

Community-Wide Archaeological Surveys

Leonard W. Loparto

Many towns have surveyed at least a portion of their community's historic architecture; archaeological resources, however, are sorely underreported. Archaeological sites may be less visible, but are nonetheless important historic and prehistoric resources to consider in all community-wide preservation planning. Most residents in a community do not know that archaeological sites can survive near existing buildings and in urban settings as well as on undeveloped parcels of land. Interest in archaeological resources often arises when an archaeological resource is threatened or destroyed, or simply perceived destroyed. With MHC's help this interest can evolve into a community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey—the first step in identifying and protecting historic and Native American archaeological resources.

Reconnaissance Surveys

Best completed by professional archaeologists, a reconnaissance survey addresses the distribution and significance of archaeological sites and provides a base for informed community-wide planning for all known and predicted archaeological

resources. It also complements, at the town level, the State Reconnaissance Survey. Archaeologists use the natural environment and known cultural resources to develop a predictive model for the town. This model is used to predict the types of prehistoric and historic archaeological resources that may be present and where they might be found. Documentary information is used to locate sites as well. The archaeologists develop a regional and local prehistoric and historic context to identify and evaluate the archaeological resources.

Conducting a community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey often brings together a diverse group of individuals and resources. Professional

What is a survey?

A community-wide survey produces an inventory of a town's or city's historic and archaeological resources. This inventory is the foundation of all preservation planning and decision-making. In essence, you need to know what you have before you can determine the best protection strategies. A complete survey considers architectural, archaeological, and other cultural resources. The survey should be entered into the MHC's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth so that your town's resources can be considered in comprehensive statewide preservation planning. The survey is an important tool to have when facing the challenges of future growth in your community.



Westport residents discuss the archaeology of their community with a staff member from PAL, Inc., during a community archaeology day.

consultants will interview local residents, historical societies, and commissions; Native American representatives; avocational archaeologists; and other knowledgeable persons for information about Native American and historic sites in the area. An "artifact day" is often held during which archaeologists identify artifacts for community members and record useful information.

The collected data and recommendations are presented in a technical report that encourages the management and protection of significant archaeological resources. The report should meet the State Archaeologist's regulations (950CMR70.14) and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation and include information that enables local communities and the MHC to better identify and manage threatened archaeological resources. A report usually includes local and regional Native American and historic contexts, maps of known archaeological sites and archaeological sensitivity, management recommendations, MHC archaeological site forms, and a non-technical user's guide for the sensitivity maps.

The archaeologists conducting the survey can meet with local historical commissions and representatives of town government, such as Town Counsel, the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Open Space Committees to assess permitting and approval processes, local bylaws, existing town planning and review mechanisms, and land acquisition and management strategies relevant to archaeological resource planning and protection. The information can be used as the base for specific recommendations to the town for bylaws and protection methods, including zoning and/or other land use controls and incentives for private property, land trusts, and other owners of undevel-

oped and historically sensitive land to protect archaeological sites. A summary of known information relating to Native American and historic archaeological sites should be included in town master plans and comprehensive surveys. MHC staff urges consultants to include this information and often contributes site information for these brief summaries.

Funding a Survey

Funding a survey can be a challenge. Many towns have applied for matching grants under the MHC Survey and Planning Grant program. (Recently, because of federal and state budget reductions, Survey and Planning Grants have been limited to Certified Local Government communities.) Other towns have conducted surveys using town funds from the Community

Preservation Act.

Whether under an MHC grant or town funds, MHC can provide technical assistance to towns by developing a scope of work and helping determine exactly what type of survey is needed according to the specific needs of the town. On grant projects, MHC staff members work closely with the town and consultants in an advisory and review capacity. MHC staff can also offer assistance in developing local bylaws and other legislation to protect archaeological resources.

Communities interested in conducting community-wide surveys of their town should contact the MHC Preservation Planning Division for more information.

Towns with Archaeological Surveys

- Bolton's community-wide archaeological survey identified several archaeological sites in the town, as well as known sites and potential threats. This survey supplements the town's Historic Properties Survey and Preservation Plan.
- Dartmouth and Westport recognized the need for a reconnaissance survey following a concern for the remains of water-powered mills.
- Medfield has an archaeological advisory committee.
- On Martha's Vineyard community-wide archaeological surveys were sought in part to support the special regulatory authority of the Martha's Vineyard Commission.
- Marion initiated a reconnaissance survey as a basis for including archaeology among the criteria for making decisions on land acquisition and protection strategies.
- Falmouth, Marion, Bolton, Bedford, Boston, Salem, Dartmouth, Edgartown, Tisbury, Oak Bluffs, Chilmark, Aquinnah, Medfield, Weyland, and the Middlesex Canal Association each completed surveys using funds from MHC's Survey and Planning Grant.
- A town-funded survey has been completed in Westport.



David B. Cohen
Mayor

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Newton Historical Commission

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David Morton, Secretary

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3 December 2008

Community Preservation Committee
c/o Alice E. Ingerson
Community Preservation Manager
Newton Planning and Development Department
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Subject: Newton Architectural Heritage and Archaeology Project

Dear Alice,

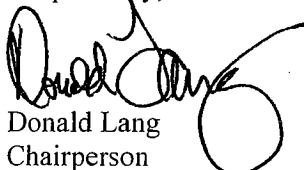
The Newton Historical Commission wishes to express its full support for the proposed project. The city's historical data base, while extensive, is incomplete and in many cases, inaccurate. Many of the city's historic resources have been lost since the last survey was completed more than twenty years ago. The current data base has been only sporadically updated since then.

