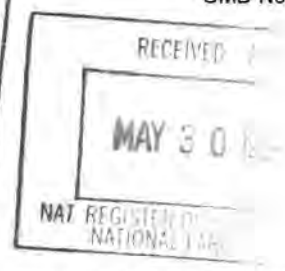
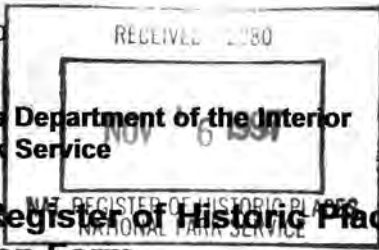


625

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Coram Shipyard Historic District

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 2120, 2125, 2130 Water Street N/A not for publication

city or town Dighton N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Bristol code 005 zip code 02715

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough 5/14/97  
Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough, Executive Director Date  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Name of Property

Bristol County, MA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	4	buildings
1	0	sites
1	0	structures
1	0	objects
6	4	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

TRANSPORTATION: water-related

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

SOCIAL: clubhouse

TRANSPORTATION: water-related

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL: Georgian

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls shingle

roof asphalt

other stone

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetCoram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
MassachusettsSection number 7 Page 1**7. DESCRIPTION**

The Coram Shipyard Historic District is comprised of two historic homes along the west side of Water Street and the early eighteenth century wharf at the site of the former Coram Shipyard, directly eastward across Water Street and along the bank of the Taunton River. The district is compact, comprised of only 2.1 acres, with the two homes set on rectangular lots of less than 1/2 acre each. The shipyard site is now occupied by the Taunton Yacht Club clubhouse, which sits at its center, surrounded by grassy areas and a large paved parking area near the street edge. The rectangular stone wharf (approximately 50' x 75') survives largely intact, with new pilings set out into the river along its edges.

The district is defined by the river-orientation of the homes and wharf, from which there is still a commanding view up and down the river. The similar rectilinear massing and close street proximity of the two homes tend to unify them as remaining elements from the earliest years of the eighteenth century, despite significant alterations in later times, particularly to the Thomas Coram House (Map #4).

The district contains a total of ten resources, of which six are contributing and four are noncontributing. There are three contributing buildings, one contributing structure, one contributing object, and one contributing site. Of the noncontributing resources, all four are buildings, but only one of them, the Taunton Yacht Club, is of significant enough size to detract from the area's historic appearance. The two historic homes are in fair condition and historic design character is apparent. An Italianate entrance porch added to the Thomas Coram House (#4) ca. 1870s has lost its integrity in later years due to insensitive alterations.

The district's topography is dominated by the broad, level flood plain on which it is situated along the Taunton River's west shore. The wharf juts out prominently into the river. The two houses sit close to the street, set back only 20 feet with small front yards. Small enclosed rear yards remain from what once were farm and pasturelands sweeping westward. The area retains an open, windswept character due to its proximity to the river's edge and the lack of tall vegetation able to survive there.

The two historic homes are situated on adjacent lots with 100' and 145' street frontages. Both are of wood-frame construction and are of similar size and rectangular massing. Small wood

**(continued)**

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**Section number 7 Page 2

outbuildings are set inconspicuously behind the homes. Recently installed (1990s) white picket fences extend the full length of the two homes' front property lines, each with an arched entrance framed by trellises. The effect is to unify the two buildings visually, separating them from smaller Greek Revival cottages of nineteenth century date to each side. The openness of the wharf and shipyard site remain intact in their southern portion where grass and marshland exist, although the Yacht Club clubhouse (#2) intrudes upon the northern portion of the site, where it is most likely that a variety of small sheds and buildings associated with maritime activity would have stood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The district's boundaries include all the surviving early-eighteenth century homes associated with the Coram Shipyard as well as the shipyard site itself. To the north along Water Street are two small cottages of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century date, one drastically altered. To the south along Water Street's west side is another Greek Revival cottage of early nineteenth century date, but none of these homes is specifically associated with the area's shipbuilding history. The district's boundary follows the side and rear property lines of the two homes. It includes the main parcel of the Yacht Club, on which the wharf is located and where the shipyard historically stood, as well as a smaller open parcel of Yacht Club land to the south whose inclusion maintains the open vistas from the two historic homes towards the river.

Architecturally, the district was built as a series of two early Georgian homes overlooking the shipyard which their occupants jointly owned. The two homes reportedly date from ca 1699-ca.1703. It is not known if the homes at that time were of their present large rectangular massing. It is possible that they were smaller 1/2 Georgians and that the present massing did not occur until later in the eighteenth century. This cannot be determined without in depth physical examination of structural members and framing techniques. Regardless of the exact date of its present configuration, the John Hathaway House (MAP #1) clearly retains its Georgian appearance. The Thomas Coram House (MAP #4) was updated in the 1870s with an Italianate porch which has since lost its integrity, but the house still retains much of its original design character.

Since exact dates of the homes are not documented, they are described here by street address. Names of properties are derived from the names of the original owners of the buildings. Numbers in parentheses refer to the attached Sketch Map Number, followed by MHC Inventory Number, then Photograph Number (where applicable).

**(continued)**

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**Section number 7 Page 3

The John Hathaway House at 2120 Water Street (MAP #1; MHC #167; Photograph #1) was built ca. 1700 and is a five-bay, center entrance Georgian house of 2 1/2 stories with a ridge roof with slight returns and a central chimney. A small one-story ell with a ridge roof extends westward from the northerly portion of the rear elevation. Another ell, possibly a one-story eighteenth century addition used as a store, was destroyed during the 1938 hurricane, at which time the south elevation was rebuilt in its present design. The exterior is faced in weathered wood shingles.

The primary facade faces eastward and features splayed wooden lintels at all first and second story window openings. Windows are all six-over-six wood sash. The facade is framed by narrow wood cornerboards and a plain wood cornice at the second story window heads. The central entrance has a triangular pediment with dentilled cornice atop the four-lite panel door flanked by full-height sidelights, each in a 2x5-lite pattern. The door and sidelight designs appear to be of Colonial Revival origin, possibly early twentieth century.

