

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

NAHANT

Report Date: 1985

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.

The activity that is the subject of the MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior. This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility as described above, or if you desire further information please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20240.



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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: 1985

Community: Nahant

I. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Nahant is a resort town of rocky coasts and low-lying terrain in southernmost Essex County. Consistent with other coastal Essex towns, in Nahant can be found Woodland, and likely Contact period sites of native activity, although none of the latter have been discovered to date. Early use as common lands for pasturage, before mid-century fishing, farming and woodcutting had become important activities. Scattered European settlement not until the late 17th century, settlement focused in the middle third of the peninsula along Nahant road in the vicinity of Wharf Street.

Recognized as a potential recreational area by 1800, thereafter improvements began to quicken in pace. By the 1820s there were both steamboat and stage connections to Boston. Wharves and sea walls were erected, particularly at Nipper Stage (Wharf Street) at the center of the peninsula's fishing activities, and at East Point, the early focus of the resort industry. Residents had taken in boarders since ca. 1800. The scenic eastern third of the peninsula attracted the construction of several hotel/boarder house establishments by 1830. Small scale agricultural, and manufacturing activities continued throughout the Federal decades.

By 1840, Nahant was already the celebrated summer resort of elite Bostonians, and the first of such seasonal hideaways to emerge on Boston's north shore. After incorporation in 1853, a flurry of municipal improvements followed, both the town's institutional and transportation facilities forced to respond to the area's escalating demands for building space and services. The eastern peninsula continued to serve as the focus of the town's ever-elite resort industry, by the 1860s the preeminent attractions having emerged at Bass Point (the Relay House), North Springs (Maolis Garden) and East Point (the Nahant Hotel). A shanty/tent community developed in the Bass Point vicinity, the newly opened western peninsula now attracting Boston's working class en masse. But the mid-century was the heyday of Nahant as a hotel colony. By the 3rd quarter of the 19th century, cottages began to grow in popularity, and many of the large attractions to succumb to either fire or declining business.

By the Late Industrial decades, Nahant entered a period of frenzied growth. A flurry of institutional building commenced, the chief civic axis having stabilized on central Nahant Road. Additional cross streets were opened and tiny lots opened for building. By 1903, summer visitors daily were disgorged by the thousands from steamer, barge, trolley and soon automobile. In the west, Bass Point emerged as the working class attraction, a giant midway of everything from vaudeville acts and barrooms to hotels. The elite continued to cluster on spacious lots in fine dwellings on the scenic eastern peninsula. Middle class cottage construction filled-in every available interstice between the

civic and commercial core on Nahant Road and the elite fringe along the eastern coast. The resort industry sustained the town, both manufactories and agriculture having declined in importance.

After a 1925 fire at Bass Point, and the roughly contemporaneous demise of steamer and trolley service, again the town underwent a period of change. From the hordes of day visitors attracted by the Bass Point Midway, now exclusiveness (via cottage rental or ownership) became the rule. Bass Point reverted to an area of elite residential construction (now it hosts a modern condo community). Cottage construction continued, but with space increasingly tight, the traditional means for acquiring Nahant property became one of inheritance. Its clannish zeal for privacy took hold until now it has become virtually a part and parcel of the peninsula's cultural lore. Nearly exclusively a residential area at present, the town's historic fabric is threatened by residential owners themselves, who subdivide lots smaller and smaller, and endlessly "improve" their dwellings by additions and renovations.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Originally a part of seventeenth century Lynn and by the 19th century, one of its wards, Nahant finally won incorporation as an independent town in 1853.

III. TOPOGRAPHY

The town of Nahant is the southernmost town in Essex County, Massachusetts. Physiographically, the town lies within the New England Seaboard Lowland, a relatively smooth coastal strip of land with some hills usually below the 400 and 500 foot contours. In Nahant, several hills are present from which land surfaces slope downward to the sea in every direction. Hilly areas include Little Nahant, Greater Nahant, north of Dorothy Cove, the Bailey's Hill area, and east of Black Rock Point. In general, these areas slope from 75 to 100 feet down to sea level. Nahant is separated from the mainland by Lynn Beach, a sandy isthmus which has historically been built up to support Nahant Road.

Bedrock deposits in the Nahant area are primarily characterized by igneous deposits though some sedimentary formations are also present. These deposits are visible ledge outcrops throughout much of the town's coastline. Igneous gabbro at Nahant is the dominant bedrock throughout most of the town. Bedrock deposits are unknown in the area around Lynn Beach. Worcester phyllite, a sedimentary formation of Graphitic phyllite and slate is present in the area where Little and Greater Nahant meet and in the vicinity of East Point.

Nahant's soil associations are divided into four groups, two of which exhibit disturbance due to urban development with the remainder exhibiting signs of Late Pleistocene glaciation. Most of the area around Nahant Road north of Little Nahant is characterized by the urban land-Udorthents association, altered or obscured by urban development and found in areas where soil

material has been excavated or deposited. Soils in Little Nahant, the area east of Nahant Harbor, marshlands in the central portion of town and the southeastern tip of Nahant belong to the Chatfield-Hollis-Rock outcrop association. These soils occur in deep deposits and gently sloping to moderately steep areas. They are generally well drained loamy soils formed in glacial till containing areas of exposed bedrock. Soils belonging to the Merimac-Hinckly-Urban land association are present in the area north of Nahant Harbor. These soils occur in deep deposits and nearly level to steep areas. They are excessively drained loamy and sandy soils formed in outwash deposits and in areas where natural soils have been obscured by urban development. Soils of the Paxton-Montank-Urban land association are the fourth type present on Nahant. They are found in the area east of Nahant Harbor to a line between Bass Rock and Saunders Ledge. Soils in the association are found in deep deposits and nearly level to steep areas. They are well drained loamy soils formed in glacial till and areas where natural soils have been altered by urban development.

