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

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### National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms* Type all entries—complete applicable sections

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# 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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# 7. Description Historic Resources of Downtown Salem, Massachusetts

Condition		
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Check one

X original site

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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X altered

X unaltered

Salem is a city of 38,220 located on the Atlantic Seaboard in southern Essex County, 16 miles northeast of Boston. Boundaries for the Downtown Salem Multiple Resource Area correspond to those of the present commercial district as well as to those of the 17th century settlement (see Section 10 for details). It is surrounded by several National Register districts, including the Chestnut Street Historic District (1973) to the west, the Salem Common Historic District (1976) to the east, and the Derby Waterfront Historic District (1976) to the southeast. It also includes several existing National Register properties and districts listed in Section 10.

Topographically, Salem occupies an irregular V-shaped peninsula, protected from the full force of the Atlantic by Beverly and Salem harbors. Stemming from the rocky highlands to the west, the peninsula was created as a glacial outwash plain bordered on the north and south by tidal rivers known as the North and South rivers. The village of Salem was established at the peninsula's narrowest point, accessible to both rivers. Oriented to the sea from the beginning, the town was laid out in lots facing the rivers, with the public buildings centered on the street linking the riverbanks, now called Washington Street.

Politically, Salem originated as part of a massive land grant to the Massachusetts Company. It served as the shire town of this territory from 1628 until 1630 when administrative functions were transferred to Charlestown by John Winthrop, the newly appointed colonial governor. At that time, Salem and Charlestown were the only settled areas in the colony. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Salem's territory was gradually whittled away as new towns were established: Wenham (Enon) was incorporated in 1643, Marblehead in 1649, Topsfield in 1650, Beverly in 1668, Middleton in 1728, and Danvers in 1757. Salem, as the mother town, was never formally incorporated. Although Salem lost its role as capitol of the colony in 1630, it was made a shire town in 1643 when Essex County was established, thus continuing its role as a regional political center.

Since its founding in 1626, Salem has served as an economic and political core for the entire region now defined as Essex County. The English Puritans who settled here were attracted by the natural harbor, and maritime activity became an economic force early in the community's history. The great wealth amassed by Salem's merchant-adventurers in the 18th and early 19th centuries was visible in their elegant residences, but the expression of prosperity in commercial architecture was limited by the character of their business. The decline of shipping coupled with industrial growth focused new investment on downtown Salem in the mid 19th century. Conservative attitudes and a sound economic base helped to insulate Salem from the boom and bust cycle characteristic of post-industrial history. Downtown development culminated in the 1880s and '90s with the construction of the substantial commercial blocks which line Washington Street. A disastrous fire in 1914, comparable to the Great Fires of Chicago, San Francisco and Boston, destroyed acres of industrial and residential development, but spared the downtown. The impact of this

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fire was to divert investment, and later development pressure, away from downtown, effectively preserving its 19th century character to the present. An urban renewal clearance program in the last decade obliterated an early 19th century vernacular neighborhood, but was redirected in support of preservation before the downtown commercial area was seriously eroded.

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

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The factors which contributed to present-day Salem's appearance are discussed below by period. Please refer to the historic map series for specific locations.

### Plantation Period 1620-1675

Salem was settled in 1626 on a narrow neck of land flanked by the North and South rivers, both of which flowed into protected coves before reaching the Atlantic Ocean. The North River, a tributary of the Naumkeag (now Danvers) River, followed present-day Bridge Street, while the lesser South River followed Front and Derby Streets. The choice of Salem's location followed the Native American preference for estuarine sites.

From the beginning, these riverine connections greatly enhanced Sælem's regional role by providing easy access to inland, coastal and foreign points. The Naumkeag River and its tributaries led north to Beverly, and west to Danvers and Peabody, thus making available the rich resources of the hinterland, while making Salem their natural outlet. The South River formed a natural protected harbor leading to other American ports as well as foreign destinations. Salem capitalized on this natural resource early on, so that within a few years of settlement three scheduled ferries plied the North River, fishing and shipbuilding were important industries on Salem Neck (east of the survey area), and foreign trade routes had been established. In addition to its easy access to water routes, Salem was also located on one of the seven primary overland corridors to Boston; this road ran along the coast through Ipswich and Lynn.

It is believed that initial settlement in Salem occurred just southwest of the survey area, in the block bounded by present-day Norman, High, and Summer Streets. However, in 1628, when Salem became the capitol of Massachusetts Bay, the town was laid out in regular house lots which generally faced the two rivers and extended inland. A central street (present-day Washington Street) was laid out, four rods wide, connecting the rivers and the paths that followed their banks. The other major roadway of this period was Essex Street which came into gradual use as an east-west thoroughfare, connecting the backs of the houselots

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Due to its

on its way inland to Danvers and eventually to Boston. prime location and early date, Salem's population was relatively large during this period, with one estimate putting it at 900 in 1638.

While there are few physical remains from this period in the survey area, the locations of several public structures are known through documentary evidence. One was a fort, built on high ground between Washington and Summer Streets, probably on the western corner of present Sewell and Lynde Streets. A second important structure was the Town House (1677) erected in the middle of Washington Street, near what is now Lynde Street; its ground floor was used by the town while its upper story accomodated the court. Other structures included the First Church meeting house at the southeast corner of Washington and Essex Streets (1634), a jail just south of the church (1668) and a courthouse on the west side of Washington Street opposite the jail.

