

SALEM WILLOWS EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT: HISTORIC RESOURCES

This report accompanies Phase One of the Salem Willows Park Existing Conditions Analysis prepared by HATCH, and includes:

1) A review of the historic resources identified in the 1994 National Register of Historic Places nomination of the Salem Willows Historic District (1994 HRDIS), as identified on the 1989 Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory form SAL.929. The Period of Significance for historic resources in the Willows Park is 1870-1935.

In verifying dates of construction in the Salem City Documents, several changes are proposed to the list of contributing features within the Period of Significance:

- A pair of granite steps, constructed in the early 20th century as part of developing the space around the outdoor amphitheatre, are contributing resources;
- Construction dates of two structures identified as “Maintenance” and “Hut” have been established; both are within the Period of Significance.
- the date of 1909 for the Willows entrance gate was found to be incorrect (see below)

2) Description of potential contributing resources which have been added to the Park between 1935 and 1966, and which are now over 50 years old:

- Robert Hays Bandshell (1965)
- Gates (1965)

3) Historic elements of vehicle and pedestrian circulation were not evaluated in 1994 as contributing resources. Both vehicular and pedestrian circulation were established during the Period of Significance, with minimal modification (largely in materials) since the Park layout in the late 19th century. Circulation is discussed in a separate report: Salem Willows Circulation and Design History.

Methodology

The features described in Existing Conditions of Historic Resources are numbered/labeled in accordance with the naming conventions established by HATCH for purposes of this report.

The following historic narrative and observations are drawn substantially from Salem City Documents, the Salem Public Library vertical file of the Willows, the 1994 Salem Willows Historic District National Register nomination, inventory forms (see bibliography for list of relevant MHC forms), and visual evidence in historic photographs. Archives at the Phillips Library/Peabody Essex Museum and the Nelson Dionne Collection at Salem State University’s Digital Archive were consulted.

Due to the temporary inaccessibility of city records, further research using those records is recommended to substantiate uncertainties on construction dates, modifications to circulation and to plantings, and to design elements that may have been based on the Philip Codman plan of 1896.

Existing conditions were observed in September and November 2018; photographs are by Pamela Hartford unless otherwise noted.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES FOR 1875 – 1935 PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE**3. Clam Shack****“Men’s Cottage” 1905**

The men’s sanitary facility, built in 1905 in a Colonial Revival style by Salem architect William Devereaux Dennis, was positioned at the south end of the area occupied by the original “Restaurant Row,” parallel to the shoreline along Clam Shack Beach. In 2008, the Men’s Cottage was closed, and men’s facilities were combined into the “Ladies’ Cottage.” In 2013, the city leased the building to allow for commercial operation.



Men’s Cottage. 1991

The interior was gutted for the new commercial use. Exterior modifications include changes to the east elevation windows, removal of the south windows, and the addition of a fabric canopy. The rubble foundation is original, as are the columns and cupola. Some shingles have likely been replaced over time, and the roof has been replaced several times.

Notable are the exterior colors (taupe cladding with bright blue canopy and door) which depart from the historic dark green with white trim color scheme of the former Ladies Cottage and the Pavilions. Addition of commercial vending machines on the prominent south façade detracts from the visual integrity of the historic building.



Clam Shack, looking northwest. 2018



South façade of Clam Shack, looking northeast. 2018

4. Public Restrooms **“Ladies Cottage” 1904**

The “Ladies Cottage,” designed by Salem architect William Devereaux Dennis in Colonial Revival style and built in 1904, was positioned at the north end of the original “Restaurant Row,” with its entrance facing north (directed discreetly away from the entrance to the Men’s Cottage, which faced south). A band of narrow windows just under the fascia provide interior light while maintaining privacy. The original rubblestone foundation is intact, as are the windows and cupola; all exterior materials have been repaired or replaced in kind over time.



