

*Returned by  
M. Scanlon*

# REPORT

## LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK AND PRESERVATION DISTRICT

### CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

prepared for

DIVISION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES  
NORTH ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

by

SHEPLEY BULFINCH RICHARDSON AND ABBOTT  
ARCHITECTS  
BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS

P. A. N. S.  
of the Town of  
**LOWELL**  
BELVIDERE VILLAGE,  
Taken by Mr. J. W. ...  
BENJ. NATHAN.  
1832.

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- 3. ...
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Architects            Boston, Massachusetts

PROPERTY OF  
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

1980

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## PREFACE

This Report and its accompanying fourteen inventory volumes and seventeen base maps together form the end product of a \$99,980 contract (CX1600-9-0005) between the National Park Service and Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott. The purpose of this contract was to inventory and begin an architectural and socio-economic interpretation of the cultural resources of the Lowell Historic Preservation District and the Lowell National Historical Park as represented by the 895 individual properties which exist in the District and Park.

The project commenced in March, 1979, and was completed in January, 1980. To SBRA's knowledge, no other cultural resources inventory of similar depth and magnitude has ever been undertaken particularly in such a brief time span. Such pioneering work as that of the Cambridge (Massachusetts) Historical Commission and of the Vieux Carré project in New Orleans, Louisiana extended over a number of years.

That this project was successfully completed is entirely due to many dedicated people in Lowell, on the SBRA staff and at the National Park Service.

Among the latter, special thanks are due to Francis P. McManamon and to Bronwyn Krog, who acted almost like a member of the SBRA team and without whom the project could not have succeeded, as well as to Ramon A. Cintron, Contracting Officer, whose understanding of the problems involved in the project went beyond normal expectation.

In Lowell, the people who deserve special mention are the hundreds of owners of the properties being surveyed who were understanding and went out of their way to be helpful; there are so many of these that to mention one would be a disservice to others. At Boott Mills, Melvin Lezberg generously made the Locks and Canals archive and much of his time available, and Roland LaRochelle was constantly helpful. At the University of Lowell's Alumni-Lydon Library, Martha Mayo, Librarian of Special Collections, was especially helpful as well as tolerant of researchers turning the place upside down. And Edward Harley and Robert



MacLeod were equally gracious and full of information at the City of Lowell Memorial Library. We are also thankful to Helena Wright at the Merrimack Valley Textile Museum in North Andover.

Edward S. Rutsch and Michael N. Gimigliano of Historic Conservation and Interpretation, Inc. were indispensable in the research for and writing about the archaeological aspects of the project. Pauline Carroll prepared the report on the Lowell canal system.

However, there would have been no project had it not been for the SBRA staff and particularly Edward F. Zimmer, Principal Investigator. His dedication, understanding, long hours spent on the project and scholarship literally held the team together. Anne Booth, Chief Researcher was second only to Ed Zimmer in her contributions to a successful conclusion.

It is hard to single out these two when one considers the hard work put in by other members of the survey/research team: Anne Grady, Edward Gordon, Mickail Koch, Ellen Lipsey, and Brian Pfeiffer.

Last only because she never was officially a member of the team, but certainly not least, to be thanked is Constance Zimmer who proofread all of the material, collated it, prepared it for reproduction, then reviewed the final product; it is probably fair to say that she is and may remain the only person to read all of the material produced.

And, of course, there never would have been a legible final product had it not been for our three Lowell typists, Mary Christmas, Peggy Lightner and Alice Santos.

To all of these people, the Lowell Cultural Resources Inventory project owes a great debt of gratitude and thanks.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY: INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY, PERSPECTIVES, AND SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

Lowell is a city of 95,000 in northeastern Massachusetts, thirty miles north of Boston and three miles from the New Hampshire border. The city is built around the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers. At the northern side of the city, the Merrimack traverses a long rapids called Pawtucket Falls, before sweeping around a broad bend and receiving the waters of the Concord. Between the head of these rapids and the mouth of the Concord, the waters of the Merrimack drop thirty-two feet. It was this fall of water that drew to Lowell the men, the women, the money, and the technology of this country's first industrial city. Here for the first time agrarian America saw an entire town, and soon a major city spring up that drew its livelihood not from fishing or farming, lumbering or mining, nor from the shipping or buying and selling goods, but from large-scale, mechanized, highly organized manufacturing.

Within a century after its bold beginnings in the 1820s, Lowell's industrial foundation was crumbling. The major corporations that had founded the city began to relocate or to fail, closing their giant textile mills. Lowell entered the Great Depression several years before the country as a whole, and the city is still striving to regain full economic health. Within the last decade, however, there has been a renewed awareness of Lowell's significant role in American history, combined with a realization that the city's historical resources might become economic resources as well.

Awareness led to action. The first step in the early 1970s was the development and broad acceptance of the concept that Lowell should establish an urban cultural park. This park would preserve Lowell's unique historic resources, and interpret the city's history to the nation. The city government made a firm

commitment to the historic park concept, and since 1975 has spent more than twelve million dollars on activities supportive of park-oriented revitalization. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts authorized the Lowell Heritage State Park in 1974 to help preserve Lowell's historic resources and develop public appreciation and enjoyment of those resources. Several private, public, and joint projects to rehabilitate and reuse historic buildings have been completed or are underway.

