

BELCHERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

**CULTURAL & ARCHITECTURAL
RESOURCE SURVEY**

Performed in 2007-2008 for the
Massachusetts Historical Commission and the
Belchertown Historical Commission

Fitzgerald & Halliday, Incorporated

SURVEY FINAL REPORT

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I. Abstract

Fitzgerald and Halliday, Incorporated (FHI) conducted an intensive level community-wide cultural and architectural resource survey of Belchertown, Massachusetts. The project was conducted for the purpose of identifying and assessing additional cultural resources within the town, and applying National Register Criteria to all properties identified in the inventory. The resources were located throughout the town, and range in age from the mid-eighteenth to the early-twentiethth centuries.

The project included: 1) analysis of the architectural history and significance of selected structures in the town that are at least fifty years old. 2) Research into the social, economic, personal, and professional histories of individuals and organizations affiliated with inventoried structures. 3) Consideration and evaluation of these resources in the context of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

The resulting final list of inventoried properties included 125 “B” form building resources, and one “A” form area resource. FHI took approximately 300 survey photographs of these resources, and created a basemap and GIS-produced sketch maps of the properties in relation to the streets and natural resources that surround them.

FHI recommends several of these properties for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. They are:

- 17 Main Street, the Jonathan Grout House, the residence of attorney Jonathan Grout at the time he obtained a patent for what became the first visual telegraphy system in the United States.
- 84 Old Bay Road, the Elijah and Ethan Smith House, the childhood residence of Second Great Awakening author Ethan Smith, who wrote a religious tract that may have been instrumental in formulating early Mormon theology.
- 103 Bardwell Street, the Washington District School, the best-preserved of Belchertown’s remaining District Schools.

II. Methodology

Survey Objectives

The purpose of this project was to undertake an intensive level community-wide survey of cultural and architectural resources in the town of Belchertown. The project was structured to provide professional cultural and architectural resource survey expertise to the community. The *Community Plan of Belchertown* (2002) noted that lack of public awareness was one of the biggest problems concerning cultural resources in the town. As such, one of the main objectives of this survey was to raise public awareness through identification of the town's cultural resources. Specific project goals were as follows:

- 1) Performance of a community-wide survey to assess and document approximately 135 selected cultural and architectural resources following Massachusetts Historical Commission survey standards and methodology.
- 2) Identification of contexts for National Register Evaluation and application of the National Register criteria to all resources identified in the survey.
- 3) Submission to MHC of a list of individual properties and/or districts that are recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Criteria for Survey

Belchertown, like most communities in Massachusetts, has an extensive number of historic resources, far more than can be surveyed in this endeavor. FHI sought guidance from the Belchertown Historical Commission (BHC) to identify and prioritize the community's needs. At the suggestion of the BHC, FHI focused on previously un-surveyed properties built prior to 1900. This method of using age as a criteria rather than geographic location, allowed for a very structured and thorough survey, and also followed the Town's patterns of historical development. The BHC provided FHI with a set of three lists identifying properties to compile for inclusion in the Phase I Survey. The resulting combined list included approximately 150 properties. In Phase II, the list was condensed to include only properties that met survey standards and had not been previously included in a MHC survey of Belchertown. The remaining 126 properties covered an approximately two hundred-year period from 1700 to the early 20th century.

Within this established framework, FHI followed the general selection criteria set forth in the MHC's *Historic Properties Survey Manual: Guidelines for the Identification of Historic and Archaeological Resources in Massachusetts* (1992). Specifically, the historical merit of the resource, the architectural or design merit, the relationship to neighboring resources, and the integrity were all taken into account. Finally, the survey related the cultural resources to historic patterns of architectural development, land use, economic development, social and demographic history, and events that had an impact on the community. The survey also recognized ethnic and cultural diversity within the community, and identified cultural resources associated with the history of the minority social and cultural groups and individuals.

Procedures

The survey concentrated primarily on exterior architectural evaluation. The survey followed the MHC's "Architectural Form and Style Terms" in Appendix C of the *Historic Properties Survey Manual* and specifically Virginia and Lee McAlester's *Field Guide to American Houses* (New York, 1984), and John B. Blumenson's *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945* (New York, 1981).

