Local Historical Commissions at 50 Years
The Massachusetts Historical Commission

- Established in 1963 to identify, evaluate and protect the significant historic and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth.

- Staff at the MHC includes architectural historians, preservation planners, planners, archaeologists and architects.
Local Government Programs at the Massachusetts Historical Commission

Assisting all 351 Cities and Towns of Massachusetts in Community-Wide Historic Preservation Planning.

Primarily, the Local Historical Commissions.
A presentation on the History of Local Historic Preservation Efforts

1. Before Local Historical Commissions (and I mean way, way before)
2. Historic Preservation in the 1960s (it wasn’t all peace, love and grooviness)
3. How Far We Have Come (as well as…the more things change, the more…)

love and grooviness
1. Before Local Historical Commissions
Time Machine

Expertise

Flux Capacitor
Who was the first Historic Preservationist?

Mid 19th Century
Was it Ann Pamela Cunningham?

A Brief History

Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, is owned and maintained by the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, the oldest national historic preservation organization in the United States.

Founded by Ann Pamela Cunningham of South Carolina, the Association might never have come into existence were it not a tradition for ships to toll their bells when passing Mount Vernon. When in 1853 Miss Cunningham’s mother was summoned to deck by such a bell, ringing in homage to the nation’s first president, she was horrified at the sight of Washington’s once grand house covered with peeling paint and overgrown weeds, its famous portico so dilapidated that it was propped up by a sailing mast. “I was painfully distressed,” she later wrote to her daughter, “at the ruin and desolation of the home of Washington, and the thought passed through my
Did Historic Preservation Efforts Really Begin with Creating Museums?
Examples of 21st Century Historic Preservation Efforts

- Identifying Historic Resources
- Education about Historic Resources
- Advocating for Historic Resources
- Historic Property Stewardship
- Preventative Maintenance
- Rehabilitation of Historic Resources
- Adaptive Re-use of Historic Resources
Who was the first Historic Preservationist?
Could it have been someone 40,000 years ago?
The Story of Tuthmosis and the Sphinx

Use Your Imagination!
Pausanias and his description of the Temple of Hera

Again, Use Your Imagination!
Time Machine

BACK TO MASSACHUSETTS!
Fairbanks House, Circa 1640
Dedham, MA

Mid 19th Century Stewardship
BOSTONIANS!
SAVE THE
OLD JOHN HANCOCK MANSION
THREE IS TIME YET, ALTHOUGH THE WORK OF
DEMOLITION HAS COMMENCED

It is a question of some perplexity to decide how far it is wise or proper for the city
government or for individuals to interfere to prevent the act of modern vandalism which
demands the destruction of this precious relic; for that it is destroyed, in effect, if re
moved, we conceive admits of no question. Will it, or will it not, be a mitigation of the
public disgrace to establish the house itself elsewhere as a perpetual monument of the
proceeding.

Without wishing in the least degree to discourage the public spirit and the patriotism
of those gentlemen in the City Council who are seeking at this moment to do the best thing they can for the preservation
of the house, we still think it right that one preliminary appeal should be made to the present owners. They are gentlemen
of wealth, they have made an honest purchase, and of course may plead that they have a right to do what they will
with their own. It is with full recognition of their rights in this respect, and withal in the utmost kindness to them, that we
would admonish them how dearly is purchased any good thing which costs the sacrifice of public associations so dear and so
noble as those that cluster around the Hancock House.

These purchasers must at any rate be prepared to hear, during the whole of their
lives and that of their remant posterity, as long as any of them may live in the elegant modern palaces
which shall supplant the ancient structure, the frequent expression of public discontent. Argument may
shew them blameless, but sentiment will ever condemn the proceeding in which theirs will be perhaps
the most innocent, but nevertheless the most permanent part. It is not often that an opportunity is given to men
of wealth to earn a title to public gratitude by an act of simple self-denial. Such an opportunity falls to the
lot of the purchasers of this estate.

Published by T. O. H. Revere & Co.
June 6, 1863.
1881

Old State House
Paul Revere House

1908
Regional Non-Profit Organizations

Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities/
Historic New England
1910
Outdoor Living History Museums

Old Sturbridge Village
1946

Historic Deerfield
1952
Local Non-Profit Organizations
Local Historic Districts

Beacon Hill

Nantucket

1955
2. Historic Preservation in the 1960s

A time of great change for historic preservation in Massachusetts and the nation.
Urban Renewal

The West End of Boston in this planning document is described as an “obsolete neighborhood.”
Urban Renewal

The West End of Boston
Before and After
Transportation Planning and Highway Expansion

1956
The Federal Aid Highway Act
Demolition of Neighborhoods for Transportation Projects
The state law establishing local historical commissions.

