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SHIPYARD DISTRICT HISTORIC PROPERTIES SURVEY, PART I Marblehead, Essex County, Massachusetts

Final Report

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Abstract

The project conducted an intensive-level survey of historic resources within the Shipyard District in the Town of Marblehead. This project was a high priority in the Town's Historic Resource Survey Master Plan (2013) as the neighborhood is recognized as historically significant and increasingly vulnerable to redevelopment. The goal of the survey is to promote the preservation of these resources by raising public awareness of their significance through detailed and cogent narratives of their individual histories and their role as landmarks in the evolving physical and cultural character of their neighborhoods.

In addition, the local Marblehead Historical Commission (LHC) believes that a higher level of documentation will provide information useful in the evaluation of significance for preservation planning and the town's review of permit applications involving historic properties. The LHC has no direct jurisdiction in project review but hopes survey documentation will lead to informed decisions where significant historic resources are involved. This project, the first of a two-phase effort, recorded architectural, historical and photographic documentation for 68 properties in the Shipyard District for individual properties and two areas on inventory forms provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). Individual properties and historic districts that appear eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places have been identified. When the second phase of the project is completed, the eligibility of the entire Shipyard District will be addressed.

Methodology:

Survey Objectives. The objectives of the survey were to retrieve information relevant to historic properties, their owners and builders, organize it in narratives that are accessible and informative to a variety of users, and provide assessments of significance that contribute to local and state preservation planning.

Assessment of Previous Research. Very few historic properties outside of the existing historic districts in the town core have been documented, and approximately five of them are located in the Shipyard District. It was this circumstance that prompted the creation of a survey master plan in 2013. A review of local repositories done for the plan revealed little source material pertaining to 19th- and

20th-century development of the town and Marblehead's resort era history. The documentation for the selected properties essentially started from scratch. Local historians Samuel Roads, Jr. (1880s) and Sidney Perley (1910) published sources that contained information of the area's early land history and figures active in its 19th-century residential development.

Selection Criteria. A preliminary list of properties was compiled in the Survey Master Plan. The selections were made based on an extant property's representation on atlas of Marblehead published in 1912. In addition, notable buildings erected after that date were selected through visual assessment. In this initial phase, properties selected by this standard were limited to two areas, one on Rowland's Hill, which had its own distinctive development history, and another along Hawkes and Barnard streets, where a planned subdivision was platted in 1853. A set of 69 individual properties were selected for inventory forms within these two areas, and inventory forms were created for the two areas as well. A preliminary selection of individual properties for inventory also was made for two areas to be surveyed in the second phase of the project.

Procedure. The survey followed the standard methodology set forth in the "Historic Properties Survey Manual" issued and updated by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The process includes field inspection with on-site notational and photographic recording, archival research, association with architectural and historical contexts, and assessment of significance. Research focused on property owners identified in deeds using historic atlases, city directories, the census, vital records and genealogical sources searchable on Ancestry.com. Local archives and historical sources also were reviewed either in physical repositories or on the Internet. Biographical information on architects and builders were examined where possible using architectural records, newspaper accounts, obituaries and genealogical sources and indexes. The project was planned based on the town's Survey Master Plan (2013) and organized in four phases, the standard scope of work for MHC survey projects.

Products. The products are MHC Building and Area Forms with detailed property and building histories. The 212 properties inventoried represent 69 Building Forms and 2 Area Forms. Each form is illustrated with current and, when available, historic views of the property. (All digital photographs taken as part of the project will be conveyed to both MHC and LHC.) A table with property data on each individual building and area will be compiled in a spreadsheet format as an index to the survey and a basis for general analysis and mapping. (A preliminary table is attached.) As part of the project, the LHC will produce a base map showing the locations of the surveyed properties using data provided in this table. A final report also will be prepared providing an overview of the project along with its findings and recommendations for future applications.

