

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

MATTAPOISETT

Report Date: 1981

Associated Regional Report: Southeast Massachusetts

Reconnaissance Survey Town Reports, produced for MHC's Statewide Reconnaissance Survey between 1979 and 1987, introduce the historical development of each of the Commonwealth's municipalities. Each report begins with an historic overview, a description of topography, and political boundaries. For the purposes of the survey, the historic period has been subdivided into seven periods: Contact (1500–1620), Plantation (1620–1675), Colonial (1675–1775), Federal (1775–1830), Early Industrial (1830–1870), Late Industrial (1870–1915), and Early Modern (1915–1940/55). Each report concludes with survey observations that evaluate the town's existing historic properties inventory and highlight significant historic buildings, settlement patterns, and present threats to these resources. A bibliography lists key secondary resources.

Town reports are designed for use together with a series of town maps that demarcate settlement patterns, transportation corridors and industrial sites for each historic period. These maps are in the form of color-coded, polyester overlays to the USGS topographic base map for each town on file and available for consultation at MHC. For further information on the organization and preparation of town reports, readers should contact MHC.

Users should keep in mind that these reports are now two decades or more old. The information they contain, including assessments of existing knowledge, planning recommendations, understanding of local development, and bibliographic references all date to the time they were written. In some cases, information on certain topics was not completed. No attempt has been made to update this information.

Electronic text was not available for digital capture, and as a result most of the reports have been scanned as PDF files. While all have been processed with optical character recognition, there will inevitably be some character recognition errors.

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: June 1981

Community: Mattapoisett

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Mattapoisett is located in the coastal lowlands on Buzzards Bay. Soils are sandy and there is a system of swamps on the northern portion of the town. Topographic relief is relatively moderate with a northwest/southeast orientation. Drainage principally via the Mattapoisett River.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Mattapoisett, the second precinct of Rochester, was incorporated as a town on May 20, 1857.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Mattapoisett is a resort town on Buzzard's Bay located approximately 10 miles from New Bedford. Mattapoisett was a Contact period native seasonal site with possible pre-1620 utilization of the harbor by European explorers and fishing fleets. White settlement in Mattapoisett during the First Period was also seasonal, extensive settlement of the area did not begin until the Colonial Period, Mattapoisett became the second precinct of Rochester in the 1730s. By 1787 Mattapoisett Harbor was considered one of the major trading towns in Plymouth County. Late 18th century residential development centered around the shipyards at Mattapoisett Harbor, shipbuilding and whaling were the principle economic activities prior to the Civil War. (There were 4 shipyards in operation in Mattapoisett prior to 1800.) Outlying residential settlements during this period were dependent on farming and sheep raising. Mattapoisett was incorporated in 1857 after a long standing dispute with Rochester over the location of town meetings. Mid-late 19th century resort development replaced whaling and shipbuilding as the principle source of income. The last shipyard was closed in 1878. Although some cranberry production entered the economic base during the early twentieth century, the mainstay of Mattapoisett's economy during the late 19th and early 20th century were the summer residents. As in Marion there was an influx of relatively well-to-do summer residents who built homes in the town. The resort development in Marion and Mattapoisett was substantially different from that of towns on the south shore, i.e., Scituate and Marshfield, in that the development resembles the Newport model of large summer residences with grounds rather than densely packed summer cottages. Although there has been some post World War II suburban development in the town, the principle industry is still the summer resident.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500 - 1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Coastal setting on Buzzards Bay with inland connections from Mattapoisett Harbor to interior ponds. Primary north/south trail between Mattapoisett Neck (Antassawamock) and Snippatuit Pond (Rochester) appears

to follow Mattapoissett Neck Road to Crystal Spring Road with ford over Mattapoissett River to North Street around Towser Swamp with branch routes to Brant Island Cove as Brant Island Road and Tinkhamtown Hill as Achusnet Road. Primary east/west coastal trail to Sippican Harbor follows from Mattapoissett River ford as Park Street past Cushing Cemetery to Main Street along Mattapoissett Harbor and east as Pine Island-Mation Roads (Route 6) with former loop at Chapel Road (High School) and branch to Connet Point from Auccot Road (Leonard, 1907, pp.98-100). Alternate coastal trail is documented from Mattapoissett ford around interior swamps to Sippican River (Leonard, 1907, p.99), apparently preserved as portions of Park Street extension (abandoned).

