

WALTHAM INDUSTRIAL PERIOD HISTORIC PROPERTIES SURVEY UPDATE

FINAL REPORT

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This project consisted of an intensive-level survey of three target areas: the Boston Manufacturing Company village ("The BMC Mill Village") centered on River and Newton streets; the Waltham Watch Company neighborhood on the South Side of the city, between Moody and Crescent streets; and the Chemistry neighborhood, between Newton, High, Cedar, and Calvary streets. Efforts are focused on buildings of the Industrial Period, defined for purposes of this project as c.1820-1900.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

(Added by Mort Isaacson, Chair, Waltham Historical Commission, 2022)

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SURVEY OBJECTIVES

This survey sought to document the housing stock of three important early industrial neighborhoods. As with many parts of eastern Massachusetts, the neighborhoods under consideration were densely built up with single, duplex, and small multiple family buildings, mostly dating from the second quarter to the end of the nineteenth century. (Figure 2) These resources exhibited the "weave of small patterns" described by

Sam Bass Warner in the Boston suburbs, demonstrating adjoining, and in many cases overlapping development patterns. Some areas, particularly the important early housing associated with the Boston Manufacturing Company, were developed as ranges of identical, or near-identical buildings. BMC's housing and the later company housing constructed on the South Side of the city by the Waltham Watch Company represent evolving corporate housing solutions. Documenting these resources, some of which may be among the oldest company houses in the nation, was an important part of the survey efforts. More typical of the area are clusters of privately developed buildings of the same era. Many of these appear to have been built by or for individuals associated with nearby industries. The survey sought to record a representative sample of these documenting many of the varying building types found here. The area was notable for the variety of forms and types exhibited, while height, materials, and massing remain generally consistent throughout the neighborhoods.

The sheer number of potentially surveyable resources – there were at least 500 industrial-period buildings in the survey areas considered by the consultants – posed a problem of selection. Most of these were in a less-than-perfect state of preservation, many with altered surface materials. Selection criteria that emphasized integrity – and therefore National Register eligibility – would have removed from consideration many of Waltham's important historic resources and resulted in a survey that did not fully document the city's development patterns. Instead, while preference was given to documenting properties with the highest level of integrity, this survey employed selection criteria that sought to identify and document significant patterns of historical development. In the BMC village area, all, or nearly all, pre-1900 properties were documented, including all the company-associated houses. (This was reflected in the target list provided by the city.) In the larger but less well-documented Waltham Watch area, likewise, all company-associated houses were documented either in Areas or on B Forms. Similarly, in the Chemistry Area, the remaining houses associated with the Newton Chemical Works were identified and documented. A selection of early, privately-developed houses were documented here as well.

ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING DOCUMENTATION; CHARACTER OF PROPERTIES RECORDED

The survey areas were already quite heavily represented in MACRIS at the beginning of this project. In the Boston Manufacturing Company village, four Area forms existed: "Central- Appleton-Cross-Heard Streets"

(WLT.N), Newton Street (WLT.O), Boston Manufacturing Company Housing (WLT.Q), and Lawton Place Historic District (WLT.AG). The latter of those areas was included as part of a large-scale, National Register Multiple Resource Area (9/28/1989). That neighborhood also had 48 properties documented with individual forms.

The entirety of the Waltham Watch Company neighborhood was covered by an Area form (WLT.T), over which has been layered two smaller Area forms: "Brown Streetscape" (WLT.AT) and "Orange Streetscape" (WLT.AR). The neighborhood included 87 individually inventoried properties, including listings on the west side of Moody Street. A number of these were also listed in the MRA.

The smaller Chemistry area was the most sparsely documented of the three. Only six individual properties had been recorded in that neighborhood, which contains no area forms. Only one of the six buildings had been included in the MRA but has since been demolished.

This high level of documentation was the result of multiple phases of a City-wide survey of historic resources that took place in the 1970s and 1980s. However, as with most survey products of this era, research on most buildings was cursory and analysis nonexistent or outdated. Many of these forms were very brief, with limited documentation of historical narrative. This was true even of many, although not all, of the properties included in the National Register MRA. Some of the largest Area forms covering portions of the survey area, particularly form WLT.T, did not even contain a datasheet listing recorded properties. Additionally, since most of these forms were 30, and in many cases 40, years old, they did not reflect changes that have been made to these resources, as well as increasing an understanding of the landscape of this period.

METHODOLOGY, PRODUCTS, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The methodology of this survey was based on that outlined in the latest version of the *Historic Properties Survey Manual* of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and related documents. All properties were documented by one or more site visits, producing field notes and multiple exterior photographs, following MHC's *Interim Guidelines for Inventory Form Photographs*.

The scope of work outlined by the city in the RFQ calls for the survey of 120 properties drawn from a candidate pool of 150 buildings. After examining a candidate pool of over 500 buildings, in consultation with the Waltham commission, consultants surveyed 166 properties. 117 B Forms were produced, along with four area forms covering a total of 49 properties.