Major drainage in Nahant is characterized primarily by subsurface patterns throughout the town. Several springs historically existed throughout the area. Surface run-off and marsh land drainage is also present in the area north and east of Nahant Harbor. Several areas around Nahant's coastline offer potential harbor locations though Nahant Harbor is the largest and presents the most protection from northerly and easterly winds.

At European contact, most of Nahant was forested with little undergrowth. Some grassy areas were also present. The original forest growth in Nahant and in Essex County in general included a mixture of mostly oak and pine as well as chestnut, poplar, maple, birch and some other hardwoods and conifers. Second growth patterns characterizes most of the town today where vegetation exists including oak, maple, pine and probably chestnut. Marsh vegetation is also present.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500-1620)

A. Transportation Routes

Native American transportation routes in the Nahant area likely emphasized water travel along the coast in Nahant Bay, Nahant Harbor, Lynn Harbor and Broad Sound. Water travel may have at times been the only means of reaching Nahant as the Long Beach (Lynn Beach) area was underwater at high tide. Land trails were also probably present in the vicinity of Nahant Road (at low tides) and around the periphery of Little and Great Nahant. Inland trails also likely existed.

B. Population

Nahant was inhabited by members of the Pawtucket group (often called Penacock) who inhabited the coast from the north side of Massachusetts Bay in the Lynn/Saugus/Salem (includes Nahant) area to York Village, Maine. Locally this group is commonly referred

to as the Naumkeags who may have been a subtribe of the Massachusetts but seemed to be under the leadership of the Penacooks. Most seventeenth century colonists considered the Pawtucket and Massachusetts Indians closely related but separate entities. Both Swanton (1952) and Speck (1928) included Pawtucket Indians in the area among the Massachusetts. Gookin (1792) lists ca. 3,000 men belonging to the Pawtucket group prior to the 1617-19 epidemics, while Mooney (1928) lists 2,000 men belonging to the Penacook group (probably Pawtucket), as many as 12,000 natives, probably exaggerated. During the same period, both Gookin and Mooney list ca. 3,000 men belonging to the Massachusetts while probably included some Pawtuckets. The Native American population in the Nahant area may have numbered in the vicinity of 50 to 100 individuals during much of this period. Following the epidemics, fewer than 50 individuals, if any, remained in the Salem area.

C. Settlement Pattern

Few Woodland and no Contact period sites are currently known for the Nahant area. However, sources such as environmental variables, later 17th century documentary sources, known Contact period sites in other towns, and contemporary secondary sources indicate Contact period sites should be found. Known Contact period sites are present to the south in Revere and to the northeast in Marblehead, Salem, and Ipswich. Secondary sources note Native American in nearly every town in the area along the Coast. Nanapashamet who ruled the native community in this area of Essex County in the early 17th century reportedly had a summer house in Lynn on Sagamore Hill, the hill nearest Nahant. Wenepoykin, often called Sagamore George and son of Nanapashamet, is said to have married Shawayet - daughter of Poquamum, Sachem of Nahant. Nahant was probably important to Native Americans during the spring through fall months when the area provided good fishing locations and freshwater springs were also available. Several well drained areas around the town may have provided good site locations. Habitation and village type sites may have been present as well as special purpose sites, such as fishing sites, quarries and burials.

D. Subsistence Pattern

Native Americans in the Nahant area subsisted on a variety of seasonally determined activities, including hunting, fishing, the collecting of wild plants and shellfish, and horticulture. Hunting was a major activity focusing on larger mammals such as deer and smaller furbearers. Sea mammals such as seals and drift whales may have been available on the coast upland game birds and ducks were also hunted. A variety of marine species of fish would have been available in coastal and offshore areas. Several species of terrestrial as well as fresh and salt water plants in the Nahant area provided a valuable food resource. Nahant Bay, Nahant Harbor and other points along the coastline presently contain several species of shellfish which may have been available during the Contact period. Domesticated plants such as corn, beans, pumpkins, squashes and tobacco were also important. The

locations of native fields are currently unknown, however, they were likely located along the coast or near wetland areas.

V. PLANTATION PERIOD (1620-1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Water travel along the coast remained the fastest and at times the most convenient mode of transportation between fishing and pasture areas in Nahant and mainland areas such as Lynn, Salem/Marblehead and greater Boston. Nahant Harbor provided safe anchorage for most smaller class vessels. Lynn Beach, previously known as Long Beach, became a graveyard for wrecked Colonial vessels as early as 1635. The easterly exposure of this area makes it a poor harbor area throughout the Plantation period. Few European routes developed as the area was used for pasturage and little European settlement was present. Land travel to Nahant followed the general course of Nahant Road which was then merely a sandy beach area often innundated at high water.

