

FORM A- AREA

Assessor's Sheets

USGS Quad

Area Letter

Form Numbers in Area

HULL*

C

62, 63, 209-214,
219-236



Town Winthrop, MA

Place (neighborhood or village) Thornton Park./

Washington Avenue

Name of Area Thornton Park/Wash Ave.

Present Use residential

Construction Dates or Period c.1840, 1880-1920

Overall Condition good

Major Intrusions and Alterations very intact

Acreage aprox. 5 acres

Recorded By Edward W. Gordon

Organization Winthrop CDO + Historic Comm

Date (month/year) June 1994

Sketch Map

Draw a map of the area indicating properties within it. Circle and number properties for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Attach a continuation sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.

[see attached map]

AREA FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION see continuation sheet

Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.

The Thornton Park/Washington Avenue area borders Boston Harbor, just to the south of Winthrop Center. It is composed of a group houses bordering an oval green space known as Thornton Park and a contiguous area of linear development along Washington Avenue. This area also takes in some of the housing stock bordering side streets between Thornton Park and River Road.

Thornton Park is an area whose architectural significance is actually greater than the sum of its parts. Many of Thornton Park's houses considered individually are solid, fairly ordinary examples of late 19th century Winthrop domestic architecture. Its houses, however, when viewed together with its oval park, constitutes the most sophisticated example of urban planning ever executed in the town. Washington Avenue, on the other hand, possesses some of the town's most architecturally significant late 19th/early 20th century residences in Winthrop. From Payne's Corner (Pleasant/Winthrop/Washington intersection) eastward almost as far as River Road, house after house exemplify exceptional design, quality craftsmanship, interesting form etc. The houses bordering the water side of Washington Avenue enjoy views of Boston Harbor and Snake Island. Most of Thornton Park's housing stock dates to the 1890's and early 1900's. In terms of historic styles, the housing of Thornton Park includes picturesque, towered Queen Anne houses such as 15 Thornton Park (1892-93) and 40 Thornton Park (1896). By far, the Queen Anne style

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE see continuation sheet

Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this are relates to the historical development of the community.

During the 17th century the Thornton Park/Washington Avenue area was owned by Major Edward Gibbons who was a friend of Governor Winthrop's and was one of Boston's most prominent merchants, ship-owners and soldiers. The Gibbons house was located near the intersection of Winthrop/Pleasant/Washington. As late as 1912, the Gibbons Elm, an ancient tree planted in Gibbons time, stood near the south side of this intersection. During the 18th century, this area was part of James Bill's extensive land holdings. During the first half of the 19th century, this area seems to have been essentially the private preserve of George Washington Tewksbury, one of the first highway surveyors in Winthrop. He was one of 49 signers of Winthrop's declaration of independence from North Chelsea (Revere) in 1852. During the last quarter of the 19th century, Tewksbury was joined by Belchers, Floyds, Paines and Thorntons as land owners at what was sometimes called Pleasant Point, an area bounded by Boston Harbor on the south and on the north by Crystal Cove and associated creeks, now Lewis Lake Park. John Wingate Thornton, founder of the New Historic Genealogical Society in Boston owned the Thornton Park area. He lived near the Belle Isle Inlet Bridge at the corner of Main and Pleasant Streets. Thornton was numbered among the developers who took advantage of the opening of a bridge across Crystal Cove from Washington Avenue to Shirley Street at Winthrop Beach. This bridge ended this area's days of bucolic isolation, ushering in a building boom that lasted into the second decade of the 20th century. The introduction of the Narrow Gauge Railroad to the town in 1888 made living in this area more convenient than ever before with the Thornton Station located near the intersection of Pleasant/Winthrop and Washington. From c. 1880 until World War I, a summer colony of the newly well-to-do sprang up along Washington Avenue. Men like William Mc Kie, shipbuilder (35 Washington (MHC #226) Avenue), William E. Wright, Superintendent of the American Stave and Cooperage Co. (#156 Washington (MHC # 236) Avenue), Edgar S. Bristol, a banker with Fogg Brothers & Co, Boston (16 Washington Avenue) and Patrick Joseph Kennedy, saloon keeper, Boston political figure and grandfather of President John F. Kennedy (97 Washington (MHC # 230))

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES see continuation sheet

- Winthrop Maps & Atlases-1852,1873,1886,1896,1906,1914
- Chelsea/Winthrop Directories-1882-1908
- Winthrop Directories-1911-1947
- William H. Clark-History of Winthrop (1952)
- Collier and Horowitz, The Kennedys (1984)

Recommended as a National Register District. If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement Form.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: WINTHROP	Form No: Area C
Property Name: Thornton Park/Wash. Ave.	

