

FORM A - AREA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02116

Area Letter Form numbers in this Area

B	See district data sheet
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Swansea, Mass. MRA
SWANSEA

Town _____

Name of Area (if any) _____

LUTHER'S CORNER

Present Use _____ Residential

General Date or Period 1800-1907

General Condition Good

Acreage 1-1/2 acres

Recorded by _____ K.
Preservation Plus/Broomer

Organization Swansea Historical Commission

Date March 1988 / October 1988

Photos (3"x3" or 3"x5" black & white). Indicate on back of each photo street addresses for buildings shown. Staple to left side of form.

Sketch Map. Draw a general map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Indicate north. (Attach a separate sheet if space here is not sufficient).

(see attached map)

OFFICE COPY
DO NOT REMOVE

UTM REFERENCE 19 315050 4623630

USGS QUADRANGLE Fall River, MA - R.I.
SCALE 1:25,000

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The Luther's Corner Historical District represents a well-preserved cluster of 19th century commercial/residential buildings that was once the commercial hub of the town from 1830 to the turn of the 20th century. The district retains its integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship and association significant to the early commercial district that thrived here in the 1800's. This district fulfills criteria A and C of the National Register on the local level.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.

Luther's Corner Historic District includes the four buildings located on each of the corners of Old Warren Road, Maple Avenue and Pearse Road. This district became the commercial center of the town during the mid to late 19th century because of the "Great Road", (Old Warren Road), which was the main route through the central section of the town, and travelled first by the colonists, and then by the stage and later by the Providence, R.I. and Old Fall River Station railroad. The four contributing structures which make up the Luther's Corner District were all built during the 19th century. It is because this center grew together in a cohesive manner, that the architectural features and details are similar.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain historical importance of area and how the area relates to the development of other areas of the community.

The Luther's Corner District was the commercial center of the Town of Swansea, MA. during the 19th century. This particular area formed because of the need of a transportation center during that time. During the early 19th century, when travel was still primarily by horse and stage, the need for rest stops (stage stops), along a well-marked route offering "conveniences" was necessary, as well as found to be profitable to those living near to the area. At the junction of Old Warren Road, Maple Avenue and Pearse Roads, which formed a "turnstile" in the roads, it was logical to make this the stopping place for the stages from Providence, R.I. and Fall River, MA. (east-west), as well as to North Swansea and the Cole River, Mt. Hope Bay (north-south) routes. Because of this, Luther's Corner became the commercial center of the town as well as much of the activity in Swansea Center, occurring in the vicinity of Luther's Corner.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

see continuation sheet

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: SWANSEA, MA	Form No: see DDS B
Property Name: Luther's Corner	

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

Architectural Significance (cont'd)

The first structure built at the corners is located on the northeast corner. It is the James Luther Tavern, 159 Old Warren Road (MHC #B19, Photo #2). It is a 2½-story, 5-bay Federal structure built ca. 1800. There is a central offset chimney and a rear ell with a large brick chimney. The window glazing is 6/6. There is a hood over the central door supported by Doric columns, added ca. 1910. This house served as a tavern as well as a residence until remodeled solely as a private home in 1857. The original clapboards have been covered in asbestos shingles; the fieldstone foundation is still intact.

On the northwest corner is the John Brown-Luther House, 2 Maple Avenue (MHC #B21, Photo #2). It is a 2½-story, 5-bay clapboarded structure in the Federal style with a large central brick chimney, built ca. 1811. Facade fenestration is symmetrical. Architectural details include: gable-end eave overhang, a semi-circular fanlight with decorative pilasters in the door surround, and splayed window lintels. The interior contains six fireplaces and two brick beehive ovens.