The north and south elevations are of two-bay depth, with splayed lintels at the second story and in the matching centered third story window openings. At the first story, the east bay of the south elevation has an enlarged opening with a pair of six-over-six lights, matching the single six-over-six design of the other openings.

The small one-story, ridge roof ell is also faced in wood shingles and appears to be of nineteenth century design. It has a door and a two-light window in each of its north and south elevations, and two matching windows in the west elevation, one of which is centered in the small gable. A modern wooden shed is situated to the west of the rear ell, facing southward into the landscaped rear yard. Further north of the house and set back near the rear (west) property line is a 10-foot x 10-foot shed, most likely of eighteenth or early nineteenth century date. It has a high ridge roof, two small windows in the east elevation, a window and a four-paneled door in the south elevation.

The interior of the John Hathaway House has experienced much alteration in its nearly 300 years but surviving historic features are presently being restored. The original front stair remains, as does much of the historic floor plan: a center hall flanked by two small rooms, with a large kitchen/keeping room to the rear. Three fireplaces at the first floor and three above at the second level have recently been reopened.

**(continued)**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetCoram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
MassachusettsSection number 7 Page 4

The Coram Shipyard Site is now the location of the Taunton Yacht Club (MAP #2) at 2125 Water Street. Located on the east side of Water Street and running from Water Street eastward to the bank of the Taunton River, the property extends approximately 350' from north to south. The south portion of the site is a large mowed field with scattered small trees, dropping off to marshes at the river's edge. The central portion of the site is occupied by the Yacht Club's clubhouse. It is set back approximately 100' from the street by a large paved parking lot.

The noncontributing clubhouse dates from ca. 1950 and is a one story, frame building with a hipped roof. The facade is five bays wide with a raised entrance in the second north bay and small horizontal eight-light shuttered windows just below the eaves. To its north is a small wooden boathouse with a ridge roof and wide doors in the south end elevation. Both buildings are clad in painted wood shingles. A small wooden marker reading "Coram Shipyard, Early 1700's," is situated near the water's edge, southward of the clubhouse on the open flood plain.

Directly eastward of the clubhouse's rear elevation is the Coram Shipyard Wharf (MAP #3), dating from ca. 1698. It presently serves as a grassy area between the Yacht Club and the docks and pilings along its outer edges. Approximately 50' x 75', the wharf's outer edges are of rough uncut masonry and retain their original appearance and historic integrity, despite the minor visual impact of the row of pilings set out from the wharf.

The Thomas Coram House (MAP #4; MHC #102; Photograph #2) stands at 2130 Water Street, directly southward of the Hathaway House. Dating from ca. 1699, it is a two and one-half story Georgian house, rectilinear in massing with a five-bay facade and two-bay depth. It is quite possible that it was originally a half-house or a one and one-half story house, expanded by the mid-eighteenth century to its present large size. The ridge roof is capped by a large central chimney. Original window locations are intact on the facade although sash are now a two-over-two lite pattern. The exterior has been faced in inappropriate aluminum siding.

The present three-bay porch/entrance enclosure in the south bays of the east facade survives as a modernized version of the Italianate porch added ca. 1880. An historic view of the home (Appendix A) (date unknown) shows the original design of the carved wooden posts, balustraded base and cornice, and enclosed entrance. The historic view also shows an intricately patterned wooden fence with a lyre motif, as well as four-lite windows, also a late nineteenth century change. The home's setting at that time was graced by a number of large shade and evergreen

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**Section number 7 Page 5

trees along the property's edges.

The present porch design follows the footprint and roofline of the original but retains none of the historic fabric. Barnboard siding, simple wooden braces, and a dentilled cornice above the entrance are all later changes.

A small, flat-roofed ell extends westward from the north half of the rear elevation, and there is also an attached one-half story shed at the west end of the south elevation. Little of the original floor plan or historic interior fabric is intact.

The district's character has undergone a fair amount of change over three centuries, but not to the point where a sense of the historic context cannot be recognized. The Coram Wharf retains its visual integrity despite the modern adaptation to recreational yachting from its historic maritime commerce/shipbuilding roles. The Taunton Yacht Club Clubhouse, although substantial in size, is not out of character or scale with the district's other buildings. The open, windswept character of the Coram Shipyard Site maintains much of its historic appearance. Historic vistas from the two homes towards the river and wharf are also intact. Despite significant exterior fabric alterations to the Thomas Coram House, the two homes stand together as reminders of the architectural design characteristics of houses associated with Dighton's earliest period of settlement and maritime development.

#### Archeological Description

There is likely to be a high degree of archeological sensitivity throughout this district. Each of the homes has been occupied since ca.1700, indicating there must have been trash heaps, outdoor privies, etc. for an extensive period of time. Although the present rear yards are small, they were once the beginning of much larger yards. These rear portions of the properties were used for agricultural purposes: farmland, orchards, and animals. Evidence of such items as animal pens, wells, post holes from fence lines, animal burials and stone walls may exist. Structural remains from early outbuildings may even survive.

The wharf and shipyard site have undergone very little subsequent activity, except where the clubhouse and parking lot are located. This makes it likely that remaining artifacts from colonial and nineteenth century shipbuilding and maritime commerce are probably intact on other portions of the site.

(end)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # Mass 432 (1935)
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

MARITIME HISTORY

TRANSPORTATION

**Period of Significance**

1698 - 1885

**Significant Dates**

1698

1703

1870

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Dighton Historical Commission



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**Section number 8 Page 1**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

The Coram Shipyard Historic District, Dighton, retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and it fulfills Criteria A and C of the National Register on the local level.