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

Architectural Description continued

front door is of the Georgian semi circular variety, rather than the Federal elliptical type which is more typically incorporated into the enframements of Colonial Revival houses. Similarly, 28 Washington Avenue (c.1899, MHC #223) represents an imaginative, free wheeling foray into the Colonial Revival. Here, Greek Revival elements such as monumental, Ionic front porch columns and Greek Key detail around the front door are freely mixed with Georgian Revival elements. #35 Washington Avenue, (MHC#226), built in 1909-10, represents a more archeologically correct approach to Colonial Revival, or, in this case the Georgian Revival style. At #35 strict symmetry is the order of the day and corner quoins, modillion blocks at the eaves and a trio of pedimented dormers all look to the "real thing" for inspiration.

Finally, the Craftsman Style, with its stucco walls and exposed timbers is represented at 105 (1914) and 132 (1923, MHC # 223) Washington Avenue.

Historical Narrative continued

Avenue all succumbed to this area's salty, picturesque harborside charms during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition to the well to do commuters from this area to Boston, Chelsea and East Boston there was also a representation of local people with businesses at the town center. Wilbert W. Freeman of 15 Washington Avenue (MHC# 229) was the proprietor of the Centre Hardware and Variety Store. George F. Sweeney of Sweeney and Rich Grocery Store at Winthrop Center built #25 Washington Avenue c.1902 (MHC# 223). Elmer E. Dawson of 28 Washington Avenue was described in William H. Clark's History of Winthrop as "one of the most valuable public servants the Town has been fortunate enough to have". Dawson, a flour broker in Boston, was active on committees to raise money to build the Winthrop Library and Winthrop Hospital.

Similarly, Thornton Park had its share of prominent citizens at the turn of the century. Although New England Historic Genealogical Society founder John Wingate Thornton, never lived here, he probably deserves credit for choosing the ornamental oval park plan for this area. Thornton Park eventually attracted a solid, stable middle to upper middle class. #15 Thornton Park (MHC# 209) was the retirement home of Winthrop developer extraordinaire Hermon D. Tewkbury. He was responsible for setting out streets in the northern section of Winthrop Center during the early 1870's. Daniel H. Howes, owner of a steam ship and rail road supplies company on Atlantic Avenue in Boston had #40 Thornton Park (MHC# 211) built c.1896. Charles E. Spofford "purveyors of Teas and Coffees" on Broad Street in Boston moved into #52 Thornton Park (MHC#) in 1903. In addition liquor dealers, stenographers, salesman, machinists, accountants and printers called Thornton Park home during the early 20th century.

The Thornton Park/Washington Avenue area is perhaps the most significant area within Winthrop from the point of view of planning and residential architecture. Its oval park plan almost certainly was inspired by the oval parks of Boston neighborhoods. This area's lots and houses continue to be well maintained and still is one of the most desirable places to live in the town.

Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Community

Property Address

Winthrop, MA

Thorntn Prk/Wash.Ave.

Area(s)	Form No
C	62,63,209-14
	219-256

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form



Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible only in a historic district
 Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of Significance by Edward W. Sinden
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

Thornton Park/Washington Avenue Qualifies as area of stylish and substantial homes on and near Boston Harbor. This area is composed of two contiguous areas consisting of Thornton Park , an oval park surrounded by Queen Anne and Colonial Revival single and two family residences and Washington Avenue, a linear development of large, well detailed and expertly crafted residences. Thornton Park 's land during the 1860's and 70's was owned by John Wingate Thornton, founder of the New England Historical Genealogical Society. Most of this area's land , however was owned by George Washington Tewksbury and various Belchers. Both families traced their Winthrop ancestors back well before the Revolution. In 1884, the bridge connecting this area (sometimes called Pleasant Point in old deeds) with Winthrop Beach was constructed across Crystal Cove, later Lewis Lake, opening this area up to house construction. This construction intensified around the turn of the century, resulting in many fine examples of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival. #7 and 106 Washington Ave predate 1870 with the former dating to c.1840's and the latter to c.1865. Patrick Joseph Kennedy, grandfather of President John F. Kennedy purchased 97 Washington Avenue c.1915.(area extends from 7 Washington Avenue to 156 Washington Avenue and takes in the entire length of Elmwood Avenue, a side street with well crafted Queen Anne residences. This potential historic district also encompasses Thornton Park. This area appears to satisfy criteria A, B and C of the National Register of Historic Places on a local and national level.



Boston Harbor

Thornton Park/Washington Ave
Winthrop, MA