North elevation. In the 1950’s, glass block sidelights (now boarded up) were added on either side of the main entrance. A recently added concrete ramp with metal railings provides accessibility. 2018



A 1924 extension to the south accommodated ten additional toilets. The addition was given the same foundation, cladding, window and hip roof treatment as the original. 2018



Looking at south elevation of 1924 addition. 2018

Pavilions A, B, C, D, E	"Gazebos" "Summer houses"	ca. 1874-1880
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Five "Gazebos" or "Summer houses" (now designated as "**Pavilions**") were collectively identified as contributing resources, noted by location on the 1989 sketch map included on SAL.922 (see 1898 map on p. 12)

The four gazebos (**Pavilions A, C, D and E**) and a Bandstand (**Pavilion B**) reflect the Stick Style which was used in the imposing Willows Park Pavilion structure built in 1874. The gazebos were built sometime between 1874 and 1880. ("...bandstand received new roof in 1880;" maintenance on other pavilions referred to in 1882, etc. (Salem City Documents (SCD)). A six-sided gazebo, constructed near the pier, was lost in a 1944 hurricane.

In 1889, the large pavilion "C" was moved to a higher elevation and set on brick piers (SCD); in 1926, the wood floors of the two smaller pavilions near the pier ("D" and "E") were replaced with concrete to address ongoing maintenance issues, and in 1934, the wood floor of pavilion "C" was replaced with concrete.

The prototype design for all the pavilions consists of an open frame heavy corner posts, integrated rails, open riser steps, wood floor and decorative corner braces. Note decorative 'pennant' trim at roofline. Low benches are set against the posts.

In the nineteenth century, a 'summer house' was an extremely popular feature of residential gardens. The pavilion structures at the Willows provide the ambience of an intimate summer house at a slightly larger scale, providing shaded seating on a raised platform which affording sightlines out into the harbor above the crowds walking in the park. The bandstand, a popular feature in nineteenth century public parks, was most often round or octagonal in shape; the square Willows bandstand ("B") was the first built feature on the grounds parallel and to the northwest of the willow allée, and established the look of all subsequent structures in the Park. The large pavilion ("C") was placed parallel to the allée as well. All the other pavilions were scattered informally around the hilly landscape near the waterfront.



12. Pavilion "D". Photo by Frank Cousins, PEM 1891



Waterfront view with Pavilion "D" in foreground; six-sided pavilion (not extant) in background. Frank Cousins, PEM, 1891



6. Pavilion "B" (bandstand) with raised platform (relative to other pavilions) and lattice sheathing around the base, likely hiding storage area; Pavilion "C" in background. ca. 1890's

Currently, the pavilions maintain their original footprints, rooflines and Stick style construction. Replacement trim at the roofline attempts to replicate the historic 'sawtooth' style, but the current effect creates a less crisp reveal and punctuated silhouette. The pavilions have been repeatedly repaired and painted and re-roofed. The framing members have been replaced in kind.

The most significant alteration to the pavilions was the replacement of the wood floors with concrete, which necessitated concrete block footings to support new concrete floors. Originally, the wood structures sat directly on the ground on their framing posts, the floor raised slightly above the undulating ground of the hilly area of the Park, appearing lightly perched on the terrain. The heavy concrete foundations set into the landscape negate the airy, informal feeling of the all wood pavilions. The feeling of concrete underfoot, rather than floorboards, also affects an experience that was akin to the feeling of a "summer house." Open riser wood steps have been replaced with solid concrete block or poured steps.

In 1964, all the pavilions were rebuilt (SCD).



6. Pavilion "B" (bandstand) with built in benches, modified 'pennant' trim, concrete floor and foundation, concrete steps and iron handrails. 2018



