

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

33\_0743

Salem

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See Data  
Table

## Photograph



Photo 1. (L to R) Blacksmith shop, Governor's Fayre House, and Blacksmith Cottage, looking northwest.

**Town/City:** Salem

**Place** (*neighborhood or village*): Forest River Park

**Name of Area:** Pioneer Village; Salem 1630

**Present Use:** Museum

**Construction Dates or Period:** 1930, 1968

**Overall Condition:** Good

**Major Intrusions and Alterations:** *Arbella* destroyed in 1954 hurricane; Ruck House and *Arbella* cottage destroyed by fire, 1976; reconstruction of cottages 1986; palisade fence ca. 2018

**Acreage:** 3.5 acres

**Recorded by:** G. Pineo, J. Chin, V. Adams; PAL

**Organization:** City of Salem

**Date** (*month/year*): September 2021

## Locus Map



☐ see continuation sheet

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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See Data Table

☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

*This inventory form has been prepared to update documentation for Pioneer Village (SAL.GM) prepared in 1988 by Claire Dempsey for the City of Salem. Since 1988, mid-twentieth century reconstructed buildings have become 50 years old, and thus potentially eligible for listing in the National Register. This documentation updates building descriptions and expands the historic narrative to place Pioneer Village in context with other sites associated with the early twentieth century Colonial Revival and the Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary celebrations in 1930. A revised National Register eligibility evaluation is at the end of this form.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Pioneer Village (1930; SAL.GM) is a reproduction First Period village constructed in 1930 under the direction of George Francis Dow for the Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary celebrations. The area, in the northeast corner of Forest River Park in Salem, encompasses seven buildings, two structures, and numerous landscape features across a 3.5-acre, sloping lot. The buildings are arranged in a rough line leading to Salem Harbor. The village, which is enclosed by a ca. 2018 wood palisade fence on the west, south, and east, is surrounded by residential buildings on the north, a baseball field on the west, Salem Harbor to the east, and a manufactured pond on the south. An asphalt paved parking lot is south of the pond. The site is accessed via a composite causeway (ca. 2018) that runs northwest from a curving concrete sidewalk adjacent to the parking lot. The causeway terminates at a double-leaf, vertical-board gate, which is the primary entrance into the site. A second entrance is at the east edge, near the harbor, and is also composed of a double-leaf, vertical board gate within the perimeter fence. Both gates are secured with large horizontal board.

The upper slope of the site is generally covered with successional growth forest; some of the trees may have been planted in 1930 as part of the site landscaping. The upper slope originally had three English wigwams at the northwest edge and three dugout huts in the west side of the slope, along with a saw pit. One dugout and one wigwam remain extant. Camp Harbor Quest, a summer day camp run by the Salem YMCA, now occupies the upper slope. The lower slope generally consists of buildings running roughly east-west, and gardens and the main walking path through the site to the south. A small, manmade brook runs south through the center of the site, terminating in the pond. A small, wood bridge crosses the brook southwest of the Governor's Fayre House. The pond is the southernmost element in the site and is south of the palisade fence.

Resources in the area are described roughly from west to east, south to north.

The Admission and Gift Shop (1986; SAL.x, Photo 2) is immediately to the northwest as visitors enter the site. The building is a southeast-facing, single-cell, one-story, rectangular building constructed in 1986. The building has a steeply pitched side-gable roof sheathed in wood shingles and pierced by a wattle and daub, half-timbered chimney at the west bay. The walls are clad in wide clapboards, and the building rests on wood piers. The southeast (facade) elevation has an entrance at the west bay that consists of a vertically laid wide-plank door with narrow modern metal hinges and a narrow plain wood surround. A small window opening is a slightly off center between the center and east bays and has a wood shutter with wrought-iron hinges. A secondary entrance is in the south bay of the northeast elevation, and is filled with a vertically laid wide-plank door with wrought-iron hinges. A small window is centered on the northeast elevation and is covered by a wood shutter with wrought-iron hinges. The interior of the cottage has gypsum board walls.

