

SOUTHBOROUGH MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORIC PROPERTIES SURVEY
FINAL REPORT

Anne McCarthy Forbes, Preservation Consultant
Gretchen G. Schuler, Preservation Consultant

25 Martin Street

Acton, MA 01720

June 2000

SOUTHBOROUGH HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY

COMPLETION REPORT - JUNE 30, 2000

I. PROJECT SUMMARY

Funded by the Town of Southborough and a matching Survey & Planning Grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), this project conducted a community-wide intensive survey of the town, which resulted in an expanded and updated inventory of Southborough's historic, architectural, and cultural resources. A volunteer survey had been conducted in 1971 documenting over 250 resources with photographs, some building materials facts, and names shown on the 1870 and 1898 historic maps. Additional survey work included the mid-1980s work on resources associated with the Metropolitan Water Supply which resulted in a National Register nomination of those resources, a 1995 survey in conjunction with a regional system of resources near the Boston & Albany Railroad tracks, including properties in Cordaville and Southville, of which parts of both areas were determined to be National Register eligible. In 1999 eight important properties were documented prior to the beginning of this project. The current Survey & Planning project has brought the documentation of most of the town's historic properties up to current MHC standards, has included many twentieth century properties, and has added information on structures, objects, burial grounds, and landscapes. A total of 170 forms were written or updated in this project, which is the equivalent of 230 individual inventory forms, due to the comprehensive approach of the area form.

II. METHODOLOGY

Survey Objectives The scope and procedures followed for the survey were tailored to the town's goals of extending documentation to all historic resources in Southborough that retain their architectural or historic significance; and included updating, correcting, and adding to the information of former survey efforts. MHC survey methodology was used. In addition to completing survey forms the project also involved the writing of a narrative history of Southborough, a list of individual properties and districts recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places after the NR criteria had been applied to all documented properties, the completion of an index showing properties that were documented in this project, a comprehensive bibliography and a base map locating all documented properties.

Survey Procedures In order to attain these goals within the prescribed budget, the use of the Area Form format was used to document geographically and historically related properties such as the villages of Cordaville, Fayville and Southville. Due to the budget constraints, it was not possible to replace all former inventory forms and add twentieth century properties that had not been previously documented with this combined approach. Some individual properties within the areas that retain a high degree of historical and/or architectural significance were documented in more detail on individual inventory forms.

Criteria for Selecting Properties It was not possible to document all of Southborough's pre-1960 resources according to current standards. Properties chosen for this survey project met the following criteria:

1. historic and/or architectural importance, including National Register eligibility;
2. endangerment by either demolition, neglect, or alteration;
3. lack or inaccuracy of prior documentation

In keeping with these criteria, properties that are listed on the National Register were not documented nor were the eight properties that had been documented in 1999. Furthermore only a sampling of mid-twentieth century resources, most of which illustrate representative examples of the building types constructed in Southborough during that era, were documented. No consideration of subdivisions of the early 1960s.

III. EXPLANATION OF PRODUCTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

Inventory Forms. In all, 170 forms were completed during this 1999-2000 survey project: 133 Building (B), 2 Parks & Landscape (H), 4 Structure (F), 2 Object (C), 3 Burial Ground (E), and 26 Area (A) Forms. The projected number of forms was 230 in the scope of work. The scale of the area forms accounts for the difference in the numbers of forms. The former inventory list was used as a base.

The survey work followed the Massachusetts Historical Commission methodology which began with field work - photographing each property to be included in the project and recording notes on the architecture and context of properties. Historical research for each property and for the overall development patterns included review of the historical maps, directories, town reports, vital records, town histories, old photographs, newspaper microfilm, and other historical information available.

The use of historic maps was extended back to the 1795 and 1831 plans of Southborough on which there are no historic names, and the 1856 and 1857 Wallings maps, both of which are well labeled. The 1856 version has a series of sketches of important dwellings around the edges of the map and information was derived and confirmed from these sketches in a couple of instances. Copies of the 1856 Map are framed and hanging in the Southborough Historical Society and in the entrance lobby of the Southborough Department of Public Works. The 1971 and the 1995 survey efforts did not include information from the 1856 and 1857 maps, thus the first known historic name has been changed for pre-1856 properties that had been documented in the past. The use of this information has led to a revision of the names and dates on many of the properties included in the 1971 survey and the 1995 Area Forms for Cordaville and Southville.

