

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

**Inventory No:** NWB.F  
**Historic Name:** Joppa District  
**Common Name:**  
**Address:**  
**City/Town:** Newburyport  
**Village/Neighborhood:**  
**Local No:**  
**Year Constructed:**  
**Architect(s):**  
**Architectural Style(s):**  
**Use(s):** Residential District  
**Significance:**  
**Area(s):**  
**Designation(s):**  
**Building Materials(s):**



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

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NWB.F

FORM A - AREA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA. 02108

Form numbers in this area	Area letter
161-193	F

Photo (3x3" or 3x5")  
Staple to left side of form

Photo number 11-18, BBB-4, 22-28  
22-36

Town Newburyport

Name of area (if any) Joppa Historic

District \_\_\_\_\_

General date or period Eighteenth and  
early nineteenth centuries

Sketch map. Draw a general map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets (including route numbers, if any) and indicate north. (Attach a separate sheet if space here is not sufficient)

Recorded by Mary Jane Stirgwort

Organization Office of Community  
Development

Date 11-01-80

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Describe physical setting, general character, and architecturally significant structures).

The architecture within the district is almost exclusively vernacular in style dating from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is in this district that one finds the smaller Capes and half houses of that period. Several types of houses in Joppa are worthy of note. The first is a two story colonial form with pitched roof and long, low lean-to at the rear. The second is a modest two story Georgian half house with pitched roof. The third is a two and a half story Georgian form seen in other Newburyport neighborhoods as well as in Joppa.

The first of these can be seen at 2 Neptune Street and 212 Water Street. Both houses are two stories with pitched roof and long, low lean-to at rear. These houses have fairly symmetrical facades. The original structure may be a portion of the building with later alterations and additions. Both have massive central chimneys. They could be First Period dwellings.

(cont.)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE of area. (Explain development of area, what caused it, and how it affected community; be specific).

The earliest settlement at Newbury was an agricultural one. It was started on the Parker River in 1635. Within ten years settlement had begun on the "water-side" along the banks of the Merrimack River. Wharves were built on the banks of the river beginning in 1655. During the eighteenth century shipbuilding and trade thrived on the water-side. Before 1738 Gideon Woodwell had established a shipyard at the foot of Muzzy's Lane, now Marlboro Street. Generally, however, shipbuilding was located in the "Middle Shipyard" or in the Belleville section of what was then Newbury. The area extending from South Street, now Bromfield Street, to Rolfe's Lane, now Ocean Avenue, was settled by fishermen. It was and continues to be known as Joppa.

The name Joppa is assumed to be taken from the Biblical city that was for centuries the chief seaport of Judea. There is little mention of this section of Newbury in the seventeenth century. E. Vale Smith, in her history of Newburyport, makes the following remarks on Joppa at mid-nineteenth century.

"Toward the southerly part of the town, we find the fishermen, many of whom in winter work at shoemaking. And here too is one of the primitive shipyards, long dedicated to the exclusive production of schooners .... At the starting point is located the gas factory .... from which following up Water Street,

(cont.)

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Assessor's Records 1890-1980
- 1851 Plan of Newburyport, Mass. H. McIntire
- 1872 Map of the City of Newburyport, Mass. D. G. Beers and Co.
- 1851, 1871 City Directory
- R. Woodwell, "An Introduction to Joppa", typescript, Newburyport Historical Commission
- E. Vale Smith, History of Newburyport, Boston, 1854.
- J. J. Currier, History of Newbury, Boston, 1902.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

NWB.F

Community: Newburyport	Form No: F
Property Name: Joppa Historic District	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

FORM A - AREA (CONTINUED)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (CONTINUED)

The second building type common in the Joppa district is a modest two story half house with pitched roof. This type of residence lines Union Street. Architectural detail in these modest dwellings is limited sometimes seen only in classically inspired window surrounds and doorways.

As stated earlier there are also some more pretentious Georgian homes in Joppa. They were built by shipbuilders like the Woodwells and by some merchants that lived on the outskirts of Joppa. These buildings have symmetrical five bay facades with gambrel or pitched roofs. They have classical cornices and often well-developed Georgian doorways. Examples can be seen at 284 Water Street and 19 and 40 Marlboro Street.

There are many variations of these forms in Joppa and later styles were built in this area during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, the overall flavor of this section of Newburyport is that of an early fishing community.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (CONTINUED)

through "Joppa" we find the shore lines with small boats and nets, which later may often be seen drying in the sun; while on vacant lots to the left, in the latter part of summer, it is not uncommon to see the fish-flakes reared, and the cod, which the fishermen have brought home ready salted, spread out to dry, preparatory to packing...."

The homes in Joppa are, for the most part, modest eighteenth century, single family dwellings. Several of the houses along Water Street are slightly more pretentious. These are two and a half story Georgian homes with gambrel roofs. Only occasionally does one find a Federal period dwelling in Joppa and these are generally on the outskirts of the district. One need only look at the smaller homes on Union or Neptune Streets to envision the original character of this fishing hamlet.