East of the Admission and Gift Shop is the Woodbury Cottage (1930; SAL.x, Photo 2). The cottage is a southeast-facing, one-story, single-cell, rectangular building. The building has a steeply pitched side-gable thatched roof pierced by an interior end chimney covered in clapboards at the east bay. The entrance is in the east-bay of the southeast (facade) elevation and has a narrow plain wood surround filled with a vertically laid wide-plank door that is accessed by a granite block step. A window opening is centered on the east half of the facade and is covered with a wood shutter with wrought-iron hinges. The interior of the cottage has wood plank floors and walls, and a sleeping loft opposite the chimney.

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

A Dugout Shelter (ca. 1980, SAL.x, Photo 3) is northwest of the Admission and Gift Shop. Facing southwest, the dugout, a reproduction of a 1930 dugout, is built into the hill and has an end-gable wood plank and earthen roof with overhanging eaves and exposed beams. The walls are composed of vertical bark-covered logs. The dugout is built into the earth and the northeast end rests on a mortared stone fireplace. The entrance is centered on the southwest elevation and is framed in dimensional lumber. A small square window opening is east of the entrance and is also framed in dimensional lumber.

An English Wigwam (1930; SAL.x, Photo 4) is north of the Admission and Gift Shop. The Wigwam faces southwest and is constructed with wattle and thatching. An entrance is centered at the southwest elevation and is framed in plain wood and filled with a vertically laid wide-plank door. A square stone hearth is at the northeast elevation and is nearly as tall and as wide as the wigwam.

The Governor's Fayre House (1930; SAL.x, Photos 1 and 5-8) is in the approximate center of the row of buildings; 'fayre' is a pseudoarchaic spelling of fair, likely referring to the style and quality of the house and its finishes. The house is a southeast-facing, three-bay-by-one-bay, two-and-a-half-story, Colonial Revival reproduction of a First Period-style house. The building has a side-gable roof covered in wood shingles with slightly overhanging eaves and a wide fascia. A brick chimney pierces the roof east of center. The walls are clad in wood planks, and the building rests on stone piers. The southeast (facade) elevation consists of a central entrance flanked by windows. The entrance has a narrow plain wood surround and is filled with a wood door consisting of narrow vertical wood. Window openings are on the east and west bays and have plain wood shutters. A group of three diamond-pane casement windows is in the west bay at the second story and flush with the cornice. A narrow diamond pane fixed window is at the second story above the entrance and a pair of diamond-pane casement windows are in the east bay. Window openings are at the first and second stories in the southwest elevation, and a small window is centered in the gable peak. The interior of the house has a typical First Period hall-and-parlor configuration, with stairs in front of the center chimney bay.

To the east of the Governor's Fayre House are the Blacksmith Cottage (1930, SAL.x, Photos 1, 5, and 8) and the Arbella Cottage (ca. 1988, SAL.x, Photo 8), each a southeast-facing, one-story, single-cell, Colonial Revival reproduction of a 1600s Colonial house. The buildings have a steeply pitched side-gable thatched roof pierced by an interior end half-timbered, wattle and daub chimney at the west bay. The walls are clad in wide wood clapboards, and the building rests on wood piers. The southeast (facade) elevation has an entrance at the west edge that consists of a vertically wide-plank door with narrow modern metal hinges and a narrow plain wood surround. A small window opening is a slightly off center between the center and east bays and has a wood shutter with wrought-iron hinges. The original Arbella Cottage was destroyed by arson in 1976.

The Blacksmith Shop (1930; SAL.x, Photos 1 and 9) is across the walking path from the Blacksmith Cottage and is a northwest-facing, one-story, two-bay-by-one-bay, wood-frame building. The building has a side-gable roof with a wide fascia that is covered in wood shingles and pierced by a half-timbered, wattle and daub chimney at the center of the southeast slope. The walls are clad in wood clapboards, and the building rests on wood piers. The northwest (facade) elevation consists of two large wood swinging doors with wrought-iron strap hinges. A one-story, one-bay-by-one-bay, shed roof ell with exposed rafter ends projects from the south center of the south elevation. A small window is slightly off-center in the southwest elevation and has a wood shutter and wrought-iron hinges.