B. Population:

No more then four or five Colonial families plus some fishermen likely lived in Nahant throughout this period and most of these inhabitants were not permanent settlers. Two or three herdsmen plus their families lived in the area guarding cattle, sheep and goats for Lynn residents. Fishermen were also likely present though little is known about them. Native Americans had apparently abandoned the area by this time.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Native Americans were not living on Nahant by this time. Following the settlement of Lynn (ca. 1630), Nahant was designated as common lands to be used primarily for pasturage. Huts were probably built for two or three herdsmen and their families during this period though they were not permanent. By 1635 the intent to keep Nahant for pasturage was waived due to importance of fishing. Nine men were given permission to plant and build on Nahant for the purpose of promoting the fishery. All lands granted to these individuals would be forfeited if they did not further the fishery. Little additional information exists regarding these early fishing grants. Two or three other families also lived on Nahant during this period, probably purchasing land rights from natives of simply settling on unoccupied land. Several early inhabitants claimed title to Nahant lands throughout this period. Each title was based on the sale of the same land to Colonials by Sagamore George. Thomas Dexter originally purchased Nahant from the natives claiming title to the entire town. The town of Lynn whose settlers claimed Nahant by their right of being the first settlers in the area. A third class based their claims on their being the first to settle there. These individuals refused to pay rents to the town of Lynn or the Dexter family. Disputed land claims to Nahant persisted throughout this period. This vote appears to have done little more than further disputed land claims. By 1657 Nahant was laid out in planting lots of

equal shares for all residents of Lynn. All lots were to be cleared of wood in six years which accelerated the town's deforestation. The town of Lynn further ruled that no person should raise any kind of building at all in the area (Wilson 1928:24).

D. Economic Base:

Nahant was used primarily for pasturage throughout this period. Sheep, goats, cattle and swine were kept in the town by Lynn residents who hired herdsmen to guard their stock. Oxen and fowl were also present. English hay may have been planted during this period. As land was cleared for pasturage woodcutting also grew in importance, with most exported to Lynn and possibly Salem. Small boat fishing also developed early in this period, probably before 1640. Limited farming probably developed by fishermen who were given the right to plant on the commons. Indian corn was probably the major crop along with some wheat, barley and rye when possible.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675-1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Most native trails had likely been upgraded to horsepaths and cartways by this time. The main transportation route out of town to the mainland, often called the road to Lynn, was a long beach which at high tide was merely a sandy strip of sand. Travel was better along this route at half tide when harder sands were exposed in three intertidal zones. The 1706 Lynn town committee report to divide the town's common lands indicates some roads, probably cartways, were in existence prior to the date. These roads probably included the present main road from Little Nahant to greater Nahant, the road to Bass Neck as well as portions of Glass Road, Castle Road, Spring Road (Calf Spring Road) and Willow Road. As Lynn divided its commons Nahant was divided into ranges with strips of land between the ranges called range roads. The range roads ran northeast by southwest across Nahant Road. The roads were originally designed to be one rod wide though some were eventually widened. Some range roads on Nahant included Little Nahant road, Pond Street, Flash Road, Bay View Ave, Swallows Cave Road, Cliff Street, Pleasant Street, Summer Street, Winter Street, Range Road, Ocean Street, High Street, Old Willows Road, and Trimountain Road.

B. Population:

Nahant's Colonial period changed little over the Plantation period. In fact, by 1717 Lewis and Wilson (1928: 40) note that Nahant was without inhabitants. This observation appears unlikely since unauthorized persons or squatters and fishermen always seemed to be in the town. Possibly 20 individuals including the Hoods, Breed and Johnsons, lived on Nahant later in the period, having purchased rights to the range lots after the 1706 division.

C. Settlement:

By ca. 1676 Lynn had established title to Nahant lands through the General Court. The Dexter family's claim to Nahant was overridden with the town of Lynn established as the sole title holder. This, however, did not end land disputes in the town. In 1686 Lynn supported its claim to Nahant by securing a quit claim deed from the natives. However, the following year (1687) Edward Randolph's request for a grant from Governor Andros for Nahant was denied. Much of Lynn had already been deforested and Nahant was used primarily for pasturage and woodcutting. Lynn divided its common lands in 1706, and Nahant was divided into 208 lots (divided amongst the townspeople of Lynn), between 1/4 and eight acres. The lots were organized into strips or ranges in three areas. Great Nahant was divided into 11 ranges, each 40 rods wide with a one rod road between them. The ranges at Bass Point divided into ranges running east and west. Following the division individuals purchased several of the smaller lots. By the mid 17th century the Hoods and Breeds owned nearly all the land in the first four ranges. Much of the early settlement of Nahant was reported around the vicinity of Union and Chestnut Streets (Wilson 1928: 17). By 1770 only three houses are reported in the town, probably those of the Breed, Hood and Johnson families.

