

## **SECTION V HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

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## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

Historical and cultural resources are important elements in the town's fabric. These resources include structures, archeological sites, historic sites, cemeteries, and scenic spaces and roads. They form a framework, providing a hedge against rapid change, which preserve the town's quality of life. In some cases these resources go unnoticed to the public, because they are such integral parts of the town. The citizens of Swansea need to support a public effort to protect and enhance their historic and cultural resources. A number of simple actions identified in the recommendations would leverage substantial benefits to the town.

### HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The Town of Swansea was first mentioned in the Plymouth Colony records of 1668. Traditional accounts make reference to the existence of several native American settlement sites, such as Gardner's Neck, occupied by the Pocassetts in the early 1620's. One account claimed a large native village was located in the vicinity of Margaret's Rock at the time of the first English settlement in the Swansea area. This initial colonial settlement occurred in the late 1660's when a band of Baptists, led by the Reverend John Myles, settled in the area now known as Swansea and Barrington, after being forced to leave Rehoboth because of their dissident religious beliefs. Swansea was named after Rev. Myles' home village in Wales.

In the Colonial period (1675-1775) Swansea suffered due to King Phillip's War, which hampered development until well into the 18th century. Swansea was the starting place of the King Phillip's War and the site of the first bloodshed of the war. The war destroyed all structures and homes in the area. Swansea's proximity to Mount Hope Bay and the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay meant that its early 18th century economy fell within the sphere of colonial settlements in this region, particularly those that were engaged in shipbuilding. Old Warren Road was established to connect Swansea Center, Gardner's Neck and Warren, Rhode Island.

The Federal period (1775-1830) was a time of slow growth, based primarily upon agriculture and fishing. Regional settlement patterns consisted mainly of dispersed farmsteads strung along the colonial road system, with no distinct civic core. Fishing continued to be a significant element of the economy, especially on Gardner's Neck. By the early part of the 19th century, small cotton mills on the Cole's River were the prototypes for the larger mills that were to be built later in Fall River.

During the Early Industrial period (1830-1870) transportation routes were improved. The Fall River, Warren, Providence railroad was opened in 1866. Agriculture continued to be the dominant form of economic activity, supplemented by fishing and shipbuilding. (Mason Barney's Shipyard on the Palmer River closed in 1861.)

In the late Industrial period (1870-1915) the population increased by 97%. The building of the South Swansea Station on the Fall River, Warren and Providence Railroad in the 1890's opened Gardner's Neck to summer residents, particularly wealthy Fall River industrialists and merchants. By the end of this period, Touisset Park developed as a summer colony for wealthy residents. Concurrently, major development occurred in the Ocean Grove area as a settlement of summer cottages for middle income residents of Fall River. No provisions were made for year round

occupancy including, in particular, septic systems. The remainder of the Town continued as a rural agricultural district.

The 20th century has seen most of the dramatic changes in the physical and economic character of Swansea. In the early modern period (1915-1940) the road systems were improved (Route 6 was opened in 1930) and the Town started to experience suburban growth in relationship to Fall River and the Rhode Island urban communities. Of particular importance was the operation of the electric trolley car called the "Snake Line" which ran from City Hall in Fall River to Market Square in Providence, and passed through Swansea along Route 6. This allowed Swansea residents to easily commute to larger, industrialized cities in the area.

It is perhaps the late modern period (1945 to the present) that has seen the most dramatic growth in the development of Swansea. The opening of I-195 has placed Swansea firmly in the path of suburban growth and has induced regional commercial and service industries on a large scale as a suburb of Fall River and Providence. The construction of the Swansea Mall and the resultant spin-off ventures continue to create development pressures that have never confronted the Town on such a scale before. Furthermore, demand for housing in an increasingly expanding market has also exerted enormous pressures for extensive land use change in Swansea. The pace of suburban, commercial and residential development has, in the last decade or so, made it abundantly clear that Swansea must assume a posture of predicting its future rather than reacting to imposed pressure. A Comprehensive Plan and its critical sub-component, the Historical Preservation Plan, are the principal tools that must be developed to give the Town both the incentive and the instruments to gain control of its future as it heads into the 21st century.

Like other towns that exist in close proximity to major urban centers, Swansea continues to face intense developmental pressures. As demand for residential and commercial sites continues to accelerate, greater attention must be paid to the preservation of the community's historical resources. The town's historic sites must be protected and maintained in order to provide a context for shaping future development. How else will the town retain a sense of itself if it does not provide some continuity between the past and the future? The town's leaders must fashion a variety of planning strategies that will preserve and build on the historical resources for the benefit of future generations.

## 5.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Swansea Historic Timeline

- From prehistoric times to 1660s - Settlements of Native peoples (Wampanoags and/or Pocassetts)
- 1663 - First colonial settlement
- 1667 - Township of Swansea granted by the Court of New Plymouth
- 1674 - Old Swansea consisted of 40 homes
- 1675 - King Phillip's War started in Swansea
- 1737 - Myles Bridge, one of the earliest in Bristol County, is erected
- 1765 - Present town boundary established
- 1785 - Incorporated as the Town of Swansea
- 1814 - Village Post Office erected on current site in Swansea Village
- 1830 - Union Meeting House established, site of current Town Hall
- 1830 - Hortonville School on Locust Street established
- 1833 - First Christian Congregational Church established
- 1841 - Library organized and later is dispersed
- 1848 - First Baptist Church and Society established
- 1891 - Town Hall built
- 1900 - Frank S. Stevens Public Library opens
- 1900 - Present Christ Church built
- 1901 - The electric operated trolley "Snake Line" connects Swansea to Fall River and Providence
- 1905 - Bark Street School opens
- 1908 - Frank S. Stevens School built
- 1916 - South Swansea Union Church built
- 1922 - St. Michael's the Archangel Church built
- 1924 - Gardner School established
- 1926 - Construction on Route 6 begins
- 1927 - Joseph Case High School built (present Junior High School)
- 1931 - St. Michael's School established
- 1931 - Luther Elementary School built
- 1941 - Swansea Historical Society established
- 1952 - Zoning By-Law adopted
- 1957 - Brown School opens
- 1960 - Construction of 195 (Milford Road overpass East to Somerset)
- 1962 - Construction of 195 (Milford Road overpass West to Rehoboth)
- 1965 - Braga Bridge completed as part of 195
- 1965 - Historical and Cultural Assets Commission established
- 1971 - K-Mart Plaza constructed (Building 19 Mall)
- Early 1970s - Case High School built
- Mid 1970s - Swansea Mall built
- 1991 - Hoyle Elementary School constructed

