

# SECTION I. INTRODUCTION TO THE DISTRICT

## PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

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This handbook contains the Design Review Process and Design Guidelines of the New Bedford Historic District Commission (Commission). The design guidelines are intended to preserve and protect the historic properties and sites in the Bedford-Landing Waterfront Historic District (District). The District has boundaries that are contiguous with New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. The guidelines are intended to assist all users in the District, including property owners, architects, contractors, business owners, realtors and both City and Federal employees. These guidelines are designed to protect the historic character and integrity of the District and promote the goal of historic preservation, while accommodating the diversity of architectural styles found in the District and the differing preferences and needs of property owners. The intent is to encourage the preservation of historic building fabric and offer proven solutions to repair and maintenance challenges.

The first section briefly describes the history of the District and summarizes the architectural styles found within the District. Section II provides information for applicants on the procedural aspects of the Historic District review process, including the process of obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness (Certificate) and the materials that should be included in the application for a Certificate. Section III contains the Commission's Design Review Guidelines for restoration and rehabilitation. These Guidelines have been adopted by the Commission and serve as a tool in helping the Historic District Commission to make consistent decisions about the appropriateness of improvements and alteration. While every case has unique elements, these Guidelines are intended to ensure consistency and predictability for those applying for certificates or otherwise affected by the District. Each application presented

before the Commission is considered on a case-by-case basis and all circumstances are taken into consideration. Section IV focuses on design guidelines for new construction and the criteria that should be considered when planning new construction within the District. Additionally, Section IV discusses the considerations and requirements when one is contemplating a demolition project. Finally, the Appendix contains additional support information, including Architectural Definitions and Diagrams, Commercial Storefront Rehabilitation Examples and the Rules and Regulations that govern the work of the Commission.

## CREATION OF THE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Local historic districts in Massachusetts are created according to a procedure established by the Massachusetts Historic District Act, Mass. General Laws Chapter 40C to protect and preserve the historic resources of the Commonwealth through a local review system that encourages and ensures compatible improvements and development. In general, local historic districts have three major purposes as stated in Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40C:

To preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the Commonwealth and its cities and towns;

To maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places;

To encourage new designs compatible with existing buildings in the district.

The Bedford-Landing-Waterfront Historic District and the New Bedford Historical Commission were established in 1972 by an act of the New Bedford City Council. This legislation was, in part, a reaction to the urban renewal program that destroyed thirty city blocks of New Bedford's architectural heritage in 1966. New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park was established in 1996 with boundaries that include the District as well as a segment of Route 18 and land to the north of Elm Street that included the parking garage and Standard Times Building. In 2001 the boundaries of the District were modified to be contiguous with the boundaries of the Park.



North Water Street

## HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF THE BEDFORD WATERFRONT HISTORIC DISTRICT

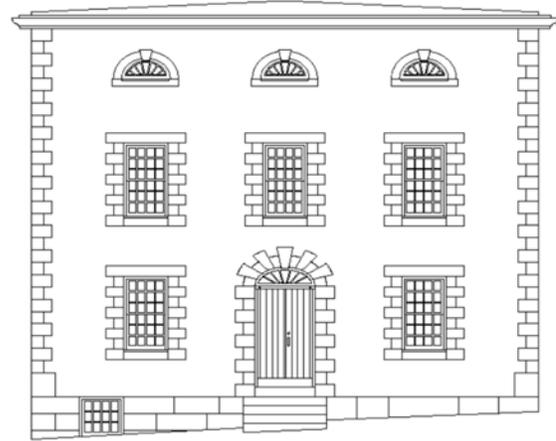
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Shortly after New Bedford's establishment as a town in the early 1760s, New Bedford began its rapid growth as a whaling port. With its deep water harbor New Bedford superseded Nantucket as the nation's leader in the whaling industry by 1840. The town maintained that position until the growth of the petroleum industry which began in the late 1850's and ultimately brought an end to the whaling industry in America. The last whaling voyage ended on August 20, 1925.

The District, bounded east and west by Elm, Commercial, and Union streets, north and south by Acushnet Avenue and Macarthur Drive, contains buildings that are significant examples of architecture built between the late eighteenth century and the early twentieth century. The district contains fine examples of Federal and Greek Revival style buildings with shops on the ground floor and living quarters above, as well as several gable-roofed warehouses of brick or stone. The majority of the buildings are commercial in design and use, but there are some residential, and some mixed-use structures. These buildings of the district are the remainder of New Bedford's nineteenth century whaling district and central commercial area and are representative of structures that would be found in the commercial district of a major New England seaport of that period.

### ARCHITECTURE

The following describes the various architectural styles in the District. The focus is centered on commercial and institutional buildings because of their greater number; residential properties are included when they are representative of a particular architectural style. The styles are presented in chronological order.