D. Economic Base:

Nahant's economic base changed little during the Colonial period. Most of the town was still used for grazing though both farming and fishing became more important as permanent settlers may have been both farmers and fishermen on a seasonal basis.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775-1830)

A. Transportation Routes:

With the town's growing popularity as a recreational area (since 1800), Nahant's transportation linkage to Lynn and the Boston/Salem vicinities saw rapid improvement. With few roads in 1795, by 1830 the Nahant Road had been opened from Lynn to the Island's easternmost extent at the Nahant Hotel (1823). Opened as well were Cliff Street and eastern Willow Road, Summer Street north to the school house, and Castle along the western peninsula as far as Flash Road. In the 1820s, the first line of public transportation (likely a simple chaise) began between Lynn and Nahant. By 1826, a stage from the Nahant Hotel connected twice daily with coaches travelling between Boston and Salem (via the Salem turnpike since 1803). With Long Beach still subject to tidal flooding, the stages' schedules changed weekly, forced to correspond to the tides. The situation was partially remedied in 1824 when a plank wall was constructed half the length of Long Beach, extending outward from the Lynn Shore.

Steamboat service, the first of any kind from Boston, began its runs to Nahant in 1817, with daily service commencing the following year. The town's wharves were the focus of its earliest

improvements. At Nipper Stage Ledge, the mooring point of the town's fishing fleet, a landing was erected in 1817. At that time a concrete sea wall was erected along Valley and Willow road at the Tudor Hotel. The Nipper Stage Wharf (at the foot of Wharf Street) served as the steamboat landing until the opening of the Nahant Hotel in 1823, which erected its own wharf at the end of Swallow Cave Road. Steamboat service than promptly shifted to the Nahant Hotel Wharf.

B. Population:

Little information is available for the town prior to incorporation. In 1800 only three families were in residence here, but by 1825 had grown to 75. Summer visitors were already staying as boarders, a hotel was in operation, and in 1821 Thomas H. Perkins and William Paines purchase of property here lay the groundwork for development as a resort for wealthy Bostonians. The town was a popular spot for viewing the sea serpent said to frequent the areas, with furor peaking in 1819. That same year a library was established, housed in the schoolhouse.

C. Settlement Pattern:

Nahant's residents were already taking in boarders prior to 1800 and the town claimed its first hotel (at Bass Point) by 1803. By 1800, the peninsula held less than a half dozen houses and only the crudest of roads. With the realization of the town's recreational potential, the scramble for land ownership began, and improvements rapidly followed. Nahant residents gained their own post office (1812), stone schoolhouse and the third oldest public library in the state (both 1819). With the erection of the large Nahant hotel at East Point in 1823, traffic to the peninsula increased in volume. Several of the town's major roads were then laid out, and additional hotels and boarding houses opened (including the Nahant House, River Tavern and the Old Castel).

Lots were early divided and sold to summer residents on the eastern third of the peninsula, and it was there that the hotels and boarding houses were attracted. The middle third of the town was the territory of the original settlers, and the area of primary civic and institutional development (at this time, the vicinity of Nahant Road from Summer Street to Pleasant). So focused were settlement activities toward there eastern peninsula that by 1830, there were only two buildings of any kind west of Summer Street. The western third of the peninsula was still largely swampy and inaccessible by roadway.

Manufactories were few. Fishing remained the town's primary industry (concentrated at Nipper Stage Point) supplemented by the several shoe shops scattered through the town. The peninsula was valued as pasturage, and after the initial settlement efforts, grazing continued in the northern and western town. Little Nahant was a yet settled and inaccessible by road.

D. Economic Base:

Only a few people inhabited Nahant year-round during this period and they were probably engaged in small-scale farming, fishing and shoe-making. Farmers probably grew grains and vegetables and raised livestock. Fishermen concentrated their efforts on the bay fisheries and in the winter months may have made shoes in ten-footers. During the final years of the period, however, significant tourism from Boston began.

E. Architecture:

Residential: The town's earliest surviving dwellings date from this period. Best known are the homes associated with the Bostonian vacationers. The earliest of these were 1 & 1/2 stories in height with gable fronts and center entries and surrounded on all sides by piazzas. At least four of these survive with fieldstone primary floors including the Nahant Country Club (built as a home for Frederick Tudor in 1825), and the later altered Asa Samuel Hammond House (n.d.), the Amos Lawrence house (1832), and an exceptionally well preserved example on Swallow Cave Road. The area from this road to Cliff Street was the earliest developed in 1824 by architect and planner Cornelius Coolidge, who constructed five houses before suffering bankruptcy. Particularly significant is the house built in 1828 by an ancestor of Henry Cabot Lodge to imitate West Indies forms, a 2 & 1/2 story brick structure under an overhanging hip roof supported by two story piazzas, and stuccoed and scored to imitate stone. The Samuel Elliot house is a three-bay, gable-front of 2 & 1/2 stories with a Colossal Doric portico. Less well known are the smaller houses built during the later years along Nahant Road. The best studied example is an 1819 house of 2 & 1/2 stories and eight bays with entries into the third, fifth, and sixth bays. Other 1 & 1/2 story houses, as well as single pile and L-plan houses of 2 & 1/2 stories, may date to this period.

Institutional: Town students attended classes in a home until 1812 when a shoemakers shop was converted to serve as a schoolhouse. In 1819 a substantial structure replaced it, built from pasture stone, measuring 25 feet square under a hip roof with a center entry, window on either side, and one on each wall; this served for all community meetings.

