

FINAL REPORT
BRIDGE STREET NECK NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIC PROPERTIES SURVEY
2010-2011

Abstract

The intent of this project was to continue work toward a comprehensive inventory of Salem's Bridge Street Neck Neighborhood by completing an additional 125 inventory forms for historic properties in the neighborhood. Previous survey efforts had documented approximately 381 total properties in the neighborhood – focusing largely on Bridge Street itself and selected properties on side streets. Based on assessor's data the City estimated that 265 historic properties (50 years or older) remain unsurveyed prior to the completion of this project.

Completed survey documentation including inventory forms, base maps and this final report will be made available to the public at the Community Services Office at City of Salem Department of Planning and Community Development at 120 Washington Street, Third Floor.

Methodology Statement

Survey Objectives

The specific goals of the 2010-2011 project were as follows:

1. To conduct a neighborhood survey to assess and document approximately 125 selected cultural and architectural resources, following Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) survey standards and methodology;
2. To identify contexts for National Register evaluation and to apply the National Register criteria to all resources identified in the survey; and
3. To submit to MHC a list of individual properties and/or districts that are recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Assessment of Previous Research

Since the late 1960s properties in the Bridge Street area have been surveyed in varying degrees of detail. Inventory forms for a few of the more noteworthy properties were completed in 1967. In the late 1970s Historic Salem, Inc. submitted a number of basic streetscape forms to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). In 1985 a number of more detailed and complete individual forms were prepared for various properties in the neighborhood by M. Malaguti and K. Murphy working for the Salem Planning Department. Forms were prepared for at least half of the buildings on Bridge Street south of March Street as well as other properties scattered throughout the area. Over the years, a number of structures were also covered by minimal Home Improvement Program Forms, which lack historical and architectural data. These do not meet MHC standards.

Over the years Historic Salem, Inc. has contracted with interested local property owners to prepare house histories. These properties are typically marked by an exterior plaque which is produced by Historic Salem, Inc. The house reports provide detailed narrative and documentary sections including information on the house's early residents and the events of their lives, and relates them to the larger events occurring in Salem and beyond. The report includes primary and secondary sources and appended are copies of deeds, atlases, and (sometimes) inventories of furnishings. Although there are only a few available house reports completed for properties in the survey area, they provide useful information that often also applies to the larger neighborhood. Copies of some of the house histories are on file at the City Planning Department.

In 1996-7 an additional eighty-five structures in the Bridge Street Neck Area were surveyed by Consultant Lisa Mausolf working for the Salem Planning Department funded by a MHC Survey & Planning Grant. The survey area was defined as the area north of Saunders Street and Arbella Street, extending to the Beverly Harbor with a secondary focus on additional structures on Bridge Street between Saunders Street and Washington Street. For this project, the emphasis was on commercial properties and those located within the CDBG target area (between Arbella St. and March St.) with others chosen because they were city-owned or located in proximity to then-proposed transportation improvements along Saunders Street. Individual "B" forms were prepared for all of the buildings on Bridge Street (fifty years or older) which lacked acceptable survey forms.

In 2001 Ms. Mausolf completed a National Register nomination for the 360-property Bridge Street Neck Historic District. This district was successfully listed on the National Register in 2002. Although the nomination does not include specific detailed information on every property, it does include useful context on historic patterns of architectural development, land use, economic development, social and demographic history and events that had an impact on the area. The nomination also includes a matrix with an entry for each property in the district including an estimated construction date and the name of the original owner, where available. [Note: The northern boundary of the district is March Street/Osgood Street meaning that this basic data was not assembled for historic properties north of these streets.]

Utilizing a railroad right-of-way, the long-awaited Bridge Street Bypass was finally completed in 2008. The City Planning Department is currently studying the possibility of a future preservation district (e.g., conservation or local historic) in the Bridge Street Neck neighborhood and good survey information will be critical to that effort.

Criteria for Selecting Properties

This project resulted in the completion of an additional 125 inventory forms for properties within the Bridge Street Neck Neighborhood. Based on assessor's data, there are 265 historic properties (50 years or older) which have never been surveyed. The Salem Historical Commission directed that top priority be given to any pre-1850 resources which had not been surveyed. Beyond that, the Commission asked the consultant to focus on properties which had not been previously inventoried in the Bridge Street National Register District and properties between Bridge Street, Winter Street, Pleasant Street, and the Common. These latter properties could potentially be included in an expanded Common district in the future.