For some properties, later historic maps also were used. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of 1912, 1915, 1925, and 1932/1945 updates clearly show footprints and functions of most commercial, industrial and institutional buildings as well as of their immediate residential neighbors. The 1937 WPA map proved useful for identifying working farmsteads (though without owner names) in the Depression era.

Completed survey forms (in duplicate) include at least one photograph, a sketch map, other pertinent information that identifies the property such as assessor's map number, building material, style, date, setting and statements of architectural description and historical information, and an abbreviated list of reference materials. Historical map information including the map name for a property is included in the bibliography/reference section of each form. National Register criteria was applied to each property and for those properties that are likely to be NR eligible, a statement of eligibility has been attached to the survey form.

This project was completed by Anne Forbes and Gretchen Schuler. Both names are used on each survey form, with the name of the person who completed the work on that property appearing first, thus each form is labeled "Forbes/Schuler" or "Schuler/Forbes" under "Recorded By".

Construction Dates and Building and Property Descriptions. The dates used reflect the completion date when known. There are a number of bracketed dates which indicate evidence that a property was not built by the first date and was in place by the second date. These usually represent fairly broad estimates. A date of "ca. 1800", for instance might mean that a building could have been constructed at least twenty years earlier or later. In some instances general dates are given in spite of the fact that local tradition may attribute a specific date. In those cases the surveyor recommends further interior investigation or other research to narrow the gap or substantiate a date. The use of dates recorded on old forms and in the Assessors Office was limited because of a large amount of known inaccuracies. Published Southborough Assessor's Reports, however, which exist from intermittent years beginning in 1860, provided a wealth of precise, accurate information. They helped to narrow bracketed dates for both a building's construction and a transfer of property ownership. They also provided clues to enlargements of buildings, the functions and dates of outbuildings, and to the shrinking and expanding of acreage. When available, published Assessor's Records were used to test traditional dates. On occasions when the two conflicted, the traditional construction date was revised based on the Assessor's information. Building permits are not available until the 1970s thus they were not reviewed.

The condition of each property was based on the preservation condition or integrity. Thus if the property has synthetic siding, the condition was assessed to be "fair" in spite of the property being in good repair. Likewise if a property has been substantially altered to remove defining features but was surveyed for historical significance the condition is recorded as "fair" rather than "good", which is the condition designation for most other properties.

Maps, MHC Identification Numbers, Assessor's Map and Parcel Information. Properties identified in this survey project have been plotted by MHC identification letter or number on a large base map provided by the Southborough Historical Commission. The numbering sequence, established in consultation with MHC staff, may be used to identify Southborough's historic resources in the State Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) system which is a computerized data base of historic properties. Former numbering has been retained, therefore new properties that have been documented in this project including significant outbuildings on properties that already had a number, have been given a number. This means that consecutive numbering is limited to areas where resources were not included in former survey work. In general new numbers were assigned to properties proceeding geographically northwest to southeast and ending in the northeast part of

Southborough and in the following order: new individual B-Forms, new Area Forms, additional resources on old individual B-Forms, and finally new resources in old Area Forms.

In accordance with MHC policy all burial grounds have been numbered in the 800s, and all structures, objects, sites, and landscapes in the 900s. At the end of this survey project, the identification numbers for burial grounds end at #803, for structures, objects, sites, and landscapes at #972, and for buildings at #751.

Each Area Form is identified by an alphabetical designation currently ranging from Area A through AF. This project identified 23 new areas (Area J through AF) and added information to Areas B, C, and D. Each resource discussed or included in the Data Sheet accompanying an Area Form has been given an individual identification number. The revisions for Areas B and C, Southville and Cordaville respectively, were added on Continuations Sheets and include data sheets showing all properties in area from the 1995 survey and for this effort. A new area form was prepared for Area D, Fayville, because the former form had only a sketch map with no addresses and no architectural or historical information. The former Area A, which covers much of the town center along Main Street, did not have an actual Area Form from a former survey project. No new Area Form was written for Area A during this project, as nearly all its properties were re-documented on individual forms or small Area Forms.

