

5.0 NATIONAL REGISTER RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Register of Historic Places is the official Federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in the history, architecture, engineering, archeology, and culture of the United States of America. The National Park Service administers the National Register of Historic Places. Properties listed in the register must possess historic significance for their association with historic events or activities, association with important persons, distinctive design or physical characteristics or their potential to yield information about history and possess integrity through historic qualities including location, design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and association.

Properties typically must be fifty years old to be considered for listing. However, properties less than fifty years old can be deemed significant under certain circumstances. Properties must also be significant when evaluated in relationship to their historic contexts. The relationship of local, state and national historic trends to a property's history is organized by theme, place, and time, and is used to weigh the historic significance and integrity of a property.

Resources selected for survey work included properties that are exemplar of development in the town during several important periods in Sharon's history. The properties inventoried in the Sharon Survey Project were evaluated based on their significance and historic integrity for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Table 5.1 identifies each of the properties, their eligibility for listing in the National Register, the criteria and criteria considerations used in each evaluation, and the surviving qualities of the properties' identities. National Register Criteria Statements were prepared to accompany inventory forms for properties that were determined to be eligible either individually, in a potential district, or as part of a thematic nomination. The statements contain expanded information relevant to the criteria, criteria considerations, and historic integrity used to determine each property's eligibility. The National Register recommendations contained in this section were considered in making the recommendations outlined in section 6.0 *Study Recommendations*.

NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

The Town of Sharon retained ttl-architects, LLC, in November 2007, to conduct an intensive comprehensive architectural survey of the Town of Sharon's historic resources (those built prior to 1967) with a primary focus on the neighborhood southwest of the town center.

The Town of Sharon, located in Norfolk County, approximately 22 miles midway between Boston and Providence was incorporated as part of the town of Stoughton in 1740. In 1765 Sharon split from Stoughton and was incorporated as Stoughtonham. In 1783, the name changed to Sharon. The Town is bounded on the north by Canton, east by Stoughton, south by Easton, Mansfield, and Foxboro, and west by Walpole and Norwood.

Europeans first settled the area c. 1655. The first settlements were located along the Bay Road, what is now the eastern boundary of the town and along the Post Road which meandered from Boston through present day Dedham, Norwood, Walpole, Sharon, and Foxboro on to Providence. The original settlement centered around the Billings Tavern "Pole Plain" are at what is now South Main Street near the Foxboro town line. The early economy of Sharon was based principally on the service industry along the Post Road, agriculture and lumbering. After 1724, bog iron removed from Lake Massapoag. During the American Revolution, cannonballs for the Continental Army were made from iron ore taken from Lake Massapoag.

Few native sites are documented in Sharon prior to settlement in the 1650s. However it is probable that Native Americans occupied the area during the winter months subsisting on the area's abundant fish and game. Additionally, although no intact structures remain from the original seventeenth century settlement, Sharon contains a number of intact dwellings from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. These properties were built in the Colonial (Job Swift House MHC #16), Georgian (G.A. Dennett House MHC # 6) and Federal (J. Capen Hearthstone MHC #24).

The population of Sharon remained unchanged at approximately 1000 between 1765 and 1835. However, in 1835 the Boston and Providence Railroad started operation and brought Sharon much closer to Boston and Providence. With the opening of transportation networks and development of water power, small industry in Sharon flourished in Sharon. The two largest industries were the Ames Family Knife works, later operated by H.A. Lothrop & Co and a substantial cotton duck mill built by George H. Mann. "A Plan of the Farm and location of the buildings of Mr. George M. Mann in Sharon surveyed at his request Dec 26, 27, 1837" shows the location of the Mill and several worker housing cottages including 14/16 Manns Hill Road MHC # 98, 24/26 Manns Hill Road MHC # 99 , and 34/36 Manns Hill Road MHC # 100. The duck factory and cutlery and trowel factory employed about 75 persons. Other manufactures in Sharon at this time included carriage makers, boots and shoes, lumber, boxes, leather, polishes and wrought stone.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the development of the Town began to shift toward the railroad corridor and the shores of Lake Massapoag. Sharon center developed and was followed by the development of North and South Main Street. Development in the center includes the Greek Revival First Baptist Church in 1833 on South Main Street as well as later commercial structures such as the Queen Anne Commercial Block at 10 Post Office Square and the Colonial Revival Dennett Block MHC #143 built by George A. Dennett, Dentist.