FHI used the Microsoft Word format provided on the MHC website to create the project survey forms, and followed the guidelines set forth in the above-mentioned Survey Manual, the *Survey Technical Bulletin #1* (1993), the *MHC Interim Survey Guidelines* (March 1999, et seq.), and the *MHC Interim Guidelines for Inventory Form Photographs* (2007).

Intensive-level survey forms were completed using field notes and on the subsequent review of photographs taken while in the field. Field notes were written by hand using a field recording form. Notations included the location of each resource relative to the street, neighboring buildings, or the nearest intersection (which were noted using a sketch map).

Previous Research

A significant amount of research existed for the Town of Belchertown. The town center had been extensively surveyed, but there were a number of outlying properties that had not yet been catalogued. A review of the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) in late 2007 revealed that at that time, there were 274 areas, buildings, burial grounds, objects, and structures listed on the MACRIS database for the Town of Belchertown. A review of these files at MHC provided background information on families, development patterns, and general history. Other sources of previous recordation include:

A review of the National Register of Historic Places files indicated that only three resources in Belchertown had been listed at the Federal level: the Belchertown Center Historic District, the Belchertown State School, and the Walker-Collis House at One Stadler Street. The survey identified three additional National Register Eligible properties in Belchertown.

The Belchertown Center Historic District Commission was created in 1990, and includes properties along Main, Maple, Walnut, Park, and Jabish Streets. All sources of information previously compiled in the Belchertown Historic District Commission files, including building alterations, were reviewed for the purposes of this project.

The Belchertown Historical Commission previously compiled a list of historic houses that included the name of the original owner, a photograph of the exterior, the location of the building, and the historic importance of the building.

The *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report* for Belchertown (1982) and the corresponding *Historic and Archaeological Resources of the Connecticut River Valley* (1984) also provided a preliminary framework and base of information for this project.

In addition to this information, the following documentary sources were employed:

The Stone House Museum (Belchertown Historical Association) archival holdings, which are extensive and include local histories, records of the Belchertown Historical Association, almanacs, church records, military records, town records, narrative histories and essays on Belchertown, photo albums, maps, and newspapers;

The local reading room of the Clapp Memorial Library in Belchertown.

Survey Results

In Phase I and Phase II of the survey, FHI and the BHC identified 126 individual and area architectural resources for inclusion in this intensive communitywide survey of Belchertown. In Phase III of the survey, FHI produced 125 draft MHC Form Bs for individual properties in Belchertown, and one draft MHC Form A for an area property in Belchertown (Cold Spring Farm at 381 Sabin Street). FHI took approximately 300 survey photographs of these resources, and created 126 GIS-produced sketch maps of the properties in relation to the streets and natural resources that surround them. The resources were located throughout the town, and range in age from the mid-eighteenth to the early 20th centuries. The survey findings confirmed the importance of the Greek Revival as the major historical architectural style in Belchertown, reinforced the primacy of agriculture and the carriage industry in the town's economic history, and highlighted the demographic and social changes that took place in Belchertown in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In Phase III, FHI also identified contexts for National Register evaluation and applied the National Register criteria to all resources identified in the survey. FHI has submitted to the MHC a list of properties outside the Belchertown Historic District that are recommended for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. FHI has recommended three of these properties for individual nomination to the National Register: 17 Main Street, the house of visual telegraphy pioneer Jonathan Grout; 84 Old Bay Road, the childhood home of Second Great Awakening preacher and influential writer Ethan Smith; and 103 Bardwell Street, the best preserved of Belchertown's original district schoolhouses. FHI completed National Register criteria statement forms for each of these recommendations.

MHC and the BHC reviewed the photographs, draft survey forms, National Register criteria statements, and historic context statement in July and August of 2008. FHI incorporated MHC and BHC comments on these draft documents into a "pre-final" draft, and submitted this pre-final draft for second review in October of 2008. This pre-final

draft was reviewed and approved by both the MHC and the BHC in November of 2008. The survey was completed and printed in November of 2008.