Under Criterion A, the Coram Shipyard Historic District is significant for its role as the site of the town's earliest eighteenth century shipbuilding industry and for its continued role in Dighton's commerce and maritime industries throughout the eighteenth and into the mid-nineteenth centuries. It is a relatively intact example of two shipbuilders' homes overlooking the site of the shipyard and wharf which they developed in the 1690s, a precursor to the many shipyards and wharves which were built in the second half of the eighteenth century. Although the Coram Shipyard closed in 1703, the area continued to be used for subsequent maritime-related enterprises during an era when the town's livelihood was almost entirely dependent on maritime activity and where prosperity among wharf owners and merchants was exhibited in their fine homes overlooking the waterfront. The district's geographic location along a navigable stretch of the Taunton River made it a desirable location both for business and residences initially as the area developed for shipbuilding and later as it also became an on/off loading point for Dighton's maritime trade.

Under Criterion C, the district is representative of Dighton's eighteenth century residential architecture in that the two historic homes reflect the setting, proportions, massing, and details of the periods in which they were first built and later enlarged to their present Georgian character. The properties are modest in size and maintain a consistent pattern of lot sizes, street setbacks, and minimal frontal landscaping which contributes to the visual continuity of the streetscape they create.

The district's period of significance spans from 1698 to 1885. These dates commence with the period in which the two homes and the wharf were initially built. They include the entire period in which maritime trade was carried on in Dighton, as well as the later period of the 1870s - 1880s when the Thomas Coram House was remodeled to include an Italianate veranda, remnants of which are still evident. Development of the area within the Coram Shipyard Historic District began in the 1690s as part of the town's early transitional growth from a subsistence-level agricultural community towards a maritime center. The location provided much acreage to the west for crops and animals, pleasant riverfront views and cool breezes for the early homesteads,

**(continued)**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetCoram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
MassachusettsSection number 8 Page 2

and most importantly, riverfront property prime for a shipyard site and ready access for shipping.

Dighton's earliest settlement was by the Pocasset tribe, which was decimated by a number of pre-1675 epidemics, leaving the area largely uninhabited. Its colonial settlement began in the late seventeenth century. The neighboring town of Taunton to the north was sold to the colonists by King Philip in 1663. An additional precinct known as the South Purchase was acquired in 1672, including the present Dighton. With the onset of King Philip's War in 1675, development of the new tract was slow. Its first home was not built until 1680 by Jared Talbot, with others soon to follow. By 1684, the new precinct had been surveyed and seven east-west highways laid out with landing places at the river's edge, as river travel was still the easiest mode of transportation for access upriver to Taunton or downriver to Narragansett Bay.

During its early colonial period (1680-1775), the settlers devoted the majority of their efforts to subsistence farming on abandoned native planting grounds adjacent to the Cedar Swamp and along the Taunton River. Subsistence fishing was also important, as fishing grounds for herring were abundant. As early as 1698, the Coram Shipyard is reported to have been in operation within the district, where it functioned as the town's first shipyard until 1703 under Thomas Coram and John Hathaway.

Thomas Coram was born in Lyme Regis, England in 1668 and had become a master shipbuilder by the time he was twenty-five. He arrived in New England ca. 1692, married a Boston girl, Eunice Wait, and moved to Taunton (as Dighton was still called) ca. 1693 to start his shipbuilding venture in an area of plentiful timber. He brought with him shipwrights from England which apparently caused resentment among Taunton's native shipbuilders who would have preferred that Coram hire local labor. Coram joined in partnership with John Hathaway ca. 1700. Hathaway built his own house adjacent to Coram's. Their shipyard apparently met with only mixed success, as it closed in 1703. At that time, Coram returned to England before venturing across the Atlantic again to settle the colony of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Later returning to England, Coram became reknowned for his involvement in the founding of the London Foundling Hospital, where he is buried.

Dighton was established as a separate town in 1712. It was named for Frances Dighton, wife of Richard Williams who was among the first families to settle there. Its boundaries changed over

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**Section number 8 Page 3

the next 150 years, expanding and receding in various outlying parts, but the subject area, close to the town center, remained continually a part of Dighton.

The town's population increased to 1174 by the 1760s and to 1420 by 1776, and three major nodes of settlement took hold. The first extended from the mouth of the Segregansett River to the Old Town Landing, including the Coram Shipyard as well as the more southerly area now referred to as the Dighton Wharves area. A second area grew in present North Dighton, where an iron forge and sawmill, a gristmill, cider mill and blacksmith shop were established on the Three Mile River. The third settlement area took hold on the Segregansett River near Williams Street, where a gristmill, sawmill, and fulling mill were built ca.1740.

During this period, Dighton served as the commercial distribution point for southern and central New England since it was impossible for the standard merchant vessels of the era to sail up the Taunton River past Dighton due to the river's shallow bed. Ships arrived with rum, molasses, salt, and general merchandise from the West Indies, South America, and Europe, while local vessels shipped out with Dighton goods such as fish, lumber, grain, barrel staves and hoops. The Coram Wharf continued to provide anchorage for the ships coming in and out of the busy port. It became home to the Bowen & Hathaway shipyard. On this wharf, as on others in the town, probably stood small frame buildings which housed chandleries and sold supplies to the outbound ships.

In addition to the Englishmen Thomas Coram and John Hathaway, other local residents became shipbuilders, merchants, and sea captains for the ships being produced here. Additional stone wharves were built, including the Andrews and Perry Wharves further southward along the river. Most of the boats being built were sloops or brigantines of less than 70 tons, two-masted, with a single deck and less than ten feet of draft. Designed for coastal trade with the West Indies, they were not "slave ships," as has sometimes been suggested.

About 1772, the first wooden bridge was built across Muddy Cove under a contract let by Captain Elkanah Andrews to John Reed, a shipyard owner on the cove. Andrews turned the bridge over to the town on the conditions that he be permitted to run a grist mill near Muddy Cove and that the town would extend a road from Main Street south to Hart Street, the present Pleasant Street. For the first time, this provided direct highway access between the southern wharves and the center village. Andrews also established a ferry landing at his wharf for trade and transportation to the river's eastern shore, then a part of Dighton. The ferry continued to

**(continued)**

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**Section number 8 Page 4

operate even after 1801 when the first bridge was built a bit upriver (at the site of the present Dighton-Berkley bridge).