Procedures Followed in the Survey

Field survey was conducted for each property to provide an accurate record of the resource and its context. Descriptions were based on field notes taken from direct observation, as visible from a public way. Digital photographs were taken of each property, ideally from a three-quarter view and without foliage.

Archival research was conducted for each property utilizing a variety of sources. The City Clerk's Office at Salem City Hall retains a record of building permits issued between 1871 and 1889. Deed research was conducted at the Essex County Registry of Deeds and provided definitive information on owners. Historic maps dating to 1851, 1874, 1897, and 1911 also were useful in researching ownership as were City of Salem Valuation Records for 1896, 1900, 1905 and 1910 located at the Salem Public Library. Information on the occupants of the homes was gleaned from directories (which include listings by street as far back as the 1880s) and U.S. Census data available on Ancestry.com. The Salem Public Library has the *Salem News* on microfilm, which provided access to the obituaries of residents where a death date was known. It should be noted that the 1874, 1897 and 1911 historic maps as well as 1890-1903 and 1906-1955 Sanborn Insurance Maps are available on the Essex County Registry of Deeds website.

Expectations about the Historic Properties to be Recorded

Given the fact that the survey area focused almost totally on a National Register district, there were few surprises. In some cases, construction dates differed considerably from the estimated construction date from the City Assessors records. This highlights the fact that the construction dates should always be verified. For example the building at 27 Williams Street was supposedly built about 1800 according to the Assessors records but archival evidence indicates that it dates to 1925, replacing an earlier structure. Similarly, the structure at 21 Planters Street had been estimated at 1834 but appears to be more likely constructed c.1860. The more detailed archival research conducted for the survey, utilizing deeds and directories as well as historic maps, also made it possible to better pinpoint dates of construction and names of original owners. In several cases buildings which were believed to have been constructed by 1952 (the end date for the Bridge Street Neck National Register nomination's period of significance) were found to have been constructed later. These properties (including 15 ½ East Collins and 18 East Collins) should not have been listed as contributing to the 2002 National Register district.

Street Index of Inventoried Properties

See Appendix.

National Register Recommendations

Nearly all of the properties included in the survey are located within the Bridge Street Neck Historic District, listed on the National Register on July 19, 2002. There are only three properties surveyed which are not currently in a Register district.

The property at 21 Planters Street is not individually eligible for the National Register owing to a loss of integrity but could be eligible as part of the district if the Bridge Street Neck District were ever expanded to include the streets north of March/Osgood Street.

The property at 27 Williams Street is part of the Salem Common Historic District, listed on the Register May 12, 1976. The property at 4 Parker Court appears to be eligible for the Register as part of one of the nearby districts. The buildings at 1 & 3 Parker Court are included in the Salem Common Historic District while 2 Parker Court is part of the Bridge Street Neck Historic District.

Further Study Recommendations

According to City estimates there are still 100+ properties in the project area which have not yet been surveyed. In particular, the area north of the Bridge Street National Register District (north of March Street/Osgood Street) has many properties which have not been inventoried although the history and context of the area is identical to the district. These properties would be a priority if expanding the Bridge Street district ever becomes a goal.

In addition to the properties which have never had a survey form, there are also a number of properties which have inadequate forms. In particular, the forms completed in 1967 are lacking in any historic or architectural detail (for example a cursory review revealed some Lemon and Northey Street addresses only have 1967 forms). The forms completed in 1985 are somewhat better and include information on original owner and construction dates but are lacking in later contextual information about later owners, residents and historic trends. In part, this is due to the fact that there are many more available online resources today and that the standards for inventory forms have changed since 1985. Many of the forms also lack accurate/current information on alterations, additions and surviving historic features. This information would be especially information for future preservation efforts. A detailed review of the existing forms should be conducted for a more accurate assessment of what properties need updated survey forms. This review would be expedited by the fact that the Massachusetts Historical Commission has recently put all of Salem's forms online, available through the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (MACRIS) <http://mhc-macris.net/>.

Lastly, although the survey area has experienced many alterations over the years, there are still many surviving elements that property owners should be encouraged to protect. This should be highlighted in any future neighborhood conservation district efforts.

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