Fishing was the primary occupation of this area during most of the nineteenth century. Shoemaking was also an important trade to the residents, often practiced by fishermen during the winter months. In 1911 seventy-three Joppa residents were listed as fishermen. They probably fished from small vessels put out from the Upper Slip, near the foot of Neptune Street, on the Lower Slip, near the foot of Beacon Avenue.

Physical remnants of past fishing are few. The site of an old flake yard, where cod was dried on racks in the sun, is now the Hale Memorial Park on Water Street. One clam shack also stands on the river's bank. It is the

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

NWB.F

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Newburyport	Form No: F
Property Name: Joppa Historic District	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (CONT.)

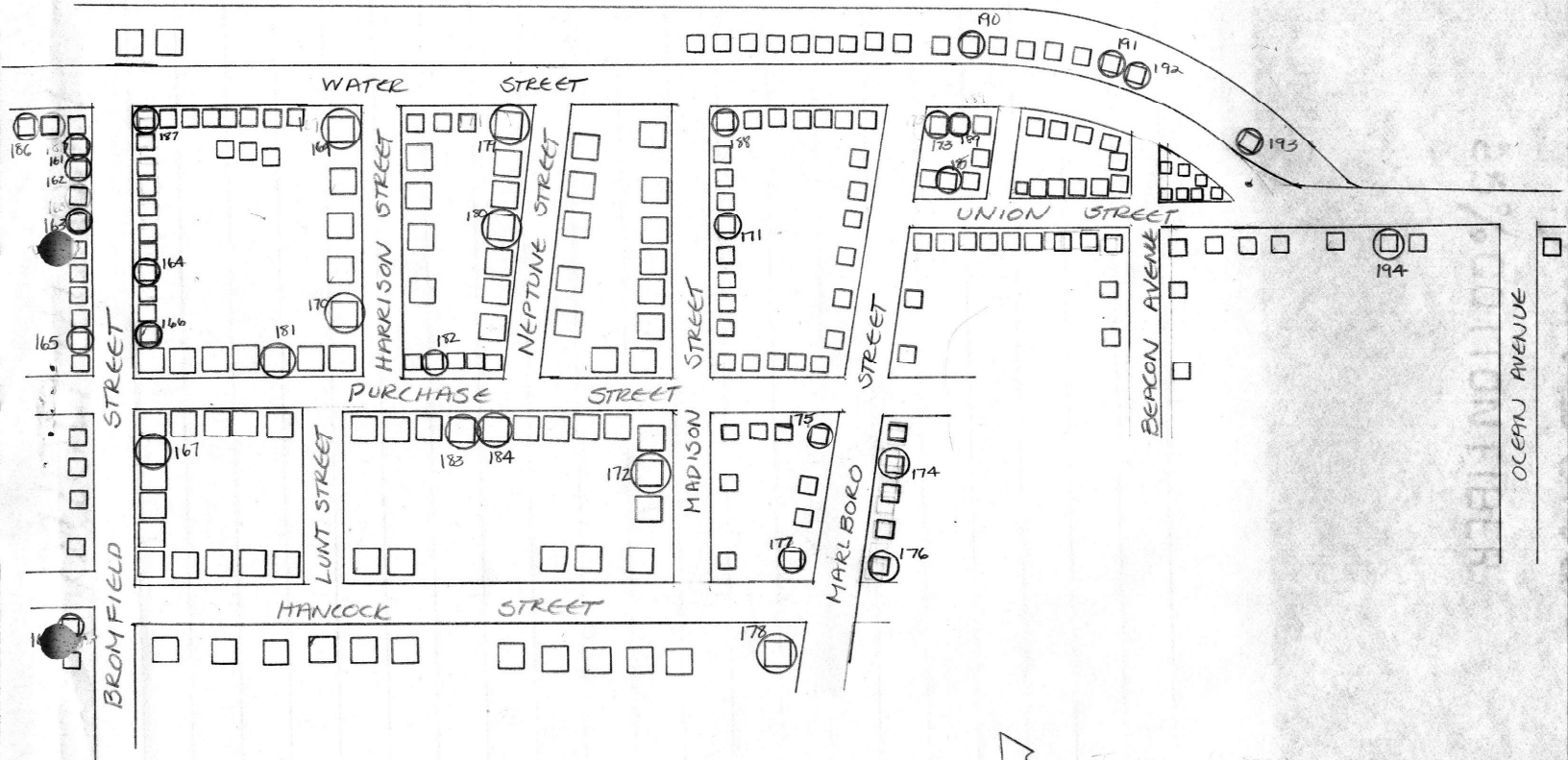
only remnant of a long line of such buildings that once stood between Water Street and the river. Clamming was a prosperous industry in Joppa at the turn of the present century. The so called "Joppa Flatts" were harvested by over forty-one Joppa residents in 1911, according to the city directory for that year.

Joppa is no longer inhabited primarily by fishermen. The original character of this maritime settlement remains, however, distinct from other residential districts of the city.

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NWB.F

HERRIMACK RIVER



J. W. H. H. H. H.

JOPPA HISTORIC DISTRICT (E)



182 WATER ST. (NWB.2502)

5/1980



18 UNION ST. (NWB.702)

5/1980



4/1980



168-170 WATER ST.  
(NWB.724)

5/1980