## 5.2 HISTORIC RESOURCES

Recognizing the importance of the town's historic sites and village centers, Swansea retained the services of a historic preservationist in 1985. Research was undertaken town-wide on evaluating 159 historic properties and six districts for possible Federal and State landmark designation. Of the 159 sites that were inventoried as being historic assets to the Town, 45 were nominated for national register designation, while two sites, the Luther Store and Martin House, were already on the National Register (5/22/78). Five of the six districts proposed for national designation were accepted by the National Register, including Swansea Village, Luther's Corner, Hortonville, Gardner's Neck, and Barneyville; Ocean Grove was not accepted for listing on the National Register. All properties that are on the National Register are also on the State Register. There are no additional sites that are only recognized on the state level and are not on the National Register. All of the 159 sites inventoried in 1985 are historical assets of which the Massachusetts Historical Society is aware.

### Historic Sites

Old homes are one of the most dominant examples of history in the town. They provide a defining element of the town's historic fabric. Approximately 22 homes from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and 42 homes from the 19<sup>th</sup> century are spread throughout the town. Over 70% of these homes are located within one of the five historic districts described below. Swansea Village, the old Town Center, contains roughly 35% of the town's 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century homes. The most frequent style of these homes is Italianate, with many homes also constructed in the Federal, Cape Colonial, Georgian, Cape, and Georgian Colonial styles.

These as well as other sites of historic importance to the town cultural and economic evolution mark important time periods which have shaped the character of specific neighborhood areas and the quality of life experienced by the residents. The preservation of these sites allows residents to maintain a local identity and to utilize these development patterns as a frame of reference in shaping new growth which will preserve important traditions and values. The historic sites listed in Tables 5-2 to 5-9 consist of a mix of farm houses and residences, churches, schools, and former ship building sites, all of which contribute to the rich history of Swansea's development.

The Town's neighborhoods are important historic resources. Of the 159 sites initially inventoried in 1985, 112 are located within one of six neighborhoods, including Swansea Village, Luther's Corner, Hortonville, Gardner's Neck, Barneyville and Ocean Grove. Historic sites located within these areas are listed in Tables 5-2 to 5-9. All of these neighborhoods, with the exception of Ocean Grove, are on the National Register as Historic Districts. Luther's Corner, Gardner's Neck and Barneyville have a number of sites, three, seven and one, respectively, which are individually recognized on the National Register.

Of the 159 inventoried sites, 47 are located in Swansea Village (Table 5-3), 10 in Luther's Corner (including 3 on the National Register) (Table 5-4), 20 in Hortonville (Table 5-5), 21 in Gardner's Neck (including 7 on the National Register) (Table 5-6), 6 in Barneyville (including 1 on the National Register) (Table 5-7), and 8 in Ocean Grove (Table 5-8). There are an additional 31 inventoried sites and 16 sites on the National Register that do not fall into any of these historic neighborhoods (Tables 5-9 and 5-2, respectively).

Listing on the National Register does not provide any regulatory or special protection. Rather, National Register designation is a type of honorary status that can influence local development

through recommendations by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. If a structure on the National Register is owned by the municipality or a non-profit organization, the recognition allows the owner to be eligible for matching funds from the state to renovate the structure. Some tax credits may also be available when a developer renovates a structure on the National Register.

In the past, families in Swansea used to set up endowments to maintain historic structures. A number of historic properties are currently in need of maintenance.

The 27 Historic Places and five Historic Districts on the National Register are located on Map 5-1.

### **Cemeteries**

There are 42 cemeteries in Swansea, including the Old Baptist Church Cemetery, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. This cemetery is a visual reminder to the Town of the principles of religious freedom which Swansea was founded upon. Historic cemeteries are located in several parts of Swansea.

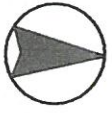
In total, there are three church-related cemeteries, the Christ Church, Old Baptist Church, and First Christian Church cemeteries.

Mount Hope Cemetery is the only Town-run cemetery. The remaining cemeteries are privately owned. It is interesting to note the Old Smallpox Cemetery, whose name attests to the period of time in which the cemetery was used. There is also a Town Hall Cemetery.

