

**CARLISLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**HISTORIC PROPERTIES SURVEY**  
**FINAL REPORT**



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## **I. ABSTRACT: PROJECT SUMMARY**

The Town of Carlisle, through its Community Preservation Fund, undertook this survey project to document Carlisle's rich heritage. The work was guided by the **Preliminary Historic Properties Survey Plan**, written by the consultants in 2006 under the Carlisle Historical Commission. Detailed information on prior survey efforts, existing inventory forms, relevant planning issues, documentary sources, and recommendations for a full community-wide survey are contained in that plan.

This survey project is the first comprehensive effort to record the town's historic, architectural, and cultural resources. A total of 220 forms were written by consultants Anne Forbes and Gretchen Schuler, including 34 Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Area Forms, 152 individual Building Forms and 34 individual Object, Structure and Landscape forms. Prior to this project, 24 of Carlisle's historic resources had been covered on 13 inventory forms written between 1978 and 1994, and over 90 brief volunteer forms had been undertaken by local volunteers in 1990. Most of the 1990 information had not been filed with the MHC, but it provided a starting point for the documentation of certain properties. A single building form with a comprehensive physical description of the Samuel Heard House, 698 Concord Street, was completed in 2008 when a preservation restriction was recorded protecting the house and barn in perpetuity.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

Standard survey methodology recommended by the Massachusetts Historical Commission was used throughout the project, and findings were recorded on the MHC historic-properties inventory forms. A general approach to the survey had been recommended in the 2006 Preliminary Survey Plan, and a more definitive Survey Methodology was written in January 2008 during the first phase of the current comprehensive survey project (attached).

### Survey objectives

Survey objectives included the identification of Carlisle's historic resources prior to 1960, the establishment of a historic context for the town's development, (particularly its agricultural landscape,) and the evaluation of the identified resources according to the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places. The application of the criteria resulted in a list of properties and districts recommended as eligible for nomination to the National Register.

### Survey procedures

**Documentary research.** Much of the documentary research was conducted at the Gleason Public Library and the Town Clerk's office in addition to use of the written histories available for Carlisle. The Gleason Public Library holds the originals and copies of the "Old Houses and Families in Carlisle" volumes by Martha Wilkins, handwritten between 1930 and 1941. Mrs. Wilkins researched primary sources and conducted interviews with Carlisle residents over many years before compiling her notes on buildings that had been built before the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The information in these volumes proved to have a high level of accuracy and was heavily relied upon to learn about specific houses and the genealogy of Carlisle families who constructed the buildings, farmed the land, and lived in the dwellings.

The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk made many important original documents readily available to the consultants. These included valuation lists, lists of voters, vital records from 1780 to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a full set of Town Annual Reports. The Carlisle Historical Society's excellent and well-organized collection of documents, which includes files of detailed research notes by local historians Martha Wilkins, Ruth Wilkins, Donald Lapham and others, augmented the information found in Martha Wilkins' volumes at the library and the two published volumes of Carlisle's history (Ruth Wilkins' Carlisle, its History and Heritage and Donald Lapham's Carlisle, Composite Community). These files added to the depth of information for the historic narratives on the survey forms, as did past issues of *The Carlisle Mosquito*, both on file at the library and through

the newspaper's on-line archives. Additional information was gleaned from many conversations with Lawrence A. Sorli, architect, who also served as project coordinator. Finally, members of the Carlisle Historical Commission read forms for properties with which they were familiar, made their own properties accessible to the consultants, and offered useful feed-back.

Other documentary sources used throughout the survey included the Federal Agricultural Censuses of 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880, available at the National Archives (New England Region) in Waltham, and the U. S. Population Censuses available in ten year increments from 1850 to 1930. The Agricultural Censuses shed light on the land that Carlisle's farmers owned during those years and how it was used, as well as what livestock was being raised and crops grown. Combining the agricultural censuses with the town's yearly real-estate valuation lists provided a well-rounded picture of farming in Carlisle in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the two years during which this comprehensive survey was conducted, there was a rapid increase in the number of reliable on-line resources available for survey research. Not only were the population censuses available on line, but several genealogical websites were also utilized. The greatest difference between research for the Carlisle project and surveys in past years in Middlesex County has been the new on-line accessibility of records in the Middlesex North Registry of Deeds. In the past, budgets for historic properties surveys did not allow for the time-consuming task of deed research. With this project, however, in the case of many (though not all) properties, it was possible for the consultants to do some deed research fairly efficiently. In addition, some property plans from Registry files were available for viewing and/or downloading.