Commercial: Thomas Handyside Perkins decisions to build a hotel here in 1823 determined the future dominance of tourism here. The Nahant Hotel at East Point was originally a 3 & 1/2 story structure with complex roof with wide overhang covering multi-leveled verandas, and surrounded by a complex of outbuildings including a bowling alley. It was later greatly expanded laterally to over 30 bays in width; it burned in 1861. Smaller inns preceeded this mainstay, the original attractions of Bostonian vacationers. The "Old Castle" was perhaps the earliest, a large 2 & 1/2 story, nine bay structure under ship roof with center and side entry. The Whitney House followed but its appearance is unknown, as is the Hood House, and Coolidge's Nahant House.

Industrial: Small shoe shops were the only industrial buildings constructed during the period; there are no known survivals.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830-1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Existing roads continued in use and were improved. At mid century and after incorporation (1853), several roads were laid out, including the road across Long Beach (1847), Pleasant Street from Nahant Road to Beach (1854), the Marginal Road (the 1850s), Willow Road from Summer to Cliff, and Wharf Street from Summer to Nipper Stage (1861). In addition, Willow Road was opened from Summer to Valley Street, Valley from Willow to Spring Street, plus the road around East Pond (1866).

The Nahant isthmus continued to attract attention. Although Long Beach was surveyed by the Federal Government in 1837, no funds were appropriated for its improvement. In 1841, 300 cedar posts were planted, in 1842 another 1000, and more were added in subsequent years. After the bad storm of 1851, a line of cedar posts was set along the ridge and reinforced with stone, sand, and sea debris (this surrogate sea wall strengthening the earlier plank breakwater). A binding Bermuda grass was imported from Holland (and its dykes) and planted along the isthmus before period's end. In 1864, a seawall was erected from Little Nahant.

With the town increasing in celebrity as a recreational resort, public transportation facilities increased rapidly. In 1864, the large Central wharf was erected (near the old Nipper Stage Wharf). From that time onward, it replaced the wharf of the Nahant Hotel (at Swallow Cave) as the town's steamboat landing. Regular steamboat service continued between Boston and Nahant throughout the period. In addition, the Eastern Railroad opened between Boston and Salem (via Lynn) in 1838. By mid-century the town had devised its own solution for conveying disembarking vacationers from the Lynn station over to the peninsula - the Nahant Barge. Side-seated vehicles holding 25- 30 people and drawn by three to four horses. In season the barges ran every half hour. A street railway was proposed in 1845, but the town rejected it (and the uncontrollable hordes of visitors they undoubtedly thought would follow).

The Egg Rock Lighthouse was erected in 1856, and Minot's Light, in 1850. The latter was destroyed by storm in 1851, and a new light (of granite) not erected until 1860.

B. Population:

The town's year-round population increased with popularity as a resort. Still, few figures are available, but in 1847 the town included 197 residents in 33 families dominated by the Johnsons. State census figures include 270 individuals in 1855, expanding to 313 in 1865. The foreign-born population grew from 15.2% to 19.2% during the same period, and was dominated by the Irish. In 1848 the summer population numbered 23 families. The area's first

church was built in 1832 on Cliff Street, at Union Church. A second religious institution was formed in 1851, and after considering Episcopalianism chose Methodism.

C. Settlement:

By 1840 already celebrated as the summer resort of Boston's elite, Nahant entered a period of unparalleled growth. By mid-century a population of 300 lived permanently in Nahant, in nearly 70 dwellings. By incorporation in 1853, the town claimed two churches, Union (1832), for the summer population and Methodist (1851), a second school (1832), a grocery store with post office (by 1847), and an unprecedented four public houses and ten boarding houses, attesting to the rising tide of summer visitors. Before period's end the Nahant Chapel had been replaced with a new structure (1869), a town hall erected on Pleasant Street at the granite school (1858), and a cemetery established. The bulk of improvements, however, were directed to optimizing the town's recreational potential, regattas began to be held (1845), the Nahant Hotel was enlarged into one of the most massive complexes on the Atlantic Coast, 1853), the Maolis Gardens (at the North Springs) were opened (1859), the soon celebrated Relay House at Bass Point (1861), and several additional hotels, opened.

Although known chiefly as a hotel colony, after mid-century in fact, there began a noticeable shift in emphasis from hotel life to that of the summer cottage. The Nahant Hotel and Nahant House both were destroyed by fire in 1861, their demise effectively signalling the end of the hotel era for the town. The Nahant Hotel at the northeast end of Long Beach (at Lynn) was closed late in the century and its assorted bathing houses, restaurants and sheds removed. Increasing numbers of lots were now being sold and/or subdivided for building. Dwellings were erected, still in the eastern two thirds of the peninsula, south of Nahant Road along Ocean and especially Summer Streets and scattered to the north between High Street and Pleasant. Already at Bass Point by the 1840s was a summertime sea of tents, shanties and now scattered cottages, as the newly opened area attracted throngs of Boston's working class. By the late 1860s, an amusement park was in operation on the sea side of Long Beach near the Lynn line. The site of the Hotel Nahant, the area was replete with bathing houses, sheds, restaurants and a yacht yard opposite. A few elite residences were built in the prestigious vicinity of the new town hall on Pleasant, but the overwhelming majority arose from Cliff Street east toward East Point.