The most outstanding remaining feature in terms of size, visibility, and integrity is the Charter Street Cemetery (NR-2-Charter Street Historic District; 1975). Dating from 1627, this is Salem's oldest burying ground, and one of the earliest in the state. Adjacent to the cemetery is the heavily restored Pickman House of ca.1638-1680 (NR-2-Charter Street Historic District; 1975).

#### Colonial Period 1675-1780

Salem experienced steady growth during this period, fueled by the prosperity of foreign trade. By 1675, Salem was involved in large-scale international commerce and its physical form was slowly being modified to suit its new role. This was especially true at the southern edge of the survey area, and to the east. At that time the South River formed a tidal basin and harbor approximately where Riley Plaza is today, with shipyards and wharves along Front Street which marks the natural water line in the area. During much of this period and the ensuing Federal period, the South River was gradually being filled and channeled to accomodate more intensive use. By the end of the Colonial period, mercantile activities were becoming concentrated east of the survey area, around Derby Wharf (1762; NHS), but their effect was felt throughout the city.

A map of 1700 and a written account of 1750 provide a description of the survey area during the Colonial period. The map (#1; From the Research of Sidney Perley) shows the survey area divided by an irregular network of streets which are further sub-divided into irregularly sized house lots. In addition to Washington Street (labeled Town House Street) and Essex Street (labeled Ye Main Street) are Front and Derby Streets following the bank of the South River, Central Street leading north to Essex Street, St. Peter Street (labeled Prison Lane) leading from Essex Street to the North River, Brown Street (labeled Highway to Ye

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Common) leading east from Prison Lane to Salem Common, and Norman Street leading west from Washington to Summer Street. At this time, few wharves had been constructed, and the South River was obstructed primarily by a dam, bridge and mill site southwest of the survey area.

The written account (James Duncan Phillips, <u>Salem in the Eighteenth</u> <u>Century</u>: pp.168-176) characterized Salem as "little more than a village" in 1750. According to this account, Washington Street was a broad, dusty way lined with residences. In the center was the Old Town House (reconstructed in 1719), by then used as a school. Essex Street, from Central Street to Hawthorne Boulevard is described as a desirable place to live; west of Washington Street, it is characterized as a mixture of shops and residences giving way to swampy ground on the south. A number of warehouses and wharves stood at the southern end of Washington Street on the South River and others were being constructed at the northern end where a drawbridge (1742-1744) had just been completed to provide access to the northern planting fields and Danvers.

Phillips states that the population at mid century was 3,472 persons, with 1,629 males, 1,710 females and 123 blacks. He also states that the town contained 372 houses although Col. Goelet, who visited Salem in 1750, said it "consists of about 450 houses, Several of which are neat Buildings, but all of wood, and Covers a Great Deal of Ground, being at a Convenient Distance from Each Other with fine Gardens back their Houses."

Few structures remain standing in the survey area to attest to the architectural character of the Colonial period. The handful that do are laterally sited, modest 2½-story wood frame residences which lend some credence to the architectural description of Salem in the 1720s and '30s provided by Phillips. He stated, "The kind of dwelling house in Salem had gradually changed since the early type of steep roofs, overhanging second stories, latticed windows, and clustered chimneys, and a new style of gambrel roofs had crept in . . . The large square wooden houses belong to a later period" (Salem in the Eighteenth Century: p.128). Extant gambrel roof examples include 47 Federal Street of ca.1760-90 (HP-24; Area A) and 18 Crombie Street of ca.1770 (HP-29; Area B). Gable roof survivors are 13 Central Street of 1766 (HP-75; Area C) and the Grimshaw House of 1770 (NR-2-Charter Street Historic District; 1975).

#### Federal Period 1780-1830

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The expansion of trade after the Revolution brought even greater wealth and population to Salem. Physical evidence of this prosperity is apparent in the increasing separation of function as well as in the many innovative, architect-designed buildings constructed. As the development pressure

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on the downtown increased, new construction assumed a predominantly commercial character. Concurrently, residential uses became concentrated in surrounding areas, most notably on Federal and Chestnut Streets to the west (Chestnut Street Historic District; NR-1973) and around the Common to the east (Salem Common Historic District; NR-1976). Residential development also spread along Derby Street, as a result of the shift of wharves and shipping facilities to deeper waters east of the survey area (see Derby Waterfront Historic District; NR-1976).

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Prosperity is also seen in the number of new streets laid out. A map of 1832 (#3) shows several major new east-west cross streets: Church and Lynde Streets crossed Washington Street above Essex Street; Federal Street was laid out above that; and Bridge Street ran along the North River from the North Bridge at Summer Street to the Beverly Bridge. The only important new north-south street was Lafayette Street, connecting Central Street with the new South Bridge of 1810. Additionally, a number of secondary north-south ways appeared. Rust and Ash Streets in the northeastern quadrant of the downtown, and Sewell Street, Crombie Street and Barton Square in the southwestern quadrant. The most important addition to Salem's streetscape was the Salem Turnpike which connected with Essex Street. Constructed in 1802-1803, it was the first turnpike in the county and ran for 12 straight miles to Charlestown Square.