Historic maps are always essential documentary sources for a town-wide survey. The component of historic maps for Carlisle ranged from 1779 – a plan of land of the Second District of Carlisle by Isaac Foster Sawyer – through 1937 – the Bradford Washburn Map of Carlisle, Mass. Compiled from a Mosaic of Airplane Photographs. Several 19<sup>th</sup> century atlas maps (1831, 1856, 1875 and 1889) also led researchers to more conclusive evidence about many properties. Carlisle's Survey Plan of 2006 provides a further assessment of documentary sources and an analysis of previous research. Its preliminary examination of extant resources was revised somewhat as the result of both the documentary research and the fieldwork done during the survey.

**Survey fieldwork.** Legal restrictions prevent consultants from entering private property without owners' permission, and as with detailed deed research, survey budgets usually do not allow for interior inspections of buildings. In the case of the Carlisle survey, however, largely through outreach by the Project Coordinator, the owners of several properties allowed the consultants to come onto their properties to view features that could not readily be seen from the street. In addition, several owners invited the consultants to view building interiors, an opportunity that resulted in a better understanding of the buildings and the recording of some important architectural features in the description sections of the inventory forms.

#### Criteria for property selection

Because of budget limitations, it was not possible for this project to include all of the properties intended under the original scope. However, a significant portion of properties originally recommended for survey were included in the final documentation. Properties chosen for this survey project met the following criteria:

1. Historic or architectural importance, potential eligibility for the National Register;
2. Endangerment, by demolition, deterioration, or alteration;
3. Lack or inaccuracy of prior documentation.

The two properties that are previously listed in the National Register, the George Robbins House at 523 Curve Street and the Zebulon Spaulding House at 1044 Lowell Street, were not documented. Most of Great Brook Farm had been documented in 1993 and 1994 on an Area Form, three building forms, and three site forms that were commissioned by the former Mass. Department of Environmental Management (now Department of Conservation and Recreation). Therefore those properties too were not included in this survey project. A few other properties that should be part of the Great Brook Farm documentation also were not included in this project, but should be considered in future survey work.

### **III. EXPLANATION OF PRODUCTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **Inventory forms**

In all, 220 forms were written during the project: 34 Area Forms, and 186 individual resource forms (152 Building forms, 2 Cemetery Forms, 10 Landscape Forms, 1 Structure Form and 21 Object Forms). The project was completed by Anne Forbes and Gretchen Schuler; therefore both names are used on each survey form, with the name of the person who wrote the form for a property appearing first. Thus the first page of each form is labeled either "Forbes/Schuler" or "Schuler/Forbes."

In order to attain the project goals in an efficient manner, the Area Form format was used for the documentation of some groups of related properties. Area Forms of this type provide overviews of small neighborhoods, and typically include a brief description of resources on several properties, as well as a historical narrative about how the neighborhood, farm, or group of buildings developed over time. The Area Form format also was found to be the clearest way to show a single large farmstead complex in detail or a smaller one that includes multiple parcels. This approach was used to document Carlisle's few large historic farms, a handful of which have grown over generations to encompass over a dozen buildings and structures while retaining a part of their working agricultural landscapes. In these cases, the contributing resources on the farm or farmstead were listed and described in detail. At the end of each Area Form, an Area Data Sheet provides a concise list of the contributing resources within the documented area.

Each inventory form includes at least one photograph, and many, especially Area Forms, include multiple photographs. One photo print that meets MHC's archival standards has been attached to each form filed with the MHC, and the same print has been provided to the Carlisle Historical Commission for the town survey file. Other pertinent information such as Assessor's map and parcel number, building material, style, builder or architect (if known), date of construction, degree of alteration, setting also appears on Page One of each form. Detailed statements of architectural and historical significance follow on continuation sheets. A brief bibliography of sources consulted is part of each form, and always includes any historical maps on which a building or structure is shown.

While the survey was in progress, two houses were demolished after they had been documented. The form for 110 Maple Street has been submitted to Carlisle, but it was not given an MHC number and was not submitted to the MHC because there are no other structures on the property. The form for 278 South Street was submitted as part of the survey project because the barn, which is distinctive, remains. Thus the barn is the subject of that B-form and it is noted that the house was demolished in 2009 and rebuilt to similar specifications. The barn (CAR.160) was given an MHC number; the house was not numbered. A few other properties were significantly changed in other ways after the inventory form for them was written. In some of those cases the initial description and photos were retained to provide a record for the future, and a sentence or two was added to the form noting the change that had either occurred or was about to take place.