The Visitor Center (1976; SAL.x, Photo 10) is a west-facing, one-story, one-bay-by-four-bay, rectangular, wood-frame building. The building has a front-gable roof with slightly overhanging-eaves and a wide fascia. The roof is sheathed in wood shingles and is pierced by a wood chimney near the west end of the south slope. The walls are clad with wood planks, and the building rests on wood piers. The primary entrance is in the south edge of the east elevation, filled with a vertical-plank wood door affixed with strap hinges. A small window covered by wood shutters is to the north. A secondary entrance is centered at the west elevation that consists of a wood door with wrought-iron strap hinges. Four window openings are evenly spaced in the south elevation and have wood plank shutters with wrought-iron strap hinges.

Immediately outside the palisade wall, adjacent to the Visitor Center, is a small, wood Ticket Booth (ca. 1970, SAL.x, Photo 11), constructed of vertical boards surmounted by a side-gable roof. The ticket booth is typically only used for special events.

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Pioneer Village was conceived by George Francis Dow (1868–1936) as a reproduction of the 1600s English Settlement in Salem, to commemorate the 1930 tercentenary of the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Dow was an antiquarian, museum innovator, and architect who championed the Colonial Revival concept of living history in America (Korieth 1990). He was the secretary of the Essex Institute (now the Peabody Essex Museum) in Salem from 1898–1918, then filled various roles at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), based in Boston, from 1920 until his death in 1936 (Stillinger 1980:152; Dempsey 1988). He was a prolific writer and editor, publishing numerous books and articles about colonial-era New England, including *Every Day Life in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (1935) which was illustrated with photographs of Pioneer Village (Dow 1935; Stillinger 1980:154). Dow was an important and influential figure in the American fields of history, historic interpretation and historic preservation during the formative decades of the early twentieth-century. His obituary in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* for October 1936 called him “one of the leading historians and antiquarians of New England,” and noted that “because of his knowledge of early New England architecture he was often consulted, and had charge of the restoration of a number of eighteenth century houses for individuals and historical societies throughout New England” (American Antiquarian Society 1936:124–125).

Dow was influenced by Artur Hazelius (1833–1901), a Swedish antiquarian who established period rooms at museums, and built the Skansen outdoor museum in 1891 on Stockholm harbor. Skansen was the first recorded outdoor living history museum, consisting of a collection of buildings and structures from across Sweden, and included a windmill, whipping post, and iron master’s house, as well as an amalgamation of farm buildings. The museum was staffed by costumed interpreters that demonstrated traditional crafts and skills as a way of preserving what Hazelius saw as a disappearing way of life (Stillinger 1980:150; Pineo 2013:14). While at the Essex Institute, Dow introduced the ideas of period rooms and created an outdoor museum on the institute property in 1910–1913 (now the Essex Institute Historic District, SAL.HQ, NRDIS 1972) based on the Scandinavian model. The seventeenth-century John Ward House (SAL.2454, NHL 1978) was moved three blocks to the site, along with the Lye-Tapley shoe shop (SAL.2513, NRDIS1976, 1976), two porches, and a cupola from a local house. The Ward House was restored by Dow and interpreted to the year 1700, and guides were required to wear period dress (Stillinger 1980:151; Snell et al. 1968). Pioneer Village represented the next evolution of Dow’s philosophies toward reconstruction and interpretation (Chase-Harrell et al. 1993:10–11).

In the late 1920s, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts prepared for the tercentenary celebration of the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s establishment. Two other historical reconstructions were built for the tercentenary: Aptuxet Trading Post Museum (BOU.AG, NRDIS 2021) in Bourne, constructed by Percival Lombard and the Bourne Historical Society, and Fort Massachusetts (no longer extant) in North Adams, constructed under the auspices of the North Adams Historical Society (Glassberg 1987:974; Dow 1931). Fort Massachusetts, built in North Adams, was a reconstruction of a Colonial Era fort that was attacked by a combined force of French troops, Canadian militiamen, and their Abenaki allies during King George’s War (1744–1748). The men, women, and children taking shelter in the fort were taken as captives to Canada and exchanged for French prisoners held by the British. The North Adams Women’s Club purchased the site of the fort in 1895. The North Adams Historical Society dedicated a reconstruction of the fort in 1933, but funding ran out and it was forced to close the site after only a few years. The fort was torn down in the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and only the chimney is extant (NAM-HA-12; PVMA 2018; Pineo et al. 2020).

The Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary was celebrated across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and included band concerts, pageants, parades, historical plays, and the dedication of numerous permanent markers, monuments, memorials, and structures, all commemorating the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Boston Globe 1930a–d). The majority of tercentenary activities did not result in permanent built structures or buildings and were, thus, ephemeral on the landscape. Although the Pioneer Village has had a small number of buildings reconstructed or replaced, the replacements were done in kind, and reflect Dow’s original layout of the site, and is thus one of two intact sites associated with the Tercentenary, along with Aptuxet Trading Post.

In February 1930, Salem’s City Council appropriated \$5,000 “for the purpose of celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.” The funds were to be under the control of the Board of

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

Park Commissioners (City of Salem 1930:269). Prior to constructing the site, Dow researched seventeenth-century documents, building contracts, journals and primary resources to design the reproduction as accurately as possible. Builders used materials and techniques that were historically accurate to seventeenth-century construction in order to represent the settlement at Naumkeag, as this area of Salem was known during the settlement period, as accurately as possible (Korieth 1990; Dempsey 1988; Carpenter 1987).

Once the Pioneer Village was completed, on June 12, 1930, a 30-act play was performed there. The first 29 acts, spanning about an hour, showed vignettes of life in the village, including salt making, unloading the day's catch of fish, thatching a roof, and chasing an escaped pig. In Episode 29, the replica *Arbella* sailed into Salem harbor, carrying descendants of John Winthrop, John Endecott, and Reverend George Philips. After landing on the shore, Frederick Winthrop, playing Governor John Winthrop, led the costumed reenactors into Pioneer Village where the final act of the play was performed (Bremer 2004:52–53).

The Governor's Fayre House was constructed with a hall-and-parlor floor plan, modeled on the Fairbanks house (511 East Street, Dedham, DED.391, 1641, NHL 1966), while the single-cell buildings were based on contemporary scholarly understanding of First Period construction. The English Wigwams and dugouts (Figures 1 and 2) were intended to represent where the colonists lived at first, prior to constructing more permanent cottages. Both were influenced by the Native Americans the colonists came in contact with, but with English adaptations, like the plank door and stone fireplace in the extant wigwam. Landscaping for the site, including planting more than 2,000 trees and shrubs, and nearly as many plants, was overseen by landscape architect, nurseryman, and conservationist Harlan P. Kelsey (1872–1958). Historian Raymond H. Odell assisted Dow with research, and Rose L. Briggs of Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth was the costumer for the project.

In 1932–1933, the ca. 1650 Ruck House was moved to Pioneer Village from 8 Mill Street, near the site of the first Salem Post Office (Goff September 2007). The house was placed near the shore and the replica of the *Arbella* (Figures 2 and 3). The house was interpreted as a maritime warehouse until it was destroyed by fire in 1976 (Goff September 2007).

After Dow's death in 1936, the firm of Smith and Walker took over as project architects. There is some evidence that architect Joseph Everett Chandler consulted on the "warehouse," possibly the Ruck House, in 1940 (Orwig 2010:639). Chandler had visited the site in 1930 while in Salem for another project, calling the reconstructions "very interesting," suggesting that he was not involved in the original project as has been sometimes asserted (quoted in Orwig 2010:398; Goff June 2008).

Pioneer Village was meant to be a temporary installation for the tercentenary celebrations and play, but it became so popular that it remained a tourist attraction until the 1950s (Figure 4). Notable visitors included President Calvin Coolidge in 1931, movie stars Frances Dee, Bette Davis, and Arthur Treacher, and geologists from Admiral Richard Byrd's expedition to Antarctica (Koreith 1990:48). Visitors from around the world were logged in the registration book in 1945, but by the late 1950s, visitation began to wane, resulting in reductions in staffing by the City, and fewer costumed volunteers in the summers. Concurrent with the decline, local residents who had grown frustrated with the traffic and throngs of tourists, did not protest the reductions (Koreith 1990:48–49). The *Arbella* was damaged by Hurricane Carol in September 1954 and was subsequently burned by the City (Koreith 1990:49). By the 1960s, the site became an attractive nuisance, and vandals destroyed three wigwams and a cottage. The Ruck House and *Arbella* cottage burned down in 1976 (Johnson 1976). The Ruck House was quickly replaced by a one-story building, the Visitor Center; the *Arbella* cottage was not replaced until ca. 1988.

By 1966, the Pioneer Village site was well-known in preservation circles and was widely documented. The site was noted in the seminal text *With Heritage So Rich*, which provided the impetus for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, prepared by the United States Conference of Mayors. The site was described as "a serious attempt to reconstruct, in a public park, examples of the rude huts, dugouts, wigwams and houses that sheltered the first settlers. The village was planned by George Francis Dow, a knowledgeable antiquarian; the planting arranged by Harlan P. Kelsey, a historically-minded nurseryman. At the time of the Tercentenary, it stimulated the popular imagination, and for the succeeding 35 years it has been decently maintained by the Salem Park Commission" (US Conference of Mayors 1966:52). The site was further lauded in 1981 by Charles Hosmer in his *Preservation Comes of Age*, which states, "[Harold] Shurtleff was also



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

aware that some reconstructions, such as the Aptuxet Trading Post and George Francis Dow's Pioneer Village in Salem, correctly displayed 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings with post-and-lintel construction, not the log cabins of popular myth" (Hosmer 1981:1055).

In 1983, the City closed the site which by then was regarded as little more than a safety hazard. Two years later, the Park Commission determined that restoration of the site was prohibitively expensive, and plans were made to demolish the site to make way for condominiums (Koreith 1990:49). In 1985, however, the Pioneer Village Management Association, organized by Peter LaChapelle, then the head of interpretation for Salem Maritime National Historic Site, and David Goss, then director of the House of Seven Gables, led the effort to save the site (NobleNet 2021). Restoration work funded by the City and private donations was guided by 1930s photographs and construction documents, and was undertaken by skilled trades and craftsmen. Retired local carpenter Robert LeBlanc replaced rotten floors, built the blacksmith shop and a cottage, as well as a saw pit and stockade fence. Seventh-generation thatchers from Ireland, Michael and William Cahill, worked at the site for two summers, covering one of the wigwams and three cottage roofs using traditional tools and techniques. Livestock was donated by Plimoth Plantation (now Plimoth/Patuxet) in Plymouth, and raised garden planting beds were established throughout the site (Koreith 1990:50). Although limited modern construction materials, such as circular sawn boards and galvanized nails, are evident in some places, they were a concession made by Peter LaChapelle and the Pioneer Village Management Associates, in order to get the site reopened as quickly as possible (Koreith 1990:50).

In June of 1990, The Salem Pioneer Village held a grand reopening and in 1991 John Goss and Peter LaChapelle won the American Society of Travel Writers Phoenix Award for their restoration effort (McAllister n.d.). A 1993 pamphlet (Figure 5) held in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum's Phillips Library shows that the village consisted of an admissions and gift shop in the new single-cell cottage, a saw pit and three dugouts at the west edge of the village, an English wigwam, a visitors' cottage with adjacent stocks and pillory, near the west entrance to the site, the governor's house and garden, a dunking stool, two thatched cottages, a blacksmith shop, animal enclosures, fish weir, and a long house, which was not open to the public. The fish weir, constructed by the Massachusetts Ponkapoag Tribal Council, was part of a larger effort to broaden the cultural interpretive history of the site, and ensure that Native voices were part of the story.

