

Roger Williams University

DOCS@RWU

Documentation

Gray's Mill: Newspaper Article from Shorelines, September 2001

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.rwu.edu/baker_documentation



Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#)

Newspaper article from Shorelines. September 2001

Project Aims to Save Town's Landscapes

Westport abounds in landscapes that are rich in historic and cultural significance. So it is not surprising that the town has been chosen to participate in the state's Heritage Landscape Program, which seeks to identify and preserve such areas across the state.

The program was initiated by the state Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and has been launched as a pilot project in three watersheds in Southeastern Massachusetts. The 15 chosen communities are near the Taunton River, Buzzards Bay and Narragansett Bay/Mt. Hope Bay. On Thursday, *Aug. 16*, state consultants Gretchen Schuler and Shary Page Berg met with members of Westport's Planning Department and local historic groups. Ms. Schuler is a preservation consultant and Ms. Berg is a landscape architect and historian. Together with local officials, they started the process of identifying and documenting unprotected cultural and historic landscapes.

Gale Nigrelli, administrative assistant to the Landing Board, said that of 38 towns that were eligible, 15 were accepted, including Westport.

By participating, the town receives \$10,000 worth of free consulting services to help with research and data collection. Using Massachusetts Historical Commission data sheets, the town identified 28 significant roadways and landscapes. Last week, Ms. Berg said the town should combine sites thematically and focus on five to 10 sites in more depth. Ms. Berg said the state has developed three criteria for inclusion — historic significance, visibility to the community and level of threat. Among the roadways the town identified were Drift, Adamsville and Horseneck. The Head of Westport, Gray's Grist Mill, old cemeteries and ice houses were also on the list. Some farms in Westport have already been preserved under the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). And Westport Point is preserved as a historic district. Thus, the working group focused on areas that are threatened with development.

For example, although much of Adamsville Road is under APR, Planning Board member

David Wallace said the cornfields along Sodom Road, which intersects with Adamsville, are threatened by development.

William Underwood, chair-man of the Historical Commission, said that South Westport is less threatened by development because it is further away from the highways. Also, some; of the large farms in South Westport are owned by people who want to preserve them. Much of the farmland on Horseneck Road is also protected under the state Agricultural Preservation Restriction. In fact, six properties on Horseneck Road are under APRs. Ms. Schuler said that documenting these sites is just the first step and that DEM hopes to get state funds for preservation.