# HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION

## Introduction

Mashpee’s heritage plays a central role in planning for the future. Historic and cultural resources within a community are indicators of this heritage and can include structures, properties, places, landmarks, archeological sites, landscapes, and natural areas that the community has determined to be noteworthy and of primary importance for recognition and preservation. The physical remnants of its heritage provide valuable glimpses into history, offering information on how people lived and worked, their values, and the roles they played in the community. They also provide us with an understanding of how the built environment has changed over time. The Heritage and Preservation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on the protection and preservation of important historic, cultural, and archaeological features of Mashpee. These historic and cultural resources are closely linked with a community’s natural and built environment.

Historic resources can be listed on federal, state, and local registers for a variety of reasons, including their architectural significance, their archaeological/historic significance, or because they reflect landscapes, development patterns, vocations, or lifestyles that are threatened. Many historic and cultural resources carry both federal and local protections. Understanding the levels of protection for historic resources is critical to the assessment of existing conditions and future preservation efforts. These levels of protection are described below:

* **The National Register of Historic Places** is the official list of the country’s historic places and is administered by the National Park Service (National Park Service, 2023). Historic and archeological resources are nominated and evaluated for admission onto the list, and individual properties and districts can be listed. The National Register denotes status upon these places and serves in the promotion of the resource and the municipality; however, protection from alteration and demolition is very limited. Historic places are protected from development that includes an element of federal funding, licensing, or permitting. The federal agency involved must document the effects of federal actions on historic properties and consult with stakeholders.
* **Local Historic Districts** **(LHD)** provide the most oversight for historic resources. In 2007, Mashpee residents approved incorporating the creation of a Historic District into Article 21 which also amended Chapter 3 of the Town’s General Bylaws to create a Historic District Commission to oversee the Historic District. The purpose of the District is “to aid in the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics and architecture of buildings and places significant in the history of the Town of Mashpee, the maintenance and improvement of their settings and the encouragement of new building designs compatible with the existing architecture” (Mashpee Historic District Commission, 2008). Mashpee, like many other municipalities, utilizes the power of its zoning bylaws to enforce standards for preservation and rehabilitation on historic properties within the designated district. See Section 6.3.3 for more information on Mashpee’s Historic District.
* A **Preservation Restriction (PR)** is a voluntary legal covenant that protects a significant historic, archaeological, or cultural resource from alteration or demolition. A PR is drawn up as a legal agreement and filed with the Registry of Deeds. This restriction runs with the land, regardless of the chain of ownership.

## Existing Conditions

### Historic Resources Inventory

The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) catalogs sites and designations, which are located in Figure 6-1 (Massachusetts Historical Commission, 2023).

National Register of Historic Places

Since 1998, Mashpee added five individual properties to the National Register. Table 6-1 provides a summary of those properties.

| **Table 6-1. Individually Listed Properties on the National Register in Mashpee** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **MHC Inventory Number** | **Property Name** | **Street** | **Year** | **Designationsa** |
| MAS.B | Old Indian Meeting House | N/A | N/A | NRIND |
| MAS.9 | Avant House | 414 Main St | c 1830 | NRIND (1998) PR (2001)  LHD (2007) |
| MAS.19 | Indian Meetinghouse | 410 Meetinghouse Road | c 1684 | NRIND (1998)  PR (2008) |
| MAS.800 | Old Indian Meeting House Burial Ground | 410 Meetinghouse Road | 1783 | NRIND |
| MAS.23 | South Mashpee School | 410 Meetinghouse Road | 1831 | NRIND |

*Source: National Register of Historic Places, 2022*

*Notes: a Designation definitions:*

*NRIND (National Register Individual Listing)*

*LHD (Local Historic District)*

*PR (Preservation Restriction)*

Archaeological Resources

A communitywide archaeological reconnaissance survey was completed in December 2011. Phases I-III of the survey were completed between 2009 and 2010. Mashpee is one of the only cities and towns to do so with Community Preservation Act funding (Christopher C. Skelly, 2018). The State Register of Historic Places notes four archaeological sites in the Willowbend area protected by private restrictions in 1987 (Fox 2, 3, 4, and 5A) (Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Office, 2020). An additional site was identified by the state at Mashpee Neck called the Shellheap Site.