# Town of Swansea Master Plan

## Historic Preservation Growth Management Vision Concept

Prepared by Larry Koff Associates



- # Historic Place
- Historic District
- Historical Open Spaces
- Proposed Historic Trail
- Bike Path (Under Construction)
- Greenbelt
- River Corridor



Map 5-1





**Table 5-2 Historic Sites and Structures on the National Register**

Historic Name	Address	Style	Historic District	Date
Luther William House	79 Old Warren Road	Cape	Luther Corner	1849
The Luther Store*	160 Old Warren Road	Federal	Luther Corner	1815
Benjamin Cole House	412 Old Warren Road	Georgian Colonial	Luther Corner	1701
David N. Anthony House "Bay Point"	98 Bay Point Road	Queen Anne	Gardner Neck	1895
Harold Norton Anthony House	132 Bay Point Road	Colonial Revival	Gardner Neck	1922
South Swansea Union Church	Gardner Neck Road and Church Street	American Gothic	Gardner Neck	1916
Samuel Gardner (IV Generation)	1035 Gardner Neck Road	Dutch Colonial	Gardner Neck	1768
Francis L. Gardner	1129 Gardner Neck Road	Colonial Revival	Gardner Neck	1903
Joseph Gardner House	1205 Gardner Neck Road	Colonial	Gardner Neck	ca. 1790
J.V. Johnson House	36 Riverview Avenue	Bungalow	Gardner Neck	1913
Norton House	61 Old Providence Road	Georgian	Barneyville	1779
First Baptist Church and Society	Baptist Road	Greek Revival		ca. 1848
Old Baptist Church Cemetery	Baptist Road			
Bend of the Lane	181 Cedar Avenue	Colonial Farmhouse		ca. 1740
Dea. John Buffington House	262 Cedar Avenue	Colonial		ca. 1790
Church of Christ	GAR Highway	Greek Revival		1833
Hooper House	306 Hortonville Road	Dutch Colonial		1790
The Luther House	177 Market Street	Dutch Colonial		ca. 1740
Short's Tavern	282 Market Street	Georgian Colonial		ca. 1730
Walkden Farm	495 Marvel Street	Georgian Colonial		ca. 1850
William P. Mason House	5 Mason Street			
Preserved Gardner	90 Milford Street	Federal		ca. 1820
Smuggler's House	361 Pearse Road	Colonial Cape		ca. 1800
John Brown IV House	703 Pearse Road	Georgian Colonial		1752
Simcock House	1074 Sharps Lot Road	Georgian		ca. 1765
Bark Street School	68 Stevens Road	Shingle		1900
Martin House and Farm*	22 Stoney Hill Road	Dutch Colonial		ca. 1728

**Table 5-3 Local Historic Resources in Swansea Village (National Historic District)**

Historic Name	Address	Style	Date
Philander Wilbur House	155 & 157 Elm Street	Dutch Colonial Revival	ca. 1910
Slade House	167 Elm Street	Colonial	ca. 1775
Frank S. Stevens School	1 Gardner Neck Road	Neoclassical	1908
Frank S. Stevens Public Library	Main Street	English Tudor Revival	1900
Town Hall	Main Street	Romanesque	1891
Christ Church	Main Street	American Gothic	1900
James Mason House	15 Main Street	Federal	ca. 1795
Stevens Mansion	24 Main Street	Italianate	ca. 1855
Winslow House	59 Main Street	Federal	ca. 1820
Henry Wood House	80 Main Street	Italianate	ca. 1880
Hull House	93 Main Street	Federal	ca. 1790
Christopher Muller	11 Elm Street	Dutch Colonial Revival	ca. 1900
Frank Hope	16 Elm Street	Italianate	ca. 1855
Arnold House	23 Elm Street	Federal	ca. 1807
Arnold D. Gardner	31 Elm Street	Craftsman	ca. 1915
William Hathaway House	73 Elm Street	Craftsman	ca. 1900
	86 Elm Street	Vernacular Italianate	ca. 1840
James Mason's Wheelwright Shop	90 Elm Street	Craftsman	ca. 1900
	102 Elm Street	Italianate	ca. 1840
Elmer S. Sears	107 Elm Street	Federal	ca. 1790
	108 Elm Street	Queen Anne	ca. 1890
Rufus Slade Home	117 Elm Street		
Richmond Gray	118 Elm Street		
	127 Elm Street		
Emery C. Kellogg	147 Elm Street		
Julia Chace Birch Stevens childhood home	160 Elm Street	Colonial	ca. 1775
Industrial Print Shop	End of Ledge Road		1850
Dorothy Brown Rebekah Lodge	19 Ledge Road	Colonial Cottage	ca. 1815
	98 Ledge Road	Shingle	1899
Martin House	108 Ledge Road	Bungalow	1908
Joseph Case High School	Main Street		1927
The Village Post Office	Main Street		
Hill House	1 Main Street	Federal	ca. 1720
John Mason	21 Main Street	Georgian	ca. 1800
Northam House	27 Main Street	Georgian Colonial	1794
	64 Main Street		1850
Dr. James L. Wellington House	72 Main Street		1830
	86 Main Street		1860
one of "Three Cottages"	92 Main Street		1860
one of "Three Cottages"	96 Main Street	Vernacular	1860
Dr. John D. Hilton	109 Main Street	Greek Revival	1905
Daniel Wood House	125 Main Street	Greek Revival	1830
	142 Main Street	Italianate	1880
Margaret Buffington House	222 Main Street	Cape	1820
	757 Stevens Road	Colonial Revival	1870/1905
Hawkins House	745 Stevens Road		1860
Hillside Stock Farm	745 Stevens Road		1870
Case's High	789 Stevens Road		

**Table 5-4 Local Historic Resources in Luther's Corner (National Historic District)**

Historic Name	Address	Style	Date
John Brown Luther House	Maple and Old Warren	Federal	1811
Seth Wilbur Eddy House & Store	74 Old Warren Road	Vernacular	1871
James Luther Tavern	159 Old Warren Road	Colonial Federal	1812
Pearse Farm/"The Inn" Farmstead	486 Pearse Road 597 Pearse Road	Federal Colonial Colonial	ca. 1810
Henry Boss, Jr.	682 Pearse Road	Craftsman	ca. 1810
John & Abigail (Cole) Brown V's House	793 Pearse Road	Georgian Colonial	1907 ca. 1740