10. Pavilion "D". 2018



7. Pavilion "C". 2018

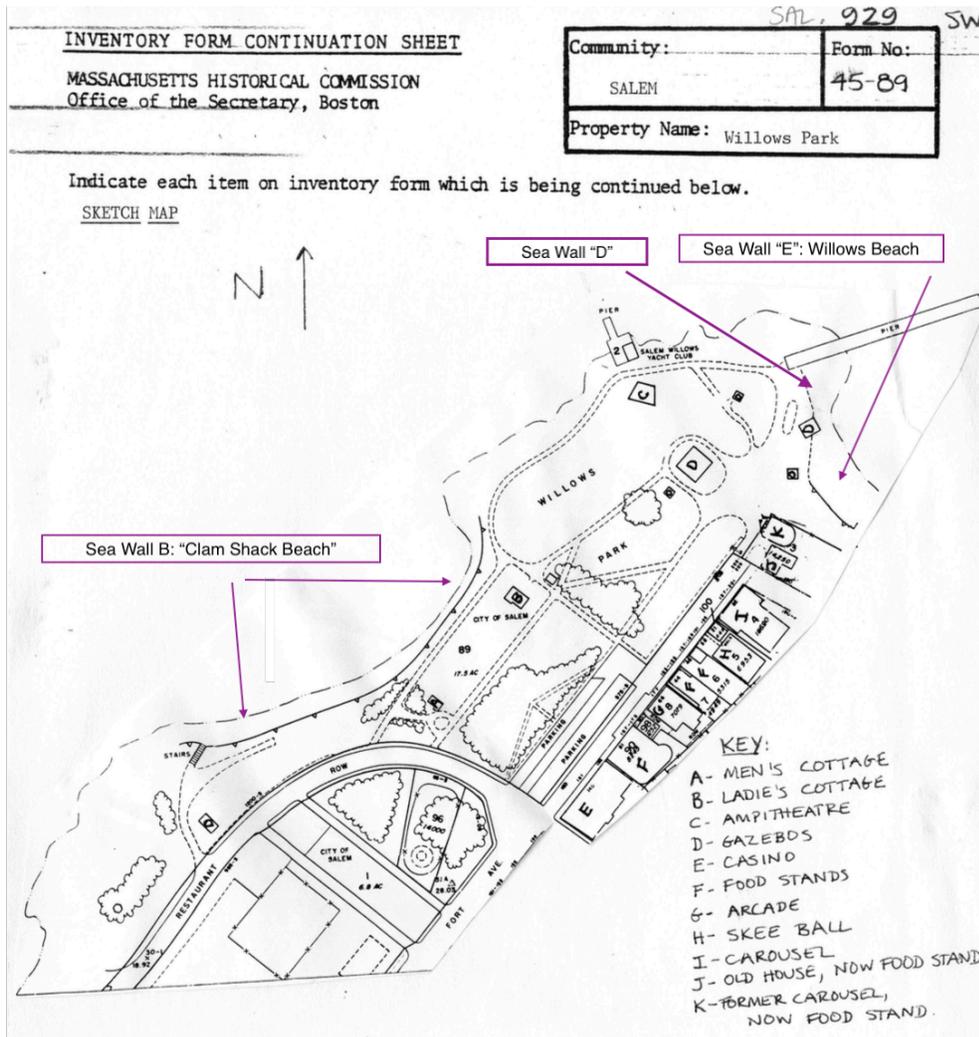


7. Pavilion "C"; detail of dripline surrounding base of Pavilion. 2018

Sea Walls (4) 1899-1901; 1942

The assessment of historic sea walls is somewhat problematic, based on the 1994 NRDIS> The description of the seawalls is limited (“...the district contains several other types of contributing resources. Sea walls and retaining walls are found throughout the district in granite ashlar, rubblestone and cast concrete”). On the NR data sheet, three sea walls are listed only with estimated dates: sea wall c.a. 1910; sea wall ca. 1890-1910; sea wall ca. 1899. On the sketch map, only two sea walls are indicated by hardscape lines (“B” and “E”; see map below).

The 2018 map indicates Sea Wall “A” as Dead Horse Beach wall, which is recent construction.



1989 Sketch Plan: location of Contributing Resources. SAL.929



2018 sea wall sketch plan; HATCH

2. Sea Wall "B": Clam Shack Beach. (ca. 1901) A mortared stone retaining wall which follows the curve of the shoreline, creating a defined waterfront edge. The historic wall is largely intact with some modifications including the addition of a concrete cap along the northern section. Historic mortared stone cap has been replaced at northern end with concrete cap. Stairs have been removed.



NEW SEA WALL — SALEM WILLOWS

Sea Wall "B" ca. 1890



Sea Wall "B" looking south. 2018

3. Sea Wall "C" Yacht Club. ca. 1910

Sea Wall "C" is in a location which was historically a beach where boats landed and visitors gained access to the Park by water. Sea Wall "C" was likely created at a point in time when a hard edge retaining wall was needed to prevent erosion encroaching into the park from the wave action and tides in the most exposed point of the Park.



Former beach in location of Sea Wall "C". Pavilion in background is six-sided. Frank Cousins, PEM 1899



Sea Wall "C". 2018 Hatch

4. Sea Wall "D": Pier (1942) Originally a poured in place concrete wall with recessed panels (perhaps an attempt to replicate design of Sea Wall "E"), the wall has been extensively altered by extensions and widening with a series of concrete additions which have largely cover the original decorative concrete design.