The large number of substantial two-story Georgian homes in Dighton indicates the town's prosperity during the Colonial era, whereas most other communities in the area showed a prevalence of small cottages instead. Within the district, it is most likely that the two historic houses were expanded to their present size during this period.

During the 1770s, the John Hathaway House was occupied by Jeremiah Jones, (b.1739 in Dighton). He ran a store adjacent to or within the house, (possibly in an ell to the south) and sold a range of goods from household items to rum. The store served as a gathering place for the town, (possibly as a tavern as well). Jones also maintained a role in the local fishing industry and served in the Massachusetts General Court in 1816.

The Federal period (1775-1830) saw an increase in maritime activity in Dighton. Although its population did not increase much in this period, shipbuilding and maritime trade became more central to the local economy. Much of the shipbuilding was in the form of coasting sloops, with most yards near the town landing and in Segregansett, slightly further north. Among the major yards were those of John Reed, Bowen and Hathaway, Smith and Wardwell, Matthew Briggs, Col. Darius Perry, and David Standish. In the period between 1795 and 1833, at least 22 ships were produced in local yards. Both the Bowen & Hathaway and Smith & Wardwell yards were situated on the Coram Shipyard site, with the former using the north side of Coram Wharf and the latter using its southern side.

In 1789, Dighton became a customs port for incoming ships from the West Indies and Europe. Major Hodigah Baylies was appointed as collector as a reward for his service to George Washington during the Revolutionary War and during his term as President. He held the post for twenty years. By 1809, a customs office was established in the home located at 2298 Pleasant Street, hence its name, the Old Customs House. Customs continued to be collected here until 1834, when Fall River usurped the role because of its larger harbor and better transportation route access.

The John Hathaway House continued to house a store during this era, after the home's ownership had passed to Major Charles W. Whitmarsh (b.1793 in Dighton). Major Whitmarsh also had a

**(continued)**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts

Section number 8 Page 5

---

tailor shop in the house, and operated a shipyard on the old Coram site. He owned several sailing scows, a schooner, and a sloop with which he carried on an active maritime trade in lumber during the period from ca. 1820 - ca.1860. The Coram Wharf was referred to locally as Whitmarsh's Wharf.

Shipbuilding and marine commerce were greatly slowed by Thomas Jefferson's Embargo Act of 1800 which virtually froze the shipbuilding industry from that time until after the War of 1812. Shipbuilding resumed after the war, but by 1825 had waned again due to the new capabilities of overland railroads. Only two large ships were built after that, the "Elizabeth Hall" of 1840 and the "William Cobb" of 1874. Major Whitmarsh was one of the builders of the "Elizabeth Hall." The launching of the "William Cobb" marked the end to over 175 years of shipbuilding in Dighton.

Several small cotton mills were established in 1810 and 1812, the start of a fledgling textile industry that would take better hold in the 1830s, the start of Dighton's Early Industrial Period (1830-1870). Two cotton mills on the Three Mile River and an 1862 woolen mill started by William Cobb were soon the town's largest industries. The Mount Hope Finishing Company, a bleaching facility, was founded in 1901 in North Dighton, and soon became a stronghold of the local economy. Its success was directly related to the burgeoning textile industry in nearby Fall River, which flourished from the 1840s onward.

Another key industry was a paper mill at North Dighton, started in 1850 and a major employer into the early twentieth century. Strawberry farming also took root in the 1850s and 1860s, eventually leading to a sizable truck-farming industry which continues to the present day.

During this era, the Thomas Coram House was occupied by George Shove, who added the front porch and lyre fence ca. 1880. Shove was an attorney and historian who wrote the Dighton History for D. Hamilton Hurd's History of Bristol County, 1909.

With the town accessible from Taunton and adjoining areas by roads, trolley lines, and railroad service, a small tourism industry started. It was introduced on a modest scale in the 1870s with the opening of the Eddy House as a year-round guest house offering boating, horseback riding and other recreational activities. The Taunton Yacht Club was organized in 1895 and purchased

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetCoram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
MassachusettsSection number 8 Page 6

the Coram Shipyard site and Coram Wharf as home for its recreational yachting program. A grand two-story clubhouse was built on pilings over the river. Its Shingle Style design featured 12-foot wide piazzas at two levels along the river side. The clubhouse was damaged by the Hurricane of '38 and relocated/rebuilt onshore. Following the Hurricane of '54, the present building was erected by the club.

The Early Modern Period (1915-1946) saw little new industry or population growth. The town had by now become a quiet rural community with a number of market farms and dairy farms, and a few pockets of light industrial activity. Without major industry locating in the area due to its relative remoteness from established urban centers, there has not been a housing boom or major subdivision of large agricultural tracts. The agricultural landscape of this period continues to dominate the town's visual character.

The early development of the Coram Shipyard Historic District in the 1693-1703 era was a critical first step in the eventual growth of the town's shipping industry. The entrepreneurial spirit of its first property owners saw an opportunity to capitalize on the riverfront location by building a large wharf and shipyard. Their interest was adopted by many of the subsequent seventeenth century shipbuilders, who also recognized that the area's navigable waters made it an ideal distribution point for trade inland to Taunton and all of southeast Massachusetts.

The district's gradual evolution away from maritime commerce was due to shifts in economic conditions, transportation patterns, and political considerations. By the 1830s, Dighton's shipbuilding industry had faltered considerably. Merchants were contracting for ever larger, deeper-draft ships in order to extend their sea-going capabilities and carry larger cargoes to faraway ports. The shallow-draft coastal sloops being built here were no longer profitable for shipowners, and the Taunton River's shallow bed did not permit building of larger ships the way larger, deeper harbors like Fall River, New Bedford, and Newport did.

