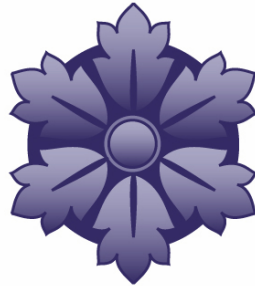


Greater Endicott Neighborhood Association

and



HISTORIC
SALEM INC

Working Together To
Preserve Our Community.

The grant request was approved
and the survey work has begun.

Congratulations!

This project aims to create a historical and architectural survey of Salem's Greater Endicott Street Neighborhood (GESN) to determine its eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic Salem, Inc. (HSI) has partnered with the neighborhood and is applying for a 2025 Planning and Survey Grant. After consultation with professionals, we have established a project budget of \$26,000. The neighborhood has engaged in a successful fundraising effort, and HSI currently holds \$13,000 in those raised funds. A consultant is needed to undertake the survey. Without this matching grant, this predominately working-class neighborhood would find it nearly impossible to raise the additional monies.

This neighborhood has a long and fascinating history worthy of recognition. As recently as the 1920s, neighborhood children were still unearthing arrowheads and other artifacts left behind hundreds of years earlier by the indigenous people of Naumkeag. By the late 18th century, the area had become an African American community called Roast Meat Hill, and its occupants were engaged in shipbuilding in its adjacent harbor. Salem's first school for African American students was established on High Street by educator and abolitionist Clarissa Lawrence. Over time, the neighborhood's inhabitants changed. Various European immigrants populated the area in support of the ship-building activity. The banging of the carpenters' mallets from the shipbuilding industry gave the area another name, Knockers Hole.

The economic hardship of Italy's southern regions after its unification in 1861 resulted in a mass exodus to other areas of Europe and the Americas. The devastating 1908 Messina Earthquake in Sicily caused many to follow relatives and friends who had immigrated to Salem and this neighborhood. The Great Salem Fire of 1914 destroyed many of its buildings and houses. Still, the neighborhood was rebuilt and became known as Salem's Little Italy, which thrived with rich community life, including rooming houses for newly arriving immigrants, corner stores, a storefront church, social gatherings, and many shared resources like wine presses and stretches of backyard clothesline. These provided a physical connection between many homes. The neighbors soon committed to building its jewel and great unifier, St. Mary's Italian Church, completed in 1925, as well as other institutions like the Christopher Columbus Society, the Italian American Credit Union, and The Sons and Daughters of Italy Veturia Romana Lodge #1200, which celebrated its 100th Anniversary last year. The unique post-fire architecture remains today as evidence of the community's commitment to the city.

This distinctive neighborhood is adjacent to Salem's majestic McIntire Historic District. As the draft version of the Massachusetts 2025 – 2031 Preservation Plan states, earlier historical surveys often missed modest and altered housing and sites with rich cultural and historical associations. Respondents to your recent survey strongly suggested they are concerned about buildings and sites associated with underrepresented communities. This is an ideal project for Massachusetts preservationists to tackle.

This is not to say that the Greater Endicott Street Neighborhood is not architecturally significant. It encompasses the Gedney and the Benjamin Cox Houses (1665), many examples of 18th and 19th-century domestic architecture, and considerable post-Fire rebuilding that began in 1915, but its cultural history is even more critical. Historic New England, owner of the Gedney House, has conducted significant research on the neighborhood, which will be helpful in the survey process. Multiple articles have been published, and films created that summarize life in this immigrant community, an essential part of Salem's historic fabric.

Initially, the project boundaries considered were Margin, Gedney, and Broad Streets. However, professionals have recommended that the survey expand to include culturally and architecturally related adjacent buildings, with proposed boundaries shown on the attached map. If invited to make a complete application, we will confer with MHC staff regarding the recommended boundaries of the survey area.

HSI has a long-standing relationship with Salem's Historical Commission and Planning and Development staff, and the Historic Commission has voted to support our application to MHC. HSI's preservation manager will manage the project, with guidance from the manager of HSI's Bowditch House 2019 roof replacement project, which MHC partially funded. Both are knowledgeable about MHC's requirements, scheduling, and reporting process.

The project aligns with the current Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Plan's goal to "Encourage and assist communities in adequately identifying and documenting their historic resources." This vital neighborhood represents a diverse cultural history, and relatively few survey forms have been completed. This project is consistent, as well, with Salem's Historic Preservation Plan Update of 2015, where St. Mary's Italian Church is called out as one of the churches reflecting the "city's ethnic populations of their era". One of the Plan's recommendations is to continue documenting Salem's historic resources through surveys.

Acknowledging the cultural heritage of the people who populated Salem over time is essential, particularly since it has an excellent architectural and historic heritage, and its cultures melded into America's cities and rural communities. This neighborhood's residents have played significant parts in the area's industrial, educational, civic, abolitionist, political, artistic, and cultural histories – stories that have partly been interpreted at various institutions on the North Shore and stories that have yet to be interpreted. They have enriched the city of Salem and the America we know today. This story is well worth telling and honoring, which this survey will support.