B. Settlement Patterns:

One reported Contact period native site, one Woodland site north of Eel Pond. Contact period native burial ground adjacent to Hammondtown cemetery, site is in proximity of Archaic-Woodland site. Tinkham Hill and unidentified native site immediately northwest of hill likely Contact period sites, in general area inhabited by Totosin (see Rochester) prior to and during King Philip's War. Mattapoissett area has high potential for native Contact period occupation due to varied resource base and extensive coast. Excellent probability some shell heaps scattered throughout Mattapoissett coast are Contact period sites. Local history referred to exposure of probable Contact period burial from garden of little house on road to wharf (Ryder 1934: 8), probably vicinity of Mattapoissett or Marion coast.

C. Subsistence Patterns:

Seasonal hunting, fishing, collecting and horticulture. Extensive coast and several freshwater streams provide access to rich sources of fish, shellfish, water fowl and wild game. Seasonal fish and eel runs on the Mattapoissett River and Eel Pond. Wild game and floral materials (e.g., timber, shelter, eating utensils) probably sought in Towser's Swamp, the coastal swampland and that bordering the Mattapoissett River. Gentle uplands, particularly those of the interior, potential planting grounds. Available coast and sheltered harbor indicate excellent likelihood of European-Indian trade.

D. Observations:

Varied inland and coastal resources capable of supporting large native population. Mattapoissett area probably utilized by Contact period natives as warm weather occupation site (late spring, summer). Probably sought the more sheltered interior (northern Mattapoissett, Rochester, Middleboro) during cooler months. Local affiliation with major village of Nemasket (Middleboro) while Mattapoissett natives were regionally tied to the Wampanoags centered in Mt. Hope, Rhode Island. Extensive coast and sheltered harbor likely utilized by pre-1620 European explorers and fishermen frequenting the southern New England coast.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620 - 1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails improved as regional highways with main path to Middleborough from Mattapoissett River ford as Crystal Springs-North Roads and path to Sippican (Rochester) from Mattapoissett ford over interior coastal route (Park Street extension). Trail system on Mattapoissett Neck evidently relocated with Great Storm of 1635 (Ryder, 1934 p.5).

B. Population:

No population figures for native or white residents. Probably moderate native population due to virtual lack of white settlers. No more than a handful of white families, primarily livestock overseers hired by Plymouth proprietors.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Minimal change in native settlement pattern as a result of limited white population. Probably scattered white settlement throughout the area's gentle uplands, land well suited for livestock grazing and crop production.

D. Economic Base:

Native seasonal subsistence patterns relatively intact largely because of limited white encroachment on native lands. However, increased Anglo-Indian trade likely resulted in growing native reliance on trade goods as subsistence items. White settlers focused on husbandry and crop production. Likely English engaged in some commercial trapping as a supplementary source of income. Fishing, hunting and shellfish collecting were probably the settlers' primary means of food procurement.

E. Observations:

Minimal white settlement in Mattapoissett despite Plymouth proprietors' attempt to encourage establishment of a discrete community. Area's white residents lacked civic, religious and commercial facilities. These were most likely sought in Plymouth. Strong likelihood considering the distance from Plymouth that white settlement was seasonal, spend remainder of year in Plymouth.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675 - 1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Location of Mattapoissett meeting house by mid-18th century improves radial highways to Mattapoissett ford with extension of Park Street as inland road to Rochester center (now abandoned). Other period highways include connections from Tinkhamtown Hill as Long Plain and Island Roads.

B. Population:

No reported native population figures although available sources indicate presence of a small native populace throughout the late 17th century and

18th century. A number of Pigwacket (Eastern Abenaki-- Maine) were relocated in Mattapoissett in 1746 by the General Court of Massachusetts. Probably captured by English forces in northern New England during King George's War. In 1683 "Old Rochester" (included present Mattapoissett) had a white population of 60 families. First reported population figures (1758) listed Mattapoissett (2nd Precinct of Rochester) having 250 residents, 30 dying that year as a result of "putrid fever" (Leonard 1907:119).