The Federal period is the first for which large numbers of structures remain. This is attributable to several factors, including commercial usage, masonry construction, high design quality, and the relatively large number of buildings constructed. Jacob Rust's brick store at 216-218 Essex St. (HP-4, Area C) and the large Central Building (HP-82; Area C), erected by merchants Benjamin Hathorne and William S. Gray, both appeared around 1805. The Central Building, known today as the Old Customs House, also housed a variety of commercial and institutional uses, including the Masonic Lodge and the new Salem Athenaeum. Designed by prominent local architect Samuel McIntire, this sophisticated building assumes the form of other important institutional buildings of the period: three-story rectangle symmetrically organized around a pedimented central pavillion. The first bank building in Essex County (HP-76; Area C) was erected on Central Street in 1811. As the county seat and commercial hub, Salem developed as a financial center early in the 19th century. A series of bank headquarters built throughout the century was notable for architectural distinction. This building, now the home of the Salem Fraternity, was designed by the prominent Boston architect Charles Bulfinch, and is the only known example of his work to survive in Salem.

The increasingly commercial character of Essex Street was boosted by the development of Derby Square in 1815-1817. Elias Hasket Derby died

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in 1799, the same year his mansion was completed, and a dispute among his heirs finally led to its demolition in 1815. John Derby and Benjamin Pickman, Jr. carefully planned a new commercial development on the site. Following the model of the Lechmere Point Corporation and its 1811 development of East Cambridge, Derby and Pickman donated land in the center of their square for a Town Hall and Market (HP-72; Area C). They also inserted deed restrictions to control the character of the square by allowing only masonry construction.

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Limited residential growth took place downtown as well, although primarily in peripheral areas. One was a modest neighborhood north of Essex Street. Only two buildings, the Universalist Church (HP-4) and the small brick house at 7 Ash Street (HP-3), remain to indicate the original character of this area, which was cleared during urban renewal in the late 1960s. At the west end of town, Benjamin Crombie, proprietor of the Salem Tavern on Essex Street, laid out a new street through his property and began to sell house lots along it in 1805. The houses lining Crombie Street (HP-29 to 33; Area B) form the last intact residential group located in the downtown, and serve as an important link with central Salem's former character.

Population and valuation figures for the period show substantial growth, especially between the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Population, recorded at 5,337 in 1776, had more than doubled to 12,617 by 1810. In the next twenty years the population grew modestly: 12,731 in 1812 and 13,886 in 1830. A town valuation of 1784 recorded 646 houses and 183 shops.

### Early Industrial Period 1830-1870

Salem experienced profound physical modifications during this period, reflecting concurrent political, social and economic shifts. The extent of this change is illustrated by a comparison of maps from 1832 (#3), 1851 (#4) and 1874 (#5). The 1832 map shows a limited street network, flanked by relatively free flowing rivers. In contrast, the 1851 and 1874 maps show a fully developed street system, and an almost total transformation of the waterfront, as trends begun during the 18th century were brought to culmination. By 1851, all existing streets were in place except New Derby and New Front Streets, a situation which remained unchanged by 1874. The most dramatic change occurred along the South River, which was extensively dammed, channeled, wharfed and filled; the North River showed only limited change. Another notable change, seen by 1851 is the introduction of a rail line running beneath Washington Street with depots at both the northern and southern ends.

Change is reflected in the building stock as well as in the transportation network, and once again, a fairly large sampling of buildings remains



for study. The increased significance of the regional economy was reinforced by a strengthening of the political system, manifested in the construction of new public buildings. The incorporation of the City of Salem in 1836 was quickly followed by construction of a monumental granite-faced City Hall (HP-56; Area C) designed by Boston architect Richard Bond. Bond was again commissioned when a new granite Essex County Courthouse (HP-12;Area A) was built in 1841. The previous courthouse, a 1785 brick structure designed by Samuel McIntire, was demolished when the railroad tunnel under Washington Street was built in 1839. Located only a block apart, the New Courthouse and City Hall represent different expressions of the popular Greek Revival style, although they are comparable in mass, scale and materials.

The growing sophistication of the social environment of Salem was reflected in the increased use of masonry construction, overcoming the 18th century preference for wood. Gridley J. F. Bryant's Naumkeag Block (HP-81; Area C), at the corner of Essex and Central Streets, is locally unique in its expression of a pilastered facade in brick. In 1851, Bryant's house for Tucker Daland (NR-Salem Common Historic District; 1976) at 130 Essex Street introduced the Italianate style to downtown Salem; the neighboring Plummer Hall (NR-Salem Common Historic District; 1976), built for the Salem Atheneum in 1857, and the Downing Block of 1858 (HP-78; Area C), at 173 Essex Street, explored the implications of the new style for institutional and commercial architecture. The Bowker Block (HP-2), built at 144-156 Essex Street in 1830, extended a sense of urbanity farther east than the previous limits of downtown. Similarly, merchant Nathaniel West's elegant residential block at 5-9 Summer Street (HP- 8) carried this character to the west. These buildings still define the limits of downtown Salem.

Several other important buildings date from the last decade of the period. A new police station (HP-65; Area C) built on Front Street around 1860 was soon followed by a fire station (HP-52; Area C) and water department headquarters (HP-51; Area C) on Church Street. Established on Federal Street, Essex County gradually erected a complex of buildings. Construction of the Superior Courthouse (HP-13; Area A) in 1860 stimulated fashionable residential construction, and this section of Federal Street is characterized by the concentration of Mansard style mansions built at that time.

