Swansea Historic Districts Discussion

Cheryl Bogle, Historical Society President

Why Do We Develop Historic Districts?

- Historic districts are developed to give recognition to the history of the area.
- To preserve historic and architectural character of homes and buildings.
- Historic Districts safeguard the unique and historically significant characteristics of the area if bylaws are established.

Massachusetts General Laws For Historical Preservation

- **Chapter 40C** for establishing local historic districts. Authorizes cities and towns to establish local historic districts by a 2/3 vote at town meeting.

- **Chapter 44B** for the Community Preservation Act: Allows towns and cities to impose a property tax surcharge up to 3% to create a fund for historic preservation, open spaces and affordable housing. Can be used for a variety of community preservation projects. That is our Community Preservation Committee.

Historic Districts
Swansea, Massachusetts

In 1988 the Town of Swansea had a historical survey performed. Information from this survey was used to establish historic districts and give recognition to historical buildings, sites, structures and objects. There are contributing and non-contributing properties.

Contributing properties are buildings, structures, objects or sites that meet the criteria based on National Park Services guidelines (National Registry). Non-contributing properties are those that do not meet the criteria of the National Parks Service.

Historic Districts
Swansea, Massachusetts

Through the historical survey **(historical means something from the past and historic means something important or significant)** the following was determined. Keep in mind that the historical survey was not completed and there has been incorrect information found on the applications.

Contributing	Non-Contributing	
155	70	Buildings
6	1	Sites
20	4	Structures
3	2	Objects
184	77	Total

Historic Districts
Swansea, Massachusetts

There were six historic districts applied for in 1989:

1- Swansea Village
2- Hortonville
3- Luther’s Corner
4- Barneyville
5- The Colony
6- Ocean Grove

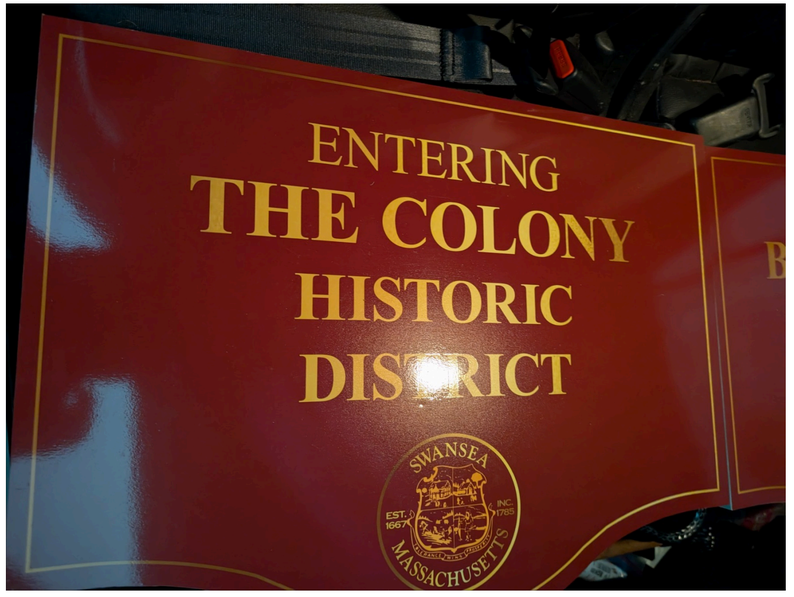
Out of the six historic districts, only five were accepted as historic districts. Ocean Grove was rejected for not meeting the National Parks Service (National Registry) criteria.


ENTERING
SWANSEA
VILLAGE
HISTORIC DISTRICT


ENTERING
LUTHERS
CORNER
HISTORIC DISTRICT


ENTERING
BARNEYVILLE
HISTORIC
DISTRICT


ENTERING
HORTONVILLE
HISTORIC
DISTRICT


ENTERING
THE COLONY
HISTORIC
DISTRICT
SWANSEA
EST. 1667
INC. 1785
MASSACHUSETTS

Historic District Signs

When historic district signs were erected, The Colony Historic District was not recognized and Gardners Neck Historic District sign took its place. **(Gardners Neck is not a legal historic district).**

In 2003, a Swansea Master Plan was written. For some reason The Colony Historic District was omitted and Gardners Neck Historic District was put in its place. Gardners Neck Historic District does not legally exist. There was never an application for Gardners Neck Historic District to the National Park Service, town or state.

Historic District Signs

The Swansea Historical Commission is righting the wrong and a Historic District sign will be erected for The Colony Historic District.

In the decades following the organization of the Town of Swansea in 1657, certain families amassed most of the land in what are now the five main villages in town:

1- The Gardners in South Swansea
2- The Barneys in Barneyville
3- The Luthers at Luther’s Corner
4- The Hales in Hortonville
5- The Eddys in Swansea Village

Swansea Village



Swansea Village

In the late 19th century, Swansea Village emerged as the residential and institutional focus for the community. Swansea Village is comprised of 42 historical buildings, one historic industry site (Swan Finishing site) and two historical cemeteries, including the oldest cemetery in town, The Ye Olde Eddy Cemetery. The first to be buried there was Samuel Eddy in 1687.

Swansea Village

In Swansea Village, the Jonathan Hill house is the oldest house standing. Per Eddy family records, the Eddy family left Swansea just before King Philip's War began and came back to Swansea after the war was over. They either rebuilt their home or took back the house they left. There were four structures that remained standing after King Philip's War, the Eddy homestead may have been one of them.

Swansea Village
Hill House

In 1726 Jonathan Hill purchased a 70-acre farm with buildings from Ebenezer Eddy which was located at 1 Main Street. The people completing the National Registry application called it the Jonathan Hill house because in his will he called it his new house. There is no evidence that 1 Main Street had been rebuilt by Mr. Hill. We did find out that there have been two additions to the house but the house has never been rebuilt.

Swansea Village
Hill House

The following is a list of owners of 1 Main Street and a few photos:

1676: Samuel Eddy
1687: Ebenezer Eddy
1726: Jonathan Hill. The house changed hands over the years until it became the property of Elizabeth Richmond Case Stevens
1915 The property was purchased by Elizabeth Stevens for 1 dollar
1927: Mrs. Stevens gave 1 Main Street to Christ Church to be held in trust
1984: Christ Church sold the property to Brian Ferguson and Thomas M. D'Arruda. It remains in Mr. Ferguson's name to date.



Hill House
Early



Hill House
More Recent



ENTRANCE HALL STAIRS
(SHOWING APPLIED DECORATION)

ENTRANCE HALL STAIR
BALUSTERS.