C. Settlement Patterns

Expanding white settlement encroaching on native settlement area, particularly prevalent in Mattapoissett Harbor with 18th century development of shipping facilities. Some native coastal occupation on Connett Point, possible residence of William Connett, a late 17th century Mattapoissett native, and Mattapoissett Neck, suspected settlement location of Pigwacket Indians. Likely continued inland occupation on Towsers Neck and Tinkham Hill. King Philip's War probably had minimal impact on the white community since majority of white settlement postdated the conflict. Settlers attracted by the area's meadowlands, woodlands and extensive coastline and sheltered harbor. Earliest postwar settlement initiated c. 1680. Establishment of settlement nodes in the vicinity of Hammond (Hammondtown) and Barlow cemeteries and Pine Island Road. Additional late 17th century settlement adjacent to the mouth of the Mattapoissett River. John Hammond House c. 1700 adjacent to the junction of Fairhaven Road and the Mattapoissett River. 18th century settlement on Main Street and Mattapoissett Neck. Settlement of Scituate residents c. 1725 clustered about Wolf Island Road Village ("Macedonia"), erected its own church within community center. Late 17th century and 18th century development resulted in successful petition for establishment of 2nd Precinct of Rochester (Mattapoissett). Meetinghouse erected c. 1737 on "Zion's Hill" adjacent to Hammond Cemetery. A new structure was built on original meetinghouse foundation c. 1772, probably to accomodate expanding population.

D. Economic Base:

Serious disruption of native subsistence rounds as a result of expanding white settlement. Limited access to coastal resources. Increased native adoption of sedentary lifestyle--farming, hired labor, household servants, whaling. Many dependent on white community for basic subsistence items. Agriculture, lumbering, fishing, shipbuilding and trade were the primary pursuits of the white population. Increased emphasis on commercial crop and livestock production. Local farmers engaged in seasonal lumbering, tar and turpentine production. Commercial fishing (freshwater and offshore) probably undertaken during initial post-war settlement. Fish weir erected at junction of Mattapoissett River and Fairhaven Road c. 1700. First evidence of whaling in the 1730s, an additional part-time pursuit of some farmers. Whaling, however, not well established until the late 18th century. Pre-1700 small scale shipbuilding occurring primarily on inland sites. Formal shipbuilding facilities probably established c. 1740 near the Mattapoissett River mouth. Trade with Nantucket, Newport (R.I.), New York and Savannah, Georgia, involving exchange of local produce for rice, cotton, etc. Shipping complex developed at head of Mattapoissett Harbor in first half of 18th century. Limited industrial facilities, probably due to area's small number of streams

capable of powering these operations. Only one reported pre-1775 mill consisting of a gristmill established by Richard Church c. 1725-35 on the Mattapoissett River at the present Mattapoissett/Rochester line. Possibly two sawmills and two gristmills predating 1775 on the Mattapoissett River north of river and Fairhaven Road junction. A possible pre-1775 sawmill on stream feeding into Eel Pond (see 1794 Rochester map).

E. Architecture:

Residential: Comparatively few buildings of the Colonial period survive in Mattapoissett. Of these, the earliest date to the 1740s with no houses of the period 1675-1725 known to survive. The earliest building (Ivory Hovey House, c. 1740) known is a gambrel-roofed, center-chimney cottage. While center chimney cottages were probably the most common houseform, most of the other surviving 18th-century houses in Mattapoissett are a full two stories in height; these are few in number with examples known at the town center on Church Street and on Acushnet Road ("Old Manse", Lebaron House, 1776). These houses are simply detailed with pedimented Georgian surrounds at the entrance; the Legaron House incorporates twin interior chimneys, demonstrating that by the end of the period center-hall plans were in use at least for more substantial houses. At least one potentially early center-chimney house with a rare three-bay center-entered facade stands on Mattapoissett Neck Road.

Institutional: The first meetinghouse in Mattapoissett was built c. 1736 when the Second Parish of Rochester was established. The building was a small square structure, 25' x 25' with galleries. The meetinghouse was replaced c. 1772.

F. Observations:

Community development closely tied to agriculture and marine based activities. Economic and demographic growth facilitate settlement's establishment as a semi-autonomous precinct of Rochester. However, the community's lack of iron production facilities probably resulted in reliance on Middleboro and Rochester operations. The present town's continued low degree of development, particularly in the inland areas, suggests a high likelihood of surviving Colonial Period archaeological sites.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775 - 1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

Shift of town center to Mattapoissett Harbor by early 19th century reorients road system with North Street to Sturtevant Mill from Crystal Spring and improvement of coastal highway as Fairhaven-Marion Road (Route 6).

B. Population: Population figures not available prior to incorporation in 1857. Friends Meeting House on Marion Road near Marion Border 1827.