**Table 5-5 Local Historic Resources in Hortonville (National Historic District)**

Historic Name	Address	Style	Date
Benjamin Martin House	24 Locust Street	Colonial	1757
Eddy/Baker Farm Complex	235 Locust Street	Cape	ca. 1750
Eddy/Baker Farm Complex	241 Locust Street	Cape	ca. 1745
Myron Baker Estate	261 Locust Street	Colonial Revival	ca. 1900
Daniel Hale House	416 Locust Street	Colonial Cape	1845
Farmstead	210 Hornbine Road	Colonial Cape	ca. 1750
	211 Hornbine Road	Colonial Gambrel	ca. 1750
Benanuel B. Horton	990 Hortonville Road	Georgian Colonial	1783
Robert Sherman Farmstead	1015 Hortonville Road	Federal Colonial	1835
Mason Horton Home	4 Locust Street	Cape Colonial	ca. 1810
Marvel Home	5 Locust Street	Georgian	1798
	31-33 Locust Street	Princess Anne	ca. 1890
	39 Locust Street	Italianate	ca. 1890
Nathaniel B. Horton	45 Locust Street	Italianate	ca. 1890
Dexter H. Nichols	67 Locust Street	Italianate	ca. 1870
Locust Street of Hortonville School	77 Locust Street	School House	ca. 1830
Melatah Martin House	397 Locust Street	Georgian Colonial	1736
William J. Hale House	410 Locust Street	Italianate	1894
Mason Farmstead	831 Locust Street	Extended Cape	1822
	11 Maiden Lane	Colonial	ca. 1800

**Table 5-6 Local Historic Resources in Gardner's Neck (National Historic District)**

Historic Name	Address	Style	Date
"Wannamoissett" Charles Anthony	945 Gardner Neck Road	Queen Anne	ca. 1900
Chace House			ca. 1788
Samuel Gardner (IV Generation)	1443 Gardner Neck Road	Colonial Cape	1898
A.T. Marvel	15 Mattapoissett	Shingle	1898
A.P. Davol House	28 Mattapoissett	Shingle	1884
	871 Gardners Neck Road		1898
Harden C. Walters	936 Gardners Neck Road	Shingle	ca. 1890
Whitehead House	952 Gardners Neck Road	Queen Anne	ca. 1900
	1332 Gardners Neck Road	Shingle	ca. 1900
	1390 Gardners Neck Road	Colonial Revival	ca. 1910
	1488 Gardners Neck Road	Shingle	ca. 1905
	1536 Gardners Neck Road	Colonial Revival	1884
David M. Anthony's Farm	1543 Gardners Neck Road	Vernacular Farmhouse	1890
Fall River Yacht Club	24 Shawmut Avenue	Shingle	1930
Summer Cottage	Shawmut Avenue	Shingle	

**Table 5-7 Local Historic Resources in Barneyville (National Historic District)**

Historic Name	Address	Style	Date
Mason Barney House	1 Barneyville Road	Georgian/Italianate	ca. 1802-1812
The Daggett Place	22-24 Barneyville Road	Cape	ca. 1771-1774
Jonathan Barney-Mason Barney Shipyard	Old Providence Road		
Site of Myles Garrison House	Old Providence Road		
Barney House	166 Old Providence Road	Georgian	ca. 1750

**Table 5-8 Local Historic Resources in Ocean Grove**

Historic Name	Address	Style	Date
Shady Isle Park	457 Ocean Grove Avenue	Bungalow	1940
Summer Cottage	529 Bay Ave at Bluff	Vernacular Amusement	ca. 1910
The Bluffs	Bluff Ave	Streetscape	1910's
Vernacular Cottages	478-469 Bluff Avenue	Streetscape	
Vernacular Cottages	25-39 Cole Street	Streetscape	
Saint Michael the Archangel Church	270 Ocean Grove Ave	Moderne	1922
Summer Cottage	335 Ocean Grove Ave	Vernacular Cottage	1920
St. Michael's School	Pinehurst & Anthony Ave		1931

**Table 5-9 Other Historic Resources (Not in a Historic District or Ocean Grove)**

Historic Name	Address	Style	Date
Chase Farm	51 Baker Road	Italianate	
Residence	195 Hortonville Road	Italianate	ca.1840
Residence	472 Milford Street	Carpenter Gothic	ca.1880
Bourne Garrison Site	Old Gardners Neck Road		1880
Farmstead	245 Baker Road	Italianate	1870
Farmstead	315 Sharps Lot Road	Colonial Cape	
Luin House/Spooner House	24 Cedar Avenue	Dutch Colonial	ca. 1800
Stephen Buffington	410 Cedar Avenue	Italianate	ca. 1740
Valentine Mason House	1468 GAR Highway	Cape	ca.1890
The Grand Diner	GAR Highway and Gardner Neck Road		ca. 1810
George W. Fisk House	239 Hortonville Road	Queen Anne	1956
	393 Maple Ave	Colonial Cape	1897
Farmstead	175 Milford Street	Italianate	ca. 1790
Upham Luther Farm	405 Milford Street	Colonial Cape	ca. 1845
Mrs. John Luther	467 Milford Street	Colonial Cape	1786
The Benjamin Kingsley Road	121 Old Fall River Road	Colonial Cape	1845
Farmstead	770 Old Gardners Neck Road	Greek Revival	1838
Farmstead	220 Pleasant Street	Italianate	ca. 1850
Ichabod Bosworth	139 Purchase Street	Colonial Cape	1780
Farmstead	287 Purchase Street	Colonial Cape	1807
Ingleside Sisson House	2 Seaview Ave		1790
Charles Smith House	208 Seaview Ave	Colonial Cape	ca. 1710
Farmhouse	374 Sharps Lot Road	Tudor Revival	1914
Farmstead	445 Sharps Lot Road	Italianate	1875
	1780 Sharps Lot Road		
Vinnicum House	15 Vinnicum Road		1780
Jonathan Davis House	141 Wilbur Avenue	Cape	1826
DelMac Orchard	160 Wood Street	Italianate	1894
Mason G. Brown/Farmhouse	590 Wood Street		1778
Alpheus Wood House/Farmhouse	973 Wood Street		1833
	1069 Wood Street	Gothic Revival	1879
		Cape	1828