Fall River also gained an advantage over Dighton because of its more rapid urban growth and transportation facilities. While Dighton remained a small country town with its main ties to Taunton to the north, Fall River was expanding in its own right as a new textile industry took hold in the 1840s. Large stone mills lined the harbor, and distribution of goods by ship from the

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts

Section number 8 Page 7

---

deep-water port was more direct and cost-effective than going by way of Dighton. Politically, it can be assumed that the wealthy textile mill owners of Fall River, which was quickly becoming a substantial urban center, had considerably more political clout than the gentleman farmers/sea captains of rural Dighton. Not surprisingly, Fall River became the customs collection point from 1834 onward, based on its political status as well as its higher volume of imports and exports.

Despite the demise of Dighton's maritime trade, the district retained its identity as a peaceful residential enclave. Land behind the homes continued in agricultural and orchard use. Some small homes were built to the north and south along Water Street, convenient to the waterfront as well as to the small town center to the north.

Each of the two houses experienced almost no expansion after 1800, except for a small rear ell on each house. Interiors were updated gradually. It was particularly desirable to replace the small, eighteenth century keeping room/hearths which had become antiquated with larger kitchens and more updated stoves and storage spaces.

The district's two houses have continued in residential use throughout their later years.

The district is one of Dighton's best examples of a cluster of two eighteenth century residential designs. In their present appearances, the homes are important architecturally as examples of Georgian period design. The Coram House also reflects changes in nineteenth century tastes and fashion, with preferences for more decorative woodwork and porch styles. Each resource exhibits the proportions, materials, and modest artistic elements of its style. The shipyard site primarily retains its open visual character. The historic wharf, which embodies typical construction methods of its day and survives intact, visually reinforces the district's historical significance.

The John Hathaway House (MAP #1; Photograph #1) exemplifies a graciously-proportioned Georgian, five-bay, center entrance house, which has been updated to its present size ca. 1770. The rectangular massing, central chimney, and shingled exterior reflect the original Georgian design. The splayed wooden lintels may be of later Federal date, and the entrance door/sidelight design appear to be of later Colonial Revival origin. The six-over-six lights and small rear ell indicate that "improvements" continued well on into the nineteenth century.

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet****Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**Section number 8 Page 8

The Thomas Coram House (MAP #4; Photograph #2) was, before its ca. 1950s modernization, the district's most pretentious design. Its present mass and central chimney also date from mid-eighteenth century and the facade's proportions and window alignment retain the historic Georgian facade's design. The two-over-two window designs indicate that the home was upgraded throughout its history, as does the flat-roofed porch/enclosed entry, even if it remains only a remnant of its original ca. 1880 design. Aluminum siding and a new wooden entry porch detract from the historic character of the design.

The streetscape formed by these two homes whose similarities in scale, massing, design, and setting form a visually cohesive entity, as well as the open shipyard site and surviving wharf continues to project a discernible image of an area steeped in historical associations with Dighton's earliest residential and maritime development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**Archeological Significance**

Historic archeological remains have the potential to provide documentation for the town's agricultural beginnings which have largely been lost by later non-agrarian uses of the land. Remains of outbuilding foundations as well as structural survivals of previous agrarian outbuildings could document construction techniques and farming habits of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Information may also be present which would give a detailed view of the social, cultural and economic characteristics of eighteenth century life. In particular, the wharf and portions of the shipyard site have undergone very little physical disturbance and could contain significant artifacts and structural evidence of former buildings, materials, and merchandise associated with shipbuilding and the maritime trade carried on here.

**(end)**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts

Section number 9 Page 1

---

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Chace, C. W. "Dighton's Old Houses" Taunton Daily Gazette, 1900-1910.

Coram, Captain. Correspondence to Dr. Colman of Boston, Davis Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

Dighton Bicentennial Celebration. Dighton Library, 1912.

Dighton Town Maps. Dighton Town Hall, 1850, 1887, 1895.

Dighton: MHC Reconnaissance Report. Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1981.

Emery, Samuel Hopkins. History of Taunton, MA from its Settlement to the Present Time, Syracuse: D. Mason, ca. 1880s.

Historic Photograph and Postcard Collection. Dighton Library, ca.1900.

Hurd, D. Hamilton. History of Bristol County, 1909.

Lane, Helen H. History of Dighton, Taunton: C. A. Hack & Son., 1962.

Reed, Charles. Collections of the Old Colony Historical Society, Taunton, MA.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts

Section number 10 Page 1

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the district's northwest corner at the northwest corner of parcel 20-127, (2120 Water Street), the boundary proceeds eastward along the north property line of said parcel and continues eastward across Water Street where it runs further eastward along the north property line of parcel 20-6, (2125 Water Street), until reaching the west bank of the Taunton River.

It then turns southward along the east edge of said parcel, including the stone structure known as the Coram Wharf, as it proceeds southward along the easterly edge of parcels 20-6 and 20-8-01. It then turns westward along the southerly edge of parcel 20-8-01, then northward along said parcel's westerly edge to a point opposite the southeast corner of parcel 20-5, where it turns westward across Water Street.

The boundary continues westward along the south edge of parcel 20-5, then turns north along the rear property lines of parcels 20-5 and 20-127 to the point of origin.

See attached Dighton Assessor's Map #20.

Boundary Justification

This boundary definition includes the two historic homes and the historic shipyard site and wharf which collectively give significance to the Coram Shipyard Historic District. The western boundary follows the rear property lines of the two historic homes, separating them from several later homes and a large town-owned open space to the west. The northern boundary abuts several small homes not specifically related to the shipyard's development, one of which is quite altered. The eastern boundary along the Taunton River shoreline includes the historic wharf and the open parcel abutting it, both of which were historically associated with the Coram Shipyard. The southerly boundary separates the district from additional shoreline and several small homes of various dates, again not specifically associated with the shipyard's development.

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**

Section number 10 Page 2

---

The district's boundaries define the three major elements associated with the Coram Shipyard. Visually, the two homes, wharf, and shipyard site are unified by their close proximity to one another as they each face eastward towards the river from which their occupants earned their livelihood. The open, windswept character of this stretch of Water Street also accentuates its ties to the river, in contrast to more tree-lined streetscapes where clusters of residential development have evolved further to the north and south.