This project would be an initial step toward the goal of an accurate, city wide data base of every structure. This, in combination with current data management techniques, will allow the Newton Historical Commission and the Planning Department to better track the city's historic resources. It will enable us to determine which of those resources are being threatened and make it possible to be proactive rather than reactive.

In the last few years, several important historic structures have been proposed for demolition. As a reactive, last ditch effort to preserve them landmarking has been proposed as a remedy. In every case, the endeavor has simply been too little, too late and the structures were lost. A comprehensive data base will enable the Commission and the Planning Department to better anticipate development pressure on the city's remaining historic resources.

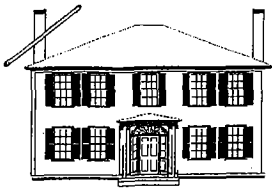
The Planning Department has identified approximately 50 structures that are particularly remarkable and warrant of some form of protection. There are, undoubtedly, many more. The Commission's hope is that as our review process has been streamlined by the recent procedural changes, we could divert some staff time toward identifying those structures at greatest risk, determine which method would best safeguard them and begin the process of doing so. This proposed project will be a valuable tool in that undertaking.

Respectfully,




Donald Lang
Chairperson

Newton Historical Commission
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459
Email: blever@newtonma.gov www.ci.newton.ma.us



NEWTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

 at The Jackson Homestead
Cynthia Stone, Director

*Headquartered at
the Newton
History Museum*

January 26, 2009

Brian Lever
Planning Department
City of Newton
100 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, Ma. 02459

Re: Newton Historical Society Letter of Support-
Newton Architectural Heritage and Archeological Survey

Dear Mr. Lever:

Based on the information you have provided, the Newton Historical Society has voted to support the City's application to the CPC for a Newton Architectural Heritage and Archeological Survey. The Society believes the survey will be extremely valuable as a guide for the protection and preservation of historic sites throughout the city. It will aid the Newton Historic Commission as well as the city planning department and other city and state agencies in identifying historic resources before they are threatened.

It has been twenty years since a survey of this scope was undertaken in Newton. The Society believes the information from this survey is essential to maintain and protect Newton's historic resources.

Sincerely,

Anne Larner
President Newton Historical Society



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

January 15, 2009

Brian Lever, Senior Preservation Planner
Newton Planning and Development Department
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Mr. Lever:

At its January 14th meeting the Massachusetts Historical Commission reviewed your Letter of Intent (pre-application) for **Fiscal Year 2009 Survey and Planning Grant** funds. While MHC recognizes that your pre-application for the **Newton Architectural Heritage & Archaeological Project** reflects a high priority local preservation planning need, we are unable to extend to you an invitation to prepare a full application for this project at this time.

In this round of the Survey and Planning Grant program, the number of competitive pre-applications was high. MHC received forty-nine (49) pre-applications that requested a total of \$683,200. Given its target figure of awarding 10 to 12 awards in the FY09 Grant round, the Commission opted to invite only 14 of the 49 pre-applicants to submit full applications. Competition among these full applications for program funds is expected to be high.

While the MHC is pleased in this round to be able to again offer the Survey and Planning Grant program to assist all communities in the Commonwealth with critical preservation planning needs, the backlog of grant-worthy projects means that we have not been able to address every community's needs in this grant cycle. The Commission appreciates your interest in our program and values your preservation concerns. While we understand that this is discouraging news, we would encourage you to continue to seek support for your efforts, and to consider what components of your project might still move forward with the resources currently available to you. **In particular you should not hesitate to re-apply to this program in future rounds.** If you wish to discuss your projects further, and/or to strategize on how best to continue your efforts with this project, please feel free to contact Chris Skelly, Director of Local Government Programs at MHC, or me. MHC may be able to assist you to move your project forward and/or to take preliminary steps that would better position you to take advantage of the next Survey and Planning grant round, or of other available funding sources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Steinitz".

Michael Steinitz
Director, Preservation Planning Division
Massachusetts Historical Commission

LWVN
6 Jan 09

Project Name: Newton Pre-1820 Architectural Heritage and Archaeology Project

Submitted by: Mike Kruse: Director Planning and Development Dept.
Brian Lever: Senior Preservation Planner

CPA Category(ies): Historic Preservation

Location: Newton

Cost: From CPA funds: \$37,000 for Phase I (total = \$57,000)

Description: Conduct a citywide systematic survey to identify, map, and evaluate historic resources from the Federal period (ending approximately 1820) and earlier.

To be accomplished in two phases. CPA funds are being sought for Phase I.

This phase involves an archaeological survey identifying areas of archaeological sensitivity, including existing sites, and a ground penetrating radar survey of the East Parish Burying Ground to assess the presence of remains. There are presently 29 documented archaeological sites in Newton with possibly 120 others. Phase I would be done by a consultant with assistance from city staff.

The final product would be a report filed with the Planning Dept. for use in project review and for the proactive preservation of such sites.

Comments/Questions: This is both a worthwhile and an inexpensive endeavor that is likely to offer considerable benefit to the work of the Historical Commission. We suggest that the final survey be distributed to that commission as well as to other bodies that deal with property and development, such as Land Use and Planning, to maximize the opportunity for it to be used rather than simply archived.

Recommendation: Support.