D. Economic Base:

Farming, fishing and shoe-making were the principal activities of Nahant's residents. The small number of farmers grew hay, corn, barley, potatoes, and vegetables (likely cabbage, squash, turnips and beets). In 1865 there were three farms of 225 acres, employing ten men. Of these, 130 acres (57.7%) were cultivated, 49 acres with English and salt hay, six acres with corn and barley, five acres with potatoes and the remainder with vegetables and fruit trees. Small numbers of swine, milk cows and horses

grazed on the town's pasture land. Nahant's fishermen primarily served the local market with cod, mackerel, haddock and halibut, as well as lobster after 1858. In 1855 there were four small vessels employing thirty men in catching \$10,000 worth of cod and mackerel. Upon the introduction of trawl fishing ca. 1860 bay fishing was practically abandoned at Nahant. In 1865 there were only two small vessels employing twelve men and the catch of cod and mackerel had fallen by 80%. Another twenty men caught 150,000 lobsters. A few people built vessels in Nahant, the first of which, a schooner, was launched in 1858. Many fishermen and their families made shoes on consignment from Lynn shoe manufacturers. However, upon the introduction of the factory system in Lynn this activity declined in importance. The only other manufacturing activity was house building. In 1865 one master builder and seven employees made buildings worth \$12,000. Some of these structures were constructed for the developing summer resort industry in Nahant.

E. Architecture:

Residential: During the early years of the period houses in a variety of forms were constructed with Greek Revival ornament. Larger, 2 & 1/2 story examples include three and five bay, center entry examples with gable roofs, and both interior and end wall chimneys; a single example employs a hip roof. More uniform in design were the gable front, side entry houses appearing in both 1 & 1/2 and 2 & 1/2 story examples. By mid century builders overwhelmingly preferred the Second Empire style; most common were large, center entry, three story form, followed by the smaller, two story, side entry variation. The number of dwellings grew from 69 in 1853 to 107 in 1861.

Institutional: The construction of institutional buildings increased with the rise in year-round and summer populations. In 1832 the community's first church was constructed in frame on Cliff Street, described as Tuscan; it was expanded in 1842 and damaged in a gale in 1862. Six years later a new structure replaced this, built of stone, brick and frame from a High Victorian Gothic design by Ware and Van Brunt; the gable front structure has a covered entry, tower, and transepts. A second religious institution, known as the Village or Independant Methodist Church, was built on Nahant Street in 1851; now the YMCA, the altered structure is a gable front form with mansard roofed entry tower and ornamental shingle wallcover. The stone school was replaced by a frame structure of 2 & 1/2 stories with three bay width and a paired entry porch in the center, a cupola, "modern ventilation", and Italianate ornament. The Town Hall of 1868 was a frame, 2 & 1/2 story, gable front structure but little more information is available. An engine house of unknown appearance was constructed in 1853.

Commercial: Hotel and recreational structures remained the dominant business-related buildings. New construction of hotels shifted to the southeast coast and included the Relay House (1862), and the Bass Mountain House (1864). The former was a 2 & 1/2 story, four bay, gable front block with porch on a long rear

ell. The town's store at this time was housed in a three story mansard structure with a three bay, side entry facade.

Industrial: Small shoe shops were constructed during the period. There are no known survivals.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870-1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

By 1870, Nahant's principal cross streets (High, Pond, Ocean, Winter and Summer streets) had all been opened, as well as numerous small side streets. Willow Street now extended westward to Castle road, a coastal route now encircling the peninsula for the first time. In 1875 the Long Beach Road was laid out and lined with posts. In 1892, a wharf was erected at Bass Point, now the most popular resort area on the peninsula. The Egg Rock Light was erected, 1905. In 1894, the Minot's Light was altered. Proposals of the Lynn and Boston Horse Railroad Company were rejected by the town in 1885, 1886 and 1887. An electric street railway was finally approved in 1903, and the Nahant Street Railway was organized, the peninsula now linked with the vast network of North Shore trolley lines at Lynn. Service by the town's barges ended soon thereafter. In 1900, the Metropolitan Parks Commission took over the Beach and all buildings were promptly removed from the Lynn end of the Beach, including old boat yards there.

B. Population:

Nahant's total population increased from 475 in 1870 to 1387 in 1915, a 192% jump for the period. Throughout the period the foreign-born population represented a large portion of the whole. In 1875, 27.7% were immigrants and Italians and Swedes joined the Irish, English and Canadians. In 1872 Roman Catholics established a church. In 1902 the Catholic Community was set apart as a separate parish. In 1876 a high school was established. In 1880 the school system was re-graded when a new primary school was established and the three lower schools were brought into correlation with the high school. In 1914, Nahant High School was closed, changed to a junior high, and students completed the high school years in Lynn. That same year a P.T.A. was established in Nahant. In 1876 a YMCA was established. The Nahant Dory Club was established in 1894.

C. Settlement Pattern:

The era of skyrocketing growth continued. Institutional building accelerated, attempting to accommodate the town's growing resident population. The civic and residential core expanded from its earlier Summer/Pleasant Street niche on Nahant Road to by 1945 span the peninsula along Nahant Road from Spring to Cliff Street. Added to the municipal fabric for this corridor were a Catholic church (1872), a public library (1872), High School (1876), YWCA (1876), Engine House (1878), new public library (1895), a new town hall (1912). By the 1870's, many of the town's streets were lined

with sidewalks and edgestones, and planted with several varieties of trees. The peninsula's perimeter also attracted civic improvements, a coast guard station being erected (1896-98), an engine house at Bass point (1894), the Nahant Club House (1906), and the state beach bath house at Long Beach (1903).

As Nahant continued its role as a preeminent vacation center for sweltering Bostonians, its transformation from hotel colony to cottage community continued. By the late 19th century, the town's large hotel complexes had either closed or burned, the Maolis Gardens had been dismantled, and the picknicking parties dwindled. In 1900 all amusements and buildings were removed from the Lynn end of Long Beach. Far from entering a decline, Nahant began a new era - as a popular, rather than elite, resort area. While the eastern third of the peninsula remained the private turf of Boston's wealthy, Bass Point now developed into Nahant's premier attraction directed to Boston's middle and laboring class. With the Old Castle since the early 1800s and the Rally House and the first Bass Point House since the 1860s, Bass Point attracted a host of smaller enterprises as well as two large hotels (the latter between 1897 and 1909). Mirroring the din of the popular amusement park across the bay at Revere Beach, Bass Point possessed its own midday atmosphere of dance halls, bar rooms, brass bands and vaudeville attractions. Rapidly, however, it became a source of rising dismay for native and many elite Nahanters, as they watched their quiet peninsula become the playground for a virtually unstoppable swell of vacationers. Coming directly to Bass Point by steamer, barge, by 1903 trolley, and soon automobile, as many as 40,000 people arrived on a given summer Sunday.

In the shadow of the popular amusement midway, adjacent Bass Neck developed into a city of tents, shanties, and especially cottages, as population and activities there intensified. Meanwhile elite residential building continued on the opposite side of the peninsula, the finest buildings occupying the highest inland sites or coastal locations with the finest vantage points.

Middle class building continued in the central town, with residential densities increasing, by 1900, particularly along Emerald and eastern Willow roads, between Ocean and Pond Streets, at Nahant Road and Spring Street, and virtually across the whole of Little Nahant.

D. Economic Base:

While some farming, fishing and shoemaking activity continued during the period all these industries declined in importance, leaving the resort industry as the only significant sector of the economy. In 1895 there were only two farms of eighteen acres and the total value of agricultural products was under \$10,000. The introduction of greenhouses caused a slight expansion in the product value to \$21,592 in 1905. Fishing also was pursued on a small scale, with the emphasis on catching herring, cod, lobsters and pollack. The product value of \$20,000 in 1905 was the peak for the period. Shoemaking had ceased by the 1880s. As in the

previous period the only significant manufacturing activity was house construction. In 1875 there was one construction firm with a product value of \$77,000. By 1895 there were eight such establishments employing sixty-one carpenters and the product value approached \$200,000. There were also a few plumbers, tinsmiths, and painters employed in Nahant.

E. Architecture:

Residential: During the late nineteenth century resort architecture continued to characterize the eastern portion of the town. Queen Ann style estates are common and included several exceptional examples on large lots. Shingle style estates are less common, and favor the dominant gambrel form. Large Colonial Revival houses were also constructed of two stories with ells, and three stories. On the western portion of Nahant construction increased dramatically in dense clusters of small and moderately sized homes. Several subtypes can be identified including simple 1 & 1/2 and 2 & 1/2 story gable fronts, and a related group with gambrel roofs of two stories. Four square, pyramidal roofed houses were built in two primary variations, a large center entry form and a smaller-scaled, side entry type. In the 1880s there were about 250 dwellings, but the total had more than tripled to about 800 in the late 1920s.

Institutional: The community built its third church, St. Thomas Roman Catholic in 1872; a gable front structure with a tower, its center entry was housed in a wide gabled porch; it no longer survives. A new grammar school was constructed in 1883; the pyramidal block is raised on a brick basement with a projecting hip block on the facade housing the entry, ornamental shingles, and formerly, a paneled brick chimney; it later became the police station. Later in the period (1905) the Valley School was constructed; the brick Classical Revival design consists of a 2 & 1/2 story hip block of nine bays with a projecting, pedimented, doric frontispiece. The town's exceptional library was constructed in a Tudor Revival design of stone in 1895 in an asymmetrical H-plan with central entry, and banks of casement windows in the gable ends. More fire-fighting related buildings were added but their appearance is unknown. A new town hall was constructed in 1912 of yellow brick in a Georgian revival design composed of a 1 & 1/2 story hip block ornamented by a projecting, pedimented entry, segmental arched windows, and cupola. The Coast Guard Station was constructed in 1896-98 in a Queen Ann design of a hip block of 2 & 1/2 stories with cross gable and tower, and a gable roofed garage. The YMCA constructed a building in 1876 but its appearance is unknown. In 1886 the Frederick Tudor House became the core of the Nahant Country Club which was expanded through the addition of low gable front ells connected by low hyphens to the older house.

Commercial: Hotels remained the primary building type but information on them is available. By 1874 a Tudor house on Bailey's Hill was converted to Trimountain House which operated until 1901 when the U.S. government purchased the area; the original house was apparently a 2 & 1/2 story, hip roofed, center

entry form. Many buildings from the Maolis Gardens were moved to Bass Point after it closed in 1892. The Hotel Tudor was enlarged and remodelled at the same time, to become a 3 & 1/2 story structure with multi-level verandas. The Bay Side and Brenton were added in the early twentieth century but their appearance is unknown. Edgehill is a complex of three buildings each three stories in height under a hip roof. At the Lynn border the Seaside Park complex included a restaurant, bar boathouses, hotel, and amusement park; it was taken down in 1901 when the area was incorporated into the Metropolitan District Commission who built a bath house in 1903. The Village Store dates to this period, a two story frame structure with flat roof housing a store and post office within its frame structure within its seven bay facade and ornamented by pilasters between them.