The completed 2008 Belchertown Architectural and Cultural Resource Survey will be repositied in the offices of the Belchertown Historical Commission at the Belchertown Town Hall.

III. Street Index of Inventoried Properties

Areas:

MACRIS #	ADDRESS		AREA
BLC.320	391	Sabin St.	K – Cold Spring Farm
BLC.319	391	Sabin St.	K – Cold Spring Farm
BLC.318	391	Sabin St.	K – Cold Spring Farm
BLC.317	391	Sabin St.	K – Cold Spring Farm

Individually Inventoried Properties:

MACRIS #	ADDRESS		PROPERTY NAME
BLC.222	306	Allen Street	
BLC.223	258	Allen Street	
BLC.224	170	Allen Street	
BLC.225	571	Bardwell Street	
BLC.226	526	Bardwell Street	
BLC.227	185	Bardwell Street	
BLC.228	103	Bardwell Street	Washington District School
BLC.229	211	Barrett Street	
BLC.230	121	Barton Ave	
BLC.231	393	Bay Rd	
BLC.232	374	Bay Rd	
BLC.233	221	Bay Rd	
BLC.234	270	Boardman St.	
BLC.235	480	Chauncey Walker St.	
BLC.236	440	Chauncey Walker St.	
BLC.237	151	Chauncey Walker St.	
BLC.238	661	Daniel Shays Hwy	
BLC.239	636	Daniel Shays Hwy	
BLC.240	621	Daniel Shays Hwy	
BLC.241	361	Daniel Shays Hwy	
BLC.242	80	Daniel Shays Hwy	
BLC.243	50	Depot St.	
BLC.244	32	Depot St.	
BLC.245	25	Depot St.	
BLC.246	19	Depot St.	
BLC.247	18	Depot St.	Saint Adalbert Church
BLC.248	10	Depot St.	Saint Adalbert Church Rectory
BLC.249	65	Dressel Ave.	
BLC.250	91	East Walnut St.	

MACRIS #	ADDRESS		PROPERTY NAME
BLC.251	885	Federal St.	Dwight Chapel
BLC.252	841	Federal St.	
BLC.253	795	Federal St.	
BLC.254	715	Federal St.	
BLC.255	135	Federal St.	
BLC.256	125	Federal St.	
BLC.257	81	Federal St.	
BLC.258	78	Federal St.	
BLC.259	74	Federal St.	
BLC.260	70	Federal St.	
BLC.261	50	Federal St.	
BLC.262	791	Franklin St.	
BLC.263	626	Franklin St.	
BLC.264	540	Franklin St.	
BLC.265	734	George Hannum St.	
BLC.266	686	George Hannum St.	
BLC.267	494	George Hannum St.	
BLC.268	460	George Hannum St.	
BLC.269	130	Gold St.	
BLC.270	41	Granby Rd	
BLC.271	95	Green Ave	
BLC.272	55	Green Ave	
BLC.273	30	Green Ave	
BLC.274	730	Gulf Rd.	
BLC.275	475	Gulf Rd.	Pelham Country Club
BLC.276	124	Gulf Rd.	
BLC.277	250	Hamilton ST	
BLC.278	229	Jabish St.	
BLC.279	215	Jabish St.	
BLC.280	42	Jabish St.	
BLC.281	31	Jabish St.	
BLC.282	21	Jabish St.	
BLC.283	38	Jackson St.	
BLC.284	22	Knight St.	
BLC.285	10	Lamson Ave.	
BLC.286	211	Ludlow St.	
BLC.287	53	Main St.	
BLC.288	31	Main St.	Methodist Church
BLC.289	23	Main St.	
BLC.290	17	Main St.	
BLC.291	70	Maple St.	
BLC.292	50	Maple St.	
BLC.293	134	Michael Sears Rd.	
BLC.294	374	Mill Valley Rd.	