Population figures for this period of economic and political maturity register impressive gains. Beginning at 13,886 in 1830, Salem's population rose to 15,082 by 1840, to 20,934 by 1855, and by the period's end in 1870, it stood at 24,117.

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### Late Industrial Period 1870-1915

Downtown Salem assumed much of its present appearance during this period when its role as a regional commercial and civic center was consolidated. Charles Osgood, in his 1879 <u>Historical Sketch of Salem</u> described the city thus (p.270):

> Salem is no decrepit tumble down city. Modern structures are the rule, not the exception. Her public buildings are substantial and ornamental; her business blocks well built and of pleasing architectural design; and fine houses adorn many streets in the residential portion of the city.

The majority of buildings included in this nomination date from this period.

A trio of buildings from the mid 1870s represents the transitional period between residential-scale commercial construction and the monumental blocks of the late 19th century. The Arrington Block (HP-63; Area C), built as a hotel when Washington Street was extended out to South Salem in 1873, is the only surviving example of the dominant wood-frame commercial architecture of its time. The short-lived firm of Bruce and Copeland designed both the Arrington Block and the Hale Building (HP-88; Area C) at 225 Essex Street, which introduced the cast iron front to the city. The late arrival of the new technology, twenty years after its popularization, suggests its limited local appeal, and the building remained unique in Salem. The use of marble on the facade of the Goldthwaite Building at 242 Essex Street (HP-46; Area C) aptly expresses the ambitious character of the building. Architect William D. Dennis relied on luxurious materials rather than size to establish its identity; its scale is now diminutive in comparison with its neighbors. All three of these buildings are overtly commercial in character, but their diversity illustrates the variety of architectural expression of the period. The increasing role of architects is seen by the association of each of these buildings with a designer.

The final decades of the 19th century brought the emergence of Salem as a regional retailing center. Eight of the monumental commercial blocks lining Washington Street today were built between 1882 and 1892 (HP-39, 40, 47, 50, 54, 55, 57 and 58; Area C). This concentration of substantial buildings defines the character of this corridor, with pleasing contrast provided by a handful of buildings from other periods. Other notable buildings from this period of commercial prosperity appear elsewhere downtown, including the Newmark Building at 203-209 Essex Street (HP-84; Area C), built in 1895 for the Naumkeag Clothing Company, and the Gardner Building at 206-212 Essex Street (HP-3; Area C), the last of the series of lavish bank buildings characteristic of 19th

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century Salem. All <sup>b</sup>ut two of these are long demolished, and only the Gardner Building continues in its original use, as the headquarters of the Salem 5¢ Savings Bank.

Another significant aspect of late 19th century Salem was the prominence of charitable socio-educational institutions. The Salem YMCA erected a handsome Classical Revival building at 284-296 Essex Street in 1898 (HP-5), combining modern athletic facilities with comfortable living accomodations for single men. The Salem Fraternity, founded in 1869 and owner of Bulfinch's Essex County Bank Building (HP-76; Area C)since 1899, is the oldest boys' club in America.

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The Great Salem Fire of 1914 destroyed extensive tracts of residential and industrial development west and south of downtown. The vast acreage cleared by the disaster served as a release valve for new development, protecting downtown Salem from real estate pressures from World War I until urban renewal of the 1960s. While renewal has had a substantial impact on Salem, its 19th century character still dominates the central business district.

As was the case during all of the preceding periods, Salem's population continued to register steady growth. Beginning at slightly under 25,000, it rose to 27,598 by 1880, to 30,801 by 1890, to 35,956 by 1900, and to 43,697 by 1910. It was not until the period was over that the population experienced its first decline: in 1920 it fell slightly to 42,529.

### Modern Salem

Downtown Salem is characterized by diversity of scale and architectural style, as well as by consistency of materials and high quality of design. Washington Street is a corridor of monumental commercial blocks, while Essex Street has a smaller scale and greater variety of building types and uses. Detached and semi-detached residential construction tightly lines Federal and Lynde Streets, extending the density of the commercial streets throughout the downtown. Well over half of the structures in the survey area are in commercial use; about one quarter are residential, providing a transition to adjacent neighborhoods; institutional buildings, in governmental, religious and social use, make up the balance. The great majority of extant features in the survey area date from the 19th century, but representatives of all periods of Salem's development remain.

The major impact on the physical fabric of modern downtown Salem has come through an urban renewal program begun in the 1960s. Using Washington Street to divide the downtown into Heritage Plazas East and West, the program initially focused on the eastern half where wholesale



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demolition occurred. Fortunately, the focus of the program was shifted to rehabilitation before the downtown's historic character was obliterated. Major new developments include the Essex Street Mall (a pedestrian zone consisting of the new East India Square multi-use facility to the north and rehabilitated 19th century structures to the south) between Essex and Church Streets; a townhouse complex between Federal, Bridge and Ash Streets; and the Heritage Plaza condominiums between Barton Square and Norman Street. Although several cleared parcels north of Essex Street remain vacant, much of the new development has been successfully integrated with the rehabilitated older buildings to create a consistent, lively commercial center with high lot coverage. Heritage Plaza West remains largely untouched.

### Survey Methodology

Boundaries of the Multiple Resource area were determined by land use patterns traditionally associated with downtown development. The defined area is primarily commercial in character, augmented by residential uses strongly associated with the central business district. It incorporates the two urban renewal areas, Heritage Plazas East and West, and also overlaps the local Commercial Area Revitalization District (CARD), a state-sponsored commercial development program which provides financial incentives to investors.