Street Index of Inventoried Properties

See attached spreadsheet

National Register Contexts for Evaluation

The properties documented represent a range of historic domestic architecture characterizing the Shipyard District's residential development during the last half of the 19th century when Marblehead's shoe industry attracted scores of families to the town from Ireland, Canada and other New England areas. Shoe manufacturers, house builders and other entrepreneurs bought land between Rowland's Hill and Marblehead Harbor formerly in agricultural, shipbuilding and fishing uses creating subdivisions and erecting "cottage dwellings" for the newcomers. These were preceded by the homes of fishermen and ropemakers built earlier in the century on Rowland's Hill.

Early ropewalks along Hawkes and Barnard streets were replaced with house lots. When Atlantic Avenue was opened in the neighborhood in 1882, it prompted the commercialization of real estate along its route, a use that was fully realized in the early automobile era in the 20th century. Over the past century the Shipyard District has experienced losses and alterations to its original urban fabric, but overall it has maintained a high level of historic integrity without the benefit of the preservation controls placed on the old town center. Currently, the neighborhood is in the midst of another wave of renovation as owners of the small-scale historic dwellings are bringing them up to 21st-century living standards. Most of the work has been sympathetic to the neighborhood's historic character, but with ever-increasing real estate values comes concerns for its long-term preservation.

Contexts for evaluation for these properties include the following.

- *Architecture.* Generally, the examples of 18th- and 19th-century domestic architecture have significance as distinctive examples of types, periods and methods of construction in the local context. All of them conform to small lots with narrow frontages that were an extension of the urban plan established in the old town, although here platted in a more orderly manner. The earlier buildings are consistent with models prevalent in the older town center. In particular, story-and-a-half and two-story, single-pile center-hall-plan houses with their narrow gable ends facing the street and two-story side-passage-plan houses. A distinguishing feature of the center-hall house was the placement of chimneys on the back walls.

By the 1840s a new “cottage dwelling” type was introduced as a more systematic plan of development was implemented by shoe manufacturers and entrepreneurs to create housing for shoe workers. These dwellings were generally a story-and-a-half, single-pile center-hall houses with facades facing the street or to one side. Better dwellings had a full second story. In addition, end houses were an option, an updated version of the 18th-century side-passage house. The neighborhood also contains examples of duplexes (although many of the conventional single-family types accommodated multiple families) and other uncategorical houses, as well as later 19th-century and 20th-century types added over time.

Any of the few historic outbuildings that survive are significant architectural features of the properties on which they are located and any potential historic districts. In particular, shoe shops—ten-footers, large shops and small factories—are rare and important resources and contributing features where they are extant.

The routing of Atlantic Avenue across the neighborhood's street plan in the 1880s introduced commercial types into the Shipyard, first adapting existing houses (a few of which survive) and then replacing them with one-story commercial buildings of little distinction. A historic bank and gas station are two properties of significance.

Nearly all the houses surviving from this mid-19th-century period are recognizable in form and design in spite of superficial alterations. Only a few are intact or distinguished enough to be individually eligible for the National Register under the architecture context. However, as a whole, they were authentic and significant enough to contribute to a historic district likely to emerge from this survey.

- *Community Planning & Development.* The Town created lots on the recompense land on Rowland's Hill in 1726 thus beginning the gradual development of the Shipyard District. Soon after Marblehead fishermen began building houses on the hill. Even at this early date, there had been some expansion of the old town into the area of the hay scales at the northeasterly end of Prospect Street. Later, this would become known as Ropemakers Court, perhaps because it served as an early outdoor ropewalk, but it also was where a number of ropemakers lived with their ropewalks in the vicinity.

Prominent shoemakers acquired and platted the entire open area between Rowland's Hill and Marblehead Harbor to provide housing, some for rent but most for sale, for their growing numbers of employees. These plans, the standardized houses built there, and the community that developed from it is historically significant in this context. This area of significance will be a contributing factor in the eligibility of a historic district.