Major research resources are outlined in the attached bibliography. These identified sources help document a property's evolution and identify, where relevant, its builder, architect when known, subsequent owners, tenants in its earliest phase of occupation, and thereafter. The resources of members of the Waltham Historical Commission were utilized where appropriate. Basic deed research was conducted on most properties illuminating key aspects of a property's history. Historical atlases provided a sense of the evolution of the area and individual buildings within it. Genealogical information about property owners was gathered using Ancestry.com and other commercial genealogical databases. Biographies were compiled for all architects identified in this process. Included in these biographies is an analysis of similar works documented in MACRIS.

In addition to other required elements identified in the *Survey Manual*, each B form includes:

- An exterior architectural description
- Photographic images
- A narrative of the social history of the building including the background of the owners, major tenants, architects, and builders, where identified.
- Footnotes or other references to sources of key information not reflected in the general bibliography
- Reproductions of relevant historical images and maps, where clarifying.

HOW THE SURVEY DIFFERED FROM EXPECTATIONS

The parameters of the survey project were well established in the original RFP and Scope, as a result, the nature of the finished survey did not differ substantially from expectations. However, the research conducted for this project deepened our understanding of the historical and architectural significance of Waltham. The surveyed area contains a wide variety of residential types constructed within a fairly short

period. As a result, the area demonstrates consistency and unity of architectural outlook while encompassing a wide diversity of individual solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Within the scope of work of this project, the consultants were able to document only a small portion of Waltham's significant Industrial-era landscape, even within the areas that were the focus of this work. While efforts were made to identify the most important resources, large swaths of related resources remain unsurveyed. This is particularly true on the South Side, an extensive landscape of nineteenth-century housing, much of which was related to the watch factory and related industries. Here, the consultants limited their analysis to the blocks between Crescent and Moody streets, and as noted previously, had to be selective even within this limited area. We recommend further survey efforts in this area to finish documenting the numerous surviving Watch Company-era buildings, which could only be partially recorded within the scope of the current project. Further, the blocks east of Moody Street contain many related buildings that warrant further study. Likewise, in the Chemistry neighborhood, efforts focused primarily on identifying remaining resources related to the Newton Chemical Works, using the 1855 Waltham map as a reference. Many Industrial-period resources in this neighborhood were identified in our reconnaissance efforts but were not surveyed. Particular note should be taken of the mixed industrial and residential landscape between Calvary Street and the Charles River, which appears to contain several early resources. Additionally, although thorough coverage of the Industrial-period buildings in the Boston Manufacturing Company mill village was an objective of this survey, the consultants limited their work to the blocks between Elm and Newton Streets, between Main Street and River Avenue. Important, related resources appear to remain in the Bleachery neighborhood to the east of Newton Street. Finally, per the scope of this project, no efforts were made to identify significant buildings of the twentieth century within the neighborhoods examined. Many potential resources of this era exist in the study areas, however,

including some World War II-era garden apartment complexes in the BMC village, as well as a group of highly-developed modernist office buildings on the fringes of the Watch Company neighborhood.

NATIONAL REGISTER RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted above, and in the previous reports, selection criteria, developed by the Waltham commission in collaboration with the consultants, emphasized documenting significant resources in areas that are experiencing an increasing number of demolitions. Selection criteria for surveyed properties, therefore, privileged more thoroughly documenting the city's development patterns, covering important or representative examples of many housing types, while at the same time putting less importance on integrity. Nearly all the surveyed buildings have had their surface materials and windows altered; many have also had other alterations. Most, however, remain legible to their period of significance.

Many of Waltham's most important historic resources, including many in the survey area, were covered in a large National Register Multiple Resource Area, listed in 1989. It should be noted that many of the properties included in that listing retained a higher degree of integrity then than they do now. As a result, the consultants have not identified any additional potential National Register listings. However further study of the Watch Company neighborhood could identify streetscapes with sufficient integrity in this significant landscape to warrant a National Register district

COMPLETED SURVEY PRODUCTS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AT:

Waltham Room of the Waltham Public Library (Added by Mort Isaacson, WHC, 2022)
Website of the Waltham Historical Commission (Added by Mort Isaacson, WHC, 2022)

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Waltham MA. City of Waltham Building Department. Building Permit Records
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Maps

Map Sources: WHC: Waltham Historical Commission; DC: Digital Commonwealth; LOC: Library of Congress; NYPL: New York Public Library

1831 Hales Map of Waltham (WHC)
1831 Hales Map of Newton- Waltham Section (WHC)
1854 E.M. Woodford Village of Waltham Map (DC)
1856 Walling Map of Middlesex County (LOC)
1867 Map of Middlesex County (NYPL)
1875 Map of Town of Waltham (DC)
1877 Birds' Eye View, O.H. Bailey (LOC)
1883 Bird's Eye View (DC)
1886 J.B. Beers Map of the City of Waltham (LOC)
1886 Map of Middlesex County (WHC)
1892 Sanborn Map (LOC)
1897 Sanborn Map (LOC)
1898 Bird's Eye View, O.H. Bailey (LOC)
1900 Atlas of Middlesex County (WHC)
1903 Sanborn Map (LOC)
1911 Sanborn Map (LOC)
1918 Sanborn Map (LOC)
1918 City Engineers Atlas (WHC)
1923 City Engineers Atlas (WHC)
1950 Sanborn Map (LOC)
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