FIRST FLOOR SOUTHWEST
ROOM (ROOM 1) - SUMMER
BEAM (BOXED & BEADED)

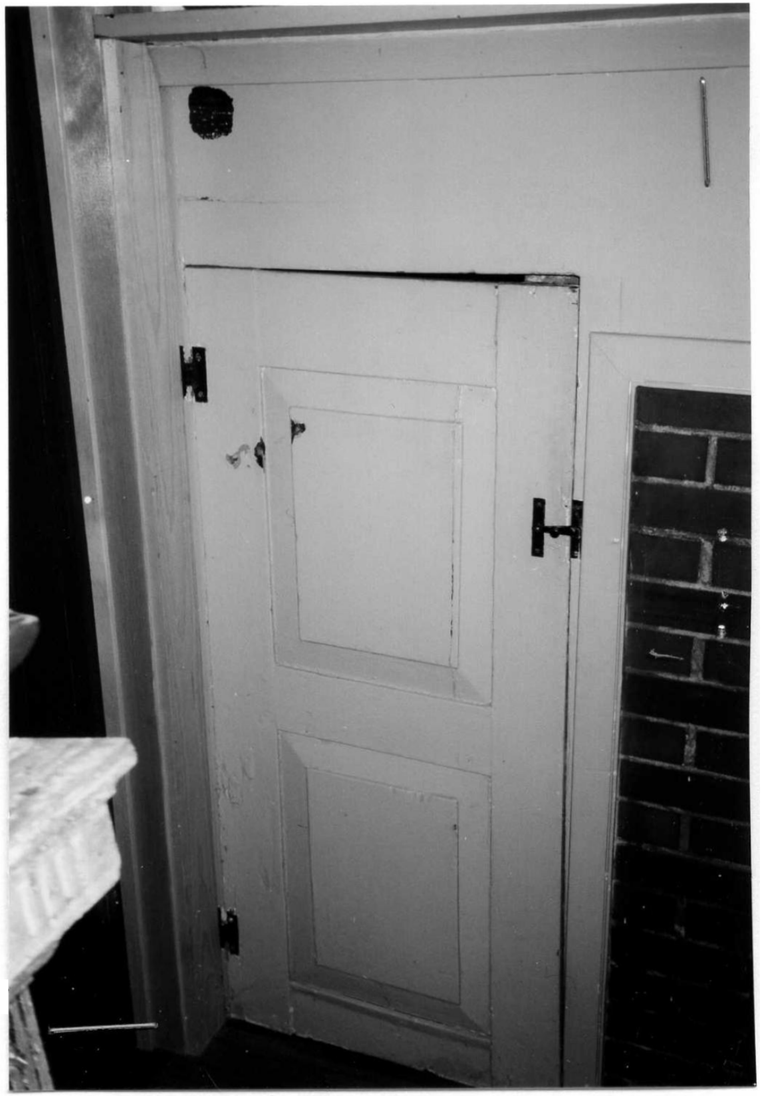


Hill House Interior Shots

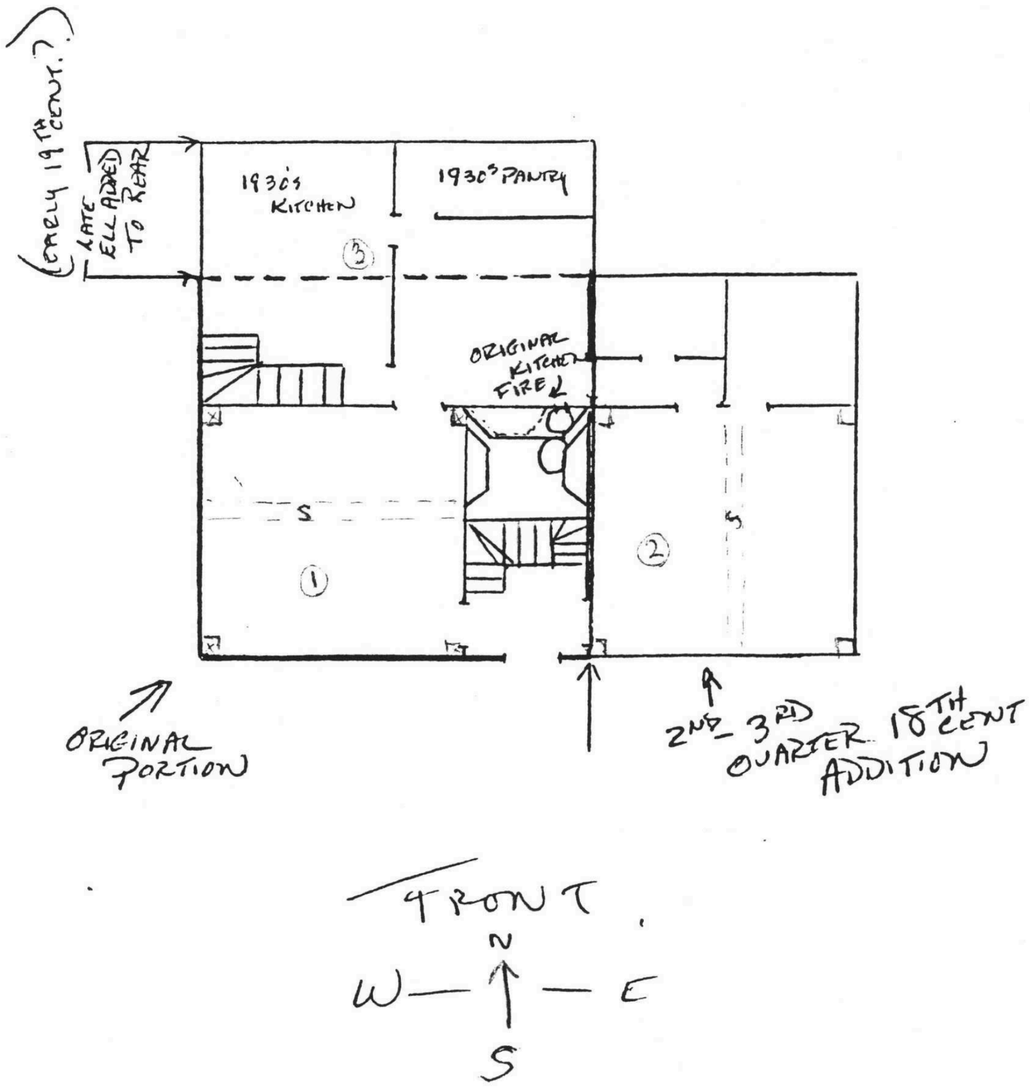


SECOND FLOOR - RAISED PANEL DOOR IN ELL LEADING TO ATTIC.

FIRST FLOOR ROOM 3 - RAISED PANEL BAKE OVEN DOOR



Hill House Interior Shots



Hill House Interior Layout

Swansea Village
Case House

Another interesting and unique house in Swansea Village Historic District is 757 Stevens Road. This structure was a large barn owned by Joseph Case. This structure was the barn to the Case Hotel. The Case Hotel was built by Joseph Case (father of Elizabeth Richmond Case Stevens) after the original structure, the Gray's Inn, burned to the ground in 1870. In 1905, the barn was moved 200 to 300 feet and converted into a handsome Georgian house (pictures below).