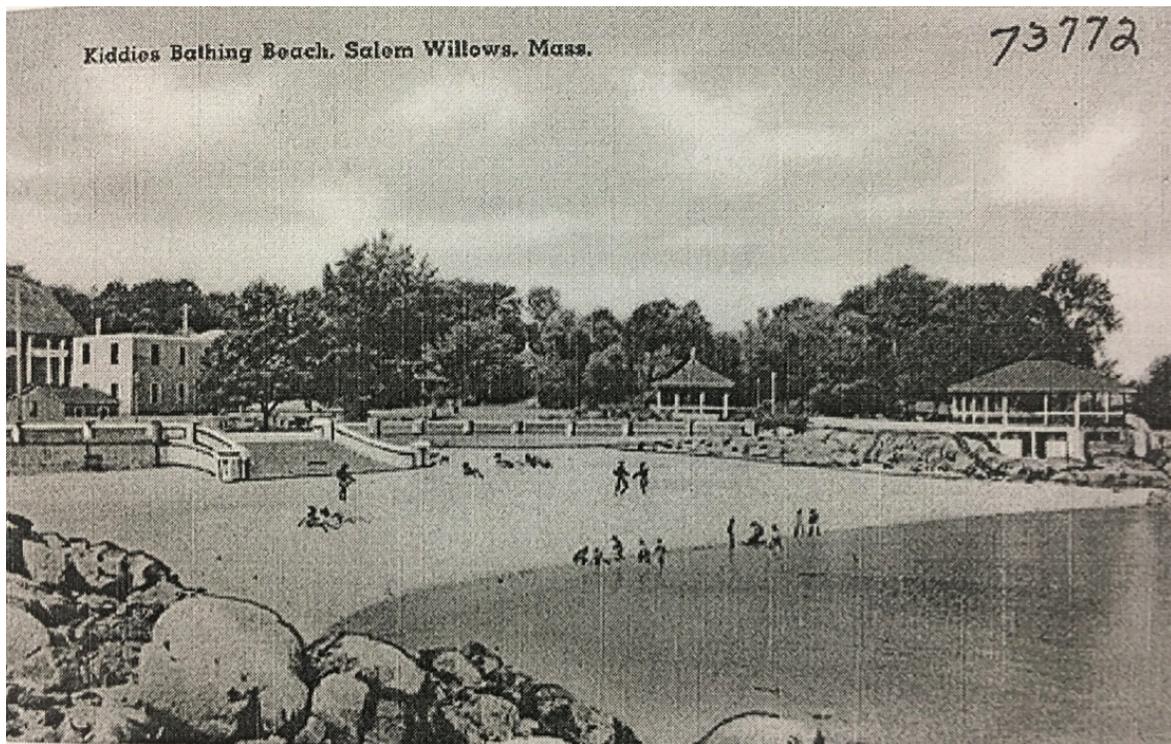
RETAINING WALL, SALEM WILLOWS

Sea Wall "D". 1942 Salem City Directory



Sea Wall "D". 2018 HATCH

5. Sea Wall "E" ca. 1899



Sea Wall "E" . Bathhouse, far right, opened 1898



Sea Wall "E". 2018 HATCH

10. Granite Steps ca. 1923

In 1923 a new outdoor amphitheatre/stage was built in the northwest portion of the site. A leveled area was created to accommodate audiences for the outdoor amphitheatre toward the northeast corner of the site. Two sets of dry-laid granite steps were built into the low slope at the outside the edge of the seating area. Steps are barely visible in the far left of historic postcard view, below. The granite steps are in excellent condition. Boulders painted white have been placed at the edges of the top of the steps to increase visibility.



Granite steps at perimeter of amphitheatre seating (one of a pair of steps.) 2018

5. Maintenance Shack**{Police Station/Tool House} 1932**

Constructed in 1932, the new police station/tool house replaced an earlier building noted existing as early as 1885 (SCD), along with a hose house and 'toilet rooms.' Hip roof mimics the pavilion design and create a harmony between the pavilions and outbuildings through the Park. ("conforming with the architecture of the other buildings at the Park..." SCD)



Police Station/Tool House vacant, 1992. (reversed view)



Looking north, south elevation of maintenance shed. 2018



Looking west, east elevation of maintenance shed. 2018



On the north side of the maintenance shed, a series of vertical lattices frame a storage area. 2018

8. Robert Hays Band Shell. 1965

Architect: Robert Charles Associates, Inc.