The town Assessor's map and parcel number for each property has been listed on the inventory forms and area data sheets. It is anticipated that the use of this data will help to coordinate preservation planning with other types of planning within Southborough. Furthermore the assessor's number is a specific identification that will not change as do road names and street addresses. There are some instances in which the addresses formerly recorded on MHC survey forms differ from those used today or listed in assessors records. One example is the name of Route 9 which has been recorded as Turnpike Road or Worcester Turnpike. Either is used generally, but officially Southborough Assessors use Turnpike Road. Survey forms indicate changes by adding "formerly known as" if there is a discrepancy or change in address nomenclature.

Application of National Register Criteria. The National Register criteria were applied to each property, and potential eligibility was noted on a form and explained on an accompanying National Register Criteria Statement. X areas, complexes, or groups of resources surveyed were found likely to be eligible for district listing, and xx resources were deemed individually eligible for the National Register. Some of those properties that are individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places may in fact also be eligible as part of a district. Most of the Areas for which NR Criteria statements have been written would be eligible only in reduced form. Where eligibility boundaries differ from the boundaries of the larger area, an explanation of the difference is given in the criteria statement. Some otherwise highly significant buildings were disqualified from individual NR eligibility because of architectural alterations that have diminished the integrity such as changes in form, siding, windows, and doors.

Narrative History. The narrative history of Southborough was developed as the survey work evolved and becomes a brief narrative history of the development of Southborough referencing the architectural examples that convey a sense of that development. It is organized according to the seven major

periods of the community's development with an emphasis on the extant resources. A discussion of the remaining architecture representative of each time period is included at the end of each section.

Other Survey Products. Three additional products include the Bibliography, the Property Index, and the List of National Register Nominations.

The Bibliography may prove useful to future researchers of historic properties. As noted above, each survey for has an abbreviated bibliography noting references relevant to the specific property. The full bibliography is included as a separate document.

The List of Inventory Forms or Property Index includes the forms for properties written or revised during the current project. The index first lists Area Forms alphabetically by the name of the Area and each Area is assigned a letter. Next the addresses of properties for which individual forms were completed are listed alphabetically by street name. Following this list of individual forms are the area lists in full showing all properties within the area for which there is an assigned number. Finally the index shows all properties that previously have been surveyed but that have been demolished. The demolition rate seems to be high with over twenty properties lost since the recordation in 1971.

The list of National Register Recommendations is prepared by the consultants and reflects their opinion only. There is no guarantee that a property on this list will be found eligible by the MHC or upon nomination to the Register. Before proceeding with any National Register work discussions with MHC staff should take place.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The entire town of Southborough has been examined for the presence, distribution, and significance of its historic, architectural, and cultural resources, although not all resources have been documented on inventory forms. Further study is recommended:

1. Further survey. Several twentieth century resources are worthy of documentation including:

- Fayville individual property histories using all maps
- Oak Hill Road Properties that are in Area Form D - #s35, 44, 59.
- Twin Shell Stations: Turnpike Road - run by Walter Hutt from 1930s
- Willow Street Railroad abutments
- 197 Middle Road - early 20th century Craftsman - stucco
- 20 Turnpike Road
- Outbuilding on corner of Pine Hill Road and Waveney Road - part of Waveney Farm
- Mid-twentieth century subdivision off Richards Road

2. Architects names. A search of other locations for architects of the many estates developed at the turn of the century should be done. Job records at Shepley Bulfinch, (formerly Shepley Rutan and Coolidge) yielded no information about any late nineteenth or early twentieth century designs in Southborough. Banker and Tradesman, the Fine Arts Files at the Boston

Public Library, and architectural journals may yield information about architect-designed houses in Southborough. Property owners also may have more information that was found in this project.

3. Archaeological survey. Little is known about Native American sites in Southborough, although there are many legends that have been passed down through oral tradition. No doubt many potential resources were damaged or eliminated in the late 1890s with the construction of the Metropolitan Water System. Nevertheless, a survey by a professional archaeologist is likely to produce information that will be valuable in planning for both protection of sensitive areas and the siting of future development.

