

Historic Preservation on Martha's Vineyard

Status of Inventories - May 7, 2015

Professional community-wide historic architectural survey updates were completed for the towns of Chilmark, Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, Tisbury, and West Tisbury during the period 1998-2000, supported by Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Survey and Planning Grants in three grant cycles to the Martha's Vineyard Commission. Products of these projects, including final survey reports with further study recommendations are on file with the Martha's Vineyard Commission. In addition, an architectural survey of Aquinnah was directly funded by the MHC in 1998. In 2009 a professional architectural survey update for West Tisbury was undertaken for the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society. Further study recommendations were also included in the final survey report for this project.

The following is the number of surveyed properties: Aquinnah - 76, Chilmark - 87, Edgartown - 472, Gosnold - 2, Oak Bluffs - 829, Tisbury - 170, and West Tisbury - 231.

Michael Steinitz of MHC reviewed the recommendations and summarized them here.

- Aquinnah (Public Archaeology Lab) – No recommendations for further survey were included.
- Chilmark (UMass Archaeological Services) - Survey stone peat houses (5 identified); conduct more intensive research on reputed earliest buildings; research Menemsha boathouses. In addition a list of properties for further study is included.
- Edgartown (Public Archaeology Lab) – Research additional properties in the historic districts that have not previously been documented on MHC forms, or for which only 1973 era inventory forms exist. [This project focused on the existing districts. No recommendations for survey work needed outside the districts were provided.]
- Oak Bluffs (UMass Archaeological Services) – Undertake additional research on three historically African-American neighborhoods. [This project focused on properties with historic African American associations in Oak Bluffs. No general recommendations for survey work in Oak Bluffs were provided.]
- Tisbury – (Public Archaeology Lab) Survey properties south of the West Chop Area. (Survey focused on properties in West Chop and did not make recommendations for survey work elsewhere in Tisbury.)
- West Tisbury (UMass Archaeological Services, 1999) – Additional survey in West Tisbury Center, Music Street, Middletown, Christiantown, and Lambert's Cove.
- West Tisbury (Public Archaeology Lab, 2009)- Christiantown Area Form. [Some of the other 1999 recommendations may have been addressed.]

Michael said that we don't have a lot of basis for needs analysis beyond the recommendations of these reports. Given the passage of time since these projects were undertaken, and the limited scope of the further study recommendations they included, it would be safe to assume that additional survey documentation would be appropriate for these towns. Likely priorities not identified in these reports would include, but are not be limited to, historic properties in Edgartown outside the historic districts and on Chappaquiddick, and previously un-surveyed properties in Tisbury and Oak Bluffs. Considerable interest and greater understanding of mid-20th century architecture has emerged since these surveys were undertaken, and it would be appropriate to document any examples of modernist seasonal housing of this period.



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