Industrial: No industrial buildings are known to have been erected in Late Industrial Nahant.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1900-1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Street railway service ended early in the century, and steamboat service in 1916, but with the increasing popularity of the automobile and the continuing improvement of Nahant's Street network, seasonal traffic into the town continued in volume. In the western town, lands were subdivided into tiny lots for building and multiple streets were opened, early in the century. With the opening of the Lynnway (1906) and Interstate 95 after 1950, overland transport became all the more rapid, facilitating commuter traffic between Nahant and the nearby Lynn, Boston and Salem metropolitan areas.

There is no rail service in Nahant, but excellent connections can be found on the Boston and Maine Railroad in Lynn. Thirty-three trains enter and leave Boston daily through Lynn, the commuting time 21 minutes.

B. Population:

After experiencing four decades of extraordinary growth around the turn of the century, by 1915 Nahant's increase had slowed somewhat. Increasing from 1387 to 3231, it logged a growth rate of 133% for the Early Modern period. Its greatest spurts occurred between 1920 and 1925 (growing 23.6% after suffering a slight decrease during the prior five years) and particularly between 1940 and 1955, when Nahant grew at a rate of over 76%. Its percentage of foreign born, as typical among Essex towns, dropped, from 23% in 1915 to 15.2% in 1940. In 1915 important nativities include the Irish (33%), Canadians, mostly Nova Scotians (20%), English (13%) and Italians (11%). In the 1952 Presidential election, 70% of Nahant voting population opted Republican and 30% Democrat.

C. Settlement:

With the demise of steamer and trolley service early in the period, the amusements at Bass Point soon folded. But the peninsula's popularity as a summer resort continued, becoming ever more ingrown with each passing decade. Prohibition and the loss of the transportation services had already spelled difficulty for activities at Bass Point. But in 1925 a large fire levelled nearly 60 houses. The area lay idle for several years until the land was subdivided. Soon the density of former years was regained. Bass Neck rapidly became the focus of building for Boston's middle class - the houses there as comparatively small as the lots which they occupied. Little Nahant similarly attracted small and tightly clustered cottages, and with Bass Neck, represented the densest settlement areas on the peninsula. Residential density intensified on a lesser scale in the central town, with the most marked building in the still open sections south of Nahant Road toward Willow Road and in the north along Nahant's central coastline. World War II brought the construction of submarine lookout towers to rural Nahant, near East Point, but otherwise the eastern peninsula remained quiet, its large lots undivided and privacy at a premium.

Manufactories were virtually nil by this point in the town, and commercial activities few in number and of the convenience variety, scattered along Nahant Road. Residents relied upon Lynn for its services, preferring to protect the residential character of their town.

D. Economic Base:

The economy focused almost entirely on the summer resort industry as fishing and farming practically ceased. Employment opportunities were limited to the service and retail sectors (54% and 25% respectively) and construction (16%). There were two small manufacturing firms of an unknown nature.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Construction of small and moderately sized homes continued at Bass Neck and at Little Nahant. Pyramidal, four square types remained popular but a range of Colonial Revival housetypes made up the bulk of new construction. Two and 2 & 1/2 story house with five bays and center entries were most popular, including the familiar Dutch Colonial, a related type that combined a gable rather than a gambrel roof with the facade shed dormer, and simple gable roofed examples. Later small numbers of Capes and ranch houses were built, often on subdivisions from larger lots.

Institutional: Institutional construction dropped dramatically during the period. The J.T. Wilson School was constructed in 1916 in brick; it is two stories in height on a basement with boys and girls entries at each end. The Ellingwood Chapel was constructed of stone in the cemetery in 1920; its entry porch is off center along the long wall of the nave, as is its tower which straddles the gable roof.

Industrial: There were two small industrial buildings erected at unknown locations. The nature of work performed and the type of building construction are also unknown.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

The town's inventory is limited to institutional buildings and early resort homes. Many other houses have been researched and date marked, and this material should be acquired by the MHC. In addition, the town includes two areas exceptionally densely built with small, early twentieth century homes at Little Nahant and Bass Neck that have not been studied.

It is not the small commercial strip at Nahant Road and Spring Street that poses any significant threat to the town's historic integrity, but instead its continuing residential construction. Not only do lots, already modest in size, continued to be subdivided and residential densities to increase, but now roads and buildings continued to invade the few open or sparsely occupied sections remaining on the peninsula. Only some of the finer 19th century dwellings of the elite have escaped "improvements". Few of the modest dwellings of Nahant's 19th century heyday survive, and these appear unprotected and in severe jeopardy. As the coastal resort community nearest to greater Boston, space for building continued to rise in price and decrease in supply. At most risk are the now modest buildings of the last century.

XII. FINDER'S AID

Early 19th century residential	Nahant Road at Wharf Street
Mid-19th century residential	Ocean Street between Willow and Nahant, Cliff Street, Summer Street south of Nahant Road.
Elite Late Industrial residential	Little Nahant Road Pleasant Street Nahant Road between Summer and Winter, Vernon and Nahant Road.

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