



City of New Bedford

Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development

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STAFF COMMENTS

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

October 5th, 2015

LOCATION: Daniel Ricketson Shanty Site, Brooklawn Park

TECHNICAL ADVICE REQUEST: New Bedford Park Board

OVERVIEW: In 2013 Mr. Simmons was authorized by the New Bedford Park Board to excavate the site of Daniel Ricketson's Shanty, located within Brooklawn Park. The excavation was overseen by a licensed archaeologist and received the proper permitting from MHC. The NBHC commented favorably to the Park Board in 2012 when the project was initiated.



REQUEST: The excavation is complete and Mr. Simmons has sought permission from the Park Board to permanently preserve the excavated Shanty site. The Park Board has concerns regarding the long term preservation and maintenance of the site and tabled the item pending a review of the concept by the New Bedford Historical Commission and Department of Infrastructure, which oversees Park maintenance.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The excavated site is open with the foundation stones exposed.

PROPOSAL: To grade and level the site to support the foundation stones and leave the top course exposed. Construct a retaining seating wall and install an interpretive wayside panel.

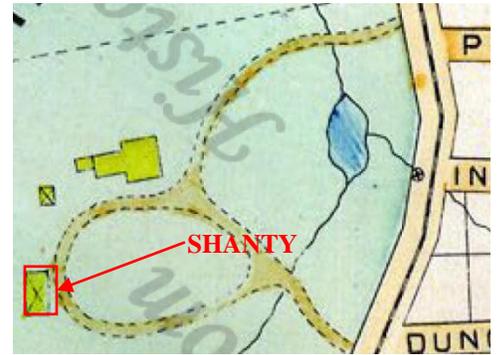
STATEMENT OF APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: Section 2-152 of the City Code provides to the NBHC the powers and duties to cooperate and advise other city agencies in matters involving historic sites and buildings.



The Secretary of the Interior's *National Strategy for Federal Archaeology* provides four overarching Standards:

- Preserve and Protect Archeological Sites in Place;
- Conserve Archeological Collections and Records;
- Utilize and Share Archeological Research Results;
- Increase Outreach and Participation in Public Archeology

Brooklawn Park is a **Cultural Landscape**, which defined by the NPS is a geographic area associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. Although overall the Park lacks integrity; the Shanty Site retains significance due to its association with Daniel Ricketson. The historic preservation and treatment approach for Cultural Landscapes utilizes *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The approach chosen by Mr. Simmons and the archeologist for the Shanty Site has been Preservation, in which measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of the historic property have been taken.



1895 City Atlas

FOR BOARD MEMBER CONSIDERATION: Daniel Ricketson (1813-1898) is a local historical figure who acquired a parcel of land he used as a rural retreat, naming it Brooklawn. In the mid 1840's, Ricketson built a rough cabin, similar to that of Henry David Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond; naming it the "Shanty." It is at the Shanty which Ricketson spent his time reading and writing and entertaining guests. Ricketson wrote the first published history of New Bedford, but is best recognized for his close association and friendships with 19th century literary notables Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Amos Bronson Alcott. It is well documented that Thoreau and other notable figures made several visits to Brooklawn, specifically to Ricketson's Shanty



Proposed Wayside

The proposed plan for the Shanty Site ensures that the site will be stabilized for long-term preservation; with no damage to the historic resource. Natural threats, such as erosion have been addressed. *The Secretary of the Interior Standards* has been met for the Preservation of a Cultural Landscape. The site's existing conditions and its ability to convey historic significance has been carefully considered and the interpretation plan is well suited to educate the visitor about the landscape's historic themes, associations and lost character-defining features or broader historical, social and physical landscape contexts.

STAFF CONCERNS: The NBHC will be reviewing the proposal and making recommendations to the Park Board related to the historical significance of the site and its adherence to *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. Items related to the landscape, materials and design of the retaining wall, funding of the proposal, as well as future programming are under the purview of the Park Board.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The Shanty Site in its existing condition has the ability to convey historical significance. The site's association with Ricketson has importance as it relates to local history, and to a degree, national history due to its associations with Henry David Thoreau.

Based on the significance, integrity, existing physical conditions, and the interpretation objectives for the site; the Commission should consider sending a recommendation to the Park Board noting the historical significance of the Shanty Site as well as a favorable endorsement of the proposed preservation and interpretation plan for the site.