**Historic Areas**

Slightly fewer than half of the sites placed on the National Register of Historic Places (11 of 27) are located within one of the five historic districts. These districts represent Swansea's evolution from a Native settlement, to a colonial town, to a rural farming community and early industrial development to a summer resort. These changes are recorded in the landscape and architecture of these neighborhood areas. Essential to the historical evolution of the Town, the preservation of these districts gives the town a sense of identity and direction as it adjusts to the many challenges of accommodating new growth.

**Historic Districts**

- Swansea Village
- Hortonville/Hornbine
- Barneyville
- Luther Corner
- Gardner's Neck

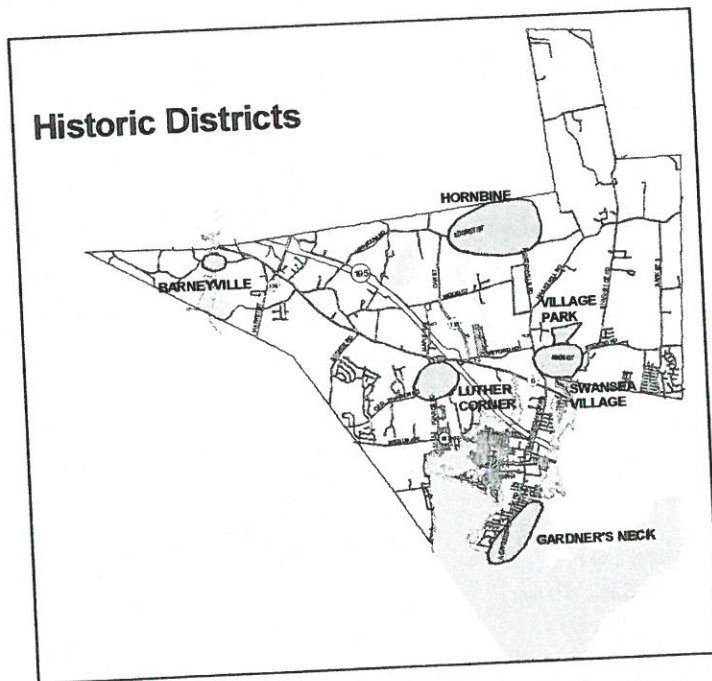
Luther Corner (Located south of Route 6 on Old Warren Road and Pearse/Maple Roads) Luther Corner is the location of an early colonial village settlement. During the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Luther's Corner was the commercial center of the town. A number of homes from the early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries still exist. The town's historic museum is located in this area.

Gardner's Neck (On Mount Hope Bay) This property was once utilized by local Indian tribes as a summer encampment. Fishing and hunting were relatively easy as the bluffs and coves were surrounded by wildlife. With colonization, a land grant extending from King Philips time led to the parcelization of this property. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century this area became a popular summer colony. Within the last 40 years, homes in this area have been converted for year round use.

Swansea Village (Near the Somerset boundary, north of the head of Lee River) At one time, a mix of residential and commercial structures, such as dry goods, clothing, and grocery establishments, were located here. The Montaup Power company built the dam here and owns the water rights. A number of fine residential estates have been converted to residential schools. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque Town Hall, Elizabethan library, and Gothic church in this area give the Swansea Village a distinctive quality. More recently, a police and highway department, and most recently a fire station, were erected in the village.

Hortonville/Hornbine (Mid-North section of Town) A grist mill was developed along the Cole River. An early village was developed around this mill, and by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there were commercial and public institutions in the area. Currently, the area is rural and residential.

Barneyville (On the Palmer River near Rhode Island) This was one location of the town's ship building industry and the first Baptist church settlement. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Mason Barney Shipyard, located along the Palmer River, was a significant location for the construction of three-masted ships. The Mason Barney Yard closed in 1861, and a site marker remains.



Village Park is an important archeological site that was purchased as a town park and did not receive designation as a Historic District. Abram's Rock is located within a unique conglomeration of pudding stone within the Park, which contains pre-Colonial hieroglyphic writings of Algonquian proverbs and script. Village Park is now under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission, which protects Abram's Rock and Lion's Head Rock (both within Village Park), because of their geological and archeological significance.

### **Historic Open Spaces, Scenic and Unique Environments**

Swansea is an area that is rich in historic open spaces, scenic and unique natural environments. These resource are located within the coastal areas as well as inland rural landscapes (See Map 5-1). Taken together they create that special town character and quality of life reflected in the vision goals established for the town's Open Space Plan. Many of these resources are threatened by inappropriately located and/or designed commercial and residential development which will further impact an increasingly fragmented landscape.

### **Historical Open Spaces**

Three landscape areas are noted for their history:

Two Mile Purchase is a large, relatively undeveloped and inaccessible rural area extending into Rehoboth in the north of Town. The town had acquired this rural, undeveloped area by 1838, at which point there was a school at 420 Baker Road, which no longer exists. Three farms are still in operation. In spite of the area's historical rural character and its designation as part of the Aquifer Protection District, there is substantial development pressure here with a new 29 house lot subdivision under plan review.