**(end)**

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Coram Shipyard Historic District  
Dighton, (Bristol County)  
Massachusetts**

Section number Photos Page 1

---

**Photographs**

The identification information listed below pertains to all photographs:

Photograph by: Taunton Historical Commission  
Date: 1992  
Original negative at: c/o Mr. Charles W. Harris, Chairman  
Dighton Historical Commission  
Dighton, MA 02715

Photo 1: Looking southeastward towards north (end) and east (facade) elevations of the John Hathaway House, 2120 Water Street, with the Thomas Coram House, 2130 Water Street, beyond.

Photo 2: Looking westward towards east (facade) elevation of the Thomas Coram House, 2130 Water Street.

**CORAM SHIPYARD HISTORIC DISTRICT  
DIGHTON (BRISTOL COUNTY), MASSACHUSETTS  
DISTRICT DATA SHEET**

MAP#	ASSESSOR'S Map	MHC#	HISTORIC NAME	STREET ADDRESS	DATE	STYLE	RESOURCE	STATUS
1	20-127	167	John Hathaway House	2120 Water Street	ca.1700	Georgian	B	C
			Shed		19th c.	Utilitarian	B	C
			Storage Shed		1960+	Utilitarian	B	NC
2	20-6, 20-8-01		Coram Shipyards Site	2125 Water Street	ca.1693-1703	n/a	S	C
			Taunton Yacht Club	clubhouse	ca.1950	Colonial Revival	B	NC
			TYC Boathouse (shed)		ca.1960	Utilitarian	B	NC
			Historic Marker		20th c.	--	O	C
3	20-6		Coram Shipyards Wharf	2125 Water Street	ca.1699	Utilitarian	Str.	C
4	20-5	102	Thomas Coram House	2130 Water Street	ca. 1699	Georgian	B	C
			Garage/Shed			19th c	Utilitarian	B

**KEY:** B: Building    Str: Structure    O: Object    S: Site    C: Contributing Resource  
 NC: Noncontributing Resource

**Total Resources:**    10

6 Contributing Resources	4 Noncontributing Resources
3 Buildings	4 Buildings
1 Structure	0 Structures
1 Object	0 Objects
1 Site	0 Sites

BT-

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RECEIVED

AUG 15 1997

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

MASS. HIST. COMM.

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Coram Shipyard Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Bristol

DATE RECEIVED: 5/30/97 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/14/97  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 97000625

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: Y PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 7/11/97 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

This nomination is being returned because we can not evaluate the integrity of the district with the documentation included. The major problem is the presence of the yacht club building, which is located on the of the shipyard. There are no photographs of this intrusion. Please de photos of the yacht club, taken from several vantage points, so that its impact on this small district can be evaluated

RECOM./CRITERIA Return  
REVIEWER Patrick Anderson DISCIPLINE 7/11/97  
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Coram Shipyard Historic District

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Bristol

DATE RECEIVED: 11/26/97      DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY:      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/10/98  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 97000625

NOMINATOR: STATE

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    \_\_\_\_\_ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

On resubmission the State has provided photos of the yacht club building. It is a small building and does not destroy the overall integrity of the district

RECOM./CRITERIA accept A & C

REVIEWER Patrick Andrews      DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_      DATE 1/5/97

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



CORAM SHIPYARD HISTORIC DISTRICT

DIGHTON (BRISTOL CO) MA

PHOTO 1

2120 WATER ST, DIGHTON

JOHN HATHAWAY HOUSE

ASSESSORS #127

John Hathaway House  
2120 Water Street  
Dighton, Ma Photo # 1  
Assessor's Map # 127



CORAM SHIPYARD HISTORIC DISTRICT

DIGHTON (BRISTOL CO) MA

PHOTO 2

2130 WATER ST.

DIGHTON

THOMAS CORAM HOUSE

ASSESSORS # 127

Thomas Coram House  
2130 Water Street Photo #2  
Dighton, MA  
Assessor's Map #127



Coram Shipyard HD

Dighton (Bristol Co.), MA

Taunton Yacht Club from river side  
looking west.

P. Bergen photograph, Sept 97

Negative at MHC



Dighton Wharves HD Coram Shipyard HD  
Taunton Yacht Club

Sept 1997

looking east

Tim Bergen photo

negatives at MHC



CORAM SITIPYARD HD  
DIGHTON (BRISTOL CO.) MA

TAUNTON YACHT CLUB (panorama)  
view of club looking NE

Sept 1997

P. BERGEN photo  
neg. at MHC.



Coram Shipyard HD

Dighton (Bristol Co.), MA

Water St. looking north (panorama view)

Yacht club on right

P. Berger photo

negs. at MHC



Corann Shipyard HD

Dighton (Bristol Co.) MA

2130, 2120 Water St. looking NE

Tim Bergen photo Sept 1997

Negs. at MHC

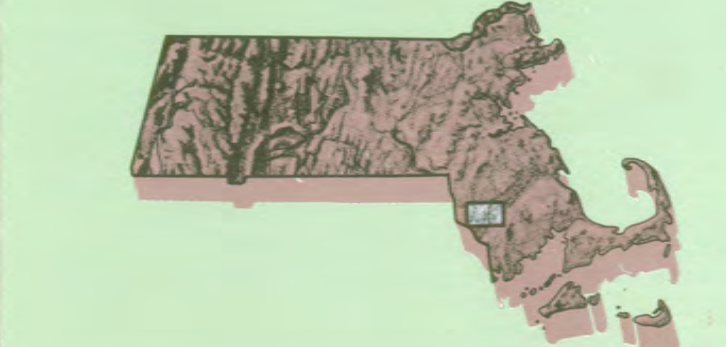


CORAM SHIPYARD HD  
DIGHTON (BRISTOL Co.) MA

AREA FROM ACROSS TAUNTON RIVER, LOOKING WEST  
YACHT CLUB IN CENTER.