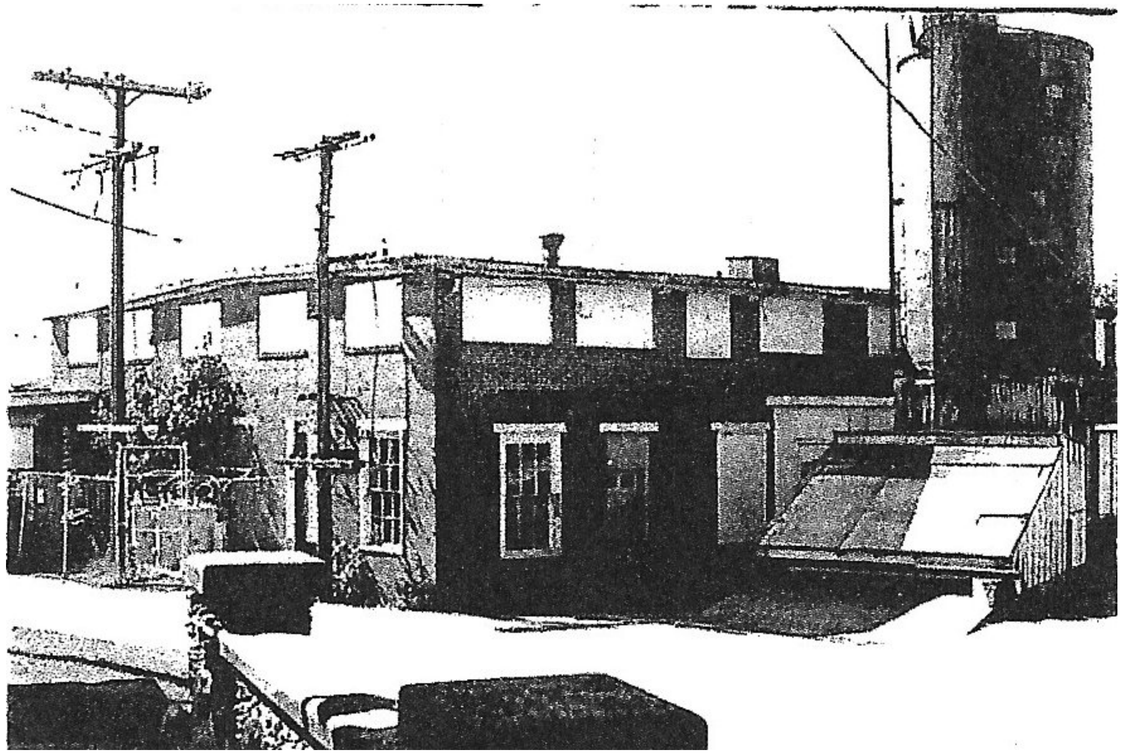




Case House

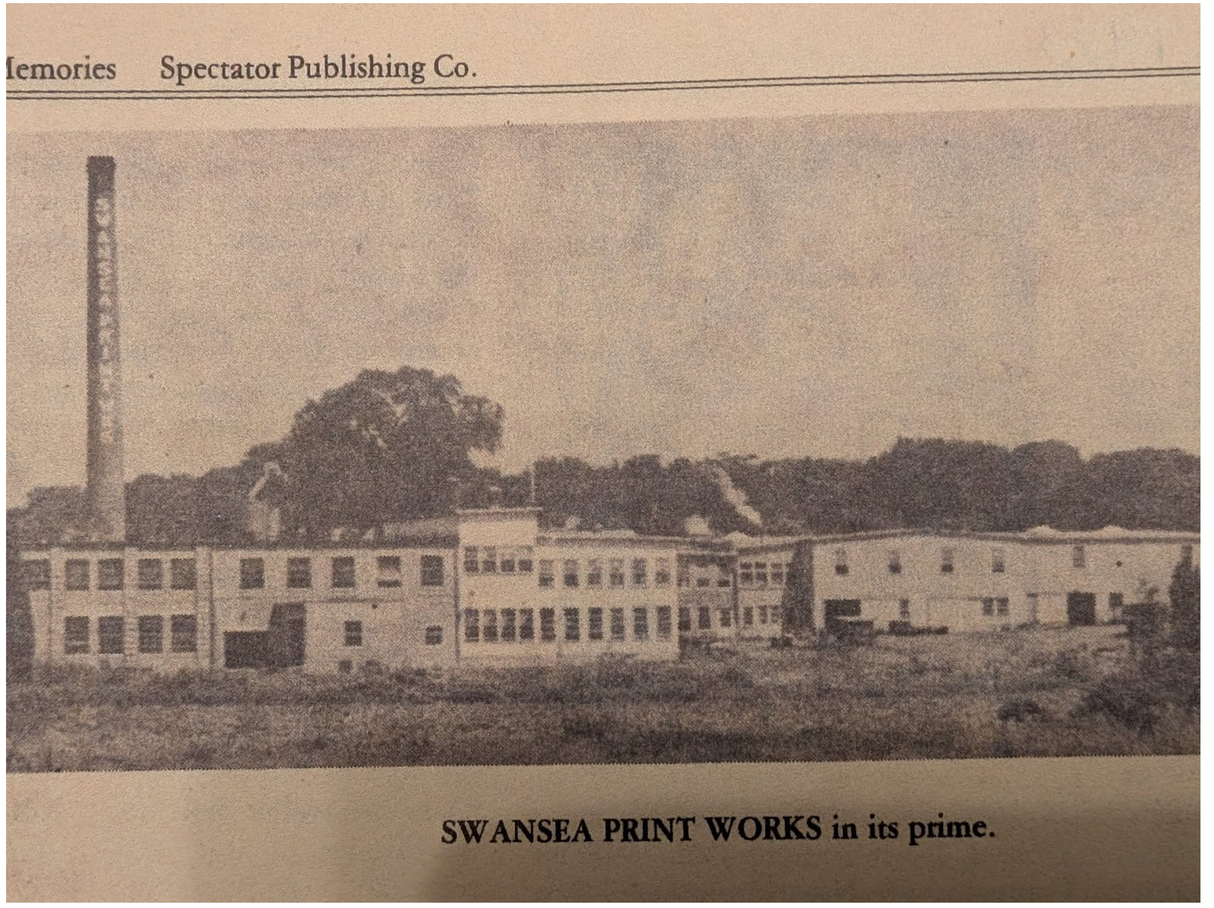
Swansea Village

There are other interesting houses and buildings in Swansea Village at the present location of the Swan Finishing site. This was the site of several manufacturing companies over the years.





Swan Finishing
circa 1900



Swansea Print Works

Swansea Village

As we all know, the Town Hall 1890, Frank S. Stevens Public Library Building 1900 and Christ Church 1900 were gifted to the Town of Swansea by the Stevens family. Joyce Moore is involved in remodeling three houses on Main Street:

21 Main Street: John Mason House
27 Main Street: Northam House- Built by Captain Joseph Northam
72 Main Street: Dr. Wellington House. House was owned by the Stevens's, rented to Dr. Wellington and willed to the Town of Swansea. All monies made from rent or sale of the house would go to the Frank S. Stevens Public Library Building. In 2021 the house was sold to Joyce Moore.



Christ Church



Frank S. Stevens
Public Library



John Mason House



Northam House



Wellington House



1810 House
Demolished in 2015



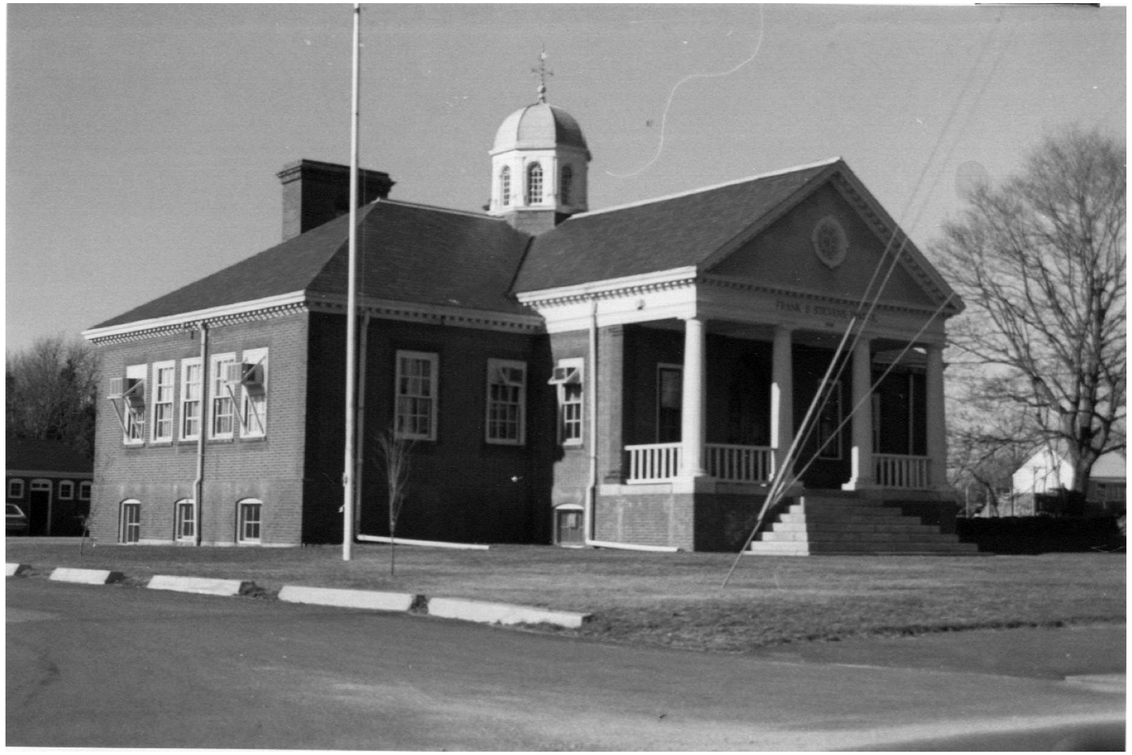
Arnold House



Austin House, Main St.
where fire station is now



Erastus Chace House,
site of Christ Church yard



Frank S. Stevens School



Henry Wood House



Gray’s Blacksmith Shop



Nottingham House



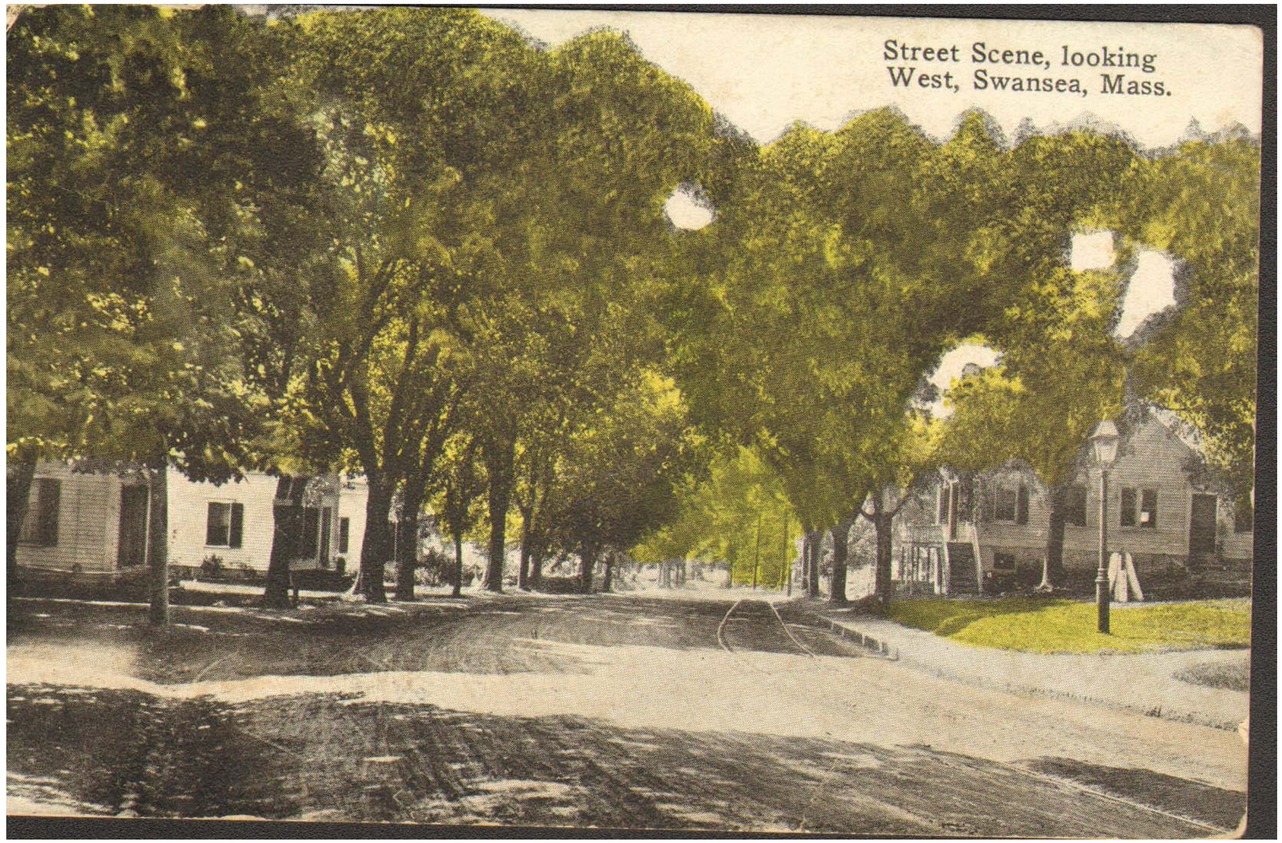
Post Office Wagon with driver, Lewis H. Gray