A preliminary inventory of the downtown was sponsored in 1978 by Historic Salem, Inc. (HSI), a private preservation organization, using a CETAfunded survey team with limited professional qualifications. An experienced preservation consultant was hired by the Salem Redevelopment Authority (SRA) in the fall of 1979 to organize and complete the HSI survey in preparation for this nomination. The consultant, Allison M. Crump, is an architectural historian and a graduate of Columbia University's Historic Preservation Program. The inventory concentrated on the identification of above-ground cultural resources because of the unavailability of staff to undertake an archaeological analysis.

All physical information recorded by the HSI surveyors was field checked for accuracy. New photographs of all properties were taken to insure timeliness and clarity of image; negatives were filed with the SRA. The limited research prepared by the HSI team was poorly referenced, so all property documentation was provided by the consultant. A series of maps and insurance atlases published between 1851 and 1945 formed the basis for most construction dates, with building department records used for recent buildings. City directories, newspapers, and the photographic collection of the Essex Institute were other valuable sources. Deed research was conducted for a limited number of properties of obvious merit. Finally, contemporary secondary source material was occasionally very helpful.

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The inventory identified the following categories of significance: representatives of a period or type of development; representatives of a building type or style; structures of architectural importance; structures associated with individuals or events of historical importance; and examples of achievements in the development of building technology. Levels of significance ranging from local to national were represented. Within the survey area, fifty-six primary structures were found to be already listed on the National Register: three as individual sites and the rest in five districts. An additional sixty-six sites have been identified as eligible for the National Register through the inventory process, comprising nine individual properties and three districts. Districts have been identified by their cohesive and consistent quality, although in some instances typified by their diversity. Individual sites have been nominated where distinctive characteristics, physical isolation or an unrelated context precluded incorporation in a district. Geographic concentration alone has not been considered to be sufficient justification for district nomination.

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### Archaeological Potential

The Downtown Salem Multiple Resource Area possesses a strong, although presently undefined, potential for the presence of a diverse archaeological component relating to both prehistoric and historic settlement of the area. In the past, construction activities are known to have produced isolated aboriginal cultural materials at four separate locations on the peninsula; other finds may have escaped recording. One instance occurred within the Multiple Resource Area itself (MHC 19-ES-511); excavations for Lyceum Hall in 1828 (Area C, HP-53) produced an atl-atl weight fragment of greenish slate. Massachusetts Historical Commission site files record approximately 30 prehistoric sites within a two-mile radius of the Multiple Resource Area in both Salem and in neighboring towns. For the majority of recorded sites, cultural and temporal affiliation is unknown, although materials from the Late Archaic through Late Woodland periods are represented; site types include lithic scatters, shell middens, burials, and single artifact finds. The presence of small isolated prehistoric sites within urban areas is not unknown; the possibility of such existing in downtown Salem is slim, but not unfeasible.

Downtown Salem should be considered as an area potentially rich in archaeological components relating to the historic period. Careful implementation of an appropriate research design employing archaeological

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techniques may provide important supplemental and comparative information for our understanding of the configuration and transformation of urban centers in the 18th through 20th centuries. In Massachusetts, recent archaeological investigations in Boston and Charlestown have demonstrated that densely developed urban centers do possess undisturbed features and cultural material deposits which reflect past activities and behavior.

As a primary Massachusetts maritime trade and commercial center outranked only by Boston during the Colonial and Federal periods and a major regional retailing center throughout the 19th century, Salem possesses a complex history. One research question which may profitably be addressed through archaeology is the nature of the role Salem played as an early regional settlement core and entrepot which served as a collection and redistribution point for regional and international exchange networks. In addition, comparison with data from other cities, particularly Boston, should help to identify differences and similarities and provide a clearer definition of how these urban centers functioned. The impact of technological innovations which aided Salem's development and the quality of life there, such as its early 19th century water supply system, may be investigated. The Crombie Street Historic District exists as an important resource for understanding domestic activities and land use during the early 19th century; the Federal Street Historic District offers similar opportunities for the subsequent period. Additionally, Downtown Salem's commercial area may contain archaeological information on past land use and commercial activities not present in the documentary record.

In sum, the Downtown Salem Multiple Resource Area should be considered as an archaeologically sensitive area with high potential to yield information on history and possibly prehistory.

# 8. Significance Historic Resources of Downtown Salem, Massachusetts

Period	Areas of Significance—C	heck and justify below	Mount 1/2 /23	
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	<u>X</u> community planning	landscape architecture	e religion
1400–1499	_X_ archeology-historic	conservation	_ <u>^</u> law	science
1500–1599	agriculture	economics	_X_ literature	sculpture
1600–1699	X_architecture	<u>X</u> education	military	X social/
<u>X</u> 1700–1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
<u>X</u> 1800–1899	<u> </u>	exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater
_X 1900-	communications	<u>X</u> industry	X politics/government	X transportation
		invention		other (specify)
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#### Specific dates See inventory forms Builder/Architect See inventory forms

#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Founded in the early 17th century, Salem has been significant throughout its history as the regional core for Southern Essex County. Politically, it was the region's first settled town (1626), its first established city (1838), and the seat of county government (1648). On an economic level, the city enjoyed unbroken prosperity until the Modern period, fueled first by an international maritime trade and later by industry and retailing. Salem's regional role was established and enhanced by its location at the web of a complex transportation system consisting of maritime, overland and finally rail routes.

As the historic center of Salem, the Downtown Salem Multiple Resource Area directly reflects the most important aspects of the city's long and varied history. It includes a combination of nine individually nominated buildings and three historic districts. Four existing National Register districts are also located within the area, two of which are embraced within the expanded boundaries of newly nominated districts. The buildings and other features included in this nomination date from the 17th through the 20th centuries, giving physical form to all phases of the city's development. As a whole, the Downtown Salem Multiple Resource Area possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and it meets criteria A, B and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

#### Plantation Period 1620-1675

Salem was the first, and initially the most important settlement in the Massachusetts Bay. Thus, its earliest history closely parallels that of the region and the state.

> The major regional event of the period was the establishment of permanent English settlement along the coastal margin and its expansion inland along the major tidal rivers. Specific events include Fernando Gorges' Council for New England patent (1621), the first serious English land claim to the area; the Massachusetts Bay Company charter (1629) which precipitated large scale puritan immigration; and the "Great Migration" of English emigres during the 1630s which insured that the colony would have sufficient population mass to survive. [Historic and Archaeological Resources

> > of the Boston Area: p.39]

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Salem played a direct role in all of these events, serving as an early regional core.

Salem was settled in 1626 by a small group of Englishmen who had recently abandoned a planting, fishing, and trading post on Cape Ann to the north. Led by Roger Conant, the group included John Lyford, John Woodbury, John Balch, Peter Palfray, Richard Norman and son, William Allen and Walter Knight. Initially, Salem was referred to as Naumkeag, recognizing the importance of its location at the mouth of the Naumkeag (now Danvers) River.

The settlement at Salem gained formal recognition from English authorities in March 1628, when the Council for New England (pat. 1621) conveyed the lands of Massachusetts Bay to Sir Henry Roswell, John Endicott, and others. Bounds for the colony were defined as "between three miles to the northward of Merrimack River and three miles to the southward of Charles River, and in length within the described breadth from the Atlantic Ocean to the South Sea." Endicott was appointed Governor (provincial administrator) of the plantation and dispatched forthwith; Matthew Cradock was named Governor of the Massachusetts Company in London. Uniting with those already there, Endicott settled in the oldest town in the colony, soon to be called Salem; and extended some supervision over the waters of Boston Harbor, then called Massachusetts Bay (Osgood: Historical Sketch of Salem, p.3).

Within a year, however, the difficulties of governing the colony from afar were becoming apparent and on August 29, 1629, it was voted to transfer authority to New England. Cradock resigned as Governor and John Winthrop was chosen in his place. Winthrop arrived in Salem on June 12, 1630, but within a week had begun to search for a more attractive capitol; he soon selected Charlestown as the seat of government. In early August the transfer was completed, the first Court of Assistants was held in Charlestown, and Salem ceased to be the capitol town.

Salem, like Plymouth, was never formally incorporated as a town, since both predated the formation of regional governments. However, Salem was recognized from the first by the court held at Charlestown, August 23, 1630, as a distinct plantation or town. Its boundaries have been defined over the years as daughter towns have broken away and achieved incorporation as distinct political units (See Section 7).

Although Salem ceased to be the capitol of Massachusetts Bay in 1630, it did continue in a regional political role. In 1635, it was named as the site of one of four regional courts; and in 1643, when Massachusetts Bay was divided into four counties or shires, it was named as the shire town of Essex County. Additionally, it was established as an official port for the collection of customs in 1658.

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### Colonial Period 1675-1780

Salem flourished during this period both as a major port and as a regional seat of government. By 1675, Salem's mercantile trading activities had expanded to an international level with regular ports of call in the West Indies and Europe. At the beginning of the period, the majority of Salem's vessels were small, 20-40 ton ketches carrying crews of 4-6 men; these were gradually replaced by larger schooners which allowed Salem captains to venture further and further from home. Census figures for the period reveal that the majority of Salem's men were merchants, traders, or mechanics, as opposed to the majority of husbandmen found in interior regions.

Salem's pre-eminent position as a port was formally recognized in 1683 when Marblehead, Beverly, Gloucester, Ipswich, Rowley, Newbury and Salisbury were annexed to the port of Salem by the Court of Assistants and it was decreed that Salem and Boston

shall be lawful ports of the colony, where all ships and other vessels shall laid or unlaid any of the plantation's enumerated goods, or other goods from foreign ports, and nowhere else, on penalty of the confiscation of such ship or vessel, with her goods and tackle, as shall laid or unlaid elsewhere. (Arrington: <u>Municipal History of Essex County</u>, p.331)

Salem's role in the Revolution principally derived from its importance as a seaport. Salem supplied much of the colonists' sea force, refitting merchant ships as privateers. In addition, it was the site of the First Provincial Congress, where opposition to the English government was first publicly expressed in 1775, as well as the first bloodshed of the war, at a showdown between British troops and colonists known as "Leslie's Retreat."

### Federal Period 1780-1830

Salem experienced tremendous growth and prosperity during this period, particularly in the years between the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. With larger and faster ships, Salem was able to expand its trade to China, India, Russia, Japan, and South America, handling such goods as Indian silks, Chinese tea, Sumatran pepper, Arabian coffee and African hides. The men most responsible for Salem's penetration of Far Eastern markets were Elias Hasket Derby, William Gray and Joseph Peabody.

The extent of Salem's foreign trade is illustrated by the tonnage of vessels registered there: 1781: 8,652 tons; 1791 9,031 tons; 1800: 24,862 tons; 1807: 24,570 tons (152 vessels). Also, between 1801



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and 1810, duties collected in the port of Salem totaled \$7,272,633; between 1789 and 1887, over \$25 million was collected. Jefferson's Embargo interrupted the steady growth of Salem's trade, and worried merchants organized in opposition to a declaration of war. Their concern proved to be justified, since disruption of trade during the War of 1812 hastened the decline of Salem's maritime industries. By 1815, the number of vessels in Salem was reduced to 57, beginning the city's long decline as a port.

General economic prosperity during most of the period was reflected in the improvement of roads and public facilities. Most notable was construction of the Boston-Salem Turnpike which greatly facilitated transportation of goods between the two ports. The Salem Turnpike and Chelsea Bridge Corp. was incorporated on March 6, 1802 with William Gray, Dr. Edward Holyoke and Nathan Dane as principals. Completed on November 27, 1803, it was a straight 12 mile, 256 rod long road from downtown Salem to Charlestown Square. Its total cost was \$189,000 and it was the first turnpike in the county. The other major public improvement of the period was a water supply system. On March 9, 1797, the Proprietors of the Salem and Danvers Aqueduct were chartered. They constructed a reservoir and piping system which initially provided water to customers at the rate of \$5 per year.

This is the first period in Salem's history for which accurate and consistent population figures are available. As is to be expected, the growth of the city's population closely paralleled that of its economy; major increases were experienced between the two wars, with only minor growth after that. Salem's population, recorded at 5,337 in 1776, had jumped to 9,457 by 1800, and by 1810 had reached 12,617. By 1820 it had risen only slightly to 12,731, and by 1830 it stood at 13,886.

### Early Industrial Period 1830-1870

This was a period of great political, social, economic and physical change. Salem made the leap from town to city, private associations proliferated, and industry supplanted mercantile activities. Physical development of the downtown became increasingly dense and characterized by masonry construction.

Salem's citizens considered changing from a town to city form of government as early as 1805. Formal action was not taken until early in 1836 when a committee was appointed to study the matter. On the favorable recommendation of this committee, a city charter was drafted and an Act "to establish the city of Salem" was approved on March 23, 1836 by Edward Everett, Governor of the Commonwealth. This made Salem the second city incorporated in the Commonwealth, following Boston, which

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had been incorporated on February 22, 1822. A fashionable new City Hall, in the Regency Greek Revival style, was constructed on Washington Street in 1837 (HP-56; Area C).

During this period private associations proliferated, supplementing the limited number formed in the Federal period. The East India Marine Society, composed of sailors who had rounded Cape Horn, was one such organization. The society built its Hall on Essex Street in 1824, to serve as a meetingplace and museum; the Lyceum, a social and debating club, was established in 1830. Although its building on Church Street (HP-53; Area C) was totally rebuilt after a fire in 1895, the location and mass recall the original structure. Many prominent figures appeared on the Lyceum's program, including Daniel Webster, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Quincy Adams, and Horace Mann.

Two of the most important organizations, which had history and science as their aims, still flourish today. The Essex Institute was formed in 1848, merging the Essex Historical Society of 1821 and the Essex County Natural History Society of 1836. The Essex Institute constructed a complex of buildings east of the survey area on Essex Street (NR-Essex Institute Historic District; 1972). The Peabody Museum was formed in 1868 with a bequest from George Peabody to "Promote Science and Useful knowledge in the County of Essex." They first occupied the East India Marine Hall of 1824, adding to it over the years to create the current complex on Essex Street (NHL-Peabody Museum of Salem; 1966).

Salem was also the home of many distinguished personalities of the time. Dr. Nathaniel Peabody's house at 53 Charter Street (NR-2, Charter Street Historic District; 1975), which was the setting for Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, <u>Dr. Grimshawe's Secret</u>, was a center of intellectual activity. Mann and Hawthorne spent much time there while courting Mary and Sophia Peabody; their sister Elizabeth Palmer Peabody was a well-known Transcendentalist who was active in educational reform. Rufus Choate, the prominent attorney and politician, lived at 14 Lynde Street (NR-3, Rufus Choate House; 1982). Benjamin Pierce, founder of the U. S. Coastal Survey, and the Transcendentalist poet, Jones Very, were also Salem residents.

By 1830 Salem had entered a period of decline as a shipping center. Never fully recovered from the War of 1812, Salem was dealt a final blow at mid century by the development of clipper ships whose hulls were too deep for the South River basin. However, rather than experiencing overall stagnation, Salem's economy found other footings. Key factors were the introduction of multiple rail lines and the growth of several regionally important industries. On April 14, 1836, a charter was obtained for the Eastern Railroad. Opened on August 27, 1838, this line took the Shore Route from Salem to Boston. The daily average

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for the first three months was 348 passengers for the 40 minute ride. In 1846, a northern rail connection was established with incorporation of the Essex Railroad. Completed on September 5, 1848, it ran from the north depot of the Eastern Railroad inland to Lawrence. In 1848 the Salem and Lowell Railroad was incorporated; going into operation on August 1, 1850. Thus, by the mid 19th century, Salem was well connected to the major cities of eastern Massachusetts, allowing continuation of its role as a regional transportation core.

