Guide to First Period Architecture

Essex National Heritage Area

FirstPeriodArchGuideFinal  06/11/07  11:43 AM  Page 1
he Essex National Heritage Area is home to more structures built by America’s earliest settlers than anywhere else in the country. When the first colonists arrived in the New World, they created simple dugouts hastily prepared to provide protection from harsh weather and curious wildlife. In some places, these rudimentary homes quickly gave way to “English wigwams,” patterned after the dwellings of their Native American neighbors. But as soon as these early colonists could cut, saw and fashion durable wooden beams, they built the kind of sturdy timber-frame post-and-beam houses they had known in England.

The buildings these settlers constructed from 1625-1725 came to be known as the “First Period” of American architecture. This style is easily recognized by such features as a second floor overhang, a steeply-pitched roofline, lean-to additions, a prominent central chimney, and asymmetrical casement windows.

Today, the Essex National Heritage Area is still dotted with the homes built by early settlers who were making their way north to expand the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Some are found in rural settings where the still pristine landscape can truly transport visitors to another era. Others are nested within developed communities, living side-by-side with more modern architecture. All will conjure images of family life and the hard work of settlers in the founding days of America.

This guide is not a comprehensive list of First Period structures in the Essex National Heritage Area. There are nearly 200 such homes in the region and many of them are still privately owned. The properties featured in this guide have been selected because they are open to the public. Additional properties and historic districts are listed in the Online Guide to First Period Architecture in the Essex National Heritage Area, which can be found at EssexHeritage.org/firstperiod.
Using this Guide

Districts

The properties featured in this guide are organized by community. A number of communities in Essex County, including Ipswich, Marblehead, Newbury, and Salem, feature historic districts with multiple properties from the First Period. These districts are featured on page 19.

Dates

Determining exact construction dates for America’s earliest surviving wood-framed structures is extremely challenging. To assign even an estimated date experts must rely upon a close examination of a building’s site, floor plan, timber frame, and architectural finishes as well as any written documents that may exist, such as deeds, wills, and journals. In some cases, the publicized construction date is a “traditional date” that has been passed down by one building owner to the next as part of the community’s oral history.

Only in the past few years with the application of dendrochronology, the science of tree-ring dating, have verifiable construction dates been assigned to more than a dozen First Period structures in Essex County alone. The process entails comparing the pattern of tree ring growth found in samples taken from the oak timbers to a master chronology recently developed for oak in eastern Massachusetts. The growing number of results are dramatically refining and revising our understanding of First Period construction dates.

Based on current dendrochronological research, the oldest documented house in Essex County is the Gedney House in Salem (1664-65).

Properties in this guide are listed with exact construction dates only when they have been confirmed through dendrochronology research. The remainder are listed as “ca.” (circa) when an expert assessment of the surviving building fabric and documentary evidence indicates a likely date or period, or “trad.” if the date is one traditionally assigned.

Designations

Many of the properties featured in this guide have been recognized by the National Park Service as a National Historic Landmark (NHL), or included on the National Register of Historic Places either individually (NRIND) or as a part of a district (NRDIS).

For more information regarding the Massachusetts Historical Commission, visit www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

For more information regarding the National Register of Historic Places, visit www.cr.nps.gov/nr

This guide was made possible by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Preservation Fund for Eastern Massachusetts. www.nationaltrust.org

Legend:

- Leashed Dogs Welcome
- P Free Parking
- $ Entry Fee
- Picnic Areas
- Guided Tours
- Restrooms
- Accessible
- Walking Tour

---

Beverly

John Balch House

1679 (Trad. 1636)
Beverly Historical Society & Museum
448 Cabot Street
Beverly, MA 01915
978-922-1186
www.beverlyhistory.org

Significance: Long thought to be one of the oldest wood frame houses in the United States. However, recent dendrochronology testing indicates sampled timbers were felled winter 1678/1679.

Architectural features: While the John Balch House has been altered substantially over the years, it retains original material from its early story-and-a-half house construction and serves as a rare example of the kind of “short-order housing” that was quite common at the time according to the renowned architectural preservationist and author Abbott Lowell Cummings. The second floor chamber, or loft, of the early “cottage” was “furnished with facade gables which provided both light and...additional headroom.”


Directions: I-95 to Route 128. Take Exit 20B (Route 1A South) toward Beverly. Follow Route 1A onto Cabot Street. The house is on the right at 448 Cabot Street.

Visitor information: $ Season and hours:
Tuesday–Saturday 12pm–4pm (except holidays). Closed from October 16–May 31.

Danvers

Holten House

Trad. 1670
General Israel Putnam Chapter,
Daughters of the American Revolution
171 Holten Street
Danvers, MA 01923
978-887-8215
www.freewebs.com/giputnamdar/

Significance: The Judge Samuel Holten House is a fine example of chronological and architectural house development representative of the period from 1670 to 1832. Benjamin Holten built the house in a typical “one-room house plan” in approximately 1670. Since that time, and several generations of Holtens later, the original structure has incorporated six additions. In 1921, the General Israel Putnam Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution purchased the property and has extensively restored it.

Architectural features: The house features a seven-seat privy (outhouse).

Directions: Route 1 or I-95 to Centre Street, Danvers exit. Turn left on Centre Street, turn left onto Holten Street.

Visitor information: Interpretive programs $ Season and hours: July-August, Wednesdays 2pm – 4pm and by appointment.
**Rebecca Nurse Homestead**

**Trad. 1678**  
Danvers Alarm List Co, Inc  
149 Pine Street  
Danvers, MA 01923  
978-774-8799  
www.rebeccanurse.org

**Significance:** The Nurse House is the only surviving residence of a victim affiliated with the Salem Witchcraft Hysteria of 1692 that is open to the public. It was the home of Rebecca Nurse, who was hanged that year on July 19.

**Architectural features:** The original Nurse House dates to 1678, and features a lean-to kitchen, working cooking hearth, great hall, and bed chamber. Later additions were built ca. 1750 and 1820. The Homestead site includes 27 acres of open fields, a replica 1692 Salem Village Meeting-house, the reconstructed Endecott Barn, small outbuildings, and the Nurse Graveyard where family legend claims that Rebecca Nurse was buried after her hanging in 1692.

**Designations:** NRDIS (1975).

**Directions:** From Route 128 North, take Exit 24 (Endicott Street). Turn right onto Endicott Street. Turn right onto Sylvan Street. Bear left onto Pine Street. The Homestead is on the left.

**Visitor information:**

P [ ] [ ] [ ] $  
Season and hours: Weekends only July–October, 2pm–5pm; closed November–June except for arranged tours.

---

**Brocklebank-Nelson-Beecher House**

**Trad. 1680**  
Georgetown Historical Society Inc.  
108 East Main Street  
Georgetown, MA 01833  
978-352-2208  
www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.org

**Significance:** Along with its First Period architectural origins, the National Park Service designated this house a stop on the Underground Railroad because of its “Slave-Hole” hideaway.

**Architectural features:** The Brocklebank-Nelson-Beecher House is a gambrel-roofed, five-bay center chimney dwelling primarily built during the early- to mid-18th century. The large walk-in fireplace is believed to date to the original First Period construction of the house.

**Directions:** From I-95, take Exit 54 (Route 133/Georgetown/Rowley). Turn right onto East Main Street. The house is on the left.

**Visitor information:**

P [ ] [ ] [ ] $  
Season and hours: Weekends only July–October, 2pm–5pm; closed November–June except for arranged tours.

---

**Thomas Riggs House**

**Trad. 1661**  
27 Vine Street  
Gloucester, MA 01930  
978-281-4802  
www.thomasriggshouse.com

**Significance:** The house was built by father and son Wakely and Matthew Coe. They sold it to Thomas Riggs Sr. in 1661; the last of the Riggs family sold the house to the current owner.

**Architectural features:** This is a log construction house with post-and-beam additions. The single-story post-and-beam cape was added ca. 1704; it was topped with a gambrel roof in 1753. All five early fireplaces still have original clay mortar. The gambrel part of the house consists of the original kitchen, the ca. 1730 field-paneled chimney breast, a very early wooden oven door, and original lug poles.

**Directions:** Take Route 128 North. Cross over the bridge. At traffic circle, go 3/4 of the way around taking the third exit marked Route 127/Annisquam and Pigeon Cove. After 1.5 miles look for the “Willow Rest” landmark on the right. Turn left onto Vine Street. Turn right at the Thomas Riggs mailbox.

**Visitor information:**

P [ ] [ ] [ ] $  
Season and hours: The house is a Bed and Breakfast. Visitors are welcome by appointment.

---

**John Greenleaf Whittier Homestead**

**Trad. 1688**  
305 Whittier Road  
Haverhill, MA 01830  
978-373-3979  
www.johngreenleafwhittier.com

**Significance:** This house is the birthplace of the Quaker poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–92).

**Architectural features:** While the original farmhouse has been altered over the years, it is situated on its original site and retains much of its colonial charm. Eighty acres remain of the original 149, offering visitors an outstanding example of an early New England farm.

**Designations:** NRIND (1975).

**Directions:** From I-495 North or South, take Exit 52 (Route 110). Turn east onto Amesbury Road/Route 110 and proceed for approximately one mile. Turn left onto Whittier Road.

**Visitor information:**

P [ ] [ ] [ ] $  
Season and hours: May–October, Wednesday–Saturday 10am–5pm, Sunday 1pm–5pm; November–April, Wednesday–Friday and Sunday 1pm–4pm, Saturday 10am–4pm. Closed on major holidays.
**Ipswich**

**Appleton Farms**

**Trad. 1690**  
The Trustees of Reservations  
219 County Road  
Ipswich, MA 01938  
978-356-5728  
www.thetrustees.org

**Significance:** Visitors will see the remains of the oldest visible house on one of America's oldest continuously working farms, which was established in 1638 as a land grant to Samuel Appleton.

**Architectural features:** The cellar hole for the 1690 Patch House, a traditional colonial saltbox, is located on this 658-acre farm. Walking along six miles of footpaths, bridle paths, and farm roads, visitors may also enjoy pristine scenic views of rolling grasslands, grazing livestock, ancient stone walls, tree-lined carriage paths, and later historic farm buildings that are all part of the legacy of nine generations of Appleton family members.

**Directions:** From I-95, take Exit 54 (Route 133/Georgetown/Rowley). Turn left onto Route 133 East, and turn right onto Route 1A. The site is located on Route 1A at the Ipswich/Hamilton town line.

**Visitor information:**  
P [x] [x] [x] $  
( fee for TTOR members)

**Season and hours:** Open year-round, sunrise to sunset.

---

**Choate House**

**Trad. 1725-40**  
The Trustees of Reservations  
Crane Wildlife Refuge  
Choate Island  
Ipswich, MA 01938  
978-356-4351  
www.thetrustees.org

**Significance:** The Choate House housed several generations of politically active members of the Choate family. It was restored during the Colonial Revival by the philanthropist Richard T. Crane Jr. and preservationist George Francis Dow. The house remains, as it did during Crane's tenure, as a picturesque fixture in the landscape.

**Architectural features:** This is a late (unfurnished) First Period house with central chimney and paneled rooms. It is beautifully situated on its original island location and may be seen by boat from the Essex River.

**Directions:** Accessible only by private watercraft or TTOR tours from Crane Beach, Argilla Road, Ipswich.

**Visitor information:** Open only for guided tours.  
P [x]  
S (fee for TTOR members)

**Season and hours:** Seasonal walking tours of the Refuge include the Choate House and are offered May-September. An annual "Choate Island Day" is held in late September, when visitors can access the island and walk inside the Choate House.

---

**Paine House**

**1694**  
The Trustees of Reservations  
Greenwood Farm  
Jeffrey's Neck Road  
Ipswich, MA 01938  
978-921-1944  
www.thetrustees.org

**Significance:** The Paine House was recognized in 2001 with the Mary Conley Award for Restoration, and in 2006 by an ENHC 10 Years/100 Milestones Award.

**Architectural features:** An outstanding example of late First Period architecture, the Paine House is a saltbox with integral lean-to and chamfered exposed timber framing revealing heavy-timbered exposed summer beams, post systems, and lintels. The picturesque house remains on its original saltwater farm location. Its interiors are furnished with late 17th-19th-century pieces acquired during the Colonial Revival by former owners Alice and Robert Gray Dodge.

**Designations:** NRIND (1990).

**Directions:** From Route 1A North at the Ipswich Town Green, continue straight onto County Road, which turns into East Street. Follow for .9 miles. Bear left onto Jeffrey's Neck Road and follow for .7 miles to the entrance on the right with the Greenwood Farm sign. Park halfway down the driveway on the left (10 cars). Follow the trail and signs to the house. From Route 1A/133 South at Lord Square in Ipswich, continue straight onto High Street and turn left onto East Street at the stop sign. Follow for .4 miles and bear left onto Jeffrey's Neck Road. Follow from above.

**Visitor information:**  
P [x] [x] $  
( fee for TTOR members)

**Season and hours:** House tours on Sundays, June–September, 1pm–5pm; Greenwood Farm is open year-round, sunrise to sunset.

---

**Detail photograph:**  
Bedroom,  
Paine House, Ipswich
**Whipple House**

1677  
*Ipswich Historical Society*  
53 South Main Street  
Ipswich, MA 01938  
978-356-2811  
www.ipswichmuseum.org

**Significance:** One of the earliest historic house museums in America (1899), historic preservationists consider the Whipple House a model in the early historic preservation movement thanks to the efforts of Rev. Thomas Franklin Waters who saved the house during the Colonial Revival. It was the home of militia officer and entrepreneur Captain John Whipple, and five subsequent generations of Whipples. The Whipple House is located within a neighborhood of 57 additional First Period houses.

**Architectural features:** The Whipple House is a “hall and parlor” townhouse, featuring original chamfered summer beams, crease-molded paneling, clamshell ceiling plaster, and walk-in cooking hearth. Originally a “half-house” built near the center of town, Captain Whipple’s son, Major John Whipple, more than doubled the size of the house before 1725 and added a back room for slaves. The house was moved to its present location in 1927. An authentic Housewife’s Garden is located immediately outside. The house is furnished with early locally-made pieces.

**Designations:** NHL (1966); NRIND (1966); NRDIS (1980).

**Directions:** From Route 128, take Exit 20A (Route 1A North). Follow to Ipswich Center (Route 1A becomes South Main Street). Ipswich Historical Society’s 1800 Heard House will be on the right, the Whipple House on the left.

**Visitor information:** Restrooms are available across the street at the Heard House. Stairs to the second floor are narrow and steep.

P $  

**Season and hours:** Open Memorial Day–Columbus Day, Wednesday–Saturday 10am–4pm; Sunday 1pm–4pm.

---

**Dole-Little House**

Trad. 1715  
*Historic New England*  
289 High Road  
Newbury, MA 01951  
978-462-2634  
www.historicnewengland.org

**Significance:** The Dole-Little House was constructed for Richard Dole with materials salvaged from an earlier structure. The house was built on a two-room, central chimney plan with a small kitchen shed in the rear. The shed has been replaced with a larger lean-to. Decorative carpentry and finish include chamfered edges, molded sheathing and possibly original stair balusters.

**Attributes of Note:** Acquired by Florence Evans Bushie in 1954, the house was restored to reflect the original period. During the restoration efforts, the lean-to was removed and reconstructed with new timbers, and small-paned sash from the front of the house was reinstalled in the lean-to. The paneling from one chamber was removed and reinstalled as an exhibition room at the National Museum of History and Technology in Washington, D.C. A copied version was reinstalled in the chamber.

**Designations:** NHL (1968); NRIND (1968).

**Directions:** I-95 to Route 113/Newburyport. Route 113 turns into Route 1A (High Road). Follow Route 1A for 3.7 miles. Turn left on Little’s Lane.

**Visitor Information:**

P $  

**Season and hours:** June 1–October 15, Thursday–Sunday 11am –4pm.

---

**Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm**

ca. 1690  
*Historic New England*  
5 Little’s Lane  
Newbury, MA 01951  
978-462-2634  

**Significance:** Since 1986, the Farm has been the focus of continuing historical research, conservation and archaeological exploration. Today, the Farm maintains its original agricultural purpose, and the fields still produce commercial crops as they have continuously since 1635.

**Architectural features:** The Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm’s imposing size and unusual building materials (stone and brick) command respect and curiosity. The unfurnished rooms reveal three centuries of construction techniques and late 20th century methods of building stabilization.

**Designations:** NHL (1968); NRIND (1968).

**Directions:** I-95 to Route 133/Newburyport. Route 133 turns into Route 1A (High Road). Follow Route 1A for 7 miles. Turn left on Little’s Lane.

**Visitor Information:**

P $  

**Season and hours:** June 1–October 15, Thursday–Sunday 11am –4pm.

---

For more information visit [EssexHeritage.org/firstperiod](http://EssexHeritage.org/firstperiod)

**Detail photograph:** Candlestick, Whipple House, Ipswich
Newbury

Swett-Isley House
ca. 1670
Historic New England
4 High Road
Newbury, MA 01951
978-462-2634
www.historicnewengland.org

Significance: Built by Stephen Swett, one of Newbury’s first settlers, this house was purchased by SPNEA (Historic New England) in 1911 as the organization’s first architectural acquisition. Today the Swett-Isley House forms the northwest boundary of the Newbury Historic District.

Architectural features: The original portion of the house was constructed on a single-room plan with a chimney bay and faced south. The hall’s 10’3” fireplace is one of the widest on record, and contains an oven on the rear wall of each end. The interior exposed frame of the house features unusual quarter-round chamfers which, according to Abbott Lowell Cummings, were “a more expensive decoration” because of their “greater elaboration.”

Directions: I-95 to Route 113/Newburyport. Route 113 turns into Route 1A (High Road). Follow Route 1A for 3 miles. The house is on the right.

Visitor information: Tours available by appointment only. $ 
Season and hours: By appointment only.

Tristam Coffin House
1678
Historic New England
14 High Road
Newbury, MA 01951
978-462-2634

Significance: Built by one of Newbury’s first settlers, the Tristam Coffin House was continuously occupied by the Coffin family for seven succeeding generations. They participated actively in the socio-economic, political and educational life of the town.

Architectural features: The Coffin House began as a simple dwelling built in the post-medieval style of First Period architecture. About 1700, the house was more than doubled in size to provide more living space. Today, the house retains the original kitchen, later 18th-century additions (including a chamber and buttery), and a collection of Coffin family furniture.

Designations: NRIND (1976); NRDIS (1979).

Directions: I-95 to Route 113/Newburyport. Route 113 turns into Route 1A (High Road). Follow Route 1A for 3 miles. The house is on the right.

Visitor information: Gift shop. 
P $ 
Season and hours: Tours available by appointment.

Parson Barnard House
ca. 1715
North Andover Historical Society
179 Osgood Street
North Andover, MA 01810
978-686-4035
www.essexheritage.org/sites/north_andover_hist_soc.html

Significance: This was the home of Thomas Barnard, Andover’s third minister. He served previously as an assistant minister during the Salem Witch Trials of 1692.

Architectural features: Abbott Lowell Cummings describes the Parson-Barnard House as a “progressive” example of timber-frame construction for its time, with its vertically divided front door, plastered walls and chimney, covered lintels and piers, and underlying ground-sill which was built to support the frame of the house. Cummings cites the house as a “transitional” example of juxtaposing traditional frame methods with “a rich display” of “applied finished trim.”


Directions: From I-495, take Exit 43. Follow Mass. Avenue to Osgood Street. Turn left onto Osgood Street. The house is one block up on the right.

Visitor information: Gift shop. 
P $ 
Season and hours: Tours available by appointment.

Nathaniel Felton, Sr. House
ca. 1644
Peabody Historical Society
Brooksby Farm Conservation Area
47 Felton Street
Peabody, MA 01960
978-977-0514
www.peabodyhistorical.org

Significance: Built in 1644, the Nathaniel Felton, Sr. house was the first house built on Mount Pleasant (the Brooksby Farm area). As the oldest house in Peabody, it is a remarkably intact example of first period architecture. The house features period rooms and a special exhibit of children’s artifacts.

Designations: NRIND (1982)

Directions: I-95 to Exit 44B, stay on ramp toward Rt. 1/Danvers. Bear right onto Lowell Street and drive for 1.5 miles. Turn right on Baldwin Street, and then left onto Felton Street. Follow signs to Brooksby Farm. The Felton, Sr. House is on the right after the Felton, Jr. House.

Visitor information: Gift shop. 
P $ 
Season and hours: Tours available by appointment.
Corwin House

prior to 1675
City of Salem
310 Essex Street
Salem, MA 01970
978-744-8815
www.salemweb.com/witchhouse

**Significance:** Purchased in an incomplete state by Jonathan Corwin, a local merchant who later served as a magistrate and judge during the Salem Witch Trials of 1692, the Corwin House is the only remaining structure in Salem with direct ties to the Trials.

**Architectural features:** The house is a fine example of a wealthier home, featuring a projecting two-story porch with flanking peaked gables on the front facade, decorative drop pendants at the porch and end corners, leaded casement windows, a rear lean-to, and a restored clustered pilaster brick chimney.

**Designations:** NRDIS (1973).

**Directions:** The Corwin House is located at the corner of Route 114 and Essex Street in downtown Salem. From Route 128 North take Exit 25A and follow Route 114 East into Salem. By train: From Salem Station (Newburyport/Rockport line), walk ahead to Washington Street and turn right onto Essex Street. Note that outdoor signage identifies the house as “The Witch House.”

**Visitor information:** Self-guided tours. 

---

Gedney House

1665
Historic New England
21 High Street
Salem, MA 01970
978-744-0440

**Significance:** This timber frame house reflects the wealth and social standing of the builder and owner Eleazor Gedney. The house is significant for its stuctural carpentry and for its evidence of early decorative finishes.

**Architectural features:** Built with the central chimney and oblong shape of First Period architecture, the original portion of the house was asymmetrical, consisting of two one-room stories with gabled attic and an attached parlor with lean-to roof. In late 1712, the parlor lean-to was raised to a full two stories. The front gable was also removed and the house achieved its present shape, except for a rear two-story lean-to built around 1800. The introduction of lath and plaster ceilings, beam casings, and paneled walls by the mid-18th century preserved the colorful paint evident underneath.

**Designations:** NRDIS (1974).

---

John Ward House

c. 1684
Peabody Essex Museum
East India Square
Salem, MA 01970
978-745-9500
www.pem.org

**Significance:** This is one of the earliest buildings to be relocated and restored for historic interpretation in the United States (1910) under the supervision of George Francis Dow.

**Architectural features:** One of the finest surviving 17th-century buildings in New England. Like many First Period dwellings, it was originally built as a half-house, with a parlor, chamber, porch, large chimney, and stairway. After several additions to make it a whole house, the building took on its current characteristics: extremely steep pitched gables, asymmetrical facade, central chimney, batten door, diamond-paneled leaded casement windows, and second story overhang.

**Designations:** NRDIS (1972); NHL (1978).

**Directions:** From Route 128, take Exit 26 (Lowell Street East). Follow signs into Salem, staying straight on the street until the end (street name changes). Turn left onto Essex Street. At the next light, turn right onto Flint Street, then an immediate left onto Chestnut Street and follow to the end. Straight at the stop sign, crossing Summer Street onto Norman Street. Take second right onto Margin Street. Park in municipal parking lot. Cross Margin Street, and walk up High Street. Gedney House will be on your left.

**Visitor information:** By appointment only.

---

Detail photograph:

J. Barnard Room,
Parson Barnard House, North Andover
Narbonne House

1675
U.S. Department of the
Interior/National Park Service
71 Essex Street
Salem MA 01970
978-740-1660
www.nps.gov/sama

Significance: The Narbonne House is a non-restored example of First Period architecture continuously occupied by the same family from 1750 until it was given to the National Park Service in 1963. Today, the house is shown as an (unfurnished) architectural study property. Visitors may also see a small portion of the 160,000 archeological artifacts uncovered on the property in the 1970s.

Architectural features: Built as a half-house with a lean-to on its south side, the Narbonne House underwent changes in the 18th and 19th centuries. The original 1675 post-and-beam framing is still clearly visible throughout the structure.


Directions: From Route 128, take Exit 25A (Route 114 East) to Salem. Follow Route 114 into Salem where it will become North Street, then Summer Street. Turn left onto Norman Street. Go straight through the traffic light onto Derby Street. Follow Derby Street through the traffic light. Continue straight on Derby Street. The house is three blocks ahead on the right.

Visitor information:
P $ $
Season and Hours: Open year-round, 9am-5pm. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day.

The House of the Seven Gables

ca. 1668
The House of the Seven Gables Settlement House Association
115 Derby Street
Salem, MA 01970
978-744-0991
www.7gables.org

Significance: The Turner-Ingersoll mansion was built by the wealthy merchant John Turner. Over the years, it has been studied by leading architectural scholars from across the nation.

Architectural features: This post-medieval gem boasts an overhanging jetty and pendant drops and original nogging in the attic where a rare 1600s batten door is on display. Restored in 1910, there is a porthole to view the 17th-century timbers with chamfered edges and lamb's tongue stops. There are two additional 17th-century buildings on the site: the Retire Beckett House (1682) and the Hooper Hathaway House (1655), which were moved here during the Colonial Revival by Caroline Emmerton to save them from demolition.

Designations: NRDIS (1973); NRIND (1973).

Directions: From Route 128, take Exit 25A (Route 114 East) to Salem. Follow Route 114 into Salem where it will become North Street, then Summer Street. Turn left onto Norman Street. Go straight through the traffic light onto Derby Street. Follow Derby Street through the traffic light. Continue straight on Derby Street. The house is three blocks ahead on the right.

Visitor information:
P $ $
Season and Hours: Open year-round, 9am-5pm. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day.

Salem 1630: Pioneer Village

Representing 1630
City of Salem
Restoration and management by Salem Preservation Inc. (SPI)
Forest River Park, Ext. West Ave.
Salem, MA 01970
978-740-9636
www.salempreservation.org

Significance: Built to be a center-piece of the 1930 Massachusetts Tercentenary this is the oldest living history museum in America. This “colonial village” was the last major architectural and museum project undertaken by architect and preservationist George Francis Dow, who was also a living history museum pioneer. The site’s 1990s restoration earned the American Society of Travel Writers’ prestigious Phoenix Award. Today, Salem Preservation Inc. is working to restore Dow’s vision as well as to more accurately portray the Native American story before and during 1630 with the assistance of Native American scholars.

Architectural features: The site includes Colonial Revival replicas of 1630 style Massachusetts dugouts, English wigwams, small cottages, a governor’s house, pillory and stocks, shaving horse, and blacksmith shop. Salem Preservation hopes to restore the site’s original ducking stool, saw pit, saltworks, brick mill, and fish flakes.

Directions: From downtown Salem, follow Lafayette Street (Route 114) south to Loring Avenue by Salem State College. Turn left at West Avenue light and proceed straight into Forest River Park. Park on the grass, or along the fence overlooking the pond. Pioneer Village is located in the northeast corner of the park, between the baseball field and Salem Harbor.

Visitor information:
P $ $
Season and hours: The Village is open on select weekends from May 1–October 31. Contact SPI for specific information.
Boardman House
ca. 1687
Historic New England
17 Howard Street
Saugus, MA 01906
978-462-2634

**Significance:** Built for the young family of William Boardman, a local “joiner,” or woodworker, this house has survived remarkably intact since its construction.