MACRIS #	ADDRESS		PROPERTY NAME
BLC.295	316	Mill Valley Rd.	
BLC.296	65	Mill Valley Rd.	
BLC.297	110	Munsell St.	
BLC.298	606	North Gulf Rd.	
BLC.299	574	North Gulf Rd.	
BLC.300	451	North Washington St.	
BLC.301	111	Old Bay	
BLC.302	84	Old Bay	
BLC.303	185	Old Enfield Rd	
BLC.304	150	Old Enfield Rd	
BLC.305	141	Old Enfield Rd	
BLC.306	121	Old Enfield Rd	
BLC.307	246	Orchard Rd	
BLC.308	100	Orchard Rd	
BLC.309	147	River St.	
BLC.310	143	River St.	
BLC.311	139	River St.	
BLC.312	127	River St.	
BLC.313	111	River St.	
BLC.314	176	Rockrimmon St.	
BLC.315	85	Rockrimmon St.	
BLC.316	72	Rockrimmon St.	
BLC.321	108	Shea Ave.	
BLC.322	81	Shea Ave.	
BLC.323	463	South Gulf Rd.	
BLC.324	227	South Liberty St.	
BLC.325	21	South Liberty St.	
BLC.326	55	South Main St.	
BLC.327	594	South St.	
BLC.328	441	South St.	
BLC.350	440	South St.	
BLC.329	296	South St.	
BLC.330	197	South St.	
BLC.331	154	South St.	
BLC.332	650	South Washington St.	
BLC.333	121	South Washington St.	
BLC.334	61	South Washington St.	
BLC.335	185	Summit St.	
BLC.336	324	Turkey Hill Rd.	
BLC.337	50	Turkey Hill Rd.	
BLC.338	335	Ware Rd.	
BLC.339	267	Ware Rd.	
BLC.340	205	Ware Rd.	
BLC.341	51	Ware Rd.	

MACRIS #	ADDRESS		PROPERTY NAME
BLC.342	131	Warner St.	
BLC.343	561	Warren Wright St.	
BLC.344	411	Warren Wright St.	
BLC.345	273	Warren Wright St.	
BLC.346	240	Warren Wright St.	
BLC.347	167	Warren Wright St.	
BLC.348	415	West St.	Austin Brothers Valley Farm
BLC.349	126	Wilson St.	

IV. National Register Context Statement

Belchertown National Register Eligible Properties:

17 Main Street –	Jonathan Grout House
84 Old Bay Road –	Elijah and Ethan Smith House
103 Bardwell Street –	Washington District School (eligible individually or along with 91 Bardwell Street, the Bardwell-Dudek House).

Historic Context Statement

The 2007-2008 survey of Belchertown has focused on resources that were believed to have been built before 1875 and had not been surveyed in prior efforts. Consequently, the context for resource that could be nominated has generally been from the last half of the eighteenth century to about 1930.

The Town of Belchertown is located in southeastern Hampden County, fourteen miles east of Northampton and eighteen miles northeast of Springfield. Geographically, it is the largest town in Hampshire County. The Town of Belchertown is bounded by Pelham on the north, the Quabbin Reservoir on the northeast, Ware on the east, Palmer in Hampden County on the southeast, Ludlow in Hampden County on the southwest, Granby on the west, and Amherst on the northwest.

Belchertown's major east-west road between Brookfield and Northampton, the Old Bay Path, was the focus of much of its 18th century development. After incorporation in 1761, the path was improved and took on the name Bay Road. The Bay Road was populated by former residents of Northampton, Hatfield, and Hadley in the late eighteenth century, among them original settlers Joseph Smith of 111 Old Bay Road, and Elijah Smith of 84 Old Bay Road. These residents primarily pursued agriculture, as did most of Belchertown's inhabitants. Livestock grazing occurred throughout the town's moderate uplands. Crop production was modest, primarily because of the limited amount of fertile alluvial soils, but extensive land appear to have been devoted to agricultural pursuits of one form or another. The best cropland was situated in southern Belchertown and the Swift River bottomlands. Extensive timbering probably took place throughout the town's woodlands.

Agriculture remained a staple of the area's economy until the 20th century, and many farms continue to flourish today, some of which, like the Austin Brothers Family Farm on West and South Washington Streets, have ties to the nineteenth century. Cold Spring Farm at 391 Sabin Street has been a center of agricultural innovation and research since

the 19th century when it was owned by the Bartlett family to the present day, when it is used as the University of Massachusetts Horticultural Research Station.

Innovation in Belchertown was not confined to agricultural pursuits. Around 1800, while a resident of 17 Main Street, attorney Jonathan Grout obtained a patent for what became the first visual telegraphy system in the United States, and was used in Boston and Philadelphia to give advance warning of ships returning to port.

Areas of local industry were Jabish Brook and the Swift River. The Jabish Brook was the site of two gristmills, a sawmill, and an ironworks around 1794, while the Swift River powered a gristmill and a sawmill. From around 1840 and to the early 20th century, a series of gristmill complexes were located at what is now 636 Jabish Street, but the mills have been converted into residences. Another sawmill, operated by Virgil Pratt and his descendants, was located at 636 Daniel Shays Highway from around 1860 to around 1938. This mill was also converted into a residence. Two small paper mills, F.M. Bardwell's Belchertown Woolen Company at Bardwell Village, and a small fork factory developed later.

Belchertown's burgeoning industries were aided by the expansion of the railroad in the town. The Amherst and Belchertown Railroad was established in 1852 from Palmer to Arcadia Lake and Hop Brook. The system expanded with the Athol Branch along the Swift River from Ludlow to Bondsville. The Central Massachusetts Railroad from Ware to Amherst Line was built in 1886, paralleling the Central Vermont Railroad through Belchertown Center and Dwight. Many men in Belchertown worked on the railroads from the 1880s on, including Timothy Garvey of 374 Mill Valley Road, Henry Bracey of 110 Munsell Street, and Almon Lovett of 463 South Gulf Road. In the early 20th century, the confluence of the railroads and the Swift River in South Belchertown made it a center of the town's industrial workforce. Industrial workers clustered in South Belchertown, working in a few small factories there, and commuting across the Swift River to factories located in Bondsville, Duckville, Three Rivers, and Four Corners to the south, outside of the town's limits. Like many of the farmers who came to Belchertown in the later 19th century, these early 20th century workers in South Belchertown were first- and second-generation Americans of Irish, French Canadian, Polish, and other Eastern European extraction.

Belchertown's most notable 19th century industry was the manufactory of carriages and wagons, giving rise to its nickname "Carriagetown". The industry flourished from the early 1800s until the Civil War, supporting at least ten carriage shops over the course of those years. The first shops were located on and around Federal Street, but after a series of fires in the 1830s, the businesses migrated to the Town Center. The industry employed men and women with a variety of skills, including harness makers and mechanics such as Simeon Dwight of 74 Federal Street, wheelwrights such as Jonas and Park Holland of 78 Federal Street, carriage-makers such as F.S. Cook of 21 Jabish Street, carriage trimmers such as Lizzie Morrison of 215 Jabish Street, and blacksmiths such as Thomas J.S. Parsons of 17 Main Street. In 1855, the peak of the industry, 166 men were employed making wagons worth \$90,750. The two largest firms of the period, J. Packard

and Co. and H.T. Filer and Co. each employed 40 – 50 men and turned out 300+ wagons annually. Among the best-known Belchertown carriage-makers, Tertius and Samuel Cowles expanded their carriage shipments beyond the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic markets that were well established, to distant locales such as Persia and Australia (MHC Town Survey Report). After the Civil War Belchertown's carriage industry collapsed due to increased competition from western factories.