The music shell is constructed of cast reinforced concrete with a cantilevered roof supported by integral concrete beams. The simple form is a version of the 'flying wedge' design, employed especially in gas stations beginning in the early 1960's. Robert Charles built several buildings in Salem, including the modern Pioneer Terrace Elderly Housing building (1967) located at Palmer Cove, and the elderly housing apartment building at 27 Charter St (1976) .



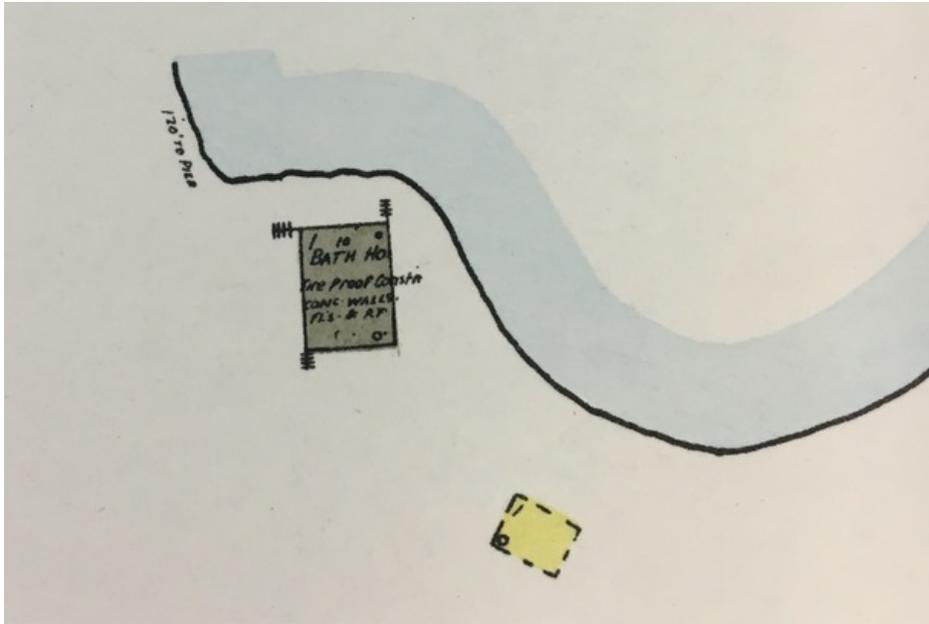
Looking northwest into performance space created by shell. 2018



Looking southeast, the rear elevation of the shell, showing integrated concrete beams. 2018

10. Hut Platform and Walls. 11. Hut. "Carpenter's Shop" ca. 1930

The Hut, constructed prior to 1932 as a carpenter shop ("roof of carpenter shop reshingled..." SCD), is currently positioned next to the concrete base which formerly supported the bathhouse. A three-foot high concrete wall surrounding the hut on three sides was constructed in 1940 (SCD), likely done at the time when the hut was moved to this location. The bath house was in operation through the 1940's.



Foundation of bath house labeled "fire proof construction" near current location of Hut. Yellow shaded structure is pavilion "E". 1938 Sanborn map.



Looking south, northwest corner of Hut. 2018



Looking northwest, south east corner of Hut; remains of bathhouse foundation. 2018

7. Salem Willows Gate 1968

The five-foot high wrought iron gates are set between five-foot high concrete capped mortared fieldstone piers. The gates were erroneously listed as built in 1909 on the 1994 NRDIS



Gate, looking north, showing inconsistent treatment of mortars over time. 2018

ADDITIONS TO PARK SINCE 1994

In 2002, the Park underwent modifications to improve amenities and safety. The current pedestrian circulation was established at this time. Google Maps, 2016.

The following features, noted in the existing conditions summaries, were added:

Park Structures:

1. Waterfront Park Activity Center

9. Raised planter

Landscape Structures and Furnishings:

11. Flagpole

1. Waterfront Park – Playground

12. Benches

2. Tennis Courts (updated)

13. Picnic Tables

3. Basketball Court

14. Trash Receptacles

4. – 6. Gateway Piers

15. Parking Meters

8. Entrance Sign and Raised Planter

16. Fence and Guide Rail