SEPT 1997

TIM BERGEN photo  
negs. at MHC



7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Massachusetts Department of Public Works  
 Controlled by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies  
 Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1980. Field checked 1981. Map edited 1985. Supervised Assonet and Somerset 1:25,000-scale maps dated 1977 and 1967  
 Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 13222 (1982). This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
 Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 19  
 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mean sea level  
 1927 North American Datum  
 To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 6 meters south and 42 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks  
 There may be private landholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
 OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER  
 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN METERS  
 DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE  
 SOUNDING SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE USE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
 THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 0.9 METER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

CONVERSION TABLE		DECLINATION DIAGRAM		ADJOINING MAPS		
Meters	Feet	MAGNETIC DECLINATION		1	2	3
1	3.2808	1985		1	2	3
2	6.5616	1986		4	5	
3	9.8424	1987		6	7	8
4	13.1232	1988				
5	16.4040	1989				
6	19.6848	1990				
7	22.9656	1991				
8	26.2464	1992				
9	29.5272	1993				
10	32.8080	1994				

To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808  
 To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048

UTM grid coverage (GTM and UTM) at center of map  
 Declination (MM) Diagram is approximate

1	Attleboro
2	Taunton
3	Bridgewater
4	Providence
5	Assonet/Pond
6	Bristol (7.5')
7	Fall River
8	New Bedford North

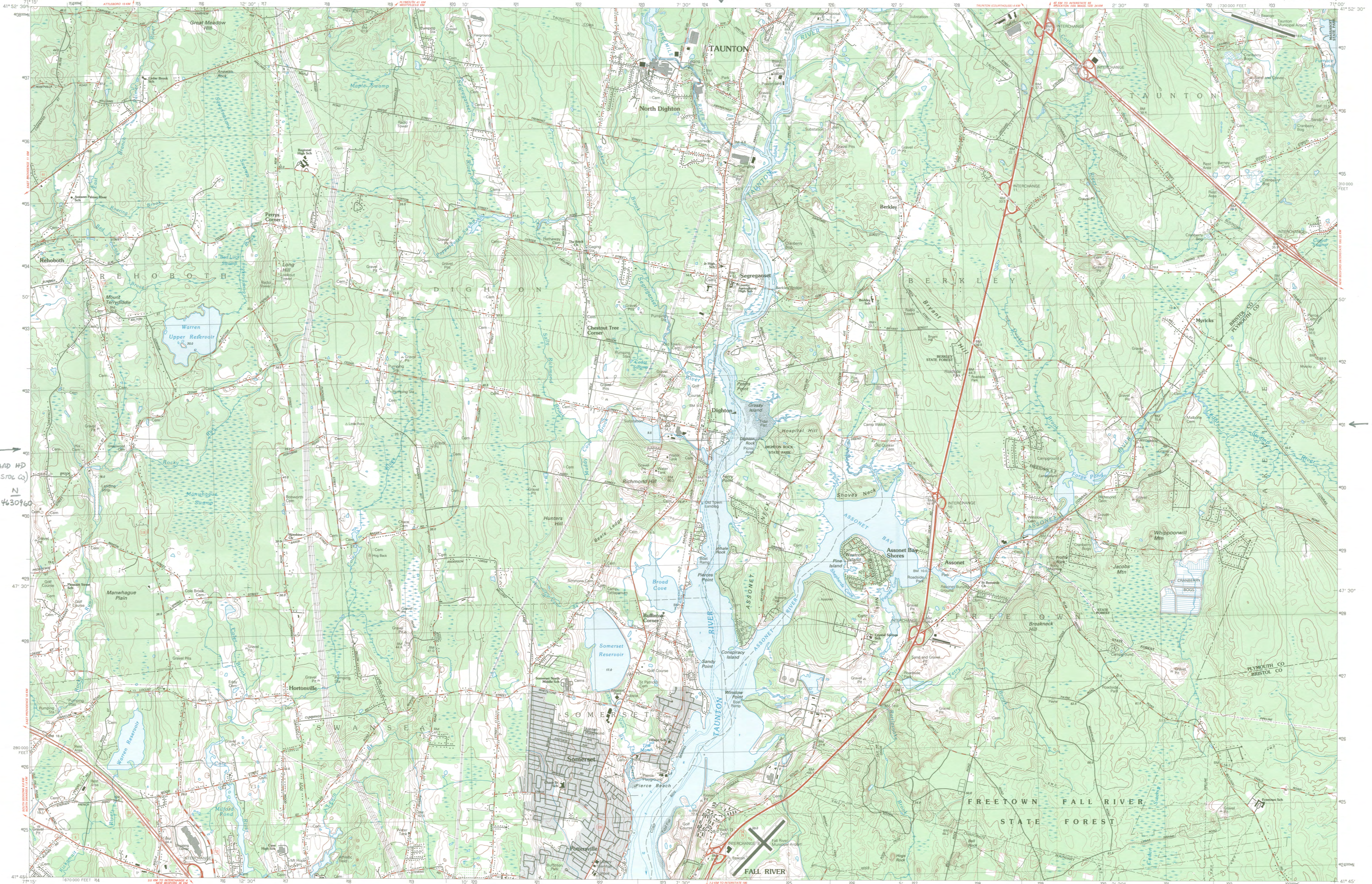
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

Topographic Map Symbols

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road, trail
- Route marker: interstate; U.S. State
- Railroad: standard gauge; narrow gauge
- Bridge: drawbridge
- Footbridge; overpass; underpass
- Built-up area: only selected buildings
- House; barn; church; school; large structure
- Boundary:
  - National, with monument
  - State
  - County, parish
  - Civil township, precinct, district
  - Incorporated city, village, town
  - National or State reservation; small park
  - Land grant with monument; found section corner
  - U.S. public lands survey: range, township, section
  - Range, township, section line: location approximate
  - Range or fall line
  - Power transmission line, located tower
  - Dam; dam with lock
  - Cemetery; grave
  - Campground; picnic site; U.S. location monument
  - Wetland; water well; spring
  - Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave
  - Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation
  - Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression
  - Disturbed surface: strip mine; new sand
  - Bathymetric contours: index; intermediate
  - Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream
  - Rapids, large and small; falls, large and small
  - Saline/marsh; marsh; swamp
  - Land subject to controlled inundation; woodland
  - Scrub; mangrove
  - Orchard; vineyard