In 1972 and 1973 federal legislation was introduced to create an Urban National Cultural Park in Lowell. Those bills did not pass, but in 1975 the Lowell Historic Canal District Commission was established by Congress to prepare a plan for the preservation and interpretation of Lowell's historic resources. The report of that commission, together with the cooperative efforts of the National Park Service (NPS), Paul Tsongas (first as a Congressman, then as a Senator), and the Department of the Interior, produced the legislation that was passed by Congress in 1978 and signed into law by President Carter. This law established a two-tiered federal involvement: the Lowell National Historical Park (LNHP or the Park) a unit of the National Park Service, and the Lowell Historic Preservation District (LHPD or the District)--administered by a commission under the Department of the Interior.

The Park consists of the areas planned for intensive visitor use in the interpretation of Lowell and its canal system. The District surrounds the Park as a buffer zone and enables federal assistance in the preservation and revitalization of Lowell. The Park includes within its boundaries the 5.6 mile power canal system, a portion of the central business district, and three major mill complexes. The area within the Park boundaries totals 134 acres, but present plans envision direct National Park Service ownership of only a handful of buildings, with other property remaining in private hands. The District includes the mills or mill sites of most of the rest of the major textile corporations, the remainder of the historic central business district, and areas along the Concord River where smaller factories flourished outside the main waterpower system.

The legislation establishing the Park and the District outlined the broad policies and goals of the federal commitment and drew the geographic boundaries of the two zones. Implementation of the legislative concepts requires a further process of careful planning, based upon a thorough knowledge of the specific historical resources included in the Park and the District. The Lowell Cultural Resources Inventory was therefore commissioned by the National Park Service, North Atlantic Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resources and executed by Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott, Inc. (SBRA) between March 1979 and January 1980. The information produced by the inventory will be used in Park and Preservation District planning, and is also available through local libraries to Lowell's citizens and visitors. This report is a summary and an initial interpretation of the inventory data. In the remainder of this first chapter, the goals and methods of the inventory are described, the inventory form devised for the project is discussed and illustrated, and the results of the inventory are summarized.

The second chapter describes the prehistoric human use of the area within and around the Park and the District, and assesses the area's current potential for containing archeological remains of those people. The chapter is based on documentary research and surface examination of the District and the Park by professional prehistoric and industrial archeologists.

The third chapter outlines the historical development of Lowell, particularly within the area of the Park and the District, and relates existing buildings, canals, street patterns, and other historic resources such as the foundations and yards of demolished mills and boarding houses, buried canals, trash pits, and other known and potential historic archeological features.

The fourth chapter interprets the inventory data in terms of current patterns of land use and urban activity. This chapter describes twelve distinct areas of the Park and the District, and identifies their historical resources, applying a spatial perspective to the inventory data.

This report is based in its entirety upon the principal product of the Lowell Cultural Resources Inventory--the individual inventory forms and research reports, totaling over 3,700 pages of information on 895 properties. Hopefully this report reflects the richness of the inventory data, and thereby, the bounty of cultural resources in Lowell.

#### INVENTORY METHODOLOGY

##### Staff

A team of five surveyor-researchers carried out the inventory tasks of observation, research, recording, assessment, and photography from April through September of 1979. All five have graduate degrees or have done graduate-level study in architectural history, archeology, art history, or preservation studies and were experienced in architectural research and survey procedures. Prehistoric and industrial archeologists assisted in the inventory as consultants, and a technological historian researched and wrote about the canal system. An architectural historian directed the project as Principal Investigator, and a registered architect oversaw the whole effort.

##### Inventory Form

At the start of the project basic decisions had to be made about the types of information to be sought, and an inventory form to record and present the information had to be designed. The form described below was devised jointly by the NPS and SBRA. The goal was to provide a broad data base for Park and District planners, property owners, developers, and students and scholars of Lowell. A facsimile of the inventory form used in the project follows page 12. Four categories of information were identified and arranged on the form under the headings Identification, Historical Abstract, Descriptive Data, and Visual Assessment. The following discussion of the inventory form focuses on terminology and on the sources and procedures employed. The Historical Abstract category is discussed last, because the research on which each Historical Abstract is based was performed after the field and office work of the other categories.



### Identification

The first category, Identification, includes information about the current status of an individual property, and is intended to assist the planners of the Park and the District. Most of this category's information was drawn from city records.

Property owners were identified through the City Engineer's plates. Those maps show the ownership of each parcel in the city, and are updated regularly. The ownership list drawn from these plates was also the basis for defining the individual survey units or properties. Most typically, an individually recorded property consists of a single building on a defined lot, or a vacant lot unrelated to adjacent lots in use or ownership. Secondary buildings and outbuildings are included on the inventory form of their primary building. Adjacent vacant parcels under one ownership are recorded together or with adjacent, improved property of the same owner. Where groups of adjacent buildings are under one ownership, such as in the mill complexes, an inventory form was prepared on each building.