4. Future updating of all inventory forms. All inventory forms, including those written during this project should be updated when additional or new information comes to light. The texts of some forms presently include recommendations for deed or geneological research. Interior inspections of buildings also may yield information relative to a more precise date of construction and about the expansion of properties over time. MHC continuation sheets should be used to provide new or corrected information.

Survey Storage and Public Access

The survey and inventory, as a public document, should be made readily available to the public. The Southborough Historical Commission maintains a file cabinet in the Historical Society resource room where it traditionally has stored its papers. A recommended procedure is to file each survey form with the original photographs in the Historical Society file drawers. A separate folder for each property allows for additional information including extra photographs to be added to the folder. Photo copies of each survey form should be made available at the Southborough Public Library and at least one municipal office such as the Town Clerk or Planning Board. These can be kept with reference material that is available to the public to review and to copy. A cover letter, the index, and the copies of the individual forms can be stored in three-ring binders. This practice, which already has been started by the Southborough Historical Commission, is a good one to continue.

It is recommended that the Southborough Historical Commission develop a procedure for adding new or corrected information to existing inventory forms. An appropriate methodology would be to attach MHC Continuation Sheets to the forms with a copy sent to the MHC as well. A requirement that additional material be submitted in writing, including the name and address or the contributor, date of submission and source of the information also is an appropriate guideline.

Other Preservation Related Recommendations The information that has been gathered as a result of this survey may be used as the basis for a variety of future preservation efforts, such as the establishment of MGL Chapter 40C Local Historic District and Local Landmarks, additional nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, and restoration or rehabilitation of significant buildings and historic landscapes. Since 1971 over 20 previously documented historic resources have been demolished. The SHC may want to consider the introduction of a demolition review by-law which could only take effect if passed by a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting. Any of these undertakings is likely to require further focused survey and inventory efforts and additional assistance may be obtained at the MHC. When the town adopts Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping

of the town it would be appropriate to map historic properties. The MHC can be of assistance by providing a disk with assessors numbers of properties included in the inventory. Another project that may be of benefit to the town would be to discuss with Assessors the possible update of the Construction dates listed in the Assessors Records which appear to be incorrect in the majority of cases.

This project was funded by the Town of Southborough and by a matching Survey & Planning Grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The work was carried out under the guidance of the Southborough Historical Commission and Local Project Coordinator Tom Nadeau. The leadership, guidance, and cooperation of Commission Chairman, Eleanor Hamel, and all Commission members, as well as the Southborough Historical Society have been extraordinarily helpful. The Southborough Historical Society opened their files for research and we are grateful for the time contributed by Eleanor Hamel, Don Leavitt, Tom Nadeau, David Falcone, Kay Allen, Jan Mattioli, Earl Watkins, John Boland, and many others, for their help and expertise.

ATTACHMENTS AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Each attachment is prepared as a pull-out section that can be used independently by the town and by the Southborough Historical Commission. Each of the four attachments are stored on computer diskettes in Wordperfect 6.0 or Word 5.0 and as public documents may be reformatted for distribution or publication by the Commission, provided that both the authors and the MHC are cited as participants, and the source of funding noted in references to the project.

List of Inventory Forms / Survey Property Index This list includes properties for which forms have been written or revised during the current project. Properties and resources documented on earlier surveys, but not resurveyed this year, are listed on the MHC MACRIS list for Southborough. In the coming months Southborough's MACRIS list will be expanded and revised to include this year's survey information. At the end of the index is a list of properties that previously have been surveyed and now are demolished. The MACRIS index is an excellent tool for finding information on properties documented only on area forms.

National Register Recommendations This attachment lists all surveyed resources deemed eligible for the National Register by the consultants. These are recommendations only, and do not ensure eligibility. For a definitive determination of eligibility of any property a request for a formal evaluation should be made to the MHC by the Commission.

Narrative History of Southborough The comprehensive developmental history of Southborough uses information gained in the course of the research and field work for the Historic Resource Survey. It is recommended that the Southborough Historical Commission make copies of the history for use by educators, town staff, and the general public.

Master Survey Bibliography The survey bibliography also should be a useful tool for anyone desiring to learn more about Southborough's history and development. For a list of documents relevant to a particular property, one may refer to the reference on the individual inventory form.