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request

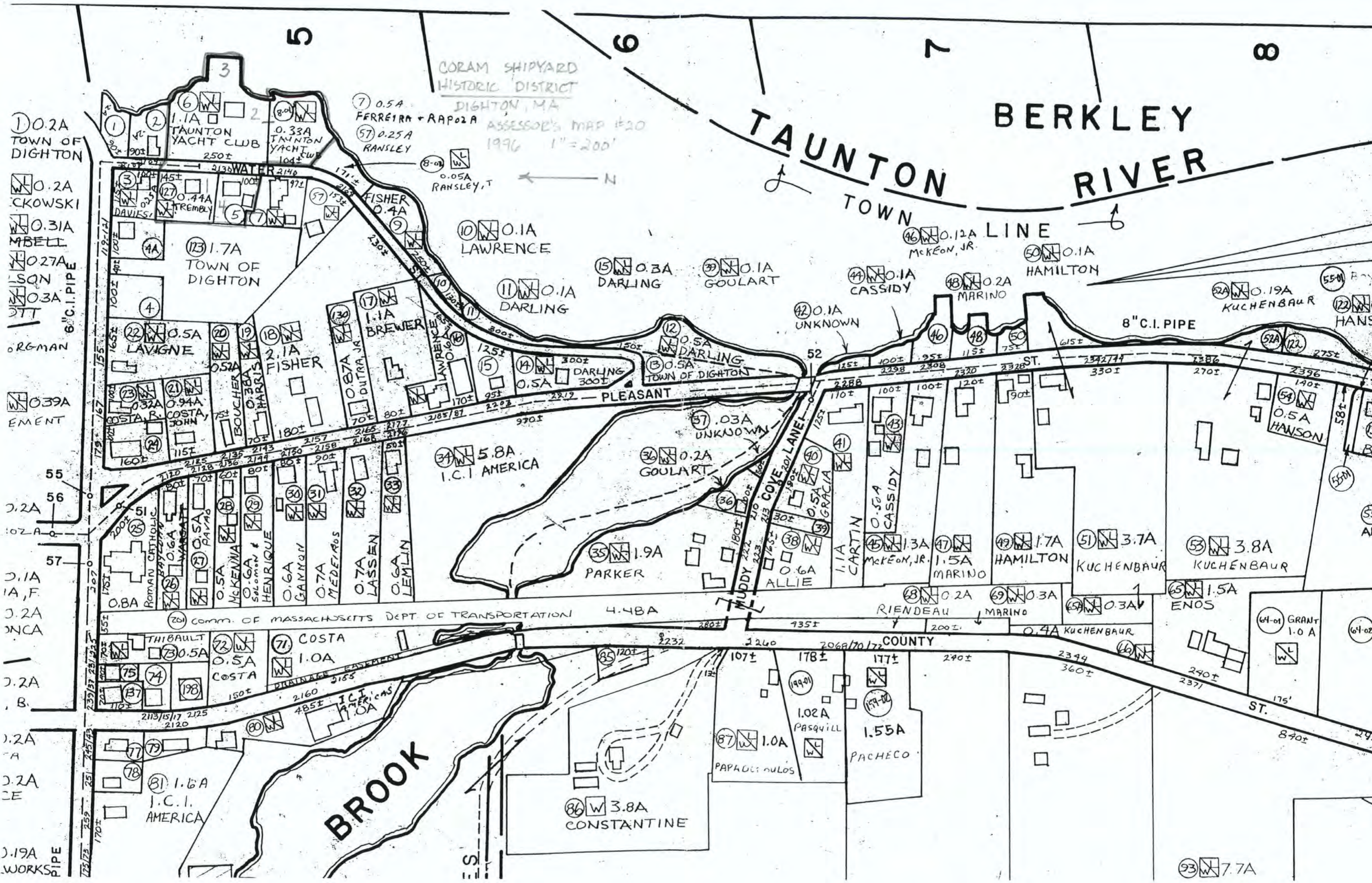
CORAM SHIPYARD HD DIGHTON (BRISTOL CO.) MA  
E N  
19 324140 4630960



SCALE 1:25 000  
1 CENTIMETER ON THE MAP REPRESENTS 250 METERS ON THE GROUND  
CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS

SOMERSET, MASSACHUSETTS  
41071-G1-TM-025  
1985







## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

May 14, 1997

Ms. Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
P. O. Box 37127  
Washington, D. C. 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Coram Shipyard Historic District, 2120, 2125, 2130 Water Street, Dighton (Bristol County), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property within the district were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

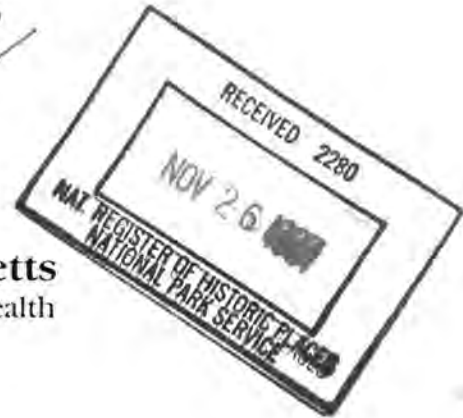
Betsy Friedberg  
National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

cc: Charles W. Harris, Chair, Dighton Historical Commission  
Gene E. Nelson, Chair, Dighton Board of Selectmen  
Diane Duprey, P.O. Box 771, Marion, MA 02738  
Margo B. Webber, Preservation Consultant

Enclosure



*Resub*



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

October 31, 1997

Ms. Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Mail Stop 2280, Suite 400  
1849 C Street  
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find additional documentation for the following National Register nomination as requested by Patrick Andrus (see attached letter of July 11, 1997). Requested photographs are included.

Coram Shipyard Historic District, Dighton (Bristol Co.), MA  
Reference number 97000625

Please let me know if I can be of further service.

Sincerely,

Philip Bergen  
National Register Assistant  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosures