



Date: 04/26/2019

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USN Number: 11946.000315

Name: Mamaroneck and Sheldrake Rivers Stone Retaining Walls Historic District

Location:

Resource Status:

1. **Determination:** Eligible
2. **Contributing:**

Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

- A. ☐ Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns in our history.
- B. ☐ Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. ☒ Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or poses high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- D. ☐ Have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Summary Statement:

The Mamaroneck and Sheldrake Rivers Stone Retaining Walls Historic District is a discontinuous historic district that contains cultural resources which are interconnected by two natural waterways. The district meets National Register Criterion C for its collection of stone retaining walls designed as a water control device to stabilize the shoreline. These retaining walls were constructed from the late 18th century through the 20th century and display various techniques of engineering design. The boundary of the proposed discontinuous district is located along the length of the Mamaroneck and Sheldrake rivers situated within the Village of Mamaroneck. It is intended to include all intact stone retaining walls on both sides of the rivers. The boundary of this district may extend beyond the village but a survey to determine the full extend has not been completed. Concrete walls and rip-rap are excluded from this resource.

All bridges that cross the waterways have also been excluded from the boundary of the historic district as the function and historic context (transportation) of these structures is largely unrelated to the retaining walls. Some of the bridges have previously been determined individually eligible for the National Register including US 1 over Mamaroneck River, Hillside Avenue Bridge over Mamaroneck River, Tompkins Avenue over Mamaroneck River, Ward Avenue Bridge over Mamaroneck River, and Anita Lane Bridge over Mamaroneck River.

The Town of Mamaroneck was established March 7, 1788 and developed as a rural farming community along both sides of the Mamaroneck River. It began to develop into a suburban and summer residential district when railroad service to New York City was established in 1848. The Village of Mamaroneck was incorporated in 1895 but remained sparsely populated with 1500 people living within its bounds.

The retaining walls are primarily dry-laid coursed stone measuring roughly between four and twelve feet high (above the water surface), approximately two to four feet thick, and of carrying lengths. In most instances the tops of the retaining walls are flush with the ground surface adjacent to the river channel. They are comprised of local gneiss and are surmounted either by horizontal capstones or mortared stone. They vary in finish from an undressed fieldstone to a rockfaced finish. Due to the fact that construction techniques used for the erection of the walls has remained unchanged for centuries, it is possible that many sections of wall could have been built as early as the late 18th or early 19th century.



It is known that some sections of the stone walls, particularly those associated with the Works Progress Administration-built stone bridges, were constructed in 1936-1937. The retaining walls constructed by the WPA were four feet at the base, four feet tall and two feet wide at the top. Some of these retaining walls were built using local stone and stone masons. In 1937, using WPA funds, the channel of the Mamaroneck River was widened to 30 feet and masonry walls were constructed from North Barry Avenue to Jefferson Avenue (only the middle 1,000 feet, centered on Hillside Avenue, remaining because the upper reach was replaced by a channel relocation associated with the New England Thruway). In the 1950s additional improvements to the Mamaroneck and Sheldrake rivers were necessitated by the construction of the New England Thruway. These improvements included widening and realigning the Mamaroneck River from the south end of First Street to the Town of Harrison boundary line and along the Sheldrake River from Larchmont Gardens Lake to a point below Fenimore Road was also widened and realigned.

Due to the nature of the resource, it is not possible to list all of the properties which line the Mamaroneck and Sheldrake River upon which these stone retaining walls are located. However, it is possible to discuss sections in relation to street locations and bridges. The discussion below will progress from the north end of the Mamaroneck River in the Village of Mamaroneck at Winfield Avenue, and continue downstream almost to the intersection of Mamaroneck Avenue and the Boston Post Road, then from the confluence of the Sheldrake River and Mamaroneck River near Station Plaza upstream to the southern boundary of the Village of Mamaroneck. The locations discussed are approximations due to limitations of property access to all sections of the rivers. Along the Mamaroneck River the district extends southward past US 1 over the Mamaroneck River to the East Basin at Harbor Island Park.

Mamaroneck River

Winfield Avenue to approximately Warren Avenue: This apparently dry-laid wall extends along the right bank of the Mamaroneck River. The location of an abutment associated with an earlier bridge is evidence in the vicinity of Glendale Road.

First Street to approximately Willow Street: This dry-laid stone wall extends along both banks of the river from the end of First Street at the Mamaroneck River, to Cedar Street, to Hillside Avenue and the 1937 WPA-built bridge at Hillside Avenue. The dry-laid wall from First Street to Hillside Avenue has a more finished appearance, with shaped and smoothfaced stones; it is likely that this section was built as part of the WPA work in the 1930s. Downstream from Hillside Avenue to approximately Willow Street the stone walls appear to be less finished dry-laid stone construction.

Ward Avenue to Tompkins Avenue: This section of dry-laid stone walls extends along both banks of the river at Ward Avenue, and includes some areas in which the stones are more informally and loosely laid. The Ward Avenue bridge was built in 1937 by the WPA and it is likely that portions of the stone retaining wall near the bridge were also built at that time.

Sheldrake River

Mamaroneck River to Waverly Avenue: This section of dry-laid stone wall with a concrete capstone extends all along both banks of the Sheldrake River from Mamaroneck Avenue, to rough-faced, unfinished walls with no capstones within the auto sales yard nearby Waverly Avenue.

Vicinity of Grand Street/Plaza Avenue: this section of dry-laid stone wall extends along both banks of the Sheldrake River.

This Determination of Eligibility is sourced from the Historic District Inventory Form compiled by Walter Wheeler and Robyn Battles in 2011 and contained within Phase IA Cultural Resources Study Mamaroneck and Sheldrake Rivers Flood Risk Management General Re-Evaluation Study by Hartgen Archeological Associates (June 2011), unpublished, on-file at the New York State Historic Preservation Office.