The Luther Store, 160 Old Warren Road (MHC #B17, Photo #1) was built in 1815-1818 by Mace Luther. It is the only brick structure on the corners (brick veneer on a wood frame). The 2-story, 5-bay Federal has two doors on the facade, in the 2nd and 4th bays. There is an interior chimney at each gable end. The original fixtures of the general store are in place: solid mahogany counter for groceries, drawers which still contain spices, a bar under the staircase, the desk where Mr. Luther kept his accounts, household items, and some Indian artifacts found in Swansea. The back room housed farm implements and musical instruments for sale. A narrow staircase leads to the second floor where undertaking supplies, shoe making and repair implements, a small library, pictures, furniture, and hand-woven spreads are stored. The store operated until 1903, when the last Luther closed its doors. In 1935, at a Town Meeting, it was voted to accept the building from the heirs as a historical monument. In 1942, the store was deeded to the Swansea Historical Society. The store was moved approximately 50 feet back from the corner in 1937 due to road widening.

At the southwest corner is the Seth Wilbur Eddy House and Store, 174 Old Warren Road (MHC #B18), built in 1871. The vernacular building is 2½ stories, 5 bays, with a gable roof. It is clapboarded with a fieldstone foundation. The asymmetrical facade is unremarkable in its architectural details, although a one-story porch with plain posts spans the eastern end. Built as a residence and store, the building housed the Swansea Post Office in 1889. By 1930, the building was remodeled for use solely as a residence.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

SWANSEA

Form No:

see
DDS

3

Property Name: Luther's Corner

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

Historical Significance (cont'd)

Old Warren Road is a colonial road connecting Swansea to Warren, Rhode Island. During the Federal period (1775-1830), a stage stop and tavern were established where the Warren road met Pearse Road, or the road north from the Cole River. This centrally located crossroads soon became known as Swansea Center and alternately as Luther's Corner, for the Luther family played a major role in the development of the area in general and the intersection in particular. James Luther, a farmer, was also owner of the tavern and stage-stop at 159 Old Warren Road (ca. 1812, MHC #B19). The tavern was considered a "strictly temperance home" and served all the comforts of home. During the same period, James Luther's son-in-law John Brown (1794-1823) built his home at the crossroads (2 Maple Avenue, ca. 1811, MHC #B21) and had his brick store built by cousin Mace Luther diagonally across the street from his house (Luther Store, 160 Old Warren Road, 1815, MHC #B17). At the death of John Brown in 1823, his brother Joseph Gardner became merchant at the store and was willed Brown's home as well. The southwest corner of the intersection had a small wood structure that housed the shoemaking and mending business of Henry Luther until mid-century.

Luther's Corner became an important mercantile area during the Early Industrial period (1830-1870). Luther's Store was a very profitable business venture and plans were made for constructing a dry goods store on the site of Henry Luther's shoe repair shop, which had been dismantled when Henry left Swansea in pursuit of other business ventures. Seth Wilbur Eddy built his meat and dry goods store and residence on the site ca. 1871 (174 Old Warren Road, MHC #B18). By then, James Luther, owner of the tavern and stage stop, had already converted his building back into a private residence. In light of the increasing popularity of traveling on the Fall River, Warren, and Providence Railroad (1866) south of the village, there was less of a need for a stage stop at the Center. A bandstand set on a green occupied the center of Luther's Corner, where it was customary for the Swansea Brass Band to give concerts on summer evenings. The former green at the center of the crossroads was removed in 1901 to make way for the "Snake Line" electric trolley cars running between Fall River, Mass. and Providence, Rhode Island.

In 1889, the Swansea Center Post Office was housed in Eddy's store, and Seth Eddy served as postmaster until the branch office closed in 1907. John Baker Eddy, his son, operated a watch and clock repair shop in the ell of the store in the last decades of the 19th century. John, a very successful jeweler, was also an agent for Briggs and Jewett Pianos. In these years, the Luther's Corner community consisted primarily of farmers. Interest in agriculture led to the organization of the Swansea Agricultural Library Association, which established and maintained its own agricultural library in Luther's Store. The organization disbanded in 1902 and donated its books to the Swansea Free Public Library.