The arrival of the railroad in 1838 and Salem's emergence as a major rail interchange fostered development of industry as the new cornerstone of Salem's economy. Importantly, the railroads brought new ties to the interior and Salem's formerly independent maritime trade began to supply coal to the great textile mills of Lowell and Lawrence. Additionally, the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company built its first mill on the South River in 1848, which was said to be the largest and best appointed in the country. Foreign trade still supported a substantial share of the economy and Massachusetts sheeting was a valuable commodity in the African markets. Salem's leather industry also developed an interdependence with traditional trade routes as Africa was an important secondary source of raw material.

#### Late Industrial Period 1870-1915

Salem was well established as a regional core for southern Essex County by the late 19th century, having served in this role since its founding in the 17th century. Several factors supported this position. Salem had served as the seat of county government since 1648. Salem had been the first city established in the region. Salem was at the center of a complex transportation network consisting of maritime, overland and rail routes. Finally, Salem had enjoyed continuous economic prosperity, fueled first by international maritime trade and at this time, by steady industrial growth.

Salem's industries, most of which had been established earlier in its history, peaked in the second half of the 19th century, thus allowing the city's growth to continue unabated. United States census figures for 1880 put the total worth of Salem's manufactured products at \$8,441,000. While this is certainly not the highest figure in the state, it is a respectable one and rested on a diversified base.

Salem's largest industry, accounting for almost one-half its total worth, involved the production of leather goods: tanning and shoemaking. Introduced in the 17th century as a cottage industry, leather production was valued at \$4,209,000 by 1880, a figure which was one of the highest in the state. Another important industry was cotton,

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whose manufacture was centered at the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company on the South River. Incorporated in 1829 with a capital outlay of \$800,000, the company was valued at \$1,500,000 by 1886. The manufacture of jute bagging also played an important role in late 19th century Salem's economy. Raw jute was shipped to Salem from Bengal, transformed into tough bags, then shipped to the southern United States to bale cotton. A final important industry was the manufacture of white lead, which commenced in 1826 and continued throughout the 19th century.

Salem's development as a rail and industrial center was accompanied by commercial/retail growth which left a strong physical imprint on the downtown. As Salem's economy prospered, merchants constructed fashionable new masonry blocks along the Washington Street corridor, and to a lesser extent, along the Essex Street axis. The buildings constructed during this perid still define much of the character of present-day Salem.

### Preservation in Salem

Salem is notable for its continuing pride in its cultural heritage, and the expression of that pride has gained sophistication paralleling the evolution of preservation philosophy in the United States.

A scholarly interest in Salem's past has been evident since the founding of the Essex Institute in 1848. The Institute's extensive library is an unusually rich resource for those tracing the development of the city and individual sites. The frame of Salem's first Quaker meetinghouse, erected 1688, was acquired by the Institute and moved to its grounds in 1860, an extraordinarily early example of conscious historic preservation. In addition to buying several neighboring mansions of architectural and historical significance, the Institute moved into a second structure in 1910, the 17th century John Ward House. All of its properties are operated as historic house museums (east of survey area).

A similar preservation program was sponsored by Miss Caroline Emmerton, a private philanthropist who purchased the House of Seven Gables and began its restoration in 1908. Miss Emerton acquired and moved two additional significant buildings to the site on Turner Street in 1911 and 1916. These buildings still operate as a museum, like the Essex Institute (southeast of survey area).

In 1962, an urban renewal program was formulated in Salem. The plan for Heritage Plaza East, adopted in 1965, relied on clearance and new construction to promote economic revitalization. The Salem experience was similar to many other communities: clearance was easily accomplished,

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but redevelopment proved elusive. By 1972, acres of older buildings had been demolished, but only one new building had appeared.

Meanwhile, preservationists had begun to mobilize support locally and nationally. Passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created a framework for review of the environmental consequences of Federal programs like urban renewal. In the first instance of their cooperation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development cosponsored a task force to examine the effects of urban renewal in Salem. While the meeting had little immediate impact, it was of lasting significance in establishing a working relationship between these two agencies. The Salem Historic District Study Committee produced a Report in 1968 identifying significant sites and areas throughout the city; local historic districts were established and properties nominated to the National Register. The attention of New York Times architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable helped to focus concern for the future of downtown Salem.

All these events, combined with a new municipal administration elected in 1971, led to the approval in 1972 of a new urban renewal plan with a very different emphasis. The existing street pattern and building stock were to be preserved and rehabilitated; demolition would not be permitted unless conclusively proven necessary, and never approved before new construction was ready to proceed. Changes in HUD regulations permitted investment in existing buildings, and a pioneering program offering facade improvement grants in exchange for preservation restrictions was established. Publicly funded improvements encouraged extensive private rehabilitation as well.

The plan for a second phase of urban renewal, in an area known as Heritage Plaza-West, was adopted in 1979. The preservation focus of the revised urban renewal plan has been extended into the new area, although the emphasis will be on stimulating private investment, in place of the massive infusion of Federal money characteristic of previous urban renewal programs.

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Essex Institute Historical Collections

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# **10. Geographical Data**

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along St. Peter to Bridge Street, southwesterly along Bridge to North Street, southerly along North and Summer Streets to Norman Street, easterly along Norman to Washington Street, easterly along New Derby Street and northeasterly along Derby Street to Liberty Street.

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