Owner-occupants were identified through the 1977 Lowell City Directory--the most recent issue. Owners residing or operating a business in a premise were regarded as owner-occupants. The question was also answered in the affirmative when the surname of the listed owner matched that of an occupant.

Historic names were found through the research work. Many commercial and industrial buildings are named on historic maps or in directories. For most others, historic names were assigned based upon the earliest or most notable owner or occupant.

Property type relates to the original function of the structure on a property. Distinctions were made between single family dwellings (SFD), two family dwellings or duplexes (2FD), and multiple-unit dwellings (Mult dwl). Industrial structures within mill complexes (mill struc) were differentiated from buildings used for manufacturing purposes that were not part of distinct complexes (other ind). Parcels without buildings, including parking lots, were designated undeveloped (undevel), unless there was strong evidence that they contained significant archeological resources (archo).

Each property's zoning classification was determined from the city zoning map. Tax information was drawn from the City Assessor's List of Tax Takings dated April 1, 1979, and from consultation with the Assessor's Office. Properties within historic districts were identified through the Boundary Map of the Lowell National Historical Park and through records of the National Register of Historic Places.

### Photography

The field work portion of the inventory included the photographing of each property. All photographs were taken with 35mm SLR cameras using black and white film, 50mm and 35mm lenses were most frequently used. The inventory photographs of buildings are intended to record basic architectural information such as massing and roofline, and as much detail as possible. When possible, a view was chosen showing mainly the principal facade, but including an oblique view of one side and the roofline. Photographs of vacant lots record the surface condition, and locate the lot within its setting.

### Descriptive Data

This category systematically records basic information about style, structure, use, and materials. Both the Descriptive Data and Visual Assessment categories are based on the surveyor's visual observations of exteriors. (An exception is the information on square footage, which was drawn from the City Engineer's plates.) Narrative descriptions of most buildings were included at the end of the inventory form or within the more extensive research report prepared for the most significant properties.

Many buildings in the Park and the District are difficult to categorize by architectural style. Simple structures that reflect a local, traditional way of building were identified as "vernacular." Many industrial buildings, particularly of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, were designated "utilitarian."

Present use of the ground floor (GF) and upper floors (UF) of inventoried buildings was judged by street-level observation. The terms abbreviated on the field version of the inventory form, such as "off" (office) and "res" (residential), are spelled out on the typed version of the form in the inventory volumes. Commercial (com) use of a building indicates retail, wholesale, or service enterprises such as beauty parlors. Warehouse (warehs) use includes storage on the upper floor of a building by a merchant operating a store on a lower floor.

Stories were counted from ground-level to the cornice or eaves. Lighted attics and the "roof story" of mansard-roofed buildings were designated as half stories.

The square footage recorded refers to the whole property, rather than to the floor space of a building on the property. The major block of a building, exclusive of small additions, forms the basis for both the plan shape and roof type recorded on the inventory form.

#### Visual Assessment

This category recorded information relative to a property's and an area's potential for rehabilitation and interpretation. The answers required the various surveyors to make consistent judgments throughout the Park and the District. Applying and maintaining consistent standards was a major concern. Each of the choices within each of the questions was defined and discussed by the whole team before field work began, specific cases were discussed by the group as the inventory progressed, and the judgments were reviewed and sometimes modified for the sake of consistency by the project director in the final editing of each form. Each of the major visual assessment questions was regarded as a continuum, and the goal was to position each property accurately, relative to the other properties inventoried.

Building condition, like all the visual assessments, was judged through exterior observation. Buildings in excellent condition included those newly built or rehabilitated, and buildings diligently maintained.

Good condition applied to structures without obvious need of repair, but in less-than-pristine condition. The intention was to reserve the "excellent" category to identify mint-condition buildings and to include a broader group of well-maintained structures within the "good" category. "Needs minor repair" designated buildings with problems such as peeling paint or a few broken windows. "Needs major repair" indicated more extensive or structural problems. The "derelict" designation described buildings that cannot be used without being virtually rebuilt.

The variety of buildings and of their states of repair throughout the District complicated the problem of making consistent judgements of condition, and necessitated some differentiation by types of buildings. A badly burned house in need of a new roof structure and major interior repairs was identified as derelict, while a large industrial building with serious fire damage confined largely to the top floor and roof was judged in need of major repair. The relative scale of the damage in relation to the size of the building was the determining factor in these decisions.

The question of "integrity of historic building fabric" addressed the quantity of surviving historic material, not its quality or condition. Sometimes poorly maintained buildings retain more original material than buildings that have been aggressively maintained, especially when the maintenance has involved removal of deteriorated elements. "Intact original fabric" identified buildings virtually unchanged in appearance since construction. "Intact with evolutionary alterations" indicated structures that had undergone various alterations which did not substantially obscure their original form, and which now present coherent designs reflecting more than one period of development. "Intact with minor changes" was the designation applied to buildings that retained most of their original fabric, but had suffered relatively minor changes or losses unsympathetic to the original design.