The education of Belchertown's children was addressed from early on in the town's history, with the first schools being formed around the time of the town's incorporation in 1761. In 1784, the District System originated, with the establishment of eight small schools in different areas around Belchertown, which provided a basic education to children of all ages. In 1878, Belchertown had eighteen public schools, including a grammar school and a high school, with a total of 27 teachers and 572 enrolled students. Eventually road improvements and greater community emphasis on education resulted in the consolidation of the district schools. As district schools were phased out and closed in the early 20th century, most were sold to private individuals and converted to dwellings. Only one of these District Schools, the Washington District School, located at 103 Bardwell Street, was not converted to residential use. The School, constructed by builder Henry Hoag in 1882 on the site of an earlier schoolhouse, permanently closed in June of 1938 and was sold by the town in 1941. It is currently on the same parcel of land as 91 Bardwell, a historic building known as the Bardwell-Dudek House.

The Second Great Awakening of the early 19th century had a significant role in Belchertown, where some residents chose to follow breakaway religious movements, such as "Perfectionist" Samuel Hopkins of 53 Main Street, while others played an important role in their creation. Ethan Smith of 84 Bay Road wrote *A View of the Hebrews*, an 1823 religious tract that postulated on ancestral links between the ancient Israelites and Native Americans, much like the Book of Mormon that was first published in 1830.

While some of Belchertown's remaining 18th century buildings played a small role in America's wars of the 18th and 19th centuries, such as 17 Main Street, the Jonathan Grout House, which served as a signal station during the American Revolution, many more of Belchertown's farmers and millers left their land and joined the armed forces during these conflicts. Many men from Belchertown marched to Lexington to reinforce colonial troops in response to news of the April 19th Battle of Lexington and Concord, while others fought in the Revolution outright. Revolutionary War veterans included Moses Hannum Jr. of 250 Hamilton Street, who served as a private in 1777, 1779, and 1782, Park Holland of 50 Federal Street, who served as a private in campaigns of 1776, 1777, and 1780, then acted as a Captain of Militia in the suppression of Shay's Rebellion of 1786-87. During the Civil War, George M. Abbey of 74 Federal Street enlisted in the Union Army in 1861 as a Sergeant, then in 1863 was promoted to a commission as a Captain with the 91st Infantry Regiment of U.S. Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.). The commissioned officers of the U.S.C.T. were almost universally white men, such as George M. Abbey, who had earlier distinguished themselves in their white regiments, and won promotions to commissioned rank leading regiments of African American soldiers.

Belchertown underwent tremendous change and a huge influx of new residents between 1922, when the Belchertown State School was constructed, and 1938, with the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir. Between 1920 and 1935, the town's population grew by 87%, leading the county in growth for that period. The State School became a major employer of both men and women, such as attendant Catherine O'Connor of 111 River Street, and psychiatric social worker Dorothy S. Peeso of 306 Allen Street. The influx of these new non-agricultural employees necessitated the construction of new housing, which hastened the development of farmland. The creation of the Quabbin Reservoir in 1938, while not taking a great deal of Belchertown's land, also resulted in an influx of people displaced by the loss of the towns of Dana, Enfield, Greenwich, and Prescott. 121 Old Enfield Road, then occupied by H. Holland, was one such building.

V. Further Study and Recommendations

A number of properties on North Main Street were reviewed by FHI for possible inclusion in the survey, including 50, 45, 42, 39, 38, and 34 North Main, but a review of previously surveyed properties showed that most had been inventoried and submitted to the MHC in the 1970s. As they were not included in the present survey, the National Register eligibility of these properties was not addressed in the historic context statement, however, FHI recommends that the boundary of the existing Town Center historic district be extended north to include these properties, with the new northern boundary terminating at 50 North Main Street.

The creation of the Quabbin Reservoir was one of the most significant events in the history of Belchertown after the town's foundation. A number of properties currently standing in Belchertown and surrounding communities (including 121 Old Enfield Road, included in this survey) were moved to Belchertown in the 1930s from what was to become the Quabbin basin. FHI recommends that further research be conducted to determine the locations of additional surviving properties that were moved in the 1930s as a result of the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir, for inclusion in a possible thematic Quabbin Reservoir National Register District.

FHI shares the goal of the MHC and BHC, that the information collected in this survey effort will be effectively used to promote and broaden preservation education within Belchertown, and recommends that the survey be utilized as a resource for any future preservation legislation enacted in the town.

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