>	76 Elm Street; oldest house in North New Salem; Underground Railroad site; first female tavern keeper (1773)
<i>Jeremiah Meecham Homestead</i>	First settler; foundation remains
<i>Quabbin View House on Lovers Lane</i>	Deteriorating condition
<i>Hop Brook Farm</i>	Also Agricultural
Transportation	
<i>*Rabbit Run Railroad in Hagerville</i>	Private and state-owned property; potential bike path