1963
National Historic Preservation Act

1966
Highway Planning

Historic Property Survey

The Massachusetts Historical Commission needs your help! Historical buildings can be preserved only when we know they exist. There is a tide, great water of historical structures in Massachusetts that have been destroyed through ignorance of their importance. The best defense against such unwitting destruction is a state-wide inventory.

A duty of the Massachusetts Historical Commission is to compile such an inventory, which will be used by various planning agencies, so that historical structures will get fair and just treatment. One of these agencies, the Eastern Massachusetts Regional Planning Project (EMRPP), urgently needs all the information the Massachusetts Historical Commission can provide. By March of 1967 they must report on the historic sites in 42 towns affected by 1975 highway networks and put this information on a computer. Lincoln is one of these towns.

In order to compile a complete inventory of publicly and privately owned sites, the following steps are involved: Preliminary
Number of Local Historical Commissions Statewide

Approximate Number of Local Historical Commissions:

- 1963: 4
- 1967: 22
- 1973: 175
- 1979: 292
- 2013: 347
Who was the first local historical commission on Cape Cod?
3. How Far We Have Come Since Local Historical Commissions Were Created.
There are now well over 150,000 records within the MHC files.
According to the State Historic Preservation Plan 2011-2015, over 5000 inventory forms were added to the statewide historic properties inventory just from 2006 to 2010.
"Cards are superimposed over each other, and light is shone through them. The points where light passes through refer you to the information that you desire."
Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) now online and available to anyone in the world through the web.
Below are the results of your search, using the following search criteria:
**Town(s):** Harwich  
**Resource Type(s):** Building

For more information about this page and how to use it, [click here](#).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inv. No.</th>
<th>Property Name</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRW.424</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Island Pond Rd</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.350</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kelley St</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.391</td>
<td></td>
<td>448 Kelley St</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.390</td>
<td></td>
<td>498 Kelley St</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.425</td>
<td></td>
<td>63 Kendrick Rd</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.423</td>
<td></td>
<td>260 Lothrop Ave</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.312</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower County Rd</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.354</td>
<td>Pine Brook Lodge</td>
<td>Lower County Rd</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.355</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower County Rd</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.356</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower County Rd</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.357</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower County Rd</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.358</td>
<td></td>
<td>288 Lower County Rd</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.293</td>
<td></td>
<td>Main St!</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.294</td>
<td></td>
<td>Main St!</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW.295</td>
<td></td>
<td>Main St!</td>
<td>Harwich</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 8 of 34

[Previous 15](#)  [Next 15](#)

502 Properties Found
National Register of Historic Places

In 1963, there was no such thing as the National Register of Historic Places.
At the end of 2010, Massachusetts remained a national leader in the National Register program, with more than 3,800 listings since the start of the program in 1966, including close to 1,700 National Register Historic Districts and approximately 77,000 contributing resources.
Tools for Education
Demolition Delay Bylaws began around 1980.
"The effectiveness of the [local] historical commissions as a group in influencing public policy suffers from the lack of a statewide association."
Statewide Local Commission Association


Even though there are nearly 3000 members that make up the commissions, they are not well represented.

Recommendation:
Establish a statewide association of local historical and historic district commissions.
Local Historic Preservation Plans

Fitchburg Historic Preservation Plan from 1978.
In preparation is a publication of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, of suggestions for local Historical Commissions. When it comes out, we shall send you copies.

Yours sincerely,

Richard M. Hale Jr.,
Acting Chairman
Massachusetts Historical Commission
Local Commission Training Manuals

Preservation Planning Manual

Local Historical Commissions in Massachusetts

Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances

Establishing Local Historic Districts
Walls Come Tumbling Down

Newburyport Renewal Opens New Vistas and Controversy

RUBBLE OF demolished brick buildings on Inn st., Newburyport, in view looking toward Market sq. and the waterfront. Many of the structures were built soon after great fire of 1811 wiped out much of the center of city. (Globe Photos by Phil Preston)
Newburyport, Massachusetts Urban Renewal Model

- MERRIMAC STREET
- PARCEL 8
- MARKET SQUARE
- WATERFRONT
- STATE STREET
- GREEN STREET
- MERRIMAC STREET
Newburyport, Massachusetts Today
While the loss of historic resources continues on…

Demolished in March, 2012

Newbury doesn’t have a demolition delay bylaw.
Imagine what our state would be like without the dedication of local historical commissions.
A Thought for the Day

NEAR THIS SPOT
SAMUEL WHITTEMORE,
THEN 80 YEARS OLD,
KILLED THREE BRITISH SOLDIERS
APRIL 19, 1775.
HE WAS SHOT, BAYONETED,
BEATEN AND LEFT FOR DEAD,
BUT RECOVERED AND LIVED
TO BE 98 YEARS OF AGE.
Thank you, local historical commissions, for all your hard work!

50 Years!