**Architectural features:** Originally built on a two-room, central-chimney plan, the house consisted of a parlor, hall, two chambers above, and an attic below a steeply pitched and gabled roof. A lean-to and appended flue for a new fireplace were added before 1696. The house’s interiors include “handsome molded sheathing and trim in the chambers.” Cummings calls the Boardman House an “outstanding example” of “ambitious trim” that was left mysteriously unfinished for several generations.

**Designations:** NRIND (1966); NHL (1966).

**Directions:** From the North: Take Route 1 South. Exit at Lynn Fells Parkway. Turn right onto Main Street, and a quick left onto Howard Street.

**Visitor Information:** Guided tours. Entry fee.

---

Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site
ca. 1681–1689
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
244 Central Street
Saugus, MA 01906
781-233-0050
www.nps.gov/sair

**Significance:** This is the site of a prosperous iron industry that enabled early settlers to forge tools and utensils such as saws, axes, nails, hinges, hoes, pots and kettles. A First Period house built after the cessation of the Iron Works still stands, reflecting the material culture and society established by the Puritan gentry of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

**Architectural features:** The 1682 Iron Works House is a post-medieval style, timber-frame, two-story-plus-attic overhang house set on a field-stone foundation. The house has a wood shingle roof, multiple gables, casement windows, finials, pendants, and a massive chimney as well as later additions. The interior features its original four rooms and a reconstructed entry hall. Also on the site are a reconstructed blast furnace, forge, rolling and slitting mill, and the dock area where raw materials arrived and finished goods were shipped out.

**Designations:** NRIND (1966); NHL (1966); NRDIS (1976).

**Directions:** Take Route 1 to the Route 97 intersection. Go west on Route 97 for .5 miles to East Common Street. Turn right on East Common Street. The house is 150 yards beyond on the right.

**Visitor Information:** Donations accepted.

---

Parson Joseph Capen House
ca. 1683
Topsfield Historical Society
1 Howlett Street
Topsfield, MA 01983
978-887-3998
www.topsfieldhistory.org

**Significance:** The home of Joseph Capen, minister at Topsfield for many years, the National Park Service refers to this house as “a faithful counterpart of the English manor house of the 17th century.” One of the finest examples of Elizabethan architecture, it was restored during the Colonial Revival under the direction of George Francis Dow.

**Architectural features:** The Parson Capen House is known especially for its “superb” Elizabethan-style interiors crafted by English artisans. Its heavy oak mortised and tenoned framework rests on a foundation of unmortared field stones. The second story overhangs the first in the front of the house in typical First Period style; more unusually, the third floor overhangs the second at each end of the house. The eight-foot-wide cooking hearth dominates the hall and contains rounded back corners and a large flue.

**Designations:** NRIND (1966); NHL (1966); NRDIS (1976).

**Directions:** Take Route 1 South, exit on Route 97, and take Exit 43 (Walnut Street) in Lynnfield. Follow brown National Park Service signs for 3.8 miles to the parking lot. From Route 1 North, take Main Street Exit (Saugus) and follow signs through Saugus Center to the parking lot.

**Visitor Information:** By appointment during the Iron Works’ restoration.

For more information visit EssexHeritage.org/firstperiod

---

For more information visit EssexHeritage.org/firstperiod

Detail photograph: Fireplace, Swett-Isley House, Ipswich
Winham
Districts

**Claflin-Richards House**

**Trad. 1661**  
*The Wenham Museum*  
132 Main Street  
Wenham, MA 01984  
978-468-2377  
www.wenhammuseum.org

**Significance:** The Claflin-Richards House contains three centuries of architecture, furnishings, and artifacts that reflect family life in a small New England village.

**Architectural features:** The house was built with Ogee braces, an architectural detail typically found in 16th- and 17th-century English dwellings. The house contains a First Period dwelling room, a late 17th-century minister's parlor, and a ca. 1750 bed chamber. On display in the Kimball Chamber is a 1724 woolen bed-rug, said to have been made for a Wenham bride. It is considered to be one of the finest pieces of American folk art north of Boston, and the second oldest such rug known to exist in this country.

**Designations:** NRIND (1973); NRDIS (1973).

**Directions:** Take Route 128 North to Exit 20A (Route 1A North). Follow Route 1A North 1.5 miles past Wenham Lake. The museum is on the right.

**Visitor information:** Visit the museum for free. Parking is available.

**Season and hours:** Open year-round, Tuesday–Sunday 10am–4pm.

---

**Ipswich: America's First Period Town**

There are 58 First Period houses in Ipswich—more than any other community in America. Thirty-eight of them built between 1650-1725 are located within one mile of the Whipple House on the Ipswich First Period House and Streetscape Trail designed by Paul McGinley of McGinley Kalsow & Associates architectural preservationists. Pick up a copy of the Trail’s self-guided map at the Ipswich Visitor Center (Rte. 1A) or Ipswich Historical Society (Heard House, Rte. 1A).