Post Office



Main Street Near Case House



Main Street Looking West



Rebekah Lodge Hall
Dorothy Brown - Ledge Road



Town Hall 1891



Main Street



Stevens Mansion



Samuel and Elizabeth Eddy Grave Marker



Bicentennial Parade Main St. Carpenter’s militia from Rehoboth

Luther's Corner
Historic District



Luther's Corner
Historic District

Luther's Corner Historic District is the smallest district with only four structures.

The oldest house in the district is the John Brown-Luther house at 2 Maple Ave. This was the Luther homestead. The Luther family settled at Luther's corner in 1726. The Luthers were in this house until Joseph Gardner Luther's death in 1924.



Luther’s Corner



John Brown-Luther House
2 Maple Avenue

Luther's Corner
Historic District

The James Luther Tavern at 159 Old Warren Road broke ground in 1799 and opened in 1803. It was a temperance house; James would not sell any alcohol at the tavern. Across the street was the Luther Store where James Luther's family members added a very small bar area to sell alcohol to the tavern's guests. It remained a tavern until the death of James Luther in 1857 when it was sold to James Easterbrook and his wife. The Easterbrooks raised trotter horses.



James Luther Tavern
159 Old Warren Road

Luther Store

160 Old Warren Road is the Luther Store. They broke ground for the store in 1799 the same year as the Luther Tavern.

The Luther Store opened a year or two after the Luther Tavern. You could find flour, sugar, spices, farming equipment, fabric and cooking supplies. Farmers would sell their eggs, butter, potatoes and more. The Luther store was a central hub for local craftsmen. Town residents would gather to gossip, play chess and checkers.

The Luther Store was open for approximately 100 years. In 1952, the Swansea Historical Society gained ownership and remain the owners of the Luther Store where you can take a step back in time.





Luther Store 1935

Luther Store more recent

Eddy Family General Store

In 1871, Seth Wilbur Eddy opened the Eddy Family General Store at 174 Old Warren Road. This also was the home of Seth Eddy and his family. This was a general store, official post office and Henry Luther had his shoe-making shop on the property, later moved to the second floor of the Luther Store. The shed that he worked out of on the Eddy property still stands today.