The buildings at Luther's Corner recall the intersection's importance as a thriving commercial center in the 19th century. Luther's Store closed in 1903 and Eddy Store closed following the death of Seth Eddy in 1916. The former was conveyed to the Swansea Historical Society in 1942, and the latter remodeled into a private residence. Luther's Store was listed in the National Register in 1978. Today, the intersection is dominated by automobile traffic between U. S. Route 6 to the north and State Route 103 to the south. The buildings at the intersection are in a good state of preservation and are well maintained, their owners sympathetic of the area's history.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:

SWANSEA

Form No:

see ~~DDS~~ B

Property Name: Luther's Corner

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

Bibliography and/or References (cont'd)

Swansea Town Hall, assessor's records.
Registry of Deeds, Bristol County, Fall River, MA.
Fall River Herald News, Jan. 1899.
Fall River Herald News, Sept. 24, 1937.
Swansea Tercentenary 1667-1967, brochure.
Swansea Stagecoach: A Local History. Swansea Historical Society, 1976.
The Luther Store, Swansea Historical Society brochure.
Luther Family Genealogy (at Swansea Public Library).
Luther, Leslie. The Luther Family in America: Descendants of Capt. J. Luther. Moravia,
New York, 1976.
Wright, O. O. History of Swansea, Mass. Town of Swansea, 1917.

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The boundaries of the Luther's Corner historic district are drawn to include the properties at each of the four corners created by the intersection of Old Warren Road, Maple Avenue, and Pearse Road. The district includes the entire lot for each of the four properties. The district is distinguished from surrounding residential construction which dates primarily to the mid-20th century and lacks the visual unity necessary to convey the character of the larger historic village.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

District Data Sheet
Luther's Corner Historic District, Swansea, Massachusetts

<u>Map #</u>	<u>MHC #</u>	<u>Historic Name</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Date of Construction</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Resource</u>
76/1	B19	Jas. Luther Tavern modern garage	159 Old Warren Rd.	ca. 1812 ca. 1950	C NC	Federal ---	B B
61/2	B21	Brown-Luther Hse. stone wall stone post	2 Maple Avenue	ca. 1811 mid-19th cent. mid-19th cent.	C C C	Federal --- ---	B St. O.
61/3	B18	Eddy Hse. and Store tool shed stone wall	174 Old Warren Rd.	ca. 1871 ca. 1950 mid-19th cent.	C NC C	19th cent. vernacular --- --	B B St.
61/4	B17	Luther Store	160 Old Warren Rd.	1815-1818	C	Federal	B

Key: Map # = sheet number of assessor's map/property number in district

C = contributing NC = noncontributing B = building Si. = site St. = structure O = object

	contributing	noncontributing
Buildings	4	2
Sites	0	0
Structures	2	0
Objects	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	7	2

412 OLD WARREN RD (#B20)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 314350 4623320

LUTHER'S CORNER HIST. DIST.
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 315050 4623630

19 OLD WARREN ROAD (#B22)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 315320 4623760

19 CEDAR AVENUE (#112)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 315400 4623190

262 CEDAR AVENUE (#113)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 315540 4623100

361 PEARSE ROAD (#116)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 315060 4622510

703 PEARSE ROAD (#120)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 314680 4621740

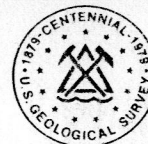
SOUTH SWANSEA UNION CH. (#F138)
GARDNER'S NECK ROAD
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
SOMERSET QUAD 1:25000
19 316880 4621270

1035 GARDNER'S NECK RD. (#F141)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 316820 4621140

1129 GARDNER'S NECK RD. (#F142)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000
19 316780 4620900

1205 GARDNER'S NECK RD. (#F143)
SWANSEA, MASS. MRA
FALL RIVER QUAD 1:25000

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



COMMONWEALTH
DEPARTMENT





Luther Store, Old Warren Rd. + Maple Ave, SW Corner. March 1988.
Southeast view.
SWN.B



Luther House (near) - Maple Avenue + Old Warren Road. Luther Tavern (far) - 159
Old Warren Road. March 1988. Northeast view. SWN.B