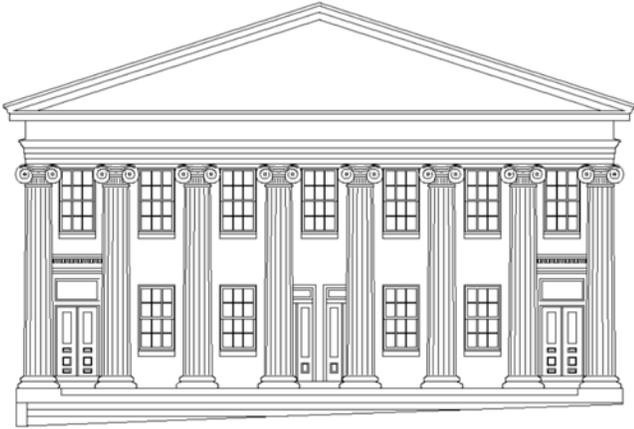
Rodman Candleworks, c. 1810

### Federal

The Federal style of architecture appeared in the District in the late 1790s, and continued to be used until about 1830. Both the District's commercial and residential examples of the Federal style share common characteristics, such as a symmetrical main block, a low pitched side gable or hipped roof often pierced by interior brick chimneys, and large window openings with flat lintels above. Many windows in the commercial buildings retain a residential scale, such as the double-hung six-over-six or twelve-over-twelve wood windows found on the c 1810 Rodman Candleworks at 72 North Water Street and the 1790-1800 Tallman Warehouse at 13-17 Center Street. Other buildings in the district which are representative of the Federal style of architecture include the ca. 1825-1830 Benjamin Rodman House at 50 North Second Street; the ca. 1804 Henry Beetle House at 24 Centre Street and the ca. 1822 Gilbert Russell Building at 26 Centre Street.

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## Greek Revival



Double Bank Building, c. 1883

Greek Revival was the dominant style of architecture between the 1820s and 1860s. Developed partly as a result of the American interest in the struggle for independence in Greece during the 1820s and the eighteenth and nineteenth century archeological activity in the Mediterranean, the Greek Revival style of architecture looked back to the classical architecture of Greece and Rome for inspiration. Greek Revival architecture in the District employed simplified, bold details based on mathematical rules of form and proportion. Although often similar to Federal era buildings in massing, Greek Revival buildings are distinguished by their wide cornices, elaborate front door surrounds of post and lintel design usually incorporating narrow sidelights, classical columns for the support of porch roofs, and pilasters at the corners. There are two distinct types of Greek Revival buildings in the District; the Temple form and the gable front. The Temple form buildings were often built by wealthy merchants or shipyard owners, and are characterized by columned porticos, large enclosed pediments, dressed granite block foundations and punched window openings. Examples of the temple form of Greek Revival architecture are the 1834-1836 United States Custom House at 37 North Second Street and the ca. 1831 Double Bank

Building at 60 North Water Street. On the gable front buildings, the gable is turned 90 degrees to create the primary or street façade. The 1846 Abijah Hathaway House at 66 North Second Street and the 1840 Haile Luther House at 70 North Second Street are representative of this type of Greek Revival architecture.

## Italianate



137 Union Street, c. 1850-1870

The Italianate style was part of the Picturesque Movement. The style was initiated in England during the early 1800s and was a dominant commercial style in the United States between the 1870s and 1880s. The Italianate commercial blocks of the District are constructed of brick and typically are capped by a flat roof with a bracketed cornice. Windows are tall and narrow with segmented or rounded decorative lintels. Many of the storefronts are visually separated from upper stories by an ornamented beam and feature tall storefront windows.

Buildings in the historic district which are representative of the Italianate style of architecture include the 1877 New Bedford Safe Deposit & Trust Company located at 55 William Street and the ca. 1850-1870 Gifford & Company at 137-139 Union Street.

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## Victorian (Eclectic & Vernacular)



Louis Hathaway House, c. 1865

The Late Victorian Period covers the latter half of the 19th century, for a portion of the true reign of Britain's Queen Victoria (1837-1901) for which this era is named. Intricate and highly decorative styles such as the Second Empire, Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, Stick, and Renaissance Revival were constructed at this time. Some buildings constructed during this period borrowed stylistic elements from several of the decorative styles. These buildings are not considered to be pure examples of any one style and are classified as Eclectic. Other buildings have no or limited ornamentation and are classified as Vernacular.

Within the District, there are examples of both Victorian Eclectic or Victorian Vernacular. The Corson Block at 27 William Street was constructed in several phases from 1878 to 1884 and is an example of late nineteenth century Victorian Eclectic ornamentation on a commercial block while the ca. 1865 Louis Hathaway House at 27 Bethel Street is an example of a modest late nineteenth century Victorian Vernacular residence.

## Renaissance Revival



National Bank of Commerce, c. 1883

Constructed between 1840 and 1890, the Renaissance Revival style of architecture is based on the sixteenth century architecture of Italy and France, with additional elements borrowed from Greek and Roman architecture. Commercial buildings in the Renaissance Revival style are typically square or rectangular boxes with decorative detailing executed either in differently colored brick, terra cotta, or cast stone. Upper story windows could be flat headed or have segmented arches often with transoms. Other characteristics of Renaissance Revival commercial buildings include belt-courses, rusticated quoins, and restrained cornice moldings. The 1883 National Bank of Commerce at 37 North Water Street is the District's one example of a building constructed in the Renaissance Revival style.

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## Romanesque Revival



Telephone Exchange, c. 1893

The Romanesque Revival style was introduced in the United States in the mid 19th century and borrows heavily from European examples which emphasized massive masonry walls, round arches, and decorative arcading. Few public buildings were built in this style until the talented and influential American architect Henry Hobson Richardson embraced the style in the 1870s and 1880s. The ca. 1893 Telephone Exchange at 392 North Second Street (5 Dover Street) in the District is a more simplified version of the style, constructed of yellow "Roman" brick with Romanesque details flanking the front entry.

## Classical Revival



125 Union Street, c. 1916

Popularized at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, the Classical Revival style enjoyed popularity in both commercial and institutional buildings in the early to mid-twentieth century. The style often emphasized classical forms through overall symmetry and the use of such features as pediments and precast details; however, the constraints of a commercial building lot and storefront design meant that Classical Revival commercial buildings were not as elaborately detailed as their institutional counterparts. Only one example of a Classical Revival building is located in the District, the 1916 Commercial Block at 125 Union Street.