A building was identified as having undergone major but reversible changes if its historic fabric was largely obscured or disfigured, but enough original material appeared to survive to provide the potential for rehabilitation to a relatively intact historic



appearance. Buildings were classified as having suffered major and irreversible changes when their historic fabric was destroyed or damaged to such a degree that reconstruction, rather than rehabilitation, would be required to approximate an historic appearance.

The last three visual assessment questions involved specific properties and their surroundings. To provide useful distinctions between properties, only a few buildings or lots on each side of a property were considered in these judgments. In addition, the areas flanking a property were weighed more heavily in these judgments than those facing it or behind it.

In identifying surrounding land uses, "xway" was used to designate major, divided roadways. Other abbreviations indicate recreational (rec) and institutional (inst). Canal or river frontage was recorded when there was a clear and near view of the waterway from the property, even if a street or another lot separated the property from immediate, physical frontage on the waterway.

The question of "integrity of property's historic period setting" focused on a property's surroundings, excluding the property itself, and like the assessment of historic fabric, was concerned more with the survival of historic features than with their condition. The five choices were regarded as forming a continuum, and each setting was judged relative to other settings within the Park and the District. 1920 was chosen as a general cutoff date for the "historic period" in terms of this question, because it marks the approximate start of the city's rapid decline as a textile-producing center, and begins an era characterized by demolition rather than construction. This question sought to identify meaningful and mutually reinforcing groups of historic properties, rather than to regard negatively every change that has occurred in the history of an area, recognizing that no setting remains completely unchanged for very long.

The "intact" category of the historic setting continuum is a relative standard, identifying the most visually intact groups of historic properties in the Park and the District. A setting was designated "intact with minor intrusions and/or losses" when

most of the properties surrounding the one in question contain nineteenth or early twentieth century structures, but some notable changes are apparent. As the scope of this question excluded the property being surveyed, some vacant lots or modern, disruptive buildings were identified as having intact settings, while the historic properties around them, because of those neighbors, had settings that are intact with minor intrusions and/or losses. Combined with the response to the next question, which identifies such disruptive lots or buildings as detracting from the historic character of their areas, properties can be identified that need redevelopment compatible with their settings.

A "moderately disrupted setting" was identified when the surrounding mix of properties included as many reflections of recent periods as of pre-1920 development. A "severely disrupted setting" was one consisting primarily of twentieth century construction or demolition.

The final Visual Assessment question judged the contribution of each property to its setting. Few properties were identified as focal points. Focal points were defined as the principal elements in determining the character of their respective areas, and as visual landmarks. City Hall, the Hildreth Building, and the clock tower at Boott Mills are focal points. Integral properties together define the character of their areas, but do not individually have the visual dominance of a focal point. Middle Street consists of a fine group of late nineteenth century buildings, all "integral to character" of the street. Any historic structure retaining most of its historic fabric was identified as integral. Compatible properties were those which were appropriate to the historic character of their areas in scale and materials but, by their period of construction or present condition, did not contribute to their areas. Detracting properties were those judged inconsistent with the historic properties in their areas in terms of scale, period of construction, siting, materials, and/or condition.

### Historical Abstract

The documentary research necessary to complete the Historical Abstract on each property commenced soon after the field work of the inventory began. The sources of information most widely used were the published maps and atlases from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that provide general outlines of the buildings standing throughout Lowell. The maps of 1821, 1832, 1841, 1850, and 1868 were particularly useful, along with the 1879, 1896, 1906, 1924, and 1936 atlases. These were consulted on each property and the appearance, disappearance, and other changes in the building outlines were duly noted. The maps and atlases often provided other information as well, such as owners' or buildings' names, or heights and materials of structures. Many other primary and secondary sources were consulted, but the maps and atlases provided the foundation for the research on each property and, interpreted along with stylistic evidence, identified the dates of construction and of major alterations to most structures.

Construction dates and information on the lifespan of previous buildings on a property were documented by indicating the sources of the information. The researchers also recorded whether the dates were directly documented (doc) by the sources cited, extrapolated circumstantially (circum), such as from a single map and stylistic evidence, or estimated (est) without documentary support. Many construction dates could be narrowed down to a decade and were so recorded, e.g. ca. 1832-41, indicating that the structure was built within that time span, not that the construction took nine years.

In completing the historical abstract portion of each form, certain of the questions were addressed only to the current structure on a property, and so were not applicable in cases of vacant lots. Construction date, architect, and original use were not entered for previous structures on a property, but rather only for current structures.

### Additional Information

Since considerable descriptive and historical information was gathered that did not fit within the standardized inventory form, two distinct means of presenting this information were employed. In the cases of about two-thirds of the properties, three narrative sections were included with each inventory form, entitled and containing: Additional Description, Additional Historical Information and Sources, and Archeological Comment. The first two of these sections clarified and expanded upon information contained in the first four categories of the form. The archeological narrative briefly reviewed the information on past uses of the site and the present condition of the site and assessed the potential for below-ground resources in each property. Properties identified through documentary research or field observation as potentially significant archeological sites were inspected by the inventory team's archeological consultants.

