

**WESTPORT POINT HISTORIC DISTRICT EXPANSION 2006****Introduction**

The Westport Point Historic District was created by Town By-Law in 1973 to encompass 162 lots in the Westport Point "village," one of four village-like concentrations within the larger legal entity of the Town of Westport. A comprehensive description of the Westport Point area and its significance was prepared in 1992 and filed as part of its Registration Application with National Register of Historic Places (see attached).

Westport Point is found at the southern end of the peninsula formed by the two branches of the Westport River as they join and then flow around Horseneck Beach into the sea at the juncture of Rhode Island Sound and Buzzards Bay. This coastal village responds both to the sea and to the rolling farmlands behind it. Its history spans from its initial 18th century settlement, through commercial development of whaling in the early-mid 19th c, and then to its growth as a modest summer resort in the late 19th and early 20th c. In the 21st c, the village is facing another demographic shift, as "empty-nesters" find the location very enticing, with its beautiful river, marshlands and farms, quiet pace and historic setting, all surprisingly in close proximity to urban amenities in Boston and Providence.

**Significance**

The historical and architectural significance of the Westport Point Historic District lies in the aggregate, rather than the individual properties. The area includes a mix of residential styles, with the earliest structures located at the southern end near the wharves, and the later summer houses in-filling between older structures or built on what was formerly farmlands. Modern intrusions have had little impact on the integrity of the village and its setting, with the size, scale, materials and design of the more recent buildings generally sympathetic to their older neighbors. The overall sense of scale and style is modest and unostentatious.

**Justification of Boundaries**

The current boundaries for the Westport Point Historic District were established through a political process, and are not architecturally or historically grounded. The original proponents for the local historic district in the early 1970s balanced the quest for a large enough aggregation of properties to encompass the sense of the village against the political risks of attempting to include some unwilling parties who would speak against the By-Law at Town Meeting. In light of the desirability to have contiguous boundaries, some properties that are architecturally and historically relevant to the local historic district and fully part of the Westport Point area were not included in the final version of the By-Law approved by Town Meeting.

**Methodology**

A group of property owners at the northern end of the Westport Point area banded together and formed a committee to investigate how to bring their properties into the Westport Point Historic District. The committee's work resulted in a report and petition to the Westport Historical Commission (copy attached) requesting expansion of the local historic district to include an additional sixteen lots (fourteen homes and two empty lots). Of the fourteen owners of the sixteen lots, twelve signed the petition; two owners do not wish to sign, but have informed that s/he will not oppose the expansion.

The proposed expansion area is contiguous with the current local historic district, running along both sides of Main Road to the north. This area had formerly been farmland, and was built on starting at the end of the 18th c. The properties in the proposed expansion area are very much like those already included in the local historic district – a mix of architectural styles, two built at the end of the 18th c, one early 19th c, eight from mid-late 19th c, two from mid 20th c. The various building sizes, styles, scale and mass are sympathetic with each other and their respective sites. All appear to be well maintained – several are in exceptionally good condition. (See attached inventory forms). Thirteen of the fourteen homes in the proposed expansion area are already included in the Massachusetts Registry of Historic Places, and twelve of these are also listed on the National Registry. Plans are underway to propose the thirteenth for the National Registry. The fourteenth home is new construction, built in 1998.

The Westport Historical Commission voted unanimously on October 13, 2005 to accept the petition and to undertake to complete the processes in time to present a petition to the next Town Meeting to accomplish this expansion. The Commission commended this grass roots effort (not imposed from outside or from above) which would benefit not only those coming under the protection of the local historic district regulations, but also the owners of property already in the current local historic district.