**Construction dates.** The dates given on the form reflect the completion of a building or structure

when known. There are a number of bracketed and approximate dates which usually represent fairly broad estimates. A date of "ca. 1800," for instance, might mean that a building could have been constructed up to about twenty years earlier or later. In some instances general construction dates are given in spite of the fact that local tradition, or an earlier survey form, may attribute a specific date. In some cases the consultant recommended further interior investigation or more detailed research to narrow the estimate or to substantiate an approximate date.

Current Carlisle Assessor's Office records show construction dates that appear to be reliable for many 20<sup>th</sup> century resources, and thus were consulted more than has been the case in other towns. Carlisle's Valuation Lists (real estate tax list), which exist for each year from 1861 to the late twentieth century, provided a wealth of precise, accurate information. They helped to narrow bracketed dates for both a building's construction and for a transfer of property ownership, and provided clues to enlargements of buildings, functions and dates of outbuildings, and to the shrinking, expanding, and use of acreage. In many cases Assessor's property cards, together with information on the 1955 valuation lists, also include book-and-page deed references. Those references were used as a starting point for on-line deed research that in turn provided further clues to the evolution of many properties and to construction dates of the buildings on them. Building Permits are not available until late in the twentieth century, and thus were not reviewed.

**MHC identification numbers.** Properties surveyed in this project have been plotted by identification letter or number on a large **base map** provided by the Town Clerk's Office. The numbering sequence, worked out in conjunction with the Massachusetts Historical Commission staff, may be used to easily identify all of Carlisle's historic resources in the state-wide computerized data base for historic properties, which is called MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System), as well as in the local file. MACRIS numbers have a three letter code for each town that appears in front of the number. Carlisle's code is CAR which is separated from the number by a period (e.g. CAR.2).

Each individual resource that has been specifically discussed on an inventory form – whether a building, object, structure, or landscape – has been given its own identification number. Generally, properties in one locale have been given consecutive numbers. According to MHC policy, all burial grounds are assigned 800 numbers, and all structures, objects, sites, and landscapes are assigned 900 numbers. As of the end of this survey project, the identification numbers for all individual buildings documented in Carlisle now range from CAR.1 through CAR.339, and for structures, objects, sites and landscapes, through CAR.985. Burial grounds identification numbers include CAR.800, CAR.801, and CAR.802. This numbering system includes properties for which numbers had been assigned previously. Some properties that already had an MHC number were recorded on new survey forms such as the Gleason Library (CAR.2) and the Highland School (CAR.3). The numbers are unique and remain with the property.

Each Area Form is identified by an alphabetical designation, currently ranging from Area A through Area AK. Areas A to C already existed; thus the first area in this survey project is CAR.D. Each discussed resource located within an area has an individual identification number, and is listed on the Data Sheet that accompanies the Area Form. From previous documentation Area A is Great Brook Farm, Area B is the Carlisle Historic District (an area in which the properties have been individually surveyed as part of this project). Area C is First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts, a regional project that listed over 100 dwellings of First Period construction in the National Register of Historic Places in 1990. Carlisle has two listings in that large thematic nomination. For those three areas, an actual inventory form exists only for Area A.

Assessor's map and parcel documentation; survey form maps. The town Assessor's map-and-parcel number for each property is part of the survey information, and appears on Page One of the form, on the Area Form Data Sheet, and in the Survey Street Index. It is anticipated that the use of these

data will help coordinate preservation planning with other types of planning within the town of Carlisle. Once the town has converted fully to a Geographic Information System (GIS) the surveyed properties can easily be mapped to show the distribution of historic properties throughout the town. With the exception of most area forms, locator maps used in this survey project were generated online using a link provided by staff of the MHC that was set up specifically for this project. Each property that has been identified on an individual property form was located on an aerial-view map. Once the consultant entered the data (street address, MACRIS number and in some instances the name of property) a map page was automatically generated that included a locus map, an aerial view and United States Geological Survey (USGS) data. Each map was saved in a pdf file and is part of the documentation that has been provided to the town electronically.

#### Application of National Register criteria.

The National Register criteria were applied to each property, and potential eligibility was noted on Page 2 of the survey form. When applicable, the reasons for eligibility were explained on an accompanying **National Register Criteria Statement sheet**. Outside of the Carlisle Center Local Historic District, 11 areas and 28 individual properties were found likely to be eligible for National Register listing. Within the local historic district there are 55 individual properties and two areas that are likely to be eligible for listing as components in a potential Carlisle Center National Register Historic District. Some properties that are individually eligible may also be eligible as part of a district. Some otherwise significant buildings were disqualified from individual National Register eligibility because of architectural alterations that have diminished their integrity, the most common of which were changes in form, siding, windows and doors. This was especially true of the farmhouses. Some of these, however, were found to be eligible as contributing resources to a potential National Register district.