Historic Structures

Mashpee contains historic structures that are clustered in some areas of Town, such as the Historic District, and scattered throughout other parts of the Town. Table 6-2 provides an overview of the information available on these historic structures within the Town.

| **Table 6-2. Identified Historic Structures** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Structure Name** | **Year Built** | **Address** |
| Bell Johnson House | ca. 1841 | 278 Main Street |
| Sanford House | 1870 | 33 West Silver Street |
| Lysander Z. Amos House/Old Post Office | 1875 | 28 Great Neck Road |
| First Pentecostal Church | N/A | 258 Main Street |
| Jonas Homestead | N/A | N/A |
| Gooch House | N/A | N/A |
| Mabel Avant House | ca. 1830 | 414 Main Street |
| Mashpee Parsonage | 1849 | 431 Main Street |
| Leonard Pocknet House | N/A | N/A |
| Archives Building | N/A | 12 Great Neck Road North |
| Samuel G. Davis School | 1835 | 16 Great Neck Road North |
| Mashpee Baptist Church | N/A | 27 Great Neck Road North |
| Old Indian Meeting House | N/A | N/A |
| Doctor’s Office | N/A | N/A |
| Horatio Amos House | N/A | 701 Great Neck Road South |
| Jones/Pocknett Homestead | ca. 1850 | 262 Main Street |
| Attaquin/Oakley/Hendricks House | ca. 1860 | 389 Main Street |
| Okry Trading Post | 1915 | 387 Main Street |

*Source: Town of Mashpee, 2022*

Burial Grounds

| **Table 6-3. Burial Grounds** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Location** | **Designations\*** |
| Avant Burial Ground | 60 & 64 Main Street | NRIND |
| Attaquin Burial Ground | 401 Main Street | LHD (2007) |
| Meetinghouse Cemetery | 410 Meetinghouse Road | NRIND (1998) |
| Heirs of Phoebe Pocknett | Great Neck Road South (near Punkhorn Point) | N/A |
| Pocknett Burying Ground | 95 Meetinghouse Road | N/A |
| Hicks Burial Ground | Falmouth/Sandwich Road | N/A |
| Ancient Cemetery | Lakewood Drive | N/A |
| Roxanna C. Mye Burying Ground | 4 Highview Avenue | N/A |
| Beckwith Property and Adjacent Lot 15 | Northern Mashpee | N/A |
| William Jones Burial Ground | The intersection of South Sandwich Road and Main Street | N/A |

The Mashpee Historical Commission has identified ten cemeteries and burial grounds in the Town. These are listed in Table 6-3.

Source: Mashpee *Historical Commission*, *2022*

### Scenic Landscapes

Mashpee’s location and geology together help to define its landscape. The Town is dominated by water features in the form of ocean, bays, streams, ponds, and wetlands. Although the Town is relatively low-lying, there are several scenic vistas. Dead Neck in South Cape Beach State Park provides spectacular views of Vineyard Sound, Waquoit Bay, and Sedge Lot Pond. Farther east in the Park, the dunes offer views of Nantucket Sound and the waterfowl that reside on Great Flat Pond.

Sacconesset Point, a 40-foot-high bluff at the midpoint of Mashpee’s coastline, offers spectacular views across the Sound to Martha’s Vineyard. Unfortunately, this area has been developed for private house lots and is not accessible to the public. This is a predominate development pattern along the shoreline in Mashpee with the only public views of the ocean at a small fisherman’s landing

owned by the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife at the end of Wading Place Road. Other views of the coastal ponds are limited, as their shores are predominantly privately owned. The Seconsett Island Road causeway offers an excellent vista of Waquoit Bay to the south and the marshes of Hamblin Pond to the north. The Pond can also be viewed from the Monomoscoy Island Road causeway, which offers views of the extensive marsh system of the upper Great River, as well as the islands and wooded shore of an undeveloped area known as Bufflehead Bay. The property was acquired for public use and offers stunning views of the upper Great River marshes, Jehu Pond, and Abigail’s Brook.

No Town roads or publicly owned properties exist in the densely developed areas of New Seabury or Popponesset. As a result, views of Fells Pond, Fish Hook Pond, and most of Popponesset Bay are no longer readily available to the public. One vista of Dean’s Pond and its white footbridge is available from Shore Drive. Popponesset Bay can be viewed from the Pirates Cove Town landing at the end of Mashpee Neck Road or from a small undeveloped conservation area at the end of Punkhorn Point Road, opposite Gooseberry Island. Otherwise, one has to visit Cotuit’s Crocker Neck Conservation Area for views of the Bay, as the Mashpee side is fully developed with privately owned land.