### In-Depth Research

Over one-third of the properties received research attention and visual assessment in far greater depth than their neighbors. A "List for In-Depth Research" was assembled jointly by SBRA and NPS following completion of initial field and research work. Properties representing the full range of construction dates, building types and uses, and locations within the Park and the District were selected. Included were all of the major industrial complexes, most of the nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings in the central business district, and many representative residences and institutional buildings. The canal system and several sites formerly occupied by important buildings or complexes were also studied.

The information sought in this in-depth research was an extension of the Historical Abstract of the inventory form, including information on the date of construction and alterations to structures, identification of designers and builders, and information on the owners, the occupants, and the uses of present and previous buildings on the property. In place of the Additional Description and Additional Historical



LOWELL CULTURAL  
RESOURCES INVENTORY

survyr	EG. & MK.
start	5 / 1 / 79
A-D cmp	5 / 8 / 79
E-F cmp	5 / 7 / 79
G comp	6 / 5 / 79
phto taken	5 / 1 / 79



# 12

A. IDENTIFICATION 1) Address 155, 157, 159 Middlesex Street

2) Current Owner John O'Laughlin owner occ: yes  no

3) Historic Name Marston Building unk

4) Current Name same unk

5) Property type: SFD canal archeo  
2FD canal struc govt  
(circle one) mult dwl mill struc other bldg  
 com other ind other  
church undevel

6) Zoning Classification I-A

7) Taxes Payments: exempt  current  delinquent since \_\_\_\_\_  
Status:  clear tax title land court

8) Within boundaries of: LNHP City Hall HD Locks and Canals HD  LHPD  
(circle all that apply) Merrimack-Middle Sts. HD Indiv NR LHPD partial

B. HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) Construction date 1889  doc circum est  
source on building

2) Architect or Builder/Designer unk

3) Historic Owner George H. Marston unk

4) Original use GF:  com ind off govt res vacant unknown  
(circle all other  
that apply) UF:  com ind off govt res vacant unknown n/a  
other

5) Moved: yes  no  date \_\_\_\_\_ doc circum est  
source \_\_\_\_\_

6) Previous bldgs on prop:  yes no date ca. 1831- ca. 1888  
 doc circum est source 1832 map & date on building

C. DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) Architectural style: fed grk rev ital goth rev 2nd Emp  
(circle one) High Vic Goth stick Qu Anne shingle Col Rev n/a  
Romanes Rev other

2) Present use GF: com ind off warehs govt res  vacant n/a  
(circle all other  
that apply) UF: com ind off warehs govt res  vacant n/a  
other

3) # of stories 4 4) Property sq ft 3,642

5) Plan: sq  rectang polygonal ( ) -shaped other \_\_\_\_\_

6) Roof:  flat shed gambrel hip endwall gable facade gable  
mansard other \_\_\_\_\_

7) Structural system: wood frame load-bearing masonry  metal frame  
reinforced concrete other \_\_\_\_\_

8) Materials, facades: R red common  
(F=front) wood clapboard  brick(color red & bond stretcher)  
(S=side) wood shingle stone(type & coursing)  
(R=rear) stucco other wood  
(A=all) asbestos other metal  
aluminum/vinyl other

trim: other metal  
 wood  terra cotta  cast iron  stone(type) granite sills and lintels  
other

foundation:  
brick concrete  stone(type) granite  
other not visible

9) Outbuildings (specify) none

10) Notable surface and landscape elements: foundation retaining wall none  
steps fence paved areas sidewalk mature trees  
other \_\_\_\_\_

D. VISUAL ASSESSMENT

1) Condition of building fabric:  excel  good  needs minor repair  
 needs major repair  derelict

2) If deteriorated, causes: fire vandalism  lack of maintenance n/a  
(circle if all applicable) other \_\_\_\_\_

3) Integrity of historic building fabric  
GF:  intact original fabric UF:  intact original fabric  
intact w/ evolu alter intact w/ evolu alter  
intact w/ minor changes intact w/ minor changes  
major but revers changes major but revers changes  
major & irrevers changes major & irrevers changes

4) Surrounding land uses:  com  ind res recr  inst RR Xway  
(circle all applicable) canal frontage river frontage  
other \_\_\_\_\_

5) Integrity of property's historic period setting:  
(circle one) intact historic setting  
 intact with minor intrusions &/or losses  
 moderately disrupted historic setting  
severely disrupted historic setting

6) Importance of property to historic character of area:  
(circle one)  focal point in area  
 integral to character  
compatible with character  
detracts from character  
character so disrupted, question not applicable  
(circle if applicable) See Section E for comment

Facsimile of the field version of the inventory form on 155-159 Middlesex Street, the Marston Building. The presentation version of this form together with its research report is illustrated later in this chapter.

Information narratives at the end of their inventory forms, the listed properties were each the subject of a research report from two to dozens of pages in length, providing a detailed description of the property and an historical narrative. A sample research report on a single structure accompanies this discussion. Reports on single sites or structures are typically two to ten pages long, while the reports on industrial complexes include twenty to thirty pages of text and up to twice that number of illustrations. The sample report also demonstrates the presentation version of the inventory form, which consolidates the information from the field form.