It should be noted that these recommendations are the opinion of the consultants only, and do not guarantee that a property will be found eligible by the MHC or upon nomination to the Register. A list of National Register Recommendations is attached and consultation with the MHC is recommended before proceeding with preparation of a National Register nomination.

#### Other survey products.

It is hoped that in the future the master Bibliography for the survey will prove useful to people wishing to research the town's historic resources in further detail.

The attached Street Index (List of Inventory Forms) includes the forms for properties written during the current project. Properties and resources documented previously, but not surveyed this year, are listed on the MACRIS list for Carlisle. In the coming months, Carlisle's MACRIS list will be expanded and revised to include this inventory project.

The MHC is in the process of making all survey forms available online; therefore when these forms are entered into the MHC database the full form including photographs and maps will be available in a PDF format.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

While the majority of Carlisle's pre-1960 resources have now been documented to the standards set forth by the MHC, some work remains to be done:

1. Expansion of the Great Brook Farm Area Form. While this form is comprehensive, some properties should be added to it, particularly the house at 107 North Road. Individual forms should be completed for that house, as well as some others within Great Brook Farm such as the North Schoolhouse.

2. Further documentation of ca. 1950s and 1960s subdivisions. A few of the more representative subdivisions developed before 1960 were documented on area forms as part of this project. While they illustrate examples of prevailing house designs of the time, many more houses were built during that “boom” period of Carlisle’s development, and the Town would benefit from having them surveyed, as well. It is especially recommended that the CHC seek out unique house designs and buildings that retain their original condition and appearance, and write forms for them first.

3. Future updating of inventory forms. All inventory forms, including those written during this project, should be updated with additional information as it is obtained. The texts of some forms presently include recommendations in that regard. While interior inspections of houses and outbuildings is not mandatory and requires working with property owners, it often may yield clues to how buildings changed over time, and may even provide new information on the presence of some early structures that are not visible from the exterior. **MHC Continuation Sheets** should be used to add new or corrected information. Any added material should be dated, should note the source of the information and the person compiling it, and should be sent to the MHC as well as incorporated into Carlisle’s files. Survey form continuation sheets can be downloaded directly from the MHC website at [www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc).

#### Storage of survey documents; public access.

As a public document, the survey and inventory must be made readily available to the public. Suggested locations where the public would have access to copies of the survey forms include the Gleason Library, Carlisle Historical Society, and at least one municipal office at the Town Hall. The original forms and photographs should be held in the Town Hall, preferably in the office of the Carlisle Historical Commission. Electronic copies of forms, photographs, and maps have been provided to the Town. To reduce the expense of making copies it may be prudent to post pdf files of each form on the town or Gleason Library websites. When the MHC processes this survey project, it will combine the map and form files into a pdf file which will be available for downloading from the MHC’s MACRIS webpage.

#### 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:

1. It is strongly recommended that the Carlisle Historical Commission develop a plan to list properties in the **National Register of Historic Places**.
2. During this project at least two dwellings were demolished while the survey form was being recorded. Carlisle does not have a **Demolition Delay Bylaw** which would at least call to attention the history of properties to be demolished and could give the CHC an opportunity to further investigate the historic resource before demolition. Thus the survey project may be used as the basis for adopting a demolition delay by-law, which would require a majority vote of Town Meeting.
3. Information generated through the survey may also provide justification for applications for funding of **restoration or rehabilitation of significant buildings and historic landscapes**, particularly those in public or non-profit ownership.
4. With the town’s adoption of the Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, it would be appropriate to **map the community's historic properties**. In most instances once the system is in place the town GIS specialist can use an electronic version of the street index to map the Assessor’s map and parcel numbers, which will show the distribution of historic properties. If this is to be done it would be beneficial to add properties that are part of the MHC data base but that were not part of this survey project, particularly the two National Register properties. (The George Robbins House at 523 Curve Street is 31-12-0 and the

Zebulon Spaulding House at 1044 Lowell Street is 32-14-0.)

5. Finally, now that all the properties in the local historic district at Carlisle center have been thoroughly documented, the Carlisle Historical Commission will be able to use those inventory form as an aid in making decisions about changes to the historic, as well as non-historic, resources there.