Many of Mashpee’s most scenic areas, particularly along the ocean, bays, and pond shores have been impacted by private development. Those that remain for the public to enjoy are important to the Town’s cultural heritage and should remain protected for the public.

### Culturally Significant Landscapes

The Town of Mashpee has a rich cultural history that presents several varied types of culturally significant landscapes.

**Route 130 (Main Street)**

Route 130 is Mashpee’s Main Street. As shown in Figure 6-2, the area of Route 130 around Great Neck Road North comprises the historic Town Center of Mashpee. A portion of this area was designated as a Historic District (the District) in 2007. The District begins on Route 130 just north of Ashumet Road and continues along Route 130 for approximately 1.4 miles, just west of Shields Road (see Figure 6-2).

The District is the traditional center of the Town, remarkable for its unique history in which the culture and heritage of the Native American Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and European settlers forged a vibrant and deeply connected community for several hundred years. The District includes a mixture of modest 19th and 20th-century buildings, sites of important former buildings, the herring run, and other natural open space in a semi-rural landscape.

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**Figure 6-1. Mashpee Historic District**

*Source: Town of Mashpee, 2022*

Map

Description automatically generatedThe District is intended to preserve the spirit and historic integrity of the traditional Town center, in the present and for the future by protecting the existing historic architectural resources and ensuring that new construction is compatible with the historic character of the District. The District is governed by the Mashpee Historic District Manual (2008) and a Historic District Commission. Section 110-1 of the Mashpee General Bylaws states:

*The purpose of the District is to aid in the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics and architecture of buildings and places significant in the history of the Town of Mashpee, the maintenance and improvement of their settings and the encouragement of new building designs compatible with the existing architecture.*

The Mashpee Historic District Manual (the Manual) provides property owners within the District guidance in preserving both the essential features of their individual properties and the character of the Historic District in which they are located.

### Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, also known as the People of the First Light, has inhabited present day Massachusetts and Eastern Rhode Island for more than 12,000 years (Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, 2023). They are one of two federally recognized tribes of Wampanoag people in Massachusetts. The Tribe was recognized in 2007, and as of 2023, consists of 2,600 enrolled members (Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, 2023).

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Challenges

Mashpee’s history and cultural resources are not adequately promoted to the public. The importance of this land to the Mashpee-Wampanoag Tribe and the region’s ties to tribal heritage have long been viewed by many residents as overlooked and misrepresented. Many feel the cultural heritage of the Mashpee-Wampanoag Tribe is being lost and should be promoted as an important aspect of the region’s history.

### Opportunities

Many residents voiced their desire to include Mashpee-Wampanoag Tribal heritage and history studies into local school curriculums to ensure future generations are exposured to the region’s cultural heritage and enhance future collaboration between the Tribal government and local government.

### Current Measures

The Historical Commission in recent years has initiated the Mashpee Historical Commission Preservation Awards to honor community members who positively contributed to preservation of Mashpee's history and heritage. Programming along with the One-Room school house has increased by offering educational tours to students and staying open to the public in late Spring and through the summer months. The Town has sought to enhance the vitality of the historic Mashpee Center by designing and installing monuments to honor Mashpee Veterans, notably a new monument that honors 252 veterans from Mashpee who fought in United States wars from the Revolutionary War to the Vietnam War. Additionally, the Town has collaborated with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to perform dendrochronology to identify the age of the Mashpee Parsonage with hopes to have it restored. The historical commission has also been working to revitalize historic cemeteries throughout the Town with new fencing, clearing of debris, and working toward rehabilitating ancient stones.

## Goals and Policies

*Goals*

1. Ensure that unique archaeological resources are preserved.
2. Ensure that future development and redevelopment reflects the historic character of Mashpee and celebrates local culture.

*Policies*

1. Enhance the vitality of the Mashpee Historic District located at the Traditional Village Center of Mashpee.
2. Preserve and protect the Town’s known archaeological and scenic resources and work to investigate and catalogue any potentially unknown archaeological resources.
3. Support Mashpee’s unique cultural heritage through education programs.