The various archives used by the researchers are discussed in some detail at the end of this report, and specific sources are cited in the bibliography.

#### Mapping the Inventory

All of the inventoried properties in the Park and the District were recorded on a series of 1"=100' scale maps based on the boundary Map of the LNHP. Most properties were identified by address; the rest, such as the mill complexes and canal features, were identified by name. Property boundaries were also recorded. A line of dashes was used to signify primary boundaries, such as those enclosing individually inventoried properties or complexes such as millyards. A line of stars was used to designate secondary divisions, such as parcel lines within a consolidated property, or divisions of ownership within millyards. The number of the map sheet on which a property was recorded was noted on each inventory form.

#### PERSPECTIVES ON THE INVENTORY

The student, planner, or interested citizen making use of the volumes produced by the Lowell Cultural Resources Inventory would do well to be aware of what the inventory is and what it is not. The volumes are, in effect, a vast, annotated street directory of the Park and the District. They do not form a comprehensive history of the city, but rather provide a source of current and historic data on individual parts of Lowell's built environment. Histories of land

ownership and use, dates of construction and alterations, exterior architectural descriptions, assessments of surviving historic building fabric, and copies of new photographs and historic images of the inventory.

The inventory was shaped in certain directions by the terms of the project contract and by the boundaries of the Park and the District. Together, these factors placed the main emphasis of the effort on buildings, particularly industrial and commercial buildings.

The contract required an inventory of physical, historical resources. Lowell's canal system, bridges, and even vacant lots were among the resources inventoried and studied, and the Park and the District's potential prehistoric and historic archeological resources were researched and assessed. However, the bulk of the city's physical, historical resources are buildings, and they received most of the inventory effort. The contract also specified that the inventory record every property in the Park and the District and set the time and funds available for the study. These conditions restricted attention largely to the exterior of structures. Interiors were virtually as off-limits to the surveyors as subsurface exploration was to the archeologists on the team.

The boundaries of the Park and the District include the canal system, most of the central business district, and the major mill complexes or their sites. They do not include most of Lowell's historic residential neighborhoods, except as single streets buffering the canals or the rivers. The single exception is the portion of the Acre neighborhood which is within the District, consisting of six whole blocks, largely of houses. These characteristics of the Park and the District placed the major emphasis of the inventory on commercial and industrial structures. This focus was not, however, synonymous with a bias toward high-style buildings, nor with a concentration on the art of architecture. Buildings of all periods and types and styles were inventoried, and a broad, representative sample of properties was subject to in-depth research.



LOWELL CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION 155, 157, 159 MIDDLESEX STREET MAP SHEET # 12  
 1) CURRENT OWNER John O'Laughlin OWNER OCCUPIED no  
 2) HISTORIC NAME Marston Building  
 3) CURRENT NAME Marston Building  
 4) PROPERTY TYPE commercial 5) ZONING CLASSIFICATION I-A  
 6) TAXES: PAYMENTS current STATUS clear  
 7) WITHIN BOUNDARIES OF LHPD

HISTORICAL ABSTRACT

1) CONSTRUCTION DATE 1889  
 SOURCE document: date on building  
 2) ARCHITECT OR BUILDER unknown  
 3) HISTORIC OWNER George H. Marston  
 4) ORIGINAL USE: OF commercial OF commercial  
 5) PREVIOUS BLDGS ON PROPERTY yes DATE ca. 1831-ca. 1886  
 SOURCE document: 1832 map and date on building

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

1) ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Queen Anne  
 2) PRESENT USE:  
 OF vacant  
 OF vacant  
 3) NO OF STORIES 4  
 4) PROP SQ FT 3,642  
 5) PLAN rectangular  
 6) ROOF flat  
 7) STRUCTURAL SYSTEM metal frame  
 8) OUTBUILDINGS none  
 9) MATERIALS:  
 FOUNDATION granite  
 FACADE front & sides: red pressed brick in stret. bond; rear: red brick in common bond  
 TRIM cast iron storefront; granite sills and lintels; wood; terra cotta  
 10) NOTABLE SURFACE & LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS none



ADDRESS 155, 157, 159 MIDDLESEX STREET

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

1) CONDITION OF BUILDING FABRIC needs major repair  
 2) IF DETERIORATED, CAUSES lack of maintenance  
 3) INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC BLDG FABRIC: OF intact original fabric  
 OF intact original fabric  
 4) SURROUNDING LAND USES commercial, industrial, institutional  
 5) INTEGRITY OF PROP'S HIST SETTING moderately disrupted historic setting  
 6) IMPORTANCE OF PROP TO HIST SETTING integral to character

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

See Research Report.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

See Research Report.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMENT

This brick structure entirely covers its site; therefore, the archaeological potential is low.



155-9 Middlesex St. -3-

architecture. Bridging the gap between Queen Anne and Neo-Classical Revival architecture, it is also an early Lowell example of metal-frame construction.