C. Settlement:

By 1775 residential settlement in Mattapoissett concentrated at Mattapoissett Village on the Harbor. A secondary node was in existence at the area called Pine Island (bounded by Marion, Prospect and Pine Island Roads.) Other smaller nodes at Tinkhamtown and at Hammondtown.

D. Economic Base:

Mattapoissett's development as a flourishing seaport was slower than Marion's; its harbor was more exposed and far less capacious. Nevertheless, as early as 1752 North River shipbuilders had begun building vessels in the town. Chief among them, Gideon Barstow, Sr. (1738-1826) whose arrival c. 1765 from Hanover is said to have given a new start to the shipbuilding industry, beginning the construction of larger ships than was possible in the shallower harbor at Marion. After a brief hiatus during the Embargo and the War of 1812, extensive shipbuilding began with as many as seven yards in operation at one time. Wrote one authority in 1815: "the proximity of this village to Fairhaven and New Bedford identifies it, as it were, with the maritime enterprises of those places." "Quite a number of mechanic shops, connected principally with the shipbuilding business" were built along Water Street, among them ropewalks, sail lofts, and the like. The depth of water at the wharves made the port more attractive for whalers, and both Mattapoissett and Marion had an extensive merchant and coasting trade.

With the import restrictions on West Indian salt, the town developed a large number of salt works; as late as 1837, 18 were recorded in Mattapoissett and Marion together, though the majority were located in Marion.

Mattapoissett's waterpower supplied a number of sawmills supplying ship timber in addition to grist and shingle mills.

E. Architecture:

Residential: A greater number of houses were built in and survive from the Federal period than do from the Colonial; this increase reflects the expansion of the economic base during the period. The greatest concentration of houses occurs at the town center where a grid of streets was laid out on the Harbor. Center and twin interior chimney plan cottages were built in somewhat greater number than two-story houses, but in general, the two-story houses are located along the main streets (i.e., Church and Main) with the smaller cottages built along secondary streets. With active preservation since the late 19th century when Mattapoissett became an important summer resort, most period structures have retained their original detailing; generally this consists of segmental arched door surrounds with sidelights but no fan or transom light. Secondary Federal period settlements occur at Tinkhamtown (where a center-chimney cottage with an unusual and conservative two-story porch stands) along Park Street and on Prospect Road at Pine Island Road. Although other houseforms are known, including twin rear-wall chimney houses and at least one hip-roofed, center-chimney house (on Prospect at Pine Island Road), few houses or cottages of less than the standard five-bay, double-celled plan were constructed at Mattapoissett; similarly only one double cottage was observed. That most residences of the period were of the more substantial double-celled form is an indication of the town's prosperity in the Federal period.

Institutional: The third meetinghouse of the Second Parish was built on County Street in 1816; a two-story gable-roofed structure with an octagonal domed belfry and projecting porch, the meetinghouse was converted in 1854 to the Mattapoissett Academy. Other churches of the period include the 1821 First Christian Church (42' x 32' x 14') on Church Street and the Friends' Meetinghouse on Route 6 at Aucoot Road (32' x 25' x 10'), a story-and-a-half gable-roofed building, two bays square, built in 1827. Five schools are known to have existed in Mattapoissett during the period but none are known to survive.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830 - 1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highway systems remain from early 19th century with location of coastal railroad from Wareham to Fairhaven (1854) on interior route through Mattapoissett Harbor across Eel Pond and Mattapoissett River.

B. Population:

1860 is the first year that separate population figures are available for Mattapoissett; population 1483 declines to end of period. (Population 1361 in 1870.)

C. Settlement:

Some growth of residential settlement continues at Mattapoissett Village and at Pine Island.

D. Economic Base:

Period witnessed the peak of Mattapoissett's maritime activities, made possible by the town's superior deep-water wharves. Although both Marion and Mattapoissett engaged in whaling, most whale ships appear to have come out of Mattapoissett. Peak year for the two towns was 1855 when Mattapoissett recorded 16 whalers; Marion, 2. Earlier census years record only the combined Marion/Mattapoissett figures, though these show steady growth from 9 ships in 1837 to 14 in 1845. Mattapoissett shipyards, too, excelled those of Marion. Five ships were launched in 1855 in Mattapoissett; one in Marion. Much of this construction was the "last burst of activity" as the rising price of sperm oil sent large numbers of ships after the valuable lamp fuel. Between 1851 and 1857 the three remaining yards built 33 ships for the whaling industry. This activity was brought to a sudden end by the three-fold calamity which hit the whaling and shipbuilding industry: discovery of petroleum in 1856; the Panic of 1857; and the Civil War, when Confederate cruisers harrassed New England whalers.