Village Park is a large forested area of wetlands and upland owned by the Town and managed by the Village Park Commission. It contains a significant amount of wildlife, hiking trails, and numerous Vernal Pools. From Wild Cat Rock formation, a high point in town, one can see all of Mount Hope Bay. An archaeological survey of various locations in Swansea was carried out in 1980 as a preparatory component of the Wastewater Facilities Plan that was prepared for the Town. Most of the archeological sites of interest in the town that were identified are located within Village Park. Abram's Rock, in particular, contains hieroglyphics from earlier Indian tribes who wintered in this area. The purchase of Village Park for conservation purposes was an important acquisition in terms of resource and historical preservation. The protection of this land is essential to prevent fragmentation of habitat areas as well as to preserve these historic and scenic resources for public enjoyment.

Martin's Farm is one of the earliest settlements in Swansea. John Martin was one of the first settlers and ca. 1728 he erected a home and farm which still remain today. The farm and house are in North Swansea near Route 6 and Stoney Hill Road. This property is maintained by the National Society of Colonial Dames of America.

### **Scenic and Unique Environments**

The unique natural environments of Swansea include significant rural and coastal resource areas that often are a locus of historical significance. These special places are located in wetland and river corridors, in the coastal estuaries and beaches found in Swansea. Because of their importance in the early development of Swansea, these areas contain the majority of the places nominated for recognition by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Palmer River Corridor This river corridor is located primarily within Rehoboth and what is known locally as "North Swansea."<sup>1</sup> The Barneyville Historical District is located along the Palmer River, and was the site of early ship building industry.

Cole's and Lewin Brook Corridors A second river corridor includes both Cole's and the Lewin Brook/Lee Rivers. This area incorporates the Two-Mile Purchase as well. This river corridor is the site of the Hortonville/Hornbine District and Swansea Village.

Kickamuit River Corridor This corridor contains two sites on the National Register of Historic sites, the Cole House and the Brown House. Luther's Corner Historic District is very close to the river corridor, off of Old Warren Road.

Barrier Beaches Two Barrier Beaches are located within town, Town Beach and Cedar Cove. The former, Town Beach, is located along a former railroad trestle. The later, Cedar Cove, is located at the tip of Gardner's Neck. This area was important to early Town development as a coastal community, and includes many houses of historical significance.

Open Spaces on Gardners Neck Located off Gardner's Neck Road and Route 6, is a 2 acre, privately owned parcel, currently used as a supply depot for a private company. Adjacent to this property is the Almeida Farm. Together these properties represent one of the last remaining coastal landscapes with a beautiful view of the Lees River.

<sup>1</sup> A regional Open Space and Recreation Plan 2001-2005, EOEA, SRPEDD, 2001, pps. 21-29.

### 5.3 OPPORTUNITIES/ANALYSIS

The **Historical and Cultural Assets Commission** has been active in town since 1965. Six people compose the Commission, who are appointed by the Selectmen on recommendation of the Commission. The Commission has a yearly appointment, but most members stay on for longer than a year, as their term is indefinite. The Historic Commission retained a consultant to survey the town's historic properties in 1986. The 2000 annual report stated that there were no ongoing grants within the year. It reported that recent activity was centered around maintaining the monuments and grounds at the Miles Garrison House and the Mason Barney Shipyard, at a cost of \$350.

A major role of the Commission is to work towards the preservation of the town's historic assets. In carrying out the master plan, the Commission has the opportunity to be a partner with other town boards in addressing the issues of growth management. The commission can become an active participant in the planning and implementation of programs to identify, evaluate, and protect the community's historic resources,

- The first step is to develop an effective local preservation program, i.e., identify a vision and priorities.
- Second in this effort, local commissions must work in cooperation with other municipal boards and agencies to ensure that the goals of historic preservation are considered in planning the town's growth. Important boards to work with include: the Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and the Building Inspector.

There are a number of opportunities, as identified below, for the Commission to participate in this growth management process. The starting point for this initiative is the excellent inventory undertaken

previously. Utilizing this inventory, and working jointly with the Planning Board, modifications in the current zoning should be considered so that it more closely reflects historic settlement patterns of the five districts. Other activities would include obtaining Town Meeting support for formalizing the role of the Historic Commission in Site Plan and Demolition Delay permit review, and the identification and planning of trails and other efforts at growth management preservation planning.

#### ***Utilize the Town's history to guide the future***

The historic forms of village and estate residences provide a range of contexts for shaping future land use patterns

#### **Adapt forms of local settlement patterns to shape various visions of future growth**

The town of Swansea developed around five specific village settings each with a mix of agriculture and/or fishing, possibly industry and retail uses, at least one church, and other public facilities. While the mix of land uses has evolved over time, each of these areas presents a settlement pattern which can continue to serve as a model for further growth. Farm and residential villages, mill towns, dense and estate summer colonies, and auto-orientated malls incorporate a mix of land uses and various set-back patterns which should be adapted to current requirements for living, working, and transportation. The current by-law, by contrast, does not respect these differences. The standard single family house on a 30,000 sq. ft lot is leading to development which is out of context to these traditional patterns and which fails to provide the diverse housing types and economic base which once existed in these diverse settings.