Eddy Family General Store
174 Old Warren Road

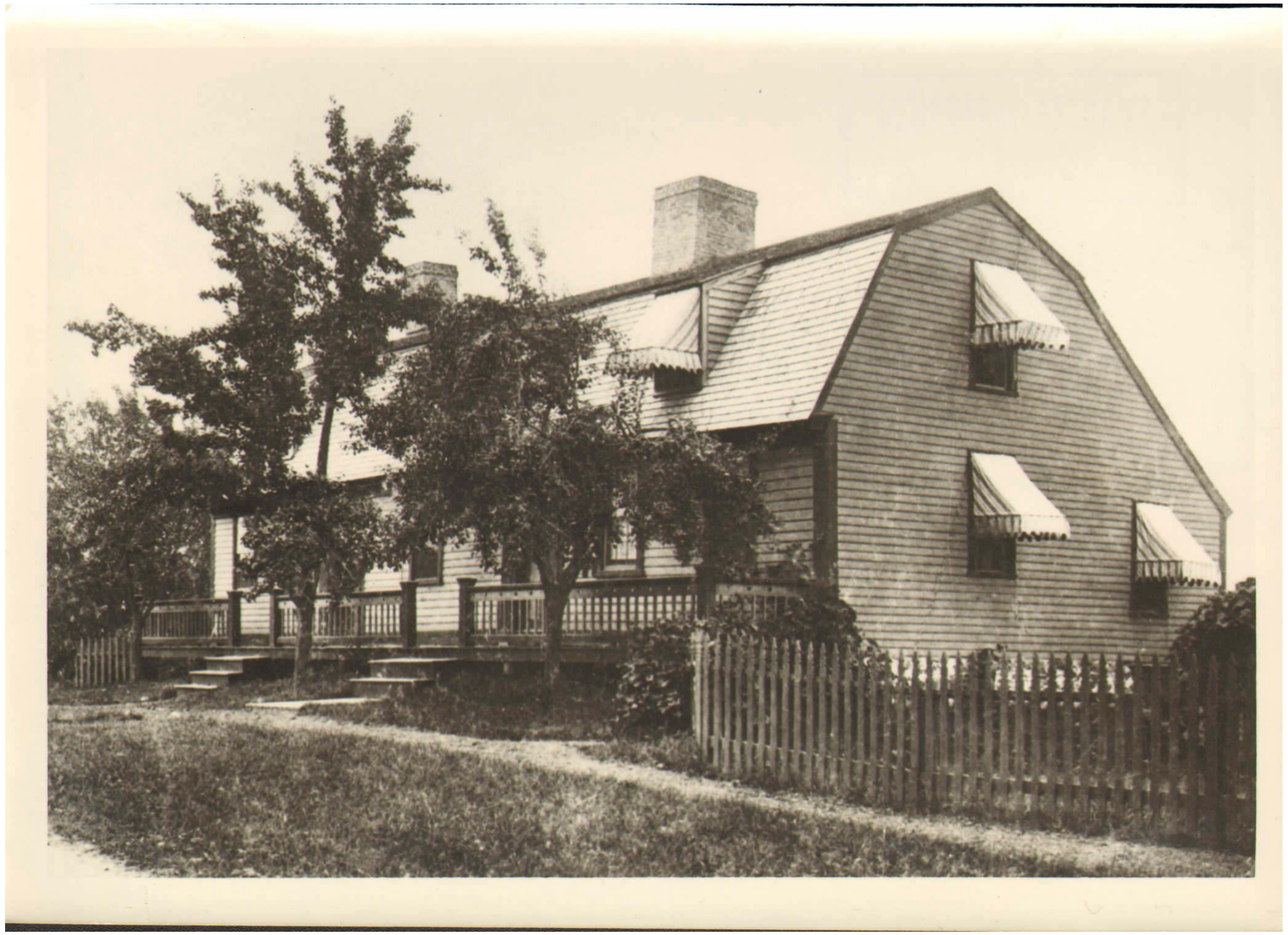
Barneyville
Historic District



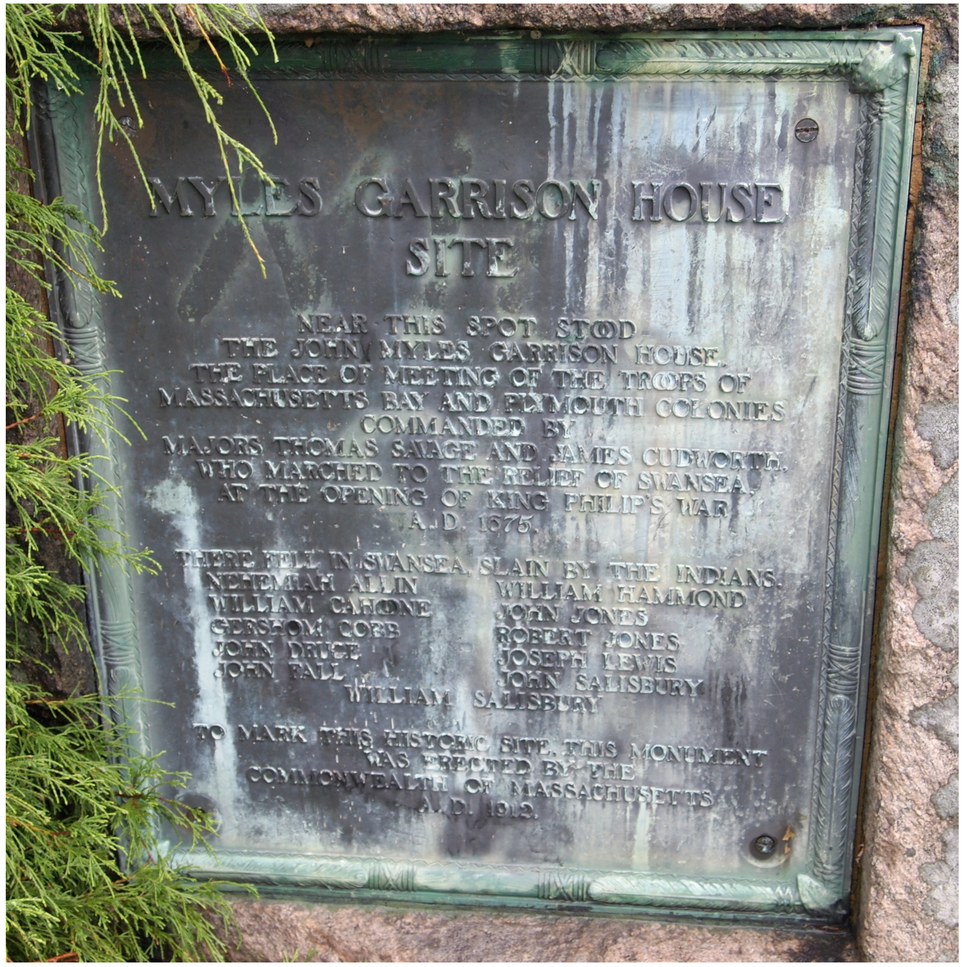
Barneyville
Historic District

Barneyville gives recognition to the development and growth of this area by Mason Barney.

Barneyville was first settled in the 17th century when Rev. John Myles from the First Baptist Church built his home, a garrison known as the John Myles Garrison. A monument stands in the area the garrison was located. The garrison made it through King Philip's War and burned down in 1909.



Miles Garrison House



Miles Garrison House Site Marker

Barneyville
Historic District

This was also the location of the first brick factory in Swansea on the banks of the Palmer River started by William Cahoon in 1673, who was killed at the beginning of King Philip's War in 1675.

There would be two more brick making businesses on the Palmer River banks that included the brick making business by Mason Barney. He made ballast bricks for the whaling ships. These bricks were used to build try-works where very large cauldrons were housed for boiling blubber.

Barneyville
Historic District

At the age of 17 in 1802, Mason Barney took over his father Jonathan Barney's boatyard business. His father sold the business and moved to New York in 1802.

Mason Barney (1782-1868) had very little knowledge of the ship building business when he took it over from his father, but he was able to develop the boatyard into a shipyard and launched his first vessel two years after becoming the owner. Over the course of more than 50 years, Mason Barney developed a shipyard that produced 222 vessels. He had over 250 men in his employ. He turned the area into a self-sustained village within the town of Swansea. Barneyville had its own school, churches, doctor's office, post office, grocery store and more.

Barneyville
Historic District

His workers and their family members never needed to leave Barneyville, because everything they needed was within the Barneyville Village.

Barneyville became the site of a jewelry manufactory company. It first opened its doors in a small shed in the shipyard. David R. Child, a former ship's carpenter and husband to Elizabeth Mason Barney, granddaughter to Mason Barney, opened the business making buttons for clothing and shoes as well as sleeve links. This business grew and become the North Swansea Manufacturing Co. The business remained open until WWII.

Barneyville
Historic District

Mason Barney built his 2nd home in Swansea for his 2nd wife, Polly Grant, in 1812. His first wife, Martha Galusha, died in 1806, two years after the birth of their only child, Edwin Barney.

Below are a few homes that still stand today including the Mason Barney home, the Daggett House, owned by a deaf mute clock maker, the John Barney Farmhouse and the Seymour Barney House, also known as the Algernon Barney House.





Mason Barney House



Daggett House



John Barney Farmhouse





Algernon Barney House



Palmer River Bridge



Bungtown Bridge

Hortonville
Historic District



Hortonville
Historic District

In the first half of the 19th century, several mills were established on the Cole's River, including the 2nd cotton mill in America. Including the Swansea Cotton Manufacturing Co. (1806-1836) and grist mills, these mills would grind grain to make flour, meal or animal feed. The cotton factory and dam were constructed by Oliver Chace.

Hortonville grew slowly over the years, along with family-owned grocery stores and mills. Below are a few of the homes that can be found in the Hortonville Historic District.