The second largest industry reported in 1865 after whaling (which in that year reported only two ships) was the manufacture of rope horse halters (with excess maritime cordage). Two shops produced annually \$12,000 worth. (One was operated by George Purrington, Jr., later a substantial town benefactor.)

Farms numbered 104 in 1865 while four small sawmills and a maker of cabinet furniture (compass cases and the like) rounded out Mattapoisett's economic activity.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Mattapoisett's period of prosperity continued well into the period with many well-detailed and substantial cottages and houses built at the town center and along Park, North and Marion Streets and Fairhaven and Prospect Roads. The traditional center-entered twin interior or center-chimney five-bay cottage was updated and enlarged in the period with side ells and large steeply pitched facade gables used either in pairs or singly; with ell and gables, this cottage form assumed status as ambitious middle-class housing while other smaller and more modestly detailed cottages were developed at the lesser end of the scale. Substantial houses for the period are concentrated at the town center and on North Avenue with more modest housing to the east on Aucoot Road and along Fairhaven Road/County Street (Route 6). Most of the smaller cottages are broad-gabled Greek Revival cottages with three-bay, center-entered facades on an end-gable orientation. The sidehall plan was not widely adopted until relatively late in the period; a few more substantial two-story Greek Revival sidehall houses are known at the town center but most sidehall plan structures are later Greek Revival/Italianate two-story houses, sidehall cottages being somewhat less common than usual for the period. By the end of the period as well kneewall construction was in use to provide additional space in artisanal/workers housing.

Institutional: In 1842, a new Congregational Church was constructed. Designed by local architect/builder Solomon K. Eaton, the church is a two-story Greek Revival structure with a Doric portico in antis and a two-stage square belfry with peaked parapet and acroteria. In 1854, the old Congregational church was converted to use as the Mattapoisett Academy and updated with Romanesque Revival detailing. Also funded were a Universalist church (1838) and an Adventist church (1841).

Commercial: Several story-and-a-half Greek Revival/Italianate shops were built in the town center during the period; these have gable-roofs and three-bay facades with center entrances. Also known is a one story-and-a-half Greek Revival carvers' shop with some carved interior detail intact as well as several shipyard shops of similar configuration. The Mattapoisett Inn, a two-and-a-half story gable-roofed Greek Revival hotel with an eight-bay facade, was also built during the period, c. 1850.

Industrial: The most significant and best-preserved industrial structure of the period is the Ned's Point Light (1835), a round lighthouse with an octagonal lamp encircled by an iron balustrade.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870 - 1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Continued improvement of coastal corridor between New Bedford and Cape Cod with trolley route through Mattapoisett center on Fairhaven-Main-Church Streets to Marion Road (Route 6).

B. Population:

Population decline noted in previous period continues to the turn of the century, then increases to the end of the period. Foreign born population of 50 in 1885 increases to 226 in 1915. Portuguese population grows from 20% of foreign born total in 1885 to 68% of foreign born total in 1915.

C. Settlement:

Summer resort development along waterfront of Mattapoisett Village by beginning of the period. Some summer development at Antassawamock, Crescent Beach, Brant Island and along Beacon Street to Ned Point Light.

D. Economic Base:

Mattapoisett's last shipyard closed in 1878. In an effort to attract new industry, Mattapoisett business men subscribed to the construction of a factory building. The only long-term tenant appears to have been a manufacturer of peanut roasting devices. Lumber products dominated much of the town's manufacturing: a large box factory was built near the railroad depot (\$20,000 worth of boxes and kegs annually), and A. M. Dexter manufactured sawmill machinery in a machine shop on the Fairhaven Road. Five sawmills produced over \$10,000 worth of lumber in 1875.