The Marston Building stands on the first Appleton Company property on the northerly side of Middlesex Street to be developed commercially (5). By 1902 much of Middlesex Street was dominated by similar commercial structures (Fig. 2). Unfortunately, none of the boarding houses remain to indicate the original land use. Sitting across the street, however, are the earlier nineteenth century Elliot Schoolhouse, Hamilton Schoolhouse (with its Queen Anne facade) and Lincoln Building. This block provides a clear contrast to the Marston Building and illustrates the nineteenth century development of Lowell architecture.

Footnotes

- 1) *The Morning Mail Souvenir of the City of Lowell*, 1890, p. 52.
- 2) *Ibid.*
- 3) *Ibid.*
- 4) *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Other Sources

- Lowell Board of Trade*, 1902.
- Lowell: Past, Present and Prospective*, 1891.
- Lowell Board of Trade Manual*, 1905.
- 1832, 1841, 1850 maps.
- 1879, 1896, 1906, 1924 atlases.
- Lowell city directories.

THE MORNING MAIL SOUVENIR OF THE CITY OF LOWELL



THE MARSTON BUILDING, MIDDLESEX STREET

Figure 1  
From *The Morning Mail Souvenir of the City of Lowell*, 1890, p. 52.

Research Report  
155-9 Middlesex Street  
Marston Building  
1889

Sitting on the corner of Middlesex and Marston Streets, the Marston Building maintains the most historically intact original fabric of any nineteenth century structure on the street. Built in 1889, it is an eclectic combination of Queen Anne and Neo-Classical Revival elements.

Rectangular in plan, it is three stories high, three bays wide, and seven bays deep. Tall and narrow, it is decidedly vertical in massing and quite rich in decoration. The front and easterly side are of red pressed brick laid in stretcher bond, while the remainder is of common brick laid in common bond (seven to one). At least a portion of the building must be of metal frame construction, judging from the wide window openings of the facade and easterly side.

Although boarded up, the ground story appears to maintain its original cast iron storefront of piers at the corners and columns flanking the central doorway. The second and third story facade fenestration (which continues around to the first two bays of the easterly side) features continuous windows divided by brick piers with decorative brickwork caps. The third-floor level is set off from the second by large paneled wooden spandrels, except on the central bay, which has a granite panel with "Marston Building" on it. Lintels of decorative brickwork cap the windows. A brick course of stretchers set at an angle divide the third and fourth stories.

The fourth-story fenestration consists of eight narrow windows with a granite sill and lintel course. Over each grouping of windows is a course of terra cotta tiles, and over the two centrally-placed windows is the date 1889. A corbelled cornice completes the building, topped with a series of projecting caps faced with terra cotta tiles on the facade and easterly side. Originally, two of these caps surmounted the central bay, with a triangular pediment between. However, this feature is now missing (Fig. 1).

The remaining five bays of the easterly side are less richly decorated. Terra cotta tiles and round-arched windows are fourth-story features, as well as the corbelled

155-9 Middlesex St. -2-

cornice which continues across the entire side. Needing major repairs, this building now sits vacant.

For about sixty years, this site was occupied by a boarding house of the Appleton Company, as was much of the northerly side of Middlesex Street. In 1889, the Appleton Company sold part of this boarding house property, and this prime site was purchased by George H. Marston (1).

Marston was associated with George C. Prince in the book-selling and stationery trade on Merrimack Street from 1872 to 1889. During this period he acquired considerable real estate in Lowell, and decided to retire from his partnership with Prince and devote himself to the care of his property (2). On his new Middlesex Street site "he has erected a fine-appearing structure known as the Marston Building. Among the notable buildings erected in this city for several years past, none exceeded this in excellence of construction and neatness of appearance" (3). Marston was listed at this building as real estate and stockbroker from 1890-1892. He died in December, 1892. An incorporator of the Lowell Board of Trade, he also served as one of its presidents.

Also listed in the Marston Building in 1890 was A. C. Stevens, apothecary, and Costilla D. Smith, photographer. The *Morning Mail Souvenir* states that "Miss C. Smith, who has just moved into her new and elegant quarters in the Marston Building on Middlesex Street, is one of the few successful ladies who have made photography a paying investment. Her new parlors are admirably adapted for her peculiar business, being light and in every way suitable" (4).

In 1896, in addition to Miss Smith, the building was tenanted by Albert Cameron, confectioner; S. G. Lyford, medicines; Adeline Bonin, dressmaker; George E. Metcalf, insurance agent; and John T. P. Proulx, physician. By 1906, the property had passed into the hands of A. G. Wheelock, who owned considerable real estate in Lowell. In 1924, an individual named Tepfer was the owner.

The 1917 directory lists the occupants as Cameron Brothers, confectioners, Spindle City Shoe Repairing, and Josephine Blasonette, dressmaker (who had also been there in 1906). By 1975, Faber Liquors was the only occupant.

Of special significance because of its retention of its essential historic fabric, the Marston Building is another fine example of Lowell's late nineteenth century commercial



VIEW OF MIDDLESEX STREET

Figure 2  
From *Lowell Board of Trade*, 1902, opposite page 32.



Figure 3  
1890 *Lowell City Directory*.

Facsimile of presentation version of the inventory form and research report on 155-159 Middlesex Street. Additional pages follow.