Benanuel Marvel House
990 Hortonville Road



Benjamin Martin House
24 Locust Street



Chace House
11 Maiden Lane



Daniel Hale House
416 Locust Street



Dexter Nicholas House
67 Locust Street



Eddy-Baker Farm Complex
235 Locust Street



Eddy House
241 Locust Street



Hortonville School
77 Locust Street



Marvel House
5 Locust Street



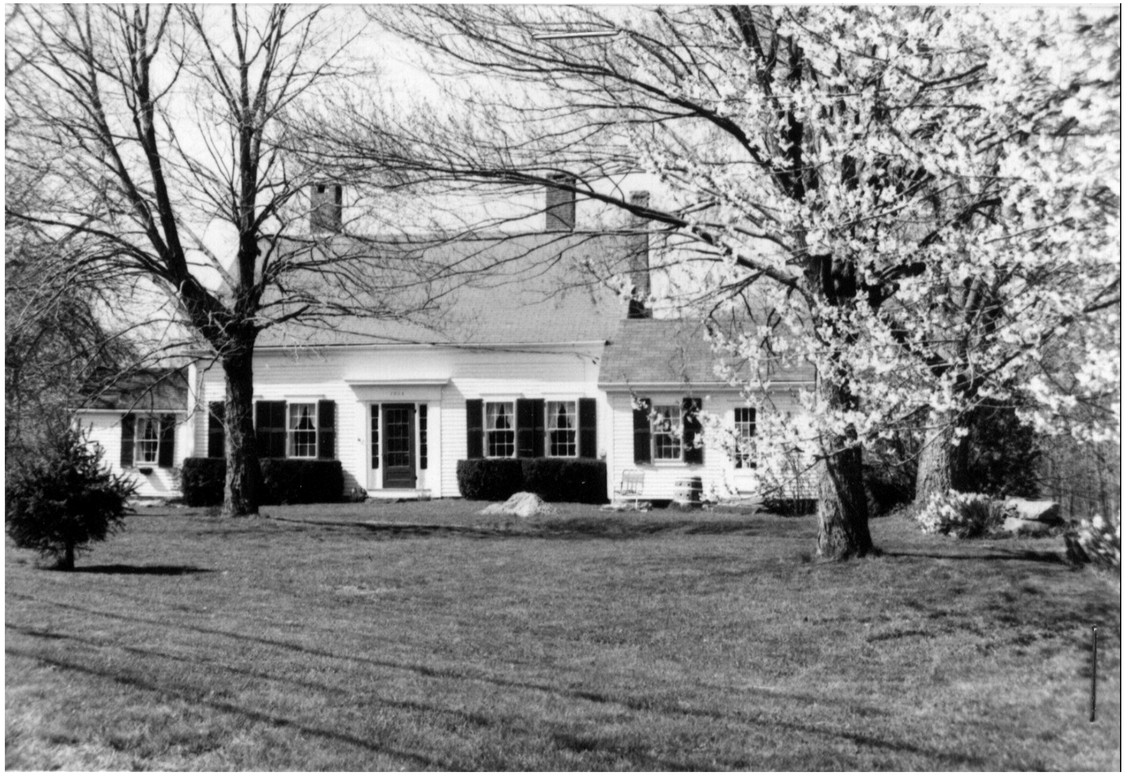
Melatiah Martin House
397 Locust Street



Myron Baker Estate
261 Locust Street



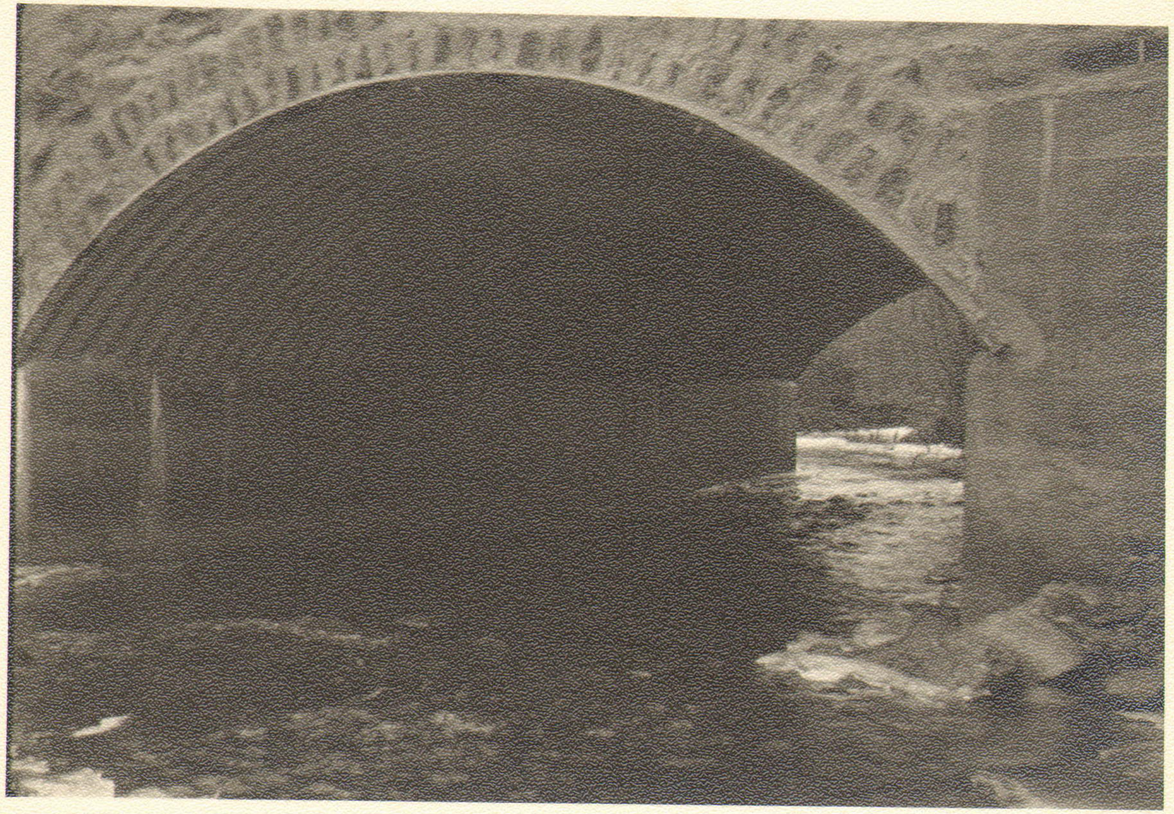
Nathaniel B. Horton House
45 Locust Street