In the early twenty-first century, the site was again closed to the public, and again became the focus of a major restoration effort, this time in support of the 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Winthrop's voyage to America (Goff 2004:14). In December 2003, Historic Salem, Inc. listed the site as one of the most endangered historic resources in Salem. The restoration efforts were run by Salem Preservation Inc., led by John Goff, between 2003–2008 in collaboration with the Boy Scouts, the City of Salem, Ponkapoag Tribal Council, Salem Harbor Alliance for Reliable Energy, and many volunteers (NobleNet 2021). During this time, bridges and fences were fixed, thatched roofs were repaired, and dugouts were reconstructed (NobleNet 2021). The site reopened in 2008 when Gordon College's Institute for Public History signed a 5-year lease for use of the Old Town Hall and Pioneer Village for their interactive theater program (NobleNet 2021). In 2013, Gordon College did not renew their lease to manage the site and the City took over operations, maintaining the property as a historical attraction. In the summer of 2021, Camp Harbor View, run by the Salem YMCA, moved to the site from Camp Naumkeag near Salem Willows.

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# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

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# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

## Salem Pioneer Village Salem, MA Data Sheet

MHC No.	Assessor's No.	Historic Name/Feature	Est. Date of Const.	Architectural Style/Type	Photo No.	C/NC
	33_0743	Admission and Gift Shop	1970	Colonial Revival	2	C
	33_0743	Woodbury Cottage	1930	Colonial Revival	2	C
	33_0743	Dugout Shelter	1980	No-style	3	NC
	33_0743	English Wigwam	1930	Colonial Revival	4	C
	33_0743	Governor's Fayre House	1930	Colonial Revival	1, 5-8	C
	33_0743	Blacksmith Cottage	1930	Colonial Revival	1, 5, 8	C
	33_0743	Lady Arbella Cottage	1988	Colonial Revival	8	C
	33_0743	Blacksmith Shop	1986	No-style	1, 9	NC
	33_0743	Visitor Center	1976	No-style	10	C
	33_0743	Ticket Booth	ca. 1970	No Style	11	NC



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

## PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 2. (L to R) Admission and Gift Shop and Woodbury cottage, looking west.



Photo 3. Dugout, looking east.



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table



Photo 4. English Wigwam, looking northwest.



Photo 5. Governor's Fayre House and Blacksmith Cottage, looking east.



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table



Photo 6. Governor's Fayre House, looking north.



Photo 7. Interior, Governor's Fayre House, looking northwest.



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table



Photo 8. (L to R) Governor's Fayre House, Blacksmith Cottage, Arbella Cottage, looking northwest.



Photo 9. Blacksmith Shop, looking southeast.



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table



Photo 10. Visitor center, looking north.



Photo 11. Ticket Booth and palisade fence, looking northwest.

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

## HISTORIC FIGURES



Figure 1. Dugouts and saw pit, ca. 1949 (Nelson Dionne Salem History Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections, Salem, MA).



Figure 2. Ruck House (left) and *Arbella* (right), July 1949 (Nelson Dionne Salem History Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections, Salem, MA).



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

Area Letter Form Nos.

SAL.GM

See Data Table



Figure 3. 1938 aerial image of Pioneer Village (NETR 1938).