### ***Rural Village***

The Hortonville/Hornbine area is a rural-residential community which was originally developed with 7 mills. This industrial and agricultural area also had a post office and a church. Five properties recommended for the National Register are located in this area: the Benjamin Martin House, the Eddy/Baker farm complex (two sites), the Myron Baker Estate and the Daniel Hale House. Provisions should be made to recognize the historical residential character of this area of town through a range of tools. Site markers can recognize the historic importance of the village and individual properties. New zoning could encourage cluster development which preserves the historic setbacks and building styles. Important open space and resource areas should also be preserved. Due to the presence of critical natural resources, commercial uses are probably best excluded from this area other than possibly a local neighborhood retail use.

### ***Dense Beach Resort Community***

The area along Ocean Grove has traditionally served as a resort community for residents of the Fall River area. The dense development in this area markedly contrasts with the more spread out, rural feel of other parts of town. The pressure for year-round housing in this area has grown in the past decades with the renovation to year round use of what had been summer cottages. This change has put strains on the water and antiquated septic systems. Some sort of updated shared wastewater system is needed to properly serve these homes. Additional planning for road improvements, parking, and view shed protection (protection of views to the ocean) will be needed as the area continues to be upgraded.

### ***Estate Communities***

With the development of a railroad to serve the Gardner's Neck area as a summer residence in the 1880's and accelerating after World War I, there was an increase in the development on Gardner's Neck and Touisset with substantial estate homes. The large lot areas, broad setbacks, and views characterize a different settlement pattern for this part of town. The existing zoning does not recognize the prevalence of large lots or the protection of views. This settlement pattern might also be appropriate for the Two Mile Purchase Area.

### ***Town Center***

The Swansea Village/Town Center area contains some of the most visibly well-preserved and well-used historic buildings in town. The Town Library, Town Hall, and other public buildings such as the Police Department and Fire Station, School Administration, and Highway Department are located in this area. This area has also developed as the cultural and educational hub of the town. There are five educational facilities, three of which are private schools, and two churches in addition to the public buildings. In addition, the historic residential buildings have certain distinguishing features, including stone walls, smaller front yard setbacks, smaller lots, which give this area its village-like character. New development in the area should respect this traditional settlement pattern. Currently, commercial uses, which were once prevalent in this district, are not permitted. Would it make sense to combine this area with the land uses on Route 6 and establish a new historic mixed use district? At least two options are possible.

- If most municipal uses remain, tie Route 6 commercial activity and these municipal and office uses together into one integrated neighborhood that forms the historic core of the community, and include some, but not all public facilities, a mix of residential uses, and attract new, specialty retail. Seek local historic designation of Main Street and Stevens Road. Encourage redevelopment of Route 6 to smaller-scale commercial and mixed

residential/retail/office uses that reflect proximity to historic district, and potentially support nearby employees and students.

- A second option would have most municipal uses relocated to a modern mixed use town center area with historic district remaining as mostly residential village with local historic designation and with improved connections to Route 6, neighborhood orientated retail.
- Under both options, protect agricultural uses.

### **Protecting Historic Properties and Districts**

On the basis of the historic survey, five historic districts received national recognition as being worthy of preservation. In addition, 27 individual sites gained recognition, which include 61 properties. Some of the designated sites are located outside the districts, but the districts provide a sense of historical continuity to the Town's character and a framework for planning for future preservation. The Commission could consider identifying more historic districts that include more of the sites located on the state register.

The current designations provide a limited form of protection. Federal or State actions will require environmental review of a property which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places if the action impacts any of the designated properties under their purview. To advance the protection of the five historic districts and the properties within these districts, the Swansea Historical Commission needs the active support of other Town agencies and in particular the Planning Board. This support could take place at several different levels of enforcement.

### ***Increasing the role of the Historic Commission***

The most direct strategy would be to amend the zoning by-law to enable the Historic Commission to have a role in site plan review. The Historic Commission would review these projects, as notified by the Building Inspector, and file a report with the Planning Board. A second tier of commitment would be to create an overlay district of the historic village centers. Design guidelines for the protection of these districts, ie., setbacks, parking, landscaping, pedestrian circulation, building form might be prepared and used by the Historic Commission in considering site plan review of residential projects within or adjacent to the village areas. A third tier of commitment would be for the Historic Commission to work with the Planning Board on the development of new zoning districts to foster appropriate growth in such areas as Swansea Village.

### ***Discouraging Building Demolitions***

A second area of participation for the Historic Commission would be the adoption by the town of a Demolition Delay by-law. Under this by-law, the Historical Commission would assist the Building Inspector on a review of demolition permits for older structures

### **Protecting Scenic Resources**

The Town's natural environment along with its historic resources provides a context for shaping future growth. Wetlands, coastlines and natural landscapes have been a significant part of the Town's fabric. *How can the town preserve this fabric as well as adjust to changes brought about by the continued development of the Town?* The Open Space Plan proposed a system of Greenbelts. The adoption of this plan could be coordinated with the work of the Historic Commission as all the Historic Districts lie adjacent to one or another greenbelt.

### **Expanding Trail Networks**

There are a number of public and private trails within Swansea. With the exception of the proposed bike trail, these walking trails exist on isolated parcels, such as Village Park, and are not part of a larger system. There is a desire to have more off road, crushed gravel paths which could be used for bikes, walking and jogging. To address both the concerns of historic preservation and more public trails (discussed in the Open Space Plan), a trail that would link the majority of the nominated historical landmarks is proposed. This trail would link points of historical significance in Gardner's Neck, Swansea Village, Hortonville/Hornbine District, and Luther Corner in one historical trail, much like the Freedom Trail in Boston. (View Map 5-1.)

### **Scenic Roads and Bike routes**

The Transportation element of the Master Plan will identify scenic roads which could be designated as such, which would assist in the preservation of Swansea's historic sites and special landscapes. The bike route (shown on Map 5-1) is currently under construction. Together, the scenic roads and bike path could provide a foundation for organizing a protection strategy for the town. Roads, views, historic sites would all be identified and located within a series of historic and recreation walks and rides. Old roads and stone walls would be preserved.

