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## COASTAL ZONE HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY Marblehead, Essex County, Massachusetts

### Final Report

18 September 2016

#### **Abstract**

The project conducted an intensive-level survey of historic resources within the coastal zone established by the Town of Marblehead. This project was the top priority in the Town's Historic Resource Survey Master Plan (2013) as historic properties on the coastline are considered to be most vulnerable to change. The goal of the survey is to promote the preservation of these valuable properties 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) desired to upgrade existing levels of documentation and 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 recorded architectural, historical and photographic documentation for 186 properties in the coastal zone on survey forms for individual properties and areas 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. Due to the large number of properties documented, exceeding the contractual obligation of 120 properties, those on Marblehead Neck were deferred to a later project with one exception.

#### **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. 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 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century development of the town and Marblehead's resort era history. The documentation for the selected properties essentially started from scratch.

*Selection Criteria.* A preliminary list of properties was compiled in the Survey Master Plan. The principal selection measure was a property's presence in the town's coastal zone. Within that area, 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. As the extent of properties selected by this standard was more than double the 120-property limit set for the project, it is necessary to defer those on Marblehead Neck for a subsequent phase. Only one of the selected properties is recorded in MHC's Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), so all of the properties inventoried will represent new information.

*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 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 186 properties inventoried represent 27 Building Forms and 9 Area Forms Each form is illustrated with current and, when available, historic views of the property. Digital photographs taken as part of the project will be conveyed to both MHC and LHC. A table with property data on each building 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 Town 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.

The properties documented represent a range of historic domestic architecture characterizing Marblehead's summer cottage development during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nearly all of these properties are located within 300 feet of the shoreline or within the town's coastal zone. (A few of the proposed areas include properties beyond this zone.) The integrity of buildings is mixed with a number of them underutilized and threatened.

An unexpected number of properties associated with Marblehead's earliest period of summer resort development, particularly a planned development in Clifton Villages and a land-lease colony in Clifton Heights. Both these areas have evolved over the years, but a remarkable amount of undocumented cottages were inventoried. In the same way, a number of cottage colonies that were created in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century along Salem Harbor were discovered and documented providing an unexpected context for the history of summer cottage development and its architecture.

**Street Index of Inventoried Properties**

See attached spreadsheet

**National Register Contexts and National Register Recommendations**

The principal context for evaluation in this survey is Marblehead's summer tourism era that originated with the arrival of the railroad and Atlantic Avenue in the 1870s, which brought tourists to the town's Atlantic coast Swampscott, Lynn and south to Boston. They initially boarded in hotels, but quickly built cottages in coastal plats and land-lease colonies created by Marblehead landholders ready to capitalize on the demand. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these colonies had become dense with cottage, with architecture that became increasing elaborate. In a similar series of events, the shoreline of Salem Harbor developed with a series of summer colonies with tourists leasing land for cottages. These colonies attracted more common folk from across the harbor in Salem, Peabody, Danvers, etc. In between was Peach's Point, a compound of elite "cottages" developed by the extended Crowninshield family beginning in the 1870s. Architecture ranges from the large-scale, architect-designed mansions on Peach's Point to the basic seasonal cottages, lacking plumbing and electricity, at Bessom's Beach.

See attached Spreadsheet for areas and individual properties recommended as eligible for the National Register.

**Further Recommendations**

- Continue coastal zone survey on Marblehead Neck
- Publish history of Marblehead's cottage colony history
- 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](http://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.

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