Figure 4. Ticket booth (not extant), cottages and English Wigwams, ca. 1935 (Nelson Dionne Salem History Collection, Salem State University Archives and Special Collections, Salem, MA)



# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

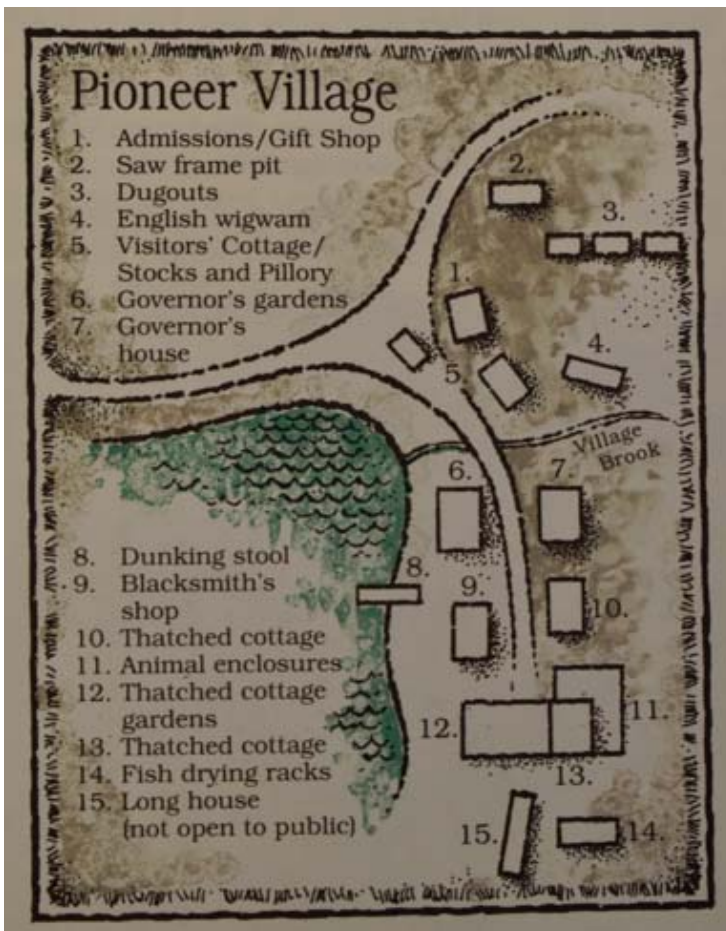


Figure 5. 1993 site map. Resource names in the text deviate from names on the map, based on historical documentation. The animal enclosures, fish racks, dunking stool, and saw pit are not extant.

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

SALEM

SALEM PIONEER VILLAGE

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

SAL.GM

See Data Table

## 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 Gretchen Pineo and Virginia H. Adams, PAL, September 2021

Salem Pioneer Village (SAL.GM) is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C for its association with the tercentenary celebrations of the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1930. Under Criterion A, the property is significant at the state and local levels in the area of Commemoration for its association with the Massachusetts Bay Colony Tercentenary celebrations in 1930. The site has further significance in the area of Commemoration for its association with the life and work of George Francis Dow, an antiquarian, museum innovator, and architect who championed the Colonial Revival concept of living history in America. Under Criterion C, the property is significant at the local level in the area of Architecture as a collection of wood-frame buildings and structures that represent 1930s and 1960s understandings of First Period architecture, as influenced by the early twentieth century Colonial Revival.

Salem Pioneer Village meets Criteria Consideration E for reconstructed buildings because it has achieved significance in its own right for its association with important trends and events in the history of the United States. The property also meets Criteria Consideration F for commemorative properties, as the significance of this resource arises from its value as an expression of the Colonial Revival movement and the commemoration and interpretation of the American past embodied in that movement.

The site retains integrity of location, setting, association, feeling, workmanship, materials, and design. The village remains in the same location it was constructed in 1930, and, although the site has been enclosed by a palisade fence, the setting remains largely the same, with a baseball diamond to the west and Salem Harbor to the east. Pioneer Village continues to be an open-air historic museum set within Forest River Park. All but three of the buildings on the site were constructed under the direction of George Francis Dow, with in-kind repairs made as needed. Three buildings post-date the construction of the site and are replacements for buildings destroyed by fire, constructed to match the originals.