- *Ethnic Heritage.* The residential development of the Shipyard District created homes for shoeworkers moving into Marblehead, a large number of whom were immigrants from Ireland or the children of Irish-born parents. The role Irish immigrants played in the industrial history of Massachusetts, not just the shoe industry in Marblehead, Lynn, Salem and the region, is significant and will be a contributing theme in the eligibility of the historic district.
- *Industry.* While the major shoe factories were located outside the Shipyard District along Pleasant Street, there were shoe shops on domestic properties scattered throughout the Shipyard District where shoes were initially manufactured by individual cordwainers, families, and small unrelated collectives. Until large, mechanized factories appeared after the Civil War, shoe manufacturers relied on a network of shoe makers and small shoe factories to make their products. A number of shoe shops and small factories survive in the neighborhood and are significant components of their properties and the historic landscape of the town.
- *Maritime History.* Underneath all the mid-19th-century residential development brought on by the shoe industry are the remnants of the maritime associations for which the district was named. That shipyard no longer exists, nor do the wharves, ropewalks drying racks for nets, and fish flakes, but the waterfront area continues in maritime uses and a number of houses, have historical associations with fishermen and ropemakers (many who later became shoemakers) particularly on Rowland's Hill. Gregory Street (the road to the shipyard), Barnard Street (the road between the rope walks), and Prospect Street (Ropemakers' Court) also have associations with this context.

National Register Recommendations

All the properties and areas inventoried in this survey have been recommended for listing on the National Register as contributing features of a potential historic district in the Shipyard neighborhood. The boundaries of this historic district await the completion of the second phase of the Shipyard survey project. Seven properties have been recommended as also being individually eligible for the National Register. These properties are so indicated on the street index for the survey.

Further Recommendations

- Complete the second phase of Shipyard District survey

- With community support prepare a National Register Nomination for the Shipyard District
- Follow other recommendations prioritized in Survey Master Plan

Bibliography

Town Repositories

Marblehead Assessor's Office. Maps and Property Data. <http://marblehead.patriotproperties.com>
 Marblehead Engineering Department. Interactive parcel map. <http://marblehead.org/webgis/>.
 Marblehead Town Clerk. Town records and reports.
 Marblehead Historical Commission. Records & Archives. www.marbleheadhistory.org.
 Marblehead Historical Commission, "Marblehead Historic Resource Survey Master Plan (2013)"
 Marblehead Museum & Historical Society. Historical Collections & Archives.
 Abbot Public Library. Marblehead Room Local History Collection & vertical files.

Other Repositories

Salem MA. Peabody Essex Institute. Library and archives
 _____ . Southern Essex District Registry of Deeds
 Marblehead timeline. <http://legendinc.com/Pages/MarbleheadNet/MM/Articles/Timeline.html>.
 Boston MA. Massachusetts Historical Commission. Marblehead Reconnaissance Survey Town Report, Marblehead inventory forms filed in the Inventory of Historic and Archeological Assets of the Commonwealth, National Register of Historic Places nomination forms and vertical files pertaining to Marblehead.

Historic Maps

Coast of New Hampshire and Massachusetts from Great Boars Head to Marblehead Harbor. Joseph F.W. Des Barres, 1776.
Chart of the Harbors of Salem, Marblehead, Beverly and Manchester, Nathaniel Bowditch, 1806.
Map of Marblehead, Massachusetts, State of Massachusetts, 1795.
 [Map of] *The County of Essex*. John G. Hales, 1825.
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REPOSITORIES OF SURVEY MATERIALS

The products of this survey will be made available to the public at the Marblehead Historical Commission, Abbot Hall, 188 Washington St., Marblehead, open to the public from 9:00 AM - 12:00 Pm, Mon-Fri or by appointment. They will also be repositied at the Massachusetts Historical Commission, 220 Morrissey Blvd., Boston MA 02125 and in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, <http://mhc-macris.net/>.