The Historic Commission could instigate the creation of a scenic roads by-law, which would protect roads designated as scenic through a process of site plan review when considering future development. Working in conjunction with the Planning Board, the scenic roads bylaw would provide an effective means for having more input in preserving Swansea's historic and scenic resources.

### **Should the Role of the Historical and Cultural Assets Commission Be Modified?**

*The Historical Commission* is charged with the responsibility of building the town's inventory of historic resources. A summary of some of this inventory was discussed previously.

*The Swansea Historical Society* consists of 30-70 volunteer members, whose primary current function is to maintain the Luther Museum. The Historical Society has spent the last 10 years working to reconstruct the back wall of the Luther Museum, which is currently under construction. The Historical Society could be more active in publicizing and educating the public about the town history, which would free the Historical Commission to be more involved into translating the inventory into an action plan.

Historical Commissions have more legal responsibilities than do Historical Preservation or Historical Societies. For example, the Historical Commission has a legal responsibility in environmental review to have a commenting role in planning for environmental impacts. If the role of "historic preservation" was spread more evenly between the two historical groups, as well as coordinated with the growth management role of other boards, more steps could be made to preserve the historical and cultural assets of Swansea.

### **How much public oversight is appropriate for Swansea?**

In order for the Town to truly protect its resources and allow development which will be consistent with the town's rural heritage and character, there needs to be more of a consensus as to what preservation strategies should be pursued.

What type and degree of regulatory control is appropriate for the town's historic and scenic areas as well as the commercial districts? These discussions need to take place during the process of updating the town's by-laws.

**Should the Commission concentrate on providing information and support to other Boards?**

The Planning Board and Conservation Commission, as well as the Building Department could utilize support in providing information on the background and importance of various sites and buildings. By cooperating in this manner and working towards a common vision for managing future growth, all boards will benefit. Under this scenario, the Commission could provide the Planning Board input during the Site Plan review process with issues of historic and cultural importance.

**Should the Commission work directly with the Planning Board in identifying modifications to the Zoning By-law to facilitate growth management and historic preservation?**

A more activist strategy is also possible. A number of re-zoning strategies could be considered including new districts and/or overlay districts which would protect historic and scenic areas. The input of the Commission would be of great assistance during this process. Does the Commission want to get involved in the growth management planning process?

## 5.4 GOALS AND POLICIES

### Vision

*Utilize the various historic settlement patterns of farm and residential villages, mill towns, dense and estate summer colonies, and auto orientated malls as a model for shaping growth incorporating a mix of land uses, various set-backs area patterns, and resource protection while adapting to the current requirements for living, working, and transportation.*

### Policies:

1. Have the Historical and Cultural Assets Commission confirm a vision plan for the various residential areas, commercial districts, (See the Economic Development Section), and Open Space areas (the proposed Greenbelt plan identified in the Open Space Section of the Master Plan.
2. Work with the Master Plan Committee and Boards to identify appropriate protection strategies for village centers, sites, and scenic areas.
3. Get support of relevant town Boards and State agencies for pursuing appropriate preservation strategies.
4. Have the Historical Commission work with Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, and the Building Inspector to assist in the review of activities which would impact landmarks, scenic roads, historic sites and buildings.
5. Incorporate historical/cultural resource education into the public schools and Town Boards.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Publicize list of scenic, historic and special places as well as vision concept plan.(Map 5-1)
2. Consider expanding role of Commission to include:
  - Being involved in the Site Plan Review process
  - Working with the Master Plan Committee and Planning Board in the adoption of new residential, commercial, and resource protection districts
3. Promote historic preservation by:
  - Placing markers on historic properties which is consistent with a uniform system and theme of town signage (shape, material, size of signs, color)
  - Undertaking a program of public education
  - See grant funding to support preservation of specific structures
4. Formalize role of Historic Commission in review of impacts on local historic, cultural and scenic resources:
  - Site plan review
  - Subdivision review
  - Conservation Commission review
5. Formalize the role of the Historical Society to include:
  - Adopting a program of public education
  - Researching the background information of historic sites to assist the Commission in the evaluation of site-plan review processes
  - Assisting the Conservation Commission on design guidelines in historic districts and historic plaque markers
6. Consider new zoning by-law amendments
  - Demolition by-law A demolition delay ordinance is just that: a mechanism whereby demolition permits for certain buildings are delayed for a specified period of time in order to allow for consideration of preservation options. The Historic Commission should have an informal or formal agreement with the Town Building Inspector to review and comment on demolition permits for properties listed in the inventory of historical sites. The delay allows the Commission time to contact owners who may not be aware of their property's significance or of the potential benefits of preservation (including, in some cases, federal tax credits and state grants).
  - Protection of scenic roads, views, natural features, historical and archeological sites Swansea has a wealth of older, narrow roads which are bounded by stone walls and wetlands. The Town has the option of designating any road as scenic, which would mean the consent of the Planning Board would be required before any construction, tree removal, or demolition along the roadway. Scenic road designation does not prevent development along a road, but it gives the Town another way to influence that development in a manner that causes the least harm to a road's historic character. This designation can be recommended by the Planning Board, Conservation Commission or Historical Commission.
7. Collaborate with the historical societies and commissions in Rehoboth, Fall River, Somerset, Seekonk and Dighton to identify shared history.

- The history of Swansea is intertwined with that of its neighbors. The historical organizations should collaborate as much as possible to share ideas about historical trails and other methods of preservation that cross town and city boundaries.