Facsimile of the research report on 155-159 Middlesex Street. See preceding pages.

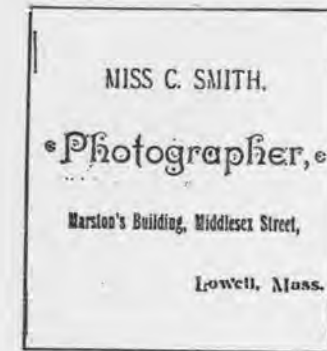


Figure 4  
*Morning Mail Souvenir of the City of Lowell*, 1890, p. 33.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTORY

The Lowell Cultural Resources Inventory recorded 895 individual properties, and produced 131 research reports that encompassed 305 of the individual properties. 308 residential buildings were identified in the Park and the District, of which 147 are single-family dwellings (in design, if not in use), sixty-two are duplexes, and ninety-nine are multiple-family dwellings. There are 210 structures in the Park and the District built for commercial purposes (including offices, retail stores, and service companies such as barber shops and restaurants), 130 buildings within mill complexes, and twenty-seven other industrial structures. The Park and the District include sixteen structures built as schools, nine built as churches, and twenty-four constructed to house various governmental activities. Ninety-two inventory forms record vacant lots. Some of these represent consolidations of adjacent undeveloped properties. Thirty-three separate components of the canal system were surveyed, along with eleven bridges. Theatres, parking garages, and playgrounds were among the other types of structures and sites inventoried.

These categories represent the property types identified in the inventory, which were defined as the principal, original forms and functions of properties or buildings. "Present Use" in the Descriptive Data category of the inventory form records the current use of properties, and by comparing "Present Use" to "Property Type," information can be gathered on topics such as the number of factories now used for housing, or the number of houses containing shops.

Ninety-nine tax-exempt properties were identified, but this number under-represents the tax-exempt component within the Park and the District, for each Lowell Housing Authority complex within the project area was recorded on a single form, even though most of these complexes have several structures. 134 tax-delinquent properties were identified, including forty-four against which land court action has been initiated.

Only three structures within the Park and the District were found that predate 1820, excluding the basic course of the Pawtucket Canal. Twenty structures



date from the 1820s, along with the reworked Pawtucket Canal and the Merrimack and Hamilton Canals. Forty-four buildings of the 1830s still stand within the Park and the District, and the Western and Eastern Canals date from that decade as well. The Northern Canal and seventy-eight structures from the 1840s were inventoried, along with forty-five from the 1850s, and twenty-seven from the 1860s. Ninety-three buildings of the 1870s, seventy-eight of the 1880s, and 122 of the 1890s were identified. The first quarter of this century added 166 structures still standing within the Park and the District, and the second quarter added forty-five. Sixty-seven buildings have been constructed since 1950 that are within the LNHP and LHPD boundaries.

Fifty-six structures within the project area were judged to be in excellent condition, and eight were identified as in derelict condition. Since the field work of the inventory was completed, a continuing rash of fires in the Acre neighborhood has rendered several more houses derelict, and the city's aggressive demolition program has removed most of these. 412 buildings appeared to be in good condition, 244 needed minor repair, and seventy were in visible need of major repair.

The Park and the District's most important historical resources are the canal system, the remaining major mill complexes, and the central business district's nineteenth century commercial buildings. The District also includes elements of other historic industrial enterprises, particularly along the Concord River. Residential properties within the District represent most of the range of styles, forms, and periods of Lowell's architectural history, but these houses generally fall short of Lowell's historic houses outside the District in quantity, quality, and concentration.

The extensiveness of the inventory should disguise neither the significant historical resources that Lowell has lost in recent decades, nor the city's historic assets that are not included within the Park, the District, or the inventory. Four major mill complexes are now gone--Merrimack Manufacturing Company since the early 1960s, Middlesex Manufacturing Company since 1956, and Tremont Mills and the Lowell

Machine Shop, both demolished in the 1930s. Corporation-built housing, a tremendously significant part of the Lowell industrial system, survives only in scattered fragments.

Outside the Park and the District are many more historic houses than are within the boundaries, and these houses often comprise intact historic neighborhoods. Chapel Hill, Centralville, Belvidere, and the whole area presently referred to as the Acre contain significant concentrations of nineteenth century houses, as do other Lowell neighborhoods. The North and South Commons are both historically important open spaces, and are both bordered by residential and institutional structures significant to the history of Lowell. There are also industrial buildings, complexes, and sites outside the District's bounds that merit attention, such as the C. I. Hood patent medicine laboratory, several small factories west of Fletcher Street, a portion of the Wamesit Canal system off the Concord River, the house of gunpowder manufacturer Oliver Whipple and attached workers' housing, and workers' housing associated with the Massic Falls industrial site on the Concord.

Nevertheless, the inventory makes apparent the bounty of historical resources in the Lowell National Historical Park and Preservation District. The canal system that powered America's first industrial city is intact and still operates, most of the major historic mill complexes and many secondary factories still stand, and in the central business district buildings from Lowell's heyday in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries predominate. Lowell has a future in its past.