During the 1870s, however, Mattapoisett began to attract summer residents in increasing numbers, with an accompanying increase in town valuation. Farm land complemented the summer prosperity of the seacoast--a complexion that has little changed since.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Little construction occurred in the 1870s with some houses built in the 1880s and an increasing number constructed in the 1890s and after 1900. In more desirable locations along the Harbor and especially at the town center along Beacon Street to Ned's Point and out Mattapoisett Neck to Shell Beach and Antassawamock, substantial summer houses were built in the Colonial Revival and Shingle Styles. Resort development also occurred at Crescent and Harbor Beaches where smaller vernacular Colonial Revival cottages were built while in the town center along North Street and Route 6 modest Craftsman and Colonial Revival cottages and houses were constructed for year-round use. Many substantial summer houses incorporate cobblestone masonry and Craftsman details; gambrel roofs are common. Resort development at Crescent and Harbor Beaches consists of smaller one-and-a-half story shingled vernacular Queen Anne and Colonial Revival cottages with verandas and modest turned wood details; most of these have either sidehall or cross-gabled L-plans. Year-round cottages along Route 6 and North Street were built in the Colonial Revival or Craftsman styles; while some are substantial houses, particularly those on North Street, most period structures are simple cottages with verandas and hip or gable-roofs with overhanging eaves and exposed rafters in the Craftsman manner. Some very small cottages, apparently only one room wide, were built in the period, along Brant Island and Aucoot Roads.

Institutional: The Tinkhamtown Chapel, a one-story, gable-roofed vernacular Queen Anne structure with patterned shingles and a projecting porch, was built in 1889. Other institutional buildings include the Town Hall (c. 1895) on Main Street, a two-and-a-half story hip-roofed Queen Anne building with turrets and patterned shingles, a story-and-a-half shingled bellcote chapel (c. 1885) on Beacon Street, and the Mattapoisett School (1898), a hip-roofed two-and-a-half story brick building with steep cross gables and elaborate Tudor Revival trim.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915 - 1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Abandonment of streetcar line and improvement of coastal corridor as Route 6 auto highway to Cape Cod with bypass around Mattapoisett Center during 1930s.

B. Population:

Population increases to 1915, post World War I drop in population alleviated by 1925 then continuous growth to end of period. Steady growth through World War II and during post war period.

C. Settlement:

Residential settlement represented primarily as infill along existing roads and at existing nodes.

D. Economic Base:

Continued development of Mattapoisett as a summer resort community. Most sawmills cease operation, though farming remains major occupation of interior sections. Only identified new industry, Charles S. Mendell's electrical parts factory, a business which moved from New Bedford in 1917. In Taunton and New Bedford the firm had pioneered in the manufacture of jack knife switches.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Resort development continued at Crescent and Harbor Beaches with new development at Holly Woods and Brant Island. This construction along with limited residential construction along Route 6 consists of small Colonial Revival bungalows and cottages. More substantial construction is limited to a few Colonial Revival and Dutch Colonial houses and bungalows at the town center and on North Street.

Commercial: The most significant construction of the period is the commercial building along Route 6. The auto-related commercial buildings of the town include several period gas stations, an arched reinforced concrete bowling alley (c. 1938) and remnants of at least one motor court, along with several simple vernacular roadhouse/restaurants as well as the pantiled, pagoda-roofed Cathay Restaurant.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Existing survey for Mattapoisett concentrates on Colonial and Federal period resources with little information on or documentation of extensive Early Industrial construction or later 19th century resort development. Stylistic interpretation is often misinformed or poorly comprehended. While architecturally and historically significant areas are indicated on the base map, there is no accompanying documentation. In addition to areas identified in existing survey, potential districts exist at intersection of Prospect and Pine Island Roads and at Acushnet and Crystal Springs Roads.

Industrial: Mattapoisett retains little evidence of the shipbuilding and whaling industries which dominated her 19th century economy. Both Ned's Point Light, the stone 1837-38 lighthouse, and the 1832 Block Shop at 15 Water Street have been identified by the town's inventory. Both should be considered National Register eligible, the latter possibly as part of a waterfront district including the stone wharves and Shipyard Park.

Unidentified resources include the "Arch Bridge, formerly Wing's Bridge" over the Mattapoisett River at the site of the town mills, very possibly 18th century in date; and the Fairhaven Water Works, a few hundred feet downstream. At Tubmill Brook on the Fairhaven Road, a local realtor has recently undertaken an imaginative reconstruction of the stone foundations and sluiceway of the Dexter/Barnard sawmill. The "Mattapoisett Sawmill" on Crystal Springs Road, possibly from c. 1900 is an unusual example still in operation. Sites of the town's other saw and shingle mills should be identified for archaeological potential.

Developmental Pressures: Most obvious commercial expansion evident along Route 6 bypass from Interstate 195 junction (North Street), although Mattapoisett Center retains conscious historic quality along harborfront. Coastal necks are intensively developed as suburban districts and could suffer serious damage from tropical hurricanes.

XII. SOURCES

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