The local economy was bolstered the tourism industry in the nineteenth century. Inns and hotels developed around the shores of the lake. Here parties were brought from Boston and Providence and "spend the day in agreeable recreation, sports upon the water, in the woods, or in the buildings erected for their comfort and accommodation (Hurd 454)." Sharon became a summer resort for Boston residents. Many built residences upon the bluffs which overlook the lake "to enjoy the romantic scenery and rural quiet (Hurd, 454)."

The Massapoag Lake Hotel overlooking Lake Massapoag was once the finest, largest, and busiest hotels in Sharon. It contained 100 rooms with modern conveniences. The hotel offered livery stables, tennis courts, croquet, billiards, pool, boating, bathing, bowling, hunting, and fishing. It was built sometime around 1880 and originally owned by A. Park Boyce & Co. After a fire in 1906, the hotel was replaced by the Sunset Lodge in 1932 which has since been rehabilitated into The Sharon Community Center by the Town of Sharon.

During the late nineteenth century, driven by the advertisements by W.B. Wickes of Sharon being the "Healthiest Town in New England," speculative builders appeared. The area between South Main, Oakland, Station Street and the Railroad was platted for 361 5,000 square foot lots in 1888. The proposed grid-iron layout of "Pleasant View" ignored the rolling terrain of the site and ultimately only 78 properties were constructed along curvilinear roads following the lay of the land. The properties within the Pleasant View neighborhood bear influence of the Queen Anne, Shingle, and Victorian styles; however, few are stylistically pure; many appear to have been built by builders (MHC 1979). The properties include the Shingle Style residences at 15 Edgewood Road MHC # 95 and 5 Ridge Road MHC #144 and the Melville Hall House, at 19 Walnut Street MHC # 187, a Craftsman residence.

The "Pure Air and Water" promoted by real estate agents such as William B. Wickes appealed not only to city dwellers but the ill and their caretakers as well. The Sharon Sanatorium for Pulmonary Diseases opened formally February 9, 1891 and received its first patient, one week later. The Sanatorium's purpose was to provide affordable care for patients suffering from Tuberculosis and other pulmonary diseases. Treatment at the Sharon Sanatorium included sleeping on porches in the fresh air year-round, which was a unique and unusual way to treat patients with pulmonary diseases. The rationale was that rest and good nutrition offered the best chance for cure. The 1896 annual report of the Sharon Sanatorium states that the Sharon Sanatorium "is the only one for this special purpose in New England."

Additionally, several Camps including the most intact, Camp Gannett (MHC Area G) were created on the shores of Lake Massapoag during the early twentieth century. These "Fresh Air Camps" were built to help inner-city children escape the city and experience the summer outside, in a safe, fun, and nurturing camp environment.

From the 1920s to the present, little large scale industry has developed in the town, however, through the foresight of conservation-minded landowners and the town, recreation continues to be important. The Town of Sharon has more that 5000 acres of protected open space including the 2,250-acre Massachusetts Audubon Moose Hill Wildlife Sanctuary, 60% of Borderland State Park comprising 1,260 acres, as well as the Warner, Massapoag Brook, and King Philip's Rock nature trails. In addition, the Town has been successful in preserving an additional 1,500 acres of its area of 24 square miles as public conservation land.

A majority of Sharon's population is employed in professional or management jobs, and many of them commute to Boston, Providence and other communities. While a majority of commuters drive, Sharon's stop near the center of town for commuters on the MBTA Providence/Stoughton provides a convenient location to the many commuters living in the nearby neighborhoods. Today, the Town's attention to the quality of services and the quality of life for its residents as well as the development of land use and preservation plans should protect the environs of the Town for future generations to come.