Robert Sherman House
1015 Hortonville Road



William J. Hale House
410 Locust Street



Bridge & Brook Under Hortonville Road



Cumming's Store & Chapel



Unidentified House



Unidentified House



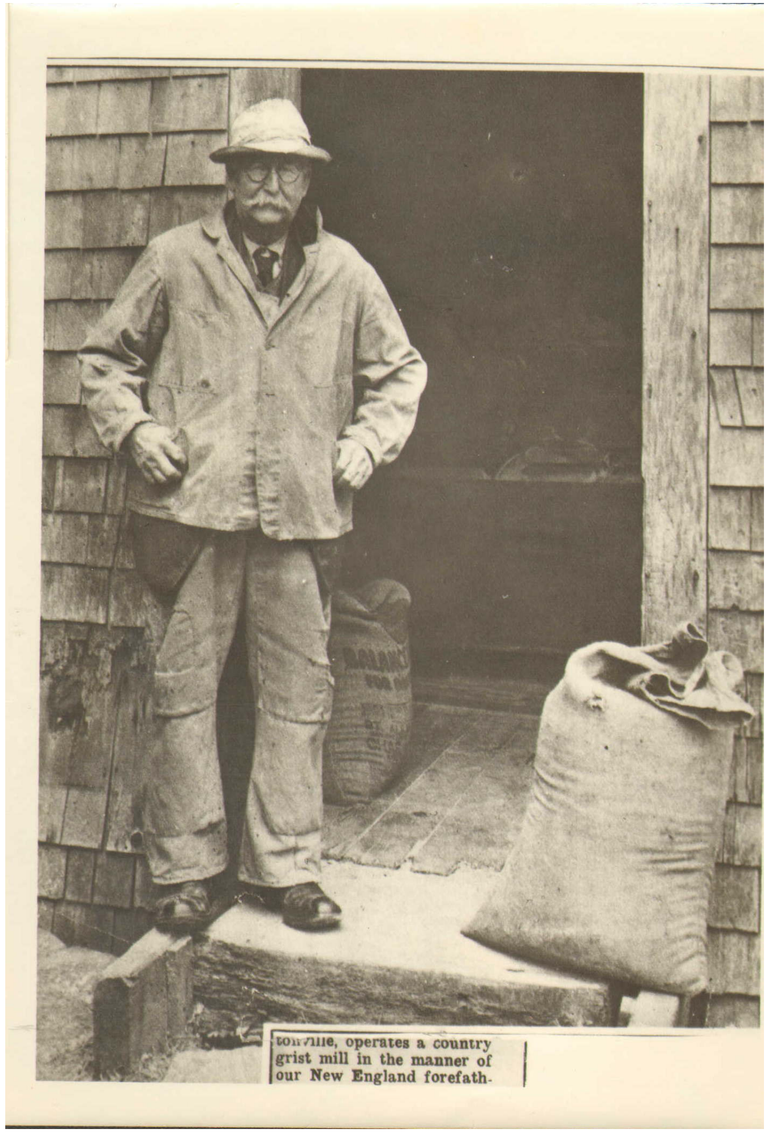
Mill



Stone Sled



Unidentified Street Scene



Jesse Chace Miller Grist Mill Operator

The Colony
Historic District



The Colony
Historic District

The Colony Historic District is the forgotten district. This area was once called Mattapoisett. It was purchased from King Philip by William Brenton and later sold to Samuel Gardner and Ralph Chapman in 1693.They owned from what is now Wilbur Avenue to the banks of the Bay.

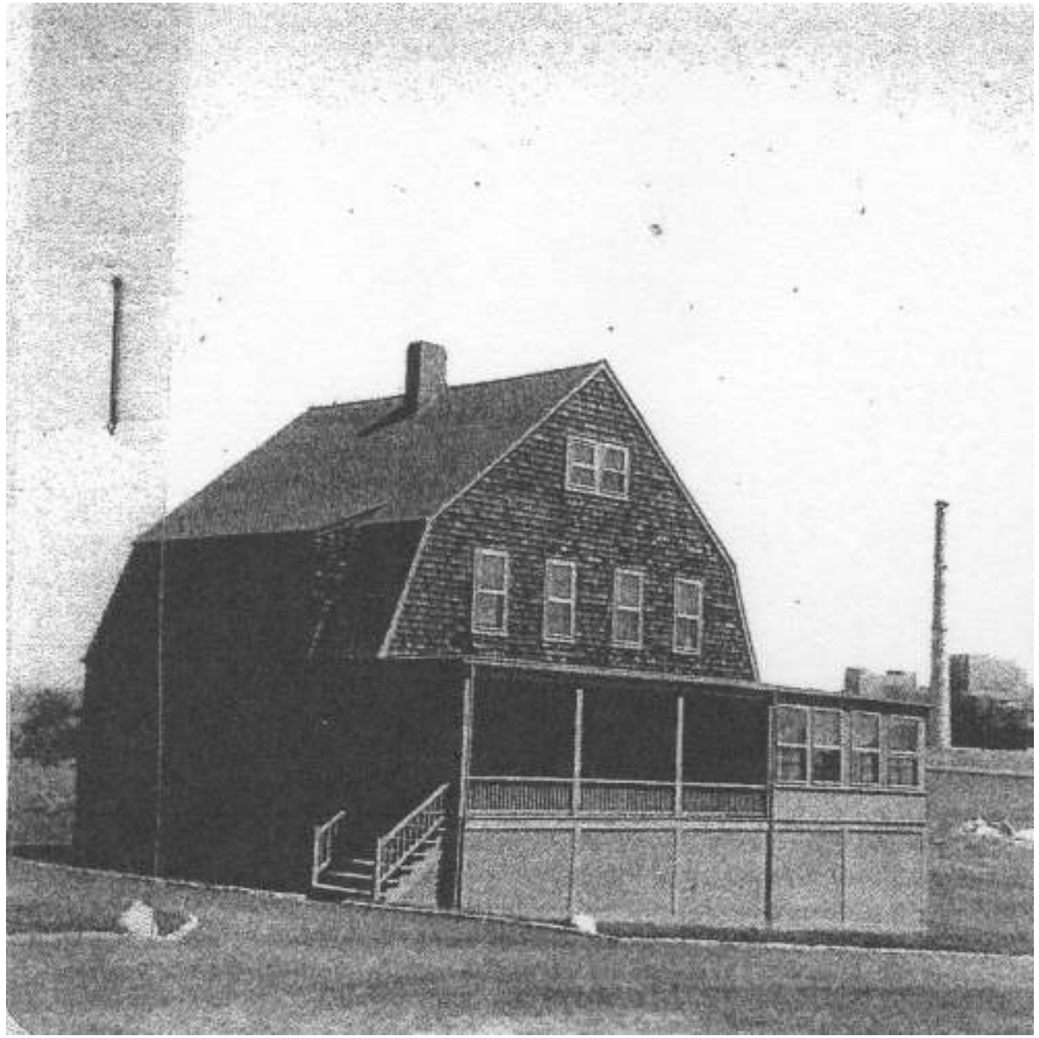
The other historical significance of the area lies in its association with resort and suburban development in Swansea at the turn of the 20th century, a time when residents of Fall River looked for a place to build their summer homes. The homes that are still standing are below.



1536 Gardners Neck Road



Davol House
28 Mattapoisett Ave



Marvell House
15 Mattapoisett Ave



Unidentified House in The Colony



1536 Gardner's Neck Road (right), 28,15,35 Mattapoisett Rd (left). March 1988.
East view. SWN.F

1536 Gardners Neck Road (right)
28, 15, 35 Mattapoisett Road (left)

Final Thoughts

There are several other areas in town that have historical homes, buildings and land that they were not able to include in the original survey. We will cover those areas and homes in our next talk. This will include homes and buildings on the National Registry not in historic districts and those that do not meet the National Registry's criteria and were rejected by the National Registry.

The End