This project was funded by the Town of Carlisle through its Community Preservation Fund. The work was carried out under the guidance of the Carlisle Historical Commission and Local Project Coordinator Lawrence A. Sorli, whose leadership, guidance and involvement have been extraordinarily helpful. The Carlisle Town Clerk's office opened its extensive files for research, and the consultants are especially grateful to Charlene Hinton and Irene Blake for their help, expertise and trust in making the irreplaceable primary documents in their care available for the survey research. Other valuable assistance was received from the staff of the Carlisle Assessor's office, Planning Department, Gleason Library, and from Janet Hentschel of the Carlisle Historical Commission.

Finally, we thank all the Carlisle historic property owners and residents who struggle daily to preserve, maintain, and operate these remarkable historic properties. Many welcomed us to their homes, provided us with a wealth of information, and gave this survey a gift of their time and their personal experience which has made a crucial difference in the final product.

Anne Forbes and Gretchen Schuler  
April 2010

## **ATTACHMENTS AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Each attachment is prepared as a pull-out section that can be used independently by the town and the Carlisle Historical Commission. The Street Index is an Excel file provided electronically, and the Historic Context, the list of National Register recommendations and the Bibliography are Word files. As public documents, they may be reformatted for distribution or publication by the Commission.

### **Street index of inventoried areas and properties**

The street index includes the MHC identification letter or number for all areas, properties, and individual resources covered in the survey. The list of Area Forms is presented first, arranged alphabetically by the historic or descriptive name of the area according to MHC standards. However, the town will find the street addresses of the area forms more useful. Thus the town's copy of the street index has been arranged alphabetically by street name with Area Forms listed first. Individual properties for which only a B-Form (Building Form) was written appear next, arranged alphabetically by street address, and with all significant associated individual buildings, structures, and landscapes enumerated. Some individual objects, structures and landscape forms are scattered within the list of individual building forms. The boundary markers (corner monuments and road stones) are listed separately at the end of the index followed by the guideposts. These 21 forms are listed alphabetically by street or closest street to the object.

In addition to addresses and MHC numbers, historic names (if appropriate), Assessor's Map and Parcel numbers, and approximate dates of construction are shown for all resources. Properties already included in the Local Historic District are so designated with an "LHD" in the Designation Column. Also included in the LHD but not listed individually in the street index is one house at 43 East Street and a small part of the parcels of 81 East Street and 29 Blaisdell Drive. They are documented in the Blaisdell Drive Area Form; therefore, for each of those three properties, there is no indication of its LHD status in the street index.

As stated above, this index covers only properties for which survey forms were written during the current project. Properties and resources documented on earlier historic surveys for Carlisle, but not surveyed as part of this project, appear on the MACRIS list for Carlisle, which includes three areas, 15 individual building numbers and seven individual structures and landscapes. In the coming months, MHC staff will expand and revise the MACRIS list to include this survey project. The MHC also will make a combined PDF file of each form and its map and post those forms on its MACRIS webpage available for anyone online.

### **National Register Recommendations**

The list of areas and properties deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places consists of recommendations only, and does not ensure eligibility. Additional properties may also prove to be eligible upon future inspection or the receipt of new information. For a definitive determination of eligibility on any property, a request should be made to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for a formal evaluation prior to engaging in preparing a National Register nomination.

### **Master Survey Bibliography**

The survey bibliography should provide a useful tool for anyone desiring to learn more about Carlisle's historic properties. A list of documents relevant to particular properties appears in the Bibliography section of each individual inventory form.

### **Overview History**

A brief history of the Historical Development of Carlisle includes a discussion of the main events that occurred during each development period and a discussion of themes or patterns of development in Carlisle.

### **Preliminary Methodology, January 2008**

This initial methodology is included for reference purposes. It has been supplemented by the final Methodology statement for the project (see p. 2 of this report.)

## **ADDENDUM TO FINAL REPORT**

After submitting forms and the draft final report it was called to the consultants' attention that the prominent guidepost at the intersection of West Street and Acton Street had not been documented. This omission has been rectified by completion of a form for the guidepost which has been given an MHC number – CAR.986. The information about this form has been added to the property index under the last heading on p. 9 "Guideposts."

The figures in the final report were not edited to reflect this additional survey form which brings the total to 221 forms or which 22 are for Objects. In addition the survey forms have not been amended to include this guidepost in the count of those documented in this project. Therefore each survey form for the other seven guideposts states that it is one of seven documented in this project. The addition of the form documenting the guidepost at West and Acton Streets brings the total guideposts recorded in this project to eight.