**The First Period in Marblehead**

Established for commercial fishing in 1629, Marblehead's non-conformist settlement, often disregarding the stricter Puritan government of Salem and most of New England, became the "greatest Towne for fishing in New England," a flourishing center for overseas Atlantic trade in the 1700s, and the 10th-largest town in the colonies in the 1760s. Marblehead's rugged beginnings are reflected in its evocative first period sites and homes. For more information, contact the Marblehead Museum & Historical Society at (781) 631-1768 or marbleheadmuseum.org.

**The Newbury Historic District**

The Newbury Historic District is characterized by a wide range of domestic, civic, educational, religious, cultural and commercial structures. Contiguous to one another in this rural townscape, the buildings in the district continue to serve as the community center of Newbury. The district also includes the First Parish Burying Ground on High Road, which dates from the time of the first settlement in the mid-seventeenth century. For more information, contact the Historical Society of Old Newbury at (978) 462-2681.

**Salem Architecture**

While it is often noted for its outstanding collection of Federal style (ca. 1790-ca. 1830) architecture, Salem is also home to a very rich collection of 17th-century sites. From the homes of successful craftsmen to the mansion of one of the wealthiest families in pre-revolutionary Massachusetts, the center of Historic Salem contains some of the finest First Period homes in the state, including five that are open to the public. For more information, contact the National Park Service Regional Visitor Center at (978) 740-1650.

---

**For More Information**

For information about fees and special events, or to receive more information about these sites, please contact them directly. We strongly recommend that you confirm hours of operation before visiting. Many of these sites are managed by nonprofit organizations that depend on memberships and donations; we encourage you to support their important work. Some of these sites are available for events, small meetings, or for private tours. Please take advantage of what they have to offer.

For more information about First Period architecture in Essex County, the Colonial Revival, George Francis Dow, Abbott Lowell Cummings, and other leading scholars and preservationists, please visit EssexHeritage.org for a list of resources.

**Credits**

We would like to thank the individual sites listed here for providing descriptive text, images, and visitor information.

**Additional writing and editing:** Bonnie Hurd Smith, *Hurd Smith Communications*; Kate Fox, *ENHC*

**Design and Production:** Jerrie Hildebrand, *Kishgraphics*

**Printing:** *Flagship Press*

### Index

- Appleton Farms, Ipswich ........................................ 6
- John Balch House, Beverly ...................................... 3
- Parson Barnard House, North Andover ...................... 11
- Boardman House, Saugus ....................................... 16
- Brocklebank-Nelson-Beecher House, Georgetown ....... 4
- Parson Joseph Capen House, Topsfield ..................... 17
- Choate House, Ipswich ........................................... 6
- Claflin-Richards House, Wenham ......................... 18
- Corwin House, Salem ............................................ 12
- Dole-Little House, Newbury .................................... 9
- Nathaniel Felton, Sr. House, Peabody .................... 11
- Gedney House, Salem ............................................ 12
- Holten House, Danvers ......................................... 3
- The House of the Seven Gables, Salem .................... 14
- Narbonne House, Salem ........................................ 14
- Rebecca Nurse Homestead, Danvers .................... 4
- Paine House, Ipswich ............................................ 7
- Thomas Riggs House, Gloucester ........................... 4
- Salem 1630: Pioneer Village, Salem ..................... 15
- Saugus Ironworks National Historic Site ............... 16
- Spencer-Perce-Little Farm, Newbury .................... 9
- Swett-Iseley House, Newbury ................................ 10
- Tristam Coffin House, Newbury ......................... 10
- John Ward House, Salem ..................................... 13
- Whipple House, Ipswich ....................................... 8
- John Greenleaf Whittier Homestead, Haverhill ........ 5

### About Essex National Heritage Area

Covering 500 square miles just north of Boston, the Essex National Heritage Area encompasses 34 cities and towns within Essex County, MA. From the first wave of European immigrants and the first contact with native Americans in the 17th century, to the rise of the international maritime trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, to the leather, textile and shoe entrepreneurs that initiated the industrial revolution in the 19th century, the Essex National Heritage Area illuminates almost 400 years of our nation’s history. One of 37 heritage partnership parks of the National Park Service (NPS), the Area is managed by the non-profit Essex National Heritage Commission (ENHC) who, in collaboration with the NPS, promotes partnerships and develops and implements programs that enhance, preserve and encourage regional awareness of the unique historic, cultural and natural resources found within the Area.

For more information, visit EssexHeritage.org or call (978) 740-0444.